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Congressional Record S. 548 - S. 3334 - Introduction of Bill Increasing the Daily hire Rates on Box Cars

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S. 3334—INTRODUCTION OF BILL INCREASING THE DAILY HIRE RATES FOR THE USE OF CERTAIN FREIGHT CARS

Mr. MANSFIELD. Mr. President, in the past 10 years the Montana congressional delegation has been plagued with an annual problem for which no reasonable solution has been developed. I refer to the continual and, in some instances, increasing shortage of boxcars on the Western railroad lines.

This is a very serious matter to States like Montana where so many farmers and elevator operators are dependent upon an adequate source of boxcars to ship their wheat to the export market on the west coast.

Today Montana ranchers are buying large, expensive trucks to transport grain to water outlets on the Columbia River for transport to the coast. This situation has been compounded by our expanded export of grain. Despite the annual discussion on how best to facilitate a return of boxcars to owner lines, very little effective action has been taken by the Interstate Commerce Commission or the Congress.

This year the car shortage on the Great Northern Railroad line has reached ridiculous proportions. Recently, there was a Montana request for 3,500 cars and they were receiving something on the order of 10 or 15 per day. Fortunately, this year the situation has not been as bad on the Northern Pacific line, which also crosses the State of Montana. This does not mean, however, that it will not happen in the future. To date, there has been no effective means of convincing the eastern railroad lines that they should return the cars to the owners as expeditiously as possible.

To date, the ICC has been hesitant to issue strong orders establishing incentive charges and increased penalties.

I have joined with a number of my colleagues here in the Senate in cosponsoring S. 3223 to give the ICC additional authority to handle the situation. The proposed bill would authorize an increase in the incentive per diem and penalties. The congressional interest in this proposal seems to have generated little activity at the agency level.

I believe that we must impress upon the railroads and the Commission the seriousness of this situation. I will, therefore, send to the desk a bill which would set per diem rates at \$100 minimum and an increase of penalty charges from \$1,000 and up to \$10,000. These provisions seems to be severe, and they are meant to be so. The boxcar shortage should not be allowed to disrupt the industry each year, as has been the case as far as Montana is concerned, over the past two decades. Recently, it has been so on an almost continual basis. Hopefully, this latest proposal will give notice to all parties that the boxcar shortage in the West will not be permitted any longer. There are solutions and Congress and the Interstate Commerce Commission must act to provide the necessary relief.

Mr. President, I send to the desk a bill

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to amend the Interstate Commerce Act to increase daily hire rates for use of certain freight cars, and for other purposes, and I ask that the bill be referred to the Committee on Commerce.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The bill will be received and referred to the Committee on Commerce.

The bill (S. 3334), to amend the Interstate Commerce Act to increase the daily hire rates for the use of certain freight cars, and for other purposes, introduced by Mr. MANSFIELD, was received, read twice by its title, and referred to the Committee on Commerce.