

# The Santiam News.

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EDITOR AND PROPRIETOR.

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## THE RESPONSIBILITY OF RAILROADS.

The late Shippers' Congress at Eugene developed facts that ought to and will cause the people to act.

Railroads are of immense value in the development of a country. Were it not for the establishment of lines of transportation, by which products of different portions of a country can be interchanged, a pioneer condition only could exist. The general Government, therefore, recognizing the immense aid to development that these arteries of commerce furnish, has granted munificent bodies of the public lands to corporations who have undertaken to build these highways of commerce. These land-grant railroads have been built and they have received title to public lands as per contract. But does the obligation of the railroads cease with the construction of the railway lines? Are not these railways under obligations to the people to operate these lines in a way that will take care of the increased volume of commerce that the building of the railway lines has generated?

The fact was developed at Eugene that the donations by the Government of public lands to railroads in Oregon, if converted into cash at \$5 per acre, which could easily be done, would amount to more than \$71,000 for every mile of road built.

As the cost of building railroads, such as we have in Oregon, will not average above \$25,000 per mile, it can readily be seen that the overplus of the cost of building is an abundance to supply the lines with motive power and rolling stock.

Seeing that the Government, which is the people, have built and equipped these Oregon railroads and has made a present of them to the railway companies, the companies are certainly under obligations to operate the roads so that they will conserve the interests of the people.

So long as the railroads were willing to take care of the business offered them with reasonable dispatch, nevertheless exorbitant freight rates were exacted, the people made no concerted complaint. Because of transportation facilities people have been encouraged to and have embarked in business enterprises that depend upon the railroads to carry their products market. The railroads have practically said, "We are here and willing to take care of any and all business you can offer and you may depend upon us to do so." With this guaranty men have invested their all in manufacturing plants. Also, lumbermen have entered into contracts to furnish lumber at various points, based upon the existing freight charges. By a sudden raise of nearly \$2 per thousand feet of lumber in freight charges, these lumbermen have had their business changed from the profit side to the loss side of the ledger. Ought not the railroads, in equity, to make up to these men any loss they may suffer from the raise in freight rates?

But the main cause of complaint at the present time is not rates, but a total lack of cars to carry the freight offered at any price. Shippers know that a temporary shortage of cars may be brought about at any time, despite the best of intentions on the part of the railroads. An extraordinary demand for cars in one part of the country must necessarily cause a shortage in other parts. This condition ought not to and generally does not continue but for a few days only. For nearly three months Oregon shippers have called in vain for cars to carry their products to market. On this account business in all lines has suffered the loss of thousands of dollars. Are not the railroads directly responsible for this loss?

When a person or corporation assumes the responsible position of common carrier, he or it becomes responsible to the public to perform the duties required with reasonable dispatch. A refusal to do so for lack of cars or any other reason, should be just cause upon which to recover damages.

However, there may be a cause lying underneath this car shortage that is not generally understood. Last Spring Congress enacted a freight rate law, which was very bitterly opposed by the railroads. While the law tempered in favor of the roads as much as possible by the railroad U. S. Senators, and who succeeded in extracting from the bill almost every feature that made enforcement of the measure possible, the railroads resent any inter-

ference in the business of operating the roads, whatever. While the railroads enjoy special favors from the public, they resent being placed under special obligations to the public. For this reason it is not just possible that the railroads are endeavoring to administer a little wholesome discipline to the public in the way of car shortage? Are the railroads not endeavoring to show the people how entirely dependent they are upon the railroads, in order to stem the rising sentiment against the roads?

Here in Oregon the people have but just commenced the battle against the railroads that the older states in the East have fought and won. We have assessed the railroads, not in relative proportion to what other property is assessed, but at double and treble what they have heretofore been assessed. Here in Oregon we have an unprecedented car shortage. May there not be some measure of relationship between these two facts?

The fact of the matter is the railroads are very rapidly developing a sentiment and necessity for Government control, if not Government ownership of the roads. If the statement made at Eugene is a fact, and it will probably not be disputed, that the Government has, through land grants, built and equipped these railroads, would it treat Mr. Harriman unjustly if it would depose him as president of his railway system and appoint one in his stead, in the manner that Cabinet officers are appointed?

Car shortage, that has paralyzed business in all lines for the past two months, will probably cause the enactment of some drastic railway laws at the coming session of the Legislature. If Governor Chamberlain will assume a position similar to that assumed by Governor Folk, of Missouri, with reference to lobbyists, the Legislature may enact a law or laws that will cure the evil.

The people, as a rule, do not wish the railroads treated unjustly. They are willing that the roads shall earn a fair remuneration upon the money invested. Nor do they wish that the Government shall own the roads, except it becomes necessary to do so in order to prevent the roads from owning the Government. But they do insist very firmly that the railroads shall perform the duty of a common carrier at reasonable rates and without respect to person or favoritism. They demand that the roads shall provide motive power and cars sufficient to transport all freight offered. They also demand that railroads shall be assessed at their full cash value, the same as other property is assessed, and to be required to bear their just proportion of the burden of government. They think that railroads have dodged these responsibilities too long now, and nothing short of laws that will regulate and control the roads will satisfy the people.

## HE SHOULD REMEMBER MITCHELL.

A late issue of Colliers' Weekly gives what purports to be an expose of Senator Fulton. That paper publishes a letter from Senator Mitchell to George C. Brownell, and which was concurred in by Senator Fulton, the tenor of which indicated that Senator Fulton was conversant with all land fraud matters in which Senator Mitchell and Messrs. Brownell and Hall were involved.

Senator Fulton, of course, denies any knowledge whatever of any wrongdoing in connection with any or all of the business. When Senator Mitchell was accused, and shortly thereafter indicted, he, too, denied very bitterly any guilt whatever as to the crime charged. All will remember how the aged senator was humiliated by being convicted of the crime charged. His humiliation was certainly increased by the public denial he had made in the open Senate. Senator Fulton should take warning from the fate of his then associate senator. He should be very, very sure that he is not denying matters publicly that may afterwards be proven in the courts.

It has been whispered to the NEWS man that Prosecutor Heney has this noted letter in his possession, and that he had it at the time of Senator Mitchell's indictment. But as the evidence against Fulton seemed less convincing than that against Mitchell, Hermann, or Williamson, and as Mr. Heney did not wish to leave Oregon wholly without representation in Congress, he concluded not to press for the indictment of Fulton at that time. But from the way Colliers' is lifting the lid, Senator Fulton is not to escape investigation.

When Senator Fulton was elected United States Senator the people generally thought that a high-minded, honorable, and far-seeing statesman had been selected. Are we to be mistaken? Is Senator Fulton to be proven to be nothing but a dirty little politician, like the rest of the Oregon Congressmen at that time?

Senator Fulton well knows that Oregon needs the ablest of representation in Congress at the present time. He knows that in order to accomplish the greatest amount of good for his State, he ought not to antagonize any of his associate Congressmen, the heads of the various Governmental departments, nor the President. But in spite of that knowledge and the knowledge that he is destroying his ability to accomplish results for the State, he begins a fight against the President in the opening days of Congress. And for what reason? Just to pay a political debt that ought never to have been incurred. Senator Fulton ought to know that Mr. Heney has made good in the estimation of the President. He ought to know when President Roosevelt appointed Mr. Bristol District

Attorney at the instance of Mr. Heney, that the President reposed much more confidence in his special prosecutor, who was bringing the land thieves to book right and left, than he does in a senator whom he suspected was trying to screen these thieves.

The NEWS does not say Senator Fulton is guilty of the matters charged against him. It hopes that he is not and that he will be able to establish his innocence beyond the shadow of a doubt. But it does think that the senator is most unwise to arouse the President's antagonism; especially if he expected to secure appropriations for Oregon rivers and harbors.

The Oregon Republicans are surely not very proud of the delegation now in Congress, sent there by their votes. Senator Mitchell and Congressman Williamson convicted of crime; Congressman Hermann indicted, both in Oregon and

at Washington, and now Senator Fulton is being brought under the cloud. Senator Gearin, a Democrat, appointed by a Democratic Governor, seems to be the only decent one there. Let us hope that Senator-to-be Bourne and Congressmen-elect Hawley and Ellis will prove to be different timber from this quartette of gentlemen that are proving to be tainted with a desire to protect dishonest men of the get-rich-quick order.

Oregon is surely getting in the neck with a dishonored Congressional delegation and the Harriman system of conducting railroads. Yet people in prosperous times will accept most anything and without grumbling. No wonder the people are enacting stringent Primary and Referendum laws. If these laws had been made fifteen or twenty years ago, we might have escaped the humiliating position in which the State has been placed.

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