

HOUSE No. 239.

Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, April 4, 1871.

The Committee on Railways, to whom was referred the petition of Thomas M. Hopkinson, praying for a law requiring more equal rates for season tickets on railroads, have duly considered said petition, and report that the matter was referred by them to the Railroad Commissioners for investigation, whose report to the Committee is herewith submitted to the House for its information. The conclusions arrived at by the Commissioners commend themselves to the judgment of the Committee, wherefore the Committee recommend that the petitioners have leave to withdraw.

Per order of the Committee,

J. Q. ADAMS.

REPORT

On the Petition of Thomas M. Hopkinson and others, for a law requiring more equal and just Rates for Season Tickets on the Railroads in this Commonwealth.

A hearing on this case was had on Saturday, the 25th day of February, when certain of the petitioners appeared and made a statement as to what was desired. A general law was asked for regulating the rates of reduction below the usual fares, at which season and package tickets should be sold throughout the Commonwealth. The petitioners called attention to the fact that no proportion existed between the price of season tickets on the railroads to various points and the distances to those points from the common terminus for such tickets. For example: A ticket to a point one mile from the terminus might be \$7 per quarter; one to a point eight miles from the same terminus, \$15 per quarter; a third, to a point twenty-five miles from the same terminus, \$30 per quarter. The petitioners wished a law providing for the sale of these tickets on something approaching a *pro rata* principle, the price of the ticket being fixed approximately to the number of miles of road over which it gives the right to travel.

There was no peculiar hardship about the case of the petitioners. They travel from Groveland to Haverhill, a distance of three miles, for \$9 per quarter. This is six cents a trip. None of the roads running out of Boston to points equally distant, whether operated by steam or horse power, afford any better rates to the public, as will be seen on examination of the

subjoined table.* The rates paid by the petitioners may therefore be assumed as the standard rates of the roads in this State.

The question is twofold: (1) whether the amounts generally charged for season tickets over short distances on the roads of the State are in themselves excessive; and (2) whether these amounts are excessive as compared with those charged for longer distances.

The first question has already undergone some very recent examination in connection with the Quincy petition for cheap working-men's trains. A rate equivalent to 50 cents a week for one trip each way was suggested, after examination of the returns, as the lowest reasonable basis for the trial of that experiment; this rate to be uniform for all distances run by the proposed cheap trains. The trains referred to by the petitioners are not exceptional or experimental trains. They ask for a general law applying to tickets good in all trains. The rate alleged to be excessive is 72 cents per week, in place of 50 cents. If 50 cents a week is to be considered a fair rate for an experimental system of cheap trains, the Commissioners are unable to say that they consider 72 cents in itself an excessive charge, calling for remedial legislation, for season tickets on ordinary trains. It is as low as ever has been, or now is usual

* TABLE.

RAILROADS.	Miles.	Per Quarter.
BOSTON AND MAINE RAILROAD.		
Boston to Somerville,	2	\$10 00
Boston to Wellington's,	3	13 50
Andover to Lawrence,	3	9 00
BOSTON AND LOWELL RAILROAD.		
Boston to Winter Hill,	3	10 00
Chelmsford to Lowell,	3	10 00
FITCHBURG RAILROAD.		
Boston to Cambridge,	4	10 00
BOSTON AND PROVIDENCE RAILROAD.		
Boston to Roxbury,	2	7 00
Boston to Boylston Street,	3	9 00
OLD COLONY AND NEWPORT RAILWAY.		
Boston to Savin Hill,	3	12 50
Boston to Harrison Square,	4	14 00

on the roads of this State. Whether a lower scale of rates can be successfully adopted, is yet a matter of experiment. Legislation looking towards it would at this time, in the opinion of the Commissioners, be premature.

Can the rate named be considered excessive as compared with the rates charged for longer distances? Where only \$18 per quarter is charged for eight miles, should \$9 per quarter be regarded as excessive for two miles? The formation of an opinion upon this point involves some consideration of the working of the season-ticket business. Any extensive demand for these tickets can exist only in the neighborhood of considerable business centres, and its accommodation requires a regular equipment of cars, stations, &c. The trains which accommodate the travel run a given distance. The company must necessarily supply cars, &c., for the whole of such travel, no matter at what point it may take the train throughout that distance. These trains, therefore, do not continually empty and fill, but they arrive or they start full, and make a large portion of their route more or less empty. Practically it costs as much to draw a passenger a part as the whole of the route. The difference between hauling an empty seat and a seat with a passenger in it would not probably exceed one-third of one mill per mile. If a train has to be got ready and sent out it would not cost a road over three mills more to carry a passenger eight miles than it would three miles. This distinction destroys the whole theory of *pro rata* charges as applied to these passengers. For obvious reasons the companies cannot apply it to ordinary, casual travel. As regards this they can only average and charge according to distance. They can, however, and do recognize the distinction as regards regular and reliable local travel. What may be called the initial cost of starting the train is here approximately divided among all those for whose convenience the train is started, and in addition to this each passenger pays for the distance he travels, be the same longer or shorter. This rule of division the Commissioners believe to be a just one. Such a law as is petitioned for would very unequally distribute an expense incurred for the common benefit. So far from inclining towards it, the Commissioners are, on the contrary, disposed to believe that for a large regular and daily travel over short distances to and from business centres, the one-

price system would be the more just and equitable. The cost of depots, of road-bed, of motive power, of rolling stock and of officials incurred in running these trains is the same, no matter what distance the passenger goes; the only difference to the corporation is the inappreciable one of the cost of hauling perhaps 130 pounds more or less. The initial cost constitutes probably nineteen-twentieths of the whole expenditure.

For the reasons above stated the Commissioners would respectfully recommend that the petitioners have leave to withdraw.

E. APPLETON,
CHARLES F. ADAMS, JR.
Commissioners.

NOTE.—Mr. Converse was not present at this hearing.

