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Organized by A. R. Mosher

Mr. Robertson joined the L. and PS in June 1929 after the line had transferred from steam-power to electric. The railway was operated at the time by a commission appointed by the London City Council. From old files he produced a report of a Local meeting July 3, 1935 when the commission approved the formation of a union and agreed to negotiate a working contract. The London Commission was headed by Mayor George Wenige and a Grievance Committee, composed of Brothers J. S. Kay, J. Ringsdorf, H. Collins and W. McCauley, was authorized to start immediate negotiations for a contract.

In the vacated freight shed, Mr. Robertson located a time table of June, 1941, which must have been the peak period in the line's history, with a schedule of 16 passenger trains a day, stops at 10 stations and connections for passengers and freight to anywhere via the Canadian National, Michigan Central, New York Central and Canadian Pacific. He also had boxes of old tickets, tags and checks — one a check for dogs with the usual small print — that absolved the railway from any "responsibility greater than the sum of \$25 for any dog or dogs injured or lost".

After a journey over the line, we visited the London freight sheds and car shops, solid stone structures that were built as though they were meant to last forever — but now their future is in doubt. The 75-year old car shops will likely be vacated by the end of this year but the freight sheds are doing a brisk business in storage.

First Piggyback

Brother Charlie Nash presides in a tiny but tastefully decorated office, as major domo of the storage section. He also went back in memory to the early days of his railway life. He recalled that he drove a team of horses for the L. and PS in 1923 and claims the line introduced a piggyback service in 1931 — the first on the continent. In the freight shed offices, Brothers Bill MacIntyre, Don Mills and Len Mason, Local 262 financial secretary, were working on accounts. They are among the 30 remaining employees of the L. and PS, which once had a staff of 180.

The real end of the line was realized at the car shops — where all was idle and the remaining vehicles of the once big fleet were gathering dust and rust. A four-man staff was working at odd jobs, where once there were 30 highly skilled workers. The rolling stock — formerly the pride of any short-line in existence — was reduced to three electric locomotives, used for switching; two diesel locomotives, 21 hopper cars and four box cars.

Brother Hubert (better known as Shorty) Collins, was in charge at the time — with never a hint that he was nearing the end of his own line — but a few weeks later he died suddenly. Brother Collins in his talk expressed more concern for others than he did for himself. He related how most of the regular staff were qualified as engineers and expert diesel mechanics and he related how he had recently run one of the diesel engines over the line at full power ahead. Brother Collins had a sincere pride for the L. and PS and the men who operated it.

A. L. Furanna, general manager of the London Public Utilities Commission, seemed as regretful as the workers at the passing of the line. He reluctantly had to admit that the railway was losing money every year, having past its age of usefulness. He did not know when the CN would be taking over officially or what use would be made of the CN London property gained in the trade for the line.

The acquisition by London of the CN property also sounds the death knell of the CN car shops where many other Brotherhood members are employed. The car shops work was moved by the CN to Montreal, over the objections of the London people and trade unions.

More than half a century ago the CNR tried to get control of the L. and PS Railway, even to seeking a 99-year lease with the promise of building a \$250,000 hotel in London and putting the city on the main trunk line. Sir Adam Beck, father of the Ontario Hydro Electric System, considered the best publicly owned electric service in the world, was mayor of London in 1902 and opposed any sale or lease of the railway. He led the campaign to have London take over the line and change it from steam to electric power in 1912, which was authorized by a majority of 2820 to 2074 in a municipal vote.

Father of Ontario Hydro

Sir Adam Beck was considered a radical socialist at the time. Today he would probably be termed a communist of the yellow not red

variety, but his accomplishment for a provincial hydro system operated for the public and not private gain is his memorial. He also dreamed of an electric railway system through all Western Ontario and must have had a vision of the future for the area is now probably the most progressive in all Canada. He saw his plan for a municipally operated electric line prove a financial success and a main factor in the development of Ontario's south western territory.

Actually there were other farsighted planners before Sir Adam's time — back as far as 1856 when the line was built from Port Stanley to London as a main artery of trade between Canada and the United States. It proved a failure but it obtained considerable revenue from excursion traffic and transport of coal. It was taken over by the Great Western Railway in 1875, under a lease that expired in 1893, when it was leased to the Lake Erie and Detroit River Railway for 20 years. The Great Western Railway, later the Grand Trunk and now the CNR, reached London only three years before the start of the Port Stanley-London line.

Thus another chapter in the history of Canadian railroading is about to end — another short line merged into Canada's great national railway — that actually started with a short line of 14½ miles from Laprairie to St. John's, Quebec, built by the Champlain and St. Lawrence Rail Road in 1836. That pioneer Canadian line — like the L. and PS, was planned as a link — via water — to the United States.

Cruel Coincidence

Almost as a cruel coincidence, while this rambling review of the London and Port Stanley Railway and its people was being prepared, news came from Japan that a passenger train, called the "Bullet", had been introduced from Tokyo to Osaka that travels 130 miles an hour. The 12-car trains on the 330-mile run pass each other in two seconds at the half way mark. When the L. and PS was electrified and in operation a Japanese trade mission of engineers spent almost a year studying the line, examining almost every spike, all equipment, every culvert and bridge. The L. and PS was the pattern for Japan's electric railway — now rated the best and fastest in all the world.

Just when the last rites for the old L. and PS will be observed was not known at time of writing but soon the final phrase will be sounded:

"END OF THE LINE — ALL CHANGE HERE".