



Railway Development NEWS

25p

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members

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February 1980

Minister denies 900-mile closure plan

Members of R.D.S. will by now be familiar with the report which appeared in the "Guardian" on 7th November of an alleged plan by B.R. and the D.Tp. to close 900 miles of railway line, including 41 passenger services and with Transport Minister, Norman Fowler's vehement denial of any policy for "substantial" cuts in the rail network. Looking through past copies of R.D.N. the subject seems to come up almost every other issue; all that seems to vary is the mileage and number of services to be cut. The latest disclosure appears to have been prompted by a Cabinet decision to impose a further £22m. reduction in B.R.'s passenger subsidies on top of a cut of £20m. made by the previous Govt. but the alleged plan seems only to be a re-hash of one drawn up by B.R. in 1975 when the then Government was applying for a loan from the I.M.F.

More significant than the "leak" itself was an editorial in the "Guardian" on the same day entitled "Much lopping on the line" to which the Society's Chairman was not slow to respond refuting many of the pro-closure arguments it contained. Also of consequence has been the response of the Central Transport Consultative Committee whose Chairman, Frank Higgins, in launching its recent report on Rural Railways * shortly after the "Guardian" disclosure, asserted that the public would much prefer reduced standards to complete closure of their local rail services. He described B.R.'s proposals for modernising rural lines as unnecessarily elaborate and costly and suggested that the projected annual loss on these services of £30m. could possibly be cut by half.

The Report itself * echoes much of what has been said in the Society's publication "Your Local Trains in the 80s" @ which is specifically referred to in the introduction.

Above all it raises the perennial problem of B.R.'s costing methods for local services for whilst P.T.Es appear to have generally accepted the Board's "allocated cost formula" (of which RDS and its predecessors have long been critical) Shire Counties have not so far committed themselves to it, even assuming that they are the appropriate bodies to give financial support to rural services, other than as a last resort.

One area in which there appears to have been inadequate research is contributory revenue and the Report points out that studies carried out by various Government and academic bodies (including RDS) over the last 10 years on such lines as the Cambrian Coast, Exeter - Barnstaple and Ashford - Hastings, have indicated that this can form an

@ Copies available from RDS Sales, "Latymer", The Drive, Belmont, Surrey, SM2 7DJ Price: 62p. inc. postage.



Photo: Kent Messenger, Maidstone

Dear member,

You will find enclosed with this issue of Railway Development News details of our Annual General Meeting to be held in Bristol on 26 April.

An Annual General Meeting is the highlight of the year's activities, and an excellent opportunity for members from all parts of the country to meet and discuss the Society's policies and activities.

As Chairman, I extend a personal invitation to all members to join us on 26 April, and I look forward to meeting many members at Bristol.

As a national organization, it means a long journey for some; but to be fair, we endeavour to hold our AGM in a different area each year. We shall no doubt decide on the 1981 venue at this year's meeting.

Yours sincerely,

R. V. Banks

Chairman.

"Come to the AGM"

appreciable portion of service earnings, possibly as high as 25-35%, and would have a noticeable effect on Inter-city business if passengers opted to make the whole of their journey by another mode. Only now, however, is B.R. to embark on research into this important subject.

Whilst the Board has maintained that it is not seeking to close passenger services and that the effect on the freight system would be evaluated on an individual basis the Committee detected no awareness by B.R. of the environmental and social effects of transferring freight from rail to road (witness the position of Fakenham RDN No.5, p.13). In the view of the Committee the value of a complete rail network for passenger and freight traffic cannot be too strongly emphasised and a greater degree of stability by Central Government in policy on Inter-city services would assist the "cascading" of stock to these local services. The tendency for railway investment to take place en-bloc every 25-30 years is also seen as one of the major problems of rural rail services in the 80s.

Turning to B.R.'s Bus/Rail proposals the Committee sees little future for them and the concept was effectively knocked on the head by Richard Hope, Editor of the "Railway Gazette" in a recent letter to the "Financial Times" when he summed up the position as follows:-

"There may yet be a case for closing some lines, but let us stop pretending that people are being perverse in refusing to recognise that buses in B.R. livery would be every bit as good as trains. The public has been there before, and fights to keep the railways because it represents a tangible link which is not easily whittled away - as so many rural bus routes have been in the last 20 years."

In his own summing up of the CTCC's recommendations Mr Higgins suggested the replacement of some DMUs with the Leyland Railbus; running some country lines as light railways with single track; single manning and low cost vehicles on continental lines with easing of Inter-city standards - a proposal which does not seem to be wholly unacceptable to the Railway Inspectorate. Lightweight trains and railbuses running on railway track would not have to use congested and circuitous roads and would be able to offer a service of comparable standard to existing trains.

The Society's Chairman issued a statement to the press on the same day (14/11/79) supporting the C.T.C.'s recommendations and adding:- "The Minister of Transport has repeatedly stated that there will be no Beeching type cuts. Will he now publicly state that this Government will not allow the rural lines of the country to be run down until they are no longer able to operate, and what steps he proposes to take to avoid this happening?"

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On a slightly different tack, B.R. also placed before the Railway Unions in the middle of November a package which could possibly lead to a more flexible attitude to manning, rostering, radio links between locos, and signal boxes and even possibly remote control locos, on some isolated systems. It also hopes thereby to reduce labour turnover and absenteeism in train operation, a problem which has seriously beset the new North Woolwich - Camden Road service, but which is clearly not an isolated case.

In conclusion, whilst Mr Fowler has promised "No more Beechings" in the words of RDS Vice-Chairman, M.P.L.Caton, "even one closure is a Beeching to those who live there". Whether or not there is any credence in the 900 mile closure plan it nevertheless shows what B.R. would be forced to do if P.S.O. is cut any further and adequate investment in the railways is not forthcoming. In order to fully ventilate this issue the Society has convened a National Conference of Rail Users' Groups in London on 29th March. (For further details see R.D.S.DIARY p.9)

* "Rural Railways" A report on British Rail's other provincial services. Sept. 1979.
CTCC, 3-4, Gt. Marlborough Street, London W1V 2EA

Heavier juggernauts will ruin roads

Is the Juggernaut in fact the cheapest way to convey the nation's wares as the road haulage industry would have us believe or is the market for transport being distorted by the hidden subsidies which lorries receive in the form of less than adequate taxation to cover the damage they cause; a subsidised road system; freedom to intrude into congested areas which no measure of control will ever restrain; but above all freedom to pound the nation's roads, both motorway and by-road, to destruction within the next 20 years (or less)? The picture puts one in mind of a certain South American country which placed all its eggs into one basket, namely road haulage, only to find its road system pounded into ruins such that its economy was unable to finance their rebuilding, so rapid was the rate of decay.

Will this situation be allowed to happen in Britain or has the road to ruined roads already been paved? Judging by the furore over the Peeler affair (See RDN No.3. p.2), criticism over some aspects of the Armitage Inquiry and the initial suppression of LR910, the controversial TRRL report on the Damaging effect of Commercial Traffic, the road lobby could well have its back to the wall. What, however, LR910 does reveal is that the most damaging vehicles are those over 28 tons, and that the 4th power rule for the incidence of axle damage may well be

out of date. More worrying is the fact that current official forecasts are that in 10 years time vehicles of this class will be doing at least 60% more mileage than at present, and that Great Britain already has about 120,000 of them, far more than any other continental country.

Official figures for motorway and trunk road maintenance also put the cost of this class of road in 1979 at £94m. (which at 1978 prices is more like £100m.) whilst that for all other roads came to £520m. What is perfectly clear to any user of the M1 and other major roads is that some, even less than 10 years old, are having to be completely rebuilt and Alan Smith, County Engineer for Kent, which gets a heavy pounding of lorries to the Channel ports (of which 53% of those tested in the last 6 months were found to be overweight) has predicted that a road such as the A2, designed to last 20 years, may need complete renewal in as little as 8.

There is therefore increasing evidence that the damaging effect of these lorries (with a legal limit of 10 ton axle load) is much greater than is now officially admitted and the National Council on Inland Transport in a submission to the National Taxation Division of the D.Tp. has calculated that the underpayment in taxes by Artics. (4 axle 32 tons) of which there are estimated to be 75,600 could be as much as £50m. p.a. (the Department itself admits an underpayment of £500 each) and re-iterates the view expressed by the Society that it is inequitable in these circumstances to have expected rail freight to break even over the last 2 years - a feat which it has in fact achieved - but at what expense to the taxpayer.

Furthermore a recent report by the Council for the Protection of Rural England finds that more than 50% of the 207,000 miles of roads in Britain are unsuitable for Juggernauts, and expresses particular concern about the few restrictions imposed on their use of such roads. Even when new by-passes are built they are not used as South Cambs. D.C. was told in a recent report that industry objected to letting lorries travel the extra miles by using the A45 Cambridge Northern By-pass. The Report by CPRE also questions whether the forecasts of serious increases in the tonnage of goods carried by road will materialise, and whether the distances travelled will continue to increase at some of the rates suggested. What is clear is that Sir Arthur Armitage will have much useful and hitherto unpublished material to weigh up in conducting his Inquiry into the case for heavier lorries, of which that submitted by R.D.S. is only one of many.

The main conclusions of this document, shortly to be published by the Society are that whilst it is inconceivable that all loads at present going by road could, or

should go all the way by rail, much of the heavy long-distance freight - and indeed some of the lighter - can and should go all or part of the way by rail, and sets out the reasons why. The Society, therefore, sees little need for bigger and heavier lorries which would have an adverse effect on safety and fuel consumption and quotes the example of Japan which has a maximum weight of 20 tons and whose economy is often set up as a model for our own.

Other organisations which have submitted evidence to Sir Arthur's Inquiry are:- The Pedestrians' Association, which asserts that lorries are only paying half of their road costs; the Civic Trust which is pressing the Government to declare further growth in heavy lorry traffic as "unacceptable" and not the least B.R. itself, which like the Society argues that with lorries consistently failing to pay their full road costs the conceptive market between road and rail for long distance freight is distorted, and that this situation should be remedied before even heavier lorries are contemplated.

Whatever the outcome of the Inquiry Mr D. Penhaligon, Liberal Party Transport Spokesman, has been pressing Mr Fowler in Parliament to make all the relevant evidence available to the public, including that of those senior officers of the Department of Transport who believe that 44 ton lorries would be good for Britain... but even as we go to press further evidence has come to light of what might be construed as an attempt by the EEC to pre-empt the decision of the Inquiry.

This takes the form of a proposal which has been put to its Economic and Social Committee to set up a European Road and Bridge Repair Fund from which D.Tp. and County Councils could claim for major road damage caused if heavier lorries are allowed. However, this would have to be financed out of much heavier lorry taxes throughout the E.E.C. and goes some way to scotch the myth perpetrated by some sections of the Road Lobby that heavier lorries would not be more damaging. Clearly we have not seen the last of these machinations.

'Roads into railways': members respond

Dear Sir,

If the Railway Development Society is to remain a credible and persuasive force likely to convince uncommitted public opinion of its case, and able to command respect from "the opposition" it must continue to press its arguments and make its statements in a realistic and reasoned way. I feel therefore that I must try and redress the balance by answering some of the rather extreme views expressed in Mr Servian's article which appeared in the last issue of the Journal.

Firstly his proposals take no account of the need many Britons have (or believe they have) for private transport. Use of public transport is either unknown to, or disliked by, many and they will not forego their cars without a clearer explanation than your contributor offers as to why research and development could not produce battery cars at reasonable cost, or for that matter why more economical conventional cars cannot prosper for the foreseeable future.

He also fails to acknowledge that his strategy would require enforcement by a democratically elected government who might be encouraged to make a change of emphasis, but cannot be expected to turn over existing policies in such a revolutionary fashion.

There is a certain amount of sense in what Mr Servian says but few people at present will be impressed by extreme proposals to close the M1 and M20; my own worry is that few people will take seriously, still less associate themselves with, a Society which publishes such suggestions.

John Lunn
Aylesbury, Bucks.

Dear Sir,

I found the article about converting roads into railways interesting, however, it made no mention of the effect the development of new railway technology, especially in electronics and computers, could have. In my opinion this would be more likely to increase rail traffic than the rising price of oil.

The author mentions the need to increase the pay and numbers of rail staff, however, I believe that even with a much larger railway network and more rail traffic the number of railway staff would need to be reduced if the building of new railways is to be economic in some areas. At present staff costs account for something like 60% of B.R.'s expenditure and even more for road hauliers and bus operators.

The technology already exists to run driverless remote-controlled trains on some specialised railways and could be adapted to a large part of Britain's railways. In addition to greatly reducing operating costs the development and introduction of new railway technology should increase the speed, flexibility, scope and efficiency of rail transport.

Operations such as rolling stock, locomotives and track maintenance and building could be automated and simplified to reduce costs and increase efficiency.

Furthermore if instantaneous and automatic coupling and uncoupling of rolling stock; rapid switching of complex networks of points could be developed and con-

trolled by computers and microprocessors, which could also run the trains themselves, then rail would become a much better mode of transport for most purposes than road ever was.

Otto Ruskulis
Newcastle-upon-Tyne

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The Editor will consider for publication letters on matters of general interest (such as the above). Any opinions expressed, however, must not be taken as necessarily reflecting the official views and policies of the Society.

The Editor also reserves the right to make "cuts" Letters should normally be signed by the writer's real names. Only in exceptional circumstances, which must be clearly stated in a covering note, will a letter be accepted for publication under a "nomme de plume".

R.D.S. DIARY

MARCH - 15th - RDS is to hold a meeting at the Howard Room (next to the Corn Exchange) in BEDFORD, at 2.0.p.m. The Chairman will be Mick Farley, a member of RDS and of Bedfordshire County Council. Speakers will be Messrs: D.Maudlin, T.J.Garrold and D.F.Ogilvy.

Subject: the future of the Bletchley - Bedford line and the formation of a Rail Users' Group. (members in the area will already have been sent details but those from other areas will be welcome)

22nd - RDS (in conjunction with the National Council on Inland Transport) is to hold an afternoon Conference at the Royal Station Hotel York, on the theme "More Freight to Rail" which will be addressed by Sir James Farquharson (a Vice-President of RDS), Mr Ralf Bonwit and possibly also a senior officer of British Rail.

A visit is also being organised on the morning of the conference to B.R.E.L. Holgate Works where EMUs are manufactured. Fee for the Conference will be £2.50 + 50p. for tea (if desired) and further information and booking forms can be obtained from: K.Meyer, 5, Pembridge Crescent, London W11 3DT

29th - A National Conference of Rail Users' Groups is to be held by the Society at: Friends House, Euston Road, London N.W.1. between 11.30 and 16.30 - with an hour for lunch.

(over)

The main aims of the Conference are:-

- (a) to enable rail users' groups to meet each other and learn from each other's experiences and
- (b) to discuss the relationship between RDS and users' groups - in particular how the two can co-operate in the light of threatened rail cuts;

and it is hoped that as many groups as possible throughout the country will be able to be represented. Further details, booking form etc., can be obtained from the Conference Secretary: G.L.Collett, 451A, Bromley Road, Bromley, Kent, BR1 4PH (Tel: 01-697 1762)

30th - Grimsby - Louth Rail Group hope to run their special train on this day, which will be the first passenger train from Louth since closure in 1970, calling at Grimsby Town and thence to YORK. Further details from: T.E.Smith, 132, Durban Road, Grimsby, DN32 8AY

APRIL - 12th - The East Anglian Branch hopes to run a further special train on the Cambridge - St. Ives line, starting at Swavesey and calling at Longstanton, Oakington, Histon and Cambridge and from thence to London. Further details from S.F.Wilkinson, 52, Manor Park, Histon, Cambridge, CB4 4JT

26th - NATIONAL A.G.M. (see below)

26th - Breckland Express - RDS & WyDFRAC intend to run a further joint Special Train, the 5th passenger train to run on the Dereham line since it closed in 1969 and the first hauled passenger train since then. Calling at Dereham, Yaxham, Thuxton, Kimberley Park, Wymondham, Attleborough and Thetford the train will run to London (King's Cross)

Further details from:- J.S.Hull, Cydonia Cottage, Station Road, Yaxham, Dereham, Norfolk.

JUNE - 7th - The Spring meeting of the East Anglian Branch will be held at 2.0.p.m. in the Kennedy Room of the Cambridge Union Society.

Further details from: T.J.Garrood, 15, Clapham Road, Lowestoft, Suffolk, NR32 1RQ

With this issue...

"IN PARLIAMENT" - "MEMBERS ONLY SUPP" - "A.G.M.NOTICE"

With the new format of Railway Development News and in order to maintain continuity of presentation details of Branch & Area activities will in future be dealt with together under the heading "REGIONAL NOTES"

REGIONAL NOTES

LONDON & HOME COUNTIES

With its steady growth in membership the Branch is planning to hold more events in which members can participate. First will be one of the ever popular B.R. Film Shows at Fred Tallant Hall, on Wednesday 27th February at 18.45. There will also be an opportunity for general discussion after the refreshment break.

Other activities planned include a meeting at Rye, in the Spring to consider the future of the Ashford - Hastings line and the possibility of forming a rail users' group. Plans for a railtour to the Isle of Grain have so far come to nought but the Branch is now in negotiation with B.R. for a special to London for the benefit of local residents. Whatever the outcome it is intended to hold some form of event in the area to give publicity to the scheme outlined in the first issue of R.D.N. (p.5) to restore a local rail passenger service over the existing freight only line to Grain. With the ever increasing industrial and residential development, which echoes that of Canvey on the opposite side of the Thames, re-opening is becoming a matter of urgency and the local Council, which commissioned the original study by Messrs; Banks & Ogilvie, in 1978 is still actively pursuing the matter.

News of the energy shortage appears to be slow in reaching the Department of Transport judging from its announcement on 2nd January of major road schemes in London and the South East. Despite a few road construction cuts in some parts of the country the Home Counties are expecting a road building boom after 10 major schemes were exempted from further delay. At the same time, however, commuters in the London area are being asked to bear the brunt of B.R.'s recent fares increase of more than 20%. Some are in fact as high as 30% because travellers in this area are intended to increase their contribution to direct operating costs. As if that were not enough, being the first increase in a year, L.T. is planning a massive 30% hike in fares from March, the third increase by them in 10 months.

Jim Daly, former Chairman of the G.L.C. Transport Committee, in a statement last December, asserted "Cutler has switched expenditure to road building - surely one of the most inappropriate responses to the world energy crisis. Just at a time when in the U.S.A. there is a massive revival of all kinds of public transport, his regime is presiding over the collapse of L.T. which was once an international showpiece." Leslie Chapman who recently reported on what he described as "bureaucratic waste in L.T." rev-

ealed that the organisation has a fleet of 26 chauffeur driven limousines for its executives and added "it seems that almost every one in the top 5 or 6 levels of management finds its own product unacceptable." L.T.tubes are fast becoming as unreliable as the buses. One man operation on the underground was agreed last September yet L.T. expects to convert only a half of the system to this mode by 1990. We note that the popular "Victoria Line" has been OMO since 1968. L.T. must be persuaded to improve on its snails pace of progress.

From May a new hourly and fast (75 min.) train service will operate between Reading and Gatwick, calling at North Camp, Guildford and Redhill. Construction of a new S.R. station has commenced at Moulscumb, between London Road (Brighton) and Falmer on the Coast Route East and is also due to be opened in May.

WEST MIDLANDS

Transport 2000, has urged that the W.M.Structure Plan should provide for the replacement of diesel buses by modern trams and electric buses. On the Coventry - Birmingham line, Adderley Park station is to have a £75,000 renovation under the Birmingham Inner City Programme. Widney Manor station, near Solihull, is also to have a £245,000 modernisation for new housing and industrial development nearby. From May the 13.10 ex. Moor street will be extended beyond Henley-in-Arden to Stratford-upon-Avon thus completing the daytime hourly frequency on this route. Also in May the evening trains between Moor Street and Shirley are being improved from the present 90 min. intervals to provide a regular hourly service.

RDS Branch Committee members have canvassed all passengers on the Stourbridge line at New Street with information on the Snow Hill development and have recruited several new members. The W.M.Advisory Committee has heard of the problems and delays affecting Stourbridge trains which are subject to conflicting movements and priority given to the Inter-city services at Smethwick and New Street. An RDS public meeting in West Bromwich on 26th October was attended by some 60 people supporting the need to re-open the town's train service. Birmingham City Council, fearing a possible further delay to the re-development of the Snow Hill site has urged W.M.C.C. to approve the integral provision of a new £1.5m. rail station.

The Branch has submitted its observations on the draft P.T.Ps for Salop., Warwicks., Staffs., & Hereford/Worcester urging both general and specific policies and developments. Similarly a detailed submission has been made on the draft W.M.Structure Plan.

EAST ANGLIA

Two shoppers "specials" were run by RDS in December. On 1st, 130 people used a special from Dereham to Norwich chartered by the Wymondham, Dereham & Fakenham Rail Action Committee and was the third passenger train on the freight-only line during 1979. Two weeks later 700 people from Yarmouth, Acle, Lingwood, Reedham, Cantley and Brundall filled a special to London, chartered by the East Norfolk Travellers' Association. More are planned by RDS and its associated groups in 1980.

British Rail have also been making a welcome effort in East Anglia to woo shoppers on to rail for both Christmas and the January Sales. Saturday Awaydays to London at between £4-£5 have been offered from nearly all staffed stations in the Norwich Division. Other welcome innovations from B.R. have been the extension of the One Day Anglia Ranger tickets to Winter Saturdays; an experimental half-fare offer which filled the local trains during the Autumn half term weeks and advertisements in the local press showing the local Paytrain network.

B.R.Property Board and the Co-op are persisting with plans to build a hypermarket on the former goods depot at Sudbury which the Branch has repeatedly stated would be an ideal site for a bus/rail interchange. Objections were being made at the December Public Inquiry. On Saturdays in December certain Sudbury trains were being extended to St. Botolphs station in the centre of Colchester and a special fare of 70p (return) charged. Door to door leafleting succeeded in filling the trains and B.R. have promised that after May some trains will be extended there regularly.

The Branch has written to Mid-Suffolk Planning Officer urging that an application by ICI to build a new paint resin plant at Stowmarket should only be approved on condition that the adjacent rail link is utilised for the transport of the dangerous liquids involved. Three RDS Committee members met Mr A.Turner, MEP for Suffolk & Harwich, on 8th December and had a useful discussion on rail matters including the much needed investment in local rail services and the Channel Tunnel.

Now for sale are retractable ball-point pens advertising RDS East Anglia for only 15p. (min of 5 for orders by post) and gummed labels with the slogan "Save fuel - use public transport" at 70p. per 100 or £3.00 for 500. Obtainable from T.J.Garrod, 15, Clapham Road, Lowestoft, Suffolk, NR32 1RQ

The future of the last 2½ miles of the Fakenham line is still in doubt but RDS continues to campaign against its closure to all remaining traffic.

YORKSHIRE & CLEVELAND

At a meeting organised by the Branch and the N.C.I.T. in Sheffield on 24th November some 80 people, including MPs resolved to press for a public inquiry into the closure of the Woodhead line to Manchester. Diesel hauled freight trains are now using it, such as those from Trafford Park to Parkstone Quay and Tyneside and some CEGB ventilating equipment has been installed between the new and old tunnels. The North Yorkshire Structure Plan's proposals for rail appear unambitious:- No more closures but little enthusiasm for re-opening of any stations or lines. RDS is however urging that steps be taken to restore the rail link between Malton and Pickering to give better access to Whitby and the North York Moors and for the re-opening on a permanent basis of the stations between Skipton and Garsdale, possibly through to Appleby. This would relieve pressure on local bus services and reduce the isolation of this part of the Pennines and has been prompted by the success of the "Dalesrail" specials which have been run each Summer for the last few years. The Branch is also pressing for the Garsdale - Northallerton link to be restored for similar reasons.

The Aire Valley Trunk Road Inquiry was due to open at Saltaire on 29th January. The Branch has lodged an objection to the whole scheme, the cost of which has now been put at £53m. (at 1979 prices). It would involve the loss of 130 acres of agricultural land, 19 acres of industrial land and a further 32 acres of parks, school playing fields residences etc., 49 houses and 32 factories would have to be demolished with a loss of 300 jobs in the case of the latter, 85 without the prospect of re-employment,

The latest traffic census (October 1978) showed that of the traffic using the present main road between Shipley and Kildwick 72% were private cars, mainly travelling between Skipton, Bradford and Leeds. The Branch maintains that if the stations which formerly served the urban area along the valley were re-opened, as was suggested in the West Yorkshire Structure Plan, a by-pass built round Bingley and various trouble spots on the present road straightened out there would be no need for the road at all.

The Kirkhamgate - Dishforth road Inquiry has now been abandoned in the interests of reducing public expenditure. This news, at the beginning of January, evoked an angry response from the British Road Federation. The Inquiry for this scheme, to which the Branch also lodged an objection, was estimated to be costing £300 per week. It opened last September, soon ran into trouble and was expected to drag on until early this Summer. A modified trunk road scheme, to link the M1 and A1, has now been put forward as an alternative.

Cleveland County Council is planning to switch from major road building to greater support for public transport including the re-opening of rail stations and lines between Eaglescliffe and Northallerton and Saltburn and Stockton and Hartlepool.

NORTH EAST ENGLAND

As anticipated the Minister of Transport has turned down the application for help from Tyne & Wear Council to meet the £40m. overspending on the Metro. On the other hand the E.E.C. are giving a £2.9m. grant towards the cost of training new operatives. To help meet the financial problems, Tyne & Wear Council is only going to make an outright purchase of about half of the vehicles required, the remainder to be leased. In the present financial climate Newcastle City Council feel no definite routes for further extensions of Metro should be laid down as yet. Two more problems which could jeopardise the plans to make part of the system operational from June are:- (a) the difficulty in recruiting senior operating staff from B.R. because although wage scales are slightly better, career prospects are worse on Metro, and (b) delay in delivery and testing of the ticket barriers. In the meantime one of the units is carrying out test trials on the section of line between Jesmond and South Gosforth.

Wansbeck D.C. would still like to see the resumption of a train service between Ashington and Newcastle and wish to have test train runs this year to gauge the strength of public support, but with Blyth Valley D.C. and Northumberland C.C. realise that an enormous bill would have to be met. B.R. has given a warning that local rail services could be seriously under threat in the next 10 years unless Government approval is given for a huge investment programme to replace the ageing DMUs at present in use. If this is not forthcoming it may be necessary to close the Newcastle - Carlisle and Newcastle - Middlebrough lines and to withdraw local services on the East Coast main line operating from Newcastle, north to Alnmouth and south to Darlington.

One likely consequence of the closure of the steelworks at Consett will be the withdrawal of B.R. freight services to the town, although thousands of pounds has recently been spent by B.R. on strengthening the track to carry 100 ton iron ore wagons to the doomed steelworks. Apart from a ball bearing factory at Annfield Plain and a coal depot at Consett itself the line has no other usage other than the steel traffic. Closure would also sound the death knell for proposals made from time to time to restore a passenger service. Bishop Auckland M.P., Derek Foster, is seeking assurances on the future of the Darlington - Bishop Auckland line.

NORTH WEST ENGLAND

By the time members receive this report a meeting should have been held, organised jointly by the Society and STELLA (Save the East Lancs. Line Association), at Blackburn Central Library on 18th February, to publicise the Society's book "Your Local Trains in the 80s". Booked to speak are one of its authors, a Transport 2000 representative and a member of STELLA.

One mile east of Warrington a new station is being built at Birchwood and will, hopefully, be open by May. Trans-Pennine trains are now pleasingly being hauled by Class 55 "Deltic" diesel electric locomotives which are considerable improvement upon the relatively low powered former DMUs. Through working of EMUs is imminent on the Southport - Garston route hopefully with Class 507 stock which should attract many more day trippers to the resort.

On the Rock Ferry/Hooton line Bromborough station car park is now open and being increasingly patronised. A new car park is still to be authorised at Spital and a badly needed extension is required at Hooton where parking regularly exceeds the designated 50 places.

The Society is hoping to call a meeting soon at either Wrexham or Chester to further promote the cause set out in "Your Local Trains in the 80s" and with a view to forming a local users' association for the Wrexham - Bidston line.

LINCOLNSHIRE

The County Council and B.R. are studying the possible closure of Lincoln (St. Marks) station and diverting services to Lincoln Central. On the Grantham - Skegness line various stations are having their brick waiting rooms demolished and replaced by wooden shelters. At Wainfleet however, users are quite happy with their present shelter. To avoid the previous overcrowding (outlined in our last issue, p.18) B.R. have promised to put on an extra King's Cross - Skegness train on Summer Saturday mornings.

A meeting on "Your Local Trains in the 80s" was held in Scunthorpe on 17th November when Mr T.J.Garrod (R.D.S. National Committee) spoke about the Society's continuing campaign for increased investment in secondary services, and the need to expand and strengthen the network of local users' groups. Mr M.J.Savage (RDS Area Representative and Secretary of the South Humberside Rail Users' Group) also spoke. SHRUG hoped to increase its membership in the Scunthorpe area; having grown to 40 members, mostly at the eastern end of South Humberside, since its formation in February 1979.

It had built up a good relationship with B.R. and had concentrated so far on small local issues like the state of stations and the withdrawal of catering facilities on certain trains. SHRUG had protested at the cutting of an afternoon Scunthorpe - Cleethorpes train and B.R. had then agreed to extend a Doncaster - Scunthorpe working to the resort. The local management were also being pressed to mention Cleethorpes station as well as Grimsby Town in their Inter-City press advertisements, and to introduce HSTs on the Cleethorpes - King's Cross services.

Cllr. B.Hastings, of Crowle, who chaired the meeting spoke of his Town Council's recent success in getting extra trains to stop at Crowle where the station (Threatened with closure in 1965) was now unstaffed and B.R. therefore needed an "ambassador" in the town, a role which the Council had gladly accepted publicising the rail service.

Grimsby is set to become one of the foremost car importing ports in the U.K. and B.R. to gain a fair proportion of the traffic. Volkswagon already use B.R. services but from a ramp in the goods yard! Surely B.R. must invest in a purpose built car loading terminal on the quayside, where there is still a rail link.

Lincolnshire County Council, in its Transport Plan 1979-84 called for the re-opening of old rail stations in the County. A station for Caister is suggested at either North Kelsey, Moortown or Holton le Moor.

EAST MIDLANDS

Discussions have been held with B.R. local managers to review the possible improvement of services and other developments in the area. Further plans to set up Rail Users' Groups are being made for the Matlock - Sinfin and Nottingham - Grantham lines.

SOUTH EAST MIDLANDS

Since our last report (p.11) Mr M.J.Hadley has been appointed Area Representative for the void in the Society's local organisation North of London (See Members only Supp. for the exact area). A second edition of his North Herts. Rail Guide is to be issued in the Spring. This is to be a rather larger version of his first venture, last Sept. in which it is hoped to promote local leisure travel on the Hitchin - Royston and Hitchin - Huntingdon services in particular. He has also suggested that B.R. offer a Ranger ticket (similar to those in East Anglia) for these services during the Summer.

In furtherance of his activities the Society is organising a survey of local opinion in the catchment area

of the Bletchley - Bedford line, similar to those successfully conducted by the former RIS on the Sudbury, Skegness and Sheringham lines in 1975/6. A Questionnaire has been sent to more than 80 local authorities and voluntary organisations in the area, asking for their views on the present service, how it could be improved and promoted etc., It is hoped to issue a report of this survey in March and a Public Meeting has been arranged in Bedford on 15th. (See RDS DIARY for further details)

WORCESTERSHIRE

Considerable concern is being expressed at B.R.'s plan to further down grade services at Worcester with the deletion of the 08.54 stop at Shrub Hill of the Inter-city train to Birmingham (& Manchester). Loss of this train not only affects Worcester but delays existing connections afforded from the Cotswold Line by a full hour. In making objections to this move the Cotswold Line Promotion Group and others are asking B.R. to at least provide an alternative train.

The additional trains provided for Bromsgrove from October last year have successfully attracted over 1,000 passengers per week instead of the previous total of only 300 and Hereford & Worcester C.C. have decided to extend the trial period to July and embark upon further advertising. The Bromsgrove Rail Action Group is seeking restoration of the second platform and hopes to see improved bus links from across the town centre.

Big improvements are in hand for Redditch where it has been agreed to increase the present 3 trains a day in each direction to 9 to and 11 from Birmingham, starting in May. Of the gross cost of £168,000 the Redditch New Town have agreed to pay 30% with the consent of the DoE. It is expected that the trains will run as an extension of the WMPTE's all-station Longbridge service. The running of extra trains to both Bromsgrove and Redditch will mean a substantial improvement for the junction station at Barnt Green which could well develop as a railhead interchange with cars and buses from the surrounding area.

SEVERN SIDESIDE

A Society member who lives in Chipping Sodbury has been in correspondence with Avon County Council about the need for a station to serve the fast developing Yate/Sodbury area but alas consultants commissioned by the Council concluded that "under current conditions the likely patronage of a restored rail link was low and did not justify the resources required." Meanwhile the Society's Area Representative has tried to persuade B.R. to run a shopping

trip from Yate to Gloucester but the temporary platform needed proved an unsurmountable obstacle for B.R. There is however just a chance that a brand new concept, the "Avon Metro" which includes a new combined BR/Metro station at Yate will get the go-ahead. This is an ambitious scheme, the brainchild of Richard Cottrell, (MEP for Bristol) for a Light Rapid Transit system on Tyne & Wear principles to be based on the existing Bristol suburban network but with a new underground in the city centre. The cost, including rolling stock is estimated at over £200m. and an article on the scheme appeared in January's "Modern Railways" so perhaps in a few years time you could ride from Mangotsfield to Portishead on the "Metropolitan Line" without having to change trains.

The "West Midlander" is the ambitious name chosen by our local Representative for his proposed new train service from Nottingham to Bristol via Lichfield, Wallsall, Dudley, Kidderminster, Worcester, Cheltenham and Gloucester. At Cheltenham B.R. is itself considering a plan to provide a new station which might be located just south of the present outworn one. Further news of events in Severnside, Thames Valley, Wessex, Devon & Cornwall were contained in the first of what is hoped to be a regular Newsletter for local members issued in January and entitled "Rail South West." Members outside these areas who would like one can obtain it from RDS Sales (address on p.3) price 20p. incl. postage.

SCOTLAND

A private haulier has bought six 20' containers, removed the roofs and placed them on adapted flat wagons to carry coal from Cowdenbeath, via Perth, to Elgin where the containers are off-loaded by B.R. crane on to tipper trailer lorries for delivery to distilleries in what used to be Morayshire and Banffshire, another excellent example of road to rail freight. In November Glasgow saw the opening of the new £37m., 4½ mile "Argyle Line" which connects the North and South Glasgow Suburban electric networks via the former Central (Low Level) line closed by Dr Beeching in 1964. In December B.R.'s APT broke its own speed record when it reached 160 mph between Quintishill and Bestock

WALES

British Rail have announced that a "Cambrian Coast" style express will be restored on Summer Saturdays this year when the 07.40 Euston - Shrewsbury train will be extended to Pwllheli. Also a new fast morning train will depart 07.54 from Crewe to Cardiff with good connections from the North Wales line, thus improving the links between North and South Wales.

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