

## NEWSWATCH

**Top draw:** Members are reminded that cash and ticket counterfoils for the summer draw need to be returned before 20 July. There is still time to sell more tickets. We need the money raised from the draw to make our campaign more effective. Additional books can be obtained from Reg Snow (address back page). Many thanks to those members who have responded. It is planned to use draw proceeds on a major campaign to call for more electrification and improvement of the North Wales coast line. We will probably produce a four-page broadsheet similar to the Midland Mainliner.

**Steaming in:** A new We Need More Trains leaflet has been designed to appeal to visitors to steam lines. If you can help to get it on show, contact publicity officer Roland White (address back page).

**Sick policy:** It is estimated that company cars still enjoy a subsidy of £300 million even after the latest Budget changes. By comparison, the London Dial-a-Ride service for 65,000 disabled people receives an annual grant of £10 million. (source: Transport Review 12.4.91)

**Road dictator:** An unelected London Traffic Director is to be appointed under the Road Traffic Bill currently going through Parliament. He will be able to overrule the decisions of boroughs which try to protect their residents from roads. (source: New Cyclist magazine Mar/Apr 1991)

**Prevaricating politicians:** The Government set up a Royal Commission in 1904 on London's traffic. Its major recommendation was the extension of existing railway routes right across the heart of London.

**The great car economy:** British car exports, £1,042 billion. Car imports, £1,479. Figures for December, January and February.

**Capital recipe for misery:** Increase passenger traffic on London's Tube by 70 per cent between 1982 and 1989. Improve the service level by 12 per cent. (Source: Chartered Surveyor Weekly)

**See here:** East Anglian branch is working on a video based on the RDS railguide. It is to be called Travels in Another Country.

**Book offer:** Publicity officer Roland White has just published a book about the firm which he and his brother established. Called Cromar White Ltd - Miniature Railway Engineers, it costs £7.45 (including postage) from Roland White (address back page). Roland will donate 50p to RDS for each copy sold to a member.

**Man with the red box:** Public Transport Minister Roger Freeman is planning to meet RDS members at a seminar in Leicester in July.

**Vat's enough for now:** The Chancellor increased the VAT threshold in the budget and as a result, our turnover is likely to fall below it for 1991. RDS treasurer David Bigg has therefore been empowered to de-register the society although it is likely we will have to re-register in 18 months time if membership continues to grow.

**Softly softly:** The Railway Inspectorate gave an RDS delegation a reassurance that a safety edict about railway platforms would be implemented on a flexible basis. The inspectorate had expected BR to implement the directive gradually, during routine maintenance programmes and had been surprised at the excessive reaction. The executive is keen not to put obstacles in the way of reopening schemes.

**Party time:** Members of the South London Line Travellers' Association held a party to celebrate the return of a half-hourly all-day Monday-Saturday service to their much-neglected route.

## MPs meet the men from the Ministry

The value of new roads in easing environmental problems is difficult to judge, conceded top civil servant Sir Alan Bailey in April.

Sir Alan whose Department of Transport has already squandered millions of pounds in building new roads and has billion-pound plans to construct even more, admitted that new roads "must generate some traffic".

Giving evidence to the House of Commons transport committee, Sir Alan came under fire from Mr Gilroy Bevan for allocating only a small part of the department's annual report to new schemes for electric light rail.

Mr Bevan questioned why the Manchester and Sheffield schemes were mentioned but the West Midlands' ambitious plans and about 50 other projects were not dealt with in detail.

Sir Alan also conceded that his report painted a gloomy picture on road vehicle emissions and agreed it would be a number of years before even 50 per cent of the cars on Britain's roads were fitted with catalytic converters to filter out some pollutants.

The MPs laughed out loud when Mr Sidney Bidwell suggested that the situation could be eased if all MPs and top civil servants travelled in mini cars.

And no-one suggested it would provide a good example if they travelled by public transport. But then the MPs are in a good position to know how cost-cutting and short-sighted policies have reduced both the rail and bus network to shadows of their former selves.

**Ferry good:** The European Community will back plans to reinstate the Dumfries to Stranraer line to give a better service for the Irish ferry link. The commissioner for transport said he would support the development of both Crewe - Holyhead and Carlisle - Stranraer on a complementary basis.

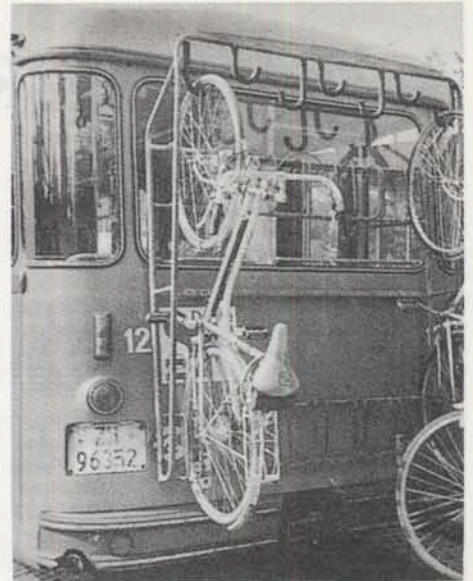
**Second class:** If you wondered why Britain's mail services are so unreliable now, the Post Office has revealed that the proportion moved by rail has fallen from 70 per cent three years ago to 20 per cent now. The Post Office claims the service has improved!

**Cool on cash:** British Rail is planning to use plug doors on all new rolling stock, following the problems with sliding doors last winter. It also plans more point heaters and better information for passengers. Prototypes of new types of rail vehicles will be tested for temperature extremes and diesel fuel better suited to low temperatures will be considered. The Department of Transport made no mention of who would pay the estimated £100 million cost.

**Big mover:** 19 billion tonnes of freight were moved by British Rail in 1988.

**Deadly department:** Over 3,000 pedestrians were killed or injured at or near pedestrian crossings in 1989 according to a leaflet issued by the Department of Transport. Likely response from the department: Reduce the number of pedestrian crossings.

**Bargain travel:** One of the best travel bargains in the world is now available to the over 26s. The InterRail pass which used to be available only to under-26s is now available to us all. The InterRail Plus 26 gives one month unlimited travel on 24 national rail systems across Europe for £235. A 15-day ticket costs £175 but excludes Spain, Portugal and Morocco. Neither card is valid on BR or any cross-Channel services.



All hung up: Bikes even go by bus in Zurich

## A cycle of despair

The free carriage of cycles by train was a welcome initiative by Sir Peter Parker when he was chairman of BR.

Since then BR managers with a meaner view and official miserliness by the Department of Transport has squeezed out all but the most determined users of the bike and train.

For the last 10 years cycling groups have been pleading with BR to be more reasonable in accommodating cycles and to build new trains which can cope with bikes, prams, skis and luggage.

BR has responded by continuing to build unsuitable trains, banning cycles from more and more services and introducing charges (in addition to increasing fares).

The once simple invitation to use the train has been converted into a multi-page document designed to confuse the customer.

One cycling wag has concluded: You can now take some bikes on some of the trains at some of the times, at the guard's discretion.

The latest news from Scotland however is that cycles have been banned completely on the 158s which Regional Railways regards as its flagship.

Writing in the Edinburgh Evening News, columnist Rob Edwards responded: "The trouble is that 158s are badly designed, cheap and nasty trains. They are the products of an industry starved of resources by successive governments.

"They represent the victory of short-term meanness over long-term planning. Of course the Government has to take much of the blame for this, but so too do ScotRail managers.

"They have failed to plan for sufficient growth and failed to win adequate resources."

RDS member Doreen Bray of Grangetown, Cardiff, sold her car in 1987 on environmental grounds, hoping to make use of bike and train. But she has been dismayed at how in that short time taking her bike by train has become more increasingly difficult and fraught.

She mourns the passing of the guards van and the introduction of Sprinters. She now suspects BR is actively trying to discourage cyclists. She has been told in an official letter that, after safety, meeting financial targets is BR's top priority. She predicts that the car will soon face severe restrictions and that the bike and train could have tremendous potential for the future.