

Washington Strike Inquiry

Men Present Their Side—Company Now Engaged in Presenting Its Case

The Washington Railway & Electric Company, Washington, D. C., began on May 21 the presentation of its side of the case before the Senate committee which is inquiring into the recent strike of the employees of the company. The company called as the first witness George A. Wilburt, president of the Washington branch of the Amalgamated Association. Counsel established, through Mr. Wilburt's testimony, that District Commissioner Newman had been advised that the railway employees would not insist upon their demands for the closed shop and recognition of the union, provided other demands satisfactory to the men were allowed. Counsel also brought out that Mr. Wilburt had not availed himself of the opportunity for a final conference with President King of the company, because that conference was to have dealt only with the individual contracts proposed by the company. Counsel of the company then sought to show that the by-laws of the parent association were not lived up to in the letter of the law in the preliminaries to calling the strike.

UNION PRESIDENT'S TESTIMONY

It was developed by the testimony that President King of the Washington Railway & Electric Company would not deal with any committee of the Amalgamated, but would treat only with a committee of the men not representing that organization. Counsel questioned the witness to try to bring out that Mr. King would have been glad to receive the grievance committee of the men, but the witness clung to the statement that Mr. King wanted to talk about the individual contract, which, in the opinion of the witness, was of a character that made discussion of it useless, from the viewpoint of the union men. Later Mr. Wilburt admitted that he had said publicly that the conferences were over because Mr. King had refused to recognize the union. Subsequently he said that while the men wanted the union recognized, and favored the closed shop, still they would not cause a strike on refusal of these demands alone, provided other concessions were made, but that Mr. King would not discuss these matters. Mr. Wilburt's authority for this statement was questioned by counsel for the company. He did not understand that the Amalgamated was committed irrevocably to the principle of the closed shop. Senator Johnson pointed out that the contract of the Amalgamated with the Capital Traction Company demonstrated that fact. Mr. Wilburt also reviewed his career with the company since the date of his employment in 1908.

The committee resumed its session on the night of May 22. It will not sit while the Senate is in session.

THE MEN'S SIDE

In presenting their side of the case the men sought to show that the company had since the strike re-employed forty-eight men discharged previously from its service. The men also introduced what purported to be a statement of the terms under which new men were engaged at the outset of the strike to replace the men who went out.

Commissioner Oliver P. Newman, of the District, testifying before the committee on May 10, said that before the employees went on strike last March the commissioners were authorized by them to waive, in the proposed negotiations or mediation between the company and the men, the recognition of the union. Mr. Newman also told the committee that the commissioners did not state this fact to the officials of the company. Explaining the reasons of the commissioners for not making the direct statement that the men were ready to waive the demand for recognition of the union in the negotiations, Mr. Newman said: "The men wanted recognition, and asked us not to tip their hand to the company."

Mr. Wilburt, on the other hand, insisted that President King would not have agreed to mediation even if Commissioner Newman had told him the men were ready to waive recognition in the negotiations. As stated previously, his authority for this statement was questioned by counsel for the company.

St. Paul to Rush Electrification

The Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul Railway plans to complete the electrification of its line from Cle Elum, Wash., west, one year earlier than expected. The Puget Sound Traction, Light & Power Company has been advised by the St. Paul that it will be expected to furnish electric current from its hydroelectric and steam plants by Sept. 1, 1918. Survey crews and materials have been moved from Othello to South Cle Elum, and preliminary work will be started immediately, thus postponing work on the Columbia division. The reason for the change in plans, according to C. A. Goodnow, who is supervising the work, is the constantly increasing price of oil. The company must use oil in the locomotives passing through the forest reserves in the mountain on the Columbia division, while coal-burners can be employed between South Cle Elum and Othello without danger. The survey along the proposed line of the Columbia division has been almost completed, and setting of pole lines and building of substations is to start soon.

The contract of the Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul Railway with the Puget Sound Traction, Light & Power Company calls for a minimum of 13,000 hp., or the equivalent of one unit at the White River plant. The company has been working on plans for an increase in the capacity of the White River station, where two new units will be ready next spring, giving 23,000 hp. additional, and it is probable that an extra order for development at White River will be placed in time to permit the work to be completed before the St. Paul's western division is electrified. The present contract with the railroad calls for the delivery of current by the traction company at the Snoqualmie Falls plant.

CAPACITY USE OF STEAM PLANTS CONTEMPLATED

While the four steam plants of the Puget Sound Traction, Light & Power Company were used comparatively little during the past winter, orders have been placed to get all four ready for capacity use next winter, indicating the company's estimate of the immediate development of business within its territory. Its steam plants are located at Everett, Tacoma, and at Georgetown and Post Streets, Seattle. The present capacity of the company's water-power plants is as follows: White River, 33,000 hp.; Electron, 25,000 hp., and Snoqualmie, 25,000 hp.

The Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul Railway will expend \$6,000,000 in making the change from coal to electricity between Othello and the coast. It will have 640 miles of track electrically operated.

The company has recently awarded to the Brick & Tile Delivery Company, Seattle, a contract for 3,000,000 bricks to be used in connection with the construction of substations every 30 miles along the line.

Hydroelectric Power Helpful

That hydroelectric energy is proving a substantial help in the solution of the fuel problem in street railway power plants was stated by C. V. Wood, president of the Springfield Street Railway, at a hearing on May 3 before the Massachusetts Waterways Board. The commission was considering a petition of the Turners Falls Power & Electric Company for authority to build an additional 66,000-volt line across the Connecticut River at Springfield for the supply of electricity to the Springfield Street Railway according to the terms of a contract recently closed between the two concerns. Mr. Wood said that delays in fuel supply last winter had several times brought the road within twelve hours of a shut-down. It is hoped that by 1919 all the energy required by the road will be supplied from the Turners Falls system, which will shortly be increased in capacity by the construction of a \$2,000,000 auxiliary steam turbine plant at Chicopee Junction, Mass. The Springfield Street Railway would be obliged to expend \$1,500,000 if it enlarged its power plant facilities itself. Bentley W. Warren, counsel for the Massachusetts Street Railway Association, also spoke on behalf of the purchase of power by street railways. He then emphasized the present difficulties in obtaining capital for electric railway power plant extensions.