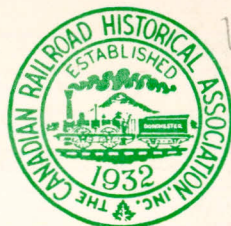


# Canadian Rail

1932 - 1972

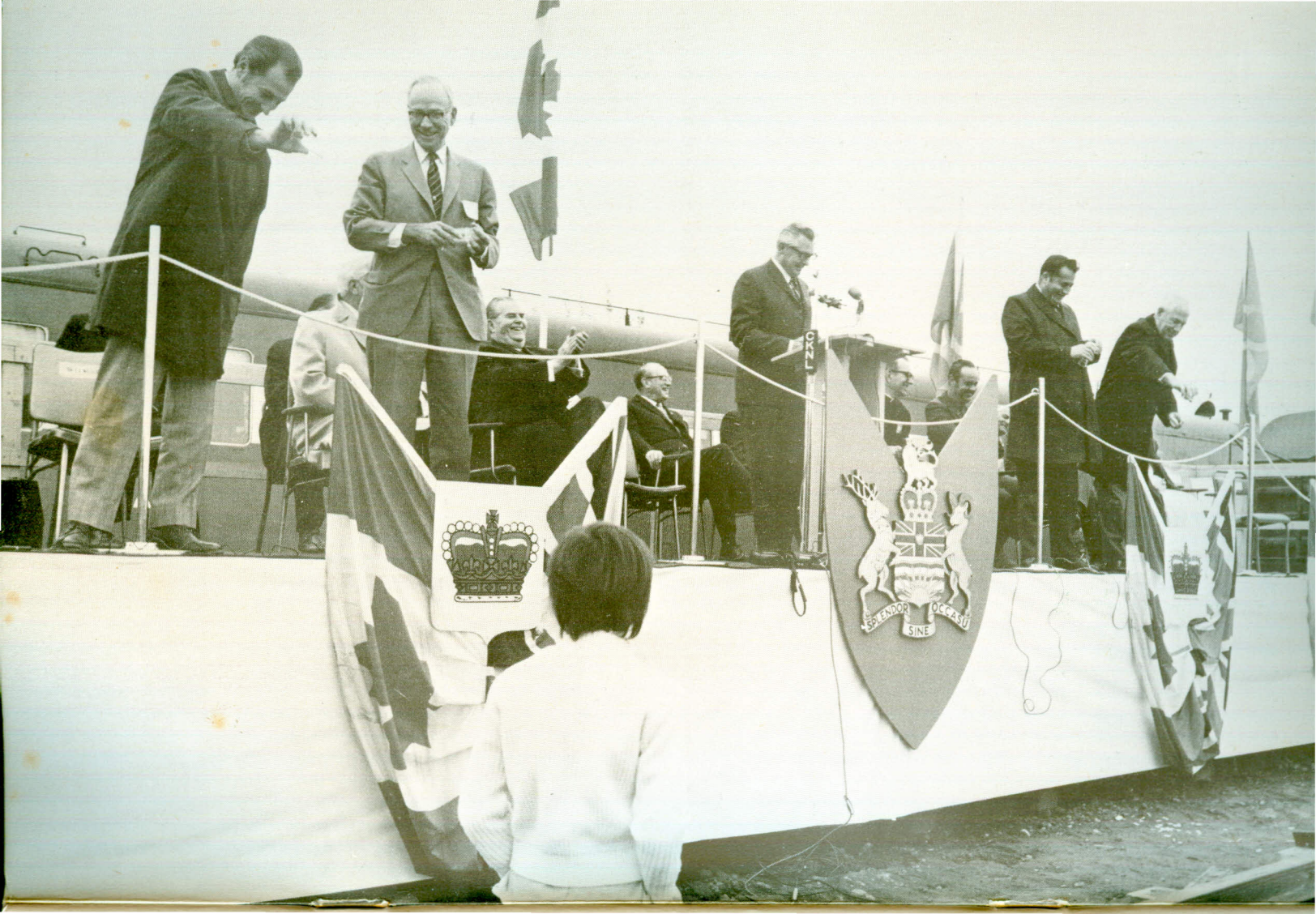


40th. anniversary

**NO. 248**  
**SEPTEMBER 1972**









# NORTH TO THE YUKON !

C. Willis Creighton.

**T**he completion of 250 miles of new railway - anywhere in North America in the 1970s - should not be allowed to pass unnoticed. Such an event did, in fact, take place in September, 1971, when the Pacific Great Eastern Railway, renamed the British Columbia Railway in April, 1972, owned and operated by the Province of British Columbia, Canada, placed in operation the extension of its Peace River main line.

This new line extends northward from the former terminus at Fort St. John, B.C., two hundred and fifty miles to a new terminal, five miles south of the town of Fort Nelson, on the famous but as yet unpaved Alaska Highway. The recently-completed railway extension strikes through completely new territory and the closest it comes to the Alaska Highway, wartime (1944) emergency supply route to Alaska, is at Fort Nelson.

Passing through farmlands on its way north from Fort St. John, the new railway soon leaves civilization behind, traversing uninhabited territory that, up to now, has been populated only by the odd moose or bear, or an occasional oil survey or drilling crew. The first bridge of any size is crossed 75 miles from Fort St. John, where the line leaps the Blueberry River. Continuing due north to the Beaton River, the railway then climbs the Milligan Hills to an elevation of 3,000 feet, running along the northern slope to Gutah Creek.

Following the west side of this creek, the rails soon reach the bank of the Sikanni Chief River, one of the main tributaries of the Nelson River. At a point some miles northward, the Sikanni Chief is joined by the Fontas River, to form the Nelson. Four Indian families living in this neighbourhood represent the first sign of human habitation since leaving the Beaton River country, 85 miles to the south.

The new railway thereafter follows the north bank of the Nelson to a "forced" crossing of the river, some ten miles south of the town of Fort Nelson. Crossing the river on an all-steel bridge, 727 feet long, the largest of seven bridges on the 250-mile extension, the railway terminates at the Muskwa River, about five miles downstream from Fort Nelson.

WHEN THE EXTENSION OF THE PACIFIC GREAT EASTERN RAILWAY WAS OPENED, Premier W.A.C. Bennett was one of the proudest citizens of the Province of British Columbia, as, indeed, he had the right to be. We are particularly pleased to have this excellent picture for this month's cover. Photo courtesy British Columbia Railway.

AT THE OFFICIAL CEREMONIES AT FORT NELSON, REPRESENTATIVES OF THE several on-line industries participated in the "Sprinkling Ceremony". At the far right is Mr. Kelly H. Gibson, Chairman of the Board, Pacific Petroleum Limited and Chairman, Westcoast Transmission, Limited. Each industry representative sprinkled some of it over the new line to dedicate it for use. Photo GUNNAR Photography.



Fort Nelson, which in the early 1950s had a population of only 300 people, today is a thriving small city of 4,000.

The principle reason for the construction of the British Columbia Railway's extension is the ever-growing need for a better transportation mode for bulk commodities further into northern British Columbia. The growing markets of the north demand an ever-increasing quantity of manufactured goods and construction materials. Conversely, improved transportation for the raw materials being produced in this northern area was and is essential. Major industries to be served by the new line include forest product mills, the Churchill mine which produces copper concentrates and two multimillion-dollar natural gas plants, which ship sulphur and other important by-products.

Already the BCR's freight trains are rolling north with a wide variety of manufactured goods and materials to the new industrial park with extensive warehousing facilities, being constructed near Fort Nelson.

A special inaugural train - with the writer on board - was operated by the then PGE on September 8, 1971, from Fort St. John to Fort Nelson. This train consisted of three Budd RDC cars (two RDC-3s, BC 30 & 31 and one RDC-1, BC 11, in the middle), carrying businessmen and industry representatives (the author was one), together with a high school band! PGE Special Train BC 30 rumbled cautiously northward over the newly-laid rails, the permitted maximum speed being 25 miles per hour. Most of the new line had only recently been ballasted and, as it was built over a muskeg bottom, three to five years must elapse before the new line will be completely settled in place.

The up-and-down level of the track on the spongy roadbed and the resulting motion imparted to the Budd cars created more than a few problems for the train crew, during the run. On one occasion, the RDC cars had to be uncoupled and separated, because the end buffer-plates of the cars had ridden up and over one another. Under such trying operating conditions, the PGE stewards did an exceptional job of serving to all the passengers a hot roast beef dinner with all the trimmings!

Meanwhile, another larger special train, carrying distinguished guests, provincial government representatives and other dignitaries was en route from Vancouver, 700-odd miles to the south. There were 13 special and business cars in the consist, plus a steam-generator car. Power for this train was PGE units 630, 615, 627, 625 and 619, DL718Bs, all built by Montreal Locomotive Works, Montreal, as are all of the units on today's British Columbia Railway, with the exception of the Budd RDC railcars and a single B-B switcher.

The composition of this Special Train for Dignitaries on its northbound journey was as follows:

PGE Unit 630

615

627

625

619

PGE St/Gen 730

CNR VAL ALAIN

Union Pacific RR 114

CP RAIL VAN HORNE

CP RAIL ASSINIBOINE

CNR 24

CNR BONAVENTURE



CNR NORTHWIND

Burlington Northern A-4

CNR 15205

PGE CARIBOU

CNR 1344

PGE NORTHERN SUMMIT

CNR VAL CARTIER

When the railway was surveyed, the Canadian Indians in this part of the country did not agree that they had received sufficient compensation from the Province and on the day that the Special was scheduled to arrive, there was a rumor that the line would be blocked, in protest for this injustice. However, no confrontation occurred, although the constables of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police were on duty!

At Fort Nelson, a demonstration of track-laying did occur. The track-crew had laid a section of the line in the Fort Nelson yard a few days before and had then removed four rail-lengths, which were to be replaced during the demonstration to the dignitaries and the public. However, when the time came to show their capabilities, the track crew just could not get the rails to fit quite right and some of the rail-joints had to be left unbolted until the sections could be "stretched" into place! This demonstration preceded the actual "Last Spike" ceremony.

When the "Last Spike" had been driven, a special freight train carrying products of the north to the markets of the south, broke a symbolic ribbon, stretched across the track, to signify the opening of the line. This special freight was made up of PGE DL718B No. 624, with a consist of cars including a covered hopper of copper concentrates, a boxcar of finished lumber for Chicago, a bulkhead car of graded lumber for Canada's east coast markets and a brightly-coloured Pacific Great Eastern caboose.

The Honorable W.A.C. Bennett, Premier of British Columbia, paid tribute to those men who had constructed the new extension, as well as those other pioneers who first settled the area, when he declared, "Our present achievement will be overshadowed by the challenge of the future". This announcement was, in a sense, somewhat anticlimactic, since the PGE had already declared its intention to add another 420 miles of new line from Fort St. John to Dease Lake, B.C. - scarcely 100 miles from the boundary with the Yukon Territory - in 1974.

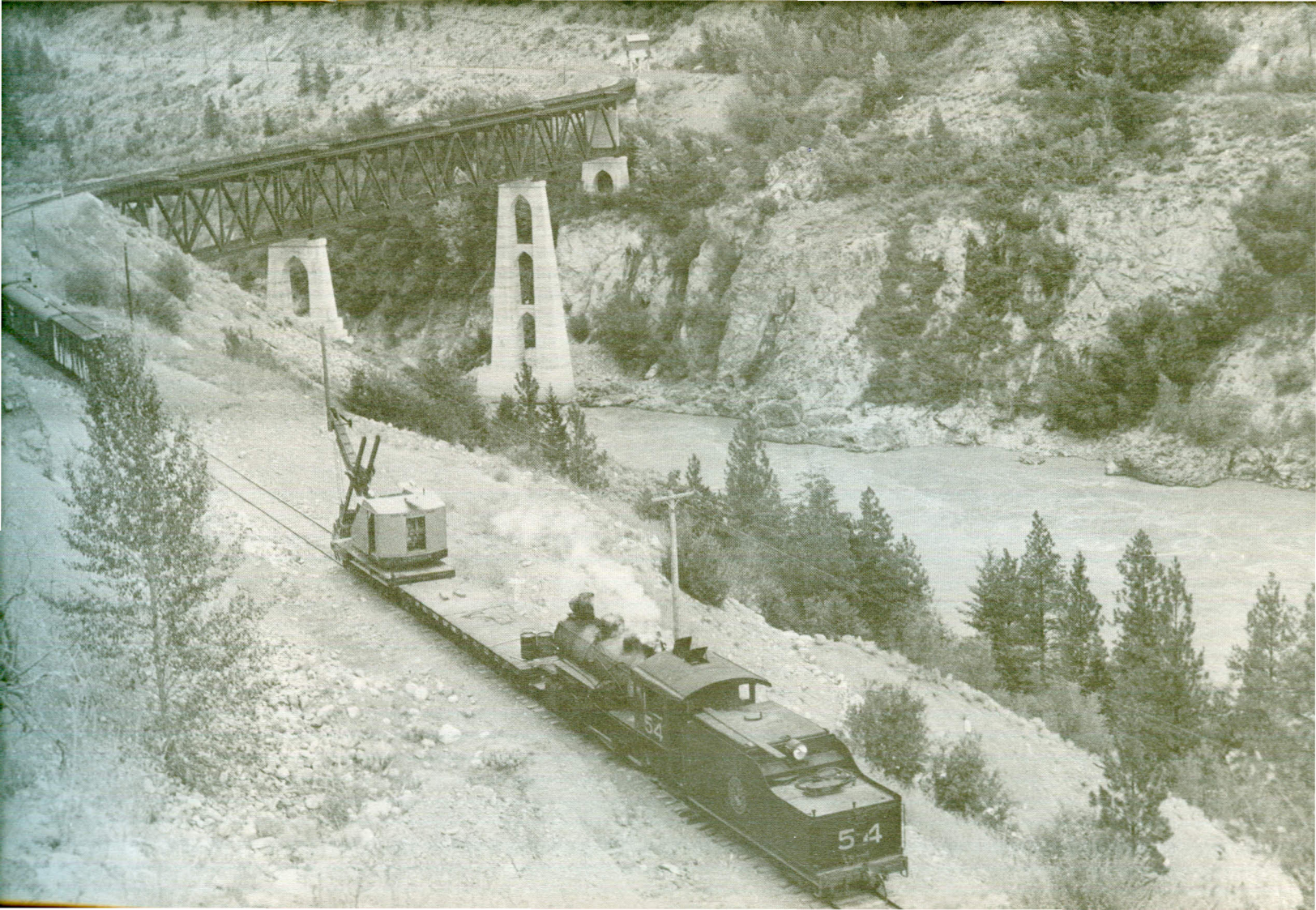
Mr. Bennett also took advantage of the occasion to make an announcement about the forthcoming name-change in corporate title of the PGE. He said that, as soon as the enabling legislation could be formulated, the railway would become the British Columbia Railway, as indeed it did on April 1, 1972.

After all of the celebrations had taken place, the Special Train for Dignitaries departed on its southbound run through Chetwynd, Kennedy, Odell, Prince George, Quesnel and Williams Lake, on its way to Squamish and North Vancouver. However, near Williams Lake, a serious derailment occurred, severely shaking up all of the passengers, among whom were the Premier and members of his Cabinet, several Canadian National and CP RAIL Vice-Presidents, the President of the Burlington Northern and officials from several other United States railroads.





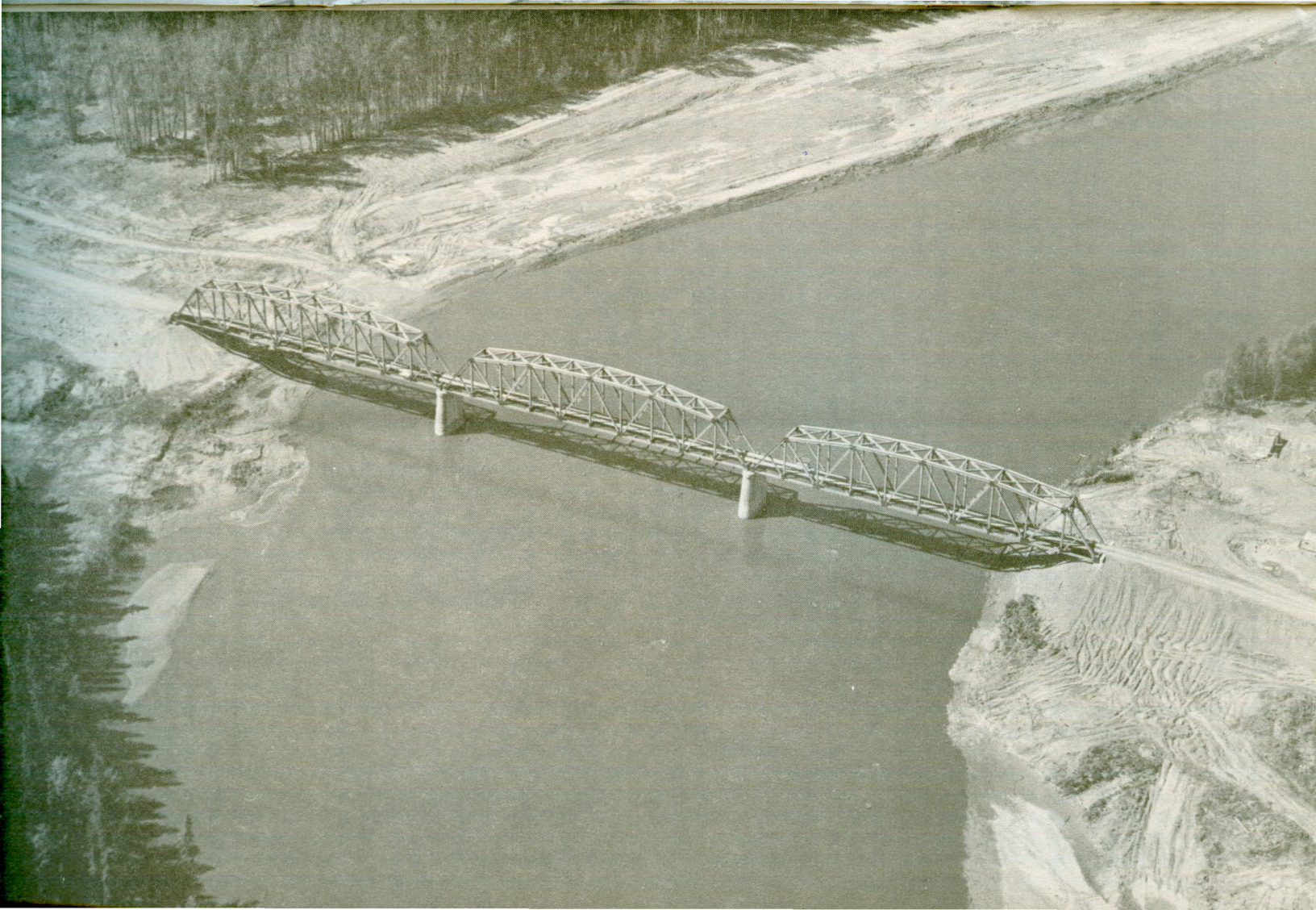














Some passengers, including two PGE train stewardesses, were hospitalized, but fortunately no serious injuries were suffered by any of the passengers.

The official investigation of the derailment determined that it had been caused by a transverse fissure in a rail, which caused the rail to fracture when the wheels of one car passed over it. The derailed equipment was rerailed by auxiliaries from Squamish and Prince George, while the passengers were returned to Vancouver the next morning by Pacific Western Airlines.

The "challenge of the future" referred to by Premier Bennett in his Fort Nelson speech aptly describes the opening up of vast new areas of the Province through the medium of the British Columbia Railway. With the completion of the Dease Lake extension in 1974-75, the BCR will have penetrated even closer to the Yukon and the State of Alaska - north to the Yukon, and beyond.

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The author would like to thank the following people for their assistance in the preparation of this article:

Mr. H.D.Armstrong, Executive Assistant to the Vice-President and  
Director of Public Information,  
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Mr. R.F.Corley

Peterborough, Ontario;

Mr. S.S.Worthen

Montréal, Québec.

PACIFIC GREAT EASTERN UNIT NO. 563 HAULING A MIXED TRAIN AT SQUAMISH,  
B.C. on July 18, 1951, when it was still an A1A-A1A wheel arrangement.  
CRHA E.A.Toohy Collection.

PGE engine Number 54 shunts the work-train on the west side of the high  
bridge over the Fraser River near Lillooet, B.C. on July 19, 1951.  
CRHA E.A.Toohy Collection.

Not only was gas-electric car No. 107 of the PGE self-propelled, but  
it was strong enough to haul two flatcar-trailers, loaded with one  
truck and four automobiles, the total operation being some kind of  
an ancestor to AUTO-WITH-YOU! All this at Lillooet, B.C. on July  
19, 1951.  
CRHA E.A.Toohy Collection.

British Columbia Railway's three-span, 727-foot long bridge over the  
Nelson River, not far from the terminal of the new extension.  
Photo courtesy British Columbia Ry.



## PGE SHIPMENTS— FORT NELSON

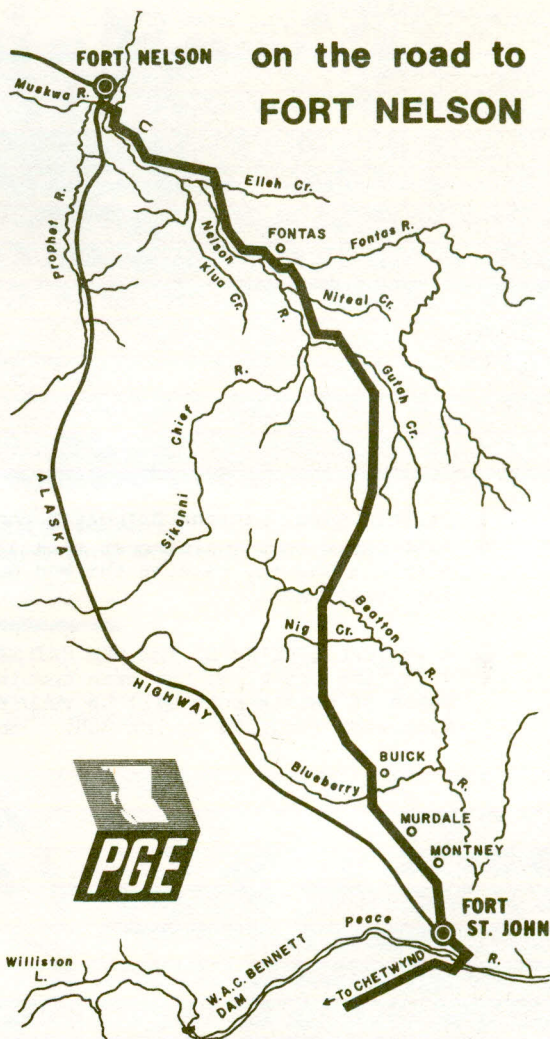
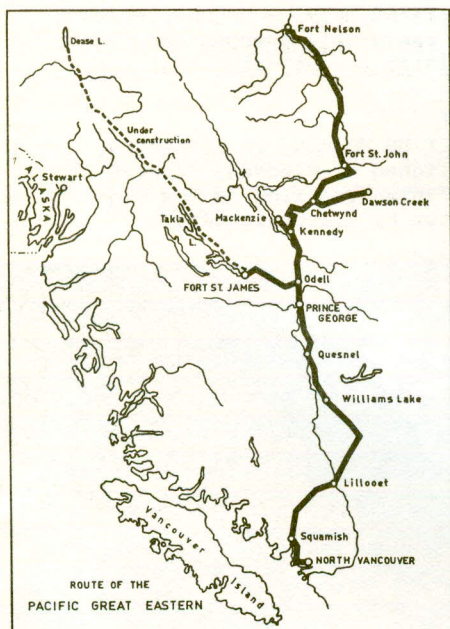
With the opening of the Fort Nelson extension, the Pacific Great Eastern will be hauling a wide variety of shipments into and out of the area.

### INCOMING

oil & gas industry  
supplies  
construction  
materials and  
equipment  
general  
merchandise

### OUTGOING

lumber  
pulp logs  
wood chips  
copper concentrates  
asbestos  
agricultural  
products



We are pleased that you could be with us on this special occasion to mark the official opening of the 250-mile rail extension from Fort St. John to Fort Nelson on September 10, 1971.

**PACIFIC GREAT EASTERN RAILWAY COMPANY**



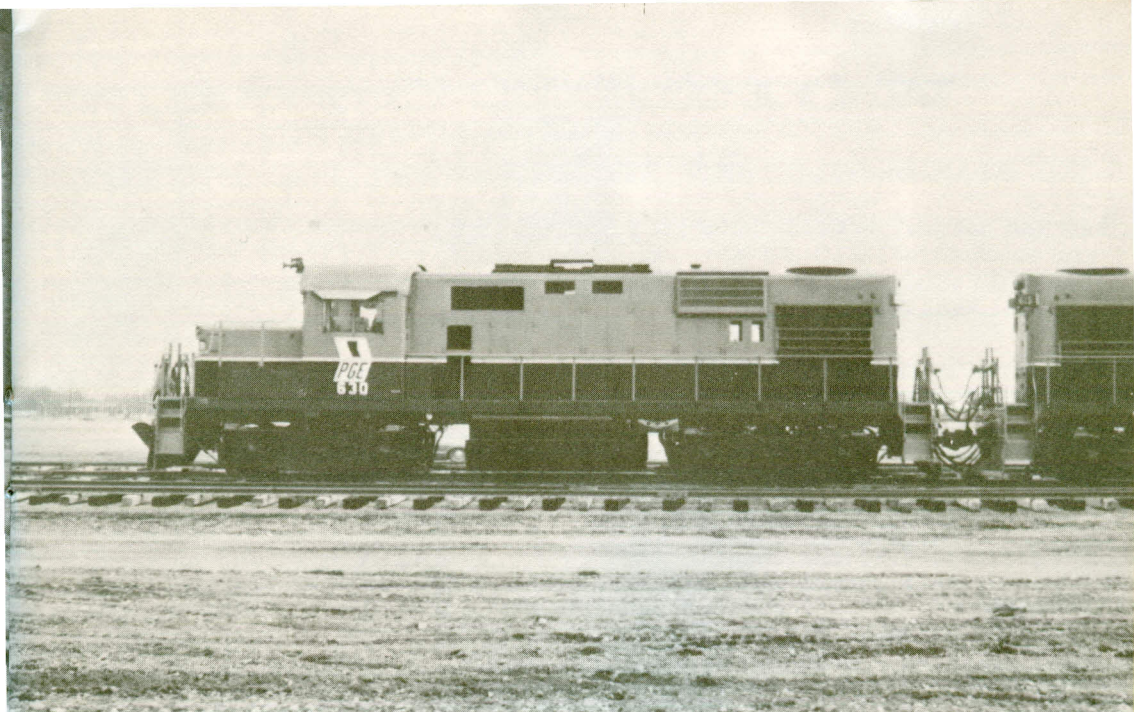


▲ PACIFIC GREAT EASTERN RAILWAY'S SPECIAL - EXTRA BC 30 - UNCOUPLED AND stationary on the siding at mile 125. The newly-laid roadbed was not a little uneven, causing the end buffer-plates to over-ride thus risking derailment.

▼ A TYPICAL STRETCH OF THE NEW RAILWAY. BUILT ON MUSKEG, IN SEPTEMBER, 1971, the track had not been completely aligned or sledded. Several years of maintenance will be required to finish the line to the high standards required by the BCR. Both photos by C.W.Creighton.

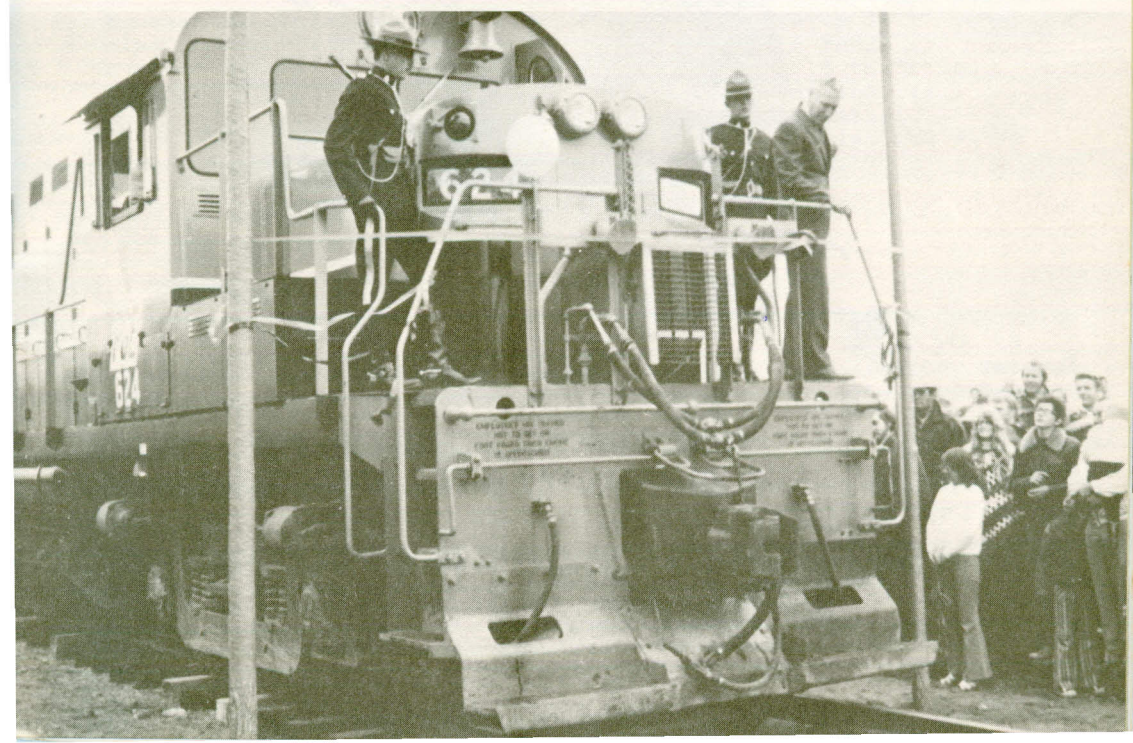






▲ THE SPECIAL TRAIN FOR THE DIGNITARIES WAS HAULED BY MLW UNITS WITH Number 630 leading. On its southbound run, the train was derailed near Williams Lake, B.C.

▼ THE INAUGURAL FREIGHT, WITH UNIT 624 ON THE POINT, BREAKS THROUGH THE red ribbon across the track, symbolizing the official opening of the new line.  
Both photos C.W.Creighton.









PGE/BCR  
RESUME OF CONSTRUCTION

The Pacific Great Eastern Railway Company was incorporated in accordance with the laws of the Province of British Columbia and construction was started on February 27, 1912.

<u>Date opened for service</u>	<u>From</u>	<u>To</u>	<u>Mileage</u>	<u>Note</u>
Jan. 1, 1914	North Vancouver	Horseshoe Bay	12.0	1
Oct., 1921	Squamish	Quesnel	348.0	2
Jan., 1953	Quesnel	Prince George	81.3	
Aug., 1956	Horseshoe Bay	Squamish	39.8	3
Oct. 5, 1958	Prince George	Fort St. John	262.5	
Sept. 8, 1971	Fort St. John	Fort Nelson	250.0	

Branch Lines

Oct. 5, 1958	Chetwynd	Dawson Creek	61.1	
Aug., 1966	Kennedy	Mackenzie	23.0	4
Aug. 1, 1958	Odell	Fort St. James	75.0	

Total..... 1,151.7 miles

Notes:

- 1 The original line of the PGEry was constructed from North Vancouver, B.C. to Horseshoe Bay, on Howe Sound. It provided a commuter-type passenger service until November 29, 1928, when service was suspended. It had no connection with any other railway, except by car-barge, until the construction of the Second Narrows Bridge across Burrard Inlet.
- 2 Tugboats and car-barges moved freight cars from North Vancouver to Squamish. Passengers made the connection by ferryboat.
- 3 The North Vancouver-Horseshoe Bay line was extensively rebuilt at the same time as the Horseshoe Bay-Squamish line was constructed along the shore of Howe Sound.
- 4 This branch runs to the south end of the Peace River Reservoir, created by the W.A.C. Bennett Dam, some miles upstream on the Peace River from Fort St. John, B.C.

Passenger service is offered between North Vancouver and Fort St. John, B.C., only. There is presently freight service only on the other portions of the British Columbia Railway.

THE SPECIAL TRAIN FOR INDUSTRIAL REPRESENTATIVES AND MARCHING BANDS stands in the new yard at Fort Nelson, B.C., ready for its southbound journey to Vancouver, B.C. The track in the new yard had been laid only 10 days before and was, as yet, unballasted. Photo C.W. Creighton.



BRITISH COLUMBIA RAILWAYRoster of Diesel-electric engines.

<u>Road number(s)</u>	<u>Wheel arr'g't.</u>	<u>Model/ Type</u>	<u>Builder</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Hp.</u>	<u>Weight</u>	<u>Note</u>
551	B-B	65 ton	GE	1948	550	130,000	a
552-555	B-B	70 ton	GE	1949	600	139,000	b
556-557	B-B	70 ton	GE	1950	600	139,000	b
561-566	A1A-A1A	RSC-3	MLW-CGE	1951	1600	240,000	c
567-568	A1A-A1A	RSC-3	MLW-CGE	1952	1600	240,000	c
569-571	B-B	RS-3	MLW-CGE	1953	1600	240,000	
572	B-B	RS-3	MLW	1954	1600	240,000	d
573-575	B-B	RS-3	MLW	1954-5	1600	240,000	
576-578	B-B	RS-3	MLW	1955	1600	240,000	
579-586	B-B	RS-10	MLW	1956	1600	240,000	
601-602	B-B	RS-18	MLW	1957	1800	240,000	e
603-604	B-B	RS-18	MLW	1958	1800	240,000	e
605-611	B-B	RS-18	MLW	1960	1800	240,000	e
612-613	B-B	RS-18	MLW	1962	1800	240,000	e
614-618	B-B	DL-718B	MLW	1964	1800	240,000	
619-623	B-B	DL-718B	MLW	1964-5	1800	240,000	
624 (2nd.)	B-B	DL-718B	MLW	1964-5	1800	240,000	
625	B-B	DL-718B	MLW	1965	1800	240,000	
626	B-B	DL-718B	MLW	1965	1800	240,000	
627	B-B	DL-718B	MLW	1965	1800	240,000	f
628-630	B-B	DL-718B	MLW	1966	1800	240,000	
624 (1st.)	C-C	RSD-17	MLW	1957	2400	339,000	h
701-704	C-C	M-630	MLW-W	1969	3000	380,000	k
705-709	C-C	M-630	MLW-I	1970	3000	380,000	
710-716	C-C	M-630	MLW-I	1971-2	3000	380,000	m
1000-03	B-B	S-13	MLW	1959	1000	229,390	
1004	B-B	38-D-8 1/8 FM-Beloit		1949	1000	249,440	n

NOTES:

- a Sold to MacMillan & Bloedel, Powell River, B.C.  
b No. 552 scrapped; No. 553 to Sydney & Louisburg Railway, 1960.  
Nos. 554, 556 & 557 to A.A. Merrilees Limited, Toronto, Ont.  
c Converted to B-B trucks.  
d No. 572 wrecked and later scrapped in 1960.  
e Original road numbers 587-599 inclusive.  
f No. 627 was originally No. 616, which was wrecked, repaired and renumbered.

➔ BY THIS TIME, UNIT 714 WHICH WAS OUTSHOPPED BY MLW INDUSTRIES IN January, 1972, will have been painted in the new BCR colours and will bear the proud name "British Columbia Railway".

Photo courtesy MLW Industries.







- h Now CP RAIL No. 8921, ex-PGE No. (1st.) 624, ex-CNR No. 3899, ex-MLW demo No. 7007 on CP RAIL.
- k Equipped with LOCOTROL for mid-train unit operation.
- m No. 710 outshopped ex MLW-I December 23, 1971; Nos. 711-712 outshopped December 25; No. 713 outshopped December 31; Nos. 714-716 outshopped January 5, 1972.
- n No. 1004 originally Columbia & Cowlitz Railway Unit No. D-1. Built by Fairbanks Morse and Company, Beloit, Wisconsin, U.S.A. Leased by PGE with option to purchase. Option exercised.

GE General Electric Company, Erie, Pa., U.S.A.  
 MLW-CGE Montreal Locomotive Works-Canadian General Electric  
 MLW Montreal Locomotive Works Limited, Montréal, Québec.  
 MLW-W MLW-Worthington Limited, Montréal, Québec.  
 MLW-I MLW Industries, division of MLW Worthington Limited, Montréal, Québec.

#### Roster of Rail Diesel Cars.

<u>Road Number</u>	<u>Model</u>	<u>Serial</u>	<u>Built</u>	<u>Psgs.</u>	<u>Facilities</u>	<u>Note</u>
BC-10	RDC-1	6319	1956	80	Bag/Exp/Mail	a
BC-11	RDC-1	6320	1956	80	Bag/Exp/Mail	a
BC-12	RDC-1	6321	1956	80	Bag/Exp/Mail	a
BC-30	RDC-3	6508	1956	48	Bag/Exp/Mail/Kitchen	b
BC-31	RDC-3	6509	1956	48	Bag/Exp/Mail/Kitchen	b
(BC-32	RDC-3	6510	1956)	- - - -	see note c - - - -	-
BC-33	RDC-3	6601	1956	48	Bag/Exp/Mail/Kitchen	b

#### NOTES:

- a Original passenger capacity 89. Reduced to 80 to provide two small compartments for baggage, express and mail.
- b Original passenger capacity 49. Reduced to 48 to provide space for baggage, express, mail and a small galley.
- c BC-32 wrecked in a level crossing accident at Canim, B.C., February 8, 1960.

➔ FOR ITS NEW "CORPORATE SYMBOL", THE BRITISH COLUMBIA RAILWAY HAS SELECTED a design somewhat more natural and understandable than those designed in recent years. It is the dogwood flower, which is the well-known provincial wildflower. It has been applied to one of the new wood-chip cars, recently purchased by the BCR, to handle the ever-increasing traffic in this commodity. Photo courtesy BCR.



