

Experienced operating men will remember as vividly as I do that in the yards we used to look for accidents to be numerous, costing anywhere from \$1,500 to \$4,000 each. Yet, listen to this! In one month, passing through our 38 main yards on the Atlantic Coast Lines, 530,000 cars were handled without one dollar's damage. Another month nearly 632,000 cars were handled, with a damage of only \$256. I am emphatic in saying to you that the safety movement, to my mind, has been the greatest factor in bringing about such notable savings.

I wonder if we agree on what is the most important thing concerning railroads today. What is paramount? I say to you without a shadow of doubt—public opinion, the good will of the people. Neither railroads nor any other industry can get very far without public opinion in its favor. This safety movement has been a great influence in building up public opinion. It is our custom to invite lawyers, doctors, preachers, school teachers, leading citizens of every walk of life to attend our safety meetings. Time and again, after those meetings, I have had those men say to me, "Why, this is a revelation. We had no idea what you were doing in these safety meetings. What a pity that this could not be carried on generally in a public way."

The Accident Investigation Work of the Bureau of Safety, I. C. C.

By W. P. BORLAND

Director, Bureau of Safety, Interstate Commerce Commission

The speaker said in part: You are already familiar with the accident investigation work of the Bureau of Safety of the Interstate Commerce Commission. However, there are certain fundamental features which are often overlooked and which should be kept in mind at all times. I refer more particularly not only to the necessity of having the investigator of accidents develop the immediate cause of an accident, but to the even more important necessity of having him develop the underlying causes which so often set the stage for what subsequently occurs, and to the further necessity for plugging away continually with the idea of impressing on the minds of everyone that there is no sound excuse for the occurrence of accidents.

I doubt if these results can be satisfactorily attained unless all accidents, however trivial they may appear on the surface, are carefully investigated by competent investigators whose primary interest is the prevention of accidents of a similar character. Formerly many accidents on railroads were investigated for the principal purpose of ascertaining the immediate cause, then determining what disciplinary action should be taken, and to what extent it should be carried. There the matter rested. Today we are paying increasing attention to the more important side of the question, which is the development of underlying causes with a view to profiting by the unfortunate experience of the past. This is a long step in the right direction.

When an accident of major importance occurs, everyone concerned is on the job for the purpose of finding out what happened and why it happened. General officers, division officers, safety inspectors, representatives of State and Federal Commissions, comers, etc. Everyone is duly impressed with the seriousness of what has occurred and in many cases circumstances are such that lessons are learned that are highly beneficial for the future. The accident of minor consequence so far as casualties are concerned, however, attracts little attention; there is no commotion about it, and entirely too frequently no lesson is learned from it, although the small number of casualties is merely a fortunate circumstance, and such an accident should carry a far more important lesson than half a dozen accidents of so-called major importance.

It may be argued that no one has time to dignify minor accidents by careful and painstaking investigation, but the answer to any such argument is that if they are investigated carefully and with sufficient thoroughness to bring out any underlying condition or situation which may exist, the time soon will come when there will not be very many to investigate, and we may rest assured that the occurrence of major accidents will decrease just as rapidly as do the minor accidents. Furthermore, all employees involved are available for questioning, whereas in the more disastrous accident important witnesses are often permanently silent.

Railroad casualties have been decreasing for years, although just what the immediate trend is I cannot pretend to say; you may rest assured, however, that they will continue to decrease, but only if all accidents are treated with the importance they deserve. As to the steps to be followed by the various railroads in this humanitarian work, these must be worked out for each individual organization. They all have the same object in view, the saving of life and limb, and I do not believe that anything can impress itself to any better advantage on the rank and file of railroad workers in the way of accident prevention than to have the investigation of the minor accident, regardless of its character, as thoroughly and painstakingly handled as the investigation of the major accident. The investigation of the major accident obviously would take more time because of more facts to be developed, and more evidence of one kind or another to be considered, but aside from the question of volume there would appear to be no difference in the investigation itself. The result to be accomplished is the same in each, and only by handling it in the same manner can those results be best attained.

WEDNESDAY AFTERNOON SESSION

October 5, 1932

Value of "Safe Practices" Committees

By F. HARTENSTIEN

Assistant to General Manager, Lehigh Valley Railroad

The speaker said in part: In our efforts to reduce the number of casualties on the railroads it becomes natural for us to analyze their causes and if possible adopt ways and means to prevent repetition. After a careful study of this subject, and considering that 75 per cent or more of the injuries that occur on the railroads are the result of unsafe practices, it appears to be in order to make a change in our safety organization that is adaptable or more in keeping with the causes which are responsible for producing unsatisfactory safety records. With the hope and expectation that a change in the name of safety committees to that of "safe practices committees" will be conducive of better results, it is recommended to the members of the Section that such a change be made.

The change is recommended for the purpose of inspiring careful employees who are dependable safety workers to caution their co-workers when they observe them doing anything that is liable to result in personal injury. Also, to more clearly instill in the minds of committees and other employees that the causes of the majority of personal injuries on the railroad are from unnecessarily taking chances and their discontinuance will be a large contribution to the goal that we are struggling to make by the end of the year 1933.

If it is decided to change the name of committees it should be understood that reporting any unsafe conditions observed on railroad property must not be discontinued, but a careful analysis of the records indicate that a very small percentage of our injuries occur from defects and unfavorable conditions, and the change suggested should direct the attention of officers and employees to the real reason for the majority of railroad accidents.