

PUBLIC LAW BOARD No. 7708 CASE No. 3

BROTHERHOOD OF MAINTENANCE OF)	
WAY EMPLOYEES)	
)	PARTIES
vs.)	TO
)	
UNION PACIFIC RAILROAD COMPANY)	DISPUTE

STATEMENT OF CLAIM:

“Claim of the System Committee of the Brotherhood that:

(1) The Agreement was violated when the Carrier assigned outside forces (J. P. Plumbing) to perform routine Maintenance of Way Water Service Subdepartment work (repair/replace urinals, showers and related work) in the side locker room at the Roundhouse at Mile Post 1297 on the Lordsburg Subdivision on March 27 and 28, 2012 (System File FC-1259S-455/1570476 PSW)

(2) The Agreement was further violated when the Carrier failed to furnish the General Chairman with a proper advance notice of its intent to contract out said work and when it failed to make a good-faith effort to reduce the incidence of contracting out scope covered work and increase the use of Maintenance of Way forces as required by Rule 59 and the December 11, 1981 National Letter of Agreement.

(3) As a consequence of the violations referred to in Parts (1) and/or (2) above, Claimant F. Edgar shall now be compensated for sixteen (16) hours at his respective straight time rate of pay.

The Carrier has declined this claim.”

On March 6, 2012, the Carrier, by letter, notified the Organization of its intent to contract, in pertinent part, as follows:

SUBJECT: This is a 15-day notice of our intent to contract the following work:

SPECIFIC WORK: Provide all labor supervision, materials and equipment necessary for plumbing, pipe work and other work as it relates to water service work. The notice will last for two (2) years from the date the service order is conference.

LOCATION: LA Service Unit, Sunset Service Unit, Roseville Service Unit.”

The notice also informed the Organization that while the Carrier was available to conference the matter, the contracted work was not necessarily scope covered work. At the Organization’s request, a conference was held on March 23 to discuss the notice.

On April 26, 2012, the Organization alleged that the Carrier violated their Agreement on March 27 and 28, 2012, when it utilized an outside contractor, J.P. Plumbing Co. to make “repairs to the urinals and showers in the side locker room at the Roundhouse * *”. The Organization claimed that the work was exclusive to its members; and that the Claimant was deprived of [a] work opportunity and compensation to which he is entitled by virtue of his seniority rights.}

In support of its claim, the Organization submits a letter dated April 18, 2011, from Claimant F. Edgar, a Water Service Foreman, that the type of work contracted out, to replace and install parts to urinals and shower stalls and clean out sewer line in the roundhouse locker room “has been the past practice of the Water Service personnel to maintain these facilities and perform all repairs”.

In addition, the Organization submitted statements from various employees, most of which contained identical descriptions of repairing and maintaining various kinds of plumbing work, which they had observed.

The statements by the Claimant and Organization employees are essentially self serving and do not constitute probative and credible evidence that the work in dispute is scope covered work.

General statements providing for maintenance and repair of plumbing work are hardly sufficient to establish that the work in dispute is exclusively the work of the Organization.

The Organization has been provided with a 15-day notice of its intent to contract out "plumbing, pipe work and other work as it relates to water service work". Clearly, proper notice has been served under Rule 59 (a).

Furthermore, Rule 59 (c) in pertinent part, provides as follows: "Preservation of Rights -- Nothing in this rule will affect the existing rights of either partying connection with contracting out.

Referring to Rule 59 (c) the Carrier has established that from 1996 to the present time, it has contracted out "plumbing type work "over the Carrier's entire system". The system includes the State of Texas, New Mexico and Arizona where the Claimant has performed his duties of plumbing works.

Accordingly, the work has not been exclusively performed by the Water Service Department. Clearly, the Carrier has established a past mixed practice of utilizing contractors of the Carrier's force to perform the type of work in question of the work force. Thus, the Carrier's concerns were directed at productivity and work rules.

There was established a mutuality of obligation under this principle both parties are required to perform their obligations or neither party is bound to perform. Events which followed the 1981 Letter established that the parties failed to achieve mutuality. By the next round of negotiations, the 1981 Letter had no force and effect.

The Organization claims that by contracting out the work, which is in dispute, the Carrier has violated Rules 1, 2, 3, 5, 26, 59 and the December 11, 1981 Berge-Hopkins Letter of Understanding. In this connection, it is incumbent upon the moving party (the Organization) to prove by a preponderance of the evidence the allegations presented. In *Third Division Award No. 16851*, Referee Person said:


"It is fundamental that the Claimant must always present to this Board a preponderance of evidence to sustain the claim; the burden is on the Claimant to prove his case."

Clearly, there is no evidence in the record to sustain the claims raised. The claim is denied.

AWARD

Claim denied.


HYMAN COHEN
Neutral Member


KATHERINE H. NOVAK
Carrier Member

Dated: 10/30/2018


ANDREW MULFORD
Organization Member

Dated: 10/30/18

****DISSENT TO FOLLOW****

LABOR MEMBER'S DISSENT
TO
AWARDS 1 through 14, 18 AND 24 OF PUBLIC LAW BOARD NO. 7708
(Referee Hyman Cohen)

The Majority erred on multiple accounts in these awards. That being said, one (1) error warrants further comment and review as it unquestionably confirms that the decisions are outliers, go against the expectations of the parties and qualify as being palpably erroneous. In this manner, the Majority's decisions hold that the December 11, 1981 National Letter of Agreement, also referred to as the Berge-Hopkins letter, is null, void and has no longer has any force in contracting disputes. Such a finding has no valid basis and goes against the clear terms of the Agreement, past practice on this property and numerous prior arbitral awards.

To be clear, the Majority's decisions do not align with more than thirty-five (35) years of Section 3 arbitration decisions, including numerous on-property decisions, that have applied the December 11, 1981 National Letter of Agreement. The following is a small sampling of the applicable awards on this Carrier which have recognized the validity and controlling nature of the December 11, 1981 National Letter of Agreement:

Third Division Award 26212	Initial Claim Filed in 1983
Third Division Award 26770	Initial Claim Filed in 1984
Third Division Award 29121	Initial Claim Filed Approx. 1989
Third Division Award 29158	Initial Claim Filed in 1986
Third Division Award 29912	Initial Claim Filed in 1989
Third Division Award 30944	Initial Claim Filed in 1986
Third Division Award 30976	Initial Claim Filed in 1990
Third Division Award 31015	Initial Claim Filed in 1990
Awards 9, 11, 20 and 23 of PLB No. 6249	Initial Claims Filed Approx. 1996
Third Division Award 32865	Initial Claim Filed in 1993
Third Division Award 36292	Initial Claim Filed in 1998
Third Division Award 36517	Initial Claim Filed in 1998
Third Division Award 36964	Initial Claim Filed in 1998
Third Division Award 37720	Initial Claim filed in 2000
Third Division Award 37852	Initial Claim Filed in 2000
Third Division Award 38349	Initial Claim Filed in 2001
Award 6 of PLB No. 7099	Initial Claim Filed in 2004
Award 13 of PLB No. 7100	Initial Claim Filed in 2005
Third Division Award 40922	Initial Claim Filed in 2007
Third Division Award 40923	Initial Claim Filed in 2007
Third Division Award 40929	Initial Claim Filed in 2008
Third Division Award 40930	Initial Claim Filed in 2008
Third Division Award 40932	Initial Claim Filed in 2008
Third Division Award 41048	Initial Claim Filed in 2008
Third Division Award 42225	Initial Claim Filed in 2011
Third Division Award 42231	Initial Claim Filed in 2011

The aforementioned awards confirm that in the more than thirty-five (35) years since the parties executed the December 11, 1981 National Letter of Agreement, Section 3 arbitration panels have consistently and uniformly enforced the December 11, 1981 National Letter of Agreement. These arbitration panels have actually sustained claims based solely on the Carrier's failure to comply with the December 11, 1981 National Letter of Agreement. Obviously, awards spanning some thirty-five (35) years which apply the December 11, 1981 National Letter of Agreement as having full force (while rejecting the Carrier's position) stand as irrebuttable confirmation that the instant awards are palpably erroneous.

Before this Board the Carrier attempted to side step its contractual obligations by arguing that the December 11, 1981 National Letter of Agreement is a dead agreement due to some alleged unfulfilled reciprocal obligations. The Carrier's position is simply wrong. To be clear, Section 3 arbitral boards have consistently and repeatedly rejected this same argument by the Carrier over the past thirty-five (35) years. On this point, we invite attention to Third Division Award 40923, where veteran arbitrator W. Miller rejected the same arguments presented by the Carrier:

"The first question at issue is whether or not the vitality of the December 11, 1981 Letter of Understanding (Berge/Hopkins Letter) has expired because expectations by one party or the other may or may not have been realized. There was lengthy dissertation on the subject by the parties which set forth their respective positions. That record indicates that this argument has arisen on several occasions over the life of that Agreement sometimes boiling over into contentious debate. As that debate was waged, Neutrals continued to accept the fact that the Agreement was viable. As an example, Award 13 of Public Law Board No. 7100, involving the same parties to this dispute, issued a decision on March 4, 2009, without dissent by the Carrier, that the December 11, 1981 Letter of Understanding had been violated by the Carrier. Other Awards such as Third Division Awards 29121, 30066, 31015, 36292, 38349 and Award 6 of Public Law Board No. 7099 have also determined that the Agreement applies to this Carrier and on that basis the Board is not persuaded that the December 11, 1981 Letter of Understanding has lost its applicability."

Importantly, just a few years later, Union Pacific attempted the same misdirection regarding the December 11, 1981 National Letter of Agreement, but that time on property governed by the Southern Pacific Western Lines (SPW) Agreement (i.e., the property involved in the instant decisions). In Award 40932 (SPW), the Carrier's misdirection and attempts to side step its contractual obligations were properly rejected and it made clear that the December 11, 1981 National Letter of Agreement remained in full force and effect:

Labor Member's Dissent

Awards 1 through 14, 18 and 24 of Public Law Board No. 7708

Page Three

“A review of the record evidence indicates that the parties made the same respective arguments that they made in several other cases regarding the applicability of the December 11, 1981 Letter of Understanding and whether or not the Organization was required to prove exclusive reservation of scope-covered work when the dispute involves the assignment of work to outside contractors. For the sake of brevity, the Board will not discuss those issues, but instead refers the parties to Third Division Awards 40922, 40923, 40929 and 40930 wherein the Board ruled on behalf of the Organization.”

To be clear, the Carrier presented this Board with nothing but conjecture to support its position that the December 11, 1981 National Letter of Agreement was no longer applicable. The Carrier's on-property correspondence in each case, as well as its the submissions to this Board lacked any evidence that the parties had mutually abandoned the agreement or other evidence which allows a reasonable mind to overcome the agreement language and the thirty-five (35) years' worth of past arbitral awards. Perhaps most importantly, the Carrier provided no comparable arbitral precedent to support its arguments.

The Majority's willingness to cast aside the December 11, 1981 National Letter of Agreement as being (miraculously and suddenly) inapplicable constitutes an absurd outcome which serves to invalidate these decisions. Indeed, these decisions are extreme outliers which are not based in fact or logic, go against the longstanding status quo of the parties and also against the consistent arbitral authority which has consistently affirmed the validity and application of the December 11, 1981 National Letter of Agreement since the agreement was executed.

For all the above-mentioned reasons, it is clear that the Majority erred in rendering its decision and that these awards are palpably erroneous. Therefore, I respectfully dissent.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Andrew Mulford', written in a cursive style.

Andrew Mulford
Labor Member