

C 10970

Philadelphia Public Ledger

FEB 7 1916

## What the Eight-hour Day Means to Railroads; Views of Both Sides

BELOW is a statement of the issue apparently about to be joined between the railroads of the United States and their employes as represented in the four great national Brotherhoods of Locomotive Engineers, Locomotive Firemen and Enginemen, Railway Conductors and Railway Trainmen. The railroad side of the case is taken from the speech made by Howard Elliott, President of the New Haven, before the United States Chamber of Commerce in Washington, on February 7, when he told what railway managers estimated; the Brotherhoods' side is taken from a statement made to the PUBLIC LEDGER over the signatures of the heads of the respective brotherhoods. The question turns on the proposed demand for an eight-hour day, instead of a 10-hour day, with overtime paid at time and half time rates.

### THE RAILROAD VIEW

The eight-hour day would increase operating expenses 25 per cent. to 40 per cent.

Because of wage increases between 1910 and 1914, \$238,000,000 was added to payrolls for the same number of men.

The proposed schedule would be, in effect, an increase of 25 per cent. in freight speed basis for wage computing.

It would mean an increase of 87½ per cent. in overtime rate.

About 1,500,000 other employes would get no benefit.

The 662,000 stockholders of the railways of the country now get less than 2 per cent. of gross earnings.

Employees now get 45.3 per cent. of gross earnings.

Employees involved, although numbering only 18 per cent. of the railway army, now absorb 28 per cent. of the railway's payroll of \$1,500,000,000 a year.

The money necessary to meet this demand could be obtained only by either a reduction of wages of other employes or by reduced payments of interest and dividends, or by curtailing letterment expenditures needed by the public or by increased passenger and freight rates.

### THE BROTHERHOOD VIEW

The eight-hour demand is fair; we believe it can be adopted with no greater inconvenience than accompanied its introduction in other employments.

Overtime in road service is due almost wholly to the practice of overloading trains so that they cannot make their mileage within their time limits. The railroads are doing this for profit.

The shorter work day is the only proposition upon which the men are voting. If the railroads desire to test their sincerity let them establish an eight-hour day so the men do not have to make a minute of overtime.

"Forty-five per cent. of the earnings are paid in wages," it is said; what interests the railroad employe is not the bulk sum, but the amount that goes to each man.

We are asked whether the railroads should seek another increase in rates. The men are not asking for more money; they are asking for a shorter work day. If the railroads insist on a longer day, then it will mean more pay.

We are asked whether the railroads should reduce interest or dividend payments. That is a matter with which the employes have nothing to do.

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W. L. Mackenzie King Papers

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