

## Illinois Central Directs Attention to the Grade Crossing Problem

For the four-year period ended December 31, 1920, there were 4,350 per-
killed and 12,750 persons injured in automobile grade crossing accidents in the United States.
For the same period there were 158 persons killed and 659 persons injured in automobile grade crossing accidents on the Illinois Central System. Analysis of these cases shows that crossings considered the safest are actually the most

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A serious automobile grade crossing accident, involving personal injury or
loss of life, is usually followed by a demand upon the railway for the eliminafion or "protection" of the crossing involved.

Crossing gates do not entirely eliminate accidents. People become educated
rely upon the gateman instead of upon their own faculties. If the gateman to rely upon the gateman instead of up on their own faculties. If the gateman
errs, the danger of accident is very great. Electric warning bells do not entirely
great deal, automobilists disregard them. In addition, there is always the possibility that a bell may not be in order just at the moment of greatest danger. Crossing flagmen are not infallible. The human element enters into most
accidents, and crossing flagmen are like other human beings. Some of the most accidents, and crossing flagmen are like other human beings. Some of the most
disastrous automobile grade crossing accidents have occurred at crossings where flagmen were on duty.
One of the results of crossing "protection" is to teach the public that cross-
ings are safe. The opposite should be taught. All railway grade crossings are dangerous-the "protected" as well as the unprotected crossings. This should be impressed upon the minds of everybody, beginning with the children in the
schools.
There are about 8,000 grade crossings on the Illinois Central System. It would cost approximately four hundred million dollars, or substantialiy more
than the combined stock and bond issues of the Company, to eliminate them by separation of the grades. The following is quoted from the report made by the
Grade Crossing Committee of the National Association of Railway and Utilities Grade Crossing Committee of the National Association of Railway and Utilities crossings in the United States would probably cost as much as all the railroads
in the United States have cost."
Outstanding features of this question are: 1 -Inability of the railways to
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eliminate all grade crossings at any period within present vision. 2 The uneliminate all grade crossings at any period within present vision. 2 -The unreasonableness of some communities ins isting upon the railways doing things for
them that cannot be done for all. Every community has its dangerous crossings. One state could not reasonably expect the railways to eliminate all of its
grade crossings unless the same thing were done in neighboring states-in all grade crossings unless the same thing were done in ne
states. The same principle applies to cities and towns.
The railway grade crossing problem is usually considered from two view-points--the railways and the pubsic. There is the viewpoint of engineers and
firemen. which should also be considered. Their duties are nerve-racking, and the habit of automobilists in racing to crossings, and darting upon the track immediately in front of locomotives, has a great tendency to confuse and distress
them. They do not want to be involved in accidents causing personal injury or toss of life. They ought to have some assurance that an automobile will be brought to a stop before it is permitted to cross a railway track. The benefits derived from the elimination of grade crossings by the con-
struction of overhead bridges and underpasses-the only plan promising struction of overhead bridges and underpasses-the only plan promising abso-
lute safety-accrue largely to the public in safety and convenience. Therefore, when crossings are eliminated, the expense should be divided on some fair basis between the taxpayers receiving the benefits and the railway. If the people of a community paid in proportion to the benefits received when a crossing is elimnated, demands for enmination would be less frequent. More crossings could
be eliminated. The automobile, in proper hands, is an agency of safety at railway grade
crossings. It can be driven up close to the tracks and stopped in perfect safety. crossings. It can be driven up close to the tracks and stopped in perfect safety. That cannot always be done with a spirited horse. Therefore, the increasing
use of the automobile and the decreasing use of the horse should be solving the grade crossing problem, instead of making it worse,
We recognize there are crossings that should be eliminated, but the crying need is for some plan of action that will prevent loss of life and destruction of property in automobile grade crossing accidents that can be put into effect im-
mediately. One practicable remedy, which would cost but little, would be to mediately. One practicable remedy, which would cost but little, would be to
inaugurate a great crusade against carelessness of automobilists at railway grade crossings. Require them to Stop, Look and Listen. No automobilist who does that will ever meet with an accident at a railway crossing.
Constructive criticism and suggestions are invited
C. H. MARKHAM

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