

Fewer ICC Signal Applications

... discussed by Western Signal Engineers

No applications required when making signal changes because of track changes—Or when moving or removing signals if braking distances are proper—Or when relocating control machines for interlockings or CTC

AT A MEETING of the Western Signal Engineers, in Chicago, May 4, there was a discussion of the recent action by the Bureau of Safety, Interstate Commerce Commission, to reduce the number of applications which railroads are required to make to the Commission for authority to modify existing signaling, or to make new installations. Speaking from notes, B. A. Anderson, chief engineer train control and signals, Bureau of Safety, ICC, answered questions and explained the types of modifications for which applications need not be made in the future. Some of Mr. Anderson's remarks to the meeting of the Western Signal Engineer are abstracted as follows:

In these new instructions, no attempt has been made to define a material modification. However, paragraph 5 does explain the kind of changes for which the railroads are requested to file, and still leaves to your discretion whether the change which you contemplate constitutes a material modification. Thus the determination, in this respect, still rests with the railroad.

Eliminate Some Applications

"The most significant change in these instructions is the insertion of paragraph 6, which spells out certain modifications for which applications need not be filed.

"With respect to Section (a), the relocation or addition of a single signal for whatever reason, is not enough of a change to be considered a material modification. Section 136.24 of the R.S.&I., with reference to stopping distance, must be complied with in connection with any relocation, and this is the only interest the Commission has in the matter. If the signal is to be relocated to the left of the track, Section 136.21 becomes involved, and an application is required in such a case.

"With reference to Section (b), common sense should dictate that a

railroad ought not to have to ask permission to do something that it is required to do in any event under an order of the Commission. The Rules, Standards and Instructions are established by an order of the Commission, and accordingly an application need not be filed to seek approval of any modifications that may be necessary in order to comply with any of their requirements. Section 136.24 requires proper spacing of signals and therefore the relocation or removal of signals to provide adequate stopping distance constitute compliance with the rule, and applications for approval of such changes need not be filed.

Track Changes

"In regard to Sections (c) and (d), the Commission has no jurisdiction over track changes, and accordingly it is believed that where track changes are made, the necessary modifications in signal facilities to conform to the new track arrangement should be undertaken at the same time, as a matter of course and in the interest of safety, and accordingly, when no change in type of signal system is involved, no application should be required to do such work. Similarly, where track is being abandoned or a line is being relocated, it should not be necessary to ask for permission to remove signals and other signal facilities on the track to be abandoned, since the signals would serve no useful purpose once the track were removed or placed out of service.

"Sections (e) and (f) both involve change of aspects of signals. If an advance-approach or approach-medium aspect is added to a signal, in order to provide adequate stopping distances for increased authorized speeds, obviously the change is made to comply with Section 136.24, and as in Section (b) an application need not be filed since the aspect is changed to comply with a rule, and

does not involve a modification of the system of signaling. Suppose that an interlocking home signal displays a red-over-yellow aspect for movements over an interlocked switch into a siding, and the track department decides to remove the siding. If there is no other reason for the signal displaying the red-over-yellow aspect, why should it be necessary to file application for removal of the yellow aspect when the siding is removed?

Applying to Manual Block

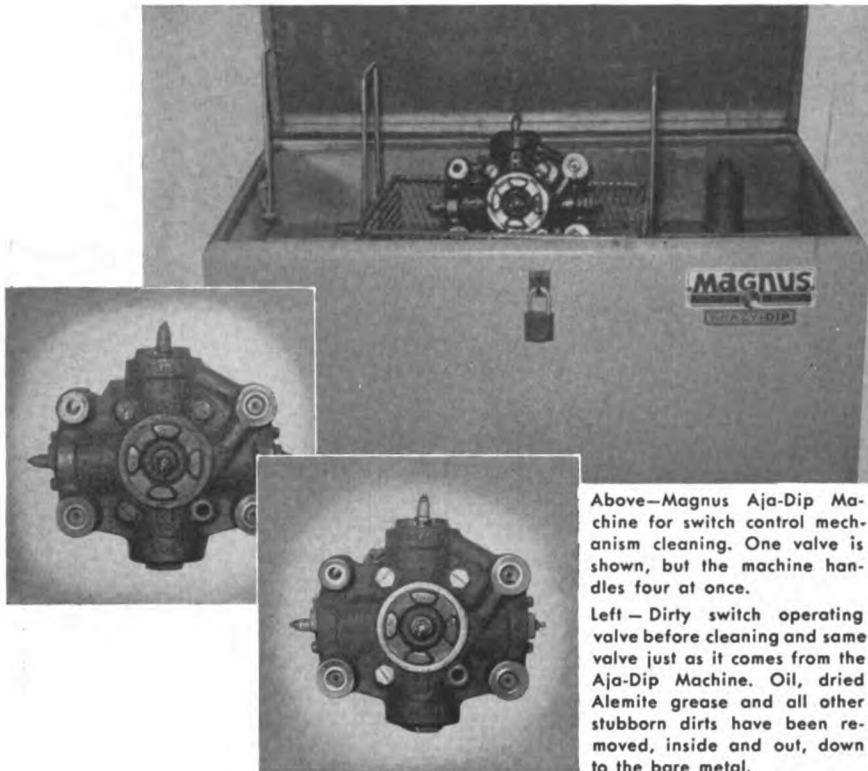
"With reference to closing of a manual block station or change in hours during which a manual block station and/or interlocking is attended, as covered in Section (g), the Commission years ago ruled that closing of a manual block station or change in hours during which a manual block station is attended does not constitute a material modification of the manual block system, and accordingly no application need be filed for such changes. With respect to change in hours during which an interlocking is attended, the same reasoning applies. However, in this connection, it should be borne in mind that this section does not grant relief during part-time closing of an interlocking from compliance with Section 136.308, which prohibits signals from displaying aspects which permit conflicting movements. In other words, opposing home signals on the same track may not simultaneously display proceed aspects during the period an interlocking is unattended, unless relief from this requirement of the rule has been obtained.

"The substitution of other types of protection for crossing gates at railroad crossing at grade, as covered by Section (h), does not require the filing of an application, because in the Signal Inspection Act such crossing gates are not included in the systems or devices which may not be discontinued or materially modified without the approval of the Commission.

"It has been the position of the Commission for many years that a change in the location of the machine from which an interlocking

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or traffic control system is controlled is not considered to be a material modification, provided that no changes are made in the signal or track arrangement, and in conformance with this practice, Section (i) was incorporated in the new instructions.

"Section (j) permits the installation of supplementary devices, such as slide-detector fences, dragging equipment detectors, motor car indicators, switch indicators and speed governors on locomotives equipped with automatic train-stop or cab-signal devices, without filing applications because such devices are considered to be auxiliary equipment only. The Commission has never required applications to be submitted for approval of installation of such appliances, which usually enhance the protection provided by the facility to which they are added.

"Now that these instructions have been liberalized to such a large extent, we trust that the railroads will not go overboard and stop filing applications altogether. Already we have been made aware of such a tendency by a rumor that one member of the signal fraternity is said to have advised a colleague that he could make any changes in an interlocking he desired without filing application, as long as he always ended up with the same kind of an interlocking, basing his opinion on Section 6(c), which states in effect that application need not be filed for installation, relocation or removal of signals and/or other facilities occasioned by track changes where changes in type of system is not involved. Obviously, such an interpretation is entirely erroneous. For example, if a crossover is to be removed from an interlocking, no application is required to remove the switch machines or to change the aspects of any signals governing movements over the crossover, but the mere fact that the crossover is being removed does not mean that other changes in the interlocking not involving the crossover, can be made at the same time without filing application. Nor should this section be interpreted that where one track of a double-line is to be retired, the signals on the remaining track can be removed, or that they can continue to operate for movements in one direction only without filing application. In converting from double to single track where automatic signals are in service, the automatic signal system must be arranged to protect movements in both directions on the remaining single track, or application filed for removal of the signals on that track.