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### Copper Strike

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United States  
of America

# Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 90<sup>th</sup> CONGRESS, FIRST SESSION

Vol. 113

WASHINGTON, THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 30, 1967

No. 195

## Senate

### THE COPPER STRIKE

Mr. MANSFIELD. Mr. President, the strike in the copper industry which has deeply affected the economic situation in the State of Montana as well as the States of Utah, Nevada, Arizona, and New Mexico and also the copper fabricating plants in the Midwest and the east coast, especially in Connecticut, is now in its fifth month and I regret to say, with no end in sight.

There appears to be a reluctance on the part of both the unions and management to get down to bedrock in the matter of negotiations.

While there is a diminishing supply of copper in this country, it is my understanding that it is still far from the scarcity stage. Therefore, there will be no pinch on the part of the copper companies to enter into hard and fast negotiations. Furthermore, there is no tendency on the part of the Government to either release copper from the national stockpile or to invoke the Taft-Hartley Act.

In this respect, it might have been and, in my opinion, would have been, feasible to invoke Taft-Hartley when the strike began, but it is now too late to do so because if no agreement was reached within the 80-day limitation, it would mean that the critical situation which now exists would become much worse.

As a possible means of getting off dead center, my colleague, Senator METCALF, and I have, today, dispatched a letter to the President of the United States, asking him to set up a special board for the purpose of bringing the unions and the companies together and, if not successful in reaching an accord, to make recommendations for the settlement of this strike which is causing so much pain to so many people at this time.

We make this suggestion only because the dedicated efforts of the National Labor Mediation Board and the Department of Labor have been in vain.

We make it, further, because the efforts which Senator METCALF and I and many of our colleagues in the Senate have failed to bring the companies and the unions together on a daily around-the-clock negotiating basis.

We make this appeal because we know of no other means by which this situation can be met. And while we do not like the idea of the Government intervening in labor disputes, we see no other alternative at this time.

We make this request despite the fact that it is our firm conviction that all

labor disputes, including the dispute in the copper industry, should be settled between the unions and the companies concerned.

This is the way this matter should be disposed of, but this is the way it is not being met at this time; hence, our appeal to the President for a Special Board of Inquiry into the copper situation.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to insert the letter referred to above at this point in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the letter was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

U.S. SENATE,  
OFFICE OF THE MAJORITY LEADER,  
Washington, D.C., November 30, 1967.

The PRESIDENT,  
The White House,  
Washington, D.C.

DEAR MR. PRESIDENT: The copper strike is now in its fifth month and there is no possibility that we can see of an ending to it in the near future. Conditions among the miners and smelters in the States of Montana, Utah, Nevada, Arizona and New Mexico have reached a critical stage, and as of now, there have been very few meetings between the companies and the unions seeking to bring about a settlement, except on a haphazard basis.

While we feel that this strike must and should be settled on the basis of direct negotiations between the companies and the unions, to date there have been no results in that respect. We have nothing but praise for the efforts of the National Mediation Service and the Department of Labor in their many attempts to try and bring the parties together to achieve a possible settlement. However, all efforts to date have failed; winter is with us in Montana; the miners and smelters and their families are using up their savings, many of them are in dire straits and the need for action is long overdue.

We, therefore, most respectfully request that you appoint a Special Commission to look into the copper situation for the purpose of seeing what it can do to bring companies and the unions together on a "bedrock" basis and, if unable to do so, to make recommendations to you as to ways and means by which this threat to the economy of Montana and other states in the Union can be met and overcome.

We would deeply appreciate your most earnest and serious consideration of this matter.

Respectfully yours,  
MIKE MANSFIELD,  
LEE METCALF,  
U.S. Senators.

### ANACONDA AND THE COPPER STRIKE

Mr. MANSFIELD. Mr. President, I call to the attention of the Senate an article in this morning's Wall Street Journal by Michael K. Drapkin entitled "Strike-bound Town." It tells the story of how the town of Anaconda, Mont., is tightening its belt in a grim struggle to survive the crippling effects of the nationwide copper strike. It is an excellent piece of reporting—but it does not make for pleasant reading.

Anaconda, namesake of the giant copper company which employed nearly 2,000 of its workers before the strike began on July 15, is a town in trouble. With 60 percent of its work force unemployed overdue payments on installment loans have risen tenfold and those on real estate loans sixfold. The number of families receiving welfare payments has risen from 20 to approximately 500. A total of 700 families are receiving Federal food stamps. Fathers are being forced to forage for wild game in an effort to feed their families.

In all, some 50,000 workers in the West have been idled by the strike. The situation in Anaconda is grim but no more so than in other communities like Butte, East Helena, and the like. The companies have been similarly hard hit. Earnings of some major copper producers have fallen 60 percent from a year earlier. More copper customers contemplate switching to aluminum products as the price of the metal has already increased by 50 percent over its prestrike level.

Yet the unions and mining companies appear no closer to a settlement of the dispute than they did 3 or 4 months ago. It is safe to say that the two sides have no even agreed yet on the central issue of the dispute.

This failure to communicate in head-to-head bargaining sessions is having serious repercussions far beyond the copper towns in which the mines and smelters are located. It is within the power of the disputants to sit down and work this thing out. It is not realistic, nor does it reflect well on the principle of the inviolability of collective bargaining, for either side to expect the Federal Government to bail them out. There is no "easy way out" in this matter.

Mr. President, some of my earliest memories are of the mines. I am intimately aware of the problems and responsibilities of both the unions and management, and I am very familiar with the particular problems of the city



of Anaconda. All of the parties deserve better in this situation. If they will but sit down and work this out, the entire Nation will benefit.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the article by Mr. Drapkin be printed at this point in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the article was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

**STRIKEBOUND TOWN: HOW ANACONDA, MONT., SCRAPES BY AS WALKOUT PERSISTS AT COPPER FIRM—WORKERS HUNT GAME FOR FOOD AS CASH GOES, BILLS RISE—FAMILY LIFE DETERIORATES—AN AWFUL GLUM CHRISTMAS**  
(By Michael K. Drapkin)

ANACONDA, MONT.—This was once a boom town. Today it's a bust town.

Most men here are copper workers, and they have been on strike now for more than four months. A strike in the hills of Montana is not like a strike in Detroit or Pittsburgh or Newark. There, a resourceful striker can find ways—either work or play—to while away the time. Here, it takes infinitely more resourcefulness; there is some play, but little work. For many, life here has been reduced to merely existing.

The nationwide copper strike, which has dragged on since July 15, has had a major impact far beyond this town, of course. Many copper users have had to scrounge around to find supplies or to use substitute metals. Many copper companies fear they may lose some of their markets permanently as users switch to plastics and aluminum. In the first nine months, earnings of some major copper companies fell 60% and more from a year earlier. Dealers, meanwhile, have raised their price for the metal to 60 cents or more a pound, up 50% since the strike began. By now, 90% of the copper industry has been shut down, idling 50,000 workers in 22 unions.

The major economic consequences of the strike have been well publicized. But what has been the impact on the average worker in such a quiet, out-of-the-way place as western Montana? Certainly, most of the workers here who overwhelmingly voted for the strike last summer did not expect they would still be out at the end of November. Neither they nor their chief union—the copper division of the United Steelworkers of America—had set aside enough money to see them through a month-long strike. Some of the workers here—who represent 60% of the town's labor force—get \$30 a week in strike benefits; others get nothing.

#### THE WORLD'S LARGEST SMOKESTACK

Even in the best of times, Anaconda is a rather stark town. It has a population of 12,500 and is about 25 miles from Butte (population: 46,000). Its main claim to fame is its copper smelter, which boasts "the world's largest smokestack," a 585-foot structure. It has one movie house (The Washoe, where John Wayne in War Wagon opens today). And it is cold (at noon yesterday, the temperature was 10 degrees, the first time it had risen above zero all week), with strong winds whipping out of the surrounding mountains. Now Anaconda often has the eerie look of a town in which everyone has suddenly died.

The pall isn't just a matter of economics, though the economic impact of the strike has been so severe that some families may never recover. Even more debilitating for some are the social and psychological problems that arise when a breadwinner is no longer winning bread. Some men become withdrawn, uncommunicative; some spend what little money they have in bars.

#### JUST SITTING AND STARING

Family life deteriorates. "In another hour," a woman sitting in the local welfare

office tells a visitor, "I'm going to take an ax to our television set. My husband gets up in the morning, eats breakfast, then turns on the damn thing and watches it until the Star Spangled Banner comes on the next morning." Another woman says she and her husband have not spoken to each other for more than three weeks. And a welfare worker says, "At least one divorce has come out of the strike."

Just existing is a problem for many. Overdue payments on installment loans have risen tenfold since the strike began, and the overdue total on real estate loans has risen sixfold, says Calvin J. Crowe, executive vice president of the only bank in town. (The bank hasn't foreclosed on a single loan, he says.) The local telephone company estimates that more than half the 5,638 phones in the area have been either disconnected or limited to outgoing calls, which costs less than full service. The Methodist Church, short on contributions, has quit publishing its weekly bulletin.

Arlo Hancock can't afford to give his five oldest children money for hot lunches at school any longer. "They're toting the old brown bag," he says. And he adds, "It'll be an awful glum Christmas for the kids." Mr. Hancock, a 41-year-old smelter worker with a wife and 10 children to support is living on welfare payments of about \$5 a day. Like many other strikers, Mr. Hancock hunts deer and other game for food.

The Hancocks are one of about 500 families receiving welfare payments, a figure that is up from only 20 families just before the strike began. A total of 700 families are getting Federal food stamps.

The welfare payments range from \$70 to about \$150 a month, depending on family size, and the burden has become so heavy that Deer Lodge County has had to increase its property taxes to cover the payouts. The increase, to \$17 per \$1,000 of assessed valuation from \$9, further hurts the strikers, since most people here own their own homes.

#### "WE'LL BE OUT OF MONEY SOON"

Why has the strike dragged on so long? One reason could be that the two sides can't even agree what the issues are. Anaconda Co. implies that the strike is really part of a drive by the Steelworkers to organize more workers and achieve industry-wide bargaining.

Nonsense, say Steelworkers officials. The union insists all it wants is money. "All these soothsayers need do is put some money on the table, and we'll prove rather quickly that it's an economic strike," says Joseph Molony, a vice president of the Steelworkers. The various companies say they are offering about 50 cents an hour over three years; the union says it is seeking 99 cents. Each questions the other's calculations.

The situation is deadlocked, and it may be several more months before any settlement is reached.

Before long, townspeople here say, the economic pinch is going to get even worse as more strikers use up all their savings. "We'll be out of money soon," says Lloyd Walund, a smelter worker with seven children who had built up an \$1,800 account in a credit union before the strike. "And then I suppose, I'll have to leave my family here and find work in some other town."

That may be easier said than done. The 50,000 men idled by the strike are mainly here in the West—in Montana, Colorado, Utah and Arizona. Early in the strike, some men found jobs on construction projects, but now that winter is here these jobs no longer exist.

#### STRIKES ARE NOTHING NEW

About the only solace to the workers is the conviction that they can survive, if only because they have done so in the past. Strikes are almost routine here. This is the sixth con-

secutive year that Anaconda Co., operations in Montana have been affected by strikes, though this year's strike now is about as long as the strikes of the past five years combined. In 1959 and 1960, the workers here were out for six months.

"We've been through this before," says Mr. Crowe, the banker, explaining why the bank isn't foreclosing on anyone. "They'll make good once the strike ends." But history also indicates it may take some time for things to return to normal. Jennie Jacobson, owner of a ready-to-wear store here, says that not until this year did she begin to get over the effects of lost sales and of higher costs stemming from extended credit in the long 1959-60 strike. "And now we're caught in another strike," she says.

The situation is actually grimmer this time because the town has been suffering from a years-long decline in fortunes as a result of automation and a cutback in operations at the smelter. Employment at Anaconda Co. facilities here had dropped from 3,500 in 1957 to 1,902 at the beginning of the strike.

Even before the strike, a visitor could count eight empty storefronts among the five dozen or so stores on the three business streets here. There may soon be more. "A couple of retailers have told me they will probably close up if the strike continues much longer," says Howard Shinrock, director of a southwest Montana industrial development agency.

Rex Jensen, owner of radio station KANA, Anaconda's only station, thinks that this strike could be worse than any previous ones. "If the strike continues through the first of the year, the town will be crippled—maybe permanently," he says.

#### SOME HISTORICAL NOTES

Things weren't always so bleak. In the 1870s and 1880s, when the mines in nearby Butte were discovered and the local copper industry started up, there were high hopes for the region—hopes that were justified for a long time. Marcus Daly, an early owner of the mines, wanted to name this smelting town Copperopolis.

(The town became Anaconda instead, named after a South American snake in the boa constrictor family. The discoverer and first owner of the Butte mines, Michael Hickey, spotted the name in an editorial in the New York Tribune and liked its sound. The company that was developed to handle the giant vein also became known as Anaconda. A claim near the Anaconda vein was known as Never-Sweat, and an Anaconda Co. man says that "but for the grace of God, we might be known today as the Never-Sweat Co.")

The town later engaged in a bitter fight to become the capital of Montana, but lost out to Helena, a city of 22,000 about 60 miles northeast of here.

#### A BARTENDER PHILOSOPHIZES

The town still has some trappings of the old days. The Marcus Daly Hotel (Mr. Daly left his mark; the bank is also the Daly National Bank & Trust Co.) is a massive, ornate structure, and it sports an inlaid hardwood likeness of Mr. Daly's favorite race horse, Tammany, in the floor of its Tammany Bar & Lounge. Mr. Daly always avoided walking over the inlay, and even today the bar's patrons aren't allowed to walk on it.

But the bar—and the other 40 bars in town have fewer and fewer patrons as the copper workers' money runs out. On a slow day not so long ago, a visitor struck up a conversation with Howard Cook, a smelter worker who is getting by on the \$40 a week he earns tending bar at the Tammany.

Why don't the people pack up and leave, he was asked. Why don't they go East, or West, or South, where there are plenty of jobs?

"You tell me why those people stay along the banks of the Mississippi River, knowing each year they're going to be flooded out," he replies. "Then you'll know why we stay here. Because it's home, I guess."