

THE "RUSSEL" Working her way to Sarles
RR Officials and State Representatives
investigating conditions on the G. N. Ry.
in N. Dak. Jan. '07

Winter weather in 1907 was one factor hindering railroad service in North Dakota. The handwritten caption from January 1907 documents the involvement of railroad officials and state representatives in investigating conditions on this train destined for Sarles in northeastern North Dakota. SHSND SA 00714-00003

“Harvest of Death in North Dakota”

The Political Economy of Coal, Railroads, and Weather in Early Progressive North Dakota

By Scott E. Randolph

DURING ITS 1907 SESSION, the North Dakota legislature acted decisively to investigate, reform, and regulate railroads. The legislature passed bills to regulate railroads and grain elevators and to mandate the reportage of railroad wrecks and fatalities.¹ They called into question both the competency and independence of the North Dakota Board of Railroad Commissioners, opening an investigation into its response to widespread service failures on the railroads during the fall months of 1906.²

The causes for this rapid legislative action are more complex than historians have previously understood. Most historians of North Dakota interpret this as evidence of the influence of progressivism. As historian Maureen A. Flanagan argues, progressivism was a destination, and the roads (in this case the railroads) that Americans traveled to get there—even though they never quite completed the journey—were as diverse as the nation itself. In North Dakota the battle against monopoly capitalism, best illustrated by legislative efforts to control railroad behavior, was driven as much by immediate hyper-local concerns over contemporaneous shortages of coal and food and general railroad service failures in the winter of 1906–07 as it was by political, ideological, and cultural trends at the national level. This article shares the story of those railroad service failures in North Dakota as part of an effort to illustrate the local and particular flavors of progressivism.³

Newspaper reports of coal shortages began in October and grew in volume once winter weather began to bite across the northern Great Plains in the late fall of 1906.⁴ In Minot unknown miscreants stole two hundred pounds

Newspaper reports of coal shortages began in October 1906 and grew in volume once winter weather began to bite across the northern Great Plains.

of lignite from a dealer, with the newspaper noting that it illustrated “a coal famine is still in progress.”⁵ These stories continued, unabated through the rest of the fall and much of the winter, as the severity of the coal shortage coupled with what would turn out to be a prolonged period of severe winter weather garnered the attention of newspaper editors throughout the country. They recounted stories of North Dakotans days or hours away from freezing or starving to death. When those grew stale, they published pitiable tales of families, young women, children, and old men found frozen to death, men weeping in public because they could not purchase coal at any price, or stories of snow drifts ten feet high, or even seventy feet deep covering railroad tracks.⁶



This 1906 photo is captioned “The loads of grain on the wagons in this picture are awaiting their turns to go up in the elevator. This is only one of many elevators at Mandan, North Dakota. You can see the same scene around any of the Mandan elevators any day after the farmers begin to market their grain.” SHSND SA 00090-00176



Marketing grain on the Soo Line Railroad, Kenmare, ND, 1903.
SHSND SA 2012-P-064-00291

While snow was common at that time of year, full-blown blizzards were not, and the region was about to begin a long winter of nearly constant snow, extended deep freezes, and frequent blizzards.⁷ Given the state's reputation for hard winters, a shortage of home-heating coal could quickly become a political issue, aside from the specter of frozen families and frigid towns. While North Dakota possessed ample lignite coal deposits, it was ill-suited for home heating. Most home heating coal came from bituminous fields in Illinois and Indiana, with the remaining portion from the anthracite districts of eastern Pennsylvania. For decades railroad practice had been to ship this coal via a rail-water-rail route through the Great Lakes.⁸ As this was the same routing, in reverse, used to export the state's grain harvest, transit problems and freight car shortages in the fall of 1906 had a cascading effect upon the inbound movement of coal. The shortages were not a consequence of the cost of transportation. In October of 1906, anticipating minor winter shortages of coal, the Great Northern Railway reduced the rates for its movement westward via the Great Lake ports and Minneapolis.⁹ The coal famine was only one of several that had plagued the state; there was also an acute shortage of freight cars to move the grain harvest, and these deficits were related.¹⁰

A traveler wandering through North Dakota in the fall of 1906 would have been struck by a peculiar sight: mountains of grain sitting alongside the elevators that dominated the prairie skyline and smaller piles on many farms. It was a good harvest, although by no means a record; rain had come to the right places, at the right times, and in the right amounts to deliver an abundant crop. Another visitor, perhaps more perceptive, would have noted that few boxcars stood beside those elevators and would correctly have posited a connection between the two.¹¹

That fall throughout the United States and Canada and acutely so in the Great Plains, railroads struggled to provide

enough freight cars to move the grain harvest from country elevators to the great milling centers of the Midwest.¹² When they could provide the cars, railroads could not move them to their destinations in a timely fashion. Shippers reported travel times that were double and triple that of previous years; stories of cars wandering the rails for two and three months between shipper and consignee were common.¹³ Several newspapers published the story of a boxcar that took seventy-two days to cover the three hundred rail miles between Fessenden, North Dakota, and Duluth, Minnesota.¹⁴ When grain-laden cars finally reached their destinations, they languished in terminal yards for weeks, often within sight of their increasingly furious consignees.¹⁵

The freight car shortage caused farmers to receive less for their grain at the local country elevator than they might have otherwise, and at times forced elevator operators to refuse grain at any price. The shortage also hindered the efforts of country banks to collect on farm loans, lost business for grain brokers who could not fulfill their contracts, and led to empty shelves in the stores of local merchants—to say nothing of the reticence of their customers to buy when so many were cash poor.¹⁶ For example, in early December, 9.7 million bushels of grain awaited shipment at elevators along the railroads near Jamestown, enough to fill 9,700 boxcars. The elevators in Courtney, North Dakota, received only six hundred of the nine hundred cars they needed to ship the fall crop.¹⁷ This problem was not new to railroad managers, and their efforts at addressing the problem throughout the fall had failed.¹⁸ In a state whose interstate-oriented and commodity-centered economy was utterly dependent on the railroads, national railroad service problems became acute local concerns.

THE RESIDENTS OF NORTH DAKOTA were not alone in facing the onset of winter with insufficient supplies of fuel and food. The railroad car service problems (usually called a “car famine”) that had bedeviled the country since September had not discriminated, although the upper Great Plains suffered more than other parts of the country, and North Dakota particularly so. Beginning in October, newswire reports of real or impending shortages of coal appeared with dull regularity in most of the states west of the Mississippi River.¹⁹ Farmers in Minnesota complained of car shortages and feared for the welfare of their families.²⁰ In Arkansas, Washington, the Oklahoma Territory, and elsewhere, people took coal from railroad cars by force.²¹ Elsewhere, elected officials threatened to do so, although with proper payment made.²² No doubt conditioned to seeing the military used to break strikes,



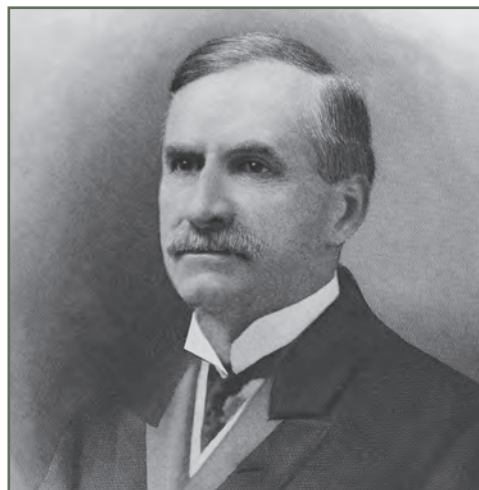
Northern Pacific Railroad steam engine and tender. SHSND SA 2011-P-0002-02289

residents of one Utah town assumed that the arrival of an army unit on maneuvers was evidence that the federal government was acting to relieve the shortages directly. They were disappointed mightily when the soldiers did not “bayonet the [railroad’s] general agent on the spot.”²³

However, outside of North Dakota, northern Minnesota, and eastern Montana, the coal shortages, while frightening, were mostly short-lived.²⁴ Most newspapers blamed the railroads, although an unusually stormy and cold winter throughout the country contributed to the shortages. The same meteorological patterns that sent blizzard after blizzard through North Dakota brought winter floods and record snowstorms in Indiana, Illinois, and Kentucky. New York City and Philadelphia suffered through repeated record snowfalls.²⁵ In most regions the shortage of coal had the most serious effects on commerce, manufacturing, and schools.²⁶ Perhaps the plight of North Dakota’s residents enjoyed such widespread newspaper coverage because many other sections of the country also suffered in some small part.

NORTH DAKOTA’S CONGRESSIONAL

delegation did not sit by idly as the newspapers carried stories of deprivation, nor could they have ignored the avalanche of letters and telegrams sent to their offices. Senators Henry C. Hansbrough—who called the situation a “calamity”—and Porter J. McCumber, along with Representatives Thomas F. Marshall and Asle J. Gronna, pestered the White House and the Interstate Commerce Commission (ICC) for action.²⁷ All were associates of the



US Senator Henry Clay Hansbrough. SHSND SAA5011-00001

state’s Republican political machine controlled by Alexander McKenzie and sympathetic to the railroads, but in the face of a growing crisis, they were happy to chastise publicly their benefactors and blame the problems on railroad arrogance and a studied, perhaps criminal, disinterest in serving the public.²⁸

McCumber called on President Theodore Roosevelt to use the army to force the railroads to move coal into the state.²⁹ Marshall, at the request of the ICC, travelled around the state in early December, gathering information on the fall service failures, a task that quickly became one of cataloging shortages of coal, kerosene, and food. Convinced that the railroads had deliberately favored high-value freight over commodities like

coal, he encouraged the ICC to require railroads to deliver cargo in the order it was offered, rather than segregating it by class, a suggestion seconded by Hansbrough (coal traffic, while large in volume and relatively imperishable, did not carry high profit margins, and often suffered from slow movement by the railroads).³⁰

Hansbrough spoke with President Roosevelt frequently concerning the shortages throughout December 1906 and January 1907. He asked Roosevelt to support an investigation into allegations of favoritism for competitive points (towns served by more than one railroad); a serious charge in a state where most communities had but one railroad, to which the president responded favorably.³¹ Hansbrough also drafted legislation to amend the Interstate Commerce Act, even before the commission had a real opportunity to respond to the crisis. Among other items, he sought to give the commission the authority to compel railroads to provide idle cars to one another in times of shortage, and to require shippers to unload freight within twenty-four hours of delivery.³²

North Dakota’s relationship with the railroad industry was one that combined symbiosis and seething resentment. Virtually an economic colony of Minnesota—the destination of most of the state’s agricultural products—North Dakota was utterly dependent upon the railroads to transport the bountiful harvests of its tillable lands.³³ Railroads had made possible the state’s rapid increase in population, booming since 1900.³⁴ Between 1905 and



Railroad rotary snowplow near Goodrich, ND, 1906. SHSND SA 00032-WE-16-00024

1907 railroads built 945 miles of new lines in North Dakota and platted scores of communities.³⁵ The state's largest railroads, the Great Northern Railway (GN), the Northern Pacific Railroad (NP), and the Minneapolis, St. Paul and Sault Ste. Marie Railroad (known as the Soo or Soo Line), viewed North Dakota as a reliable torrent of freight and revenues. Yet, despite the political control exerted first by the NP and later by the GN, North Dakota was not entirely supine, as the state code contained elevator and railroad laws common to many Granger states. Railways faced insistent demands for line extensions and better, more frequent, service, and equally vociferous calls for expansive regulation designed to restrict a laundry list of practices obnoxious to farmers, shippers, and politicians. For instance, North Dakota law required railways to construct sidetracks and loading facilities at the behest of the Board of Railroad Commissioners.³⁶ Yet that agency had been the target of citizen anger regarding its cozy relationship with the carriers since its inception.³⁷

In early December, animated by months of reports of car shortages and related service problems, and pushed by the concerted efforts of the entire North Dakota delegation, the ICC called five days of hearings in Minneapolis and Chicago.³⁸ The first three days took place in the chambers of the US District Court in Minneapolis. Given the relationship between that city and North Dakota, and the service problems there, the terrible reports of coal and food shortages dominated the testimony.³⁹

As the new hearings began, the shortages became more desperate, and the winter storms ever more remorseless. Faced with what they believed was a choice between the law and survival, individuals and then entire communities began to systematically confiscate coal from railroad property, even stopping trains to relieve them of their coal. Residents of Mohall, on the GN, threatened to dig up the railroad's ties to burn for heat. Other reports noted the use

of wooden fence posts, railroad ties, and telegraph poles for fuel in towns otherwise empty of coal. Farmers burned their outbuildings, corncobs, and flax straw.⁴⁰ From other communities came calls for the state militia, and even the army, to take command of the railroads and operate them to relieve the suffering.⁴¹

Commissioner Martin A. Knapp, in opening the car service hearings, was careful to temper expectations, noting that the commission lacked the "authority to compel interstate carriers to provide adequate equipment," but that it could "make an enforceable [sic] order of relief after investigating a

**PROSPECTS ARE GOOD FOR EARLY
RELIEF OF THE FUEL SHORTAGE**

**BUT MANY TOWNS ARE SUFFERING GREATLY FROM
ITS PRESENT LACK—THE HEADS OF RAILWAYS
PROMISE EVERY ASSISTANCE, SPURRED ON BY
THE PERSONAL REQUESTS OF PRESIDENT
ROOSEVELT.**

Associated Press to The Evening Times.

Washington, Dec. 15.—Representative Gronna of North Dakota is being congratulated on the speedy action taken by President Roosevelt to relieve coal famine in northwestern states. His emphatic statements made to president on Thursday and his suggestion that it be taken up with heads of railroad companies has borne fruit.

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Governor E. Y. Sarles, Hillsboro, N. D.:

Your message received also one from the commercial club of Mad dox. Have wired we will do all we can to help out. Superintendent's and others have been so instructed. There are three cars of commercial coal for them now at Staples, which we are hurrying west as fast as we can. The bad storm makes things worse. Last summer we urged all coal dealers to lay in a stock of coal because we feared conditions now existing. Of course the railway company is not in the commercial business but will do all we can to relieve distress.

(Signed), —Howard Elliott.

The Evening Times (Grand Forks, ND), Dec. 15, 1906, p. 1.

complaint.”⁴² When dealing with industry-wide problems, it was limited largely to suggesting remedial legislation to Congress.⁴³ The commission had expansive investigative powers, but it was limited in most circumstances to the adjudication of individual complaints. The North Dakota congressional delegation provided the commissioners with a steady supply of documentation for the service problems of the fall. As reports of outright fuel famines and shortages proliferated, they sent those along as well.⁴⁴ The Commission issued subpoenas to railroad managers, including the presidents of the NP and the GN, elevator operators, grain merchants, bankers, and “substantial farmers,” and requested information from postmasters across the region.⁴⁵ Many private citizens also testified at the hearings at their own expense. Most desired that the commissioners hear their grievances and act with firm expedition. Many railroad officials testified, all offering a variety of explanations for the car shortages and for the accelerating fuel famine in North Dakota.

IN LAYING OUT THEIR CHARGE, the commissioners sought to “enter fully into the conditions and practices respecting the movement of freight which obtains in the Northwest, and to search for the reasons or causes which tend to justify or condemn the same.” The crisis was serious and required an understanding of the root causes for the car shortages and fuel famine, with a desire to fix the blame on the railroads, or their customers, as the facts warranted. Were customers, the commissioners asked, deficient in their “mean[s] of receiving and shipping freight,” or were the railroads guilty of an “indifference to public necessity,” a “lack of foresight in providing necessary equipment and terminal facilities,” or, worst of all, concerned with “interests not wholly compatible with the most efficient transportation service?” Furthermore the Commission insisted that, “specific emphasis was to be paid to railroad operating practices, to see if these might be improved so as to increase the

SITUATION IS CRITICAL

FUEL FAMINE CAUSING INTENSE SUFFERING IN MANY TOWNS IN NORTH DAKOTA.

SCHOOLS AND FACTORIES CLOSED

HEATING AND ELECTRIC LIGHT PLANTS COMPELLED TO GO OUT OF BUSINESS.

Grand Forks, N. D., Dec. 18.—The fuel situation as it exists today presents the most critical condition that has existed in the history of the state. Careful inquiry in every portion of the northern half of the state shows that there is not a town in which coal can be had except in small quantities and to supply immediate needs and in dozens of places there is not a pound to be bought, the dealers having been out of fuel for days and in some cases for a week or more.

At Lakota dealers are out and individuals are sharing with their neighbors.

At Cando the flour mill has been closed for three weeks for lack of fuel and the light plant closed last Thursday and individuals are running short.

At Granville the last coal was sold on Dec. 8.

At Towner and Rugby the schools are closed, as in many smaller places.

At Minot the central heating plant has closed down at intervals to save fuel.

These illustrations could be multiplied indefinitely and the same conditions prevail in the southern half of the state and in Northern Minnesota.

One of the most serious features is the possibility of a snow blockade. There is now more snow on the ground than at any time since 1896. Thus far the state has escaped high winds and bad drifts, but a storm such as is usual at any time in the winter would pile up immense drifts and tie up the roads absolutely for many days and cripple them for the entire winter.

REASON FOR COAL SHORTAGE.

President Elliott of the Northern Pacific Explains.

Washington, Dec. 18.—In response to telegrams of inquiry addressed to presidents of several Western railroads by the interstate commerce commission as to the causes of reported shortage of cars for the transportation of fuel, by reason of which great suffering had been entailed, President Howard Elliott of the Northern Pacific Railway company telegraphs the commission from St. Paul as follows:

“There is a scarcity of fuel in some parts of the country served by our line, but we do not know of any shortage of other necessities of life. Our company has done and will continue to do all that it can to prevent suffering. The company realized in June and July last that the fuel supply was likely to be inadequate and that the great increase in general business would probably produce a congestion in the autumn. We therefore urged all dealers at that time to look ahead and provide a stock of coal early and to try to find new sources of supply. I think the reason given in your message, namely, extraordinary delay in moving, is incorrect so far as this company is concerned. The difficulty in Montana, Idaho and Washington is that not enough coal is being produced to supply promptly the increased domestic trade and at the same time furnish the railroad with fuel for the operation of its trains. Then in November unprecedented floods west of the Cascade mountains damaged our

(Continued on page 4)

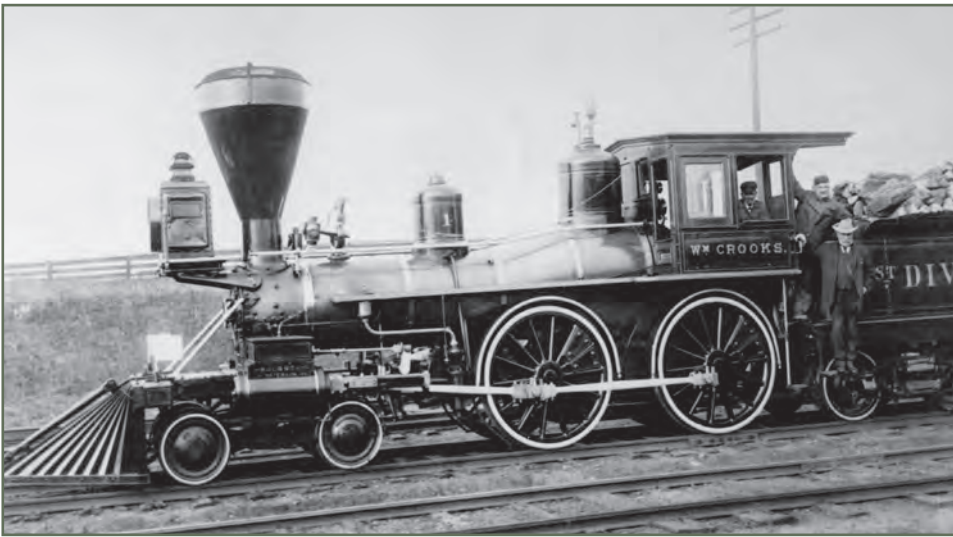
Bismarck Daily Tribune, Dec. 18, 1906, p. 1.

velocity of railroad movements, and also to the practices of country elevator operators and terminal buyers of grain.”⁴⁶

Farmers, grain dealers, and elevator owners leveled a series of charges against the railroads. The first, and most serious, was the railroads had simply refused to provide sufficient cars to move the grain harvest, and this had inhibited the movement of coal into the region. Others asserted the railroads favored line elevators over the independents and the farmers’ co-operatives in supplying cars. When the railroads did provide equipment, witnesses offered evidence they had simply abandoned loaded cars in their terminal yards in Duluth and Minneapolis just shy of final delivery.⁴⁷ As for coal, witnesses insisted the railroads, the large coal companies, and the Coal Dealers’ Association in the Twin Cities had colluded to exclude small dealers and individual buyers from the marketplace in order to sustain prices. One local elevator manager on the GN, in an effort to slip the grasp of the Coal Dealers’ Association, purchased two carloads of coal—one in Ohio, the other in Michigan—



Close up of a rotary snowplow on a train near Kenmare, ND, in 1916. SHSND SA 2012-P-064-001276



James J. Hill (right), founder of the Great Northern Railway system, stands on the steam engine "William Crooks," which had been restored by the railroad in honor of his seventieth birthday. SHSND SAA3673-00001

only to find that the railroads would not offer him a through rate. He was forced to pay the considerably higher short-haul rate for each local train in which his coal moved. The coal shortage was thus, they alleged, a consequence of anti-competitive behavior.⁴⁸

Railroad officials tacked back and forth in their explanations for the car service failures, in general, and for the fuel famine, in particular. Commissioner James S. Harlan often interrupted their testimony in order to enter into the record the telegrams and letters that arrived daily concerning dire conditions in North Dakota. While the railroad witnesses sought to explain the car service issues, they did so in an increasingly hostile environment as the evidence of fuel famines mounted.⁴⁹ The general superintendent of the GN blamed the uncharacteristically late grain harvest in South Dakota and Minnesota. This meant that freight cars that would normally have hauled grain out and coal into North Dakota were otherwise occupied. Another GN official insisted the root of the problem was the seasonal imbalance of traffic in the state—too much in the fall, not enough the rest of the year. He argued the terminal elevator companies in Minneapolis and Duluth should build supplemental storage facilities in the Dakotas, and farmers should provide their own grain storage on their farms so that the railroads could move the crop over a longer period of time.⁵⁰

A PERSISTENT REFRAIN in the testimony of railroad management was that, on the whole, there was no shortage of cars. By this they meant the total supply of freight cars was more than adequate to service the transportation needs of the country, in the aggregate and on an annual basis. While local shortages were unavoidable, officials insisted, they were not indicative

of a general shortage, despite the allegations leveled by witnesses and implied by Commissioner Knapp's opening statement. Managers noted railroads could not afford to own cars sufficient to move the entirety of the nation's potential available traffic at the same time, because that would leave tens of millions of dollars of capital investment idle for most of the year. The integrated nature of the railway network permitted it to absorb seasonal regional demands for cars by shifting equipment from areas on the declining side of their respective car demand cycles. So a delay or an extension of the harvest schedule in one region could pervert the allocation of cars on a national basis.

In short, the railroads were not to blame for temporary dislocations; that blame lay with the vagaries of the market and harvests. Under questioning, H. J. Horn, the NP's general superintendent, admitted that the railroad, facing a 15 percent increase in traffic over 1906, was "forced to let the grain wait." Other traffic took precedence, and this pattern exacerbated

**SUFFERING AND DEATH
FROM COLD IN DAKOTA**

**Fuel Famine Unrelieved — Dis-
tress Grows More Acute.**

MANY RAILROADS BLOCKADED

**And Another Snowstorm Would Tie
Up Nearly All of Them—Situa-
tion Is Critical.**

Special to The New York Times.

**GRAND FORKS, N. D., Dec. 16.—A
critical condition exists in North Dakota
owing to the scarcity of fuel. Several
persons have frozen to death through
inability to obtain coal.**

The New York Times, Dec. 17, 1906, p. 6.

car shortages in the grain regions.⁵¹ Yet this was not an admission of responsibility for the shortages, but rather an assertion of prudent action to assure the movement of all goods into the region.

This was cold comfort to elevator operators on the GN such as I. H. Harris of Bathgate, North Dakota, who had been unable to ship grain eastward, or to the residents of Sheyenne, North Dakota, on the NP when they went a month between freight trains.⁵² Railroad managers insisted that stories of shipments delayed by weeks and months were outliers, singularities, or simply false. Yet the volume of complaints was overwhelming. Before the fall crisis, transit times from North Dakota to the Twin Cities were seven to ten days. Yet the commission took testimony from scores of witnesses who provided documentation on hundreds, if not thousands of cars taking twenty to sixty days to travel the same distance. The *Bismarck Daily Tribune* carried a story of a boxcar of wheat shipped from Eckelson, North Dakota, to Valley City, North Dakota, a rail journey of sixteen miles that consumed twenty-two days, a blistering pace of 0.737 miles per day. With such extreme delays moving grain out of the state, the railroads had also had to restrict the movement of freight into the region, including the coal now in such desperate shortage.⁵³

A shortage of unskilled labor was another explanation, one expounded by several witnesses. By this, they meant not

only brakemen, but also maintenance, car repair, and yard workers. Railroad managers complained farmers hired away the available simple labor during the harvest season by offering better pay. Managers turned away suggestions from the commissioners and ICC attorney John Marble that higher railroad wages would help retain such "ordinary labor." D. W. Philbin, an assistant district superintendent on the GN, insisted this would do nothing to increase the general supply, as it would only cause workers from other railroads to shift employers. The railroads had instituted a general wage increase that summer, but this had not increased the supply of labor. Even at the princely sum of \$2.80 a day, Philbin had less than half of the labor he needed to run the ore docks at Duluth and Superior. "There is," he noted, an "honest scarcity of men in our district."⁵⁴ The problem was much worse in sparsely settled North Dakota. The founder and president of the Great Northern, James J. Hill, reiterated this point in his testimony:

For years we have made it a rule to carry all we can into the country as our workmen in the spring, expecting that the farmers will hire them away as quick as they get here, and it is necessary that they should. This year we employed as far as we could and took a great many Italians. We could not hold them, although we were paying \$2 and \$2.50 a day for Italian labor.⁵⁵



**16 This kept section hands busy.
North Dakota, winter 1906-07**

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G. M. Barsness, Fairdale, N. D.

North Dakota Institute for Regional Studies, NDSU, Fargo (rs003291).



Raising snow blockade in North Dakota, January 1907. SHSND SA 00116-00008

Without the necessary men, expansions of yards, terminals, and track work could not be completed even when there was money to pay for supplies.⁵⁶ The prosperity of the country was at fault, not the railroads.⁵⁷

Hill's testimony hit on a variety of explanations. First and foremost he said the nation as a whole, and the northwestern states in particular, suffered from a lack of what he called "facilities." Economic growth, he said, surpassed the capacity of the railroads to move the traffic generated. The only solution was capacity expansion—at least seventy-three thousand additional miles of track, mostly in double-tracking single-track lines, new yards, and expanded terminals. Nor was he shy in blaming others. He noted that residents of northwestern North Dakota burned lignite. Because the severe weather frustrated their efforts to obtain it from their local suppliers, they ordered coal from out of state at a time when the railroad's own coal supply was reduced by strikes at the mines of favored suppliers in British Columbia. Those mines supplied much of the railroad's steam coal, which forced it to bring in coal from other regions for its own operations, using cars that would otherwise have delivered retail coal. Had locals ordered their coal early, as the railroad had suggested, no one would have been caught short.⁵⁸ For Hill, the coal shortage was not a railroad problem; for that matter, it was not a problem at all, but a simple manifestation of economic growth, perhaps uncomfortable at times, but nothing that should require additional regulation.⁵⁹

While Hill and the other officials claimed throughout the hearings there was no real shortage, they did promise to make special efforts to move coal into the region. In this their actions belied their testimony, as both the GN and the NP took the drastic step of embargoing the westbound movement of general freight into the region in order to concentrate efforts on transporting coal, kerosene, and food.⁶⁰ Initially these

efforts appeared to bear fruit, as sorely needed coal arrived in many communities around the state during the hearings and immediately afterward. The *Jamestown Daily Capital* announced on Christmas Eve "Danger of Fuel Famine Over."⁶¹ Yet the sense of relief proved premature, as storms in late December disrupted service and brought on new rounds of desperate stories and telegrams.⁶² Even these efforts were of no avail, as the *Jamestown Daily Alert* noted in late December. On most branch lines the arrival of a train was "very much of a curiosity" for communities that had gone weeks without service.⁶³

IN THEIR SUBSEQUENT REPORT to Congress, Commissioners Harlan and Lane surveyed the testimony they heard in Chicago as it related to the fuel shortage. For their part, there was ample blame for all, from dilatory orders for coal, railroad operating practices that privileged the tonnage of trains over speed, poor car handling practices by shippers, logistical and organizational problems at the terminals in Duluth, and a decided preference by railroad management to move grain out before bringing in coal. They agreed with Hill and others who insisted that expanded terminals, yards, and more railroads would help to prevent future shortages, but rejected the argument that a shortage of these facilities had caused the fuel famine. The commissioners dismissed the railroads' claims they had been robbed of the cars necessary to complete their work and delays by the elevators in the terminal cities were to blame. They chastised the railroads for favoring towns served by more than one railroad over those with but one. The solution, according to the ICC, was neither complex nor difficult. The commissioners politely, but firmly, asserted:

A railroad which lives by the virtue of a public grant and the exercise of quasi-public powers is primarily obligated to discharge its functions with an eye to the welfare of the public which it serves and to avoid any policy of operation which, no matter how profitable to stockholder, may result injuriously to its dependent communities.⁶⁴

The railroads had a statutory obligation to provide prompt and efficient service even if, within reason, this reduced revenues, and they had failed at that task.⁶⁵

AS THE SECOND ROUND of shortages began to bite throughout the northern regions of the state, the messages from beleaguered towns to the officers of the GN, NP, and Soo took a decidedly angry turn. Senator Hansbrough relayed stories of farmers killing their cattle, towns without lights, women found frozen to death, and general desperation despite the promises made by the railroads.⁶⁶ The citizens of Provost appointed a committee to threaten railroad officials that “desperate measures would be taken if the fuel famine is not relieved immediately.”⁶⁷ The elected officials of New Rockford threatened to confiscate the railway’s coal, its buildings, and rolling stock in order to dismantle them for fuel. At one point in late January, the town had gone ten days without fuel and was still waiting on coal ordered six weeks previously.⁶⁸ The mayor of Park Ridge accused the GN of deliberately abandoning his community to its fate.⁶⁹ Elsewhere citizens moved quickly from threat to action.⁷⁰ In Barnes County farmers stopped a Soo train at Wimbledon and unloaded a car of lignite.⁷¹ A GN engine crew in Epping, on returning to their train after procuring lunch, found the locomotive surrounded by locals and emptied of its coal. A similar story emerged from Rugby, where locals stopped a train and warned off the crew as they unloaded the coal.⁷² Communities starved of fuel sent scavenging expeditions to beg, borrow, or steal coal. Reports of deprivation rolled in from all over the state.⁷³

The Soo appeared utterly overwhelmed by the storms and the fuel crisis. It lacked sufficient snow equipment and manpower to clear its lines. Service broke down altogether in many areas, especially along its most recently constructed lines.⁷⁴ In the early stages of the crisis, the railroad blamed the “blundering mismanagement” of the GN and the NP for failing to return its cars.⁷⁵ By mid-January the railroad’s new line west to Kenmare had been blockaded for more than month. When James J. Hill’s son Louis visited the area a month later he returned the favor, claiming that he saw no evidence the Soo had tried to clear its line. Local newspapers spread the blame, asserting the “kindergarten management of the heads of the railroads” were more interested in stock dividends than in their service obligations.

By early February the Soo simply gave up on the Kenmare line and embargoed the entire branch.⁷⁶ In Courtney citizens took some glee in noting that with no trains running on the railroad’s lightly built line into town, there had been no derailments, and the lack of service meant no mail and hence no responsibility to pay one’s debts to banks and mail order houses.⁷⁷ In Wilton locals asked the Board of Railroad Commissioners to order the railroad to turn over twenty-five cars of coal sitting on Soo to the NP to deliver since it seemed incapable of doing anything.⁷⁸ Even on its main line the Soo had problems; Valley City went six days without service in late January, which left the city in the dark and the schools closed despite promises from the railroad of the delivery of an entire train load of coal.⁷⁹

WHATEVER THE LARGER CAUSES of the shortages, there can be little doubt that the savage winter storms hindered all efforts to bring relief to the region. The railroads themselves were often short of coal, and resorted to confiscating commercial coal in Grand Forks, Fargo, and elsewhere to run trains.⁸⁰ Branch line trains regularly stalled

**RAIDS ON COAL TRAINS
BY FAMINE SUFFERERS**

**Angry Northwestern Farmers
Seize Only Supply at Hand.**

WILL PAY FOR IT LATER

Desperate Steps Taken to Relieve Situation in North Dakota and Oklahoma Towns.

MINNEAPOLIS, Minn., Dec. 22. — Dispatches from Berwick, N. D., say that a gathering of citizens and farmers from the near-by towns took possession of a train at that point yesterday and helped themselves to ten tons of coal.

The train was stalled on the village siding by a dead engine, and the raid was begun by some farmers who had been waiting in the town all night in hope that they could secure fuel.

Bankers, barbers, and business men joined in the distribution, all coal taken being weighed and charged to the recipients, who are to pay the railroad company for it.

The New York Times, Dec. 23, 1906, p. 1.

in snowdrifts, or were buried in deep cuts; distances that trains would normally cover in hours consumed days. The cold and snow reduced the pulling power of locomotives, in turn requiring extra power for even the shortest of trains. This stretched railroad resources as extra locomotives on one train meant that other trains either could not run or were delayed. Rescue trains with plows derailed, or became as stuck as the trains that they had sought to assist. Lines cleared after exhaustive efforts would be impassable again within days, if not hours, as blowing and fresh snow filled the cuts.⁸¹

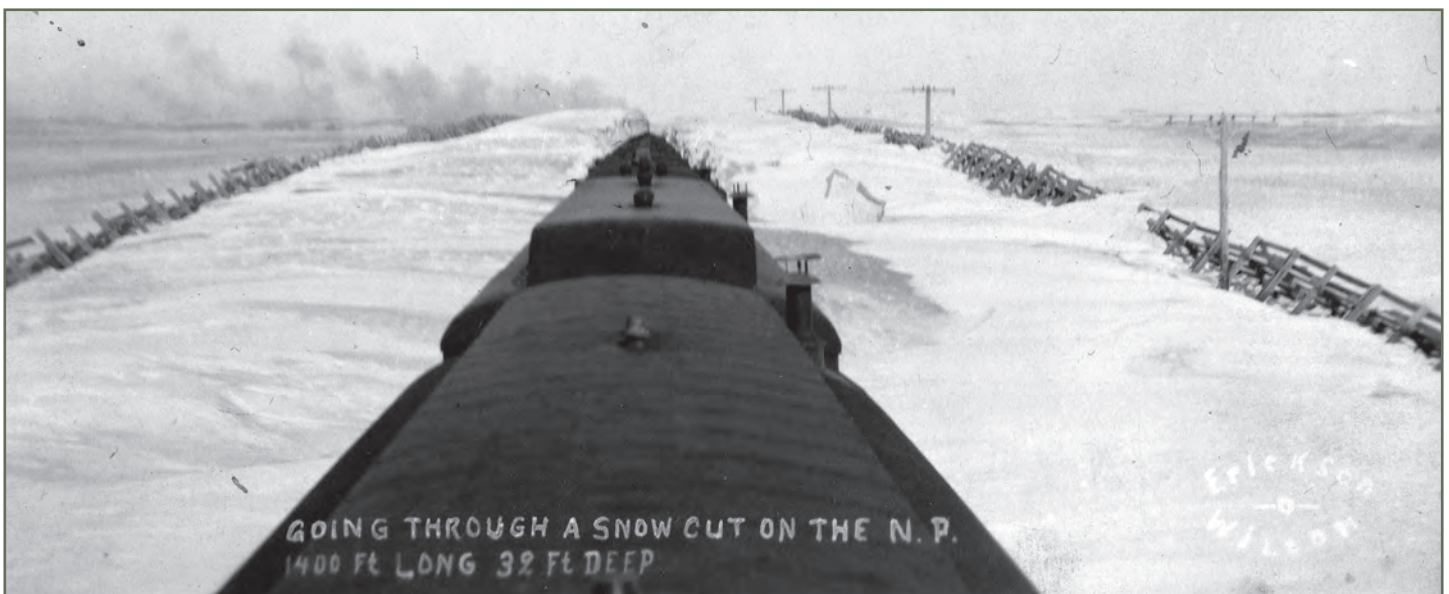
Desperate to move traffic and supply coal to communities, railroad managers ordered crews to push derailed equipment off the tracks for recovery, come spring.⁸² Reports circulated of over seven thousand freight cars stranded on the GN between St. Cloud, Minnesota, and Minot, many likely to remain until spring.⁸³ Often the only solution was an army of laborers with shovels or expensive rotary snowplows to clear the lines. However, as Hill noted in his testimony, labor was scarce in the state and had to be imported at great expense. By mid-January the GN had fifteen hundred laborers at work shoveling snow in North Dakota.⁸⁴ In early February, despite weeks of efforts, most of the NP's branch lines remained impassable. The other railroads were no better. Yet the storms and the winds meant real relief did not arrive until spring.⁸⁵

In its effort to resolve the shortages, the GN sent agents to every community along its lines in early February to assess their coal supplies, and they were authorized to divert shipments from communities with sufficient supplies to those without. The railroad also pulled obsolete and condemned freight equipment out of mothballs in order to increase its car supply and rush coal to the region.⁸⁶ At the same time, the NP marshaled resources from across its

system to clear its North Dakota lines and move coal into the state, even over the interests of its customers in other states.⁸⁷ Desperate for snow-clearing equipment, the Soo bribed an eastern railroad equipment manufacturer into allowing it to buy a rotary from under the British railroad that had ordered the already completed machine. It was rushed west and put to work immediately.⁸⁸ The railroads' efforts eventually bore fruit, although much of the credit should rightfully be granted to the improving weather as stories of shortages gave way to stories of train loads of coal arriving throughout the state.⁸⁹ The newspapers carried few notices of shortages and famines after the middle of February, as the weather settled into a more normal pattern.

WITH THE END OF THE CRISIS, and in some sectors of the state even before, there emerged a concern that the stories of famines, shortages, and rampant death by freezing across the Prairie State would stifle immigration. The state was in the midst of its most rapid decade of aggregate population growth, adding nearly 260,000 new residents by 1910.⁹⁰ The stories of fuel famines, terrible storms, and deprivation had taken on a life of their own. For local business interests, full of a booster spirit, a decrease in immigration would put in jeopardy their investments in stores, businesses, banks, and land. Editorial pages in the state's newspapers reflected their concerns. While the same newspapers happily printed the countless stories of woe and travail that litter this paper and its endnotes, their editors led the effort to balance the short-term need for coal and train service against their long-term interest in boosting their communities and the state.

While this might seem a difficult balance to achieve, a popular tactic of the state's editors was to refute the hyperbolic coverage of the crisis published elsewhere.



A Northern Pacific train traveling through a snow cut. SHSND SA 11063-00232

worst shortages were in communities less than one hundred miles from Grand Forks.

While the individual circumstances of each community differed, the overall picture was one of apparent crisis, with the potential for tragedy. From early December, until the end of the worst storms in late February, the newspaper stories, telegrams, and letters to government officials followed a general pattern. At the onset the story was one of future concern, low coal supplies, and predicted suffering if more coal were not made available. These were often leavened with reports of coal ordered weeks and months previously and not yet delivered. Then stories began to circulate of towns going days and then weeks without train service. With dwindling supplies of coal, and facing the prospect of running out entirely, towns closed their schools, shut down their electric power plants, brought farmers and their families into town from outlying districts, rationed fuel, and sent increasingly anxious telegrams to railroad officials, legislators, and regulators. As the winter began to fade into spring, the storms abated, and the snows began to melt, community and state boosters began a process of repudiating their own stories of want and woe, fearful that such tales would impede growth and reduce migration.

Scholars explain the 1907 legislative session's spate of regulatory legislation as a consequence of John Burke's November 1906 election to the governorship. Historians divide North Dakota's early political history into three somewhat overlapping periods: the Alexander McKenzie years of political corruption and railroad dominance, the rise and fall of populism and Alliance politics, and, finally, the Nonpartisan League era of radicalism and conservative counter-revolution. In that chronology, John Burke's three terms as governor (1907–13) inhabit a vaguely progressive, broadly popular netherland. The first non-fusion Democrat to hold the office, Burke was a principled enemy of the McKenzie Republican political machine.¹⁰⁰

The McKenzie machine had been an unabashed protector of the state's railroads, and the legislature's efforts in 1907 reflected, many argue, the release of pent-up political frustration on the part of farmers, small-town merchants, and recent settlers. Yet, as Charles Glaab asserts, Burke's support of regulatory railroad legislation was not a manifestation of anti-railroad agrarianism but rather a logical outgrowth of a commitment to democratic rule, limited but effective governance, fair economic competition, and a Jeffersonian concern for the reduction of the corruption that came of concentrated wealth. It reflected a North Dakotan variation of the Progressive Era spirit, one that cared more for questions of political economy and economic infrastructure and the day-to-day concerns that revolved around immigration, grain, coal, elevators, and freight cars than the urban issues such as tenement reform, settlement houses, and child labor

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battles that still dominate scholarship on progressivism.¹⁰¹ All of this is supported by the evidence, but missing from these accounts are two factors, one local, the other national, that informed the tenor, pace, and scope of the 1907 session. The local issue was a sudden shortage of coal that began in December of 1906—"a famine" in the parlance of the day. The national issue was a general shortage of freight cars and greatly extended transit times.

The 1907 legislative session around which this article revolves can only be understood fully as we seek to better understand the particular context of the wave of railroad and commodity regulation undertaken during that session. It is not intended to rehash the political history of the session or Burke's governorship, but rather to illuminate the specific transportation and commodity questions that were ringing in the ears and searing the eyes of the legislators. It is incomplete reasoning to see the local as merely reflective of national contexts, and to dismiss the emergence of progressivism in North Dakota as merely one thread in a larger tapestry, because in reality, politics reflects local concerns more readily. The legislature worked through much of its 1907 session amid what appeared to be a catastrophic service collapse by the state's railways and the frightening specter of freezing citizens, economic failure, and national embarrassment. Its actions must be properly interpreted within that light. North Dakota's legislators were aware of the broader political and cultural efforts for reform that historians now define as "progressivism," but their reasons for enacting legislation sprang from strong local concerns and crises rather than national trends.



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ENDNOTES

The title of this paper comes from a subhead in the newspaper article “Fierce Storms East and West,” of the *Salt Lake (UT) Herald*, February 6, 1907. Other equally bombastic headlines include, “Suffering and Death from Cold in Dakota,” *New York Times* (hereafter *NYT*), December 17, 1906, 6; “Horror in Dakota,” *Washington (DC) Times*, January 13, 1907; “Death and Want from Blizzard in Northwest,” *St. Louis (MO) Post-Dispatch* (hereafter *SLP-D*), February 6, 1907.

1. “Coming,” *Bismarck Daily Tribune* (hereafter *BDT*), January 5, 1907, 5; “Organization of the Legislature,” *BDT*, January 6, 1907, 4; “The Bunch,” *BDT*, January 6, 1907, 5; *BDT*, January 9, 1907, 2; “Both Houses Organized,” *BDT*, January 8, 1907, 4; “Intertesting” [sic], *BDT*, January 8, 1907, 5; “Both Houses Organized,” *BDT*, January 9, 1907, 3, 8; “Now Governor Burke,” *BDT*, January 10, 1907, 5
2. *BDT*, January 4, 1907, 2. See also Commissioners of Railroads of North Dakota, *Seventeenth and Eighteenth Annual Reports of the Commissioners of Railroads to the Governor of North Dakota for the Years Ending November 1, 1906–1907* (Bismarck: Tribune, State Printers and Binders, 1907), 85–103. (Hereafter cited as *Seventeenth and Eighteenth Annual Reports*.)
3. Maureen A. Flanagan, *America Reformed: Progressives and Progressivisms, 1890s–1920s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), vi–viii, 141–59.
4. “Driscoll,” *BDT*, October 11, 1906, 2; “Business Men to Dictate,” *Ward County Independent* (Minot, ND; hereafter *WCI*), October 18, 1906, 11; “Governor Sarles to Investigate,” *WCI*, October 18, 1906, 14; “Is There a Coal Trust?” *BDT* (reprint of an article published in the *Mandan [ND] Pioneer*), October 23, 1906, 3; *WCI*, November 15, 1906, 10; “Plenty of Coal,” *BDT*, November 26, 1906, 4; *BDT*, November 22, 1906, 1; “City News,” *BDT*, November 23, 1906, 3; “Fuel Famine in Fargo,” *Minot (ND) Daily Reporter* (hereafter *MDR*), December 8, 1906; “Financial and Industrial Situation in North Dakota,” *BDT*, December 7, 1906; “Fuel Famine Imminent,” *Devils Lake (ND) Daily Journal* (hereafter *DLDJ*), December 6, 1906; *BDT*, December 8, 1906; “Is Becoming Serious,” *DLDJ*, December 8, 1906; “Fuel Shortage,” *Jamestown (ND) Daily Capital* (hereafter *JDC*), December 8, 1906; “Serious,” *MDR*, December 9, 1906; “No Coal, Little Wood,” *DLDJ*, December 10, 1906 (excerpt from the *Cando [ND] Herald*); “Is Still Desperate,” *MDR*, December 12, 1906; “Coal Famine Is Serious,” *JDC*, December 12, 1906; “Still Short of Coal,” *DLDJ*, December 12, 1906; “Fearful Conditions,” *JDC*, December 12, 1906; “Eveleth Is in Distress,” *JDC*, December 14, 1906; “Situation Is Critical,” *Carrington (ND) Record* (hereafter *CR*), December 18, 1906.
5. “Wanted the Coal,” *MDR*, December 1, 1906.
6. “Buildings Torn Down for Fuel; Families Dying,” *SLP-D*, December 17, 1906, 1; “Freeze for Lack of Coal,” *Washington Post* (hereafter *WP*), December 17, 1906; “Suffering and Death from Cold in Dakota,” *NYT*, December 17, 1906; “Town Appeals for Food: Blizzard Ties Up Traffic and Threatens Famine in Ambrose, N.D.,” *NYT*, December 20, 1906; “Food Is Short as Well as Fuel,” *Atlanta (GA) Constitution*, December 20, 1906, 2; “Stay in Bed to Keep Warm,” *WP*, January 5, 1907, 1; “No Freight for Weeks at a Time,” *Detroit (MI) Free Press* (hereafter *DFP*), December 27, 1906; “Dakotans Lack Food,” *WP*, January 13, 1907, 2; “Three Die by Freezing,” *WP*, January 15, 1907, 2; “31 Frozen to Death,” *NYT*, February 14, 1907; “North Dakota Facing Famine,” *Keowee Courier* (Walhalla, SC), December 19, 1906; “People Starving and Freezing to Death,” *Palestine (TX) Daily Herald*, January 4, 1907; “Snow in Drifts 10 Feet High,” *Boston Daily Globe* (hereafter *BDG*), January 13, 1913, 10; “North Dakota under Snow,” *WP*, January 22, 1907, 3; “Many Are Suffering from Hunger and Cold,” *Spanish Fork (UT) Press*, February 7, 1907; “He Cried for Coal,” *MDR*, February 7, 1907.
7. “Blizzard Sweeps Dakota,” *DFP*, December 14, 1906, 1; *Jamestown (ND) Daily Alert* (hereafter *JDA*), December 15, 1906; “55 Degrees Below,” *WP*, January 16, 1907, 3; “Worst Blizzard in 50 Years,” *Baltimore Sun* (hereafter *BaS*), January 22, 1907, 11; “48 Below in North Dakota,” *WP*, February 6, 1907, 1.
8. The principle reason for doing so was to provide a backhaul for ore boats on the Great Lakes.
9. *Seventeenth Annual Report of the Great Northern Railway Company, Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 1906* (St. Paul, MN: Great Northern Railway, 1906), 11; *Eighteenth Annual Report of the Great Northern Railway Company, Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 1907* (St. Paul, MN: Great Northern Railway, 1907), 12.
10. Elwyn B. Robinson, *History of North Dakota* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1966), 240–41.
11. “Wilton,” *BDT*, November 26, 1906, 1; *WCI*, December 6, 1906, 6, 13; “Wheat Lies on Ground,” *BaS*, December 19, 1906, 12; “Snow Covered Piles of Grain,” *BDG*, January 3, 1907, 11.
12. *Sixteenth and Seventeenth Annual Reports*, 9–20, 85–95; “Expect Car Shortage,” *Wall Street Journal* (hereafter *WSJ*), July 24, 1906, 3; “Western Car Shortage,” *WSJ*, August 15, 1906, 5; “Chicago Situation,” *WSJ*, August 17, 1906, 6; “Conditions of Trade,” *NYT*, August 25, 1906, 10; “Car Shortage Felt in Indianapolis,” *WSJ*, September 13, 1906, 7; “Car Shortage Felt West,” *WSJ*, September 14, 1906, 7; “Car Shortage in Grain States,” *WSJ*, September 26, 1906, 5; “Serious Car Shortage: Railroads East and West Unable to Handle the Fall Traffic,” *NYT*, October 10, 1906, 1; “Roads Begging for Cars,” *NYT*, October 12, 1906, 1; “Southern Car Shortage,” *WSJ*, October 17, 1906, 4; “Car Shortage,” *WSJ*, October 19, 1906, 3; “Shortages in Car Supply,” *WSJ*, October 20, 1906, 5; “Grain Trade Clogged,” *WSJ*, October 24, 1906, 2; “Car Shortage,” *WSJ*, October 26, 1906, 5; “Maine Potatoes Waiting for Cars,” *Massachusetts Ploughman and New England Journal of Agriculture* (hereafter *MPNEJA*) 65, no. 43 (October 27, 1906): 8; “Potato Supply Ample,” “Waiting for Cars,” “Potato Shippers Anxious,” *MPNEJA* 65, no. 44 (November 3, 1906): 8; “Crops and Car Shortage,” *WSJ*, November 5, 1906, 5; “Decrease in Flour Trade,” *WSJ*, November 6, 1906, 3; “Car Famine at Furnaces,” *WSJ*, November 8, 1906, 2; “Southwestern Lumber Outlook,” *WSJ*, November 9, 1906, 5; “Potato Men None Too Happy,” *MPNEJA* 65, no. 46 (November 17, 1906): 8; “Situation in Chicago: Car Famine Still Most Deplorable and Its Effects Disastrous,” *WSJ*, December 6, 1906, 7; “The Car Shortage,” *WSJ*, December 7, 1906, 2; “Financial and Industrial Situation in North Dakota,” *BDT*, December 7, 1906; *BDT*, December 8, 1906; “Corn Price Factors,” *WSJ*, December 12, 1906, 5.
13. *Testimony Taken by the Interstate Commerce Commission at Minneapolis, Minn., December 17, 18 and 19, 1906 and at Chicago, Ill., December 20 and 21, 1906 in the Matter of Car Shortage and other Insufficient Transportation Facilities and Reports Thereon by Commissioners Lane and Harlan* (hereafter cited as *Car Shortage Hearings*), U.S. S. Doc. No. 59-33 at 101–12, 167–68 (1907).

14. "A 'Short Car' Story," *MDR*, December 9, 1906; "The Car Came Home," *JDC*, December 12, 1906.
15. *Car Shortage Hearings*, 171–72. A "consignee" is the recipient of a good shipped. See also "Cars at Duluth," *BDT*, December 8, 1906, 5.
16. *Car Shortage Hearings*, 116–21, 131–32, 144–45, 168–74, 195–97, 489–90; "Can't Get Their Money," *MDR*, December 2, 1906; "Wheat Lies on the Ground," *BaS*, December 19, 1906.
17. "Some Lines from Home," *JDC*, December 3, 1906; "Snow Covered Piles of Grain," *BDG*, January 3, 1907, 11.
18. Railroads had been battling with the issue of car shortages for a decade and had tried various mechanisms for assuring the smooth interchange and return of freight cars across the nation's integrated railroad network. See Scott E. Randolph, "Playing by the Rules: Markets, Manipulations, and the Meaning of Exchange in the American Railway Industry, 1900–1918" (PhD diss., Purdue University, 2009).
19. "Coal Famine," *Deseret Evening News* (Salt Lake City, UT; hereafter *DEN*), October 20, 1906; "Northwest Faces Coal Famine," *Minneapolis Journal* (hereafter *MJ*), November 19, 1906, 1; "Coal Famine in Bakersfield," *Los Angeles Herald* (hereafter *LAH*), November 27, 1906, 2; "Question of Fuel Menaces Northwest," *MJ*, December 2, 1906, News 5; "Threatened with Fuel Famine," *The Leader* (Guthrie, OK), Evening Edition, December 3, 1906, 6; "Fuel Situation," *Willmar (MN) Tribune*, December 12, 1906, 1; "Pupils Victims of Coal Trust," *San Francisco Call*, December 14, 1906; "Wrapped in Snow," *Daily Ardmoreite* (Ardmore, OK), December 17, 1906; "Hazelton Items," *Barbour County Index* (Medicine Lodge, KS), 7; "Katy after Coal Supply," *Daily Ardmoreite*, December 20, 1906; "C. M. & St. P. Rushes Coal: Consignments for the Trans-Missouri Region Given Precedence," *MJ*, December 19, 1906; "Short of Coal in Kansas," *NYT*, December 3, 1906; "Governor Blames Harriman Line," "Wants State Commission," and "Famine Pleas Pour In," *MJ*, December 27, 1906; "Blames Oregon Short Line," *New York Sun*, December 27, 1906; "No Freight for Weeks," *BaS*, December 27, 1906; "Say Famine Grows," *Indianapolis (IN) Morning Star* (hereafter *IMS*), December 27, 1906; "Coal Scarcity in Atlanta," *WSJ*, November 21, 1906, 7; "Cleveland in Great Distress," *JDC*, January 7, 1907. Nor was Canada spared, since the border did not isolate the Dominion of Canada from problems on the continent's integrated railway network. See "Fuel Famine in Canadian West," *WSJ*, January 25, 1907; "Canadian Northwest Fuel Famine," *WSJ*, February 1, 1907; "Canadian Farmers Burning Their Homes Owing to Fuel Famine," *NYT*, February 14, 1907.
20. "Continued Coal Famine Strikes Wadena," and "Coal Famine Raises Price of Wood," *Bemidji (MN) Daily Pioneer*, February 6, 1907.
21. "People in Desperate Straits," *San Francisco Call*, December 2, 1902; "Coal Train Raided," *MJ*, December 3, 1906; "Coal Train Raided," *JDC*, December 4, 1906; "Freight Blockade Felt Another Way," *MJ*, December 7, 1906; "Helped Themselves to Coal," *Spanish Fork (UT) Press*, February 7, 1907; "Coal Famine in Oklahoma," *Columbus (NE) Journal*, December 19, 1906; "Raids on Coal Trains by Famine Sufferers," *NYT*, December 23, 1906; "Citizens Raid Coal Train," *JDA*, January 10, 1907.
22. "Will Take Coal," *Daily Capital Journal* (Salem, OR), November 9, 1906, 1.
23. "Panic on the ROW," *DEN*, December 18, 1906.
24. "Nevada Coal Famine," *DEN*, December 18, 1906; "Will Send Cars as 'Freight' to Relieve Coal Famine in the West" and "San Francisco Fuel Famine Is at an End," *LAH*, January 12, 1907; "Nebraska Coal Famine," *Salt Lake (UT) Herald*, November 25, 1906; "Coal Famine Spreads," *New York Daily Tribune*, December 16, 1906; "Fuel Shortage in Kansas," *JDA*, December 14, 1906; "Mead's Coal Famine Committee Reports," *San Juan (PR) Islander*, January 5, 1907; "The Fuel Situation," *Colfax (WA) Gazette*, December 21, 1906; "Boats and Factories May Cease Operation," *Seattle Star*, January 7, 1907; "Fuel Situation Improved: Embargo on Freight of Harriman Lines Lifted," *BaS*, January 22, 1907; "Death and Want from Blizzard over Northwest," *SLP-D*, February 6, 1907.
25. "Storm Worse in Years" and "Foot Deep in Philadelphia," *BaS*, February 6, 1907.
26. "Calamity or Crime?," *LAH*, December 8, 1906.
27. "Concerned about Car Shortage," *JDC*, December 6, 1906; *BDT*, December 8, 1906, and December 14, 1906; "Confer on Fuel Shortage," *IMS*, December 14, 1906, 12; "North Dakota Fuel Shortage," *BDT*, December 14, 1906, 1.
28. On the McKenzie machine see Robert P. Wilkins, "Alexander and the Politics of Bossism," in *The North Dakota Political Tradition*, ed. Charles N. Glaab and Thomas H. Howard (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1981), 3–39.
29. "To Make Roads Haul Coal," *New York Sun*, December 16, 1906, 18.
30. "Congressman Marshall," *JDC*, December 8, 1906; "Investigation Progressing," *JDC*, December 10, 1906; "Investigate Shortage," *MDR*, December 13, 1906; *JDA*, December 11, 1906; "Unnecessary Delay," *JDC*, December 17, 1906.
31. "Roosevelt Probes Famine," *IMS*, December 18, 1906, 2; "Interviews the President," *MDR*, December 19, 1906; "Teddy Interested," *BDT*, December 19, 1906; "President Interested," *DLDJ*, December 20, 1906. On Hansbrough's relationship with Roosevelt, see Leonard Schlup, "Political Maverick: Senator Hansbrough and Republican Party Politics, 1907–1917," *North Dakota History* 45, no. 4 (Fall 1978): 32–39.
32. "A Rail Shortage," *The Outlook* 84, no. 18 (December 29, 1906): 1084; "Hansbrough Has Plan," *BaS*, December 20, 1907, 2.
33. Elwyn Robinson, "The Themes of North Dakota History," *North Dakota History* 26, no. 1 (Winter 1959): 5–24.
34. Robinson, *History of North Dakota*, 235–47; R. Douglas Hurt, *The Great Empty: The Great Plains in the Twentieth Century* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2011), 1–11.
35. Robinson, *History of North Dakota*, 236–42. Robinson notes that between 1898 and 1915 railroad mileage doubled from 2,662 to 5,226 miles. See also John C. Hudson, "North Dakota's Railway War of 1905," *North Dakota History* 48, no. 1 (Winter 1981): 4–19; John C. Hudson, *Plains Country Towns* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985), 54–69; Commissioners of Railroads of North Dakota, *Seventeenth and Eighteenth Annual Reports*, 5–7, 21, 70.
36. Hiram M. Drache, "The Economic Aspects of the Northern Pacific Railroad in North Dakota," *North Dakota History* 34, no. 4 (Winter 1967): 347; Robinson, *History of North Dakota*, 220–21.
37. Robinson, *History of North Dakota*, 217–30; Drache, "Economic Aspects," 320–72; Kenneth Hammer, "Territorial Towns and the Railroads," *North Dakota History* 36, no. 4 (Fall 1969):

- 356–68; Ronald Ridgely, “The Railroads and Rural Development in the Dakotas,” *North Dakota History* 36, no. 2 (Spring 1969): 163–87; Ross Cotroneo, “Northern Pacific Officials and the Disposition of the Railroad’s Land Grant in North Dakota after 1888,” *North Dakota History* 37, no. 2 (Spring 1970): 77–103; F. Stewart Mitchell, “The Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul Railway and James J. Hill in Dakota Territory, 1879–1881,” *North Dakota History* 47, no. 4 (Fall 1980): 11–19; H. Roger Grant, “Western Utopians and the Farmers’ Railroad Movement, 1890–1900,” *North Dakota History* 46, no. 1 (Winter 1979): 13–18; J. B. Hedges, “The Colonization Work of the Northern Pacific Railroad,” *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 13, no. 3 (December 1926): 311–42. As of December 31, 1906, the Great Northern, Northern Pacific, and the Soo Line had 1,466, 1,186, and 1,082 miles, respectively, of track within the state.
38. “Car Shortage Is to Be Investigated,” *MDR*, December 5, 1906; “Concerned about Car Shortage,” *JDC*, December 6, 1906; “Investigate Shortage,” *MDR*, December 13, 1906; *BDT*, December 8, 1906; “Commission Takes Up the Woes of the North,” *Arizona Republican* (Phoenix, Arizona Territory), December 16, 1906, 1. See also *Car Shortage Hearings*, 488.
39. *Testimony Taken by the Interstate Commerce Commission October 15–November 23 in Matter of Relations of Common Carriers to the Grain Trade*, U.S. S. Doc. No. 59-278 (1907).
40. “Confiscation of Coal,” *JDA*, December 11, 1906; “Provisions Are Getting Very Scarce,” *BDT*, December 20, 1906, 1; “32 Posts Left,” *MDR*, December 23, 1906, “North Dakota Must Have Fuel,” *MDR*, December 15, 1906; “Fuel Condition Today,” *MDR*, December 18, 1906; “Raided Coal Trains,” *MDR*, December 23, 1906; “Drive Fifty Miles for Coal,” *JDC*, December 29, 1906; “Fuel Exhausted in Mohall,” *BDT*, January 5, 1907; “Receives Partial Relief,” *JDC*, January 7, 1907; “Burn Poles,” *BDT*, January 8, 1907.
41. “Militia for Coal Trains,” *BDG*; December 15, 1906; “Would Give Army the Job,” *Boston Daily Globe*, December 16, 1906. See also “Towns Have No Coal, Ask Outside Aid,” *SLP-D*, December 15, 1906, 2.
42. “Concerned about the Car Shortage,” *JDC*, December 6, 1906.
43. See Isaiah L. Sharfman, *The Interstate Commerce Commission: A Study in Administrative Law and Procedure*, vol. 1 (New York: The Commonwealth Fund, 1931), 19–52, 94–103.
44. “Congressman Marshall,” *JDC*, December 8, 1906.
45. *BDT*, December 14, 1906; *Car Shortage Hearings*, 488–89.
46. *Car Shortage Hearings*, 5–6.
47. *Ibid.*, 17–18, 280–281.
48. *Ibid.*, 100–01, 127–28, 145–46. See also “Coal Men in Combination,” *CR*, January 10, 1907.
49. *Car Shortage Hearings*, 92–94, 128–29, 194–97, 235.
50. “The Car Shortage Matter,” *JDA*, December 14, 1906; “W. M. Brown on Car Shortage,” *MDR*, December 21, 1906.
51. *Car Shortage Hearings*, 220–21.
52. For I. H. Harris, see *Car Shortage Hearings*, 121–24; for Sheyenne, see “Very Much a Curiosity,” *JDA*, December 27, 1906.
53. *Car Shortage Hearings*, 17–22, 52–54, 64–68, 94–97, 101–03, 106–11, 114–16, 121–24, 166–68, 169–76, 253–57, 267–71, 308–11; “Canal Boat Speed,” *BDT*, January 5, 1907.
54. *Car Shortage Hearings*, 89–91.
55. *Ibid.*, 291–92. See also “James J. Hill’s Answer,” *JDC*, December 19, 1906.
56. *Car Shortage Hearings*, 293–94, 307.
57. “Reason for Car Shortage,” *BDT*, December 18, 1906; “Surplus Better than Deficiency,” *JDA*, December 22, 1906; “Business Growth Too Fast,” *JDA*, December 21, 1906; “Situation Is Critical,” *JDA*, December 18, 1906; “Hill Replies to Message,” *JDA*, January 16, 1907; “More Trackage Is Crying Need,” *JDC*, January 16, 1907.
58. *Car Service Hearings*, 291–307.
59. *Ibid.*, 491. Hill’s insistence that no shortage existed continued through the remainder of the crisis. See “Hill Replies to Message,” *JDA*, January 16, 1907.
60. “Coal to Burn,” *MDR*, December 16, 1906; “Trying to Hurry Coal,” *BDG*, December 16, 1906; “Rushing Fuel to N. Dakota,” *BDT*, December 17, 1906; “Moving Fuel Cars,” *JDA*, December 18, 1906; “Cold and Relief Racing to the North,” *Chicago Daily Tribune* (hereafter *CDT*), December 18, 1906, 2; “Working to Relieve Shortages of Cars,” *IMS*, December 19, 1906; “Fuel Famine Will Be Broken Soon,” *JDC*, December 19, 1906; “Train Loads of Coal,” *MDR*, December 21, 1906; “Eight Cars of Coal,” *JDA*, December 21, 1906. The embargoes covered the westbound movement of general freight traffic. Passenger traffic continued, as did eastbound freight movement. The embargoes restricted westbound freight movement to coal, fuel, and food only. See also *Car Shortage Hearings*, 303.
61. *JDC*, December 24, 1906. See also “Coal Situation Improving,” *DLDJ*, December 11, 1906; “Glenburn People Get Relief,” *MDR*, December 13, 1906; “Fuel Conditions Today,” *MDR*, December 18, 1906; “Hearing at Minneapolis,” *JDA*, December 19, 1906; “Eighty Cars of Coal,” *JDA*, December 21, 1906; “Cold and Relief Racing North,” *CDT*, December 18, 1906; “Fuel Famine Will Be Broken Soon,” *JDC*, December 19, 1906; “To Spend Billions,” *MDR*, December 26, 1906; “Brief Mention,” *DLDJ*, December 27, 1906.
62. “Say Famine Grows,” *IMS*, December 27, 1906; “Northwest Farmers,” *JDC*, January 5, 1907; “Fuel Famine Again Acute,” *DFP*, January 13, 1907; “Famine in North Dakota,” *BaS*, January 13, 1907, 2.
63. “Very Much of a Curiosity,” *JDA*, December 27, 1906.
64. *Car Shortage Hearings*, 493.
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