Paper by James J. Hill

read at

The Portland Fair and Live Stock Exposition

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The raising of live stock has a twofold relation to the food supply of any country. Directly, it furnishes the meat diet; and indirectly, as the most valuable of all aids to the cultivation of the soil and the growing of crops, it helps to furnish the bread diet. The interests which you represent may, therefore, be said to act doubly upon the argiculture of the country and contribute twice to its welfare.

Since people learn mostly by the pressure of some need, the sharp rise in price of all kinds of meats has turned attention to the state of the live stock interest. Retail prices in some cases double what they were a few years ago stimulate inquiry. Investigation shows that live stock production has not kept pace with the demand upon it.

The receipts of all kinds of live stock at the Chicago Stock yards for the year 1909 were 1,544,997 less than in 1908, although the total valuation increased over $9,000,000. The receipts of hogs at thirteen principal markets in the United States were 5,586,312 less in 1909 than in 1908. The total number of cattle in the country has declined 3,000,000 in the last three years, and of hogs 7,000,000.

Necessarily prices have gone up. The breakfeast table of the rich and the dinner pail of the poor are both affected. As one would expect from these figures, native beef cattle and Western range cattle sold for the highest prices on record in the Chicago market in 1909. Hogs brought the highest figure received for twenty-seven years. Increase of population, changes in agriculture, drift of population cityward, all have helped to restrict production and to add to price. Even where numbers are not reduced, as in the case of horses, which are more numerous than ever in this country, the proper proportion has not been maintained. For in spite of the lessening demand for the horse, due to the trolley and the automobile, and although the total number has increased by a million and a quarter in the last three years, the average price in the United States last year was also the highest ever recorded.

These are a few of the facts bearing on the direct relation of the live stock interest to population, prices and the general welfare. As our population increases by anywhere from 1,500,000 to 2,500,000 per annum, and practically every person is a meat-eater, it follows that when the number of the principal food animals either remains stationary or begins to decline, the cost of living rises and the pinch begins. Not even the extraordinary prices paid for live stock have thus far been able to raise production to the level of demand.

The indirect relation is of still more consequence to the country. Before railroad transportation was generally at the service of the people, raising live stock was the only means of getting a crop to

market. The haul from the frontier farm to the nearest point of shipment and the freight rate would amount to more than the grain would bring. Crops had to grow feet and walk. Now the railroad everywhere, with its reduced rates, has made practicable the carriage to market of all soil products; while it has broken up and is putting under cultivation the great ranges of the West and Southwest where grazing was once the only industry. The present is, therefore, in several respects a transportation period; and it is the business of such organizations as this to forecast future conditions and endeavor to meet them.

The people of the United States must neither be forced, like the peasantry of Europe, to deny themselves meat except as a luxury, nor obliged to look, like Great Britain, outside their own borders for a supply. On the contrary, it is desirable that we should not only feed our own people but maintain those declining exports of food animals and other food products by which we have to so considerable an extent paid our debts in the past. The figures of our foreign trade emphasize the lesson of domestic production and price reports.

In the last five years our exports of meat and dairy products fell from $211,000,000 to about $130,000,000; and of cattle, sheep and hogs from $43,500,000 to about $13,000,000. This illustrates the swift decline in all our exports of food products; a trade change so sudden and so tremendous that the country may well take alarm.

Unless we change our industry we must soon cease to be self-supporting as far as food is concerned. This sounds absurd in view of our immense expanse of fertile land, our relatively scanty

population and the part we have played in feeding the world in the past. But the figures prove it. Our foreign trade in cereals tells the same story as that in meat products. Between the five years ending with 1904 and the five ending with 1909, the decrease of our wheat exports was over 40 per cent. In round numbers, our exports of foodstuffs in crude condition and food animals were $106,000,000 for the eleven months ending May 31 this year, $132,000,000 for the same period in 1909, and $181,000,000 in 1908. Our exports of foodstuffs partly or wholly manufactured for the same three eleven month periods were $240,000,000, $281,000,000 and $310,000,000. The wheat exports were 46,000,000 bushels, 66,000,000 bushels and 95,500,000 bushels; the flour exports, 8,500,000 barrels, 10,000,000 barrels and 13,000,000 barrels. The force of these figures cannot be evaded or misunderstood.

Food consumption in the United States is increasing more rapidly than food production. That is the explanation of the falling off in exports of all forms of food products. It has been written in our statistics for many years, if any cared to look for it. If we take two five year periods and compare their averages it will exclude the possible unfairness of matching single good years against bad. When the five year period 1879-1883 is compared with the five year period 1904-1908, twenty-five years later, the change is impressive. In that quarter century our population increased 64.5 per cent, our wheat production 45 per cent and our domestic consumption of wheat and flour 82.7 per cent. Not only had population grown, but the consumption per capita had risen from 5.7 to 6.4 bushels. The percentage of our total domestic product of wheat and wheat

flour exported was 34.90 for the first and 17.33 for the second five year period; a decrease of more than one-half.

A nation that means to preserve its prosperity and control its own destiny must make sure that its food supply is adequate and will continue to be so. To reverse our movement toward industrial dependence, food scarcity and permanent high prices, which has already gone far, is the item of the conservation program more important to us than all the others combined. This means conservation of the soil. It requires no expensive machinery, no subordination of local to federal interests, nothing but industry, intelligence and willingness to follow the teachings of experience. To insist upon it is especially the duty of all who, like those gathered here, have interests inseparably connected with the preservation and increase of soil productivity.

In "Highways of Progress" I have demonstrated that this country might easily double its wheat yield per acre and make a similar gain in the quantity of everything produced from the land. To do that would be only what Great Britain and Germany are doing; far less than Holland and Denmark and those other countries where modern agriculture has been specialized. It requires better cultivation, smaller farms, study of soils and their adaptation to different forms of plant life, rotation of crops, selection of seed as careful as that which the breeder gives to the parentage of animals, and proper fertilization. By these methods from twenty-five to forty bushels of wheat per acre and a corresponding yield of other crops are now being obtained not only at experiment stations but on many scattered farms in this country whose cultivators

have adopted the new methods. If all our farmers could be educated to the same point, twenty-five bushels of wheat would be only a fair crop; but this, on our present acreage, would give us a surplus of 400,000,000 bushels for export. Plenty at home and a balance to draw on abroad would transform our outlook, at present far from reassuring. The game is in our own hands.

This change could scarcely be wrought without the assistance of the industry which you more particularly represent. The farmer and his land cannot prosper until stock raising is an inseparable adjunct of agriculture. The natural increase of animals, the dairy products, the meat market products, create the wealth of such countries as Holland, and may and should be valuable revenue producers on every farm in the United States. Hogs can be raised at small cost of food or labor, and bring a sure income. Still more important is the fact that of all forage fed to live stock at least one-third in cash value remains on the land in the form of manure that will aid in restoring exhausted land to fertility and maintaining good land at its highest productive point. It would be easy to cite hundreds of instances where the careful saving of every ounce of manure, in either the solid or the liquid form, and its application to the cultivated area have made and kept the farm a source of wealth.

Here as always it appears that nature's ends are nicely adjusted to one another. We begin by discovering that the breeding and keeping of live stock in this country are not keeping pace with its needs. We find, of course, that the first consequence is a rise of prices, bringing hardship to our people and a falling off in exports that will compel us to find

some other means of paying the big balance left by our constantly increasing imports. We look at the grain trade and our cereal production and perceive a corresponding unfortunate change. And finally it is apparent, from the experience of all agriculture, that one ill is partly a consequence of the other. The cattle and hogs and sheep that are needed for home use and for export, to feed the world and reduce the prices that impair our standard of living, are needed equally to diversify our farm industry and maintain the fertility of the soil. Nature makes no mistakes; and to follow her leading is to walk toward prosperity and peace.

The industry which is your special province is an essential factor in the conservation movement so much in the public mind. It must always help to make and preserve the wealth of nations. Foolish people and false economists, led astray by the glitter of the city and the magnitude of the manufacturing industry, have sought to give that first place. It is only subsidiary. Always the soil on which he stands, the living things that grow on it by his side, the wealth that he may win directly from it by his labor, will be man's sure reliance and the heritage of himself and his children. Neglecting that, race yields to race until one comes wise enough not to wander from the giver of all its plenty, its defence against all ills. Upon our understanding of this greatest and most fundamental of all the natural laws to which we are subject, upon our obedience to it and the fashioning of national industry and national policies and national thought upon it rest not only the commonplace fact of national prosperity but all larger hope of intellectual, moral and spiritual progress still to come.