

Statement by the President Upon Issuing Order Averting a Railroad Strike May 10, 1948

I HAVE today by Executive order taken over the country's railroads and directed the Secretary of the Army to operate them in the name of the United States Government.

A strike has been called for 6 a.m. tomorrow by 3 of the 22 railroad labor organizations--the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers, the Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen and Enginemen, and the Switchmen's Union of North America. These three have declined to accept the findings and recommendations of an Emergency Board created by the President under the Railway Labor Act. In the strike situation thus confronting us, governmental seizure is imperative for the protection of our citizens.

It is essential to the public health and to the public welfare generally that every possible step be taken by the Government to assure to the fullest possible extent continuous and uninterrupted transportation service. A strike on our railroads would be a nationwide tragedy, with worldwide repercussions.

I call upon every railroad worker to cooperate with the Government by remaining on duty. I call upon the officers of the railroad labor organizations to take appropriate action to keep their members at work.

The Executive order I have issued provides that, until further order of the President or the Secretary of the Army, the terms and conditions of employment now in effect on the railroads shall continue in effect, without prejudice to existing equities or to the effectiveness of such retroactive provisions as may be included in the final settlement of the disputes between the carriers and the workers.

Harry S. Truman: "Statement by the President Upon Issuing Order Averting a Railroad Strike.," May 10, 1948. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, The American Presidency Project.
<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=13177>.

Excerpts from Radio Report to the American People on the Status of the Reconversion Program January 3, 1946 [Delivered from the White House at 10 p.m.]

Immediately after V-J Day, the Government announced a policy of taking off the wartime controls which it had exercised over wages and over industrial relations as a whole...

Unfortunately, industrial disputes soon began, and many strikes were called. Many of these disputes and strikes were settled or conciliated. But there were some strikes of nationwide importance in which collective bargaining and conciliation both failed....

As industrial strife has increased, with automobile workers out on strike, and with steel workers, electrical workers, and packinghouse workers scheduling strikes very soon, I have been deeply concerned about the future. I am sure that all of us, including these workers themselves, share that concern...

Without legislation, fact-finding boards cannot function as effectively as they can under a statute. For example, shortly after I made my recommendation to the Congress, I appointed a fact-finding board in the dispute between the General Motors Corporation and the United Automobile Workers. I thought the matter too urgent to wait upon the passage of legislation. You have seen how the General Motors Corporation has refused to cooperate with this fact-finding board. There is no way that it can be compelled to cooperate, unless a statute is passed giving the board the power of subpoena. That is what is now up to the Congress.

Every day that production is delayed and civilian goods are kept from our markets by strikes or lockouts brings injury to our reconversion program. Already millions of dollars in wages have been lost to workers. Laboring men and women are using up their savings. It is for these reasons that I urged the Congress to pass this legislation without delay. This legislation is still in the Committee on Labor in the House of Representatives, and in the Committee on Education and Labor in the Senate....

I have indicated my opposition, and I repeat it now, to the antilabor bills pending in the Congress which seek to deprive labor of the right to bargain collectively, or which seek to deprive a union of its ultimate right to strike. That is why I am so anxious to have on our books an effective statute which will have none of the evil effects of some of the legislation now pending.

Harry S. Truman: "Radio Report to the American People on the Status of the Reconversion Program.," January 3, 1946. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, The American Presidency Project. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=12489>.

Letter to the Chairman, Wage Stabilization Board, Requesting Investigation of a Strike in the Copper and Nonferrous Metals Industry August 27, 1951

Dear Dr. Taylor:

The Director of the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service has reported to me that collective bargaining and mediation have been exhausted and that a strike is in progress, effective August 27, 1951, involving the mining, milling, smelting and refining of copper and certain other non-ferrous metals.

The strike is a consequence of labor disputes between Kennecott Copper Corporation, Phelps Dodge Corporation, American Smelting and Refining Company, Anaconda Copper and Mining Company (including International Smelting and Refining Company), and other employers who are similarly engaged in mining, milling, smelting or refining copper or other non-ferrous metals and certain of their employees represented by certain labor organizations, including the International Union of Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers, several railroad brotherhoods, and unions affiliated with the American Federation of Labor.

On the basis of information and advice submitted to me by the Office of Defense Mobilization and the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service, I am of the opinion that the disputes are of a character which substantially threaten the progress of national defense. Thus, in accordance with the terms of E.O. 10233, I am referring the disputes to the Wage Stabilization Board and asking that the Board investigate and inquire into the issues in dispute and promptly report to me with its recommendations to the parties as to fair and equitable terms of settlement. I am asking the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service to provide the Board with a record of the issues in dispute.

The Director of the Office of Defense Mobilization has reported to me on the serious effect of the strike on the production of copper and other non-ferrous metals. The present critical shortage of copper has inhibited fulfillment of essential production schedules. Thus, the strike has an immediate and very serious impact on the defense program.

It is my earnest hope that the men involved will comply with your request that they return to work while the matter is before the Board and that the utilization of the Board's machinery will thus serve its purpose of restoring to production the facilities necessary to the national defense. I am sure that, in that event, the Board will proceed promptly in its task of recommending to the parties fair and equitable terms of settlement of the disputes.

Very sincerely yours,

HARRY S. TRUMAN

[Honorable George Taylor, Chairman, Wage Stabilization Board, Washington 25, D.C.]

Harry S. Truman: "Letter to the Chairman, Wage Stabilization Board, Requesting Investigation of a Strike in the Copper and Nonferrous Metals Industry.," August 27, 1951. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, The American Presidency Project. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=13893>.