

*Maintenance of Railway Operation Act*

We recognize that the parties to the dispute are most anxious to avoid a strike which would tie up all railway transportation facilities of Canada and their allied services. The government believes that every effort should be made to avoid a strike of such serious consequence and believes also that such is the feeling of every Canadian.

The government has taken note of the fact that negotiations, at the moment, appear to be deadlocked and that there is a possibility of the negotiations not being able to come to a mutually satisfactory understanding before the strike deadline.

A disruption of transportation and other railway facilities in Canada would be a very disturbing event even in normal times and would have most serious effects not only on the railways and their employees but on the economy and the welfare of the whole country. The importance of avoiding any disturbance in the handling of traffic and interruption in other services under the existing circumstances and dangers of the international situation cannot be too strongly emphasized.

The Department of Labour has followed the customary procedure in providing the normal conciliation services to the parties, under the provisions of The Industrial Relations and Disputes Investigation Act. The government has seriously hoped that the parties would come to an understanding without any further government action. Even at this stage it is hoped by the government and also, I am sure, by the public as well that the parties will resume their negotiations and carry them through to a successful conclusion. However, in recognition of all the facts and because the remaining time is short, I am asking you, with the full force of the government behind the request, to postpone strike action for thirty days. The government itself cannot, under our present labour legislation, impose a settlement upon the parties in respect of the difference between the report of the conciliation board and the demands of the union. However, if, in respect of that difference, a settlement is not reached by the parties themselves prior to August 22, and strike action is postponed, the government will appoint a special commissioner to act as a mediator.

On behalf of the government and in the interest of all Canada, I request that you use your best endeavours at once to dispose of the dispute yourselves, or, failing settlement, that you comply with this request for postponement of strike action for thirty days in order that the special commissioner may have an opportunity to exercise his good offices.

Yours faithfully,  
Louis S. St. Laurent.

Replies were received as follows:

Canadian National Telegraphs  
Montreal,  
August 17, 1950.

Right Hon. Louis St. Laurent,  
Prime Minister,  
Ottawa.

With reference to your letter of yesterday addressed jointly to presidents of Canadian National and Canadian Pacific Railways and representatives of unions involved in present dispute Stop With utmost respect for the views you expressed on behalf of the government this negotiating committee must decline to postpone date set for withdrawal from the service Stop We shall however hold ourselves available for further discussions with

[Mr. Gregg.]

the railways if it is thought that such would be of any value Stop Confirmation by letter follows.

F. H. Hall  
Chairman

Canadian National Telegraphs  
Montreal  
August 17, 1950.

The Right Honourable Louis S. St. Laurent,  
Prime Minister,  
Ottawa.

Further to my telegram of this morning Stop This committee has communicated with the railways expressing willingness to meet them again and we are now awaiting their word.

F. H. Hall  
Chairman  
Negotiating Committee

Grand Division  
Canadian Brotherhood of Railway Employees  
and Other Transport Workers  
Office of the National President 230 Laurier Avenue West.  
Ottawa, Canada,  
August 11th, 1950.

The Rt. Hon. Louis St. Laurent, K.C., M.P.,  
Prime Minister of Canada,  
Ottawa, Canada.

Dear Mr. Prime Minister:

Replying to your letter of the 18th instant addressed jointly to Messrs. F. H. Hall, Donald Gordon, W. A. Mather and myself.

We are in complete accord with the request for the resumption of negotiations with a view to reaching a settlement of the current dispute. Our negotiating committee will gladly meet the railway management in Montreal upon their request at one hour's notice, or elsewhere as quickly as transportation permits, and will be ready to work on a round-the-clock basis in search of agreement.

Should the government see fit to appoint a special commissioner we will co-operate to the fullest extent possible with a view to reaching a satisfactory settlement. It is our firm conviction that a competent mediator could either establish a basis for settlement or determine the unlikelihood of being able to do so before the strike deadline.

Communications reaching me this morning from all over Canada, following the announcement of the government's request, make it very clear that the workers involved are showing great resentment, at both the delay and the imputations of disloyalty and bad faith contained in managements propaganda, and indicate that further postponement would not be acceptable to them.

The government will appreciate the fact that nearly fourteen months have elapsed since our requests were submitted to the railways and I regret that, on the basis of those communications, I am unable to offer any encouragement that the request for a postponement of strike action for thirty days can be accepted in the event of failure to reach an agreement. A great deal would depend, of course, on what progress can be made toward establishing a basis for settlement before the afternoon of August 21, 1950.

Your sincerely,  
A. R. Mosher

Representing Canadian Brotherhood of Railway Employees and Other Transport Workers and the Brotherhood of Express Employees.