



# Danger!

By T-BONE SLIM

Has the locomotive destroyed "the family-life" of the railroad worker? I'll say it has, and for the sake of this argument, you will say that it has not. All set:

A locomotive is so built that there is no place on it where the wife could do her house-work. On a freight train there is no place to hang the wash unless she is carrying empties. If you hang it on top, the wash will soon be more black than dry and would result in "a jump" in the price of the thousand mile shirt.

As yet no parlor has graced the symmetrical lines of a locomotive—about the only "convenience" about it is a coal-shed; and the fireman swears up and down that, as a convenience it is a backbreaker.

I remember an occasion, on the Big G out of Superior, at the loop-tower, a fireman lights down off a "malley" and tendered his resignation to the hogger in a fine flow of eloquence and sweat. We cannot record his immortal words in a small "splash" like this and besides; if we did, we might get arrested for over-exercising the freedom of speech—the present bunch (who think they are running this country) do not believe in exercising any muscles higher than the shoulders—sufficient to say, he yelled up to the tower man, "Tell 'em to send out another fireman."

"But what shall I tell 'em? Shall I tell 'em you're sick?" inquired the operator.

"No," yells the fireman, "tell 'em I'm healthy, tell 'em I'm done, and tell 'em I'm no steam shovel"—and, he had only 144 steel "hoppers" behind him going "up" to the range. . .

But we're off our subject. The locomotives have been getting bigger and bigger, but its crew remains the same size—the hogger is no bigger than he was 40 years ago, in fact I think he is smaller; the fireman is of the type in vogue when 12 cars was considered a tremendous train. I'm off again! . . .

As I said before, a locomotive isn't a flat, a dwelling—there is no room on it to raise a family. Why there is hardly room on it for the head-brakeman. No wives being along they have to chew the rag, the best they can, among themselves. Belonging to three separate unions the conversation sometimes gets lively and personal—if their wives were along they would be more polite and would discuss rent, high cost of living and various other small topics; the depth of last winter's snow and maybe the one big union would come in for a share of attention.

Now what I want to do is to get some family life started on those trains. I want to see trains with "neat cottages" built on wheels, riding along behind the engine. I want three such rolling palaces for the head end and three for the rear end.

My reason for asking this is because the trainmen are spending three-fourths of their time on the trains, away from their families. (If a trainman spends two eight-hour shifts running away from his family, eight hours resting, and another two eight-hour shifts running towards his family he has been away from his family 40 hours). This makes a rather stiff "shift" for a wife to be alone—to "battle the future little railroaders"—for it is a well established fact that railroad men's children are no more amenable to law and order than are the children of men who absent themselves only four and eight hours at a time.

The need for "Own your Own"—on wheels—has been established—so that a trainman can carry his family right along with him, and make such alterations and corrections in the "conduct" of his children as he may see fit.

This Idea is all my own and I donate it to humanity for whatever it is worth—but I see you do not like the idea—I seem to hear you saying the idea is slightly "bad order," and you point out "the great danger to kiddies," in case the old junk-pile should take a notion to pile up at the bottom of a grade. Alright! Have it your own way. I won't argue with you. You say there would be danger. That's my point. There is a danger.

I am glad that is settled. Now we can take up the compensation doled out to these men. But, unfortunately the pay is so small, compared to the great danger, that I am ashamed to mention the exact figures. I feel a certain loyalty with the train crews and therefore I would be the last man in the I. W. W. (i. e., world) to parade their disgrace on printed paper. The less said about actual wages the better. Sufficient to say they must work 10 to 16 hours for a living.

It would almost seem there is no limit to the endurance of the crews. Then again, the railroad companies are (or should be) satisfied to let the men put in "time," in so far as a slow-moving train is less liable to "rattle to pieces"—much of the present-day rolling stock is held together only by the grace of God. And it is for that reason the companies are in the habit of stringing iron tonnage behind the engines sufficient to make, what is called "drag."

At any time the "ribbon of steel" may curl up through the floor of the caboose, pin Mr. Trainman against the frescoed ceiling, disarrange the adjustments of his timekeeper and cause his wife to make different arrangements for his home coming.

Yes.  
The pay is small—  
The danger great—  
It's hit the ball;  
We're ten years late.

Excuse me, I've got to take the hole here to let No. 250 get by.—(T-bone Slim).