

Mr. ROGERS. If we were called upon to participate in any manner in the Middle East, in a military way, would this affect this situation any more?

Mr. IGNATIUS. Again, I don't want to get into matters dealing with the situation in the Middle East. The railroads now carry a substantial portion of our total traffic. If more traffic were required that should be moved by rail, then we would become more dependent upon the railroad industry.

But I don't wish to speculate on the Middle East situation, per se.

Mr. ROGERS. I realize that, I am simply saying that to close our eyes to it would be absurd, wouldn't it, Mr. Secretary?

Mr. IGNATIUS. I think so. Referring to Secretary McNamara's statement at the top of page 2:

In the light of the current world situation, and with new and dangerous unknowns created by the Near East crisis, we believe it is unthinkable that a strike should be permitted to occur in the industry which constitutes one of the basic elements supporting our military posture.

Mr. ROGERS. Thank you. I think that clearly puts it in a proper light.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Mr. Watson.

Mr. WATSON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Secretary, I should like to join with the others in thanking you for your contribution. Certainly we understand why Secretary McNamara is unable to be here.

I would like to believe that your multitudinous problems that you would have on a partial operation are well beyond any that you have even described in your statement. I think if you tried to solve one, you would have 15 others crop up.

Be that as it may, apparently there has been a concern on the part of some of the committee members about the mechanics of this meeting with the unions. I have had difficulty in fully understanding what contribution the carriers could have made if you had invited all of them to this meeting.

If I can recount this, the unions made this offer of partial operation to serve the defense needs, is that not correct?

Mr. IGNATIUS. That is correct.

Mr. WATSON. And they appeared before you and, as I understood it, you determined after hearing them that it would be impracticable and unwise to undergo such an operation.

Mr. IGNATIUS. We had given their proposal a great deal of thought prior to the meeting, and a great deal of study. There was nothing that occurred during the meeting that caused us to believe that this would be a feasible solution to the problem.

Mr. WATSON. Mr. Secretary, of course you are aware of the fact that the carriers had taken the position before this committee in testimony that such a plan would not work, that it was impractical. You were aware of that, weren't you?

Mr. IGNATIUS. I was aware of testimony before the Senate committee by, I believe, the president of one of the carriers. I did not have an opportunity to read the hearings that may have been conducted in which carriers addressed the problem before this committee.

But I had heard, yes, sir; as to their views on this, and had read, as I say, the testimony of one of the railroad presidents in connection