

the nation

# Strikebound Rock Island to get help

WASHINGTON — The Interstate Commerce Commission has ordered a group of Midwest railroads to provide emergency service along routes normally served by the strikebound Rock Island lines, a major Midwest grain shipper.

Vice President Walter Mondale, who announced the development from the White House, said the action means the Rock Island service will be back in operation by the beginning of next week.

The commissioners ordered the Kansas City Terminal Railroad, an organization of 12 lines that mutu-

ally own a freight yard, to operate over Rock Island tracks in 14 states, using Rock Island's equipment and employees, for at least the next 60 days.

The Rock Island was shut down three weeks ago by two striking railway unions after the company refused to grant retroactive pay raises like those in nationwide railroad industry contracts reached earlier this year. The railroad has been bankrupt since 1975 and has been operating under court supervision.

Noting the railroad serves 10 to 15 percent of the agricultural production of a 14-state area in the

Midwest, Mondale estimated the strike was causing a loss of \$4 million to \$5 million a day in revenues to farmers and grain shippers.

The ICC decision automatically triggers an infusion of millions of federal dollars to get the railroad running again. Federal law requires railroads directed to provide service on other lines to be reimbursed for any losses.

A key provision in the order authorizes the railroad consortium to pay prevailing industry wage rates, a critical demand of the striking unions.

President Carter last week or-

dered the striking employees back to work for a 60-day "cooling off" period, but union members so far have refused to obey and have vowed not to return until they can be guaranteed jobs and are assured they will be paid.

Elevators in the Midwest are overflowing with a record-breaking grain harvest, but with no means of transport. Farmers and elevator operators met with administration officials last week and warned that many farmers face financial ruin and consumers can be hurt through higher food prices unless the grain is moved to Gulf Coast ports.


The ICC said it intends to conduct hearings in states affected by the Rock Island shutdown to determine what to do after the 60-day emergency period has expired. The commission has the authority to extend service for an additional 180 days if necessary.

The commission said it expected the Kansas City group to have service resumed "within five business days of this decision's effectiveness." The ICC staff has been working with the railroads for several days to get service resumed as smoothly as possible.

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# Paper doesn't even make its own funeral

MONTREAL — In the end, The Montreal Star died so swiftly it had chance to record its own obituary.

The Star, one of Canada's oldest and most respected newspapers, ceased publication Tuesday with the 111th year and too late for its final edition.

Blinded by an eight-month strike and a vicious circulation war, The Star, the ownership of the F.P. Publications group of newspapers, gave an option to its assets to the rival morning Gazette.

Some wept, others roamed the plush newsroom in shock after editor Raymond Heard announced at 4 p.m. that Tuesday's edition was the last.

At the Gazette, the reaction was muted.

"What has happened is as much a tragedy as a victory," Gazette publisher Robert McConnell said. "A newspaper with 110 years of publishing has closed."

Star publisher Arthur E. Wood, moved into his job only two months ago after the Gazette outstripped the Star's 114,000 daily circulation

with its own commanding 167,000 in an almost exact reversal of the two newspapers' pre-strike positions, was blunt about the Star's situation.

"We just didn't have the advertising and we didn't have the circulation to continue," he told the staff.

Wood said The Star had had to pay \$7 million to end the strike.

Since it resumed publication in February, The Star lost another \$10.4 million — \$2 million in August alone.


The initial move to extricate The Star from its calamitous finances, it was learned, came with an F.P. approach to Southam. F.P. wanted an agreement under which the two newspapers would merge their

printing operations.

That effort foundered on legal barriers. The Star then agreed to give a three-year option to the Gazette on its building and plant but the option reportedly can only be exercised after The Star has clearly severed its relationship with every employee.

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