

EVIDENCE TAKEN IN WAGE DEBATE AT BOULDER CITY

Representatives From 4
Different Communities
Testify

Representatives, of organized labor from Boulder City, Las Vegas, Los Angeles and Phoenix gathered in the first-named city yesterday to give evidence they hope will result in establishment of a higher wage on all Boulder dam workings and substantiate a similar rate of pay on the \$250,000 highway from Overton to Boulder lake in the Recreational area.

At the outset of the hearing Vahan Moushegian, special representative of the federal department of labor, made it clear that he was not present in the role of "conciliator" or "arbitrator" but as a fact-finder for the bureau of public roads and the secretary of interior.

IN EXPLAINING his interpretation of the "prevailing wage" Moushegian said it was based if possible "on the prevailing wage paid to a majority of crafts in the particular locality under consideration."

"If no majority exists, then it is the wage paid to thirty per cent of the crafts. Where this does not exist, the average wage paid is taken," he said.

Type of evidence accepted to substantiate wage rates, he divided into two sections. First, wages paid on comparative projects and second, union agreements with contractors in that area.

His purpose was two-fold, he explained. First, he was to determine the prevailing rates in highway construction in this area, for application to the Overton-Boulder lake project. This determination will be made within the department of labor and will be binding on the bureau of public roads in awarding the contract.

SECONDLY, HE had been requested by Secretary Ickes to investigate the wages being paid on heavy construction work similar in nature to Boulder dam. The request was the outgrowth of the controversy arising following the acceptance by the unions of the 40 hour week on the dam with a scale of \$1.12½ an hour for skilled labor.

The unions are asking \$1.20 an hour, charging that to cut the weekly wage is in violation of the administration's policy of spreading employment by reducing the number of hours without cutting the weekly wage.

In this instance, Moushegian explained, the report of the hearing will be turned over to the secretary for his guidance in settling the dispute.

First witness was L. A. Parker, of Los Angeles, business agent for the hoisting and highway engineers who presented the scale prevailing in his territory, exhibiting contracts to substantiate each.

His scale called for the following rates: concrete mixer operator, \$1.12½ to \$1.25 an hour; compressor operator \$1.12½; crane operator \$1.25; drag line operator \$1.50; elevating grader operator \$1.12½; fireman 90c; Le-Tourneau operator \$1.12½; motor patrol operator \$1.12½; oiler 90c; power shovel operator \$1.50; tractor operator \$1.12½; cableway operator \$1.50; air compressor operator \$1.12½; asphalt plant operator \$1.50; concrete and gravel plant operator \$1.12½.

HE SAID this scale is in effect on all public works in southern California and on Grand Coulee, Bonneville and Horse Mesa dams. The Arizona state scale is even higher, he said, explaining that although the rates at Parker dam are lower, negotiations are now in progress seeking to establish a higher rate.

The present hourly wage for skilled labor at Parker, he explained, is \$1.15.

Parker said the dispute between the crafts he represented and the bureau of reclamation was that when the 40 hour week had been accepted the weekly wage was reduced. He said his group

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Evidence Taken

desired \$48 for the 40 hour week.

HUSTON MILLS, assistant state highway engineer, testified that prior to the passage of the Farndale act, the highway department and bureau of public roads had determined wage scales on all projects, but that now the labor commissioner makes the determination.

At the request of the referee, Mills submitted payroll reports on the Las Vegas underpass and Apex highway projects, and stated that the Glendale project recently contracted for contained the rate of wages established by Fitzgerald as the prevailing rate here.

He said the same scale would be included in the specifications

for the Jean underpass and the Jean-Goodsprings highway.

E. C. Brown of the bureau of public roads substantiated Fitzgerald's wage rate determination, stating that it represents the scale now being paid in this area.

CLAUDE MACKKEY, WPA director, said he had been instructed by Washington to attend the hearing but that he had little to offer in the way of evidence.

"The policy of the WPA is to pay the prevailing hourly wage," he explained. "That was set at \$1 an hour for skilled labor about 18 months ago, and there has been no adjustment since for the reason that we are not employing any skilled workmen—they all have jobs."

J. J. Fitzgerald, state labor commissioner, followed with an extended discussion of the prevailing wage set-up details of which are carried in another column of this issue.

J. S. Hardwick, head of the Arizona department of labor was sworn and submitted the Arizona scale for public works adopted by the state highway commission on July 12 of this year.

THESE RATES call for the following hourly wage: bricklayers \$1.50; bricklayer helpers 87½c; plasters \$1.50; cement finisher \$1.25; tractor operator 20 horsepower 65c, fifty horsepower \$1.25; caterpillar operator 30-50 H. P. \$1.00, fifty horsepower and up \$1.25; brush painter \$1.00; spray painter \$1.25; ironworker \$1.25; riggers \$1.25; truck-drivers 1½ ton 5 yard truck, 68¾c; over 1½ ton, 5 yard, 75c; 7-8 yard trucks, 85c; 8-12 yard trucks \$1.00; truck-driver helper, 65c; teamster, 2-line, 65c; teamster 4-line 75c; bulldozer operator \$1.25; motor grader operator \$1.00; motor patrol operator \$1.25; shovel operator \$1.00; crusher operator \$1.12½ to \$1.25; welder \$1.32½; machinists \$1.20; machinist helper 87½c; powdermen \$1.00; blacksmith \$1.20; plumbers \$1.25; sheet metal workers \$1.12½; carpenters \$1.12½; electrician \$1.12½; La Tourneau operators, \$1.25.

THESE RATES are being paid on the highway contracts now under construction in Mohave county, Arizona he explained, these being adjacent to Boulder dam. He said they are also being paid on the various dam projects in Arizona.

Cotton Murray, representing the Phoenix Building Trades Council, offered in evidence contracts between various unions and the Arizona state contractors association showing that the Arizona wage scale is being paid on all work in that state.

W. A. Gray, representing the Phoenix local of operating engineers testified that the Arizona scale is being paid on highway projects in Mohave county.

Ragnald Fyhen appeared as representative of the metal trades department of the American Federation of Labor, the machinists, federal labor union and state federation of labor.

He called attention to the Arizona wage scale and the rates being paid by Westinghouse and General Electric Companies on Boulder dam to substantiate his claim that the skilled crafts he represents, should receive the \$1.20 an hour.

HE SAID that the two large electric concerns are paying "more than \$1.20 an hour on a monthly basis" and that the bureau of reclamation on the installation of electrical equipment now going on is paying at the rate of \$1.19½ on a monthly basis.

He pointed out that the skilled workers now employed receive "no annual leave, no sick leave, no old-age benefits." He said that the rate of pay at Fort Peck and Grand Coulee dam is higher than at Boulder and that the \$1.15 an hour skilled rate at Parker is under protest.

The present rate at Boulder, he described as a "hangover" from the PWA schedule established several years ago.

He explained at length the

manner in which the 40 hour week proposal was accepted by the workers, stating that the unions agreed to the \$1.10 scale set under the misapprehension that they had to choose one of three proposals submitted. The present scale, he declared, was accepted under protest.

THE LABOR leader said the rate for skilled labor should be \$1.20 an hour made retroactive to July 1 when the present scale was adopted.

He then entered a protest against men being forced to work overtime and then required to lay off whatever extra time they put in. He also called attention to the present method of change-shifts which he said was not in keeping with union precepts.

He asked that some method of settling such disputes be set up, and also insisted that overtime rates of pay be made to conform to union standards instead of being set at "straight time."

In closing, Fyhen urged that the equality of wage rates now existing among the various metals trades be continued.

T. D. BETTS appearing for the electrical workers, offered evidence that the old contracts now in existence between his craft and employers call for \$1.25 an hour for journeymen electricians and 75c an hour for helpers. New contracts call for \$1.37½ for journeymen and 85c for helpers. The rate on Boulder dam is \$1.12½ and 77½c he said contending that the \$1.37½ rate should be adopted there.

He also protested against the present overtime system on the dam and said that despite the fact that his craft had been assured there would be no more overtime after September 1 of this year the practice was still followed.

Betts said the scale on Yuma dam is \$1.45, on Parker \$1.15, and on Coulee \$1.25 to \$1.37½

ANTHONY SAUNDERS, secretary of the Building Trades Council and representative of the plasterers, cement finishers, carpenters, bricklayers and other crafts, introduced evidence to show that truckdrivers were paid 87½c an hour on the Las Vegas grammar school and recommended a scale of 75c for drivers of trucks with 10,000 pound "payload", 85c for payloads of 10,000 to 20,000 and \$1.00 for those above.

He said the bureau of power and light is paying unskilled labor from \$5.50 to \$6.00 a day on the house construction now under way in Boulder City, and that the workers on the dam are now receiving 62½ cents an hour. This, he pointed out, goes back to the new scale set July 1, prior to which he declared there were ten classes of unskilled labor receiving from \$4.00 a day to \$6.00 a day.

HE SAID that the PWA scale for carpenters was \$1.00 an hour but is now considerably higher and agreed to submit affidavits to substantiate the contention.

Saunders urged the adoption of a rate of \$1.20 for skilled labor and 75c for unskilled.

Harry S. Plough representing the bridge-builders and structural iron workers of southern California, introduced contracts showing payment of \$1.37½ an hour for his crafts. He said iron workers on Parker dam are getting \$1.37½ and riggers \$1.15. He held out for \$1.37½ for these crafts on Boulder dam.

William Harnden of Boulder City, representing the carpenters, said that 95 per cent of all carpenters in Clark county are union men. He said that on a recent contract awarded by the bureau of reclamation on the All-

American canal, the rate for carpenters was set at \$1.25 an hour. The rate on Parker Dam is \$1.15. At present on Boulder dam the wage is \$1.12½ and this is the one adopted by the state labor commissioner in his most recent set-up.

Harnden protested against the classifications of "rough carpenter" and "hammer and saw men" as contained in the highway specifications.

"A man is either a carpenter or he isn't," Harnden said. "We recognize only carpenters and apprentices and request that this practice be followed on all public works."

He was requested to submit the apprentice scale of pay and said he would do so.

K. D. Hickman, representing the painters and decorators, said the rate for his craft on Coulee, Fort Peck, Seminole and Bonneville is \$1.25 an hour and on Parker dam, \$1.20.

The city of Los Angeles is paying \$1.00 an hour and living expenses to the men brought to Boulder City from the coast to work on the houses now being built there. The prevailing scale in Reno is \$12.00 a day for six hours, he pointed out, and stated that local contractors are willing to pay \$1.25 in Las Vegas if the scale is adopted on Boulder dam.

He was requested to submit affidavits to substantiate this statement and agreed to do so. He urged the establishment of the \$1.25 rate on Boulder dam.

Wm. D. Roberts, representing the Hodcarriers and Common Laborers, testified that prior to July 1, common laborers on Boulder dam were paid from \$4.48 to \$6.00 a day, but that since then the rate is \$5.00 a day. The reduction occasioned by the adoption of the 40 hour week and the new scale, hit the common laborers hardest, he said, dropping many from \$35 a week to \$24 a week, a situation against which he pro-

tested vigorously.

He said the common laborers were not very well represented at the hearing on the present wage scale and while agreeing that the going rate is 62½ cents an hour at the moment said that it should be raised to 75c.

Mouchegian asked for a list of highway contractors doing business in the state and indicated he would request their wage scales as part of the evidence of the hearing.

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