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TELEPHONE STRIKE SCHEDULED TODAY

**Bell System Offer Rejected
—Early Walkouts Start
Throughout the Nation**

By PHILIP SHABECOFF

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, July 13 — Joseph A. Beirne, president of the Communications Workers of America, announced this afternoon that his 500,000-worker union would strike the nation's telephone system at 6 A.M. tomorrow.

Even while Mr. Beirne was saying at a news conference here that there was almost no chance of avoiding a strike, some units of his union were already throwing up picket lines in scattered sections of the country.

Walkouts were reported in Michigan, Ohio, Florida, California, Virginia, South Dakota and Georgia.

In New Jersey, 11,000 members of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers walked out at midnight.

If a strike by the communi-

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ANNOUNCES PHONE STRIKE FOR TODAY: Joseph A. Beirne, the president of the Communications Workers of America, at his news conference yesterday in Washington.

Telephone Strike Is Scheduled for Today

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cations union does take place, about 400,000 workers would immediately leave their jobs, the rest later. With an average salary of about \$133 a week, this means that about \$66-million a week would not flow into the workers' paychecks and into the national economy.

Except in cases of need, the union does not pay strike benefits. However, the union tries to help members weather the strike through a "community services program" that includes arrangements for credit at supermarkets, moratoriums on mortgage payments, and even assistance in finding temporary jobs. The last national phone strike was in 1968.

Mr. Beirne brushed aside an offer made by the Bell Telephone System this morning to improve its contract terms in negotiations with union bargaining units around the country. He called the offer a "scandalous" appeal to public opinion.

The union leader asserted at a news conference at the union's headquarters here that all the issues involved in the contract dispute could not be resolved by the 6 A.M. strike deadline.

Mr. Beirne said that a strike could still be averted if the company accepted all of the union's demands. "But that is a very remote possibility," he added.

The Bell System controls most of the nation's large telephone operating companies as well as the Western Electric Company and other production and installation units.

Although non-Bell operating companies are not being struck, they tie in with the Bell System for other than local calls.

Past strikes against the Bell System had little immediate effect on telephone service because the system is largely automated and management employees were able to provide emergency service.

Effects of Strike

But the strike is expected to halt immediately all telephone installation work and repair service. A prolonged strike could result in a complete breakdown of the system.

Mr. Beirne that, once a strike started, it could only be ended by a mail referendum of the union's half-million members. That would take at least two weeks, he added.

In reply to a question, he said that union and management were only about 1 per cent apart on a wage settlement and 0.75 per cent apart on pensions, using the company's method of computing the wage package.

A spokesman for the Bell System here said that the company had been trying without success since 9 A.M. today to get union negotiators to sit down at the bargaining table to hear its new proposals.

A spokesman for the Chesapeake and Potomac Telephone Company, one of two "pattern-setting" companies in the national contract negotiations, said tonight that the company was ready to make a new contract offer, including a 16 per cent increase in wages and fringe benefits in the first year. But the spokesman added that the union bargaining team refused to meet with company officials to receive the new offer.

'Scandalous Double-Dealing'

Mr. Beirne said that he and his executive board had been waiting all weekend for word from Bell and still had not been notified about the new contract offer. He called the company's pany's announcement "scandalous double-dealing."

The Bell System's consolidated income statement for 1970 showed operating revenues of about \$8-billion and profits of about \$2-billion after taxes.

Mr. Beirne said that the wage package offered by the company was very complicated but that it added up to about an 11 per cent increase in the first year of the contract and about 30 per cent over a proposed three-year contract.

He outlined the following union demands other than wages and pensions:

¶An end to "antifeminist" wage scales that the company allegedly follows in paying its women operators less than a commensurate wage with men.

¶A more equitable geographic distribution of wages.

Mr. Beirne said there now is a

\$40 gap between the wages paid by Bell in its top rate zone and its bottom rate zone.

¶Compulsory payments to the union by nonunion members who are represented by the union in collective bargaining. Mr. Beirne described this demand as "union security."

¶Improved health benefits.

¶"Hundreds" of local grievances.

¶Contract settlements retroactive to the date of the original contract expiration.

Mr. Beirne said that independent telephone unions in Pennsylvania and Connecticut had informed him that they, too, would go on strike.

Other Labor Problems

Meanwhile, labor-management conditions were growing increasingly turbulent throughout the country.

In Chicago, Judge Joseph Sam Perry of Federal District Court issued a temporary restraining order barring the United Transportation Union from carrying out a strike scheduled for Friday against the Chicago and North Western Railway. The decision came after the railroad lost an appeal in Washington earlier in the day against a ruling by the Federal District Court here in which the court refused to grant the restraining order.

Judge Perry's order delayed the threatened strike until July 23, but a union spokesman in Cleveland said that the ruling would not effect threatened strikes against the Southern Railroad and the Union Pacific.

The union had scheduled the strike for 6 A.M. Friday against the three railroads and the Norfolk and Western and the Southern Pacific eight days later in a dispute over work rules.

About 30,000 copper workers

remained on strike after talks between the United Steelworkers of America, which represents the copper workers, and the Phelps Dodge Copper Company were recessed this afternoon.

On the West Coast, 15,000 members of the International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union continued their strike.

About 17,000 Western Union workers are still on a strike that started June 1.

Finally, negotiations continued between the steel workers union, which represents more than 400,000 workers in the basic steel industry, and the major steel companies. The current steel contract expires Aug. 1 and the union has said it would strike if it has not won a satisfactory contract by then.

Impact on New York

A spokesman for the Communications Workers of America said yesterday that telephone users in the New York metropolitan area could expect to have a "growing awareness" of a strike by telephone workers.

Morton Bahr, a vice president of the union, estimated that 146,000 workers would stay off their jobs in New York, New Jersey and Connecticut if the strike begins today at 6 A.M.

"The public will first notice the strike when they attempt to make credit-card or operator-assisted calls and they either get a male voice or they experience long waits," Mr. Bahr said.

He also said that telephone installation work and repair service would halt. "If you are expecting a telephone to be installed or your phone is out of order, forget it until after the strike," Mr. Bahr said.