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The Baltimore and Ohio Railroad Company

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October 10, 1935

Miss Ida M. Tarbell
120 East Nineteenth Street
New York, N. Y.

Dear Miss Tarbell:

I have your letter of the Fourth and return herewith your own copy of the digest of our Relief Department operation so that you may note the interlinear corrections made. I also attach a clean copy.

Perhaps I should explain two of the changes made in your copy. The B & O does not guarantee the Relief Department funds as stated in the first paragraph. It is merely responsible for the integrity of the funds, their proper investment, etc. The fact remains that in the long history of the fund, there has been no failure to meet obligations.

In the second paragraph the statement is made in your draft that no pension is less than $25.00 a month. The change here has been necessitated by the fact that there has been a horizontal reduction of pensions of 10%, making the new actual minimum $22.50.

I hope these changes will be perfectly clear and I will appreciate if it you will send me a copy of any publication in which reference to our Relief Department activities is made.

Yours very truly,

Robert Van Sant

Digital Image, 2011, The Ida M. Tarbell Collection, 1890-1944, Allegheny College Pelletier Library.

The distress which railroad men particularly suffered because of disabling accidents, as well as the helpless conditions of their families in case of death became a serious concern of the Baltimore & Ohio railroad in the '70's. A thorough study was made of the activities of the English societies which attempted to meet these problems and finally in 1880 the railroad established a Relief Plan which has been in operation ever since. It is divided into two sections, one handles relief, the other savings. The former cares for a man injured or sick and for his family in case of his death, the money comes from regular fixed contributions of the members of the Relief Association. The company pays operating and administrative expenses. Up to December 1934 the Relief Plan had paid out nearly fifty and a half millions of dollars to Baltimore & Ohio employees.

The Savings Feature inaugurated in 1882 has been steadily supported by the men. It has operated from the beginning somewhat in the nature of a combined Mutual Savings Bank and Building Association. In December 1934 there were seventeen and a half millions of deposits and about eight and a half millions in loans to employees on homes, in the Savings Department. In 1884 the company followed these undertakings by a Pension Plan still with certain modifications in existence. These pensions are charged to monthly operating expenses. No pension exceeds fifty percent of a man's average monthly earnings and none is less than $22.50 a month. More than $20,000,000 has been paid by the road for pensions since the inauguration of the plan in 1884.

Before the end of our period a number of the leading roads of the country were adopting features of both the Baltimore and Ohio Relief and Pension plans. In no case did the adaptation cover the needs so thoroughly and generously.

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