

The Loss of the Air-Line.
Charlotte Observer.

The news of the loss of the Air-Line was not unexpected. The owners, who are the bondholders, were not indemnified with any particular railroad interest; they were not in the business, their possession of the property being accidental—merely to protect themselves. They knew, however, that it was an important link in the great through-line system, and they have sought to bring the property to such a condition as to make it desirable. Having no particular interest, however, and being untrammeled, it is natural to suppose that they would lease to the highest or safest bidder.

Its most striking effect, so far as Charlotte and certain contiguous sections of the State are concerned, will no doubt be the suspending and perhaps total abandonment of the scheme to build the projected Midland connection from Danville to Charlotte, at some point on the Air-Line Railroad. Without the control of the Air-Line road the connection could not be at all valuable to the Virginia Midland Railroad or to its backers, the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad Company. Charlotte and certain towns and sections of country near by had expected benefits from such a line through the advantage which would accrue from competition. These benefits will, we feel quite sure, never be realized, but at the same time we do not share the alarm which certain merchants and business people appear to appreciate as a result of the loss. Neither do we wholly agree with the argument, which others bring forward, that simply because the Richmond & Danville once controlled or owned the Air-Line and therefore suffered no ill effects, therefore nothing but good may be expected now. The conditions have changed entirely since the last combination existed. The Richmond & Danville Railroad has formed new alliances and identified itself with other interests since that time. These completely change its attitude, and a absolute no guarantee whatever as to what its conduct will be in the future.

But it may be said in support of this position that the road was first projected the county of Mecklenburg subscribed \$200,000 to aid the enterprise. We could not expect to control it with that comparatively small sum, and the subscription eventually turned out to be a gift. It is useless now to inquire why this is so. The Richmond & Danville road aided liberally to complete the Air-Line as a feeder, and the stockholders even gave as far as to make Col. Buford, who was President of the Richmond & Danville, President of the new road. No alarm was then felt by the citizens of Charlotte, and therefore there is no use of crying "wolf" before the wolf really appears.

So far as the effect on Charlotte is concerned, we are disposed to look at the matter from a hopeful standpoint, but not for the reasons above referred to. Successful competition is certainly a thing to be desired for any place, but injuries to one arise rather than benefits from aimered and unhealthful contest for business. There is such a thing as a competition which not only does not compete, but places the competitor in a hostile attitude towards a conservative and steady upbuilding of a city. In times of war there is no opportunity for railroad companies to undertake to carry out a policy which looks to benefit them may expect to derive from the growth and development of the country. It may be that in the past railroad companies have been as busy trying to get the fruits of Charlotte's pride, that they could not if they so desired lend their help towards digging about the tree. The Richmond & Danville Railroad has certainly had a hard fight, and now that it is practically in command of the situation, we may not expect that it will endeavor to fortify itself by helping to build up Charlotte. Charlotte occupies a central and altogether important position in this system of railroads the Richmond & Danville Railroad now controls. All three of its important lines meet here. This city will certainly be a grand transfer depot. Is it natural to suppose that the company would exert itself to build up? It may be secondary to Richmond, true, but it has been playing that part generally for some time, so that there will not be much of a change in this respect. In any event, we are not disposed even to base a prediction as to its future conduct upon its past policy, for it now has opportunities which it never possessed before, of enlarging and liberalizing that policy. Let's see if they do not intend to do it. Our interests and theirs are in a measure common; whatever injures the one must in the long run injure the other, and if one is benefited, the other will enjoy the fruits of its growth and development.

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