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Congressional Record S. 5956 - 5958 - Postpone Implementation of Proposed 'Amtrak' Rail System (Railpax 4)

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TO POSTPONE IMPLEMENTATION OF PROPOSED "AMTRAK" RAIL SYSTEM

Mr. MANSFIELD. Mr. President, on behalf of my distinguished colleague from Montana (Mr. METCALF) and myself, I send a resolution to the desk and ask that it be stated.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The resolution will be stated.

The assistant legislative clerk read the resolution as follows:

Resolved, That it is the sense of the Senate that section 401(a)(1) of the Rail Passenger Service Act of 1970, as amended by striking out "May 1, 1971," each place it appears and inserting in lieu thereof in each such place "December 1, 1971.

Sec. 2. That section 401(b) of such Act be amended by striking out "May 1, 1971," each place it appears and inserting in lieu thereof in each such place "December 1, 1971.

Sec. 3. That said modifications should be enacted as soon as possible in order to enable the correction of certain inequities in the so-called proposed rail service system known as Amtrak.

Mr. MANSFIELD. Mr. President, I ask for its immediate consideration.

Mr. PROUTY. Mr. President, reserving the right to object, and may I say to my distinguished friend the majority leader that I am most reluctant to object, I think he does know that the Committee on Commerce this morning approved a resolution which will require and provide a $100,000 authorization for Amtrak to conduct a study and report back to the committee within 30 days and take into consideration the trains which will cease to serve the people in his State, the people in my State, and elsewhere.

Mr. MANSFIELD. Will the distinguished Senator from Vermont yield right there?

Mr. PROUTY. I yield.

Mr. MANSFIELD. If I recall, there is no train service in the States of Vermont, New Hampshire, and Maine.

Mr. PROUTY. That is absolutely correct.

Mr. MANSFIELD. There were three transcontinental lines in Montana and a study means that come Saturday, Railpax, Amtrak, the Halftrack, or what ever they now call the operation goes into effect. So, if we want to do both at the same time, that is fine. But why stop the service to carry on an investigation? It will never get back on the track again.

Mr. PROUTY. If the Senator from Montana will yield further, it seems to me that we are going to destroy the whole concept which may restore effective rail service to this country unless we take action which the distinguished majority leader is suggesting at the present time.

I am concerned. I am as unhappy as he is. By virtue of the fact that we have no train service in northern Vermont, New Hampshire, or in Maine. Mr. Roger Lewis, whose nomination was before the Commerce Committee this morning, in response to a question from me, stated categorically and specifically that it was the intention of the corporation to conduct such studies as this, and that these trains may be put back into service at any time. Such studies are provided for in the law as it exists at the present time. So, I am most reluctant, but I feel that I have to object to the Senator's request.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Mr. FAN-IN.

Mr. PROUTY. I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard, and the resolution goes over under the rule.

Mr. MANSFIELD. Mr. President, I cannot follow the reasoning of my distinguished friend from Vermont, whose State has been without rail service for a long time now and for reasons which he is well aware. But, as I have tried to indicate, there was a time when three transcontinental lines ran through the State of Montana—A State of 148,000 square miles and 700 miles across. And what will we have if this plan goes into effect on Saturday? We will have one, the old Great Northern which is now part of the Burlington Northern. My colleagues and I are delighted that the Great Northern is going to be retained and that the northern part, the high line of Montana, will be served.

But we feel very strongly that, in addition, the southern and western part covered by the Northern Pacific should also be served. There is great need.

May I point out also that the Great Northern and the Northern Pacific came into being solely because of land grants given by the Government.

The Milwaukee, the Third Transcontinental Lines, was built privately. There were no land grants. But over the years it has gradually cut off passenger service so that it now has only freight service running through the State of Montana.

I am sorry that the resolution has been objected to. It expresses clearly the great inequity that exists in this situation and, if its objective is adopted, there will be sufficient time to work out a fair and adequate solution.

ORDER FOR ADJOURNMENT

Mr. MANSFIELD. Mr. President, I now ask unanimous consent, instead of coming in on Monday, that when the Senate adjourns today it stand in adjournment until the hour of 12 o'clock noon tomorrow.
April 29, 1971

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection? The Chair hears none, and it is so ordered.

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Mr. MANSFIELD. Mr. President, at that time unless satisfaction is received, the resolution will be brought up for consideration. If it can be brought up, I want to serve notice on the Senate that it is the intention of the two Senators from Montana to do everything in their power to look after the interests of the people of Montana and to look after the immediate interests of the country.

Mr. PROUTY. Mr. President, may I say that I am very sympathetic to the Senator's position. We have a similar problem in northern New England. However, we must remember that contracts have been entered into and are binding with 20 major railroad systems in this country.

I believe that we will be involved in lawsuits. I am not a lawyer. I cannot get into the legal technicalities. However, obviously we can have lawsuits after lawsuit. The Federal Government, I would think, would have to honor these contracts which are now completed.

It is not my intention to do anything to discourage the maintenance of adequate train service in Montana or in my section of the country.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Montana referred twice to this matter. I assume that it is an urgent matter.

Mr. MANSFIELD. Mr. President, the measure will be introduced in the form of a bill, and will thus have the effect of law if and when enacted.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The bill will be appropriately referred.

Mr. MANSFIELD. Mr. President, since as a bill it will have to be referred, I would prefer its consideration tomorrow as I am going over to see the rule. It is therefore a resolution. If it can later be worked out to consider this proposal as a bill today or tomorrow I shall hold open that option.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The resolution will go over under the rule, objection having been heard to its immediate consideration.

Mr. MANSFIELD. Mr. President, I was interested in the remarks of the distinguished Senator from Vermont because, as far as I can see, he has no chance of getting any service under any circumstances. I do not propose to operate there. Maine, Vermont, and New Hampshire have lost their service over the years past. However, as far as Montana and the Middle West are concerned, the Heartland of America, we have what we have already paid for, what the Government paid for in the form of land grants. And as far as I can recall, the G.N. and the N.P. Railroads have not been operated for at a loss, as have some of the eastern railroads such as Penn Central.

There is a great need, as my colleague has brought out, to take care of the needs of our veterans and college students and 80 percent of our people, not only in connection with the NF, but also along the short line from Butte to Salt Lake City.

I would like the Senator to know that I concur completely in the remarks of my distinguished colleague. He has worked night and day to bring about rectification of this situation.

I would like to state that in my opinion what Railpax, now Amtrak, has done is not for the benefit of Congress, but to place emphasis on the urban areas of this Nation and to ignore the rural sections of the country.

Let me read, if I may, an editorial from the Billings Gazette of April 25, last Sunday. It is written by an old student of mine at the university, Doc Bowler, a good friend of my colleague's. He is editor of the Gazette.

I read what he says:

The end of an era will come to Billings next weekend unless Congress can be prevailed upon to delay the start of Railpax.

Railpax, or AMTRAK as the new national railroad corporation is known, starts operation May 1 in what well may spell the doom of the passenger in much of this State and service.

In southern Montana, Wyoming, South Dakota and most of North Dakota and Idaho, Railpax spells added. That's all. It doesn't happen and it shouldn't happen. Vast segments of the nation should not be left without passenger train service.

Where Railpax chiefs got their figures on passenger travel, and what they are for that matter, is unknown. It can be presumed, however, that they were taken from the railways that had been hauling passengers.

Railpax tells us that the northern route was chosen for Montana because of more ridership, whatever that means. At this writing the term has not been given definition or explanation.

It certainly is not advocated here that the northern route across Montana and North Dakota be abandoned in favor of the southern, more populous route. Both are needed.

That expresses the feelings of my colleague and me. I continue to read:

There is good reason to believe that high officials of the Burlington Northern are just as amused as most people in the area when they learned, along with the rest of us, that only the northern or Hi-Line route would be used.

Insiders thought both would be used, perhaps on alternate days, to serve both Yellowstone and Glacier parks and for the areas. The Interstate Commerce Commission recommended it.

The Interstate Commerce Commission, of all groups, recommended it.

Whether Congress will be responsible to the will of the people is not known. Energetic forces in Montana now seek a delay in Railpax starting May 1. Another 90 days is sought in which to make a decision.

Senators Mike Mansfield and Lee Metcalf and Representatives John Melcher and Dick Shoup are trying to persuade their fellow congressmen that Railpax is not doing what it said it would. More time is needed.

It was, as one of them states, the intent of the Passenger Service Act to bring about rejuvenated passenger service that would replace deteriorating and stagnant facilities that the majority of railroads in this country seemingly have and are unwilling to improve.

That is not what is happening under Railpax.

In the Burlington Northern's area alone the number of passenger trains is being cut from 33 to 6 and the daily train miles from 26,972 to 6,858.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

Mr. MANSFIELD. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

Mr. President, since as a bill it will have to be referred, I would prefer its consideration tomorrow as I am going over to see the rule. It is therefore a resolution. If it can later be worked out to consider this proposal as a bill today or tomorrow I shall hold open that option.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. That is, I concur completely in the remarks of my colleague. He is editor of the Gazette.

Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The second assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. MANSFIELD. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. MANSFIELD. Mr. President, I have had further consultations regarding the parlimentary situation and in behalf of my distinguished colleague, the Senator from Montana (Mr. Metcalf), and myself, I introduce a bill and ask for its first reading. I do so as a means of keeping this issue alive in the form of a Senate bill. I would like action today but I am not unmindful of the parlimentary rights and privileges of other
Senators. I would hope for action tomorrow.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will read the bill.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

S. 1698

A bill to postpone for seven months the date on which the National Railroad Passenger Corporation is authorized to contract for provision of intercity rail passenger service; to postpone for seven months the date on which the Corporation is required to begin providing intercity rail passenger service, and for other purposes.

Mr. PROUTY. Mr. President, I object to further consideration of the bill.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Second reading will go over until the next legislative day.

Mr. MANSFIELD. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The second assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. BYRD of West Virginia. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. MANSFIELD. Mr. President, will the Senator yield briefly?

Mr. BYRD of West Virginia. I yield.

Mr. MANSFIELD. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to withdraw the resolution previously introduced, in favor of the bill S. 1698, just introduced.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, the resolution is withdrawn.