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Mr. Huntington on the Grill

An Unpleasant Time Before the Senate Railroads Committee

Makes an Appeal for More Time to Meet His Obligations

Affirms His Eagerness to Pay the Central Pacific's Indebtedness in Full

Forgets Some of His Statistics

He Finally Escapes on the Plea That Certain Necessary Figures Are Not at Hand

WASHINGTON, February 8.—For four hours, today, Mr. Huntington sat in the Capitol without speaking. One might have said he was embarrassed at finding himself in such distinguished company. He was, in fact, in the presence of the Senate committee on Pacific Railroads, containing such eminent men as Edward O. Wolcott of Colorado, William M. Stewart of Nevada, William P. Frye of Maine, Calvin S. Brice of Ohio and John T. Morgan of Alabama. The committee has nine members, but not all are illustrious.

There were present also Messrs. Little and Anderson, the "majority" of the famous Pacific Railroads Commission of 1887. The latter was very much present indeed, his statement regarding the affairs of the Union Pacific, of which he is a Director, having occupied the committee's attention during most of the time it was in session. Of Mr. Anderson's knowledge of railroad affairs, his memory of details and his tranquility under the searchlight it is impossible to speak with too high admiration. One could almost feel the threat of the questions passing through him as he sat there at the point of interaction, yet never once did he wince.

It developed that Mr. Anderson is opposed to government ownership and management of railroads, yet from his own lucid exposition of the results in the instance of the Union Pacific it seems clear that the government can operate a railroad as well as a corporation; and in point of fact has, in one instance, done so a good deal better than was done by the corporation that was the predecessor. The Union Pacific is today under government management, and has been for years. So is every other road that is managed by a receiver appointed by a United States court. The receiver is supposed to operate the road for the benefit of the class—namely, its creditors—yet even so we hear little complaint of selfish management. It is hardly to be supposed that were the government's object the good of the whole people instead of a class the problem of management would be more difficult. He who considers the practical management of railroads by the United States Government an untried and doubtful experiment may justly boast that large, conspicuous and salient facts have not the power to take his attention. In justice to Mr. Anderson it should be said that his objection to Government ownership is based on other grounds than the

evils or uncertainties of “government operation,” by which term he distinctly characterizes the work of himself and his co-directors.

While believing that neither of the two “aided” roads would be worth to the government what would have to be paid to private creditors on foreclosure, Mr. Anderson was of the conviction that both roads, taken together, would be worth much more than the sum of the two values. He complained that the traffic naturally belonging to the Central and Union lines is diverted by Mr. Huntington and his associates to the Southern line.

In the House Committee the other day Judge Maguire, modestly venturing a reference to the same phenomenon as a “current report” was by several members fiercely challenged for proof, and by Grove Johnson was as nearly insulted as that person could find it in his liver to do. It was plainly the sense of most of the committee that the reference was most improper, not to say malicious. Yet what should be plainer than that the Southern Pacific company, as a merely human corporation, should prefer the superior profit of the “long haul” between San Francisco and New Orleans and even New York to that of the “short haul” between San Francisco and Ogden?

Freight sent from San Francisco by the Southern route to New Orleans and thence by Mr. Huntington’s steamers to New York pays him and his associates. Sent by the way of Ogden it pays him and his competitors. For the Kentucky corporation not to divert all through traffic it can from its northern to its southern road would be commercial stupidity. That the members of the House committee should demand proof of the corporation’s promotion of its most obvious interest fixes their intellectual status very clearly indeed.

During the examination of the Union Pacific’s attorney (Mr. Pierce, whom Senator Wolcott’s questions painfully rattled) and its director, Mr. Anderson, Mr. Huntington sat in veiled attention. He affected indifference, but was keenly interested. He had been invited to the sweat-box himself and was there to measure swords with Messrs. Wolcott and Morgan, who would have him on the grill directly he should open his mouth. He observed them doing Perce to a delicate nut-brown, inserting their forks into his incinerated sides, turning him on the iron and basting him in his own gravy. Doubtless the spectacle did not encourage Mr. Huntington.

True, Mr. Anderson has undergone the same ordeal like a man of asbestos, but Mr. Huntington must have been conscious that that gentleman’s case and his own were hardly analogous. If nothing else, they were dissimilar in this. Mr. Anderson had apparently nothing to conceal. However this may have been, it was plain that Mr. Huntington grew more and more nervous, and when at last he upheaved his bulbous bulk to address the committee, it was only to ask, in a half incoherent way, for more time.

It seems he lacked certain figures which for four mortal hours he had not remembered that he needed. His request being granted, he gained sufficient courage to stumble through an unheeded harangue, having no relevancy to anything in particular nor to much in general. He affirmed his eagerness to pay one hundred cents on the dollar of his road’s indebtedness—he was crazy to do that, apparently although for thirty years some invisible and intangible power had been holding him. He thought it expedient also to rethrust the old straw about the gigantic difficulties of building across the Sierra Nevadas. He touching recited the number of feet of lumber that had gone into snow sheds, and related with emotion that he had seen ten engines pushing one snowplow/

He adverted with mixed pride and regret to the fact that the Central Pacific Company had paid every creditor but the government, and with indubitable sorrow recalled the fact that it had been unable to realize the full face value of its bonds. He probably meant the contract and

Finance Company, but the good man was confused by the conversation which by this time had become general.

It is a fact that during his entire disjointed harangue (which was badly memorized from a plea of the late Creed Haymond) the only persons in the room that made even a pretense of listening were the chairman of the committee, the official stenographer and the reporters of the press. The revelation of our great Western dictator's Eastern insignificance and disrepute was no less than shocking.

A prediction that when the illustrious Kentuckian again appears before that committee it will be in obedience to an imperative summons would have a good many chances of fulfillment.