

ARGUMENTS IN FAVOR OF THE NEW ROAD

CONTAINED IN MONTHLY LETTER OF THE OPERATORS.

Coal Roads Have Been Expensive to Construct—Built Years Ago When the Cost of Materials Was High. There Are Other Roads in the Country, However, That Have More Difficult Conditions to Meet. Figures Showing the Earnings of Various Railroad Companies.

The recent letter of the Anthracite Coal Operators association contains the following:

The state commissioners of railroads of New York have notified all parties interested in the application for a charter for the Delaware Valley and Kingston railroad, that a meeting will be held in New York city, on Tuesday, January 30th, 1900, at the Fifth Avenue Hotel, to give a public hearing.

"Since that meeting of independent anthracite coal operators in this city in December to protest against the transportation charges of the coal roads and to help forward the project for a new line from the Lackawanna, Lehigh, Schuylkill and Wyoming coal regions along the old Delaware and Hudson canal route to Rondout, on the Hudson river, I have been making efforts to understand this problem of coal transportation and the ground for the complaints that are made.

"The authority denies, however, that there is any combination of the coal roads to control freight charges. Every effort that has been made to induce them to act together and to avoid competition in order to maintain uniform and remunerative rates has broken down.

"If there is no combination or tacit agreement as to freight rates among the present anthracite operators then why is there absolutely no competition among them for this valuable tonnage? They do not one railroad refuse to take the product, or a coal breaker the product of a colliery whose output is claimed, without any rights of ownership, or domain, by another transporting interest.

"There need be no denial that these 'distinctively coal roads' have been expensive to construct. They were built years ago when the cost of materials was high, and, in most cases, have been so wretchedly managed that with an equipment years out of date, they stand on the books as a costly asset of doubtful intrinsic value.

"There are other roads in the country which have had more difficult conditions to meet. Which were built according to old methods and whose traffic has returned a steadily decreasing ton-mile revenue, but through proper management have been modernized and their earnings have increased. The trouble with the anthracite roads has been the certainty of ample earnings from high priced anthracite freight. It has been unnecessary to shave and trim in order to meet the competition and improve the equipment. Moreover, these earnings have led the companies into experiments which have resulted unfavorably. For instance, the Buffalo extension of the Lehigh Valley. Would such proposition have had a chance of going through had there not been a great earning power in the eastern lines?"

IN DESPERATE SHIFTS. The writer says the companies have been driven to desperate shifts to develop other lines of traffic. An instance would have been more definite. The following statement of four of the leading anthracite operators tends to disprove this statement.

PHILADELPHIA AND READING RAILROAD EARNINGS. 1898. 1899. Earnings \$1,458,414 \$1,875,242 Tons freight carried 7,463,568 8,282,841 Tons coal carried 11,457,626 12,981,957

Of the total earnings in 1899, those from coal represent 47 per cent, and in 1898, 46 per cent.

CENTRAL RAILROAD OF NEW JERSEY. 1898. 1899. Earnings \$1,458,414 \$1,875,242 Tons freight carried 7,463,568 8,282,841 Tons coal carried 11,457,626 12,981,957

Anthracite earnings represented 54 per cent, of the total in 1899 and 47 per cent, in 1898, there being a decline in tonnage in this period of 2,079,546 tons.

DELAWARE, LACKAWANNA AND WESTERN RAILROAD. 1898. 1899. Earnings \$1,458,414 \$1,875,242 Tons freight carried 7,463,568 8,282,841 Tons coal carried 11,457,626 12,981,957

Since 1891 the coal and freight earnings have been reported together, but since the coal transported and the total freight and coal earnings were about the same in both periods, the percentage of earnings from coal traffic alone cannot have materially changed.

LEHIGH VALLEY RAILROAD. 1898. 1899. Earnings \$1,458,414 \$1,875,242 Tons freight included 6,018,392 6,722,503 Tons freight included 6,018,392 6,722,503 Tons freight included 6,018,392 6,722,503

With this company the freight traffic, especially in bituminous coal, has increased largely. But no better proof of the fallacy of this assertion can be given than the following statement of the operations of the New York, Ontario and Western railway.

BALANCES—1897, \$2,215,000; 1900, \$432,491; 1899, \$1,191,271; 1897, \$1,528,244; 1898, \$1,225,558. Net earnings per mile—1897, \$737.31; 1898, \$1,019.21; 1899, \$2,561.11; 1900, \$2,477.81; 1897, \$2,531.43. Tons anthracite originating on line—1897, 1,323,967; 1898, 1,321,603; 1899, 1,321,592.

Prior to the time this company extended its lines into the anthracite region in 1890, it was operating under an annual license that time, through its earnings from anthracite coal, aided by able and progressive management, it has been placed in a position of financial basis. There has not, in any of the cases above given been any evidence of strong efforts to secure other traffic. The article continues:

"In regard to the charge of discrimination, based on the fact that the cost of mining and transporting anthracite is so much less than that of bituminous coal, it is maintained that the difference is legitimate and unavoidable. In the anthracite fields the royalty paid to the land owner for the corresponding royalty cost to the mining company that owns the land averages 40 cents a ton. Only a small area can be worked each year. The cost of equipment and operation, with breakers, shafts, engines, pumps, etc., far exceeds anything required for bituminous coal. The product has to be collected and marketed in seven or eight different sizes, loaded into different cars, and delivered to different places for use. Large amounts have sometimes to be stored to await the demand for that particular size. The cars have to be gathered from a wide area, and the cost of equipping a car can be used for nothing else. The delivery involves the use of many sidings and much arranging of cars and costly terminal appliances. On the other hand, it is said, bituminous coal is mined as a single product of one grade and dumped into cars and made up into solid trains, transported over roads mostly engaged in general traffic, and chiefly delivered in the mass. The legitimate cost of carriage and delivery is much less than that for anthracite, and the difference in rates is justified. But the rate for bituminous coal is not a remunerative one. It is forced down by the struggle to control tonnage and markets, and the burden of earning a profit is thrown upon the other traffic on the roads."

CURIOUS MIXTURE. This is a somewhat curious mixture of an argument for and against the cause set forth. Anthracite royalties are far higher than those on bituminous freight and the cost of equipping a mine for the former is far in excess of like work in the latter. These conditions must be met by companies and individual operators alike on a basis of contention as to mining, but not transporting, with which this article particularly deals.

As regards different sizes and necessity for collecting over a wide area, this applies largely to bituminous conditions. The variety of sizes of cars has no bearing on the formation of a train load, since all of these sizes are made at each breaker, loaded on the cars furnished, and do not enter into the question, except at a tide terminal point. Further, both classes of coal are loaded and unloaded by gravity, anthracite having the advantage of flowing more freely. The area over which the coal must be gathered is far less than in the bituminous regions, and with the advantage in favor of anthracite that one day's run at an ordinary breaker will give a full train load, which only the larger soft coal mines can do, the cost of assembling a train is not greater in one case than in another, nor is there a greater cost in the actual work of transporting to the breaker. An excellent example of the low rates given soft coal was presented in the recent arguments before the State Railroad and Waterways commission in Minnesota, when representatives of the lines entering that city from Duluth and West Superior applied for consent to increase the rate on bituminous coal to 90 cents per ton, the distance being 178 miles.

The representative of the Eastern railway of Minnesota and the Great Northern, is quoted by the Dispatch, of St. Paul, as saying that some time ago the Chesapeake and Ohio, and Big Four, decided to make New York a shipping point for Minneapolis flour. It was found that it would not pay to return the cars empty and consequently they were loaded with West Virginia coal. A rate of \$2.95 was made to St. Paul and Minneapolis, to meet competition from Illinois coal fields, which had reduced their rate to \$2.50 per ton. In 1898 the rate to St. Paul was advanced to \$2.50 per ton. Six months later the rate was \$2.25 per ton, and two months ago \$2.25 per ton.

CLAIM UNREASONABLE. To claim that low rates on soft coal are unprofitable on a well managed road, and that the high rates on anthracite are justified in the absence of equally good management is unreasonable.

"It is also denied with emphasis that the roads controlled by coal companies make any discrimination in transportation charges against the independent operators. It is even said that the latter have been enabled to realize better prices than the companies controlled by the coal roads. In the language of my principal authority: 'When the coal companies controlled by the coal roads have been operated either at a loss or at a small profit, the independent anthracite operators have always been rich.' Their chief grievance is said to be that under the recent management of the coal roads they have not been able to secure the enormous profits which they formerly obtained at the cost of bankruptcy for the transportation companies, and that the movement for removing friction by laying off their collieries failed because it could not stand the extravagant prices demanded. Those which were bought at the beginning of the movement continue to be operated independently and are treated like other independent operators."

This question of discrimination in freight rates against the individual operator is a delicate subject for a railroad to argue upon. It is fair to say that the rate is not to be disputed, since it is so stated in the annual reports of each interest, that when the coal company owned by the railroad has a surplus, the debt thus increased is paid by the transportation company.

To make this clear, the Lehigh Valley Coal Company, at least, has lands in the coal regions, mines coal and ships this product over the Lehigh Valley railroad. The coal company also supplies various tractors to its land and individual operators, and contracted with them to buy their coal, paying 60 per cent, on chestnut and larger, of the price prevailing at whatever rate, and retaining the other 40 per cent, to reimburse itself for the freight payment and selling expenses.

SHOW A DEFICIT. The Lehigh Valley Railroad company, which owns the coal company, transports this coal to tide, receiving a certain established rate of freight, the same that charges an individual operator shipping on his own account. According to the annual report of 1899, the coal company paid freight amounting to \$7,255,078. Its operations for this year show a deficit of \$259,289 and as no reference is made to any charge for interest paid on its bonds, guaranteed by the railroad company, it is fair to assume that this amounting to \$271,394, and the deficit have both been paid by the railroad company, a total of \$1,026,372. Then by paying back this amount, the railroad company has discriminated in freight rates in favor of its coal company, to the extent of a rebate of nearly 15 per cent, or, on a \$1.55 rate, of 23 cents per ton. This company, while paying certain royalties for its own mining rights, retained as an offset to this \$271,378 in royalties from others operating on its lands. Individual operators must pay these royalties and are holding to offset the outlay. With all of its advantages from these various sources of income, the company cannot pay the high

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Mrs. M. F. Long, of LeLoup, Franklin County, Kans., writes: "Words cannot express how grateful I am for your kind advice and good medicines. I have been in poor health more or less all my life. In the past nine years grew worse, and two years ago was so poorly could hardly drag around. I consulted a Specialist, and he said I had ulceration, and that an operation would have to be performed. At last I wrote to Dr. Pierce, asking advice. I soon got a helpful answer, advising me to try his medicines, the 'Favorite Prescription,' 'Golden Medical Discovery,' and also his 'Pleasant Pellets.' I bought two bottles of the 'Favorite Prescription,' two of the 'Discovery,' and two vials of the 'Pellets,' and I began taking 'Favorite Prescription' and the other medicines, as advised. When commencing I weighed 119 1/2 pounds, and after taking one bottle of each I was like a new woman. In one month I gained eight pounds. After taking two bottles of each of the medicines named, I began to look like a woman and not like a wasted skeleton. That weary, tired feeling all left me, and it did seem as though life was worth living, and that I had been snatched from the grave, and would live to a good old age."

The Woman Who Was and the Woman Who Is.

Her Friends Were Surprised.

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"Two years ago I had a miscarriage," writes Mrs. Mattie F. Enloe, of Lexington, Lafayette County, Missouri. "I was in bed nearly three months afterward, and was treated by three different physicians. Had nervous prostration, indigestion, and sinking spells, and suffered a great deal with my head. In fact, I can't tell all I did suffer. Came near having convulsions, when my husband sent for another doctor. Under his treatment I got so I could be up most of the time and assist a little in the housework. I continued in this way for some time, suffering all the time with my back and a misery low down across me till I was induced by a friend to write to you for advice. You pronounced my trouble to be congestion of the internal organs, and told me what course to pursue. I did as directed, and also took two bottles of your 'Favorite Prescription,' and one of 'Golden Medical Discovery,' and one bottle of 'Pellets,' when I felt like another person. Of course after being sick so long, it was some time before I felt altogether well. But I have been very strong the present summer. Some of my friends were surprised that I ever got up."

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Illustration of a woman sitting at a desk writing a letter. Three speech bubbles contain text: "I WROTE TO DR. PIERCE", "I SOON GOT A HELPFUL ANSWER", and "I BEGAN TAKING YOUR FAVORITE PRESCRIPTION". To the right, a testimonial from Mrs. Mary O. Lewis, Tamworth, N.H., reads: "My friends say they can hardly believe I am the same person after being sick so long and most a perfect and easy checked woman."

freight charges and meet its obligations. This shows most conclusively that the rate is abnormal.

As another instance of the discrimination against which the operators complain, anthracite stove coal was contracted for in Buffalo, June, 1898, for \$4.00 per gross ton delivered. Allowance is made for the cost of the commission, there remained \$3.01 f. o. b. The ruling price at breakers, at that time, was \$2.32 per ton and the freight to Buffalo, \$2.25 per ton. Therefore, the rate actually received by the companies who sold the coal was \$1.23. By a fiction of bookkeeping they have charged their mines \$2.25 and made a price of \$1.26 at the breaker, but since such losses to the coal company are eventually paid by the railroad company, the loss of 96 cents is actually a freight rebate and represented a discriminating rate to that extent against individual operators who were endeavoring to bid on the same contract.

INSTANCES NUMEROUS. Instances of this kind are so numerous and easily found, that for a railroad company to deny discriminating against individual shippers in favor of its own sub-company is futile.

The statement that the independent operators have grown rich while the railroads have operated at a loss, betrays willful ignorance. Take the names of all the collieries in the anthracite region and see by whom these were opened and through whose hands they have passed. It will be found that nearly ninety per cent, were started by the enterprise of the present coal operators. When, through the exorbitant tolls charged for taking their product to market, they were squeezed out of business, the railroads stepped in and purchased these developments and improvements at low figures. The relatively small number of operators who have been able to retain an active interest in mining, have done so only because of their ability and skill in the economic management of their properties, and their combined efforts, in recent years, to force the railroads to give a fair rate on their product, has not been, as is claimed, to increase their profits, but to enable them to continue in business and meet the increasing costs of deeper and more expensive colliery operations.

the railroads argue on this point, the profit with the public believe in their wisdom. There has never been, since the inception of the anthracite industry, such a hopeless display of stupidity.

The article draws to a close in the following paragraph, that is, evidently the subject matter at which all is aimed:

HAD NO GRIEVANCE. "This statement comes from one side, and it is intended to show that the independent operators of the anthracite association have no grievance against the present coal roads, which have had to struggle against difficulties and adverse circumstances to extract any profit from supplying the eastern markets with fuel. Why, then, it may be asked, should these operators be so earnest for the construction of a new and competing line, which must reach tidewater by way of Kingston, some eighty miles or more from New York? Some of the promoters of the new road say that it has no necessary connection with disputes or quarrels with the old coal roads. Here is simply a line from a large extent of coal fields on an easy grade along the bed of an old canal, where a railroad can be cheaply built and cheaply operated, inasmuch that, whether present rates are fair and free from discrimination or not, anthracite coal can be got to the markets of which New York is the centre at a price considerably below that now prevailing and with a better profit to the producers using that road. But such a claim is laughed to scorn by the representatives of the present coal roads, who declares that the projected road is 'not even a factor in the solution of the anthracite coal problem,' and that its projectors, if they are in earnest, have ventured like wanton boys on a sea of financial troubles far beyond their depth."

"New York, Jan. 10, 1900." A. K. F. Truly, why should the individual operator wish to have a new railroad, one which guaranteed them a cheaper means of reaching the market for their product. Why, except to save themselves from being utterly crushed and ruined by the existing railroads. These latter had every chance to make the same arrangement. It was discussed with their representatives for over a year. They would do nothing and the situation was so serious that something had to be done. Instead of building

their own road, as was first intended, the operators found one large company which was considering the construction of an independent line for its own tonnage. They have offered their support, and the undertaking will be carried through.

This new road will not be a solution of the anthracite coal problem and was not proposed with that in view. Nothing would do that, judging from the past year, except a radical change in the management of several anthracite railroads. The new road will, however, solve the problem of the existence of the individual operators, and give them a position in the market to which they are entitled.

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