



SYSTEM COUNCIL NO. 6

INTERNATIONAL BROTHERHOOD OF ELECTRICAL WORKERS

Tom Owens
General Chairman

Shannon Spotswood
Vice Chairman

Mike Stacks
Secretary-Treasurer

General Chairman's Report – March, 2020

Brothers and Sisters:

Covid-19: The rapidly spreading conditions have impacted all phases of our interactions with the Carrier. While attending an investigation in Atlanta in conjunction with other scheduled meetings, I became ill with “flu-like symptoms.” I remained isolated in the hotel while attempting to deal with the Carrier in what would prove to soon be our primary way of communication – teleconferences. Upon my return to Knoxville, I tested negative for the flu and was referred to the Health Department. The Health Department declined to test me for Covid-19. After further isolation, I have recuperated but will probably never know a diagnosis. Upper management and all of the labor organizations are participating in regular conference calls regarding Covid-19. At least verbally, the Carrier has seemed proactive in responding to any specific concerns I have brought to their attention as explained to me by our locals/members. As the government standards and requirements are constantly changing, I am sure what is standard procedures today will be changed the next day.

Roanoke Locomotive Shop Closure: Negotiations continued to reach an implementing Agreement. The first face to face meeting was held on Friday, March 6th, in Norfolk. The second face to face meeting was held in Atlanta, Wednesday, March 11th. Due to Covid-19, the negotiations have moved to a teleconference format. All of the Organizations are working together in this negotiation on our common issues. Covid-19 is playing a large role in influencing this negotiation.

National Negotiations: The next two sessions have been cancelled due to Covid-19 conditions.

John Sevier Shop: Our locomotive work in Knoxville, TN ceased with furloughs on May 1, 2016 under previous General Chairman Fiery. Since that time, the local IBEW work has been our presence on the repair truck. On March 03, 2020, I was notified by the Carrier that Progress Rail would be leasing the repair facilities at the point to perform warranty work on 51 locomotives that were purchased from Progress Rail. These locomotives have suffered catastrophic failures and are being reworked at no cost to the Carrier. I served notice on the Carrier for subcontracting and performance of work where we have had furloughed employees. In conference, the Carrier proved that there was no subcontracting issue due to the work being warranty repair at no cost. I stressed our position regarding a contractual obligation for locomotive work. The Carrier has provided an exact list of the 51 locomotive's numbers that will provide us a claim basis if any other locomotives are handled by the contractor. To my knowledge, no other organization has challenged the Carrier regarding the situation.

Communication Workers: The Carrier abolished two positions (Bluefield, WV and Roanoke, VA) of members who were both retirement age. When I questioned Labor Relations over this issue, they were unaware that the Department had even but out abolishment bulletins. Over the course of several days, the Carrier has rescinded the abolishments. I have been informed by our members that they do intend to retire after ensuring their vacation qualifications. I have been informed that following the retirements, management will not be filling the vacancies due to the cluster of workers around these positions. These were communication maintainer positions which were surrounded by numerous CET positions.

Medical: All the Carrier updates regarding Covid-19 are flowing through the medical department. This increased workload appears to be affecting the regular work regarding member's return to work processes. I have had several cases of delay that I am attempting to rectify for our members.

In Your Service,

Tom Owens
General Chairman