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THE SAFETY PROBLEM OF THE RAILROADS

At the Third Annual Safety Congress, National Council for Industrial Safety, Hotel LaSalle, Chicago, Ill., October 15, the following address was delivered by W. B. Spaulding, Chairman Central Safety Committee, representing the railroads:

Since the initial construction of railroads their safe operation has been a subject of paramount concern to those upon whom devolved the manifold responsibilities of their management. This was sought to be attained by the promulgation and enforcement of enlightened rules dictated by the combined knowledge and experience of all persons upon whom this responsibility rested.

The great success that has attended their efforts to secure safety in the transportation of passengers is manifest in the fact that during the fiscal year ending June 30th, 1913 (the latest figures published), there were in round numbers one thousand million passengers transported by the railroads of this country of which but 403 were killed and but 181 of these were killed in train accidents. The rest, or 222, were killed by other causes, such as getting on and off trains; struck at stations and in other like ways for which occurrences the victims themselves were probably alone responsible The figures given include passengers carried on freight trains

Accident insurance companies have long recognized the very great degree of immunity of passengers from death and injury in consequence of the provisions railroads have made for their safety and evidence their confidence in the effectiveness of these provisions by giving passengers, for the same price, double the indemnity against injury they may sustain while traveling on a railroad that they can obtain against injuries liable to occur in their own homes.

While railroads have been able by vast expenditures of money on roadway and equipment and for safety devices; by educating trainmen in the knowledge of rules governing the movement of trains and being able, because of the necessity of keeping constant supervision over train movements, to secure, to a large degree, obedience to those rules, to thus safeguard their passengers, it has not been possible for them to secure similar observance of rules promulgated for the protection of their employes generally from physical injury and death and whose retention in the service is of vital concern to them.

The inadequacy of rules and discipline to stop the annually increasing number of employe injury cases became apparent several years ago. A study of the situation revealed the reason to be that the employes, not the company or its officers, controlled the majority of the causes of injury sustained by workmen, and, therefore, the logical thing to do was to interest the workmen themselves in the removal of all causes of injury possible before such injury occurred, not afterwards. Not as a matter of obeying rules (which it seems is innate human nature to resent), but because of the benefit that would come to them and those dependent upon them by so doing.

This thought originated in the mind of Mr. R. C. Richards, a veteran in-

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vestigator of accident cases, was formulated into a working plan by him and tried out on the Chicago and North Western Railroad. Its success was immediate and so great that the plan was adopted and is now in successful operation on seventy-four of the great railroad systems of this country and Canada owning two hundred thousand of the two hundred forty thousand miles of railroad in these two countries. This employe safety movement has been in operation on these seventy-four railroads varying lengths of time. On some its inauguration is comparatively recent. I am in possession of data from three of the roads on which the movement has been longest in vogue, as well as some figures from seven other important railroads, which I think will definitely indicate what can be accomplished by an injury prevention movement managed by the employes themselves.

On three railroads with a mileage of 19,000 miles and 100,000 employes and an average of three years' experience in "Safety First" work, as compared with the same period prior to the inauguration of the employe injury prevention movement, a decrease of 457 fatal accidents, or 21 per cent, and a decrease of 14,843 non-fatal accidents, or 23 per cent was effected.

On seven other railroads with a mileage of about 30,000 miles, during the first six months of the present year as compared with the same six months of last year, there were reductions made in casualties as follows: Fatal accidents, decrease 205 or 32 per cent; non-fatal accidents, 4,326 or 21 per cent.

The most difficult problems of railroad safety work arise from accidents, the causes of which are not within the control of the railroad company. It is this class of accidents that supply by far the greater number of cases to the casualty list. These accidents may be divided into two classes:

(a) Those which occur to the public.

(b) Those which occur to employes.

In regard to accidents which occur to the public, by far the most numerous are to those persons who use railroad tracks as walkways and those who steal rides on trains, including boys who hop on and off moving trains as a pastime. Notwithstanding the appalling loss of life and limb from these causes annually, the general public, which is profoundly shocked and indignant when life is lost or serious injury occurs in a train wreck, the sinking of a ship at sea, or in a highway crossing accident, takes no more heed of it than if as many flies had been destroyed, yet it is the general public alone that has the power to put a stop to this great loss in the productive power of state and nation and save the victims to lives of usefulness and contentment. The warning signs the railroads erect and maintain at great expense are a useless thing in checking track walking. This is all the railroads can do in that direction. As a part of the movement for injury prevention something has been accomplished, just how much it is not yet possible to say in figures, in persuading boys to abandon their train hopping and turn-table pastimes by talks to them at their schools, oftentimes illustrated by stereopticon views; the giving of safety buttons as prizes for learning and reciting some pertinent "Nevers"; by constructing swimming

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pools for their use on condition they will keep away from the cars and not play on railroad premises; by reporting them to their parents and securing the aid of town officers. I know of several towns where the employment of some of these methods resulted in absolute stopping of these dangerous pastimes by the boys. I thoroughly believe that all that is necessary to keep a boy from indulging in dangerous sports is to provide him with safe and attractive ones in which he can expend the excess energy of his youth. This, however, is a duty to the boy that should be performed by his parents or by the community in which he lives. Railroads should be relieved of this task.

A second difficult public safety problem is the ever increasing number of persons who while riding in automobiles are struck on highway crossings by rapidly moving trains. As there is fifty feet clear space on each side of all railroad tracks, assuring a clear view of an approaching train, if one will look, and as an automobile can be stopped in ten feet even when moving at a high speed, there seems no excuse for such occurrences except the spirit of chance taking automobile driving seems to inspire in many persons

In respect to accidents that occur to employes, I am firmly of the opinion that the most difficult problem in railroad safety work is to arouse a genuine, active, heartfelt interest in the foreman in safety work, (I intend that the word "foreman" shall include every man whatever his title who has immediate authority over and the direction of other men in their work)- an interest that is based on his own mental conviction that the prevention of injury of each individual workman will increase the efficiency and production of all, lessen the cost of production and bring personal credit and promotion for himself and therefore of the first importance to him if he desires advancement. A conviction that when he has once secured a satisfactory and competent force of men that the loss of any one of them is a loss that affects him personally and detrimentally. A conviction that will cause him to give his workmen the same supervision and care to guard them against injury that he would instinctively give to a very valuable animal or a delicate and expensive machine he might own, and for the very same reason, i e., because it is the sensible thing to do.

A foreman interested in safety work because he had the intelligence to perceive its resultant benefits made the statement to me that "foremen would not help safety." The foreman who made this statement was an exception to it and I knew personally of several other exceptions, yet I also feel equally certain that as a general statement it was a true one. This statement did not mean that foremen generally were indifferent to the safety of their men and would not regret the injury of any of them but it did mean that the average foreman's first concern was production—the accomplishment of the work with a dispatch and at a cost that would reflect credit on him and as the ideas underlying the movement for greater safety for workmen conflicted with notions and methods of doing work to which foremen generally had long been accustomed they would be opposed to a change which though it would eliminate risks would, in their judgment, retard the work and cause some loss of time to the men—in

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a word, that risks known to foremen generally are regarded as incident to the work and usually escaped; that injuries were to be regretted after their occurrence, not before. Unfortunately it is believed by many foremen that the men who will not take chances lacks spirit, while it should be the best of evidence that the man has good sense.

The code of safety rules promulgated by railroads give evidence that their general officers realize that a well organized and trained force of employes is essential in order that the company may serve the public efficiently and prosper itself; that the frequent occurrence of injury among their force of employes is a serious impairment of both the company's ability to render good service and its chance to prosper. If those rules were obeyed by all employes injury cases would be kept down to the minimum and a "Safety First" organization would not be required, but these rules are too frequently disregarded and the passing years have demonstrated there is no practical way to get them obeyed—*AS RULES*. An unpopular rule, just like an unpopular law, is not enforced. Both laws and rules must have the vitalizing force of the majority sentiment of the persons whom they affect behind them to make them effective. It is little use for a special missionary to travel around among thousands of employes preaching safety and attempting to convince them the company means what it says in a rule declaring

> "The company does not require nor expect its employes to incur any risks from which, by the exercise of their judgment and personal care, they can protect themselves but enjoins upon them and demands that they shall take the time and use the means necessary to, in all cases, do their duty in safety"

if the "bosses" under whom these men work are not in sympathy with that rule and ignore it because they do not appreciate its importance and value to their company and themselves. A great enthusiasm for the prevention of work accidents may be aroused by large safety meetings of workmen; by the circulation of safety literature among them; by the efforts of their associates in work who are members of safety committees and in other like ways and gratifying decreases in injury cases immediately result from the activity of workmen so aroused, but unless the immediate bosses of these men have been aroused at the same time and become possessed of a conviction that will stick, the good results of all this effort will not long continue. A foreman's "wet blanket" will speedily extinguish all the fire in any enthusiasm thus aroused and things will continue as before. The cook book recipe says "first get your rabbit" and paraphrasing I say first get your foreman. Make them thorough converts to the cause of greater safety by convincing them that their own personal interests and the real interests of their superiors and their company is best served by the absolute prevention of injury among the workmen under their charge. One of the chief tests of the efficiency and competency of a superintendent and every junior official should be the freedom of his men from injury and it should be

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understood that the casualty record of every such official would be given serious consideration whenever promotions were to be made.

Having thus captured the "boss" the rest of the problem is of comparatively easy solution. It is agreed that supervision and education is the straight road to greater safety- the true solution of the injury prevention problem.

The best supervisor is the foreman because he is always on the ground and for the same reason, assuming that proper regard has been had as to his competency when selected, he is the best educator for the knowledge he imparts will be practical, of present application, and permanent value and his situation such that he may not only know that his instructions are understood but he can see that they are followed. The safety missionary; the safety committees; safety literature and prizes will be distinct and valuable aids to the foremen in inspiring the necessary co-operative spirit among all their men.

In the following address delivered by C. F. Moffitt, at the meeting of the Memphis Safety Committee, September 21, 1914, attention is directed to some entirely new features of Safety First, that are well worthy of the consideration of all:

Columns, pages, in fact books, have been written upon Safety First, and never a word amiss, but in all of these, nothing whatever has been said of the most important feature of this great movement. All attention, it seems, has been turned to material matters as foreign agencies to the safety of mankind, and the physical condition of our employes has been grossly neglected- not even receiving the remotest consideration in the work of Safety First.

I heartily endorse everything that has been done and said towards the promotion of this great propaganda, but I do believe, and feel certain all will agree with me, that the physical development of our fellow workmen deserves the most serious consideration of our several committeemen.

In order that man may attain the highest degree of success in any line, he must, of an absolute necessity, possess three principal qualifications physical, mental and spiritual strength. With these equally developed, nothing is impossible, and, while all are absolutely prerequisites to a good and perfect man, it is a fact, that without the proper physical training, no man can give his best efforts to the greatest advantage, regardless of how strong may be his mental and spiritual inclinations.

Every man, in fact every home, should adopt some good, systematic course of physical culture a training not only for the growing boys and girls, but for the mature in years. Surely no one becomes so old but personal attention to the proper keeping of the physical body, aids nature in its efforts to make man strong.

A man may be gigantic in size and yet, if he has not the proper development and training, he will never know the real value of his strength, nor will he be able to understand why the smaller man, although of not half his stature, is so much stronger and so much more active, which is due almost entirely to the training he has had.

In the life of the well-known Robert Fitzsimmons, we have a living example of physical development of man. In no other was there ever sufficient qualifications of every kind to make him the unquestionable and undefeated middle and heavyweight champion of the world, in the great squared circle for so many years. While it is true, we cannot accomplish all of the things so appropriately accredited to this great warrior, at the same time, we can better prepare ourselves for service as ordinary wage earners by a little personal attention, to which our bodies are justly entitled.

Naturally, the question is asked, "Will it help one as old as I am now, and in what way will it benefit me in the line of work I follow?" Anything that will aid nature, will, at any age, help you, and, in my opinion, a very large percentage of personal injury cases can be attributed to carelessness, due to lack of proper energy and to inactivity, all of which can be easily overcome by physical culture and training. This, of course, depends upon your own personal interest and efforts, and although one of the most important things of life, I dare say little or not attention is given to it.

The following extract from an interesting talk given by C. H. Baltzell, who is not only an athletic enthusiast, but superintendent of the division winning Safety First honors twice in succession, highly commends physical training for every man in every vocation of life: