

shortly, the whole country will be taking sides and digging in on positions which they will believe must be held at all costs.

So whatever we do or do not do, I trust that we will keep in mind that our job is to try to settle the dispute between the railroad unions and management. Any action that will accomplish that purpose will be approved by the public, I am confident. Arguments over "face-saving" will get little applause.

We are opening these hearings by considering a definite proposal, sponsored by the administration. I assume, however, that alternatives may evolve from the discussions. In fact, I hope, personally, that they will evolve, and that all possible courses of action will be given due consideration.

We shall begin by hearing witnesses from the administration, and after that from representatives of the unions and of management. Following these, we may want to ask responsible elements of the general public to give us the benefit of their counsel.

It may be well, therefore, to review the suggestions that have been made for congressional action in case the parties to the dispute do not reach an agreement before the deadline. They are:

1. That the Government seize the railroads and operate them until the disputing parties reach an agreement.

It has been taken for granted that this option would leave existing conditions exactly as they are—wages, applications for mergers, and all the rest. Such a situation could be dragged out indefinitely, thereby denying justice to either labor or management in some details.

I might suggest that we need not necessarily confine ourselves to such narrow limits in case we finally adopt this expedient. Existing conditions could be modified where such is deemed right and just. For instance, pay rates for shop labor could be made to conform to local practices.

2. That some third party, a refereeing board, draw up a settlement which would be binding upon both parties. The word "binding" is an attempted euphemism for the word "compulsory." If the thing were binding, it would be compulsory. We might then be faced with writing some legislation that would compel management to run trains and compel workmen to operate them.

A third alternative seems to be emerging from the discussion over the situation. It is, and I want to state it clearly, that the Congress do nothing at all.

In case we adopt this alternative, I feel that we should do it positively, and not by default. It would be possible for us to go before the House and say that, in our opinion, it is not expedient nor justifiable for the Congress to interfere in the dispute in any way. In such a case, the railroads and the workers might be spurred to action on their own; or the strike might occur as threatened.

Objection to a strike is based on the assumption that it would involve disastrous consequences to the Nation, especially, among other things, to the war effort and to public health.

In connection with this assumption, I quote from a telegram sent Defense Secretary McNamara by the heads of two of the disputing unions:

In view of scheduled national strike by railroad shopcraft unions at 12:01 a.m., May 3, we stand ready to meet with you at any time to arrange for con-