

The Decision of the Railroad Commission

Some Comments by the Editor as to Its Probable Results

Bogalusa, La., Dec. 22, 1914.
Editor St. Tammany Farmer:
Dear Sir:—I am enclosing herewith a copy of the order and decision of the Railroad Commission of Louisiana in the matter of the application of the New Orleans Great Northern Railroad Company to discontinue certain trains on the Shore Line and the Bogue Chitto Branch, with the request that you publish the same in the next issue of your paper.

There has been so much discussion of the action of the Railroad Commission in this connection, that I think it is only fair that the decision should be published in order that the public may have knowledge of all the conditions which were considered by the Railroad Commission in making the application and of the Railroad Commission in granting it.

Yours very truly,
H. M. MILLER,
Railroad Commissioner of Louisiana.
Order No. 1848.
New Orleans Great Northern Railroad Company, ex parte. In re temporary reduction of passenger service on Shore Line and Bogue Chitto Branches.

The New Orleans Great Northern Railroad Company on October 5th, 1914, filed with this Commission application for permission to discontinue trains numbers 21 and 22, operating between Folsom and North Slidell, Louisiana, on what is known as its Shore Line, and trains numbers 31 and 32, operating between Rio, Louisiana, and Tyertown, Mississippi, on the Bogue Chitto Branch, and also trains numbers 13 and 16, between Rio and Bogalusa, these being the same as trains 32 and 31, taking these different train numbers between Rio and Bogalusa.

Before the case was heard, the application was amended so as to include the discontinuance of trains 33 and 34, instead of trains 31 and 32, as the Commission might determine.

Accordingly, a full investigation has been made by the Commission, in which the people have been given an opportunity to present fully their views to the Commission, and in which the company has been required to furnish the Commission with the fullest statistical data regarding the financial and operating conditions of its Louisiana lines.

It is unnecessary for us to review in detail the figures which have been presented; it suffices to say that we are convinced that the New Orleans Great Northern Railroad Company is entitled to the relief it seeks.

Before this action by the Commission became necessary, the company has by every means within its power reduced its operating expenses to the point beyond which they cannot be further reduced except by the discontinuance of some of the trains which it now operates.

It is shown to be done at a distinct loss, provided always that sufficient service is rendered to reasonably and fairly accommodate the passenger travel.

Railroad corporations have not the latitude enjoyed by private corporations, in that they are compelled to continue operation of their lines, although at a loss, while private corporations may close down their plants or curtail their operating expenses in any manner they see fit without official interference, but the Commission cannot within its authority require the railroad company to do that which is unreasonable, and in the light of the facts presented in this case, it would be unreasonable in the extreme to require the continuance of the operation of all of the passenger train service which has been previously operated, and which was necessary when conditions on the line were prosperous.

It is our opinion that railroads should bear their burden of the depressions which now and then overtake the country, as they likewise share in its prosperity. But when a railroad company has acted in perfect good faith, and before coming to the Commission has exhausted every means in its power to reduce its operating expenses, and is still able to operate its service only at a loss, thereby facing a deficit which will eventually prevent it from properly performing its functions, or perhaps throw it into the hands of a receiver, the Commission is constrained to grant its reasonable request to discontinue some of its train service, which, while it will result in inconvenience, will not deprive the public of a reasonable means of travel on other trains which will not be discontinued.

The Commission has already recognized the necessity for reducing train service on two important trunk line railroads in the State of Louisiana. In the matter of the application of the Southern Pacific Lines for a reduction in passenger train service, this company was permitted to discontinue several trains on branch lines, and on the main line, until such time as the present conditions improved, to such an extent as to warrant their re-establishment.

The Vicksburg, Shreveport and Pacific Railroad Company has been given permission to take off a local train running on its main line under the same conditions. We cannot deny to the New Orleans Great Northern Railroad Company some relief to which it has plainly shown itself to be entitled. As to which of the two trains now operated on the Bogue Chitto Branch should be discontinued, this is a matter which the Commission will leave to the business judgment of the company; and the company will be expected to discontinue either trains numbers 31 and 32, or trains numbers 33 and 34, operating on the Bogue Chitto Branch, or on the main line between Rio and Bogalusa.

The premises considered, it is therefore, Ordered, That the application of the New Orleans Great Northern Railroad Company for permission to discontinue the operation of trains numbers 21 and 22 on the Shore Line, be, and the same is hereby ordered granted, effective January 3, 1915.

It is further Ordered, That the New Orleans Great Northern Railroad Company be, and it is hereby granted permission to discontinue either trains numbers 31 and 32, or trains numbers 33 and 34, on the Bogue Chitto Branch, and on the main line between Rio and Bogalusa, effective January 3, 1915, whichever may be removed with the least inconvenience to the greatest number of their patrons.

It is understood that if trains numbers 31 and 32 are discontinued, trains numbers 33 and 34 must be continued in operation; and if trains numbers 33 and 34 are discontinued, trains numbers 31 and 32 must be continued in operation.

By order of the Commission, B. A. BRIDGES, Chairman.
JOHN T. MICHEL, Commissioners.
HY. JASTREMSKI, Secretary.

(SEAL)
Attest: A true copy.
HY. JASTREMSKI, Secretary.

SOME REMARKS BY THE EDITOR.
In compliance with Mr. Miller's request, the above decision of the Railroad Commission has been published in full. We want to be perfectly fair. Mr. Miller is a shrewd and competent lawyer, and he is in the employ of the railroad company. Mr. Davis is a man of strong personality; a fine man and an excellent and convincing talker. He is transportation superintendent of the company. Mr. Davis in his testimony before the Commission gave a long and uninterrupted statement of the causes leading up to the request of the company to take off trains numbered 21 and 22. His high compliment to Manager Howard is a tribute that is a two-edged sword in the matter of investment. It also shows that earnings of merit in the interest of the investment in a system that, at least in the matter of railroad ties, exceeds that of the wealthy Pennsylvania Road. Mr. Davis said:

"At least one gentleman of this Commission remembers that it is only about three or four years ago—three years ago—when our present general manager, Mr. Howard, came down here and actually picked this railroad up out of the mud. It is a ballasted railroad today, with eighty-

pound open hearth steel rails from one end to the other. The trestles that were wooden structures, and which were being burned now and then, delaying traffic until they could be fixed up—today many of those structures are replaced with timbers that have been creosoted with the latest and most improved creosoting process. They are being ballasted with flags which we get from Birmingham. They are being made structures that will stand for the next fifteen or twenty years, with practically no expense. In many places along our line we have those timbers right there today, but we have not the money with which to put them in. We have not the money to finish the excellent work that has been started. Our track, instead of being laid now and repaired and relaid with cross ties of a cheap sort, are being repaired with cross ties that are creosoted, and we use 3200 cross ties to the mile—more than the Pennsylvania Railroad uses; and all this means that our general manager was able to operate that property the year before last with 59 per cent of the gross earnings. You can look at the report as has been filed with this Commission and as they come to the Interstate Commerce Commission and you will see that no other railroad in the South has operated for so little as 59 per cent of its gross earnings. That gave us \$196,000 at the end of the year. The year that was just closed on June 30 we operated for 60 per cent of the gross earnings and have approximately \$154,000 left, and every dollar of that has gone back into the property."

Now, then, if a railroad can operate on 59 per cent of its gross receipts when no other railroad in the South can do so, its receipts must be pretty good, especially when it is justified in putting in first class material and more ties to the mile than the Pennsylvania Railroad. At all events, the earnings of the road are admittedly put back into the plant as an investment for the stockholders and represent value to the stockholders. But not satisfied with this, after this money has been put into the investment and there is none left, in order to increase the earnings of the road it is asked that the company be allowed to take off two trains, Nos. 21 and 22 of the Shore Line, because, Mr. Davis states in his testimony: "About three or four months ago it seemed that the lumber traffic began to fall off and our earnings began to go down. Today we have reached the point where the earnings will not meet our expenses. That is the reason we are here. We use the figures submitted by the company's auditor to show that the business was better in 1914 than it was in 1913, taking the statement as prepared in the brief for the patrons of the road by Attorneys F. J. Helntz and A. D. Schwartz, in which they say:

"We now desire to call the Commission's attention to the tables of figures on the mileage basis submitted in Mr. Wade's testimony showing the earnings of the four passenger trains operating on the Shore Line during the corresponding months of 1913 and 1914. We desire to carry over in these earnings for the respective months of September 1913 and 1914, and have added and subtracted therefrom the net monthly gains and losses of these four trains during the period named and the total which appears from the tables herewith submitted as taken from the testimony of the applicant demonstrates that despite all of the causes which are contended for as affecting the local passenger traffic on the Shore Line, that the Shore Line earned thirty-one per cent greater revenue on the mileage basis in the year 1914 than in that of the year 1913, which it takes as a criterion for its statement, nor has there been any showing that the costs of operating these particular trains have been any greater in 1914 than they were in 1913."

We use this statement simply to show that the Lake Shore Line was not a greater expense in 1914 than in 1913, according to the company's own showing. We do not maintain that any profit was being made out of this portion of the New Orleans Great Northern, under the company's system of figuring, but we do maintain that as a part of the system it should be shown that some effort had been made to develop the resources or business opportunities along this line.

The company testifies that 85 per cent of the freight tonnage on the road is local and that it consists of "lumber, naval stores, cotton and forest products," and that the other 15 per cent is off the road. When it was attempted to show that the stockholders of the Great Southern Lumber Company were also stockholders of the New Orleans Great Northern Railroad, the testimony was shut out by a ruling that it was irrelevant. While this may be true in a procedure of this kind, it has an important bearing on the sentiment of the people in connection with the railroad. Bogalusa is a pet scheme of the Great Southern Lumber Company and Covington is a competing town on the railroad, which road gets a large amount of business from the Great Southern Lumber Company. If, aside from this business, the Bogalusa investment has a stockholder's influence in the management of the railroad, it is clear that it has a great advantage over competing towns on the line and that the people will view with suspicion any action of the road that may weaken them as competitors of that town. We do not know that such a condition exists, but we would have felt better satisfied if it had been proven at the hearing that it did not.

The filing with the Commission of statements that were afterwards admitted to be wrong and that had to be amended, and the appointing to the Shore Line in the expense account a pro rata of taxes and damages for stock killed, instead of a specific statement of the 43 miles of the Shore Line being exempt from taxes, and the omission from the receipts of part of parcel car and chair car revenues, express revenues, special service and train revenues, station and train privileges, car service, telegraph service, rent of buildings and other property and joint facilities revenue, especially as \$203,500 per year is paid for use of Northshore tracks, terminals and yard service, does not help to increase confidence in the good faith of the company.

Figures are such complicated affairs in the hands of an expert and can be made to prove so much or so little and their dissection is such a difficult matter without the proper means, that it would cause no surprise, with the discrepancies in view, if they are looked upon with suspicion and if doubt should exist as to whether the Shore Line is actually losing money. Mr. Miller's questioning of a company's witness to bring out the fact that a part of the savings of taking off trains numbered 21 and 22 might come from the charges for the use of the rolling stock hired to other companies leads to the suspicion that even if the Shore Line was barely paying expenses there would be more profit to the road in renting out this stock than in serving the patrons along the line. But if the road is paying expenses there would be no justification in such an act in view of what is due the public by a public service corporation.

The people of this section have looked upon the New Orleans Great Northern as their railroad. It was given birth through the business opportunities of St. Tammany parish in the lumber trade. Its growth and progress had been watched with pride until it turned its back on Covington and moved its headquarters to Bogalusa and became a factor in building up that town. Not that there was any objection to building up that town. We want to see it grow and we want to see the Great Southern Lumber Company prosper. It has done much to develop this part of Louisiana. But we do not wish to be sacrificed to Bogalusa. We want all the opportunities the railroad can give us. And if this railroad will not assist us, then we shall turn to some other railroad or to some other source for assistance. We do not propose to die without fighting. The testimony of the company shows that nearly its entire revenue comes from lumber and forest resources. What will it do in a few years from now if it does not help to build up other resources of this country? If it does not help to settle the lands and to build up agricultural industries and make it of convenient and easy access to travelers?

We say, if the New Orleans Great Northern does not help us we will turn to some other source. We will at least show that we are made of the stuff that deserves to be helped. We don't ask the road to do impossibilities. We believe the Shore Line is not an actual expense and that it could build up a country that would feed it well.

Mr. Miller also brought out, in the testimony of his witness, that the people still had, if 21 and 22 were removed, the services of the Illinois

Central Railroad, the Motor Line to Mandeville and the boats to New Orleans from that point, and the Steamer Jpsie, running on the river. Well, this is true. It may be that the people will follow this suggestion, and it may be that the service we are seeking will be found in this direction. If so, then the remark of Mr. Davis in his testimony before the Commission, " . . . and right at this time, I don't know but what it is the best thing that can happen to the community," may prove true, indeed. We hope he may be a prophet.

D. H. MASON.

The King's Daughters Give Successful Entertainment

In the first place, Mrs. Addison showed remarkable foresight in the choice of her date, and also great consideration in the selection of her weather, for she sandwiched in a most mild and beautiful night between a stormy one and a beastly cold one.

So there was a chance for everybody to get out, and to be perfectly comfortable while enjoying the pretty little play. And, say what you will, this means much to the success of a play, for if the audience and

actors are half frozen how can even a good play prove a success? I do not believe that under such chilly conditions even Mr. McCormack could make us laugh. We might give a crooked smile, but not a great big warm-hearted laugh, such as greeted Mr. Higgins and Miss Drusilla Wednesday night.

"The Teaser" certainly merits a word of commendation. It is clean, moral and high toned, full of honest thought, sweet sentiment and strong character. Its dialogue is good, and plot well and clearly de-

veloped for so short a play. Now for the actors. Anyone seeing quiet, refined Mrs. Addison—let us say—presiding at a meeting of the King's Daughters, would never dream she could impersonate a rather bumptious old maid, who could "kick out a dance" or grow kitchinish with her best beau. But she did, and did it like an artist. Mr. McCormack is a surprise to everybody all over again each time he puts on a red wig, a pair of short "pants" and forgets about Mrs. McCormack. He and his elderly sweetheart were certainly twin stars, and merrily did their twinkle. Mr. Fuhrman was most effective as the young reporter, who saved the situation and straightened everything out beautifully. Mr. Boudousque made an excellent villain of the gentlemanly type, and while none of us ever like a villain, we like Mr. Boudousque and his clean cut impersonation of the "disagreeable man."

Holgar Kohne almost defied recognition as Dr. Thorpe. Helger seems wonderful at "make up" any way, for we remember Dick Dead Eye as well as Dr. Thorpe. His acting is always in perfect keeping too. Miss Lucile Smith was graceful and pleasing as the young daughter, and read her lines clearly and well. Miss Lola Christopher offers positive talent in the humble opinion of the scribe. As Mrs. Fleming, she scored quite a success. Her voice was clear and sweet and expressive, and her face portrayed very truly the emotion of her lines. We venture to predict some future for Miss Christopher for a career.

Mrs. Addison expands through this column her hearty appreciation to all those who so ably assisted her in making this entertainment a success. She also wishes to thank Tom Rout, who gave a day's work free to the ladies, because, as Tom put it, "they had been kind to the colored folks" who had applied for help to the King's Daughters and Sons of Covington.

Fair Association Will Probably Be Organized in the Near Future

The St. Tammany Parish Fair is one of the very few in the State that has proven self-supporting. Most parishes have been well satisfied if only a small deficit has to be made good. We cannot now make a statement of the exact financial standing of the last fair, but we feel warranted in the statement that there will be some cash on hand after all debts are paid. The statement will be ready shortly. In the mean time we

wish to call attention to the fact that valuable time is slipping by which should be devoted to a preparation for the coming fair this fall. No announcement has been made as to the management of the fair or under what auspices it will take place. There has been some talk of organizing a fair association, placing the stock at one dollar a share and inviting everybody to come into the fold and help boost an undertaking that is so beneficial to the parish. Such a stock subscription

would be popular and show an association would probably be successful. We can with some assurance, however, state that if the men do not come forward with such a proposition the women will, and if the women take hold of it they are pretty apt to hold it. A success of it. Special attention will be given to the stock and agricultural departments, no matter whether it is gotten by one or the other. It is suggested that the matter may be taken up by the Women's Progressive Union.

Waldheim School.

Following is the program of the Christmas entertainment held at the Waldheim school under the direction of Miss Edna E. Vix, teacher:
Opening address, by Mr. F. Dutsch, which was extremely interesting, and was listened to with great attention by the immense audience that was present.
Recitation, "When the Shepherds Watch Their Flock By Night," by Annie Thomas.
Recitation, "A Loving Little Girl," by Louise Dutsch.
Recitation, "Holiday Acrostic," by Arthur Scheck, Clyde Adcox, Jimmie Talley, Addison Downs, Archie Cook, Rachel Dutsch.
Play in three acts, "Lost On Christmas Eve," by Willie Cook, Adolph Dunn, Charlie Hutsch, Gertrude Talley, Ruth Scheck, Jennie Cook.
Recitation, by Mattie Nelson.
Recitation, by Jennie Cook.
Recitation, by Carter May Adcox.
Recitation, by May Bell Windom.
Recitation, by Esther Cook.
Recitation, by Blanche Scheck.
Prizes were offered for the one that compiled the best Autum Book. First prize was won by Gertrude Talley; second, by Jimmie Talley; third, by Katie Dunn; fourth, by Ruth Scheck.

There was a beautiful Christmas tree. Santa Claus appeared and made each child happy by his jolly appearance and also by giving to each child a lovely gift.
The entertainment was brought to a pleasing close by a few appropriate remarks from the teacher.
Everybody went home happy and with nothing but praise from the delightful evening which they had spent at the Waldheim school.

Fendlason School.

The following program was held at the Fendlason school Wednesday, December 23, at 2:30 p. m.:
Song, "An Autumn Song," school.
Recitation, "Santa Claus," G. Thompson.
Recitation, "Good St. Nick," Eve first grade pupils.
Recitation, "Toy Land," Collis Lee.
Song, "Santa Claus," second and third grade pupils.
Recitation, "The Tip-Toe Man," third grade.
Recitation, "Major's Christmas," Mamie Willie.
Recitation, "A Christmas Song," John Willie.
Recitation, "The Christmas Tree," Carl Cove.
Recitation, "The Little Fir Tree," Henry Thompson.
Song, "Out of Doors," school.

For prickly heat, insect bites, mosquitoes and flies, try BLUE LABEL ANTISEPTIC, ask DR. J. L. WATKINS, drug store.

Masons Distribute Presents to Poor Children Christmas

The Masons of Covington, Lodge No. 188, F. & A. M., distributed a wagon load of Christmas presents to the poor children in the outskirts of Covington, last week. Judge Robert Badon and Attorney A. B. Bear acting as Santa Claus. Truly the pleasure of giving is more than empty words. The realization of happiness produced by the distribution of these gifts has caused a consideration of the

real significance of Christmas gifts to the poor who cannot indulge the habit that brings so much pleasure to the more fortunate. Next Christmas there will be a more extensive giving of Christmas presents among the poor by the Masons. An effort will be made to secure the name of every poor child in the community and bring to them a merry Christmas in the sense that other children enjoy it.

Edwards School.

Creditable Christmas exercises were held in the Edwards school on Wednesday afternoon, December 23, and were largely attended. Each number on the lengthy program was enthusiastically received. The children displayed much talent in their presentation of three very interesting and instructive plays: "The Christmas Spirit," "The Ringing of the Joy Bells," and "The Snow Fairies." Delightful music added much to the evening's entertainment. There was a beautiful Christmas tree, the ornaments of which were constructed entirely by the children. Santa Claus, of course, played an important part in the presentations, distributing gifts to the children.
The entertainment was under the direction of their teacher, Miss Christine FitzSimons.

visitors from Folsom were present. Mr. Willie Burns and Miss Ollie Dyess visited Miss Ada Essel.
Miss Clara Dyess and Miss Deedee McKee were the guests of Miss Ruby Wilkins and were joined by Miss Olla Fussell and Miss Bessie McKee, and all enjoyed a walk to Blond, Sunday afternoon.
Messrs. Jules McKee, Robert McKee, Jessie Booth and Murphy Maples were week-end visitors to Blond.
Mr. Tilmer Schilling and Claude Voth, of Isabelle, were visitors to Blond, Sunday.
Miss Eula Talley, the assistant teacher of the Middle Roads school, left to spend the holidays at her home.
Mr. Howard Burns, Mr. Mark Fitzgerald and Mr. C. B. Wilkins are on the sick list.
Messrs. Harvey and Mm. McKee, of Bogalusa, are visiting in Blond.

Blond Notes.

Blond was a jolly place during the Christmas holidays.
A grand concert was greatly enjoyed at the Middle Roads school on December 23. Quite a crowd was present, although the weather was very threatening.
A jolly crowd met at the home of Mr. R. T. Dyess, December 24th, and went out shooting birds and mistletoe.
Quite a number of guests were entertained at the home of Mr. H. A. Essel, Christmas afternoon.
Miss Minnie Essel, of Bogalusa, is home on a two weeks vacation. She will return to Bogalusa Hospital and Training School for Nurses on January 2, where she hopes to finish soon.
A number of guests were at the home of Mr. R. T. Dyess Christmas night. They played games and had a jolly good time.
Services were held at New Zion church Sunday, December 27th. A large congregation attended and a grand sermon heard. A number of

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