

FEB 9 1946

800 RCAF Defy Warning Strike Mutiny

London, Feb. 8 (CP).—Despite an official warning that continuance of their strike would be considered mutiny, 800 RCAF ground crew personnel at Down Ampney air transport station in Gloucestershire today decided to remain idle, but 1,200 others at Odiham station in Hampshire announced they would return to work tomorrow.

The decision taken at Odiham air transport station heralded the end of a four-day work stoppage in protest against delays in repatriation. The Down Ampney ground crew men went on strike for the same reason Thursday.

The strikers at both RCAF stations were warned that RCAF headquarters in Ottawa had set next Monday as a deadline for return to duty. Odiham and Down Ampney were the only overseas RCAF establishments so far involved in work stoppages.

Three ground crew men from the RCAF Topcliffe repatriation depot at Leeming, Yorkshire, are due here tomorrow to discuss repatriation complaints with Air Commodore H. B. Godwin, acting air officer commanding the RCAF overseas.

No Strike on Continent

RCAF stations on the Continent have not been affected. Air Commodore W. W. Brown of Hamilton, Ont., senior air disarmament staff officer at No. 84 Group headquarters, said: "I have not heard anything about a strike going on anywhere in Germany among any RCAF personnel and to the best of my knowledge there have been no such strikes and none are pending."

Group Capt. F. A. Sampson, personnel officer at the RCAF's overseas headquarters in London, addressed the men at both Odiham and Down Ampney during the day.

"It will be considered mutiny if you men are out after Feb. 11," he told the Down Ampney strikers.

His speech there was punctuated with boos and cat-calls by the ground crew men, who voted by a show of hands to continue their strike. It is understood a secret ballot will be held tomorrow at the Gloucestershire station to confirm or reject today's decision.

At both stations the idle men were informed of a warning from Ottawa that if the men did not return by Monday, stoppages of pay and allowances and of postwar gratuities could result, as well as delay in repatriation.

The Odiham decision to resume work was not generally known at Down Ampney when the men at the latter station voted to remain out.

Warning Brings Boos

Group Capt. Sampson said at the Gloucestershire station that the men's request for speedier repatriation had been brought to the attention of interested parties in the United Kingdom.

"That's what we want," a ground crew man shouted.

The men booed when the personnel officer said their pay allowances would be stopped if they remained on strike after Feb. 11 and that "we could cut your food."

Earlier in the day, the Down Ampney men said they would remain idle until they received a satisfactory answer to a cable sent to Prime Minister Mackenzie King asking for an "immediate change" in RCAF occupation policy in the United Kingdom and "complete repatriation of non-volunteers."

At Odiham the men delivered this statement to their station commander, Group Capt. N. W. Timmerman of Kingston, Ont.

"On resumption of their duties, the airmen of the RCAF at Odiham wish the Canadian public to know they are still dissatisfied with statements and actions of the Government.

"They have returned to work solely because they realize that under the circumstances, a demonstration of this sort cannot continue indefinitely and even now it is still necessary to maintain Canadian commitments overseas.

Hope for Support

"They sincerely hope the people of Canada will not forget their grievances, but will carry on the struggle where they left off."

The 2,000 men involved in the strikes were all of the rank of corporal or lower.

Speaking early in the day at Odiham, Group Capt. Sampson delivered the warning that Ottawa had set next Monday as a deadline for a return to work. The men there gave him a friendly reception and after the meeting questioned him personally for more than an hour about their individual problems.

Despite the strike, air service was partially resumed today. Four planes left for the Continent on scheduled trips after being serviced by officers.

Decision of the Odiham men to break off their strike was received with mixed feelings at Down Ampney. Some men condemned their fellow-ground crew personnel, while others took the view that a protest against the repatriation program had been accomplished and nothing was to be gained by prolonging the sitdown.

033-033-007

149
WAR
EUROPEAN
1939
CANADA
AIR
FORCE
DEMobilIZATION

strike