

ONTARIO
NORTHLAND
RAILWAY
DIARY
THE ONR
QUARTERLY

Winter on the Railroad

By LEN PARKER



"And tell me Conductor, does the railway run in the wintertime?"

Among the standard questions that Ontario Northland employees have been getting from tourists for the past fifty years, the one above is near the top of the list. O.N. employees, mindful of the reputation for friendliness that the railway has built up over the past sixty years, make a point of answering with a straight face and courteous tone.

The fact that the railway operates throughout the winter is taken for granted by the people involved in the operation and there is little they see difficult or unusual about temperature extremes and snowfall. With a practiced shrug, the railway slips into its winter garb without breaking stride. Let the weather do its worst; let the planes and highway vehicles take shelter, the people of the north country know that the trains are running.

The people of the railway have done it so often that the job of getting ready for winter seems automatic. Yet, the battle with the weather is a carefully planned campaign. Every man knows his job. Every contingency has been taken into account. It's tough work, but work that must be done if the trains are to go through. As the trains reel through the frosty miles, the passenger lounging in snug comfort probably gives little thought to the labour that has gone into making his trip safe

and comfortable. And yet if one man had slipped up on the job, this trip would be abruptly terminated. An ice-clogged switch point, a few drops of condensation in a steam line, or any one of a dozen other details would be sufficient to force the multi-ton train to a halt. Old Man Winter has a bagful of tricks and it is up to the railroaders to be onto them all.

Temperature Changes

Winter is something that the north country railroader has learned to live with. From experience he knows that every project undertaken must be capable of standing up to weather extremes ranging down towards fifty below and upwards to ninety above. Thus equipment, roadbed, buildings and other facilities must be capable of full operation over a temperature range of up to one hundred and forty degrees. Sudden changes in temperature are to be expected.

Snow piles up in the bushland to an average depth that is measured in feet. A sudden thaw will see an abrupt run-off straining culverts to capacity. And then a sudden cold snap will in a matter of hours reduce

Forty-five below zero makes for a frosty morning at Temagami as Train No. 47 pulls in. It is taken for granted that no matter how cold the weather, the trains will go through.

the flowing water to solid ice, locking switches and other moveable objects in a concrete grip. With ice chippers and steam hoses the ice is forced away only to have the thaw-and-freeze cycle take place a few days later.

The winterizing program on the railway never stops. It is only a matter of increasing the tempo as the autumn months draw on. Miles of snow fencing go into place along the right of way to cut down the drifting of snow on the tracks. Culverts are marked with stakes which will later show work crews where they are hidden beneath the snow. In the scores of buildings along the line, heating plants are checked over and storm windows and doors are installed. At main terminal points where big heating plants operate to provide steam heat to buildings and parked passenger equipment, a thorough overhaul and inspection takes place.

The big V-type snowplows are readied for operation. One by one, the defences against winter are erected.

Around the first of December, Old Man Winter fires the opening gun in the battle. Across the land frost clamps down with frigid grip. For the next five months, that grip will remain unbroken, bearing down on everything that lives, moves or flows. Sometimes, for a few days in January or February, winter stages a phony retreat. A sudden thaw set snow to melting and water is everywhere. And then, just as suddenly, the temperature drops and the water is suddenly a rocklike mass. Ice jams running gear on the trains and forms in every nook and cranny where it can do damage. The thermometer ranges over the lower scale, edging up a few degrees above zero only to dump several inches of fresh snow, and then plunging once again.

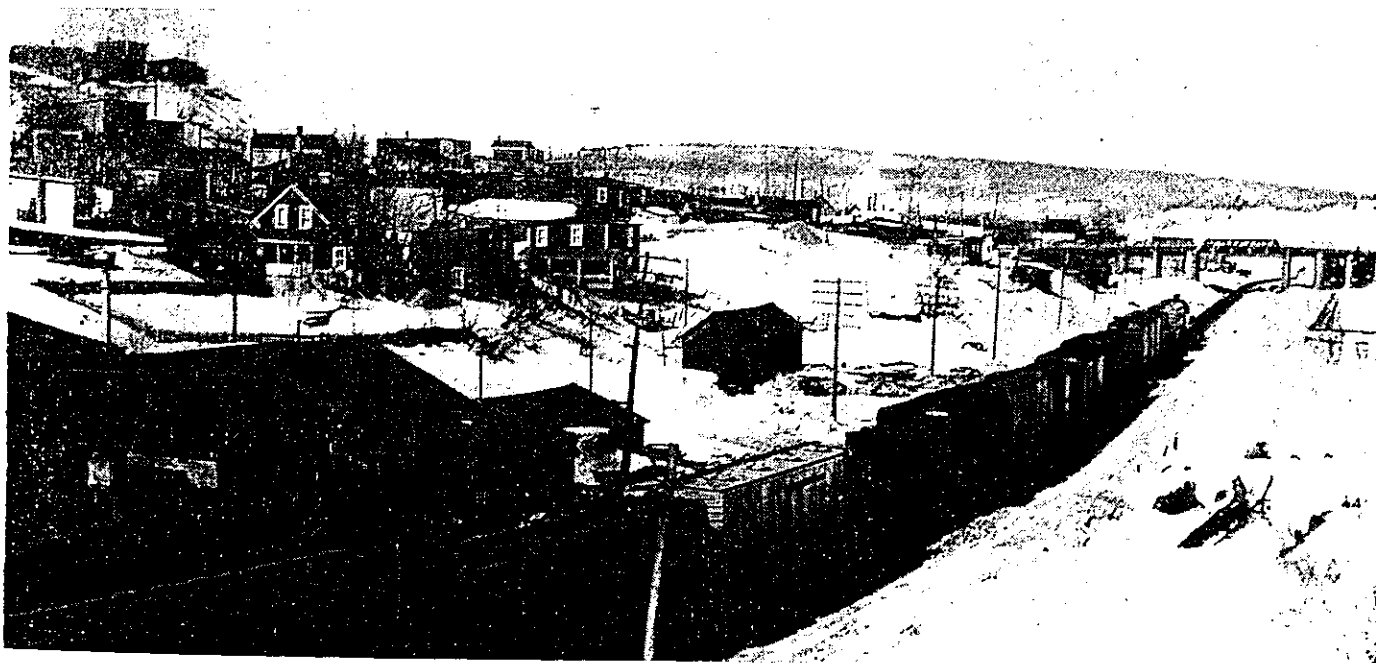
On the Line

Out along the line the section men keep at their daily chores, working with wooden shims to level the track where the frost causes it to heave or sink. Their work outdoors in winter is not for softies. Every man has his own favorite formula for dressing against the weather. Their gasoline-powered motor cars

(Continued on Page 14)



Train service in cold weather calls for extra care and attention. At Engle No. 47 stops for a long drink. BOTTOM, No. 209 heads north through snow-cove Cobalt.



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Winter On the Railroad (continued)

are also ready for winter travel. A raised head on the wheel tread helps give them traction on snow-covered rails.

As the yearly snowfall goes on, it is plowed away week after week. Eventually a spreader is needed to push back the snow banks to give elbow room for still more plowing.

In the yards and terminals, the steam hose is the prime weapon in the war with the cold. Thawing frozen water or steam lines, melting down ice on rolling stock and equipment, the steam hose makes a handy tool.

Bananas and oranges form a staple in the north country winter diet and insulated cars carry these. Charcoal heaters in the carloads of perishable freight are tended carefully at each stop-over. In passenger equipment steam heat lines feed out from the diesel locomotive and stretch down the length of the train. Moisture condensation is the thing to be guarded against in the steam lines. A few drops of water in the steam lines will quickly freeze and turn passenger coaches into rolling ice boxes.

Tricks of the Trade

A few tricks of the trade are also used to keep the big diesel engines running during the winter months. Except when they are in heated storage, the diesel engines run continuously to prevent freeze-up. Hot air, which during summer months goes up the chimney is re-circulated, creating air pressure which prevents snow and moisture from entering the engine grillwork. Excess moisture can cause trouble in the engine's electrical system.

Winter is bad enough on the attack but in retreat, it is even nastier to deal with. Thawing in the bright sun and freezing hard again at night, the snow and ice gradually diminishes. Culverts become plugged with ice that does not melt quickly enough to let the spring waters through. Digging and chopping, the section men work to keep the culverts open so that the water can get away. The creeks and rivers break free and carry the remnants

of their winter ice towards the sea. Ice must be kept from jamming up bridges. To prevent this many bridges are constructed with their decking on the bottom of the steel span, rather than on top. This allows for a maximum of clearance for the ice underneath. Creeks and rivers rise to the very limit of their banks. Weakened beaver dams often give way under the pressure and a crest of water comes sailing down the already overburdened waterway.

Last of the Snow

Towards the latter days of April the sun assumes more authority, gradually drying out moist ground. The frost bubbling its way out of the ground continues its efforts to heave the tracks out of level, only to be forestalled by alert maintenance crews. Finally winter consents to an armistice. The last trace of snow sneaks out of the bush and the north country comes to life. Before many weeks have elapsed the tourists will be back and one of them is bound to ask the favourite question:

"Does the railway run in the wintertime?"

As a matter of fact, the railway is the one thing they can count on to run in the wintertime. There is more hard work than glory to the task but it is a job that must be done. It has been going on for more than sixty years now and while new ideas and new equipment are continually being utilized, it is still essentially a struggle of the railroader's brawn and brain pitted against the worst that winter can offer. Each man has his own job to do and upon the successful completion of that job depends the railway's reputation for reliability. Upon it depends the movement of fuel, food and shelter for the population of the north country; upon it depends the safety and comfort of the travelling public. It has come to be taken so much for granted that the traveller will seldom give a thought to the work behind the scenes that make his journey so pleasant; nor do those at home give thought to the miracle of bananas in February.



The weather outside may range far below zero but the interior of the passenger coach gives no indication. It's a point of pride to get the trains through on schedule during the winter months.

RETIREMENTS

NAME	RETIRED	ENTERED SERVICE
TRIVETT, B. G.	August 1, 1963	February 27, 1942
LeBRASSEUR, J. A.	August 1, 1963	August 21, 1928
READ, THOS.	September 10, 1963	September 10, 1923
STRATTON, H. R.	September 24, 1963	September 19, 1923
CASSELMAN, A. A.	November 12, 1963	August 23, 1926
ARMSTRONG, R. W.	January 1, 1964	May 29, 1919
BARNES, C. F.	January 1, 1964	January 27, 1939
BOILEAU, J. E. F.	January 1, 1964	December 4, 1918
BOULANGER, A.	January 1, 1964	December 5, 1922
BUCKLEY, H.	January 1, 1964	September 20, 1926
BURNS, A.	January 1, 1964	October 29, 1918
HALL, W. A.	January 1, 1964	July 13, 1920
HILL, W. J.	January 1, 1964	November 20, 1918
HOTTE, V.	January 1, 1964	May 1, 1927
KANT, F. E.	January 1, 1964	June 8, 1923
KENNEDY, E. A.	January 1, 1964	January 8, 1945
McCALLUM, W.	January 1, 1964	October 3, 1933
NELSON, J. M. E.	January 1, 1964	June 4, 1927
ROBINSON, A.	January 1, 1964	August 23, 1930
SCOTT, F. W.	January 1, 1964	July 22, 1919
SHARPE, W. H.	January 1, 1964	October 1, 1935
SNEDDON, M.	January 1, 1964	November 6, 1922
SOUCIE, J. J.	January 1, 1964	October 26, 1920

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A WINTER'S DAY ABOARD TRAIN 47

By E. C. LUKE

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Alloy Iron Castings

Chilled Tread
Car Wheels

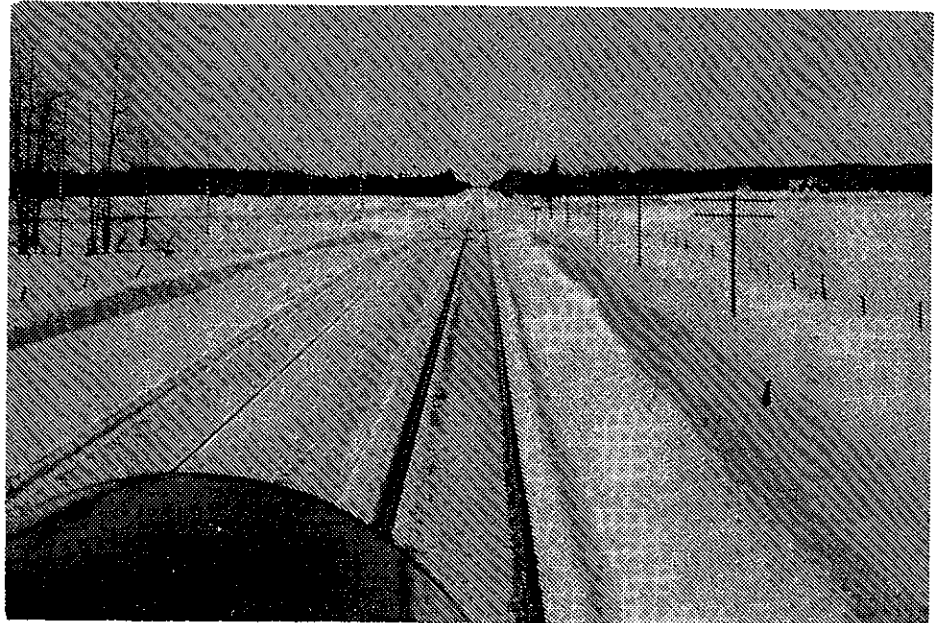
Brake Shoes

Industrial
Machinery

Bumping Posts

Cast Iron Pipe &
Fittings

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Even in this jet age, anyone who does not still enjoy a train journey, through places he has never seen before, has NO romance in his soul.

Over the snout of the diesel locomotive, shadows on the snow form a pattern.

Photos By the Author

ALL ABOARD!

In a very few minutes the Ontario Northland Railway's train number 47, out of North Bay one day in mid-winter, was thrusting its round nose in the direction of Cochrane, Moosonee, and James Bay. It began slicing almost through the middle of our great Pre-Cambrian shield country. My eyes were soon sweeping across this peaceful-looking quiet expanse, whose rocks have already borne us millions in mining wealth, and which now holds promise of yielding even more to those who will come, and work, to get it. The journey provided a passing parade of snug mining towns, some of their names now famous in Canada's mineral history—Cobalt, Haileybury, Kirkland Lake, and Timmins. New ones are joining them.

NATURE AT EYE-LEVEL

Everywhere there was Nature at its Winter best. Acres and more acres of snow, curving and folding over the sleeping ground. Here and there the trees and rocks, and a few fence posts, stuck up through it toward the sky, looking as if the white blanket was torn. Foot tracks of animals came close to view and wandered away again. Occasionally long twin ridges of snow marked the route of a plowed highway. Folks waved to us from door-step and window. You can't see these things from 20,000 feet

up in the air, at 500 miles an hour.

But what of the train? The old black steam locomotive, exuding its white vapours in all directions, has gone—maybe sadly to many, but engineering marches on. In its place a new young giant, the sleek and confident diesel—making new and interesting noises, does the hauling job with almost insolent ease. O.N.R. Number 47 was pulled by two power units known as General Motors F.P. 7, each one capable of 1,500 horsepower. Inside the cab, in charge of the two throbbing diesels, was engineer Wilf Church, a veteran of many years. At the left window a younger man, fireman Doug Pillsworth, assisted him. Watching this two-man team work for a few miles can't fail to impress you, the way they perform their tasks with business-like efficiency.

FROM FATHER TO SON

As it is so often in railroad life, these jobs are virtually handed on from one generation to the next. In one of the yards we passed a freight train, and engineer Church waved a greeting to his son, at the controls in the other cab. Fireman Pillsworth spoke of the days when his father handled a steam engine on the O.N.R. So it goes in railroad families.

To the rear, behind the mail, express, and baggage, the passengers' interests were being looked after by another two-

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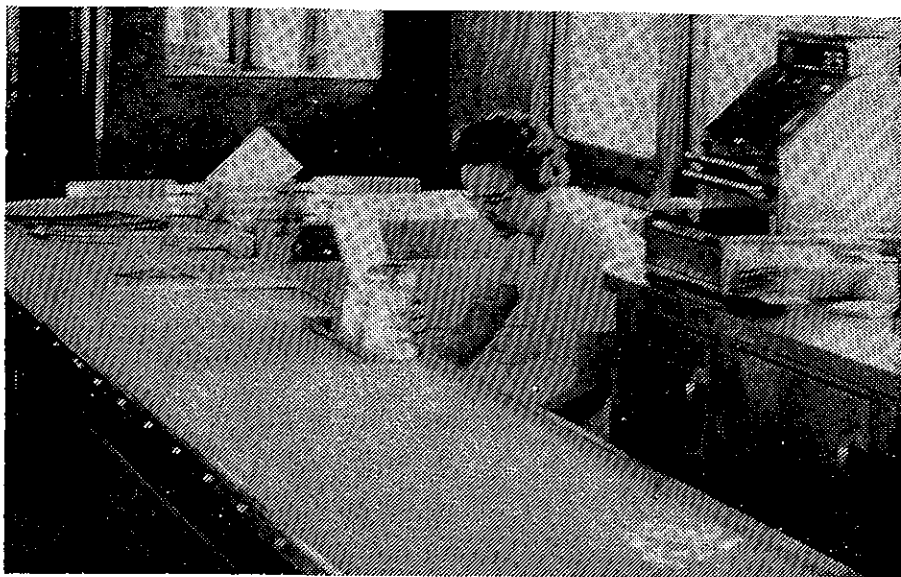
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man team, in the bright air-conditioned coach. Conductor Clarence Connelly and trainman Norm Martin treated everyone, the very young and very old, with friendly courtesy. These people are interested in their passengers, which means going out of their way to see that you are kept comfortable, and well informed about your trip. At meal time, your nose led you by savoury aroma still farther back, to the small restaurant car. In his kitchen, in white uniform, Chef Eddie Granner prepared snacks or full meals, and they were served to you over the broad counter by waitress Ida Rowlandson. I did not look for white table linen or cut flowers, but I did find the important essentials—a spotless car, tasty food, and low prices. The smiles were free!

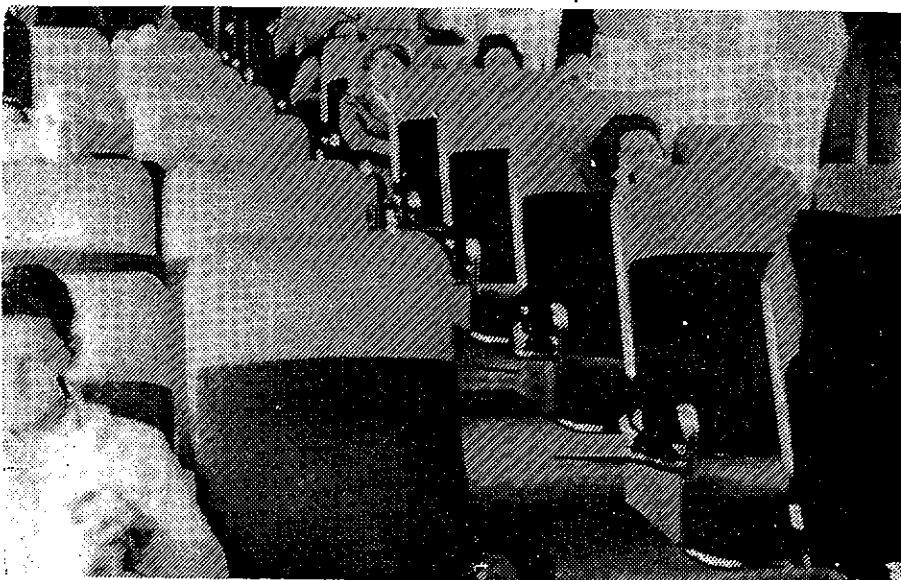
This was a HAPPY train, with a nice informal atmosphere too often missing these days in our high speed ulcer culture world. I liked everything about it, even the fact that it took most of the day to get to my destination. I didn't care.

It was a beautiful day too. The hills and occasional deep ravines were blanketed with such clean snow. Every few minutes the surface of it was raked marked by the sharp blue shadows of pines and slender birches, flung across the scene by Winter's low slanting sun. As every vista of beauty passed behind, a new one unfolded ahead. And all through the day, over and over again, the long honk of the diesel's horn kept reminding every living thing for miles around that we were on our way.

This train, this journey, this rugged land of rocks and trees and snow, and buried treasure—they are all part of Canada's Northland, and our own heritage. To hear about it is interesting. But to see it and feel it at first hand—this adds a flavour to life that can come from nowhere else.



In the restaurant car Meechim, waitress Ida Rowlandson keeps everything gleaming.



As their train rolls across the snow-covered north country, passengers relax in solid comfort.

"Dependability is the watchword of our service"

A MOTTO WORTH REMEMBERING!



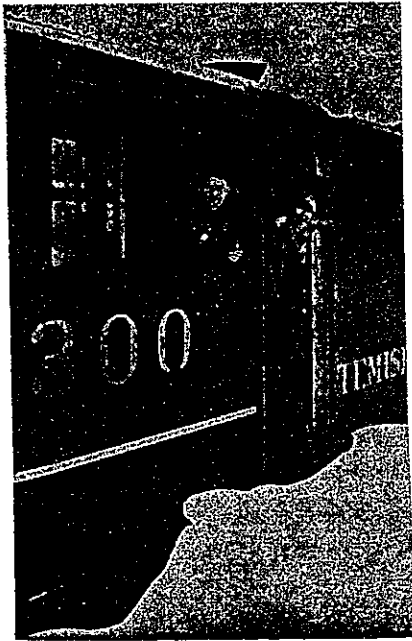
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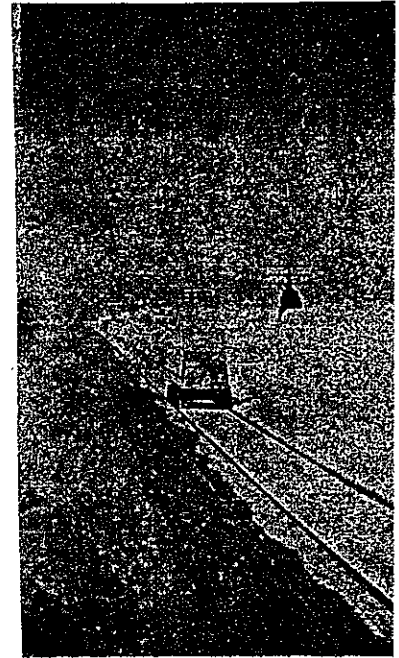
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Engineman Savard, in cab of one of the 300 series, was mighty close to the top of the snowbank.

The Weather Outside Was Frightful . . .



Section Foreman Bruce White sat on top of a 14-foot snowbank near Connaught.

Northern folks shuddered when winter got in its first good punch of the season at the end of November, but it was nothing like the snowfall of March 22 in 1947. On that day only the top of telephone lines appeared above the snowbanks and locomotives were snowbound for many hours.

Kenneth Biggs, ONR Public Relations Officer, was agent at Connaught at that time and took pictures

after the snowfall between McIntosh Springs and Connaught at Mile 92.5 in the Ramore Subdivision. His account of the storm follows:

Train No. 49, The Northland, was tied up at Connaught from 8 a.m. until 4 o'clock the following morning. Before the main line was cleared of snow, we had two snow plows, one freight train and one passenger train all at Connaught.

The dining car ran out of food and

in a short time the village stores Connaught were completely sold of fresh foods such as bread, but and meats.

Trainmaster Art Houghton recall this incident. He was Ro master at that time.

In the Village of Connaught so people had to be shovelled out their homes. Snow drifts were high and heavy, and doors could be opened from the inside.



Standing on snowbank near top of telephone line are Domenic Campagna, now Section Foreman, North Bay; Arnold (Beaver) Manion, Garry McMahon, Gerry Picard and George Pullen

Discuss Ways To Improve Rail Service

A successful staff meeting of the Rouyn - Noranda Express Freight Department, under the Chairmanship of Terminal Manager Nelson Racicot, was held Friday at Henri's Motel, Noranda.

Matters of vital interest to both staff, railway and the customer were discussed in detail. Suggestions on how to improve our service to the customer were offered by staff members.

Ken Biggs, Public Relations Officer, North Bay, was on hand to address the meeting at which time he commended the Terminal Manager and his staff for the very efficient manner in which the meeting was conducted and he mentioned that he found the morale high.

The meeting was followed by a tasty buffet luncheon provided by Henri's Motel.

Present were: Nelson Racicot, Terminal Manager; Sam Aquino, Office Assistant; M. J. Dempsey, ONR Cashier; Don Turcott, CNR Cashier; P. J. Bonnah, Senior Clerk; Laurier Beaudoin, Rlv. Foreman; J. A. Gagnon, General Clerk; Frank Pelquin, General Clerk; Gary Racicot, Spare Warehouseman; Marcel Boulianne, Warehouseman; Joe Cashback, Swing Man; Gord Mallin, Motorman; Roland Cote, Motorman; W. J. Maloof, Warehouseman; Stan Marshall, Warehouseman; K. Biggs, Public Relations Officer, North Bay.

Expects to Get Pilot's Licence

Many people appear to be in the clouds most of the time, but Charmaine Putnam, an accounts payable clerk in the Communications Department, has decided to make this her extra curricular activity. Charmaine is the type of person who likes to have knowledge of many variable subjects. She has taken night school classes in such things as psychology and philosophy, public speaking, art, conversational French and auto mechanics. After all this it would not shock you to hear that Charmaine has now decided to take up flying. She is studying at Orillia Air Services and expects to receive her licence to fly after Christmas.



Timmins will boast one of the most modern stations in Ontario when work has been completed on a new waiting room, washrooms and office. Above photo shows carpenters on the job early in November.

Timmins Station "Dresses Up"



Exterior of the Timmins station has taken on a bright new look. The brick has been sandblasted. New windows will also be installed.

MANAGEMENT-LABOR (Continued From Page 17)

Many points of interest to Labor and Management were discussed freely. The meeting was informative and interesting and all voiced the opinion that future meetings of this type should be held.

After a buffet luncheon the group motored to the Adams Mine at Kirkland Lake and enjoyed a tour of the mine and mill. On their return to Englehart they boarded train No. 416 and returned to North Bay.