

Oregon Farmers and the Railroads.

I notice in your issue of the 24th of the Oregon Farmer, an article favoring a branch of the Pacific Railroad from Portland to Centerville in the Humboldt valley. The Oregonian has given its views of the matter. And now, at the solicitation of some neighbors, I propose to look at this proposed road from the farmer's standpoint. How will it affect their interests? Supposing it to be the only railroad outlet Oregon could get. All will admit that any railroad would help us. But when it is proposed that it shall help us, is the question for farmers. All the wheat and flour during the last year in price and in fact all the surplus Oregon wheat and flour goes to San Francisco and in going there the Oregon farmers lose about forty cents per bushel on every bushel, by reason of the charges on the present Ocean route of transportation, after it leaves Portland to say nothing about the expense of getting it to Portland. In this county the average charge for getting wheat to Portland is twenty five cents and I suppose to take the Willamette valley through the average expense of getting wheat to Portland would be, the year round, not less than thirty five cents per bushel. There is then the sum of seventy five cents on the bushel of wheat shipped from this valley, taken out of the hard earnings of the Oregon farmers to pay charges on transportation to San Francisco. It is of no use to ask why our wheat goes to San Francisco, or why we cannot get as much in Portland as California farmers get for their wheat. There are the station facts, and they are the facts which have been grinding down Oregon farmers for many years past. We want cheaper transportation, and we must have it, or remain slaves to the present ruinous course of marketing our produce. Just think of it that the Oregon farmer who has one thousand bushel of wheat to sell, must lose seven hundred and fifty dollars, on the value of the wheat in San Francisco. It is reshipped by the San Francisco dealers to Australia, China, Sandwich Islands, Japan, England and other countries, and he would save by the reshipment of his person here knows, just look at the charges which are imposed on our grain after it leaves our wagons. Freight charge to Portland, drayage, wharfage, and storage in Portland, lighterage over Swau Island Bar, priming, wharfe on the Columbia, freight charges to San Francisco, wharfage, drayage, commission, dealers profits, insurance and drayage and wharfage again, before it leaves the vessel to carry it to a foreign market; which vessel ought to have been here to take us load in the Columbia river in the first place, and thus saved this multitude of charges which are eaten out of the pockets of Oregon farmers. If we had direct trade with foreign nations, or the Atlantic States, it would relieve us of a great deal of the tax, but we hope to see the Legislature make an effort in that direction. As for this new branch railroad, it would mean the California dependence of our wheat. It must sell our produce to San Francisco, and then railroad connection with that port, as far as possible, so that the railroad and the steamships and sail vessels will have to compete with each other for our freight, and thus reduce charges. Let us not stop with that, but let us labor for direct railroad communication with Puget Sound, where the greater of the North Pacific is bound to be. But let no Oregon farmer entertain or favor the idea that his produce must be subjected to a branch railroad which must carry it over the Cascade mountains half way to Salt Lake, and then back again over the line of a California monopoly, and over the snowy heights of the Sierra Nevada before it reaches the market. In what condition would our fruit (one of our staples) be after crossing and recrossing those lofty mountains—spending a day in the icy regions of Klamath lake, and taking the chances for a weeks detention at the junction on the Humboldt?

The argument that this branch railroad will help us go East, does not amount to much. Very few Oregonians want to go west, compared with those who want to go east, a connection in the Humboldt is no better than one at San Francisco. That city is the present centre of trade and interest on this coast, and there is not one man in five hundred going East, who does not want to stop at San Francisco on his way. Suppose you want to go East, when you reach Humboldt you would be at a disadvantage. You must take a back seat to San Francisco passengers; and if you wanted to go San Francisco, you must defer to passengers from the States; and the same disadvantage, operating with greater force, would detain freight shipped to Humboldt.

The idea that such a branch road would develop any portion of valuable farming land east of the mountains, is a mistaken one. There have been great many Oregon farmers through the Klamath basin, and everybody knows that it is principally alkali and sage brush; while the coldness of the climate forbids the production of grain or fruit. Fort Klamath receives all its supplies from Rogue River Valley one hundred miles south. Notwithstanding the representations of persons having pecuniary interests in that direction, the facts of the country are against it.

Of course nobody will oppose the construction of any railroad to any point in the country; but if this Humboldt branch scheme is gotten up to embarrass the construction of the Oregon Central railroad, now being pushed forward by a company having already a large land grant and liberal aid from the State, it ought to be vigorously opposed by all Oregon farmers. The advantage of the Humboldt route can never be shown to be equal to the route fixed by act of Congress and by act of the Oregon Legislature, for the Oregon Central. If the Government has any bonds to give or dispose of, why not give to the Oregon Central Company? I have subscribed my mite to this cute ploy, and so have all my neighbors; and if Congress is to be pressed for U. S. bonds to aid a railroad to Oregon, we demand a fair share on an equal chance for this company, to which we have subscribed our money, and I ask the Oregon Legislature in Congress to make a note of this. And I would here call the attention

of members of Congress to an act of the Oregon Legislature, approved Oct. 24th, 1866, which provides that the State of Oregon shall pay the interest for twenty years on one million dollars of the bonds of the Oregon Central Railroad Company. Now, if the Oregon Legislature do not believe that the route of the Oregon Central Railroad is laid out by act of Congress, approved July 25th, 1866, was not the best one for the interests of the State of Oregon, why did it pledge this large amount of State aid? And I would for her call the attention of members of Congress to a joint resolution adopted by the Oregon Legislature in 1864, which asked Congress for land grants and pecuniary aid to assist in constructing railroads from the north boundary of the State of California to some point on the Columbia river, and from the overland railroad, in Salt Lake, through Utah to the Columbia river. I pointed that these acts and resolutions, are positive instructions to our delegation in Congress to favor and sustain the Oregon Central Railroad, so far as its line relates to Willamette valley, and the route through Southern Oregon. If this Humboldt branch route is feasible or desirable, why was it not mentioned in Congress or in the Oregon Legislature when the various acts and resolutions were before those bodies?

This railroad connection with California has been agitated for the past four years, and yet it is not until the present, after the Oregon Central has commenced work, and after it has received subscriptions from the Oregon farmers amounting to hundreds of thousands of dollars, that this Humboldt branch is incorporated, and yet I propose to make their Northern terminus at the same place.

The Oregon farmers are waked up to the importance of railroad matters. They know that their purse and property, and their products, and the value of their land depend upon the treatment of these railroad interests; and if their voices cannot be heard and heeded now, for fair play and justice, they will most certainly be present in the promotion of public men in the future. Oregon farmers are the bone and marrow of the State, and they have a right to demand the protection of their interests at the hands of those receiving public honors from their votes and favor. Oregon farmers want direct railroad communication with Portland and San Francisco and Puget Sound. If any branch railroad is to go to the Central Pacific it ought to go through Idaho, or Salt Lake, as indicated in the joint resolution of the Oregon Legislature, above referred to. This would give us the trade of Idaho, and the choice of connection at Salt Lake with either the Union Pacific or the Central Pacific, thus rendering us independent of any one company to go East. The branch through Idaho is not any longer than the Humboldt branch, and can be completed by the time the overland road is completed. Oregon is also vitally interested in the North Pacific road—one which will give us the trade of Montana; and it is no uncertainty as some suppose, for a company already has an immense land grant, and has expended \$150,000 on surveys. In conclusion, I can see no reason why an Oregon farmer, or any citizen of the State, (not interested in the Eugene City Military Wagon Road Company) should favor this Humboldt branch until after the North Pacific, the Salt Lake branch, and the Oregon Central have been constructed. It is not a single national argument in its favor, and not a real Oregon interest to recommend it. I hope every Oregon farmer will exert his influence, by letter or petitions, and otherwise, to have our delegation in Congress support the Oregon Central Company, to which we have subscribed our means and which is pushing its road without asking for any U. S. bonds. I make no apology for the length of this communication as I think the importance of the farmers demand the whole of it.

Yours truly, D O QUICK. P. S. The Oregon press will confer a favor on the farming interest by republishing this communication. D O Q.

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