

April, 1946 - Number 7

CANADA MAY GET A NEW RAILROAD

If literally true, this would be great news indeed. Actually, it involves only the transfer of ownership of a section of line operating in south-western Ontario. Yet this in itself, by the very nature of it, is spectacular and uncommon enough. When a whole Class 1 railroad is swallowed up into another, it is news these days. Nevertheless, this is what is occurring right now, and the final arrangement may have been completed by the time this reaches print. The Chesapeake & Ohio is negotiating to take over the Pere Marquette, which it already controls by stock ownership.

The particular reason why this is of interest to Ontario railfans is, of course, the fact that the Pere Marquette operates 200 miles of line in Canada, composed of a secondary main line from Walkerville to St. Thomas and branches from Blenheim to Erieau and Sarnia. Trackage rights are maintained over the New York Central from St. Thomas to Niagara Falls & Buffalo.

Thus it appears that the C & O will become a company operating in Canada, while the PM disappears as an independent road. Just what effect the merger will have on these Canadian lines is difficult to say at the moment. However, it is generally known that the PM has never been a very prosperous railroad, whereas the C & O is one of the best off, financially, of them all; moreover, it is under the guidance of an aggressive and able president, Robert R. Young, who has just currently bring the C & O into the public eye in other matters beside the PM acquisition.

The PM main east - west line in Ontario carries a heavy freight traffic; yet the branches, and what little passenger traffic there is, can hardly be said to be flourishing. The present C & O management appears to have a very aggressive policy with regard to passenger traffic, despite the fact that the road is primarily a coal carrier. Thus it may well be that the C & O will endeavour to revive passenger business on the lines in Canada. At present the PM operates a mixed train daily each way between Walkerville and Chatham — the resat is freight only. The mixed takes 6 hours for the 90 mile run.

It would not seem unreasonable that a couple of lightweight streamlined railcars, operated on a respectable schedule between Windsor and St. Thomas, might prove a worthy experiment, timed so as to meet NYC and L&PS trains conveniently at St. Thomas. A service of this sort should draw back a fair number of travellers from the Greyhound busses. Whether or not it would be worthwhile having this service operated up to Chatham is a debatable point.

Whatever the changes, or lack of them, the merger will be very significant from the standpoint of demonstrating how the C & O is still very definitely a growing railroad, while practically all others have reached the static point. In the late 1920's, the C & O was, except for the Chicago Line, entirely south of the Ohio River, and a long way from Canada. Then it acquired the Hocking Valley which was floundering at the time; the C & O built a connecting line between Columbus and Portsmouth, Ohio, and this gave it a through north-south route in Ohio up to Toledo. Now, with the PM it spreads its tentacles all through Michigan, over to Wisconsin (by car ferry), and of greatest interest to Canadian railfans, into the Province of Ontario.

THE MARCH MEETING

The all time high as yet for a U.C.R.S. meeting was reached at the meeting held on March 15 at the home of Stuart Westland in the far eastern reaches of Toronto. Twenty- six persons were present, including four guests, two of whom, we are happy to add, signed up for membership. Charles Randall reported on excursion possibilities, but nothing has been definitely settled yet. although many good suggestions have been put forward. The general consensus is narrowing down to either a) a trip into the Niagara Peninsula, always full of rail interest; b) an excursion up to Palmerston, in "Ten Wheeler Country".

Stuart Westland gave a talk on systems of locomotive classification, followed by an analysis of the development of the locomotive types, illustrated with charts.

NEWS OF MEMBERS

Two more ex Active Service members were welcomed back at the March meeting; Donald Darwin, who was in the Air Force, and George Corrin, just back from the Army.

The Society has located an Associate member, Earle Hampel, who was in the R.C.N.V.R., and is now in Toronto attending University. His address is 64 Rusholme Road, (phone LO 7329). Unfortunately his Friday evenings are taken up, and he cannot attend meetings.

Bob Brown reports a new telephone number for himself, MA 2555.

Associate member G. W. Lindsay has changed his address to:

Southern Railway System, 1328 Exchange Building, Memphis 3, Tenn.

NEW ZEALAND

Mr. Walter Thayer, of Cholan, Washington, has forwarded a short article dealing with railway matters in a sister Dominion of ours, New Zealand. The write is Mr. A. C. Bellamy, of Christchurch, N.Z.

"On Saturday, December 15th, 1945, I went to Kaikowa to witness the opening of the South Island's main trunk railway, which has been projected since 1870, and only just completed. It was one of the few vital links to be connected up and now makes the railway complete from Picton to Bluff. I travelled on the first through passenger train from Christchurch to Kaikowa. The train I went up in had two AB's on the head end, and carried 951 passengers. I had a great day up there, and took 24 photos of the opening, which show the railcar cutting the ribbon.

"New Zealand Government Railways have on order 24 Diesel Electric 3 - car trains, which may be coupled together to make a total of 12 cars. When these arrive, they will be available for passenger runs to replace certain minor express trains. They will be the first Diesel Electrics in New Zealand. Many of our lines are going to be electrified, as a post-war project, because of the shortage of coal, and the abundance of water power to generate electricity, and also because of its cheapness."

We thank Mr. Thayer for forwarding this to the Society, as it is certainly interesting to hear of railway activities in the Antipodes.

FUTURE MEETINGS

The next two meeting of the Society will be as follows:

Friday, May 17: Home of Jack Macnab, 46 Benlamond Avenue.

Friday, June 21: Home of Charles Randall, 466 Milverton Boulevard.