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Fort Smith and Western coal Railroad Company.

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FORT SMITH AND WESTERN COAL RAILROAD COMPANY.

FEBRUARY 3, 1896.—Committed to the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union and ordered to be printed.

Mr. LITTLE, from the Committee on Indian Affairs, submitted the following

REPORT:

[To accompany H. R. 4153.]

The Committee on Indian Affairs have had under consideration the bill (H. R. 4153) "To grant the Fort Smith and Western Coal Railroad Company a right of way through a portion of the Indian Territory, and for other purposes," and report the same back to the House with the recommendation that it do pass, with the following amendments:

In section 2, line 11, strike out "two" and insert "one"; also, in said line strike out "three" and insert "two." And in line 18 of said section strike out the words "one hundred" and insert "fifty."

In section 3, line 20, strike out "thirty" and insert "ninety." After the word "States," in line 21, insert the word "District."

In line 22 of said section strike out the following words: "At Muscogee, Indian Territory," and insert the following: "For the central district of the Indian Territory, sitting at the place nearest and most convenient to the property sought to be condemned."

Strike out all of section 8.

In section 9, in line 13, strike out the word "five" and insert "three."

Add, at the end of section 10, the following amendment:

Provided further, That the entire line of said road shall be surveyed and located and said location approved by the Secretary of the Interior before the work of construction shall commence.

This road, if constructed, will open up a large valley of fertile country south of the Arkansas River, as well as a large mining interest along its line. The section of country through which the proposed line runs is isolated from other roads by the Arkansas River on the north and a heavy range of mountains on the south.

Your committee has authority to submit copies of the annexed letters—one from Hon. Green McCurtain, a prominent native of the Choctaw Nation and ex-treasurer, and one from Hon. Jeff. Gardner, present chief of the Choctaw Nation—which show the necessity for the granting of this charter.

JANUARY 20, 1896.

SIR: The Fort Smith and Western Coal Railway Company have surveyed a line of railway, commencing at Fort Smith, Ark., and intersecting the Missouri, Kansas, and Texas Railway at Reams Station, Ind. T., and they propose building the said road if they can procure a charter. The country through which this road would pass is rich in coal deposits, has large agricultural interests, and is the center of a

large cattle business. There are only 34 Choctaw families on the immediate route, yet a population of at least 10,000 (whites and Choctaws) would be directly and indirectly benefited by it.

Along this line and adjacent to it are numerous stores, sawmills, and other business interests that pay annually large amounts of freight, most of which could be saved if we had a railroad.

The Arkansas Valley Railroad being north of the Arkansas River, and the Gulf, Choctaw and Oklahoma Railway being south of the San Bois Mountains, makes both of these roads inaccessible to the business enterprises. Hauling merchandise overland increases the price, and a railroad that would cut down the heavy freight rate would cheapen goods and thus benefit our people.

Along the proposed line of railway there were raised, in 1894, about 7,000 bales of cotton and in 1895 about 5,000, all of which had to be hauled overland to Fort Smith and other points, at a great cost. In addition to this there were about 5,500 head of cattle taken out of here last year, entailing an expense of about \$35,000, a great part of which could have been saved by proper railroad facilities. Besides these advantages, a large area of coal lands could be opened up, bringing vast revenues both to individual citizens and the nation.

I served as treasurer of the Choctaw Nation, and during that time the royalties on coal mined increased from \$60,000 to \$90,000 annually; and during the past three years they have increased to about \$220,000 annually.

The Missouri, Kansas and Texas Railway first developed our coal mines, and first paid coal royalty into our treasury. Then the building of the St. Louis and San Francisco Railway opened up other mines, and the Gulf, Choctaw and Oklahoma Railway also developed large coal fields. The royalties derived from coal mines benefited our schools and government. Before our coal was developed, we had only two academies and seminaries, educating fifty pupils, and we were able to appropriate annually only \$5,000 for running our neighborhood schools. Now we have the orphan schools, accommodating 200 orphans, two seminaries, and two academies, accommodating 400 boys and girls; besides which we have 57 boys and girls attending colleges in the States.

An increase in our revenue benefits our schools. An increase of our public revenue is only possible through an increase in our coal-mining operations, and this Fort Smith and Western Coal Railroad Company is especially designed to open up our coal mines.

I therefore respectfully ask that it be granted a charter.

GREEN McCURTAIN.

Hon. GROVER CLEVELAND,
President of the United States.

EAGLETOWN, IND. T.,
December 21, 1896.

SIR: I beg to call your attention that, if Congress, in its wisdom, sees proper to grant a right of way through the Choctaw Nation to the Fort Smith and Western Coal Railroad Company, provided, if the charter is granted in accordance with the act granting right of way to the Chicago, Rock Island and Pacific Railway, it would meet my approval, as I am satisfied that it would be beneficial to my people. The road would run east and west through a district of my nation, where we now have no railroad. This road will be 20 or 25 miles north from the Choctaw, Oklahoma and Gulf Railway, and on the opposite side of a mountain range extending the entire length of the nation.

This road will develop extensive coal fields, and will thus handsomely increase the national revenues. We need this increase in revenues to carry on our government, and especially our schools.

I sincerely hope Congress will grant the charter, and that you will find it consistent with your public duty to approve the same.

I am, very respectfully,

JEFF. GARDNER,
Principal Chief, Choctaw Nation.

His Excellency, GROVER CLEVELAND,
President of the United States.