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The Times-Herald.

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LAND LEASING QUESTION.

COMMUNICATION FROM F. C. LUSK IN ITS FAVOR.

The Homestead Law Will Not Be Infringed Upon, But More Homes Fulfilled, Other Great Advantages.

Chicago, July 25, 1901.

THE TIMES-HERALD.—When I was last in Burns you invited me to write for your paper a communication upon land leasing. I am pleased to do so, and, especially, after it has been called to my attention by your giving several columns of your space to the copying of an article from the Oregonian by Mr. J. K. Huntington; and I notice in your editorial column that you fall into the same error as does Mr. Huntington, that the proposed bill will interfere with agricultural settlement and development. I am pleased to be able to remove that objection. Until I read it in Mr. Huntington's article it had not been before called to my attention that any one supposed that any proposed lease law would be passed which prohibited homestead entries. I am certain that no such law is desired by any one, and that no such law will be passed.

The government now provides no way for selling its arid range lands. The pre-emption law has been repealed, and there remains the actual homestead entry upon so-called agricultural land, and which must be land capable of agricultural development to enable the settler to comply with the law and make his final proof. That the homestead settler will not be interfered with by such a law will be reached in one of two ways: either all leased land will be subject to homestead entry by the actual settler, or, else, the land will be first classified by the Interior Department, as it now is in Texas, and any land capable of agricultural settlement, if leased at all, will be leased subject to homestead entry. In either case it amounts to the same thing. All the land suitable for homestead entry will be open under such a law, just the same as they are now, to the actual settler.

In addition to that the bill will propose that the rents derived from such leases be used in building irrigation and storage works for the express purpose of making land that is now arid and not subject to homestead entry, agricultural land, and which would be open to the actual settler. The workings of such a bill would be to constantly increase the land open to agricultural settlement and lessen that which might be leased; and you are entirely mistaken in imagining that it would retard settlement in Harney county; to the contrary, it would accelerate it, as there are no doubt many places in that county where the government could build irrigation works and store the flood waters, and thus increase the agricultural land.

In confirmation of this, in the same issue of your paper you speak of a scheme of a private company to irrigate some desert land in Harney county. If there are waters in the place spoken of that can be stored and bring arid lands under cultivation by private parties, there are, certainly, other places that water can be so stored and land brought under cultivation by the government.

While in Portland recently I was interviewed upon this subject by an Oregonian reporter, and gave views upon some of the proposed features of the bill and the necessity for it which, doubtless, have been read by most of your readers and very likely may have been copied in your paper, as I have no doubt, with your usual fairness, you are giving both sides of a question that is of great interest to Harney county, and which it is very important to that county should meet a decision that will do the country the most good. If you have not copied that interview, I can be pleased if you would do

OPPOSES A LEASE SYSTEM.

VIEWS ON DISPOSITION OF OUR PUBLIC LANDS.

A Writer in the Oregonian Says It Will Practically Repeal the Homestead Law, and Abolish Free Homes.

In recent issues of the Oregonian the question of leasing the remaining public lands is discussed by Mr. Lusk and others, and, believing as I do, that our present delegation in congress will have to decide to a great extent the future destiny of its public lands, I am glad that the discussion has commenced so long before the assembling of congress, for I believe that ere two sessions are closed some form of leasing lands will be adopted, thus practically repealing the homestead law.

No representative from this state ever had greater responsibilities in regard to the lands yet open to settlement than those now serving. The area of public lands granted to railroad corporations during the past year was about 300,000 square miles, a territory larger than Texas, or nearly 200,000,000 acres. Now, the proposition is at once to pass for a merely nominal rent to, practically the control of a few, more than twice that area. In the days of land grants, the honest man, who believed that great good could be accomplished for the country by these grants, worked along with a swarm of adventurers of all grades, from the benevolent-looking company president, whose gold-rimmed spectacles would shrivel in the heat of his indignation did any one call him an adventurer, down to the professional lobbyist, whom he used as a huntsman uses his hound to run down the game, for the enactment of these laws.

Can we expect it otherwise? Here are millions at stake, and the lobbyist will be there to cajole, to seduce, to ensnare. All the arts of temptation will come from their tongues in drops of honey, and fall from their hands in streams of gold. Need we wonder, then, if some bill becomes a law that will forever prevent the settlement of the lands, now called arid? A quotation from 1869 manual, issued by the secretary of the interior, will show what they think of the major portion of Oregon, and you complain, in a recent issue, of geographers in regard to our state. There is this ignorance that sends such a report of these lands to congress to be scattered about broadcast over the United States, or a link in a chain of circumstances that will repeal the homestead law.

On page 597, annual of 1899, we find this language, in speaking of the Columbia river:

"The Pacific Northwest, including Montana, all of Idaho, and major portion of Oregon and Washington, and this section in connection with other arid lands, is said to be the 'Nation's farm.' It contains practically all that is left of the public domain, and is the chief hope of a free home for those who dream of landed independence, but who have little besides industry and self-denial with which to secure it. As it is now, this land has but little value. In many places a township would not support a settler and his family, and a section of land does not yield enough to keep a light-footed and laborious sheep from starving to death."

This writer is an advocate of land leasing and wants no homestead law. Rent these worthless lands and thus create a fund to build an irrigation system of a greater magnitude than the world has ever seen. What would be the commercial value in rent for land where a sheep would starve to death unless we give him more than 640 acres for his pasture field?

This same writer estimates the grazing land at 400,000,000 acres; this would grow 450,000 sheep, having a section for each sheep, but as there are many places where

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