Bridges Blasts Compulsory Arbitration

I appear before you to oppose House Resolution No. 1025 now pending before the Congress of the United States.

The American was a joint resolution is to provide a procedure for a settlement of the longshoremen strike and to establish an arbitration board to hear and settle all issues in dispute; and to make it clear that this strike which shall not be less than 18 months or more than 24 months; and an agreement for a strike or lockout act by the parties during such agreement.

RANKS DECIDE

I want to say here and now personally, and for the International Longshoremen and Warehousemen's Union, which I have the honor to represent, that our recommendation to the Congress and to the President is that the workers came out on strike with a vote of the union regarding the strike and the arbitration board would return the same way.

In saying this, I mean no disrespect to any of our leaders or his high office; simply I mean to say that in this case instance he is trying to rely on the Government's strike to force an end to our strike.

Even the President of the United States and the halt in our work does not make the claim that this strike must be ended because the nation must have its grain and wheat abroad, the union has commenced separate negotiations with the shipping line operators on the Pacific Coast of the United States, covering all grain and wheat traffic to and from Mexico. Our purpose is to negotiate separate and a special agreement to permit the union once again becomes possible.

(January, 1970.)

GRAIN NEGOTIATIONS

Recognizing the need of the farmers, the growers to get their grain abroad, the union has commenced separate negotiations with the shipping line operators on the Pacific Coast of the United States, covering all grain and wheat traffic to and from Mexico. Our purpose is to negotiate a separate agreement to permit the union once again becomes possible.

Statement by Harry Bridges, President International Longshoremen’s and Warehousemen’s Union

Before the

House Labor Committee, Subcommittee

Hon. Frank Thompson, Chairman

Senate Labor Committee

Senator Harrison Williams, Chairman

Washington, D.C.

February 4, 1972

Paid holidays have become an accepted fixture in practically all American business. Nowhere is this more true than in the transportation industries. The union's deman for paid holidays is an unassailable right. Yet, the employers say that paid holidays should not be granted in this particular industry.

3. The union has demanded that employers covered under the collective bargaining agreement provide paid holidays with prescription drugs.

This is a very normal and generally accepted practice in American commerce.

Other issues in dispute relate to an increase in insurance coverage, wages for certain skill differentials, and a few other similar items.

In the context of an industry which has had 24 years of peaceful collective bargaining, the strike during that period, seems hardly practical or proper to me that this strike is now going on.

We feel that if left alone, within a reasonably short time the parties will come to terms.

During the last 10 years particularly, the union has grappled with the problem of mechanization, automation, and increased productivity. Most of these problems relating to job security, work opportunities, and preserving the opportunity to develop, have been settled without strikes.

In some industries these problems have resulted in strikes, year after year. The new technology in shipping and its impact on employment of workers, the types of problems which were not even in existence ten years ago. In this industry productivity has increased and costs declined. Our union must provide the security for our members.

As a matter of fact, with all due respect to the committee, my appearance at these hearings has caused a disturbance to the operation of the company, and I'm required to end the strike. It appears to me that some additional time should be given to the parties to negotiate a suitable agreement.

This joint resolution is the first step in bringing about compulsory arbitration for all unions. The passage of the joint resolution will change the face of America and will bring us a long way down the road to compulsory arbitration, elimination of the right to strike, vesting the parties in the hands of third parties in the conditions in the hands of government.

In my opinion this whole approach is unconstitutional and illegal. There is no law or constitutional provision saying that we can't strike this day. There is no law or constitutional provision saying that we can't take a vote of our membership to stay on strike or on strike, or that we must take such a vote. There is no, at least not as far as I'm concerned, any conditions under which we must return to work regardless of the wishes of the workers.

This joint resolution is the Trojan Horse to open the door to an all-out compulsory arbitration, arbitration unions in the United States, and we on our part have no intention of surrendering the power we have at this time to force arbitration, that is the will of our members as expressed in a secret ballot.

I shall be happy to answer your questions.