

NEWS

of the MONTH

Illinois Central Honors Radio "Hams" for Emergency Services

As an expression of appreciation, Medals of Honor have been presented by the Illinois Central to 10 amateur radio operators who aided in keeping trains of that road moving on its Louisiana and Vicksburg divisions in the area north of New Orleans, La., recently affected by a severe hurricane. The presentations were made by J. M. Trissal, superintendent of communications and electrical engineer, at a luncheon at Antoine's Restaurant, in New Orleans, on October 14. Those honored at the luncheon included Sidney Blailock, A. C. Ellzey, Jr., and Jewell W. Cole of McComb, Miss.; J. Bullock and Irvine Levi of New Orleans; W. C. Spence, Cicero LaHatte, Jr., and David P. Stabler of Vicksburg, Miss.; James G. Anding and Clifford Radcliff of Baton Rouge, La.

When communication lines were interrupted north of New Orleans by the storm, and high water blocked train operation on the line between Manchac and New Orleans, along the shore of Lake Pontchartrain, arrangements were made to detour trains from Hammond via Baton Rouge, as the Yazoo & Mississippi Valley line was open into New Orleans. Three hours after a call to the amateur radio operators for help, radio operation was commenced, and messages were transmitted between radio operators at Vicksburg, Baton Rouge, New Orleans and McComb. For approximately 48 continuous hours, train orders were relayed from office to radio operator by telephone, radio

operator to radio operator by radio, and to office from radio operator by telephone. In this manner the Panama Limited, City of New Orleans and Miss-Lou, as well as other passenger and freight trains were moved with safety, without interruption of service, and with little delay.

Mr. Trissal, in expressing the appreciation of the railroad, as he presented each medal, warmly complimented the operators on their splendid performance under trying conditions. He also reminded them that beyond their assistance to the Illinois Central System was the service to thousands of persons who are dependent upon uninterrupted railway operation and service.

Crossing Accidents During 1946 in Pennsylvania

The Public Utility Commission of the State of Pennsylvania, Harrisburg, has recently issued a report of accidents involving the facilities or operations of public utilities in that state during 1946, a detailed part of which is devoted to highway-railway grade crossing accidents. There were a total of 10,988 grade crossings, 2,155 of which were protected by signals, watchmen or other forms of protection, and 1,440 of which were protected by trainmen, totaling 3,595 protected crossings. There were 7,393 unprotected crossings. During 1946, 26 persons were killed at protected crossings and 28 persons were killed at unprotected crossings. A total of 59 persons were injured at protected crossings and 145 at unprotected crossings.

State Approves Interlocking Plant Alterations

The California Public Utilities Commission, San Francisco, has recently issued an annual report of the activities of its Transportation Department, Operations and Safety Division, for the fiscal year ending June 30, 1947. According to the report, the Commission, upon recommendation of the Division, and in accordance with the requirements of General Order 33-B, accorded formal approval for 14 alterations at various interlocking plants on railroads in the state.

More Radio Channels for Rail Communications Advocated

Declaring that railroad experience in the use of radio communication has amply substantiated the carriers' contention that such communication, properly used as a supplement to existing devices and practices, will enhance both safety and efficiency of operation, L. J. Prendergast, superintendent of communications, Baltimore & Ohio, has urged the Federal Communications Commission to further the development of railroad radio service by providing sufficient channels to encourage railroads to invest the "substantial sums" required for such a venture.

Mr. Prendergast, chairman of an Association of American Railroads' Committee on Radio and Allied Communications as Applied to Railroad Operations, expressed the carriers' views at a hearing being conducted by the F. C. C. with respect to proposed amendments to the F. C. C.'s rules and regulations governing the sharing of television channels and assignment of frequencies to television and non-government fixed and mobile services.

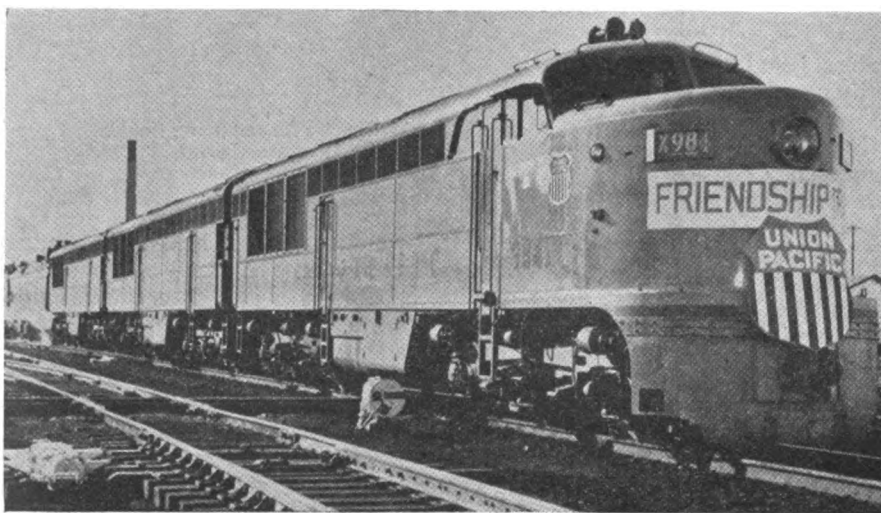
Reviewing the railroads' role in radio communications since the establishment of the railroad radio service in December, 1945, Mr. Prendergast said that the use of radio by railroads is expanding despite "limits dictated by a general shortage of equipment and inherent complexities in applying radio communication to railroad operation." Since August, 1946, he added, there has been approximately a 90 per cent increase in the number of licensees and an 80 per cent increase in the amount of railroad radio equipment in use.

Mr. Prendergast also referred to the results of a questionnaire circulated by the A. A. R. for the purpose of ascertaining the railroads' plans for utilization of radio in the coming three-year period, particularly in congested areas where heavy yard and terminal operations are carried on. The survey indicated, he told the F. C. C., that 77 railroads representing 90.1 per cent of Class I mileage in the United States and 19 of the smaller roads are "now using or expect to use radio communication within the next three years." Such a program, he added, will entail an expenditure of approximately \$15,000,000.

Mr. Prendergast said that the 60 frequencies in the 152-162 megacycle band allocated for train communications, which constitute only 30 usable channels, are probably adequate for that particular class of service but will not provide enough

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The Friendship Train



The Friendship Train on the Union Pacific being hauled by a 6,000-hp. Fairbanks-Morse Diesel-electric locomotive pulling out of Grand Island, Neb.