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PREFACE

Railroad facilities were not physically adequate to provide prompt transportation for the volume of traffic that was offered, and the ability of the railroads to finance the enlargement of these facilities was seriously impaired by their failure to earn a return upon their investment sufficient to attract capital. At this juncture federal power was exercised to increase, not only the revenue derived from interstate transportation, but also that derived from traffic which did not cross state lines. This immediately raised the legal question of federal power thus to regulate intrastate transactions. If the United States Supreme Court had not sustained this exercise of federal power, it is very doubtful whether the railroads could have rehabilitated their financial position as they have done during the past seven years. A continuation of impaired credit and inadequate service would probably have aroused an acute agitation for government ownership and operation of interstate railroads. The other illustration is taken from the field of taxation. The argument was made that state taxation of property used in interstate transportation and of the net earnings derived from such transportation is illegal because it imposes a burden upon interstate commerce. If this argument had been sustained by the Court, the states and the various subdivisions thereof would have been deprived of a source of revenue from which they now derive a quarter of a billion dollars annually. The exemption of interstate railroad property and income from state taxing power would have had almost revolutionary effects upon our system of public finance. On the other hand, the distribution of power has to a large extent been determined by economic considerations. The same two illustrations may be used to show that this is true. Federal power to regulate the general level of intrastate rates was exercised and sustained largely because of the economic fact that an additional dollar earned from intra-

state traffic has just as much effect upon the credit of a road and its capacity to provide transportation facilities as an additional dollar earned from interstate traffic. The decisions sustaining state power to tax property used in interstate transportation and the net earnings derived therefrom were largely influenced by the Court's belief that, as a matter of economic fact, no serious impediment or restraint was imposed upon interstate commerce by compelling the industry of interstate transportation to contribute on equal terms with other taxpayers to the expenses of administering state governments.

The purpose of this discussion is to show how the control of carriers engaged in interstate transportation is divided between the state and the federal governments and to trace the process of judicial interpretation and legislative activity by which the present distribution of powers has gradually evolved from the provisions of the United States Constitution. In attempting to accomplish this purpose it is necessary to give a detailed analysis of many decisions of the United States Supreme Court because it is impossible to interpret the history of the distribution of powers or to make definite statements concerning the existing status without some knowledge and appreciation of technical distinctions made by the Court. The legal material here presented has however, a direct bearing upon the work of the economist. It forms an important part of the history of transportation in the United States because the character of our past and present plans of regulation and taxation of interstate carriers has been largely determined by constitutional considerations. Furthermore, the economist is vitally concerned with the relation of state and federal powers in all his effort to improve our transportation system. If he suggests legislative remedies, he must either coordinate his proposals with the present division of control between the states and the

nation or must embody in his legislative program measures to readjust the distribution of power within constitutional limits. Therefore, it is hoped that students of the economics of transportation will find some value in this statement and explanation of the legal foundation upon which our system of control of interstate carriers is based, and in the suggestion of many points of contact between the law and the economics of transportation.

Grateful acknowledgment must be made to Professor Thomas Reed Powell for suggesting the basis of much of the analysis of constitutional interpretation presented in this volume. When Professor Powell was a member of the Faculty of Political Science at Columbia University, I had the privilege of attending his lectures on Constitutional Law. The preparation of this study was commenced almost immediately thereafter, and these lectures provided an invaluable foundation for my approach to the many decisions herein discussed. I am deeply indebted to my teacher and friend, Professor Edwin R. A. Seligman, for his interest and helpful advice as the work progressed. I wish especially to thank Professor Noel T. Dowling and Dr. Robert L. Hale, both of whom read my manuscript with great care. Their criticism has enabled me, not only to eliminate many errors, but also to clarify and strengthen parts of the discussion which were far from satisfactory as originally written. To many others, whose work has been of great assistance to me and whose ideas are embodied in this volume, I have endeavored to make appropriate acknowledgment in the text.

GEORGE G. REYNOLDS

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