11-24-45

THE CONGRESSIONAL FRONT.
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BELIEVE IT OR NOT

It is now nearly 3½ months since active warfare came to an end. Yet, in connection with the many strike votes which the National Labor Relations Board has been conducting throughout the nation, each employee in a plant where a strike vote is held, gets a ballot prepared by the NLRB which reads as follows: "DO YOU WISH TO PERMIT AN INTERRUPTION OF WAR PRODUCTION IN WARTIME AS A RESULT OF THIS DISPUTE?" Now, rub your eyes and read that again. But you say, the war is over so how can war time production be interrupted? That's correct. And you ask, "How can war production be interrupted when there is no war production? And of course, the answer is that it can't? Then why such a ballot? Why such a paradox. And that brings us to the story.

THE SMITH CONNALLY ACT

Back in 1943, when it was alleged that strikes were crippling war production, there was a firm insistent clamor both at home and among the armed forces abroad that Congress deal with this problem. As a result, the House and Senate passed the War Labor Disputes Act, better known as the Smith-Connally Bill. It was vetoed by the President and then enacted over the veto by more than a two-thirds vote of both Houses. That Act is still the law. By its own terms, it will remain the law for a period of six months after the cessation of hostilities unless the President proclaims or unless Congress by concurrent resolution resolves that hostilities have been officially terminated. No such proclamation has been issued and no such resolution has been passed and, therefore, the Smith-Connally Act remains the law.

SECTION 3 OF THAT ACT

Section 8 of that Act bears the following title: "Notice of Threatened Interruptions in War Production Etc." It provides that "In order that the President may be apprised of labor disputes which threaten seriously to interrupt war production" labor organizations must file a notice of a labor dispute and of their intention to strike. On the 30th day after such a notice has been filed (unless the labor dispute has been settled) the National Labor Relations Board must conduct a secret strike ballot and that's the ballot referred to above. You might say that since the war is over, that the use of such language on a ballot is absurd. Perhaps so but the National Labor Relations Board has no choice in the matter since the Smith-Connally Act is a war time statute and the Board is merely carrying out the direction in the law.

WORK VOLUME UNDER THE ACT

Since V-J Day, the number of strike notices that have been filed has increased by leaps and bounds. The Board's work has increased enormously. In some cases, a single strike notice will cover many plants as in the case of General Motors where one notice applied to 120 plants. Funds for the administrat on of the Smith-Connally Act have been virtually exhausted already and both the Board and Congress are faced with one of three problems. Congress can provide the Board with a deficiency appropriation to carry on the work (2) the Board can use funds which were provided for the regular administration of the Wagner Act or (3) Congress can suspend the enforcement of the act by denying the use of any more money for this purpose. The latter course would in a way operate to nullify the Act.

IT SHOULD BE REPEALED

The Smith-Connally Act was of doubtful value even in war time. Industrial management was not happy about it. Labor fought it. There is general agreement that it should be repealed and many resolutions to do so have been introduced. However, the Military Affairs Committee of the House in reporting a repeal resolution tacked on a provision which is highly controversial and which may delay repeal for many months. Meanwhile, public funds are spent to conduct strike votes involving war production when there is no war production. So, the logical thing to do would be to withdraw funds for its enforcement and so terminate this strange paradox.