

RDS

RAILWAY DEVELOPMENT SOCIETY

(incorporating RIS & RDA)

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RAILWAY DEVELOPMENT NEWS

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RAIL CLOSURES AND THE NEW GOVERNMENT

Before looking at the latest threat of further rail closures it will be useful to see what the new Government has done since it came to power and how this is likely to influence the Society's tactics in the coming months. Looming large in all this is of course the mounting energy crisis which could make the events of 1973/4 pale into insignificance.

With the change of government the Society's Chairman, Mr Banks, wrote to the Chancellor suggesting taxation measures which would encourage the more economic use of cars. For some inexplicable reason one of Mr Fowler's first acts as Minister of Transport was to scrap the Labour Plan to abolish road tax, despite apparent acceptance by the motor industry and the savings in manpower which it would have achieved, a move which should have appealed to Tory voters. Instead pressure from Civil Service Trade Unions, whose members would be affected, and/or from rural voters, who represent a large proportion of Conservative support, appears to have won the day.

Cuts in transport spending were not unexpected in Sir Geoffrey Howe's Budget and the railways were an obvious target. Of the £25m. announced on 12th June, £15m. will be slashed from the Board's cash limits on external finance, including a £1m. reduction in the level of grants for rail freight facilities but the remaining £10m. will be found from savings in the Road Programme. This will have the effect of reducing B.R.'s 1979/80 spending limits from £730m. to £715m. Some crumb of comfort can, however, be found in that no reduction has been made in the level of P.S.O. Grant which remains at £497m. and as a result rail fares are not likely to be increased in the Autumn as had been feared. Even so any reduction in rail investment can do nothing but bode ill for the long term future of the railways.

On the credit side the 10p. per gallon increase in the cost of petrol and derv. (which in the light of recent developments may only be the first of many) should make British Rail more competitive both in its freight and passenger businesses. The reduction in investment levels also has to be seen in the light of the Board's underspending on its Capital Budget as a result of delays in the supply of new equipment.

More people are, nevertheless travelling by train - according to the recent 1978 Annual Report of B.R. - the number of passenger journeys (724m.) being 3% up on 1977 and passenger miles up by 5%. As a result passenger revenue increased by £108m. (18%) and so enabled B.R. to achieve an operating surplus of £58.3m. and beat the financial limit set by the Government by £8m. On the freight side, however, tonnage was up only marginally on 1977 and the ton miles slightly down. Even so only 3 yrs. after losing £66m. and being directed by the Government to break even B.R.'s freight activities made a small surplus.

The prospects for road transport on the other hand look less encouraging as it had been hoped that diesel fuel, already taxed more highly than petrol, would escape altogether but the increase imposed in the latest Budget will, according to the Freight Transport Assn. put up its members' costs by at least 1.5%. Moreover there is a nasty sting in the tail with the tighter limits on rate support grant to local authorities which is bound to have some effect on Council's transport spending, especially on roads and buses, the last of which will also suffer from the higher fuel costs.

Before moving on to the effects of the energy crisis on road and rail it is significant that our comments on the plus side of Tachographs are not without their supporters within the road transport industry as a haulier in Peterborough recently confirmed that one of his drivers had been able to prove after a recent accident that he was not speeding, and urged a Trade Conference in Bournemouth to reject any move to exempt British commercial vehicles from the E.E.C. Regulations. The provisions regarding drivers' hours are also having some effect with the recent transfer by one coach firm of its Scottish tourists to a reserved coach on an Inter-city train and the similar transfer by Giltspur Bullens during the last 12 months of much of its London - Glasgow traffic on to Freightliners.

Turning to the fuel situation the facts of life were spelt out in a recent article in the "Financial Times" where Exxon, one of the largest American oil companies estimated that world crude oil supplies could fall between 1.5m. and 2m. barrels a day short of demand for at least the next 12 months unless conservation efforts are sharply increased. Spot shortages have already developed in several countries for products such as petrol, heating oil, jet fuel and naphtha and it predicted that the situation could become more critical by the winter if oil industry stocks were not rebuilt during the summer. In a country where a generation or more has grown up not knowing how to live without the motor car it is not inconceivable that Summer 1979 may be remembered for the petrol riots as disturbances have already been reported from both auto users and truckers where filling stations have run out of gas. All the more ridiculous then comes the D.O.T's determination to press ahead with its plans to wipe 43% of rail passenger services off the U.S. railroad map in an effort to improve the financial position of AMTRAK.

The position in the U.K. does not appear to differ greatly as both road and rail have been affected by the recent shortages of oil supplies so much so that the Central Transport Consultative Committee has expressed concern to the Minister of Transport at the way in which some cuts in frequency of diesel operated services has been forced on B.R. at a time when difficulties with petrol supplies are likely to produce increased passenger traffic, both in the peak and off-peak periods. Whilst it realises that refinery output patterns cannot be changed overnight the Committee considers B.R. should be offered a measure of priority in view of the role which energy efficient rail transport has to play in a situation which is unlikely to improve for some time and points to the example of some European railway administrations which have already received such treatment. In view of the level of Government support to the railways, and to attract new investment, the Cttee. considers B.R. should maximise passenger volume and revenue but any cuts in passenger services made necessary by the present action would frustrate such endeavours and be to their long term detriment.

The Society's response has been to issue a statement pressing for an acceleration in the railway electrification programme so that B.R. will be less dependent on oil; coupled with an immediate decision to maintain and extend the present rail network so that more traffic, both passenger and freight, can be diverted from the roads and thus save oil. A number of local Branches have also written to Ministers and M.Ps drawing their attention to the seriousness of the situation in their particular areas.

Finally we come to the latest concrete proposals, long mooted in these columns, to slash a further 700 miles off the B.R. rail network and the Society's answer to it. The plan was in fact put to the Dept. of Transport by B.R. back in March although the accompanying proposals to raise rail fares in September by some 7.5 - 12.5% now appear to have been deferred. The document concerns 85 services on 2,000 miles of the passenger network representing the least profitable quarter outside the inter-city routes. It has also been put to the Railway Unions who have needlessly to say expressed grave concern at its implications.

Under the 4 point plan a third would be replaced by buses run by the N.B.C. under contract to B.R.; others would be operated by a new generation of lightweight vehicles at present being developed by B.R.; some up-graded to Inter-city status and the remainder closed altogether without any replacement bus services. As is usual in such documents much stress is placed on the fact that most of the services meet less than 60% of their direct costs and lost over £30m. last year before taking into account shared overheads. No mention is made of the fact that complete closure will presumably have to go through the T.U.C.C. procedure (that is unless the Government intend to legislate it out of existence in its Transport Bill expected in the Autumn) or what will happen if the Minister decides against closure. All this must be seen in the light of the urgent need for investment to replace B.R.'s ageing fleet of diesel multiple units.

In a nutshell B.R.B. has decided that it is tired of having to spread its fixed level of P.S.O. Grant (which is in fact declining in real terms) over the entire system and would prefer to spend it on areas of potential growth. How long the replacement bus services will last on those lines to be so treated is again a 64,000 question both for the N.B.C. and the users. The response of the new Conservative Minister, Norman Fowler, has been cautious and so far he has not been prevailed upon by his civil servants to implement the plan rejected by his Labour predecessor stating "There is no justification for another Beeching style round of cuts."

The R.D.S. reply has been in the form of a 40 page booklet entitled "Your Local Trains in the 80s" * which was launched in mid-June. Whilst this was prompted largely by growing concern over B.R.'s ageing fleet of DMUs the increased investment which would be needed to replace them has undoubtedly had some influence on the latest B.R. Plan. The Booklet discusses existing DMUs, the proposed class 210 replacement, programmes for both re-furbishment and life extension as well as the role the Leyland railbus could play if further developed. Comparisons are made with continental railways in this field of operation. Other issues dealt with include electrification, use of hauled trains on some routes, promotion and the problems of level crossings (which figure prominently on many lines likely to be threatened) as well as the scope for some re-openings (more relevant in view of the oil crisis Ed.)

The book makes for easy reading and covers the essential points with the minimum of fuss, being aimed at those without a detailed knowledge of railway operation. It is the result of 6 months' study by a group of R.D.S. members and provides a fund of useful ammunition for use in pressing for investment not cuts!! We intend to mount a vigorous campaign around the book in the coming months with meetings throughout the country, as the future of local rail transport could well be decided between now and Christmas.

Whether there will be any local trains at all in the 1980s seems to be the key issue !!!

* Copies available from RDS Sales, "Latymer", The Drive, Belmont, Surrey, SM2 7DJ Price: 50p. (+ 10p. p & p.)

R.D.S. - SEVEN MONTHS ON !

(Text of the Chairman's address delivered at the first General Meeting of the Society held in Peterborough on Saturday 5th May 1979)

Although RDS has been in existence only seven months, following amalgamation of the three previous organisations (i.e. the Railway Invigoration Society and the two Railway Development Associations) we are rapidly establishing ourselves as the premier national pro-rail group in the country. New Branches are being formed in several localities to deal with local issues and contacts have been established with pro-railway groups in Europe and both North and South America.

Nationally, we are concentrating our activities on the following issues:-

- (1) Future investment in the railways.
- (2) Transfer of freight from road to rail.
- (3) Secondary lines (network concept, Local Authority participation)
- (4) Railway Electrification (energy conservation)
- (5) The Channel Tunnel.

We shall be pressing our views on the new Transport Minister, Members of Parliament, Civil Servants and Local Authorities etc.,

The original societies which now form R.D.S. were actively concerned in their early days with fighting the massive rail closure proposals. These I consider were our "Dunkirk" days. We fought then almost alone, we suffered heavy defeats but rescued much more than our enemies had planned and many lines were saved. Now in 1979, we have arrived at our "D.Day" period. We are not alone as we were in the Fifties and early Sixties, the environmentalists, the conservationists and many more sections of the general public are increasingly aware of the folly of the previous closure policies, so we, with our allies, are over to the attack and our fight is now to campaign for the re-opening of lines and stations and the general development of our railway system both for passengers and freight.

Above all else we must immediately concern ourselves with the secondary lines - mainly the lines operated by the Diesel Multiple Units. These units are worn out and replacement stock must be provided with financial aid from the Government or British Rail will be unable to keep these services running.

There is talk in some quarters of bus replacement on some rural lines. Will they never learn? Have they not read our publication "Can Bus Replace Train?" the facts are there in the book - buses cannot satisfactorily replace trains. We must not let the experts repeat the mistakes of the 1960s.

KEEP RAILWAYS TO EASE ENERGY CRISIS

O.H. Prosser *

Among that minority of secondary railway routes which survive in North Wales is the $2\frac{3}{4}$ -mile long single track branch linking the coast at Prestatyn with the inland town of Dyserth. Opened to freight in 1869, with a passenger service from 1905 - 1930, the branch ceased in 1973 to carry what had become its sole remaining traffic, stone from a quarry. The track has been left in place pending the possibility of its being needed again for stone.

In 1977 a group of chiefly local people set up the North Clwyd Railway Association so that, if British Rail finally decided that it no longer needed the branch, it might be possible to revive it as a community-endeavour concern. Their object in so doing was to provide both a useful service to those living in the district and to add something to the range of holiday amenities in an area to which thousands

flock each summer. Their inspiration came of the Railway Restoration Movement, which thirty years ago this year was planned for its first application on the Talylyn line between Towyn and Abergynolwyn by the late Mr L.T.C.Rolt, myself and others.

In public transport run on a normal commercial footing wages and salaries at some 60-70% of total costs come to more than all other expenses put together. By importing the principle of volunteer assistance in selected cases, the Movement has proved to be the most effective way of cutting costs yet evolved. The many lines which rely on its basic idea now carry on a self-financing footing well over two million passengers per annum as well as several thousand tons of freight. Judging from what has happened with so many other examples the N.C.R.A. thought that they had a chance of making a go of the Dyserth branch.

This year sees the crunch in the Association's affairs. In a letter dated 2nd May from the British Rail Property Board, Birmingham, to their Secretary, Mr Trefor Thompson, (10, The Avenue, Woodland Park, Prestatyn) it is stated that:-

"A shot estimate of the present value of the track, equipment, gives a figure in excess of £180,000 although the price to be paid may vary considerably from this figure when a detailed inspection is carried out."

The question of what value should be put on closed lines which are redundant assets to British Rail has long been a contentious one. For instance, when the Westerham Valley Railway Society were refused a lease on the 5-mile branch from Dunton Green in 1962 their own Valuer thought the purchase price should be some £20,000; B.R. sought more than twice as much. In 1963 a local group offered £40,000 for the Chacewater - Newquay line but were turned down on the grounds that £60,000 must be paid. That same year saw promotion of a scheme for acquisition of the Brent - Kingsbridge branch, for which some £40,000 was sought. The equipment was subsequently sold for scrap for £23,000 odd, though the land values are not known. The distance between Kingsbridge and its junction was 12½ miles. Quotations by the next year would seem to have risen sharply, for when in 1964 Herefordshire farmers enquired into buying Leominster - Presteign (17 miles) they were quoted £80,000. The cost of the track and assets of the 3¼ mile long Yatton - Clevedon branch, closed in October 1966, was given as £37,125, plus some £4,000 for land between but not including the terminal sites, though the scrap value of single track had at that time been quoted elsewhere as between £2,000 and £3,000 per mile and the assets did not amount to much.

One of the best known examples of B.R.'s policy was that affecting Sheringham - Weybourne, cited by the late Sir Gerald Nabarro, M.P., in his book "Steam Nostalgia", and also in the July 1965 issue of the promoting Society's newsletter, which explained that:-

"Track on this line has been sold to a Norwich scrap metal dealer and is now in the process of being removed... On contacting the scrap dealer it was ascertained that he would be willing to re-sell the track to us for only £3,000 per mile as compared with the £5,250 originally quoted by B.R. However, because of the terms of the contract between the dealer and the British Railways Board, we were told that the B.R.B. would not allow the dealer to sell the track to us for re-use; all track sold for re-use must be purchased direct from the Board at the price stipulated".

If one were to regard railway operation (by whomsoever it may be undertaken) as something anti-social and deserving of suppression, one could regard this kind of thing with equanimity. In fact, however, most people would probably agree that the retention of as much of the system as possible is a good thing from the point of view of different sections of the community. The passengers have kept in action, or brought back into use, a travel medium which can offer better than any

other, speed, comfort, safety, reliability in almost all weathers and a flexibility in absorbing peak loads. Ratepayers should rejoice at such economies in road expenditure as flow from existence of an alternative. British Rail themselves gain from the contributory revenue to their adjoining main lines of such traffic as might otherwise be diverted to road carriage throughout - for the long trunk haul as well as the branch taking it to its ultimate destination.

To all these points, which have long been valid, the recent past adds another, which means that with re-doubled force we can now adapt "Tiger" Clemenceau's dictum on generals and the conduct of war by saying: "The way in which threatened parts of the railway system are dealt with is too serious a matter to be left to the B.R. Property Board." That new factor is the energy crisis! Those living in parts of Britain where petrol has already run short at the pumps may have been reminded of some of the things said, even before the recent trouble in Iran, by the Rt. Hon. Roy Jenkins, President of the E.E.C. Commission when addressing the Seventh World Planning Congress. He then gave facts and figures illustrating beyond doubt that an energy crisis was looming which made essential such measures as "the revitalisation of public transport, especially the railways." Why so?

The simple reason is that through the combined influence of generally fewer stops, a usually more level course and most important of all the reduced natural resistance to movement of the steel wheel on the steel rail the rail vehicle can move given loads at only a fraction of the fuel consumption needed to do the same job by road. For this reason, in addition to all the others, there is urgent need for our country to look afresh at the prospects of those, who, like the North Clwyd Railway Association, seek to bring rail transport back into action. How is it to be done.

The need is to bring calm and reflective consideration to the basic issues. In the Railway Restoration Movement we have a technique which, as is being proved over and over again, can allow the running on a self-supporting basis of services that were hopelessly unprofitable when operated by a wholly paid staff. If (especially in the light of the energy crisis) we are as a nation to gain full benefits the Movement can confer, we need a new basis for takeover prices with disinterested impartial settlement of the price in a manner fair to both vendors and purchasers. In the draft Railway Transfers Bill, published with a considered case for its enactment in the Ian Allan book "Trains Annual" 1967 I sought to prescribe the kind of considerations that should be taken into account.

Agreeing when it was put to him that reform in transfers might best be achieved by suitable legislation, one of the most knowledgeable members in this field in the Upper House, the Lord Somers, in April 1975 promoted the measure in slightly amended form as the Railways (Transfer of Undertakings) Bill. It failed a second reading on 8th May that year through arguments on the part of the then Labour Government and others which those who check "Hansard" in their local Library may agree have become, flimsy as they were at the time, largely academic and unrealistic in the light of the energy crisis.

For this demands, if we are to take it seriously and prepare to meet its full impact, that the more energy-efficient forms of transport like railways and waterways shall be kept in being and given their full chance of serving the nation faithfully and well. The Dyserth branch could play its part. Whilst anyone with a seat in the Upper House can promote a Private Members' Bill at any time (and it would, indeed, be pleasant to see another trying again with something akin to that in which Lord Somers unfortunately failed), in the Commons the avenues for such action are much more limited. It may be, however, that some M.P., lucky in the autumn draw will feel that this is a measure he or she could usefully sponsor. I hope so.

Furthermore, the Euro-elections of 7th June will be of Members who will through their service on the Continent presumably assimilate the E.E.C's preoccupation with taking such action as the energy crisis dictates. Correspondence and other contacts with candidates could prove a productive way of securing their interest in bringing the influence of the Common Market legislature to bear on the issue. If directives from Brussels have brought about such changes as the compulsory introduction of Tachographs on lorries, one assumes that the E.E.C. Parliament if as conscious as one supposes of the need to save fuel would have the powers to impose fair railway transfer arrangements. These could certainly play a part in securing that growth of the community endeavour lines which would enable them more fully to contribute to a pattern of public transport geared to the situation with which we are now faced.

* Owen Humberstone Prosser was the founder of the Railway Development Association (16/11/51) which on 1st October 1978 merged with the Railway Invigoration Society to form the Railway Development Society.

(All unsigned articles are produced by the Editorial Board. Other material is welcome from members and others but does not necessarily represent the views of the Board or the Society. For addresses for the submission of material see back page.)

NOTES IN BRIEF

Thoughts of an American (Howard Kleinburg, Editor of Miami News, after a recent visit to Europe.) "As auto travel in the United States becomes more difficult because of gas supply and cost, it is a shame that the Amtrak railroad system is also cutting back. While Amtrak is operating at huge losses, it seems that we have given up on our trains just a bit too soon. Rather, an attempt to have America's rail system compare favorably with that of Europe's undoubtedly would cut down on much auto travel and further increase the use of trains.

But in America it hasn't been convenient to travel by train. Autos were easier. This is fast not becoming the case. I thought of that traveling by train from Boulogne to Calais in France, and from London to Dover in England, marveling at the efficiency of the systems and the comfort of the travel. Do that in America and Amtrak would be talking of expanding rather than retracting."

Cross Country Services - Following the improvements in the Norwich - Birmingham services which produced a 20% increase in travel, B.R. have substantially improved their SE/North services via Birmingham, and are considering a Birmingham - Dover and Peterborough - Liverpool cross-country service.

Sleeper Investment - (Not to hold up more rails but to ease night travel) The D.o.E. has approved a £39m. investment in 236 new sleeping cars for B.R.

Rail service cuts restored - rail service cuts arising from the oil shortage have led to industrial action by rail men in some areas. Hardest hit seems to have been South Wales where buses have also been seriously affected. Following a walkout by some staff in protest B.R. abandoned the cuts and withdrew disciplinary notices in a move to end a strike by some 200 local railwaymen. In Lincolnshire cuts have also been withdrawn following an appeal to Sir Peter Parker by the County's Chief Executive.

Woodhead Closure (See also p.13) - Delegates representing locomen from all parts of Britain voted at ASLEF's recent Annual Conference to take action to oppose the closure or run down of the Manchester - Sheffield - Wath electrified lines.

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

May was a red-letter month for London, with the opening of the first part of the Jubilee Line on May Day - L.T.'s new tube from Baker Street to Charing Cross via Bond Street - followed on 14th May by the start of B.R.'s Crosstown Linkline, which is the name given to the extended North Woolwich - Stratford - Camden Road service. Although the line is at present run by DMUs B.R. has plans for electrification and whilst the stations at Hackney Wick and Hackney Central are not expected to be ready until Spring 1980 and that at Dalston much later the simple interchange platform at West Ham (Manor Road) to link with the L.T. (District Line) opened with the new service. Members of the Branch Committee travelled the line on the first day and held an impromptu meeting at Custom House.

Rector Fights Jubilee Line Threat to City Church - The most useful part of the Jubilee Line is likely to be the next stage (CharingX - Fenchurch Street) and the extension eastwards into Docklands. The G.L.C. is anxious to develop this run-down area which may explain its readiness to "go it alone" without Government aid to Fenchurch Street for which it already has powers. A London traffic consultant, Nigel Seymer, has, however, put forward an alternative scheme, published in the "Evening Standard" which would take the line south of the river through Bermondsey. The scheme is not likely to be treated seriously and one reader of the Branch Newsletter "Railondon" has protested that it is essentially anti-rail.

So the probability is that the line will run under the Strand and Fleet Street, making a useful connection at Aldwych with the short branch from Holborn, once threatened with closure, and providing another station at Ludgate Circus. It has been suggested that these stations might be dispensed with as an economy, but one near Ludgate Circus or Blackfriars would be essential if Channel Tunnel trains are eventually to use the B.R. line through Blackfriars, as RDS advocates, in order to take advantage of the link to the North which will be provided when Snow Hill tunnel, alongside Farringdon Road, is opened.

Owners of buildings on the south corner of Fleet Street and New Bridge Street have already been alerted to the fact that a tube station entrance is likely to be built at this point. One of the buildings likely to be affected is the church of St. Brides, one of Wren's most famous, whose crypt would only be feet away from the proposed station. The Rector, the Rev. Dewi Morgan, told RDS that he was determined to fight the proposal, particularly in view of the "why worry?" attitude of the G.L.C. He had been told: "If we had to deviate by one foot it would cost £10m., but we could replace your steeple for £2m. St. Brides steeple is Wren's tallest; it withstood the air raid on the city in December 1940, when most of the church was destroyed but was later restored.

Liverpool Street - B.R. to prepare detailed scheme - The admirable plan for the northern end of the L.T. East London Line to terminate at Liverpool Street, instead of the wilds of Shoreditch, is part of the tentative proposals for the re-development of the two adjacent termini, Liverpool Street and the higher level Broad Street. Outline Planning Permission and Listed Building Consent was given by Peter Shore in the final days of the last Government. B.R. now has to prepare a detailed scheme, particularly in view of the Minister's decision that part of the Western Train Shed must be retained.

Extra platforms will be needed for both the East London Line and North London Line trains, if Broad Street station is to be closed and the site sold, and the Inspector, in his report which accompanied the Minister's decision, considered that the latter could be constructed at a high level above the extra low level platforms. Rather than abandon the service between Dalston and Broad Street, as B.R. seem to favour, it would not be impossible to transfer some Eastern Region services from Stratford into the new high level station by re-instatement of the Eastern curve at Dalston Junction, a scheme which is being studied both by the Branch and the North London Line Committee.

Rural services - Out in the sticks the Branch is applying its mind to the problems of the Ashford - Hastings line as B.R. want to single the section between Appledore and Ore (18 of its 26 miles) and provide a passing loop only at Rye. This they claim, would keep the line running with a smaller subsidy. It is therefore hoped to arrange a meeting in the Autumn, probably at Rye, to sound out local opinion and possibly set up a local Rail Users' Group of the kind which has proved so successful in East Anglia.

As the building of a Channel Tunnel appears once again to be imminent, the revitalisation of rail services in Kent is all-important. Kent County Council has invited RDS to comment on its public transport consultation draft for 1979-80, and the Branch has urged that maximum advantage should be taken of the county's rail network. We are also urging the Council to support the re-opening to passenger traffic of the Isle of Grain line (as outlined in R.D.N. No.1, (Oct. 78), p.5) and are hoping to run a railtour over the line in 1980.

MIDLANDS

Bromsgrove Increase - Worcestershire County Council has arranged the provision of an experimental increase in trains to Bromsgrove. From October a new total of around 9 trains each way per day will run to and from Birmingham, mainly as extensions of the Longbridge service, and also calling at Barnt Green. Some will run to Worcester. At Bromsgrove it is planned to provide timed connections with buses.

Kenilworth Mining - N.C.B. exploratory mining around north Kenilworth - South Coventry has found huge reserves of coal which they will seek to mine within the next 10 years. This could lead to much rail traffic and may require the doubling of the existing line and perhaps the re-opening of the Berkeswell cut-off line.

Broadway route - In July contractors started removing track from the now disused Cheltenham - Stratford upon Avon line but hopes still linger locally as to the possibility of its re-use and there are whispers of relaying the Stratford - Honeybourne direct line.

West Midlands Usage - At November 1978 the average weekday passengers counted at New Street or Moor Street were as follows:-

Four Oaks	10,043	
Longbridge	8,231	
Leamington	7,796	(Only Walsall was slightly down
Coventry	7,207	due to a 50% reduction in the
Kidderminster	4,953	off-peak trains)
Earlswood	3,537	
Wolverhampton	3,099	
Walsall	3,013	

Castle Bromwich - The Branch has publicised the need to re-open the existing platforms at Castle Bromwich, near Water Orton, where there is a vast housing estate and two large industrial areas with good bus interchange readily available. New stairs and offices are required at a cost of about £200,000. There is already an hourly service of trains (better in the peak) and much support for the scheme from local residents and elected members.

Re-open says T.U.C.C. - In a paper to the B.R.B. on railway performance the Central Transport Consultative Committee has suggested the re-opening of about 25 miles of freight-only lines to passenger service each year. Over 2,200 miles of freight-only routes and amongst others it is suggested that the Coventry - Bedworth - Nuneaton line could support at least a peak hour DMU passenger service.

Coalbrookdale Special - To celebrate the Bi-centenary of the Iron bridge in the Severn Gorge near Telford B.R. has laid on a Sunday train service over this otherwise heavily used branch line to the Buildwas Power Station. The New Town has supplied a new platform.

Snow Hill - The Birmingham City Council has approved a shopping centre development above a new Snow Hill station (on the ex GWR line) and the developers have sought a commitment from the W.M.P.T.E. as to their intentions to re-open the line with intensive local services.

EAST ANGLIAN

Special Trains and Re-openings - The first three of this year's special trains on freight-only lines (to Swavesey, Fakenham and Wisbech chartered by the RDS and its associated local action committees, carried well over a thousand people; and at the time of writing, bookings are coming in well for our Dereham - Lowestoft train on 22nd July.

A similar train will run from Wisbech to Lowestoft on Saturday 2nd September. An adult return fare of £2.95 is being charged; or 80p. return March - Wisbech. Full details and bookings: Catours, Nene Quay, Wisbech Cambs. Please enclose a stamped addressed envelope, and make cheques etc., payable to WAMRAC.

The last train in this year's series will be on Saturday 13th Oct. from Norwich to Lenwade and return; then Norwich to Reepham and return. Although this line has had an annual autumn passenger train since 1976, this will be the first time that a train will be run to cater for the shoppers' market from these Norfolk towns and villages into Norwich; in addition to the enthusiast and day tripper market. A return fare of £1.75 will also be available from Norwich to Lenwade; and a coach trip from Lenwade to Thursford Organ Museum and steam railway, and back to Reepham to connect with the evening train. Full details and bookings: Mr J.Coton, 63, Soame Close, Aylsham, Norfolk. Cheques etc., payable to ADRAC.

The running of specials on freight-only lines is only one aspect of our work towards their permanent re-opening. We also keep up the political pressure for this, and are therefore pleased that RDS has been invited to participate in the Hearing in Public of the Cambridgeshire Structure Plan in September; when we shall again argue the case for the restoration of St. Ives and Wisbech to the passenger network.

Oil crisis - Train Cuts "deplorable" - The Branch wrote in early June to the Secretaries of State for Energy and Transport, and to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, describing as "deplorable" the fact that B.R. were having to cut trains because of lack of fuel; and urging that diesel supplies to the railways be safeguarded (if necessary with constraints on private road transport) and that rail investment be stepped up to bring about speedier electrification. Our letter was well reported in most local media - including an interview with the Branch Secretary on Radio Orwell - and several individual members of the RDS have followed up with personal letters to their M.Ps.

Although the train cuts, when announced, were less than feared; and some services (e.g. Iner-city; and Norwich - Yarmouth/Lowestoft) escaped altogether; we still take the view that even one cut is one too many. We are encouraged by the reinstatement of the 19.30. Ipswich - Saxmundham and return, after local protests; and the continued running - at the time of writing - of a Saturdays-Only Norwich - Sheringham train threatened with the axe. The Branch and its associated local

users' groups will continue to press for the remaining cuts to be reversed.

Freight - The port of Lowestoft handled 25,000 tonnes of rail freight in 1978 - which is some 18-20,000 more than dealt with in the previous few years. These figures have been given to the RDS by B.R.'s Divisional Freight Manager, and are encouraging - though of course they also show how much rail freight at Lowestoft had become run down by 1977.

Yarmouth - Following the RDS Public Meeting in Yarmouth on 28th March, attended by 35 people, the East Norfolk Travellers' Association has been revived, and is now fixing its priorities in a campaign to improve services and facilities on the Norwich - Yarmouth service, and increase usage. Those priorities include the restoration of a more attractive summer Sunday service on the Acle line; improvements to early morning services into Norwich; an inspection of Yarmouth station to compile its good and bad points (like the SHRUG survey, q.v.); and improved publicity for services.

Other activities - Among the many activities of the Branch and its associated local groups in recent months have been a sponsored train ride; lobbying of Euro-candidates; talks by members to Cambridge Civic Society and the local District Council of the NUR; the mounting of the Branch exhibition at Ipswich and Southwold; and publicising B.R. services and facilities - including the One Day Anglia Ranger which, again this year, provides very good value at £2.50.

Autumn Meeting - The Autumn Meeting of the Branch will be held at the Assembly House, Theatre Street, Norwich, on Saturday 29th Sept, commencing at 2.0.p.m. The meeting will include the first showing of the film of the special train to Fakenham, made by RDS member R.B.Whipps.

AREAS

North East England

Our correspondent in the North East reports:-

Metro Problems - Very serious problems have arisen re progress on the Tyneside Metro. As charges and counter charges are made by the various parties, it is difficult to get a clear picture of just what has gone wrong. The main problem relates to cost. Mr Rodgers originally placed a ceiling of £160.88m. at 1975 prices. Current estimates are that this will now rise to £277m. representing a £40m. increase at present day prices. Tyne & Wear Council intend to approach the present Minister of Transport, Mr Norman Fowler, with a request that the Govt. should grant the necessary extra cash, but realise that current policies on public spending mean that they cannot hold out a great deal of hope. In the event of failure, an approach for help from E.E.C.funds is the most likely course to be pursued.

On the construction front there is an estimated delay of 2 years in overall completion, with no part of the system likely to be operational before the Summer of 1980. There is a possibility that the section from Heworth to South Shields may be abandoned altogether. Despite all the problems plans are going ahead to introduce through bookings on Tyne & Wear P.T.E. buses where change of vehicle is required this being part of the long term plan to allow single bookings for journeys made partly on Metro and partly by bus.

B.R.Services - The rail services from the North East to London are continuing to attract extra custom now that the High Speed 125s are widely used. Teeside Airport report a drop in the number of people using their flights, and accept that B.R.'s improved services are a major factor.

B.R. have plans to speed up off-peak services on the Newcastle - Carlisle line, by cutting out stops at stations such as Haydon Bridge, Bardon Mill and Brampton. Tynedale Council Transport Committee has

decided to formally object to the move, because the present service of trains to Newcastle from these stations is already limited, so any further reductions would make it very difficult to use the railways.

It is proposed to spend as much as £30,000 to provide a bus and train link up at Durham, where there is a fair distance and steep hill between the respective stations.

Freight - A new freight service has been introduced between Tees-side and Stranraer providing a link to Northern Ireland by the Stranraer - Larne Ferry.

When the Riverside Branch of the North Tyneside loop was closed in July 1973 the line was retained to freight standards. However the section between Percy Main and Point Pleasant has now been lifted, and the remainder has had reduction in tracks and most of the signalling system has been destroyed.

Merseyside

The full complement of Class 507 EMUs are now in service on Mersey-rail Northern Lines and are much appreciated by the travelling public. Some sets of the displaced "Southport" stock were seen recently at Crewe en-route for scrapping. We now look forward to the appearance in the next few years of new electric stock for the Wirral side of the Mersey and electrification of the Rock Ferry to Hooton line. After long delays things are moving at last in respect of providing station car parks on this line; a 60 space one at Bromborough is now out to tender and one at Spital and extension of the existing one at Hooton are under negotiation.

There is renewed hope for the survival of the Bidston/Wrexham service with news that local authorities other than Clwyd (the sole helpers with finance so far since Merseyside P.T.E. withdrew last year) are now interested in giving financial help.

The prolonged bus stoppages on Merseyside in May due to industrial action by crews was mitigated by strengthening of trains where possible e.g. 6 cars were run all day on Garston/Kirkby line and Rock Ferry/Chester DMUs were increased from 2 to 4 car - the latter were often "full and standing" at certain times of the day. Some trains on the main line into Lime Street made additional stops at Liverpool suburban stations.

The new trans-pennine Liverpool - York hourly shuttle has made a good start with early arrivals reported on more than one occasion at Liverpool. A similar welcome improvement is a circuit of loco-hauled Mk. 1 coaches on the Crewe - North Wales line replacing some DMUs.

An APT set is now often seen doing trials between Crewe and Carnforth on WCML - it was seen last week "swishing" through Wigan and gracefully doing its tilting act on the curves to the North and South of the station. May we soon be able to sample it and in the year of the "Rocket 150" celebrations show the world that we not only started railways but still lead.

Yorkshire

At a Public Meeting organised by the Area Representative Mr D.J. Bradbury in Sheffield on 28th April Mr T.J. Garrod (RDS National Cttee.) spoke on the need for railway development; and Dr Porteus, of the Sheffield Passengers' Association, dealt with the local rail network and how it could be improved. After detailed discussion of local issues the meeting unanimously passed resolutions urging the retention and development of the Woodhead route to Manchester; and priority to the permanent re-opening of Dronfield station and the main line platforms at Dore. These resolutions have been sent to B.R. and the relevant local authorities.

Woodhead Line - An official statement from British Rail about the future of the line is expected very soon. It is anticipated that closure of the line will be announced for 1982.

In spite of this considerable maintenance is being carried out on the track, Welded rail has been laid between Torside and Hadfield, a distance of about three miles. Work is also continuing on strengthening the Dinting viaduct. Approval has been given for the diversion of trains using the Hope Valley line on Sundays to the Woodhead route between Oct. 1979 and May 1980. This is to allow work to continue in Totley tunnel where an underground stream is giving a lot of trouble.

At present there are 48 class 76 electric locos for use on the Woodhead line, 28 of these are working regularly, 7 are kept for stand by duties, but the remainder are likely to be reduced by 8 in the near future. The line from Guide Bridge to Stalybridge, formerly scheduled for closure, is being widened and the bridges strengthened, a possible prelude to the closure of Woodhead.

The RDS has been invited to take part in the Hearing in Public of the West Yorkshire Structure Plan in October - which will be a valuable opportunity to put our case for the improvement of local rail links.

North and East Lincolnshire

The South Humberside Rail Users' Group, formed earlier this year on the initiative of RDS, has been making steady progress. SHRUG members descended on the four stations in Grimsby and Cleethorpes in the Spring and made a close inspection of the facilities. This resulted in a detailed report of the good and bad points of each station (e.g. clean spacious toilets at Cleethorpes; faulty lighting at Grimsby Docks); plus a recommendation that a basic halt for Willows Estate, 1½ miles west of Grimsby Town station be urgently considered. SHRUG's report has been sent to all relevant bodies in the hope of getting improvements; and also resulted in Secretary Mr M.J.Savage (who is also RDS Area Representative) being interviewed on Radio Humberside.

Another recently formed local body is the Grimsby - Louth Rail Group, campaigning for the restoration of passenger services on the Grimsby - Louth freight-only line, and ultimately the restoration of the entire East Lincs. line. The G-LTG has just joined the RDS as a corporate member, and we hope to include a fuller report of its work in our next issue.

South Lincolnshire

The RDS is studying the Draft Written Statement of the Lincs. Structure Plan and will be issuing its comments very shortly.

The Lincolnshire Road Car Company has produced a joint bus/rail timetable with effect from 1st June - a move which the Society welcomes. Less welcome, however, are the continued travelling problems caused by the 10-hour shift between Boston and Skegness - which are being closely documented by RDS members and SELTA Treasurer Mr R.L.Waite. On one occasion an evening train from Grantham arrived at Skegness too late to form the 19.20 back to Grantham; and as a result passengers for Nottingham and London were conveyed from Skegness to Grantham by taxi at B.R.'s expense! SELTA is calling for more flexibility in staff working hours to allow for such late running.

More encouraging is the recent introduction of local day return fares on the line - something for which the RDS and SELTA have been pressing for some time. Unfortunately this has been given very little publicity; and indeed SELTA members are concerned about the general lack of efficiency from B.R. at Doncaster in publicising the line.

Severnside and South Wales

Despite publicity for new members in 80 libraries and colleges from Moreton-in-Marsh to Fishguard response to date has been most

disappointing so the formation of any sort of Branch in either of these areas must wait for the time being.

A particularly successful publicity event was the display mounted at Gloucester Library from 2nd June - 5th July which resulted in a long article published in a number of weekly papers. The RDS effort by our Representative was a follow up to a local railway history display presented by the library staff, which included detailed track plans of the Gloucester Brookthorpe Marshalling Yard which scheme was cancelled but had been a major factor in closure of Stroud Valley Halts and withdrawal of passenger services to leave lines clear for freight trains which in the event never materialised.

Our effort filled four large display panels in the entrance hall and consisted of maps, local photographs, including Ferry Wagons being loaded at Gloucester, B.R. Ferry Wagon publicity, HO and O gauge model wagons and containers, electric and diesel locomotives, B.R. passenger and parcels facility leaflets and diagrams of potential new passenger train service patterns on five routes from Gloucester. Public reaction has been support for restoration of a Halt at Brimscombe and support for the re-opening of Yate to serve Yate Sodbury New Town. It is hoped to arrange further RDS displays in other towns in the area.

Pembroke Boat Train - The Whitland - Tenby - Pembroke Dock line now provides a connectional service to a new B.& I. Cork - Pembroke ferry service which since May 1979 has been diverted from its former Swansea terminal. Whilst the B.R. terminal stops some $\frac{1}{4}$ mile short of the new B.& I. ferry terminal the track bed of the former dock line is still available for relaying as a "Weymouth" type port rail link.

Ford Line - To serve the new Bridgend factory the Ford Motor Co., are building a branch line complete with level crossings over the A48. Clearly Ford see the benefit of rail freight facilities.

Devon & Cornwall

Plymouth HST - Work has started on a £4 $\frac{1}{4}$ m. depot at Plymouth to service and maintain the High Speed Trains being introduced later this year on the Paddington - Exeter - Plymouth - Penzance services. The new depot also anticipates the maintenance requirements of the additional HSTs to be introduced in 1981/82 on the NE/SW route.

A.A. praise for St. Ives - Praise indeed from the Automobile Assn. whose 1978 National Motoring Awards presented a Silver Medal to B.R. for its Park & Ride scheme on the Lelant - St. Ives Branch. For 1979 a much larger car park, extended platforms, longer trains and later services will be provided. A composite fee of £1.00 per car includes parking and travel for all occupants.

EDITORIAL ANNOUNCEMENT

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Mr Bevan is responsible for branch and area reports, Mr Barfield for all other material. To ensure inclusion in the next issue (to be published in November) all material must be in the hands of the appropriate Editor by WEDNESDAY 3rd OCTOBER.

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