

IDLE RAILWAY MEN.

How Tried and Trusted Employees
are Thrown out After Their
Usefulness is Past.

Carefully prepared estimates based upon investigation covering 29 states, showing the number of unemployed men in this country, bring to light some startling information and disclose a condition bearing upon the railway industry well worthy of criticism and of much interest to men now in service and those who contemplate taking up this line of work.

The writer has devoted the greater part of three years in an earnest effort to secure substantial data wherefrom a positive statement could be prepared showing the exact number of idle men who could rightfully be classed as railroad men and to determine if their inaction was voluntary or the result of some specific act on their part or general movement of employers. In doing this numerous difficulties were encountered and various obstacles were present which prevent issuing a statement absolutely correct as to exact numbers. However, sufficient information is at hand to convince fair minded persons that the number of unemployed railroad men has reached alarming proportions notwithstanding the fact that a greater number are required to operate the lines at present than at any time during the life of American railroads. Statistics gathered from 131 railway and industrial centers, not including New England, North and South Carolina and Georgia, show that men now idle and formerly employed on railroads, of ages ranging from 30 to 55, constitute 20 per cent, or one-fifth of the total number of unemployed. The average term of service rendered to the various departments by the number mentioned shows 16 years.

That portion of the reports which shows 60 per cent of this class as physically and mentally sound but refused employment on account of age, seems almost incredible in view of the prosperous condition of traffic and the fact that information gathered refers only to those over 55 years. Thirty per cent are exempt under the age limit, but rejected on account of physical defects. Five per cent frankly declare their inability to provide suitable record. The remaining 5 per cent has no desire to re-enter the service. It should be borne in mind that many thousands of former railroad employes of the rejected class have engaged in other lines of labor and are not mentioned in the figures quoted.

Many fail to see the justice of this enforced idleness, which may in time lead to serious industrial disturbances. Whether or not there is an element of danger in this seemingly bad condition, the policy inaugurated and responsibility for its existence is due to the attitude of the railway companies, who for many years have given special attention to the age and physical qualifications of their employes in all departments of the service. Some lines have placed the age limit at 35 years, while others have decided not to employ men over 28. Wide experience, a good record, intellectual superiority and moral uprightness are not considered in passing upon the fitness of candidates for employment, the essential qualifications being youth and physical perfection. Brain and muscle is an unequal struggle with muscle in the ascendancy.

In the interest of peace it is well to reason together. If an army of energetic, industrious men are reduced to a condition of helplessness, while yet physically and mentally vigorous, and removed from a field of usefulness into which they are prohibited to again enter, and forced to take up, though unwillingly, the brutal burden of poverty and become a part of the hungry horde of discontents, can any one doubt that bitterness will be

created and harmony destroyed? Contentment is a condition precedent to tranquility and should be established whenever and wherever possible. The best employee in any and all industries is the contented one. A hundred thousand men, strong in mind and muscle, idle because of the loss of a finger or perhaps a year or two beyond the age limit, in constant association with their younger and more fortunate brothers, will certainly sow broadcast the spirit of discontent and the doctrine of hate.

It is true that many hazardous features of train service of former years are happily removed by the adoption of safety appliances and power brakes. This has added to the general comfort and lightened the burden of those employed, liability of accident has been lessened, and each year fewer men are crushed beneath the wheels. It also removed the necessity of having well trained men to couple cars and handle trains with hand brakes. We have passed from the age of links and pins to one of levers and hose, from a scene of frightful slaughter to one of comparative safety. During the former period men with fingers and thumbs missing were in demand. A crushed hand was its own indorsement. It served all the purposes of a traveling yard while on the line, was ample reference at terminals and was not considered a misfortune to seriously deplore. The chance for employment was not impaired, but rather improved.

In the later period "old timers" are not required. They are classed as undesirable, their skill no longer necessary. Their disappearance from the field of action was coincident with the adoption of modern safety appliances and the removal of the dangerous methods of long ago. Very few of this class shared in the benefits that inventive genius has wrought in the interest of this giant industry.—F. J. O'Rourke in Chicago Inter-Ocean.

The women of San Francisco are agitating the subject of organizing a Woman's Label League. Much enthusiasm is being manifested. A meeting was to be held yesterday for the purpose of forming an organization; but we have not learned the details. There is no doubt that a league of that description would be a great auxiliary and do much toward assisting in making a demand for goods bearing the label of organized labor. The women do most of the purchasing at the dry goods stores, and of course they have it in their power to make the demand for the label almost universal.

Such an organization would be just as good for Portland as for San Francisco or any other place; then what is to hinder organizing a Woman's Label League in this city? Nothing except a little enterprise and a good deal of loyalty to the cause of labor. The mothers, wives, sisters, daughters and acquaintances of the union men in town, if they would unite their efforts in this direction, could wield a power that would be irresistible. If the women of Portland who are in sympathy with organized labor, would get together and take concerted action in this matter, it would not be six months till every thing from a spool of thread to a Brussels carpet would bear the trade mark of organized labor.

We call attention to the advertisement of A. J. Farmer wholesale and retail grocer, in another column, in which he specifically describes butterine and calls attention to its purity as a food, the manner in which it is made, and he shows conclusively that the feeling against it, if there is any, is founded wholly on prejudice. Read his advertisement, and judge for yourself.

What is the good of the union label if you don't demand it?

Keep your card up to date.

A VOICE FROM MEXICO.

How the Clerks in the City of the
Montezumas Make the
Union Boom.

The "Centro de Dependientes," or Clerks' Union," is proving to be an organization affording much pleasure socially, as well as filling a long felt want in the City of Mexico for a society of the kind where those not in a position to take advantage of other facilities for acquiring literary and commercial improvement, can make themselves conversant with the current education of the times.

The above organization was started last September with the object as stated above. The membership already takes in 1300 employees in good standing in this city, says the Retail Clerks' National Advocate. Large and commodious rooms have been secured at Calle Santa Clara No. 15; night classes in English, bookkeeping and other useful branches that tell in the successful career of the class that are interested, have been formed and are attended regularly by a good representative portion of the members; a gymnasium is shortly to be started, and also another feature that certainly reflects credit on the originators of the plan and the management who are carrying it to completion as fast as possible, viz., a sanitarium which will form a department of the club early in the new year. It is the intention to provide means for taking proper care of all members who should happen to fall ill and not be in a position to receive the home comforts that go much further than medical attention in bringing about a rapid recovery in the majority of cases.

Also once a month the organization has a social function to which the lady relatives and friends of the members are invited, the best of music is employed and a pleasant evening spent in dancing, vocal and instrumental music.

On account of the holiday season a nine-night social entertainment has been inaugurated, which will end next Monday night. In the meantime every night is a festa; the rooms have been most tastefully adorned with palms, evergreens and artificial decorations.

There were over 200 ladies and gentlemen present last night and the management said that the same had been the case ever since the present fiesta commenced.

CARNEGIE TALKS (?)

"Here, boys, I've been taking the hog's share of the profits in this business. I've appropriated so much of the profits of our joint efforts that I don't know what to do with the money. I've been building libraries for towns that were rich enough to build their own. Possibly some of you have had a tough time of it raising your children, paying doctor bills and giving them a common school education let alone spending any time in my libraries. It may be true, too, that you can't save up enough to protect your wives and babies in case you die making money for me. So I think I'll turn over a new life and go at the thing rationally. Now there are, say 14,000 of you. Instead of keeping your wages where they are I'll make a fairer distribution of the profits. I can give you an average of \$1500 each a year more than you are getting now. That will make all of you comparatively rich, yet it will only take \$21,000,000 altogether, and leave me a nice income of \$3,000,000 as compensation for my services in bossing the job."—What Carnegie said in his mind.

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