



Railway Development NEWS

no.12

40p

Free to
members

Railway Development Society, BM-RDS, London, WC1N 3XX 01-405-0463

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October 1981

Fowler turned out

In our last editorial we suggested that the Government might be about to do a "U turn" on rail closures and with the recent departure of Norman Fowler as Transport Secretary for some one who has made no consistent promises on the subject that way could now be open for another round of Beeching type cuts. Much will depend upon the outcome of the March - Spalding Inquiry, reported more extensively below. We shall also be watching closely the utterances of the new Secretary of State, David Howell M.P., who was appointed in Mrs. Thatcher's recent Cabinet reshuffle.

Indications are however that the Government will remain adamant that investment for electrification must be justified on a line-by-line basis in return for productivity agreements on the part of the Unions who, with the aversion of the threatened rail strike, seem to have decided that they cannot bring down the Government, at least on this issue. Not that a prolonged strike would have achieved much except to ensure that some line closed down never to re-open, as occurred in the 20s and 30s and this point was rammed home by B.R. Chief Executive R.B. Reid, in a Memorandum to all staff in August, when he stressed that "this strike will be a disaster for the industry and give satisfaction only to our competitors and enemies."

Where, therefore, does this leave B.R.? Still very much in limbo as more Branches and even main lines teeter "On the Brink" as more and more deferred investment catches up on it. The evidence is clear to see, as outlined elsewhere in this issue. One crumb of comfort is perhaps the agreement by B.R. to defer the complete dismantling of the Woodhead route for 6 months (from 2nd July) pending the outcome of the Government's review of the Electrification programme. Even so RDS issued a Press Release on 18th July describing any dismantling of Woodhead as one of the greatest acts of vandalism about to be perpetrated by B.R., abetted by the Government, particularly as the financial statement put forward by the Board was torn to shreds at the 3 day Inquiry in Sheffield held by the N.U.R. in May and upon which the railway management refused to be questioned by RDS and others giving evidence. As it is understood that the Department of Transport is requiring all existing schemes to be re-submitted to meet new criteria, a well-known delaying tactic by civil servants, time could well be running out for this trans-pennine route.

On the leadership front Sir Peter Parker has now agreed to serve for another term, of 2 years, as B.R. Chairman, albeit at a greatly enhanced salary, but will he now emulate his predecessor, Richard Marsh, and indulge in sour comment or use his remaining period to wrench from a reluctant Government the financial commitment that will ensure the continuation and development of a healthy and progressive railway industry. France appears to have made up its mind on this issue (See below) but the Reagan administration in the U.S.A. seems determined to all but eliminate what remains of a rail passenger system on the long-haul routes, concentrating funding for AMTRAK on the North East Corridor (Washington - New York - Boston) which all evidence indicates to be a "loser" in financial terms.

Increasing public pressure on the Congress may however prevent this and President Reagan may find he is in for a rough ride in the coming months as the rail advocacy movement, centred on NARP, and its Regional Groups, arms itself for battle. As the cost of new cars and gasoline escalates rapidly and the reductions in taxes from this source provide less and less to maintain its increasingly battered inter-state highway system the Administration may well be forced to retreat on some of its more swinge-

ing budget cuts. Similar urgent action is now required in the U.K. before our own railway system commences the slippery slide to oblivion that nearly overcame the American rail passenger system. "Think Electric" must be the order of the day to sustain it through the "Eighties" and into the "Nineties" and R.D.S. has already had one Public Meeting in Leicester, during September, on this theme.

France Sees Results Of Investment!

R.D.S. Member, Mr. G.M. Barrett, who lives for part of each year in France has sent us details of the "Train a Grande Vitesse" (TGV - High Speed Train) for which a completely new line is being constructed between the outskirts of Paris and Lyon.

The first section of line was due to open this month, cutting the time from Paris to Lyons to 2hrs. 40 mins; and when the rest is open, it will be cut to 2hrs. exactly. Trains will therefore require an average speed of 132 mph to cover the 265 miles. By continuing over existing tracks, the new TGVs will reach Marseilles in 4hrs. 43 mins., compared with the 11hrs. 43 mins of steam days and 6hrs. 45 mins with the present "Mistral" electric.

87 train sets of 10 vehicles have been ordered for the new service. Each set has a power car at each end with eight trailers marshalled between them. Both bogies of the power cars and the outer bogies at each end of the trailer set are motored and these six bogies provide a total installed power of 6450 kW (8646hp).

There are no line side or driving cab signals. In their place a figure indicating the instantaneous maximum permissible speed in km/hr. is continuously presented visually to the driver on his fascia board. He also maintains liaison by radio with traffic control all the time. The 'dead man' device includes a ring the size of a car steering wheel under the driver's hands as well as a pedal for the foot. In addition he has to make a positive response to another device which interrogates his wakefulness at very frequent intervals and failure to respond will automatically actuate the brakes.

It is anticipated that the new line will earn a revenue of 15% on its capital cost and the average land width taken from agriculture, at only 50 metres compares very favourably with the 120 metres which would be required for a modern motorway. In fact the total area of land occupied by the whole length of the line is no more than that taken for the new Charles de Gaulle Airport to the North of Paris which was opened five years ago to replace the old "Le Bourget". The route of the new line has been laid out so as not to pass closer than 250 metres from any town or large village. The six foot way is noticeably wider for the new line and even the smallest radius curves permit a running speed of 300 km/hr. The rail section weighs 60 kg per metre (121 lbs/yard) and the rails are laid on concrete sleepers.

As Mr. Barrett remarks "these are encouraging developments in a country fortunate enough to have a Government with sufficient faith in its railway system to provide the necessary financial support." New British Minister of Transport Please note!!!

March - Spalding : A Test Case

"If we do not make a stand on this closure proposal, we're likely to find the secondary rail network falling to pieces around us."

That is what RDS National Committee Member, Mr. T.J. Garrod, said in an interview broadcast by Anglia and Yorkshire Television on 31st July.

He was being interviewed outside the public inquiry at Spalding into the proposed closure of nearly 20 miles of line forming the only direct link between East Anglia and Lincolnshire — the first significant closure proposal in the Shire Counties for more than 5 years — and the first in Eastern England for over 10.

RDS National Chairman, Mr. R.V.Banks, also attended the inquiry and has since written to the Secretary of State for Transport, seeking a meeting. Outside the limelight was a high ranking official of the Department of Transport, clearly not there for the benefit of his health but perhaps to see what level of resistance to the closure of a "branch on the brink" was being displayed.

The inquiry was held by the East Midlands Transport Users' Consultative Committee, although 40 of the 71 written objections were from East Anglia. When the Inquiry Chairman was challenged by the RDS on why it was not being held at the March end of the threatened line, he was evasive. In fact the choice of venue has been regarded by some people as a device by the Government — appointed T.U.C.Cs to ensure minimal attendance. (Or are we being too uncharitable towards them?)

Certainly, one local RDS member, Mr. P.J.Strong, had to send apologies for absence, as he was away on holiday. Other members had to take circuitous routes to reach Spalding; and would have been put to even more inconvenience had not strong pressure from the RDS and rail unions forced the T.U.C.C. to put back the sitting from 10.00a.m. till 11.00 a.m. As it was, our member Mr. C.J.Clarks, who lives at Gainsborough on the direct line from March to Doncaster, had to make an awkward journey involving two trains and a bus to get to Spalding; and had to leave well before the end of the inquiry to get home.

Mr. Clarke's travel problems highlight the deficiencies of the timetable on the March — Spalding line, which was constantly referred to by objectors. Trains on the March — Spalding — Sleaford section do not run at convenient times for commuters or day-trippers and connections at March and Sleaford are often haphazard. Publicity is also poor. Yet despite this, surveys of passengers by RDS have revealed them to use the line to travel between a wide variety of places. Lincoln, Spalding, Ely, Cambridge and Norwich are the most popular; whilst objectors at the inquiry also came from as far away as Manchester, Scarborough, Yarmouth and Felixstowe.

Another constant problem, referred to by many objectors and documented by some good contributions from the local rail unions, was congestion at Peterborough. If passengers and freight from the March — Spalding section are all diverted via this bottleneck, journeys will become longer, less convenient and less reliable.

The RDS case at the inquiry was put by Messrs: P.B.Jowett, S.F.Wilkinson and T.J. Garrod, whilst five other members spoke as individuals or representatives of users. Over half of the 50 objectors at the inquiry gave us their names as being interested in forming a Fenland Rail Action Group which we hope will work constructively to defend and promote this line.

A Tale Of Two Railways

(a) Gainsborough — Barnetby

Gainsborough Central Station lies almost unnoticed behind factories, one of them derelict, but a few minutes' walk from the town centre. At least, what remains of the station lies there, for its buildings have disappeared and there are just two small and heavily

vandalised bus-type shelters, garnished by torn and graffiti-ridden timetables. Not that there is much to advertise, since the section of the former Great Central line from Manchester to Cleethorpes (via Woodhead in fact) between Gainsborough and Barnetby only has 4 up and 3 down trains.

Gainsborough's other station, at Lea Road, has a much more frequent service, mainly to Lincoln and Sheffield, but it is less convenient for the town centre. A Gainsborough Travel Agent, who is also an agent for B.R., had no railway literature in his window when our correspondent passed on a warm afternoon in late August. Two of the down trains would be suitable for trips to the coast but on the 13.54 he was accompanied by only 4 other passengers at the start. With 20 people on board eventually the 2-car un-refurbished DMU made its way at between 30—40 m.p.h. along this former main line. Worse was, however, to come as it slowed for two short sections at 20 m.p.h.

The backlog in track maintenance, highlighted in B.R.'s "Branches on the Brink" campaign earlier this year, has clearly caused a deterioration in service on this line. At Kirton Lindsey, 10½ miles from Gainsborough and a large pleasant village with its station intact but rather decrepit, there were no passengers on or off. How much do the locals know about their service? Two up mineral trains were passed, and a lime works outside Kirton also provides freight traffic.

Soon afterwards the train ran into the Ancholme Valley — at 25 m.p.h. — Presumably another speed restriction — on a double track former main line — caused by lack of money for maintenance. At Brigg, another unstaffed station, 7 passengers joined the train and 3 alighted. Then it was not long before this line — which had clearly seen better days — was left behind and the train reached the more prosperous network of South Humberside, making up for lost time by shooting along the quadruple track east of Barnetby and overtaking a double-headed freight train into the bargain!

(b) Habrough — Barton-on-Humber

At Habrough our intrepid traveller changed to "Humberlink", buying a through bus-and-rail ticket to Hull. This little station, which is railhead for Immingham, was staffed by one man, had an admirable display of B.R. posters and leaflets, was neat, tidy and moderately busy. A 2-car DMU drew up for Barton, and was soon speeding up the branch which now has an hourly service. With the opening of the Humber Bridge, the pier and ferry at New Holland have been closed, a new halt has been opened, and the single track line to Barton upgraded.

On a previous visit to Barton, in February 1979, the train had ambled along the bank of the Humber at 20 m.p.h. The line speed is now 40 m.p.h. and the terminus was reached in no time at all. On the earlier visit Barton had looked somewhat unprepossessing — a single platform and a glass and metal shelter, fronted by waste ground. Now the platform looks smarter, the waste ground has been converted into a neat car park for some two dozen cars plus racks for half a dozen cycles; and a bus station, with a shelter and toilets, and space for four vehicles.

Every hour, a train draws in and two or three buses draw up, exchanging passengers, the train then returning to Cleethorpes; the buses to Hull (via the Humber Bridge) and Scunthorpe. On the day of the most recent visit, the operation went smoothly, with some 70—80 people making the change. The only criticisms might be; More covered accommodation at Barton would be welcome in Winter — particularly if the train or bus is delayed. Also some passengers seemed unaware of the existence of through booking facilities, and quite a queue developed as they boarded the bus. South Humberside Rail Users' Group has offered to help the County Council in publicising this link, and more advertising for through ticketing could be a useful step.

This recent visit to Humberside brought home what can be achieved by imagination and investment in public transport (investment further more that is very modest in comparison with that has been spent on the Humber Bridge itself) — and of the decay that can set in if such investment is not forthcoming. That lines can die of old age if B.R.'s investment ceiling is not raised, is not an idle threat. RDS has to keep ramming home this fact. The supplement to "Your Local Trains in the Eighties" has just been published, and is available (at 25p. incl. Postage) from RDS Sales (Mr. A.F. Johnson) 38, Grange Park, London W5. But it. Read it. Arm yourself with the arguments. Sell it to others and strengthen our fight for more investment.

T. J. G.

"JUGGERNAUT" — by John Wardroper *

All you suspected about the road haulage industry but could not prove! That an unhealthy proportion of road haulage operators are probably only a few millimetres above the criminal classes gives cause for grave concern but that they should have been aided and abetted by officials from the Department of Transport for nearly 20 years is an outright scandal. By subtle inactivity and delay the civil servants have circumvented the wishes of even the boldest Ministers of Transport in their attempts to civilise the lorry and effectively featherbedded the road haulage industry to the detriment of the railways.

If you are a true environmentalist this book will make you angry and its substance is summed up in a remark made by the head of the freight directorate of the Department at the start of an interview he gave the author: "We are the sponsor directorate for the road haulage industry." Mr. Wardroper, for over 10 years a writer for the "Sunday Times" and latterly its Transport Correspondent, comments that "at the Department of Transport the view has prevailed for 20 years and more that an ever-growing use of heavy lorries is good for Britain and must be encouraged.

He tells of an undersecretary for railways who spent most of his time 'knocking railways! Moreover, the Department not only willingly undertook the secretarial work for the Armitage inquiry but also presented the committee with biased reports, so that senior civil servants obtained "the answer they wanted." (Chapter 9).

Mr. Wardroper points out the decline in the number of local factories, owing to central distribution and argues that motorways render possible day return trips, but that transport costs are nevertheless greater. That much of the economic savings that heavier lorries would bring is largely illusory (and would be achieved at a terrible price to the community) soon becomes clear and if you had any doubts about their advantages after reading this informative work you will probably be pressing for smaller ones.

Certainly some operators of large fleets are beginning to question the present free-for-all in what is probably the least controlled country in the world and beginning to see the advantages of rail for the long hauls. If however the balance is not redressed soon there may be no railfreight facilities to turn to when the oil gets scarce.

Now that Parliament appears to have set its face against heavier lorries what new ploy will the "Juggernauters" and their friendly civil servants turn to? An essential addition to your environmental reading so why not inundate your local library with requests to borrow it or invest in a copy yourself.

JWB/LGH

* Temple Smith, 1981. £9.95 (cased); £4.95 (pbk.) 223p.
ISBN 085117 0207 5 (cased); 085117 0208 3 (pbk.)

Selected extracts from parliamentary questions and speeches. Commons replies given by Transport Secretary, Norman Fowler or his Parliamentary Secretary, Kenneth Clarke unless otherwise shown. C. = Conservative, Lab. = Labour, Lib. = Liberal. An asterisk denotes the reply was given orally.

BR RECEIPTS FALL BY 10% AFTER COACH DELICENSING

JUNE 3 * *Mark Lennox-Boyd* (C. Morecambe & Lonsdale) asked for an assessment of the effect of delicensing coach services on inter-city fares.

Mr Fowler: The 1980 Transport Act came into effect in October. The result has been an unprecedented growth in coach services. Many fares have been halved (London to Birmingham single now £2.00 against £5.40).

Donald Anderson (Lab. Swansea East): Are you aware of the absurd consequence of the other side of the coin? The reduction in passenger receipts on the South Wales to London route of BR is 10%.

Mr Fowler: The policy is best described by saying: "Provided the terms of competition are fair, if people choose to travel by coach rather than rail or air because lower fares are more important than speed, they should not be prevented from doing so." That is a quote from the previous Government's White Paper. We are simply putting the principle into effect.

LABOUR MP HITS OUT AT LONDON'S CHEAPER FARES POLICY

JUNE 3 * *Dennis Canavan* (Lab. Stirlingshire West) asked the minister to conduct an investigation into different schemes of concessionary travel. In view of the unfair anomalies and the wide discrepancies between different areas, would the Government consider funding a national scheme of concessionary or even free travel for pensioners and disabled people, especially as this was the Year of the Disabled.

Mr Fowler: As a nation we are already spending about £120 million a year on concessionary fares. A half-fare scheme would raise the annual cost to £200 million. A free fare scheme would raise the cost to £300 million. I must advise you that in present circumstances that is something which we cannot afford.

David Trippier (C. Rossendale): Will you use your good offices to make a direct appeal to neighbouring local authorities where significant anomalies exist, in the hope that a more uniform system could be applied, which would be more equitable.

Mr Fowler: We should be prepared to do anything we can to make possible a closer co-ordination of those schemes on a local basis. The vast majority of district authorities provide such schemes.

Arthur Lewis (Lab. Newham North-West): Is it not ludicrous for a progressive council such as the GLC — the previous and the present one — to give concessionary fares, and now impose higher rates to allow free or cheaper travel for all, when the sick, disabled and old age pensioners, who already have concessionary fares, are to be taxed to allow MPs and people earning £10,000 or £20,000 a year to have cheap fares? That cannot be right.

Mr Fowler: I am grateful to you. I have been strongly putting that case for the last few months. I agree that in London it would be wrong to have such indiscriminate subsidies. The people who will pick up the bill will be London ratepayers. Many will regret that.

Chunnel — "It's All Happening Now!"

Two MPs already had questions to ask the Transport Minister about the Channel Tunnel, when Mrs. Thatcher and M. Mitterand spoke so favourably on the subject at their meeting. The two MPs were Sir Albert Costain (C. Folkestone & Hythe) and Mr. Peter Temple-Morris (C. Leominster): who wanted to know on 21st September if Mr. Fowler had reached a decision on the subject.

"It's all happening now," Mr. Temple-Morris told our correspondent when M. Mitterand left for France. "I hope things will move rapidly. I think it will be perfectly possible to raise the money: BR Chairman Sir Peter Parker and the French are confident they can do it. It stands to reason that the business that can be generated as a result is enormous"

It has not been possible to include the subsequent remarks made on the subject by the new Transport Minister, Mr. David Howell, who succeeded Norman Fowler on 15th September. Space only allows brief references to Mr. Fowler's replies to MPs before the Summer Recess; a summary of his remarks on electrification, and short extracts from earlier in the Summer.

JUNE 22 Electrification — No Unconditional Commitment

* *Mr. Fowler:* The Government have completed their examination of the report on main line electrification. They are not prepared to give an unconditional commitment to the electrification of an extensive network, and progress on electrification will depend on the achievement of the changes necessary to secure manpower reductions and improvements in productivity. I am asking the BR Board to bring forward plans for an inter-city business that will achieve a fully commercial performance by 1985.

Albert Booth (Lab. Barrow, Opposition Transport Spokesman): Why have you ignored the three-year joint study by your Department and BR of this major issue of electrification? You have rejected the view in the report that the electrification programme, to be efficient, cannot be brought about by a series of ad hoc decisions on individual lines? Is the prospect before us one of a few lines of excellence, while the rest of the system deteriorates to the point of collapse?

Mr. Fowler: I am asking BR to submit a list of schemes which can be started within a 10-year timetable. They will be ranked in order of return. The potential economic merits of electrification have been accepted, but it is a good idea only if the business performance of BR is also good.

Robert Adley (C. Christchurch & Lymington): I am disappointed by the statement. BR covers by fares a higher proportion of its operating costs than does any other railway in Europe: surely that is a factor to take into account in assessing BR's investment requirements.

Mr. Fowler: We are giving the promise of a running programme providing that sensible conditions are met. There are areas within BR where further urgent improvements must be made, in particular on the freight side.

"A Desperately Disappointing Statement"

Stephen Ross (Lib. I. o Wight): This is a desperately disappointing statement. It can lead to the break up of expert teams who are electrifying the line to Bedford. It can also lead ultimately to higher costs if electrification is not to be undertaken on a large scale. The East Coast Main Line is well patronised and proposals are fully advanced for its electrification.

MEMBERS ONLY SUPPLEMENT — ISSUE No. 12

NEW SLIMLINE R.D.N.

Members will note the rather economy issue of the latest "Railway Development News". The reasons for this are manifold. First the last two issues have been "Bumper" ones with the large amount of general news and activities of the Society to report. With our professional team of Parliamentary reporters news from this quarter is now, we hope, fairly up to the minute and the latest issue has coincided with the Summer Recess. Other news has also been rather sparse for similar reasons.

More significantly however we are nearing the end of the year and it has been largely a case of keeping within the Annual Budget. Even so Members will have received 4 issues this year (as against 3 last) and with the prospect of securing advertising revenue in 1982 we hope to be able to develop an even better presented product.

MEMBERS OR EMBERS!

In the past efforts have been concentrated on recruiting new members and with the delivery of a new supply of Membership Leaflets (obtainable from R.D.S. Sales (Mr. A.F. Johnson) 38, Grange Park, London W.5) we hope members will continue the good work so that we may reach our target of 1,000 members by the end of the year.

Concern has, however, been expressed at the rather high turnover of members we seem to experience. Some join undoubtedly with the fire of enthusiasm and when they find that R.D.S. cannot change things overnight their enthusiasm burns out. Ours is however a task which requires perseverance and you may perhaps be able to give some encouragement to the faint hearted.

Under our present system details of lapsed members are notified to the appropriate Branch & Area Reps., by the Membership Secretary, who then make every endeavour to make personal contact. If this fails there is a final appeal from our National Chairman. This work is of course best carried out at Branch or Area level to simplify the task and some Branches already have a Committee Member particularly entrusted with this job. There will, however, always be members on the fringe or in an area where we have no local organisation so if you would like to assist in this important work please write to your local Branch or Area Representative (See Members' Handbook) or drop a line to the Membership Secretary at 64, Cowper Road, London W7 1EJ and inform him of the area you would be prepared to cover.

PRODUCTIVITY — ONE OF THE DANGERS

More un-manned stations are a distinct possibility as a result of recent productivity talks on BR. We need to monitor this to see that it does not lead to wholesale fare evasion. National Committee Member M.G. Crowhurst has agreed to collect evidence. Examples of journeys on which passengers frequently get away without paying — perhaps because of overcrowded trains, would be useful; as would instances where tickets are rarely checked, or where stations have "unofficial" exits. If you know of any examples where B.R. is losing revenue in this way send them to Mr. Crowhurst at 3, Cranford Ct. Shakespeare Road, Harpenden, Herts. AL5 5NY

SPREAD THE WORD!

RDS has published a considerable range of leaflets and booklets in the last three years or so which are all very relevant to the fight to save and improve our rail network. They are also central to our drive to gain more members. What can YOU do to help sell and distribute them?

Leaflets: (1) RDS general Membership Leaflet — 4 sides, with membership application form. These are for prospective members and can be left in small quantities at local libraries (but ask the librarian's permission first). They should also be available at all RDS meetings and any others in which RDS members are participating.

(2) "Don't Blame B.R." — is a cheaper type of leaflet, for much wider use e.g. for handing out to rail passengers.

(3) "Electrify Now!" — is relevant to many areas. It is not for indiscriminate distribution, as it was quite costly to produce, but small quantities can be displayed at libraries, meetings etc., It is particularly ideal for sending to the politicians whom we are trying to influence. If an M.P. receives, say a dozen copies from different constituents, he may be prompted to take notice of it!

Books: (1) "Can Bus Replace Train? Or Will they never learn? (45p. inc. postage) — published in 1977 but as relevant as ever. Although publication of this book can be said to have helped defeat the "Rail replacement bus" notions floated in the 1977 Government Green Paper; there are still one or two B.R. officials toying with the idea. Our book enables rail users (and advocates) to argue effectively against them.

(2) "Your Local Trains in the 80s" (65p. inc. postage) — a major RDS study of the problems of secondary services and how to solve them. First published in 1979, it has now been joined by an 8 page illustrated supplement at only 22p. (inc. postage) giving the most up to date assessment of the issues.

(3) "Railfreight or Juggernaut?" (50p. inc. postage) — To help you argue against Road Haulage Assn. adverts in your local press, delve into this RDS booklet, published last year and based on our evidence to the Armitage Committee.

(4) "Guide for Rail Users' Groups" (65p. inc. postage) — No users' group should be without a copy. Nor should anyone else concerned actively with the fight for better services. This booklet, greatly expanded and updated in June this year, contains the distillation of experiences of users' groups and RDS activities all over the country.

All the above are available from our Sales Officer: Mr. A.F. Johnson, 38, Grange Park, London W.5. For sale-or-return terms on bulk supplies consult Mr. Johnson.

GET KNOTTED!

If you are a member of RDS who is fashion conscious don't forget that one of the best ways of advertising the Society is yourself.

Wear and RDS tie (Why not get one of each colour — maroon or navy — to match what you are wearing).

These terylene crimpelene satin quality ties are excellent value for money at £3.25 each (inc. postage and packing) so send your order now to our Sales Officer at the above address.

WHERE IS R.D.S. GOING???

It is now 3 years since the amalgamation of R.I.S. and R.D.A. and at its meeting on 12th September the National Committee discussed a Paper submitted by East Midlands Area Representative, Simon Hartropp, on this important topic.

Who do we represent? Should we be a federation of Rail Travellers' Associations or something more? How well are we known? Should we be more user orientated and take on a more positive role like production of a Route Planning Guide for Rail Travellers? How are our Branches developing and how should they be financed?

These are all issues which need to be discussed by members of the National Committee; Branch and Area Representatives and other interested members. To this end it is proposed to hold a Conference (on either 20th or 27th February 1982 in London) and if YOU have any ideas on this subject, or would like to attend* drop a line to the General Secretary (Mr. R.J.P. Townend) St. Julians, Sevenoaks, Kent.

* If you would like to attend the Conference please send S.A.E. and further details will be sent to you in due course.

EAST ANGLIAN BRANCH ANNIVERSARY BOOK

How did our Society's membership grow from 30 to 180 in East Anglia in 10 years? Who was Inspector Clinch and what did he do to Trevor Garrod? When did Dereham get its first passenger train for 9 years? What was a broily-waving commuter doing in front of the Harwich Boat Train? What happened to Swavesey on 31st March 1979?

The answers to these and many other intriguing questions will be found in East Anglian Branch's illustrated book, to be published to mark its 10th Anniversary, in the New Year.

Order your copy NOW from: Mr. P.R. Lawrence, 75, Maripit Lane, Norwich NR5 8XN. (price: £1.20 inc. postage). Cash with order please. Make cheques payable to RDS (East Anglia).

DATES FOR 1982

NATIONAL RAIL USERS GROUPS CONFERENCE — LONDON — 27th MARCH

Principal Speaker: Ray Buckton (ASLEF)

R.D.S. NATIONAL A.G.M. — READING 24th APRIL

MEMBERS HANDBOOK — Supplement — National Committee

Please note that Mr. W.J.H. Apsey's address is now 47, Schubert Road, London SW 15.

SUBSCRIPTIONS

With this issue will be enclosed to those members who have recently renewed their subscription a new MEMBERSHIP CARD (look inside the envelope!!!) Also if your subscription falls due in the next few months A RENEWAL FORM IS ENCLOSED. Please return it with your remittance as soon as possible and a DONATION over and above your Subscription will also be gratefully received.

STOP PRESS!

MARCH - SPALDING : First battle won!

The East Midlands T.U.C.C. reported on 16th October to the Secretary of State for Transport that hardship would be caused if the March-Spalding line were closed. This vindicates the stand taken by RDS and associated users' groups which spearheaded the anti-closure campaign.

Rail Users unite - Again

On October 17th, delegates from Cleethorpes to Felixstowe and from Sheffield to Yarmouth met in Sleaford for the Eastern Region Conference of Rail Users' Groups. The following week, a similar gathering took place in Birmingham for groups from the London Midland and Western regions.

A wealth of ideas on such issues as fares, rail cards, B.R. Property Board, rail unions and, above all, transport policies were discussed. Reports on the two conferences will be available shortly from R.D.S. Sales Officer. (Please send 2 x 11½p stamps towards printing & postage costs)

Apologia

We regret that once again this issue is somewhat delayed in publication due to technical problems beyond the control of the Editorial Board.

VACANCY in SOUTH WEST

It is with deep regret that we report the untimely death of our local representative for Devon and Cornwall Chris Shiel, who volunteered to take over the vacant post at the 1980 AGM in Bristol. As a former travelling ticket inspector and latterly a postman he had only just started to get to grips with the problems of this difficult area. He was largely instrumental in alerting us to the potential problems of the demanning of stations.

PUBLISHED BY THE RAILWAY DEVELOPMENT SOCIETY for the exclusive information of its members.

Editor: J.W.Barfield

Mr. Fowler: We require the industry to take sensible measures to make itself more efficient and more effective.

Peter Snape (Lab. West Bromwich East): The difference between the Minister and Dr. Beeching is that at least the good doctor was honest about his intentions. Your statement will be demoralising. Do you not feel that the much-heralded upturn in the economy might have a good effect on rail productivity?

Mr. Fowler: We are attempting to achieve productivity improvements that we know are possible. Provided that is done, this imaginative plan can go ahead.

Roger Moate (C. Faversham): Will you dispell the notion that rail electrification is some sort of job creation scheme? How many jobs would be generated?

Mr. Fowler: About 2,000; over the 10 year period. 80% of the work will be done by the private sector.

Harry Cowans (Lab. Newcastle Central): The statement will be viewed with dismay. Investment begets productivity; it is not the other way round. May I direct your attention to the call for a rolling programme, instead of using the delaying tactic of asking for a subsequent report when you already have one.

Mr. Fowler: We are asking for a programme of action, not a report.

Michael McNair Wilson (C. Newbury): BR knows only too well that it is still grossly overmanned. How soon will you ask BR to come forward with the schemes?

Mr. Fowler: The next step depends on the speed with which BR produces its plans and achieves the changes we have set out.

"Would Have Made A Profit But For Recession"

Alexander Lyon (Lab. York): Sir Peter's chairmanship has produced a marked improvement in productivity and, had there not been a recession, BR would have made a considerable profit in the current year. What has caused the fall-back is the ineffectiveness not of Sir Peter's regime but of the Government.

Mr. Fowler: I pay tribute to past efforts to improve productivity, but they have not negated the need for further improvements.

Leslie Spriggs (Lab. St.Helens): Two most important considerations should be a really efficient railway system and jobs in the peripheral industries that are waiting for work from BR. Will you take those two factors into account and invest in a first-class transport system?

Mr. Fowler: That is entirely what the plan is concerned with; making fully commercial businesses out of freight and inter-city. Freight drivers average 30 miles a day; we do not need investment to change that.

Nigel Forman (C. Carshalton): Although I welcome the productivity pre-condition, how many miles of track will be electrified?

Mr. Fowler: That will depend on the scheme. Cost will be taken into account when setting the finance and investment limits each year.

Leslie Huckfield (Lab. Nuneaton): Do you intend to make electrification schemes entirely self-financing? How much electrification will it mean?

Mr. Fowler: Estimates must wait until BR submits the list of schemes. It depends on the success of BR's commercial business.

"Biggest Factor In Pulling Economy Round"

Michael English (Lab. Nottingham West): Why should inter-city subsidise the commuter services?

Mr. Fowler: A good question, but it does not remotely apply. Inter-city and freight services are not meeting their full financial costs.

Robert McCrindle (C. Brantwood & Ongar): Has any consideration been given to the possibility — in view of the spin-off into private enterprise — of some kind of association between BR and private industry to push the programme along?

Mr. Fowler: Some work has been done by merchant bankers advising BR, but no proposals have been put to me. The rail network naturally presents difficulties, but I should be prepared to consider genuine schemes of private investment.

JULY 1

Leslie Spriggs (Lab. St. Helens): In view of the strong endorsement by both the European Parliament and the Commons Select Committee on Transport for the Channel single-track link, will you expedite a decision in favour of the scheme?

Mr. Fowler: We are considering the effect of a tunnel or any other Channel Link on existing trade.

John Wells (C. Maidstone): Will you understand that there is a considerable degree of urgency about this, and at an early date make a public statement from which there is no going back?

Mr. Fowler: I understand the urgency and endorse what you have said. A number of stages still remain, and we are looking at the evidence coming in from the promoters.

Elaine Kellett-Bowman (C. Lancaster): Many firms in the north-west are desperately keen to get a decision. They believe a link with the Continent will assist their competitive position in that it will reduce the proportion of transport costs and thus alleviate unemployment.

Mr. Fowler: There is much support on both sides of the House for the Channel Link. We shall make as much speed as we can.

REGIONAL NOTES

LONDON & HOME COUNTIES

Dramatic changes that have just been made in London Transport's fare structure have prompted the Branch Committee to oppose the Transport Minister's threat to reduce the Government subvention to B.R. A members' meeting had agreed, last Spring, that passengers in any part of London should enjoy similar travel facilities, whether the district was served by B.R. or L.T. tube. The new Greater London Council, elected in May, expressed the intent of implementing such a policy with regard to fares, by both reducing tube fares and subsidising fare reductions on the suburban lines of B.R. It was the Government's intervention to frustrate this latter proposal that prompted the Branch Committee to pass a resolution at its meeting on 8th July deploring such interference and, as a result, the Branch Chairman and other representatives of R.D.S. were due to meet the Chairman of the G.L.C. Transport Committee on 1st October.

When London Transport fares came down by 25% on 4th October it was the first time since 1921 that London fares have been cut. Passengers who, given the option, have been travelling by B.R. rather than the tube to save money now find that as tube fares come down, the tables are turned and main line passengers face an impending increase. Yet even after the big reductions, London tubes are still among the dearest in the world. Transport expenditure for the capital has dropped by 33% in the last six years, according to a plan to revitalise public transport submitted to the Government by the G.L.C. which proposes to boost the transport budget from £346m. in the present financial year to £566m. next year.

The meeting with the G.L.C. will be doubly important as without a solution to the anomaly created by the Government's intervention (by threatening to reduce central government subsidy to B.R. by the amount of any subsidy from the G.L.C.) plans to revitalise other B.R. lines in London, on which discussions have been held with the London Boroughs concerned, will be effectively blocked (unless this affects only revenue and not capital support.) Results of the discussions and any further action considered necessary by the Branch will be reported in the next issue.

Meanwhile on a more encouraging note it is pleasing to report another small victory against the cuts in the Home Counties. South East Essex Rail Travellers' Association has secured the reinstatement, commencing 5th October, of three late evening fast trains from Liverpool Street to Southend (Victoria).

WEST MIDLANDS

In October the NE/SW route will see the start of HSTs infiltrating on the existing 07.00 Bristol — Leeds; 08.20 Plymouth — Leeds and 14.37 Leeds — Plymouth & 16.38 Leeds — Bristol. These trains arrive at Birmingham (New Street) at 08.43; 12.45; 17.10 & 19.13 respectively. Two more will be added in November to operate the Plymouth — Edinburgh and return working. By 1982 there should be 28 NE/SW High Speed Trains running.

During August and September extra trains ran daily to relieve the new Malvern — Worcester — Birmingham fast DMU service. For the first time the West Midlands TRAVELCARD has been extended beyond the County boundary for Redditch rail passengers using an add-on ticket costing £22 per 4 weeks. If this facility proves successful further extensions could be made to such places as Lichfield and Kidderminster.

Meanwhile our associate Rail Users' Group in Radditch have produced another successful newsletter; have seen the West Midlands County Council confirm the continuation of the increased service on the line and on 26th September ran a successful 6 car DMU charter to Barmouth which was sold out well before the day.

W.M.P.T.E. reported in July, however, on the growing troubles for rail services of the life-explred DMUs. They regard the Class 140 and 210 diesels as not well suited to West Midlands needs and see electrification as the only satisfactory alternative.

Freightliners plan to mothball their Dudley Depot from December and transfer services to Landor Street, near Saltley. From its Tyseley base a single diesel car, formerly from Dundee and still carrying its ScR. number 55005, is operating around the West Midlands as part of a 3 car set with each car of different make and livery. On the infra-structure front W.M.C.C., T.P.P. for 1981/2 provides for starts to be made on new station car parks at Four Oaks, Sutton Coldfield, Acocks Green; and for the development of Cradley Heath station, all at a total cost of £540,000.

EAST ANGLIA

Whilst 2 successful seaside specials have been run by our Corporate Members; ESTA carried 350 people from stations on the East Suffolk Line to Cromer & Sheringham on 26th July and the Fakenham & Dereham Railway Society carried 150 passengers in a 3 car DMU from Ryburgh and other stations on the Dereham line to Clacton, Walton and Frinton on 23rd August; two other seaside specials involving R.D.S. had to be cancelled by the B.R. Engineers' decision not to allow any more passenger trains on two other freight-only lines for the time being, due to the alleged state of the track, (from Reepham to Lowestoft and from Swavesey to Bournemouth). It will therefore be seen that the problems of "Branches on the Brink", referred to earlier in this issue, apply as much to freight-only as to passenger lines. Indeed, the freight on the Swavesey (former St. Ives) line is currently suffering speed restrictions in two places because of rotting-sleepers.

These problems have increased the Branch's determination to fight for its rail network by approaches to M.P.s and two representatives recently met officials of Camb. C.C. to discuss the future of the St. Ives line. However campaigning for the railways costs money, and by the end of August the Branch had raised nearly £80 from sponsored train rides by two members on 20th June. In 24hrs., with a 1-day Anglia Ranger (£4), by Mr. M.I. Brakewell covered 676½ miles, while Mr. S.J. Herman clocked up 596 miles on a more normal day (from 05.36 - 24.00). These records will be difficult to beat and apart for the money and publicity for RDS also emphasise the bargain travel possible with a 1-day Ranger.

The need for a Public Inquiry into the closure of the Wensum Curve has now been pressed to B.R.'s legal advisers at H.Q. (See last R.D.N.). Branch publicity continues with exhibitions at Histon and Colchester and one at Needham Market library scheduled for October, but the main activity is the production of a Book to commemorate the 10th Anniversary of the founding of the Branch by RIS (in February 1932).

Efforts over 5 years by RDS and Sudbury-Marks Tey RUA, for a halt on the line at Cornard have now received the backing for a survey of potential usage by both the Parish Council and Suffolk County Council. Meanwhile the Saturday Shopper fares to Colchester continue to drum up business; special fares to Clacton, Frinton and Walton are further boosting traffic but SMTRUA's idea for a special anglers' ticket - to give access to more than 11 miles of the River Stour easily accessible by train - whilst acceptable to B.R. has been vetoed by the Anglian Water Authority???

The Breckland Line Users' Association has been conducting a survey - with B.R.'s agreement - at Attleborough, to see if there is sufficient demand for an extra morning commuter train from the Ely line into Norwich. Finally the Branch is to hold another Photographic Contest (a) Best Photo of any special train (by RDS or other Corp. Member) in the region in 1981; (b) Best Photo illustrating the theme of Railway Development in 1981 (anywhere in the world). CLOSING DATE: 20th January 1982. ENTRIES TO: S. F. Wilkinson, 52 Manor Park, Histon, Cambridge, CB4 4JT, from whom further details may be obtained. Judging will be at the Branch A.G.M. on 23rd January in Ipswich Town Hall, commencing at 2.00pm.

YORKSHIRE

The branch has issued a leaflet about the York - Harrogate line, as the first stage of its campaign to establish a rail users' group on this, one of B.R.'s "Branches on the Brink." Local members prepared to help in this project should contact the Branch Chairman, Mr. P.A. Ralph, 39, Newton Garth, Newton Road, Leeds LS7 4HG.

The T.U.C.C. has come out strongly against closure of the Sheffield - Huddersfield line (on which the Branch has campaigned energetically) but agreed to the closure of the 4-mile Clayton West Branch, subject to the provision of replacement buses. Not unexpectedly closure of the Woodhead route has led to troubles on the Diggle line - one of the three remaining trans-pennine routes - where, due to block working, gradients etc., trains are having to queue, with delays of up to 45 minutes. One is tempted to say, "We told you so . . ."

SEVERNSIDE

Of the many speakers at the "Energy in Transport" Conference held in Bristol on 5th September (See last News Extra) of significance were Richard Cotterell, MEP, "a Conservative who believes in public transport", and Arthur Palmer, M.P. for Bristol N.E. who pointed to the need for a return to trolleybus and trains for local transport, and the shortsightedness in their elimination in the 1950s. Energy was becoming so expensive in the U.S.A. that even the country could not afford to permit unlimited motorisation. Furthermore with many diesel locomotives wearing out at the present time it would be more sensible to replace them with electric ones. In his view electrification of B.R. should have been completed years ago with much more money spent on such lasting capital assets. Line by line conversion (as perpetuated by the present Government) was a mistake and a rolling programme was the only answer.

Mr. Cotterell, Euro M.P. for Bristol and Rapporteur of the E.E.C. Transport Commission saw an increasing role for railways in the area, despite the bus oriented comments of Asst. County Surveyor, Mr. D.R. Sims, and regretted the lack of a proper plan for transport under any British Government. He compared the large sums spent on "Concorde" with the advantages which could have been obtained by investment in public transport, pointing out that traffic congestion in Bristol was estimated to cost £20m. p.a. Whilst he pressed for his own "Avon Metro" idea to be implemented he saw virtue in the electrification of B.R.'s main routes.

Other speakers included Mr. J.W.K. Pearse, B.R. Divisional Passenger Manager, who stressed the low rolling resistance of rail traction; that fuel represented only 7% of railway costs; that electric trains used only 1/3 of the energy of diesel and that 60% of Container traffic at Southampton was being handled by rail. The meeting was introduced by R.D.S. member (and founder of R.D.A.) O.H. Prosser, Chairman of Avon Transport 2000.

NORTH WEST ENGLAND

On the initiative of the Ormskirk - Preston Travellers' Assn. B.R. have agreed to produce 3 publicity leaflets for the line with OPTA undertaking door to door distribution in Croston, Rufford and Burscough. The first of the 3 leaflets contains details of the Class 140 trials on the line; the "Rail Night" at Ormskirk (OPTA has been allowed to have a stand at this), timetable and fare details. B.R. have also agreed to run a Rail Rumble from Ormskirk to the Cumbrian Coast sometime next year and this would be the first special train on the line for at least 6-7 years.

A meeting with Ribble (buses) took place on 28th August and among the topics discussed was the possibility of greater bus/rail co-ordination; interavailability of tickets; the Ormskirk bus/rail interchange and bus services to Martin Mere. OPTA has started a working party to investigate the possible re-opening of Midge Hall Station. This was the first station on the line once it left the West Coast Main Line. The station is intact and could easily be re-instated. Lancashire County Council and the New Town Development Corporation have both talked about this and we hope to produce a case to finally convince them that it would be a worthwhile project.

Meanwhile Mr. G. Nuttall has formed a Users Group for the Settle - Carlisle line entitled "Friends of the Settle to Carlisle Association." The meeting to initiate this organisation on 27th June, was prompted largely by the state of Ribbleshead Viaduct, which B.R. say will cost £4½ million to replace or refurbish. Not only is its structural stability a problem but many other similar structures on the line are reaching the end of their natural life. Readers will be aware that B.R. plans to re-route the Inter-city trains via Manchester as from 1982 and this has provoked opposition from the Yorkshire T.U.C.C. Its substitution with a DMU service can only be the thin end of the wedge. Members interested in this association should contact Mr. Nuttall at 37, Bar Street, Burnley, Lancs.

Lancashire County Council are, however, seeking talks with B.R. with a view to increasing local rail services and to press for more investment in projects like electrification of the Manchester - Blackpool line as soon as possible. (Sir Peter Parker has suggested this could be as soon as 1984). Other improvements they would like to see are:- (a) Improvement and electrification of the Preston - Colne Line. (b) Introduction of a Preston - Southport service, via Burscough Bridge; (c) Replacement of the life expired DMUs as soon as possible. (d) the new station at Lostock Hall (e) more Park & Ride Schemes and greater co-ordination of bus and rail services. In addition to the modernisation of Preston station they would also like to see introduction of a rail service to Clitheroe. Whilst no money is likely from this source at the present time discussions are taking place with B.R. for a "Rail Charter for Lancashire."

Finally on Merseyside, at Edge Hill the long disused Wapping Cutting (containing the site of the historic Moorish Arch) has been re-laid with track and together with the sidings on the south side of the station been electrified. This has been done in order to provide a headshunt for the marshalling of Freightliners and other goods traffic working to and from the dock. The sidings on the north side of the line from Liverpool to Manchester, including the famous "gridiron", which are now largely disused, are likely to be cleared and released for development. However a new APT carriage servicing depot was due to have been built on part of the land???

LINCOLNSHIRE

Singling has taken place on three sections of the line between Sleaford and Skagness. Our local representative reports instances of late running on some Summer Saturdays because of the above economics which have in turn caused northbound trains to be

delayed on the Spalding - Sleaford section. On a brighter note, however, Lincs. C.C. have given indication that they are prepared to finance some automation of level crossings in the county.

To the north the most recent Newsletter of the South Humberside Rail Users' Group draws attention to a B.R. proposal to withdraw two of the three Inter-City trains between Cleethorpes and King's Cross. These trains, which also serve the important centres of Grimsby and Lincoln, are to be replaced by DMUs to Newark. SHRUG has enlisted the support of Grimsby's M.P. in fighting these threatened cuts and is seeking the backing of the L.As, Chamber of Trade etc.,

WALES

R.D.S. had a stand at a "Rail Night" organised by the Wrexham - Bidston Rail Users' Assn. at Shotton (Clwyd) on 24th September. Postponement of track renewals has, however, led to a ban on locomotive hauled excursion trains on the Central Wales Line and poses a long term threat to its future. The Welsh Rail Action Group is therefore organising a public meeting in Llandrindod Wells on Saturday 7th November at 2 p.m. to form an Action Group for the line. The 10.46 ex Shrewsbury & 10.33 ex Llanelli are suitable trains but further details can be obtained from R.D.S. member, Mr. A.M. Watson, 20D Parkdale, Tettenhall Road, Wolverhampton WV1 4TE. On a brighter note B.R. have announced that more work is to be done on the Barmouth Viaduct to keep it open for trains this winter.

On Saturday 27th June R.D.S. held a Public Meeting at University Colleg, Swansea, entitled "Wales is where Railways need development." The meeting was introduced by National Chairman, R.V. Banks, who spoke of the urgent need for long term investment in Britain's rail network. Other speakers included John Rogers (founder of C.C.L.A.G.) and our local Representative Andrew Poole. A healthy debate covered such matters as the Barmouth Viaduct, lack of electrification in Wales; freight; scope for more inter-modal interchanges and the need for replacement of the ageing DMUs. Good reports appeared in the South Wales press. Mr. Poole also hopes to convene a meeting in Pontypridd in late November to form a Rail Users' Group for the Treherbert/Merthyr lines.

DEVON & CORNWALL

Summer traffic jams between Barnstaple and Bideford this year have made it quite normal for buses to run 20 mins. late and not uncommon for trips to be cancelled. All the more reason for re-opening the 9 miles of track to Bideford and extending to this town the existing passenger service from Exeter to Barnstaple. The North Devon Rail Development Group will therefore be renewing its pressure for an experimental re-opening of this line under the terms of the amendment to the 1962 Transport Act recently secured by local M.P., Tony Speller.

EDITORIAL ANNOUNCEMENT

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Mr. Bevan is responsible for REGIONAL NOTES, Mr. Barfield for all other material. To ensure inclusion in the next issue (to be published in January 1982) all material must be in the hands of the appropriate Editor by WEDNESDAY 18th NOVEMBER.

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Subscriptions should be sent to: Mr H.G.M. Rogers, Membership Secretary, RDS, 64 Cowper Road, London W7 1EJ.

Published by the RAILWAY DEVELOPMENT SOCIETY
BM-RDS London WC1N 3XX

Lithographed by Derby Christian Printing Trust
72 Empress Road, Derby, DE3 6TE.