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THE PUBLIC BE PLEASED

**“THE RAILROAD BUREAU FOR BRICKBATS
AND BOUQUETS”**

**REPRINTED FOR DISTRIBUTION THROUGH THE
BUREAU FOR SUGGESTIONS AND COMPLAINTS**

OF THE

UNITED STATES RAILROAD ADMINISTRATION

WASHINGTON, OCTOBER, 1918



**WASHINGTON
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1918**

A LIFE SENTENCE

From an address recently delivered by the Rev. J. F. Weirmann, of Philadelphia.



TAKE the case of a railroad conductor or engineer. Suppose a man has to take a train of coaches from New York to Washington, leaving New York, say, at 6 a. m. Anyone can readily see that his task may be contemplated in two entirely different frames of mind.

“He can say, as the bell rings and rouses him in what seems the dead of night, ‘Hang it all, it’s time to get up again; nothing but the same old grind; I hate railroading anyway; I think I’ll quit; this isn’t a job; it’s a life sentence.’”

“Or he can do something else. He can press a button somewhere inside himself and in a flash see the whole situation big before him, pulsating and tense in its human interest. He can see the great ‘system’ with which he is connected; its multiplex life. He can see the huge overarched shed with its breathing trains; he can see his own engine or train, and as he contemplates what by this time has begun to shape itself in his mind as an opportunity a smile can be seen breaking out on his lively face—it is *his* engine, *his* train; he can see the three hundred souls, more or less, waiting to be taken to Washington, each with a living interest, how and with what freight God only knows; and *it’s up to him to take that big human thing to Washington!* Once more he smiles and, thanking God he has a share in human things, in the work that needs to be done, he presses his hat down on his head and ‘beats it.’”

Printed for distribution among the United States Army of Railroad Men with the compliments of—

McAdoo

Director General of Railroads.

COPY OF POST CARD RECENTLY SENT TO EVERY EMPLOYEE
OF THE UNITED STATES RAILROAD ADMINISTRATION
BY DIRECTOR GENERAL MCADOO

THE PUBLIC BE PLEASED.

“THE RAILROAD BUREAU FOR BRICKBATS AND BOUQUETS.”

By THEO. H. PRICE,
Actuary to United States Railroad Administration.

As you fall unconcernedly asleep in a Pullman car, which, with all its drawbacks, is the least uncomfortable means of traveling at night on land that has as yet been devised, did you ever reflect upon the number of persons and the complexity of the organization upon which you are dependent for the safety and luxury in which you are able to make your journey? The engineer and the fireman, the conductor and the brakemen, the Pullman conductor and the porter, the steward in the dining car and the waiters are all more or less in evidence, and of their presence and the service they render you may be more or less conscious, but behind them and directing their activities is an unseen host of others upon whose vigilance in the performance of their duties your life and comfort depend.

There is the train dispatcher and the telegraph operators, the track-walker who patrols the right of way day and night, and the section gang who must always be ready to repair any defects, the switchmen, and the inspector who used to go about tapping the car wheels with his tell-tale hammer at the end of each division, the “hostler” who takes care of the engine and the machinist who repairs it, the car cleaners, the iceman, the commissary chief who provisions the dining cars, the ticket agent and the station master, the “red cap” and the baggage-man; if any one of these fails in his appointed task, the passenger is almost certain to suffer or be inconvenienced. Back of these again there used to be the executive officers, the president, the various vice presidents, the general manager, and the superintendent, with scores of other functionaries who were the objects of relentless public criticism if their subordinates were careless or inefficient. Now that the railroads are under the control of the Government the operative duties of the railroad president and the vice-presidents devolve upon a Federal manager and his assistants. They are in turn responsible to a regional director, who is the representative of Director General McAdoo at Washington; but in other respects the operating organization is not much changed and, because some people, forgetting the exigencies of the war, assume that the Government is omnipotent, they are now disposed to be more, rather than less, exacting in demanding perfection of service from the machine that is called the American railroad system. Composed, as this machines is, of literally

millions of mechanical parts whose functioning depends upon the co-ordinated watchfulness and care of thousands of fallible human beings, it is really surprising that more accidents do not occur, and that the reaction of man upon man does not result in irritation oftener than is the case. When we consider that a loose spike, a defective rail, a misplaced switch, or a misread signal may precipitate a train-load of people into eternity, and that an innumerable number of spikes, rails, switches, and signals, to say nothing of the air brakes, couplings, electric wires, and steam and water supply pipes, with an engine having about 15,000 separate parts that make up a passenger train must all be as they should be if we are to reach our journey's end successfully and on time, it is little short of marvelous that travel is as safe as it has become and that under the strain to which they are subjected railroad employees are not oftener careless and impatient. It is greatly to the credit of the executive officers who through three generations had built up the fabric that is called the American railroad system that they should have succeeded in developing the *esprit de corps* by which the men under them were animated. This had been accomplished in the face of many difficulties, including especially a mass of hampering legislation in 48 different States; and when, in order to meet the exigencies of the war, it became necessary for the President to put the transportation agencies of the country under the control of Mr. McAdoo, his first care was to preserve and increase the spirit of idealism in the performance of their duty that was characteristic of the Americans who had become proud of being called "railroad men."

There were not wanting those who predicted a speedy decline in what has come to be called the "morale" of the railroad army, and there were some who, professing to discern such a decline, persuaded others to look through glasses that were darkened by a defeatist self-interest in the failure of Government control.

The Director General, confident as he was of the loyalty of the men, did not share this pessimism, but feeling nevertheless that it was his duty to ascertain whether it had any basis, he determined, with his customary directness, to ask the public to tell him frankly how and where the service could be improved.

Accordingly he issued an order establishing a Bureau for Suggestions and Complaints, and on the 3d of September, 1918, the following notice was posted in every station and passenger coach under the control of the United States Railroad Administration:

To the public:

I desire your assistance and cooperation in making the railroad service while under Federal control in the highest possible degree satisfactory and efficient.

Of course, the paramount necessities of the war must have first consideration. Our gallant sons who are fighting in France and on the high seas can not be adequately supported unless the railroads supply sufficient transportation for the movement of troops and war materials and to keep the war industries of the Nation going without interruption.

The next purpose is to serve the public convenience, comfort, and necessity to the fullest extent not incompatible with the paramount demands of the war.

In order to accomplish this, criticisms and suggestions from the public will be extremely helpful, whether they relate to the service rendered by employees and officials or impersonal details that may convenience or inconvenience patrons of the railroads. It is impossible for even the most vigilant management to keep constantly in touch with local conditions and correct them when they are not as

they should be unless the public will cooperate in pointing out deficiencies and disservice when they exist, so that the proper remedies may be applied.

I have therefore established a Bureau for Suggestions and Complaints in the Director General's office at Washington, to which the public is invited to resort.

Aside from letters of complaint and suggestion, the public can render a genuine service by sending letters of commendation of employees who are conspicuously courteous and efficient in the performance of their duties. Nothing promotes the esprit of a great organization more than recognition from time to time of these employees who perform their duties faithfully and commendably.

It is requested that all communications be brief and explicit and that the name and address of the writer be distinctly written.

Also give the time of day or night, the number of the train, the name of the railroad, and, if possible, the name of the employee whose conduct is complained of or whose services are commended, together with such other information as will enable me to take appropriate action.

Please address

W. G. McAdoo,
*Director General of Railroads,
 Bureau for Suggestions and Complaints,
 Washington, D. C.*

To deal with the letters which this notice was expected to elicit, five trained men were selected and put under the direction of the writer. They include Ballard Dunn, assistant actuary to the United States Railroad Administration and formerly special representative of president's office, Union Pacific Railroad, Omaha; J. F. Jarrell, formerly editorial writer on Kansas City Times and Topeka Capital, and later with the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe Railroad as editor of its industrial and agricultural publications and in general charge of publicity matters; T. T. Maxey, formerly of the Chicago, Burlington & Quincy Railroad as advertising agent; E. H. Lamb, formerly general agent of the Chicago & North Western Railway at Sacramento, Cal.; and Frank F. George, formerly secretary to the actuary to the United States Railroad Administration.

This Bureau for Suggestions and Complaints, which a newspaper man has facetiously dubbed the "bureau of brickbats and bouquets," is Mr. McAdoo's latest application of his motto "The public be pleased." It has now been in existence long enough to make it possible for those in charge of it to draw a cross section of the composite public mind as revealed in the many thousands of letters that have been received.

The writers of these letters unconsciously divide themselves into two classes—one comprising those who are temperamentally censorious, and another which includes the people who believe that praise is a duty and that "criticism is best defined as an emphasis of the desirable."

The rhyme which runs—

Between the optimist and pessimist the difference is droll,
 The optimist the doughnut sees—the pessimist the hole

finds fresh application in not a few contrasting letters upon the same subject, but between the two extremes there are many who are evidently inspired by a public-spirited desire to improve the service that the railroads are trying to render and a patriotic willingness to subordinate their own convenience and comfort to the primary purpose for which the railroads were taken over, namely, the winning of the war.

That this latter class is in a very large majority is one of the reassuring facts revealed by the experience of the Bureau for Suggestions and Complaints.

Some of the newspaper writers who have been vociferous in proclaiming the discourtesy and indifference of "Uncle Sam's railway employees" would perhaps be surprised at the number of letters of commendation that have been received, and while a few of them are no doubt the result of auto-suggestion, it is evident that as a class the men and the increasingly large number of women who compose the "railway army" of the United States are loyal and enthusiastic, anxious and willing to give the best that is in them to the work in which they are enlisted. Perhaps a story written by a newspaper reporter who started out to find the discourteous railway employee and failed describes the experience of not a few disappointed pessimists. This reporter was named John C. Baskerville, and his story was published in the Des Moines (Iowa) Record. It follows and is reprinted as a spontaneous tribute to the many railroad employees at Des Moines and elsewhere who deserve a word of praise for their self-control under conditions that are irritating.

**YOUNG REPORTER TRIES TO LOCATE DISCOURTEOUS RAILWAY EMPLOYEES—
SEARCHES TICKET OFFICES AND RAILROAD STATION TO FIND MEN WHO WILL
TALK ROUGH TO HIM.**

[By John C. Baskerville.]

Because of so many rumors that railway employees had adopted an attitude of "the public be damned" since the roads came under Federal control, the young reporter set out to investigate on his own hook.

He selected the most pretentious-looking ticket office in Des Moines, entered, and approached the bar—beg pardon; desk, I should say—falteringly. He asked for the manager. The clerk smiled, but courteously summoned a businesslike-looking man with rimmed spectacles.

"What is the best way to get from Des Moines to Skeedunk Hollow, Mo.?" asked the young reporter.

Although the businesslike agent had never heard of the place, he searched through big volumes and many maps, finally locating the place in question. He located the railroad it was on, looked up the connections, gave the hours trains left Des Moines, and went into detail to the rather dull-appearing youth on the other side of the desk.

NO NEED TO PURCHASE.

Unlike the clothing salesman or jewelry-store clerk, he did not insist upon an immediate purchase of a ticket, and when the young man turned away, stating that he had heard of that place and wondered how he would get there if he ever wanted to, the agent was still smiling and courteous.

From this office the young man forsook the offices of Walnut Street and sought one in the vicinity of Seventh Street. Here he inquired how to get to a remote spot in South Dakota. Although there were not as many men in the office to wait upon the public as in the other, he was required to wait his turn. But his questions were answered courteously, and the greatest of care taken to direct him with regard to all details of the journey.

He retraced his steps to Walnut and entered another office. He was delayed somewhat by a large, overgrown, superfed human crab, who was vociferously attempting to provoke the genial and accommodating agent to wrath by criticizing railroads in general, and expounding upon the way he would run the roads if he were doing it.

GETS INFORMATION CHEERFULLY.

This time the reporter was interested in Pullman berths from a point outside of Des Moines to the far West. He asked the agent to make the reservations, assuming ignorance of the fact that the Director General had prohibited all

offices wiring for berths except at the expense of the purchaser.¹ This fact was explained by the agent, who volunteered, however, to make out the wire, send it over, and telephone results, although the expense would have to be met by the person reserving the berths.

It so happened that the young reporter had once or twice had occasion to buy Pullman tickets before—not having always been a reporter—but never had he been shown such attention and accommodation.

So far nothing but failure had rewarded the search for the “public-be-damned” attitude among the railway men. But he was not discouraged. He decided to beard the lion in his den, and call upon that high and mighty, the manager of the division.

He was informed that the manager was out at the time, but—still greater wonder—the chief clerk, generally considered to be more fierce in his natural instincts than the manager himself—volunteered to give what information he could on the subject, calling in the general freight traffic manager to assist.

SEES FAILURE AHEAD.

What was to be done? Failure stared grotesquely into the face of the young man who had started in pursuit of success. But additional thought brought one more chance to light. That night he would visit the station when it was most crowded and seek more information.

When the limited trains became due, the reporter took his place in the long line of ticket purchasers before the window at the railway station. When he reached it, his questions and numerous desires put two clerks to work searching records, maps, and rate schedules. There was no complaint from the men behind the window.

He then went out among the trains and people on the tracks. He selected one brakeman who had been handling hundreds of suitcases and dozens of babies, incidentally answering some thousands of questions, who stood mopping his brow, as the train was almost ready to start. He held a letter, previously prepared, out to the man, asking that he mail it on the fast train at the junction with another line.

This last card he was certain would give him the necessary data for his story. It would surely be the last straw for the brakeman with the “public-be-damned” attitude, since he was getting paid by the Government.

The brakeman took the letter, obligingly agreeing to mail it at the point mentioned!

Then the young reporter went to the office and wrote a different, but better, story than he expected to get.

Propos of the foregoing, it may be appropriate to mention a letter from a man who says that “I know that many will complain of the discourtesy of railway employees to the public, but I desire to file a complaint in regard to the discourtesy of the public to railway employees,” as emphasizing the need of reciprocity in politeness in a way that many travelers would do well to ponder, for it is undoubtedly true that some of the questions that railroad men have to answer and some of the demands made upon them are absurd and exasperating to a degree that even Job would have resented.

Of the letters received, probably three-fourths complain of conditions that are presently unavoidable or of regulations, the reasonableness of which is not apparent to the casual traveler who fails to appreciate or understand the complexity of the railroad machine or the necessity of protecting the public against the ignorance, carelessness, and selfishness of some and the dishonesty of others who feel that it is no sin to evade the payment of their fares or “get the best of the railroad.”

What may be called the conventional complaints relate chiefly to a few subjects, which are dealt with, as follows, in the order in which

¹ Since this newspaper story was written arrangements have been made for the free use of railroad wires in making telegraphic reservations of Pullman accommodations for continuous journeys. When thus reserved, however, these reservations must be paid for.

they seem uppermost in the public mind and have elicited the largest number of letters.

They are:

1. **The crowded condition of the stations and cars and the delay encountered in purchasing tickets.**—Under this heading there may be considered practically all the complaints which arise as a result of the unprecedented increase in the passenger traffic of late and the shortage in the ticket-selling forces that is the result of the draft and the high wages which have attracted many experienced railroad men into other positions where they can, for the present at least, earn more than it is possible for the railroads to pay. The enormous increase in passenger traffic with which the railroads are now contending is not perhaps generally appreciated. The complete comparative statistics for June, 1917, and June, 1918, are not yet available, but a statement which includes the passenger traffic of 208,988 miles of railroads out of a total mileage of nearly 300,000 miles shows that 3,621,088,633 passengers were carried 1 mile in June, 1918, as compared with 3,049,803,635 passengers carried 1 mile in June, 1917. The increase of 571,285,028 passengers carried 1 mile is equal to 18.17 per cent, and if it be assumed that the average journey of each passenger was 50¹ miles, which is probably an approximation to the fact, we shall be justified in concluding that the railroads reporting had to carry 11,425,700 more persons in June, 1918, than during the same month in the previous year, and that there was an equal increase in the number of tickets sold. As the roads reporting include only about two-thirds, but the most important two-thirds, of the total mileage in the United States, it is not improbable that there was an aggregate increase of 15,000,000 in the number of persons traveling and the number of journeys made throughout the United States in the month of June, 1918, as compared with June, 1917. This means an increase of 750,000 in the number of persons traveling each day. The average passenger car will seat 50 people, and to carry 750,000 persons 15,000 cars filled to capacity would be required. They are not to be had. They could not have been built even if they had been ordered. The labor and material necessary are unobtainable. According to the figures of the Interstate Commerce Commission there were (excluding parlor and sleeping cars) only 40,870 passenger cars of all sorts in the United States in the year 1916, and the necessity of crowding these cars in order to transport those who now desire to travel will at once be apparent even to the statistical tyro.

An average of about 1,100,000 troops a month is now being carried by the railroads on orders from the War and Navy Departments. A great many other soldiers and sailors are traveling on their own account and at their own expense. The mothers, fathers, wives, sweethearts, and friends of these men have also been traveling to visit them at the camps at which they were stationed. The high wages that are being paid in industry generally, and particularly in the shipyards and munition factories, the agricultural prosperity that is the result of \$2 wheat and 30-cent cotton have made many of those who were not previously in the habit of traveling feel able to "take a trip," and they

¹According to the figures of the Interstate Commerce Commission the average journey per passenger in 1916 was 34.73 miles, which figure, if applied to the returns for 1918, would indicate an increase of over 21,000,000 in the number of persons traveling during the month of June, 1918, as compared with June, 1917. Inasmuch, however, as this year's figures include the movement of many troops over long runs, I have preferred to avoid an overestimate by assuming that the length of the average journey was 50 miles.

have yielded to the impulse. Concurrently the force of ticket sellers has been depleted by draft or resignation to accept other and better-paid positions, and those who were left have had to deal with the unprecedented increase in the passenger traffic that the figures given disclose.

Under the circumstances it is not surprising that sometimes long lines of people are to be found waiting at important ticket offices. It is not possible for untrained men to sell railroad tickets. This work requires a knowledge of routes, rates, time tables, and connections that can only be acquired by experience and an ability to make change promptly and accurately and to be self-controlled when tired or exasperated that can not be learned in a minute. In an effort to meet the public demand the United States Railroad Administration has opened schools in some of the larger cities for the education of women as ticket sellers, and not a few graduates have been passed from these schools into active service, but the number of women who have applied for this instruction is not large, and after making allowances for the drain that will be caused by the pending draft it seems unlikely that the ticket-selling force can be appreciably increased in the near future.

These conditions are frankly stated that the public may have some idea of the situation and refrain from unnecessary travel. The increase in passenger rates seems to have had no effect. Mr. McAdoo has appealed to the public to avoid pleasure traveling, but he seems to have been unheeded. It is not possible for the United States Railroad Administration to put a quart in a pint bottle. It can not carry the soldiers who must be transported comfortably and provide the public with the luxury and accommodations to which they have been previously accustomed. The former is an imperative duty, and this is written that those who complain of the crowded cars and the delays at ticket offices may understand that some discomfort and inconvenience are unavoidable. Universal mileage books, good in the hands of bearer upon any railroad under the control of the Director General, have been devised and are now on sale. Those who use them will avoid the delay usually encountered in the purchase of tickets, but the best method of relieving the situation is to avoid unnecessary travel and preach the gospel of "winning the war by staying at home" among your friends by both precept and example.

2. **The surcharge of one-half cent a mile now made for transportation in parlor or sleeping cars, which charge is in addition to the regular Pullman fare,** is another thing that provokes many complaints. The reasonableness of this charge will be appreciated in the light of the following comparisons: With one person in a berth the average sleeping car will accommodate but 27 people, whereas a modern coach has seats for approximately 60 people. Upon the average, a passenger in a sleeping car occupies $13\frac{1}{2}$ square feet of space, whereas a passenger in a modern steel coach occupies but $7\frac{1}{2}$ square feet. The average dead-weight per seat in a sleeping car is 3,250 pounds, whereas the average dead-weight per seat in a modern steel coach is but 1,400 pounds. The passenger capacity of a sleeping car is, therefore, less than half of the passenger capacity of the average coach and the engine load per passenger is more than double in the case of Pullman cars that are completely filled, and still further increased when they are only half filled, as was not infrequently the case when a person

with only one transportation ticket was permitted the exclusive occupation of a section. In view of these figures the reasonableness of the increased charge now made for the luxury of a Pullman car at once becomes apparent. It is not necessary to elaborate upon it.

3. **The rule which makes it impossible to reserve Pullman accommodations without paying for them and another rule, formerly in force, which made it necessary that Pullman tickets not used should be sent to Chicago for redemption** are the subjects of many complaining letters. These rules were deliberately adopted in an effort to prevent those who were only *thinking* about a journey that they were not certain to make from preempting the Pullman space that was urgently required by others who were compelled to travel. When it was possible to reserve a berth by telegraph or telephone or buy a Pullman ticket and get your money back at the last moment, it frequently happened that sleepers in which all the berths were reserved in the morning would go out half filled in the evening because the reserved space had not been taken up or had been released so late that it could not be resold. Now that it is necessary that both the railway ticket and the Pullman space must be paid for before a berth can be reserved, only those who are reasonably certain of traveling make reservations, and the Pullman cars are better filled, to the advantage of both the public and the railways. The rule which made it necessary to send Pullman tickets to Chicago for redemption has recently been rescinded and they will now be redeemed at the office of sale provided they are presented long enough before the departure of the trains to permit of their resale. Thus tickets on trains leaving during the forenoon of any day must be presented at the office of sale by 5.30 o'clock p. m. on the previous day, and tickets on trains leaving after 12 o'clock noon must be presented at least three hours before the departure of the trains for which they are sold. Pullman space released later will, if possible, be resold for account of the buyer, and when so resold the tickets will be redeemed if sent by mail to the Pullman Co. in Chicago. The necessity of providing Pullman cars for the transportation of our troops on night journeys has made it necessary to adopt these rules, all of which are designed to secure a full loading of the sleepers which are used by the public and thereby release those which are necessary for the transportation of soldiers.

4. **The sale of surcharge tickets for transportation in Pullman cars when no berths or seats are to be had** is one of the things properly complained of that has been remedied. Formerly the Pullman Co., being a separate and independent organization, objected to collecting revenue due the railroad companies. Now that both are under the control of the United States Railroad Administration this difficulty has disappeared, and arrangements are being made in pursuance of which the Pullman Co. will hereafter sell tickets for the transportation surcharge to those, and only to those, who are able to secure accommodations in parlor cars or sleepers. Much of the unnecessary confusion hitherto arising will thus be avoided.

5. **The limit of from 24 to 48 hours now placed upon the use of tickets issued by a few roads that formerly sold unlimited or 30-day tickets for short journeys** has also provoked many complaints. It is natural that those who do not understand why this limitation has been imposed should resent it, but there is a good reason for the new rule. It is to be found in the crowded condition of the trains,

which makes it exceedingly difficult for the conductor to be sure of collecting the tickets from everyone in the car, especially when some of those who have no scruples about "beating the railroad" are skillful in evading him. If these dishonest persons could buy unlimited tickets and succeed, as many of them do, in riding without surrendering them, they would be able to resell the unused ticket or get a second or third ride free, thus giving them an advantage over their more conscientious fellow travelers. A limited ticket good only on the day of issue makes such practices more difficult, and the rule prohibiting the sale of unlimited tickets has been framed in the interest of the honest as against the dishonest person and is to be commended rather than condemned.

6. **Ill-kept stations, cars, and lavatories** compose another group of the grievances complained of in many letters that reach the Bureau for Suggestions and Complaints. The investigations which have followed the receipt of these letters reveal not a few cases of genuine neglect and carelessness. Efforts are being made to prevent their recurrence and enforce high standards of cleanliness and sanitation everywhere. It is to be admitted, however, that the shortage of labor makes this difficult, and that while the war lasts immaculate house-keeping is hardly to be expected. One of the letters received upon this subject is worthy of special notice. It came from a woman in a Pennsylvania town where the station was unkempt. The writer said that she knew that the station agent was doing all that he could, but that she realized that it was impossible for him with the help at his disposal to keep things in a presentable condition, and she offered to organize a committee of women who would undertake to sweep out and clean the station daily as part of their war work. It has not yet been decided whether it would be expedient to accept this offer, but the admirable public spirit that it expresses is entitled to appreciative recognition.

7. **The departure and arrival of trains at inconvenient hours and schedules which are arranged to prevent rather than facilitate close connections between trains on roads that were formerly in competition** are matters that are complained of in still another group of letters, many of which have been helpful to the officials who ever since the United States Railroad Administration was organized have been trying to coordinate the railway time-tables of the various roads.

Now that competition is eliminated, there is every reason why the national time-table should be synchronized as far as possible. Efforts are being made toward this end, but the arrangement of a railroad schedule is a matter of infinite complexity and its rearrangement is even more difficult. There are many communities in the United States where the whole scheme of living has become adjusted to the arrival and departure of certain trains. To change their time would involve almost a social revolution. Then again a single change in a schedule may compel hundreds of other changes at other points or on other roads, and each innovation must be carefully studied. Some improvements have already been made, and ultimately, no doubt, a large portion of the time now wasted in waiting for connections can be saved; but in the effort to attain the ideal in this as in other respects great care must be used to avoid dropping a monkey wrench into the machinery that is already working fairly well.

This about completes the list of what have come to be called "conventional grievances" in the Bureau for Suggestions and Complaints. Of course, it does not include many other things that are complained of, nor does it take account of the innumerable suggestions that are made for the improvement of the service. Some of these suggestions are practicable and have been thankfully adopted. Others, as for instance, a bachelor's advice that a nursery car reserved for mothers and children should be run upon every train, are impracticable.

Complaints of discourtesy on the part of employees are less frequent than might have been expected and are about equal in number to the letters of commendation received.

The consolidation of ticket offices, which was at first criticized, is now generally approved as the new offices are getting into working order and their convenience is appreciated.

The delays in settling claims for lost or damaged freight and baggage are the subjects of many letters which will, no doubt, lead to a reform in the traditional policy of many claim agents who had been in the habit of trying to save money for their roads by a procrastination which often wore the claimants out. Mr. McAdoo has ordered that just claims shall be promptly paid, and that unjust or dishonest demands shall be resisted and the claimants prosecuted where there is any evidence of criminality.

Concurrently with the increase in passenger travel there has naturally been an increased amount of baggage to handle, but the comparatively small number of letters reporting "lost trunks" encourages the belief that the baggage men have succeeded in meeting the strain to which they have been subjected. It may not be amiss, however, to express the hope that the American public will soon realize that it is a war duty to travel with as little baggage as possible when travel is necessary. Handling heavy baggage is a duty that can only be performed by strong and vigorous men, and delay in the transportation and delivery of heavy trunks is almost inevitable when the number of such men available is constantly being decreased by the draft.

Generally, and with few exceptions, the communications reveal a widespread desire to cooperate with Mr. McAdoo and the United States Railroad Administration in the effort that is being made to improve railroad efficiency for the winning of the war. To this everything else must be subordinated, and in comparison with this everything else is trivial. Our soldiers must be carried in comfort on what, for some of them, will be their last journey in their own country. While they are risking their lives for our protection on the battle fields and in the trenches of Europe, they must be kept liberally supplied with everything that they may require. Our allies must be fed. Our wounded must be brought back and tenderly carried to the homes and hospitals that are ready to receive them. The Bureau for Suggestions and Complaints was primarily organized to promote the efficiency with which the railroads may serve the Nation in the doing of these things.

If it shall have exalted the convenience or comfort of the individual to the disservice of the country or a civilization that has become militant in the assertion of right and the protection of humanity, then it had better be discontinued. Comfort and convenience must give way before the supreme needs of war and be surrendered until victory is ours.



Gaylord

PAMPHLET BINDER

Syracuse, N. Y.

Stockton, Calif.

