

Railroads Eye Free Hand to Decide Rates

(Editor's Note: Second in a series on railroad bills now in Congress that would vitally affect the economy of the Pacific Northwest.)

By A. ROBERT SMITH
Statesman Correspondent

WASHINGTON - The railroads would like to have a free hand to set their own rates, rather than submit them to the Interstate Commerce Commission for its approval or disapproval as they have been required to do ever since 1906.

Some say they would only commit suicide with this power, but the railroads claim they can hardly keep alive the way things are going under ICC authority. They contend the ICC takes too long to decide on their requests for rate increases and then usually doesn't grant as much as it should.

Two bills now in Congress, S. 2518 and 2519, would permit the railroads to increase rates at will upon certifying to the ICC "that they have incurred, or are about to incur, increases in wages, costs of materials or other expenses." This legislation would permit the ICC to look into the new rate schedule to see if they are justified—but the concept of what is justified would be completely changed.

ICC CONSIDERATION
Today the law requires the ICC to give due consideration "to the effect of rates on the movement of traffic . . . to the need, in the public interest, of adequate and efficient railway transportation service at the lowest cost consistent with the furnishing of such service; and to the need of revenue sufficient to enable the carriers, under honest, economical and efficient management to provide such service."

The railroad bill would change this rule of rate making so as to require the ICC to consider only the interest of the railroad. Specifically, it would require the ICC to approve whatever rates railroad management found to be necessary to provide "adequate and efficient service, establish and maintain sound credit, attract equity capital, take advantage of technological developments, and advance and improve the art of transportation."

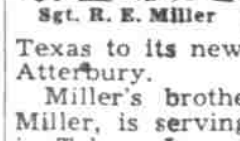
In short, these bills would transfer authority over rates from the ICC to the railroads, a move being strongly resisted by the ICC.

COMPROMISE OFFERED
The ICC is sympathetic, however, to the burden which long hearings place upon the railroads. Hence it has offered a compromise bill that would allow the railroads to ask the ICC for higher rates it deems necessary to cover greatly increased costs. The ICC could authorize these new rates immediately if it thinks the roads have a case, and then later hold hearings on the problem. The present rule of rate making would be unchanged.

This proposal has the support of 8 ICC members. Three think no changes are advisable. No member of the Senate Interstate Commerce Committee, which just finished hearings on the railroad bills, has expressed

Sgt. Robin Miller On Mass Air Move

Statesman News Service
Silverton - Sgt. Robin Elsworth Miller, son of Mr. and Mrs. Marion Miller of Star Route, Silverton, is a member of the 31st Infantry Division, which recently participated in a mass airlift move from Texas to Indiana.



The division was moved entirely by plane from maneuvers at Fort Hood, Texas to its new station at Camp Atterbury.

Miller's brother, Sgt. Miles C. Miller, is serving with the Army in Tokyo, Japan.

20,000 Air Cadets Needed

The Air Force needs 20,000 applicants for aviation cadet training and 40,000 Women in the Air Force—or WAFs, according to Sgt. Wilmer McDowell of Salem, local liaison officer.

McDowell said that reports on the critical need for flying personnel have not been exaggerated. Both flying cadets and the WAFs have to be on a voluntary basis, since neither can be obtained through selective service. There are over a hundred occupations open to women who can qualify for the service.

Details on how young men and women can apply can be obtained at the Air Force Liaison office, 1326 State St., Salem.

himself on this substitute proposal.

Chairman Johnson, (D-Col.) said during the hearings he would favor requiring the ICC to act within 60 to 90 days of the filing of rate requests as a cure for time lags, but he does not favor the railroads' bill.

"Increasing freight rates is not the solution—it's a partial solution, but not a cure-all," Johnson declared. He observed that none of the railroads' competitors opposed the two bills, saying "and why should they? If they see the railroads committing suicide why interfere with the blood letting?"

BUSINESS DECISION?
The roads have no such fears and they feel that fixing rates is a business decision they should be entitled to make without ICC control. When asked by Sen. Tobey (R-N. H.) how much they would propose to increase rates if given the power, Walter S. Franklin, president of the Pennsylvania Railroad, said:

"An increase of 25 per cent would come pretty close" to bringing the roads the 6 per cent return they seek.

Shippers steadfastly maintain that more efficient management is the only solution, that higher rail rates will only force greater diversion of traffic to motor and water carriers. National Cattle-men's Association, for example, testified that rail freight revenue for edible livestock dropped from \$95 million in 1946 to \$75 million in 1950 due to increasing rail rates.

The cattlemen, wool growers, apple growers, National Grange and National Farmers Union all opposed the bills before the committee.

(NEXT: The Inland Empire's big rate battle)

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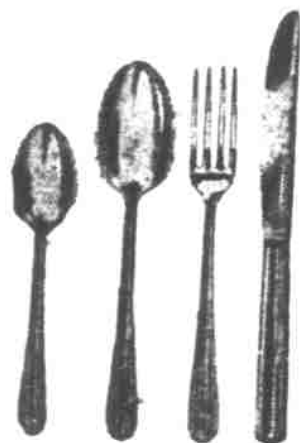
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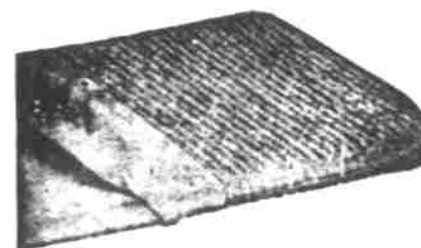
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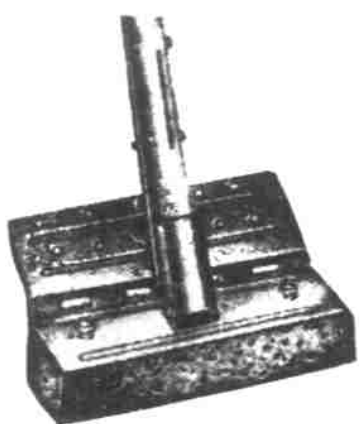
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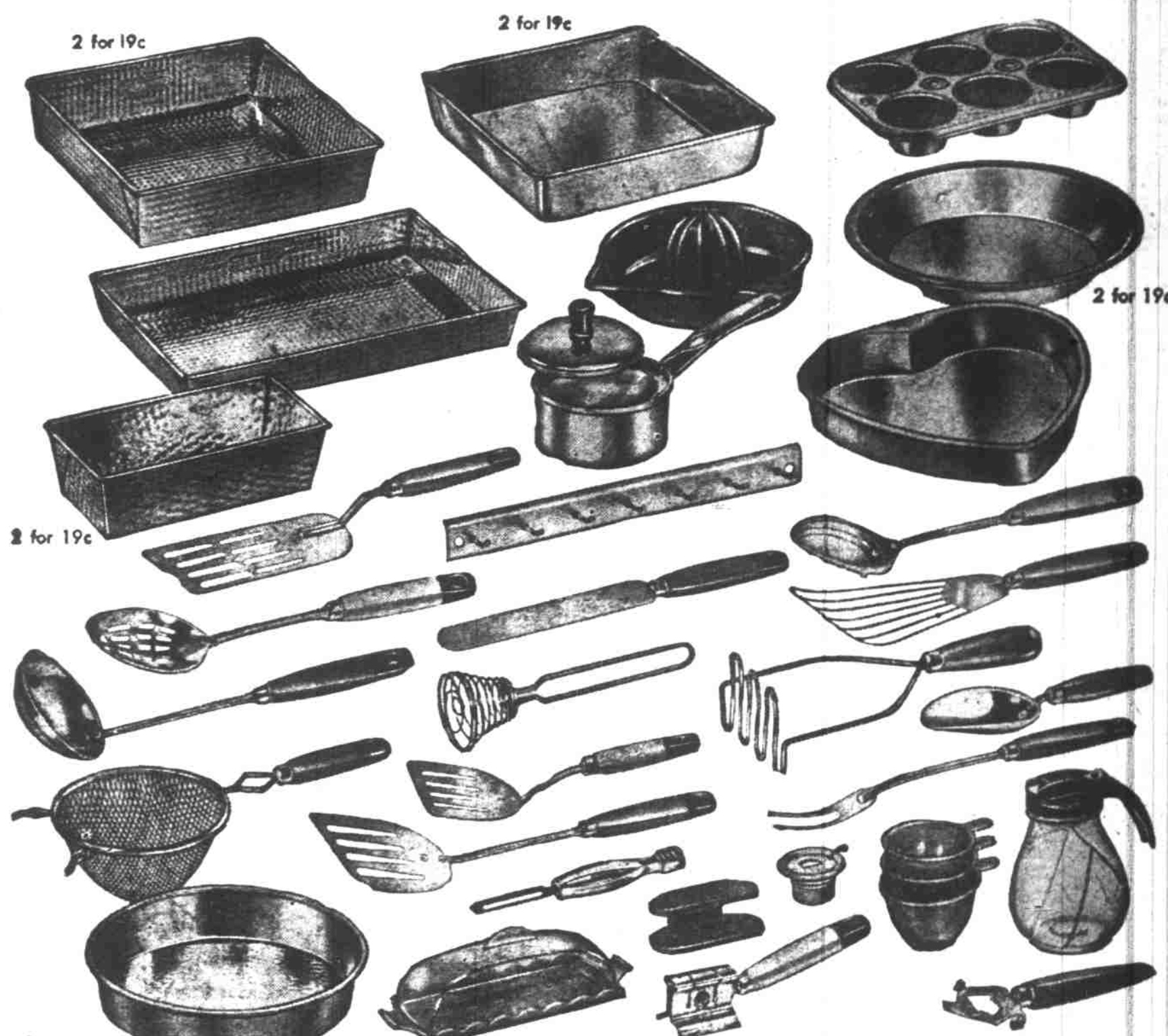
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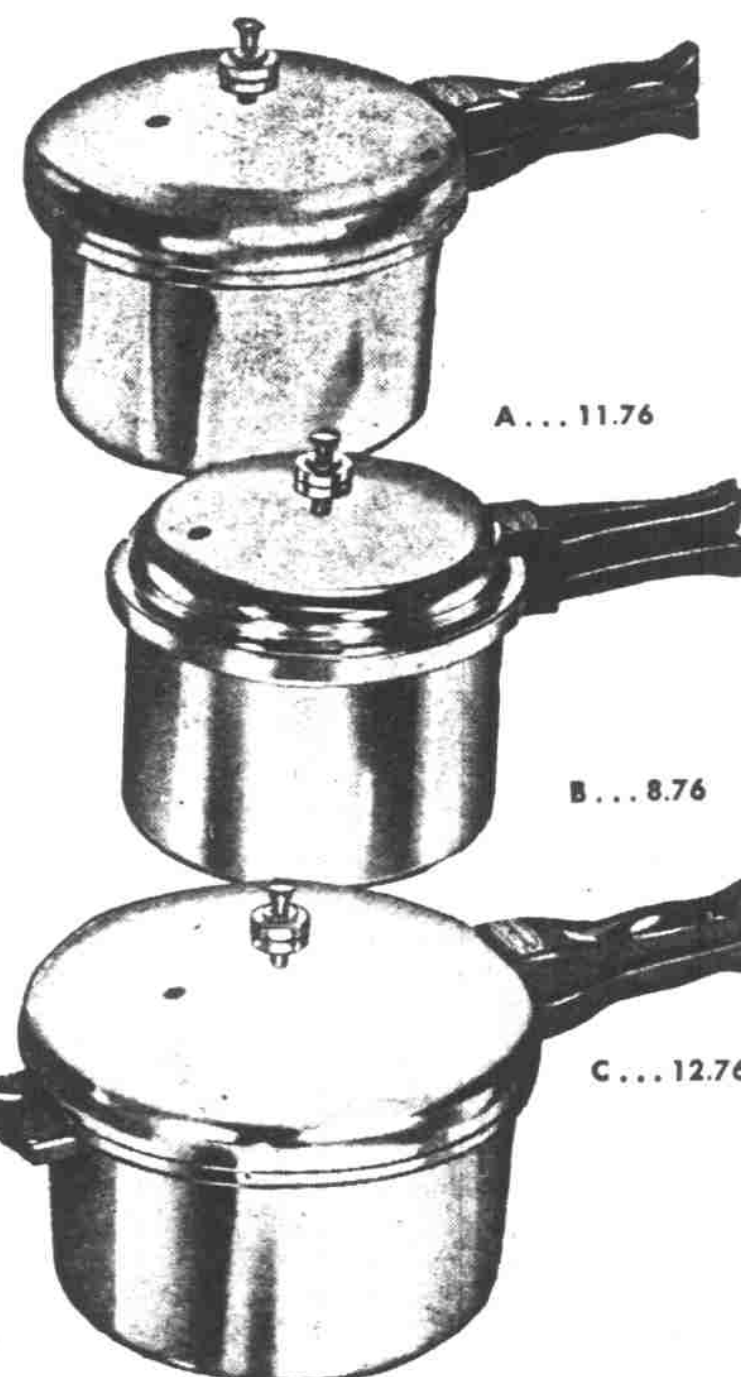


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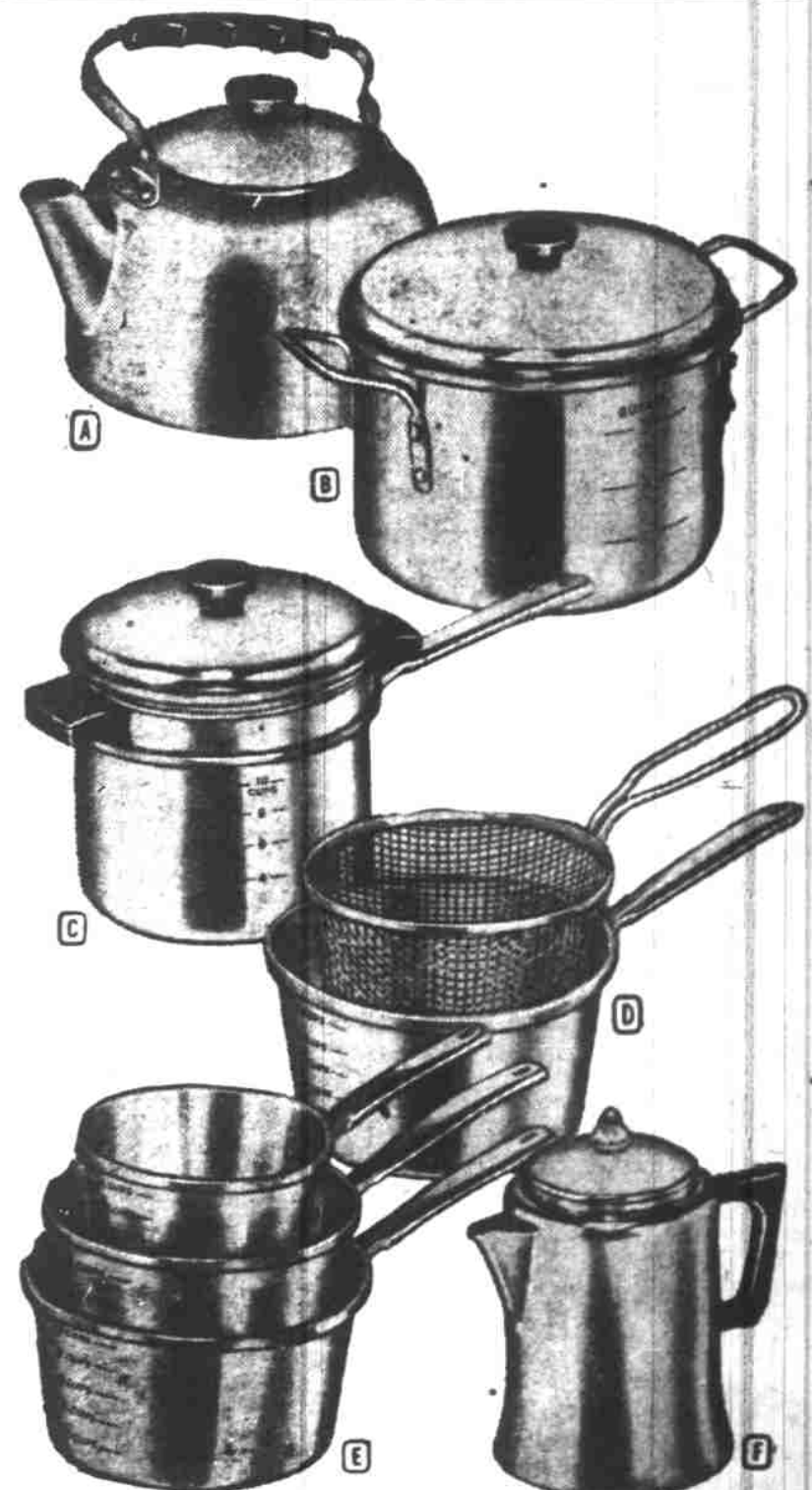


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