

The Railroads and Legislation

Editorial from the Evening Sun, Baltimore.

Recently Senator Maloy introduced a bill in the senate at Annapolis requiring the railroads of the State to place extra crews on passenger trains under certain circumstances. A few days before, Senator Hammond introduced a bill providing for the taxation of stocks and bonds held by railroad companies upon which no taxes now are paid. Recently the Interstate Commerce Commission handed down a decision to the effect that the railroads may be required to carry certain classes of freight at a loss if existing rates are necessary to enable small dealers to compete with their larger rivals. The railway engineers on all the lines east of Chicago are preparing for a strike in case their demands for higher pay are not acceded to. Meanwhile the railroads are not permitted to increase any of their rates on any classes of goods.

Isn't it about time to give the railroads a fair chance to earn a 6 per cent dividend on their stock? Doubt-

less some years ago they all more or less sinned grievously against God and man. They granted rebates, they watered stock, they showed discrimination, their high officials took graft from the supply companies and made the public pay for it, and there was no health in them. But the gross abuses have certainly been corrected. The Interstate Commerce Commission keeps a pretty firm hand upon them in the matter of stock issues as well as rates and discrimination and proper service. Through the Erdman act the Government has taken a hand in the matter of prescribing wages paid, and it seems probable that it will increase its activities in this respect in the future. Wages, in fact, have gone up enormously in recent years, and the cost of supplies has increased tremendously. Yet when the Eastern roads asked the commission some months ago permission to increase their freight rates they met with a polite refusal.

The time will certainly come when a halt must be called to this system of increasing expenditures and decreasing revenues, and a great many disinterested students of the problem think it has arrived now. The railroads must pay dividends, otherwise they will not be able to get the capital that is necessary for them to maintain their tracks and equipment in proper condition and to increase their facilities for caring for additional business. If the present tendency continues, the result will be cheese-paring economies that will prevent a proper handling of traffic, and in that event the railroads will not be the only sufferers; the business men of the country generally will suffer as much as or more than they.

Senator Maloy's bill providing for increased crews on passenger trains is eminently a proposition that should be submitted to the Public Service Commission for investigation and action. It has ample power to act, and it is in a much better position to reach a just conclusion than a Legislature that sits for ninety days and whose members are kept busy with matters of detail during that time. The commission in fact, was formed and given large authority for that very reason. We have not seen Senator Maloy's bill and are in no position to pass judgment upon it, but it recalls one of the foolish results of the system of governmental regulation now in force, if the spokesmen for the railroads are to be believed. Everyone knows that the Government, through the Interstate Commerce Commission, requires the railroads nowadays to equip all their freight cars with automatic air brakes. In the old days the braking was done by hand and when a freight train was to be brought to a stop the brakeman had to run from car to car putting on the brakes. The equipping of the cars with automatic brakes left these brakemen with nothing much to do and yet, coincident with the enforcement of the national law requiring the automatic brakes, several of the states of the Union—Maryland among them—passed laws requiring the railroads to add another brakeman to the crew of every train consisting of more than a specified number of cars. The practical result of this is said to be

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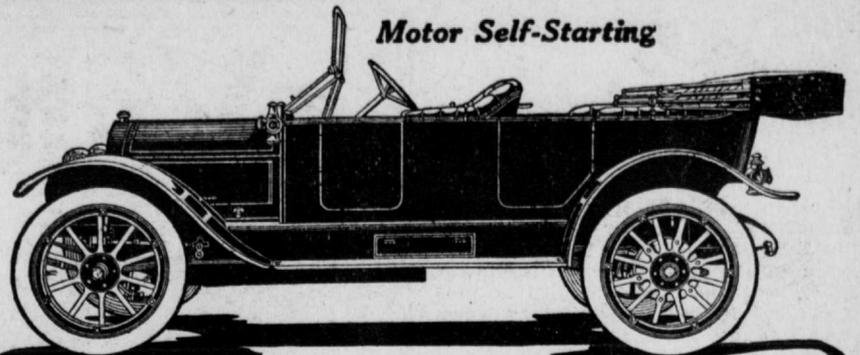
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that when a train reaches the border line of these States a new man steps into the caboose and remains there until the train reaches the other border. He has no real work to do, but his name goes on the payroll. Here is certainly bad economics. Waste labor is profitable neither to employer or employee.

Of course every corporation should be obliged to pay its just share of taxation, to be decent to its employees and fair to its customers and to regard the just rights of the public. The railroads of Maryland have offended in these respects in the past, as have the railroads of other States. But the time has come, we believe, for a stop to be put upon punitive legislation.

IRISH NAMES FOR GIRLS.

Could you give me some pretty old-

fashioned Irish names for girls? I want something a little more uncommon than Nora, Kathleen or Bridget. M. O'N.

Our knowledge of Gaelic or Erse is too limited to be very helpful, but among musical Irish names we recall Grainia (Grace), Moyra or Moira (Mary), Mona, Oonah, Maureen and Bridget or Bride, an old form of Bridget. Deirdre is a beautiful name, but it is associated in legend or history with that most unhappy Irish princess who was called "Deirdre of the hundred sorrows." Mairenn is a variant of Maureen. Sheila or Sheila is the Irish form of Cecelia; Meve is Maud. Other attractive names are Brenda, Ita, Ailin (Ellen), Aine (Anne), Fedelma, Fiala, Nesta, Nuala. We infer that Nesta is a form of Agnes, as Nest was a medieval English form of that name.—D.