

# NATIONAL RAILWAY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

PHILADELPHIA CHAPTER



## CINDERS

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### THE VIEW FROM NEVIS

#### BEWARE OF COMPLACENCY

The word complacency is a dangerous word in any language. Kingdoms, civilizations, and the like which were regarded as invincible have fallen simply because people were content to rest on the status quo. Too often we look at things with rose-colored glasses and decide that since all is well, everything will remain as it is. However, the next time we look, things have changed.

So it is with the railroads and railfans. Consider the passenger train, for example. People took them for granted, assuming that they would be running forever, this despite soaring deficits. That is hardly the case today. And how about the trolley lines that the railfans regarded as being safe for a few more years? It wasn't long before we were packing our suitcases and cameras for a trip to some town so that we could take a last ride before another line was lost forever.

Sometime around the late 40's the well known Cmdr. E. J. Quinby wrote an article entitled a "Postwar Challenge," which appeared in Railroad Magazine. In it he exhorted the railfans to do what they could to save the remaining traction lines from substitution by the bus and oil interests. But the Cmdr. saw further into the future than most of us for he predicted that the mainline passenger train was fair game also. Remember? He was right. Of course, the railfans were not really in a position to do anything except to write letters to the newspapers or cry over their beer.

Well, the Commander's predictions have come true but we hasten to point out that America's railroads will always be carrying freight. After all, they are the nation's first line

### OPPORTUNITY

On the sandy soil of a Jersey field a handful of railfans are trying to bring reality to a long sought goal. Their efforts have been largely without publicity or support. Yet, because of their efforts one of the few remaining vestiges of New Jersey traction may soon be running. The largest collection of Philadelphia equipment will shortly be in action because talk was replaced by action. This despite the conflict among area railfans.

The two men largely responsible for this progress will be guests of the Chapter at the March meeting. Joe Alfonsi and Bob Foley have prepared a short, interesting slide show about their project. Of special interest is a series of slides showing how trolleys are moved. Following the slides Bob Foley will outline the aims of the museum and will answer questions from the floor.

"Cinders" has already urged firm steps to save deserving equipment in the area. Since that time the Ardmore line has been abandoned. Surely the scrappers are on the way. All too soon the deserving will be the dismantled.

Even now grass grows from rotting ties, dust settles on once busy platforms, poles stand naked against the dark sky. The last car is rolling toward the barn. Which way are we rolling?

### BREAKTHROUGH

A green and yellow road-switcher, a similarly colored caboose and seven limestone loaded covered hoppers are hardly the ingredients of a transportation breakthrough. They were, however, last December when the Reading unveiled its new Bee-Line service.

The new service, the result of "Creative Prospecting" by the RDG's revised Marketing Department, provides

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of commerce and defense. Look at all the new freight cars, high horsepower diesels, CTC, and other technological advances for which the railroads are spending millions of dollars. Surely, this insures their continuing to run for generations to come. I wonder about that. Consider the lumber industry. Up until this past year it seemed safe to assume that the bulk of this traffic would always move by rail. Then the lumber industry finally tired of car shortages and asked the truckers to start hauling forest products to the Eastern States as a backhaul. This turn of events jolted some railroads into action. It is the old story of locking the barn after the horse has run away.

I remember well the incident about Westinghouse traffic out of Mansfield, Ohio, which was related to me by a Reading Co. freight salesman. During the late 40's there was a severe box-car shortage. Well, it seems that every night the B&O ran a train of empty boxcars out of Willard to Newark, Ohio, for the exclusive use of Owens-Corning Fibreglas. The Reading man said to the B&O: "Look, why don't you drop a couple of those emptys at Mansfield and get some high-rated traffic from Westinghouse? Owens-Corning won't miss a few cars and their freight carries a low rate." To which the B&O replies: "No, sir, we can't tamper with Owens-Corning." Result: Westinghouse began shipping by truck.

And what about the current increase in train accidents, especially derailments? Despite the use of hot box detectors, wheel flange checkers, and improved track maintenance, the railroads seem to be running their trains off the tracks more than on. Some of the big Eastern roads appear to be good for at least one derailment weekly at the rate they are going. The situation is serious enough for the PUC to start an investigation of accidents in the Keystone State.

Another indication that the railroads are lagging is their earnings picture. Although most lines are operating in the black their net income is hardly an adequate rate of

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a new and powerful tool against motor competition. A shipper, who has at least five loads for the same receiver, gives the RDG two hour notice. From the extra board, a three man crew is dispatched with road-switcher and caboose direct to the shipper. The crew picks up the loaded cars and operates directly to the siding of the receiver. Returning, the crew may take another train to home base.

The big breakthrough was not in the new service itself, but rather in the unprecedented degree of cooperation between the operating brotherhoods and the Reading's management. The far-sighted agreement permits the use of a three man crew. Terminal and divisional restrictions have been lifted. Only one pick-up and set-out is allowed in each direction. The crew members, all from the extra board, are paid on a mileage basis with a hundred mile minimum. Everything over five hours is overtime, and the crews are returned home in a reasonable time.

As the Reading's president C. E. Bertrand points out, everyone wins: shipper, railroad and labor. We hope it will not be long until everyone everywhere wins.

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return. A recent government report showed that all forms of transportation in the U.S.A. have increased their earnings in relation to the gross national income with the exception of the railroads. Sounds a bit like the interurban story, doesn't it?

This observer feels that something is drastically wrong with the railroads and they had better set their houses in order before the government does it for them. Or is this what they really want?

Ben Nevis

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