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LOOKS GOOD TO MR. LUSK

**Gives His Reasons Why
Leasing of the Public
Lands Would be
Beneficial.**

A LONG "PIPE DREAM"
Refreshing News That Big Corporations Pay Their Full Quota of Taxation to Maintain County and State Governments.

F. C. Lusk, president of the American Cattle Growers' Association, and also president of the French-Glean Cattle and Land Company of Harney county, tells in the Oregonian why he is in favor of a bill that will be presented to Congress for leasing the public domain. The Examiner has for a long time been anxious to learn just upon what grounds the millionaire cattle barons built their hopes for the passage of this act, and what their argument in favor of the leasing proposition really is. We here-with give Mr. Lusk's argument on the proposition, and we trust that after reading it, some of the stockmen of Lake county will give their views on the other side of the question. A column will always be open in The Examiner for the argument of this question pro and con. It appears to us that this leasing proposition would be a very bad thing for Lake county, and at least one argument against it is the fact that watering places on the ranges of this county during the summer time are few and far between, and the man who could first get the opportunity to lease the ground upon where a spring is located, be he a large or small stockman, could practically control that range for miles and miles. Mr.

"Public opinion is largely formed by those directly interested. In the convention at Fort Worth, in January, 1900, of the National Livestock Association, a body composed of the owners of all kinds of stock, sheep predominating, a resolution favoring land-leasing was passed. A bill providing for it was introduced in Congress that winter, and the subject at once became a general theme of discussion. Public opinion in the arid land states mostly affected appeared adverse. This was caused by the owners of the innumerable bands of migratory sheep, who naturally oppose it, and by the small cattlemen, who, not understanding the proposed measure, feared that they would be frozen out by large cattle or sheepmen monopolizing the leases. But in the past year and a half events have followed so rapidly on the ranges, and the facts became known, that public opinion has changed with great rapidity on the subject. In Colorado, for instance, the change is almost absolute. The cause of this change will be perceived by the answer to the questions you ask as the reasons for the law, and a general knowledge of its proposed features.

"Growing of cattle on the ranges of the arid states is the pioneer industry, commenced and brought to a high state of perfection many years before sheep were there at all. Most of the older cattlemen fought the Indians in starting their plant. The company I represent in Harney county, in this state, lost all of its buildings, much of its stock and the lives of some of its employes in the Indian outbreak in 1878. There is no such thing as migratory cattlemen. The nature of the business prohibits it. They must have a fixed habitation, a ranch, a land plant, with fences, buildings, hay fields and means to protect and care for the cattle in winter. These have been the growth of 30 years or more, and vary all the way from the ranch worth \$5000 up to the investment of \$1,000,000 on every dollar of which and all their cattle, full taxes are paid to the local county. They now find everywhere that countless migratory bands of sheep, a majority in the hands of Basques and Portuguese, who are not citizens, and pay no taxes to the local county, and have no ranch or landed headquarters anywhere, swarm all over their ranges, up to their fence lines, and not only drive and run their cattle out, but are also utterly destroying for all time the feed on the range.

"To illustrate, our company pays into the treasury of Harney county a very

large sum annually for its and the state's benefit. Yet hundreds of thousands of migratory sheep pour in that county in the summer from Idaho, Nevada and elsewhere, and utterly devastate the range and retire in the late fall, without contributing one dollar to the county tax fund; but, on the contrary, lessen its tax-roll by cutting in two the amount of cattle and sheep its residents could carry and pay taxes on if the migratory sheep bands were kept out, although that county has ample range and feed for all the stock it could own and winter. In these cases it is not a free range, because the cattle will not graze where sheep are, and the herder with his dog readily drives them off if they attempt it. The statistics furnished by the Agricultural Department show just what such a state of affairs leads one to expect—that the cattle are rapidly decreasing in the trans-Missouri states, and territories. For instance, in Wyoming in the last 10 years over 50 per cent; in other localities, 66 per cent, and in some places even more; hence the price of beef is constantly advancing, and has now reached a point that in the eastern cities makes it a luxury to the common people.

MUCH BLOODSHED NOW.

"Another reason of great importance for such a law is that the ranges are now open battle fields between sheep and cattlemen, and also between sheepmen themselves. In these battles last year the homicides were numerous. There have been many this year, three in one fight a short time ago. One here can have no idea of the intensity of this feeling on the ranges of Wyoming, Colorado, Utah, New Mexico and other states. In many localities small cattlemen see their homes and ranches of 20 years' standing invaded by the vast bands of migratory sheep, and they have organized and established dead lines, and are guarding them today with rifles; but the sheepmen come to the edge, hesitate perhaps a time, and then say: 'We have the legal right to cross; our sheep have eaten it clean behind us, and we must cross.' And they do. Then comes bloodshed, homicide and the law openly violated. Each side shoots as well as the other. It is obvious this cannot go on in a civilized country, and nothing can stop it but a lease hold law.

WORKS WELL ELSEWHERE.

"We are frequently asked if it will not be difficult to frame and administer such a law in a manner that will do justice to all. By no means. Such laws exist in Australia and Texas with satisfaction to lands. Both jurisdictions found themselves confronted with the same difficulty we are now in, and adopted the only remedy—a wise lease law. In each place the stock business is now on a permanent basis. Each stockman knows how many sheep or cattle he can carry without injuring his leasehold. Nothing could induce either Texas or Australia to abrogate its lease laws and throw open its ranges to the old condition of overstocking, consequent destruction, and continual battle and violation of law.

"The law will be for all, sheepmen as well as cattlemen. Many sheepmen favor it, and are just as anxious for its passage as cattlemen. This is especially so of the sheepmen who have a fixed habitation, a ranch where they cut hay and care for sheep in the winter. I am in receipt of daily communications from such men, who tell me that while they know they can't join the American Cattle-Growers' Association, they favor such a law and want to aid in its passage in every manner possible. The whole situation was adequately summed up a few weeks ago by one of the most prominent sheepmen in Wyoming, who said that he realized that the time had now come that every one who owned sheep or cattle on the public range must have the ability to control a definite portion of it by lease.

"A vital feature of the law will be protection by preference right to lease to actual residents and owners in a county; this to cut off all possibility of foreign syndicates coming into a county and renting the land away from the local resident stockmen. The bill will be fully safeguarded against any such star-rout-ing. Another equally important feature will be the prohibition against leases being put up at auction. Many small stockmen have been justly and naturally frightened by the suggestion that the leases would be put up to highest bidder, and wealthy corporations thus secure them all. The auction feature will be prohibited and a fixed reasonable rent established. The most important feature that the proposed law will contain will be a provision adequately protecting the small stockowner, and assuring his right to a full proportionate share of the ranges in his respective county. This must and will be plain and emphatic. No bill will ever pass the Congress of the United States that does not contain the three principal features above named in unequivocal language. It is thought by those best informed on the subject that when a bill is framed fully protect-

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