

**ADDRESS OF MR. PATRICK
CALHOUN: DELIVERED AT THE
FIRST ANNUAL BANQUET OF THE
ATLANTA CHAMBER OF
COMMERCE, FEBRUARY 13, 1890**

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Address of Mr. Patrick Calhoun: Delivered at the First Annual Banquet of the Atlanta chamber of commerce, february 13, 1890 by Patrick Calhoun

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PATRICK CALHOUN

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ADDRESS

—OF—

MR. PATRICK CALHOUN,

DELIVERED AT THE

FIRST ANNUAL BANQUET

OF THE

ATLANTA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE,

URBAN OF
GEORGIA

FEBRUARY 13, 1890.

"What we need is that character of railroad combination which will enable the Southeast to enter vigorously into competition with the North for a share of the commerce of the continent, and that will tend to promote the industrial development of our Piedmont and mountain sections and build up our South Atlantic seaports."

ATLANTA, GA.
THE CONSTITUTION JOB OFFICE,
1890.

ADDRESS

—OF—

MR. PATRICK CALHOUN,

Delivered at the First Annual Banquet of the
Atlanta Chamber of Commerce,
on 13th February, 1890.

Mr. Chairman and Gentlemen—Atlanta is the result of a railroad accident—of a collision between swift-footed progress, the forerunner of railroad development, and that slow moving conservatism which sees danger in the shadow that follows every form of progress. Early in the railroad history of the State, it became apparent that the most important roads then projected, would meet near this spot. The necessity of connecting the South Atlantic sea ports with the Mississippi Valley, commanded the attention of the leading men of the South. A committee of the Legislature, in an able report, urged that this State should build a grand trunk line, from a point on the Tennessee river near Look-out Mountain, to a point near the southeastern bank of the Chattahoochee, and branches thence to her important towns, which, like veins of the human body, should lead to a common center. The widespread sentiment in favor of reaching out to the West, resulted in the Act for building the Western and Atlantic Railroad, and in an invitation to the roads projected in the State, to meet the grand trunk at its eastern terminus. At that time Decatur was one of the prosperous towns of Georgia; the county seat of a large county, which included the land on which Atlanta is situated, and stretched westward to the Chattahoochee river. Its citizens were intelligent, but they failed to

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appreciate their opportunity. Tradition tells us, that they objected to Decatur being made the terminus. They did not want their slumbers disturbed by the blowing and shutting of engines, and they feared the contaminating influences of the immoral characters which, it was supposed, the railroads would gather about the terminus. They objected to the State Road being built to Decatur, and permitted the Georgia Railroad to be extended through their town to an unpeopled spot, where it met the State Road. Around that spot has grown this city. Thus, once prosperous Decatur, startled by a shadow, escapes obscurity only as a suburb of Atlanta; while Atlanta, fair daughter of a railroad union, known in infancy as the Terminus, and described in youth as "a point in DeKalb county, Georgia, not far from Decatur," stands to-day in her majesty and might, with the bloom of youth still fresh upon her cheeks, a great, opulent and populous city, the capital of her State, the pride of her section, the metropolis of the Southeast, the very embodiment, indeed, of those broad and liberal sentiments of progress and patriotism which most distinguish and adorn the highest development of American civilization. There is no marriage more prolific than that between an important, healthy railroad terminus, and a liberal, vigorous spirit of progress. From such an union sprung this beautiful city—the child of the railroad, the child of progress; dowered with health and wealth, with energy and strength, with virtue and public spirit, and with every noble quality to fit her for leadership in the race of material development, and to make her the exponent of the highest culture, the broadest patriotism and the loftiest aspirations of her State and section. How little did the people of Decatur foresee this result! Not here the contaminating influences that corrupt society, but the church and the school house—the merchant and the manufacturer with their great stores and factories, giving employment to

thousands—and their homes, the centers of culture and refinement. And at their table, the foremost men of the country—the Governor of the great State of Ohio, who has so recently led his Democratic cohorts to glorious victory, and whom his party may yet call to lead greater cohorts to higher victory; the distinguished Congressman of West Virginia, whose great speech on the tariff attracted the attention of the whole country—the President of our sister chamber of the greatest city of the Western world—the brilliant Democratic leader of Massachusetts, that grand old Commonwealth of which every American is proud, and which is doubly dear to us now because of the royal welcome extended to our immortal Grady—and all these men, so distinguished in their respective callings, with what pride we welcome them!

Sir! What single factor was common to this whole result? What instrument most has fashioned it?

THE THROB OF THE ENGINE IS THE HEART-BEAT OF CIVILIZATION.

Intelligence, wealth, Christianity, follow it everywhere. Less than a century ago, it was gravely argued that the vast territory west of the Alleghany mountains, not contiguous to the great rivers, was practically useless, because what it produced could not be transported to the markets of the world. But the railroad has penetrated the mountain fastnesses and rendered their hidden wealth available, has crossed the prairies, peopled them with cities, and transformed their treeless solitudes into fruitful farms; has stretched from ocean to ocean, driving before it the savage with his war paint and his tomahawk, bringing with it the home, the school house and the church, and moves the commerce of the continent, carrying peace and plenty to the dwellings of the poor, and has made it practicable for a young girl, unattended and alone, to travel unarmed and unmolested around the world. It is

the railroad that has built up, peopled and developed this country with rapidity unequalled. It is the railroad that has contributed most to national wealth. It has done all it could, and is doing all it can, to promote the welfare of the people. The country is dependent upon the railroad for its growth, and the railroad, more than any other industry, is dependent upon the growth of the country. The railroad has a direct interest in the prosperity of every kind of business. Every additional inhabitant, every additional store, every additional factory, means increased freight, and increased freight means increased prosperity for the road. The railroads have been built at an enormous cost. It requires a vast volume of freight to enable them even to pay operating expenses, and it is only by increasing this volume to such proportions that it can be handled economically, that the roads can earn any profit for their stockholders.

THE WELFARE OF THE PEOPLE MEANS THE WELFARE OF
THE RAILROADS.

The greatest concern of those who manage the railway systems of the country is, how can they best reconcile all conflicting interests; how can they best promote the welfare of the section tributary to their roads; how can they render their patrons the most efficient service. Nor are these questions born of philanthropy. To answer them correctly is the best way to serve the interest of those whose money is invested in the roads.

It is absurd to suppose that the welfare of the roads and the welfare of the people are antagonistic. They go hand in hand; and it is therefore ridiculous to suspect that the railroads would strike a blow at the prosperity of the country. Men do not go contrary to their own interests. Every intelligent man admits these facts, and yet there is a widespread effort to create antagonism between the people and their railroads. It is clear that none should exist. It

is clear that that which exists is often unjust, and nearly always unreasoning. What is the cause? Have the railroads performed their duties to the public? Have they decreased the cost of transportation, and increased the facilities for travel? If so, why should dissatisfaction exist? It arises from two classes of causes; one is adventitious; the other inherent, springing from conditions beyond human control. Among the first may be classed railway mismanagement, resulting too often from railroad competition, producing unjust discrimination and railroad wars; the efforts of those engaged in building new roads, who, for selfish purposes, antagonize the old; and last, but not least, the misstatements of designing men who would excite popular prejudice to secure personal advancement. My time is too short to discuss the mere adventitious causes of dissatisfaction. Suffice it to say, they will wilt and die beneath the summer heat of enlightened thought. But, underlying the railroad situation, there are conditions, permanent in their character, which the public must recognize are beyond the power of the roads to control. Without a clear conception of them, no correct opinion can be formed.

THE DISCRIMINATIONS OF NATURE.

God discriminated when He created the world. At one point, He put lime and coal and iron so near together, that a man can throw a stone across the veins of all. At another, He ran His rocky hills so close to the shore, that the rivers come tumbling to the sea, enabling the sailing vessel to bring the raw material to the factory's door, run by the only power practicable for moving heavy machinery, prior to the introduction of steam, and enabling the merchant to reload the vessel with the factory's product, and send it by water, the then only practicable means for distant transportation, to the markets of the country; and here great factories rose. At another, He made his mountain ranges recede so far inland,

that vast lowlands, through which rivers sluggish run, lie between the mountains and the sea—lowlands where the cotton grows. At another, He stretched great prairies, adapted best to grain. Through the center of the continent, from north to south, He directed the course of a mighty river, giving, with its tributaries, thousands of miles of navigable waters, emptying, before the day of railroads, the commerce of its imperial territory into the splendid Gulf of Mexico; and on its banks mighty cities grew. From east to west, along our northern frontier, He stretched a chain of great and navigable lakes. On the eastern coast, He opened a noble bay, into which pours the splendid Hudson, broad and deep, whose waters were easily connected by canals with this great chain of western lakes. With these natural conditions the railroads have had to deal, and dealing, find that man demands that they shall destroy the discriminations nature made. The planter, who formerly hauled his products by wagon, to the city on the river, at a post greater than he can ship them now a thousand miles by rail, and who before paid readily the river freights in addition to the cost of his private conveyance, demands—since the railroads have been built—not only to be put on an equality with the city, but, if he is nearer, that he shall pay even less freight to the sea. The city, in turn, complains that its former trade now goes direct to distant markets. The town, situated nearer the coal and iron fields, demands that it shall be given the full benefit of its natural position. The town, a hundred miles away, wants coal just as cheap, and feels discriminated against if it does not get it. The wheat grower on the distant prairies of Dakota, in order to get his wheat to market, requires from the railroad a very small through rate. The wheat grower, nearer the sea, complains that this is discrimination against him. The manufacturers of the east demand a rate sufficiently low to enable their products to reach the distant markets of the west, but the