

BARGAINING UPDATE – November 23, 2011

From President F. N. Simpson

Yesterday, the Chief Executive Officers of the Railroads covered by the recommendations of Presidential Emergency Board No. 243 received a letter from me unconditionally extending the cooling off period to February 10, 2012. The BMWED took this action to spare the nation a railroad strike during the busy holiday season, given the still fragile state of the nation's economy. We made this position clear and public so that shippers and Congress would realize the BMWED would not engage in self-help until at least next February. Any interruption to commerce during this period will be due to Railroad actions, not ours.

The purpose behind this extension is to make the Railroads bargain seriously regarding away from home expenses. We have received assurances from the Railroads that they understand the importance of this issue and will not just "kick the can down the road" in bargaining. Well, now is the chance for the Railroads to back up their words with action. Local BMWED committees will be reaching out to the various Railroads seeking to begin bargaining regarding away from home expenses no later than January 9, 2012. I hope those bargaining sessions are productive and can resolve this issue quickly and fairly to the interests of BMWED members.

BMWED will evaluate the situation in early February to determine if it will offer an additional extension to the cooling off period, or if once again, we will be engaged in a countdown to possible self-help.

The BMWED did not take this action because it was afraid to strike. We took this action because we believe it gives our members the best opportunity to resolve this issue quickly and fairly and avoid an interruption to commerce and avoid a wage loss to our members and other union members who would honor our picket lines. We have conceded no legal rights by our actions, we have merely postponed the date we will consider ourselves able to exercise self-help if that is the correct and necessary course of action.

Stay strong and united. Show solidarity with your other union brothers and sisters.