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## Report on a Railroad from Salt Lake City to the Colorado River

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## IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES.

JANUARY 20, 1871.—Ordered to be printed.

Mr. POMEROY made the following

## REPORT.

[To accompany bill S. No. 1154.]

*The Committee on Public Lands, to whom was referred bill S. No. 1154, report as follows :*

A glance at the map of the United States will indicate to any thoughtful mind the advantages of a railroad through the country between Salt Lake City and the mouth of the Colorado River.

The interior of the Territory of Utah is unfortunately situated with respect to the great through routes across our continent; for, while the Northern Pacific makes its transit far to the north, the contemplated Southern Pacific passes nearly as far south, and the Union Central Pacific, the only road which at all favors the Territory, runs through its extreme northern part, and all productions of the great basin, whether of soil, mines, or manufactories, must be "hauled" from fifty to three hundred miles before reaching an outlet for market. The Great Salt Lake and Colorado River Railway, starting from Salt Lake City, it is intended shall follow up the valley of the Jordan, and, skirting Utah Lake by way of Provo City, shall pass thence by way of Juab Valley to the Sevier River, and, running up the valley of that stream, it will then seek the valley of the Rio Virgin; passing down that until it reaches the Colorado, it will follow the course of that river to its southern termination on the Gulf of California, a distance of about six hundred and seventy-five miles.

It will thus be perceived that the most fertile and productive part of Central Utah would be opened by rail communication to the outer world, to settlers and to miners, to capitalists and to manufacturers. This section of the Territory partakes of the character of the great interior basin, being an alternation of mountain ranges and intervening plains. The plains are unproductive in their present state, except in the valleys bordering on the rivers, in the neighborhood of springs and along the bases of the mountains; but these plains would be redeemed by the settlers through irrigation and the planting of forest trees. Mines, however, are extensive, comprising gold, silver, copper, coal, &c., while in the vicinity of Little Salt Lake, which lies on the line of route of the road, extensive deposits of iron ore occur. In this neighborhood there exists a ridge of magnetic iron ore, nearly pure.

In San Pete County and elsewhere in that region, near the northern end of the route, coal also exists. The coal is all bituminous in quality, and gives an intense heat.

In its course down the Colorado the road would run through gold and silver fields of Nevada and California, approaching within a close distance, also, those of Arizona; fields upon which thousands have been spent in the fruitless effort to extract the precious ore with pecuniary advantage, but which have realized nothing to the investor, because of the great expense attendant upon bringing the necessary machinery to the mines, and of sending the product to market by the present unreliable and costly means of communication.

The valley of the Rio Virgin in the extreme southern part of Utah, and which this road would reach, is extremely productive, and tropical fruits may be abundantly grown there. Cotton also is produced in this valley, to the extent of 150 pounds per acre, but, of course, only for home consumption, as in its present isolated position it would not pay to raise for the general market. This valley, also, is the only place, with one exception, in the Territory where corn may be profitably grown; the nights being too cool in other parts for large crops.

The distance, however, which it is necessary to travel by ordinary conveyance to reach these valleys is so serious a drawback in the minds of settlers seeking for homes, and others seeking for investment of capital, that they naturally turn to regions presenting less natural attractions, but favored with easier and quicker communications.

Thus these valleys and mines are left undeveloped, and will long remain so, except a railroad, giving quick and cheap transportation to settlers and machinery, is built through and to them.

Then, again, there are in this region Indian reserves and Government forts, to which it is necessary to forward supplies and military stores; and the experience of the Government in the lessening of its transportation expenses in the States and Territories traversed by railroads has been ample enough to leave no doubt on its mind of the real economy of granting reasonable assistance to such means of communication; and it is but necessary to view the rapid, almost marvelous, development of such portions of our western country traversed by railroads, to understand their magical influence and to appreciate the merits of this bill.

The principal feature of the bill, however, in comparison with other land grants, is the manner in which the lands are to be taken and disposed of.

In some grants heretofore made there has been given to the corporations a certain quantity of land to which they receive full title without reservation, upon the completion of their roads. These lands they have placed in market at prices varying from \$2 to \$10 an acre.

By the terms of the bill for the Utah road, the company cannot place a price on the lands exceeding an average of \$2 50 per acre, and must sell the same to *actual settlers* only, and not to exceed 160 acres to any one person; the patent to be issued to the settler by the Government upon proof of compliance with the law; and it is only after settlers have declined to purchase the lands that the company may sell the same to other persons. Further, the lands cannot be sold except the road is built, and then only along the constructed portion; thus, the company is required to build each section of road *before* it can realize a cent from the grant, and, even then, to actual settlers are given the first right of purchase. This feature of the bill will give to the pioneer who seeks a home an assurance that he can obtain the land he may improve without being at the mercy of any corporation, and strongly recommends it to favor.

On the score, too, of political economy, this bill has claims to a favorable consideration. The Mormon question has long been a perplexing one with the Government, but no surer or more speedy way to eradicate the evil can be adopted than to present such inducements as will bring a rapid settlement to the Territory. The passage of this bill is desirable, as it will open to settlement a neglected and yet very valuable portion of the country if placed under cultivation and civilization, and also afford facilities for the commerce of those great inland valleys with the ocean, which they can obtain in no other way.