

Steam Railroad

TUESDAY AFTERNOON SESSION

October 11, 1938

The first meeting of delegates to the Steam Railroad Sessions was called to order by Mr. W. W. Wood, Superintendent of Safety and Welfare, Baltimore & Ohio Railroad Company, Baltimore, Maryland,

who presided. Chairman Wood briefly outlined the significance of the programs of the two sessions planned, and then introduced the first speaker.

"Hidden Causes"

By FRED W. SARGENT

President, Chicago and North Western Railway Company, Chicago

We have seen the evolutionary growth of accident prevention work from its inception, as applied to the American railroads. Many of us here knew Mr. Ralph C. Richards intimately, and discussed his hopes and ambitions with him frequently. Though he met from time to time with discouraging results, yet he never surrendered. He laid the foundation for safety work that is vastly enlarged and is rapidly ripening into collateral lines that are of benefit not only to employees and managements but to the entire economic and social structure of the country.

In the beginning, and even until rather recent times, the greatest emphasis was laid upon working rules and physical conditions of plant and facilities; in other words, a safe place to work. There was every reason in the world why the greatest emphasis should be placed upon these factors, and, indeed, we are not yet so far along that we can afford to lessen our efforts with relation to these matters.

In the beginning, the idea of a surgical department was to care for men and women after they were injured. Gradually this conception has been enlarging and changing into a broader field and greater service, if a greater service is possible. This department no longer has as its sole objective the healing of wounds and the saving of human lives after injuries. Gradually,

steadily, the whole conception of safety work has progressed and evolved until today it has become a nationwide activity, drawing to its cause the best minds and the finest characters in our social structure. And with this greater interest in the work it has been but natural that the whole scope, theory and conception of the undertaking should gradually enlarge to embrace the wider field of accident prevention, to which I am about to refer.

In recent years many of the railroads have enlarged their conception of this work and have come to the realization that safety work involves not only safe tools, safe way and structures, and safe surroundings, but involves likewise, and with equal importance, the very physical and mental condition and attitude of the employee or officer himself. With this thought in mind we have changed the title of the head of our surgical organization from that of "Chief Surgeon" to that of "Medical Director," because if men are to avoid accidents we know that they must not only be surrounded with safe working rules and safe working conditions, but they themselves must be physically and mentally fit; and that the so-called human element, always and ever present, must constantly be reckoned with if we are to achieve the ultimate beneficial results so earnestly desired.

And so it is that in all this work, whether