

NATIONAL RAILROAD ADJUSTMENT BOARD

THIRD DIVISION

Award Number 24599
Docket Number CL-24841

Robert Silagi, Referee

PARTIES TO DISPUTE: (Brotherhood of Railway, Airline and Steamship Clerks,
(Freight Handlers, Express and Station Employees
(
(Central of Georgia Railroad Company

STATEMENT OF CLAIM: Claim of the System Committee of the Brotherhood
(GL-9660) that:

Carrier violated the Agreement at Augusta, Georgia, when on October 11, 1980, it dismissed Claimant R. L. Lowery, Clerk-Operator, from service for an alleged violation of Operating Rules 218, 211(b), and 801.

For this violation, Carrier shall be required to compensate Claimant Lowery for all time lost, beginning on October 11, 1980, and continuing until he was subsequently restored to service.

OPINION OF BOARD: Claimant worked at the Augusta Yard, Augusta, Georgia. His tour of duty on October 3, 1980, began at 11:00 p.m. and ended at 8:00 a.m. the following day. H. P. Smith, a clerk-operator trainee was assigned to work with and under the supervision of claimant as part of a training program. Claimant and Smith were expecting to receive a train that would depart from Augusta Yard as Extra 2583. Claimant, assisted by Smith, made up a clearance card and the necessary orders for the train to operate as Extra 2583. However, said train arrived late and the orders were changed for it to operate as First/137 departing at 6:20 a.m. It therefore became necessary to make a change in the clearance card and to add one additional Train Order No. 20, which had been issued at 4:13 a.m., giving Train No. 20 right over Trains 137 from Millen to Waynesboro.

At about 5:00 a.m. on October 4th, General Yard Master Siders ordered claimant to deliver a piece of equipment to Nixon Yard, some 10-11 miles distant from Augusta. At about 5:15 a.m. Claimant departed on this errand. At 5:26 a.m. Smith prepared the proper clearance card for Train First/137. During Claimant's absence Smith delivered the necessary papers to the crew of Train First/137 but neglected to include Train Order No. 20 which gave Train No. 20, an opposing train on the same track, right over Train First/137. At about 6:15 a.m. claimant returned to Augusta Yard. Claimant spoke to the crew of Train First/137 but failed to check the clearance card and train orders. Train First/137 departed with its crew unaware that Train No. 20 on the same track proceeding in an opposing direction had the right over Train First/137. Fortunately a head-on collision was averted when the engineer of Train First/137 sighted the headlight of Train No. 20 in sufficient time to stop.

A formal investigation hearing was held at which both claimant and Smith were charged with violating operating rules. Both were found guilty and dismissed from service as were a Dispatcher and another Clerk-Operator trainee who were involved in this incident. Claimant was reinstated to service on March 31, 1981 "on a leniency basis, with seniority and vacation rights unimpaired".

The Organization's position is that claimant quite properly followed his superior's orders in delivering equipment to Nixon Yard as a consequence of which he was absent from the Augusta Yard when the papers were delivered to Train First/137; that claimant was punished for another's error; that the burden of proof rests squarely on the Carrier; that Carrier failed to sustain that burden and that claimant's conviction was predicated upon suspicion, surmise and uncorroborated circumstantial evidence.

Carrier's position is that claimant knew of the existence of Train Order No. 20 and the necessity to furnish the crew of Train First/137 with a copy thereof; that claimant's excuse for not checking the physical delivery of Train Order No. 20 to the crew of First/137 was because he assumed that it was present; that claimant admitted his responsibility to supervise a trainee under his jurisdiction.

There is no doubt that in a disciplinary case the burden of proof rests with the Carrier. The transcript of the formal investigation clearly establishes that Carrier sustained that burden. Indeed, the transcript shows that Claimant admitted not verifying the delivery of Train Order No. 20 to the crew of First/137 because Claimant "assumed that it [Train Order No. 20] was already there". Likewise Claimant admitted knowing his responsibility vis-a-vis his trainee.

That another may have initiated the error does not make Claimant blameless (Award 15978-Engelstein). In view of Claimant's own admissions it cannot be said that Carrier acted upon suspicion, surmise and uncorroborated circumstantial evidence.

We turn now to the severity of the discipline. Claimant was dismissed in October 1980. Standing alone the penalty of dismissal would have been unreasonably harsh. However, Carrier saw fit to reinstate claimant 5 1/2 months later. This Board has often said that it will not reverse or modify the discipline unless Carrier acted in an unreasonable, arbitrary, capricious or discriminatory manner (Award 14700-Rohman). A careful review of the record shows that Carrier did not abuse its discretion hence there is no reason to modify the discipline. The claim will therefore be denied.

FINDINGS: The Third Division of the Adjustment Board, upon the whole record and all the evidence, finds and holds:

That the parties waived oral hearing;

That the Carrier and the Employees involved in this dispute are respectively Carrier and Employee within the meaning of the Railway Labor as approved June 21, 1934;

That this Division of the Adjustment Board has jurisdiction over the dispute involved herein; and


That the Agreement was not violated.

A W A R D

Claim denied.

NATIONAL RAILROAD ADJUSTMENT BOARD
By Order of Third Division

Attest:


Nancy J. Fever - Executive Secretary

Dated at Chicago, Illinois this 15th day of December 1983.