

REFUTING ARGUMENT OF CARRIERS BEGUN

Labor Asks Calling of Three Presidents to Testify.

1000 PAGES IN ANSWER

Reading of Reply in Defense of National Agreement Expected to Last Several Days.

CHICAGO, March 24.—Three railroad presidents, members of the labor committee of the Association of Railway Executives, will be summoned to testify before the railroad labor board April 4, concerning their attitude on national boards of adjustment, if a request of the employees today is granted.

W. G. Bealer, president of the Central of New Jersey; E. E. Loomis, president of the Lehigh Valley, and H. E. Dyran, president of the Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul, are the executives named. All were members of the labor committee, which took a divided stand on boards of adjustment.

Labor today began its attack of refuting arguments of the carriers against national agreements. B. M. Jewell, president of the American Federation of Labor, stated in his opening of approximately 1000 printed pages of argument.

Negotiating rules and working agreements of individual railroad, as proposed by the railroad executives would cost the railroad workers more than \$4,000,000, B. M. Jewell, president of the American Federation of Labor, said in presenting the labor side of the conference.

"If the request of the conference committee of managers of the Association of Railway Executives were granted," said Mr. Jewell, "the national agreement abrogated by decision of the board, remanding the subject matter of rules and working conditions to the respective railroads and committees of their employees for conference on individual lines, the employees' conference committee on both railroad and non-railroad employees, composed of at least one man from each craft at each point on the railroad."

Expense Is Held Great. "For the 167 roads listed the figures show that the services of 5158 committee men would be required at a total daily expense of \$56,760 and a total expense for 30 days of \$5,215,442, besides additional expenditures.

"Much of this enormous expense on both railroad and non-railroad employees, together with the assumption of valuable time of the highly skilled and essential railroad officials and railroad employees, should be eliminated by co-operation between railroad management and the recognized railroad labor organizations through the creation of a conference committee authorized to represent on the one hand railroad management and on the other railroad employees of the particular crafts."

Expense Cited as Proof. He cited figures to show that 95 per cent of the 455,776 railroad shop employees of class one carriers are members of their respective craft organizations and that since 1912, when the railways employees department of the American Federation of Labor was organized there has not been a single forceful strike of federated shop craft employees.

Mr. Jewell's statement was expected to occupy several days in its presentation before the board, following which the labor side will present numerous exhibits on the various rules and principles of the national agreement.

RAIL LOSS LAID TO LABOR With Pre-War Rates, Bankruptcy in 60 Days Forecast.

SEATTLE, Wash., March 24.—American railroads are at present facing a loss because of high costs of labor and supplies, and immediate reduction of passenger and freight rates to pre-war levels would throw them into the hands of receivers within 60 days, declared Louis W. Landman of Chicago, passenger traffic manager of the New York Central lines, here today.

Mr. Landman arrived here today accompanied by Charles Howe of Chicago, general freight manager of the New York Central.

"We cannot reduce our rates until our operating expenses go down," declared Mr. Howe this morning. "Labor is the principal thing we need and it remains at peak wages. We are on a non-profit basis now and cannot cut our revenues without corresponding decrease in cost of doing business."

TEST WAGE SUIT IS FILED Authority of Federal Railway Labor Board at Stake.

COLUMBUS, O., March 24.—A test suit to determine what authority the federal railway labor board may have in backing up its ruling that railroads may not reduce wages until after conference with employees was filed in federal district court here today by attorneys Randolph W. Walton and W. S. Pealer, representing 1200 employees of four subsidiary lines of the New York Central railroad.

The action is brought by Cecil E. Jewell, a member of the Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employees of the Toledo & Ohio Central railway and said to be the first attempt made in the country to get the courts' interpretation of the powers of the labor board.

DEBS IS FREED FOR DAY (Continued From First Page.)

Returned to Atlanta, Colney Guy D. Goff, assistant to the attorney-general, was present during the inquiries.

Mr. Daugherty refused to comment on the presentment made by Debs, who was sentenced in 1918 to ten years imprisonment for witness tampering of the espionage act. Debs, Mr. Daugherty said, looked and acted much as any other man. He was said to be in fairly good physical condition, although apparently nervous. The prisoner's physical condition, Mr. Daugherty added, necessarily would be taken into consideration by the government in its decision. In the preliminary Debs is employed part of the time in the hospital and part in the library.

Debs reached the department of justice about a quarter of an hour before the attorney-general arrived.

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