

RAILROAD OR RIVER-PORTLAND AS AN ORIA

Exhaustive Discussion of the "Common Point" Question, by Mr. Ellis G. Hughes.

When I prepared the article which appeared in your issue of November 4, though I made a few general statements as to the proper subject of the discussion, my object was to point out the absurdity of giving weight in the discussion to the opinions of Mr. Huntington and Mr. Melien, who belong directly to the question of the removal of the port from Portland to the mouth of the river, even though such removal might result in the general disadvantage of the city. The discussion having been continued by the advocates of the mouth of the river, and they having apparently no other way of escape, I have been obliged to answer what has since been said, and may do some good to make a general statement of the situation.

Under date of November 14, Mr. Hammond asks, or rather asks questions which he apparently desires answers. I will answer them separately. The first question is:

"Would it not be to the interest of Oregon generally, if common rates be extended to the mouth of the Columbia?"

If by the "western port" peculiarly Mr. Hammond means his route, the exact point to which common rates be extended, we might admit the advantage without admitting any obligation on the City of Portland, or any other part of the country, to do the work, for on any railroad centering at Portland to grant the rate. It would undoubtedly be an advantage to the City of Portland to have the rate of the port of Portland extended to the mouth of the river, and that it might be to Portland's advantage to have this rate be no sufficient ground on which to base a demand for a rate. The burden is on Mr. Hammond, or the place demanding the rate, to show itself entitled thereto. Thus far the arguments advanced have been limited to a rate of 1 cent per year, and by the Oregonian and the Portland Chamber of Commerce, and interested opinions expressed by Mr. Huntington and Mr. Melien. The attempt is made to show some right to the rate demanded. It will be time enough to discuss the question.

Whether the granting of terminal rates to the mouth of the river would or would not benefit the country at large depends on whether the railroad or the sea-going vessel is the cheaper means of transportation between Portland and the mouth of the river. All added cost of transportation is ultimately paid by the producer and consumer. If ships can be chartered to Astoria or the mouth of the river, for so much less than they can be chartered to Portland as will pay the cost of transportation from Portland to the mouth of the river, over the route of the Northern Pacific, the mouth of the river does not need the terminal rate to enable it to compete for the business. If, for any reason, the ship cannot be chartered to Astoria cheaper than it can be chartered to Portland, or if the difference is only such as to pay but a portion of the cost of transporting its cargo from Portland to the mouth of the river, the mouth of the river is at a disadvantage. The mouth of the river is at a disadvantage, either directly or indirectly, to the cost of the cargo, and to take it directly and indirectly out of the producer of the cargo, and making a common rate to the mouth of the Columbia would not be to the advantage of "Oregon generally."

Mr. Hammond's second question is:

"Is Mr. Melien unfriendly to the interests of this state when he extends common rates to the mouth of the Columbia River against the protests of the O. R. & N. Co.?"

Mr. Melien's personal feeling can be judged of by the world at large from his acts only. Whether his heart was filled with friendship for the mouth of the river when he did this act, is immaterial. In this matter Mr. Melien and the Northern Pacific are one and it requires but little consideration of the facts to see that the Northern Pacific occupies at this time to make it clear that whatever Mr. Melien's personal feelings may have been, he acted in the matter of the common rate in the interest of his road.

As for their competitive territory, the Northern Pacific and the O. R. & N. diverge at about the mouth of the Snake River, the Northern Pacific carrying the business over the mountains to Tacoma, the O. R. & N. bringing its business down the Columbia River to Portland. From this point of divergence the two roads seem to be not alone considerably longer than that to Portland, freight must be raised one-half mile in the air and lowered again, as against a steady down grade to Portland. Under the present conditions the O. R. & N. can make a profit at a rate at which the Northern Pacific must make a steady loss, and the consequence is that the Northern Pacific is in a position to carry at a present profit, is foreign to the issue, so long as the O. R. & N. has the short line and the down grade, and can make a profit at a rate at which the river must make a loss. The amount of business and profit of the long line and heavy grade of the Northern Pacific is a matter of indifference to the O. R. & N. Mr. Melien has as good as acknowledged this, but whether he would directly acknowledge it or not, he is too good a fellow to not know it. If Mr. Melien could not know it, he would be a fool. He is absolutely without knowledge on the subject on which he speaks. Mr. Stafford pleads for rapid transit. It takes an ocean steamer carrying 1000 tons of freight to make a round trip to the mouth of the river. It takes a freight train to make the run between the mouth of the river and Portland that it would take an ordinary freight train running on average tracks to make the run between the mouth of the river and Portland, and as things go, something over 48 hours to transport what the steamer carries in about 10 hours. The train up the river, in clearing the mouth of the river, takes about 10 hours, the steamer or sailing vessels appears to have the advantage.

Mr. Schenk.

In so far as Mr. Schenk speaks as Mr. Oracle, unsupported by fact taken from the records of the world's commerce, without argument, save that based on future events evolved from his own inner consciousness, but of the happening of which there is no sign, indication or faintest shadow in existing conditions, and of which there can be no reasonable hope or fear, Mr. Schenk's statement of fact is, in my opinion, a statement of pure fiction. I shall not attempt to answer him. That which is limited to it, or is not, is unanswerable. In so far as Mr. Schenk's article is devoted to a discussion of the respective merits and standing of Major Sears and himself, I shall not attempt to answer or follow him, for the reasons: First, that I am so unfortunally ignorant of the subject that I cannot follow him; second, that the matter appears to have no bearing on the question under discussion. Major Sears, from well-established facts, to-wit: the actual location of the great commercial seaports of the world, deduced a general law. This was a strictly scientific method of arriving at a conclusion. The facts on which the law was based either do or do not exist. The accuracy of the statement of facts could and can be tested by the charts used in the world's commerce or by actual examination at the ports of the world. Mr. Schenk's statement is unanswerable; whether any engineer or society of engineers approved or did not approve of the facts, could

not alter or in the slightest degree change the fact of their existence. They either do or do not exist. As to the deduction, drawn, as to the theory advanced by Major Sears, the opinion of an engineer or body of engineers, as such, is of no special value, but the opinion of a body of the special training and experience of the engineer. The fact is that the subject is a commercial one, entirely outside the line of the engineer's special training and experience, which rather disqualifies than qualifies him to give an opinion on the subject. Commercial seaports are established by the law of demand and supply, on the basis of profit and loss. Engineers are at times called in by commerce to render a place selected by it as a commercial seaport more convenient for its use. When Mr. Schenk or any other gentleman of his profession can point out a single commercial seaport, ancient or modern, established by the law of demand and supply, or on the advice of any engineers or combination of engineers, it will be time enough to give weight to their opinions as such. Engineers do not even figure in the question of the location of a seaport.

When the commercial side of business has determined the general line on which the road is to be built, its terminal points and general location, the engineer is turned over to the engineer to find the easiest grades, shortest line, cheapest construction; when the road is completed they have no connection with its operation, and are in no wise responsible for its success or lack of success as an instrument of commerce. The mere opinion of the American Society of Civil Engineers as to the correctness of the location drawn by Major Sears is valueless. I, for one, should have been pleased to read an argument going to disprove the theory advanced by Major Sears made by a body of engineers, or by an engineer or any other man. The charts of the world's harbors show the facts to be as stated. If there are not the result of the immutable law stated, what produced the result?

Though of the opinion that there is no contest now on between the inland seaport and the coast seaport, other than in the imagination of the advocates of the inland seaport, and in the newspaper, but that the question was settled before any of the contestants were born, by commerce following of its own motion the line of least resistance and greatest profit, I will not venture to express what Mr. Schenk apparently considers an argument. To do so it will be necessary to first clear away some of the rubbish which Mr. Schenk has ignorantly or intentionally brought into the question.

The general proposition was and is, the commercial port of a region will be as close to the producer as it is possible to reach with the class of transportation demanded by the producer and the consumer. It appears evident, or at least that it should be evident to one of ordinary mental capacity, that when the term producer was used in the above statement, the individual producer is not intended. What is under consideration is the commercial port of a region, made one by common interests in a common commercial port, or at least in a system of interior collection and distribution, and the question is, where should that port be located, and the law which governs its location. The proposition stated being, that the port should be located as far from the producer as it is possible to reach with the class of transportation demanded by the producer and the consumer. The proposition is, that the port should be located as far from the producer as it is possible to reach with the class of transportation demanded by the producer and the consumer. The proposition is, that the port should be located as far from the producer as it is possible to reach with the class of transportation demanded by the producer and the consumer.

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Commercial seaports and the laws which govern their location, being a subject entirely foreign to the line of thought and special education of a civil engineer, he may be entirely ignorant of the subject, without being the less first-class in his profession. But if there is a contest involving more millions of dollars than the millions of dollars of an engineer is supposed to be an expert in, it is in figures, and if he has any standing in his profession, within a reasonable degree of accuracy, he should be able to find his figures correct. Mr. Schenk not alone ignorantly or intentionally misstates the figures in some in-

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But it is in the case of Galveston and Houston that Mr. Schenk shines with peculiar brilliancy. Many years ago I read an article, favoring a high protective tariff, which, as illustrating the evils of free trade, cited India and its families. It has never been exactly clear to my mind just how free trade produced the climatic conditions which were and are the natural cause of the famines. And it is not more clear what Mr. Schenk's heating, black weevil and maggots have to do with the question of whether Houston is or is not, surely if slowly, distancing Galveston in the rice, and that by reason of a channel of only very moderate depth, and as against the general climatic conditions of the two places widely different? Is there no heading, weevil or maggot at Houston, and do they all come from the Hudson? Is the distance from one city to the other? Or is it Galveston's location on a sand spit which makes the heating, weevil and maggot?

London, the metropolis of England, and the chief town of the British Empire, is situated on both banks of the River Thames, about 50 miles from its mouth. This distance may be intended for the course of the river, but the charts of the English Admiralty show it to be 30 nautical miles in an air line, or about 35 geographical miles from the heart of London to the sea.

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HERE'S YOUR CRANBERRY SAUCE, SIR.



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depended on the amount of common sense its owners had at command. If, on the other hand, Mr. Schenk is ignorant of a cheerful liar, he need remain away from our account or his own. We are a small community, but we are cosmopolitan, and have had and have with us all manner and conditions of men; we can stand him, and he will not be lonely. But we warn him to look to his reputation. We have now with us men who can evolve statistics from the inner consciousness at a rate which he will find it difficult to equal.

The General Situation.

When I came to Portland, now near 28 years ago, I was strongly impressed with the belief that Portland was in the wrong place. Like all who know nothing of seaports from experience or a study of a map of the world and the records of its commerce, I believed a sea port should be as near the sea as possible. I had an abiding faith in the profundity of my own wisdom, but had advanced beyond the know-it-all stage, and had some years previous come to the conclusion that nature knew a little more than I did, and made fewer mistakes. As a consequence, the fact that Portland was, caused me to make a study of the subject. My first inquiry was as to what had been done to make the city. I found that attempts had been made to move it in turn to St. Helena, Klamath and Astoria; but, in spite of these attempts, and notwithstanding the great effort had been made by any one to retain it in its present position, it had remained stationary and continued to grow. The city had been built on a narrow strip of land, and the general location of a natural law, not the result of sea captains who brought their vessels to Portland, instead of stopping at Astoria, though they had frequently stopped there, and that in the short distance from one city to the other? Or is it Galveston's location on a sand spit which makes the heating, weevil and maggot?

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While it would certainly be greatly to the benefit of Portland if she would push to the utmost the advantages which nature has placed at her disposal, and which she has been helping her to make work which the good Lord has thus far carried on unaided, what she most particularly needs to do at this time, in addition to continuing to make a leading work on the channel of the river, is to provide cheap fuel for ocean-going vessels and a drydock.

While the advantages of Portland's fresh-water harbor and her general location far more than offset the lack of cheap and good fuel, it cannot be denied that this lack is a great drawback to the port; that its supply would be both many and constantly increasing millions, and it is greatly to the discredit of the city that no organized and persistent effort has been made to secure a permanent supply of fuel. There is every reason to suppose that nature has placed the necessary material within our reach, and that nothing more is necessary to find it, and a reasonable investment of capital to bring it to our shores.

It is a question as to fuel there may be some question as to the supply being within our reach, there can be no such question as to a drydock. Here we have not to act, all depends upon ourselves. No one can hope to find a leading position, to secure the most advantageous charter rates, to do its full share of business, which does not offer drydock facilities. Portland has a long continental line of railroad could be operated with a repair shop located at one end of the line only. In commerce by there is a well-ascertained percentage of damage to ships, and many millions of dollars are expended in repairs. So long as these repairs cannot be made at Portland and damaged ships chartered for their port, the port is at a disadvantage. Sound for needed repairs, we will pay the rate necessary to cover the risk of added expense in the increased rate we have to pay for repairs, and in the past paid for the dock many times over, while we are still without it. It will pay for many times over in the future, and we will be wiser to build a drydock at once. There are many things, but it looks to its ports to provide them, and in all cases where they do not make them pay the penalty of the lack of a drydock, it has been claimed that private capital should build a dock at Portland, and that it would do so if the dock would pay. Private capital should not and will not build such a dock at this port, for the sufficient reason that it will not pay; that is, the business of the dock will not make it a paying investment as such, and standing by the dock, many millions of dollars are expended in repairs. So long as these repairs cannot be made at Portland and damaged ships chartered for their port, the port is at a disadvantage. Sound for needed repairs, we will pay the rate necessary to cover the risk of added expense in the increased rate we have to pay for repairs, and in the past paid for the dock many times over, while we are still without it. 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