

CAR WORKERS LEARN MUCH ABOUT PEOPLE

By Eldora Field

"The public—say, you wouldn't print what I think of the public, after seventeen years of street car work," a W. Washington street car conductor laughed.

"They're funny—people, and what strikes you most is that they're so much alike; say and do the same things. Take the men. Simply dozens of 'em get on the street car and feel in half a dozen pockets before they find their tickets. But oh boy, that's nothing to the women with their hand bags. Lots of time, I watch a woman after she's on the platform with people crowding behind her. She'll open a hand bag, then find a smaller purse, then open the purse, then come back to the handbag, then return to the purse—oh it's awful, but you can't say a word, of course."

"How do people act on a street car?" a College Ave. Conductor repeated, half closing his eyes. "Well I'm pretty new but I'm ready to say that if anybody wants to go in train-in' to harness his temper, conductorin' is the job for him. Usually people seem to think we've a personal grudge in enforcing rules. I'll report you' has been hurled at me so often that I hear it in my sleep."

"The ones that say they'll report the loudest never do. Reports come from the quiet ones that don't threaten."

"I have most trouble with smokin' in' a Northwestern Ave. conductor remarked. "Smokin' against the rules, but many of 'em certainly try to get by. They lean 'way out the window sometimes and declare, 'I'm not smokin' on this car. I'm outside.' Once in a while I have serious trouble. Once a fellow drew a knife on me, but usually they just joke."

"Children are supposed to pay after 5 years, you know. Only last week I sized up a little girl that got on with her mother. The woman had paid one fare. I decided she should have paid two. Isn't that little girl over 5? I asked. 'No,' she answered quickly; 'only a little past 5.' Guess she thought we'd raised the age limit and she'd play safe."

"They try to get their dogs by, too," he continued. "People are supposed to have a permit for dogs. Some of 'em either haven't permits or forget to bring 'em along. One day last winter a woman got on and I didn't notice anything unusual about her until I saw some passengers smiling. She had on a cape, but that didn't prevent my catching sight of a furry little head which she was trying to push back."

"Everybody was looking in her direction by this time and her face was getting red. I marched up. 'Madam, you must have permits when carrying dogs on street cars,' I said."

"I'm not carrying a dog," she said, as bold as you please. That made me mad, especially as some of the passengers were snickering. 'Madam, you can't put anything over on me,' I answered. 'You either produce a permit, the money for it, or that dog comes off.' Just then a furry little head came out; we both reached for it, and then the passengers roared. That devilish little dog was a pet monkey, and as my book of rules didn't mention monkeys, I retired to the back platform while the passengers snickered all the way downtown."

"Transfers make for a lot of rag chewing," another conductor observed. "The older a transfer is the madder they get when I call 'em for it. They have all kinds of excuses—usually say the conductor punched the transfer wrong. If they have boarded the wrong car, or they

didn't hear me call their street, of course they announce that the conductor's to blame. Usually, I don't argue with 'em."

"The motorman's the fellow that's got a real job—to keep from running over people. Seems like people, especially the ones in machines, just try to get run over, sometimes."

"They do—believe me they do." The motorman overheard us. "Some of the folks in bum flivvers wouldn't mind getting bumped and collecting a little insurance on the old bus. Leastwise, nothing else would explain why they're hugging the track."

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sometimes, when I'm ringing the gong in back of 'em, for a square or two.

"Funniest thing I've noticed for a long time was when a fellow did his moving by street car," the conductor got back into the conversation. "We're supposed to use our judgment about packages that are carried, and although this particular fellow got on loaded with rugs and pictures, he stood on the back platform and I didn't object."

"On our return trip, I noticed the fellow boarding another car and he

was loaded to the guards with household goods. Our line is a short one, and presently, we picked up the fellow again—same thing, looking like a truck. 'Starting a second hand store?' I asked. 'Moving,' he answered briefly.

"He kept that up all day—at least I saw him half a dozen times. Finally, when the rush was on, and he tried to board the car with the biggest rocking chair I ever saw and with bundles tied all over it, I had to object. 'Passengers can't get on the platform—you're obstructing

the passage,' I said, but at that he threatened to report me."

"Yep, we learn a lot about human nature—both good and bad. Meet a lot of fine people, and see a lot of little kindnesses, too. Just watch when a blind man or an old person or a woman with a baby gets on. Half a dozen passengers will jump to their feet."

"Yep," the motorman got back into the conversation—"Yep, we find out that after all peoples' hearts in the main, are absolutely in the right place."

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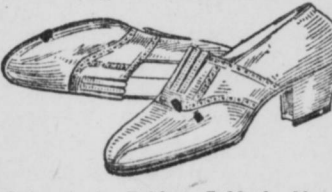
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