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CONCERNING OUR RANGES

A CORRESPONDENT TO VALE DEMOCRAT PROPOSES PLAN.

To Solve the Perplexing Problem of Land Leasing--What he Considers a Practical Remedy for Conditions.

(Charles Becker in Vale Democrat.)

Editor Democrat--In the last number of the Weekly Democrat I noticed that Mr. John Gilcrest in an interview most emphatically declared in favor of a wise lease law that will protect the interests of the sheepmen and small stockmen alike with the big corporations, one of the very largest he is manager of.

Now, as I have been a close neighbor for a number of years to the concern which he represents, and in all intercourse incidental to the running of cattle on a common range I have ever found John Gilcrest a fair-minded and honorable gentleman, who, during the time of superintending the immense interests of his company, has never shown any inclination to oppress, hinder, or in any way interfere with the rights of his neighbors--the individual small stockmen of this county--but has ever been ready and willing to accommodate and extend courtesies to one and all of us as far as compatible with the best interests of his company, but when Mr. Gilcrest says that the leasing of the public domain is the only remedy against the destruction of the open ranges, I beg to differ with him, although I agree with him when he says that if something is not done soon to check the crowding in on our ranges of immense migratory bands of sheep whose owners have no interests in the growth and development of our county, own no real estate and pay no taxes, our open ranges will soon be reduced to a dusty desert that will support neither cattle nor sheep; a condition which will have a most disastrous effect upon the business interests of our whole state, for what would Eastern Oregon be, for instance, if you took away from it the livestock industry? Of course Mr. Gilcrest, being a representative of a wealthy livestock company, naturally will look upon the situation from the standpoint of his company.

The leasing of our public ranges is unjust, unfair and contrary to the principles of our institutions, besides it is entirely impracticable, for it would put a stop to all further settlement of the arid range states, and put the entire livestock industry into the hands and control of large non-resident corporations.

Different reasons are advanced in support of a lease law. One is that the government does not receive any revenue from the grazing of the public domain; another reason they claim is an overstocking of the ranges, and still another, which all who are acquainted with conditions now prevailing on our ranges must admit is a just and proper reason, and congress ought to lose no time in finding a remedy for this great evil that is now threatening the annihilation of the live stock industry.

The remedy is not in the leasing of the public domain to big livestock companies. As to the government not receiving any revenue from the grazing of the public domain, it does derive an immense revenue in the way of taxes. Lease the range and the people of the range states will soon be too poor to pay any taxes or buy goods.

Now as to the second reason, the overstocking of the ranges. The first thing a big stock company will do when taking possession of a range is to overstock in order to starve out their neighbors, the small stockmen. It has become a well established fact that there is no end to the greed of a corporation, and they are the very ones who are raising the cry of overstocking the ranges. We had a fair demonstration of that fact about sixteen years when Miller & Lux the California millionaire cattle kings, took possession of this county. In places

where there had been one head they drove in twenty head of cattle. The consequence was that in a few years they themselves and all others who had stock running on the range lost about 75 per cent of it during a hard winter. I believe that with the exception of those tramp sheepmen who with their immense bands of sheep roam from place to place reducing our best ranges to a dusty desert, all stockmen are in favor of a law to protect our ranges from certain quick destruction and preserve them for the benefit of coming generations. But it must be a law that will give all the people an even chance to graze the public domain, and the sooner such a law is passed the better it will be for the country. And here I would propose a remedy that would be entirely practicable and would give individual stockmen and companies an even chance alike as heretofore, and keep the arid land states open for further settlement.

Let the general government take control of the ranges. Lay it off into districts of suitable sizes. Appoint a range warden for each and every district whose duty it should be to see that his district is not overstocked, which would be conducted about on the same principle as is now applied to our forest reserves. And by all means give the resident owners of livestock the preference thereon. When a district is staked off for all it can support, allow no more stock to be driven thereon. Should the occupants of the district by natural increase overstock it, let the warden order a certain per cent of the stock cut down as per ratio. This, in the opinion of most of the smaller stockmen whom I have heard express themselves on this most important subject, would remedy the evils now so much complained of and stop all further "range wars" the corporations love to write so much about and save our public ranges for all time to come. Such a plan would prevent our public domain from falling into the hands and under the control of large corporations, most of them non-residents of the state in which their holdings are located, such as are now monopolizing the livestock industry of Texas and Australia. But such a law the big corporations do not want. Nothing will suit them but the whole earth with a wire fence around it.

STEEL STRIKE GOES ON.
New York, Aug 3.--The steel conference held here today failed to arrive at an agreement. What the next move will be is problematical. After the adjournment President Shaffer declined to speak on the matter further than to say: "It is a serious matter. I must submit certain matters--understand me, not propositions--to my men before I can speak."
Later he said he and his companions were going to confer privately and might issue a statement late this afternoon.
After the labor men went into session, however, it was stated by one of their number that the proposition would not be accepted and there would be no further conference.
The Amalgamated representatives will probably leave for Pittsburgh tomorrow morning.
At the conference this morning Messrs. Morgan and Schwab insisted upon acceptance of the terms offered Saturday that the men return to work at last year's scale and said that encompassed all that the employers had to offer.
The Amalgamated delegates insisted upon further concessions. A general discussion followed and Morgan and his associates withdrew in order to give Shaffer and his associates a chance to confer privately.
They decided they could not accept the proposals and so informed the steel officials when they returned.
After further general unimportant discussion the conference adjourned.
President Schwab went directly to the office of J. P. Morgan. He would not discuss the strike situation.
D. G. Reid of the American Tin Plate company said after the conference the strikers had until 4 o'clock to decide whether they would accept the only proposition ever made them by the steel corporation.

THE "DESERT" OF OREGON

A GOOD DESCRIPTION OF OUR ARID EASTERN OREGON SECTION.

Where the Soil Will Produce Excellent Crops --Water is all That is Needed to Make it Best Farming Land.

(Paul DeLaney in Portland Telegram.)

There is a large scope of country in Eastern and Southern Oregon called "desert country." This land lies principally in Klamath, Lake, Harney, Malheur and Crook counties. This country for years has been regarded as worthless, except as a stock-raising country. To the stranger it does indeed appear to be a barren waste, only put there to help hold the world together, as the saying goes. There are long stretches of alkali plains, where the ground is so white with this enemy of vegetation that in the distance it looks as if it were covered with snow, miles and miles of rocks and sand, where nothing but sagebrush and greasewood can live without water, and these are interspersed with mountains and hills covered with rocks and boulders, at many points guarded by rim rocks, that stand up like a wall at the approach of the summit.

For more than 30 years this section has been a stock and wool producer of great magnitude. The resources from these industries have brought in millions of dollars annually to the state, and the total since the discovery of the country would sound fabulous. In early days the range in this section was the stockman's ideal. Along the water courses the grass grew as high as the average horse's back, and among the sagebrush and rocks of the plains and mountains a smaller grass grew that was unequaled as a stock food. Year by year the settler has taken up the lands along the water courses, until they are all under fence. The vast herds were driven to the plains and mountains for sustenance. For a number of years these have not been sufficient to sustain the stock of the country, and where stockmen had not taken advantage of the lands along the water courses and secured them themselves they have been compelled to buy hay during the midwinter months from the settlers, and during hard winters have had to pay very high prices. But with the good prices paid for wool and stock the stockmen have continued to grow richer, and the settler has prospered here, as in no other section of the state.

But a gradual change has been coming over the manner of conducting the stock and farming industries from the beginning. The ultimatum is as plain to the thought as day. At first the settler cut the hay in summer from the range and saved it for emergencies in hard winters. Then he began to fence the hay-producing portions of his land and cut from it every year to feed his own increasing herds during the winter, and sell all that he could spare to the stockmen. At first the native hay cut from the natural meadows was the only kind known in the country. But the demand became so great that a heavy crop was needed, and the process of farming was begun on a small scale against much skepticism and adverse criticism. Timothy, redtop, blue joint and alfalfa were introduced, and step by step the native meadows have been giving way to these, until in many localities the domesticated grasses have become pre-eminent.

In many places the settler began experimenting with grain and fruits and vegetables also. But he met the same skepticism on this point as he did in the introduction of new grasses. In many places today the settler who plants fruit trees, sows grain or attempts to raise potatoes or other vegetables for the first time is laughed at by his neighbors, and often neglects them and lets them go to waste. The industry has been kept back in many places on this account. Then there are other conditions that have retarded the industry. Western Oregon produces these necessities

very cheap, and the well-to-do rancher of Eastern Oregon thought he could buy them cheaper than he could raise them. He was busy himself with the affairs of his stock and ranch, and hired help came high in that sparsely settled section, in fact, to the prosperous rancher and stockman of that section to work in a garden. The man who handled only dollars could not stoop to raising vegetables that only cost cents. But in spite of the prejudice the love of some for gardens and orchards of their own induce them to experiment on a small scale, and in nearly every incident it proved successful. Fine "spuds," cabbage, corn, grain, fruits of many kinds and berries grow there and produce abundantly. Thus the rancher of the all round producing kind is steadily getting a foothold and increasing in numbers, and this section is changing from the two main industries of stockraising and hayraising to a diversified country of stockraising and farming. But farming is still in its infancy. At the best it is only beginning, and in many places a start has not even been made. Along the running streams and where the streams have been diverted through ditches the lands are yet mostly devoted to hayraising. Wherever there is farming it is a success both in manner of production and in ready market for products. There are no railroads here to cause competition from the outside world, and when wheat is selling at 40 and 50 cents per bushel in the wheat belt it brings \$1 per bushel here readily; when potatoes are selling for 40 and 60 cents per 100 pounds in Western Oregon, the Eastern Oregon "spuds" brings its \$1 per 100 pounds, with ready sale for all that is produced. It costs this amount to get the products from the outside after paying transportation by means of railroads and freight teams, and the quality in Eastern Oregon is just as good. It will be years, however, before a sufficient amount of the necessities of life outside of beef and mutton will be raised in Eastern Oregon to supply the home demand, and the prices must necessarily remain high. As long as hay is raised with no other labor than harvesting and has a ready sale at \$5 per ton, the tedious work of diversified farming will be neglected and kept back, though the prices of the products are good.

This will remain the case until the grazing lands are taken up on a more diversified scale and the bands of stock reduced in numbers, which will necessarily increase the number of men engaged in the business. While it will increase the demand for hay it will also increase the demand for farm products, as the population increases. As the lands under water supply at present are about all taken the prices of lands of a tillable nature increased at a rapid rate, and it will not be long until the lands will reach such a value that the small farmer will only be able to buy a small tract of land. He will necessarily engage in diversified farming on his small plot.
The soil in this section of country is noted for its fertility. Water is only needed to make it produce anything that can be grown in this latitude. The supply of water is being increased by artificial means in different ways, and every means will be exhausted, so long as it offers successful farming, and this will be as long as there is an available acre left in the fertile sections. Artificial ditches are now the principal means of supplying the water for irrigation purposes, but storage by means of mountain reservoirs are being advocated and built in some instances, as well as successful prospecting for artesian water in many instances. Where there is such vegetable-producing soil and water going to waste sufficient to utilize it, it is safe to say that the enterprising American will find a means of uniting the two elements with profitable results.
It is a remarkable coincident of nature that within reasonable distance (Concluded on fourth page)

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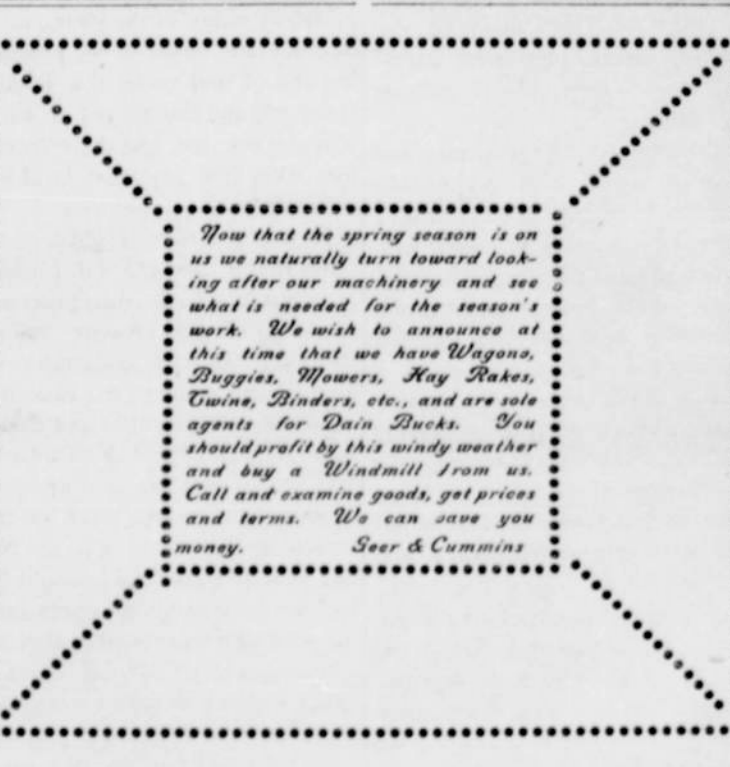


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