

I am informed by a representative of the conductors that the Emergency Board must be appointed before June 2.

Mr. BROWN. In response to a question asked by Mr. Devine, you cited the productivity of the employees and the volume of railroad business increasing as the reason for the wage increase. If the volume of business declines, is it your opinion that the wages should be cut?

Mr. RAMSEY. Mr. Congressman, that doesn't happen in the railroad industry. They immediately get out the knife if they even project a reduction in traffic and start whacking them off at about 10 percent per clip.

Mr. BROWN. On the basis of seniority?

Mr. RAMSEY. Yes, sir. They don't waste very much time doing it. In fact, we have only about 50 percent of the employees employed by the railroads today that we had at the peak of employment.

Mr. BROWN. You also were talking to Mr. Harvey about the Presidential boards and inferred that they might be limited by the Presidential economic advisers in what they would permit in the way of settlement.

Are you suggesting that the boards themselves were not meeting with you and judging this matter on the basis of good faith?

Mr. RAMSEY. I am not accusing them of anything. They are appointed by the President, and they are given to understand what the policy of the administration is in regard to, as they term it, the inflationary trend, and cautioned to see to it that the recommendation doesn't exceed certain figures, I imagine.

I don't know. They don't let me sit on their sessions at the White House.

Mr. BROWN. Is this made part of the rules of the game to management and labor representatives; that when these boards meet there is a limitation?

Mr. RAMSEY. They don't tell you that except indirectly. They keep bringing to your attention the fact that the message of the President stated so-and-so and, therefore, of course, they intend to be conservative about what they do, which loses sight of the justification and merits of the case. But this is all you get.

Mr. BROWN. Mr. Chairman, you have been very patient. I would like to ask one more question, if I may.

When we had Mr. Leighty before us, he suggested that he would be willing to have Government ownership of the railroads. Would you share that view?

Mr. RAMSEY. If that is the only answer.

Mr. BROWN. What happens to the possibility of collective bargaining at that point?

Mr. RAMSEY. Then we would have to come down to the Congress and put the heat on, like the postal employees do.

Mr. BROWN. Is that much different than where we are now?

Mr. RAMSEY. Well, let us say the guillotine is there, of course. It is all according to whether you lower it on our neck or not.

Mr. BROWN. Would you prefer permanent Government ownership to House Joint Resolution 559?

Mr. RAMSEY. Personally, no.

Mr. BROWN. Would you prefer a strike to the possibility of seizure?