

REGULATING GRANTING OF PASSES ON THE ALASKA
RAILROAD

FEBRUARY 8, 1926.—Committed to the Committee of the Whole House on the
state of the Union and ordered to be printed

Mr. CURRY, from the Committee on the Territories, submitted the
following

REPORT

[To accompany H. R. 6117]

The Committee on the Territories, to whom was referred the bill (H. R. 6117) to amend an act entitled "An act to authorize the President of the United States to locate, construct, and operate railroads in the Territory of Alaska, and for other purposes," approved March 12, 1914, having considered the same, report it to the House with the following amendments:

On page 1, beginning on line 6, strike out the words "inmates of hospitals and charitable and eleemosynary institutions" and strike out the comma after the word "institutions" and insert these words and comma after the words "homeless persons," on line 9 of page 1.

On page 1, line 8, after the word "work" insert the words "when engaged in their work in Alaska."

The committee reports the bill with the recommendation that as amended it do pass.

The following letter from the Secretary of the Interior, Hon. Hubert Work, prompted the introduction of this bill:

INTERIOR DEPARTMENT,
Washington, December 16, 1925.

HON. CHARLES F. CURRY,
*Chairman Committee on the Territories,
House of Representatives.*

MY DEAR MR. CURRY: I inclose herewith for your consideration, and introduction if you deem proper, draft of bill designed to extend the privilege of granting passes in certain instances on the Alaska Railroad.

Up to the rendition of an opinion by the Attorney General, July 30, 1924, that existing law did not warrant, the department followed the practice of exchanging passes with other common carriers.

I am advised by the general manager of the railroad that the loss of the privilege has been keenly felt by the employees of the railroad, as it was a substantial

aid to them in meeting the occasional heavy expense of a trip to their homes or other points in the United States. In his opinion the restoration of the privilege would not in any way burden the railroad, as the resulting free travel by employees of other roads would not be heavy. The privilege is one to which railroad men generally are accustomed, and they feel that they are entitled to it as one of the features of employment by a railroad.

It is also deemed proper and advisable to secure authority for the issuance of passes to ministers of religion, persons engaged exclusively in charitable work, and certain other similar classes specified in the inclosed draft of bill.

Those engaged in such work in Alaska are hampered by the limited amount of available funds, while the services they perform are highly beneficial to the public in the railroad territory.

Finally, attention is invited to the fact that the provisions herein recommended have been in force for many years among the common carriers in the United States, subject to the provisions of the interstate commerce act.

Very truly yours,

HUBERT WORK, *Secretary.*

The bill is designed to give the management of the Alaska Railroad the same authority to issue passes and to interchange passes as is now enjoyed by all other railroads in the United States.

Prior to July 30, 1924, the railroad management followed the practice of exchanging passes with other common carriers. On that date the Attorney General rendered an opinion that existing law did not warrant the practice.

This has worked a hardship on the employees of the railroad, as it deprives them of the privilege of traveling without cost on other railroads in the United States. This is a privilege that is enjoyed by all other railroad men, and your committee feels that the employees of the Alaska Railroad are entitled to enjoy all of the rights and privileges that are extended to the employees of other railroads.

The provision to extend passes on the Alaska Railroad to ministers of religion, traveling secretaries of Young Men's Christian Associations, and persons exclusively engaged in charitable and eleemosynary work when engaged in their work in Alaska, and to indigent, destitute, and homeless persons, inmates of hospitals and charitable and eleemosynary institutions is approved by your committee, since it follows the custom approved by all railroads and followed by them under existing law. The Government railroad can afford to be as generous in its dealing with the persons specified as can privately owned and operated roads.

It should also be noted that the bill does not require the issuance of passes nor compel the interchange of passes, but merely gives the management of the railroad authority to do so in their discretion.

The bill is approved by the Secretary of the Interior, and its adoption was urged before your committee by Mr. N. W. Smith, the general manager of the Alaska Railroad; Mr. W. N. Doak, vice president and national legislative representative of the Brotherhood of Railroad Trainmen; Mr. D. B. Robertson, president of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen and Engineers; Mr. H. E. Wills, assistant grand chief of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers; and Mr. W. M. Clark, vice president of the Order of Railway Conductors.

The effect of the enactment of this bill on the financial condition of the Alaska Railroad is outlined in the following report to your committee by the general manager of the road, Mr. Noel W. Smith:

A review for a period of one year immediately following the discontinuance of the pass privileges shows that the Alaska Railroad paid the railroads of the United

States from appropriations for the maintenance and operation of the Alaska Railroad, for fares for officers and employees of the Alaska Railroad traveling on official business, \$1,254. In the same period, fares to the amount of \$906.95 were paid to the Alaska Railroad by persons, who, had the proposed law been in effect, could legally have been granted free transportation. The operation of the proposed law, had it been in effect, would have produced a net gain of \$307.05 in favor of the Alaska Railroad.

We have not included as a credit to the railroad the reduced rates formerly granted by the steamship companies, which were withdrawn by them when the railroad discontinued the issuance of passes, as we have no assurance these companies will again grant these reduced rates if the free pass bill becomes a law. If it is assumed that the reduced rates will again be put into effect, we can increase the above figures by \$780, making a total net gain of \$1,127.05.

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