

Trains back on track; dispute unresolved

WASHINGTON - The nation's freight trains rumbled the rails Thursday after the government stepped in to halt a 19-hour strike, but the disputes that led to a walkout by 235,000 workers remained unresolved.

Freight carriers and their unions will now make their cases on wage and work-rule disputes to a special review panel. Absent any new agreements the parties reach on their own, the panel will impose a mandatory settlement on both sides by late June.

Under emergency legislation rushed through Congress, the clock will start on a 65-day timetable as soon as President Bush names the board's members.

The unions won't be able to strike again, even if they don't like the ultimate settlement, nor will management be able to lock them out.

The deal, struck by the White House and Congress late Wednesday after rail workers went on strike at 7 a.m., was seen as a potential victory for the eight striking unions because it gives them a second chance at gaining a more favorable contract.

At first, the White House pushed Congress to merely enact the wage and work-rule recommendations made by a presidential emergency board in January.

The unions were not satisfied with those recommendations, and pressed Congress for a new board to try and settle differences that had dogged the industry since 1988. They got their way, though the January proposals will mark the base from which any changes will be made.

"I see it as coming into overtime at the end of a ball game after we were down. We tied it at the end," said John Woischke, a union engineer who works for Conrail out of Columbus, Ohio.

Mac Fleming, president of the Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employees, called the legislation a "narrow window for the unions to rebut the most destructive recommendations" of the earlier report.

Jim Reiter, a spokesman for the American Association of Railroads, said management considered the earlier recommendations "an exhaustive effort and a reasonable compro-

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mise.”
“It would have been a shame to throw out all that effort. At least this way, we're back at the table using that as a base. The main thing is to get back to work,” Reiter said.

Work-rule issues regarding crew sizes, miles in a one-day shift and pay differentials for some employees were expected to be hotly contested by the labor unions, officials said.

The size of wage increases — though the unions said they were too small — were not expected to be a major issue, nor was a plan to make workers start picking up part of their health care costs.

By Thursday afternoon, just hours after Bush

signed legislation ending the strike, nearly all picket lines in the nation's freight rail yards were down and cargo trains were rolling again.

America's major freight carriers, forced to shut down all operations during the strike, expected "business as usual" by Friday, said Carol Perkins, a spokeswoman for the Association of American Railroads.

Bush signed the strike-ending bill about 2 a.m. Thursday after Congress, moving with rare speed, passed emergency legislation halting the nation's first nationwide rail strike since 1982.

Both Congress and the White House wanted to move quickly because of the potential cost to an already struggling U.S. economy: some \$50 million a day and possible forced layoffs in the auto industry and other businesses relying on the rails.

Under the legislation, Bush will name three people to a special board, including one person who served on the first panel. The other two members will be arbitrators picked from a list submitted by the National Mediation Board.

Bush unveils school reforms

WASHINGTON - President Bush unveiled his blueprint Thursday for top-to-bottom school reforms, including a voluntary nationwide exam system, aid pegged to academic results, and hundreds of millions of dollars in start-up funds for "a new generation of schools."

"I'm here to say America will move forward," declared Bush as he described the "America 2000" education strategy in an East Room address before governors, business leaders and educators.

"The time for all the reports and rankings, for all the studies and surveys about what's wrong with our schools, is past," said Bush.

The plan, crafted by new Education Secretary Lamar Alexander in his first month on the job, calls for relatively little new federal spending. It relies instead upon states, governors, teachers, parents, students and communities to take steps to embrace the rigorous new education goals that Bush and the governors pronounced early last year.

It is "a national strategy, not a federal program," according to a 34-page Education Department strategy manual.

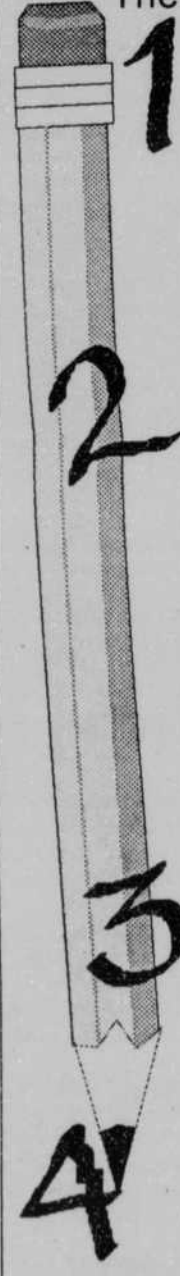
Still, Bush said he will ask Congress for \$690 million, mostly for \$1 million seed grants to open a prototype "New American School" in each of the 535 congressional districts by 1996. He invited communities to vie for the grants to create the non-traditional new schools, some of which may be operated by private businesses.

Democratic leaders of Congress said they would work with Bush on the plan but also accused him of waiting too long and of obstructing their past school improvement initiatives.

"We welcome his interest in education, belated as it is," Senate Majority Leader George Mitchell, D-Maine, said.

America 2000:

The President's Education Strategy



- 1 Create better and more accountable schools for today's students:**
 - Establish world-class standards in English, mathematics, science, history and geography.
 - Set up a system of voluntary national examinations for all fourth, eighth and twelfth grade students in five core subjects.
 - Use schools as sites of reform.
 - Provide and promote school choice. The president believes that educational choice for parents and students is critical to improving our schools.
 - Offer incentives for teachers and principals.

- 2 Create a new generation of American schools for tomorrow's students:**
 - Contributions from the business community for research and development would help design a New Generation of American Schools.
 - The president will ask congress to provide \$550 million in one-time start-up funds to create at least 535 New American Schools that "break the mold" of existing school designs.
 - The president called upon every community in the country to become an America 2000 Community and adopt the six national education goals, establish a community-wide strategy for achieving the goals, develop a report card for measuring its progress, and demonstrate its readiness to create and support a New American School.
 - Seek the commitment of America's leaders at all levels.
 - Families and children need to be devoted to learning, including working with children at home to improve performance in school.

- 3 Transform America into a nation of students:**
 - Strengthen the nation's education effort for yesterday's students, today's workers.
 - Establish standards for job skills and knowledge.
 - Create business and community skill clinics.
 - Enhance job training opportunities.
 - Mobilize a "nation of students."

- 4 Make our communities places where learning will happen:**
 - Encourage greater parental involvement.
 - Enhance program effectiveness for children and communities.

AP

Iraqi, U.S. officials to discuss refugees

INCIRLIK AIR BASE, Turkey - Iraqi and U.S. officials agreed Thursday to hold their first direct talks in northern Iraq, where Saddam Hussein's armies have crushed a Kurdish rebellion and sent hundreds of thousands of refugees fleeing.

Turkish authorities, meanwhile, warned that many more Kurdish refugees could die before they are moved to new camps inside Iraq that are to be set up and protected by U.S., French and British forces.

U.S. military teams scouted Iraqi territory Thursday to search for sites for refugee camps, officials in Turkey and at the Pentagon said.

About three to four dozen members of the U.S. military are in Iraq at any given time, Pentagon spokesman Bob Hall said. He said the U.S. troops so far have had no face-to-face contact with any Iraqi military during their efforts.

The new commander of the U.S. relief effort for Kurdish refugees was to meet Friday in northern Iraq with an Iraqi military delegation to discuss ways to avoid any accidental conflicts during the operation, a military spokesman said.

The U.S. commander, Lt. Gen. John Shalikashvili, was to travel from this base in southern Turkey to Zakuhi in northern Iraq for the meeting, according to the spokesman, Cmdr. John Woodhouse.

Woodhouse did not disclose the reason for the meeting, but a diplomatic source said earlier that such a meeting would be to help avoid clashes with the Iraqis.

Iraq has been warned not to interfere with efforts to assist and protect the refugees.

The Baghdad government has protested the U.S. plan for the new

camps as unnecessary, but Thursday's announcement of the planned talks suggested Iraq was willing to acquiesce.

Iraq also took one more step Thursday toward putting the war behind it. The Iraqi Ambassador to the United Nations said Iraq had given the United Nations a detailed list of its chemical and biological weapons capabilities and nuclear facilities. That was aimed at complying with a stringent U.N. resolution setting down terms or a permanent cease-fire.

Hundreds of thousands of Iraqi Kurds fled into the mountains of northern Iraq after a rebellion in their traditional homeland was crushed by Saddam's forces in the wake of the Persian Gulf war.

At the crude encampments in the rugged terrain along Iraq's borders with Turkey and Iran, up to 1,000 refugees are dying daily of hunger, disease and exposure, aid officials have estimated.

Officials expect that finding sites and building the new refugee centers will take up to 40 more days, and some say even those estimates are too optimistic.

Mahmoud Yildirim, the Turkish commander of the huge ramshackle settlement at Isikveren, estimated that many more people would likely die in that period.

Yildirim estimated that up to 20 people are dying each day at the Isikveren camp alone, one of several dozen settlements of refugees.

Some medical care is available in most camps, but the lack of sanitation and the scarcity of water is leading to increased illness. Distribution of relief supplies remains a difficult problem, with mob scenes around trucks and supply drop sites.

Bush concedes on gun control

WASHINGTON - The Bush administration made a second gun-control concession on Thursday by signaling its willingness to ban some semiautomatic weapons if Congress enacts key provisions of the president's crime bill.

If President Bush gets the crime package he wants, said Attorney General Dick Thornburgh, the proposed ban on nine types of assault weapons, as passed by the Senate last year, would be viewed "much more favorably."

Thornburgh's statements to the Senate Judiciary Committee marked the second time in recent weeks that the administration has given ground on gun-control legislation.

Last month, the administration said it would accept the proposed seven-day waiting period for handgun purchases to win passage of its anti-crime package, which includes an expansion of the federal death penalty and curbs on the appeal rights of death-row inmates.

Both gun-control measures "will be favora-

bly reviewed by the administration only as part of a comprehensive crime control package incorporating the key provisions in the president's bill," Thornburgh told the Senate panel.

Thornburgh repeated a threat that the president would otherwise veto gun-control legislation.

Failure to reach agreement on death-penalty and other anti-crime provisions last fall produced bitter argument between Congress and the administration.

A House-Senate conference "trashed virtually every tough provision there was and put out a wimpish bill," Sen. Orrin Hatch, R-Utah, complained at the hearing.

Democrats in the House, who are pushing the so-called Brady Bill toward a floor vote this spring, have said they won't link anti-crime legislation with the gun-control measure.

But Sen. Joseph Biden Jr., D-Del., expressed a willingness to strike a deal despite his objec-

tions to some of the proposals in Bush's anti-crime package.

"I think your willingness to moderate the administration's position on gun control measures paves the way for passage of some tough legislation," Biden told the attorney general.

Thornburgh stopped short of saying he would urge Bush to sign an otherwise acceptable crime bill that included the gun control measures, saying: "I don't write blank checks."

The Brady Bill has gained momentum this year, particularly after last month's endorsement by former President Reagan. It is named for former White House press secretary James Brady, who was shot in the head and paralyzed by John Hinckley Jr. in an assassination attempt upon Reagan, who was wounded in the chest.

The ban on nine categories of semiautomatic weapons.

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