



# WASH DAY

## on the

# ERIE

*Above Prestly J. Wood, a former dining car chef, is in charge of finishing coats and caps worn by chefs, waiters and porters. He is shown discussing his work with John M. Collins, superintendent of the dining car department which operates the new laundry. At right Raymond E. Cavanaugh, assistant working foreman (left,) removes linens from a high speed extractor which dries them enough for ironing while Working Foreman Anthony Domino is unloading a batch from the huge washer*



A new phase in railroading intended to eliminate "wash day blues" from passenger train operations has been instituted by the Erie Railroad during the past month.

Staffed and equipped to handle two million pieces a year, a modern laundry was installed as a part of the Dining Car Department.

The installation was made after an extensive study of commercial laundry operations by John M. Collins, superintendent of the Dining Car Department. The objective of the study was "How can the Erie do it better?"

"We believe the answer has been found," Mr. Collins said. "From now on, Erie passengers in coaches, parlor cars, sleeping cars and dining cars will enjoy the use of linens which have been custom laundered to meet Erie's high standards of quality and service."

The average Erie employe may think the thousands of pieces of linen which come off the trains daily are merely dumped into a washer in one batch. According to Mr. Collins, this procedure may be true in commercial laundries where the process is beyond our control.

### Quality Laundry

"After the time spent in studying the laundry business, I feel qualified to give my wife a few hints about doing my shirts," he declared.

"Many passengers, and even our Erie people, may fail to realize the

high quality linens which are purchased each year for the comfort and satisfaction of our customers," Mr. Collins explained. "The bedsheets and table cloths, to mention only two, are as fine as those used in their homes or in the best hotels."

Every housewife does custom laundering each week although she may not realize it. She sorts out the various pieces according to color, material and texture and each batch gets a different type of washing. This includes amount of soap, temperature of water, use of bleach or bluing, etc.

The Erie laundry is operated on the

## ... new laundry will cut costs, give passengers better linen service.

same basis. As the hampers of soiled linen are removed from the trains outside the laundry door, the pieces are sorted and prepared for scientific laundering.

This may sound like a simple, small job until one considers that Erie laundry bills show payment has been made each year for laundering more than a quarter million head rests used in coaches, more than 300,000 napkins, 80,000 table cloths and so on. Just to take one item, it takes nearly a thousand napkins a day to keep the dining cars supplied.

### Replacement Costly, Too

In addition to the laundry bill, the cost of replacement has been terrific each year. Replacement is mainly required because of wear-and-tear speeded by improper laundering and losses beyond the Erie's control. As an example of losses, Mr. Collins explained:

"In the New York Harbor area, almost every laundry has an account with some steamship company. It has been our experience to receive quantities of laundry carrying the label of some steamship line which undoubtedly received our linens. We have sent the 'strange' linen back but never received ours in return. Once at sea, Erie linens probably ended up as wiping rags in the boiler room of an ocean liner."

The dining car department superintendent explained the "Erie Laundry Co.," as some employes have referred to it, operates on an efficient,

high-speed, day-to-day basis. All work is cleaned up every day without leftovers for tomorrow, except during the weekends when the plant is idle.

In order to provide a sufficient supply of linen on all trains every day, it is necessary to carry an inventory of five times the daily requirements, Mr. Collins explained. Trains are immediately stocked with fresh supplies as their soiled equipment is removed.

### Six Employes

The laundry plant is operated as a part of the dining car department by six employes, most of whom were promoted from other jobs in the department.

"Our crew feels it is pioneering an operation on the Erie and works as a unit," Mr. Collins said. "Without previous experience, the men strive to do their job more efficiently and economically every day."

Installation of the laundry has been accomplished in the traditional Erie manner of utilizing existing facilities whenever possible and acquiring the most modern equipment for the particular operation to help employes do a good job.

The laundry plant is located in a structure which formerly housed the labor camp department, Pullman

storeroom and shop in Jersey City. Since the equipment is extremely heavy, the building was strengthened with reinforcing beams and trusses. Large pipes to provide steam and water had to be run into the area by Erie forces to supply the plant. The floor was resurfaced with a waterproof coating for easier cleaning.

The equipment includes a huge stainless steel washer, 42 inches in diameter and 54 inches long, and weighing 4½ tons. The washer cylinder has two compartments so that different types of linen, using the same soap formula, can be washed at the same time without re-sorting. A large dial thermometer shows the attendant the loss of water temperature and more hot water can be added.

The washer handles 225 pounds of linens, dry weight, every 40 minutes. From the washer, the batch is transferred to an adjacent extractor which whirls the water out of the material within 30 minutes. At this point, most linens are ready for transfer to the huge five-ton mangle for ironing. Certain other materials, such as blankets and throw rugs, are completely dried in a heated drying tumbler from which they emerge in a soft,

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*The battery of special presses for ironing coats is shown at the right with Prestly J. Wood at work. The two large units finish backs and sleeves while a small unit, seen in rear, takes care of shaping the shoulders.*



*Valerio D'Aloia and Anthony DeMatteo are shown at left as they feed a sleeping car sheet into the 100-inch continuous mangle. William J. Lutier can be seen folding pillow cases which will soon be issued to fill porter's requisitions.*



## LAUNDRY *continued*

fluffy and pleasing condition.

The huge mangle has a 100-inch capacity which permits two employes to feed bedsheets extended to their full length. The finished linens pass through the machine and are returned to the front where they are deposited on a platform for sorting and folding. The mangle permits three persons to feed towels, pillow cases and other flatwork simultaneously.

A unit of three presses is used for finishing coats for waiters and chefs. Two are identical presses for use on sleeves and side panels while a third is designed for pressing shoulders and

collars in a simple operation.

Spotless tables, equipped with smooth-rolling casters, are provided in the laundry for sorting or other purposes. The wheels make them easy to roll in and out of position wherever required for an efficient operation.

Along one wall of the plant, scores of cabinets with tightly fitted doors have been installed. These cabinets are used for storing the different types of finished pieces for filling requisitions from porters and stewards.

Outside the building, the platforms between tracks have been re-built with concrete to the plant door level so that supply trucks from the laun-

dry can be rolled directly to car side with a minimum of effort.

"The Erie's investment in its own laundry, manned by its own employes, and operated at Erie's high standards, has been made for the benefit of Erie's passengers," Mr. Collins said. "We expect to be repaid with greater passenger satisfaction through better quality service. It is another indication of Erie's progress in railroading."

*While material and labor costs are now approximately 100 per cent higher than in 1939, freight rates have increased only 57 per cent and passenger fares only 34 per cent.*