

### Agents' Election

At a meeting of the Southeastern Division Local Agents' Association, Masonic Hall, Jasper, Ala., September 24, the following agents were elected officers: W. O. McLean, Tupelo, Miss., president; J. R. Young, Aberdeen, Miss., vice-president; W. T. Springfield, Sulligent, Ala., secretary.

The committees appointed to serve for the ensuing year were:

**EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**—J. P. Houk, New Albany, Miss., chairman; D. W. Ramsey, Carbon Hill, Ala.; J. H. Pinkston, Holly Springs, Miss.

**ACCOUNTING COMMITTEE**—J. R. Buchanan, Amory, Miss., chairman; W. C. Webb, Nettleton, Miss.; E. L. McAlister, Ensley, Ala.

**TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE**—P. J. Lee, Dora, Ala., chairman; J. H. D. Smith, Bessemer, Ala.; W. A. Moore, Sherman, Miss.

**TRAFFIC COMMITTEE**—J. R. Young, Aberdeen, Miss., chairman; J. B. Broome, Townley, Ala.; A. Johnson, Cordova, Ala.

**CLAIMS AND O. S. & D. COMMITTEE**—R. G. Cary, Jasper, Ala., chairman; E. L. Lea, Byhalia, Miss.; C. K. Clayton, Pratt City, Ala.

**EFFICIENCY COMMITTEE**—C. J. Snook, Birmingham, Ala., chairman; W. T. Burt, Potts Camp, Miss.; P. Pearce, Winfield, Ala.

The subject of handling shipments of plate glass was thoroughly discussed at the meeting. The suggestion was made that cars containing this commodity should be handled near the engine, especially in through trains, as cars near the head end do not receive the shock in making stops those further back do. A letter from J. H. Doggrell, superintendent of freight loss and damage claims, relative to the handling of this commodity

was read, containing resolutions adopted by the General Association as follows: That the bracing of shipments of glass is by far the most important feature in connection with the safe transportation of this commodity, and that agents at glass loading stations inaugurate a plan by which shipments loaded by shippers be inspected by some competent employe before accepting. Shipments loaded by carrier should be braced under the supervision of a competent employe.

Such subjects as the solicitation of traffic, stationery economy, proper packing of household goods before acceptance, checking household goods and quarantine regulations were discussed at length.

The agents who attended the meeting were, C. J. Snook, Birmingham, Ala.; J. H. D. Smith, Bessemer, Ala.; E. L. McAlister, Ensley, Ala.; C. K. Clayton, Pratt City, Ala.; P. Pearce, Winfield, Ala.; D. W. Ramsey, Carbon Hill, Ala.; J. R. Young, Aberdeen, Miss.; F. J. Lee, Dora, Ala.; J. F. Hatley, Quinton, Ala.; W. T. Springfield, Sulligent, Ala.; A. Johnson, Cordova, Ala.; E. L. Lea, Byhalia, Miss.; J. R. Buchanan, Amory, Miss.

### Important Meeting of Western Agents

At a recent business meeting of the Local Agents' Association of the Western Division, in the rooms of the City Commercial Club, Arkansas City, Kas., a number of interesting talks were made, portions of which are given below.

President J. W. Hall of Blackwell, Okla., called the meeting to order and after a few preliminary remarks said:

In these times of financial distress,

when we need every dollar that can be gotten out of the territory tributary to our lines, it is up to us to look well to the "fine tooth comb" method of finding business.

We have paid much attention in past months to not allowing a carload of freight get away from us, and in this we have done well. Many of us have given little attention to the solicitation of less than carload business, as compared with carload, forgetting the large revenue from the L. C. L. business is worth working for.

The Western Division Association at its May meeting had on its docket, "Why not L. C. L. Advice Letters as Well as Carload?"

While we were of the opinion that such advice letters should be used, we did not take action on the matter, in deference to the influence which seemed to prevail with those in attendance, who, it seemed, should have been in favor of the movement but were not, and the item was passed.

Since that meeting the traffic department has deemed it wise to issue this advice letter, which is covered by form number 2105 Standard. Traffic Manager Middleton, Assistant General Manager Levy and Superintendent Chandler are much interested in this part of our work. Mr. Levy states that if we could impress all the agents on our line with the importance of this work, our earnings would be increased to considerable extent. Traffic Manager Middleton says, if it is pushed as it should be, it means that the term of our receivership will be materially shortened. Mr. Chandler says: I am of the opinion the time is ripe for accomplishing a great deal for the company in making a special effort in solicitation of all classes of freight, and I wish you would lend your best efforts in that direction.

Our traffic and transportation officials have a right to expect every agent on the Western Division, at all competitive stations, to see that the trade of his city is solicited for his line, making a general canvass at least once every six months for the spring and fall shipments of goods. Every day look out for new orders. Keep a book record of these orders, make records of firms so-

licitated, making a list of firms with whom they deal with, address of same. As way-bills come in, add names to this list, and when time comes to renew orders, make out a list from your record, get it confirmed by your patron, and write up your routing orders, ready for your patron's signature. Make your patron as little trouble as you can and you will get more orders from him. Don't jolt in on him at just any time, but watch for the opportune time, when he can give you his attention. All conditions are not alike for success in this line. Be good to the patrons of the Frisco, but do not neglect or forget to cultivate the man with a grievance who gives you no business. Visit him, listen to his complaints, assist him whenever you can, and he will fall in line sooner or later under the treatment. Do not overlook the importance of SOLICITATION OF LESS THAN CARLOAD FREIGHT. Make requisitions at once, if you have not already done so, for Form 2105 Standard, and when received, push the solicitation of L. C. L. freight until you have covered every merchant in your city.

Following President Hall's talk the regular docket was taken up and such subjects as "Insufficient Prepay on Household Goods to Connecting Lines," "Quarantine Regulations," "How Should Shipper's Order Packages be Marked," etc., were thoroughly discussed.

At the noon hour a luncheon with the Arkansas City Commercial Club at the Fifth Avenue Hotel was enjoyed. Secretary William Kennedy of the Commercial Club, made a very interesting talk, followed by a welcoming address by Hon. C. W. Wright.

Mr. Fritz introduced J. W. Hall of Blackwell, President of the Local Agents' Association.

He spoke of the difference before and after the Interstate Commerce Law. The time was when one did not know what rate his competitor in business had; it might be higher or lower, there was no certainty, it depending largely

on the leverage one had to bear down tariff rates. THEN the tendency to lead every shipper away from a knowledge of what you were compelled to do for his competitor in business prevailed, and this was not always covered with exactly the truth, and to say the least, the situation was far from being pleasant from a business standpoint.

The Vanderbilt sentiment, "The public be damned," was a position taken by many high officials, and naturally assumed by agents. That sentiment has cost the railroads many million dollars. NOW a great change has taken place, the Interstate Commerce Commission has made it possible for all to be treated alike with reference to rates. This was a great help to railroad men. The railroad management expects every department to do business with the public in the same manner that is adopted by the most successful merchants, and in many cases the people are getting that kind of service. At one time claims were held off as long as could be and paid only when that was the last resort. Now all claims are paid as quickly as it is possible to put them in proper shape. Then it was to see how little the railroad company could settle for; NOW instructions are: Settle claims promptly; not for the least possible amount, but dollar for dollar as the loss shall appear. An honest deal is the policy of the Frisco Line management, doing business on the same basis that every successful, honest business man does. Frisco employes are encouraged to be courteous and patient in their dealings with the public, and I am proud to be able to say that this sentiment prevails to a great extent among the men of the Frisco Lines of today.

C. E. Schofield, agent, Winfield, Kan., took up the subject of solicitation as one of the prime factors in the work of an agent of today. This brought the merchant and the railroad closer together, the interests being identical. On the part of the shipper, to have his merchandise handled with as much dispatch as possible, making prompt delivery on good and regular time; brought the agent credit for efficiency and made revenue for the railroads.

The agent who shows an interest in the proper handling of your shipment is the man that will sooner or later get your business. He said he was handicapped somewhat in his talk from the fact that every business man present knew the methods of the Frisco in soliciting, as they were continuously reminded of it by Agent Fritz. He said the Frisco appreciated the Arkansas City patronage, as was evident by the fine new depot which is being built there.

Mr. Schofield was once connected with the Frisco at Arkansas City, and became well acquainted with the shippers from that point, and had many friends among those of the Commercial Club who sat around the table listening to him.

E. E. Penfield, agent, Frederick, Okla., followed Mr. Schofield with the subject, "Freight Rates and Damage Claims; or, The Old Way and the New." He spoke of the slow process of settlement under the old plan, and the very unsatisfactory result especially to the claimant. How often the business of the railroad company was driven to other lines by this method, leaving the agent helpless in the matter of holding the merchant, and then he spoke of the new way, whereby the agent was given authority to pay claims up to \$50.00 at once, thus establishing the precedent that would draw the patron to the Frisco because of the satisfactory adjustment of any claim that would arise. It had made a great hit with the public, he said, showing honest dealing of the railroad company. With other remarks he closed a very good talk by saying that Arkansas City would not suffer any disappointment with the agent the company had put in charge of the station, as he was one of the best young men the Frisco has ever turned out.

Papers regarding the New Agency Plan of Solicitation and its Results, were assigned to the following parties:

- (a) Agents' Point of View, by L. L. Herald, Agent at Vernon, Texas.
- (b) Patrons' Viewpoint, by B. W.

Jones, Sec. Blackwell Comm'l Club.

(c) Railroad Company's Point of View, by J. M. Chandler, Superintendent.

Mr. Herald: "Under this heading will say that my humble opinion is that it is the solution of the problem of solicitation except at large traffic centers and is bound to grow as the years pass until before long no railroad company that pretends to be up to date will have any traveling solicitors making towns on their own lines.

"My experience has been that the local agent is the one to perform such service, provided he is competent, as he is or should be in close touch with all traffic movements to and from his territory, as he is on the ground continually while the traveling representative only comes around weekly, monthly or semi-monthly, and having a large territory to cover it is impossible for him to keep in touch with the movements to any great extent.

"To keep in touch with the movement of traffic, the agent must keep in touch with the people in general, and to keep in touch with the people, he must to a more or less degree, be all things to all people, maintaining at all times that degree of reserve which would prevent his being identified with cliques or classes; by all means he should not indulge in any hobbies except one and that one getting business. To enjoy much of a ride on this hobby, it is absolutely necessary that he have friends, the more the better.

"To accomplish this, there are a thousand ways; but unless you do accomplish it, your days as a solicitor are few and full of trouble. The first step towards this end is to be honest, frank and courteous, observing the Golden Rule, remembering that you are a merchant who is handling but one article and that is transportation of freight and passengers, and the only thing you have at this day and time to offer any man for his business is prompt service, courteous treatment and last and greatest of all, SQUARE DEALING.

"There is no usurer on earth that would think of charging the interest which these will pay voluntarily. If

in doubt at any time, just reverse your position; consider yourself the patron and he the representative of the railroad company, and act accordingly, and surely your intelligence and sense of justice will suggest a way out of any circumstance that might arise. Never indulge in smart practice, for just as surely as you do, they will rise up and smite you with increased vigor when least expected.

"Handling but the one commodity—TRANSPORTATION—a local agent should specialize in it, and to do so he must study closely the conditions on his own line and get thoroughly familiar with them; also study the condition of his competitors, if he has any, getting just as familiar with the conditions of their line as his own, so that at all times he may be able to offer patrons something just as good or better if possible, than his competitor.

"THERE ARE MANY WAYS to do this at a station on the line. The first thing to do is to learn what your patron has to sell, and next, what they want to purchase; then find some place on your line where they can dispose of their product and supply their wants to a good advantage, thus giving our line the entire haul. As to results of solicitation when conducted as heretofore stated, I believe they are manifold. First: It places the agent nearer the people he is serving, results in increased practice for him, gives him a better standing in the community, and you can rest assured that your reputation will follow you wherever you go.

"It also serves to overcome that prejudice against railroad companies that is so prevalent over our land, and works such hardships on them in the way of adverse legislation, etc. It benefits the agent in giving him experience necessary to qualify for a high position in the traffic department, and benefits the company in having a greater number of competent men at their disposal."

B. W. Jones, Secretary of the Blackwell Commercial Club, Blackwell, Oklahoma: "In answer to your question as to what we think of the 'New Agency Plan,' from the patrons' view-

point, I take pleasure in stating as follows:

"The new plan and the measure of success obtained thereby will depend largely on the personnel of agents. If an agent has the interest of the company at heart, and is competent and exercises ordinary diligence and judgment, it will be a great improvement over the old plan; and on the other hand, if he is looking to every other interest first and the company's interests last, and does not exercise diligence and judgment, it will prove a failure.

"The freeing of the agent from clerical duties makes it possible for him to get and keep in close touch with the patrons of the road; or, in other words, it makes it possible for him to mix more with the people and solicit business and look after the business of the company as well as the patrons of the road.

"The plan at Blackwell has proven successful beyond our expectations. The agent here has time to devote to the upbuilding of the city. It was through the advice of the representatives of the Industrial Commission that our Industrial Committee was formed, and through that committee that we succeeded in locating our splendid glass plant. It was through the alertness of the agent and his being 'on the job' all the time and securing the presence of his superintendent and others that caused the glass plant to locate their plant on the Frisco tracks, and it is also due to his diligence that practically every car of its product, incoming and outgoing, is given to the Frisco.

"The attention given to tracking carload shipments through the Assistant General Manager's and Superintendent's offices has made many carload shipments for the Frisco line, and this initiates with the local agent for the reason that he has time to look after this part of the business.

"The prompt cash settlements of loss and damage claims is a feature that is greatly appreciated by the patrons of the Frisco lines, and this is possible only by the increased authority given him by the railroad company.

"The agent at Blackwell is an active

member of the Commercial Club, and devotes much time to the upbuilding of Blackwell, and by his activities along these lines is naturally given the preference by the shippers.

"These things would not have been possible if he had been required to stay at his desk in the office doing clerical work that can be done by a fifty-dollar man.

"In view of all these things, I am glad to say that from the patrons' point of view, the 'New Agency Plan' is much preferable over the old plan."

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Superintendent J. M. Chandler's View-Point: "It is not within my province to express an opinion as representing 'The Railroad Company's view' of the results so far derived from the New Agency Plan of solicitation, but I am more and more convinced that it is the rational plan and must, therefore, become the permanent plan. The agent is given an opportunity to produce results which heretofore was not his, and with the enlarged scope of work and responsibility for which a liberal force has been provided, the management has the better opportunity to measure the capacity of the individual agent. The logical conclusion is, the agent will gain recognition and further advancement in proportion to the energy and effort put into the position he now has."

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It has been suggested at different meetings of the Agents' Association that the name of the Agents' Association be changed to "Local Association of Frisco Agents," eliminating the word "Freight." I see no objection to this and will be glad to have you so indicate in the minutes of your next meeting.

By President Hall: This action was taken at a previous meeting of this Association, and we are now known under the title of "Local Association Frisco Agents."

Under the heading of "Meetings," for the Division Associations, Mr. Doggrell advises these meetings will be held in the months of March, June,