

News from Senator

BOB DOLE



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DOLE URGES PRESIDENT TO ENSURE GRAIN MOVEMENT ON ROCK ISLAND LINE

WASHINGTON -- In a telegram today to President Carter, Sen. Bob Dole (R-Kan.) called for the restoration of rail service along the Rock Island line so that grain being stored in elevators and on the ground can be transported to market.

The troubled Rock Island Railroad is currently in the midst of an employee strike, called last Tuesday by the Brotherhood of Railway and Airline Clerks in response to a deadlock in contract negotiations. From 1,000 to 2,500 union workers are off the job, either striking or honoring picket lines.

"The strike by the Brotherhood of Railway and Airline Clerks and the United Transportation Union could affect a significant portion of the \$46 billion of agricultural products expected to be exported this year," Dole said. "A lengthy strike could threaten the shipment of 1.4 billion bushels of export wheat this year and comparable amounts of corn. Each carload of grain we fail to supply means sales and profits for our international competition and an increase in our trade deficit.

"The Rock Island strike will particularly hurt the economy of Midwestern agricultural states. Because of its 1,700 miles of Rock Island track, Iowa will feel the greatest impact. This comes at the worst possible time, as Iowa prepares to harvest a record corn crop in October. Kansas, with its 1,000 miles of track and 50 trains per day, will be hard hit because many elevators are overflowing with wheat from the recent record crop. Many of these elevators are served solely by the Rock Island Railroad."

Dole called on Carter "to use the powers of your office to restore service along the Rock Island freight routes and ensure that grain stored in elevators and on the ground along the Rock Island line is transported to markets in our country and abroad."

"If service is not restored," he said, "much of the grain will deteriorate. This wheat must be moved from the elevators to make room for expected good crops of milo and corn later this year. These same problems face Illinois, Missouri, Arkansas, Oklahoma, Texas and Colorado, which will lose a combined total of 3,500 miles of service."

In addition to the strike, the Rock Island is currently undergoing financial reorganization under federal bankruptcy laws.