

If there are any means of serving that purpose more fully, any provision for them, a change in this resolution would be clearly within its intention.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Mr. Secretary.

At this time I would like to ask one question and then I will reserve the rest of my time until later.

Is there any collective bargaining going on now?

Secretary WIRTZ. There is none at the moment.

The CHAIRMAN. No attempts are being made, then, at mediation?

Secretary WIRTZ. There should be no unpleasantness about this. We have, of course, kept in constant contact with the parties and we expect to keep in constant contact with the parties, to take advantage of any opportunity that should open up during this period. I don't mean to sit back and wait. We expect to keep probing.

We have, within the last 10 days, gone through one period of hope and exchange of inquiries by the mediators with the parties. We are continuing to do that right straight on through, and in no lackadaisical manner.

But in answer to your question, there is nothing at the moment which permits me to give any promise or even expression of expectation of a settlement.

The CHAIRMAN. I might ask you one further question: When the mediation broke off, were the disputing parties very far apart?

Secretary WIRTZ. I never know how to answer that kind of question, Mr. Chairman. Anyone approaching the matter as a stranger would reach very easily the conclusion that they were very close together. It is not a matter of principle here. It is a matter of dollars and cents. It is a matter specifically of what the percentage of the general wage increase shall be, what special adjustments shall be made for the mechanics and the skilled journeymen. It is recognized there must be some. The question is how much they should be given to make up for a differential which is recognized. And there is a disagreement as to the lengths of the contract term. They are not matters of principle, but matters of dollars and cents.

So the easy, layman's answer to that would be they are quite close. We all know that there are involved here two strongly held views as to how much give there should be and one thing or another.

I think the answer to your question probably lies in the fact that the parties feel strongly enough about it that they have gone on for 10 months and have driven the Congress to two extensions of this, and have been unable to agree. They are responsible people, and they feel very strongly about it. So anybody looking at it from any distance would say they are very close together. Anybody looking at it from the inside would know that the positions are still strongly and intransigently held.

The CHAIRMAN. Mr. Friedel.

Mr. FRIEDEL. Mr. Secretary, if the committee were to adopt or if Congress were to adopt 559, what would happen at the end of 2 years?

Secretary WIRTZ. The situation would at that point be open to the established processes under the Railway Labor Act. Either party