

The Corn Belt Meat Producers' Association of Iowa: Origins of a Progressive Pressure Group

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THE ROOTS OF AGRICULTURAL PROGRESSIVISM in Iowa are to be found in the changes which science and technology produced in the nature of farming following the Civil War: in the emergence of the "new agriculture" which was well under way in Iowa by the turn of the century. As the farmers of the state developed a stable and diversified system of production based on corn, beef, pork, and milk, their interests became increasingly specialized, and they began to form commodity organizations to protect and promote the interests of particular groups of producers. The programs of these associations were varied. They often included educational campaigns to promote more efficient production; cooperatives designed to free farmers from the exactions of middlemen; and lobbies and pressure tactics seeking state and federal laws that would meet the needs and remedy the grievances of the farmers. Iowa farmers generally agreed, however, that one of their greatest needs was more effective state and federal regulation of the "combinations," notably the railroads and the trusts. Consequently, Iowa farm organizations became increasingly involved in the politics of protest and reform that was so characteristic of the progressive upheaval in Iowa and other midwestern states. Agricultural progressivism, then, is used here to refer to the collective efforts of Iowa farmers in dealing with the problems of the emerging industrial order by invoking the powers of the state and federal governments to protect and promote their economic interests.¹

¹Earle D. Ross, *Iowa Agriculture: An Historical Survey* (Iowa City: State Historical Society of Iowa, 1951), chs. 6-8.

Illustrative of this process was the emergence in 1904 of the Corn Belt Meat Producers' Association of Iowa in response to the rapid and far-reaching changes that were transforming the production, transportation, and marketing of livestock at the turn of the century. "That we are entering upon a period of transition, which can almost be called a quiet revolution, many believe and few deny," A. L. Ames, the president of the meat producers' association, commented in 1905. A major element in the transition was a sharp rise in production costs resulting from the increasing value of land and corn. Reflecting the passing of the frontier, the prices paid for Iowa land rose from an average of \$14 an acre in 1871 to \$16 in 1881 and then jumped to \$27 in 1891 and \$44 in 1901. The price of corn, which continued to be the principal livestock food but was also used increasingly for other purposes, fluctuated from year to year but the overall trend was upward, the average price in Iowa rising from 14 cents a bushel in 1896 to 51 cents in 1908. Iowa stockmen were forced to recognize, therefore, that they had entered an era of rising costs which could only be cut through improved methods of production.²

The need to produce meat more economically and efficiently stimulated the interest of Iowa farmers in the scientific breeding and feeding of livestock which began in the state during the late nineteenth century and grew rapidly between 1900 and World War I. Iowa cattlemen turned increasingly to purebred Shorthorns, Herefords, and Polled Angus which matured more quickly and produced better beef more economically than the nondescript scrubs brought in by the settlers. Improvements in feeding necessarily accompanied improvements in breeding. Where Iowa farmers had formerly raised their cattle on grass—grazing herds of cattle on the open prairie continued in northwestern Iowa as late as 1890—and fattened them for market by stuffing them with as much corn as possible for a few months, they now began to utilize timothy, clover, alfalfa, and corn silage plus nitrogenous supplements, such as gluten, oil, and cottonseed meals. The new feeding methods provided a more efficient and better balanced ration than the old. By 1910, Iowa cattle were as well finished and as

²Wallaces' *Farmer*, June 17, 1904, Feb. 17, 1905, 808, 220; State Auditor, *Biennial Report, 1901*, Iowa Documents (Des Moines, 1902), I:229-234; "Statistical Tables of Iowa's Principal Farm Crops," *Iowa Year Book of Agriculture* (cited hereafter as *Ia. YBA*), 1908, Part II, 58.

heavy at two years of age as they had been at three or four years in the mid-nineties.³

Pressure to cut costs was by no means the only factor impelling Iowa cattlemen to improve their methods of production. Of equal and more immediate force were the changing tastes of the American consumer. Not only were the American people eating more beef—per capita consumption rose from 72.3 pounds in 1900 to 77.9 pounds in 1905—but they were also demanding better beef. Public insistence on better quality began to influence cattle markets in the 1890s when demand shifted from heavy steers, three to four years old, to younger and lighter steers with as good or better finish. Particularly important was the rapid growth of public enthusiasm for “baby beef”: young cattle ready for market at twelve to twenty-two months, weighing 800 to 1200 pounds. The popularity of baby beef coincided with the cattle industry’s need for more efficient production, since young cattle gained weight more rapidly and economically in proportion to the amount of feed used and could be marketed sooner than older stock. Feeders turned increasingly, therefore, to the production of baby beef. “In the feedlots of the Corn-belt this winter there are many calves whose owners never fed a calf or beef before,” the *Breeders Gazette* reported in 1904. The production of baby beef, however, was an exacting occupation, requiring well-bred cattle, scientific feeding, and intensive care. The production of beef, in short, had become a highly specialized business, demanding capital, equipment, and skillful management.⁴

Another major factor in the transformation of the livestock industry, according to Iowa farmers, was the rise in shipping costs. They complained that their shipping costs had risen, not because the railroads were charging higher freight rates but because they were giving poorer service.⁵ Cattle shippers complained particu-

³John A. Hopkins, “Economic History of the Production of Beef Cattle in Iowa,” *Iowa Journal of History and Politics*, 26 (January 1928), 136-139; (April 1928), 208-210, 222, 229-232, 234-235, 237-240, 256-262.

⁴John T. Schlebecker, *Cattle Raising on the Plains, 1900-1961* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1963), 17-18, et passim; Hopkins, (April 1928), 208-209, 263-265, et passim; *Wallaces' Farmer*, Jan. 13, 1905, Feb. 23, 1906, 34, 278; *la. YBA*, 1904, 341, 363.

⁵A. L. Ames said that the farmers would not complain about rates if the railroads gave good service. “What we do object to is their charging the same rates for the inferior service, and what we ask is that the rates and service should be com-

larly of the greater delays and the slower speeds of livestock trains which caused cattle to lose weight and bring lower prices, thereby imposing losses on the shipper that were equivalent to an increase in real or actual rates. They attributed the deterioration of service to the railroads' adoption of the tonnage system which was designed to haul a maximum amount of freight at a minimum cost per ton-mile: to haul as many cars as possible per locomotive in order to economize on fuel and labor. To this end, the railroads improved their roadbeds, straightened their tracks, laid heavier rails, used bigger cars, and introduced "mogul" locomotives which operated most efficiently at speeds of ten to twelve miles an hour and were capable of carrying sixty to eighty cars of livestock.⁶

Iowa farmers did not object to the application of the tonnage system to dead freight, recognizing that it was in the public interest for the railroads to haul coal, wheat, and the like as cheaply as possible. They objected strenuously, however, to the use of heavy, slow-moving trains to haul livestock. Cattle shipped from central and western Iowa had formerly reached Chicago in twenty hours or so but under the tonnage system, they sometimes spent as many as forty hours in transit. Even with the best management, stockmen pointed out, cattle shrank continuously in actual food value as well as weight from the time they left the feedlot until they reached the packinghouse. The increase of shrink, moreover, was greater proportionately than the increased time of the haul. Shrinkage during the first twelve to twenty-four hours of shipment consisted largely of filling which could be at least partially replaced when the hungry cattle were fed upon arriving at the Chicago stockyards. When cattle spent twenty-eight, thirty-six or forty hours en route, however, they were too tired to fill properly, resulting in additional shrinkage of twenty-five to fifty pounds per steer and an estimated average loss of \$20 to \$25 per car.⁷

mensurate with each other, and that for the present substantial rates we should receive a quality of service that such rates demand." A. L. Ames to Senator Jonathan P. Dolliver, Jan. 19, 1905, Jonathan Prentiss Dolliver Papers (State Historical Society of Iowa, Iowa City).

⁶ *Wallaces' Farmer*, March 11, 18, 25, April 29, May 13, 1904, 366, 403, 439, 603, 667, 669.

⁷ *Ibid.*, March 25, April 22, 29, 1904, 439, 573, 603-605. Wallace based his calculation of the additional hours and shrinkage resulting from slower hauls on

Slower hauls also resulted in lower prices. Livestock trains sometimes arrived in Chicago too late for the day's market, forcing the shipper either to sell his cattle to speculators for less than the market price or to hold them over to the next day's market at additional expense. Cattle that were jaded by a long haul, moreover, sold for less than those that were fresh. Choice steers, qualified for sale in eastern or European markets, fell into the packing class because of over-fatigue and inadequate filling and had to be sold for dressed beef, entailing an estimated average loss of twenty-five cents per hundredweight. *Wallaces' Farmer* estimated that losses resulting from excessive shrinkage and depreciation "frequently" ran as high as \$75 to \$100 per car. Such losses had created a crisis for the entire cattle industry, the journal continued, for the railroads had extended the tonnage system throughout the western cattle country, from Chicago to the Pacific coast.⁸

Closely related to the complaints of Iowa stockmen against the railroads were their complaints against the meatpackers. It was an article of faith among Iowa farmers that the "Beef and Pork Combine of Chicago," described by H. C. Wallace as "absolutely the most dangerous trust in the United States," fixed the prices of livestock and meat, exploiting producers and consumers alike. A. L. Ames admitted that it was difficult to prove that the packers controlled the market, but he told the Iowa Farmers' Institute in 1904 that there was ample circumstantial evidence to warrant such belief. As a case in point, Ames stated that the Big Four paid good prices for cattle during the spring and summer of 1902 in order to force the independent packers into line. This was accomplished at the end of October when the packers reached an agreement to fix prices. Thereafter, the price of cattle fell sharply, sacrificing the welfare of farmers to "the greed of a monopoly that expects to filch increasingly from the larder of the producer," declared Ames.⁹

figures supplied by shippers. See summary of shippers' reports, April 29, 605.

⁸*Ibid.*, March 11, 15, April 8, 22, 29, May 13, 1904, 366, 439, 509, 573, 603, 618, 667. Wallace declared that cattlemen could not endure such "tremendous" shrinkage. If it continued, "the whole system of handling cattle must be adjusted. The man who grows stock cattle must in the future sell them at lower prices to the feeder or the feeder must quit the business."

⁹A. L. Ames, "Some Thoughts for the Cattle Feeder"; F. A. Delano, "Trans-

Iowa farmers charged that the packers, like the Standard Oil Company, had achieved a monopoly through their private car lines: that their ownership of refrigerator cars had enabled the packers to obtain rebates and favorable freight rates by compelling the railroads to bid against one another for the privilege of hauling their cars. The classic example of such discrimination was between Chicago and Missouri river points, notably Kansas City and Omaha, where the railroads not only carried dressed meat cheaper than livestock but also paid the packers one cent a mile for the use of their refrigerator cars. During the 1890s, following an order by the Interstate Commerce Commission in 1890, the published rates on cattle, hogs, dressed beef, and packing house products hauled from Missouri river points to Chicago had been the same—23.5 cents per hundredweight. Around 1900, however, President Stickney of the Chicago Great Western entered into an agreement with the packers to carry dressed beef and packing house products from Kansas City to eastern markets at 18.5 cents per hundredweight. After a brief rate war, the other railroads adopted the Stickney rate which then became the prevailing rate on the shipment of meat from the Missouri river eastward. Livestock rates remained the same, however; farmers in western Iowa, from Des Moines to the Missouri River, continued to pay 23.5 cents to ship their livestock to Chicago.¹⁰

Iowa stockmen argued further that an analysis of the comparative cost of hauling meat and livestock showed clearly that the railroads carried meat at bare cost or less and made up their losses at the expense of the farmers. A refrigerator car was not only heavier and more expensive to haul than a cattle car, since it included 6,000 pounds of ice and salt and 3,000 pounds of equipment for hanging beef, but it also carried a somewhat smaller average payload than the cattle car: 22,000 pounds of beef as against 23,000 pounds of cattle. At 18.5 cents per 100 pounds, the packer paid the railroad \$40.70 to haul dressed beef from the Missouri River to Chicago, of which \$10 was a rebate for the use of the refrigerator car—one cent a mile for the 1,000 mile round

portation—Its Relation to the Farm"; Annual Proceedings, State Farmers' Institute, Dec. 13, 1904, *Ia. YBA*, 1904, 10-16, 34-42.

¹⁰F. A. Delano, "Transportation—Its Relation to the Iowa Farm," 34-42; *Wallaces' Farmer*, Sept. 30, Oct. 28, Nov. 25, 1904, 1182, 1328, 1460; W. E. Keepers to T. J. Hudson, Dec. 30, 1904, enclosure, Stuyvesant Fish to Dolliver, Jan. 4, 1905, Dolliver Papers.

trip—leaving the railroad a return of \$30.70. At 23.5 cents per 100 pounds, the farmer paid \$54.05 for the comparable haul to which the railroad added a \$2 terminal charge for delivering the cattle to the Union Stockyards. After the railroad deducted \$6 for the rental of the cattle car, the farmer's shipment yielded \$50.05, two-fifths more than the packer's shipment. It seemed clear to Iowa farmers, therefore, that if the 18.5 cent rate on beef was reasonable, they were paying some \$20 more on every carload of cattle than they ought to pay. *Wallaces' Farmer* calculated that the "tribute" levied by the railroads and packers on Iowa farmers totaled more than \$1,000,000 annually. "Is it any wonder that the beef trust prospers?" asked Wallace.¹¹

Convinced that the railroads were subsidizing the beef trust at the expense of the farmers, Iowa stockmen were in a rebellious mood by 1904. "There is a deep and widespread disaffection of the farmers and shippers of Iowa and other states as well, against the railroads," reported *Wallaces' Farmer*. The smoldering resentment of Iowa farmers burst into flame when the railroads decided, effective January 1, 1904, to stop giving return passes to farmers who accompanied their cattle to market. The railroads justified their decision on the ground that there was no longer any need for farmers to accompany their livestock and that stockmen had abused the privilege of free transportation by allowing others to use their passes. The railroads pointed out further that numerous accidents occurred on livestock trains for which they were liable, forcing them to pay thousands of dollars in damages to those traveling on stock passes, many of whom were not bona fide shippers.¹²

¹¹*Wallaces' Farmer*, Sept. 30, Nov. 25, 1904, March 10, 17, May 12, 1905, 1182, 1460, 335, 366, 654. Iowa farmers found further justification for their complaints of discrimination when the Interstate Commerce Commission ruled on January 7, 1905, in reference to a complaint filed by the Chicago Stockyards Company on April 3, 1904, that the discrepancy in meat and livestock rates between the Missouri River and Chicago was discriminatory and ordered the railroads to equalize the two sets of rates. However, the railroads refused to obey the order, forcing the Commission to appeal to the federal courts to enforce its decision. Noting that the case might very well be tied up in the courts for several years and that Iowa farmers must continue meanwhile to pay existing rates, *Wallaces' Farmer* declared that the only remedy for such discrimination was to give the Interstate Commerce Commission power to fix and promptly enforce just rates. *Ibid.*, Oct. 28, 1904, March 10, May 12, Sept. 29, Oct. 20, 1905, 1328, 335, 654, 1130, 1228.

¹²The pass question is discussed in almost every issue of *Wallaces' Farmer*

Iowa stockmen promptly protested that the cancellation of return passes violated an understanding going back to the early days of railroading in Iowa. They argued that the practice of giving return passes had originated in the insistence of the railroads that farmers accompany their cattle to see that they were not knocked down and trampled or otherwise injured during shipment. Improvements in roadbeds and rolling stock had lessened but not eliminated the need for supervision; it was still necessary for the farmer to accompany his stock, not only to see that it was properly handled and sold but also to gain a better understanding of the market as a basis for future feeding. The farmer who accompanied his stock to market was, in effect, a temporary employee of the railroad and, therefore, entitled to free transportation. Iowa stockmen admitted that some farmers had abused the pass system but held that the real culprits were the station agents and conductors who had long conducted a traffic in return passes, giving or selling them to merchants and other influential persons in their communities.¹³

Wallaces' Farmer saw the cancellation of return passes as another maneuver by the railroads to increase their earnings at the farmers' expense. The journal estimated that the actual shipping costs of farmers in central and western Iowa had risen \$25 to \$30 per car: \$5 as a result of the cancellation of the return pass and \$20 to \$25 because of the increased shrinkage resulting from slower hauls. Adding a "possible loss" of 25 cents per 100 pounds for choice cattle which had to be sold for dressed beef instead of eastern shipment, *Wallaces' Farmer* declared that the evidence was "absolutely overwhelming" that the feeders of Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska, and South Dakota, as well as those in central and western Iowa, were "being bled systematically" by the railroads. The western Corn Belt had become "a sort of second Ireland" which the railroads were exploiting through their rate system in much the same way that non-resident landlords had exploited Ireland for hundreds of years through their rent system. "This condition of things is intolerable and we have lost the spirit of '76 if we endure it patiently any longer," continued *Wallaces'*

during the winter and spring of 1904; see particularly the issues of Jan. 1, March 18, April 22, May 13, 6, 403, 573, 666.

¹³*Ibid.*, Jan. 1, May 13, Aug. 19, 1904, 6, 666, 1020.

Farmer. "The tea tax and the stamp tax were mere peccadilos [sic] as compared with this present system of blood sucking perpetrated on the feeders of the cattle growing states."¹⁴

The Sam Adams of Iowa feeders was James J. Ryan of Fort Dodge, one of the state's largest livestock shippers. Convinced that stockmen must organize to protect their interests, Ryan obtained a list of the leading cattle feeders of the state from the county auditors. He then sent a circular letter to two or three feeders in each county, asking their views on the advisability of calling a meeting of the state's meat producers. Receiving favorable responses from all but one of his correspondents, Ryan thereupon invited the men on his list, some 1,000 in all, to attend a meeting in Des Moines.¹⁵

On January 21, 1904, 250 farmers, representing every county in Iowa and controlling more than sixty percent of the livestock shipped out of the state, assembled in Des Moines in response to Ryan's invitation. Ryan opened the meeting by declaring that the presence of men from every corner of the state showed that the cattle feeders and shippers of Iowa had finally awakened to the need to protect their interests. There was no need to waste time discussing grievances; everyone present knew what was wrong with the cattle industry. The thing to do was to organize. Noting that the Corn Belt produced the bulk of the world's supply of corn fed beef, Ryan called for the organization of a regional association of meat producers to include every state and county in the Corn Belt. The association's goal would be to free farmers from the clutches of the railroads and packers. "The railroads who are now handling every feeder's steers as dead freight, and every feeder as a deadbeat are in need of prompt attention," affirmed Ryan. The association should also investigate the cost of setting up an independent packing plant and consider the possibility of cooperating with the National Livestock Association in its recent endorsement of a proposal to build packing houses in the principal livestock markets to compete with the packers' combine and raise livestock prices.¹⁶

¹⁴*Ibid.*, Jan. 1, March 11, 25, April 29, 1904, 6, 366, 439, 603.

¹⁵*Fort Dodge Messenger*, Jan. 8, 26, 1904.

¹⁶*Ibid.*, Jan. 26, 1904; *Des Moines Register and Leader*, Jan. 22, 1904; *Wallaces' Farmer*, Feb. 5, 1904, 175. In discussing the advantages of organization,

Ryan's timing proved to be excellent, for the assemblage endorsed the substance of his proposals. Denouncing the poor service, extortionate charges, and discriminatory practices of the railroads and packers, the cattlemen voted to organize the livestock feeders, shippers, and farmers of the state into the Corn Belt Meat Producers' Association of Iowa and to help organize similar state associations throughout the Corn Belt; elected officers headed by President Ames, Secretary Ryan, and a Board of Directors, one from each of the state's eleven Congressional districts; directed their officers to investigate the cost of establishing an independent packing plant; demanded state and federal legislation to remedy their grievances; and selected five of their members to act as lobbyists, including Ames, Ryan, and Frederick C. Larrabee of Fort Dodge, son of ex-Governor William Larrabee.¹⁷

Moving immediately to obtain state legislation requiring railroads to give better service, the meat producers urged the General Assembly to pass a bill introduced on January 27 by Representative L. L. DeLano of Cass County, an attorney of Atlantic, the county seat and one of the leading livestock shipping centers of southwestern Iowa. Entitled "a bill for an act to define the duties of railroad companies in the shipment of livestock," the DeLano bill was a comprehensive measure which required railroads in Iowa to receive, transport, and deliver stock "without any unnecessary delay." The key provisions of the bill were those dealing with the transportation of livestock shippers and the speed of livestock trains. The railroads must furnish free transportation both ways to all shippers of one or more carloads of livestock. The roads must give livestock precedence over dead freight; if shipment of the two conflicted, dead freight was to be side-tracked and livestock trains given the right-of-way. Finally, railroads must haul livestock, whether inside or outside of the state, at not less than twenty miles an hour; failure to do so would make the roads liable for all losses suffered by shippers, including shrinkage and depreciation of the stock, lower prices, and extra expense.¹⁸

Ryan noted the trend among businessmen to organize trade associations to control markets and stabilize prices. "We can at least so regulate the prices of livestock that we will be able to know where we are at," Ryan stated.

¹⁷*Register and Leader*, Jan. 22, Feb. 18, March 1, 2, 3, 1904; *Wallaces' Farmer*, Feb. 5, 26, March 11, 18, 1904, 175, 286, 367, 421.

¹⁸*Register and Leader*, Jan. 28, Feb. 18, March 2, 3, 1904; *Wallaces'*

"How did you happen to draft the bill?" a reporter asked DeLano. "Simply because it was the principal thing I heard while making my campaign last fall," the latter replied. "Every farmer and stockman was talking about the way they were being treated by the railroads." It had been reported that DeLano had introduced the bill at the instigation of livestock shippers, but he insisted that he had made no commitment during the campaign and that only one person knew beforehand that he was going to introduce the bill. He added that he had received petitions signed by more than 5,000 stockmen, demanding passage of the bill. "If the railroads are not careful and do not make some concessions to the farmers, they will have another grange movement to fight," warned DeLano. "The people of Iowa want relief from the restrictions the railroads are trying to place on them, and they will have it."¹⁹

Whether DeLano was acting independently or as the legislative agent of the meat producers is immaterial. His bill included their key demands, and they gave it their full support. On February 17-18, some thirty or forty of the meat producers, organized and led by Ryan, attended the hearings of the House Committee on Railroads and Commerce to urge approval of the DeLano bill. Ryan made an opening statement and then assisted DeLano in examining the stockmen. They testified that shippers must accompany their stock because cattle were injured and sometimes killed during shipment, or shipments were mixed and had to be separated by their owners upon arrival in Chicago; that livestock trains were side-tracked to permit the passage of the dressed meat trains of Armour and Swift; that cattle sometimes arrived in Chicago too late for the day's market; and that losses caused by delays in shipment ran as high as \$50 a car.²⁰

Farmer, March 11, 1904, 367; House File No. 7, Legislative Papers, 1904, Thirtieth General Assembly, Box 391 (Iowa State Department of History and Archives).

¹⁹*Register and Leader*, Feb. 10, 16, 1904. "In Cass County no more popular measure in the way of legislation could hardly have been conceived," observed the *Atlantic Messenger* on March 4, 1904. "Cass County is a stock shipping locality and many of the farmers ship their stock to market themselves. There are enough of them to create a very general popular sentiment in its [DeLano bill's] favor."

²⁰*Register and Leader*, Feb. 18, 19, March 2, 1904. A northwestern Iowa stockman said that the "discriminations" of the railroads cost him \$10,000 in 1903 and that he would have to quit the livestock business if the legislature failed to remedy the grievances of shippers.

The meat producers were given a sympathetic hearing by the legislators, many of whom were themselves farmers and stockmen.²¹ The *Atlantic Telegraph* reported that most legislators recognized the needs of livestock shippers and that many were determined to enact remedial legislation. Even the railroad lobbyists admitted that the roads must improve their service. The *Telegraph* doubted that the DeLano bill would pass, reporting that it was "the prevalent opinion in Des Moines" that the bill would be killed in committee and a more practicable measure substituted for it. The DeLano bill was "too heavy" and cumbersome, containing provisions that imposed needless burdens on the railroads without benefiting the farmers. The *Telegraph* was confident, however, that the legislature would enact some form of railway legislation for the relief of the livestock shippers.²²

Observers agreed that the DeLano bill was of major importance. The struggle over the bill "promises to be one of the warmest fights that the Iowa legislature has witnessed in years," observed the *Des Moines Register and Leader*. The railroad lobby was "badly frightened." Convinced that the DeLano bill would pass both houses in whatever form it was submitted to them, the lobby was "pulling every wire at its command" to defeat or modify the bill in committee. Noting that railroad officials were urging farmers in the principal livestock districts to write their senators and representatives in opposition to the bill and were paying all of the expenses of those who were willing to testify against it, the *Register and Leader* estimated that the railroads had brought at least fifty livestock shippers from various parts of the state to Des Moines to speak against the DeLano bill.²³

²¹Of the 150 members of the General Assembly—100 Representatives and 50 Senators—37 were farmers or farmers and stockmen, 7 combined farming with other occupations, such as banking, manufacturing and preaching, and 3 were grain and livestock dealers. The House included 28 farmers or farmer-stockmen, 6 in combined occupations, and the 3 grain and livestock dealers. There were 9 farmers or farmer-stock breeders in the Senate and 1 farmer-banker. Thirtieth General Assembly, *Journal of the House* (Des Moines, 1904), iv-vi; *Journal of the Senate* (Des Moines, 1904), iv-v. DeLano estimated that some 35 members of the legislature were "directly interested" in the "livestock business." *Register and Leader*, Feb. 16, 1904.

²²*Atlantic Telegraph*, Feb. 19, 23, 1904.

²³*Register and Leader*, Feb. 16, March 2, 1904. The DeLano bill posed a

That the DeLano bill alarmed the railroads was attested by the impressive array of railroad officials who appeared before the House Committee on Railroads and Commerce to oppose it. In addition to their attorneys, the Burlington, Milwaukee, and Northwestern sent their general managers: F. A. Delano, H. R. Williams, and W. A. Gardner, respectively. J. M. Daly, Superintendent of Transportation, spoke for the Illinois Central, and H. J. Slifer, General Superintendent, represented the Rock Island. Attacking the DeLano bill section by section, the officials declared that its provisions were either useless or harmful. Objecting to the free transportation of shippers, the general managers reiterated that stockmen had abused the pass system, Gardner citing, as an example, a recent month in which the Northwestern had carried 1,300 men to Chicago on shippers' passes only to find that 300 of them were not shippers. The officials acknowledged that the roads sometimes gave priority to the packers but denied that they made a practice of sidetracking livestock trains to permit the passage of dressed beef trains.²⁴

The general managers conceded that livestock shipments were slower than formerly but attributed this to the increasing number of stock trains and the delays encountered in transferring and unloading the stock in Chicago. They pointed out that the Union Stockyards in Chicago received 203,000 carloads of stock in 1903, an increase of 30,000 over 1902. They noted further that most farmers continued to adhere to the traditional two-day marketing pattern: to believe that Monday and Wednesday were the best market days and to ship their stock accordingly. The resulting glut overtaxed the facilities of the Union Stockyards and Terminal company which transferred the animals into the stockyards, causing congestion and delay. Moving livestock into the stockyards frequently required two to five hours; livestock trains arriving in Chicago at seven o'clock in the morning sometimes were not unloaded until noon. Declaring that the railroads were

serious threat to the railroads, for the hauling of Iowa livestock constituted an important part of their business. In 1903, for example, Iowa farmers marketed 72,975 carloads of cattle and 62,388 carloads of hogs, shipping 90 percent of the cattle and 67 percent of the hogs to Chicago where Iowa shipments accounted for 40 percent of all cattle and 50 percent of all hogs received in 1903. "Cattle and Hogs Sold for Slaughter from Iowa in 1903," *Ia. YBA*, 1904, 352.

²⁴*Register and Leader*, Feb. 10, March 2, 3, 1904.

doing everything possible to speed up shipments, the managers stated that the number of livestock trains arriving late in Chicago had been reduced from twenty percent in 1902 to seven percent in 1903. They insisted that the roads compensated shippers fully for delays, W. A. Gardner testifying, for example, that in 1903 the Northwestern, the largest livestock carrier in Iowa, had paid shippers \$50,000 for losses resulting from delays.²⁵

The general managers focused much of their attack on the clause in the DeLano bill that required the roads to haul livestock at an average minimum speed of twenty miles an hour. They said that the most economical speed for freight trains was ten to twelve miles an hour: to run them faster would be costly and dangerous if not physically impossible. Allowing for the delays which occurred in switching cars in yards and terminals, the average speed of a freight train on a 200 mile haul did not exceed five miles an hour. "We get only twenty-two miles per day out of our stock cars, on the average," testified J. M. Daly of the Illinois Central. "How could we then make a minimum of twenty miles per hour, as this bill contemplates?" Greater speed would invite accidents and endanger the safety of crews, shippers, and stock. "Safety demands that ten or fifteen minutes shall elapse between trains," declared W. A. Gardner. "Running twenty-five trains in a day, we [the Northwestern] can't get them all into Chicago in less than 250 minutes, from the arrival of the first to the arrival of the last."²⁶

Railroad attorneys rounded out the testimony of the general managers by challenging the constitutionality of the DeLano bill. Noting that the bill made no distinction between livestock shipments inside and outside the state and that most such shipments originating in Iowa were to points outside the state, the attorneys argued that Iowa had no constitutional authority to regulate the speed of interstate livestock trains or to compel the railroads to furnish shippers free accommodations on such trains. Only Congress or the Interstate Commerce Commission could impose such regulations.²⁷

Concluding its hearings on March 2, the committee on Railroads and Commerce voted the next day to recommend the indef-

²⁵*Ibid.*, March 2, 1904; *Wallaces' Farmer*, April 22, 29, 1904, 573, 603.

²⁶*Register and Leader*, March 2, 1904.

²⁷*Ibid.*, Feb. 16, 26, 1904.

inite postponement of the DeLano bill, the majority holding it to be unconstitutional. The House approved the committee's recommendation on March 5 but only by a margin of three votes: thirty-six to thirty-three, thirty-one members being absent or not voting. The vote clearly revealed the ambivalent mood of the House: most members believed that the DeLano bill was too sweeping and of doubtful constitutionality, yet they desired to do something for the relief of livestock shippers. Recognizing that the situation in the House was fluid and that it was possible to salvage part of their program, the meat producers decided to postpone their efforts to require the railroads to provide faster service and to work for restoration of the return pass.²⁸

The House clearly desired to take some kind of action on the pass question. Representative George W. Hanna, a banker-farmer of Kossuth County, introduced a bill on January 27, requiring railroads to issue free transportation to livestock shippers. Representatives J. S. Pritchard, a farmer of Wright County, and William S. Hart, an Allamakee County lawyer, introduced similar bills on February 17. After disposing of the DeLano bill, the committee on Railroads and Commerce referred the Hanna, Pritchard, and Hart bills to a subcommittee for consolidation into one bill. In effect, however, the committee referred the three bills to the meat producers' legislative committee and the railroad attorneys, for the Hart bill, which the committee recommended for passage, was based on an agreement between the two lobbies. Hart told the House that the livestock shippers and the railroads had both agreed to his bill and that he had a signed statement to this effect.²⁹

The Hart bill required the railroads to provide free transportation both ways to shippers of one or more carloads of horses or mules or two or more carloads of cattle, hogs, goats, or sheep. When a single shipment of livestock totaled six carloads or more, the railroad must provide free transportation for an additional person. Return passes were to be good for thirty-six hours after delivery of the livestock to their destination. Railroads failing to comply with these provisions must pay the shipper three times the

²⁸*Journal of the House*, 472-473; *Register and Leader*, March 4, 19, 1904; *Wallaces' Farmer*, March 18, 25, 1904, 404, 440.

²⁹*Journal of the House*, 94, 259; *Register and Leader*, March 9, 19, 1904; *Wallaces' Farmer*, April 29, 1904, 603.

amount of the regular round trip fare. Any person attempting to use the free transportation, other than the owner, his agent or employee, would be considered a trespasser.³⁰

The Hart bill passed the House without opposition or debate, moved quickly through the Senate, and received Governor Cummins' signature on April 9, 1904.³¹ It gave the meat producers, as Ryan remarked, all that they could "reasonably expect" to obtain from the legislature. The law was, in effect, a compromise between the meat producers and the railroads sanctioned by the legislature acting as a broker. The law's significance was political rather than legal. If the legislature did not have the constitutional authority to regulate the speed of interstate livestock trains, it is difficult to see how it could legally require railroads to give shippers free passage on such trains. "It was, of course, understood that this [Hart] law would not be strictly legal—so understood by the farmers and also by the railroad attorneys," explained *Wallaces' Farmer*. "It was quite as much the railroads' bill as the farmers' bill, and was regarded as a settlement of the pass question for the state of Iowa."³²

The meat producers, meanwhile, deciding to carry their case for faster schedules and better service directly to the railroads, had arranged a conference with railroad officials in Chicago on April 15. They were following in the footsteps of officials of the National Livestock Association who had met traffic managers of the western railroads in Chicago on February 25. The grievances of western stockmen were similar to those of Iowa feeders: cancellation of the return pass, application of the tonnage system to the transportation of livestock, losses resulting from shrinkage in the weight and value of stock, and discriminatory freight rates. The meeting was reportedly harmonious. The traffic managers con-

³⁰*Journal of the House*, 629-630, 686-688. Shippers of one carload of cattle or hogs were to receive free transportation only to the destination of their shipment.

³¹*Ibid.*, 688-689, 1028, 1045-1046, 1226, 1228, 1270, 1287, XV; *Journal of the Senate*, 657, 671, 857-858, 896, 898-899, 953, 969, 1143, 1150; *Register and Leader*, March 19, April 2, 1904. The Senate deleted "free" from "free transportation" to emphasize that transportation of livestock shippers was not a gift but an obligation of the railroads and that they were responsible for injuries suffered by the shippers. The Senate also extended the life of shippers' return transportation from thirty-six to forty-eight hours. The House concurred in both revisions.

³²*Register and Leader*, March 19, 1904; *Wallaces' Farmer*, April 29, 1904, 603.

ceded that their service had not been satisfactory and promised to make the necessary improvements. However, the railroads had not yet acted on any of the complaints of western ranchers when representatives of the Iowa meat producers and the railroads held their meeting on April 15. Newspapers had reported, in fact, that the western roads had decided against restoration of the return pass on the ground that it was not a right, but a privilege and that the railroads could not be expected to give something for nothing.³³

In a day-long meeting at the Union League Club, the officers of the Iowa meat producers' association, accompanied by Henry Wallace, and the general managers of the Burlington, Illinois Central, Milwaukee, Northwestern, and Rock Island railroads, engaged in a lengthy discussion of their mutual problems and respective positions. Henry Wallace opened the meeting with a detailed discussion of the farmers' grievances, using figures supplied by livestock shippers to substantiate his claim that their losses from delayed shipments amounted to twenty-five dollars a carload. The two sides then joined in a "frank, earnest, and thorough discussion" of the shippers' complaints. Evidently eager to understand the livestock shippers' problems, the general managers promised to investigate their complaints and to remedy them as much as possible. "There was the best of feeling throughout the entire meeting," reported Henry Wallace. A. L. Ames concurred: "we were fairly met and fairly treated by the railroad people."³⁴

The general managers subsequently invited Ames to a second meeting in Chicago on April 28. They told him that they had decided to restore the return pass to livestock shippers throughout the west along the lines laid down by the Hart law. They said that they could not restore the old livestock schedules but promised speedier hauls, particularly on the branch lines. Ames replied that these decisions were satisfactory as far as they went. He expressed confidence in the good faith of the railroads, adding that he believed that they and the stockmen had achieved a better un-

³³*Register and Leader*, Feb. 25, 26, March 19, 31, 1904; *Wallaces' Farmer*, March 25, 1904, 440.

³⁴*Wallaces' Farmer*, April 22, 1904, 573; A. L. Ames to *Wallaces' Farmer*, May 13, 1904, 673.

derstanding of each other's position that would be mutually beneficial in the future.³⁵

Securing restoration of the return pass was an important achievement, but it was only the beginning of the meat producers' campaign to remedy railroad abuses. Their major goals were prompt service and fair rates. They continued to press railroad officials to speed up their livestock trains.³⁶ Recognizing that they could eliminate the discriminatory rates and preferential practices of the railroads only by strengthening the Interstate Commerce Commission, they applauded and endorsed President Roosevelt's proposal to give the Commission power to fix and enforce reasonable rates subject to judicial review. Affiliating with the American National Livestock Association in 1906, the meat producers joined western cattlemen in working for the passage of the Hepburn Act.³⁷

Increasingly committed to Progressivism by their struggle against the railroads, the meat producers broadened their stand on state and national issues to include most of the planks in the Progressive platform. They urged the General Assembly to institute direct primaries, prohibit the railroads from using passes to bribe public officials, pass a pure food law, and enact a joint rate law to give Iowa shippers reasonable rates on shipments handled by more than one railroad. They called upon Congress to extend the jurisdiction of the Interstate Commerce Commission by placing all corporations engaged in interstate trade under its supervision, adopt a reciprocal trade policy to promote the sale of American meat abroad, and strengthen federal inspection of meat to protect the health of American consumers and increase the demand for American meat abroad by winning the confidence

³⁵Ames to *Wallaces' Farmer*, May 13, 1904; Iowa Board of Railroad Commissioners, *Twenty-Seventh Annual Report* (Des Moines, 1905), 236-237; *Wallaces' Farmer*, May 6, 1904, 637.

³⁶In March, 1905, for example, Ames held several meetings with officers of the Burlington, whose livestock service at the time was the poorest of all the trunk lines running through Iowa to Chicago. These talks bore fruit in April and May when most of the stock shipped over the Burlington arrived on the market at 8:00 A.M. or before, whereas there had been only twelve days in March when the road had delivered livestock before 9:00 A.M., some deliveries not being completed until 2:30 P.M. *Wallaces' Farmer*, Feb. 17, April 17, June 16, 1905, Feb. 16, 1906, 221, 528, 781, 214.

³⁷*Ibid.*, Jan. 22, 1904, Feb. 17, 1905, Feb. 16, 1906, 99, 220-222, 214-217, 231; *Register and Leader*, Feb. 7, 8, 1906.

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