

**FACTS AND FIGURES
CONCERNING THE
HOOSAC TUNNEL**

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Facts and Figures Concerning the Hoosac Tunnel by John J. Piper

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THE HOOSAC TUNNEL.

By JOHN J. PIPER.

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THE HOOSAC TUNNEL.

In his inaugural address to the Legislature, Governor Bullock says, "There can be no doubt that *new facilities* and *new avenues* for transportation between the West and the East are now absolutely needed. Our lines of prosperity and growth are the parallels of latitude which connect us with the young, rich empire of men, and stock, and produce lying around the lakes and still beyond. The people of Massachusetts, compact, manufacturing and commercial, must have *more* thoroughfares through which the currents of trade and life may pass to and fro, unobstructed and ceaseless, between the Atlantic and the national granaries, or decay will at no distant period touch alike her wharves and her workshops. Let us avert the day in which our Commonwealth shall become chiefly a school-house for the West, and a homestead over which time shall have drawn silently and too soon the marks of dilapidation. Any policy which is not broad enough to secure to us a New England, having a proper share in the benefits of this new opening era of the West, be assured, will not receive the approval of the next generation."

This important recommendation is what the public had reason to expect from a man so keenly alive to the interests and welfare of the Commonwealth as Governor Bullock, whose close observation and discernment had long since discovered the danger, and disposed him to take a deep interest in any adequate enterprise by means of which it could be averted. The reasons which have induced His

Excellency's convictions on this subject, and caused the apprehensions he has expressed, are very clearly set forth in the following articles from the Buffalo Commercial Advertiser of November 25th and 28th, 1865:—

“To-day, the Western States are far more bountifully provided with avenues of transportation than the extreme East. This is peculiarly anomalous and inexplicable when we consider the boasted enterprise, wealth and shrewdness of New England, and the dependence which always exists upon the part of a manufacturing district toward that section which furnishes it with a market, and from which it obtains its breadstuff. It is fortunate for New England that it does not lie in the line of transit between the West and its market, or it would have drawn about its head a storm of indignation which it could not have resisted. The State of New York has contributed an hundred fold what New England has towards providing the required facilities of traffic, for the great West. Our Yankee friends have done much toward facilitating intercommunication among themselves, but very little toward direct communication with the West.

It is not a little strange that, with all the ambitious effort of Boston to become a mercantile emporium, rivaling New York, and with its vast manufacturing interest, it should have but a single direct avenue of traffic with the West. Yet such is the fact. The Western Railroad between Albany and Boston is the sole route now in existence except those circuitous lines via New York City or through Canada. Our down-east friends, usually so keen and enterprising, seem to have exhausted their energies in the construction of that road twenty-five years ago, and the consequence is that to-day the business interests of all New England are suffering for lack of the timely investment of a few millions.

Strange as it may seem, it is nevertheless true that Boston is now virtually cut off from its trade communication with the West for want of facilities of transportation. For weeks past the Grand Trunk Railroad has ceased to take Boston freight, by reason of its being blocked up with other through and way freights at Sarnia. The swollen tide of freight via the New York Central has exceeded the capacity of the Western Road between Albany and Boston, and the consequence has been felt in an increased charge by the New York Central of twenty cents a barrel above New York

City rates, and, finally, that road has been obliged to refuse Boston freight altogether, simply by reason of the accumulation and delay occasioned by the inability of the Western Road to forward it to its destination. In like manner, Boston freight going forward by canal is hindered and accumulated at Albany. A similar state of things exists in regard to most of the westward bound Boston freight, as Boston jobbers are finding out to their cost. Merchants at the West, who purchase in Boston, are six and eight weeks in getting their heavy goods.

We are informed upon reliable authority that flour can be sent from Chicago to New York, by lake and rail for \$1.90 per barrel, while very limited quantities only can be sent to Boston at \$2.25, and that by the "Red Line" \$3 a barrel is demanded.

New England depends upon the West for its bread, and also for its market for its imports and manufactures. If the state of things to which we refer, continues much longer, it will be compelled to go to New York both for its bread and its customers.

The West complains of New York, because, forsooth, it is tardy in enlarging its canals to meet the anticipated necessities of its future growth, and Boston has had the assurance to join in the thoughtless and unfounded clamor. Yet the great State of Massachusetts has supinely stood still for twenty-five years without making an effort to overcome the barrier between it and the great West. During that time the Western road has grown rich, and paid large dividends from a business which has been greater than it could transact, and to-day there exists an almost total blockade of Boston freight at Albany.

Surely, this does not reflect favorably on New England shrewdness and enterprise, neither does it tally with New England interest. Besides, it is detrimental to the business interests of the West. As the case now stands the fault rests with Massachusetts alone, in not providing railroad accommodations east of the Hudson river. It is also nonsense to assert, as some will, that the capacity of the Erie canal is inadequate. During the past season it has not been taxed to half its capacity, and yet it has found the Western Road unable to dispose of what Boston freight was offered.

Western merchants and shippers ought to know where the fault lies, and to the end that they may be informed we have

penned this article. Their true remedy is to buy in New York, and to ship their produce to that city, until Massachusetts shall provide adequate facilities of transportation.

Boston is the natural eastern terminus of the great northern line of transportation, and we should have been glad to have seen her citizens and those of the great state of Massachusetts realize the fact. Their supineness, however, has lost to them for the present, if not forever, the great commercial prize which nature intended for them. It remains to be seen whether they will realize their position, and make an effort to retrieve their "penny wise and pound foolish policy."

"In a recent article we took occasion to point out the importance to the country at large of the construction of adequate facilities for the accommodation of the traffic exchanges between the different sections; and to call the attention of our readers to the remarkable fact that while the whole country, and particularly the West, had undergone a wonderful development requiring for its accommodation a corresponding increase of commercial facilities, that New England had stood still for a quarter of a century. The fact that a great State like Massachusetts, with a great emporium like Boston, should have but a single line of direct communication with the West, and that it should supinely stand still and refuse to add to it, notwithstanding the yearly demonstrations of its growing inadequacy, seemed so strange as to justify remark. The other fact that the transit of freight to and from Boston should be almost stopped by the inability of that single railroad to handle it—thereby increasing rates and compelling purchasers as well as sellers to go to New York—also seemed to be inconsistent with our traditional ideas of eastern shrewdness. Our remarks have received additional force by the fact, subsequently learned by us, that there are at the present time between four and five hundred car-loads of Boston-bound freight lying at Albany and Greenbush awaiting cars for its movement to its destination, while there exists no stoppage whatever of New York freight, thus demonstrating clearly the inadequacy of the Western road to answer the demands made upon it.

Since that article was penned, information has reached us to the effect that our Massachusetts neighbors have at last waked up to the importance of the subject, and are about to enter vigorously upon the work of providing another avenue

of trade between Boston and the West, by what is known as the Greenfield route which embraces the long talked of Hoosac Tunnel. This great enterprise has enlisted the energies of the engineers and railroad men of Massachusetts for more than thirty years, with constantly varying prospects of success, and at last seems in a fair way of being accomplished.

The high range of hills which runs along the whole western line of Massachusetts, for a long time baffled the efforts of railroad engineers; and the rival claims of competing routes distracted the popular mind, and delayed the construction of either. The most eminent engineers preferred the Northern, or Greenfield route—involving the Hoosac Tunnel—as being the most direct and feasible. In the struggle which followed, the Southern route was successful, and the Western road was built and opened in 1842. The other route was also constructed after a time, upon either side of the proposed tunnel, but for lack of the completion of that great work, has never been anything but an avenue for local travel and traffic.

The whole length of the proposed tunnel is 25,574 feet, and the estimated cost of construction is about three and a quarter millions. When we consider the vital interest which the citizens of Massachusetts have in the completion of this work, and the enormous interests to be served by it, the sum required seems absolutely trivial, and the withholding of it really parsimonious as well as foolish. We are pleased to learn that the State is at last about to lend a helping hand to this great enterprise, which will guaranty its speedy completion. This is an indication of wisdom upon the part of our neighbors, albeit it comes somewhat tardily.

Almost all the other States that lie between the great West and the Ocean have pursued a very different policy from that of New England, and with very favorable results. New York, which was the pioneer in the matter of internal improvements, not only built her great Canals, at a cost of over \$62,000,000, but also aided largely in the construction of her great through lines of railroads. It contributed to the Erie road \$3,000,000, which is now seen to have been a good investment despite the fact that it was entirely lost to the State. The same policy was pursued by Pennsylvania and Maryland, with equally happy results.

We congratulate our New England neighbors, and, especially, the citizens of Boston, upon the improved prospect of

the completion of the Hoosac Tunnel, and the opening of another great route to the West, through, instead of over the mountains which lie between them and us. We trust that the obstructions which have existed, and still exist, in the channels of commercial intercourse between New England and the West will speedily be removed, never again to be manifested in freight blockades or threatened diversions of trade."

The statements contained in these two articles are substantially true; and they are not only interesting, but important, as throwing much light upon a subject which will, doubtless, occupy much of the attention and time of the Legislature: for the Western Railroad managers have already opened their annual attack upon the Hoosac Tunnel, through their well known agents and tools, Bird, Harris and Seaver, who shamelessly advocate the entire abandonment by the State of an enterprise to the completion of which her word, and bond, and honor are irrevocably pledged.

The Western Railroad Company was organized in January, 1836, and its road was completed in 1847, having received aid from the State, during the period of its construction, to the amount of five millions of dollars. The terms upon which State aid was granted were very liberal, as they should have been; for the opening of this line of road had become as much a necessity to the development of the commercial and industrial interests of Massachusetts and the wants of her whole population, as the establishment of schools and churches had ever been to her moral or educational welfare. The involvement of the State in so great an enterprise was strenuously resisted by timid and narrow minded legislators; but the representations of those sagacious and far seeing men who had devoted themselves to the work, prevailed, and Massachusetts was, thus early in the history of railroads, committed to a policy which has, within a few years, not only trebled her productions and wealth, but made her the first and foremost of all her sister States which are honored for enterprise, prudence and wisdom.