INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF THE BUREAU OF SAFETY IN RE INVESTIGATION OF AN ACCIDENT WHICH OCCURRED ON THE TRACKS OF THE CENTRAL UNION DEPOT AND RAILWAY COMPANY AT CINCINNATI, OHIO, ON FEBRUARY 8, 1929.

May 16, 1929.

To the Commission:

On February 8, 1929, there was a side collision between the forward portion of a passenger train of the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad, consisting of empty mail and baggage cars, making a back-up movement, and a standing passenger train of the Louisville & Nashville Railroad on the tracks of the Central Union Depot and Railway Company at Cincinnati, Ohio, resulting in the death of one employee, and the injury of one employee and two other persons. This accident was investigated in conjunction with a representative of the Ohio Commission of Public Utilities.

Location and method of operation

The Central Union Depot and Railway Company operates the Union Station, used by the trains of eight divisions of five different railways, and also operates a double-track main line extending westward from the station to Harriet Street, a distance of 1.2 miles. This section of track is used by passenger trains of the Louisville & Nashville and Baltimore & Ohio Railroads, and also by passenger trains of other railroads. There is no block signal system in use in the vicinity of the point of accident, nor are train orders used, movements being handled entirely by switch tenders. In the case of movements with the current of traffic the signals given by switch tenders merely indicate whether the switches in question are properly lined up for the movement to be made, while in the case of movements against the current of traffic the switch tenders first make the necessary arrangements between themselves before authorizing such movements to be made.

There are eight parallel tracks, numbered from north to south, under the train shed of the Central Union passenger station. The distance from the bumping posts, westward, to the end of the train shed is approximately 600 feet, track 2 connects with track 3 at a point about 400 feet west of the western end of the train shed. The accident occurred at the fouling point of the

junction of these two tracks, 903 feet west of the bumping posts. Starting at the bumping post and proceeding westward track 3 is tangent for a distance of about 750 feet and then it curves slightly toward the left for a distance of about 75 feet, following which it is tangent to the point of accident, the grade is 0 97 per cent descending for a distance of approximately 550 feet and then it is 0.74 per cent for 100 feet, following which it is level to the point of accident.

It was raining at the time of the accident, which occurred at about 8.42 p.m.

Description

Baltimore & Ohio St. Louis Division passenger train No. 33 arrived at the Central Union passenger station at about 8.05 p.m. The six rear cars were moved westward to Park Street coach yard by a yard engine at about 8.18 p.m., leaving the forward portion of the train, consisting of B&O engine 5115, headed east, one postal car and two baggage cars, all of steel construction, in charge of Yard Conductor Garner and Engineman Black, standing on track 3 under the train shed with the engine nearest the bumping post. After these three cars were unloaded the contemplated back-up movement was started but shortly afterwards, on reaching the fouling point at the junction of tracks 2 and 3, traveling at a speed estimated to have been between 5 and 10 miles per hour, the northwest corner of the leading car struck the south side of the rear car in L&N passenger train No. 17

Louisville & Nashville passenger train No. 17 consisted of an engine, headed east and standing near the bumping post on track 3, two baggage cars, one combination car, one coach, one dining car, five sleeping cars, one observation car, and L&N yard engine 880, headed west and coupled to the west end of the train. This train was made up on track 2 and was in charge of Yard Conductor Gutman and Yard Engineman Herron, while being operated within the Cincinnati terminal, and it was intended that yard engine 880 should haul the train backward to Wood Street and then assist it across the bridge over the Ohio River to Covington, Ky., however, while standing on track 2 obstructing track 3, preparatory to starting the contemplated movement, the observation car was struck by the cars in B&O train No. 33.

The leading baggage car in the B&O train scraped the side of the L&N observation car a distance of about 58 feet, damaging the observation car slightly and resulting in the derailment of the baggage car, which car then continued westward until it struck the tender cistern of L&N yard engine 880. The impact forced the cistern against the cab of the engine, breaking the coupling between the tender and observation car, and separating the yard engine from the observation car a distance of about 15 feet. The employee killed was the conductor of the yard engine, who was caught between the tender cistern and the engine cab.

Summary of evidence

Yard Conductor Carner stated that his duty consisted of backing trains in and out of the passenger station. He attached the back-up hose to the leading car of the B&O cut about 20 or 25 minutes before it was ready to back out of the train shed. He then anchored the hose in the door hasp hole, and, as was customary, tested the air merely as a matter of precaution, by opening the back-up hose valve slightly, not in order to set the brakes but just to ascertain that there was a flow of air. After receiving a signal from the platform foreman indicating that the cars were unloaded he again opened the valve to assure himself that there was a proper flow of air, also to give warning to anybody who happened to be working around the cars that the back-up movement was about to start. He then went to the door of the leading car and gave the engineman a back-up signal by means of the air-whistle, and also waved a back-up signal with his lantern. The movement was then started and as the cars approached the end of the train shed Conductor Carner saw that the L&N train was blocking track 3 and that the switch tender was giving stop signals, he said that he opened the tail hose valve slightly and that the air apparently was working but the brakes did not seem to take effect, so he opened the valve wider, but without result, and then he opened the valve completely and as he noticed no reduction in the speed, which he estimated to have been between 8 and 10 miles per hour, he jumped off on the engineman's side, when about two or two and one-half car-lengths from the fouling point, shouted a warning of danger and waved stop signals with his lantern, but to no avail. After the accident he walked toward the leading car and on his way he requested Passenger Car Inspector Campbell, of the CCC&StLRy, to accompany him whichhe did Steam and water were escaping and there was considerable excitement at the time But Conductor Carner held his lantern over to look at the position of the angle cock and he said

the air was cut in and flowing freely, he did not recall having closed the angle cock at this time but said that subsequent to the arrival of the wrecker, while in company with Yardmaster Gray, the yardmaster called his attention to the fact that the angle cock was closed. Conductor Garner said that he afterwards asked Passenger Car Inspector Campbell if he had looked at the back-up hose and whether the latter went to that point with him to verify the position of the angle cock, but received negative replies. Conductor Garner's statements as to how he handled the air before starting the back-up movement were very conflicting, at one point he said that after he received the signal from the platform foreman indicating that the cars were unloaded he made a 15 or 20-pound brake-pipe reduction and that this should have applied the air brakes, yet he did not know whether they did apply, at another point he said that he could not recall having heard any escape of air when he first tested it. He did not try the air after starting out and before seeing the danger ahead, did not get the required signal from the switch tender to start the back-up movement, and did not know that the train on track 2 was fouling track 3 until he received the stop signals from the switch tender, at which time his train was about six car-lengths from the fouling point. After the accident the air brakes were tested in his presence and he saw that they applied properly on all three cars, he did not know as to the engine

Switch Tender Cropper, of the CUD&RyCo, stated that he heard no signal sounded on the back-up hose whistle as B&O train No. 23 approached. He saw that train before and when it started the back-up movement and commenced giving stop signals, continuing to do so until the collision occurred, at which time the speed of the train was about 8 or 10 miles per hour.

Engineman Black, of B&O train No. 23, stated that at about 8.40 p.m. he received an air-whistle back-up signal, as well as a lantern signal, and he therefore released the independent engine brake, worked steam for a distance of four or five car-lengths and then shut off, at which time he estimated the speed to have been about 5 or 6 miles per hour, the brake valve was in running position during this movement. The first he knew of anything wrong was when the accident occurred and he did not think the speed at that time could have been in excess of 6 or 8 miles per hour. Engineman Black said that he did not at any time feel an air-brake application made by means of the back-up hose, that he did not test the air brakes before starting the back-up movement, nor was there, so far as he knew, any test made of the air brakes after

the back-up hose was attached, although he said that it was customary to make such a test. He only looked back along the train from the time it started until it had moved about two car-lengths and then drew his head inside on account of the inclement weather. He left the cab window open but did not again look back prior to the accident, at which time the engine was drifting, as he depended upon the man at the rear end to operate the train and he was not in position, therefore, to receive hand signals. Engineman Black did not remember having made an air-brake application when he looked back to see what the trouble was at the time the accident occurred but said that he might have done so, no stop signal was sounded on the air-whistle signal prior to the accident.

Fireman Overturf, of B&O train No. 22, stated that he was putting in a fire when the accident occurred. Passenger Car Inspector Cutter, of the L&NRR, stated that he was engaged in testing the air brakes on L&N train No. 17 and was about six car-lengths from the rear end of that train when the air brakes applied in emergency as a result of the accident, he immediately proceeded to the point of collision and on examining the angle cock on the leading car of the B&O cut, about one minute after the accident occurred, found it to be closed, while the valve in the back-up hose was wide open; the brakes on this car were set; however, and they were also set on the adjacent car. Passenger Car Inspector Campbell, of the CCC&StLRy, stated that he was standing about 40 feet from where the collision occurred and immediately thereafter Yard Conductor Carner requested him to go along to the leading car, which he did, and examination of the angle cock at that time disclosed it to be in the closed position, he then saw Conductor Carner open it. After the arrival of the wrecker Conductor Carner called him aside and asked him about having seen everything lined up properly but at that time he told the conductor that he had not paid attention and then walked away, as he did not want to talk about it. Passenger Car Inspector Campbell was of the opinion that Yard Conductor Carner failed to open the angle cock at the time the back-up hose was attached. Statements of Passenger Car Foreman Crowe, of the B&ORR, were to the effect that a test of the air brakes and back-up hose failed to disclose any condition that would have caused or contributed to the accident, and in his opinion the air brakes would have

functioned properly had the angle cock been open and proper connection made between the train line and the back-up hose. Testimony given by other witnesses brought forth nothing having any additional bearing on the accident.

Conclusions

This accident was caused primarily by the failure of Yard Conductor Garner, of B&O train No. 22, to open the angle cock on the leading car, so as to be able to control the movement by means of the back-up hose. A contributing cause was the failure of Engineman Black to know that the brakes had been set on the train by the man at the rear end, which the rules require to be done in order to indicate to the engineman that the train is ready to back out, and his further failure to be in position to receive any hand signals which might be given him.

Rule 15 for the government of the operating department of the Central Union Depot and Railway Company reads as follows:

> "(a) Brakemen or backup men, must be at the rear end of their train from the time of arrival until the train backs out.
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> "(b) When a train is unloaded and ready to back out, C.U.D. platform foreman will so indicate by signal to the man at the rear end, who will keep himself in position to observe such a signal. As soon as the man at the rear end gets the signal, he will indicate to the Switchtender by the whistle signal on the back up hose that the train is ready to back out. When the Switchtender gives the proper signal, the man at the rear end will set the brakes on the train thus indicating to the engineer that the train is about ready to back out. The engineer will not move, however, until he receives a whistle signal and also a hand or lamp signal from the man at the rear end."

While Yard Conductor Garner was certain that he opened the angle cock, and said he made a 15 or 20-pound brake-pipe reduction after receiving a signal from the platform foreman that the cars were unloaded, he admitted that he did not know whether the brakes applied. Engineman Black felt no air brake application made by means of the

back-up hose at any time, and immediately following the accident the angle cock was observed to be closed. Apparently Yard Conductor Garner failed to open the angle cock before starting the back-up movement and when he realized that the brakes were not applying he did not wait to give the engineman a stop signal on the communicating air-whistle, but jumped off and gave him hand signals to stop. These signals were not observed because of the fact that the engineman was not in position to receive them. The rule above quoted requires that the man at the rear end of a back-up movement set the brakes on the train to indicate to the engineman that the train is ready to back out, Engineman Black should not have started the back-up movement until this had been done, and he then would have known whether the brakes could be operated properly from the back-up hose.

Yard Conductor Garner and Engineman Black were men of long experience, at the time of the accident they had been on duty 4 hours and 42 minutes and 7 hours and 32 minutes, respectively, prior to which they had been off duty 16 hours or more. None of the other employees involved had been on duty contrary to any of the provisions of the hours of service law.

Respectfully submitted,

W. P. BORLAND,

Director.