CONGRESS HEARS WILSON'S MESSAGE

President's Address to Both Houses Is Quite Short.

RAIL TROUBLES COME FIRST

Further Legislation on That Line Is Strongly Recommended—Bill Giving Foreign Commerce Powers Free Hand Necessary.

Washington, Dec. 5—President Wilson today delivered his message to both houses of congress in joint session. The address was as follows:

Gentlemen of the Congress:

In fulfilling at this time the duty laid upon me by the Constitution of communicating to you from time to time information of the state of the Union and recommending to your consideration such legislative measures as may be lodged necessary and expedient I shall continue the practice, which I hope has been acceptable to you, of leaving to the reports of the several heads of executive departments the detailed statement of the detailed needs of the public service and of the action to those matters of more general public policy with which those reports necessarily and feasible to deal at the present session of the congress.

I realize the limitations of time under which you will necessarily act at this session and shall make my suggestions as few as possible; but there are some things left undone at the last session which there will not be time to complete and which it seems necessary in the interest of the public to do at once.

In the first place, it seems to me imperatively necessary that the earliest possible consideration of the action should be accorded the remaining measures for the purpose of settlement and regulation which I had occasion to recommend to you at the time of your last session in view of the public dangers disclosed by the unhappily unsolved difficulties which then existed and which still subsequently continue to exist, between railroads of the country and their locomotive engineers, conductors and trainmen.

Railway Troubles First.

I then recommended:

First, immediate provision for the settlement and administrative readjustment of the controversies which the commission alone has been authorized in the bill recently passed by the house of representatives and now awaiting action by the senate; in order that the commission may be enabled to deal with the many great and various duties now devolving upon it with a promptness and thoroughness which are, with its present constitution and organization, practically impossible.

Second, the appointment of an eight-hour day as the legal basis alike of work and of wages for the employment of all railway employees who are actually engaged in the work of operating trains in interstate transportation.

Third, the authorization of the appointment by the president of a small board of men to observe the actual results in experience of the time and the eight-hour day in railway transportation both for the men and for the railroads.

Fourth, explicit approval by the congress of the consideration by the interstate commerce commission of the increases of freight rates to meet such additional charges as may be found to result as may have been rendered necessary by the adoption of the eight-hour day in train service, and specifically by administrative regulation and not by legislative process in the first instance.

Fifth, an amendment to the existing federal statute which provides for the mediation, conciliation and investigation of such controversies as the present duty to a question that, in view of the methods of accommodation now provided for should not be the subject of investigation of the merits of every such dispute, but only of the means to be found for the settlement of the matter itself.

And, sixth, the judgment in the hands of the executive of the power, in case of military necessity, to take control of any part or all of the railway or the railroads of the country and to operate them for the period of the necessity and to operate them for military purposes with the authority of the congress, but without taking over the ownership of any railroad property or any part of the organization of the railroads.

Control and Operation.

I would hesitate to recommend, and I do not now say the congress would hesitate to act upon the suggestion should I make it, that any man in any occupation should be obliged by law to continue in an employment which he desired to leave. To pass a law which forbade or prevented the individual workman to leave his work before relinquishing the service which he had set himself to render would be to adopt a new principle like that of involuntary servitude. I take it for granted we are not prepared to go that length. But the proposal to limit the operation of the railways of the country when the workmen have quit service has sometimes been suggested as a way to avoid a part of the present difficulty. It would be a very different principle if the time of action of powerful bodies of men shall not be permitted to stop the industrial processes of the nation at any rate before the nation shall have had an opportunity to accommodate itself to the merits of the case as between employers and employees, time for full opinion upon an impartial statement of the facts, and opportunity to exercise all practicable means of conciliation.

I can see nothing in that proposition but the justest treatment of all parties to the controversy. There is nothing arbitrary or unjust in it unless it be arbitrary and unjust to insist that the public should be done with a full and airing discussion before the interests and the lives of all concerned as well as for the general welfare and public safety are put in jeopardy.

Other Legislation Urged.

I recommend the extension of the principle of the action of the senate which have already been taken in the case of the railway mail services: the bill which seeks to extend the principle of workmen's compensation for accidents to employees engaged in the service of the United States, to those employed in the hazardous occupations connected with the building and repair of ships and with the operation of docks and wharves in our ports and harbors; the bill which seeks to make more adequate provision for the safety of employees and travelers upon railroads engaged in interstate commerce by the use of block signals, interlocking switches and other similar safety devices; the bill which provides for the raising of the present grade of the service of the foreign service of the United States; and the bill which provides for the purchase of a building suitable for the use of the diplomatic representatives of the United States at such centers as circumstances require for their safe and convenient housing.

Renews His Recommendations.

The second and third of these recommendations the congress immediately acted on. It remains for the eight hour day as the legal basis of work and wages in train service to be established and for the appointment of a commission to observe the practical results of the experience of the measures most immediately necessary. But if postponed now that every possible opportunity should be offered for a settlement of the controversies that still unsettled. The fourth recommendation I do not feel that I can too earnestly urge. The power of the interstate commerce commission to make an increase of rates on the ground relieved in any particular case and a recommendation by the congress with regard to such increase might seem to draw in question the scope of the commission's authority in the matter. That authority is absolute and should be left so. It is essential that the commission should be free to act upon the suggestion should it make it, that any man in any occupation should be obliged by law to continue in an employment which he desired to leave. To pass a law which forbade or prevented the individual workman to leave his work before relinquishing the service which he had set himself to render would be to adopt a new principle like that of involuntary servitude. I take it for granted we are not prepared to go that length. But the proposal to limit the operation of the railways of the country when the workmen have quit service has sometimes been suggested as a way to avoid a part of the present difficulty. It would be a very different principle if the time of action of powerful bodies of men shall not be permitted to stop the industrial processes of the nation, at any rate before the nation shall have had an opportunity to accommodate itself to the merits of the case as between employers and employees, time for full opinion upon an impartial statement of the facts, and opportunity to exercise all practicable means of conciliation.

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