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**NATIONAL RAILROAD ADJUSTMENT BOARD
THIRD DIVISION**

**Award No. 37994
Docket No. MW-37070
06-3-01-3-696**

The Third Division consisted of the regular members and in addition Referee Joan Parker when award was rendered.

PARTIES TO DISPUTE: (
(Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employees
(Burlington Northern Santa Fe (former Burlington
(Northern Railroad Company)

STATEMENT OF CLAIM:

“Claim of the System Committee of the Brotherhood that:

- (1) The Carrier violated the Agreement when it failed and refused to pay Mr. H. D. Kerr the travel allowance for weekend travel made on March 17 and 19, 2000 as provided in Article XIV, Section 1 of the September 26, 1996 Mediation Agreement (System File T-D-2075-W/11-00-0410 BNR).**
- (2) As a consequence of the violation referred to in Part (1) above, Mr. H. D. Kerr shall be paid the weekend travel allowance of one hundred fifty dollars (\$150.00) as well as interest on the amount of money claimed, at eight percent (8%) per annum, compounded monthly from the date of the initial claim.”**

FINDINGS:

The Third Division of the Adjustment Board, upon the whole record and all the evidence, finds that:

The carrier or carriers and the employee or employees involved in this dispute are respectively carrier and employee within the meaning of the Railway Labor Act, as approved June 21, 1934.

This Division of the Adjustment Board has jurisdiction over the dispute involved herein.

Parties to said dispute were given due notice of hearing thereon.

On March 17, 2000, the Claimant worked his last day on a mobile gang in Douglas, Wyoming, and traveled by the most direct highway route to his home in Chadron, Nebraska. The Claimant had bid for and had been awarded a position on Mobile Welding Gang TC-01. On March 19, 2000, the Claimant traveled the most direct highway route to his new assignment in Beatrice, Nebraska. In total, the Claimant traveled 610 miles. He submitted a claim for a travel allowance, which the Carrier denied.

The September 26, 1996 Mediation Agreement between the parties provides in pertinent part:

"Article XIV – Travel Allowance

Section 1

(a) At the beginning of the work season employees are required to travel from their homes to the initial reporting location, and at the end of the season they will return home. This location could be hundreds of miles from their residences. During the work season the carriers' service may place them hundreds of miles away from home at the end of each work week. Accordingly, the carriers will pay each employee a minimum travel allowance as follows for all miles actually traveled by the most direct highway route for each round trip:

0 to 100 miles	\$0.00
101 to 200 miles	\$25.00
201 to 300 miles	\$50.00

301 to 400 miles	\$75.00
401 to 500 miles	\$100.00

Additional \$25.00 payments for each 100 mile increments.

- (b) At the start up and break up of a gang, an allowance will be paid after 50 miles, with a payment of \$12.50 for the mileage between 51 and 100 miles. . . .”

On July 7, 2000, the Organization submitted a claim on behalf of the Claimant, which the Carrier denied. Having failed to reach a satisfactory resolution on the property, the parties submitted the dispute to the Board for final and binding resolution.

The Organization contends that because the Claimant held a position on a mobile gang, he was entitled to a weekend travel allowance under Article XIV of the September 26, 1996 Mediation Agreement. According to the Organization, the plain intent of Article XIV, Section 1 is to provide a minimum allowance to employees who travel long distances between work and home in order to be with their families on weekends. To qualify for the travel allowance under Section 1, the Organization asserts, an employee need only be assigned to a mobile gang and travel by the most direct highway route. Having met both qualifications, the Organization submits, the Claimant is entitled to a travel allowance for his travel on March 17 and 19, 2000.

The Organization argues that if the parties had intended to limit Article XIV's travel allowance as the Carrier asserts, they would have done so in clear, unambiguous language. The Organization cites in support of its position Special Board of Adjustment No. 1114, asserting that Referee Kasher in that Award found that Article XIV's travel allowance applies to all employees who are assigned to a mobile position and who “travel between their home and varying successive work locations at the beginning and end of their work weeks.”

The Carrier argues that under the clear language of Article XIV, Section 1, the travel allowance provided is payable only if an employee is traveling from and returning to the same gang (a “round trip”) or is traveling one-way at the beginning or end of the gang's annual work season. According to the Carrier, the Claimant's trips on March 17 and 19 constituted two one-way trips, not a round trip, because -

rather than returning to the gang in Douglas, Wyoming, - the Claimant voluntarily left that gang to take a new position with another gang elsewhere. Therefore, the Carrier submits, the travel allowance provided by § 1 is inapplicable to the Claimant's travel. The Carrier notes that the Organization cited no Awards supporting its interpretation of Article XIV. The Organization's reliance on Special Board of Adjustment No. 1114 is misplaced, the Carrier contends, because the only issue decided in that Award was whether Article XIV's travel allowance applied to local mobile gangs as well as regional and system gangs.

The Board finds the language of Article XIV, Section 1 to be clear and unambiguous. Section 1 provides for an allowance to be paid each employee for "all miles actually traveled by the most direct highway route for each round trip." (Emphasis added.) The common meaning of "round trip" is travel from and back to the same point (A to B and back to A). The Organization argues that because mobile gangs may change location so that a member reports to a new point after a weekend (A to B to C) and the travel allowance is payable then, the allowance should be payable to the Claimant in the instant case. The Board finds this argument to be without merit. It is clear from Section 1's language that "round trip" is defined in the context of the mobile gangs to which the provision applies as travel from and to the gang, wherever the gang may be at the time of travel. Mobile gangs, by definition, move to "varying successive work locations," as recognized in SBA No. 1114. Hence, at the beginning and end of the work season, there is an allowance "to travel from their homes to the initial reporting location" and to return home from a location that "could be hundreds of miles from their residences" depending on where the gang has moved. (Emphasis added.) Similarly Section 1 states, "During the work season the carriers' service may place them hundreds of miles away from home. . . ." (Emphasis added.) Section 1 does not contemplate travel from and return to a single geographic location but rather travel from and travel to a single gang. That is the plain meaning of "round trip" as used by Section 1.

In the Claimant's case, he did not return on March 19 to the gang he had traveled from on March 17, 2000. Instead, he traveled to a second gang on which he had been awarded a position by bid. In these circumstances, the Claimant did not make the round trip contemplated by Article XIV, Section 1. Nor was the Claimant traveling to or from a gang location at the beginning or end of the work season. The Claimant's travel does not fall within the criteria established by Section 1 and the

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Claimant therefore is not entitled to Section 1's travel allowance for his travel on March 17 and 19, 2000. The Board, therefore, must deny the instant claim.

AWARD

Claim denied.

ORDER

This Board, after consideration of the dispute identified above, hereby orders that an Award favorable to the Claimant(s) not be made.

NATIONAL RAILROAD ADJUSTMENT BOARD
By Order of Third Division

Dated at Chicago, Illinois, this 25th day of October 2006.

LABOR MEMBER'S DISSENT
TO
AWARD 37987, DOCKET MW-36873
AND
AWARD 37994, DOCKET MW-37070
(Referee Parker)

These cases involved the interpretation of Article XIV of the 1996 National Agreement. It is not the least bit surprising that the Carrier has taken the position it has in these cases when consideration is given to the history of Article XIV between these parties. As soon as the ink was dry on the 1996 National Agreement, the Carriers led a charge to eviscerate the provisions of Article XIV of Presidential Emergency Board (PEB) 229. The Carriers contended that Article XIV applied only to employees on regional or system gangs. Of course, the Maintenance of Way contended that all Maintenance of Way employees who had to travel far from home during their work week to perform service for the Carrier were entitled to Article XIV. That dispute resulted in the findings of Special Board of Adjustment (SBA) No. 1114, Referee Kasher. The Board held:

“A lay person, not familiar with railroad industry maintenance of way jargon or terms of art, would justifiably conclude from reading Article XIV that any maintenance of way employee, who traveled between one of the various sets of mileage parameters found on page 34 of PEB 229’s recommendations, would be entitled to the travel allowance payment for such trip.”

and

“Based upon the foregoing facts and findings, it is this Arbitrator’s conclusion that the position of the BMWWE must be sustained and that the travel

"allowance benefits of Article XIV of the September 26, 1996 National Agreement apply to all traveling employees.

Award: The position of the BMWWE that the travel allowance benefits of Article XIV of the September 26, 1996 National Agreement apply to all traveling employees is sustained. ***"

Clearly, the findings of SBA No. 1114 upheld the Maintenance of Way's position that all Maintenance of Way employees who were required to travel away from their homes to perform service for the Carrier during their work week are entitled to travel allowance in accordance with Article XIV.

In these cases, the Claimants had been assigned to gangs that required them to travel away from home during the work week to perform service for the Carrier and the Carrier was obligated to compensate them for such travel. The Claimants received the travel allowance they were entitled to receive until such time as they bid to another gang that also required them to travel away from home during the work week to perform service for the Carrier. It was at the point when the Claimants moved from one gang to another that the Carrier refused to pay the Claimants travel allowance for the interim period when the Claimants moved between gangs.

The Carrier took the position that the Claimants were exercising their seniority when they moved from one gang to another and, therefore, it was not obligated to pay them the travel

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allowance in such a circumstance. Without making a ruling on that aspect of the Carrier's position, the Majority in this instance determined that the key to the resolution of the dispute was what constituted a round trip? The Majority never considered for a moment the unrefutable fact that the Claimants were performing work consistent with "the Carriers' service" and therefore entitled to the travel allowance. Instead, it considered the extremely narrow interpretation of what it considers to be a "round trip" without ever considering the impact of its narrow view on the Claimants. There is no dispute that the Claimants were entitled to travel allowance because they were in "the Carriers' service". Hence, the manifest intent of Article XIV required the Carrier to apply the travel allowance provisions in the instant cases, rather than buying into the extremely narrow view of the Majority. The Majority here is attempting to place a new provision into Article XIV which is contrary to the manifest intent of the rule. That restriction would in effect render those traveling employees who move from gang to gang in the service of the Carrier as employees who are not entitled to travel allowance in accordance with Article XIV. Such a narrow interpretation of Article XIV is contrary to the clear intent of SBA No. 1114. Because of the reasons set forth above, this Award was wrongly decided and should not be followed.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Roy C. Robinson", written over a horizontal line.

Roy C. Robinson
Labor Member