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INTER STATE COMMERCE.

At the risk of being a little behind time, but with a view of letting people hear about this topic from high official sources, we publish the following letter from Hon. J. H. Mitchell to the secretary of the Dalles board of trade, B. S. Huntington, Esq., under date of January 21st:

Mr. Mitchell says, as you have been informed by telegraph, the senate has concurred in the report of the conference committee on the interstate commerce bill, and the bill as agreed on in conference has passed the senate without amendment, and in all probability will be agreed to by the house, and become a law.

I hope sincerely the bill will have the effect of meeting the expectations of shippers and remedying the grave difficulties, and prohibiting the gross discriminations upon the part of transportation companies of exacting greater charges for the transportation of persons and property over shorter than longer hauls; and to some of which unjust exactions my attention was recently attracted by a communication from a committee of your board. That it will have this effect, however, at least on points of shipment in eastern Oregon and Washington territory east of Umatilla junction, or on points in middle and southern Oregon, I have very serious doubts; and whether it will meet the question of long and short haul on points on the river between Portland and Umatilla junction, in Oregon and Washington territory, may admit of the most serious question.

The bill, under the rules, could not be amended in the senate. The only way in which any amendment could be reached was by recommitting the report of the conference committee with suggestions. I submitted certain amendments, and with a view of placing the bill in a position where they could be considered and adopted, voted to recommit to the conference committee, thereby hoping to secure such amendments as would make the bill certain and effective in absolutely prohibiting greater charges for a short haul than a long haul; but failing to secure any amendment, I voted for the bill on its final passage, trusting, as I have said, although with serious apprehension, that it may afford some relief, at least, from the unjust discriminations growing out of charges by common carriers, as is done in many instances of more, and sometimes more than double, and even treble, for transporting persons and property over a shorter than a longer distance. Besides there are, I believe, some other provisions in the bill that will prove of much value to the producer, shipper and consumer.

A few of the evils, and what are believed by the people of Oregon and Washington territory to be unjust discriminations in this matter of trans-

portation, and which are apparent to all, may be briefly stated thus; and some of which were only indicated in the communication to me from your board hereinbefore referred to:

It is well known that the tariff on all classes of freight from Portland to the interior over the lines of the ORN and OCR are infinitely higher to points beyond the first few stations out on the various lines from Portland than they are by any of the transcontinental lines from Chicago or St. Louis to Portland; as, for instance, coffee, sugar, bacon, hams, water-pipe, pig-iron, and like articles are from \$12 to \$14 per ton from Chicago or St. Louis to Portland, while from Portland to Pendleton, these same articles are \$19 per ton; and from Portland to Eugene city, Springfield, Roseburgh, Riddles, Grants pass, Central point, Medford and Ashland from \$8 to the former, to \$18.60 per ton to the latter, while the freight charge on many articles of freight are as much as \$30 per ton over the same distance.

But again, referring to the way-points along the line of the ORN, in Oregon and Washington territory, and to the matter of transportation between these various points and eastern cities, it will be seen that a car load of merchandise to any of these way points from Chicago or Omaha, or St. Louis, is delivered at such point without going through to Portland, and the freight charges thereon consist of a full through rate to Portland, plus the local rate on merchandise from Portland to the way point. This local rate between Portland and these way-points bears relation to the through rates to Portland as follows:

From Portland to the Dalles, as 75 to 100; while from Portland to Walla Walla, La Grande, Union, Baker city, and Huntington, as 100 to 200; that is to say, the freight charges for transportation between these latter named points and Portland are on an average double the rates of transportation between St. Paul or Chicago and Portland; yet the actual haul in each of the cases between Portland and the way-points above named is on an average only about one-tenth the distance from these eastern cities to Portland.

As a consequence, a person desiring to ship a ton of freight from St. Paul to Umatilla, or from Chicago to Baker city, the former being nearly 200 miles nearer to St. Paul than Portland, and the latter over 300 nearer Chicago than Portland, is compelled to pay just about double the amount a shipper pays on a ton from St. Paul to Portland, or from Chicago via the UPR and ORN to Portland.

The people, as I understand, are complaining, not of the through rates, but of these excessive charges to non-competing points. What the people, therefore, away from competing points in eastern Oregon and Washington territory, and in middle and southern

Oregon as well, desire; at least what they believe to be to their interest; is an absolutely effective provision that will in each and every case absolutely prohibit transportation companies, under severe penalties, for charging more for transporting passengers or freight over a shorter than over a longer distance on the same line. And while it is a matter of very serious doubt with me whether such a provision of law will have the desired effect, and will absolutely reduce the freight to and from way-points, or whether, on the contrary, the effect may not be to increase the through rates on the long hauls, and thus maintain the local rates at high rates on the short hauls, I am decidedly in favor of giving it a trial. But to give it an entirely fair, honest, and complete test, it is all-important that the prohibitory clause intended to meet the evil above suggested should be clear, unambiguous, direct, plain, positive, and certain, and not couched in such language, or coupled with such conditions, as to render it ineffective or absolutely nugatory.

It was my fear that the provision in the bill just passed was of the nature last described that led me to make an effort to secure its amendment.

To be Continued.

All the eastern wires are down. There is a light snow and cold weather throughout eastern Oregon. The NPR express was eighteen hours late yesterday, and the OSL is three hours late.

It was the railroad bridge at Salem, and not the county bridge, which was reported damaged yesterday. The Statesman says: This is the same bridge which gave away under the morning passenger train two or three years ago. To O. P. Randell, the section boss, is due the credit of having discovered that the bent had been washed away. Had it not been for the vigilance of Mr. Randell a serious accident might have occurred.

The Oregonian rebuked the assembly for tardy work, to which the Albany Bulletin reads the Oregonian a splendid lecture stating the well known fact that the delay in legislative work has been solely caused by the Oregonian persistently circulating an infamous scandal, and loudly clamoring from day to day for an investigation. But for this piece of rascally business, which has confused the assembly, legislation would have been greatly advanced from where it is.