

RDS

RAILWAY DEVELOPMENT SOCIETY

(incorporating RIS & RDA)

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RAILWAY DEVELOPMENT NEWS

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BUS/RAIL REPLACEMENT - WILL IT BECOME INEVITABLE?

Much space has been occupied in the columns of this and earlier journals of the constituent Societies of RDS on the merits, or otherwise of proposals by B.R. to axe a further 2,500 route miles from the rail network if the Government can guarantee adequate bus services that will slot into its Inter-city network (October 1976). Notwithstanding the refusal of the National Bus Company to co-operate by withdrawal of its Inter-city coach services the Board nevertheless went ahead with its survey of lines which could, in its opinion, more economically be replaced by an assured bus service (March 1977). That very month the Central Transport Consultative Committee (the passenger users watchdog soon to become the National Transport Consumers Council) came out with a critical report against such proposals in which it expressed particular scepticism about the "assured" nature of the rail replacement buses quoting past experiences during the Beeching era.

Despite an assurance by the Secretary of State for Transport, William Rodgers, when launching the Government's Transport White Paper in June 1977 that there would be "No return to Beeching" the document itself put forward a scheme which in the words of one newspaper columnist was described as "a method of closing railways that could bring about a new era in neighbourhood nastiness." As a result the R.I.S., in September 1977, issued a revised version of its pre-Beeching publication "Can Bus Replace Train?" * which has since sold over 6,000 copies in the United Kingdom, Europe and the U.S.A. Even with these assurances and the reservations of the Select Committee on Nationalised Industries it is becoming increasingly apparent that B.R. may be forced, whether it wishes to do so or not, to cut back some rural services if for no other reason than it does not have the equipment to run them.

Once more the C.T.C.C. has grasped the nettle in a recent report where it states that a big withdrawal of Britain's cross-country rail services will become inevitable in the late 1980s unless the Government sharply increases investment funds for new rolling stock now. As any youthful train spotter can tell you more than half of the passenger network is dependent on rolling stock built 20 years ago and rapidly coming to the end of its economic working life. The DMU refurbishment programme, whilst commendable, is at the most a holding operation and can do no more than extend the life of the ageing fleet by a few years. All the more reason why B.R. should press ahead with British Leyland to develop a cheap alternative "Railbus" if only as a stop-gap.

To prevent these closures "by default" the Government would, in the view of Mr Frank Higgins, Chairman of the C.T.C.C. have to allow B.R. an additional £25 - £30 million a year for new stock or the cross-country services would simply disappear. Whilst discounting any active

* Copies available from RDS Sales, "Latymer", The Drive, Belmont, Surrey, SM2 7DJ Price: 40p. (Incl. p & p) U.S.A. \$ 2.00

collusion between the Department of Transport and British Rail he has suggested that neither seem to be offering any solutions to the problem and one might well ponder the words of our Chairman, Mr Banks, in his address to the R.I.S. at its last Annual General Meeting in April 1978.

"What concerns some of us very greatly is the evidence that the ghost of Beeching still lurks in the corridors of 222, Marylebone Road. Certain statements by senior officials of B.R. and indeed the Board's own submission to the Select Committee included the idea of further substitutions of railway services by buses."

With the increasing powers being devolved on Local Authorities, particularly the Shire Counties, for the financing of local rail services and the fact that T.P.P. allocations have to be scrutinised by the Roads Directorate of the Department of Transport, it is difficult to arouse optimism about the allocation of the limited funds available, although John Horam, M.P., a Junior Minister at the Department, recently warned that County Councils who bid for public transport money in their T.P.P.s and then spend it on roads might lose the money altogether.

Further support for the view, long held by the Society and the Railway Trade Unions, that the Bus/Rail proposals are far from dead are talks which have been taking place between the Board, the N.B.C. and the C.T.C.C. regarding the possible substitution of buses in three areas; Lincolnshire, North Berwick and Edinburgh and Oban - Glasgow, no doubt as part of the pilot study recommended by the Select Committee (Sept. 1977) but from which it appears the savings would be minimal.

The Grantham - Skegness line has already had its own form of bus/rail replacement exercise with the results which have been reported elsewhere in these columns. Whilst B.R. realise the need to re-classify some lines such as Manchester - Sheffield - Hull as secondary Inter-city services and spend money on renewing the stock, others such as the Central Wales Line, Cardiff - Crewe and many rural services in Scotland, Wales and the West Country are already candidates for closure.

What is more worrying are the increasing number of reports being received from our Branches of apparently premature scrapping of DMUs, rolling stock and locomotives and the following extract from a recent member's letter seems an appropriate note upon which to end this item.

"One of the problems that seems to be getting worse is the constant shortage of multiple units in East Anglia. Not enough sets are being provided on many services and passengers are travelling in crowded conditions."

"What makes things worse is that B.R. is still withdrawing DMUs. They say that they are surplus, but I don't know of one Division that has any surplus multiple units. Most PTEs are increasing their services e.g. Longbridge - Sutton Coldfield, Newcastle - Morpeth, Leeds - Bradford, Dunfermline - Edinburgh and the refurbishment programme has taken most units that are spare into the workshops."

Turning to more positive developments the Channel Tunnel is once more a debating point and figured prominently at a public meeting sponsored jointly by the Society and the National Council on Inland Transport at the Caxton Hall, London, on 13th October 1978, when Dr Frank Tomlins explained the thinking behind the R.D.A. (CTRL) proposals (fully reported in our last issue, p.4). Likening them to an old advertisement for "Erasmic" shaving soap "Not too little, not too much" he suggested that his plan, for a twin track single bore tunnel, struck just the right balance, as against the BR/SNCF plan for a single track bore; for in the event of fire or breakdown it would be more flexible as with two tracks in the same tunnel crossovers could be changed at any time.

An essential feature of the plan would be the provision of Continental Loading Gauge, not only in the tunnel itself but to London which would hopefully be extended to principal routes throughout the country. Richard Hope, Editor of the Railway Gazette, speaking from

the floor suggested that the B.R. proposals for a single track bore initially was at least a start and, like the Italian Mafia policy of "slicing the salami" (i.e. taking a little at a time according to what their victims could pay) the Board could always go back to the Government like Oliver Twist and ask for more. M. Roger Hutter, until 1976 Deputy Chief Director of SNCF (French National Railways) and speaking for his country, stressed that as Britain had put the closure on the project in 1975 it was up to the U.K. to start the ball rolling again.

Senior officers of RDS have since attended a seminar on the project at County Hall. sponsored by the G.L.C., where Richard Burke, E.E.C. Commissioner for Transport stated that a relatively modest cost railway tunnel by the mid 1980s might later be supplemented by a more costly bridge if traffic warranted it. His Commission had recently authorised a study into the project and with a single track tunnel (BR/SNCF) estimated at about £600m. a contribution from E.E.C. funds of perhaps 20% - 30% of the capital cost might be forthcoming. Mr Burke has also indicated that the Commission are considering the R.D.A. proposals as well.

Sidney Weighell, General Secretary of the N.U.R. has described the Channel Tunnel as a vital issue, not only to the U.K., B.R. and his union but also to the whole of Europe. Not only would it offer the prospect of increased speed and flexibility of movement between Britain and the rest of Europe but with the proven fuel-efficiency of rail transport a rail-based system could contribute to energy saving objectives within the Community and diminish dependence on the heavy lorry for major freight movements across the Channel. This would also avert the growing threat to the environment of juggernaut lorries and by ensuring reductions in traffic flows reduce the need for costly expenditure on road and motorway construction on both sides of the Channel.

This brings us on to the topic of a fair and proper basis for pricing the different modes of transport which excludes unfair competition by hidden subsidies. The way the average motorist values the cost of his or her travel has long been distorted by the fact that once a large fixed sum has been paid in Road Tax there is an incentive to use the vehicle as much as possible to get one's money's worth, invariably forgetting that tyre wear and maintenance are (or should be) recognised as mileage related. The recent announcement by the Secretary of State for Transport that Vehicle Excise Duty is to be phased out by 1983 is therefore long overdue and has been pressed for by the constituent societies for some years. Unlike the previous occasion when it was mooted by the Chancellor of the Exchequer in the Autumn of 1976 there seems to be generally wide acceptance of the measure both from the motoring organisations and the manufacturers. The latter have welcomed a recent discussion paper issued by the Department of Transport as they now feel better able to respond to the demand for smaller and less profitable cars which would result from the 5 year period of the phase out.

In essence the tax would slowly be reduced by 1983 whilst the tax on petrol would be increased to compensate for the potential loss of revenue. This would add approximately 19p. to the price of petrol irrespective of any other increases over the period and would cost about 2,000 jobs, 800 of these at the notorious DLVC at Swansea, but most of this could be achieved by natural wastage and in any case by then the computer equipment would be life expired. The extra cost to the motorist has been estimated at £17 a year or 32p. a week for users covering 10,000 miles a year. On the other hand a recent study showed that 7-9% of motorists were evading the tax altogether at a cost to the revenue of between £50 and £63 million p.a. and that with tax evasion cases in the courts running at 165,000 in 1977 it appeared to be in the increase. The move would also save the taxpayer about £20m. in administration costs.

Much play has been made by the Road Lobby of the effect this would have on rural motorists but how many of them travel all the way to their destination by car. Perhaps they might be more inclined to use public transport? All the more reason to ensure that it is attractive and not phased out altogether otherwise "real hardship" would result.

Finally we come to the fundamental problem of the motor vehicle itself which was touched upon by Roy Jenkins, President of the E.E.C. Commission in a recent speech to the Seventh World Planning Conference. On the subject of energy he stressed that the urgent need was to reduce the rate at which the demand for energy was going, and ultimately to reduce the absolute level of demand itself. The carriage of goods and people by road vehicles using the internal combustion engine was perhaps one of the most pronounced features of our western society but it has also demanded a high price in urban sprawl, atmospheric pollution (e.g. the high lead level in parts of Birmingham) to say nothing of the toll of death and injury from traffic accidents which in the countries of the E.E.C. averaged over 60,000 p.a.

Every drop of oil consumed in the internal combustion engine, is a drop which might be better used for other purposes, said Mr Jenkins, Mobility as we know it today may be an expression of consumer preference but it is not a God given necessity. Such mobility could however be maintained by developing and refining patterns of transport which do not depend so much on the I.C. engine. This could go a long way to revitalise public transport and in particular the railways. He also saw a big future for electric vehicles of all kinds. The technology was there all it needed was the political will which if combined with new concepts of transport planning could significantly reduce the overall energy requirement for transportation.

It is nearly 200 years since the Industrial Revolution brought western society into a new age of prosperity but if the natural resources which enabled this to come about are squandered may we not be passing into some new "Dark Age"? Only time will tell.

WHITHER AMTRAK

For those not familiar with the North American scene it is perhaps desirable to explain that Amtrak is the National Railroad Passenger Corporation which commenced operations on 1st May 1971 to provide passenger trains over those railroads which could not or would not afford to do so. It is therefore a quasi-public corporation whose activities have been imposed on a sometimes reluctant private railroading industry.

1978 (like 1963 in the annals of British Railways) has proved to be a year of decision with the publication, in May, of a Beeching type report by U.S.D.o T. recommending cuts in the Amtrak system from 27,000 to 18,900 miles largely as a result of the rapidly rising deficits of the Corporation which in FY 1977 amounted to \$537m. as against \$441m. in FY 1976. Amtrak expenses have therefore continued to be two and a half times its revenues.

Before jumping to hasty conclusions we should perhaps look to see what Amtrak has achieved in the six years of its existence. Firstly as the "Miami Herald" of July 4, 1977 put it "it has achieved only one spectacular feat and that is staying alive. When it started it did not own any railroad tracks, any stations, any terminals, any yards, any repair facilities, any locomotives, any passenger cars, or other railroad equipment and there was not one manufacturer in the U.S. building inter-city rail passenger equipment. In the meantime there has been an appropriation of Federal funds of \$1.5 billion for operating, \$900m. in guaranteed loan authority and \$232m. in capital grants. In 1977 it was carrying more passengers (from 16.6m. - 18.6m.), covering more miles (23,000 - 26,000), serving more stations (440 - 512), running 52 new locomotives, 38 rebuilt ones, seven new turbo powered trains, 241 new cars and 496 overhauled ones."

Despite the claims of the American Beechingites it is interesting to note from the 1978 Report of the Inter State Commerce Commission to the President and Congress on the effectiveness of the Amtrak Act, that "the cost to Amtrak of actual passenger transportation (including train crews, station agents, and on board personnel) represents a relatively modest percentage of total expenses." and its conclusion was "that even reductions in services over unprofitable routes would have a minimal impact on Amtrak's operating deficit, as the burden caused by transportation expenses is minimal." During FY 1977, however, the Corporation's payroll accounted for \$272.3m. (one third of its total carrier expenses) and the I.C.C. regarded this as a fertile field for inquiry. (During the 2 years from Sept. 30, 1975 - Sept 30, 1977 the number of executives, officials and staff assistants rose 59% and professional, clerical and general staff jumped by 65%) A phenomena with which we are not unfamiliar in Britain.

In the meantime there have been nationwide hearings into the U.S. D.o.T. proposals and these too have brought some surprises. As the "Dallas Morning News" of August 18, put it "There is a definite public outcry for the continuation of a national system." "Sometimes in Washington you don't think much of the public forum. This time it has worked and worked well." Amtrak may not, however, be completely out of the wood as President Carter, when signing into law S.3040, the Amtrak Improvement Act of 1978, stated on 6th October:-

"This legislation authorizes the appropriation of \$755 million in Federal funds in fiscal year 1979 for the National Railroad Passenger Corporation's (Amtrak) operating expenses and capital expenditures. This bill also directs the Secretary of Transportation, in conjunction with Amtrak, to conduct a study of Amtrak's basic route structure for railroad passenger services and to submit his final recommendations regarding that system to Congress by December 31."

On the basis of this appropriation and a ruling in Congress existing Amtrak services should be frozen until October 1979, so no major cuts seem likely until then.

The present state of Amtrak is, however, more appropriately described in the following extracts from a recent letter by Dr Dan Monaghan of Texas, a Regional Director of the National Association of Railroad Passengers:-

"The main inconsistency that persists in the U.S. is the fact that we willingly spread the cost of air and highway transportation over the total populace by pouring billions of dollars of general tax money into their facilities but we seem paranoid about doing such when it comes to rail... The Highway Lobby here is all powerful and very difficult to oppose. They consider tax money as their money, not the public's money. They use the gasoline tax money of those who never depart the city streets to build inter-city freeways and \$1.8 billion of general tax money funds the air control and navigation system for the aviation users plus additional amounts for airports and other facilities. Our system is rife with hypocrisy.

There is a great deal of confusion about track conditions in the U.S. Much of it, especially in the West and South is in the best condition it has ever been with miles of new ribbon rail. Most of the poor track is in the Northeast, however, this has been improved in the last year under Conrail. Hopefully the shortcomings of Conrail will lead to bona fide nationalisation in 2 or 3 years. Railroads become vulnerable to manipulation and the property always suffers the consequences. This has been going on for 150 years and it is becoming obnoxious.

Businessmen are making decisions that should be made by technical men, a typical example being the 100 ton behemoth freight cars that create constant track maintenance even of premium track, metal -

stresses in wheels, bearings and axles far beyond the available capability of the metallurgy, and formidable train dynamics when long trains are assembled. A lot of our track that is bad would not be as bad as it is if it were not for the beating the freight cars give it.

Amtrak's inception meant different things to different people. To the rail advocates and most of Congress it was an effort toward revitalization. To railway management, the highway lobby and the Nixon/Ford administration it was an effort to decimate it further. The Carter Administration appears more interested and has appointed good board members but is under heavy counterpressures. What we have had to fight is the myth that passenger trains can only be "profitable and self-sustaining" between congested Eastern cities. They may be needed there for other reasons but that is where they are hopeless economic losers simply because the fares will not cover the cost of traffic generation and providing the service if they remain competitive. In the West and South where people will ride trains for the same reason they will go to a good restaurant to eat the haul is long and the yield high. Only the premium long-haul routes have ever met or exceeded their avoidable costs. They can fudge and make the Metroliners look like they do but it is only because the other trains on the route absorb costs that would otherwise accrue to the Metroliners. The more people the North East Corridor hauls, the more money it loses as evidenced by the fact that during the energy crisis the NEC deficit per train mile rose by 44% whereas the long-hauls dropped by 27%.

The events leading up to the recent D.o T. Report were a result of massive attempts of Eastern and highway interests to decimate the system but the ICC hearings should have effectively refuted their attempts. We hope something constructive will come out of it at the end of the year instead of something destructive. All polls support our position too. Efforts to destroy Amtrak have reached scandalous proportions and the facts have never been fully divulged. I hope you can create some awareness in your country. You will probably be feeling increasing pressures of the same nature in England as highway interests become stronger and the North Sea oil discoveries may exacerbate this."

M.D.M.

Garland, Texas

In conclusion I should like to acknowledge the many sources of my material for this feature, in particular Hank DiVenuto, Editor of "Track 4", Georgia, Dan Monaghan and Burt Blanton, Editor of "The Clearance Card" * both from Texas. Responsibility for any errors in compiling the material, however, is mine and mine alone. Ed.

"CAN BUS REPLACE TRAIN?" FORGES INTERNATIONAL LINKS

The last year has seen a rapid increase in overseas contacts as the contents of this issue of R.D.N. clearly show. The spin-off from the last publication produced by R.I.S. has given the new Society a good start on the international scene, as also have the R.D.A. (CTRL) proposals. The following extract from a letter written by the personal assistant to a Dutch M.P. bears witness to this:-

"I came across your outstanding report "Can Bus replace Train?" as we were faced here in Holland with similar problems. I'd like to express the gratitude of several Dutch M.Ps for publishing such a report, which was quoted several times in Dutch Parliament during the last weeks. It really was a help in our efforts in holding several railway lines open to the public. Happily I can say we finally succeeded for the time being."

Evidence of the international trend in rail advocacy was echoed at the Fall meeting of NARP, where the Canadian Branch of Transport 2000 was well represented.

Dan Monaghan summed up the position in "The Clearance Card* as follows:-

"NARP and Transport 2000 have joined hands with similar organizations in England and France and are in the process of allying with a fifth country, possibly Switzerland. When five countries unite with such common interests they become eligible to appear before the various committees of the United Nations to further their interests. Rail advocacy is indeed growing by leaps and bounds."

* Monthly Newsletter of the Southwest Railroad Historical Society.

MOTORWAYS v DEMOCRACY

Not a leading law case but a brief review by Trevor Garrod of John Tyme's recent book of that title @ to bring us back to Britain with a thud.

"In late November I was invited as representative of the RDS to a meeting of some people preparing to object to a new trunk road planned to run past where they live. They were quite ordinary people, not too pleased with the treatment they had so far received from the Dept. of Transport. None of them had been in such a situation before, so they were keen to hear all I could tell them about the workings of the Dept. and its attitude to objectors at road inquiries. Apart from drawing on the experience of myself and other RDS members in questioning the need for a particular road scheme, and putting the rail alternative, at inquiries; I also recommended to them John Tyme's Book @

In this he recounts his five years of personal involvement in inquiries, from Bromsgrove to Ripley, via Airedale, Winchester, Ipswich Archway etc.,. He dwells particularly on the legal arguments and the ways in which objectors organised themselves; quoting, as a recipe for success, the equation:- Truth + Courage + Numbers = Invincibility!

It is important to know whom, and what, one is fighting, and so Mr Tyme shows how the Road Lobby works with various Public Servants and how it influences M.ps. For instance, members of bodies like the British Road Federation sit alongside civil servants on the British National Committee of the Permanent International Association of Road Congresses. There is no comparable body for railways or waterways. Indeed, one former Chairman of B.R. said he had to "read my newspapers" to find out government intentions for his rail network!

Certain other quotes stick in the mind: like the road engineer who told a group of objectors, "You people are inanimate objects. We will fill the hospitals if necessary... That road is going through." Or the comment from a Road Construction Unit, "It is not intended to relate the (road) proposals to an integrated transport policy."

The book conveys in a vivid, personal way what it is like to be an objector at an inquiry; while also serving as a well-documented reference manual. Anyone involved in opposition to a road or motorway scheme; and indeed anyone giving evidence at an inquiry into transport matters; should find Mr Tyme's book a most useful source of arguments, precedents and inspiration. Appearing soon will be a further volume "Roads to Ruin", which should provide further ammunition in the fight for a more balanced transport system.

T.J.G.

@ "Motorways Versus Democracy." Macmillan. 1978. £2.95

WITH THIS ISSUE

"IN PARLIAMENT" - "MEMBERS ONLY SUPPLEMENT" - "CHAIRMAN'S APPEAL"

DONT FORGET TO NOTE IN YOUR DIARY - PETERBOROUGH - 5th May 1979 - AGM!

REPORTS FROM BRANCHES AND AREAS

(This section, which is based principally on information provided by branch secretaries and area representatives, tells what the Railway Development Society is doing throughout the United Kingdom, as well as giving news and views of railway happenings.)

BRANCHES

LONDON & HOME COUNTIES

NLLC expresses concern over "City Link" - Whilst the Branch and the North London Line Committee welcomed the announcement, in October, that an interim diesel service is to be provided between Stratford and Camden Road next May with new stations later at West Ham, Hackney Wick, Hackney Central and Kingsland, as an extension of the existing North Woolwich - Stratford service, both are concerned that this may be the "thin end of the wedge" for the "City Link" between Dalston and Broad Street. Early in November the Committee issued a Press Release after a Report was put to the G.L.C. which looks at the development of orbital rail services via Hackney, Stratford and a tunnel at Silvertown under the Thames to Woolwich. This has the long term aim of providing a through Richmond - Woolwich electric service by 1983.

The future of the Dalston - Broad Street link is also tied in closely with the re-development proposals for Liverpool St. for which a Public Inquiry was held nearly 2 years ago and on which a decision is still awaited from Environment Secretary, Peter Shore. "We would ask Mr Shore to speed his decision" said NLLC Secretary, Stephen Joseph "or failing that, make a firm statement supporting the retention of the "City Link" so as to end the planning blight and provide a certain basis for improvements." Not only would closure of the line from Dalston deprive many commuters of a direct link to the City but the potential benefits to up to a million passengers a year of the re-opening of the stations at Shoreditch Church and Haggerston would also be lost. The Branch has set up a joint working party with the NLLC and other interested parties to investigate all aspects of the scheme and produce a common policy.

B.R. tells L.As "Hands off the West London Line" - The G.L.C. and Kensington & Chelsea Council seem intent to run a motorway on top of the line from Clapham Junction to Olympia. B.R. have, however, told them that the plans are simply not acceptable, and that the line is a strategic route which must be kept intact. RDS fully supports this stand and will investigate ways to help B.R. avert the threat.

RDS Branch gets off the ground - At its inaugural meeting on 25th October Mr G.F. Manley, a former Chairman of R.I.S., urged that the Branch should become closely involved with its members and it was then agreed to aim for a high degree of member-participation. Meetings would be arranged, to be addressed by outside speakers and visits were suggested to the Brentford Refuse Transfer Station, the London Post Office Tube and possibly the Jubilee Line (See later) The Branch which encompasses most of London and the South East has more than 150 members. (Its precise area together with that of all other Branches and Areas is defined in the Members Only Supplement) At the meeting Messrs: C. Rowe and A.F. Johnson were elected Chairman and Vice-Chairman and A.J. Kearns as Secretary and are supported by a strong Committee of 14.

Resolutions were passed welcoming the recent improvement in B.R.'s publicity and advertising but urging local managements to increase and modernise their activities. Another urged the Government to increase substantially its investment in the railways to bring them more into line with continental systems. The prospect of a 10% fares increase which had just been announced, was severely criticised, but members welcomed the likelihood of a change in road taxation, involving the phasing out of the road fund tax and its replacement by a heavier duty on petrol.

Jubilee Line expected to open April/May - The most important new construction expected to be completed this year is the diversion of the Stanmore Branch of the Bakerloo Line to Charing Cross, taking a new route from Baker Street, via Bond Street and Green Park. The new trains will not mark such a dramatic step forward as the Victoria Line as they will still have drivers in the cab and be similar to the newest tube trains already running on the other conventional lines. A London Transport spokesman told our reporter that they already have powers to continue to Fenchurch Street and are only waiting for the money. A further extension to Docklands is also hoped for. Bakerloo trains will run to Queens Park when the new line opens and passengers on the present Stanmore branch will have to change at Baker Street. More stations will, however, be fitted with closed circuit t.v. (presumably to permit of one man operation Ed.)

MIDLANDS

Telford New Town - On 1st October it was announced that a new rail station is to be built on the Wolverhampton - Shrewsbury line, probably as a joint venture between B.R. and the Development Corp'n. The existing Wellington and Oakengates station will remain and as a start in service improvements two additional Euston trains will run from Shrewsbury at 09.40 and 11.40; returning from Euston at 17.40 and 19.40 as from 14th May 1979. As part of the "Ironbridge" centenary the freight-only line through Telford to the power station will carry special passenger services.

N.E.C. services - The substantial additional Inter-city and local train services, reported in these columns in October, were extremely well used and operated very efficiently. Considerable patronage from the North was reported and the trains from New Street (an 8 min. journey) were running at 3 min. headways of 8 coach and 8 car EMUs, invariably packed to the hilt! British Rail put on a good show and we extend our praise to the superb "Operation Motor Show".

Snow Hill Development - The West Midlands Transport Committee have agreed to go ahead with development work of some £65,000 towards the £1.5m. re-opening of the Moor Street - Snow Hill tunnel and stations for local services running via Tyseley to Stratford-upon-Avon and Leamington. The RDS Branch Committee has forwarded its detailed observations on the scheme to the P.T.E. and B.R. and have recommended the operation of through services to Stourbridge and West Bromwich.

O.A.P. Rail Travel - Being phased in from February is an excellent new scheme to allow all Senior Citizens in the West Midlands County to travel free on all local rail services in addition to WMPTE buses. This idea was of course first floated by members of RDS over 12 months ago.

Longbridge Success Mounts - Whilst we were pleased to report, in October, a 22,000 passenger usage per day last July we can now report 27,000 users per day and the numbers are still climbing. Traffic at the University/Q.E.Hospital and Five Ways stations is now particularly heavy.

Kingsbury Station - Although closed in December 1967 the platforms at the Warwickshire village of Kingsbury on the Water Orton - Derby line may be re-opened. B.R. "believe that it would be practical" as it would serve an increased population of 5,500.

Hereford/Worcester P.T.P. - Having sought to participate in the Preparation of the new Public Transport Plans of the Midland Shire Counties of Stafford, Warwickshire, Salop and Hereford/Worcester we have already submitted our 4 page observations on the last named. Arising from the Transport Act 1978 and discussed in D.Tp. Circular 8/78 Shire Counties are urged to consult with "transport user organisations and others" and to set up Advisory Committees of such to help prepare the P.T.Ps.

Belchers Lane Station - As originally proposed in an official West Midlands transport study the Branch have again suggested that a new station be built on the New Street - Coventry line near Stechford to serve an urban population of over 5,000 people living within 5 mins. of the site. Local Councillors and M.P.s are already supporting the scheme which would take advantage of the existing electric local trains.

EAST ANGLIAN

General Meeting - The Branch will hold its Annual General Mtg. on Saturday 3rd February in Room 2, Ipswich Town Hall, commencing at 2.15.p.m. After the official business there will be a talk by John Ogilvie, a Technical Adviser to RDS, on "New technology and how the railways can benefit from it."

More Specials proposed - Branch officers are currently negotiating with British Rail for a series of special trains to run partly on freight-only lines in East Anglia, on dates between April and October. This follows the series of three specials run in 1978 by the Society and its associated local Rail Action Committees. These carried over 1,100 people altogether, many of whom, from places like Aylsham and Wisbech, had not been on a train for years. Thanks are due to local B.R. staff and management for their friendly co-operation in these ventures. However one swallow does not make a summer and one special train service alone does not bring about a re-opening.

Shortly after our Wisbech special carried a capacity load of 220 local people to Cambridge, on 23rd September, Cambridgeshire County Council acted as though nothing had happened and in its draft Public Transport Plan cited its 3-5 year old "feasibility studies" as excuses for taking no action on the question of re-opening the lines to both Wisbech and St. Ives. The RDS, in detailed comments on the Draft Plan, has drawn attention of the Council to a number of recent developments that should cause it, at the very least, to maintain an open mind on the re-opening issue: e.g. the special trains, the D.Tp. Level Crossings Report and the likely increase in petrol tax.

Suffolk P.T.P. etc., - Comments have been compiled on the Draft P.T.P. for Suffolk (for which voluntary bodies like RDS were allowed just three weeks) At the time of writing, Norfolk County Council has not issued a Plan, but we have written to the County Surveyor (as have also at least two of our associated local groups) putting our views on what we think should be in it.

Ipswich By-Pass and after - A very successful Branch Meeting was held in Norwich on 7th October, attended by 30 people, when a lively and informative discussion of all local rail and associated transport issues took place. The meeting also considered Inspector Clinch's conclusions concerning the Ipswich By-Pass proposal (to which the RIS had objected) and resolved to lodge an objection in principle to the proposed new western section. We felt vindicated in our original objection to the scheme as over extravagant, and not taking account of the rail alternatives, by the fact that even Mr Clinch - who hardly showed himself as favourable to us - found himself unable to justify one £3m. section. He also admitted, in his report, "It is undoubtedly advantageous to make as much use of the railway system as reasonably and economically possible."

News of Local Groups - Local groups associated with RDS continue to be active in a variety of ways. The Bramford Station Action Group has been conducting a survey of potential usage of a re-opened station in the village. The Newmarket & District Rail Users' Assn. has, by special arrangement with B.R. been selling day return tickets to London on Saturdays, for £2.80. (Newmarket station is unstaffed and normally only paytrain singles are available, so this is an interesting new departure). The Sudbury - Marks Tey Rail Users' Assn. has had useful meetings with B.R. following its recent survey (See last R.D.N.) and already some work has been done to improve the

condition of Sudbury station. The Fakenham & Dereham Railway Society held a well-attended public meeting in Fakenham on 21st October. The aim of the new society (which has become a corporate member of RDS) is to attempt to buy the final section of the Fakenham freight branch, if B.R. at any time in the future decide to cut back its operations.

Norfolk's Mammoth Crash Bill - Those who would like to wipe rural rail services off the map might care to ponder the price of road accidents which for Norfolk amounted to £12,500,000 for the first 9 months of 1978. This figure, based on D.O.E. accident cost calculations was accounted for by over 4,400 incidents in which 81 people died and 1,000 were seriously injured. New roads are not the answer as West Norfolk Road Safety Officer, Mr Peter Ward, attributed them to (a) too fast driving in poor conditions and (b) disregard for traffic signs and signals. (With ack. to E.D.P.)

AREAS

Severnside

It had been hoped to form a Branch in this area but at the time of writing this has not proved possible and the Branch Secretary Designate has agreed to become Area Representative.

Sharpness Docks - For some time ships have discharged pig iron at Gloucester rail served wharf and the traffic has been removed by road. Some 2,000 tons of the same commodity discharged at Sharpness is in prospect for dispatch by rail. Appeals have been made to B.R. for many years to improve its freight train service at Sharpness for attraction of new traffic flows to rail but to date these have been declined. However on 1st December a start was made in the supply of wagons to Sharpness to move pig iron en route to Wakefield, Yorkshire. Also at Sharpness there are currently train loads of crane parts for export; train loads of wood pulp imported; scrap metal for export; and occasional train loads of steel coil for export.

Private Sidings - Whilst approving in principle new private sidings the planners failed to have the new Milk Marketing Dairy at Stonehouse constructed alongside the railway. It seems unlikely that rail will be used for bulk milk supplies from other areas or that the butter produced would be consigned by rail from Gloucester. British Rail were pleased with the attendance of local industry representatives at a Speedlink and Ferry Wagon Exhibition held at Gloucester on 2nd November - a German "Cargowaggon" being used as display and lecture vehicle. Unless strong pressure is placed on the Department of Transport and Gloucestershire County Council most of the industries in the Stonehouse - Stroud - Nailsworth area will be unable to re-open any private sidings because a Motorway link road is planned along the former L.M.S. line. Additional factories and warehouses are likely to be built in the same vicinity but the County planners clearly have in mind only access to the Motorway.

Wagon Movements - Recent refusal of some wagon load traffic to Gloucester because of congestion shows that extra depots and private sidings will be needed to cope with extra traffic. Discharge of wagons with delivery traffic is slow because two lorries have a large proportion of loads to deliver to firms up to 20 miles distant. There have already been complaints that new air braked wagons have had to wait their turn for attention. A major traffic is pipes from Corby for delivery at Lydney, being an example of industrial development after closure of local freight depot and private sidings. The RDS representative visited the area recently and is preparing a submission for the restoration of the private siding complex at Lydney Industrial Estate. None of the considerable output of the various firms is road hauled to Gloucester for despatch by rail although some may well reach rail yards in London.

Yorkshire

The West Yorkshire PTE announced, in October, a £4½ million subsidy for fourteen lines in West Yorkshire varying from £41,000 for the Huddersfield - Marsden line to £742,000 for the Leeds - Bradford - Ilkley line. Included in the list is the Huddersfield - Penistone line which has been under threat of closure for a considerable time. These grants were confirmed at the end of November. The Huddersfield - Clayton West train service is to be discontinued apart from a daily train for schoolchildren. In a Thirteen year plan also receiving consideration is a recommendation to re-open nine stations which are at present closed.

A major new freight complex, the first in the United Kingdom combining road and rail interchange facilities, is to be developed by British Rail and Garonor Services Ltd., at Stourton, near Leeds. The site is located alongside the M1 and M62 motorways and is destined to become one of the most important freight centres in Europe (provided the T. & G.W.U. don't put the boot in as at Didcot Ed.)

Woodhead Line - There has been no outward change regarding the fate of the Woodhead line during the past six months. To the threat of a motorway over Woodhead has been added a "Pumped Storage" scheme for generating electricity in the Longendale Valley. Whether this would threaten the future of the line has not been revealed. NUR and ASLEF branches along the line have been mounting their own vigorous campaigns of opposition to the closure and action groups comprising members of interested organisations have been formed at Glossop and Penistone. At a meeting held at Glossop by the Glossop, Hadfield and Longendale Transport Action Group at the end of November the following facts emerged:-

(1) Contrary to statements made by British Rail that the amount of freight using the line is falling, it was stated that the work load is the same as it was ten years ago. At present 45 freight trains each carrying 1,000 tons use the line each day. Ten years ago there were about double the number but they only carried about 500 tons.

(2) If the Woodhead line were to close an extra 10-15 diesel locos would have to be built to haul the extra freight trains diverted to the other trans-Pennine routes.

(3) Woodhead is the only trans-Pennine line able to take the new 8'6" containers, the use of which has necessitated lowering the track in 3 tunnels on the East Coast Main Line from King's Cross to Edinburgh. The new containers if used on the Calder Valley or Standedge lines would restrict train speeds to 5 m.p.h. when passing through tunnels.

(4) At present the Woodhead line carries 66,000 tons of coal a week from the Yorkshire coalfield to Fiddlers Ferry Power Station near Widnes. There is an extensive traffic in liquid nitrogen which nets British Rail a million pounds a year. 15,000 tons of scrap a week are delivered to British Steel at Stocksbridge.

(5) If, as has been suggested, Inter-city trains between Sheffield and Manchester were re-routed by Woodhead there would be a saving of 15 miles per journey or 400 train miles a day.
(Need one say any more Ed.)

North East England

Our correspondent in the North East reports:-

When the Inter-city 125 trains were introduced on the East Coast main line, B.R. intended to introduce an additional journey from Newcastle at 07.25 with a return from London at 17.35. This was to operate from May this year, but the trains have already been put into operation from 20th November to cope with the heavy public demand.

There had been hopes that Tyneside's Metro could be extended to Sunderland, but Junior Transport Minister, John Horam says this cannot be expected in the near future. A portion of the long disused passenger line to Ponteland still operates for freight from a Rowntree Mackintosh depot, and carries explosives to I.C.I. at Callerton. The section to Kenton Bank Foot will soon be required by Metro and although B.R. only visualises the use of the line by two freight trains a day they are laying fresh track where necessary so that their services can continue.

Merseyside

Two items of good news this Quarter concerning railfreight on Merseyside:- (1) The proposed Seaforth Dock Freightliner Depot, mentioned in the June Newsletter of RIS, has now been approved by the D. Tp. with a 50% grant and (2) three firms in the grain trade have joined forces with Mersey Docks Company to finance the renewal of a mile of line in Birkenhead Docks to facilitate the movement of grain traffic from East Anglia. - "Rail transport is beginning to be competitive when you are thinking about that kind of distance" a spokesman for one of the firms is reported as saying.

The first Class 507 EMU set arrived on Merseyrail week ending 30th September and came into service on 25th October as the Royal Train conveying the Queen to Kirkby. A second set was also seen in service on the Southport line at the beginning of November, and more may well be in circuit at the time of writing. - they appear to be much appreciated by the travelling public, which is not surprising considering that the stock they are replacing is nearly 40 years old.

Merseyside Chamber of Commerce and Industry have submitted their views to the Secretary of State for Transport on Railway Electrification and strongly support B.R.'s case for a rolling programme to extend the electrified network as set out in the Board's May 1978 Discussion Paper. They consider priority should be given to completion of electrified links from both Liverpool and Manchester to the West Coast Main Line (Northbound) and Carstairs to Edinburgh, and taking the energy conservation arguments further than main lines make a plea for continued extension of third rail electrification of Merseyrail lines.

North and East Lincolnshire

The possible re-opening of the Grimsby - Boston - Peterborough line is again in the news. Both Lincolnshire and Humberside County Councils have considered re-opening the line but both have come out against subsidising even the most northerly section (Grimsby - Louth) for passenger services. However, a group of local people have organised a petition bringing the case for the re-opening to the notice of the general public, and the prospects may be even better when a feasibility study has been completed.

Humberside County Council have promised that a "smoothly co-ordinated" bus and rail link between Hull, Barton-on-Humber and Scunthorpe and between Barton and Cleethorpes will be introduced on the opening of the Humber Bridge (late 1979???) The basic idea will be an hourly Cleethorpes - Barton rail service, linking in to a Scunthorpe - Barton - Hull bus service, with extra buses from Barton to Hull at the peak.

One Railways Act, Sec. 8 Grant application which has NOT been approved is that by Nypco Chemicals of Flixborough. The grant would have been £800,000, and the D.Tp. have said that the cost is too great. The fact that extra dangerous chemicals will now be transported by road to a factory site where 28 people died in an explosion in 1974 seems to have slipped the D.Tp.'s mind!!! Once again the local M.P. is in the forefront of efforts to get the Department to think again.

A Public Meeting has been called for 10.30 on Saturday 10th Feb. at Grimsby Central Library when the RDS will sponsor (hopefully) the formation of a rail users's group for North and East Lincolnshire.

South Lincolnshire

There was an encouraging attendance at the A.G.M. of the South East Lincolnshire Travellers' Association in Skegness on 25th November. Chairman, Mr P.B.Jowett, spoke of the Association's success in getting improved connections at Sleaford and Day Return tickets to Lincoln and Nottingham for Christmas shopping; but urged B.R. to promote the line to Skegness more amongst local people. B.R. Divisional Passenger Manager, Mr Hendry, stressed that the 10 hour shift between Boston and Skegness - which he termed only an experiment - was not a step towards closure; but the economy measure which would still give Skegness the best chance of continuing to make a living from tourism. In fact, he said, B.R. had carried more visitors into Skegness during the Summer of 1978 (including the Editor) than in the previous Summer, despite the 10 hour shift. He also felt that the recent D.Tp. Level Crossing Report "could be a great advantage for this line"; and predicted, "within 3-5 years we could see some interesting things happening in that direction."

Devon and Cornwall

Mr R.Joanes, of the North Devon Line Development Group, reports that 2,500 return passenger journeys have been made from the closed Bideford station, on special trains that he has organised over the past year or so. Mr Joanes has for some time been campaigning for the Bideford - Barnstaple line to be re-opened to passengers. Although local traffic is already catered for by the good bus services, he feels that there is a definite need for an Inter-city link from Bideford to Barnstaple, Exeter and the outside world. The next stage of his campaign is to try to develop incoming excursions to Bideford and the nearby beach at Westward Ho! Would any RDS member like to help market such an excursion? Mr Joanes lives at the Old Railway Station, Filleigh, Barnstaple, Devon. (Tel. Filleigh 311)

We are also pleased to report that St. Ives has finally solved the problem of invasion by thousands of motorists during the holiday season. "Let them go by train!" To this end Penwith D.C., Cornwall C.C. and B.R.(W) have together built a new halt at Lelant Saltings, several miles from the resort, with parking for 300 cars. The cost of the facilities (£50,000) was met by the two Councils whilst for its part B.R. laid on a 35 min. interval 3 coach service between St. Ives and St. Erth on the main line to Penzance. Between 27th May and 27th Aug. 1978, 29,023 cars containing 115,395 passengers used the car park at Lelant and so successful has the venture been that it is proposed to double the size of the car park for next season. Other similar resorts Please Note!!

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