

May 20th, 1914.

IN RE INVESTIGATION OF ACCIDENT ON THE GRAND TRUNK WESTERN RAILWAY AT CHICAGO, ILLINOIS, ON MARCH 3, 1914.

On March 3, 1914, there was a rear-end collision on the Grand Trunk Western Railway between a passenger train and a transfer freight train at Chicago, Ill., resulting in the death of 2 employees and the injury of 2 passengers and 1 employee.

After investigation of this accident and the circumstances connected therewith, the Chief Inspector of Safety Appliances reports as follows:

The trains involved in this accident were westbound passenger train No. 3, running between Battle Creek, Mich., and Chicago, Ill., and a westbound transfer freight train, running between Elsdon and Chicago, Ill. Train No. 3 consisted of a baggage car and two day coaches, hauled by locomotive 107, and was in charge of Conductor Clark and Engineman Leedy. All the cars were of steel construction. The transfer train consisted of 29 loaded freight cars and a caboose, hauled by locomotive 1696, and was in charge of Conductor Breen and Engineman Caster.

On the day of the accident train No. 3 left Battle Creek at 1:18 a.m., 9 hours and 10 minutes late, passed Elsdon at 5:45 a.m., 9 hours and 14 minutes late, and collided with the transfer train at about 5:52 a.m.

The transfer train was regularly engaged in moving freight between the yard at Elsdon and the freight depot at

Twelfth Street, Chicago, a distance of 9 miles. It had no regular place on the schedule but left Elsdon daily on its first trip between 5:00 and 6:00 a.m. On the day of the accident this train entered the westbound main track east of Kedzie Avenue and started for Chicago at 5:43 a.m., and shortly thereafter was struck by train No. 3 as above stated.

The force of the collision telescoped three freight cars, and the locomotive of train No. 3 came to rest with the fifth car of the transfer train on top of it. The conductors and brakeman of the transfer crew were killed in the collision. At the point of collision the track is straight and level. The weather at the time was foggy.

On that portion of the Chicago Division of the Grand Trunk Western Railway between Battle Creek, Mich., and Elsdon, Ill., a distance of 168 miles, trains are operated under the manual block system. Between Elsdon and Chicago, a distance of 9 miles, there is no block system, the movement of trains being governed by time card, book of rules, and bulletin instructions. The 9 miles of track between Elsdon and Chicago is within yard limits. The lead track from the yard at Elsdon connects with the main line at a point about 1,600 feet east of Kedzie Avenue. At Kedzie Avenue, a short distance west of Elsdon station, there is a semaphore which governs the movement of trains from Elsdon yard to the westbound running track. This semaphore is operated by the crossing watchman

at Kedzie Avenue, and when it is in the danger position it indicates that the main track is occupied by yard trains and main line trains must stop; when in the clear position the main track cannot be used by yard trains, and it is proper for main line trains to proceed.

On the day of the accident the crossing watchman at Kedzie Avenue gave the transfer train the signal to proceed. About 7 or 8 minutes after that train passed he placed the semaphore in the clear position. Train No. 3 arrived at Kedzie Avenue about 10 minutes after the transfer train left that point and finding the semaphore in the clear position, proceeded on its schedule rights and collided with the rear end of the transfer train at a point approximately 3 miles west of Elsdon. At the time of the collision the transfer train was moving at a speed estimated to have been 10 or 12 miles per hour, while train No. 3 was running at a speed said to have been 25 or 30 miles per hour.

Rule 83 of the Grand Trunk Western Railway provides in part as follows:

"A train must not leave its initial station on any subdivision or junction, until it has been ascertained whether all superior trains due have left."

Rule 93 reads as follows:

"Within yards defined by yard limit boards, the main track may be used, keeping clear of first and second-class trains."

"The main track must not be used within yard limits until it is known that all sections of over-due first and second-class trains have arrived."

In addition to these rules, which govern the movement of trains generally, yard or switching trains moving between Sladon and Chicago are governed by special rules issued by the general yardmaster in the form of bulletin orders. One of these bulletins, under date of December 19, 1913, reads as follows:

"Your attention is again called to the necessity of getting full information in regard to regular and special passenger trains before occupying main line."

On January 19, 1914, Bulletin No. 1, containing yard rules for Chicago terminals of the Grand Trunk Railway, was issued by the general yardmaster. This bulletin, among other rules, contains the following:

"Bulletin board must be examined before going on duty."

"Do not occupy main line without full information in regard to regular and special passenger trains."

Engineer Caster of the transfer train stated that on the morning of the accident he made no inquiries of the operator at Sladon before leaving that place to ascertain whether all passenger trains due had arrived and departed. While both the engineer and conductor are supposed to secure this information, it was customary for the conductor to do so, and when the conductor gave him the signal to proceed he assumed that it was all right to go. He further stated that the rules requiring engineers to check the train register when they came on duty was habitually disregarded, and that he had never been called

to account by his superiors for disobeying the rules.

Operator Ridgley, on duty at Elsdon at the time of the accident, said that it was customary for switching crews to come into his office before occupying the main line to learn whether or not all superior trains had departed. However, on the morning of the accident he did not see any of the transfer crew, nor did they make any inquiries regarding train No. 3 or any other train. He stated that the operators were supposed to mark late trains on the bulletin board for the information of switchmen. The operator he relieved from duty had not marked train No. 3 upon the bulletin board, and when he came on duty he neglected to do so. Therefore the transfer crew left Elsdon without obtaining any information regarding train No. 3.

Yardmaster Courney stated that he did not direct the movement of trains at all, his duties being to instruct the assistant yardmaster and switchmen, issue bulletins, etc. He stated that these transfer movements were regular yard trains, but inasmuch as they were not on the time cards he did not consider that they were governed by the rules applicable to regular scheduled trains. He further stated that the employees knew it was customary to regard rule 83 as applying only to road trains and not to yard trains. The transfer crews were supposed to call at the telegraph office before going out on the main line to find out if superior trains had departed, but there was no one to see that they made such inquiries. As a rule the con-

ductor got this information from the operator and communicated it to the other members of the transfer crew. He said that the employees were examined on the book of rules once in a while, the last examination being about three years ago.

There was no report of these trains at Kedzie Avenue, the point where they entered upon the main line, and the flagman at that point had no special information or instructions as to the protection of transfer trains entering upon the main line. There was no record kept of the time transfer trains left the yard at Elsdon except the yard conductor's switching slips which were turned in to the yardmaster at the end of the day's work.

Engineman Leedy of train No. 3 stated that on account of the fog he did not see the caboose of the transfer train until within about three car lengths of it, too late to stop before colliding with it, although he made an emergency application of the brakes. He had no previous notice of the presence of the transfer train on the main track, all the signals indicating that the track was clear. The speed of his train was about 25 miles per hour at the time of the collision.

This accident was caused by the conductor and engineman in charge of the transfer train disobeying the rules and using the main track without first ascertaining that train No. 3, a first-class train, had departed. This information was accessible from the operator on duty at Elsdon and they were

charged by the company's rules and by bulletin orders with the duty of obtaining it before occupying the main track with their train. The conductor of the transfer train was killed in the accident.

The operator at Elsdon is at fault for not posting a bulletin for the information of switching crews stating that train No. 3 was over nine hours late.

Had there been an adequate block signal system in use between Elsdon and Chicago it is unlikely that this accident would have occurred.

The Coroner of Cook County, Illinois, held an inquest in connection with this accident and forwarded a copy of the testimony taken in connection therewith, together with the verdict of the Coroner's Jury, to this Commission. This verdict embodied a recommendation that the Commission compel all railroads operating in Cook County to install a modern block signal system on all main tracks upon which passenger trains are operated. In this connection it is to be noted that the Commission is without power to comply with the recommendation of the Coroner's Jury. The attention of Congress has repeatedly been called to the necessity of requiring the use of block signals upon interstate railroads.

From this investigation, it appears that while the crew of the transfer train violated the rules, they have habitually done so in the past without being called to account for it by their superiors, although the officials were more or less

cognizant of such violations. While the transfer crew were supposed to secure the information from the operator relative to the movement of regular trains, the operating officials had no way of knowing whether or not they did secure such information.

It is not sufficient for a railroad company merely to provide rules to govern the operation of its trains. It is an absolute duty upon the part of the operating officials to know beyond question whether or not the rules are rigidly lived up to, and only when this is done can a railroad company provide that measure of protection to which the traveling public is entitled. Dereliction of duty by those who are charged with the making and enforcing of rules cannot fail to weaken respect for all rules and to render nugatory to a large extent all efforts to maintain discipline. It is a dangerous practice to replace positive rules by custom.

Previous accidents investigated upon the Grand Trunk Railway, particularly those occurring at North Yarmouth, Maine, on February 13, 1912, and at Fosters, Mich., on February 6, 1914, show an exceedingly lax enforcement of rules upon that road, and until this condition is remedied, accidents may be expected to occur.

All the employees involved in this accident were experienced men with good records, and none had been on duty in violation of the hours of service law.