



Railway Development NEWS

no. 16

50p

Free to
members

Railway Development Society,

A Voice for Rail Users

In this issue

RAIL DEVELOPMENT WEEK

OCTOBER 23rd-30th

Public Meetings Competitions

Leafletting A 'Write-in' to MPs

Exhibitions Petitions

Window Displays

*Fight for the Future of
British Rail!*

Full Details Inside

October 1982

2 NOW THE STRIKES ARE OVER???

With the T.U.C.'s Inner Cabinet having effectively banged the heads of the two railway unions together, on 19th July, and sent at least one of them away with a very sore bottom to sort out its differences — both within the trade union movement and with its employer — will peace now prevail within the railway industry, as desired by our late President in his address to the A.G.M.?

If the utterances of the N.U.R. are anything to go by there is room for doubt, for, in its evidence to the Railway Staffs' National Tribunal at the beginning of August, General Secretary, Sidney Weighell, asserted:-

"Railwaymen should not be expected to carry the burden of financing the railway industry on their shoulders. Years of frustration arising from unfulfilled promises by Government and B.R. finally spilled over into an official strike. . . .

When asked by Lord McCarthy how he would finance a substantial pay rise if B.R. were broke, Mr. Weighell replied:- "the Board must go to the Government and get the money." British Rail's response to the whole affair has been predictable and BRB member James Urquhart told Lord McCarthy that any award would have to take into account the "huge and immediate" losses resulting from recent disruption of rail services which put future business and network size at risk, adding:-

"The trade unions should therefore agree to further economy measures, including reductions in passenger train mileage, re-allocation of workload between train crew depots, adjustment of terminal staffing and accelerated administrative economies.

BR needed a positive programme of electrification and there was no chance of the Board going to the Government for more taxpayers' money "supported only by vain assertions of good intent."

How much therefore has all the disruption cost? BR calculate it at a staggering £266 million. Stoppages in January, February, June and July damaged all rail business and resulted in £170m. in lost passenger revenue; £62m. for freight; £27m. in the parcels business and a loss of £7m. to Freightliners, and forecasts that the damage could drag on for years.

Sir Peter Parker summed up the position after it all as:- "We're not where we should be — but by God we're better than we were." Cold comfort when Mr. Urquhart calculated that "This years' disputes — 2 with ASLEF and 1 with the NUR — have caused a total net loss to B.R. of £240m. and that the nett trading loss at the end of the year would be between £240m. and £280m. and the Board's 1982/3 external financing limit be exceeded by between £70m. and £110m.

Not an ideal time for the Society to mount a major campaign for investment in rail or for the Government to review the future basis for financing the operations of British Rail. Our observations to the Serpell Committee are summarised elsewhere in this issue and to some extent perhaps echo the frustrations expressed by Sidney Weighell in his evidence to Lord McCarthy.

Notwithstanding the Society has resolved to go ahead with its plans for RAIL DEVELOPMENT WEEK (October 23 — 30th) a full programme for which is enclosed with this issue of "Railway Development News" it has been heralded as what must be the widest and largest ever spread of events — including exhibitions, competitions, leafleting, petitions, letters to M.P.s and over 20 public meetings NATIONWIDE. That it should co-incide with the Motor Show and that the Bus Industry should choose to

mount a similar campaign the same week — with undoubtedly far greater financial backing — should not daunt us, for if we (and our many associated Rail Users' Groups) do not fight for the future of British Rail — and at least be listened to — WHO WILL ?

Even now the eve of another Beeching Era could well be upon us. One only has to look at the happenings reported elsewhere in this issue and to read the statistics of line closures reported "IN PARLIAMENT", not to mention the doubts cast on the future of the T.U.C.'s as "public watchdogs" of rail passengers. Even the worse fears of the AMA (See last issue p.4) are proving well founded with the threat by the Secretary of State for Transport to bring in legislation to curb the excesses of some "metropolitan county councils which are a significant part of overspending by local authorities this year" and presumably impose what the Government considers is a reasonable level of subsidy in such places as South Yorkshire and Greater Manchester. (See IN PARLIAMENT — "Any subsidies could be legally challenged again").

The general theme of all the meetings in OUR CAMPAIGN will be "Invest in rail — Invest in the future" as the general situation now facing BR is a further reason the Society feels that everyone interested in the future of railways in Britain should stand up and be counted. The Society has generally kept out of the squabbles which have taken place between B.R. and the Unions but the time has now come when we must state our position unequivocally and this we intend to do during RAIL DEVELOPMENT WEEK."

WITH THIS ISSUE

"IN PARLIAMENT"

"MEMBERS ONLY SUPPLEMENT"

FULL PROGRAMME FOR RAIL DEVELOPMENT WEEK

APPLICATION FORMS — Lottery — Railcard

WHAT THE SOCIETY SAID TO SERPELL

Below is a brief summary of the main points made by the Society in its evidence submitted to the Committee set up by the Government under the Chalmership of Sir David Serpell to review the finances of British Rail:-

Firstly RDS welcomed the setting up of the Review as the finances of BR had reached an extremely critical stage. Quoting B.R.'s own 1981 Rail Policy Statement:- "BR must prepare to take either the path of progress by re-equipment and modernisation; or that of decline through gradual but deliberate run-down of the system We are reaching the dividing of the ways!"

It stressed that for years BR had been required to operate certain of its services, notably freight and inter-city passenger, on a commercial basis and was severely critical of successive governments for failing to ensure that these commercial areas competed on fair and equitable terms with road transport. Road and rail projects were not judged on equal terms. As a result "massive new road construction had been undertaken over the past two decades, whereas investment in railways had been relatively modest, major schemes such as electrification having been withheld because they had not satisfied the commercial criteria imposed."

"Any review of Railway finances should therefore take this basis difference into account."

It therefore recommended that:-

- (i) Investment in all railway projects should take into consideration the wider community benefits at present used to justify road schemes and also the effect on BR of the present system of tax concessions for company cars.
- (ii) Taxation of heavy lorries should be increased to a level where the operators paid *all*, including their indirect environmental costs.
- (iii) Taxation of road vehicles should be transferred exclusively to fuel tax to ensure that use of roads was paid for on a mileage basis.

It considered that a comprehensive, efficiently operated railway network was vital to the future of Britain..... stressed the likely effect on road transport of the finite supplies of oil..... and saw it as essential that an immediate start be made with railway electrification. "the financial review should be undertaken on the assumption that Railways are an industry capable of considerable expansion."

"For this purpose the system must be maintained at at least its present size with scope for re-opening of lines previously closed and some new construction where the traffic demands."

Overall emphasis was placed on capital investment to encourage efficiency of operation and traffic growth. Capital was therefore required urgently:-

- (a) to finance the renewal of life-expired equipment - at the latest by the end of 1982;
- (b) to finance electrification - to maintain continuity;
- (c) for the installation of hardware which would bring about improved efficiency;
- (d) to provide track improvements to by-pass areas of congestion and those unsuitable for high speed operation;
- (e) to improve infrastructure to maximise benefit from a Channel Tunnel e.g. "improved loading gauge."
- (f) to support the re-opening of lines and stations where a good case for this could be made out.

The Society saw the money coming from:-

- (i) The Government, as the major source of finance for roads;
 - (ii) Local Authorities, with in some cases the imposition of mandatory support for some forms of capital projects;
 - (iii) the E.E.C., which has been provided for some B.R. projects and should be extended;
 - (iv) employers, who already provide some assistance for the purchase of season tickets; and in many cases provide free parking for their employees.
- finally (v) from private capital which could be used to sponsor individual passenger services, with perhaps guaranteed sole advertising space on lineside structures..... "If promoted effectively this could have considerable spin-off publicity value for the sponsor in a novel way, and therefore command quite substantial sponsorship fees from which BR could benefit."

In conclusion the Society saw BR as being at present seriously under financed and in need of a much higher level of state support, comparable to that given by other major industrial countries of Europe.,

a need for more emphasis to be placed on capital investment to promote efficiency of operation and encourage traffic growth.....,

and the objective to create a railway industry carrying considerably higher traffic levels..... but at a lower unit cost.

MARCH - SPALDING - THE ROT SETS IN!

As forecast in our last issue the Government now appears to be showing its hand regarding the future of run-down rail services with the announcement, on 19th August, that the Secretary of State for Transport had approved closure of the March - Spalding rail passenger service and two short sections of line in Lincolnshire.

The local branch of RDS issued a statement the following day condemning the Government's decision as an example of its anti-public transport attitude which must be seen alongside the lack of investment in railways (Britain compares poorly with most European countries) and cutbacks in the Public Service Obligation Grant for British Rail's secondary services.

Such policies are not new, having been experienced, to some extent under the previous Labour administration but, stated the Branch, "Secretary of State, David Howell, has flown in the face of opposition from rail users' organisations throughout the eastern region, and the recommendations of the Transport Users' Consultative Committee which he himself appoints. He does not appear to have considered constructive proposals for development of the line put forward by the Railway Development Society and has also shown short-sightedness in view of the line's potential as part of a long-distance passenger and (especially) freight link."

Mr. Howell's announcement, coming as it did, during the holiday period with Parliament in recess, seemed to be timed to arouse as little public outcry as possible. Indeed, its timing on the same day as another piece of local transport news - the announcement of the multi-million pound A1 - M1 link road - may not have been pure co-incidence. The Editor's long-held view that there may be an ulterior motive in closing this line was strengthened when the "Daily Telegraph" the following day reported that the Transport Department will save £400,000 because work to divert the A47 road at Guyhirn will be simplified by its elimination and that this could be a foretaste of further similar closure proposals (as forecast in our last issue, p.6) and confirmed by developments reported elsewhere.

East Anglian Branch Chairman (and R.D.S. Vice-Chairman), Steve Wilkinson in an interview on Hereward Radio on 19th August attacked the Government for its policies which were forcing rail closures and echoed the prediction that more closure proposals would follow. He also criticised B.R.'s claim that £4 million would be saved over 4 years in track maintenance and recalled that RDS had suggested singling the track to reduce maintenance costs.

RDS National Chairman, Dr. Michael Caton, has since written in similar vein to the national press but the Society is now putting into operation contingency plans to see whether E.E.C. funds can be made available to avert closure and aid the line's development and the Minister's action further convinces us of our wisdom in setting up a national Anti-closure Fund the latest state of which is reported elsewhere.

REVIEWS

"CAMBRIAN RAIL"

The return of the Ffestiniog Railway to Blaenau opens up new travel possibilities for North and Central Wales, and should encourage more people to make use of the area's rail network. Potential travellers (and armchair travellers too) are urged to buy "*Cambrian Rail*" a new guide to the area's rail routes *

This 48-page illustrated guide gives vivid examples of how the train "is the key which opens the door and takes you through a Wales which cannot be seen in any other way." An account of the train ride into Wales from Shrewsbury whets the appetite. Of a Cambrian Coast Line journey we are told, "it may take you 2½ hours or more — but you will love every minute." There are shades of Dylan Thomas in the description of "the train constantly winding into little bays and out again round headlands, occasionally diving into short tunnels like a frightened rabbit going into a burrow." Elsewhere the mood is different — "Beyond Llwyngwrl prepare for a breathtaking cliff-top ride. Few railways can compete with this — anywhere."

You will love this book. You will love these lines. You will appreciate what an asset they are to Wales — and hopefully you will be convinced of the importance of the work of RDS and the many local users' groups to ensure that such lines survive and prosper.

TJG

* published by Cambrian Coast Line Action Group (£1.30 incl. p & p) from:—
25, Dunval Road, Bridgnorth, Shropshire WV16 4NA.

"LORRIES IN LONDON"

RDS member Peter Bibby has produced a 37-page booklet on this subject, specially for the recent London Lorry Ban Inquiry but also with much material of general interest to anyone concerned with combatting propaganda from the "road lobby."

For example, he identifies a £231 million hidden subsidy to the road haulage industry in 1978/9. He also gives evidence to refute the frequent claim that better roads will bring more jobs — Courages closed their Tower Bridge Brewery and are bringing beer from Reading and Plymouth by lorry, thanks to better roads to the Capital!

Mr. Bibby is also planning to press for an independent inquiry into the true costs of road transport.

His booklet is obtainable from him (£4.50 incl. p. & p.) at:—
62, Oakhurst Grove, London S.E.22.

ANTI-CLOSURE FUND

This now stands at nearly £200, which is most encouraging as the fund is only 6 months old. Thanks are due to all groups and individuals who have contributed. Further donations are still, however, needed to build up the fund if the present trend on the rail closure front is anything to go by. So send your contributions NOW to Mr. A.R. Macqueen, 20, Colgaith Gardens, Enfield, Middx. EN2 7PE.

We shall publish details of the latest state of the fund in each issue of R.D.N. and if a line (or station) is proposed for closure applications will be considered for a grant from the fund.

MEMBERS PLATFORM

"A Tale of Two Railways"

Dear Sir,

It has taken a month's rail-roving in France to realise just how run down and starved of investment the British railway network really is. In France there is still a profusion of branch lines, and on the main lines the wayside stations remain open (not only for passengers but also for freight. Where the main line has overhead electrification the freight sidings have also. In Britain exactly the opposite happens. Under electrification schemes sidings and even whole branches (e.g. Harpenden — Hemel Hempstead) are disconnected from the network because it is "not convenient" or "too costly" to connect them to the electrified track. All the French lineside industrial estates are connected to the railway just like our Slough Trading Estate used to be.

The SNCF's timekeeping was impeccable. Only once in 3 weeks did I note the overnight Calais — Nice train running late, and that was a mere two minutes behind at Cannes. Every other day it was on time after a 14½ hour journey across the whole of France.

The French version of the APT (the TGV) actually works, unlike the British one. If we had the finance, we could have built a new line for the APT instead of tinkering around with tilt mechanisms that don't untill. The Great Central London Extension might have been suitable for the start of an APT line, but we all know what happened to that. (Thanks to Dr. Beeching ED)

Great Britain was the pioneer of railways, but we are now sadly lagging way behind. The French government is decidedly pro-railway, and we must continue in our efforts to convince the British government (and, for that matter, our railway unions) that railways are a good investment.

Peter G. Scott
Harrow, Middx.

"Too Much Government Bashing"

Dear Sir,

I have been a member (though perhaps not a very active one) of RDS and its predecessor for about 15 years and now feel that recent issues of R.D.N. have taken up an attitude to the Government increasingly critical in tone.

The July Editorial took this a step further and referred to the Prime Minister as "Maggie" at least twice which I find quite offensive and too much like the leftist political stance of the Fleet Street press.

There must be members (apart from myself) who deprecate this criticism of a Government who tho possibly not as much as we would like, finds the funds for subsidy to British Rail, and has to cope with many inherited problems.

SMALL ADVERTISEMENTS may be inserted in R.D.N. at 5p a word (3p a word for RDS Members). All enquiries to Advertising Manager, James Apsey, 33A Fournier Street, London E1 6QE.

FOR SALE: KODAK 77X126 CAMERA. Good condition with case — little used: £6.00 ono. Apply THE EDITOR (address on p.15).

As professional people we should, I think, avoid such attitudes, as personalising the Government as if it were Mrs. Thatcher's property, for I regard her as a brave, talented and hardworking woman, worthy of our respect.

I therefore feel I must dissociate myself from the views expressed in the July Editorial and review my membership of RDS.

T. D. Teague
Newport, I of Wight.

THE EDITOR COMMENTS: The references to the P.M. as "Maggie", which seem to have caused offence, were in fact direct quotations from the text of the address given by our late Chairman/President to the A.G.M. in Reading on 24th April and were therefore merely "bona fide" reporting of what he said.

I was surprised that the writer felt that the editorial itself was biased as I tried (and have tried) to apportion blame evenly between the Government and the Unions where I felt it was due. There are always two parties to any dispute and one side is never completely "without stain" so I leave it to members to judge for themselves who is to blame for the present state of B.R., and their views will always be welcome.

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 writers' 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."

"QUARTERLY QUOTES"

"Last year I travelled 4,879 miles by rail — its a good way of getting around the country." — *H.R.H. the Prince of Wales.*

"I have not travelled by train since taking office." —

Rt. Hon. M. Thatcher M.P.

WANTED! — URGENT! — DYNAMIC NEW SALES OFFICER

Could you handle a stock of some 17 different items, including both books and leaflets (250 pn average per line now in stock) incl. some invoicing? Due to the resignation of the present postholder this Society office is NOW VACANT! Without a suitable marketing outlet the production of new publications cannot be justified and the Society is starved of vital funds.

This post provides substantial scope for someone with drive and initiative.

If you feel you could fill the gap please write NOW to the General Secretary, Mr. R.J.P. Townsend, St. Julians, Sevenoaks, Kent.

N.B. Until a new Sales Officer has been appointed all enquiries regarding Society publications, leaflets etc. should be addressed to the General Secretary.

Selected extracts from parliamentary questions and speeches. Commons replies given by Transport Secretary, David Howell, or his Parliamentary Secretary, Reginald Eyre unless otherwise shown.

C = Conservative, Lab. = Labour, Lib. = Liberal.
an asterisk denotes the reply was given orally.

"Various Options for future of L.T."

JUNE 6 *John Wheeler* (C. Paddington) asked for a statement on the G.L.C.'s proposals in respect of London Transport.

Mr. Howell: Mr. Livingstone has told me he is preparing a plan, but in the light of last week's unwarranted GLC threats about further fare increases, presumably calculated to alarm the public and demoralise L.T., it remains to be seen whether he is seriously getting down to its responsibilities to secure better and cheaper services.

JUNE 16 *Frank Dobson* (Lab. Holborn & St. Pancras) asked if the Minister had received a reply from the GLC Leader about a plan for LT services and fares.

Mr. Howell: Yes, I look forward with interest to seeing how realistic and balanced the proposals prove to be.

"M.P. suggests privatisation of L.T."

JULY 14 **Harvey Proctor* (C. Basildon): Would it not be best if LT were removed from the GLC's sticky paw and placed temporarily with your Department, so that a study can be made of privatising the entire operation?

Mr. Howell: From bitter experience, there is something to be said for a changed structure within which LT can work. I await with interest the Select Committee's report on the right structure.

Christopher Price (Lab. Lewisham West): Does your answer mean the Government now believes in new quangos? Do you agree that LT fares are too high?

Mr. Howell: My answer means what it said. Londoners have had a raw deal in transport organisation. I hope the GLC will produce a firm and sensible plan. I detect some signs that the GLC now accepts that its "Fares Fair" experiment was unrealistic and unworkable nonsense. I should like lower fares and lower costs. They are too high.

Robert Hughes (Lab. Aberdeen North): Will you undertake to have no truck with the nonsense expressed by Mr. Proctor? May we have a firm assurance that before coming to any conclusions you will publish a Green Paper, so that all the ideas can be thoroughly canvassed?

Mr. Howell: I cannot give an undertaking about the precise way we shall carry the debate forward.

Sir John Biggs-Davison (C. Epping Forest): asked about the future of public transport in and near London.

Mr. Eyre: We have made it clear to the GLC that what is needed is lower fares and better value and we have asked them to prepare a plan on that basis.

"Epping – Ongar line burdened with premium fares"

Sir John: Many of my constituents rely on the Epping – Ongar line, which is the responsibility of the GLC, on which their local authorities are not represented. Will the Minister therefore expedite proposals for setting up a public authority able to do justice to all its users?

Mr. Eyre: I appreciate the complications, which will be taken into account when we consider the Committee's report.

Stan Newens (Lab. Harlow): Will the Minister provide direct financial support for transport undertakings heavily used by commuters?

Mr. Eyre: The Government already provides substantial financial assistance for local transport services.

Mr. Newens: Essex County Council refuses to pay any supplementary grant towards the Epping–Ongar section of the Central Line. Is it fair that that section of line should be burdened with premium fares that are driving travellers away and continually forcing the question of closure to be raised, when these problems have nothing to do with the travellers there?

Mr. Eyre: Services on the Epping–Ongar line, provided by LT, require Essex to decide whether it will give support. If it does so decide, the Minister will assist the council by giving sympathetic consideration with regard to the TSG grant.

Stephen Ross (Lib. I. of Wight): Will you confirm to the House that it is not the minister's policy to turn railways into highways, an idea that has been promoted on television, but that it is his policy to give public transport the opportunity to provide the service commuters are entitled to expect?

Mr. Eyre: The minister has made it clear that he does not expect any substantial rail closures to take place. There are parts of the country, mainly rural, where lines are now unused, where it is sensible to bring forward alternative proposals, such as cycle tracks.

Douglas Jay (Lab. Battersea North): The minister's total inactivity on LT affairs for months is doing as much damage to London as his inactivity over the rail dispute is doing to the country.

Mr. Eyre: The damage to transport was done by the "Fares Fair" policy. The minister is right to call on the GLC to prepare sensible plans to deal with London's transport requirements.

Nigel Spearing (Lab. Newham South): Do you agree that present problems arise from the ill-considered and ill-judged intervention of one or two Bromley councillors?

Mr. Eyre: The GLC plans did enormous harm to businesses and to a great number of private individuals as a result of the excessive burden of rates placed on them.

"Any Subsidies could be legally challenged again"

JULY 26 *Hugh Dykes (C. Harrow East):* asked if new legislation would be introduced on public transport in London and the conurbations.

Mr. Howell: I have been concerned with two major issues: what level of subsidy is reasonable and whether the organisation is right. The Government believe that subsidy is essential to maintain key public transport systems, but it must be wisely and thoughtfully spent. Legislation on subsidy has worked reasonably well in the past, but it has not prevented excessive subsidies by metropolitan county councils which are a significant part of overspending by local authorities this year.

These could lead to legal challenge by ratepayers, uncertainty and damage for transport undertakings and confusion for the travelling public. I therefore intend to introduce legislation to ensure greater stability.

Powers and duties will be re-defined to make it clearer what subsidies are buying and to allow greater scope for private sector competition. In reaching decisions on subsidies, authorities will have regard to guidance which I shall give them on what is an appropriate amount. I shall be issuing advice to local authorities this autumn.

I am still considering whether more far-reaching changes are needed; I will examine carefully the report of the select committee, and in the meantime legislation will include reserve powers which will enable me to step in if the effect of the GLC's irresponsibility continues to be damaging to London's transport.

"Lines and stations still being closed"

MAY 25 *Dennis Skinner (Lab. Bolsover):* How many stations have been closed since May 1979?

Mr. Eyre: Three on BR: New Holland Pier, with the withdrawal of the Humber Ferry, June 24 1981; Gateshead, on the opening of the neighbouring Tyne–Wear station, Nov. 22 1981; and Blake Hall, on LT, on Nov. 2 1981.

JUNE 16 * *Donald Anderson (Lab. Swansea East)* asked if there were plans to change the law on closure of passenger services. Last week, Mr. Cobbett, director of strategic studies at the BRB, spoke in favour of abandoning certain branch lines and worse, referred to "cumbersome procedures, adopted by Governments for closures. Can you give an undertaking that the so-called cumbersome procedures, which give opportunities to cranks, as Mr. Cobbett says, will remain as safeguards?

Mr. Eyre: I do not altogether agree with the view expressed by the gentleman to whom you refer. I shall certainly look at the procedures, but I know you understand they are intended to give protection to passengers.

David Knox (C. Leek): asked how many miles of railway lines were closed in each of the previous five years?

Mr. Eyre: Gross passenger and freight mileage closed was as follows:
1977 – 33; 1978 – 48; 1979 – 109; 1980 – 62; 1981 – 140.

(Subsequently, on August 20, BR was given permission to close 20 miles of track from March to Spalding, Lincolnshire.)

"Did Mrs. Thatcher veto Chunnel with Pres. Mitterand?"

JUNE 16 * Replying to a question from *Philip Whitehead (Lab. Derby North)* about negotiations for a Channel Tunnel, *Mr. Howell* said: The report of the Franco-British study group (published that day) concludes that existing services could be developed to cope with foreseeable traffic growth, but that a fixed link could be economically advantageous. The group confirms the feasibility of rail tunnels, which could provide both through rail services and a vehicle shuttle. Forms of link permitting vehicles to be driven across the Channel require further technical study.

The question of organisational, legal and technical arrangements for the construction of any fixed link lay outside the group's terms of reference, and the two Governments have agreed that, before a decision is reached, these aspects should be examined. This further work should be completed by the autumn.

iv

Mr. Whitehead: Will you comment on what appeared on tape this afternoon, to the effect that work on Tunnel studies will now be indefinitely delayed. Will you also comment on widespread stories that the Prime Minister vetoed agreement on the Tunnel at her recent summit meeting with President Mitterand? Government strictures on productivity, and on the railways in particular, look very dim in view of their own productivity record.

Mr. Howell: I cannot comment on press speculation. I advise you to stick to the points I just made and possibly to study the Franco-British study group joint report. We have to see whether it can be demonstrated that any of the schemes can be financed on the terms laid down.

Stephen Dorrell (C. Loughborough): Will you repeat previous assurances that no public sector capital will be used? And that BR will not be required to give a traffic guarantee to whatever consortium may choose to build the Channel Tunnel?

Mr. Howell: Yes. Any proposals for constructing the link would, on the British side, be without financial guarantees. That would also exclude a non-commercial throughput guarantee by BR - an arrangement which would of course fail to be met by the British Government.

Donald Anderson (Lab. Swansea East): Target dates have been pushed back further and further. Are further studies proposed after the autumn, or can we be assured that after completion of the two further studies the ball will firmly lie with the two Governments for decision?

Mr. Howell: I would very much wish that we could reach an early decision, having examined the aspects not included in the original report. I realise that uncertainty provokes difficulty for those who want to invest, in ferries or anything else. I assure you that we aim to reach a decision.

John Ward (C. Poole): Would you agree that any progress on the Tunnel involving private enterprise would depend on a reasonable return to the investors?

Mr. Howell: It also depends on being able to organise the finances needed to promote a particular scheme. First returns from the finance invested will come only many years hence.

Albert Booth (Lab. Barrow): Does it not logically follow that those who invest will have complete control of the levels of traffic and the charges that may be made for the use of the Tunnel?

Mr. Howell: Those arrangements would have to be worked out in consultation with the French. Governments on both sides have ruled out the provision of public finance. Provisions for relying on the market are now very similar on both sides.

"M.P.s protest over Gillingham train cut"

JUNE 17 On the motion for the adjournment, *Bob Dunn (C. Dartford)* opened a debate on late evening trains from London to North Kent.

I am raising (he said) a matter of great constituency interest, and I am grateful for the presence of *John Cartwright (Lab. Greenwich, Woolwich East)*, who wishes to support what I have to say.

I refer to the cancellation by BR in June 1981 of the 59 past midnight service from Charing Cross to Gillingham via London Bridge, stopping at Dartford. The decision to cancel this service had severe ramifications for job opportunities and caused people to give up jobs which they had held for years. I have attempted to persuade BR to rein-

Dear (M.P.s name),

This year has seen such disruption on the railways but hopefully peace has now broken out.

Without needlessly stirring up the arguments again by attempting to apportion blame, I hope you will agree that what British Rail desperately needs now is more than just words of support but **POSITIVE INVESTMENT**.

My own feeling is that successive governments (of all shades) have avoided the problems of transport (and particularly of railway modernisation), usually in the time honoured way of holding an official inquiry or initiating studies, followed by inaction pending further inquiries!

* TO CONSERVATIVE M.P.s (or known prospective candidates)

Your party (at the last General Election) made favourable promises regarding the future of the railways and as the Unions have now demonstrated - to varying degrees - their willingness to accept productivity, could you not use some of your influence to ensure that investment now follows. This would surely create a better feeling of faith, coming as it were from the Industry's banker, and could not fail to make for better future industrial relations.

By **INVESTMENT** I mean funding in excess of the £900m. which is the social obligation payment (or P.S.O.) and of which only a small part is intended for actual renewal. The rest being for revenue shortfall - a policy which your Government was highly critical of the G.L.C. for implementing recently.

Investment in the right areas could actually reduce the need for some of this revenue support by removing inefficient labour. Apart from electrification (which surely must be part of a continuous plan - isolated schemes being much less cost effective), other areas include investment to abolish many of the remaining "manned" level crossings; automatic ticket collection; colour signalling to eliminate scores of signal boxes; ADD OR ELABORATE SOME LOCAL EXAMPLES all of which save manpower whilst creating work - particularly in the engineering and electronics industries.

Recently HRH The Prince of Wales, in a speech at the opening of the new Milton Keynes station, highlighted the continuing need for railways and more particularly the social problems experienced to this day by communities where the Beeching Axe fell the hardest.

We need a rail network properly modernised to carry both heavy goods efficiently for industry and to enable thousands of people to get to work. Now that the conflicts are behind us (Hopefully) you may feel better able to help us to achieve what we consider to be a vital objective.

IF THERE ARE LOCAL LINES IN A POOR STATE OF REPAIR - or even under threat - BRING THEM INTO THE ARGUMENT

* TO LABOUR M.P.s etc

Labour has always prided itself as a supporter of rail although the action of William Rodgers in initiating the Inquiry into Electrification has if anything had a serious delaying effect such as to seriously prejudice its effective achievement. There is also the nagging doubt that the proper influence exerted by the ~~TMG~~ to safeguard its members' interests has reduced the Party's commitment almost to the level of mere lip service. I would even go so far as to suggest that that Union's part in promoting road transport was largely influential in stunting the performance of Ministers (such as Rodgers) in the effective support of rail - by deeds rather than words.

What I think is vital now is a much greater extension of the stance taken recently (both by the TUC and the Shadow Cabinet) in cooling the recent unhappy disputes with the rail Unions. If it can be shown that they are now effectively honouring their commitment to productivity this must surely embarrass the Government to the extent that it can no longer find excuses for denying the sorely needed investment a moment longer. If the Labour Party can exert this kind of moral pressure and prevent the eyeball to eyeball confrontations which have marred the railway scene for the last year or so the ball will then be firmly back in the Government's court...

TO S.D.P. M.Ps (Candidates etc.,)

Although your party has not had much chance to make clear its policies regarding the future of British Rail it seems to be making constructive noises about future transport goals....

(Continue as below for LIBERAL PARTY)

TO LIBERAL M.Ps etc.,

Your party has always in the past (and increasingly of late) appeared to have made constructive statements regarding the future of Britain's railways....

..... so unfortunately have all the other parties at some time or other, but positive commitment appears to be generally lacking. Although made more difficult by the recent unfortunate disputes I am sure you will not want to pay mere lip service as the other major parties have? Whilst a Liberal Council in Liverpool tried to stop the Merseyside "Cheap Fares" scheme this concept was applauded by the House of Commons Select Committee (Chaired by a Social Democrat). It was however Bill Rodgers (then a former Labour Minister of Transport) who launched what we regard as a time wasting inquiry into main line electrification. Perhaps as someone who is seriously prepared to consider how I vote, and why I have written you this letter, you could also seriously consider your answer to the points I have made.

What I think is now essential is efforts by all parties (or committed members of all parties) to remove all possible causes for further industrial conflict on the railways by making sure that Government comes up with such promised investment which would then give both leaders and workers in the railway industry some cause to believe that its owners have at least some faith in them.

The above alternatives (and indeed the whole text) are only intended as a rough guide and members may wish to express themselves more or less forcefully (with local examples) as they consider appropriate.

THE MAIN AIM OF RAIL DEVELOPMENT WERE HOWEVER IS TO SEE THAT AS MANY M.Ps, elected representatives at local level etc., ARE LEFT IN NO DOUBT AS TO THE STRENGTH OF MEMBERS' Opinions on these vital issues - SO AT LEAST WRITS TO YOUR M.P. - if nothing else.

Rail Development Week

23rd - 30th October

1 Meetings

- 23rd October R.D.S. Rail Development Week
Reinvigoration party to Ashford - Hastings - Tunbridge Wells -
Eridge meetings with local press, Rail Users' Groups,
Councillors, etc.
Meet Charing Cross for 10.30 depart ... contacts: J. Barfield
home: 01 474 5722
work: 01 980 4414 x 317
- R.D.S. Rail Development Week
Public meeting in Lincoln
Theme - 'Invest in Rail, Invest in the Future'
St. Mary Le Wigford Church Hall, Lincoln 7.00pm
... contact: P.J. Strong
0522 25689
- R.D.S. Rail Development Week
RDS/Matlock - Sinfia Rail Users Group
Public meeting in Matlock
Speaker - Philip Whitehead M.P. ... contact: S. Hartropp
Tawney House, Matlock, Ilam Derby 47651
- 25th October R.D.S. Rail Development Week
Public meeting in Sharnbrook, Beds.
Theme - Midland electrification + new station
Various speakers ... contact: L. Freitag
Fariah Hall, Sharnbrook, 7.30pm Harpenden 63098
- 26th October R.D.S. Rail Development Week
Public meeting in Aylesbury
Theme - Improved rail services in the Aylesbury area
Various speakers ... contact: L. Freitag
Civic Centre, 7.30pm Harpenden 63098
- R.D.S. Rail Development Week
RDS/Maswell Hill Metro Group
Public meeting in Horsey
Theme - 'Light rail for London' ... contact: F.G. Tomlin
Horsey Town Hall, 7.30pm 01 529 5543
- R.D.S. Rail Development Week
Public meeting in Southampton
Theme - 'Invest in Rail, Invest in the Future'
Various speakers ... contact: Miss Lingard
Polygon Hotel, Southampton, 7.00pm Petersfield 61717
- R.D.S. Rail Development Week
RDS/ T.2000/ Nottingham Transport Group
Public meeting in Mansfield
Theme - 'A rail service for Mansfield'
Various speakers, inc. Council Vice Chairman
Council Chamber, Town Hall, Market Place, Mansfield, 7.00pm
... contact: S.Hartropp
0132 47651
- 27th October R.D.S. Rail Development Week
RDS/ Southport Rail Travellers' Assn.
Public meeting in Southport
Theme - 'Invest in Rail, Invest in the Future'
Southport Arts Centre, 8.00pm ... contact: Dr. Ford
Southport 29446

- 28th October E.D.S. Rail Development Week
 RDG/ Bedford - Elstchley Rail Users' Assn.
 Public meeting in Bedford
 'Oxford - Cambridge Line, Past, Present, and FUTURE'
 Speaker - author Bill Simpson ... contacts: R. Crane
 Bedford Central Library, Harper Street, Bedford 51771
 7.30pm
- E.D.S. Rail Development Week
 Public meeting in Corby
 Theme - passenger service for Corby
 Various speakers ... contacts: R. Chaplin
 Willow Room, District Council Offices, Rockingham 770416
 George Street, 7.30pm
- E.D.S. Rail Development Week
 London Branch to visit Kings Cross Midland Station
 Kings Cross Midland Station, 4.00pm ... contact: J. Barfield
 home: 01 474 5722
 work: 01 980 4414 x 317
- E.D.S. Development Week
 Public meeting in Dewsbury
 Theme - 'Invest in Rail, Invest in the Future' +
 The Missing Link
 Various speakers ... contacts: S. Firth
 Town Hall, Dewsbury, 7.30pm 450917
- 29th October E.D.S. Rail Development Week
 Public meeting in Darlington
 Theme - 'Invest in Rail, Invest in the Future'
 Various speakers ... contact: S. Beynon
 Baths Hall, Darlington, 7.30pm Eaglescliffe 785792
- 30th October E.D.S. Rail Development Week
 RDG/ Ormskirk - Preston Travellers' Assn.
 Public meeting in Preston
 Theme - 'Invest in Rail, Invest in the Future'
 Various speakers ... contact: R. Watts
 Preston Playhouse, Market Street, Preston 743371
 2.00pm
- E.D.S. Rail Development Week
 RDG
 Public meeting in Stirling
 Theme - 'Invest in Rail, Invest in the Future'
 Various speakers ... contact: P. Neville
 Golden Lion Hotel, Stirling, Dundee 826398
 10.00 - 17.00
- E.D.S. Rail Development Week
 RDG/ T2000
 Public meeting in Bristol
 Theme - 'Invest in Rail, Invest in the Future'
 Speakers including Richard Cottrell, W.R.F.
 BRSA, Temple Meads, Bristol ... contact: E. Barbary
 0453 82147
- E.D.S. Rail Development Week
 RDG/ Bristol - Weymouth Line Dev. Group.
 Public meeting in Yeovil
 Theme - 'Invest in Rail, Invest in the Future'
 Various speakers ... contacts: D. Rootham
 Three Choughs Hotel, Yeovil, 2.00pm Poole 734593

(A) RDS TRAVELCARD

FOR USE BY CARDHOLDERS ONLY

To: D.P.O'Leivy, "Trees," 116, Bucknalls Lane, Garston,
Watford, Herts.

I have obtained the following discount upon presentation of my
RDS TRAVELCARD:-

NAME OF SUPPLIER:.....

ADDRESS

Amount/percentage savedComments

NAME.....SIGNED

ADDRESS.....

(B) RDS TRAVELCARD

FOR USE BY NEW APPLICANTS

To: H.G.M.Rogers, 64, Comper Road, London W7 1BJ

I enclose my cheque/postal order * for £5.00 (payable to the
RAILWAY DEVELOPMENT SOCIETY) for my RDS TRAVELCARD, which I understand
will be valid for one year.

NAME SIGNED

MEMBERSHIP NUMBER Date:

ADDRESS
.....

(C) LOTPERY

To: L.J. Roylett, 15 Athenaeum Road, Whetstone, London N20 9AA

Please include me in the purchase of 4 tickets at 25p. for each
£1.00 subscribed, on my behalf, monthly until further notice.

NAME SIGNED

ADDRESS
.....

BANKERS ORDER

To:Bank PLC Sort Code

Address

Pay Barclays Bank PLC (Oakwood Branch), 125, Bramley Road,
Southgate, N14 4UZ. - For the Credit of the RDS current account
no. 20727192, No. 2 (Promotion) the sum of £..... (This must be
a whole number of pounds) on 2nd of the month, and monthly thereafter
until further notice.

A/C No.

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Signed

Date:

Because of matters outside our control certain events have been moved out of Rail Development Week but are still considered part of it. These are as follows:

- 14th October Public meeting in Welham Green, Hatfield
Theme - a new station for this isolated community
Various speakers, inc. Div. Passenger Manager, BR ER.
S. Nyasa Memorial Hall, 7.30pm ... contacts L. Freitag
Harpenden 61098
- November Public meeting in Walsall
Theme - improved rail links from Walsall
RDC/ Walsall Passenger Transport Action Group
... contacts Alan Brown
021 745 6001

2 Other Events

A Exhibitions

- 16th Oct. - 5th Nov. Bedford Central Library, Harper Street.
Subjects: the Oxford - Cambridge Line, Past, Present and FUTURE.
Organised by the Bedford - Stetchley Rail Users' Asm. in conjunction with Rail Development Week and the publication of the book on the Oxford - Cambridge Line by Bill Simpson
- 29th Oct. - 30th Oct. Dereham, Norfolk
Subjects: the Dereham to Wymondham Line and its return to regular passenger use. Organised by WyDRAG in conjunction with the Rail Development theme of 'Invest in Rail, Invest in the Future'.
Trinity Methodist Church Hall, Dereham, 2.00pm
- 23rd Oct. - 30th Oct. Exhibition in Northampton Public Library, theme as above.
- " " Exhibitions in Sleaford and Ruskington Public Libraries. theme as above
- " " Exhibitions/Displays in the following building societies:
Anglia B.S. - Skegness
Saffron Walden & Essex B.S. - Royston
Nationwide B.S. - Lowestoft
Anglia B.S. - Cambridge
Gateway B.S. - Norwich
Britannia B.S. - Ipswich
Halifax B.S. - Colchester
Leeds B.S. - Huntington
Trustees Savings Bank - Aylsham
Leamington B.S. - Worthing
- " " Exhibition in Woodbridge Public Library, theme as above
- 30th Oct. RDC stall at Cambridge Model Railway Exhibition
- 29th Oct. RDC stall at Dereham Market
- 23rd Oct. - 30th Oct. Principality Building Society, Cardiff exhibition of results of Schools painting competition. See below. *

B Leafletings:

during the Rail Development Week the following areas will have leafletings taking place either in support of the general theme or promoting specific lines most of which are in varying degrees of threat:

Sideford - Barnstable and whole of N. Devon Line in co-operation with BR.
Kings Lynn
Cleethorpes
Redditch
Grimsby
Portsmouth - Southampton
St. Pancras Station - morning of 30th

C Poster Competitions:

- * All secondary schools in S. Glasgows have been invited to participate in poster competition on 'Why we need trains' theme. The Education Authority is co-operating with distribution; the Principality Building Society is giving its window for the display of winners; BR Area is helping with judging, etc.

D Letter to M.P.s:

All RDS members are urged to write to their M.P. during RDW

E Petition to INGO:

Organized by Scottish Assn. for Public Transport: contact P.W. Seville for further details and petition forms (tel: Dundee 826398)

F Letter to PM:

This has already been sent, but in anticipation of a non-committal answer, all Rail Users' Groups in the country, (something like 100), are being contacted to gain their support for the letter, the text of which, with any reply, will be released to the Press.

G Sponsored Train Ride:

A sponsored ride by John Bull of MyDRAC is taking place on 23rd Oct. to gain publicity and funds for the RDS.

Meetings still unconfirmed at time of going to press:

Birmingham - Contact Alan Bevan : tel 021 745 6001
Kidlington - Contact Tom Comber : tel 0865 44632
Shrewsbury - Contact A. Bevan

BR are opening two new installations on 27th October, one at Gasbridge, the other at Norwich, all Users' Groups have been invited to send representatives. The timing is not just a coincidence we feel! Contact T. Garrod

Further details of local meetings should have been notified to members by their Branch or Area Rep. If not, please contact him or her, or the contact person indicated.

MEMBERS ONLY SUPPLEMENT - ISSUE No. 15

RAIL DEVELOPMENT WEEK - (23rd - 30th October) - A full programme of meetings and other events to be held NATIONWIDE is enclosed with this issue of Railway Development News.

RDS - THE TRAVELCARD - AND YOU - In the last issue of R.D.N. we invited readers to apply for their special TRAVELCARDS, which are available only to current RDS members. Perhaps by now you have done so, but if not, may I urge you to complete the APPLICATION FORM enclosed TODAY and send it to the MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY with your £5.00 remittance.

Much spadework has been carried out to launch the TRAVELCARD, therefore providing known cash benefits ranging from reduced rates on a worldwide basis for car-hire through Geoffrey Davis (available at many main line railway stations) to an electrical contractor, near Cambridge offering a local service. However, the main aim behind the TRAVELCARD is to provide YOU with strong bargaining power, whether you are dealing with a hotel, store, hire company or any other service organisation. The cost of the card can be recovered in one day through a GOOD DEAL!

The success of the scheme depends largely on you as an RDS member. When you strike a bargain, please do not hide your achievement, but send details to me on the form (also provided) so that we can prepare a detailed list of concessions for Cardholders. In this way the system will develop and at the same time will help to strengthen RDS in its finances and its prestige, each of which is essential if the Society's activities are to increase in effectiveness. As a supporter of the cause of rail, you will know that this work is more important now than ever before.

So support your society and help yourself to better bargains by applying today for your TRAVELCARD.

David Ogilvy

RDS LOTTERY TAKES OFF! - ARE YOU A SUBSCRIBER? - Having more or less reached the target set in our last issue the FIRST DRAW in the RDS Lottery was performed by London & Home Counties Branch, Chairman, Dr F.G. Tomlins, at the Branch Committee Meeting on the evening of 16th September, the results of which are summarized below:-

<u>First, Fifth & Sixth Prizes:</u>	(40%, 5%, 5%) (£6.)	T.G. Comber, Oxford.
<u>Second Prize:</u>	(20% of Pool) (£2.80)	D.G. Ventry, East Wolsney.
<u>Third Prize: Ninth Prize:</u>	(10%, 5% -) (£1.56)	P. Wakefield, Oakington.
<u>Fourth Prize:</u>	(6% -) (£0.72)	M.J. Breslin, Anfield.
<u>Seventh Prize:</u>	(4% -) (£0.48)	J.W. Barfield, West Ham.
<u>Eighth Prize:</u>	(4% -) (")	R.G. Vincent, Fekesham.
<u>Tenth Prize:</u>	(5% -) (£0.36)	H. Lingard, Petersfield.

The percentages given above are of the Stake Money which at £12 was 50% of the total amount contributed by Subscribers in September. Whilst prizes were on this occasion a mere pittance the Lottery has at least got off the ground.

It will therefore be seen that the more members who subscribe, the greater will be the monthly stake money; the greater the monthly income to the Society and more importantly the greater the potential Prize Money.

Full details were sent to all members with the last issue of RDM but a further APPLICATION FORM is enclosed WITH THIS ISSUE, in case you have mislaid it. Just complete and send it to the TREASURER. This will be sent on to your bank to debit your account with the chosen amount on 2nd of each month. DO SEND OFF YOUR FORM WITHOUT DELAY TO ENSURE INCLUSION IN THE NOVEMBER DRAW!

SUBSCRIPTIONS - With this issue of RDM will be enclosed to those members who have recently renewed their ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION a new MEMBERSHIP CARD (look inside the envelope). If however, your subscription falls due for renewal at this time A RENEWAL FORM IS enclosed. Please return it with your remittance as soon as possible and a DONATION over and above your subscription will always be gratefully received.

If you subscribe to the LOTTERY don't forget that only FULLY PAID UP MEMBERS can participate. So check your Membership Card NOW! and make sure it has not expired and send your remittance (as per the back panel of R.D.N.).

ADVANCE NOTICE - ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 1983 - CREWE

23rd APRIL

KNOW YOUR REPRESENTATIVE

This Quarter sees quite a turnover in personnel at local level and the following amendments should be made to the information contained on pages 5 & 6 of the MEMBERS' HANDBOOK:-

LONDON & HOME COUNTIES BRANCH - Please note that the new BRANCH SECRETARY is:-

L.I. Elias Esq., 78, Rochford Gardens, Slough,
Berks. SL2 5XF (Tel: 0753 30178)

COUNTY OF DEVON - The new Area Representative is:-

W. Davies Esq., 7, Bouchers Hill,
North Tawton, Devon.

MERSEYSIDE - The new Area Representative is:-

M.J. Breslin Esq., # 16, Feltwell Road,
Anfield, Liverpool, L4 2TF

Mr. M.J. Savage is now Area Representative for SOUTH HUMBERSIDE only; and the new Area Representative for MID-LINCOLNSHIRE (all of the administrative county of Lincoln, north of Metheringham) is:-

F.J. Strong Esq., 55, Newson Road,
Lincoln, LN1 1RE

Finally Mr. A. Macaulay is no longer Area Representative for NORTHUMBERLAND & DURHAM and appointment of a successor will be announced in due course.

A.J. Kearns who had been Branch Secretary (of both RIS & RDS) since 1976 has recently resigned & as has Mr. R. Wilson for Merseyside and we would like to take this opportunity of expressing our thanks for their services to the Society.

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

Editor: J.W. Barfield

state the service. Its removal has acted as a deterrent to those who work in the police, in transport undertakings, cinemas, theatres and restaurants. Many servants of the House find it difficult to get home when we sit late. Cases of real hardship have been put to me. I have been told of transport workers who sleep in their offices or require their friends to put them up.

The decision to eliminate the service was wrong. The social consequences have been enormous. The financial consequences outweigh strongly the £55 per day that BR claim that it cost to run the service. Constituents who used it claim that it was well used on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday, fully used on Friday and packed out on Saturday and Sunday.

After some time BR agreed to a slight change, which took effect on May 17: to retire the 1 minute before midnight to ten minutes past midnight. While I welcome this, there is still a difference of 49 minutes between the last departure in the old timetable. The service was so well used, there must be other considerations than cost that motivated BR to end it.

The angle that worries me most is its effect on the willingness of my constituents to go to London to find jobs. BR's attitude is deplorable. I hope you will request BR to consider the urgent reinstatement of the 59 minutes past midnight service. I place on record my thanks to my constituent, Mr. Beechills of Dartford, Mr. Bob Newlyn, manager of BR south-east division, and the people of Dartford, who in their generous and concerned way have petitioned me to bring the matter to the attention of the House.

Mr. Cartwright: I have been involved in this campaign for about six months. Many of my constituents live at Thamesmead, a new town development, where people have been brought out of central London and re-housed. They depend heavily on the train service to Dartford to get home. We have provided BR with the names of over 50 people who were regular travellers on that train. One of the letters I received from the general manager of BR (Southern) accepts that it was a popular service. However, the letter, dated March 18, continues: "a majority of the passengers were travelling for entertainment and are in a position to re-schedule their arrangements."

I do not accept that, and BR has amended its view. Even if it were right, it betrays a strange view of BR's responsibilities. I was brought up to believe that the service exists to meet the needs of the travelling public. BR has moved to some extent. It has delayed the 23.59 to 10 past midnight. That is a small step in the right direction but does not meet the needs of shift workers. It would not have met the needs of MPs if we had been trying to get home after tonight's debate. The final suggestion I have had from BR is puzzling, which says it will re-schedule the 00.54 by delaying it to two minutes past 1 am. The only trouble is that that service goes to Orpington. Even the rolling drunkard will not go to Thamesmead, Abbey Wood or Dartford via Orpington at that time in the morning.

One of the most sensible suggestions from our constituents is that BR should thin out its late-night service, delay the 11.27 to 11.59 and the 11.59 to 00.59.

Mr. Eyre: Ministers have no powers to intervene but I have been in touch with the board about this matter and it has explained the background. The board decided to discontinue the 12.59 train as part of a package of service reductions introduced in 1981. This was in response to recommendations in the Monopolies and Mergers Commission's inquiry on London commuters services. The then minister made clear his view that the board should look for changes that were least harmful to the interests of its customers.

There were complaints, especially about last trains. The board took heed of the complaints and reinstated some of the services. It was as part of this process that it arranged for the last train to Dartford to leave at the later time of 12.10. But I understand that the board considers that the cost of about £20,000 a year to reinstate the 12.59 train could not be justified.

Mr. Eyre then spoke of assistance given to BR on other lines: Great Northern Electrification, the Bedford electric trains that were standing idle; resignalling at Victoria and on the Brighton line, and the annual construction of 200 EMUs. In replying (he said) my intention has been to set out the context within which the board makes its decisions on planning passenger services.

I hope that co-operation ("with the active support of the work force") will be forthcoming in the interests of commuting passengers.

Mr. Eyre stopped speaking and the House rose at 12.27 am.

"Electrification to Leeds & Newcastle being considered"

JUNE 6 * *Alan Beith* (Lib. Berwick-on-Tweed): When the report is published of the select committee on electrification, will there be a positive response to the case? The experience of the Penmanshiel tunnel closure showed that traffic does not want to transfer from the east coast line, which ought to be operated by one method of traction from Edinburgh to London.

Mr. Eyre: We are considering the board's proposals for electrification to Leeds and Newcastle and shall reach a decision as soon as possible.

Tim Eggar (C. Enfield North): Can you confirm that electrification is crucially dependent on reduced manning levels and the abandonment of nineteenth century work practices?

Mr. Eyre: The struggle for more efficient working practices is central to the future of the railways and must be fully supported.

Albert Booth (Lab. Barrow): Do you accept that investments are urgently needed to catch up on the back log of repairs to BR's main line network, because there would be no sense in electrifying a worn-out system? What basis has been calculated to be adequate to bring about those renewals that are desperately needed?

Mr. Eyre: The amount has not yet been decided, but I very much recognise its importance to the renewal of track.

"Lorries: DoT has not kept its promises"

JUNE 16 * *Sydney Chapman* (C. Chipping Barnet): asked the minister if he would review existing powers to ban heavy lorries from using inadequate roads.

Mr. Eyre: The minister has issued a circular urging local authorities to make more extensive use of their wide powers to control lorries. We are determined to do everything practicable to check the growth in lorry numbers and journeys, to control more effectively the vehicles themselves and where they go, to encourage rail freight, build more bypasses and strengthen enforcement regulations.

Mr. Chapman: Will you confirm that there is a need to encourage quieter, cleaner and safer heavy vehicles? Would you monitor local control schemes and encourage, for example, the proposed scheme of 50 square miles in North London?

Mr. Eyre: We shall watch carefully the efforts made by the authorities to keep lorries out of environmentally sensitive areas.

Michael McNair-Wilson (C. Newbury): asked if he had decided about maximum permissible weights.

Mr. Howell: I hope to make an announcement as soon as possible on a wide range of issues affecting heavy lorries, not just weights.

Mr. McNair-Wilson: When you announce the maximum permissible weights will you say whether that will be the maximum you are prepared ever to permit?

Mr. Howell: It is certainly the Government's view that any increase in the dimensions of trailers and containers on our roads cannot be tolerated. Indeed, one of the proposals is for a maximum height, which does not exist at present. It is the Government's intention that there should be no increase in trailer sizes. On the other hand, it is the Government's view that it makes no sense for these containers to be running round one-third full of air.

Gwilym Roberts (Lab. Cannock): Will you comment on the observations of the T&GWU about the difficulties that would be created by increasing the maximum weight?

Mr. Howell: I think your worry is that there would be fewer vehicles and fewer jobs. Sainsbury's tell me that if the weight limit were raised, it could supply a supermarket with as few as six instead of 10 40-ft. containers a day. That would obviously reduce the number of journeys and, I am afraid, of jobs.

Anthony Nelson (C. Chichester): Will you think again before announcing a course of action that will be gravely damaging to our party and to many whose interests we represent? There is simply no way you can guarantee that heavier lorries will mean fewer.

Mr. Howell: The Government's concern is to see that the lorry problem is tackled vigorously. I would expect to have your full support for a package of measures for controlling the vehicles.

Peter Snape (Lab. West Bromwich E.): For most people the heavy lorry is a dirty and dangerous menace that should be controlled far more rigorously by both local and national government. Will your department publish a list of authorities, including — regretfully — the West Midlands County Council, which have not yet implemented the valuable provisions of the 1972 legislation, known as the Dykes Act?

Mr. Eyre: I shall consider your suggestions. We shall be looking at the response of local authorities in this respect.

David Crouch (C. Canterbury): I should find it impossible to support any proposition to increase the weight of juggernauts. In my experience over many years, the Department has let down ministers, the House and MPs by not keeping to its promises on road development. Until our roads are ready, there can be no heavier juggernauts allowed on them.

Mr. Eyre: I appreciate your frankness, but I ask you to await the final package of proposals. I believe it represents a substantial advance in environmental conditions, which I know concern you.

"Marginal increase in railfreight expected by 1991"

JUNE 28 *Nicholas Winterton* (C. Macclesfield): asked about plans to encourage more goods to be carried by rail.

Mr. Eyre: Road and rail must compete fairly for freight traffic, but I recognise there can be environmental benefits if suitable freight can be transferred from heavy lorries to rail. Section 8 of the Railways Act 1974 encourages freight to be carried by rail rather than road where there is benefit to local communities. I wish to see the valuable contribution of these grants continued.

PREVIEW

MPs of various parties have questions on the stocks about railways, due to be answered orally by the Transport Secretary, David Howell, on the first available day after the Summer Recess — *Wednesday October 27.*

Nigel Forman (C. Carshalton), *Sydney Chapman* (C. Chipping Barnet), *Barry Porter* (C. Bebington & Ellesmere Port), *Robin Squire* (C. Havering Hornchurch), *Michael Neubert* (C. Romford), *Tim Eggar* (C. Enfield North), *Michael Shersby* (C. Uxbridge), *David Winnick* (Lab. Walsall North), and *Alfred Dubs* (Lab. Wandsworth) will all be asking about the future of London Transport, and several others will be asking about fares and transport subsidies. Just one MP, *Sir William van Straubenzee* (C. Wokingham) will be asking when the minister "expects to receive the report by British and French financial institutions on the future of the Channel Tunnel."

Most MPs were on holiday at the time of writing. Mr. Dubs, whose question is about the cost per mile of travelling on (a) tubes, (b) LT buses and (c) BR commuter services, told me his aim was to show how high our fares are; to show the discrepancy between LT and BR and to keep up the pressure now that Mr. Jay's Bill had "died the inevitable death."

On the subject of the Tunnel, he told me he was "more than marginally in favour" but he thought the Government was "not enthusiastic," partly because they believed it was a way of boosting BR. What about Mrs. Thatcher's meeting with President Mitterand last May, I asked him? When they had been expected to discuss the subject.

"There were more urgent issues at the time," Mr. Dubs replied, "and if they had dealt with it something would have come out." He thought the Tunnel might have a significant effect in easing the pressure on air travel, "but ministers are not keen to go along with that argument."

Returning to the subject of London tubes and buses, Mr. Dubs said: "I don't believe you can have public transport without a decent level of public support. No other country can, and London supports the whole economy, not just that of London. Many people outside benefit. Ken Livingstone did what he did as second best, but the ideal is to have a decent level of subsidy from taxation."

Commons questions will also be asked about future investment in railways by that keen enthusiast *Robert Adley* (C. Christchurch), *Peter Snape* (Lab. West Bromwich E.) and others.

JE

"MORE IN OUR NEXT ISSUE!"

Prepared by Louis Hipperson & Jack Ellis (Railway Development Society)

REGIONAL NOTES

LONDON & HOME COUNTIES

Moving into top gear in readiness for Rail Development Week, branch machinery has been renovated to enable more activities to be organised and for more members to participate. The momentum of the branch committee has quickened as a result of holding more frequent meetings, a new Secretary has recently been appointed (See Members Only Supplement) and more specialist sub-committees. The formation of small area groups in various parts of the Branch's area to encourage more localised activities by RDS members is also being pursued.

R.D.W. will be crammed with events. Two days before it starts, on October 21st, the Branch A.G.M. has been arranged in the historic Midland Railway Board Room at St. Pancras with the added attraction of one of the Society's films. The week itself will begin on 23rd October with a round trip by Branch Members and supporters via Ashford — Hastings and Tunbridge Wells to publicise the problems of the Tonbridge — Hastings line. Originally it had been intended to concentrate on the picture postcard village of Rye, jewel of the much threatened Ashford — Hastings line, but with more real threat to the Tunbridge Wells — Eridge line (see below), the Branch Committee has decided to revise the itinerary to concentrate meetings with the press, local rail activists and those concerned with the future of the services radiating from Tunbridge Wells (returning via Eridge to London Bridge).

London's suggested light rail projects, at Muswell Hill and in Docklands, will be the focus of attention of a meeting at Hornsey Town Hall (on either the Tuesday or Wednesday of the week) and a day time visit to view King's Cross Midland station and associated electrification works at St. Pancras is in prospect for 28th. (Details of this and other local activities will be contained in the latest issue of the Branch Newsletter "Railondon" due early September to all local members).

Transport in London (and in particular its financial support) is continuing to exercise the branch since the doubling of fares over six months ago. A House of Commons all-party Committee has recently produced a controversial report recommending that all transport authorities within the metropolis should be under the umbrella of a Metropolitan Transport Authority. Just what RDS has wanted — a single authority or P.T.A. for the area! Not quite! For according to GLC Leader, Ken Livingstone, the report "could have been drafted by the roads lobby" for it recommends the Government not to support measures proposed by his authority to prevent the movement of heavy lorries in the area. Retiring L.T. Chairman, Sir Peter Masefield, however welcomed the emphasis placed on the "national importance" of transport in London although he disliked the Committee's rejection of the principle of relating subsidy to the amount of commercial revenue earned from fares, upon the desirable level of which it is relatively silent.

GLC Transport Committee Chairman, Dave Wetzel, has forecast that the next step will be for the Council to ask the Government for talks on the proposals "with a view to the GLC continuing to be the transport authority for Greater London, but with its powers and responsibilities changed in the way suggested by the Select Committee for the MTA." The recommendations are therefore good "in parts" and the Branch Committee is actively studying them.

Pressure is meanwhile building up from local rail users groups on BR to secure the future of the Tonbridge — Hastings line and at a recent meeting with them B.R. London & South East Director and General Manager of Southern Region, David Kirby, outlined some of the options. The most favoured appeared to be the one costing £24m., involving widening stone bridges but with singling for short stretches through all tunnels (and some

bridges) except Grove + electrification, which would permit some timetable improvements. This has now been approved by SR and gone to the BRB for submission to the Secretary of State. He warned, however, against over-optimism for even if approval was forthcoming promptly from Mr. Howell the construction timescale would be approximately 3½ years which would make May 1986 the earliest date for completion.

On the Hurst Green - Uckfield line, where substantial deterioration of track has already taken place, *singling* was the favoured option. This would give it another lease of life and enable shorter journey times than at present to be achieved. On the Tunbridge Wells - Groombridge link however conditions were much worse and as the line was less viable and presented problems of tying in with any new Hastings service, closure seemed the only course open and by the time members receive this report official closure notices are expected to have been posted. At its last meeting the Branch Committee therefore resolved to lodge a formal objection, at least to satisfy itself that closure would have no long term adverse effects on the viability of other lines in the local network.

JE/JWB

WEST MIDLANDS

Following persistence by our Redditch Line Users Group, and the local T.U.C.C., on the absence of the 26 extra trains from the G.B. Timetable since May 1980 the matter was referred to the Central Transport Consultative Committee who have secured a BRB policy decision that "in future financially aided train services (and for that matter those under threat of closure) will be published in the National Timetable provided there is an assurance at the time it goes to press that the service will operate on day one of the timetable. If there is any reasonable possibility of the service being discontinued during its currency, for whatever reason, an appropriate footnote will be added."

An independent 80 page study report on the potential for rail development in the West Midlands by a student planner concludes that there is a good case for re-opening the Snow Hill route through to Stourbridge; a Walsall - Hednesford service, and an associated widespread electrification programme. The report also remarks that B.R. is "vastly inefficient", "racked with conservative attitudes" and "suffering from high operating costs." It points to the Tyne & Wear Metro as a "good example of a modern and efficient public transport system for metropolitan areas."

The number of local rail passengers using New Street and Moor Street every day, as at November 1981, had risen to 59,701 compared with 56,160 in November 1980. In view of the recession the increase is most gratifying. West Midlands Transport Commiteemen have been visiting urban transport systems in Europe and more recently in Tyneside where the Metro was described as "Magic" and "Fantastic". There is interest in a "lighter than B.R." rolling stock being secured to replace the ageing DMUs in the Midlands and with the Class 210 costing £1m. per set the Saltley based Metro Cammell has been asked to offer an alternative. British Rail have reported to the WMCC that electrification of the local passenger lines within the boundary will cost some £28m. - excluding the rolling stock. Overall the cost of switching over to electrification would be nearer £100m.

B.R. are planning to revise the hourly fast trains running between Worcester and Birmingham, from May 1983, by re-routing them off the Bromsgrove route to travel via Kidderminster, calling also at Droitwich, Stourbridge Junction and Cradley. The journey time is likely to be increased from 47 to some 54 minutes but with increased revenue. A new user group has been formed to promote this line and the Secretary is Mr. Jim Colley, 387, Huncott Road, Kidderminster, Worcs. Their first public meeting was due to be held at Kidderminster Corn Exchange on 15th September.

Our Hednesford Public Meeting, on 30th June, attracted over 60 people who vigorously supported the provision of an hourly train service; and at Walsall a publicity stand was manned in the Market Place on 22nd and 29th July. On 28-30th August RDS was represented with a stand manned by Branch Members at the IWA boat rally, held this year at Titford, Langley, Sandwell. The Branch charter excursions on 10th July had to be re-arranged to run on 4th September offering morning and evening return trips over the freight-only 15 mile Walsall - Cannock - Rugeley line and also a day excursion from Rugeley and Walsall to Bewdley for the Severn Valley Railway. A further RDS enterprise is a party visit by HST from Bhm. New Street to Newcastle on 9th October to see and ride the exciting new Metro network of Tyne & Wear.

EAST ANGLIA

Five special trains were run by the Branch and its associated local Groups in May and June, carrying over 1,400 people. These included a hauled excursion from all East Suffolk Line stations to Windsor; two DMU trips to the Nene Valley Railway; and a seaside special from Wisbech to Felixstowe.

Our plans for further specials in July were thwarted by the rail strikes, with the need to postpone the trains. However, following the return to normal working on BR we re-arranged these and were due to run a further four specials in late August/early September. By the end of the season, we expect to have carried some 2,500 people - some of whom had not been on a train for years - on our regional network.

RDS has welcomed initiatives by local BR management to gain new business; notably a 20% experimental fare cut on most of the Sheringham line trains; issuing of the popular Anglia Ranger tickets by conductor guards; and the distribution of leaflets with discount vouchers in areas served by our paytrain lines.

Gt. Yarmouth Borough Council has announced its intention to take the BRB to Court over the lack of formal notice and consultation when the Wensum Curve (allowing trains to avoid Norwich) was closed. Certain other councils have offered financial support to the cost of the action which is being viewed as a "test case." RDS itself certainly thinks so and has also offered a small contribution as have at least 3 local rail users groups.

During the ASLEF strike, the Branch issued a statement calling on both sides to come out of "their entrenched positions" and agree to some experiments with better use of manpower. It also called on the Secretary of State to give the go-ahead for a significant investment project in East Anglia if such experiments went ahead and since the end of the strike has pressed Mr. Howell further on the issue and particularly condemned the withholding of PSO grant to BR.

RDS has continued to correspond with various bodies on issues such as the Sealink cuts at Harwich; possible singling of parts of the Norwich/main line when electrification takes place and the proposals for modernising the East Suffolk Line. An RDS Committee member has also written to BR and other bodies drawing attention to the more central position of St. Botolphs station (Colchester) to the town and shopping centre which might warrant it being re-named Colchester Central or Town. Finally, the Society's Exhibition was due to be displayed at March Library during September.

YORKSHIRE

Our report in this issue is concerned mainly with roads for if less (time and money) were spent on these mammoth "White Elephants" more might be available for more sensible public transport investment (particularly in railways).

The Inspector's recommendations following the Airedale Trunk Road Inquiry, which kept the local Branch of RDS diverted from more important matters from January to October 1980, have now been published. An extensive history of this scheme, and the significance of the outcome, appeared in the centre pages of the Transport 2000 Newsheet "Transport Retort" (Vol 6, No.7, July 1982) but of even greater significance was their almost complete acceptance subsequently by both David Howell and Michael Heseltine. The main points are as follows:—

That the road should follow the route suggested (by the D.Tp.) from Kildwick, near Skipton to Keighley, but that the spur running south west to Crosshills should not be built. *It was feared that this had the makings of a motorway through to Burnley and the M6.*

That the trunk road should end on the west side of Keighley from whence traffic would follow the existing road system and thus avoid massive demolition within an industrial estate. From the east side of Keighley it should continue to Bingley taking the route thro. the town alongside the railway and canal, involving the demolition of six business premises. The road would end at Cottingley Bar, just east of Bingley, instead of continuing to Baildon as originally planned, thereby saving Roberts Park, a local beauty spot on the edge of Shipley and the demolition of Shipley Salt School.

All in all the curtailment of the Trunk Road at Bingley should be to the advantage of the rail services to Leeds and Bradford and generally residents of the Aire Valley (including many who disrupted a previous Motorway Inquiry) feel the outcome to have justified their efforts. Having spent much time over a considerable period opposing this wasteful scheme, appearing at Public Inquiries to put forward the rail alternatives, the Branch can now concentrate on maintaining and developing the local rail infrastructure, something which it may be hard-pressed to do if Government plans to alter the rules for financial support within the P.T.Es (reported in our Editorial) are implemented.

DJB/JWB

NORTH EAST ENGLAND

The recent BR decision not to go ahead with closure of the BREL Shildon Works is welcomed and follows a resolution of the RDS National Committee opposing the proposal which was sent to BR, the press and many national organisations concerned.

TJG

LANCASHIRE & CUMBRIA

Following the BBC2 Brass Tacks programme on "Back Door Beeching" (shown on 3rd June) a local RDS member wrote to its Editor requesting a complete list of the lines threatened with closure. In his reply the Producer, Alan Dobson stated:—

"It is a list of lines that are not having enough money spent on them at the moment and that unless substantial funds are made available in the near future, the lines will begin to deteriorate to such an extent that they will have to close. *This of course does not apply to the Settle to Carlisle; Ribbleshead Viaduct, has now passed the point of no return. I think most informed people would now accept that closure is now inevitable.*"

The list of lines included the following in this area:—

- | | |
|---------------------------|---------------------------------|
| (1) Barrow — Whitehaven; | (2) Blackpool South — Kirkham; |
| (3) Burnley — Colne; | (4) Hebden Bridge — Rose Grove; |
| (5) Newcastle — Carlisle; | (6) Ormskirk — Preston; |
- and last but not least Settle — Carlisle.

Following cuts in the grant to the Bolton — Wigan — Kirby line by Merseyside County Council, British Rail are proposing severe cuts to the service, especially at peak times. Local users feel that such cuts would mark the beginning of the end for the line and are now arranging a venue for a public meeting in order to form a Rail Users' Group. Meanwhile (as mentioned in the last issue of R.D.N. p.13) Lancashire County Council in conjunction with B.R. have produced a document entitled "Rail Strategy for Lancashire" It was hoped that both parties to the strategy would sign it and pass it to Transport Secretary, David Howell. In the event B.R. have now declined to do so and at the Council's meeting on Thursday 29th July, Highways & Transport Committee Chairman Cllr. G. Slynn stated that an urgent meeting with L.M.R. General Manager, Mr. J.O'Brien, was being arranged. This very worrying development does not augur well for local lines in this area.

The committee of the South Fylde Line Users' Assn. have now had a meeting with British Rail at which the urgent need to reinstate the axed through trains formed the main part of the discussions. Other topics discussed, however, included extra trains calling at Kirkham to improve connections from Manchester to the South Fylde, improved publicity for the line, and a scheme to adopt a station. Following the meeting B.R. have agreed to stop one up and one down train from Manchester to Blackpool additionally at Bolton and 3,000 leaflets have been given by B.R. to SFLUA for local door to door distribution. The Association are now planning to officially adopt Squires Gate Station. Anyone who knows it will know well why this has been done!

Members of the Ormskirk to Preston Travellers' Assn. also had a meeting with B.R. on 3rd June at which plans for the 1983/84 Timetable formed a large part of the proceedings. From what was said it appeared that OPTA faced a re-run of its timetable campaign all over again as BR, faced with a worsening financial position, was once more proposing to introduce the 1 DMU service. The County Council was also planning to "Bus" students from Ormskirk to Preston, and thus take away nearly 150 daily peak hour users, as it was cheaper than using rail. Straight away OPTA alerted all interested people to this danger and the County Council agreed to back down (at least for the next academic year). The future of the line therefore looks safer for a while longer. *OPTA is planning to hold its first A.G.M. on Tuesday 14th September 1982.*

RNW

MERSEYSIDE

On 26th July, Malcom Thornton MP, opened a new £1½ million container terminal at North Dock, Garston. The development includes a Freightliner Terminal. The 1982/83 Timetable includes a number of additional Saturdays Only trains from Liverpool; a new service to Weymouth departing at 08.56 and an extra train to Barrow departing at 09.15. On 23rd July a coal train was derailed by vandals on the single track branch between Huyton Quarry Junction and Cronton Colliery, the third such incident in the Merseyside area this year.

The idea put forward jointly by Bebington Rail Action Group and the Wrexham — Birkenhead RUA of an underground railway in Chester, linked to proposed electrification between Liverpool and Chester, received considerable publicity locally. Much of it however was of a mocking nature. The idea was originally contained in written submissions to the Public Transport Plan of Cheshire County Council. In the meantime BR have already advised that they plan to extend the service from Bidston to Birkenhead North in 1984. This is one of the improvements sought by WBRUA since its formation in 1980.

RW

CHESHIRE & GREATER MANCHESTER

Possible sites for about 15 new stations are being investigated by Greater Manchester County Council. Of these Derbyshire Lane (Urmston) and the Mills Hill/Middleton Junc. area are being assessed in detail. A joint BR/GMCC/PTE Rail Study Group has been established. Its remit includes (a) the development of the Blackpool - Manchester - Windsor Link scheme and (b) examination of possible cross-city rail links. The latter includes (i) the original Picc/Vic. scheme and (ii) a Light Rapid Transit (LRT) system, either on the surface or below ground.

Disused parts of the Cornbrook Junc. - Chorlton - Didsbury etc., route (closed 1967) are being converted into a "walkway" by GMCC. However, the option for the route to be used in an LRT scheme in the future will be retained. RDS is pointing out the need for LRT stock using such routes to be fully compatible with the BR 25kV system.

BR have announced permanent closure of the Tiviot Dale (Stockport) freight route between Portwood and Cheadle. The section between Portwood and Woodley is also in danger. Local groups are fighting for the retention of the "right of way" (also possible "mothballing" of the track) and the future development of the rail link. This is envisaged as part of a larger scheme to re-open this route from Romiley/Woodley, through Wythenshawe to Altrincham - possibly even Warrington/Widnes.

EAST MIDLANDS

RDS and the Sheffield Passengers' Assn. organised a public meeting in Hathersage on 1st July; when the 28 people present agreed to set up a Hope Valley Rail Users' Group. Dr. Hugh Porteous, in the Chair, spoke of problems on the Sheffield - New Mills Central DMU service; and John Asquith (RDS Cheshire Area Representative) recounted the problems encountered on the New Mills - Manchester section of the route (on which he hopes to set up a users' group in the autumn). Some of these problems were the result of lack of investment, as on most similar lines; but others could be solved by better co-operation between the different BR regions and Divisions through which the line runs.

Trevor Garrod (RDS National Committee) also spoke at the meeting, describing the achievements of rail users' groups elsewhere and possible strategies that could be adopted in seeking improvements to the service and new business for it, e.g. in the tourist field. At the end of the meeting, a strong local committee was set up, including at least one person who had been active in the successful fight to save the line from the Beeching Axe in the 1960s. Though the Hope Valley Line would not appear to be threatened with closure, as it now carries more traffic with the diversion of the Nottingham - Glasgow trains, the Group will be concentrating on increasing passenger traffic on the local trains and improvements in the timetable.

TJG/DJB

WALES

On Sundays, 22nd and 29th August the Cambrian Coast Line Action Group ran "Super Sunday Scenic Specials" from Barmouth to Aberystwyth in response to B.R.'s request to help the line. C.C.L.A.G. have produced a new route guide for the general public entitled "Cambrian Rail" (a review of which should appear (appears elsewhere in this issue of RDN). C.C.L.A.G. are concerned by proposals being considered by BRB to scrap the Mk.1 coaching stock fleet and also by the possible withdrawal of goods facilities at Tywyn, but more heartening is the news that BR is to spend £150,000 this Autumn on repairs to Barmouth Bridge.

The future of the Heart of Wales Line (Shrewsbury - Swansea) is not helped by criticism of BR mad by Ludlow M.P. Eric Cockeram, but to which C.C.L.A.G. have responded. The local Line Travellers' Assn. (set up at a meeting in Llandrindod Wells in November last year) ran its first Railtour entitled "The Brecon Beacons" Shrewsbury - Llandoverly (Tour to Brecon Mountains Rly.) - Abergavenny - Shrewsbury with thro. fares from all parts, including the Midlands and London on 18th September.

At the end of July it was heartening to read in the "North Wales Weekly News" an editorial questioning the need for the £800m. + Colwyn Bay - Conwy ASS Project. On 25th July the Gwynedd County Council's Conwy Valley Sunday trains were well supported. The Council ran specials on 6 Sundays in the Summer, 3 trips each way along the Conwy Valley line - fares being pegged at 1977 prices!! A commentary on the route was provided for all passengers.

SOUTH WEST ENGLAND

Mr. R. N. Joanes (a member of the Society's affiliated North Devon Railway Line Development Group), has organised a special tour train to traverse the two lines most likely possibilities for re-opening to passenger traffic in North Devon. These being the line which connects Barnstaple with Bideford and Torrington and the line which runs between Crediton and Okehampton. As well as providing enthusiasts and day trippers with a fun day out, this trip, and the many others which have been run over the last few years, serve to demonstrate in the most practical way possible the potential for carrying passengers on these normally freight-only lines and also to remind the local people that their railway still exists.

Originally the trip was to have been a re-run of that which took place on 9th August last year over the route from Barnstaple to Petrockstow and Meeth clay quarries, but was altered to go to Okehampton and Meldon Quarry instead because BR's Engineer declared the line from Torrington to Meeth quarry as unsafe for passenger trains, due to deterioration of some sections of the track. This could mean that the 1981 train, which was well supported, could have been the last passenger train ever to go to Petrockstow, and one is bound to wonder how long clay trains will be able to continue to use the line (which is now not even considered safe for a DMU), unless extensive repairs are made to the track. The trip, originally scheduled for Sunday 25th July, was re-scheduled for 12th September because of the rail strike.

WD

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