

Editors Afield

CHICAGO

One railroad is operating a locomotive and side dump cars by remote control. But no one will talk about it for publication. Everyone (officially) denies its existence. Why the news blackout? Labor relations, say those in the know. This is an important step toward automation, and I'm sure the brotherhoods know about it.

Planning today for tomorrow, Santa Fe is installing extensive microwave systems for through communications. Pole lines will be maintained for signal circuits, namely CTC, and local message lines. Top management concurs with financial support for extending microwave to cover all mainlines.

Speaking of microwave, don't expect to use it for television. TV just takes too much bandwidth. Might be OK for coast-to-coast commercial use, but those in the know say microwave transmission

of TV isn't economical. Similarly, some thinking is that TV for railroads does not replace the yardmaster and his tower. Most yardmasters want to be up in the air and have those binoculars for looking around. Economically TV doesn't pan out for yard surveillance, say my informants.

Hot box detectors are again in the news. General Railway Signal has just entered the field (*see page 15*) and the word here is that Union Switch & Signal will have a detector out next month. That brings the score to five: pioneer was Servo Corp. of America, then came General Electric and Link Aviation last fall.

Time-saver: Rock Island is using an ultrasonic (high frequency sound waves) unit to clean six teleprinters per day compared to one per day using the former hand methods.

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