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CENTRAL RAILROAD MAKES FORMAL REQUEST FOR RARITAN RIVER CONTROL

Despite the fact that formal application has been made by the Central Railroad of New Jersey for corporate control of the Raritan River Railroad, nothing of any importance is expected to happen to the local railroad or its employees in the immediate future, at least. The application was made to the Interstate Commerce Commission recently and was based upon the Central Railroad having taken an option on 424 shares of stock in the local railroad. The option, if exercised, would give the Central more than a fifty per cent stock ownership. The last annual report showed stock ownership of over forty-nine hundred shares.

Whether the application for corporate control would be opposed by the Pennsylvania Railroad is still undecided so far as can be learned at this time. The Pennsylvania through its subsidiary the Pennroad Corp., is also a heavy owner of stock in the Raritan River line. Stock holdings are in the neighborhood of forty-five hundred shares. The total stock issuance of the short line amounts to ten thousand shares. The fact that the Pennsylvania is such a large stock owner and the fact that some forty per cent of the traffic to and from the shortline moves over the Pennsylvania is regarded as more than sufficient grounds for the opposition to the application for control.

There is a fairly large number of employees of the local line that might be affected by a consolidation, if one were effected, with the Central Railroad. Just what effect the consolida-

tion would have upon them is, of course, all a matter of conjecture. So too, are the possibilities as to what the Central would do with the line if it got it.

The individual shippers served by the Raritan River are the ones that would most likely be most seriously affected by any change in the present methods of operation. Now they enjoy a very unusually efficient service in the way of delivery and pick up of the freight shipments to or from their sidings and direct connection with two trunk lines instead of only the one. Whether a change in operating service would improve the service is doubtful with the prospects being very good for the direct opposite resulting. There is probably no other small railroad, commonly known as "short lines" that is as efficiently operated as is the local line. Few can be found in the country that is as adequately equipped to maintain its rolling stock. The local shop plant, hardly a dozen years old, can handle almost any job short of building a locomotive—and even that job could probably be taken care of if the castings were furnished.

The Raritan River line was assigned to the Central, just as the Central was assigned to the Baltimore and Ohio, in the tentative consolidation program issued by the Interstate Commerce Commission a year or so ago, which program covered the consolidation of the seven hundred individual railroads of the country into some nineteen greater systems.