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C O P Y

Chicago, April 19th, 1937.

Mr. S. H. Schneider, Secretary,
General Managers' Association of Chicago,
482 Union Station Building,
Chicago, Illinois.

Dear Sir:

At your request I have been working with the Railroad Engineering and Shop Committee appointed by the General Managers' Association to consider problems arising under the new Illinois Occupational Diseases Act. This committee has issued bulletins designed to minimize the dangers of silicosis and asbestosis and is now preparing bulletins on lead poisoning and other occupational diseases which may occur in the railroad industry.

A very real problem arises because many railroad men still dismiss the subject as being greatly exaggerated and an almost imaginary danger. At first, several members of the committee felt much the same way - there had never been an occupational disease on their road - so what was the danger.

The danger results largely from the educational program of the State Department of Labor. Thousands of pamphlets have been distributed describing in detail the symptoms of various occupational diseases and from what types of work they may result. The pamphlet on silicosis, for example, lists among those subject to its hazards sandblasters, polishers, metal grinders and coal miners. Among the symptoms are listed shortness of breath, inability to do as much work as before and practically all other signs of tuberculosis. In the future, every man who breaks down and many who are laid off will be able to find or imagine many of the symptoms of some disease and claims will result.

In addition to these possibly imaginary claims, the railroads are subject to real claims. One Illinois railroad has found eight cases of lead poisoning in the last two years among painters and men working on brasses. Several railroads have found active silicosis cases among sandblasters and in metals reclamation work. That similar diseases have not been found on other railroads may be due to the fact they were not recognized.

While claims may be made in the future for imaginary diseases, the danger now facing the railroads is certainly not imaginary. An application of the safety principles on this subject, recommended in the Bulletins issued by the Engineering and Shop Committee, will prevent many real cases of occupational diseases and will be helpful with the industrial Commission when imaginary claims are made.

Yours truly,

(Signed) J. W. Freels.