

Railway Development News

Railway Development Society

A Voice for Rail Users

No. 18

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STILL NO FIRM COMMITMENT TO RAIL INVESTMENT FROM PRIME MINISTER

At the General Election, in June, the Chairman, Dr. Caton, wrote to all the Leaders of the major political parties posing the questions set out below and requesting a meeting to discuss railway matters when the results were known. In the event only Mrs. Thatcher sent a personal reply the text of which (and the Chairman's comments thereon) are reproduced on this page.

In the letter RDS asked the Party Leaders to state, if elected, whether they would implement the following policies for the railways:-

(1) Reject options in the Serpell Report on railway finances for further contraction of the Railway network;

(2) Respond to the recent management - union agreement on the Bedford - St.Pancras line for single manning of trains by authorising the go-ahead for a major programme of railway electrification;


(3) Fund a programme of experimental rail re-openings under the amendment passed in 1981 to the 1962 Transport Act;

(4) Work towards a fairer system of funding road and rail transport, in particular removing the present anomaly in which road building is justified in terms of social cost - benefit whereas major railway investment is often confined to schemes which meet strict commercial criteria.

THE CHAIRMAN COMMENTS

The Society was pleased to receive the accompanying reply, signed personally by the Prime Minister, the most significant statement in which is the assurance that the Government does not envisage major route closures. We may perhaps take some comfort from the fact that this policy is mirrored in the recently published B.R. Corporate Plan which envisages very few passenger closures although it is clear that, if implemented, some freight lines would disappear. However, the current threat to the Settle-Carlisle line, which forms the most direct link between Leeds and Glasgow, must surely put the Prime Minister's pledge to the test, since by an standards this must be regarded as a major route.

The remainder of Mrs. Thatcher's letter is less satisfactory in that it contains no firm commitment to a rolling programme of electrification and other long-term mod-



10 DOWNING STREET

THE PRIME MINISTER

6th June 1983

Mar. L. Caton,

Thank you for your letter of 28th May enclosing a questionnaire.

First, the Serpell Report: we have no programme of major closures, and Serpell did not recommend any. The network maps in the Serpell Report are emphatically not closure proposals. They were no more than broad illustrations. They certainly do not constitute Government policy. Our aim is to secure improved productivity and efficiency in the railways industry, as recommended by the Serpell Report itself, in order to give a better and more secure future to those working on the railways.

Second, electrification: we want to see productive investment in the railway system and we are committed in principle to electrification. However, like our predecessors in Government, we believe that British Rail's freight and intercity businesses should run commercially, so each electrification project must be assessed on its commercial merits. As electrification is expensive, we must be sure of the financial benefits it would bring. These financial benefits are linked with plans for the future of these businesses, which the Railways Board and the Government are developing.

Third, rail reopenings: the Government supported the 1981 Conservative Private Members' measure to which you refer. But the question of reopening railway lines on an experimental basis is a matter for consideration by British Rail normally in consultation with the local councils concerned.

Fourth, funding rail transport: British Rail is receiving something like £1000 million a year in various subsidies from the Exchequer. So I would not agree that the railways are treated unfairly.

*Yours sincerely
Margaret Thatcher*

Dr M P L Caton

ernisation which British Rail so desperately needs. By contrast the Government has just published a White Paper setting out a £7,000 million road programme designed to meet the country's needs beyond the end of the century. If such vision and long term planning were similarly applied to the Railways, Britain might have a transport policy worthy of that name.

M.P.L.C.

GARETH JONES

We regret to advise of the sudden death of the Midlands Branch Secretary, Gareth D. Jones on 26th September. Gareth was a most amiable colleague anxious to spend every moment working for rail promotion and he will be very much missed.

A.B.

RAIL LETTER FROM AMERICA

Harry Miller is a freelance U.S. railway writer who visited the U.K. in 1982 and participated in several RDS activities. We publish below, with his kind permission, extracts from a letter which he wrote to John Barfield in May 1983.

.....Part of the reason that I delayed writing you was that I felt that you had enough gloom and doom from the railway world in Britain, without my adding another negative note. Perhaps, however, I should continue to be negative: the creation of Amtrak in 1971 was a miracle I would not have predicted, and its survival in 1983 is a continuing miracle. If I became positive, perhaps things would get worse?

.....I always encourage and admire those who are heavily engaged in the thankless task of slowing the headlong rush toward total domination of the English-speaking world (and other civilised parts of the globe) by the infernal combustion rubber-tyred device. Thus I want to emphasise that I enjoy the publications from RDS and Transport 2000 (I have paid a subscription to their "Retort") even though I may never again live in Britain and I am not sure when I may return as a tourist.

All the news coverage we get assures us that the Thatcher bunch will increase its control of Britain in the upcoming elections. Rest assured that the lady and her henchmen will step up their campaign of starving and otherwise diminishing British Rail and ALL forms of public transport. She and her camp are no more than elected representatives of the automotive highway interests, and you are going to face many discouraging setbacks in your very important campaign. Ultimately, if the automotive addicts have their way, Britain will be no more than a snarling mass of overcrowded roads. Indeed, it is that way now at many times and in many places. By living in Bournemouth from late August until 7th December 1982, I discovered for the first time what it is like to be in a moderately large town, with reasonably good bus service (although it was threatened with severe reductions), with excellent train service, at least to Southampton and London. Always before, I had travelled extensively throughout England, Scotland and Wales, using either Rail passes or individual tickets. In using British Rail as my "window" on the U.K., I had failed to realise just how thoroughly the automotive highway system has taken over the life-style, just as in the U.S.

You know Americans in general and Anglophiles in particular have a predisposition to think of the British as orderly, polite and very civilised. What I did NOT expect to find in Bournemouth was that the British motorist is far more aggressive than his American counterpart, far less considerate of pedestrians, far more impatient, and far more likely to run up on the pavement any time he sees fit. Placing the automobile in the hands of large numbers

of "ordinary" British people has encouraged a meanness and a retreat from an otherwise civilised existence. This tendency has quite some time to run its course in your venerable society. Whether there will be much public transportation left in the end ultimately depends on the trade-off between individual rights to drive motor vehicles ANYWHERE at ANYTIME and the interdependent needs of society as a whole. It was depressing to find that the British admire, indeed are fascinated with, many of the worst features of the American culture in all its "exciting" brashness and crudities. As you and your fellow workers stand up for the preservation and improvement of public transportation, of which the rail mode is of course the best, you are, contrary to what all the road gang thinks, standing up for the survival of the U.K. as a habitable land. Once British Rail is severely reduced or eliminated, the U.K. will be a land I will never want to visit again. One hopes that reason and economic necessity will see the eventual stabilisation of the British Rail situation.

THE WEST LONDON LINE TWO WAYS TO SPEND £50,000

Coopers & Lybrand are to receive £50,000 of British Rail's money to study the feasibility of converting selected railways, including the West London Line, into roads. That such a concession to the road lobby should have been made at all is regrettable; that this line — a major cross-London freight transfer route — should be chosen for such a study is absurd. It is to be hoped that the study will find conclusively in favour of keeping the line intact, but this is a faint hope. More than likely the report will display the same strategic myopia as did Serpell, and £50,000 better spent elsewhere will have been wasted.

Co-incidentally, the G.L.C. is considering funding a £50,000 study by B.R. into the possibility of running a half-hourly DMU service over the same line between Clapham Junction and Willesden, while opening or re-opening six stations en route. Preliminary study by the G.L.C. has produced a rough estimate that 2-3,000 passengers a day would use the service, which would provide a cross-river link from the S.R.'s busiest interchange station to the North London and Bakerloo lines. Eventual electrification would lead to an integrated orbital service from Clapham Junction to North Woolwich.

The G.L.C. is to be commended on its positive approach to railway development. Whether £50,000 worth of well-spent G.L.C. money will undo the harm caused by £50,000 worth of ill-spent B.R. money remains to be seen.

K.W.

R.D.S. SECTOR COMMITTEES

The National Committee are considering mirroring more closely the work of B.R.'s Commercial Sectors in the same way that the Freight Sub-Committee at present

work in close co-operation with the Board in promoting RAILFREIGHT (See report elsewhere in this issue).

One of the prime requisites will be the staffing of the Committees by enthusiastic volunteers. To gauge response would members having a particular interest in the following SECTORS who might be able to contribute please advise the General Secretary:-

PARCELS-INTER-CITY-PROVINCIAL

Many Branches and Areas already deal with local management on a variety of issues. The new and successful Sector Management has many advantages over the previous situation where one could never find any one responsible at B.R. Headquarters, if indeed that could be located, and that went for staff also! With the new structure we can now reach the top as and when we need to but it helps them if policy matters are directed through one source within the Society.

I have personally sent several potential traffic suggestions to the Parcel Sector which their appreciation has been expressed and am willing to continue with this should members keep me informed. The area most useful is I feel where companies are moving location or setting up in new areas of production and B.R.'s salesmen can visit them before contracts are placed and road vehicles leased.

W.L.Freitag.

WHERE ARE THE WOMEN?

R.D.S. is distinguished from other pro-rail groups such as environmentalists, preservationists and enthusiasts by its commitment to the improvement of rail services for the public transport user. It is strange, therefore, that, while women are heavily dependent on public transport, only a small percentage of R.D.S. members are women and there is only one woman member of the National Committee.

If R.D.S. were to attract a representative proportion of women into its ranks this would at the very least bring in 1,000 new members. We would also be able to honestly claim to represent a true cross-section of rail users.

ED.

RAIL DEVELOPMENT ENTERPRISES — also offer:-

(a) Shed Code type stickers 2" x 3" in electric blue with the initials "RD" and words "Rail Development"

(b) SCRAP SERPELL lapel badges (not the NUR design). (Special bargain price 50p for (a) & (b).

(c) How to organise a special train with a difference. Hints, tips and advice from booking to marketing to success! Send SAE for Fact Sheet.

All the above available from M.Hadley, 34, Station Road, Letchworth, Herts. Make cheques payable to:-

M. Hadley re: RDS a/c.



As reported in the recent MEMBERS' BULLETIN the RDS Petition was finally presented to the Prime Minister on 30th June and the above photograph (which is reproduced by courtesy of the "Morning Star") shows (l-r) Nigel Spearing M.P., John Barfield (Petition Co-ordinator) and Vice-Chairman, Steve Wilkinson, preparing for their visit to No.10. With them were Dr.Caton, Stephen Ross M.P.(Lib. IoW) Press Officer, Les Freitag, and a representative of the SDP.

FREIGHT SCENE

The Freight Sub-Committee has met at three-monthly intervals. London has been the most popular venue, although one meeting took place at Milford Freight Terminal (Didcot) when members of the Committee inspected the premises and discussed potential traffic with the Managing Director there.

Amongst many subjects discussed over the last year or so the following are a mere sample:-

A comprehensive paper has been produced suggesting that (i) I.S.O. containers should be carried by BR "Speedlink" services as well as by "Freightliners" to achieve a wider distribution network; (ii) Freightliner flat wagons should be modified to run as separate wagons carrying 40'0" long containers; and (iii) BR should urgently consider building some wagons

which would accommodate 10'0" high containers, a subject which has been discussed with the BRB.

Correspondence is taking place with Transfesa Terminals Ltd., about their operations and the effect of proposed roll-on/roll-off developments by Brittany Ferries. Answers so far have been re-assuring but the situation is to be monitored.

Correspondence is continuing with B. R.B.; the Greater Manchester Council and the City of Manchester about rail traffic which could be generated by a proposed plant for the conversion of rubbish into crude oil. Swedish Railways have been contacted about a pro-road/anti-rail article in the "Scania" magazine. Replies are awaited.

The provision of Lorry Parks by local authorities, with all expenses paid, has been discussed and referred to the Road/Rail Committee as this is seen as a subsidy

to the road haulage industry. Grain and its derivatives have proved a growing source of traffic with rail-connected terminals appearing at the ports of Southampton, Tees Dock, Ipswich, Tilbury and Cardiff.

The Committee has been in correspondence with B.R. and private wagon companies specialising in Railfreight, notably Traffic Services Ltd., and Storage and Transport Systems Ltd.,. A good rapport has been established with these concerns and further developments are expected. Concern has been expressed about delays by the Department of Transport over the consideration of applications for Sec. 8 grants. This matter is being taken up with the Minister.

Corby New Town has been approached about rail-linking freight facilities now that the steelworks has closed. Interest has also been shown in a rail link for the proposed "Disneyland" amusement park. Light Rail schemes and their effect on existing and future freight schemes are to be monitored. A policy statement on this subject is being prepared for submission to the National Committee.

Taking a broad view the Rail Freight scene has much in it which is encouraging. The suggestions of the Committee are taken seriously at a high level and its members feel that they have much to contribute towards sustaining and improving the railways' ability to move large and more modest loads over long and not so long distances, given new and developing technology.

H.L.

LONDON FREIGHT SCENE

Readers will doubtless remember reading sometime ago of a freight transshipment depot proposed for Welwyn Garden City. We are therefore pleased to report that this has now been given the go-ahead in the latest round of Sec.8 grants. The slowness of the grant procedure nearly cost the entire project and following investigations it would appear that one of the chief culprits was the last Minister and the B.R. Property Board. Fortunately progress since the announcement has been such that the handling equipment should be on site by late Autumn.

Concern that traffic to the Sec.8 facility at Harperbury, (Herts) by Redland Aggregates could be in jeopardy if alternative quarrying took place on the Radlett Airfield site have been removed. Outline plans indicate a conveyor system to take the extracted gravel to the rail facility and talks with Redland have revealed that the traffic will increase (granite chips from Leicestershire) as gravel sources in the Home Counties become worked out. Because of this Redland are pursuing further rail access points. These are: Stevenage, where planning permission previously granted has been renewed; Hoddesdon and Broxbourne, both of which will be built, preferably at the old power station which has certain sidings already in-situ.

W.L.F.

MEMBERS' PLATFORM

"Another Axeman for Our Railways?"

Sir,

We are a strange nation.

While most of Europe carefully planned a co-ordinated system of railways, roads and canals, we have, in our uniquely insular way, proceeded to lay the basis for a decaying system by persisting in looking at our railways as a pure profit and loss exercise without attempting to evaluate their contribution to the nation's economy and environment.

In the 19th Century, inspired by George Hudson, private enterprise developed a totally uncontrolled railway network with such competitive nonsenses as three routes from London to Nottingham. Private collieries and factories did not help either — they wanted rail connections but were not prepared to remodel their premises to accommodate them. The result was sharp curves in sidings and short wheelbase wagons while on the European mainland high capacity wagons were already the order of the day. Meanwhile the railways had been allowed to buy many of our canals which have steadily deteriorated as freightways by contrast with the rest of Europe.

Even with the 1921 Railways Act we had not learned our lesson — instead of creating one system four companies were formed which, apart from the Southern Railway and a few crack trains on other lines, proved to be inefficient, over centralised and labour-intensive — nice to work for but inadequate in a modern context with a particularly marked lack of significant investment. For example, the nationalised undertaking inherited 44 mechanical signal boxes, many continuously manned, in the 50 miles between London & Bedford. Now there is only one control centre for the lot.

Labour had a chance to do something positive with its 1947 Act — not only to set up one system but to rationalise and modernise it but what did they do? They put money into groundnuts while over the water in Holland the Government appointed a real "statesman" to plan and implement their Railway Modernisation. I know — because I worked for him and the International Union of Railways.

In 1952 the Conservatives tried to unscramble the nationalised egg. "Bring back the old company colours and thus the old loyalties" they said. So we had chocolate and cream coaches on the Western until real modernisation. Then came the 1955 Watkinson Report, setting out a full programme of re-equipment, including electrification and re-signalling projected, in the way all such programmes should be well into the 1970s. But this gave the promise of an efficient nationalised system — an anathema to the Tory right wing and the road-minded Civil Service advisers, so Marples stopped progress dead in its tracks, even to the extent of slowing down the long-welded rail programme, a producti-

vity measure if ever there was one. He then brought in axeman number one; Beeching who, egged on by the Ministry of Transport Railway Directorate, closed lines and stations wholesale, leaving whole areas to the mercy of the bus companies who subsequently cut replacement services to the bone or withdrew them entirely, leaving whole areas without public transport. Later of course it was found that branch lines made a substantial contribution to main line revenue, but never mind. By this time, while anti-rail or just plain dithering Ministers hedged at any major spending wholesale electrification and other improvements to the infrastructure were the order of the day in most European Countries.

And so to the present day with Axeman No. 2 on our horizon — Sir Peter Parker having proved too much of a pill for our rail-hating Prime Minister to swallow. To give her credit the outgoing administration had allowed 50 miles to be electrified between Bedford and London (even though one Serpell Option was to close it) together with some 75 miles between Colchester, Harwich and Norwich but they carefully refused to extend the eastern wires 13 miles from Royston and 20 miles from Bishops Cleeve to Cambridge. In addition diesel traction is still required for the strategically obvious few miles between wires at Willesden and Stratford.

On the roads juggernauts reign supreme and motorways crumble. Railway productivity improves (since ASLEF realised their 1982 folly) with flexible rostering. OMO and the "open station." But Mr. Howell, having commissioned yet another report from "experts" and then changed their terms of reference half way through the study still found excuses to avoid honouring his promises of investment in return for productivity. Meanwhile the Energy Minister spends £1.5 million per week propping up the coal industry which, in 1947, inherited many mines whose owners had worked out the most easily accessible coal leaving millions of tons uneconomical to extract.

Mr. Editor, we are indeed a strange nation.

Yours non-politically
A.P. Lambert
Hendon, N.W.4.

"Don't Bash the Arts Council (II)"

Sir,

It was with dismay that I read in the last issue of Railway Development News the following:-

"Taxpayers are forced willy-nilly to fork out..... through the Arts Council £560m. to foster modern art and encourage esoteric branches of culture such as ballet and opera."

I have been employed at the Royal Opera House for over 20 years and in the musical profession for over 30 years and

in all that time I have maintained that rail should get a larger share of the traffic generated by ballet, opera and symphony music than it does.

These activities, unlike road traffic, do not compete against railways for traffic and they do not make insatiable demands on space and ruin the environment. Over the years I have recruited some of my colleagues into RDS membership and the Musicians' Union, of which I am a member, have urged railway modernisation for several years now.

Against this background such remarks offend me, especially when they have no place in RDS literature. I therefore insist that:-

- RDS disassociates itself from these remarks;
- An assurance is given that it will not happen again.

Kenneth R. Shaw
Woodford Green, Essex.

THE EDITOR COMMENTS

Opposition to Arts Council subsidies is in no way official RDS policy. The article in question was published under the same conditions as a "letter to the editor" and I apologise if this was not made clear. I cannot, however, undertake not to publish members' views which may be controversial. The "MEMBERS' PLATFORM" is intended to stimulate free discussion, not to promote any particular "party line"

"Bouquet"

Sir,

Just a short letter of congratulations on your first R.D.N. in the new format. Its presentation is much more appealing and offers a great deal more scope, as do the illustrations and advertisement inserts. Well done sir!

Eddie Graves
Histon, Cambridge.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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

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

A.G.M. — 1984

Provisional arrangements have been made for the 1984 Annual General Meeting to be held at The Maltings, ELY, Cambridgeshire, on Saturday 28th April. Please make a note in your diary.

REGIONAL NOTES

LONDON & HOME COUNTIES

Principal concern of the Branch in the last few months has been the preparation of its reply to the Government's White Paper "Public Transport in London" (Cmd. 9004) which envisages transferring responsibility for L.T. from the Greater London Council to a Government-appointed Regional Transport Authority. In its 4 page Memorandum sent to Transport Secretary, Tom King; other interested parties and the media at the beginning of September grave disquiet was expressed at the prospect of London and South East transport services being controlled by an unrepresentative QUANGO and the Society deprecated any moves which could lead to the erosion of the principles of integration which have been developed by L.T. (and more recently the G.L.C.) over the last 50 years. Copies have since been sent to all London M.P.s, G.L.C. councillors, and the Transport Chairmen of the relevant shire counties as the moves, (as the subsequent White Paper issued on 7th October confirmed) could well be the first steps towards similar action in the other Metropolitan areas.

At the end of September the Branch (and the Society) was represented at a 3-day Conference sponsored by the University of London, London Transport and the Chartered Institute of Transport on the future of Urban Public Transport to celebrate the 50th Anniversary of L.T. The standard of the papers presented (and subsequent debate) indicated that L.T. is being run by far-sighted and dynamic managers (in both the bus and rail field) who are not afraid to tackle the problems of over-manning which have plagued the undertaking in an imaginative and realistic manner. The whole proceedings were, however, overshadowed by the uncertainty which now prevails over the future of London & South East (and Urban Transport generally) and the dramatic end to the L.T. Reception which was more reminiscent of a Greek Wedding — with the shattering of crockery — was perhaps an omen of what is to come.

The position on the Tonbridge — Hastings line still remains uncertain despite the commitment in para. 2.16 of B.R.'s Corporate Plan to eventual electrification. It appears that the Department of Transport is still looking at the possibility of continuing with diesel traction and a final decision was expected when Parliament resumed in October. The campaign to save the Tunbridge Wells — Eridge line however continues and RDS and local users' groups carried out a massive leafletting operation in the area over the weekend of 17th September urging greater use of the line.

On the Watford — St. Albans line the Society's visit on 4th June, and its involvement in the 125th Anniversary Celebrations the week before, has undoubtedly

had some influence on the decision of Hertfordshire County Council not to continue with proposals which would have involved its partial closure merely to facilitate a local road scheme. Those members and supporters who joined the trip on 4th June were able to travel on what were then one of the new Midland-City Electric units; to inspect the new station at Milton Keynes (and sample its real ale) and also the Bletchley — Bedford line on which B.R. have recently agreed to divert trains into the main Bedford station — largely as a result of pressure from our Corporate Member the Bletchley — Bedford Rail Users' Assn.

A dramatic turn of events occurred in the Liverpool Street Saga when B.R. circulated local groups and authorities with its latest proposals to divert the North London Line trains to North Woolwich (after completion of the electrification being financed by the G.L.C.); provide the new curve at Graham Road at an early stage and abandon the idea of a temporary station at Worship Street providing dual-voltage stock to maintain a service from Watford to Liverpool Street. As B.R. explained in their summing up "This re-appraisal has now led to the conclusion that it will now be practical to construct the new line at Hackney at the start of the project and then divert the North London City services from Broad Street into Liverpool Street without the need to provide a temporary station at Worship Street.

Abandonment of the section of line between Dalston Junction and Worship Street will still presumably require a further closure notice and Inquiry by the T.U.C.C. when the acceptability of B.R.'s revised proposals will have to be considered but the availability of dual-voltage stock opens up broader opportunities for the development of Cross-London Links which the Branch will not be slow to pursue with the appropriate authorities and recent meetings with G.L.C. Transport Chair, Dave Wetzel, indicate that the Council is further advanced with proposals for the West London Line (Willesden — Clapham Junction) than had at first been thought.

Finally the proposed closure of Marylebone, and its effect on the services to Aylesbury, (as outlined in the Press Statement issued with the B.R. Corporate Plan) has prompted the Branch to submit a detailed letter to "Modern Railways" seeking answers to the many "Unanswered Questions" and at a Public Meeting, organised by RDS, in Aylesbury on 4th October a packed hall of some 80 local residents and councillors gave a resounding "thumbs down" to any proposals which would adversely affect the rail services to this expanding county town. On the contrary they passed a Resolution deploring the continued deterioration of services and pressed for improvements to be implemen-

ted — to be financed by office development at Marylebone.

J.W.B.

WEST MIDLANDS

Two rail routes are candidates for closure in this area. North of Walsall 5½ miles of the Ryecroft — Lichfield freight line is to be closed as far as Brownhills from 14th January 1984 with an Oil Terminal there left to be served by a singled siding from Lichfield — a further 4½ miles to the North. Freight trains from the North East will incur an extra 15 miles travel via Water Orton and the local Branch of RDS has lodged objections to B.R. and the W.M. C.C. British Rail also want to close four miles of the 24 mile main route to Stratford-on-Avon by terminating trains at Henley-in-Arden and singling both the Shirley — Henley section (10 miles) and the Hatton — Stratford section (9 miles). Stratford-on-Avon trains would be halved and re-routed. The Branch has sent details of its objection and alternative economies to several interested parties but B.R. have to date refused to discuss their scheme at public and private meetings with us, or with the T.U.C.C. In the meantime the 1968 Injunction against withdrawal of the service remains in force.

B.R. also seem unable to meet the W.M.P.T.E.'s request for a marginal costing for the proposed experimental EMU service between Walsall and Wolverhampton instead of the full Section 20 costing. The County Council are anxious that B.R. should accept the spirit of the Tony Speller amendment to the 1962 Transport Act and representations are being made to the Department of Transport. Just north of Wolverhampton's former Low Level (GW) station a new curve has been opened to link Oxley with Bushbury and thus enable MGR trains to avoid reversing to and from Ironbridge p.s.

On 31st August the Branch ran a successful 6-car DMU charter "Avon Adventurer" from Rugely, Hednesford and Walsall to Stratford and Leamington. The Branch A.G.M. was due to be held in Birmingham on 22nd October and our Redditch Group to run an Inter-City charter train to Euston on 29th October. From 2nd October the PTE were due to reduce all off-peak fares. All rail returns over 40p to be charged at the single fare to a maximum of £1.50 but the bus to have a maximum single fare of only 32p. The West Midlands County Council are also very keen to develop new forms of guided transport. £1m. is to be spent on an experimental guided busway; and the Consultants report is due in 2 months on the introduction of several super-tram routes segregated from other traffic. With the acquisition of the former goods yard at Kidderminster by the Severn Valley Railway it is expected that steam services will be connecting with B.R. trains in the Spring of 1984

EAST ANGLIA

RDS and its associated local groups ran four special trains over the Summer. DMU specials ran from Sudbury to Sheringham and Ipswich to Sheringham (the latter via the East Suffolk Line); while from the Sheringham line, the North East Norfolk Travellers' Association carried 500 people on a locomotive-hauled special from North Walsham to Llandudno. Another RDS-organised special ran from Watton-at-Stone to Lowestoft, picking up passengers on at each of the stations between Hitchin and Cambridge. Every special train that we run strengthens the case for the retention of our local network. Plans are already in hand for our 1984 programme.

The Branch has published a leaflet detailing victories won by the pro-rail lobby in East Anglia over the last year or so: notably electrification to Norwich; the East Suffolk Line modernisation and various Sec. 8 grants to transfer freight from road to rail. 7,000 copies of the leaflet have been distributed by members, together with BR literature, mainly door-to-door, at various places in West Norfolk and Cambridgeshire.

RDS and users' groups members have made an effort to meet members of BR management in recent months, following the extensive BR managerial re-organisation in the Region. Several useful discussions have been held and Branch Chairman, Steve Wilkinson, was invited to a working lunch with the King's Cross Divisional Manager on 9th September. This does not, however mean that we agree with all that management are doing as on 17th September the Branch put out a Press Statement expressing concern about the claimed need to single certain sections of line in East Anglia. We have suggested that, if it is really necessary to economise, there should be a period of experimental single-track working, during which no track would be removed.

Branch Secretary, Trevor Garrod, took part in an hour-long programme on Radio Orwell on 18th August, on the subject of heavy lorries and the rail alternative. The following week he was again on the air waves, talking about the railways' safety record.

RDS held a stall at the "Wheels 83" Transport Rally in Ipswich over the Late Summer Bank Holiday Weekend and at the Open Day at Crown Point Depot, Norwich, on 24th September.

October 3rd saw a slowing down of trains between Colchester, Ipswich and Norwich by 15 minutes, because of electrification work and some deterioration in connections off the East Suffolk Line, because of engineering work. All this work will bring benefits to the travelling public by May 1985 — but we stressed to BR the need to make sure that their public relations department was really "on the ball" in explaining this to users.

T.J.G.

YORKSHIRE

In a recent Newsletter the Knaresborough & Harrogate Rail Users' Association reported pressure on British Rail to replace the many manned crossings on the line between Harrogate and York with automatic gates. The level crossings are one of the chief reasons why the line is so costly to run and the service is restricted because British Rail is concerned to avoid paying overtime to the crossing keepers as far as possible. North Yorkshire County Council has indicated that it would be prepared to finance the installation of automatic crossings on the principal roads provided that BR will guarantee not to close the line in a year or two's time. The matter is at present under discussion between British Rail and North Yorkshire County Council.

The Hope Valley Rail Users' Group has taken up the matter of the station approaches with British Rail's Area Manager in Buxton. Many such approaches in the Hope Valley are in various states of neglect varying from potholes in the road; slippery platforms; dangerous steps to poor lighting and a profusion of brambles.

Plans are well in hand for the construction of a chord at Hazel Grove near Stockport which would connect the freight-only line that used to form the main line from Chinley to Manchester Central with the line from Buxton to Stockport. This would allow trains from Sheffield to call at Stockport and to come into Piccadilly station on the correct side, so that they could continue to Liverpool.

On the Sheffield to Huddersfield line the diversion via Barnsley has resulted in increased passenger usage particularly by residents in Penistone who can now get to Barnsley in about ten minutes instead of some 30 mins. by bus. The section of the line in West Yorkshire is not doing so well as the trains are in competition with the cheap off-peak fares on the buses. In an effort to counteract this British Rail are introducing some fare concessions.

Singling of the line to Ilkley has resulted in alterations to the timetable which have led to a considerable reduction in the amount of passenger usage.

D.J.B.

NORTH WEST BRANCH

A North-West Branch of RDS has been formed to cover the areas of Cumbria and Lancashire; Greater Manchester and Cheshire and Merseyside. Links will be maintained with other RDS Branches as well as with rail users' groups in Wales such as the Heart of Wales Line Travellers' Assn. (HOWLTA). On 1st October Branch members were due to meet for a talk by Mr. J. Berry (Project Manager, London Midland Region of BR). Already the Branch has been represented at a Conference organised by Pennine Heritage into the future of the Pennine railway network. The Conference looked at ways individual lines could

be promoted and also what to do should the worst happen and a line be proposed for closure. Detailed comments have been submitted to Greater Manchester Council on its proposed rail strategy. Chairman of the Branch is Mr. R.N.Watts, 15 Stanley Avenue, Penwortham, PR1 9RB. (The address of the Secretary appeared in the latest issue of the Members' Handbook which has been issued to members over the last few months. ED).

LANCASHIRE & CUMBRIA

The main concern in this area is the threat to the Settle — Carlisle line and at a special meeting held in Lancaster on Saturday 3rd September the SETTLE-CARLISLE JOINT ACTION COMMITTEE was formed. Chairman of the Committee is Dr. John Whitelegg (052 63175); Vice-Chairman is David Burton (16 Gordon Street, Colne) and Secretary Geoff Dickinson (20 Halifax Road, Nelson). The Assistant Secretary is North West Branch Chairman Richard Watts. The Committee is made up of representatives of the RDS, Transport 2000 and Friends of the Settle-Carlisle Association. Already 5 public meetings have been arranged; a special meeting for Parish Councils on 28th October; a meeting with Tom King, Secretary of State for Transport, and mass leafletting of affected areas. For further details of the campaign write with SAE to 53 Derwent Road, Lancaster. Formal closure notices for the line were expected to be posted during October.

On the Ormskirk—Preston line the local Users' Group (O.P.T.A.) held a special meeting on 9th August to launch a research project into its use, which was attended by delegates from Lancashire County Council (including the Chairman of the Highways & Transportation Committee); the 4 Borough/District Councils; several Parish Councils; the T.U.C.C.; E and others. The research project will look at ways to make the line more cost-effective in the short term and in the longer term ways to generate more traffic. Dr. Lewis Lesley will manage the project (as reported in the last issue of R.D.N.) and following the meeting Lancashire County Council decided to meet the full cost and to extend its scope to cover the Kirkham to Blackpool South; Lancaster — Morecombe and the Preston — Colne lines and have allocated £10,000 for this purpose.

The line from Farrington Curve Junction to Midge Hall has been singled — a move which has been welcomed by OPTA as it will improve time-keeping on the line. The South Fylde Line Users' Association has also welcomed the re-opening of Moss Side Station (between Kirkham and Lytham). This experimental re-opening, under Tony Speller's amendment to the 1962 Transport Act, has cost £7,000 with the majority being paid for by Lancs. C.C. Since it was closed in 1961 a hospital and caravan park has developed and the Council and B.R. hope this will provide increa-

sed custom. From Monday 3rd October the South Fylde line will also be singled and a much reduced DMU shuttle introduced. SFLUA have campaigned vigorously for a passing loop to be retained at Ansdell. So far BR have commented that they have no reserves to provide such a facility but the campaign continues.

On the East Lancs. Line (Preston — Colne) BR are looking at further economy measures and the section between Daiseyfield Junction (Blackburn to Accrington) is also likely to be singled in the near future. Uncertainty also hangs over the future of the Copy Pit line (Rose Grove — Todmorden) as certain sections in BR wish to see it closed despite recent moves to develop this important link. With completion of the M65 close at hand an improved service between East Lancashire towns and Yorkshire becomes vital and RDS has proposed that a service be provided, perhaps every two hours, between Leeds and Blackpool. Anyone interested in helping compile a report on how this could be achieved please contact Richard Watts at the above address.

MERSEYSIDE

The first week in July was designated "Transport Week" on Merseyside and was opened on Sunday 3rd by a Special Fare Day, when each single journey within the MPTE area was a mere 10p fare (5p for children). So many people turned out to travel on the Liverpool—Southport line, that there was chronic overcrowding and by mid-afternoon station staff were compelled to turn prospective passengers away, as the trains were unable to cope with the demand. The MPTE have stated that the week was a success and they may consider a repeat during 1984.

The MPTE is giving active consideration to further electrification schemes within Merseyside area. When the extension to Hooton is complete, the next priority is to be Hunts Cross—Halewood where a new station is to be built. This will be followed by 3rd-rail electrification to St. Helens Shaw Street, which will include a new tunnel link between Liverpool Central and Edge Hall, together with a new station at Liverpool University.

The Wrexham—Birkenhead Rail Users' Association chartered a locomotive-hauled train from Bidston to Bath on 4th June. Demand was so great, that all tickets were sold 2 weeks before the trip. Another charter is now being organised to London (Paddington) for Saturday 26th November, which will pick-up at all stations between Bidston and Ruabon. WBRUA is currently fighting plans to single the section of the line between Bidston and Dee Marsh Junction. Support has been promised from local MPs and Councils, and BR have been asked to delay the singling until the Liverpool Polytechnic research project has been published.

Passengers travelling from certain unmanned stations on Merseyside must now purchase 10p Boarding Tickets from machines. On reaching their destination they then pay the single fare less 10p. Passengers travelling without Boarding Tickets will be charged 10p in excess of the single fare.

M.J.B.

GREATER MANCHESTER

Peak Rail, the organisation seeking to re-open the Matlock—Buxton line as a community railway countered a negative response from the Peak Park Joint Planning Board with a detailed press statement and conference on 23rd September. Our Corporate Member STORM announced on 20th September details of their scheme to re-open the Rochdale—Bury—Bolton line.

Local members have made representations (by invitation) to the Greater Manchester Rail Study Group. The main points made by members were, i) any LRT (light rapid transit) system could be compatible with BR track (operational economies and lightly-used freight lines could be part of suburban rail pattern); ii) preference for a "tunnel solution" to the cross-city problem but "on street running" of LRT might have to be accepted to get the scheme off the ground; iii) development of a circular rail route around Manchester viz. Wigan — Bolton — Bury — Heywood — Rochdale — Oldham — Ashton — Hyde — Stockport — Altrincham — Warrington — Wigan.

The following stations are due to open in Greater Manchester in 1984:— Derbyshire Lane (Stretford) and Mills Hill (Manchester Vic. — Rochdale). Hyde North will almost certainly gain extra platforms to serve Hadfield trains within the next few months to become a true junction station. This is a rather fortuitous development being brought about by junction re-alignments but it does open up new journey possibilities. Other new locations for stations that GMC is considering are:— Ryder Brow (Gorton); Nuthurst Road (New Mostin); Heaton Road (Stockport); Droylsden; Little Hulton; Lostock (Bolton); Clayton Vale; Clayton Bdge.; Crossley Park (Levenshulme); North and South Failsworth; Brindle Heath (Salford) and Dewsnap (Guide Bridge).

A campaign is now under way to provide a "park & ride" station near Windlehurst/High Lane. The possibility of linking this in with the "Blue Route" (Hazel Grove by-pass) is being considered. Such a station would have attractions for motorists using the busy A6 & A523 roads — noted for severe congestion inwards to Stockport and Manchester.

J.A.

WALES

The Cambrian Coast Line Action Group organised two "Super Sunday Scenic Specials" on 7th and 14th August. Two return trips each Sunday Pwllheli—Tywyn £2.00

return. 1,000 people were carried on the four trains. It is hoped to repeat the service next Summer. Gwynedd C.C. supported the tours and provided all the publicity. Once again CCLAG produced a route guide in 1983 entitled "Gt. Wales Rail."

The Heart of Wales Line Travellers' Association organised their first special train on 2nd July, Llanelli—Llandudno. Loco-hauled it was the first PUBLIC excursion train since the unfortunate loco ban in 1981. 37301 hauled 10 Mk. 1 coaches from Llanelli to Crewe; 40.093 to Llandudno.

SOUTH HUMBERSIDE

RDS Area Representative, Mike Savage, was one of three speakers at a TUCC-organised public meeting in Grimsby on 20th October; and has also been appointed to the local BR Customer Care Panel, of which he comments "BR are taking it very seriously and it is not all talk — things are getting done." Mr. Savage and other local members have also met local councillors, traders and hoteliers in Cleethorpes to discuss the implications of a BR feasibility study which is understood to include track singling between Grimsby and Cleethorpes and some contraction of the station.

BR has received complaints about the lack of Merrymakers from South Humberside this year; and RDS is seriously considering chartering one or two trains in the Summer of 1984.

NORTHAMPTONSHIRE

In the last issue of R.D.N. mention was made of the local Corby re-opening campaign and the effect of the proposed multi-million pound "Wonderworld" complex. Since then BR Chairman Sir Peter Parker has visited Corby, local RDS members have held a town-centre petition to gain signatures in favour of a re-opening and David Howell visited the town (unannounced) — on petition day!

The petition over a Saturday in May gained the interest of all of the political parties and resulted in 5,500 signatures. The public demonstrated very effectively that it wanted a rail service — at the rate of 900 signatures per hour. The Evening Telegraph reported Mr. Howell's pledge "that the government would back plans to re-open the line to Corby." The Petition was due to be presented to the new Transport Minister by RDS; the local Council and the new Corby MP; sometime in September — the MP undertaking to make all the arrangements.

In addition members in the Area are hoping that "Support Groups" get established in other parts of the County in order to monitor and improve rail services and facilities. Northampton, Wellingborough and Stamford are in particular need of such groups. Public Meetings are to be held in each of these three towns in the Autumn or Winter

DEVON

A Preservation Society has been formed with the intention of buying and running as a private concern the Barnstaple-Bideford rail line. They have had meetings with BR, and have established that BR is prepared to sell the line, the price has not yet been agreed, but is thought to be in the region of £250,000. To raise this amount of money would be a daunting task, and the Society say they will be looking to the District and County Councils for assistance. The North Devon Line Development Group, whilst wishing this new organisation well, feel that there is better hope in the prospect of re-opening the line under the auspices of British Rail, and are still pursuing the possibility of assistance from the E.E.C. for an experimental re-opening (presumably under the Speller Act ED). It is to be hoped that one or other of the organisations will meet with success in saving the line.

The station at Pinhoe, 4 miles east of Exeter on the Salisbury line, was re-opened last May, and now 3 trains every weekday stop there, the timings of which are geared to people commuting to and from the city centre to work. The MP for North Devon, Tony Speller, opened the station, as it was under his Act that it was achieved. Templecombe station was similarly due to re-open in October.

W.D.

SCOTLAND

From a membership of single figures at the time of RAIL DEVELOPMENT WEEK just over a year ago, we are now touching 60, including some Corporate (i.e. Community Councils, Trades Councils, Trade Union Branches, Amenity Associations) and at the inaugural meeting we elected Branch Officers for the ensuing year. The Serpell Report, the Petition relevant to it (which was presented to the Prime Minister — see page 2) and the General Election conditioned our activity till the Summer. Our mailbox indicates that folk are beginning to take stock anew.

Most urgent concern is the Serpell-type investigation (proceeding behind closed doors) into the rail services supported by Strathclyde PTE's Sec. 20 grant. At the time of writing arrangements are still to be finalised for a public meeting in Glasgow on 26th November — about the time the Strathclyde Serpell is due to be published — and as we have serious doubts as to the wisdom of the extent of station de-manning now being implemented on some PTE routes we are circulating a discussion paper among interested parties. Interest is also being shown in the possibility of re-introducing a commuter service over the Paisley (Canal) line by diverting some Largs trains from the Gilmour Street route — despite the fact that the track from Corkerhill to Elderslie is to be singled and the signalling equipment removed.

In-roads by private bus operators over some routes is a serious matter, although

the reduction of rail fares in competition has encouraged new travel. Investigations by the Scottish Trade Union Congress have revealed speeding by some private bus operators and their evidence has been passed to the appropriate authorities. We welcome the spontaneous appearance of two new organisations; Friends of the West Highland Line and "Keeping Track" (to defend the North of Scotland railways) and look forward to the development of effective collaboration with them.

F.H.N.

SUBSCRIPTIONS — With this issue of R.D.N. 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 is due within the next 3 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 always be gratefully received.

If you subscribe to the LOTTERY don't forget that ONLY FULLY PAID UP MEMBERS can participate. A separate leaflet on the R.D.S. LOTTERY is enclosed with this issue of R.D.N.

RDS YORK SPECIAL

Due to the number and range of such events it is not always possible to mention RDS special trains in advance. 3rd DECEMBER is, however, sufficiently proximate to advise members who may wish to travel on what we believe will be the first such Excursion to traverse the Selby Diversion.

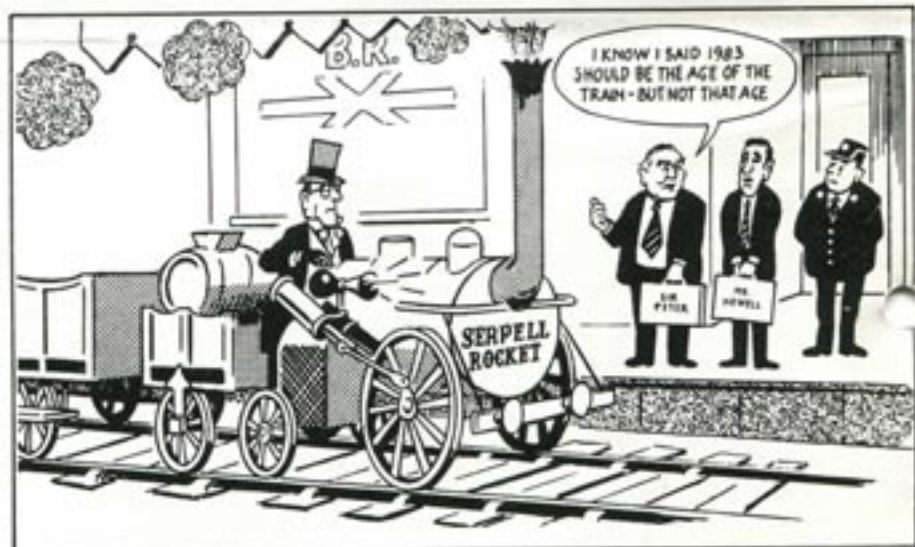
Starting from Hertford North and all stations to Cambridge (incl. the recently-opened Watton-at-Stone it will give ample opportunity for Christmas Shopping, visit to Museums etc., A packed lunch (outward) and Christmas Dinner (return) — £3.85 adult; £1.50 child - may also be obtained. Fare £7.95 (adult); £6.95 (OAP); £5.95 (child). Further details from M. Hadley, 34, Station Road, Letchworth, Herts. Please enclose SAE.

RDS CHRISTMAS CARDS NOW AVAILABLE

Following satisfactory response to the note in the last MEMBERS' BULLETIN RDS Christmas Cards are now available at price £1.50 per dozen (incl. P & P). Based on an East Anglian Country Station in a Winter setting these have been specially commissioned from a leading railway artist and RDS member.

Order yours now from: I.G.Crighton, 19, Oakdale Avenue, Kenton, Harrow, Middx.

Make cheques payable to: "RDS (London & Home Counties)"



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

Changes coming but what next

This Summary of Parliamentary debates and questions about railways covers the period *before* and *after* the General Election, and up to the end of the Summer Recess. We start with a rambling debate on a Bill that was lost because of the election; but which throws interesting sidelights on railway history.

Sudden changes of subject are explained by the Speaker's custom of calling on MPs to speak from opposite sides of the Chamber alternately. The burning topics — the *Channel Tunnel*, *Electrification* and *Reorganisation of L.T.*, are discussed at later dates.

As will be seen there was a re-shuffle of Ministers after the General Election.

WHAT NOW? A new Parliament; a new B.R. Chairman. Should it be pessimism after the Serpell Report or optimism at the improved financial state in which Sir Peter Parker leaves BR? I put this question to Robert Adley, Conservative MP for Christchurch — a good friend of railways (and recently appointed a Vice-President of RDS).

He was just as baffled as us but one thing he was sure about, and is as keen as ever — the Channel Tunnel.

Our other good friend, Nigel Spearing, (Lab. Newham South) was incommunicado at the time of writing (in August) being on a canal. He practices what he preaches, just as he turned up at Downing Street to accompany our Petition to the P.M. on his bicycle.

AN OMINOUS SIGN is the recent emergence of the "Rail to Road" conversionists who are once again raising their ugly heads.

Swift, sharp reply to "Conversionists"

In choosing the West London Line and the Hounslow Loop as possible Conversion Fodder it was hoped that the sheer absurdity of the proposals would de-fuse the whole disastrous idea. However, Jeremy Hanley, the new Conservative M.P. for Richmond & Barnes, after beating his closest (Liberal) rival by only 74 votes lost no time in giving "cautious endorsement" to the British Road Federation's on-slaught on BR — suggesting conversion of the Hounslow Loop into a Motorway.

Cries of outrage were the reaction of local residents, including members of his own party, in Barney Hayhoe the Conservative M.P. for Brentford & Isleworth,

through which the line runs. Mr. Hanley has needless to say since tried to play down the whole unhappy affair. Newspapers in the area have however kept the pot boiling with such remarks as "highly damaging scheme", "monumental gaffe" "highway to hell" "so preposterous as to be almost unbelievable" and "an unworthy start to his parliamentary career." The "Richmond & Twickenham Times" described "kow-towing to the British Road Federation as the unacceptable face of capitalism." So far so good — but we must remain on guard.

JE.

Portsmouth Pontoon & "Ringway" Spur.

MARCH 15 * *Patrick McNair-Wilson* (C. New Forest) introducing a "Private Members" measure said this was the 20th "miscellaneous provisions" Bill of its kind since 1962. It dealt with such varying subjects as constructing a short line at Hazel Grove, south of Manchester, to provide for through running from Liverpool to Sheffield; a rail link with Manchester Ringway Airport, and the costs of a pontoon landing stage at Portsmouth Harbour.

Building a new line to connect the airport with the Manchester-Wilmslow line (he continued) would have far-reaching consequences: it would provide access to the airport from many ports. Another clause provided for the short length of line at Hazel Grove, to enable Liverpool, Warrington, Manchester and the Manchester, Sheffield and east coast railways to be combined in a single service through Stockport.

That would mean a single service through Stockport to the Mersey, across the Pennines, to Scotland, the east coast and Europe. It would however be necessary to acquire a small portion of land adjoining Norbury Churchyard, but discussions had taken place and provision made not to interfere with graves or memorials.

Half Mile Ferry — 15 miles by road

The Bill also sought powers for sealink to levy charges on users of the floating landing stage beside Portsmouth Harbour station. Portsmouth Harbour Ferry Company operated from here to Gosport (a mere ½ mile) whereas the journey by road would be 15-18. A 20-year lease that expired in July allowed the Company to use the facility for £1,500 p.a. which covered only a fraction of the true costs. The proposal would allow Sealink to levy charges more in keeping with these costs.

Rail to Ringway more useful than Stansted

Andrew F. Bennett (Lab. Stockport N.) welcomed proposals for the rail link to Manchester Airport. Any rail link to the proposed Stansted airport would be less convenient than a link to Manchester airport, which had established itself internationally. The piece of railway would be short. One could have envisaged a more elaborate scheme that would have involved linking with the old Cheshire railway at Ashley.

If the Government wanted to show Manchester people that they cared about creating jobs, they could invest money in this modest project and be sure of obtaining a good return. It should do so before considering a further terminal at Heathrow, or anything at Stansted.

"One can reach many centres of Europe from provincial Britain without going through London. The way transport planning often assumes that people must do so gives rise to great resentment!! Much of the track involved in the Bill would be run by sleeper trains. There would be little point in BR saying proudly that as a result of these proposals it could run freight from King's Cross through the Penines, into Manchester and up to Scotland, if at the same time it was talking of removing basic services like sleepers. There was a strong case for refurbishing old stock, rather than, as appeared to be the case, "withdrawing the service by stealth."

Peter Snape (Lab. West Bromwich East) — intervening — Was not this the usual practice, when management wished to withdraw a service or close a line, of making it unattractive to potential customers, driving them away to some other form of transport, then producing figures to illustrate that the service was losing money?

Mr. Bennett: In many ways that was what the management did, petty things that made the service less attractive. He welcomed the works at Hazel Grove. One or two people would complain of extra noise on the line, but he had little sympathy with that. The line used to carry old trucks without braking systems and when trains stopped the clanking could be heard all over Stockport. Increase in traffic now, as a result of the link, would not create the volume of noise that existed before.

The link would give a through service with considerable increase in convenience: it would save travelling across Manchester. About the amount of traffic going through the junction at Knott Mill and Deansgate,

he was a little concerned about whether that tight piece of line would be able to cope. There would also be traffic going from Sheffield up to Scotland along the line, using the new Windsor link that came in a previous Miscellaneous Provisions Act.

This piece of line would also mean that main line trains would be withdrawn from the section coming up from Strines, Marple Bridge and Bredbury into Manchester. Main Line trains would come through that bit quicker, but many people feared that once main line trains and freight were taken off, BR would tell the transport executive that the line had to be paid for by commuter trains. He hoped that if Manchester had to put in an extra subsidy, that would be given special consideration in working out the grants. He hoped that 100 yards of new track at Hazel Grove would not mean the loss of commuter services.

Albert Booth: (Lab. Barrow-in-Furness) said the Bill would have small effect on vast areas of BR that were in danger of collapse and the thousands of miles that might have to be taken out of service as a result of shortage of investment. He welcomed the minor provisions of the Bill which allowed BR to extend small parts of the network. "Let us hope that the extra 2½ miles to Ringway Airport are but the start of greater and more valuable extensions to BR."

Mr. Eyre: intervening for the Government said they had no objection to the powers sought by the BR Board. The Minister of Agriculture, for reasons connected with the use of the land, had reservations about the Airport Spur, but he hoped it would be possible to iron out the difficulties.

Turning to Mr. Bennett's question about the effect on the cost of commuter services if services were diverted from Sheffield via Hazel Grove, the Board was examining this matter with the PTE. If, as a result of diverting some traffic from the existing route the PTE were left bearing the costs of the line, this would be taken into account in setting the level of revenue support. He told Mr. Booth that relevant parts of the Serpell Report did not support that thousands of miles were likely to collapse.

Mr. Booth: "One has only to look at the rail policy document that was signed by every member of the BR Board. It said that if investment was not increased above the 1981 level, within a decade thousands of miles of track would have to be closed down. Investment has not risen; it has fallen."

Mr. Eyre: "We both know there are maintenance problems." They had developed the wise policy of earmarking part of the PSO grant to carry out such work. They were continuing it on a more extended basis during the current year. He recommended that the Bill be given a second reading and allowed to proceed the usual way.

As beneficial as the Ship Canal

Frank White: (Lab. Bury & Radcliffe) recalled that in 1980 was celebrated the 150th Anniversary of the first passenger line from Manchester to Liverpool. What drew Bolton and Manchester together was the fact that next came a coal-carrying line from Bolton to the Atherton and Leigh area. Bury was developed as a railway town shortly after. The north-west group of MPs supported BR's present proposals for the area and had heard that the link with Manchester airport was as important as had been the development of the Manchester Ship Canal, which regrettably was now little used and would silt up at our peril.

The 1978 White Paper, Airport Policy, recognised that there appeared to be a lobby in the south for the development of other airports — new terminals at Gatwick and Heathrow; an airport at Stansted. That would be a retrograde step and take away resources that would be valuable to the north-west. Manchester was just as accessible, and 50% of Britain's manufacturing industries lay within 75 miles of Manchester Airport.

The original development of railways was a vital ingredient of the first industrial revolution. The future of Manchester International Airport was also a vital ingredient. Greater Manchester PTE and BR had recently completed a rail strategy for the area. Within it was a re-equipment proposal for the Bury line, which ran into one of the most modern rail/car interchange developments in the north. A rail link to the airport would add to its development and bring new industries and prosperity.

Peter Griffiths: (C. Portsmouth North) said he had a motion on the order paper seeking to give the Bill a second reading in six month's time (a standard parliamentary procedure for stopping a Bill). He did not now intend to stop the Bill, but he had great reservations about proposals for the Portsmouth landing stage.

Forced to provide pontoon in 1873

He continued: "The pier, harbour station and landing stage were not built in a disinterested fashion by benevolent railway companies. The Joint Portsmouth Railway Extension Act 1873 placed an obligation on the company to provide and maintain a public landing stage. As early as 1847 the two railway companies, which at that time operated competitively in the Portsmouth area, were required to provide a public landing stage, which was seen as a place of public resort and advantage to the city and which balanced the privilege given to the companies to build the pier, carriageway and harbour station, instead of using the common hard for bringing ferry boats from the Isle of Wight to shore. In return they provided a public landing stage. This was to be a landing place to which the public had free access in every sense."

The imposition of a charge would affect the public right. If the Bill indicated that the charge was to be a modest one, there

might be merit in supporting it, but Sealink was claiming a sweeping power. The implication was an intention to seek to make the pontoon either profitable or at least self-supporting, whereas there was never any intention in 1847 or 1873 that this should be so. BR was seeking to shuffle off responsibility that had lain with its predecessors for 140 years. Petitions against this provision had been made by Hampshire County Council, Portsmouth City Council and Portsmouth Harbour Ferry Co. Why should the public have to pay to enter what had always been a place of public resort?

The main user was the Harbour Ferry Company (operating the service between Portsmouth and Gosport). There would be no advantage in diverting the traffic to the roads. The most sensible suggestion seemed to be that a consortium be formed of local authorities and the ferry company. "Should agreement not be forthcoming at the later stages, people would require that the Bill be fought."

Disused line could link Leeds Airport

Bob Cryer: (Lab. Keighley) reverted to the subject of Manchester Airport Spur: "an excellent development. Where massive numbers of people are involved, BR should seek to serve them." He then called for a rail link with Leeds-Bradford airport. A £13 million extension was being constructed there, and an abandoned rail track used to run to Yeadon (about 7 miles north of Bradford, half way to Ilkley).

"In the same context as Manchester, with a municipally owned airport and an increasing number of passengers, BR should consider the possibility of serving it with an extension of the line, if it has a vacant track bed that could be adapted."

He then referred to the threat to withdraw sleeper services from London to Leeds, on the ground that the number of users meant that the Board could not afford to refurbish the coaches. It claimed (he added) that the Inter-City service had been speeded up since the introduction of 125s. "As I pointed out, however, the HSTs are now roughly 10 minutes faster than the 1938 West Riding Limited, using Sir Nigel Gresley's streamlined Pacifics. The railways did not regard this as sufficient reason for withdrawal of sleeper services, nor do I regard the introduction of HSTs as sufficient reason."

More concern about sleeper services

"I want to draw my anxiety to the Minister's attention, because in a recent adjournment debate (March 9 — see IN PARLIAMENT No. 18) he said he had nothing to add. I want him to draw attention of BR to the wider area of worry which comes not only from the north-west but also from Yorkshire and Humber. If the services are withdrawn, it does not necessarily follow that people will automatically use the HST, as BR suggests. They may be diverted to motor cars or the air services."

Settle — Carlisle closure threat

He then spoke of the threat to the Settle—Carlisle line. New railway works (he said) were proposed at Stockport, Disley and Whaley Bridge. BR was diverting the Nottingham—Glasgow service via Manchester. "I am anxious that the capital investment proposed should not be based on a design to increase the speed of that service which would result in greater justification for the closure of the Settle—Carlisle line."

"The service between Nottingham and Glasgow has been diverted through Manchester since May 1982, and is a tortuous and lengthy service. The Nottingham—Leeds—Keighley—Skipton—Settle—Carlisle service to Glasgow was much better."

"Many believe that what is proposed will lead to the closure of the Settle—Carlisle line, which is one of the most magnificent railways in the country. It goes through starkly beautiful countryside. It has maintenance problems, as do all railways, but it is believed that the rundown of services is a prelude to BR presenting a case for closure. If BR propose to close that splendid scenic route — which has not been exploited to its full potential — there will be strenuous opposition in the House. An organisation called "Friends of the Settle—Carlisle" has support on both sides of the House. People such as myself will be keeping an eye on the service in the hope that the Board can be put under pressure to improve it this Summer — not at some dim and distant stage in the future — so that maximum use can be made of the line and revenues thereby increased."

Electrification to Cambridge — £13m.

MAY 13 Alan Haselhurst (C. Saffron Walden) introduced an "adjournment debate" (i.e. a subject of his own choice) on London — Cambridge electrification. He hoped it would be decided to electrify the route from Bishop's Stortford to Cambridge (24 miles) and Royston to Cambridge (13 miles) with the former (Liverpool St.) route as the prime service. "Let it be of a standard to grace the times. I ask you to approve the scheme without delay. I am scared of the prospect that we or our ghosts in Parliaments of the future will still be debating whether to electrify to Cambridge."

Chunnel Estimates — Banks to report soon

JULY 21 Nigel Spearing asked the Transport Secretary what was the full commercial return he expected from rail electrification schemes — suburban, inter-urban and inter-city.

Mr. Mitchell: We use the same test discount rate, 7%; We are prepared, where appropriate, to take account of any wider social benefits from investment in the non-commercial railway.

Peter Viggers: (C. Gosport), reverting to the Portsmouth pontoon, said the manner in which Sealink proposed to exercise its powers was unacceptable. "I can claim to know the Gosport ferry as well as any MP. I used it for five or six years on the way to school." Those using it tended to be on bicycles or on foot, using connecting bus services, rather than cars. A charge of 5p. would lead to an estimated 5% loss of custom, that would also be felt by bus and rail services — "a classic vicious circle."

The Gosport side of the harbour was developing as a tourist centre. In Portsmouth the "Victory" had now been supplemented by the "Mary Rose". It was more than ever necessary to develop good services across the mouth of the harbour. "I put down a marker. Unless a reasonable arrangement can be worked out among BR, the local authorities and the ferry company, there will be opposition later during the course of the Bill."

Mr. McNair-Wilson: replying to the debate thanked the various speakers for the subjects they had raised, and spoke further about the "Portsmouth problem." Much had been said about the 1873 Act, which authorised the extension of the railway from Portsea to the naval dockyard. In doing so it prevented access to the common hard, which is still there, and was the normal place for sailors to land. It was because the railway shut off access to the hard that it provided another facility, not in exchange for the ability to extend the line. He said he hoped the Bill would now proceed, and it was read a second time.

Nigel Spearing (Lab. Newham South) said that Mr. Haselhurst's proposal to electrify both routes was much the best value for money. As for the new station at Liverpool Street; he hoped it would not be like Euston, where steps were needed to get to the taxis. "The arrangements at Liverpool Street on the level installed in 1870 are far better than those of 1970 at Euston."

Mr. Eyre replied that the fixed work from Royston to Cambridge would cost about £5 million and that from Bishop's Stortford £8.5 million. If the Board showed that there was a satisfactory case for electrifying both routes, the way would be clear for a decision in favour.

David Howell (C. Guildford) asked for the latest estimate of the cost of building (a) twin 6m. rail-only tunnels connecting Britain and France; (b) a single 7m. tunnel and (c) twin 7m. tunnels.

Mr. King (in a written reply) said that there was no estimate of twin 6m. tunnels, which had not been advocated by the promoting groups. The UK-French study group, reporting in June 1982, estimated at January 1981 prices the cost of single and twin 7m. tunnels with vehicle shuttle

at £153 and £187 million respectively. These figures comprised only the cost of the link and portal infrastructure. Conditions under which any form of fixed link would be financed by the market were now the subject of study by a group of British and French banks.

Mr. Howell asked when a statement would be made on the outcome of current financial studies.

Mr. King: I expect to receive the report of the banks within the next few months. I cannot say now when I will be ready to make a statement. The aim of the economic analysis had been to compare the total cost of carrying traffic forecast for the various forms of fixed link with that by sea and air.

New Plans for London Transport

JULY 26* *Mr. King:* I am today publishing a White Paper on Public Transport in London. The present system has served the travelling public and transport operators badly. Since 1970 costs have risen in LT way beyond inflation; public subsidy has risen thirteenfold and fares have doubled in real terms. The all-party Transport Select Committee unanimously recommended that the improvement of transport in London should be a national priority, and that responsibility should be moved from the GLC.

The Government had accepted this need. It would reform the LTE into a new body on the pattern of a holding company, with separate subsidiaries for bus and underground. The new body, London Regional Transport (LRT) would have wider responsibility and encourage other private or publicly-owned operators to provide services where they could be offered more efficiently and cheaply. He would establish liaison arrangements between BR and LRT to secure closer co-operation between them. A reserve provision would allow LRT to take responsibility for grant allocations to BR's London commuter services later, if needed.

Abolition of the GLC would in any case have required new transport arrangements. These would end the inefficient arrangements under which BR and LT served two different masters. Responsibility for granting concessionary fares would in future rest with London Boroughs. "I hope to bring legislation before the House in the Autumn."

Robert Hughes (Lab. Aberdeen North): The suggestion that the capital's transport system be taken away from the GLC will mean that pensioners' concessionary fares will be adversely affected. Have you not fallen into the same trap as the Serpell Committee, in being more concerned with finance than transport policy, and in your objective consideration being clouded by the Government's vindictiveness towards the GLC?

Mr. King: You may welcome some of the proposals. They provide for better co-oper-

ation between LT and BR's commuter services . . .

Mr. Spearing: (intervening): They do that now.

Mr. King: This can achieve substantial benefits for London travellers.

Mr. Spearing: What an excuse!

Mr. King: The Select Committee could not reach agreement on membership. I shall not prejudge the concessionary fares issue, but before the GLC operated the present scheme, the boroughs operated a standard scheme for concessionary fares across London.

Terence Higgins (C. Worthing): Many people outside London believe they are unfairly treated over concessionary fares, because of the different age distribution in places such as Worthing compared with London. Would you consider a national standard?

Mr. King: said it was up to individual authorities to determine appropriate concessionary fares for their areas.

Idea welcome in Bromley

Sydney Bidwell (Lab. Ealing, Southall): As the only London Member of the Select Committee, he pointed out that it had observed the necessity for having on the body representatives of the public such as members of shire counties and district authorities and of the GLC.

"We left the size of the committee fluid, so that, possibly under an enlightened Labour Government, it could later include elected representatives and so on."

Mr. King: The London Transport Executive (LTE) does not include elected representatives. The duty of the GLC is to approve plans and expenditure, not to interfere in the running of L.T. A reason for this was that the executive encompasses a much wider area than the GLC. I shall have responsibility for appointing the members and be answerable to the House for those I appoint.

John Hunt (C. Ravensbourne) said the proposals would be warmly welcomed in Bromley and throughout the Greater London Area, where ratepayers had had to pay dearly for politically-motivated fare experiments. A regional authority would signal the return to sanity.

Mr. King: No one knows better than you about the problems and distress caused to many of your constituents and your local authority by the GLC's behaviour. I hope the new proposals will lead to a more stable relationship.

John Cartwright (Lab. Woolwich) asked if the travelling public wanted not liaison between BR and LT, but the closest possible integration of services. A modern public transport system also needed and deserved a substantial capital investment programme.

Promise of exciting innovations

Mr. King: The liaison arrangements are to achieve the better integration to which you refer. For instance, facilities for common ticketing or interchange facilities are part of the whole range of possibilities being developed. New developments in technology make it possible to achieve some exciting advances which I hope to encourage. The more efficient the operation, the greater will be the sums available.

John Page (C. Harrow West) asked if the new regional authority would take responsibility for taxis and car-hire firms.

Mr. King: The White Paper opens up interesting possibilities. It does not cover taxis, but I hear what you say.

Mr. Spearing suggested that the separation of bus and underground into separate subsidiaries was a retrogressive step, "putting the clock back to before 1912 and taking apart the merger that a Conservative government agreed to in 1932. Is it not the opposite of integration? Will you assure us that the proportion of public support will not be reduced?"

Mr. King: The point of establishing separate subsidiaries is to draw attention to the fact that LRT will be responsible not just for managing those subsidiaries but for seeing how transport can best be provided within London. I do not think the two parts, being adjacent, mean the total collapse of communication you suggest.

Sir John Biggs-Davison (C. Epping Forest): In view of constituents' grievances over services and concessionary fares, would there be consultations with local authorities in Essex?

Mr. King: The White Paper affects not only 32 London Boroughs but 15 shire counties as well. The answer is yes.

Tony Banks (Lab. Newham North-West): A public accountable authority would be made into a quango. Would fares not increase and would pensioners' bus passes be safeguarded?

Mr. King: There would be consultation about concessionary fares. A substantial quango would cover all London traffic and roads.

Sydney Chapman (C. Chipping Barnet) said his constituents did not care who ran LRT; they did not expect more or less accountability than they had with the BR suburban line. They welcomed integrated public transport which included BR suburban lines.

Mr. King: London travellers should not be treated as a political football, to gratify the aims of certain people in County Hall. I and the Under-Secretary will be responsible for appointments made to the LRT.

GLC had abused its powers

After the Speaker called for much shorter questions, *Frank Dobson* (Lab. Hol-

born & St. Pancras) asked if Greater London would be the only part of the country where democratically elected representatives would not play a part in planning transport in their area. "Your proposition contains no benefit to ratepayers, because you intend to withdraw rate support grant."

Mr. King said he would maintain the relative position of London ratepayers and those in other communities. It would be the duty of LRT to consult local authorities and the Minister would be answerable to the House.

Sir Anthony Grant (C. Cambridgeshire, South-West) asked if the new body would be unable to waste public money on party political advertising in the press.

Mr. King replied that the GLC had abused its powers. He hoped that under the proposed legislation, a more stable and promising future could be provided, with local transport being managed professionally.

Eric Deakins (Lab. Walthamstow) asked the replacement of GLC control by that of the unelected Treasury was a recipe for the end of cheap fares in London. "Failure to give assurances about pensioners' bus passes will lead to great anxiety."

Mr. King: "I thought you believed in local authority freedom."

Roger Sims (C. Chiselhurst) asked if LRT would have powers over BR.

Mr. King: "The initial proposal is that I should chair a liaison committee with which BR and LT will be involved. I shall seek various facilities and improvements that many people feel are possible. Legislation will contain a reserve power which might later give LRT grant-making powers for payment to BR of public service obligation grant for commuter services."

Simon Hughes (Lib. Berrmonsey) asked he would grasp the nettle of integrating BR more effectively, and would consider the fact that London had an unused transport artery — waterways.

Mr. King: "That aspect is worth considering. On the first point, people are now commuting into London from as far away as Bristol and Leicester; it is a difficult problem because we are talking about a wide area."

Peter Bottomley (C. Eltham): "When are ratepayers in my constituency likely to see BR fares on a par with the Underground?"

Mr. King: "My aim is to see early progress."

Ron Leighton (Lab. Newham, North-East) "Will you use plain language and say there will be no increase in real fare levels and that existing concessions will continue?"

Mr. King: "Those answers will depend on the decisions of the boroughs."