

# Why should you be a Union Member and what has the Union done for the members?

The answer is, "Quite a lot."

- When I started, we didn't have:
  - dental insurance
  - eye care
  - personal leave days or
  - 401K savings plans.
- It took ten years to get three weeks vacation and 20 years to get four weeks; *now* we get three weeks vacation after only eight years and four weeks vacation after seventeen years.
- We had to work until age 62 to retire; now we can retire at 60.
- There were no guaranteed extra boards.
- BLET collective bargaining agreements provide our members with some of the highest blue-collar wages in the United States, and also include important work rules that ensure our members' safety on duty.
- Often overlooked – but very important – are the fringe benefits provided to BLET members as part of the Brotherhood's collective bargaining agreements.
- In 2008, BLET members (on average) will receive more than \$31,000 in fringe benefits according to the BLET's 2008 Fringe Benefit Study.
- The rail carriers will pay an average of \$12,919.32 toward membership health care benefits – that's \$12,919.32 per member working under the National Contract. (This does not include what the carriers contribute toward the retirees' health care plan, which is an additional \$1,331.76 per member, per year. It also does not include benefits of \$548.64 per member, per year toward the dental plan, and \$121.92 per member, per year for the vision plan.)
- These fringe benefits also extend to Railroad Retirement payments. In fact, nearly half of the \$31,282.02 that BLET members receive each year in fringe benefits goes toward Railroad Retirement payments.
- For each Class 1 railroad worker covered by the National Contract, rail carriers will contribute \$6,324 per year in Railroad Retirement Tier 1 taxes and an additional \$9,183.90 per year in Railroad Retirement Tier 2 taxes. That's a total of \$15,507.90 (As a side note, the same railroad workers will each pay \$6,324 per year in Tier 1 taxes and \$2,960.10 in Tier 2 taxes.)
- Our Railroad Retirement system is strong and healthy. As economists provide a dire forecast for Social Security, it is good to know that our members can depend on the reliability of Railroad Retirement.
- The money values set forth in this study are computed on costs actually known as of January 2008, and the estimated value of fringe benefits accruing to operating employees is based on annual wages of \$75,900 to \$102,000, which are the maximum Tier 2 and Tier 1 Railroad Retirement taxes, respectively.
- It should also be noted that the study does not take in to consideration vacations, holidays and other time-off benefits, which vary by railroad, class of service and seniority.

Railroad jobs are good jobs. The kind of jobs you can depend on to raise a family. The wages and work rules are just as important the fringe benefits. So the next time someone asks, "What has the union done for me lately?"...you can point them to this study and show what the BLET is doing everyday to provide its hard-working members with decent jobs and decent benefits.