

Passenger Rates

According to the interstate commerce commission's system of grouping the railways of the United States for statistical purposes, Nebraska lies in Group VII., along with Wyoming and Montana; the north one-third of Colorado, being all north of a line drawn east and west through the state beginning at a point a few miles south of the southern line of Nebraska; and all of the two Dakotas lying west of the Missouri river. The entire reported mileage under operation in this group for the year ending June 30, 1900, was 11,069.78 miles, and Nebraska alone had over 5,700 miles, or more than half.

In handling the passenger traffic of this group, 218 passenger locomotives and 888 passenger coaches were employed. The passenger trains, averaging four coaches to the locomotive, traveled all told 10,335,554 miles in the year, and in that time carried 5,600,194 passengers. Each train averaged 39 passengers, or about 10 to the coach, and each traveler journeyed on the average 91.48 miles. The railroads received an average of \$2.13 and a fraction from each passenger carried, or 2.315 cents a mile. An average passenger train earned \$1.20 for each mile it traveled, which produced in the year \$1,273.55 for each mile of line in the group.

It is evident that passenger traffic in this group is far from dense, when we consider that a locomotive and four coaches must cover over ten million miles in a year to carry five million passengers less than a hundred miles each. It is also evident that with passenger rates lowered and put on a scientific basis, the passenger traffic could be increased greatly. The average man cannot afford many trips at an average cost of \$2.13. Owing to the transcontinental traffic of the Union Pacific and other roads in this group the average journey is away above that in the whole United States—27.8 miles, although the trains are nearly as well filled: 39 in Group VII. as against 41 in the whole country.

During the year 41,323 passengers passed over each mile of line in Group VII., which was equivalent to carrying 457,441,462 passengers one mile.

The enormous waste of equipment is best understood when we realize that, counting Sundays and all, about 13,700 persons were traveling in Group VII. each day. There was a passenger locomotive to haul each 63 passengers, and a coach to seat each 15; and the total earnings for the day amounted to about \$29,075.

Suppose we count that one-half the equipment is not in use while the other half is. Let us make a flat fare of 25 cents per trip regardless of distance and figure on the possibilities. Assuming that each coach will seat 50 persons, the 444 coaches would carry 22,200 persons at one time and have some vacant seats left. Allow eighty miles for the average journey (it would probably be much less) and, running 20 miles an hour the trains would cover 480 miles a day, the coaches emptying about 6 times in 24 hours. Thus, 133,200 passengers could be handled in a day, producing a revenue of over \$33,000, with practically no additional expense.

What applies to Group VII. will apply with even greater force to Nebraska. The legislature could prescribe a 25-cent fare for all distances within the state, and the law would stand the test of constitutionality in the United States courts—because it would produce greater net revenues than under the present system. It would shorten the average journey, because so many more persons would travel three to six stations, willingly paying a quarter where they will not pay 60 cents to \$1.50. One can send a letter to Montreal or San Francisco for the same postage as to Havelock, but the great mass of letters are sent short distances just the same. If railroad fare were free to San Francisco, millions of persons would not go—because there are other expenses besides railroad fare.

Of course, it is not to be expected that the present legislature will adopt any scheme apparently so revolutionary in character, but the idea is worth discussing nevertheless. It applies just as well to freight shipments, which we expect to discuss at another time. Those who wish to study the question should read "A General Freight and Passenger Post," by James L. Cawles (G. P. Putnam's Sons, 27 W. 23rd st., New York).

J. W. Shepperson, of Casper, Wyo., had in a consignment of sheep to Nye & Buchanan Co. of South Omaha last week, which topped the market. Mr. Shepperson expresses himself as highly pleased with the treatment and service he received, and did not find the market as bad as he had expected from reports.

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Mention This Paper.

Good Roads

With the extension of rural free delivery the question of good roads grows amazingly.

"To the rapid and economical extension of rural mail delivery," says Martin Dodge of the agricultural department, "only one obstacle worthy of consideration presents itself, but that obstacle is of such a nature as to greatly affect its practicability and economy. This is the present condition of our country roads.

"Without question one of the first great movements toward the economical free rural delivery of the mails should be the construction of passable roads. This is already evident from the fact that some of the mail delivery routes have had to be abandoned on account of bad roads.

"The circumstance that over six million dollars was appropriated by our last congress largely to be buried in our muddy roads in the delivery of our rural mails, while only the small sum of \$20,000 was last year devoted to meeting the road problem, indicates the great need of education regarding the present necessity and demand for vigorous and intelligent road work.

"As much of these large appropriations for rural mail delivery could be saved if we had good roads, it is obvious that an amount equal to a considerable portion of these sums could be spent to good advantage in educating the people in the work of improving our country roads, and thus forever close a large drain on our national cash box.

"In view of these facts could not a million or more be spent to the best possible advantage by the national government in constructing a section of brick track road near each county seat throughout the country as an object lesson in each county in the most advanced methods of road construction?"

Poor roads in the United States are costing the people annually the enormous sum of \$650,000,000, which is a tax of more than seven dollars a year for every man, woman and child, avers Mr. Dodge, who is director of the bureau of public road inquiries, of the department of agriculture, in Washington. He advocates the construction

of brick track roads with convict labor.

As a result of the good road movement which has been largely stimulated by the efforts of the department of agriculture, the road question is at present receiving a remarkable degree of active interest, as indicated, for instance, by a movement in the state of New York for bonding this state for \$80,000,000 to build country roads. This is wholly in line with a bill before the last national congress by Mr. Otey of Virginia, for \$100,000,000 for the same purposes.

Mr. Otey declares: "In view of our willingly having spent \$400,000,000 on the Philippines it is time to do something tangible for our own people.

"This is especially true," comments Mr. Dodge, "in view of the fact that we are continually paying an avoidable mud tax of more than \$650,000,000 each year for the privilege of driving over our dusty and muddy roads. This enormous expense is better comprehended by saying it equals a tax of more than \$7 each year for every man and woman and child in this country."

The Heroic "Scab"

Henry D. Lloyd, who is acting as one of President Mitchell's attorneys for the presentation of the strike case before the commissioners, spoke in reply to the denunciation of union labor by President Eliot of Harvard. Mr. Lloyd is the author of "Wealth Against Commonwealth," and "Country Without Strikes" and has given much study to labor conditions. He said:

"The strike breaker or scab is in our day precisely the same kind of 'good type of American hero' as the New England loyalist was in his day when he did his best to ruin the struggle of his fellow-colonists for independence.

"The trade union movement is a movement for the independence of the working people, who are the only real people. It is one of the greatest democratic movements in history, an emancipation unique in the ages, because it is self-emancipation. The working people of the world during the last century have been chased by what Toynbee called the industrial revolution out of the possession of an economic independence which they

possessed before that change.

"One hundred years ago the weaver owned his loom, the shoemaker his bench. The instruments of production have been swept into the possession of the quickest, strongest and most unscrupulous men, who know how to take advantage of the marvelous opportunities of the modern era. There is literally nothing left in the workingmen and women but their hands and the power of association.

"Men like President Eliot and Rev. Dr. Hillis, who expressed the same sentiments as President Eliot, however honest they may be, are holding the hands of the defenseless masses, while capitalism robs them of the only thing they have left—union."

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