



Railroad Workers United

Solidarity • Unity • Democracy

The Rank & File in Action!

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An Open Letter to Our Allies in the Fight for Safe Rails and a Sustainable Environment

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No More Lac-Mégantics – Drop the Charges

July 6th marks four years since a runaway train carrying volatile Bakken crude crashed and burned in the small town of Lac-Mégantic, Quebec, killing 47 and destroying half the town. It's time to recommit to making sure tragedies like this don't happen again. It's also the right time to speak up against the criminal trial beginning in early September this year, that unfairly and inaccurately hangs the Lac-Mégantic crash on two railroad workers.

Some of us focus on how dangerous this kind of cargo is. Trains carrying volatile crude are called "Bomb Trains" for a reason. Some of us focus more on rail safety, no matter what or who is on the train. We push for safer work schedules and big enough train crews to handle an unusual situation or an emergency. Railroad managers push hard to squeeze every dollar they can out of every train run. The Lac-Mégantic train had a dangerous cargo, a single crew-member and work rules that cut the margin of safety down to just about zero. The result was a disaster that still impacts the Lac-Mégantic community.

You'd expect railroaders to point the finger at management. But we're not the only ones. Multiple government safety investigations and independent journalists looked at what happened in Lac-Mégantic and came to the same conclusion. Railroad management policies made this kind of runaway train crash likely to happen sooner or later. Lax government oversight looked the other way until it did.

You would think that four years later there would be stronger safety regulations on every railroad, with extra layers of protection for dangerous cargo. Sadly, this is not the case. Railroad policymakers are still cutting corners and government regulators are still looking the other way. They want people to believe that the big safety problem is a few careless railroad workers.

Even after all the reports and exposes, the Canadian and Quebec governments are still not going after the railroad policy makers and their unsafe policies. Instead railroad workers **Tom Harding and Richard Labrie will be on trial this fall in Quebec**. The managers who made the critical policies will not even get a slap on the wrist. That's just wrong, and it *guarantees that the danger continues*. Every year since the crash, the number of reported runaway trains in Canada has increased. That's a sign of a reckless culture, not the actions of two railroad workers one night in Quebec.

Whether your main issue is the environment, community safety, rail safety, or worker's rights, it comes down to stronger government regulations and stronger railroad safety policies, with real community and labor enforcement. The two railroad workers were not the cause of the Lac-Mégantic crash or any of the runaway trains since then. They are not the ones still running trains right through the town of Lac-Mégantic, ignoring the demands of the survivors for a simple rail bypass. The people in Lac-Mégantic know that sending Harding and Labrie to prison won't address any of their problems with the railroad. But if that happens, you can bet the government will close the book as the official verdict on Lac-Mégantic and railroad management will be standing there with them.

Railroad Workers United is going to mark the Lac-Mégantic anniversary wherever we are. We'll stand in solidarity with the people of Lac-Mégantic like we have for four years, and talk about rail safety. That's who we are. But we'll make sure to point out that scapegoating two railroad workers for this tragedy will make railroads and communities across the continent less safe.

When you hold public commemorations this year, we ask you to make this point your way. Blaming Harding and Labrie for the Lac-Mégantic tragedy weakens all of us and all our causes. So all of us have to speak up.

Justice for Lac-Mégantic requires Dropping the Charges Against Harding & Labrie