NEWS OF THE MONTH

Signal Statistics

The Interstate Commerce Commission has recently issued the annual report compiled by the Bureau of Safety on signals, automatic train control, and telephone and telegraph for transmission of train orders, on railroads of the United States as of January 1, 1937.

The first five tables contain block-signal statistics. Table No. 1 shows the aggregate length of railroad line of each company reporting on which the block system was in use on January 1, 1937. Tables No. 2 and No. 3, respectively, indicate the kinds of automatic block signals used and the apparatus employed in the operation of the manual block system; Table No. 4 is a general classification of practices and methods employed in the operation of the manual block system; and Table No. 5 contains additional data pertaining to block signals. Tables No. 6 and No. 6-A contain information relative to automatic train-stop, train-control and cab-signal installations. Table No. 7 includes information with respect to railroad grade crossings and gauntlets which are protected by automatic interlocking. Table No. 7-A shows for each state the number of crossings and gauntlets protected by automatic interlocking. Table No. 8 relates to power-operated switches and signals which are remotely controlled. Table No. 9 indicates the extent to which centralized traffic control systems are in use. Table No. 10 contains information relative to train operation by signal indication without train orders. Table No. 11 contains a list of railroads on which the telegraph and telephone were used for transmitting train orders on January 1, 1937. The total length of railroad in the United States operated under the block system on January 1, 1937, was 108,749.7 miles. Of this total, 63,117.6 miles of road were automatic and 45,632.1 miles, non-automatic. Comparing these figures with the corresponding figures contained in the bulletin of January 1, 1936, there was an increase of 288.8 miles operated by the automatic block system.

Copies of this report may be obtained from the Superintendent of Documents, Government Printing Office, Washington, D. C., at 25 cents per copy.

Personal

Robert A. Sheets, signal engineer of the Chicago & North Western, died suddenly in Chicago on October 16. Mr. Sheets was unexpectedly taken ill in his office on Saturday morning, and died a few hours later. During his railroad career he was quite active in the affairs of the Signal Section, A.A.R., having served on several committees, and as a member of the Committee of Direction from 1933 to 1936. Mr. Sheets was born on September 5, 1887, and,

R. A. Sheets

after completing his high school education, he attended the Chicago Engineering Institute for one term. He was a stationary fireman previous to entering railway service as a leverman in the operating department of the North Western on January 2, 1907. Six months later he was transferred to the signal department as a batteryman on the Galena division at Maywood, Ill., and on April 1, 1908, he was promoted to maintainer at West Chicago, Ill., where he remained until September, 1909, when he was appointed signal foreman at Sterling, Ill., serving in the latter capacity until October 1, 1913, when he was appointed signal inspector in the signal engineer's office. On account of a reduction of signal forces, he returned to Sterling as a signal foreman in July, 1915, remaining until April, 1916, when he resumed his duties as signal inspector. On August 1, 1916, he was appointed assistant signal supervisor, Chicago terminal, which position he held until August 20, 1920, when he was promoted to signal supervisor at Boone, Iowa. Mr. Sheets continued as signal supervisor at Boone until January 16, 1925, when he was appointed assistant engineer, train control, in charge of field construction work. On January 1, 1928, Mr. Sheets was appointed assistant signal engineer, and in 1930 was promoted to signal engineer, holding this position at the time of his death.

Stanley E. Noble, assistant signal engineer of the Chicago & North Western, has been appointed signal engineer, with headquarters at Chicago, effective October 20, succeeding **R. A. Sheets,** whose death is noted elsewhere in this issue. Mr. Noble was born on May 2, 1888, at West Pittston, Pa., graduating from the electrical engineering department of Pennsylvania State college in 1915. During the summer vacation preceding his graduation, he entered railway service as a helper in a signal construction gang on the Delaware, Lackawanna & Western. Mr. Noble, after completing his college course, returned to the Lackawanna on June 15, 1915, as an electrician's helper at Scranton, Pa. In December, 1915, he was transferred to the signal department of the Scranton division as an assistant wireman, later becoming signal wireman, which position he held up to December, 1917, when he left the Lackawanna to join the Chicago & North Western as a signal draftsman in the office of the signal engineer, Chicago. He was appointed signal estimator in April, 1912, and, after serving in this

S. E. Noble

capacity for a year, he was appointed chief draftsman. In October, 1924, Mr. Noble was promoted to assistant engineer, signal department, and he held this position until December, 1926, when he was appointed general signal inspector. On January 1, 1928, Mr. Noble was appointed assistant signal engineer, holding this position at the time of his recent appointment.

O. Scott Tomkins, general signal inspector of the Chicago & North Western, with headquarters at Chicago, has been appointed assistant signal engineer, effective October 20, succeeding **S. E. Noble,** whose promotion is noted elsewhere in this issue. Mr. Tomkins was born at Ashland, Wis., on August 25, 1881, and was educated in the public and high schools at Ashland, at Lawrence university, Appleton, Wis., and at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, Wis. He worked as an electrical apprentice during vacations and spare time while attending school and college, later serving as electrician for the Lake Superior Iron & Chemical Company, Ashland, and as chief electrician for the Ashland Light, Power

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