

'It would appear that the first step towards effecting such a settlement would be to arrange a joint conference between the representatives of the company's employees, acting on their behalf, and yourself with such other representatives of the company as you may name, acting on the company's behalf, and that pending such conference and such further negotiations between the parties as may be mutually agreed upon, the operators should continue in the company's service under the present schedule of rates and hours, and the company agree to continue in force the present schedule.

'If you will kindly acquaint me with the views of your company as to this proposal, I shall, in the event of it being favourably entertained, be pleased to so inform the operators, and endeavour to bring about a joint conference as speedily as possible.

'I have the honour to be, sir,

'Your obedient servant,

'(Signed) W. L. MACKENZIE KING,
'Deputy Minister of Labour.'

Mr. Armstrong, at the same time, delivered a similar communication.

No reply was received to either of these communications until the afternoon of the next day, when the following communication from the local manager was handed to Mr. King and Mr. Armstrong at the company's office.

THE BELL TELEPHONE COMPANY OF CANADA, LIMITED.

TORONTO, February 1, 1907.

W. L. MACKENZIE KING, Esq.,
Deputy Minister of Labour,
Toronto.

DEAR SIR,—I beg to acknowledge receipt of your letter dated January 31, expressing a willingness to lend the good offices of the Dominion Department of Labour towards effecting a settlement of the differences which exist between the company and a portion of its operators in this city, making a suggestion that pending a conference and such further negotiations between the parties as may be mutually agreed upon, the operators be allowed to return under the old schedule of rates and hours. On behalf of the company, I beg to state that had this request been received before the operating staff, or rather a portion of it precipitated trouble by striking yesterday about 1 p.m., the company would gladly have acceded. The action above referred to has now made it impossible for reasons explained more fully to you in conversation. The difference is one of principle. What was originally a temporary relief to off-set the discomforts of operating while the main exchange was being reconstructed, was continued as an experiment based upon the principle of rapid work for 5 hours at smaller salary as against the usual practice of a lighter load continued for an ordinary day at a higher rate of payment. The experiment was tried exhaustively and under most favourable conditions. It has proved an absolute failure, detrimental to the service, injurious to the health of the operators; and those in direct charge of the Traffic Department, who were most favourable to its adoption are now most pronounced in its condemnation. In view of the practical knowledge and experience gained during this experiment, the company cannot in justice to its subscribers or to the health and comfort of its operating staff continue the plan condemned by all who are charged with the duty of maintaining the service.

The company appreciate highly the motives by which you are actuated, and the fact that you have come to Toronto to act in the capacity named in your letter and strongly desire that for the information of yourself, your government, the general public and the operators, you will make a full investigation in order that you may form an accurate judgment upon the course the company has taken. I can only again assure you of our willingness to give full information. We recognize our duty to the public, and believe that at the present moment satisfactory service is being furnished

to all subscribers, as every switchboard position at every exchange in the city is now filled by a competent operator.

There may be matters of detail capable of improvement and these will be adjusted as satisfactorily as possible with our staff. In conclusion I would add that as an evidence of the fact that this company has not abused its position towards its operators, there has been no previous strike during the 27 years of its history.

Yours respectfully,

(Signed) K. J. DUNSTAN,
Local Manager.

On the evening of the same day, the operators to the number of over four hundred held a meeting in the Labour Temple, Toronto, at which meeting the following resolution was unanimously passed, and a copy given to the Deputy Minister of Labour to have forwarded to the Minister:—

'Whereas by the arbitrary action of the manager of the Bell Telephone Company, at Toronto, the operators, supervisors and monitors were compelled to leave the company's employ in a body and thereby disorganize the service and cause serious inconvenience and delay to the general public of the city of Toronto;

And, whereas, the said employees having every confidence in the fairness and justice of their demands, proposed and agreed to submit all questions in dispute to a board of arbitrators;

'And, whereas, the said company, through its manager, has refused a conference and such submission to arbitration;

'And, whereas, the said employees are confident that the force of public opinion would, upon all the facts being made known upon oath, compel the said company to treat its employees fairly and justly;

'And, whereas, the said employees are anxious that all the facts should be made public upon oath before a board of public inquiry;

'Now, therefore, this meeting of operators, supervisors and monitors to the number of over 400, requests the Minister of Labour to cause a public inquiry to be made under oath into all matters in dispute between them and the said company, agreeing, that in case said inquiry is ordered, to return to the company's employ in order to prevent inconvenience to the public and a general disorganization of business, and to be bound by the finding of said board in all matters between themselves and the said company.'

The Appointment of Royal Commission.

The communications received from the local manager of the company, and the resolution passed by the employees were communicated by telephone to the Minister of Labour at Ottawa by the Deputy Minister from Toronto, and copies subsequently forwarded by mail. The Deputy Minister at the same time strongly recommended that, considering the dispute was one which had an important bearing upon the health of women engaged in an industrial pursuit in which a large number of young women and girls were employed throughout the Dominion, a royal commission should be appointed to inquire fully into the matter. At noon on the following day the Deputy Minister received the following communication from the Minister of Labour:—

'W. L. MACKENZIE KING,
'Deputy Minister of Labour,
'King Edward Hotel,
'Toronto.

'OTTAWA, February 2, 1907.

'Re dispute between Bell Telephone Company and operators, government has de-

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