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October 10, 1911.

The Interstate Commerce Commission,

Washington, D. C.

Dear Sirs:-

At about 5 A.M. on September 11, 1911, north bound freight extra 600 collided head-on with south-bound freight extra 563, on the Northern Wisconsin Division of the Chicago & North Western Railway, at a point about two miles north of Oakfield, Wis. No telegraphic report was received from the railway officials as there were no fatalities. This wreck was investigated by Inspector C. F. Merrill, who was in the immediate vicinity of the accident, and a synopsis of his report is herewith submitted.

Extra 600 was drawing a dead engine and wrecking outfit, while extra 563 was coupled to engine 600, double-header, and had no train, a caboose being the only car attached to the engines.

This accident resulted in injuries to twelve employees, as follows: three engineers, three firemen, two brakemen, one car foreman, two car repairers, and one helper.

The conductor and engineers of extra 600 received at Clyman, Wis., at 1:25 A.M., train order No. 133, reading as follows:

Eng. 600 run extra Clyman to Fond du Lac. Extra 568 south and extra 1212 nth have right over extra 600 north Fond du Lac to Clyman and will wait at Fond du Lac until four twenty 4:20 A.M., Oakfield four forty 4:40 A.M., Oak Center four forty-five 4:45 A.M., Cheston four fifty-five 4:55 A.M., Burnett Jct. five ten 5:10 A.M. for extra 600 nth.

On arrival at Oakfield about 4 A.M., not having sufficient time on this order to make Fond du Lac, extra 600 went in on the siding there, at which time it appears that the engineer and crew went to sleep. After extra 1212 passed, at about 4:50 A.M., the engineer states that he was awakened by the head brakeman, who asked him if he was ready to go. He claims he asked the brakeman if both extras had passed, and the brakeman replied that they had. He did not talk with the conductor before pulling out. The engineer further states that the only knowledge he had that the head brakeman knew of order No. 132 was that the fireman read the order from the light of the water hose lamp at Clyman, with the brakeman looking over his shoulder.

From the testimony of the fireman, it appears that he also was asleep, and he states that the engineer woke him up just before starting. He says that he thought he heard both extras pass.

The head brakeman states that after extra 1212 passed he went to the switch, lined it up for the main track, and gave the engineer the signal to come ahead. He claims that he had not read the orders himself, but had heard the

engineer read them to the conductor at Clyman. He supposed that they were to meet but one extra at Oakfield.

The conductor was lying down in the caboose and admits that he was asleep when extra 1012 passed. Then, as his train was pulling out of the siding, he asked the rear brakeman if both of the extras had passed and then read the order to him. He claims the rear brakeman replied they had. He further states that he had told the rear brakeman previously that there were two extras named in order No. 103.

The rear brakeman claims that the conductor asked him if both extras had passed when the train started to leave Oakfield, and that he said no, unless they were coupled. He further states that the conductor then read the orders to him and that this was the first he knew of meeting the two extras at Oakfield. He then states that the conductor started to go up ahead, but found that he could not get over the derrick, and that the conductor then took it for granted that the engineer knew what he was doing when he left the siding.

The evidence of all the employees on extra 600 is very conflicting, except that it agrees that they went to sleep after taking the siding at Oakfield. The entire crew on this train had been on duty but eleven and one-half hours prior to the accident, and all had had about eighteen hours' rest before starting out on this trip.

This is a single track railroad, and at the point of the accident is straight. The weather was very foggy and

misty; in fact, so thick that a lantern could hardly be seen more than five or six car lengths. The estimated speed of the trains at the time of the accident was about 25 miles per hour.

This collision was caused by the train crew of extra 600 overlooking that part of their order wherein extra 568 had rights over extra 600. There is no excuse whatever for this neglect, the engineer and conductor being especially at fault in deliberately going to sleep while in the siding at Oakfield, and in not knowing before occupying the main track whether extra 568 had passed them.

Respectfully submitted,

Chief Inspector of  
Safety Appliances.