

# OREGON WANTS ROADS

## Is Tired of Promises and Passes the Matter up to Mr. Harriman

## Hot Air Won't Go, and the Meeting of the League Sets the Dic- tator to Thinking

Funds have been collected and plans are well under way by which the transportation committee of the Chamber of Commerce hopes to accomplish that which is of vital importance to the state of Oregon—railroad development.

The conditions which have spontaneously created the necessity of active work in this regard are as follows:

For about 25 years the O. R. & N. Co. has been a dominant factor in the transportation fields in this state. During all this time the people of this city and state have, in every way they could, both by giving it their business and otherwise, shown their loyalty, going so far at times as even to discourage other roads in their attempts to secure a foothold here. During all this time the people have been waiting patiently for the building of branch lines and extensions into tributary country, and for aggressive efforts to develop the state and contiguous territory. Every map and folder issued by this company for 25 years showed extensions in embryo. Every year promises have been made to build, until its record is now one long chain of broken promises. Now the north, the Great Northern (backed by the power of Mr. Hill) and the Northern Pacific have pursued an aggressive policy and are doing all in their power to build up a commercial rival to Portland, and have forced the O. R. & N. Co. to cease even attempting to serve territory tributary to this city. Immoral, and perhaps illegal, "truces" and agreements have been entered into by it respecting interstate commerce; not only is Portland deprived of the support of as rich a country as there is on the face of the globe, but the country itself is practically set back for years for lack of transportation facilities and railroads; these companies not only divide the territory among themselves as though they owned it, but when they cannot agree as to a division, the interests and well-being of states, even, are given no consideration, and yet

they wonder at the determination of the President and of the people behind him to do what they can to break away from these conditions and enact laws which will, to some extent, make them impossible.

The records show that for years in Oregon there has been but one short branch line of 40 miles—to Condon—built, while at least four-fifths of the state is isolated and without means of getting their products to market, and, therefore, largely at a standstill.

To the south, in California, the same system is bending every energy in building up San Francisco. There millions are spent to lower grades and shorten lines, while here a water level grade from Riparia to Lewiston is abandoned and freight is forced over three mountain ranges and heavy grades 150 miles further to the sea than by the river level route. There roads are built miles in length almost paralleling the present tracks. Here a road like the Columbia Southern is left between the devil and the deep sea, although it is paying well and will pay more if extended. The Alaska trade was abandoned to the Sound without a protest; the Lewiston and Nez Perce country surrendered, although it had been recognized as Portland O. R. & N. Co. territory for nearly 50 years, and nothing done in Oregon. In the states of Washington and California there are railroad commissions and stringent railroad legislation. In the state there is not a line of adverse legislation on the statute books. Notwithstanding all this, this city and other sections reached by this road have supported it most loyally. For year ending June 30, 1897, will pay earnings of the O. R. & N. Co. were \$4,677,924; the net earnings, \$1,949,457.40; the surplus, \$563,457, after paying of dividends amounting to \$11,000. For year ending June 30, 1903, the gross earnings were \$0,117,663; net earnings, \$5,376,403; surplus, \$3,825,000, after paying dividends amounting to \$440,000; and during the intervening years each year showed an increasing surplus. How much of this money, contributed by the producers of this section, has been spent in this state or in contiguous territory? Moreover, if the country now developed is so productive that Mr. Worthington has stated that the results are extraordinary, why should not the rest of the state show like returns? There is not a resident in Portland who lived here at the time the O. R. & N. line was built up the Columbia river but prophesied its failure, and the result

has shown how little they knew of the productiveness of their own country.

This question has now reached the acute stage, and the committee asks the people of this state and those interested in its development where they expect to "get off," with the two great systems pulling for Seattle and one for San Francisco, and nothing being done for Portland or this state—in fact, their own earnings are now being used against them. We ask the property holders in this state generally to consider the question and in order to get some idea of the present conditions let them take a railroad map of the state of Washington and compare it with one of Oregon and draw their own conclusions. Let them determine for themselves how this great state can be developed if four-fifths of it is without railroad transportation and facilities.

To give some idea of the present condition, it may only be necessary to glance at the booklet issued jointly by the Chamber of Commerce and the Lewis and Clark Fair to see that "Oregon has only 1.78 miles of railroad per 100 square miles of territory, a lower ratio than that of any state or territory in the Union except Idaho, Nevada, Wyoming, Arizona and New Mexico. Central Oregon is the largest area of habitable land in the United States without railroad transportation. In short, all Oregon has outgrown its railroad facilities."

There is no question but what great dissatisfaction exists and is well founded. As an instance, nearly one year and a half ago the extension of the Columbia Southern was absolutely promised on condition that the people of this city would subscribe for a certain amount of bonds. This subscription was completed about 16 months ago, and no step has been taken towards extending the road since. A contract for building a road from Riparia to Lewiston was let abandoned after most of the grading was done. When others took up in earnest the building of a road to Tillamook, every possible obstacle was placed in their way in financing their enterprise, and in order to prevent connections with main lines if it was built. These examples might be multiplied, but it will serve no good purpose.

Self-preservation is said to be the first law of nature, and that law is the real actuating force behind this movement. The committee proposes to put forth every effort to get these conditions remedied, and to get its information in such shape that its truth cannot be gainsaid. It intends to ask nothing but what is right. It intends to take up this matter with the railroad officials, and to get the people of this state to appreciate and understand its greatness and productiveness and to keep constantly at it until relief is obtained. The committee contends that with all the roads in this state under the control of one system, this system should do its duty in developing the state as well as in drawing revenue therefrom. The committee further intends to encourage the development and use of our natural transportation advantages, and if the O. R.

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& N. Co. will not lay rails on a natural grade to Lewiston; if this great company enters into a "truce" to prevent the development of the richest section of the state of Idaho, and denies the people living there the ordinary means of communication and transportation, and to this state a rich and growing trade, because it and its partners cannot agree upon a division of territory, then it must be done in some other way and by the people themselves. Nor, under the circumstances, will this movement be confined to Oregon. Idaho and sections of Washington are affected alike, and are equally interested. Nor is the committee starting for a short campaign. It knows the resources of the great railroad companies and how they work. In the past it has apparently not been difficult to divide and dissipate the strength of such movement. It has often been said that the people of Portland never pull together, but it remains to be seen whether or not they can be divided this time. A number of meetings have already been held, and some progress made. Certain propositions have been submitted to the companies, and when their answers are received it will be time to discuss them publicly. The committee desires to work on fair and friendly lines; it wants to co-operate with the railroads in the development of the state, but it wants co-operation; it is only too willing to recognize and act on mutuality of interests, but the interests must be recognized as mutual. But the committee will not abandon its position or work until this great state receives fair treatment from the hands of the great transportation companies. It feels that as Portland is the great center of the population and business of the Northwest, and grows only as the country grows, it should take the lead in this movement. The committee further

feels that its members should have the active support and sympathy of every citizen of the state, whether he be a merchant, a farmer or a property holder.—June Portland Chamber of Commerce Bulletin.

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