The United States Government made a very extensive experiment in granting the public lands to aid the construction of railways. These grants were made to States and by them conveyed to the respective railroads. They encountered great opposition but were finally carried in 1870. The grants to the Pacific Railroad companies consisting of the Union and Central Pacific Railways consisted of 125,000 and 25,800 acres per mile in alternate sections. The Federal Government retained a lien on the Railway for the repayment of the subsidies granted and were subsequently repaid in full by the corporations.

In 1884 the House of Representatives passed the following resolution: "That in the judgment of this house all the public lands heretofore granted to States and Corporations to aid in the construction of railroads, so far as the same are now subject to be forfeited by reason of the nonfulfilment of the conditions on which the grants were made ought to be declared forfeited to the United States and restored to the public domain.

That it is of the highest public interest that the laws touching the public lands should be so framed and administered as to ultimately secure freehold therein to the greatest number of citizens, and to that end all laws facilitating speculation in the public lands, or facilitating the entry of purchase thereof in large bodies, ought to be repealed, and all of the public lands adapted to agriculture subject to bounty grants and those in aid of education ought to be reserved for the benefit of actual and *bona fide* settlers, and disposed of under the provisions of the homestead laws only.

The arguments in favour of the resolution were substantially as follows:

That large bodies of land were being secured by individual capitalists.

That enormous frauds were being perpetrated by securing large tracts of the public domain to the detriment of the country and the injury of actual settlers.