Some Progress, But Strikes Go On

A tentative agreement was reached yesterday in the 18-day-old strike against the nation's largest independent copper producer, but there was little other apparent progress in labor disputes around the country.

Seven striking unions and the Magma Copper Co. tentatively agreed on a new three-year contract early yesterday following all-night bargaining.

It was seen as a major breakthrough in a strike that has shut down copper mines and smelters throughout the West.

The proposed new contract at Magma calls for pay increases averaging 93 cents an hour, an unfunded "cost-of-living escalator" clause, and a 50 per cent pension increase.

Major medical and sickness and accident benefits also would be raised.

Meanwhile, railroad officials said the United Transportation Union has erected an "insurmountable" obstacle to settlement of a strike against two rail lines.

The strike thus far has affected only the Southern Railroad and the Union Pacific, but the UTL has said it will go on strike against three more lines on Friday if there is no settlement.

Negotiations continued in the strikes against the Bell telephone system and Western Union, but there was no report of progress. The dock workers' strike that has brought West Coast port activity to a near-standstill continued with no end in sight.