

A. W. McLEAN TELLS STORY OF V. & C. S. RAILROAD

Built to Serve Community and Operated for That Purpose—A. C. L. Assumed Debt But Will Not Operate It—Pays No Dividends But Interest on Debt.

Thirty thousand words of detailed testimony descriptive of the life and works of the Virginia & Carolina Southern Railroad, arraigned with four other short lines on the charge that they are owned and operated by the Atlantic Coast Line, but allowed to charge higher local rates, brought the hearing of the cases to an end before the Corporation Commission last Saturday in Raleigh. The News and Observer gives the following:

But for variation in detail, the story developed yesterday was like the stories of the East Carolina and the Washington & Vandermere offered on Friday. The plaintiff association alleged ownership by the Coast Line and the imposition of local rates on communities entitled to trunk line rates. The defendants, admitted ownership, pleaded separate charters, and endeavored to justify higher rates by local conditions.

Interest centered in yesterday's hearing to a much greater degree because of the fact that Angus Wilton McLean, president of the road, is prominent among the candidates mentioned for Governor in 1924, and this concern was not lessened by the open charge made by Chairman W. T. Lee, of the Corporation Commission, that the Traffic Association pressed the action in April in an effort to embarrass his own renomination at last week's primary.

Mr. McLean was on the witness stand for nearly two hours yesterday, and related in great detail the whole history of the road of which he is in the nominal head, and the circumstances that lay back of its building and its nominal transfer to the Coast Line two years after it was built. Judge J. Crawford Biggs and Senator L. R. Varner represented the road and Colonel Albert Cox and J. S. Griffin appeared for the plaintiff Traffic Association.

Rates Are "Ruinous." In presenting its case, the Traffic Association declared that the road, which runs from Hope Mills to Lumberton, 28 miles and from St. Pauls to Elizabethtown, 27 miles, is actually owned by the A. C. L., but operated under a short line charter, that under the ruling of the Commission, allows a local freight rate to be levied, and local rates are much higher than trunk line rates which should apply.

Testimony for the plaintiff was presented by M. R. Beaman, Secretary of the Traffic Association. He declared that the rates in effect were ruinous to business in towns along the line. Many natural shippers along the route were compelled to ship by truck because it was cheaper to ship in that way than by train. He submitted comparisons of rates. The instance used was the tariff on a bale of cotton from Fayetteville to St. Pauls, given at \$2.16. Evidence was offered that trucks handle the business for 75 cents per bale.

Hew St. Pauls Grew. Judge Biggs took the witness and put him through an hour of searching examination, working around the declaration that freight rates were ruining business. It was brought out that St. Pauls, now a town of 2,500 people, was not even on the map when the road was built 15 years ago, while towns on the main line of the Coast Line and with through rates, had shrunk steadily in population, though not six miles from St. Pauls.

J. M. Butler, cotton manufacturer at St. Pauls, took the stand at the instance of the plaintiff, and related at some length the necessity of shipping cotton from Fayetteville to St. Pauls by truck in preference to the railroad. He saved 55 cents per bale, he said, over the rates proposed in the hearing.

"Mr. Beaman says that these rates are ruinous to business in that section: could you tell the Commission what dividends your three cotton mills have declared over a period of five years, going back from 1921?" asked Senator Varner.

Some Ruinous Profit "We averaged about 50 per cent

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Try it the next time you suffer from a cold or the grip. It is inexpensive and entirely vegetable, therefore safe and harmless.

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during that time, though it has been nip and tuck with us for the past year," declared the witness.

"Do you think, then that the railroad, which enabled you to build up a town at St. Pauls ought to be allowed to make as much as five per cent?" The witness admitted that he would like to help the railroad, but could not afford to do it to his own loss.

Mr. McLean took the stand as the first witness for the defendant. He recounted the early struggles of the town of Lumberton, a village of 500 people 30 years ago, practically without train service, of the establishment of industries there that struggled against the inadequate service of the Seaboard Air Line, and of the efforts made by himself and other business men to induce the road to improve conditions.

Neither the A. C. L. nor the S. A. L. would help, and he, with his brother-in-law, J. L. Armfield, of Fayetteville, induced John Blue, of Aberdeen to go in with the construction of a line from Lumberton to some point on the A. C. L. below Fayetteville. They put up \$150,000 of their own money and borrowed the rest, totaling about \$524,000. The panic of 1907 scared Blue out of the deal, and it was necessary to float loans.

The Seaboard declined outright to buy the road. The A. C. L. declined to buy. Creditors were pressing the owners of the road, and finally Mr. McLean said he induced the A. C. L. to take over its obligations, agreeing to the condition that they would operate the road and pay the A. C. L. five per cent on the investment. That road now owns the stock and bonds of the road, but the title remains in the hands of Mr. McLean and his associates.

The road has been operated for the accommodation of the community which it serves, and Mr. McLean said that he had never heard any complaint in rates before. Most of the traffic handled by the road originates in industries owned by the officers and directors. They have had the railroad and all they have had out of it has been more adequate service to their other interests. In 15 years it has paid its interest, and profits aggregating \$105,000 most of which has been put back into maintenance and improvement of the road.

That was the story told by Mr. McLean. Rate experts submitted reams of exhibits showing that since January 1 two rate reductions have been put into effect that made rates much lower than those complained of, and in some instances lower than those asked to be put into effect by the complaint in the action.

The cases go under the advisement of the commission. The defendants are sanguine as to the outcome, citing the ruling of the commission in the Black Mountain railroad which set up the precedent that where a railroad was built and operated under unusual conditions it was entitled to consideration in the fixing of freight rates to compensate it.

The Black Mountain road was built into Yancey county, through a sparsely settled country, at tremendous expense. Business is scant, and the commission allows it a high freight rate in order to compensate for the unusual conditions under which it was built and operated.

T. E. Cooper Waiting to Take Crown When McLean Lays It Down. W. T. Bost wrote as follows from Raleigh in the Greensboro News under date of June 8: Presence here today of Angus Wil-

ton McLean, national committeeman and candidate for governor, and of Thomas E. Cooper, Raleigh, and Wilmington banker, had a great deal more of interest than the mere circumstance that brought McLean to Raleigh for the short line hearing before the corporation commission tomorrow, and Mr. Cooper to look after his local banking interests.

How soon Mr. McLean means to resign the national committeeman-ship nobody seems to know, but the day the crown topples from his capacious head, Tom Cooper will have one of his own to fit the hat worn by McLean, Josephus Daniels, and notables not now living. Mr. Cooper has not been seen here today, but he is in town and one who wishes to gamble in political futures hazards nothing of his political propheteering by announcing that Mr. Cooper will be a candidate to succeed Mr. McLean.

The Raleigh and Wilmington financier should have no trouble getting the backing of the organization. Mr. McLean must be governor, no matter what the archives in J. W. Bailey's office have embalmed in the shape of a record against McLean. Mr. Cooper is most friendly to McLean. The national committeeman must not go back into hostile hands. It once was owned by Josephus Daniels. Mr. Daniels may support Bailey. Mr. Bailey might help Mr. Daniels. Both are uncertain. A national committeeman must be of the household of faith.

Cooper meets the specifications admirably from the organization point of view. There has been no suggestion of any other candidate. And the organization could name him now. It has the votes, men and women, for it filled the state executive committee and the advisory board of the party which women are going to give the party no concern.

The Result in Iowa. The result of the Republican Senatorial primaries in Iowa as a political sign and portent cannot be discredited or discounted by the friends of the Administration as they attempted to do in regard to Indiana and Pennsylvania. There was some ground in both these States for minimizing the claim that the Beveridge victory and the Pinchot triumph were body blows directly aimed at the Administration.

Mr. Harding was careful to proclaim in advance that he was neutral in Indiana and to have it known that he was taking no part in the family row in Pennsylvania. And neither Mr. Beveridge nor Mr. Pinchot proclaimed himself as an enemy of the national regime at Washington. The significance of what happened in both these cases was to be found in the fact that both involved a fight against the regular Republican State organization, which was close to the national organization, and that both Beveridge and Pinchot represent a progressive element, which is not in sympathy with the reactionary or standpat tendencies which Mr. Harding is supposed to favor.

Whatever may be said of Indiana or Pennsylvania, however, there is no explaining away what has occurred in Iowa. There, it is indisputable, the Administration has received a hard smash full in the mouth. Brookhart challenged it to a championship fight and he has won the nomination over every effort of the national and local machine to beat him. His platform was definitely in conflict with almost every important policy of the

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Administration, and his success is hailed with delight by La Follette and every free lance in the Senate. Here at last, apparently, is something to give the President and his friends pause, or to cause them political indigestion. They have got to swallow Brookhart, as they have got to swallow Beveridge and Pinchot, but the question remains what the effect will be on the Republican political stomach.

It is clearer than ever now, of course, that dissatisfaction and restlessness are widespread in the Republican ranks. It is a far cry in miles from Pennsylvania to Iowa, but the cry in both States sounds virtually the same note. There is a riot, if not a revolution, among the Republican masses against the spirit and the unsatisfactory showing of Harding leadership or of Harding non-leadership. The Republican verdict in all three States is a verdict of failure—a demand that the President shall

take another route—shall move more aggressively along other political highways.—Baltimore Sun.

New President of Carolina College Mr. Ernest Green of Durham has been elected president of Carolina

college at Maxton to succeed Rev. B. John, who resigned. Mr. Green for a number of years connected with the public schools of Durham but signed a few years ago to enter business. It is expected that he will accept the presidency of the college.

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