Improper Forestalling*

A REAR-END collision between a passenger train of the Big Four and a passenger train of the New York Central, on January 27, on the tracks of the latter railroad at Elkhart, Ind., resulted in the injury of two passengers, six employees, four mail clerks and one tresspasser. In the vicinity of the point of the accident this is a double-track line over which trains are operated by time-table, train orders, and an automatic block-signal and train-stop system, the latter being of the intermittent-inductive type. The switch which connects a passenger-yard track with the eastward main track, which it parallels, is situated at a point about 235 ft. east of the station at Elkhart, and it was at a point about 10 ft. west of this switch that the collision occurred.

The route from the yard track to the main track is controlled from an interlocking tower located about 700 ft. east of the station and such movements are governed by a dwarf signal located just east of the switch. The other signals involved are interlocking home signal 48, located 185 ft. west of the switch, automatic signal 439-2, located approximately 2,350 ft. west of the home signal, and automatic signal 440-2, located approximately 3,650 ft. west of signal 439-2.

Eastbound New York Central passenger train No. 18 was made up on the yard track and departed at 6:30 a.m., on time, after having received a Proceed indication from the dwarf signal, and had passed practically through the switch when it was struck by Big Four passenger train No. 372 while traveling at a speed estimated to have been 8 or 10 m. p. h. The Big Four train consisted of gas-electric motor car M-1210 and one coach, both of steel construction. This train passed signal 440-2, displaying yellow over green, passed signal 439-2, displaying yellow over red, passed home signal 48 displaying a Stop indication, and collided with the rear end of train No. 18.

Motorman Kaiser, of Big Four train No. 372, stated that, on approaching signal 440-2, he received a clear or green indication and was operating his train at a speed of 60 m. p. h.; as he approached signal 439-2 he saw it displaying a caution or yellow indication and could see it for quite a distance; just before he reached it he closed the throttle, as he had had it wide open until that time, operated the forestalling lever of the automatic train-stop device, and then realized that the train was traveling too fast and applied the brakes in emergency. He estimated the speed to have been 15 m. p. h. at the time of the collision. He did not remember having operated the forestalling lever at signal 440-2, which would have been necessary with signal 48 displaying a Stop indication, and said that in the past he had always entered these two blocks approaching Elkhart with the signals displaying yellow indications.

The accident was caused by the failure of Motorman Kaiser, of Big Four train No. 372, properly to observe and obey signal indications. Attention is called to the fact that Motorman Kaiser also failed to comply with the requirement of the rules that an engineman must not forestall until after a signal indication has been observed and is being obeyed; he failed to take the necessary action at signal 440-2 to bring his train under control and to approach signal 439-2 at restricted speed, and at signal 439-2 he again failed to comply with the rule by forestalling an application of the brakes before he had obeyed the indication.

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*Abstract of a report by the Director of Safety of the Interstate Commerce Commission.