

Safety on Railways.

us to go on the money markets at a time when they are unfavourable means a very serious strain upon our credit.

Mr. CASEY—Would you be compelled to do this?

Mr. TAIT—Yes, sir, we certainly would. It could not be taken out of operating expenses. It is improvement and it would be new capital, and the money that we have expended in the past has been new capital. In 1896 we equipped 1,460 freight cars and 53 engines with air brakes, at an expenditure of \$130,000. This year I have authority from the executive committee to equip 3,000 freight cars and 100 locomotives with air brakes, at an estimated expenditure of \$250,000—250 cars a month. We built last year 400 new cars and some new engines. Last year we equipped 2,460 freight cars with automatic couplers at an expenditure of \$56,000. This year we contemplate the equipment of 3,000 freight cars with automatic couplers at an estimated expenditure of \$69,000. All the new cars and new engines which we have built within the last three years have been equipped with air brakes and automatic couplers and it is the intension to continue this policy in the future. The automatic coupler adopted by the Master Car Builders' Convention has to conform to certain measurements, and is supposed to couple and uncouple automatically. Now this clause will call upon us to equip all our cars irrespective of their age or value. We have in service, particularly in work trains, a large number of old flat cars and it would be a great hardship indeed to compel us to equip these cars with automatic couplers and with air brakes. Once they have been coupled together and put into a train they may be worked a whole season without being uncoupled and it would be impossible to work air brakes on them for the reason that while unloading ballast, sand, etc., sand gets into the mechanism of the air brake, the triple valve and prevents the operation of the brake. We therefore think that, providing the railway companies are making fair progress in the equipment of their present stock of cars and engines and are equipping their new engines and cars with air brakes and couplers that should be sufficient and all that we should be called upon to do. As Mr. Wainwright has said in regard to the United States bill I have just cited providing for the equipment with all appliances and air brakes of cars and engines, an extension of time is being asked for, I may say that our information is that there is no doubt it will be granted. This law provides for the equipment of cars and engines in the United States by July 1st, 1898. We must equip a large proportion of our cars by that date because they will not be allowed to enter the United States unless they are so equipped. I think I have already dealt with the paragraph in regard to couplers. Of course we are anxious to equip our cars with air brakes and couplers for another reason that perhaps has not occurred to some of those who are in favour of this bill, and that is, as on the New York Central where all the cars are equipped with air brakes, we should be able to reduce the number of train hands required on our trains. There is no reason why freight trains equipped with air brakes should need as many brakemen as we now have. On a number of heavy way trains we run three brakemen. Passing on to clause 2 of Mr. Maclean's bill I have a memorandum here which I will read:

“The period of apprenticeship for both engine drivers and conductors is too long. Two, and at the most not more than three, years is sufficient in the case of engine drivers, and one, and at the most not more than two, years in the case of conductors; but no legislation in this matter is required.

“It is quite apparent this portion of this bill has been framed with a view to obtaining new and important advantages for those who are now working as engine drivers and conductors throughout the country. Not only would it render it extremely difficult, if not impossible, for new railways to secure engine drivers and conductors except at the higher rates paid on the older roads, but in case of strikes, this bill, if it became operative, would very considerably restrict the number of men available for the position of engine drivers and conductors, and would seriously handicap the railways in coping with organized labour, because we would not be able under this law to employ any man as a conductor or as an engine driver who had not served five years of apprenticeship, no matter how capable he might be.

“It is in the interest of the railway companies to employ as engine drivers and conductors men who are not only experienced but sufficiently intelligent and capable in