

Secretary WIRTZ. That is correct.

Mr. MACDONALD (presiding). The time of the gentleman has expired.

As I was called out of the room, Mr. Secretary, you told me that the letter had been sent about a meeting.

Secretary WIRTZ. No, not about a meeting; that the letter had been sent about detail. You had a letter which you described as cavalier, to which I would not take exception. I do refer to a subsequent letter of May 9 to Chairman Staggers from Acting Secretary of Defense Vance, in which he sets out details, and I did add, in light of your inquiry here, that we have communicated by phone to the Department of Defense. We have gotten a reply that they would, of course, be glad to have the discussions.

Mr. MACDONALD. The letter didn't deal with the meeting, but it was your phone call which dealt with the meeting, and the response was to your phone call. It has nothing to do with the letter received by Mr. Staggers.

Secretary WIRTZ. That is correct.

Mr. MACDONALD. So the date of the message about the meeting is today; is that correct?

Secretary WIRTZ. The date of that message is today.

Mr. MACDONALD. Mr. Brown?

Mr. BROWN. Mr. Secretary, I would like to follow up on a point made by Mr. Pickle.

If we are to consider the comparability of skilled wages between rail and air or the trucking transportation industry in determination of the issues in this situation, then shouldn't we also consider rate differentials set by Federal authority which affects the profitability of railroads and, for that matter, that profit factor that exists in railroads now, whether they are in a good position or in a bad position?

Secretary WIRTZ. I don't believe my comment on that would be very helpful. I would have a real question on it. If you were asking me, I think it almost presumptuous for me to answer.

It would seem to me it is a question as to whether any of that is germane, particularly with regard to the recommendation the administration is making.

Mr. BROWN. I would agree with that. If we are going to get into the relative wage levels and skills between different industries, we have to consider the overall picture for the industries, the wage schedule, the profitability, and so forth.

You have been asked to submit some of that information for the record. This, then, gets us into the relative value of the present subsidies, historic subsidies, and the whole gamut of this regulated industry, doesn't it?

Secretary WIRTZ. You will understand my respecting that as a statement and there is not much I could add by way of answer to it.

Mr. BROWN. What I am getting at, Mr. Secretary, is this: It seems to me that we have two separate problems here, and I would ask for your concurrence or disagreement on this. One is how to deal with this instant case, and the other one is whether or not we can at some future date legislate, or the administration can recommend legislation, which would avoid a repetition of cases of this nature.

Secretary WIRTZ. That is correct.