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LAST NATIONAL AGREEMENT ON U. S. RAILWAYS

After July 1, 1921, Railway Employees Must Deal With Own Employers.

WASHINGTON.—National agreements defining working conditions for employees on all United States railroads, formerly under the Federal Railroad Administration, were last week ordered "abrogated," effective July 1, 1921, by the United States Railroad Labor Board.

The Board called upon the officers and system organizations of employees of each railroad to select representatives to confer and to decide as much of the rules of the controversy as possible. "Such conferences shall begin at the earliest possible date," the decision said. "While the decision did not specifically say so, members of the board said that all disputes as to rules and working conditions automatically were referred back to individual conferences between each individual road and its employees. This method of procedure had been sought by the railroads, whereas the labor side had favored a national conference between representatives of all roads and all unions.

The decision affected all railroad employees, except those in train service who are under separate agreements between the individual railroads and the four big brotherhoods.

In connection with the conference negotiations the Board laid down a set of sixteen principles to serve as a foundation for any rules which may be agreed to in the conference. The present general rules hearing before the Labor Board, which has been in progress since Jan. 10, will continue until both sides have completed their testimony, following which the board "will promulgate such rules as it determines just and reasonable as soon after July 1, 1921, as is reasonably possible and will make them effective as of July 1, 1921.

The sixteen principles outlined by the Board were drawn up by Henry T. Hunt of the public group and upheld the right of the employees to organize for lawful purposes the right to negotiate through representatives of their own choosing, the right of seniority and the principle of eight-hour day.

It was specified that eight hours' work must be given for eight hours' pay. Espionage should not be practiced by either side, the decision said, and employees' representatives should have the right to make an agreement applying to all employees in the craft or class of the representatives.

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AMERICAN FEDERATION OF LABOR ENDORSE CO-OPERATIVE MOVEMENT

Co-operatives Designed to Protect the Workers in Their Relations With Merchants in Same Measure as Trade Unions.

There is widespread interest among the organized workers in the success of the co-operative movement in establishing retail stores for the sale of merchandise on co-operative principles. In view of this interest, the following report of a special committee on co-operation, which was adopted by the 1917 convention of the American Federation of Labor, may prove instructive.

"The co-operative movement is the organization that is designed to protect the workers in their relations with the merchants and the business men in the same sense that the trade union movement protects them from the employers. The two movements are twin remedies. If we had a thorough co-operative movement throughout America, comprising in its membership the workers thereof, there would be less need for official governmental food control agencies.

"And without that kind of organization established permanently to deal with this question, there is no guarantee to the workers that the cost of living for them and their families will be permanently placed on the basis that should obtain, and it is for that reason that we believe that the American Federation of Labor should assist in establishing, building up and strengthening in every way possible a legitimate organization of bona fide workers in our country and Canada as part of the great world's co-operative movement, so that after the trade union movement has secured for the workers the wages that they are entitled to for the labor they perform, they may be assured in spending those wages that they will get for them their full value.

"We hold that it is just as essential that a working man should get ten dollars' worth of actual value for his wages when he spends them as it is that he should get the ten dollars that he is entitled to for the labor that he performs.

"We would also recommend that the United States government be requested by the executive council of the American Federation of Labor to take up the question of the co-operative movement in connection with its activities relative to the high cost of living, with a view to utilizing as far as possible, the existing co-operative organizations for immediate purposes, and encouraging the creation of additional co-operative organizations where they are needed and conditions are suitable.

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