

Resolutions of a meeting of the Illinois State Farmers' Association April 1873

Introduction

These resolutions, passed in Springfield at a convention of the Illinois State Farmers' Association, typify the grievances the Granger movement tried to remedy, particularly the farmers' complaints against the railroads and their demand for effective state regulation.

Resolved, By the Farmers of Illinois, in Mass Meeting Assembled, That all chartered monopolies, not regulated and controlled by law, have proved in that respect detrimental to the public prosperity, corrupting in their management, and dangerous to republican institutions.

Resolved, That the railways of the world, except in those countries where they have been held under the strict regulation and supervision of the government, have proved themselves arbitrary, extortionate and as opposed to free institutions and free commerce between states as were the feudal barons of the middle ages.

Resolved, That we hold, declare and resolve, that this despotism, which defies our laws, plunders our shippers, impoverishes our people, and corrupts our government, shall be subdued and made to subserve the public interest at whatever cost.

Resolved, That in view of the present extortions, we look with alarm upon the future of an interest which can combine in the hands of a few men a capital of nearly \$250,000,000, and we believe it essential to the prosperity of all classes that this contest continue until these corporations acknowledge the supremacy of law.

Resolved, That we regard it as the undoubted power, and the imperative duty of the legislature, to pass laws fixing reasonable maximum rates for freight and

passengers, without classification of roads, and that we urge upon our General Assembly the passage of such laws.

Resolved, That we urge the passage of a bill enforcing the principle that railroads are public highways, and requiring railroads to make connections with all roads whose tracks meet or cross their own, and to receive and transmit cars and trains offered over their roads at reasonable maximum rates, whether offered at such crossings, or at stations along their roads, and empowering the making of connections by municipal corporations for that purpose, and for the public use. .

Resolved, That we indorse most fully the action of those who tender legal rates of fare upon the railroads, and refuse to pay more; and that it is the duty of the Legislature to provide by law for the defense by the State of Illinois of suits commenced, or that hereafter may be commenced, by railroad companies against individuals who have in good faith insisted, or hereafter may insist, upon the right to ride on railroads at legal rates.

Resolved, That the presentation of railroad passes to our legislators, whatever may be the spirit and intent with which they are accepted, are demoralizing . . . ; and we look to our legislature, now in session, to rise above personal considerations of pecuniary interest or convenience, and to pass a law making it a misdemeanor for any Senator, or other State or county officers, to accept any railroad pass. .

Whereas, The Constitution of 1848, Article X, prohibits the legislature from granting special railroad charters . . . it is extremely doubtful whether any railroad charter granted since April 1, 1848, by the legislature of Illinois, is of any validity, and that the vested rights of railroad monopolies in this State exist only by assumption of the monopolies and the suffering of the people. .

Whereas, The Constitution of 1870, Article XI, Section 13, prohibits any railroad company from issuing watered stock . . . and whereas, this article of the Constitution has probably been violated by nearly all the railroad companies in the state; therefore, Resolved, that it is the duty of the railroad commissioners to look carefully into this matter, and to commence proceedings in all clear cases . . . against all railroad companies which have disregarded this important provision of the organic law of the State.

Resolved, That we are in favor of the immediate repeal of the protective duties on iron, steel, lumber, and all materials which enter into the construction of railroad cars, steamships, sailing vessels, agricultural implements, etc., and that we urge upon Congress immediate action for this purpose, that cheap railroads and cheap ships are necessary to cheap freights; and that we invite the railroad companies to co-operate with us to that end.

