

Maintenance of Railway Operation Act

From the outset of these proceedings the railways have greatly exaggerated the alleged costs of the employees' request and their impact on the country's economy.

In these more recent negotiations, held at the request of the Prime Minister, the railways have quite obviously been more interested in jockeying for position than to effect a fair settlement.

This is more apparent from the fact that at the last meeting, just concluded, they already had a public statement prepared, setting forth their position although negotiations had not been broken off.

We are sure the employees will support the position of their representatives and will carry on the fight for a fair settlement. The railways have not at any time denied they are financially able to meet the request of their employees.

The Ottawa Citizen, Aug. 28, 1950.

(Released Saturday—Aug. 26, 1950.)

RAILWAY STATEMENTS
By The Canadian Press

Following is the text of the statement issued Saturday night by the railways announcing the collapse of negotiations to end the railway strike:

Conscious as they were of the disastrous effect of a railway strike not only upon the domestic economy of Canada but upon the grave international situation of the country, the railway managements, in the discussions before the mediator appointed by the government, Dr. W. A. Mackintosh, went to the utmost lengths prudence would permit, in their efforts to avert a strike.

The strike having taken place the employees' representatives and the managements were urged by the Prime Minister to make another effort to reach agreement in the full realization that a continuance of the strike would cause grave hardship to the people of Canada and seriously impede the fulfilment of Canada's obligations under the United Nations charter and the North Atlantic pact.

Many meetings have since been held, and while a solution has been earnestly sought for by the managements none has been found which, in their judgment, can be justified to the Canadian people, by whom the burden of satisfying the demands of the employees must ultimately be borne.

The question posed for the Canadian people is whether the carefully weighed recommendation of a properly constituted conciliation tribunal is to be completely disregarded; every suggestion of compromise to be rejected; and the terms on which the men emerged in an essential public industry will return to work to be dictated solely by them.

Confronted with this question the railway managements believe, as the Prime Minister said in his statement of Aug. 22, that the representatives of all the people should act together in discharging their responsibilities to meet the situation.

The renewed negotiations between railway management and the negotiating committee representing the unions which were resumed on Friday and Saturday at the specific request of the Prime Minister again ended in a stalemate at 7.30 this evening.

Made Firm Offer

The railways made a firm offer of settlement as follows:

Four cents per hour wage increase to be effective Sept. 1, 1950.

A five-day 40-hour week to begin September 1, 1951.

A two-year contract to run from September 1, 1950.

[Mr. Gregg.]

An agreement along lines indicated by the negotiating committee as satisfactory, to negotiate amendments in certain rules.

A clause dealing with payment of straight time up to 48 hours a week in the event of a national emergency.

Hotel and water transport workers to be covered in a separate contract for one year to be granted an increase of two cents per hour effective September 1, 1950.

The negotiating committee rejected this offer on the following points:

A seven cents per hour wage increase effective June 1, 1950.

A five-day 40-hour week effective June 1, 1951, with a three-months transitional period during which straight time would be payable up to 48 hours a week, and insistence upon the inclusion of hotel and water transport employees in any agreement.

As a possible alternative, they proposed a two-year contract with a five cents per hour wage increase, retroactive to January 1, 1950, provided a cost-of-living bonus clause was made effective at once granting a one-cent per hour wage increase for each one point rise in the cost-of-living index.

This alternative was unacceptable to the railways.

Mr. Hall and Mr. Mosher and his associates, the representatives of the unions, met the Prime Minister (Mr. St. Laurent), the Minister of Transport (Mr. Chevrier) and the Minister of Labour (Mr. Gregg) at 11.30 a.m. on Sunday, August 27 and reported failure of negotiations to reach a settlement. Similar reports were received on August 27 from the railway presidents.

Mr. Speaker, I have merely outlined these negotiations. I have refrained entirely from trying to summarize the terms of the various suggestions, offers or counter-offers made by one party or the other, except those which have been incorporated in an official or semi-official document. I have given the story of the long processes of collective bargaining in this case. It also indicates an attempt to renew collective bargaining time and time again after negotiations had broken down. On all that long period I am going to make no further comments tonight. I am simply going to repeat the words of the Prime Minister when he made the announcement calling parliament together this week. They were:

The record shows that our railway workers are and have always been responsible and public-spirited Canadians and whatever action the government may have to take will be intended solely to protect the vital interests of the whole Canadian people.

It will be agreed by everyone that the deterioration of "the vital interests of the whole Canadian people", which has been under way for the past week, cannot continue. I hope too that it will be agreed that under the present stress the action taken at this time should deal only and deal justly with