

COAL RATES PROBE OPENED FRIDAY MORNING

RAILROADS ACCUSED OF HAMP- ERING TRANSPORTATION.

Interstate Commerce Commission Examiner Marshall in Charge of Inquiry Wherein Exorbitant Rates and Poor Service is Alleged by the "Independent Companies" of Carbon—Testimony of Witnesses.

With an array of representatives of the coal mining companies of Utah and legal talent defending the interests of the railroads, which practically filled every seat in one of the federal court rooms, the battle between the coal operators and the railroads, in which the former are seeking the removal of a differential rate alleged to be operated against them, and for an adjustment of through rates, began last Friday before U. S. Marshall, Interstate Commerce Examiner, F. A. Sweet, president of Standard Coal company, was in the witness stand the entire day. Piercing darts of sarcasm were shot back and forth at times, handicapping the progress of the hearing and apparently gaining little for either side.

From the character of the proceedings the question of car shortage entered into the merits of the case equally as much, if not more, than the matter of rates, it being candidly admitted by Sweet that during a great portion of the year the matter of rate discrimination was not a factor compared with the lack of cars in which to ship the products of the mines of Carbon county.

Complainants in Action.

The complainants in the suit are Cameron Coal company, Independent Coal and Coke company, Spring Canyon Coal company and the Standard Coal company, with the Denver and Rio Grande, Salt Lake Route, Union Pacific, Oregon Short Line, Oregon-Washington Railroad and Navigation company, Southern Pacific and Western Pacific railroads as defendants.

F. A. Sweet, president of Standard Coal company, first witness for the complainants, stated that the mines of his company at Monticello, had been developed and equipped at a cost of about \$1,000,000, and had capacity for producing four thousand tons of coal in an eight-hour day. During 1916 the Utah mines shipped between 2,000,000 and 2,500,000 tons of coal to points outside Utah, from a total production of about 3,500,000 tons. If the railroads could furnish a sufficient number of cars, if labor could be obtained and if reasonable rates were offered by the railroads the output could be increased with the present mine equipment to about 6,000,000 tons a year.

Testimony of Sweet.

During the spring and summer months, said Sweet, the operations of the Utah mines are greatly handicapped by the differential rate of twenty-five cents in favor of the producers of Wyoming, which acts practically as an embargo on Utah coal to outside points. Because of this embargo have come to him that in many portions of Idaho and Wyoming the people have been compelled to burn kerosene and outbuildings to keep from suffering from the cold. If the differential were removed the Utah mines would make heavy shipments to Idaho, Oregon, Washington and Montana during the summer months. The Utah operators enjoy no through rate to Kansas, Missouri and Nebraska points, but if a reasonable rate to points in those states were granted the business of the Utah mines would be greatly expanded.

Under cross examination he showed if granted a rate of \$4.25 to San Francisco, the coal operators of Utah could compete with Australia, Japan and British Columbia in supplying coal for the steamship trade, now receiving their supplies by water routes. He said that it was up to the railroads to put such rates in effect that the coal operators of Utah could meet the competition of oil in some places, wood in others and water competition in other places.

As to Shortage of Cars.

At the present time, however, Sweet admitted, the difficulty is one purely of a shortage of cars with which to transport coal out of the state. He also admitted that while the business of the Wyoming producers was steadily decreasing, the output of the Utah mines was increasing. He said, also, that the business done in California by Utah operators has materially improved during the past year or two, and that the present demand from California points is quite normal.

Since the time the first case was brought against the railroads conditions have changed and it is probable that the relief now being sought may be suspended for a time, or until the close of the year, without appreciable effect on the business of the operators. At the same time, he said, there is no reason why Utah coal should be denied a market in Kansas, Missouri and Nebraska, because of discrimination in rates. He said he would not complain against the Colorado mines enjoying Utah as a competitive field.

Sweet reviewed the condition which existed in Utah, Idaho and Southwestern Montana last winter because of a shortage of coal. This brought out a rather sarcastic remark on the part of J. G. Willoughby, attorney for the Denver and Rio Grande, and replying, Sweet said:

Rio Grande is Blamed.

"If you know the situation as we do, with all the sickness and suffering because of a shortage of fuel, you would not make such unfeeling remarks."

Sweet stated that in his opinion the

Denver and Rio Grande had done little to relieve the coal situation and that it is poorly equipped at Helper with switching and yard facilities and had done little to improve the method of getting long trains over Soldier Summit.

Comparing coal with oil as fuel, he said that even at a low cost of \$1.70 a barrel, laid down in San Francisco, the Utah operators could compete if allowed a \$4.40 rate. At the present time there is no competition which can reduce the output of the Utah mines, although Utah has not yet dominated the coast market. If the twenty-five cent differential is removed the consumer will get the benefit. During the summer, or storage months, the operators absorbed the charge.

Furnishes Eighty Per Cent.

Showing by J. Cal Ewing, president of the California Fuel Dealers' association, that the Utah mines furnish 80 per cent of the coal consumed in California, the coal operators further established the fact that the mines of Utah produce the coal, have a market for their product and, according to the contention of the complainants, are entitled to lower freight rates to meet the competition of other coal producers.

In the cross examination of F. A. Sweet it was brought out that the cost of mining coal in Utah is greater than in Wyoming because of the fact that the veins are not as flat as in Wyoming and timbering is necessary. The mines of Utah, it developed, are generally better equipped.

Sweet expressed the opinion that the differential of twenty-five cents a ton on all coal shipped out of Utah in favor of the mines of Wyoming was never established as a source of earnings for the railroads, but as an embargo against the Utah coal, imposed for the purpose of building up the Wyoming mines. Before the Oregon Short Line was absorbed by the Union Pacific, he said, all the mines of both states enjoyed equal rates.

Market Demand Brisk.

During the past year and a half, Sweet said, the Utah operators found a market for more coal than they could produce, owing to restricted production on account of lack of transportation facilities. The differential at this time does not materially affect the producers. At the same time he maintained that it is an injustice to the consumer, which has to absorb it. He stated that at the present time the railroads are handling other commodities in many instances over mountain ranges, at a freight rate less than that charged on coal from the Utah mines.

Sweet admitted that from twenty-five cents to a dollar more was charged for Utah coal sold in Idaho, largely because the Idaho consumer was willing to pay it, but equally as much because the Utah Fuel company had established a lower price for coal sold in Utah than for that sold in Idaho.

Utah Coal Preferred.

W. L. Clark, vice president and general manager of the Diamond Pencil company of Los Angeles, Calif., substantiated the testimony concerning the quantity consumed in California. H. W. Franklin, traffic manager of the Western Washington Lumber association, stated that Utah coal is twenty-five cents higher in Washington than Wyoming coal and that Utah coal is given the preference.

H. E. Lewis, general manager of the Standard Coal company, testified to the grades and equipment on the Denver and Rio Grande between Salt Lake City and Helper, and while admitting that the service had been somewhat improved during the past year or two, the improved service had not resulted in any improvement in the matter of coal transportation.

It was brought out in the testimony of J. R. Smith, sales manager of Spring Canyon Coal company, that about five thousand men are employed in the coal mines of Utah, while, if proper transportation were furnished, permitting the mines to be operated at capacity, at least 20 per cent more men would be given employment.

Many Witnesses Called.

Other witnesses were C. N. Strevell, president of Independent Coal and Coke company, who expressed dissatisfaction with the management of the branch lines of the Denver and Rio Grande; William Gorton, sales manager of the same company, who testified concerning the coal trade in California, and who said that if the Utah mines had the same rate as the mines at Kemmerer and Rock Springs, Wyo., they would enjoy a broader market in Washington, Oregon, Idaho and California, and if given a rate of \$4.40 to coast points the Utah operators could compete with water hauled coal at coast points.

H. W. Prickett, manager of the Traffic Service Bureau of Utah, was

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ARE DOING FINE JOB

Work On the Price to Myton Highway Recently Inspected.

Secretary of State Harden Bennion, a member of the state road commission, George A. Storr, warden of the Utah penitentiary, and Ira H. Brown, road engineer, visited the convict camp on the Price to Myton road last Saturday, where seventy-one convicts and fourteen teams are at this time employed on the Nine Mile section of the highway.

Most of the work is being concentrated on that section from the old line Anderson ranch this way and some good results are being obtained, say the gentlemen mentioned, who returned to the Tavern Hotel at Price during the evening. Convicts now employed will be kept there until cold weather drives them out.

After this, which will be a month or perhaps longer, the men are to be taken to some warmer climate until spring, perhaps the St. George section.

When it comes to real near beer there is only one on the market. That's "Snappy." Handed wholesale locally by Price Commission company.—Advt.

CHURCH INVESTING IN THE LIBERTY BONDS

TWO HUNDRED AND FIFTY THOU- SAND DOLLARS PLEDGED.

Twelve Thousand Persons Without Dissenting Voice Consent to Proposition of President Joseph F. Smith—All the Authorities Sustained—Largest of All Conferences.

Full twelve thousand high uplifted hands in the great tabernacle at Salt Lake City last Sunday afternoon silently but impressively expressed the decision of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in purchase with part of the tithing funds of the organization, through Trustee-in-Trust Joseph F. Smith, a quarter of a million dollars worth of liberty bonds to aid the government of the United States in prosecuting its part in the war in defense of constitutional freedom in the world.

This is the first time in the history of the church that the tithing funds have ever been diverted from their ordinary course of expenditure for purely church purposes. Such action was only taken after President Smith had said that it was the duty of the people to sustain the government in the war. The motion to purchase the bonds was made by President Anthon H. Lund, first counselor to President Smith, and was seconded by President Charles W. Penrose, second counselor.

When the motion was put by President Smith with the request that approval be denoted by the uplifted hand, twelve thousand hands were raised in the air. A dissenting showing was called for, but no hand was raised.

Urged to Buy Bonds.

At the morning session of the conference Presiding Bishop Charles W. Nibley gave effective promotion to the liberty bond campaign when he said: "Yes, sisters, take my advice. Don't let your husbands separate themselves from their money for something they know nothing about. If you have any surplus money—ah! many of you will have in these times of prosperity—buy a liberty bond. On that you cannot lose. It is good for all time." Bishop Nibley had himself previously subscribed a hundred thousand dollars.

To a large degree it was Patriotic Day—this closing period of the eighty-eighth semi-annual conference of the church. Two other incidents of patriotic character were noted at the morning session. The first was when President Smith announced President Brigham H. Roberts as one of those who would have charge of the outdoor overflow meeting near the bureau of information building. Lieutenant Roberts, clothed in his khaki uniform, arose from his seat on the stand among other members of the first council of seventy and went out to fill his appointment. The other was when President Richard W. Young of Keshen State, dressed in his khaki uniform as colonel of the Utah artillery, pronounced the benediction.

America in the War.

All of these circumstances served to remind the vast audience of the part the United States is taking in the war for the maintenance of principles of free government, which the members of the church are continuously taught to believe are of heavenly inspiration, and subsequent comment heard among attendants at the morning session indicated that the patriotic example given them had carried home.

Twenty thousand men, women and children, it is conservatively estimated, thronged Temple square Sunday morning and afternoon. Two overflow meetings were held at such occasions—one in Assembly Hall and one in the open air near the bureau of information building. In the big tabernacle sat and stood twelve thousand persons, in Assembly Hall were forty-five hundred more and thirty-five hundred others stood in the open air and sang and listened to admonition from their leaders.

This eighty-eighth conference of the church was by far the largest ever held in point of attendance. All of the authorities were sustained without a dissenting voice. The conference was Sunday afternoon adjourned until April next.

STATE FAIR SHOWS FIRST PROFIT FOR LONG TIME

When the gates of the Utah state annual fair closed last Saturday night officials were very well pleased with the results of the exhibition. The gate receipts showed that over two hundred thousand people had visited the grounds during the week, with the result that the fair was a paying institution for the first time in several years.

"We had one of the largest attendances at the fair for a number of years," says W. R. Romney, president, "and in every way the fair was a marked success." Hamney attributed the success of the fair to the interesting exhibits and the novel side attractions offered to the public.

The food conservation displays and demonstrations, he added, brought scores of people to the grounds day after day.

The right sort of a county agent is what his title implies—the trusted agent, friend and counselor of the farmers with whom he works. He is not an outsider with quantities of advice, but a sympathetic helper of his own people, learning by doing.

The housekeeper should be sure that her family has every day some food from each of the five principal groups, namely, fats, sugars, cereals, fruits and vegetables, and meat, milk, cheese, eggs or legumes.

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SCHOOL CHILDREN ARE TO ORGANIZE FOR RED CROSS

The state board of education has decided that school children of the state may be organized for Red Cross work, and letters to this effect are being sent out to superintendents of the various districts. The action comes in compliance with a request from headquarters of the National Red Cross at Washington, D. C.

The board also has decided that the special committee on vocational education, composed of Dr. E. G. Gowan, superintendent of public instruction; Dr. J. A. Whitson, president of the University of Utah, and Dr. E. G. Peterson, president of the Utah Agricultural college, should be empowered to name the state director of vocational education, as soon as the preliminary negotiations now under way with the federal government are completed.

The national government will aid the state in this work by contributing fifteen thousand dollars or more a year.

ORCHARDISTS ARE WARNED TO EXTERMINATE THE HATS

Hats and mice, which cause widespread damage during the summer, are even more destructive during the winter in orchards.

This warning, with the advice that means of extermination should be adopted, has been sounded by the Utah Agricultural college's department of entomology.

The rodents are especially destructive during the winter, it is pointed out, because, being cut off from other foods, they make inroads upon the bark of young fruit trees.

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