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London and Port Stanley Railway:

"END OF THE LINE" for

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"END OF THE LINE — ALL CHANGE HERE."

The familiar phrase soon will echo for the last time for the London and Port Stanley Railway and its Brotherhood employees with the old line to be taken over by the Canadian National Railways.

"The end of the line" for the L. and PS ends 110 years of rail service and the "all change here" means the end of railway service for most of the workers.

The passing of the L. and PS — in a real estate swap for CNR property in London — is the obituary for the last of Canada's short rail lines. By next year the L. and PS will be just another railway submerged in the merger of so many other lines that now form the great Canadian National.

For employees the end of the line is a heart-breaker. Many devoted their lives to the operation of the 30-mile service between the Forest City of London and the Lake Erie community of Port Stanley. Although they are protected by a job security provision negotiated for them by the Brotherhood, they will no longer be in railway service — but employed in a variety of jobs with the Public Utilities Commission of the City of London.

End Inevitable

The end of the line was inevitable. Its days of necessary service for passengers ended eight years ago and freight business diminished until now only two or three trains a week operate over the once jam-packed line. Motor cars and passenger coach lines, trucks, opposition by rival railways and the lack of patronage for the once popular Port Stanley resort and amusement park doomed the railway line to obsolescence, a line that in its heyday carried a million passengers a year and operated 26 trains every 16 hours, making the run from London to Port Stanley in 45 minutes.

The executive of the L. and PS Brotherhood Local 262, realizing the deficit operation of the railway and the uncertainty of the future, concentrated every effort for the protection of members. While job security is one of the main problems of workers today, especially with the threat of automation, the London-Port Stanley Brothers tackled the situation well in advance of any definite decisions. Representative Ray Roussel and Brotherhood Local officers held a succession of meetings with London municipal authorities and reached a solution so that workers would be protected as much as feasibly possible. Other workers involved in CNR changes in London were not so fortunate, many of them having to break up old homes for work in other cities and in some cases other provinces.

will get new jobs — but doing what they do not know. Only a few are expected to be employed by the CNR.

Did London Lose?

After retaining the line for so long, paying annual deficits for years, did the City of London lose a bundle in the transaction? That is a question taxpayers are asking, because soon after the deal with the CN was announced, the Ford Motor Car Co., confirmed a rumour that it planned to build a hundred million dollar plant at Talbotville, a station about 12 miles from Port Stanley. The L. and PS provides a line from Talbotville to the Port Stanley docks with an easy 80-mile water-route to U.S. ports across Lake Erie. Speculation is that the Ford plant at Talbotville will employ from 3,000 to 5,000 workers — who would all be potential patrons of the L. and PS, and customers for property and homes in the vicinity.

London Mayor George Stronach estimated the value of the CN property involved in the trade at about \$275,000. A study last year put a price tag of \$2,973,500 on the line as an operating railway and in 1957 London turned down a reported million dollar offer from the CNR. The CN also gets two light-weight diesel locomotives on which the city of London still owes and has to pay \$190,000 on debentures, which have 15 years to run.

ered the foliage on trees and in the fields. The territory is true Southwestern Ontario. Tidy country farms, bustling communities with spreading suburbs — all giving an indication of prosperity — yet at the end of the line at Port Stanley — it was almost desolation. The once thriving picnic and amusement area along the sandy shores of Lake Erie appeared like a ghost town of deserted buildings. The City of London retained the Port Stanley Lake Erie property and dock facilities in the deal with the CNR and they may be restored to their former popularity and prosperity.

Like a Ghost Town

The dance pavilion, often termed the largest in Canada, which attracted the top name bands, capable of accommodating crowds up to 7,000, stands as a memorial to a past era. While the hall is still used, it is only a shell of its former greatness. The big bath house along the shore has been deserted for years. Only skeletons remain of the buildings that housed the sidewalk stands, the merry-go-rounds and other amusements. The park's incline railway, operated by the L. and PS, is still in service but only used by a fraction of the 195,248 passengers that used it in 1918.