

PEACE MOVE MADE IN BAHAMA STRIKE

Governor Accepts 'Outside'
Chairman for Inquiry—
Companies Reject Plan

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Special to The New York Times.

NASSAU, Bahamas, Jan. 18—Gov. Sir Raynor Arthur made a new move today to end the six-day general strike that has paralyzed this British resort colony and dried up the flow of tourist dollars.

The Governor said he would accept a nonresident of the Bahamas as chairman of an impartial tribunal to settle a long-standing taxi dispute that has mushroomed into a mass walk-out of Negro workers and has forced the closing of all the big Nassau hotels.

But he said all parties to the taxi dispute would have to approve this step before he invited an "outside" man to head the mediation board.

The taxi union has demanded a chairman who has never lived in the Bahamas. The union is fighting four privately owned motor-tour companies over the division of tourist business between town and airport.

Operators of the tour companies said that they would not accept a foreign chairman. They said this would represent "another backdown" to union demands.

The "Bay Street Oligarchy," as it is called here, composed of wealthy merchants who dominate the political, economic and social life of the colony, wants the Governor to stand by the original tribunal of three Bahamians appointed by him two weeks ago. The taxi union refused to accept that tribunal.

Nassau remained calm. A few more shops and restaurants opened on Bay Street as a

cruise ship from Miami brought a trickle of one-day tourists. All bars remained closed, however. The Governor has decided to enforce prohibition for the duration of the crisis.

Although the Governor's proposal appeared to heighten prospects for negotiations, no one seemed very hopeful for a quick ending of the general strike.

The dispute has evolved into something much more significant than a dispute over taxi fares. The surprising strength of the sympathy walkout called by the Bahamas Federation of Labor indicates the deep-rooted economic and social discontent of the Negro majority.

The Governor's office said about 7,000 of the 12,000 Negro workers in Nassau had quit their jobs. Of these, about 2,000 were hotel workers whose walkout Sunday forced sixteen hotels to close by midweek. The colony is losing \$110,000 a day in tourist trade on the eve of the peak season.

What baffles the Governor is

the fact that one of the basic strike issues, the right of hotel workers to organize, cannot be mediated. Hotel workers are specifically banned from organizing by the Trade Union's Act of 1942. Sir Raynor pressed for labor reforms during the last meeting of the Colonial Assembly but he was thwarted by the "Bay Street boys."

A bill setting minimum working conditions in the hotel industry was introduced when the assembly reconvened Wednesday. But this bill did not provide for the free organization of employes.

Randol Fawkes, president of the Labor Federation, said yesterday that union recognition for hotel employes was now a condition for ending the strike. Consequently, the outlook for settlement seems remote.

Bay Street is counting on hunger to force the Negroes back to work. The Government made no provision for feeding the strikers.

Sir Raynor, a tall, white-

haired veteran of the British colonial service, received newsmen at Government House, a two-story concrete building on a low hill overlooking the harbor. It was a chilly day and the bare poinciana trees in the garden gave the place a wintry look. A lone British soldier with bayonet fixed stood guard at the main gate.

"The offer for arbitration is still open," Sir Raynor said. "If both sides want a chairman from outside the Bahamas I would do my best to find someone acceptable." He said the arrival Wednesday of 150 white British troops from Jamaica was "purely for the protection of life and property."

A handful of these troops have been used for guard duty at key installations. The rest have been kept out of sight in the empty Royal Victoria Hotel. So far they have not been needed to quell violence. The strikers have been remarkably docile and good-natured.

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