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This Week In Congress Radio Address: U.S. Steel Industry Labor Strike, 1959 July 17

Speaker: Senator J. Allen Frear

Transcribed by: David Cardillo

[00:00]

Announcer: The Week in Congress, recorded on July 17th, 1959.

Mr. Kelly: From Washington, DC, United States Senator J. Allen Frear reports again to the people of Delaware on current congressional affairs. Ladies and gentlemen, Senator Frear.

Senator Frear: Thank you, Mr. Kelly. Once again, one of the nation's basic industries, steel, has been silenced in its operations because of the failure of management and employees to agree on a new work contract. At the moment, and apparently for some days to come, there will be no critical shortage of this vital product because of the backlog which most users have assembled in anticipation of what has now come to pass. However, if the strike continues for any great length of time, its effects will have an adverse impact on the nation's entire economy. Of course, there are immediate consequences falling on the thousands of steel workers who are suffering the loss of their paychecks. Most of these men are family people with wives and children to support, and in these days of high costs of living for the necessities of life, these hardships are immediate and real. In addition to the wages that are being lost, the overall welfare of the steel industry is likewise suffering. Company stockholders, many of whom are undoubtedly employees as well as management, stand to lose because their investments in the company have no chance to increase during this period of idleness. As is usually the case, representatives of the steel workers and management have been negotiating for many weeks in an effort to reach agreement on issues that separate the two points of view. That they have not done so should not be construed necessarily as an indication that a long and costly strike must occur before the two sides can finally get together. Federal mediators have been active in bringing about further discussions since the work stoppage began. The President and members of Congress have likewise encouraged an exchange of views in the hope that issues which are yet unsettled may be quickly brought into agreement. As most of us can remember from the past, a strike in such a basic industry as steel can have many side effects other than those most acutely felt by producers and users of steel itself. For instance, the automobile industry, while requiring great quantities of steel also uses many other products in the manufacture of cars; but without available steel, all of the whole gigantic automobile empire would be forced to shut down. When we stop to consider how many products which we use every day are manufactured of steel or have steel

parts in them, it is readily apparent that a continuation of this industry's productive services is absolutely essential. The President could legally intervene in the strike through the authority in the Taft-Hartley Act; however, he is hopeful, as are many other people both in and out of government that this will not be necessary. It is much preferable for the representatives of the steel industry and the United Steel Workers of America to reconcile their own differences and demonstrate that they can do so without interference by the Federal government. There is really not a great deal to be gained by either side through strikes of this kind, for whatever concessions are won by the employees as a result of the strike are often wiped out by the fact that they have had to be out of work for such a long time in order to receive them. As a matter of fact, in many instances, they never do really catch up. An expanding and growing America needs and wants the benefit of a continuing steel production. It is essential not only for the infinite variety of peacetime uses, but for the needs of the national defense that the flow of steel products may be maintained. I am fully confident that the pride of accomplishment which exists as much among steel workers as steel management will contribute to the attainment of an early agreement to end the present temporary stoppage. Much of America's success as the industrial giant of the world can be attributed to the availability of its steel products. For that reason and because harmonious labor and management relations are so earnestly desired by all fair-minded persons, I trust we may soon expect a mutually successful and compatible arrangement which will return the production of our great steel industry to a normal status.

Mr. Kelly:

Thank you, Senator Frear. From the nation's capital, you have heard United States Senator J. Allen Frear in his regular report to the people of Delaware on current congressional affairs. Senator Frear will be heard again next week at this same time, speaking from the Senate Office Building in Washington.

[End 05:48]