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Senator Aiken's Speech, Endowment Dinner - Helena, Mt. - Congressional Record

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CONGRESSIONAL RECORD — SENATE

S14825

There being no objection, the letter and statement were ordered to be printed in the Record, as follows:

THE COPPER STRIKE

October 3, 1967.

Mr. President, the copper strike is more than 3 months old. We hear a great deal about the month-old strike in the auto industry but very little about the copper strike, now beyond its 90th day. The copper strike, however, is of similar major consequences, involving the States of Montana, Utah, Nevada, Arizona, and New Mexico, as well as fabricating plants on the west coast, in the Midwest, in the South, and on the east coast, especially in upper New Jersey and the Connecticut Valley.

On October 3, I addressed a letter to the President of the United States, asking him to see what could be done about bringing the copper strike to a head. I also made a statement on the floor of the Senate. I ask unanimous consent that the letter and the statement be printed at this point in my remarks.

Mike Mansfield Papers, Series 21, Box 43, Folder 92, Mansfield Library, University of Montana
I am today requesting the President to appoint a study committee to assess the effects of national defense on the copper industry. I am also requesting him to look into all the available means at his disposal to bring this matter to a successful conclusion. I am hopeful that he and his advisors can come up with the means to cope with this long drawn-out strike to which I have referred. But, in all fairness, the only authority I know of the President has is the invocation of the Taft-Hartley Act.

Frankly, I do not think that the Taft-Hartley is the answer, because it would cover only a period of 80 days and then if no settlement were reached, the strike might well begin again in the middle of the winter when conditions would be worse for the miner and the smelterman and their families. I am not at all certain that legislation similar to that which now covers the railroad shop craftsmen difficulty would be the answer either. I do believe, however, that if collective bargaining in good faith is not undertaken in the immediate future by the companies and the unions that other ways and means will have to be considered in the interest of the economies of the States affected by the strike as well as a mediation of the event.

I say that I deplore the trend toward government intervention in these matters—a trend that is both labor and management—because it degrades the principal of free collective bargaining and it places the hands of the national government powers which now covers the railroad shops difficulties in the middle of the winter when conditions would be worse for the miner and the smelterman and their families. I am not at all certain that legislation similar to that which now covers the railroad shop craftsmen difficulty would be the answer either. I do believe, however, that if collective bargaining in good faith is not undertaken in the immediate future by the companies and the unions that other ways and means will have to be considered in the interest of the economies of the States affected by the strike as well as a mediation of the event.

I accordingly, request the unions and the companies to meet on this matter and I would hope that consideration would be given to the possibility of the Montana Anaconda Company and the leaders of the unions getting together to discuss the matter as affecting both.

Mr. MANSFIELD. Mr. President, on October 9—that is, a week ago Friday—I received a telephone call from Mr. Joseph Molony, vice president of the United Steel Workers, and Al Skinner, international representative of the same organization. They asked if it would be possible for them to come to Washington and to meet with Senator McCarthy and me. We were delighted to have this opportunity to discuss the strike situation in Montana. We held a meeting with Mr. Molony and Skinner. We found them most cooperative and understanding and also reasonable and fair.

Then, as a result of the letter to the President, on October 9—a week ago today—and at the President’s suggestion, Senator McCarthy and I met with Secretary of Defense McNamara and Secretary of Labor Wirtz. Also present was Mr. Walter A. Hamilton, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Commerce, representing Secretary of Commerce Trowbridge, who had been called to a meeting before a congressional committee.

That meeting was similarly most significant. We were able to get the viewpoint of the Government on the strike in the copper industry from the standpoint of national security, the possibility release of copper from the stockpile, and the potential invocation of the Taft-Hartley Act.

On Wednesday, October 11—last week—it was our privilege to meet with Mr. Charles Brinckerhoff, chairman of the board of the Anaconda Co. He, likewise, expressed interest in and his attitude did not seem too inflexible.

As the result of these three meetings, I think it safe to say that all parties indicated a genuine interest in trying to get down to some negotiations, to the end that the copper strike could be brought to a conclusion.

Speaking for myself, I was pleased that Governor Babcock called a meeting of the unions and the Anaconda officials in Butte on October 10, and I am happy to note that the Anaconda officials will meet in Butte on Tuesday, October 17—tomorrow.

It is my hope that the Maine group will be the takeoff to serious negotiations between Anaconda and the unions; that it would not be just for the purpose of settling the immediate future by the companies and the unions that other ways and means will have to be considered in the interest of the economies of the States affected by the strike as well as a mediation of the event.

My belief is that more than 3 months have been taken up in the strike—bears a tremendous decline in income for the people out of work as well as for the State of Montana.

It is my further belief that the Government does not intend to invoke Taft-Hartley. Speaking personally again, I would hope it would be the takeoff to serious negotiations between Anaconda and the unions; that it would not be just for the purpose of settling the immediate future by the companies and the unions that other ways and means will have to be considered in the interest of the economies of the States affected by the strike as well as a mediation of the event.

As the Secretary indicated, national security is not involved, nor is there any intention on the part of the Government to release any copper from the stockpile. There is no possibility resting on the shoulders of the union and the company to get together; and the only way that could be done, in my opinion, is by a continuous meeting, on a give-and-take basis, joined in full by all concerned. It would be my further hope that if there were none, the present impasse might be broken, and perhaps a basis for agreement could be reached.

The Government will not, in my opinion, intervene in any way at this time. Therefore, with winter coming on, with incomes declining considerably, with needs becoming more apparent, it is necessary that in good faith all parties concerned get together, stay there, and continue negotiations, to the end that an agreement can be reached.

Mr. President, Senator McCarthy and I had the opportunity, over the past weekend, to visit Great Falls, Helena, Butte, and Anaconda, and observed the effects of the strike on the people in those areas. As one who spent some 9 years of his life in the copper mines, I am well aware of the pain which has afflicted that segment of our economy, and it bodes no good for the people whom we represent in our State to have this strike continue.

So both Senator McCarthy and I felt that when the Anaconda officials and the United States Steel Workers officials start their meetings in Butte tomorrow it will be just the kick-off to a continual round of meetings to the end of the settlement.

But there are two things I want to make clear: First, there is no intention on the part of the Government to intervene; Second, the Government will not, in my opinion, intervene in any way at this time.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the memorandums of the meetings with Mr. Molony, Mr. Skinner, and Mr. McNamara be printed in the RECORD, and that they be set forth as a part of the Record so that all concerned will be aware of the position and the role which Mr. McNamara and Mr. Molony played in attempting to bring an end to the strike situation as it affects Montana.

There being no objection, the statements of Mr. McNamara and Mr. Molony were ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

MEETING WITH SENATORS MANSFIELD AND MCCARTHY, OCTOBER 9, 1967.

Mr. MANSFIELD, Mr. President, I called on Governor Babcock next Tuesday for a meeting with the Anaconda officials and the United States Steel Workers officials, and Mr. Mc Massey and Mr. Skinner, national representative of the United Steel Workers, and Mr. Molony, vice president of the United Steel Workers, and Al Skinner, international representative of the same organization. They asked if it would be possible for them to come to Washington and to meet with Senator McCarthy and me. We were delighted to have this opportunity to discuss the strike situation in Montana. We held a meeting with Mr. Molony and Skinner. We found them most cooperative and understanding and also reasonable and fair.

Mr. President, Senator McCarthy and I had the opportunity, over the past weekend, to visit Great Falls, Helena, Butte, and Anaconda, and observed the effects of the strike on the people in those areas. As one who spent some 9 years of his life in the copper mines, I am well aware of the pain which has afflicted that segment of our economy, and it bodes no good for the people whom we represent in our State to have this strike continue.

So both Senator McCarthy and I felt that when the Anaconda officials and the United States Steel Workers officials start their meetings in Butte tomorrow it will be just the kick-off to a continual round of meetings to the end of the settlement.

But there are two things I want to make clear: First, there is no intention on the part of the Government to intervene; Second, the Government will not, in my opinion, intervene in any way at this time.
in Helena that the Anaconda people will be represented by a similar group.

MEETING WITH SENATORS MANSFIELD AND MTERMINEER McNAMARA OF DEFENSE, WIRTS OF LABOR AND WALTER A. HAMILTON, DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF COMMERCE, OCTOBER 9, 1967.

We meet with Secretaries McNamara of Defense, Wirtz of Labor, and Mr. Walter A. Hamilton, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Commerce Trowbridge.

As we are all aware, the Federal Mediation Conciliation Service has been enmeshed in the copper strike since its beginning and is doing the best it can to bring the parties together. I think we can state that the Secretaries have been most interested in this situation since its inception but that they feel that there is nothing that the government can do at this time; that this is a matter which should be settled through the process of free collective bargaining between the union and management; and they are hopeful that this will be done. They were not at all interested about invoking Taft-Hartley or releasing copper from the stockpile.

Mr. MANSFIELD. I yield for a further statement.

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Mr. BIBLE. Mr. President, will the Senator yield for an observation, with the consent of the Senator from Minnesota?

Mr. MANSFIELD. I yield.

Mr. BIBLE. Mr. President, I wish to commend the distinguished majority leader for his very forceful manner in which he presented this very vexatious problem.

My State of Nevada likewise is involved with two of the major copper companies. The hardships that are already apparent to the workers who are out of work and have been out of work for some 2 or 3 months are becoming increasingly critical. In the eastern part of my State, where one of the copper companies is located, many of the workers have left to seek employment elsewhere because of the lack of employment.

I commend the majority leader for his forthright statement. It seems to me that until the day comes when both labor and management sit around the conference table day after day and around the clock, as the majority leader suggested, we are not going to break the impasse.

With winter just around the corner in both the great State of Montana and my State, and particularly in areas where copper companies operate, it is high time that management and labor and their spokesmen worked extra long hours in free collective bargaining to resolve this problem. We cannot permit this impasse to continue.

I congratulate the majority leader for his statement earlier in the session, shortly after the strike began. The Senator from Utah [Mr. Moss], the Senator from New Mexico [Mr. Monrroy], and I joined in a letter to the President, just as the Senator from Montana did at a later date, asking that a factfinding group be appointed to inquire into the issues involved.

I think that the majority leader has performed a great service in this respect in at least starting to morrow morning they will get together to discuss this matter. I commend the Senator for his statement.

Mr. MANSFIELD. I thank the distinguished Senator from Nevada for his kind remarks.

As the Senator knows, on Friday or Saturday last, an agreement was reached between the steelworkers and the Pima Copper Mining Co., in Arizona, while that company employs only about 650 people. It was, nevertheless, a settlement.

The amount arrived at, I think, was 75 cents, which covers hourly increases, fringe benefits, increased pensions, and the like.

I would think there is a meeting ground somewhere between the 50-odd cents which Kennecott in Utah said it was prepared to offer, and the less than $1 the union said it is prepared to negotiate on. To me there seems to be a degree of flexibility on each side; the parties are not so far apart as to preclude a settlement at an early date. With the proper effort by all of us, this strike can be settled. More than 3 months is too long a time. The strike has already had too harsh an effect on the economy of the people of our States and the States themselves.

I thank the Senator from Minnesota for yielding.

At this point, Mr. Inouye assumed the chair.