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RAILWAY WORKERS DEFEND DEMANDS

Official Statement in Behalf of
400,000 Employees Who
Want 8-Hour Day.

NO TIME TO DISCUSS STRIKE

Nor Is Question of Dividends, Ex-
penditures, or Rates at Is-
sue, the Men Contend.

CLEVELAND, Ohio, Feb. 9.—The first official statement by the railroad men in their controversy with the railroads over working hours was issued here tonight. It gave the views of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers, the Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen and Engineers, the Order of Railway Conductors, and the Brotherhood of Railroad Trainmen, organizations which represent approximately 400,000 employees on 528 lines. The statement was headed "Why the Eight-hour Day," and was a reply to a statement issued Feb. 1 by the Executive Committee of the Association of Western Railroads. It follows:

"The demand is fair; all of the leading industries and trades, railroads excepted, have recognized the economic justice of the eight-hour day. We believe it can be adopted with no greater inconvenience by the railroads than accompanied its introduction in other employments.

"The eight-hour day movement is based wholly upon the justice of a work day of reasonable hours that will permit the men further to separate the dead line between work and wages. The railroads say in effect that men who have put in a few years of railroad service have worked themselves out and will not be accepted if they lose their positions. If men are worked out in a few years under present service conditions, as the railroads in effect declare, the demand to extend their wage earning years is fully justified.

"Overtime in road service is due almost wholly to the practice of railroads overloading trains so that they cannot make their mileage within their time limits. The railroads are doing this for profit; they do not deny it, and if they propose to demand extra service at the sacrifice of the health and future earning ability of the men they should pay extra for it. The payment of overtime applies with particular force to yards where the companies can regulate their work so that no overtime need be made. If they exact extra service it is to their own interest and the men have a perfect right to demand time and one-half time for that service.

"The railroads contend that the men are not sincere in their demand for the shorter workday; they declare they want a wage increase rather than a time decrease, and refer to a small number of the men who prefer the extra hour jobs to prove it.

Test of Sincerity Invited.

"If the companies desire to test the sincerity of the men, let them prove their belief in what they say and establish the eight-hour day so that the men do not have to make a minute of overtime. The shorter workday is the only proposition on which the men are voting.

"The statement has been made that the payment of overtime is an incentive to delay work during the regular working time. It does not apply to railroad service. Both the employers and the men know that if delays are made without reason the men are called to account for it; if at fault they are disciplined and the companies have it within their power to determine whether or not delays are unnecessary.

"The railroads have introduced statements that serve no purpose other than to divert attention from the main ques-

tion; for instance, the money paid to a 'green' brakeman is quoted at \$800 a year. A 'ripe' brakeman does not get any more for the year than the 'green' brakeman except that the 'ripe' brakeman has a regular job and stands a chance to make regular time, while the 'green' brakeman is on the extra board and must take his chances for employment when the regular man lays off. Instead of getting \$800 a year, there are times when he will be fortunate if he has a chance to make a trip once a month. If he works on certain roads, that one day will be applied to his payments due the volunteer relief association and he will not even receive that in money.

"The pay of train service employees, other than passenger, is based on 100 miles or less, ten hours or less. In the Eastern territory, for instance, the brakeman will receive the magnificent sum of \$2.67 for regular freight train service, out of which he must maintain his family at home and take care of himself at the other end of the road. The 100-mile trip is what represents one day's work, and means that at its expiration the man must lay away from home until he is dead-headed back or returned with a train. The conductors in all classes of road service receive approximately one-third more pay than the brakemen. The difference between the wages of the two is easily estimated.

"To be specific, the wages paid in freight service in the Eastern territory are as follows:

"Through freight: Engineers \$4.75; firemen \$2.45 to \$3.40, according to the class of engine. Way freight: Engineers 25 cents additional and firemen 15 cents additional per day. Switching service: Engineers \$4.10; firemen \$2.50 and \$2.60. One hundred miles or less, ten hours or less, constitute a day. A few roads pay engineers \$4.85 and \$5.15 per 100 miles or less for certain classes of heavy power, while other roads in the same territory, with heavier engines which handle approximately 35 per cent. more tonnage, pay the same rate of \$4.75 to the engineer, although the fireman gets the benefit of a graduated scale running from \$2.45 to \$3.40.

Payment by the Mile.

"Through and regular freight work, construction, snow plow, circus or wreck train service: Conductors \$0.04; flagmen \$0.0267; brakemen \$0.0267 per mile; runs of 100 miles or less to be paid for as 100 miles, on a speed basis of ten miles per hour. Local freight service, way freight, pick-up or drop-off, and roustabout service are paid as follows: Conductors \$0.045; flagmen \$0.03; brakemen \$0.03 per mile; 100 miles or less, ten hours or less, constitute a day.

"The sum of \$800 means that the brakeman who receives that amount must work 100 miles or less for every calendar day in the year. The railroad men are piece workers; they do not get paid by the year, but by the days worked. Whatever wages brakemen receive above \$800 are earned because they have worked overtime. It is no trouble to estimate these wages for they are based on 100 miles or less, ten hours or less for the day's work. Wages are a trifle higher in the Southern and Western territories.

"The statement has been made that this present demand for the shorter workday is based on 'peak' earnings of the railroads; due to the present boom business. This is not so. The shorter workday movement was started before the present earnings of railroads were thought of.

"The demand is based wholly on the absolute belief of the men that the eight-hour day is the proper work day, and that when they have worked that number of hours they have fully complied with every reasonable requirement that pertains to a fair day's work.

"The statement has been made that roads in the hands of receivers have not cut wages. The fact that wages have not been reduced on such roads is not to be placed to the credit of the companies themselves, but rather to the courts that have denied the right of the railway companies to reduce wages of employees on railroads in the hands of receivers.

"Forty-five per cent. of the earnings of the railway companies are paid in wages. It affords the opportunity to show the sum total of the wages paid. What interests the railroad employee is not the bulk sum paid to all of the railway employees, but the individual amount that goes to each man, and it is only on this basis that the figures of the railway companies interest him.

"That there is not so much justification for the contention of the railroads that the eight-hour day is impossible is proven by the fact that at the present time there are seven roads in the Southeastern and one in the Western territory that pay overtime on an eleven miles per hour basis. Six roads in the Southeastern and five in the Western territory pay overtime on a twelve and one-half miles per hour speed basis. There is only one road in the United States of which we have knowledge that

works more than the ten-hour workday, namely, the Monongahela.

As To National Regulation.

"The question has been raised whether there should be a national regulation of wages on the railroads, to be administered by a special national board. This is a question that at this time should not enter into a discussion of the main proposition. It contemplates, however, so great a departure from the present methods of fixing wages that certain inquiries as to its effect are pertinent. The most important are these: Does the proposition, by implication, mean that wages so fixed would have to be accepted by the employees without question?

"Is it the idea that wages and conditions once decided by a board of the character suggested, would mean that the employees would have to accept them and remain in service? If neither of the suggestions applies to the proposition, a railroad employee is to be left perfectly free to accept or reject wages and conditions fixed by such a board, and would not consent to work under them, it would leave the situation exactly as it is. There does not appear much to be gained by the creation of such a board unless involuntary servitude is expected to be a part of its application. Understanding the question as it has in this way been answered, the railroad organizations are opposed to it.

"The following question has been asked: 'Whether there should be government ownership of railroads, reducing the employees to classification under civil service?' The question of government ownership has nothing whatever to do with the present shorter workday movement and, therefore, is not a matter for discussion relating to it.

"This question has been asked: 'Whether the railroads in responding to the present demand of the four Brotherhoods should reduce wages of other classes?' Certainly not. The effect of wage increases to the four Brotherhoods in the past has been to encourage increases in wages to all other employees whether or not they were organized. It is true that in the last two years the railroad companies have attempted to show that the increased pay secured by the employees who were organized prevented them from increasing the pay of employees who were not organized. The purpose of this contention has been merely to decloud the main issue. The fact stands in evidence that no wage increases have been given to the organized employees until they exerted every pressure at their command.

"Another question has been asked: 'Whether they should reduce interest and dividend payments?' So far as railway employees are concerned that is a matter with which they have nothing to do.

"The next question asked is, 'Whether they should cut down expenditures for so-called nonproductive improvements?' That is a matter entirely within the judgment of the railroad companies themselves. It is governed largely, however, by the demands of the communities for buildings and terminals that will meet the requirements established by civic pride and business demand. If a railway company in complying with public demand expends \$20,000,000 for a passenger station that will not increase its revenue it can hardly be expected that the employees alone should assume the cost of the unproductive investment. It bears the same relation to their wages as so much watered stock.

"We are asked, 'Whether they (the railroads) should seek another increase in rates?' This is asked on the assumption that wages are to be increased. The men are not asking for more money. They are asking for a shorter workday. If the railways insist on a longer day, then it will mean increased pay. If the railways need revenues to meet the increased cost of operation, yes. There is no other business in the United States that is not at perfect liberty to adjust its revenues to meet the cost of operation.

"The fact that the railway companies must first secure the authority from the Interstate Commerce Commission to raise rates places them in a different position entirely from the remainder of the business in the country. This, however, is not the fault of the employees, and it is wholly unfair to expect that approximately 8,000,000 railway employees and their dependents must sacrifice their interest to the general betterment and welfare of the remainder of the population. Why should not the railway companies be permitted to increase rates to meet legitimate costs the like of which have to be met in the same way by every other industry?

"We are asked, 'Whether they (the railroads) should refuse the present demand and risk a strike should arbitration be refused by the employees?' This is a question that at this time is not a part of the discussion. Whether arbitration will even be suggested or whether it will be agreeable to either side of the subject cannot be guessed at this time.

"The position of the railroad organi-

zations in regard to arbitration is about the same, and might be expressed in general terms as follows: They are not opposed to arbitration, neither are they pledged to accept it. They are practically pledged to peace, but that does not mean peace at any price. It means peace with honor, and not peace at the sacrifice of justice. The organizations do not desire to take issue with the public; they have no disposition to take undue advantage of it in any sense; they accept every public responsibility. They challenge even the inference that they have not always been fair to the public, and they ask only of the public that which the public holds fast as its absolute right, namely, the liberty to make its own terms of service so far as it has the power.

"Now, to say what would be done would be based wholly upon personal opinion and without organization authorization. It is true that in past arbitrations the men were disappointed, and to some extent lost faith in that method of adjustment of differences, but there is neither warrant nor authority for saying that arbitration will or will not be accepted. Circumstances will determine the position of the men when the need arises and they will then decide what shall be done.

"Grand Chief Engineer B. of L. E.
"W. S. CARTER.
"President B. of L. F. and E.
"L. E. SHEPPARD.
"Acting President of the O. R. C.
"W. G. LEE.
"President of B. of R. T."

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