# Canadian Rail

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# Steam Hauled Silk Trains !

Jean-G. Coté

Early in the Twentieth Century, the fastest trains on the North American continent were the prestige "Silk Specials" speeding bales of raw silk from Pacific Coast ports to spinning and weaving mills in the Chicago and New York areas. Before synthetic fibres like rayon and nylon were invented, silk was the luxury fabric. The baled raw silk fibre had to be delivered as quickly as possible, to minimize the high daily insurance on this precious and perishable commodity.

Silk from the Orient always held a magic attraction for Europeans, both male and female, although the story of the silk trade goes further back in history. The Chinese first discovered the silk-worm spinning its cocoon of "wild silk" many centuries ago. They established its culture as an industry and silk cloth was used as currency, as well as a luxury fabric which they bartered with wandering traders all over Asia, until the Phoenician, Greek and Roman sea and land wayfarers ventured to India and the silk and spice markets of the East Indies, China and Cipangu (Japan).

Marco Polo's Thirteenth Century travels over the "Silk Road", through Iran, Turkestan and Thibet resulted in the extension of the silk trade via that overland route during the Middle Ages to Byzantium (Constantinople), Greece and Rome, thence into western Europe, as urbanization and industrialization displaced warfare. The kings of France encouraged a silk-worm industry at Lyon in the Rhone River valley and this became the silk centre of Europe, finally eliminating competition from Italy.

However, the Silk Road and the sea lanes to the Orient were fraught with piracy and trade in that direction was discouraged thereby. But such was the fascination of the silk and spice trade that it encouraged the search for a "Northwest Passage" to the East, after geographers and map-makers finally realized that the world was round and not flat. Navigators like Cabot, Columbus, Cartier and Amerigo

BACK IN THE 1950S - COULD IT HAVE BEEN 1955? - JIM SHAUGHNESSY VISited Montréal to take a picture of Canadian National Railways' famous 4-8-4 steam locomotive Number 6157, coming back light to Turcot Roundhouse from Eastern Junction. En route, Number 6157 crossed the Canadian Pacific's main line west at Ballantyne. Today, the railway archeologist would find it difficult to find this spot.

CANADIAN NATIONAL RAILWAYS 4-6-2 NUMBER 5116 HEADS A SEVEN-CAR-PLUS silk special east out of Vancouver in 1928. The presence of a pusher on the rear of the train gives an indication of the importance of speed on all stages of the run.

Vespucci discovered various portions of the continent of North America, when in fact they were searching for a short-cut from Europe to China and Japan. Jacques Cartier named the present-day suburb of Montréal "La Chine", as he postulated that this would be the port above the rapids in the St. Lawrence from which travellers would depart for the trip across the Pacific to China!

Eventually, ships of the British East India Company did trade in the Chinese ports of Canton, Shanghai and Hong Kong. Towards 1860, the clever Japanese began to compete successfully in the silk trade, having cleverly learned the ancient Chinese art of silk-worm culture and the corollary techniques of silk spinning and weaving. The Chinese, on the other hand, rapidly lost their share of the trade, due principally to a silk-worm disease which devastated the industry.

From that time on, the Japanese led the world in silk production. While ships still loaded silk in the ports of Canton, Shanghai and Hong Kong, the Japanese ports of Kobe and Yokohama offered larger cargoes of this marvellous natural fibre (1).

At first in the 1870s, the trans-Pacific and transcontinental silk traffic was, of necessity, routed through San Francisco. But later, when the Great Northern and Northern Pacific Railways and the Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul and Pacific Railroad joined in the competition for the land portion of the haul, it was found that the North Pacific route was about a day or so faster than the voyage to San Francisco and overland transport onward. Thus, Seattle, Washington and Vancouver, British Columbia became competitive arrival ports for these time-value cargoes.

By the mid-1880s, silk shipments were being routed over the Canadian Pacific Railway. According to George Johnson's "First Things in Canada" (2), the first shipment of tea and silk, 1832 tons, arrived in Vancouver on the S.S.Parthia at noon, 6 November 1889, the ship being 13 days, 13 hours out of Yokohama. The shipment was unloaded from the ship and loaded into boxcars for the journey east on the newly-built Canadian Pacific Railway.

The latecoming Grand Trunk Pacific Railway, while not a transcontinental line in the strict sense, together with its northern B. C. port of Prince Rupert, British Columbia, was opened for traffic in 1915. It never really figured in this competitive and racy trade. It might well have been a competitor, had it not been for the lack of return cargoes for the Asia-bound trans-Pacific ships. However, after Sir Henry Thornton became the President of the Canadian National Railway Company in the early Twenties, the new management team was afforded the opportunity of competing for this prestige traffic, to the discomfiture of the other competitors. Speed in delivery of the perishable raw silk to eastern United States mills was essential, as insurance premiums were high and silk was sold on a market where prices fluctuated rapidly and unpredictably.

Silk trains were always given the highest priority, with rights over all other trains, including passenger expresses, and ran nonstop between terminals. Crews on these specials consisted of regular engine and train crews, plus armed guards or special agents of the Investigation (Security) Department. The train consists of the 1920s varied from half-a-dozen to as many as twenty cars, on Canadian National Railways. Their scheduled time was the shortest of all trains and, consequently, their speed averaged about a-mile-a-minute, which was remarkable for that time.

The specials stopped barely five minutes at division points to change engines, crews and, at times, cabooses of the chain-gang freight crews who were regularly assigned to such specials, in "chain-gang" service. Carmen at these servicing stops barely had time to inspect the running gear and journal boxes, which they lubricated. From each terminal, the departure time of the special was wired to waiting officials in Winnipeg, Toronto and Montréal, or to St. Paul, Minnesota, Chicago and New York, in the United States.

Half-a-century later, it is difficult to find published information on these nearly forgotten specials, even in a library as large as CN's Headquarters Library in Montréal. I could find but two articles published in the United States. In Canada, the late Ken Liddell's book "I'll Take the Train"(3) has a chapter on the "silkers". Even the "Canadian National Railways Magazine" carried very little on these specials (4), which was unusual, since that magazine published some very good articles on railway history in the 1920s and 1930s.

On one occasion, royalty was side-tracked to let a silk special pass. In mid-December 1919 - that year, according to Freeman Hubbard, Editor of "Railroad Magazine"(5) - Ken Liddel in his chapter on silk trains (6) says that Prince George, Duke of York and later King George VI, arrived at Vancouver aboard the S.S.Empress of Russia, en route from Hong Kong, where he had been stationed with the Royal Navy, to spend a Christmas holiday with his parents in England. The ship had been delayed by bad weather and fog and a special section of the Canadian Pacific Railway's transcontinental passenger train was held at Vancouver to take the Prince eastward to Montréal, where another ship was waiting to make the trans-Atlantic crossing.

The special pulled out of Vancouver at midnight and hurried through the foothills of the mountains. The S.S.Empress of Russia had, in addition to her royal passenger, a cargo of silk, which was immediately trans-shipped at Vancouver to special silk cars on the CPR. By noon of the following day, the silk special had overtaken the Prince's train and the latter had been held on a siding in the Rockies to let the silk train pass. The Prince asked the rear-end brakeman why the train was stopped on such a remote siding.

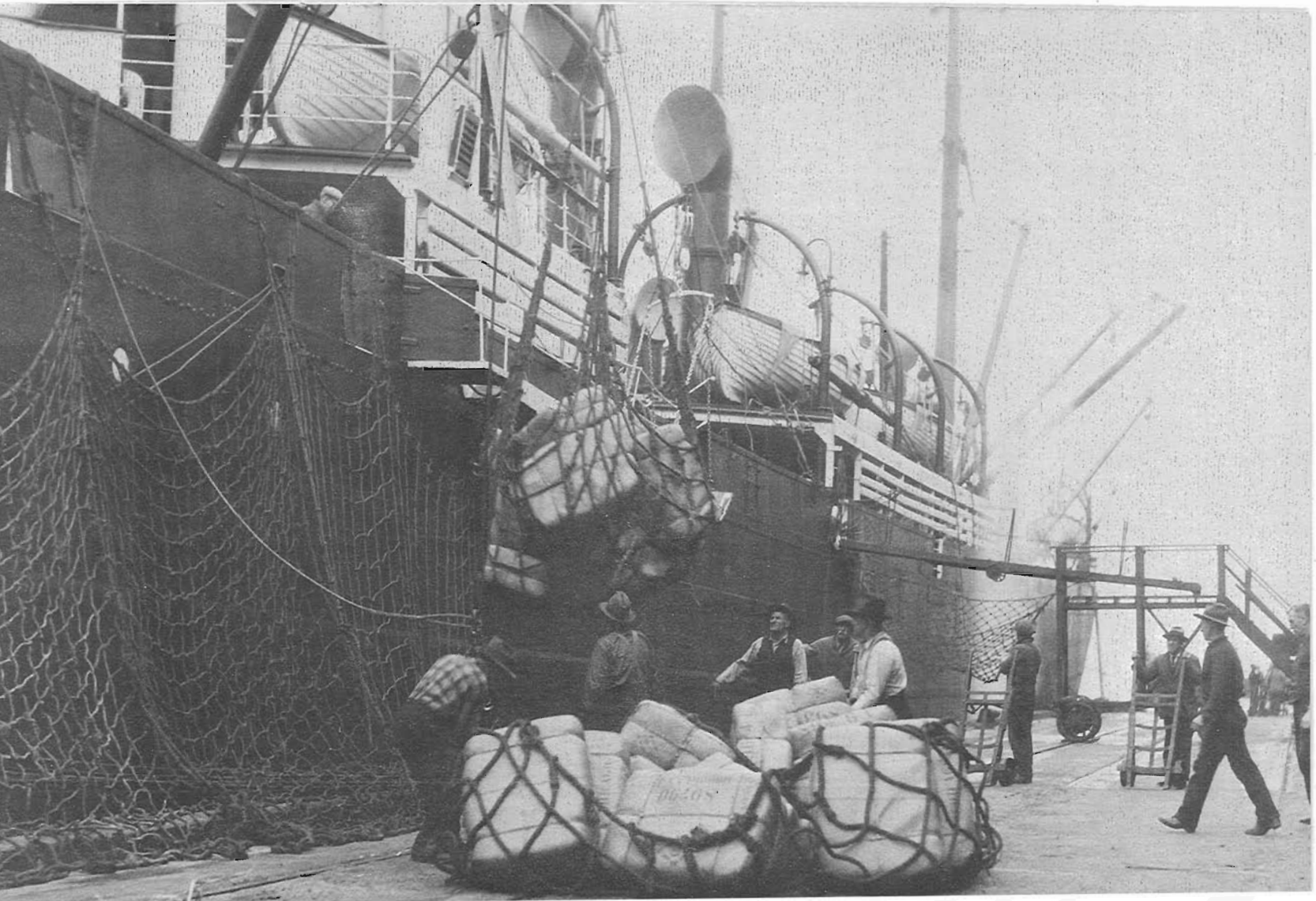
"To let the silk train pass, sir," replied the brakeman.

A stuttering ejeculation brought further explanation from the brakeman. The Prince had not known of the ship's cargo of precious silk which, after an initial delay in trans-shipment, had now overtaken the Royal train, over which it had precedence.

Ken Liddell (7) and Freeman Hubbard both tell the story about the time when Port Arthur, Ontario, then a small town on Canada's first transcontinental railway, claimed that the Canadian Pacific Railway Company owed it $ 14,000 in back real estate taxes. The railway claimed that, under the terms of its charter, it was not taxable locally. That did not prevent Port Arthur's tax collector,

BALES OF RAW SILK FROM JAPAN, CONSIGNED TO COMPANIES IN CHICAGO AND New York - and individually numbered, for strict accountability -are being unloaded by sling and crane to be transshipped to waiting express/baggage cars for the trip east via the CNR.(1930)

THE SLING ON THE DOCK CONTAINS BALES FOR CUSTOMERS IN CHICAGO AND Hoboken, New Jersey.(1930).



Mr. William Beaver, from doing something drastic to collect the tax money. When the CPR's next silk special arrived in town and stopped for servicing, Bill Beaver attached the train for the debt, both figuratively and in reality, by chaining the train's engine to the track and securing the chain with a padlock, preventing it from its onward journey until the municipal tax was paid.

It is said that President William C. Van Horne gave hurried instructions to the town's one bank to transfer the cash to the Town. Alas, the bank had but $ 12,000 cash in its vaults, which was $ 2000 short of satisfying Mr. Beaver. The railway company's employees were able to raise the balance around town and the delayed silk train was released and allowed to depart for the east!

While delays and accidents to the silk specials were rare, because of the extraordinary precautions taken - at first, CN adopted the practice of spiking the switches of all sidings/passing tracks off the main line, ahead of these specials - there were some incidents. This spiking of switches had the effect of interlocking all opposing trains and superior trains in the same direction. It was an expensive and time-consuming process, even in those days.

The Canadian Pacific had a silk train derail in the Fraser River canyon between Haig and Yale, British Columbia. One express car sank in the turbulent river and was never found. This accident became renowned as the "Million Dollar Wreck". But bales of silk from the second car, which broke open at the water's edge, kept floating downstream and continued to be found for months afterward. Local Indians were paid $ 10 per bale for each one found and turned in, although the value of the contents was, by this time, questionable.

On one occasion in December 1928 or 1929, according to my memory, Canadian National lost several cars of silk in the Fraser valley. Due to record-destruction programs, it has been impossible to locate any record of this accident. Even Vancouver newspaper morgues failed to produce any clippings or microfilm of the derailment. In 1926-1930, I was working as a stenographer in the Dispatcher's Office in Edmonton ("DK"). The bales of silk were picked up at the derailment site, loaded into box cars and moved to Edmonton by the first through freight available. There, they were to be trans-shipped to express-baggage cars at the old GTP freight shed back of 97th. Street on 104th.Avenue, under the supervision of local Freight Agent J.C. Low.

As the accident occurred just before Christmas, Edmonton shed freight-handlers were called to work overtime on December 25, hauling the bales of silk from freight cars to passenger-service cars. Jim Low, who loved a challenge, told the Chief Dispatcher Arthur McRae, known as "A.M.", that he would have the freight-shed crew fired if they did not transfer that rush cargo pronto, even on Christmas day! Well, he did not have to carry out his threat. The silk bales were trans-shipped and the special departed promptly from Edmonton, without incident.

In February 1926, being curious to see a silk train, I learned that one was to leave Calder Yard, Edmonton, at 1800k. We then worked until 17.30 hours ( 5.30 p.m.). I took my bicycle up the old Canadian Northern line to North Edmonton and, by pedalling hard, I got there in time to hear the 5100-class steam engine whistling off for its departure, two miles to the west. As I stood near the signal tower, the towerman cleared the main-line signals for the special. In two minutes, the headlight of the locomotive had expanded from pin-

point size to a solar dimension and the engine blew up a cloud of steam in the wintry twilight, as it roared by. The train raised a considerable cloud of cinders, clattering away over the diamond into the twilight; soon, only the twin red eyes of its last-car marker lights were visible, as the special increased its speed, heading for Wainwright and the East.

The busiest year for the silk traffic, both in Canada and the United States, was 1929, when half-a-million bales of silk fibre, valued at some $ 325 million, were moved from west coast ports to New York. The shipping revenues of some $ 6 million were divided among 20 participating railways in both countries, and 9 steamship lines (8). The longest silk train moved over Canadian National Railways in 1927 consisted of 21 express cars containing 7,300 bales of silk, valued at about $ 7 million.

Freeman Hubbard, present Editor of RAILROAD Magazine, wrote the longest article on silk trains that I have found: "There Was Never A Signal Set Against A Silk Train" (9). He quotes a Council Bluffs,Iowa newspaper of November 24, 1876, reporting the passage of " 49 railroad cars of tea and 2 of silk", and that HARPER'S WEEKLY of November 27, 1909, published the first record of a silk special, describing the train as "dull-painted and windowless, yet the Emperor of Trains".

At four cents per pound, there was more profit in hauling silk than there was in carrying passengers. The raw silk, a conglomeration of fibres and cocoons, the latter with silk worms still alive inside, was shipped in tightly-bound bales weighing 133 to 220 pounds each, tightly bound with straw matting on the exterior.

Market prices for raw silk varied, exceeding $ 7 per pound in the period between the two World Wars. According to Mr. Hubbard, the first through passenger train from Vancouver to Montréal over the newly-completed Canadian Pacific Railway in 1885 had carloads of silk in its consist.

While today's cross-Canada diesel-powered trains, like the CN's "SuperContinental" and the "Canadian" of CP RAIL average about 40 miles per hour between Vancouver and Montréal, counting station and servicing stops and operating delays, engineman Jack Davidson at the throttle of a CPR D-10-class tenwheel coal-burner ticked off 110 miles in 77 minutes, according to Freeman Hubbard. And that was before the advent of mechanical stokers or oil burners! Unfortunately, the name of the overworked fireman was not recorded.

Canadian National Railways scheduled more than 100 silk specials between 1925 and 1932, from Vancouver to New York, via Toronto,Niagara Falls and Buffalo, New York, where a conntection was made with the New York Central Railroad. The actual running time of these specials averaged 70 hours 40 minutes, Vancouver to Toronto; 73 hours to Buffalo and 85 hours to New York City. The time allowed for changing

STEVEDORES TRUCK THE HEAVY BALES FROM THE DOCK THROUGH THE FREIGHT shed to the waiting express/baggage cars for the fast trip east via Canadian National Railways.(1930).

THE BALES OF RAW SILK WERE IDENTIFIED BY NUMBER AND INDIVIDUALLY checked before being loaded into express/baggage cars for the long haul east. This consignment in 1931 was destined for New York.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engines at terminals was two (2) minutes, during which time journal boxes were inspected and oiled. Simultaneously, the guards inspected the seals on all car-doors.

After the silk trade began to use the ports on Puget Sound, the Canadian Pacific Steamships' "Empress" boats carried a share of this traffic from 1898 onwards, competing with the Dollar Line ships to San Francisco, the Nippon Yussen Kaisha to Portland and Seattle. On one voyage, the S.S.Empress of Japan crossed the Pacific, Yokohama to Victoria, in 10 days, 10 hours.

The "Empress" ships were about a week faster than their rivals in the trans-Pacific crossing. In 1913, the new CPSS Empress of Russia made a record crossing in 8 days, 18 hours and 23 minutes. The S.S.Empress of Canada bettered this time in 1924 by covering the 4,200 miles in 8 days, 10 hours, 9 minutes. Thereafter, the Canadian Pacific Railway Company's transport system was able to deliver silk cargoes in New York 13 days after leaving Japan. On one run, a CPR silk special passed through Fort William, Ontario 48 hours after leaving Vancouver. The train travelled the 133 miles between Brandon and Winnipeg in 131 minutes, so it is said.

In the economic depression which followed the 1929 financial crists, the operation of these legendary trains of raw silk across the North American continent became unprofitable. Moreover, the engine and train crews contributed to this deteriorating economic situation by claiming and holding out for freight-mileage pay, instead of passenger-train rates, owing to the relatively short times involved in these fast runs. Thus, they helped to "kill the goose that laid the golden egg", as special high-speed trains became uneconomical to operate. The lower rates available from water-transportation companies made the voyage via the Panama Canal more attractive to shippers, despite the railways' efforts to compete by lowering their rates.

The introduction of synthetic fibres, such as celanese and rayon, and later, nylon, sounded the death-knell of the silk trade to North America and the silk trains had disappeared from North American railroads by the 1930s.

The last silk shipment from Japan reached the United States in the summer of 1941, not very long before the attack on Pearl Harbour, Hawaii, terminated all trade between Japan and the United States. The last shipment of silk from China was made in September 1941. After World War II had ended, some raw silk was flown across North America in chartered aircraft and some was carried as air-freight on regularly scheduled airlines (10). Similarly, regular airlines also flew raw silk from the Far East, through the Middle East to Europe (11).

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## FOOTNOTES

(1) THE SILK ROAD Boulnois, Luce; Dutton, New York, 1966.
(2) FIRST THINGS IN CANADA Johnson, George; Mortimer, Ottawa, 1897.
(3) I'LL TAKE THE TRAIN Liddell,Kenneth; Modern Press,Saskatoon,1966
(4) SILK TRAIN (Poem) Knelles, V.G.; Canadian National Railways Magazine, August 1937.
(5) RAILROAD Magazine, April 1965, pp. 13-24.
(6) Op.cit. 3 .
(7) Op. cit. 3, pp.115 and 5.
(8) Op. cit. 3.
(9) RAILROAD Magazine, April 1965, pp. 13-24.
(10) Ibid.
(11) Op. cit. 1 .


# THE OTTAWA CONNECTION

Kenneth A.W.Gansel

Canadian National Railways' new white, black, orange, blue and mauve system timetable that appeared just before April 25, 1976, contained a number of sprprises, not the least of which was a dramatic rearrangement of passenger services, by train and highway bus, between Ottawa and Toronto, along the shore of Lake Ontario.

The last day of operation of Trains 40 & 41, Ottawa to Brockville, Ontario, was April 24, 1976. These were the trains that provided the connection with Train 51 for Toronto and Train 50 from Ontario's "Queen City" to the Nation's Capital. Through coaches used to be handled on the rear of Train 51 westbound, coming down to Brockville on the eastbound Train 50 in the same position.

In the new timetable, the Ottawa-Brockville train runs straight through to Toronto, with the Montréal-Brockville service being supplied by Trains 650 and 653 which are RDC RAILINERs.

The new train is called the "Capitale" and is Trains 43 & 44 . The service will operate via CP RAIL's Brockville to Smiths Falls trackage (Brockville S/D, Smiths Falls Division), 27.8 miles, after which it covers the remaining 35.1 miles on its own trackage (Smiths Falls S/D).

Before the reorganization of passenger train service, former Trains 40 & 41 were wyed on the CP RAIL spur which leads to the harbourfront at Brockville. This track, seldom used, has a 6 mph or less speed restriction. Normally, the diesel unit and one coach were all that stayed at Brockville between the departure of Train 51 and the arrival of Train 50.

During the week, the Brockville switcher added the through cars to the rear of 51 westbound and 50 eastbound. On weekends there was no yard switcher, so the road engine from Ottawa did the job.

After the train - the diesel unit and one coach - was wyed, it returned to the station and backed into the stub-end siding, where it awaited the arrival of Train 50 from Toronto.

When Train 50 arrived, it uncoupled the last two coaches in its consist and, after discharging and loading passengers, uncoupled the last two coaches. The diesel unit and coach for Ottawa backed down the main line as soon as Train 50 had departed and picked up the two coaches on the main line. It then departed for Ottawa.

In the first of the accompanying photographs, Train 51, the westbound "Lakeshore", makes its last stop at Brockville on 24 April 1976. The second photo shows Train 41, the Ottawa connection, arriving at Brockville on the same day. In the last picture, Train 41 is

being wyed for the last time, preparatory to making a last run to Ottawa.

The "Capitale" makes the 277-mile Ottawa-Toronto trip in 350 minutes with eight intermediate stops, while the eastbound run takes 345 minutes with the same number of stops. Westbound, it leaves Ottawa at 08 30, arriving in Toronto at 14 20. The corresponding Toronto-Ottawa service leaves Union Station at 09 30 and arrives at Ottawa at 15 15 .


# THE SWITCH

S.S. Worthen

Whether you travel in Europe for pleasure or business, you cannot fail to be impressed by the convenient, efficient passenger train services, a network which is at your disposition twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. No European city, from Scandanavia to Spain, is more than 24 hours by train from any other, with perhaps a few exceptions. Short, intermediate and long-distance railway travel is fast and arrivals and departures are punctual, due primarily to the excellent time-keeping of express passenger trains.

The most famous of these expresses are the TEE (Trans-Europe Express) trains, providing fast day service by luxury diesel or electric train between important European cities, north, south, east and west. A first-class fare, plus a special supplement, is required to travel on these trains, since all seats are reserved. Prior reservation is normally obligatory and a special telex network has been established to facilitate onward or return reservations.

Linking the industrial centres of France, Switzerland, Belgium, Holland and West Germany is a secondary network of daily express trains, one of the best known of which, the "Hispania Express", in the summer months departs daily from Hamburg (Altona) and Dortmund in West Germany for Basle, Lausanne and Geneva, Switzerland, Lyon, Avignon, Narbonne and Cerbère, France and Port Bou and Barcelona, Spain. Many workers from the Spanish manpower reservoir travel by this train to West Germany; in the southbound direction, holiday-makers from northern Europe, attracted by the sunny skies and sandy beaches of the Costa Brava, come to Spain.

Northbound, the "Hispania Express" departs Barcelona daily at 1800 as RENFE Train 113, with first and second-class coaches for Cerbère on the Franco-Spanish frontier, where passengers must change from the 1.651-m.-gauge RENFE to the 1.435 m.-gauge French National Railways at 2200.

From Cerbère, first and second-class SNCF sleeping cars are available to Geneva and first-class Swiss Federal Railways (CFF/SBB) sleepers run through to Basle. First and second-class coaches are provided on a rotating basis by the SNCF, CFF/SBB or Deutsches Bundesbahn for Geneva, Basle, Dortmund and Hamburg, with a dining car, generally from the DB, between Geneva and Hamburg. This is SNCF Train 376, as far as Geneva, where, running on CFF/SBB rails, it becomes CFF/SBB Train 376 for the northward journey to Basle.

After Basle, on DB metals, the "Hispania Express" is Train D376 to Hamburg via Hannover and Train D1204 to Mannheim, Koblenz, Koln and Dortmund.

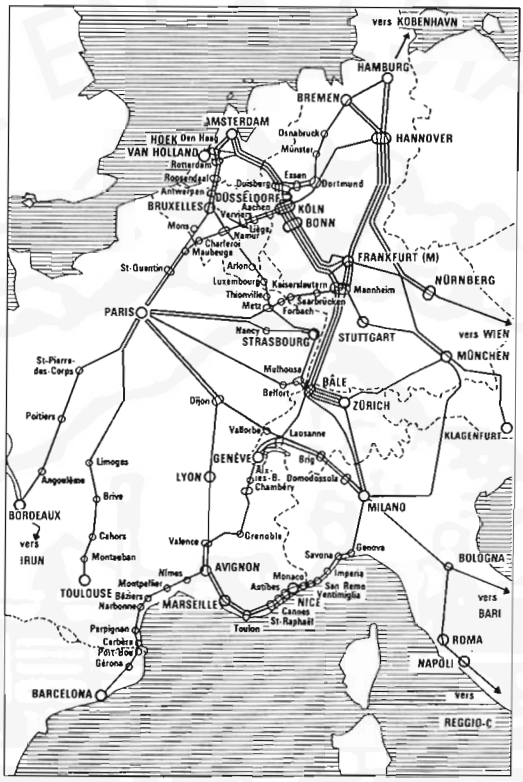
On its northward run, the "Hispania Express" travels through some of the most beautiful country in western Europe, particularly in the valley of the Rhône River, through the mountains of the Vercors and the Chartreuse, by the lakes of Geneva, Neuchâtel and Bienne and through the wild gorge of the Birse River in the Swiss Jura Mountains.


COACHES AND SLEEPING CARS ON THE RAILWAYS OF EUROPE NORMALLY CARRY destination signs; here is the destination sign for the through cars of the "Hispania Express" from Cerbère to Hamburg (Altona).
Photo courtesy "La Suisse" - Moutier.

In this latter region, the direct line of the CFF/SBB from Lausanne to Basle takes a short-cut through the southernmost rampart of the Jura Mountains, from the valley of the Aare River, via the 8.45 km.-long Grenchenberg Tunnel, to the valley of the Birse River, which the railway follows northward to its junction with the Rhine at Basle.

Turning northwest at Grenchen, 15 km beyond Bienne, the railway passes through the Grenchenberg Tunnel, emerging near Moutier in the narrow gorge of the Birse between high limestone cliffs. From Grenchen to a point a short distance north of the town of Choindez, about 5 km from Moutier, the main line is single-tracked; onward from Choindez to Basle, it is once more double-tracked. The switch at the point where the single track becomes double is electrically-operated and normally automatic, being activated by approaching trains entering the circuit. Southbound trains pass through the switch to the single track, while northbound trains are automatically diverted to the left-hand track of the double-track line, since CFF/SBB trains run to the left. This automatic switch is monitored from the station at Choindez.

Despite the difficulties imposed by heavy traffic, weather conditions and curving and heavily graded lines, the Swiss Federal Railways have achieved and continue to maintain an excellent standard of safe, "on time" passenger and freight train operation. Moreover, the CFF/SBB's safety record is an enviable one. Between 1949 and 1972, a period of 23 years, only 28 persons, exclusive of railway personnel, lost their lives as a result of collisions or derailments. Most of these casualties occurred in one accident at St-Léonard (VS), km 98 on the Lausanne-Simplon Tunnel main line, where 10 persons perished in the head-on collision of two passenger trains.




The northbound "Hispania Express" of 26 March 1974, composed of eight cars, including a Deutsches Bundesbahn dining car, was winding its way through the Birse Gorge toward Basle, having just emerged from the Grenchenberg Tunnel. The express had left Geneva (Cornavin) at 0754 and was due at Delémont, in the Swiss Jura Mountains, at 1019. Most of the passengers had had breakfast after the train left Lausanne and the dining car, midway in the train, was relatively empty. A few passengers were having a mid-morning cup of coffee.

At Choindez, about 6 km south of Delémont, work on a section of track was in progress and the automatic electric switch at the point where the single track becomes double had been isolated to non-automatic operation and was being operated by the signalman at Choindez. The operator could not see the switch from the station and therefore was controlling and changing the switch either on direction from the train-control office or by time-interval, based on the passage of trains.

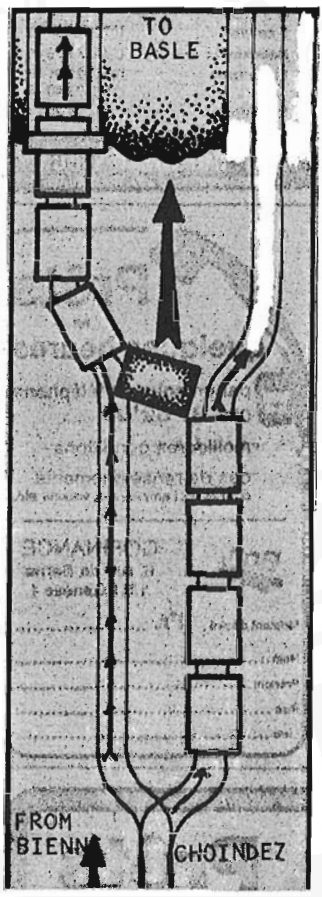
A section-man, working on the track, heard the whistle of the approaching express and crossed the right-of-way from the left-hand to the right-hand track, where he would be away from the train. The CFF/SBB, like most railways in Europe, run to the left.

The express, hauled by a green B-B electric locomotive, came on at a steady speed of about 60 km/h , despite the fact that it was running a few minutes late. In a few seconds, this one or two min-

utes was to result in an unexpected and calamitous occurrence. As the train approached the electric switch, the engineman looked ahead to the double-track, with its 4 m separation, through one short rock tunnel to a second tunnel for the northbound or left-hand line. Between the tunnels, the two tracks spread apart to about 15 m.

Reducing speed slightly, the locomotive and the first three cars of the eight-car train clattered over the switch and swung slightly to the left to enter the first short two-track tunnel. The front truck of the DB dining car, midway in the train, followed smoothly through the switch, but the section-man was horrified to see that the rear truck and the four coaches on the rear of the train took the right-hand track, which runs through the first short tunnel alongside its companion and then separates from it to run along the face of the high limestone cliff, beside but outside the tunnel.

As the train rolled onward, its front portion on the left track and its rear portion on the right, with the DB dining car on both, no one on the train was aware of anything being wrong. The cars did not uncouple, because the 26.4-meter-long dining car was able to span the 15-meter distance between the tracks. Afterwards, some of the passengers who were riding in the dining car said that there was some roughness, but nothing out of the ordinary.



The two portions of the train sped onward for about 1 km , the dining car linking them and the whole passing through the first, short rock tunnel in which the two tracks were not separated by a rock wall. The next tunnel, however, was for the left-hand line only, the right-hand track running outside along the face of the cliff.

"My God, we will crash!", one of the dining-car passengers suddenly cried out and, at the same instant, the dining car, now running almost at right-angles to the direction of travel, crashed broadside into the cliff face, impacting about one-third the length of the car on the right side.

The whole train stopped with a tremendous jerk. Passengers in all of the coaches were thrown from their seats. The coach immediately behind the DB diner was partially derailed. One side of the heavy steel diner was crushed in and the frame of the car was bent severely. Three people in the diner died, two being killed outright and the third later. Twenty-seven other passengers were injured.

Help was summoned immediately from Choindez, the steel foundry there sending its medical emergency team and doctor by special train hauled by the foundry company's steam switch-engine, since the catenary on the main line had collapsed and the power had been cut off automatically.

The injured passengers were taken by special steam train to the ambulance station at Choindez and thence by road ambulance to hospitals at Moutier and Delémont. The badly injured steward of the DB dining car was taken directly to Berne, but he died before reaching the hospital. The passengers in the other cars were bruised and shaken by the crash and some had broken bones, but, fortunately, none were seriously hurt.

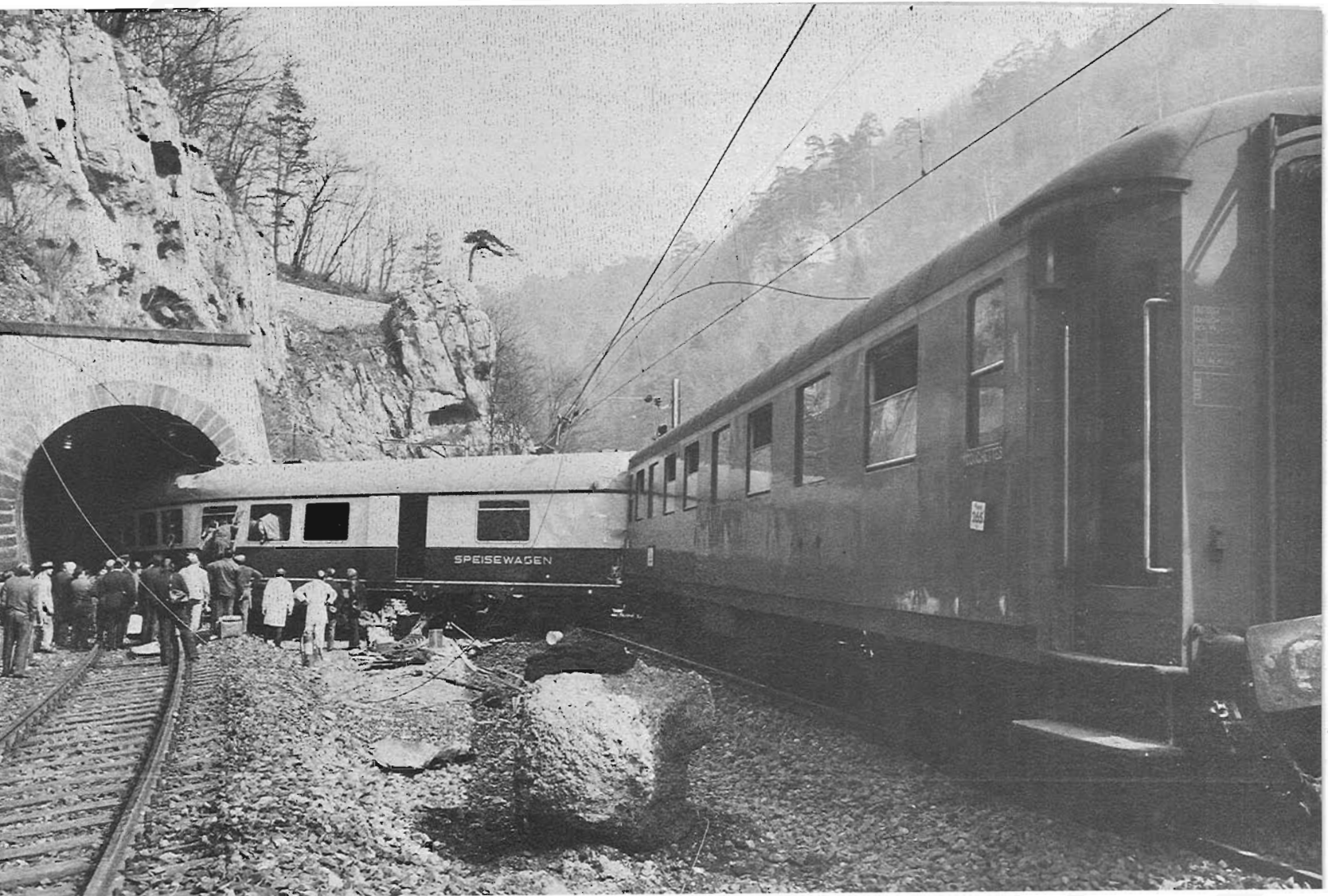
The electric locomotive and three cars on the head-end of the train and three of the four rear-end passenger cars, still on the rails, were brought forward to Delémont about an hour after the accident. By the evening of the next day, 14 of the 27 injured passengers had been discharged from hospital and had returned to their homes

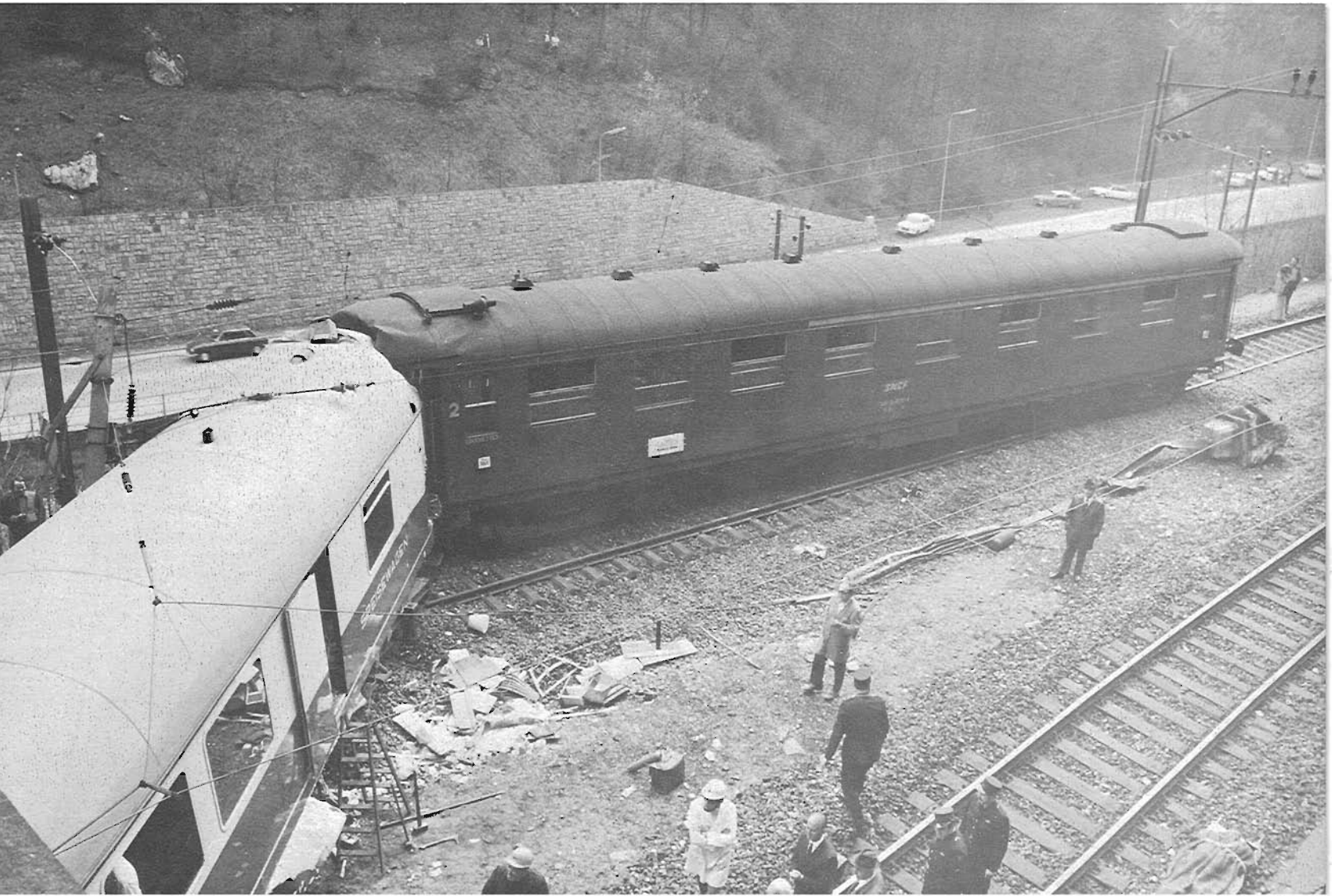
At the scene of the wreck, while the derailed coach and smashed dining car were being removed from the right-of-way and the broken catenary supports, signal masts and tangled wires were being cleaned

A GROUND-LEVEL VIEW OF THE ACCIDENT AT ROCHES ON 26 MARCH 1974. THE dining car is from the German Federal Railways, while the passenger coach coupled to it is a French National Railways (SNCF) first and second-class "couchette" car. Photo courtesy "La Suisse" - Moutier.

FROM THE PARAPET ABOVE THE SINGLE-TRACK TUNNEL, THE DISASTEROUS RESULT of the sudden switch movement are clearly visible. The DB dining car is still coupled to the half-derailed SNCF couchette car. The victims of the accident, on stretchers, lie beside the track at the bottom right of the picture. Photo courtesy "La Suisse"-Moutier.

LOOKING BACK TOWARD CHOINDEZ, THE ROCKY DEFILE THROUGH WHICH THE RAILWAY passes is obvious. While the catenary on the northbound line was completely demolished, the wire above the southbound line outside the tunnel was still up, although the supports were weakened and, in some cases, broken. Photo courtesy "La Suisse" - Moutier.


SPEISEWAGEN



up, a highway bus shuttle-service was instituted between Moutier and Delémont. Meanwhile, through express trains from Lausanne to Basle, via Bienne, were routed down the Aare River valley line to Olten, reaching Basle via the Berne-Basle main line and the Hauenstein Tunnel. Rail service was restored a few days later.

The inquiry into the cause of the accident revealed that the signalman at Choindez had activated the relay for the electric switch at the entrance to the double track at the precise instant when the front truck of the DB dining car had passed through it, but before the rear truck had reached it. Inasmuch as the switch was not visible from Choindez, the signalman had thrown the switch at the exact time he was required to do so, but without assuring himself positively that the train had passed through the switch. The express, being one or two minutes late, did not pass through the switch completely before the time the latter was scheduled to be thrown.

There is a saying on the CFF/SBB which is valid and important on any railway anywhere in the world: "Mann sacht,'Dienst ist dienst.'"

The work on the right-of-way between Choindez and Delémont has now been completed and it is understood that the CFF/SBB are studying very seriously the possibility of double-tracking the entire single-track portion of this important main line.

While the accident of 26 March 1974 at Choindez was indeed most unfortunate, there is no doubt that the Swiss Federal Railways will take the appropriate measures to prevent any such occurrence in the future. Meanwhile, the "Hispania Express" has been making its double-daily run between Hamburg/Dortmund and Barcelona, rapidly and safely.

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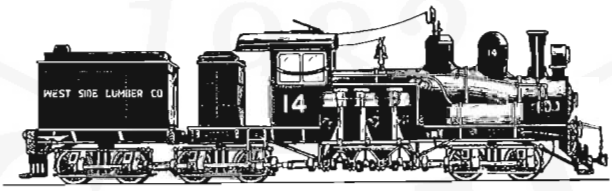
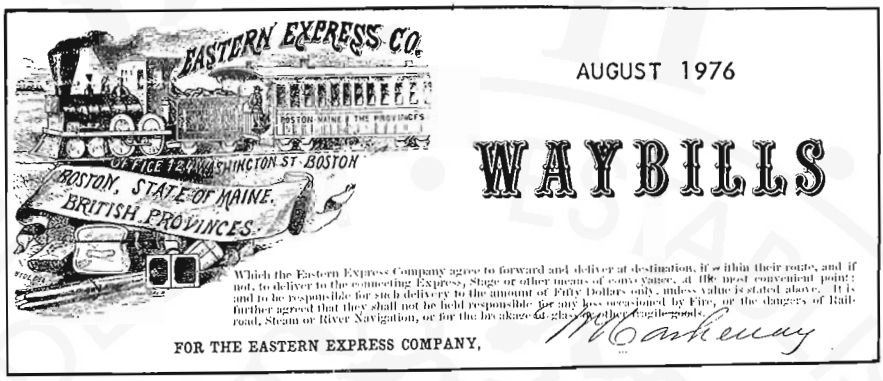
Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank M. J-M. Leclercq, European Representative of the Canadian Railroad Historical Association, for his valuable assistance in verifying information and Monsieur Charles Wisard, Rédaction jurassienne de LA SUISSE, 2740-Moutier, Switzerland for the photographs and drawings accompanying this report.






AUGUST 1976

# WAYBILLS

AN ARTICLE IN THE TROY, NEW YORK "RECORD" DATED 21 APRIL 1976 ADVISED readers that, come August, the ADIRONDACK service from Albany to Montreal, via the Delaware and Hudson Railway, might cease - again. On 5 August, the contract providing subsidies to keep passenger service going would expire and, in April, officials at the Department of Transportation of the State of New York had not decided whether or not the State should sign a new contract.

The present contract between the State, AMTRAK and the D&H requires the State to pay two-thirds of the operating deficit of the service, while AMTRAK pays the other one-third. A new federal law changed the sharing of the subsidy to a 50-50 basis, which would cost the State about half-a-million dollars annually.

Despite the increase in riders which is bound to occur as a result of the 1976 Summer Olympic Games in Montréal, it was quite difficult to imagine an increase in passengers sufficient to defray the current $ 65,000 per month deficit, roughly $ 1,000 for each of the twice daily trips.

By the time this item appears, the problem will have been solved. At the risk of being wrong, it is probable that the State of New York and AMTRAK will decide to subsidize the service for one additional year, to see how things shape up after the Summer Olympics are over.

SOME IDEA OF THE SUCCESS OF ONTARIO'S "GO TRANSIT" OPERATION CAN BE obtained from the fact that, in April 1976, a fourth GO TRAIN was added to the northwest run of GO TRANSIT. The Toronto-Georgetown five-day-a-week schedule was augmented by one added train in each direction. The added train, plus a slight rescheduling of existing trains, enabled commuters to choose between earlier and later departures both morning and night.

Since the introduction of this GO service in May 1974, the average number of passengers carried daily has risen from 1,500 to 4,000.

Later in April, Ontario Transportation and Communications Minister James Snow announced that an extra morning and afternoon rush-hour train would be added to GO TRANSIT's Lakeshore West service beginning April 26, to replace the seating capacity to be lost when GO's rented (from the Chicago & North Western Railroad) bi-level coaches returned to Chicago.

When rescheduling was completed, the run from Toronto Union Station to Hamilton would take 51 minutes instead of the normal 67 minutes used by regular trains which make all intermediate stops.

The extra morning train from Oakville at 07:40 hours will make all stops into Toronto Union. The extra afternoon train at 17:19 will run non-stop to Oakville, arriving at 17:42 and will run through to Hamilton, arriving at 18:10.

OUR THANKS TO RICK SHANTLER AND THE "NEWSLETTER" OF THE PACIFIC COAST Branch of the Association for the following first-half reports of railway doings on the West Coast;

- CP RAIL has filed its intention to abandon 24.5 miles of the Osoyoos S/D, Canyon Division, which would reduce this line to a spur from Penticton to (about) Okanagan Falls, British Columbia. It is claimed that operation has resulted in an annual loss of $ 125,000 since 1972, with car-loadings falling from 1,125 in 1970 to an abysmal low of 213 in 1974;
- BCR purchased four Budd RDCs from AMTRAK - ex Great Northern and Northern Pacific Railway equipment - to replace BCR Numbers 31 and 32. BCR hopes to salvage enough usable parts to "remanufacture" at least three "new" RDCs this year;
- the Spring 1976 issue of "Beautiful British Columbia" featured a six-page illustrated article on British Columbia's Museum Train, with several views of ex-CPR Number 3716 heading the parade! Plans then were for the Museum Train to visit one-third of British Columbia each year. In 1976, this would be Prince Rupert, Prince George, Jasper, Kamloops and the Lower Mainland, running over CNR rails;
- the new 386-foot span for the 74-year-old New Westminster rail bridge is being fabricated on the south shore of the Fraser River, just east of the bridge. You will remember that this span was destroyed by a wayward barge on December 26, 1975. The new span was due to be floated into position by "late spring";
- CP RAIL work crews recovered two open-top hoppers loaded with copper concentrate that fell into Burrand Inlet at the foot of Burrand in Vancouver. The cars were being pushed onto a barge for transport to the North Shore, when excessive "push" shoved the barge out from the pier and the cars fell into 25 feet of water. They were raised individually by cable and crane on 1 April 1976;
- British Columbia's relatively new government, under the leadership of the Honorable William Bennett, is showing a degree of coolness to the proposed BCR-Canadian National link-up in the Ashcroft-Lillooet area and in the region northwest of Prince George. It appears that Mr. Bennett and his cabinet believe that they can negotiate a more advantageous arrangement with Canada's federal Government than that arranged by Mr. Barrett and his colleagues;
- as a result of the closure of the Burlington Northern-Canadian National bridge across the Fraser River at New Westminster, CP RAIL has had to spend $ 250,000 in extra maintenance work on the Coquitlam-Mission portion of the Cascade S/D. Extra movements by CN, BN and BCHydro over this stretch have multiplied the wear and tear on the track and roadbed.

LAST APRIL, PAT WEBB WROTE FROM LETHBRIDGE, ALBERTA, THAT THE 20TH. Century Fox Film Productions had been indulging in some capers with CP RAIL passenger equipment. The equipment, one set of stainless-steel "Canadian" stock, was rented and painted "Silver Streak", for use in some film segments for a new Gene Wilder comedy called - what else? - "The Silver Streak".

The first sequences were filmed between Lethbridge and Crowsnest Pass, with some of it on "The Ledges" near McGillivray. Later footage was filmed near Calgary, Okotoks, High River and several other points in Alberta, before moving east to Ontario.

Units Numbers 4067 and 4070 were redecorated with large AMRoad logos behind the doors and a series of red,white and blue chevrons horizontally, superimposed over the CP RAIL multimark at the rear of the unit.

The comedy, directed by Arthur Hiller of Edmonton,records the adventures of Gene Wilder travelling from the West Coast of the United States to the middle west, via the AM Road (Railroad).

CP RAIL leased two units, an A and a B, one baggage car, and seven passenger cars. The equipment came from Montréal to Calgary and was redecorated at Ogden Shops for use in the movie.

FROM NIGERIA, THE ASSOCIATION'S WEST AFRICAN REPRESENTATIVE R.E."AL" Leggott writes that the Nigerian Railway Corporation had a spot of bad luck on 10 April 1976, when two MLW-built export-type units, Numbers 1720 and 1751 met head-on a cople of miles north of the Ibadan yard at Mokola. Damage to both units appeared to be extensive; they were re-railed by the Ibadan auxiliary and towed back to the yard to await repairs.

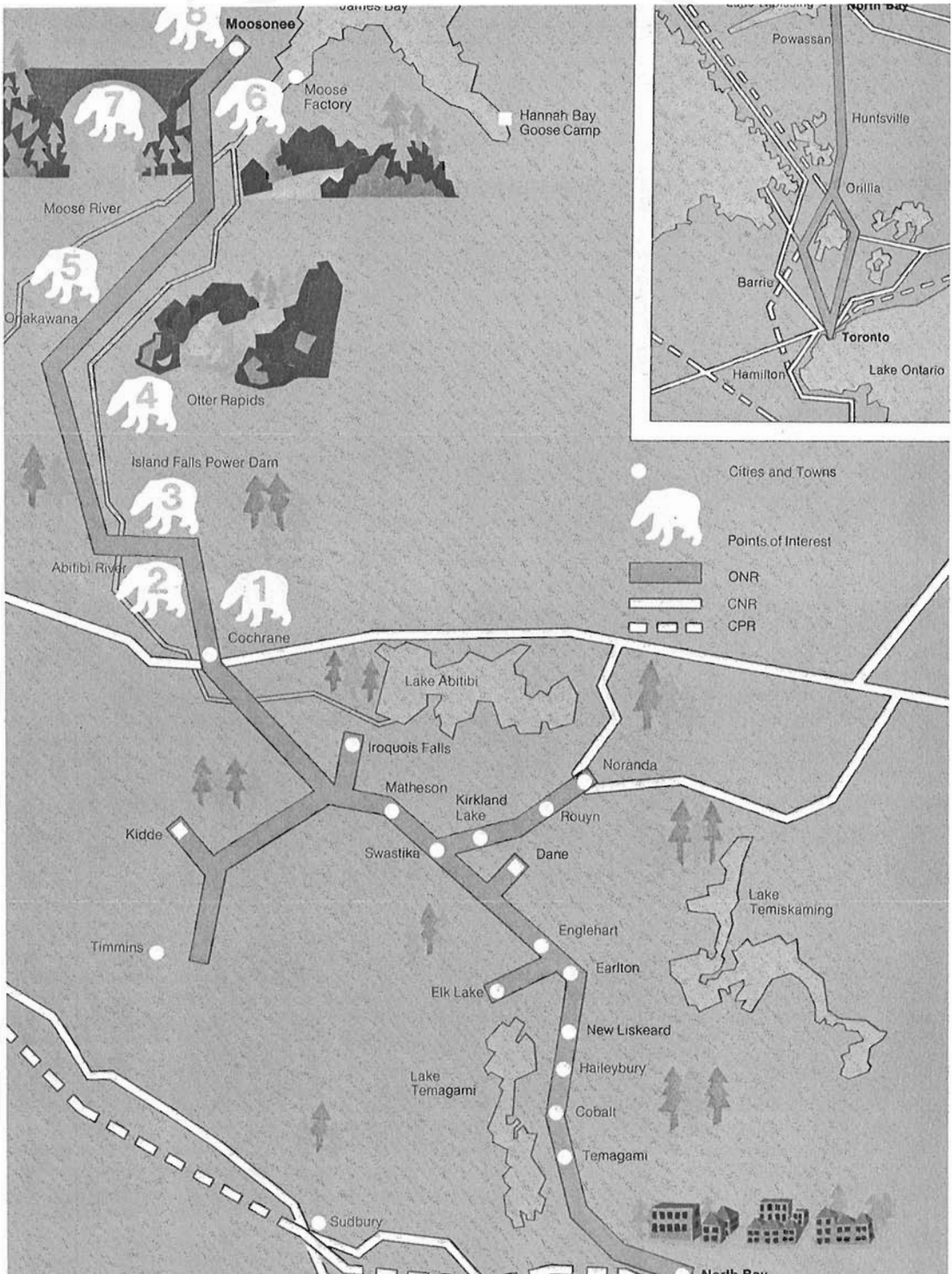
EARLY IN MAY, CANADIAN NATIONAL RAILWAYS ANNOUNCED THE FORMATION OF a sixth division of the Company, CN MARINE. The new division, under the leadership of John Gratwick, Vice-President, will operate the East Coast Marine and Ferry Service, on behalf of Canada's Department of Transport and the Newfoundland Dockyard. East Coast Marine & Ferry Service employs 5,000 people in the Maritime Provinces, operates 24 vessels, charters others and, last year, carried more than two million passengers and 1.4 million tons of freight. Last year, Newfoundland Dockyard employed 300 people and repaired and maintained 231 domestic and foreign vessels.

JUST BEFORE THE "CHANGE OF TIME" AND THE NEW TIMETABLE LAST SPRING, Canadian National Railways announced that full-dome "Sceneramic" observation cars would operate in transcontinental passenger train service this summer. In the announcement, Mr. Garth Campbell, Vice-President of Passenger Marketing, said that this Winnipeg-Vancouver operation would become a year-'round one.

Mr. Campbell also noted that "Super Continental" schedules were being improved to provide more convenient arrival and departure times at key cities across Canada. A perusal of the summer 1976 public timetable showed that this was true.

GERALD BUCK OF THE TORONTO & YORK DIVISION SENT IN THE FOLLOWING ADditional notes about the Canadian National Railways' self-propelled cars pictured on pages 124-5 of the April 1976 issue Number 291 of CANADIAN RAIL. Car Number 15791 was a "motor coach" sub-class ED53B. originally Number 15799, converted from a trailer Number 15761 in 1930, rebuilt in 1942, retired in 1952. Car Number 15748 was a trailer car, sub-class EPS56-C, built in 1912 by General Electric Company for the Canadian Northern Railway as their Number 500. It was rebuilt in 1931 and dismantled in November 1940.

A picture of Number 500, as built, together with additional information, may be found in SELF PROPELLED CARS OF THE CNR, published by A.A.Clegg in 1962.


Moosonee
Moose Factory
Hannah Bay Goose Camp
Moose River
Onakawana
Otter Rapids
Island Falls Power Dam
Abitibi River
Cochrane
Lake Abitibi
Iroquois Falls
Matheson
Kirkland Lake
Noranda
Rouyn
Kidde
Swastika
Dane
Lake Temiskaming
Timmins
Englehart
Earlton
Elk Lake
New Liskeard
Haileybury
Lake Temagami
Cobalt
Temagami
Sudbury
North Bay
Powassan
Huntsville
Orillia
Barrie
Toronto
Hamilton
Lake Ontario
Cities and Towns
Points of Interest
ONR
CNR
CPR

ONTARIO NORTHLAND RAIL SERVICES PUBLISHED A VERY ATTRACTIVE PAMPHLET in white, blue and orange, for their 1976 "Polar Bear Express" service to Moosonee, Ontario, on James Bay. Rates and schedules were designed to attract visitors to take the trip to this far-northern Ontario point.

The diagrammatic map presented in the interior of the pamphlet was a masterpiece of clarity and designed to interest the curious traveller.

What is of considerably greater interest to the railway enthusiast is the inset map, showing the line of the ONR from Toronto to North Bay, with alternate east-side, west-side lines around Lake Simcoe, south of Orillia.

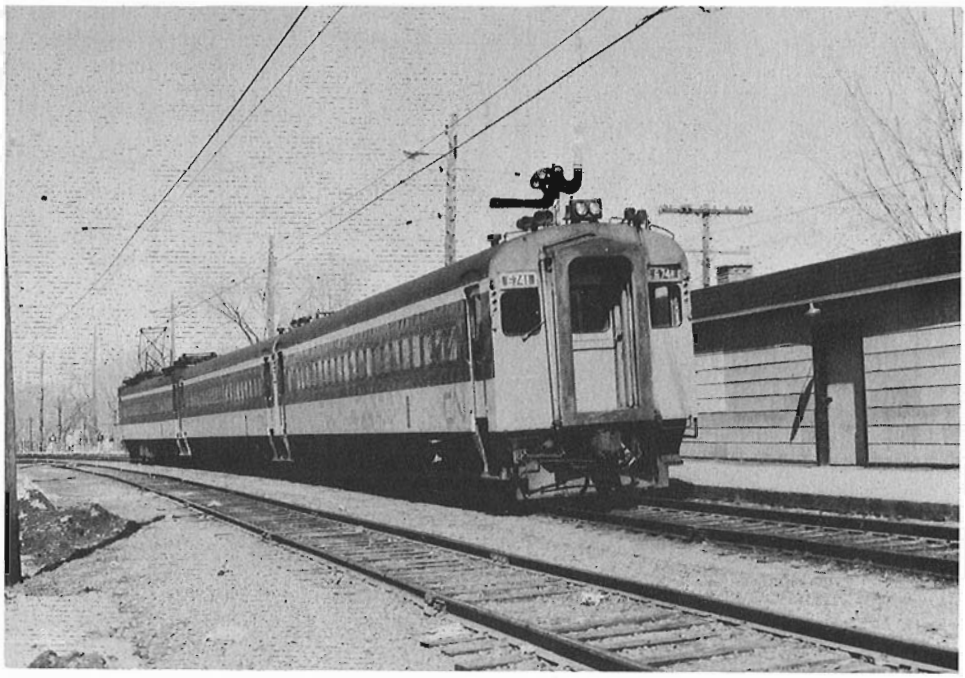
It has not been publicly announced that this portion of Canadian National Railways has been leased or sold to Ontario Northland Rail Services. Nevertheless, and in consideration of the very excellent degree of cooperation which has been achieved between the Government of Ontario, Canadian National Railways and Ontario Northland Rail Services in recent years, a little latitude in the ownership of rail lines in central Ontario may be permitted.

AT THE BEGINNING OF APRIL 1976, THE CANADIAN TRANSPORT COMMISSION RULED that AMTRAK could operate a domestic (Canadian) rail passenger service in southern Ontario. Commissioner E. H. LaBorde told Douglas Golden, AMTRAK's government affairs officer in Washington, D.C. that AMTRAK could carry Canadian residents between points on the former MC/NYC/Penn Central line through southern Ontario. Golden said AMTRAK would get right on it, since its passenger trains from Buffalo, NY to Detroit, Mich., already stop to detrain passengers at Fort Erie, St. Thomas and Windsor.

ON THE FIRST OF MAY - NOT THE FIRST OF APRIL - MARITIMERS RECEIVED A shock when they found out that ferry service rates throughout the Atlantic region would rise by anywhere from 20 to 69 percent, effective in June. In PEI, cost of ferry service per car rose from $ 2.50 to $ 4. The passenger price escalated from 65¢ to $ 1 per person. The rates on CN's Yarmouth-Bar Harbour, Maine ferry were expected to jump by 33-40% for passengers and at least 20% more for automobiles. Perhaps the Ministry of Transport, of which the Honorable Otto Lang is the head, will make these rates seasonal; that is, summer only. If they are maintained on a year-'round basis, they will represent an additional hardship which the citizens of Prince Edward Island and Newfoundland will have to suffer.

HAVING INCURRED OPERATING LOSSES OVER THE PAST SEVERAL YEARS AND PREDICTING an unprecedented deficit of $ 6.6 million in 1976, Canadian National Railways began in February of this year to try to reduce these losses by increases in commuter fares on their Montréal-Deux Montagnes line. Unfortunately, a significant decrease in commuter traffic was recorded and consequently CN reduced the number of trains operating in off-peak periods. In fact, off-peak service to Cartierville station, at the end of the branch from Val Royal, was cancelled.

There were further reductions in off-peak services when the change-of-time timetable issued on April 25. It should be noted that CN receives no subsidies for these commuter services and the Company cannot be expected to assume deficits arising from the operation of these services. The GO TRANSIT system in Toronto, on the



other hand, is subsidized by the Government of Ontario and has demonstrated that it is possible for a railway to operate a modern integrated commuter train service.

In the present circumstances, the future of CN's commuter services after 1980 is questionable. That will be the year in which the extension of Line 2 of Montréal's METRO will open and, by that time, the TRAMM service to Mirabel Airport will also probably be in operation.

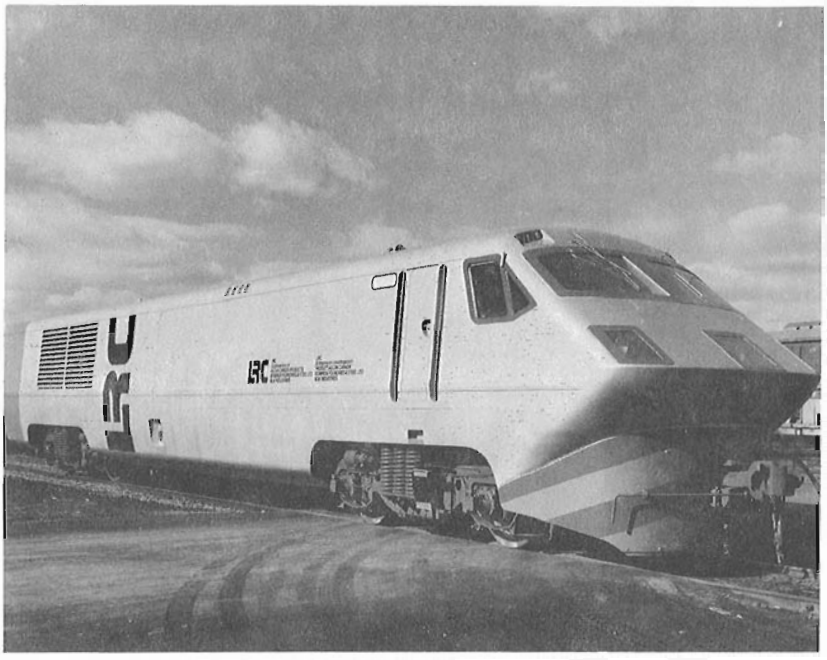
The two photographs accompanying this report were taken at Deux Montagnes, Québec, on a sunny April 9, 1976.

Rick Shantler.

IN YET ANOTHER ATTEMPT TO SECURE SOME FAVOURABLE PUBLICITY FOR THE LRC vehicle, CP RAIL announced that the engine and car had set a new Canadian rail speed record of 129 mph on a test run between Montréal and Trois-Rivières. This superceded the 1936 record of 112 mph, established with a 4-4-4 Jubilee-type steam engine between Montréal and Smiths Falls on a test run.

A few weeks later, CN bounced back with a dash by TURBO to a top speed of 139.4 mph on a test run between Brockville and Montréal.

The last word was had - apparently - by the Canadian Transport Commission, which said that, for safety reasons, it would be glad to be informed of any future test runs of high-speed trains.




ON A SUNNY APRIL 29, 1974 AT 14 30 HOURS, JOHN SUTHERLAND CAPTURED on film CP RAIL freight Train Extra 8703 west at Okotoks, Alberta. Unit Number 8703 led Numbers 8481, 8781, 4025 and 8700 north towards Calgary; at that time, this much MLW power on one freight in this region was unusual.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