

TRUCIA TUREMAN

My name is Trucia Tureman. My address is 9251 Second Avenue, N.W., Seattle, Washington. November 20, 1979, will be my 12th anniversary as an employee of the Milwaukee Road. Most of that time I have worked as a rate clerk in the Regional Accounting Office, computing charges due on freight originating at or destined to the states of Montana, Idaho, Washington, Oregon and Alaska. I worked approximately eight months as a rate quotation clerk in the Pricing Office in Seattle prior to its being closed November 30, 1977. In that capacity I was in constant phone contact with our customers. They would call and ask what the cost would be on a shipment of lumber from Port Angeles to Winter Haven, Florida, for example, and what would be the proper route.

I thoroughly enjoyed this work; it was a challenge and I was learning all the time. I loved working with the public and got a great deal of satisfaction from giving them the best service I could. I had been working at various jobs for 14 years when I went to the Milwaukee in the fall of 1967. "At last I've found the place I can work until I retire," I thought. I'd like to think that is still the case.

I speak to you as an employee of the Milwaukee and as a citizen.

I testify on behalf of the organization known as SORE (Save Our Railroad Employment) which has my greatest respect for achieving so much against such great odds, and my gratitude for keeping us in the game so long. I also testify in behalf of the New Milwaukee Lines which holds my hope for the future.

If we fail, and the West end is abandoned, where will that leave me and so many like me? I am 47 years old. I have a 14½ year old daughter to support, and my mother lives with me. Unemployment benefits at the current rate would cover my house payment and leave me \$37 per month until December when my house is due to be revalued and the payment will go up.

As I understand it, our medical benefits will continue two months from the last month we work, and then we are on our own. I have a record of high blood pressure and diabetes; though both are controlled without medication at this point, I find it impossible to buy life insurance and health insurance costs are either prohibitive or will not cover me in case of any illness bearing any connection with either pre-existing condition.

I have a total of 16 years vested in Railroad Retirement (four years with DRGW in the early 50's). I am nowhere near retirement age, yet a little over the hill as far as beginning anew on pension benefits. I can't build much of an IRA account on unemployment. Many of my fellow workers are in a much worse situation in this regard. At 50 to 56 with 30 years service, many working in small railroad towns where they will find no other work, their unemployment will run out before they can retire. When they do reach the age when they can collect their hard-earned pension, it will be reduced from what they have a right to expect because it is based on their highest earning years -- years they won't be allowed to work.

The Milwaukee has been fortunate in having many working couples employed. They will suffer double damage. Bob and Astrid Norman

are a case in point. Bob has 31 years and Astrid has 8½ years. Even if the company were to honor their "protective" agreements, only Bob is covered. They have four children at home, two of these are going to college. Dale and Esther Finley, the Agent and a clerk in Bellingham, have a combined 45 years service. Father and son, like Leo and Larry Fettig, Alan and Ruth -- there are so many.

This has been hanging over our heads for two years now. The wear and tear has been immeasurable. Perhaps you wonder why we are still here if the strain has been so great. After all we have been warned it was coming. There are several reasons. I like my job; now I am entitled to three weeks vacation. I hold one of the better paying jobs in the office and not many can take it from me. In fact I have more seniority than any other qualified rate clerk now on the roster. I work from 9:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. So long as this railroad exists, I would like to work for it. If that seems unrealistic to you, it did to me too. So I looked for another job over the last year. Results: lots of interviews, lots of "impressed with your qualifications," or "you have some highly marketable skills," but in the end -- no dice! Frankly, I'm scared -- scared for myself, scared for all of us.

I think I could accept all of this much more easily if I believed it was inevitable, but I don't believe that! SORE and New Milwaukee Lines offer us viable alternatives. The business is here and growing, and it has been my experience with our shippers that they want to do business with us, not our competitors. If

there is one thing we have offered over the years, it has been our caring, our trying, the personal touch. Otis Moyer, a potato shipper in the Columbia Basin could call the President of the Railroad in the middle of the night as he vacationed in Hawaii. Sam Graf, one of our earliest Foreign Freight specialists would write an order on a matchbook cover at lunch and a "hot" container would be on the train out of town by 7:30 that night. Bill Whalen would spend his lunch hour helping out a customer or training an eager, inquisitive newcomer. What happened to all that?

Since just prior to the announcement that we were attempting reorganization under the federal bankruptcy laws, we watched a series of policy shifts which had the effect of discouraging revenue. Aside from quoting rates, the major function of the Seattle Pricing Office was to establish rates, or make adjustments to existing rates on the basis of a very complicated set of factors. In order to accomplish this these people attended rate-making meetings on a regular basis with other railroads in the North Pacific Coast, Pacific South Coast and Transcontinenttal Freight Bureaus. These men were specialists in lumber, woodpulp, paper products, grain, coal, fresh or frozen fruit and vegetables, ores, all the many natural resources of the northwest as well as its manufactured products. On November 30, 1977, that office was closed. Walt Zahren, one of the finest rate men in the region, was told to go home, after over 30 years of service. He was not even given the five weeks of vacation pay he had earned that year. He was told he had no contract with the Milwaukee and they didn't have to give him anything. Harold Emel was transferred to Chicago, the other seven of us invaded Regional Accounting; one-third of the staff changing over night.

Now people asking for rates and routes would experience delays of up to 48 hours where we had been able to give them answers in 5 minutes to an hour, with the exception of very complicated questions. We were familiar with the territory, and the Chicago quotation office was not able to absorb the extra work. Even more importantly, there was an end to innovative, competitive rate making -- there was an end to planning.

In the fall of 1978, a letter was sent to shippers suggesting they seek alternative routes for shipping their goods; it was doubtful the Milwaukee could serve their needs. I did not see this letter, but the Manager of ITOFCA, Seattle, told me he was given verbal instructions to stop shipping Milwaukee by his superiors in Chicago on the basis of this letter. We had a healthy westbound Freight Forwarder and Shippers Association piggyback move until that time.

As the height of the lumber season approached, the popular new A-frame cars which were assigned to lumber service out of the Northwest, were removed from assignment and moved to the East. These cars were popular because they held from 95,000 to 130,000 pounds and enabled the shipper to take advantage of the lower rates applicable to particularly heavy carloads.

Now we have come up with a use charge on jumbo hoppers for grain shipments, which were similarly designed to take advantage of lower rates.

It was about the same time that the number of domestic sales personnel was reduced drastically. We went from approximately nine in the Seattle-Tacoma area to the present 1½ over the period of a

year through attrition and reduction of force. We now have the District Manager of Sales and one man who shares his time between that office and International Sales. Meanwhile International Sales were reduced from 4 to 1 until they had to add 1½ because the business just wouldn't cooperate and go away.

They tried to go away. Early in April of this year, when the Trustee was asking for an embargo of the West end on May 31, the Port of Seattle began to ship BN. When they came back to us two months later, they brought hundreds of containers, most of which had been sitting on the dock as long as a month. We joked about the Great Wall of China, hundreds of neatly stacked containers waiting for cars. We couldn't get the cars from Chicago, now that we had the business.

While our service has deteriorated and our morale has sagged, we can take great pride in the way we handle the containers of import freight. The Ports of Seattle and Tacoma, Bostrum-Warren and others give us the paperwork, we prepare availabilities (instructions to Milwaukee Motor Transport that a container is ready for pick up) and that container is off the pier and on the train the day the ship arrives in many cases or the following day 9 times out of 10. In the time I worked with outbound billing I never ceased to be amazed at the teamwork and the smoothness with which this was accomplished. This is why we continue to carry 60% of the Port of Seattle's business, even though our road time was far more than that of the BN or UP. Also, our delivery setup in Chicago is way ahead of the BN. These delays on the dock are costly to the shipper, because they have to swallow the detention charges on the equipment, and the cost in customer dissatisfaction can be loss of shipments to another port.

However, the BN has solved that problem, with our help.

Milwaukee Motor Transport, our subsidiary, has now contracted with the BN to carry the loads off the piers for them! MMT is working for our competition and has been for about three months! That way they can stay in business here when we are long gone.

Now you know what my fears are for my future and that of my fellow employees; you know what management decisions I personally witnessed which had the effect of drying up the West end in order to fulfill their prophesy. These are my opinions as an employee of the Milwaukee Road.

As a citizen, I am deeply disturbed about the fragmentation and destruction of these lines. There are shippers on the Olympic Peninsula, from the northern part of the state, from the Columbia Basin, the Inland Empire, Idaho, Montana and the Dakotas who are being left high and dry. They have no way to ship the fruits of their labor, what can be shipped by truck will destroy our highways at great cost to the taxpayer. Small towns all along the way will lose employment, and their tax structures will be shattered. Rail employees and their families stand to suffer great loss financially and psychologically. At a time when fuel costs are soaring, I find it unthinkable, criminal even to consider tearing up a roadbed, destroying the most fuel-efficient means of transport. This is a vital national resource, irreplaceable which I think must be preserved.

As four of us were discussing these hearings with our supervisor one day last week, someone said that at least we could take part in these hearings; he said, "Oh, no! Those hearings are for the

shippers, the big ones. Some of them stand to lose hundreds of thousands of dollars if these lines are abandoned." I said, "Between us we stand to lose hundreds of thousands of dollars also." He replied to the effect that all we wanted was for the company to keep running out here so we would have a job. "If more of you people worked your job so that the company could keep running we might have had a different story." He felt the company owed us nothing, we had been paid for each day we worked. There was nothing of importance we could say to this Commission.

I know two of those people were thinking of testifying, just about themselves. I know of another well-informed student of the Milwaukee who is not here to testify because of fear of retaliation, justified or not. I speak for them and for all the others who have served this railroad with loyalty over the years, and whose only wish is to continue to serve it.