

A CONFERENCE IN CHICAGO.

Western Lawyers Disagree with Eastern Men Regarding the Decision.

CHICAGO, March 26.—A conference of legal representatives of Chicago railroads was held to-day in the office of George R. Peck, general counsel of the Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul Road. B. F. Ayer, general counsel for the Illinois Central Company, presided, and there was a full attendance of lawyers from the important lines west, south, and north of Chicago. The conference was called on account of the Supreme Court's decision adverse to railroad traffic associations.

The prevailing sentiment of those present showed that the Western railroad lawyers are practically a unit in the opinion that the Eastern railroad lawyers and Joint Traffic Association magnates are wrong, from a legal standpoint, in assuming that the decision does not place the stamp of illegality on any other association except the Trans-Missouri Freight Association. The lawyers declared unanimously that the decision outlawed such associations as the Western Freight Association, and the result of the conference will be that such roads as have not already formally withdrawn from that organization will forthwith send notice to that effect. The relation of the decision to the passenger associations was not discussed sufficiently for a general opinion to be given out, and each road for the present will be guided by its own lawyers.

The Chicago, Rock Island and Pacific and the Sioux City and Northern, the latter road running between Minneapolis and O'Neill, Neb., sent notices of withdrawal to-day from all traffic associations. The Western Freight Association has practically ceased to exist, many employes have already been discharged for lack of work to do, and those of a higher grade are seeking positions elsewhere. Most of the officials have contracts which run to 1898, including Commissioner Midgeley, who is now in the Holy Land on a sick leave of absence.

The disagreement of transcontinental roads as to the payment of commissions is reported to have already led to independent action on the part of the Union Pacific, which may be the beginning of serious rate trouble in the absence of the Transcontinental Association agreement, except, on paper. The Union Pacific is said to have raised commissions over its lines from the Missouri River to Denver \$2 and to California points \$3. The Chicago-St. Paul passenger situation is also reported to be in a condition bordering on collapse on rates. The Supreme Court's decision has had the effect of abrogating the agreement of the Transcontinental Passenger Association to pool the business for the Christian Endeavor Convention to be held in San Francisco next July, and there is danger now of a free-for-all bid for the business of each line, which might bring rates from Chicago and return down to \$20.