

DANGEROUS DEMANDS.

The demands of the interstate commerce commission for increased powers, as embodied in their last report and senate bill 3354, introduced by Senator Cullom, are both dangerous and calculated to invest the commission with attributes never intended in the original law. The current number of the Forum contains an able article clearly pointing out how far-reaching such amendments would be, and their probable effect upon the internal commerce of the country. The bill proposes to confer upon the commission "the power to bring before it at all times, upon complaint or without complaint, any number of interstate carriers; to fix for them maximum rates for the transportation of freight and passengers; to fix minimum rates, when necessary to give effect to the commission's ideas as to the comparative advantages which localities ought to enjoy; to establish through routes and to fix through rates and to prescribe classifications of freight; to prescribe the rules and regulations under which traffic shall move; and to determine what privileges and facilities the carrier shall afford. Every such order of the commission may be as general, and may bind as many carriers, and relate to as many hundreds or thousands of rates, subjects or details, as the commission's wishes may dictate."

So sweeping are these proposed changes that it would be indeed difficult, as the writer remarks, to imagine any sort of traffic regulation or control which these extensive powers would not embrace. Should such a measure become law, it would, in effect, make the interstate commerce each of our interstate railroads, and give a political body the practical control of property which in the aggregate represents nearly one-fifth of the total assets of the United States. In the complete reversal of our methods thus advocated by the commission the courts of the country are to be ignored, and because some of the decisions have not accorded with the views of the commission the orders of that body are hereafter to take effect simply by virtue of the commission's decree, without consideration of any court. In short, we have here the most extraordinary proposition of what may be termed one-sided state control of private enterprise ever formulated by any legislative body in the world. The investment, amounting to something like 12,000 millions of dollars, is to remain in the hands of the people. Nominally, the working of the railroads is to continue as heretofore, while the power to regulate in the most complete and extensive manner imaginable every detail of interstate railroad traffic is to be vested in the hands of a political commission, subject to the usual political exigencies, and whose tenure of office has averaged about the customary four years.

Well may such a startling proposition as this make conservative people pause and inquire whether we are drifting! This demand is the more extraordinary because it comes at a time when the public have little complaint to make against our railroads. Rates, both for passengers and freights, were never so low as now. Dividends on two-thirds of the capital invested in these enterprises have practically ceased; interest on the bonds of hundreds of millions of money loaned in good faith to make these properties pay has defaulted, and the properties are facing enormous expenditures in improvements of track, of terminals and of equipment for life-protection and life-saving purposes, which will not add much, if anything, to the earning powers of the roads. And lastly this demand to change the commission from an auxiliary tribunal, assisting the courts in their lawful work, into a tribunal with vast original powers far greater than any court can exercise, comes in answer to an appeal from the railroads for legislation which is necessary to save them from still further financial disaster.

Not one of the reasons put forward by the commission for this proposition to revolutionize the character of the act and confer such stupendous powers upon its members is a valid reason for such sweeping changes. They may thus be briefly stated:

1. To protect the public against the evils of pooling, should congress confer that right upon carriers.

2. Because corresponding power exists in England.

3. Because the courts have shorn the commission of powers which some of the members imagined it possessed. The proposed bill authorizes freedom of contract between railway companies—the Foraker bill—gives the commission ample power over pooling contracts and the rates maintained under them. The English commission has no such powers as are here in asked, and the situation in England is so fundamentally different to the one we are facing in the United States that there is really no analogy. The debates, committee reports of both houses of congress, and the early official utterances of the commission itself, all tend to prove that the courts have not deprived the commission of an iota of power originally conferred by congress. Yet, upon these flimsy claims, this body demands that it shall be made the supreme arbitrator of the commerce of the country. To grant such a request, far from giving trade new life, would stifle enterprise, destroy competition, and create a condition of affairs far worse for the country than absolute state purchase of railroads.

It is truly urged in the article under review that the commission's demands will not correct the evil which requires correction; namely, pernicious discrimination and unjust charges for the claim of extortionate charges can not successfully be made. Other evils are undoubtedly guarded against in the act as it stands, and so far as the commission has exercised its legitimate functions, the results have been in public benefit. The danger lies in this itch for additional power, this grasping after additional legislation not warranted by existing conditions. Such an endeavor on the part of the commission can not meet with public approval, and for these pertinent reasons, which are quoted from the Forum article: "It is unsupported by any of the reasons urged for it, such as the pretext of the danger of pooling, or the mistaken citation of England's example, or the false assumption that congress ever intended to confer such powers, or the misrepresentation that

the courts have deprived the act of its effect or shorn the commission of its usefulness. There is thus an utter failure to show any reasons or arguments in favor of such radical innovations. These considerations coupled with the fact that compliance with such ambitious aims would make the commission the sole arbitrator and distributor of commercial and industrial prosperity, with almost unlimited powers of detrimental influence with legitimate commercial enterprise in every locality—now safely regulated by that great corrective, competition—will surely condemn the dangerous demands of the commission, and result in their emphatic refusal."

WHITE RATS.

A Colored Woman Raises the Snowy-Furred Creatures for Love.

If the Pied Piper of Hamelin should ever take it into his head to pay Washington a visit, he would find that he had a rival already installed there, and the field fully occupied. The rival in question is Sarah Baker, a colored woman, who lives in Georgetown, near the junction of Congress street and the canal. She raises white rats, not for sale or profit, but merely for the love of the rats. Her room, where she and her four-footed, long-tailed proteges reside, is a queer apartment, filled up with cages, piled one over the other, and scores, if not hundreds of the pink-eyed, snowy-furred rodents, making up such a ratful vision as would ruin the trade of the best saloon in Washington, if the customers had to pass through it on their way after a drink.

The rats are all the descendants of two or three pairs, and were given to the woman a year or two ago. They multiplied and increased, and, declining to kill any of them, Mrs. Baker provided new cages, as the rats filled up their old quarters, until now it takes her the better part of her spare time to feed and attend to the wants of her file-tailed family.

The rats all know her, and will come to the front of their cages and take food from between her lips, or if given the liberty of the room, some of the corpulent old fellows will sit upright in the palm of her hand and wash their faces and comb out their whiskers with the gravity of a burgo-master.

THE ILLS WE HAVE.

The Boarder Who Grewed at the Tough Beef Had to Cave In.

He didn't pay his box bill with that degree of regularity which entitled him to kick at the menu, yet he did that sort of thing now and then, and sometimes it eventuated happily, but not always. Yesterday the roast beef was appalling in its irresistible toughness, and after a violent effort on his part to make an impression on it with the knife he laid the weapon down and gazed in some kind of fashion at the landlady. What it was dependent saith not, but there was that in it to anger her, and her face grew hard.

"Well, what's the matter with you?" she asked curtly.

"It's this beef," he said, half in doubt and about seven-eighths in fear.

"What's wrong with it?"

"It's so tough I can't eat it."

"You'll eat that or nothing," she said in a tone which almost shoved him under the table.

He picked up the knife again, resignedly.

"I'll eat the beef," he replied, "for I'm dead sure nothing is tougher than it is," and as he sawed away at it once more the lady looked at him curiously and wondered if he hadn't said something that somehow wasn't just what it ought to be.

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THE POLITICIAN'S MISTAKE.

He Put His Money Where It Would Do the Most Good.

They are telling a good story about a well-known politician. He went to church one Sunday, and intended after listening to the services to call on one of his constituents, who has been sick and out of employment for some time past, and accordingly he slipped a \$20 bill into one vest pocket and a \$1 into the other before starting for church.

The single plunk he intended to drop into the contribution plate at church, while the double X he intended to press upon his constituent to help him tide over his hard luck.

But in some way he got the bills mixed, and the twenty went into the collection plate, and when he reached his constituent's residence he had only the solitary samoleon to offer him.

The politician did the square thing next day, however, by enclosing a check for \$20 in a letter and mailing it to his needy constituent, so that the latter lost nothing, while the church is just \$19 ahead.

No More of That.

Lyman Gage, after a stirring meeting, had just gone off to bed, and was in his first sleep when he heard a loud knocking at the door, and a voice called out: "I am gathering the opinions of several prominent citizens on the so-and-so question; kindly tell me what you think of it." The next day Mr. Gage sent round a polite note to the proprietor of the paper in which this nocturnal interview was to have appeared: "If anything of the kind ever occurs again," he wrote, "I shall engage a man to go after midnight to your house and knock you up at three a. m., in order to ask you a question from me." He was never again troubled in the same way.

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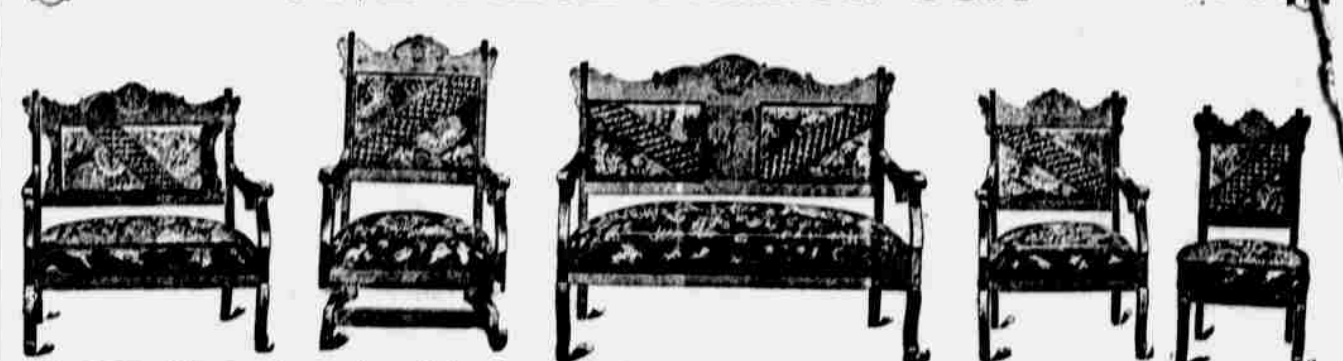
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RAILROAD ASSESSMENT RESOLUTIONS.

The board of Dawes county, (composed of one populist and two republicans), unanimously adopted the following resolutions at their meeting April 15, and sent them to the state board and to the county boards of various other counties:

Whereas, All the taxable property of Dawes county, except that owned by the railroad companies, is assessed at or near its real value, and,

Whereas, The supreme court of the United States, has by a recent decision declared that the value of railroad property must be considered in any adjustment of railroad rates and incomes, and the railway companies, claiming the privilege of placing a valuation thereon for the purpose of their revenues nearly ten times more than the amount upon which they contribute to the revenues of the state; therefore, be it

Resolved, That we, the board of county commissioners of Dawes county, are of the opinion that if the railroad companies of the state may say what their properties are worth—be it more or less—on which their revenues must be based, that the state may say that the said properties are worth the same amount upon which to base the revenue of the state; and be it further

Resolved, That this board earnestly and most respectfully remind the state board of equalization that the revenues of the state are more necessarily important than the income of any individual or corporation; that this board believes the railroads of the state are not contributing their just proportion of taxes, and calls attention in this connection to the fact: While the railroads increased freight rates on an average of 10 per cent but a few years ago—which means an increased burden of hundreds of thousands of dollars annually to the people of this state—the valuation of railroad property for the purpose of taxation has been reduced by the state board.

We therefore ask that these facts and conditions have earnest and careful consideration to the end that taxation of property in this county shall be equalized and the injustice of unequal taxation shamed as far as within our power, believing that just and proper assessment of property must under existing conditions be inaugurated by the honorable state board of equalization, and that when such precedent is established the officials and people of our state will afford them cordial support and the tendency of valuations thereafter be upward. And the county clerk is directed to furnish a copy hereof to said state board.

The grand assessment roll for 1907 shows that Dawes county had 486,374 acres land (improved and unimproved) assessed at \$420,380—an average of 86 cents per acre. Land in the extreme western and northwestern parts of the state has scarcely any market value—there are no purchasers—hence the statement of the county board while it may seem overdone to people residing in the eastern part of the state, is not far from the

truth when applied to the selling price of land.

Other average valuations in Dawes county are as follows: Horses \$4.74 per head; cattle \$4.65 per head; hogs 52 cents per head; sheep 5 cents per head; steam engines \$35 each; safes \$11.17 each; carriages and wagons \$5.89 each; sewing machines \$2.78 each; pianos \$26.92 each; organs, \$5.36 each.

Some of these valuations are no doubt considerably below the real value of the property—notwithstanding the statement of the county board. Sheep, for instance, are not selling at 50 cents per head anywhere in Nebraska, and the disposition generally shown elsewhere to cut valuations down since the hard times and panic years made payment of taxes a heart-wringing operation has spread over the entire state, west and east; counties have been obliged to keep up valuations in order to get money enough out of the county levies to pay county expenses. Since actual values have gone down and assessed values with them, these counties cannot raise enough to pay county expenses, even by making the largest levy allowed by law.

The logic of the petition of the county board is correct. Railroad companies cannot justly be allowed to earn dividends on one scale of valuation and pay taxes on another. The duty of the state board is to calculate what the average ratio is of assessed to real valuation on other property and apply that ratio rigidly to the railroads. There may be some slight differences of opinion as to what that ratio is, but on the great bulk of property which is being bought and sold—as cattle and horses for instance, there cannot be wide difference.

The original assessor's theory was to value property at one-third what it was worth. In the last three or four years many kinds of property have been valued on a much lower scale than this. Railroad property ought to be valued on the same scale—in case of doubt giving the people the benefit of the doubt.

Lamb and Adams.

CHattel Mortgage Sale.

Notice is hereby given that the undersigned, Jacob Shaber will, on Thursday, the 15th day of May, 1908, at the northwest corner of 10th and O streets, in the city of Lincoln, Nebraska county, Nebraska, sell at public sale one bay horse, named Black, eight years old, weight about 1000 pounds, by virtue of a chattel mortgage dated the 25th day of February, 1908, executed by Joseph Mayberry to said said Jacob Shaber and entered for record in the office of the county clerk of Lincoln county, Nebraska, which mortgage was given to secure a loan of \$500 of said said Shaber, and which said loan was made on the 15th day of March, 1908, and which said mortgage is now in default, and he therefore hereby himself and assigns are permitting said property to remain in his hands.

Dated this 25th day of April, 1908. JACOB SHABER, Mortgagee.

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BAPTIST ANNIVERSARIES.

Rochester, N. Y., May 16-24, 1898.

The Nickel Plate Road is authorized to sell tickets to Rochester, N. Y., and return at one fare and one-third for the round trip, on certificate plan, account of above meeting. Tickets good on any of our through express trains leaving Chicago from the Van Buren street passenger station at 10:35 a. m. 2:55 p. m. and 10:15 p. m. Vestibuled sleeping cars and unsurpassed dining car service. Colored porters in charge. Save time and money by patronizing the Nickel Plate Road. For further information call on or address J. Y. Calahan, General Agent, 111 Adams St., Chicago, Ill.

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TO BOMBARD OUR COAST.

Paris, May 1.—The Eclair remarks: "An autonomist deputy from Havana to the Spanish chamber says the Spanish squadron which has just left St. Vincent contemplates the bombardment of an American port. It is not likely that there will be a fight in Cuban waters, Havana being simply fortified to resist the American fleet."

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