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Report : Mr. Jonas

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IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES.

JUNE 14, 1880.—Ordered to be printed.

Mr. JONAS, from the Committee on Railroads, submitted the following

REPORT:

[To accompany bill S. 115.]

The Committee on Railroads, to whom was referred the bill (S. 115) authorizing the Secretary of War to contract with the San Antonio and Mexican Border Railway Company, respectfully submit the following report:

The bill under consideration has for its object the construction and equipment of a military railway and telegraph line from San Antonio to Laredo, Tex., on the east side of the Rio Grande. The distance between the points named is about 160 miles.

San Antonio is now the western terminus of the Galveston, Harrisburg and San Antonio Railway; and it is proposed by this bill to construct the military railroad of uniform gauge with the last-named railway; and for this purpose the United States Government is asked to indorse its bonds at the rate of \$15,000 per mile, the bonds to run thirty years, and draw interest at the rate of 4 per cent. per annum. The Government at all times is to have the preference in the use of said railway and telegraph line, and all money growing out of government service, from the time of its completion, shall be held by the Treasury Department, and the company is required to pay into the Treasury two per centum per annum, which sum shall be, together with said earnings, used as a sinking-fund with which to redeem the bonds at maturity. The bill also provides that the government shall have a first mortgage on the entire road and its equipment, to secure the payment as above and the redemption of the indorsed bonds at maturity.

The city of San Antonio is now, and for many years has been, the military headquarters for the army of the Rio Grande, and all troops, military supplies, and munitions of war for the protection of our frontier along the Rio Grande are now taken overland by teams along the line of the contemplated railway to a point near Laredo, and from this place north and south to the several military posts.

The distance from Brownsville, near the mouth of the Rio Grande, to El Paso, is about 1,500 miles by the river, and there are now five permanent military posts situated along this frontier, and the erection of two or three other posts is contemplated between Fort Duncan and Fort Quitman.

There are about 4,000 troops employed at these different posts in protecting the frontier from the marauding bands of Mexicans who have so long infested this country; and this force is greatly inadequate to the proper security of life and property on that border.

The country lying between San Antonio and Laredo, for many miles in

each direction, is of comparative even surface. The soil is fertile and well adapted to agricultural pursuits, and particularly to cattle and sheep raising. The vast area between the Nueces River and the Rio Grande is sparsely populated, and there is only occasionally a sheep or cattle ranch now to be found in that vast domain; but, if properly protected from Mexican raiders and banditti, it would soon become one of the finest grazing districts in the United States.

It is estimated, upon good authority, that 30 per cent. of the cattle raised in this section are stolen by Mexican thieves and Indian marauders. The necessities for a better military protection to our frontier along the Rio Grande are so ably set forth in a report made to this House by the Committee on Military Affairs, accompanying Senate bill 53, that we deem it unnecessary to review them. We append a copy of said report hereto.

The question was asked by your committee, why these military posts cannot be supplied by means of water transportation up the Rio Grande. The answer is, as appeared in proof before us: The river is a sluggish, shallow stream, fordable at almost any point, and in no season of the year is it navigable north of Rio Grande City, a point only 150 miles from its mouth, and only to *that* point in certain seasons of the year. The bar at the mouth of the river is a perpetual impediment to boats of any considerable burden.

The supplies necessary to subsist the army on the Rio Grande are large, and the estimated cost to the government for each soldier is \$1,000 per annum.

The cost of protecting this frontier is now annually between four and five millions of dollars.

The government now pays, as is shown by the Quartermaster's Department, about \$93,000 annually for transportation alone from San Antonio, notwithstanding a large portion of the Army supplies are taken across the country by government teams.

Laredo, Tex., is a flourishing town on the Rio Grande, and is situated about 250 miles from the mouth. The military posts would be more readily accessible from this point than any other on the Rio Grande. We think it is the most convenient point on the boundary for the terminus of a railway, both in a military and commercial point of view.

The advantages accruing to the general government by the construction of this line of railway would, in the opinion of your committee, be many, and much in excess of any contingent liability upon the part of the government.

It would give to the government a quick and cheap transportation of all troops and Army supplies from San Antonio to the Rio Grande.

It would save to the government a large amount of money each year in the actual cost of transportation.

If this road was constructed, at least one-half of the military force could be kept at San Antonio, and, in case of trouble breaking out upon the Mexican border, this reserve could be expeditiously taken to the scene of disturbance, and become more effective than at present in their scattered condition. This alone would, as your committee believe, reduce the expense of that army more than a quarter of a million of dollars annually.

Speedy railway communication to the Rio Grande would operate as a constant menace to the Mexican raiders, and gradually put an end to their depredations. It would attract stock-growers and actual settlers in large numbers to that region of country, and under the civilizing influence of permanent homes and family associations, it would not be

many years before this vast country would become as peaceful as our Canadian border.

In support of the views herein expressed your committee beg leave to refer to the following letters appended to and made a part of this report:

George W. McCrary, Secretary of War, to the Speaker of the House of Representatives, dated May 29, 1878.

M. C. Meigs, Quartermaster-General, to Secretary of War, dated May 22, 1878.

W. T. Sherman, General of the Army, to Hon. C. M. Shelley, dated January 21, 1880.

Stewart Van Vliet, acting Quartermaster-General, to Hon. C. M. Shelley, dated January 27, 1880.

Your committee are satisfied that the sinking fund, paid in as the bill provides, would pay off the bonds at their maturity, and that the government would suffer no loss either in interest or principal; and that the military demands for this road are such that it is both economic and wise for the government to grant the proposed aid in the construction of this railway.

In this report your committee have not considered the commercial importance of this enterprise, except incidentally. We have no doubt, however, that the construction of this line of railway to the Mexican border would soon be followed by a road from Laredo across the country to the city of Mexico, and thus open up to our markets the products of 8,000,000 of people in our sister republic. Between 70 and 80 per cent. of the trade of Mexico is now done with England, France, and Germany. The advantages to this country in a commercial point of view, which might naturally be expected by means of proper railway connections with Mexico, can hardly be estimated. It is, however, safe to say that, instead of the country getting 30 per cent. of the trade of Mexico, we would, by the opening up of these railway facilities, secure to ourselves at least 70 per cent. of such trade.

A better understanding between the people of Mexico and of the United States—a reciprocity of feeling and community of interests which would so soon spring up through the means of trade, commerce, and an interchange of products—would very soon place a quietus upon constant border warfare on the Rio Grande. Our military posts would be turned into warehouses, and instead of supporting a standing army there at a cost of \$4,000,000 a year, the custom-houses would yield a good return on our imports.

For these reasons, and many more which might be urged, your committee recommend the passage of the bill.

[Report No. 88, Forty-sixth Congress, second session.]

Mr. Upson, from the Committee on Military Affairs, submitted the following report (to accompany bill S. 53):

The Committee on Military Affairs, to which was referred the bill (H. R. 2186) making appropriation for the erection of suitable posts for the protection of the Rio Grande frontier, and Senate bill 53 making appropriation for the purpose of acquiring sites and erecting thereon such military posts on or near the Rio Grande frontier as may be deemed necessary by the Secretary of War for the adequate protection thereof, respectfully submit the following report:

The bills under consideration are of great national importance, having for their object the maintenance of peace and friendly relations and the promotion of commerce between the Republic of Mexico and of the United States, and the giving of due and

necessary protection to our constantly endangered and long-suffering citizen frontier people by the spoliations, murders, massacres, and inhuman atrocities of harbored and treaty-sheltering banditti, and of the wild and the more dangerous reservation Indian savages.

To determine as to the necessity or policy of making the appropriation contemplated by the bills under consideration, it is important to understand the past, present, and probable future condition of the Rio Grande or Mexican and Indian frontiers, where military posts are proposed to be constructed.

While your committee heartily join and concur in the congratulations of the President in his late annual message to Congress as to the improved and encouraging condition of our affairs upon the Mexican border, wherein he says, "It is a gratification to be able to announce that, through the judicious and energetic action of the military commanders of the two nations on each side of the Rio Grande, under the instructions of their respective governments, raids and depredations have greatly decreased," yet unless the same "judicious and energetic action" is continued, your committee are confident that the troubles with which that border has heretofore been afflicted will be renewed, and may involve the two nations in difficulties which may be destructive of the peaceful relations now existing, and so desirable to be promoted between them.

Although, for a short period, the administration of President Diaz has succeeded, in a commendable degree, to enforce its power and authority, and preserve comparative peace throughout the Mexican Republic, the same disturbing and revolutionary elements, though temporarily held in abeyance, exist there to-day, to a dangerous extent, which have existed since her independence as a nation. As her next presidential election draws near, her clans of revolt are organizing, her leaders of banditti are mustering their gangs for plunder and murder. The unmistakable mutterings of an approaching general revolution are heard along the Rio Grande. Our watchful and faithful sentinel upon that border warns us that the revolution has already begun. General Ord, in his report of November 28, 1879, to the adjutant-general Military Division of the Missouri, says:

"The revolution in the frontier States of Mexico has commenced in the State of Chihuahua, and, doubtless, will extend to other States; and raids into the United States, as well as summary demands for troops from this side, to protect American interests on the other, are inevitable. To meet that demand, restrain our reservation Indians, and be prepared to execute orders in regard to raids from Mexico, which Mexican troops, during a revolution, cannot prevent, the troops now in the department are wholly inadequate. I further invite attention to the fact that Victoria's large band has left the Department of the Missouri, and is now roaming in Chihuahua and Coahuila, States immediately on the border of this department. Those Indians doubtless will make their forays, within this command, whenever it suits them to do so."

We are again warned by the very recent news of the breaking out of a revolution in Durango, Mexico.

The fitting language of the President of the United States used towards Mexico in his annual message in 1858 and in 1859, might, ever since then, and now, with slight modification, be appropriately applied to that unfortunate country:

"Mexico has been in a state of constant revolution almost ever since it achieved its independence. One military leader after another has usurped the government in rapid succession; and the various constitutions, from time to time adopted, have been set at naught almost as soon as proclaimed. The successive governments have afforded no adequate protection either to Mexican citizens or foreign residents against lawless violence. * * * The truth is that this fine country, blessed with a productive soil and a benign climate, has been reduced by civil dissensions to a condition of almost hopeless anarchy and imbecility. She is entirely destitute of the power to maintain peace upon her own borders or to prevent incursions of banditti into our territory."

As it has been in the past, we have good reason to believe that the change of administration in Mexico will continue, at least in the near future, to be brought about by revolution, and the successful revolutionary leader declared President of the republic.

Mr. Baranda, in discussing a report upon the suspension of certain constitutional guarantees in the Mexican Deputies, in 1868, well said:

"Since the independence our unfortunate country has traced a tortuous and bloody road. What is the cause of the present state of our agriculture, our commerce, and our industry? Revolution. What is the reason our country is so unfortunate when it should be so happy? Revolution. What is the pretext of which our enemies at home have availed to beg foreign intervention? Revolution. What is the apparent motive upon which foreign nations have pretended to intervene in our political questions and to subjugate us? Revolution. Always revolution!"

Whenever those revolutions again occur, as we feel justified in predicting they will, we may look for, and wisdom dictates that we should provide against, renewed troubles upon our Mexican border. Notwithstanding an earnest and honest desire of the principal Mexican authorities to prevent and punish lawlessness and crime, and

preserve peace upon their Rio Grande frontier, from the lawless and dangerous character of a large majority of their population residing upon and frequenting that border, and from their internal dissensions and consequent weakness, they have been and will continue to be unable to accomplish that object, without the presence and active co-operation of an effective military force on the part of the United States, permanently stationed and properly quartered upon our side of that border.

The character of the population on the Mexican side of the Rio Grande does not seem to have materially changed since the same was described by General Ord, commanding the Department of Texas, in his examination before the Committee on Foreign Affairs, in 1876, when he said :

"The number of Mexicans who have been driven, by revolution and by their own lawless acts, from Central and Southern Mexico up to the borders of the Rio Grande, probably to escape the result of their offenses, has filled that country with lawless and desperate men. Even the rulers make little or no effort to prevent their committing offenses against the United States, as it would probably destroy their popularity if they did, and would make them odious to the majority of the people. For the same reason—the facility for crossing the river, and for escape to the United States—the Mexican troops, who are generally enlisted just as sailors used to be in England, by a sort of press-gang system, take advantage of the opportunity afforded them when brought north to the Rio Grande border, and desert to the United States. That prevents the central government from maintaining a force on the lower Rio Grande, to control the desperate and lawless people * * * The local authorities on the Mexican side, being under the influence of this lawless population, which I have described, and being sometimes their leaders, are averse to restoring any property, and I believe they have never yet shown any disposition to do so, no matter how strong the proof of the guilt of the party, or the evidence that the property is within their reach. Under these circumstances, and in view of the powerlessness or inability of the Mexican Government to enforce its own laws, or even to protect its own property we cannot expect them to protect ours, and I consider it not only justifiable, but the duty of the United States authorities to enforce the security of our own border, and to protect the people from invasion. * * * I will also add that it is a matter of great importance on that frontier that troops of the best sort should be stationed there."

Again, in December, 1877, in his examination before the same committee, he says :
 "My opinion is, that the bad element of the masses, and not the intelligent element, control Mexican politics, and that the bad element is ready for anything in the shape of war or raiding, or anything that would lead to plunder. * * * The population of the frontier towns is very lawless. The people are more like Arabs in their habits than any other people that I have read of."

Lieutenant-General Sheridan, in his report of October 25, 1878, to the Adjutant-General of the Army, says :

"On the Rio Grande border, troubles, until quite lately, have continued about the same as they have been for years past, and are incident to the character of the population on that border. The Rio Grande is about 1,600 miles in length from El Paso to its mouth, and fordable at almost any place ; and Mexicans and Indians committing depredations in Texas have every facility for escaping to the Mexican side."

Col. Edward Hatch, in his report of September 6, 1879, says :

"Probability of our government obtaining a criminal who has fled to any of the frontier Mexican States is slight, should he be of Mexican descent. Not that the Mexican officials are not inclined to do so ; it is beyond their control to produce him when the people or his relatives are inclined to shelter or protect him. * * * If necessary, a volume can be obtained from Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona, from settlers of that State and Territories, of similar statements made by the Mexicans, of raids, murders, and robberies upon American soil. The misfortune is that the Indians and robbers are merely common enemies, who take advantage of treaty relations of the two countries, a sparsely populated frontier on the Mexican side, inadequately protected. Were the United States troops allowed to follow the Indians when in pursuit, or was the Mexican Government strong enough to prevent the occupancy of their mountain regions by Indians, these bands of Indians would be exterminated."

General Ord, in his report of October 1, 1879, says :

"By reason of revolutions the Mexican populations along the river is of mongrel character : deserters from the contending forces ; Mexican soldiery sent to the border and there disbanded ; remnants of bands of wild, raiding, or refugee Indians, who formerly found safety in the deserts and unexplored mountains of Mexico or Texas, and who have gradually learned to trade and mix with the people of its border towns ; and smugglers ; all go to swell the lawless element."

Again, in his report of December 1, 1879, before referred to, General Ord says :

"Relative to additional troops, revolutions are likely to occur at any time, in all the Mexican States bordering upon Texas. One has just occurred in Chihuahua. These revolutions turn loose bands of outlaws to plunder the defenseless settlers of either country. Savages whose homes are in the wilds of Mexico, or who may escape from

the United States and take refuge there, are continually driving off stock and murdering the people of the Rio Grande Valley, and the immense and thinly-settled country adjacent thereto."

There are but six permanent posts situated directly upon the Rio Grande from Brownsville to El Paso, a distance, following the course of the river, of about 1,500 miles, viz:

	Miles.
Fort Brown, distant by land travel from Ringgold	117
Ringgold, distant by land travel from Fort McIntosh	120
Fort McIntosh, distant by land travel from Fort Duncan	115
Fort Duncan, distant by way of intermediate posts from Fort Quitman	529
And Fort Bliss, distant by land travel from Fort Quitman	84

Col. Edward Hatch, in his report of September 6, 1879, states:

"Referring to General Ord's report, it will be also seen that no troops of the Department of Texas are stationed directly on the Rio Grande River from a station not very distant from Fort Clark, though scouts are extended as far as Paso del Norte, leaving nearly 500 miles of river unguarded."

Three (3) posts are recommended to be built by General Ord between Fort Duncan and Fort Quitman. In his report dated December 1, 1879, made under the resolution of the House adopted June 25, 1879, he says:

"The following appropriations, needed for the construction of posts, &c., I view as necessary to give security and efficient protection to the lives and property of American citizens on the Texas frontier, * * * the cost of building not to exceed \$200,000."

The particular location of the posts in the bill recommended is properly to be left to the direction of the Secretary of War.

The necessity and importance of the construction of the posts in question have been repeatedly called to the attention of Congress. The President in his annual message of December 3, 1877, says:

"While I do not anticipate an interruption of friendly relations with Mexico, yet I cannot but look with solicitude upon a continuance of border disorders as exposing the two countries to initiations of popular feeling and mischances of action which are naturally unfavorable to complete amity. * * * Disturbances along the Rio Grande, in Texas, to which I have already referred, have rendered necessary the constant employment of a military force in that vicinity. * * * It is believed that this policy (referring to our troops crossing the border) has had the effect to check somewhat these depredations, and that, with a considerable increase of our force upon that frontier, and the establishment of several additional military posts along the Rio Grande, so as more effectually to guard that extensive border, peace may be preserved and the lives and property of our citizens in Texas fully protected."

The Secretary of War, in a letter addressed to the chairman of the Senate Committee on Military Affairs, dated December 1, 1877, says:

"In my opinion the preservation of peace and order along the boundary between this country and Mexico is a matter of sufficient importance to justify a considerable expenditure of money. Not only is it important to protect the people of the great and rapidly growing State of Texas from depredation, but it is also vastly important that every cause of difficulty between this country and Mexico should be removed, to the end that friendly relations may continue."

The Secretary of War, in a letter to a former chairman of this committee, Hon. H. B. Banning, stated:

"WAR DEPARTMENT,
"Washington City, February 19, 1879.

"SIR: In reply to your favor of yesterday I have the honor to inclose a report of the General of the Army upon the subject of the establishment of additional military posts in the vicinity of the Rio Grande border. I am of opinion that at least four additional military posts along the line of the Rio Grande should be constructed, and recommend the appropriation of \$200,000 for that purpose. General Ord estimates that at least that sum will be required, and I concur with him in that opinion."

General Ord, in his report of October 1, 1879, says:

"I have eleven additional companies to quarter, and no fit place for that purpose. I need not say that it is very disheartening to the officers to be compelled, through the cold winters and hot summers of Western Texas, to keep their wives and children in tents, shanties, or brush huts, or to have them packed in attics. The want of quarters for so many necessarily crowds all the others, and a glance at the amount of service—40,100 miles of scouts and expeditions, 18,700 miles more than last year—performed by the troops in a country like West Texas, ought to secure to them some comfort after a return from their long and dreary marches over trackless wastes. * * * I have, as earnestly as is consistent with propriety, urged the necessity of an appropriation of \$200,000 for four additional posts."

General Sheridan, in his report of October 25, 1878, referring to the services of the army under his command, says:

"No other army in the world has such a difficult line to keep in order, and no army

in modern times has had such an amount of work put upon the same number of men."

Under date of March 31, 1879, General Sherman says:

"I certainly will favor any proposition to build suitable posts along the Rio Grande frontier, because it forms a national boundary, and is likely to be permanent."

A bill to appropriate the same amount and for the erection of the posts in question was reported favorably by the Senate Committee on Military Affairs December 11, 1877, and passed the Senate without division, January 31, 1878. A like bill was favorably reported again on the 9th of December, 1879, from the same committee, and was passed without opposition December 11, 1879, after being amended by making the appropriation for the acquiring of sites and the erection thereon of military posts, &c, with a proviso as to title and taxes.

The report of General Ord of December 1, 1879, hereinbefore referred to, presents another question bearing upon the bills, considered of grave importance. He says:

"Connected with the '*peace and safety of the frontier*,' the incursions into Mexico by Indians from the United States should receive the prompt and serious attention of the government. General Trevino, commanding division of the north, army of Mexico, by letter of June 11, 1879, invited my attention to the subject. * * *

"If these Indians are so detrimental to the interest of settlers in West Texas, it is not to be expected that they will have more respect for the unprotected settlements on the Mexican frontier. I venture to suggest they are not now in the same unrestrained condition in which they were when the XIth article of the treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo was abrogated—when they had a country from which to get food. On the contrary, they have been gathered on reservations, so called, and the United States has assumed the responsibility of restraining and providing for them.

"If the government fails to provide for them, it becomes a question how far it may be responsible for the consequences of a failure which compels the Indians to depredate upon the nearest neighbors, including those in Mexico, for the necessities of life.

"I believe a careful scrutiny as to the ration of food issued to each Indian on the Forts Stanton and Sill reservations will establish that is not enough to sustain life."

Claimants aggregating their demands by the millions, and constantly increasing, for losses of property by reason of the alleged failure of the United States to give protection to her people upon the Indian and Mexican frontiers, are day by day, session by session, and year by year, loudly and persistently knocking at the halls of Congress for payment.

Who can question the soundness or the applicability, to the well-founded claims indicated, of the principle announced by the President in his annual message of 1859 that "the life and property of every American citizen ought to be sacredly protected in every quarter of the world"; and as declared by the Secretary of State, Mr. Evarts, in his letter to Mr. Foster, of August 13, 1878, when, speaking of the inability of Mexico to prevent marauding attacks upon our people, he says:

"This inability may be pleaded as a reason for the failure to check the crimes complained of, but that only makes the stronger the duty of the United States to protect the lives and property of its citizens, for assuredly, if the Government of Mexico cannot do it that of the United States must, so far as it can.

"The first duty of a government is to protect life and property. This is a paramount obligation. For this, governments are instituted, and governments neglecting or failing to perform it become worse than useless. This duty the Government of the United States has determined to perform to the extent of its power toward its citizens on the borders. * * * Protection *in fact* to American lives and property is the sole point upon which the United States is tenacious."

The bill reported is to provide in part the means necessary to enable the government, by its strong arm, to perform the sacred duty of protecting the lives and property of its citizens upon its borders. Can the House, under a plea of carrying out a rigid policy of retrenchment and economy, justify itself in refusing to unite with the other branches of the government in providing these means and in thereby assuming the fearful responsibility of leaving our frontier settlers without adequate security and protection and our troops without shelter, which may result in the loss of much valuable property, in the destruction of many precious lives, in retarding for years the rapid settlement, development, and growth of our vast frontier domain, which would be certain under protection, and in adding to the already alarming amount of "Mexican and Indian depredation claims" other, and perchance still greater, demands of like character, which may eventually ripen into an allowed indebtedness, compared with which the cost of protection will be insignificant?

A due regard for our relations with Mexico also demands protection upon that frontier. By timely and efficient protection only can we expect to preserve friendly relations and a lasting peace between the two republics.

As it is a sacred duty and a solemn obligation, it should be the recognized, determined, publicly declared and exercised policy of the American Government *that the life and property of every American citizen shall be protected.*

As a duty owing to our citizens and soldiers, and on the grounds of a wise, economical, commercial, and international policy, your committee report back Senate bill 53 without amendment and recommend its passage.

WAR DEPARTMENT,
Washington City, May 29, 1878.

The Secretary of War has the honor to transmit to the House of Representatives, for the information of the Committee on Railways and Canals, in response to letters dated May 8th and May 13th, respectively, from Hon. Gustave Schleicher, of said committee, a copy of report of the chief quartermaster Department of Texas, dated January 26, 1878, and a report of the Quartermaster-General, dated May 22, 1878, relative to the construction of a broad-gauge railway from San Antonio, Tex., to Laredo, and also in relation to House bill 4745, "to aid in the construction of the Corpus Christi, San Diego and Rio Grande Railroad." The views of the Quartermaster-General are concurred in by this department. Attention is respectfully invited to the letter of the Quartermaster-General, dated the 23d instant, herewith.

GEO. W. MCCRARY,
Secretary of War.

The SPEAKER of the House of Representatives.

QUARTERMASTER GENERAL'S OFFICE,
Washington, D. C., May 22, 1878.

SIR: I have the honor to return herewith the communication of the House Committee on Railways and Canals, dated May 8, 1878, requesting of the Secretary of War any information in addition to that already communicated to the committee in reference to the interest of the government in having a railroad built on the Rio Grande border, and as to the comparative advantages of Camargo and Laredo as a terminus for such a railroad, desired by the committee in consideration of H. R. bill 4745, to aid in the construction of the Corpus Christi, San Diego and Rio Grande Railroad from Corpus Christi to Laredo.

The chief quartermaster Department of Texas has made a report, dated January 26, 1878, a copy of which is inclosed. I concur in the views therein expressed.

Any railway from tide-water to the Rio Grande frontier, or penetrating the country along this troubled border, will be an aid of importance to the government in its efforts to put an end to raids and disturbances, which it is plainly the duty of the general government to suppress, for protection to its citizens in life and limb and property is the first duty of a republican government. But I believe that the time required in the present troubled state of peace to repay to the United States Treasury \$870,000 out of saving of expenses of transportation will be long. Should war break out with Mexico then railroads to the Rio Grande and extending up and down the valley will be simply invaluable. The true base of operations on the Rio Grande frontier is now San Antonio, to which place railroads are already in operation, connecting that base with Galveston, Saint Louis, and with the general railroad system of the country.

The railroad which seems to me most needed by the War Department for communicating with the Rio Grande is one from San Antonio to Laredo. Railroads perpendicular to the frontier are preferable to those parallel to it as being less liable to destruction by hostile expeditions.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

M. C. MEIGS,
Quartermaster-General, Brevet Major-General, U. S. A.

To the honorable the SECRETARY OF WAR.

HEADQUARTERS ARMY OF THE UNITED STATES,
Washington, D. C., January 21, 1880.

SIR: I beg to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of January 20, and to say that I certainly do believe the best interests of the United States will be advanced by the building of a railroad from San Antonio, Tex., to Laredo, on the Rio Grande, especially if the citizens of Mexico will take it up, and prosecute it as far as Saltillo inland. Such a railroad would ultimately connect the railroad system of the United States with that in Mexico.

Railroads are modern civiliziers, and are most useful for frontier defense, because they enable us to use our small detachments to better advantage. My judgment is that roads radiating from San Antonio west to Fort Clark, southwest to Laredo, and south to Brazos Santiago and Brownsville, would greatly facilitate the defense of the Rio Grande frontier against the thieving raids which have delayed the settlement of that quarter of Texas.

I prefer not to express any decided opinion as to the best manner for the general

government to aid the construction of such railroads, as that does not properly pertain to my office.

I beg in this connection to inclose a copy of a letter on this very subject, which I wrote some days ago to Mr. Hoxie, Palestine, Tex.

With great respect, your obedient servant,

W. T. SHERMAN, *General.*

Hon. C. M. SHELLEY, M. C., *Washington, D. C.*

WAR DEPARTMENT, QUARTERMASTER-GENERAL'S OFFICE,
Washington, D. C., January 27, 1880.

SIR: I am in receipt of your letter of this date in reference to the advantages of a railroad from San Antonio to Laredo, Tex., and in reply I beg to state that a road between these two points, in my opinion, would be of very great advantage to the government. I concur with the views of General Meigs, Quartermaster-General, given in his letter to the Secretary of War under date of May 22, 1878.

As to my opinion whether the advantages of this road would be sufficient to justify Congress in aiding it, I would state that I have always thought that Congress would be justified in extending judicious aid to roads of national importance which run through a country sparsely populated.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

STEWART VAN VLIET,
Acting Quartermaster-General, Bvt. Major-General, U. S. A.

Hon. C. M. SHELLEY,
Chairman subcommittee, House of Representatives.

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