Form 1 **NATIONAL RAILROAD ADJUSTMENT BOARD**
THIRD DIVISION

Award No. 43966
Docket No. MW-43193
20-3-NRAB-00003-190399

The Third Division consisted of the regular members and in addition Referee Patricia T. Bittel when award was rendered.

(Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employes Division
(IBT Rail Conference
PARTIES TO DISPUTE: (
(BNSF Railway Company

STATEMENT OF CLAIM:

"Claim of the System Committee of the Brotherhood that:

(1) The Carrier violated the Agreement when it assigned outside forces (R. J. Corman and Midwest RR) to perform Maintenance of Way and Structures Department work (building retaining walls, cleaning culverts, installing culverts, hauling and placing rip rap and associated work) in the vicinity of Mile Posts 203-204 on the Hannibal Subdivision, Springfield Division beginning on February 21, 2014 and continuing (System File C-14-Cl00-132110-14-0226 BNR).

(2) The Agreement was further violated when the Carrier failed to provide the General Chairman with advance notification of its intent to contract out the aforesaid work or make a good-faith effort to reduce the incidence of subcontracting and increase the use of its Maintenance of Way forces as required by Rule 55 and Appendix Y.

(3) As a consequence of the violations referred to in Parts (1) and/or (2) above, Claimants J. Abernathy, B. Rea, L. Miller, R. Anders, R. Nelson, P. Mulholland, L. Sutton, K. Liles, J. Sutcliff, W. Bellinger, R. Lene, M. Semande, M. Poggemiller, S. Bradley, M. Paris, D. Sanders, P. Harmon, R. Jarvis, J. Czarnecki and G. Kuberski shall, beginning on February 21, 2014 and continuing, now ' ... be paid all

hours straight time and overtime worked by the contractors each, at their appropriate rate of pay as settlement of this 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.

The Organization alleges that beginning February 21, 2014, without notifying the General Chairman in advance, the Carrier assigned outside forces (R. J. Corman and Midwest RR) to perform routine Maintenance of Way and Structures Department track work, i.e., building retaining walls, cleaning out culverts, putting in new culverts, placing rip rap and associated work on the Hannibal Subdivision of the Springfield Division. It calculates the outside contractor forces worked eight straight time hours and three overtime hours each day, not including weekends, beginning February 21, 2014 and continuing until the project was completed.

In the Organization's view, the Board cannot get past the Carrier's failure to comply with the notification requirement. Even if this express requirement is ignored, routine track and right of way work of the character involved here, including supervision of such work, as well as operation of machinery, equipment and vehicles used to perform such work, has customarily, historically and traditionally been performed by Maintenance of Way forces and is contractually reserved to them in accordance with Rules 1, 2, 5, 6, 55 and the Note to Rule 55 of the Agreement which provide as follows in pertinent part:

"RULE 1. SCOPE

A. These rules govern the hours of service, rates of pay and working conditions of all employes not above the rank of track inspector, track supervisor and foreman, in the Maintenance of Way and Structures Department, including employes in the former GN and SP&S roadway equipment repair shops and welding employes.

B. The Maintenance of Way and Structures Department as used herein means the Track Sub-department, the Bridge and Building Sub-department, the Welding Sub-department, the Roadway Equipment Sub-department and the Roadway Machinery Equipment and Automotive Repair Sub-department of the Maintenance of Way Department as constituted on date of consummation of this Agreement. * * *

RULE 2. SENIORITY RIGHTS AND SUB-DEPARTMENT LIMITS

A. Rights accruing to employes under their seniority entitles them to consideration for positions in accordance with their relative length of service with the Company, as hereinafter provided.

B. Seniority rights of all employes are confined to the sub-department in which employed, except as otherwise provided in this Agreement. * * *

RULE 5. SENIORITY ROSTERS

A. Seniority rosters of employes of each sub-department by seniority districts and rank will be compiled. Two (2) copies will be furnished foremen and employes' representatives, and foremen will post a copy in tool house and outfit cars, or at convenient places for inspection of employes affected. Copies will also be made available to employes not working under the supervision of a foreman.

B. Seniority rosters will show names, employe numbers, seniority dates, occupations and locations of employes. [Letter of Agreement 4/13/98]

C. Seniority rosters will be revised and posted in March of each year and will be open for correction for a period of sixty (60) calendar days from date of posting. Employes on leave of absence or on furlough at the time roster is posted will be granted sixty (60) calendar days after their return to active service in which to make protest as to seniority dates. Protests on seniority dates for correction will be confined to names added since posting of previous annual roster. Erroneous omission of names from the seniority rosters, or typographical errors on such rosters, may be corrected at any time. * * *

RULE 55. CLASSIFICATION OF WORK * * *

B. Foreman.
An employe assigned to direct the work of men and reporting to officials of the railroad shall be classified as a foreman. * * *

Q. Sectionmen.
Employes assigned to constructing, repairing and maintaining roadway and track and other work incident thereto. * * *

NOTE to Rule 55: The following is agreed to with respect to the contracting of construction, maintenance or repair work, or dismantling work customarily performed by employes in the Maintenance of Way and Structures Department:

Employes included within the scope of this Agreement--in the Maintenance of Way and Structures Department, including employes in former GN and SP&S Roadway Equipment Repair Shops and welding employes--perform work in connection with the construction and maintenance or repairs of and in connection with the dismantling of tracks, structures or facilities located on the right of way and used in the operation of the Company in the performance of common carrier service, and work performed by employes of named Repair Shops.

By agreement between the Company and the General Chairman, work as described in the preceding paragraph which is customarily performed by employes described herein, may be let to contractors and be performed by contractors' forces. However, such work may only be contracted provided that special skills not "possessed by the Company's employes, special equipment not owned by the Company, or special material available only when applied or installed through supplier, are required; or when work is such that the Company is not adequately equipped to handle the work, or when emergency time requirements exist which present undertakings not contemplated by the Agreement and beyond the capacity of the Company's forces. In the event the Company plans to contract out work because of one of the criteria described herein, it shall notify the General Chairman of the Organization in writing as far in advance of the date of the contracting transaction as is practicable and in any event not less than fifteen (15) days prior thereto, except in 'emergency time requirements' cases. If the General Chairman, or his representative, requests a meeting to discuss matters relating to the said contracting transaction, the designated representative of the Company shall promptly meet with him for that purpose. Said Company and Organization representative shall make a good faith attempt to reach an understanding concerning said contracting, but if no understanding is reached the Company may nevertheless proceed with said contracting, and the Organization may file and progress claims in connection therewith."

"APPENDIX Y
December 11, 1981 * * *

Dear Mr. Berge:

*** * * The carriers assure you that they will assert good-faith efforts to reduce the incidence of subcontracting and increase the use of their maintenance of way forces to the extent practicable, including the procurement of rental equipment and operation thereof by carrier employes. The parties jointly reaffirm the intent of Article N of the May 17, 1968 Agreement that advance notice requirements be strictly adhered to and encourage the parties locally to take advantage of the good faith discussions provided for to reconcile any differences. In the interests of**

> **improving communications between the parties on subcontracting, the advance notices shall identify the work to be contracted and the reasons therefor."**

It is well established that the Organization carries the burden of establishing that contracting out has occurred and that the work at issue has customarily been performed by Maintenance of Way employes. The Note to Rule 55 specifies that "The following is agreed to with respect to the contracting of construction, maintenance or repair work, or dismantling work customarily performed by employes in the Maintenance of Way and Structures Department." There is a split in the precedent; one line of cases holds that "customarily performed" means "exclusively performed throughout the entire system." We are not persuaded by this argument. In contract interpretation, it is presumed that the parties intend the words used to have their ordinary and popularly accepted meaning unless context or evidence indicates the words were used in a different sense.

> **"§2.5 Ordinary and Popular Meaning of Words**
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> **When interpreting agreements, arbitrators use the ordinary and popular meaning of words, unless there is an indication that the parties intended a special meaning. When an agreement uses technical terms, however, arbitrators give preference to the technical or trade usage, unless there is evidence that the parties intended a nontechnical meaning. [National Academy of Arbitrators, *The Common Law of the Workplace*, (Theodore St. Antoine, BNA Books 1998).]"**

We do not believe the term "customary' conveys the concept of exclusivity, but rather refers to what is usual or ordinary. In accordance with this interpretation, Third Division Award 40558 has articulated the applicable standard:

> **"The Board adopts the 'customary' criterion for at least three interrelated reasons. First, the Note to Rule 55 repeatedly references work categories 'customarily performed.' Nowhere is 'exclusivity' mentioned. Given the history of prior disagreements, it is very unlikely experienced negotiators arrived at this articulation by accident and without an intended meaning fundamentally consistent with the Organization's reading.**

> **Second, the less demanding 'customary' test is consistent with the spirit of Appendix Y to reduce subcontracting and increase the use of BMWE-represented forces. Finally, 'exclusivity' creates proof problems that make it almost impossible for the Organization to ever make out a prima facie case. Without evidence to the contrary, it is illogical to assume the Organization would have agreed to a standard that would result in defeat for initially failing to provide information almost always in the Carrier's possession."**

To this analysis we would add that conflict within an agreement is disfavored in interpretation, as it effectively voids terms the parties have used to express their intent. Enforcement of the Carrier's proffered interpretation would mean that any time the Organization ever agreed to contracting out a certain type of work, that work would lose "exclusivity" and be forever lost to the unit. We strongly disagree that this was the intent of the parties in carefully creating a means of discussion regarding proposed contracts with outside forces. We unequivocally find the term "customary" to reflect usual but not exclusive practices. This interpretation accords with the authoritative and commanding consistency of the more recent 35 awards rendered on the subject.

Once the Organization has met the burden of establishing that the work was indeed contracted out and that it was work customarily performed by the unit, the burden of proof shifts to the Carrier. The first question to be answered is whether the Carrier has provided the Organization with sufficient notice under Rule 55. This is to allow the parties an opportunity to make a good faith effort toward reducing the amount of subcontracting. This concept was well articulated in Award 43704:

> **"What is the purpose of advance notice under Rule 55? It is not simply to give the Organization a "heads-up" that certain work is going to be contracted out, but to give it an opportunity to object and to request a conference during which the parties are required to engage in good-faith efforts to reduce the amount of subcontracting. To that end, a proper notice must be sufficiently specific for the Organization to be able to make an informed judgment whether it believes the proposed contracting out is permissible under Rule 55 and then engage in meaningful discussions on alternatives to contracting out during conference."**

When the Carrier is able to show proper notice, it must then also demonstrate that the work falls within one of the negotiated exceptions enumerated in Note to Rule 55. This provision limits permissible contracting out of customarily performed work to situations where the Carrier's employes lack special skills needed for the work, where the Company does not own the special equipment required, where necessary special materials are available only through a supplier, where the Company is not adequately equipped to handle the work or where an emergency time requirement exists which is beyond the capacity of the Company's forces. Third Division Awards 43345, 43393, 43567, 43628, 43664, 43667 and 43668 all follow this allocation of the burden of proof between the parties.

The Carrier contends it was dealing with the emergency situation of a mudslide although it appears the mudslide was a potential event rather than an actual occurrence. Third Division Award 24440 has provided a definition for 'emergency': "an emergency is the sudden, unforeseeable, and uncontrollable nature of the event that interrupts operations and brings them to an immediate halt." Despite the precedential value of this definition and its basic logic, we are not persuaded that the Carrier is required to be jolted by disaster before using contract forces to manage a situation. That said, it should also not be prohibited from using contract forces to deal with an imminent danger to property or personnel, even if that danger is not newly discovered. When a danger is imminent enough, the necessity of acting to protect personnel and property takes priority. In this case the movement of traffic was imminently threatened, and additional force or equipment was required to address the problem. We find the Carrier's evidence does establish that an emergency existed within the meaning of the parties' Agreement, and that as a result, no contract violation occurred.

AWARD

Claim denied.

ORDER

This Board, after consideration of the dispute identified above, hereby orders that an award favorable to the Claimant(s) be made. The Carrier is ordered to make

the Award effective on or before 30 days following the postmark date the Award is transmitted to the parties.

NATIONAL RAILROAD ADJUSTMENT BOARD
By Order of Third Division

Dated at Chicago, Illinois, this 5th day of March 2020.