NO, my dear, 4908 is not somebody's telephone or house number. It is
the number of the Bill introduced in Congress on December 5, 1945 by
the Honorable Mary T. Norton, a Representative in Congress from the
State of New Jersey, which deals with fact-finding. It's official
title is "Labor-Finding Boards Act." Millions of words have been
spoken and written on the subject. It has inspired a substantial number
of letters from people in all walks of life. Perhaps it might be both
interesting and novel to make a very factual and unornamented analysis
of this proposal. In effect, this Bill does three things:

CERTIFICATION OF DISPUTES.

Section 2 of this measure provides that when a labor dispute is going
on or if there is a threat of a work stoppage which seriously affects
the public interest or interstate commerce or the national defense, and
the government mediators have been unable to bring about an agreement
between the parties who are involved, the Secretary of Labor shall
certify the facts and details to the President. In other words, if there
is a strike or lock-out and government agents cannot settle it, the
Secretary of Labor makes a complete report to the President on the whole
matter.

FACT-FINDING BOARDS.

Section 3 of the Bill provides that within 5 days after the Secretary
of Labor has certified the case to the President, the President may
appoint a Board to investigate the matter, get the facts and report
the facts to the President together with the recommendations of the
Board as to what should be done. Both sides to the labor dispute - that
is to say both labor and management - shall have a chance to present their
claims and have a full and fair hearing. The Board shall have the
power of subpoena. That is to say that the Board shall have power to
issue subpoenas to compel the attendance of witnesses and to compel
either party to present its books and records. It is the granting of
this power to the Board that has caused a great deal of controversy.
Within 20 days after the Board is appointed, it must make its report
and its recommendations to the President.

WAITING PERIOD.

Section 4 provides for a waiting period and that's the thing to which
labor objects. For a period of 30 days - which begins 5 days after
the Secretary of Labor has certified his report to the President
and ends 5 days after the Board has made its report to the President -
the parties to a labor dispute shall continue or resume work on the terms
and conditions which prevailed when the labor dispute began. And during
that time, it shall be unlawful to induce or instigate or encourage a
strike or lock-out. However, there is nothing in the Bill which would
prevent any person from quitting work. That is to say, he cannot be
compelled to work or perform service without his consent.

COMMENT.

Now, there is the substance of the so-called Fact-Finding Act. The con-
troversy resolves itself around two items. Management objects to giving
a fact-finding board the power of subpoena so that it may come in and
grab its records. Labor objects to the cooling period because it
believes that it is an infringement on the unqualified right to strike.
So, there is the whole story in brief.