

upon the taxpayers of this country. Others have computed the loss of revenue on sugar, tobacco, rice, fruits, and other products of the Philippine and West India islands, when brought under the revenue acts of the United States and Hawaii, at \$100,000,000, or over \$1.25 per head. See Mr. Robert Myrick's address to the National Grange Conference, in Concord, N. H.

Under these conditions the public will wait with some impatience for the development of the proposed policy of the secretary of the treasury in meeting the danger of a continuous deficit and with great anxiety for the message of the president on the existing conditions of passive war.

Congress may then be called upon to decide whether or not this condition of passive war in the holding of tropical islands by armed forces is to cease at an early day or is to be continued under the necessity of adding by direct taxation a large sum to our present burden, coupled with a heavy increase in the future burden, in order to provide annually for a very large portion of each year's enlisted men who will be annually disabled by fever, malaria and venereal disease.

The figures used in this analysis for the last fiscal year are from official data, subject to very slight changes in the ensuing report of the secretary of the treasury.

I have endeavored to present the exact data on which every person can compute the probable cost of the imperial or expansion policy as it is now called.

I will append one question to each reader.

How much increase of taxation are you willing to bear, and how many of your neighbor's sons are you ready to sacrifice by fever, malaria, and venereal disease in order to extend the sovereignty of the United States over the West Indies and the Philippine islands? By such policy we throw away our previous exemption from militarism which constitutes one of our chief advantages in establishing low cost of production coupled with high rates of wages or earnings—computed by myself at six per cent per annum on our total annual product—by which advantage we were attaining a paramount control of trade on the export of our goods to every port of the world of commerce.

EDWARD ATKINSON.

Boston, Nov. 21, 1898.

SOME PLAIN FACTS. The Inter-State Commerce commission was established under a law entitled, "An Act to Regulate Commerce—Approved Feb. 4, 1887." According to the report of the commission itself, this body has cost the people of the United States in eleven years \$1,992,591.05. After an existence of nearly a dozen years, and the expenditure of nearly two millions of money

this body of governmental supervisors, created simply and solely for the purpose of preventing unjust discrimination in favor of individuals, places or commodities, has accomplished practically nothing.

Members of the commission have themselves gained some insight into the vast, infinitely intricate American railway problem, but of what use has their knowledge thus far been to the nation? Has this great expense been of any real value in protecting the small shipper against his more powerful neighbor in the same line of business? Are all shippers treated alike by the freight department of our great transportation system? Does the custom house rule of uniform charges prevail? Here is a great public industry, maintained by private capital and directed by private talent, but ostensibly supervised by the strong arm of the general government in the interest of fair play to the common carriers and the shippers alike. To what extent does every citizen and every shipper get fair play for which all are paying?

Last May, Mr. M. E. Ingalls, president of the C., C., C. & St. L. and of the C. & O. railways, delivered an address at the tenth annual meeting of the railway commissioners, in Washington. Among other things he said:

"We should look the situation fairly in the face. While I do not care to be an alarmist, I feel bound to describe bluntly the freight condition to you today, so that you may understand the necessity for action. Never in the history of railways have tariffs been so little respected as today. Private arrangements and understandings are more plentiful than regular rates. The large shippers—the responsible shippers—are obtaining advantages which sooner or later will prove the ruin of the smaller and more conservative traders, and in the end will break up many of the commercial houses in this country and ruin the railways. A madness seems to have seized upon some railway managers, and a large proportion of the freight of the country is being carried at prices below cost."

Surely this expert—this man of sufficient ability to stand at the head of a great railway system—must thoroughly understand what he is talking about. But if this almost universal discrimination is the actual fact, who is securing the secret cut rates? Is it the small merchant, the small town, or the small manufacturer? No; it is the big aggregations of capital in every case. In other words, the Inter-State commerce law has turned out to be a clever device behind which the powerful shippers can dodge, dictating their own terms to the railways, while the small shippers are compelled to pay the public rate. In the hands of the railways the law is a club to make the small shippers pay the public tariff, while in the hands of the large

shippers the same law is a club to force the railways to give them whatever they want.

These are the plain facts. The chances are more than even that the net revenues of all the American railways for 1897 would have been increased between twenty-five and fifty millions if the big favored shippers had been placed on an even keel with the small shippers. The conclusion is inevitable that the Inter-State law as it now stands is a failure, benefiting the large shipper at the expense of the small.

Secret freight rebates are holding back the growth of small dealers, small manufacturers and small shipping centers everywhere. Nor do the large cities escape the injury. Wholesale dry goods dealers, wherever located, are profoundly interested in the prosperity of medium and small merchants, and in the growth of the moderate-sized towns. Their best and safest trade is always drawn from such places. Any change in present freight conditions that would benefit such towns and merchants would also be a decided advantage to all wholesale dealers.

There are many importing houses in this country that annually import thousands of cases of foreign merchandise, but they pay exactly the same duty as does the man who imports only one case. There are great houses that buy a million postage stamps at one time, but they pay the same price as the hod carrier who writes only one letter a year. There are many great banks that issue more checks in a day than most men do in a year, but they pay the same internal revenue rate as the man who issues one check a month. The railroad problem will never be settled until the large and the small shipper are accorded the same even-handed treatment at the hands of the common carrier system of the nation.

The government has essayed to set up a fair and just supervision of the railways of the country. That supervision, after a dozen years of trial, has proved to be a costly and scandalous failure. It is worse than no supervision, because it serves unscrupulous men and companies as a cloak for ruinous discriminations. The time has come for the government to do one of two things—either to abolish this travesty of supervision or to supervise and regulate in earnest, in a way that will put freight rates on the same even-handed basis as the custom house or mail service. A right settlement of this question would be of infinite advantage to the railroad wage workers, the railway share holders, and the public at large.

By an oversight the article last week on the early governors of Nebraska was not credited, as it should have been, to that excellent weekly, THE CONSERVATIVE.—Fairbury Gazette.