

Move to try to liquidate railroad

United Press International
TOPEKA, Kan. — The Kansas attorney general — lead counsel in a state action to recover back taxes from the bankrupt Rock Island Railroad — will file a motion this week to liquidate the strike-bound railroad, a spokesman said Monday.

The Kansas official also plans to ask that other railroads be compelled to operate the Rock Island system until the sale of its assets is complete.

The action by Attorney General Robert Stephan followed a meeting Friday in Des Moines between officials of nine states who agreed to the course of action. Also Friday, Rock Island's major creditor filed a motion for liquidation of the line in federal court in Chicago.

Stephan's spokesman, Neil

Woerman, said the motion for liquidation is a long-term solution.

"In the short term, we also will be asking that the court order the bankruptcy trustee to request that the Interstate Commerce Commission come down with a directed service order," Woerman said. "That would divide up the Rock Island on a temporary basis among other railroads for operation."

Woerman said the other railroads cannot be forced to operate the line at a loss. He estimated it would require a \$10 million per month subsidy from the Federal Railroad Administration during the short-term action.

The spokesman said liquidation appeared to be the only answer for the troubled railroad.

"It appears now it would take

some \$30 million to \$40 million to go back into operation if the strike is ended and Rock Island doesn't have the funds to do that," he said.

U.S. District Judge Frank McGarr has set an Oct. 5 deadline for any other motions related to those filed by creditors Friday, Woerman said he expected several of the other states would file motions similar to the Kansas action.

Rock Island, under the control of a trusteeship, has resumed paying its property taxes to the states since 1978. However, it is still locked in litigation with the 13 states over recovery of millions in unpaid property taxes and interest between 1974 and 1977. Woerman said it had been estimated the railroad owed \$4 million to Kansas alone.

Other states include Arkansas, Colorado, Illinois, Iowa, Louisiana, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Tennessee and Texas. Henry Crown, president of Material Services Corp. of Chicago, Friday filed a motion citing record first-half losses approaching \$50 million, nearly exhausted cash reserves, the current strike and "catastrophic" management policies.

Crown's motion said trustee William Gibbons "ought to abandon immediately his ill-founded and hopeless game plan of a traditional income-based reorganization" and asked for liquidation.

"The course of action pursued by the trustee has proven catastrophic. The Rock Island's 1979 losses are out of hand. Putting it bluntly, the trustee has lost control."



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Hurricane Henri's approach halts work to cap gusher

United Press International
MIAMI — Hurricane Henri stalled in the middle of Mexico's Bay of Campeche Monday, sending hundreds of Mexicans fleeing from coastal lowlands and halting "Project Sombrero" at the site of a huge oil spill that has polluted beaches as far north as Texas.

Henri, the season's eighth tropical twister, was packing minimal hurricane-force winds of 75 mph, but forecasters said it could strengthen.

At noon Monday, the hurricane was centered about 150 miles northeast of Vera Cruz, Mexico, near Latitude 20.5 north, Longitude 94.0 west. Forecasters said any movement for the next 24 hours would be slow and erratic.

At midday, Henri was centered 123 miles northwest of the

huge Petroleos Mexicanos (Pemex) runaway gusher that has been spewing oil into the Bay of Campeche and Gulf of Mexico since June 3. The 125-mile radius of Henri's strong winds was sending gales over the gusher site.

Rough seas caused postponement of "Project Sombrero," an attempt to put a 30-ton bell over the gusher to capture escaping oil that polluted beaches along the Mexican coast and as far north as Texas this summer. The bell had been scheduled to be put in place Sunday, but a Pemex spokesman said ships carrying it were buffeted by 9-foot waves and 50 mph winds, and were unable to anchor solidly enough for the job.

However, work continued on the drilling of two relief wells

from heavy platforms that can ride out high waves and winds.

Warned by Mexican officials, about 200 families began evacuating from the shores of the rising Papaluapan River at Alvarado, a shrimp fishing port of 6,000 people about 30 miles south of Vera Cruz.

All Mexican navy and army units at Vera Cruz were ordered back to their barracks to be ready for storm assistance if needed, Mexican authorities reported.

Forecasters at the National Hurricane Center in Miami warned that "the closeness of Henri to the Mexican coast means that even a small movement could bring hurricane conditions to that area."

Henri, however, posed no threat to the United States coastline Monday.

Brennan back at work after slight stroke

United Press International
WASHINGTON — Justice William Brennan, at 73 the oldest member of the Supreme Court, had a "slight" stroke on Sept. 4, his office disclosed Monday.

The court information office said Brennan "returned to work here at the Supreme Court Monday and is fully participating in the court schedule."

The announcement said the justice "suffered an apparent slight stroke causing a mild impairment of the use of his right hand."

He was hospitalized at the Bethesda Naval Hospital from Sept. 10 to Sept. 13 and is exercising "to restore the full use of the hand," the announcement said.

Brennan was appointed to the high court in 1956 by President Dwight Eisenhower.

Kidnapped executive back on job

United Press International
TOLEDO, Ohio — William Niehous, the high-ranking Owens-Illinois executive kidnapped in Venezuela by Marxist terrorists, Monday fulfilled a dream of his 40 months in captivity in the South American jungles — he returned to work.

Niehous, 48, has been named vice president and director of administration for corporate technology with Owens-Illinois in Toledo. He said after his rescue last June he did not want to return to Venezuela.

Niehous was the glass and plastic company's highest-ranking representative in Venezuela when he was kidnapped from his Caracas home in February 1976. That began a more than three-year ordeal spent mainly in dense Venezuelan jungles.

"It was a political act," Niehous said of the kidnapping. "They were not assassins or murderers."

There were times when I gave up hope, but it was only temporary.

The ordeal ended June 29, when he escaped his captors.

Donna Niehous had filed suit against Owens-Illinois during her husband's captivity, charging the firm didn't take the proper steps to secure his release. The suit has since been dismissed.

In his new job, Niehous will be responsible for technical planning and business analysis functions, technical information services, accounting projects and budget control and personnel.

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