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UNITED STATES BOARD OF MEDIATION AND CONCILIATION

WASHINGTON

March 25, 1920.

My dear Miss Tarbell:

Your mention of the United States Board of Mediation and Conciliation in the article "We Have Got to Find Some Better Way Than the Strike" (Pictorial Review--March, 1920), suggested to me that you might, perhaps, care to have a copy of the last report on the operations of that Board for your files, and I am taking the liberty of sending you a copy; also of inflicting upon you the following comments.

The report covers the period from July 15, 1913, to June 30, 1919, and contains tables of cases coming to the Board and the disposition made of them. Tables III and IV are of cases that were handled under the Erdman Law. In a bulletin of the Bureau of Labor (No. 98--1912) on Mediation and Arbitration of Railway Labor Disputes, there appeared a table of cases numbered from 1 to 48. Between the date of that bulletin and the beginning of operations under the Newlands Law 13 additional cases were handled under the Erdman Law of which no tabulated record had been published. Those cases I have put in shape and included in Table III, so there is now available tables of cases of railroad labor controversies mediated or arbitrated under federal law from the beginning of operations under the Erdman Law (June 1, 1898) down through the Newlands Law to June 30, 1919.

A paragraph of the report endeavors to distinguish between mediation and arbitration, which two processes are confused by an astonishingly large number of well informed people. This confusion may be due in part to lack of publicity being given to the work of mediation which, as practiced by mediators of this Board is conducted in confidence between the directly interested parties. Arbitration proceedings, on the other hand, are held in public. The mediators of this Board never have sought newspaper publicity; rather have they avoided it during mediation conferences. They have conducted their negotiations as quietly as possible, and by this policy have in many instances relieved serious situations which if generally known would have aroused public feeling and excitement. From a publicity standpoint, therefore, the result has been that controversies under mediation having passed the "scare head" stage and been adjusted become ancient history in news value and little attention is paid to them; while public arbitration hearings if of sufficient importance are mentioned in the news of the day.

The report also notes the cost to the public of adjusting railroad labor controversies under the Newlands Law, and of balances saved to the public, through economical administration, from appropriations made by the Congress for the Board. When consideration is given to the facts that to June 30, 1919, the troubles of some 620,810 transportation employees have been handled at a cost to the public for mediation and arbitration of less than 40 cents per employee, and that of the total amount appropriated for the Board since the beginning of its operations more than one-quarter has been saved and covered into the U. S. Treasury, it must be admitted that, whether regarded as successful or otherwise by those claiming to be qualified to judge, the application of the law has not been a public burden of much consequence, particularly if thought be given to what might have been the incalculable cost in money and misery to the people if these controversies had not been composed and strikes had resulted.

Very respectfully,

Wm H. Smith
Secretary.

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