

Railway Development News

Railway Development Society

A Voice for Rail Users

No. 19

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BRITAIN & AMERICA — THE CRUMBLING EDGES!

Christmas seems to be the time when the Roads Lobby gets its annual present from the Department of Transport! In 1980 it was the Armitage Report; in 1981 the White Paper for increasing heavy lorry weights and in 1982 it finally secured Government approval to an increase in the maximum weight of heavy lorries from 5 to 38 tonnes.

This year, as reported in "Transport Retort" * (Vol. 7, No.11), it obtained from the Government a revised scheme for assessing road track costs which would — if accepted — reduce the costs allocated to the heaviest lorries but increase the burden on buses and coaches. The same issue of "Retort" also drew attention to a large increase in road building expenditure arising from Chancellor, Nigel Lawson's public expenditure policy statement of 17th November, to be financed by cuts in public transport spending. To complete this "unholy trinity" "Retort" also reported the widely-leaked conclusions of a report by Consulting Engineers, Mott, Hay & Anderson which cast doubts on the future stability of the Severn Bridge unless urgent repairs are carried out — and all because of the unprecedented and unexpected increase in the incidence of heavy lorry traffic.

All the railways received in 1982 (albeit early in January 1983) was the Serpell Report and for an early Christmas present this year a cut of £200m. in the allocation of PSO Grant together with a rather woolly "statement of objectives" from the new Secretary of State for Transport, Nicholas Ridley. (See also "IN PARLIAMENT"). Events in the U.K. are, however, mirrored closely by those in the U.S.A. and Harry Miller, the leading American railway writer who contributed to our last issue (p.2) told me when he was over here in 1982 during "RAIL DEVELOPMENT WEEK" that some two years would have to pass before things "bottomed out" on the railway scene and we saw more positive investment in railway infrastructure which was then slowly emerging in the USA.

Nevertheless the similarities do not end here as on the highways front they have actually had a bridge collapse — when, on June 28 last year a 100 foot stretch of the eastbound roadway of the Connecticut Turnpike's Mianus River Bridge, plunged four vehicles 120 feet into the water below killing 3 and injuring a similar number. The

resultant chaos which ensued, with 100,000 vehicles having to be diverted could well be far surpassed if the Severn Bridge were to suffer a similar fate. Needless to say the bridge was soon replaced and the highway was completely re-opened to traffic on September 10th. Arising from this Connecticut DoT. reported that it would cost \$1.4bn. over the next 10 years to repair the State's crumbling bridges and highways.

Even the running battle between the G.L.C. and Mrs. Thatcher's Government over "Fares Fair" and possibly also the conclusions of the "Wood Inquiry into Heavy Lorry Bans in London" is mirrored by that raging between the federal government and many States @ over the legality of state laws banning double-tandem trailers (i.e. 80,000 pounds, 70 foot long and 102 inches wide) and this culminated in a case where a federal District Judge ruled that Connecticut's bans were "unconstitutional" and in violation of the powers of Congress to regulate inter-state commerce.

@ (incl. New York, New Jersey, Maine, Vermont, Massachusetts, Virginia, South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Illinois, Idaho, and California.)

Gov. O'Neill subsequently stated that the state was prepared to appeal the matter all the way to the Supreme Court and Rep. Geraldine Ferraro (D-NY) later introduced legislation to give the Secretary of Transportation discretionary authority to ban tandem trailers from sub-standard interstate highways. At about the same time it was reported that more than half of the country's 564,499 bridges more than 20 feet long were eroding, obsolete, carried weight restrictions or were completely closed — no doubt from the heavy pounding they had already received from the truckers. It all has a parallel with the conclusions of Husband & Co's inquiry, carried out for the Armitage Report, into the effects of heavier lorries on long span bridges and the whole scenario has a horribly familiar ring.

In this country, however, the Government appears to have chosen the simple expedient of trying to eliminate the opposition — by abolishing the G.L.C. (and Metropolitan Counties). Whether such action would be "unconstitutional" in the USA — or at least the way it is being un-

(continued on back page Co.2)

ROAD & RAIL COSTS a COMPARISON

(This article is based on edited extracts from a letter by G.R.Tolliday published in "Rail Enthusiast" (Dec. 1983) and a letter to the Prime Minister from J.H.Watkinson (both RDS members).

Britain's present policy of increasing dependence on road transport cost the nation much more than would a reversion to the safer mode of rail travel. The following figures were produced by the Central Transport Consultative Committee (except for the figure for road accidents — which emerged during an ITV programme in March 1980):-

Road Pass.Tpt. Subsidy: —	£ 781m.
Road (Maintenance & Construction) —	£2483m.
Hidden Subsidies:-	
(Hvy.Lorries/Coaches) —	£1260m.
(Use of Company Cars) —	£1000m+
Cost of Road Accidents —	£2500m

The total cost of £8024m.+ should be compared with the financial support to B.R. of £900m.

It is often said that motorways are safer: I just do not believe this — a view which is shared by a relative (formerly manager for a major insurance company) who refuses to drive on motorways even though the M56 runs almost by his door. In the U.K. the average number of fatal accidents is 6—7 thousand p.a. yet no passenger was killed on B.R. in 3 consecutive years. A recent EEC Commission Report estimated that the damage caused to road surfaces by a 35 tonne lorry was 300,000 times that of a private car. Under the weight of heavy traffic the Victorian sewers beneath the streets of our towns and cities are literally collapsing as are bridges not designed for 40 tonne "juggernauts", while motorways are under constant repair at a cost — believed to average up to £1m. per mile.

It would ultimately save money if we were to change our national policy and, instead of hopelessly seeking to cater for more and more traffic, switch our efforts to modernising and electrifying the whole B.R. network. — Correspondence with Government Departments directly (and through M.Ps) has also elicited evidence of appalling lack of financial and practical awareness of the costs and needs of rail and road users' subsidies coupled with evidence of considerable bias against rail as a transport mode.

No arguments put forward have adequately taken account of the costs (from the use of motor vehicle on the road) of: Policing; Traffic Control; Accidents; (Fire, Ambulance & Hospital services); and the cost of highway maintenance (to both Local and Central Government). A particularly partisan approach is detected with regard to the costing of rail services where (with the exception of hospital costs of the rare train accident) all services akin to those listed above are required to be provided by B.R. from its own resources — and paid for by the rail user. Many tax and ratepayers do not own a car but contribute to subsidising the motorist.

£7,000m. is earmarked for road improvements up to 2000 AD, for the most part to facilitate movement of the holiday maker at peak periods, without any commitment on his part to become more energy efficient or drive more responsibly — while B.R. is denied adequate capital funding — even in the short term. I suggest the Cabinet drops its blinkered approach to B.R.'s needs and either authorises the capital expenditure needed for essential rail investment up to 2000 AD or levies the true subsidy to highways in excess of £1000m. on the individual motor vehicle owner (about £150 per vehicle min.) Such a realistic approach would ensure that Britain has a reliable rail network using natural resources to provide transport in the best interests of commerce and employment in peace time and for defence and survival in the event of war.

GRT/JHW

METRO-COUNTIES CONFERENCE BIRMINGHAM - 15th OCTOBER

The purpose of this gathering as stated by Mr. Garrod (who chaired the morning session) was to assess rail users' response to the Government's White Paper "Streamlining the Cities" and to consider our strategy to safeguard public transport within the conurbations. It was also a means of establishing a link with sympathetic local politicians and other bodies.

The Conference was attended by 21 representatives of RDS and local users' groups from Metropolitan areas and was swelled to 30 at the afternoon session with the addition of invited representatives of most of the local authorities which would be affected. In the morning Conference received reports from local groups, many of which complained that county boundaries made little sense in rail terms and it was suggested that local control should be over groups of services rather than the fragments of them which happened to fall within such boundaries.

Strathclyde, home of what appeared to be a very powerful road lobby had changed policy since the death of its previous PTE Chief, and was now decrying rail subsidies as "wasteful". (RDS Scotland's response to this is summarised elsewhere in this issue). In contrast, the West Midlands authority received praise, although split responsibilities between BR, Councils and PTEs were seen to increase the work of users' groups. West and South Yorkshire

were criticised for their bias towards the bus — West Yorkshire's off-peak fares policy being seen as an example of this. The Tyne & Wear Metro on the other hand had been successful and extensions to Sunderland were being considered, although there were problems with violence and vandalism — due partly to low manning levels. The G.L.C. had also achieved positive results in the areas of "fares and finance" and the RDS response to the Government's plans for London Transport were circulated to delegates.

Concern was expressed at the possible results of the White Paper, particularly the removal of democratic control; the proposals for privatisation and the inadequacy of Borough Councils to administer public transport effectively. Conference then adjourned for lunch after passing the following Resolution:— (unanimously)

"We urge the Government, in formulating its policies for the future of public transport in Metropolitan Areas, to guarantee freedom and encourage provision of resources for a public transport system no less extensive and accountable to users than exists at the present time. Any future transport authority should have boundaries which make sense in railway terms."

The afternoon session was chaired by Mr. Bevan and was introduced by a short address by Cllr. P. Bateman (West Midlands) who felt that developments in Birmingham (such as the airport and international station) might never have occurred without encouragement from the County Council, which had strategic knowledge of the needs of the area. He saw the proposed Joint Boards as a threat to rail developments with pressures to cut costs leading to the abandonment of services with thousands of job losses. The travel card, free travel for the disabled and the integrated fares structure were also under threat. The White Paper having been produced for purely political reasons, lacked rationality and did not analyse the costs and savings which would be entailed by re-organisation.

Cllr. Wayne Jenkins (West Yorkshire) in his Keynote Address highlighted the discrepancy between the Inter-City network and feeder and local services which were "hanging by a thread" and suffered from irregular timetabling. His authority was neither "pro-rail or pro-bus" but had evaluated a long list of new stations — in addition to those already opened. Funding was however scarce even where there was a proven case for financial savings — such as the Bradford trolleybus experiment. He was critical of the Sec.20 grant system but stressed that it should not be "killed off" completely without something else being put in its place. B.R.'s estimates of yearly operating costs varied so widely as to make budgeting difficult and their slow response to requests for traffic data exacerbated the situation. Light rail might be the answer in some instances.

Cllr. Jenkins stressed the political aspects of the Government's attitudes and the blinkered approach of B.R.'s Corporate Plan. The attitudes produced by it (and

the Serpell Report) would affect transport thinking even if the worst options were not adopted. Abolition of the Metropolitan Counties would undo all their achievements to date. No such proposals had been mooted until they all came under Labour control (in 1981). The cost of the changes (between £165—£170m. for annual running) with a proliferation of Committees would leave less money for actually running public transport. The White Paper was also anti-democratic in that it took responsibility one step further away from elected representatives — who in the case of the Metropolitan Counties had been supported by a far larger proportion of the popular vote than had the Government.

He summed up by referring to the achievements of his authority and forecast that the advent of Joint Boards would be preceded by a year of messy and indecisive government in 1985-6; there would be competition between Cities and Districts resulting in higher fares, reduced services and more privatisation with "creaming" routes and in some instances "no-go" areas for public transport. There then followed a lively question and answer session with a panel consisting of Cllrs. S. Renilson (Merseyside), P. Bateman, W. Jenkins, and K. Hickman (Greater Manchester).

(Copies of the full Conference Report are available at 50p (incl. postage) from A. Harwood, 139, Harrowdene Gardens, Teddington, Middx. — make cheques payable to R.D.S.)

"A VOICE FOR RAIL USERS"

Have you ever wanted to know:—

(a) how to boost usage of a service; (b) how to run a special train; (c) how to lobby your local councils; (d) how to publicise a service in a novel way; (e) how to form a users' group? Ideas on these and many other questions are contained in this new book, available at 75p. incl. p. age from RDS Sales, 21, Norfolk Road, Sutton Coldfield, West Midlands B75 6SQ from whom our complete Sales List is also available on receipt of SAE.

SIXTH NATIONAL CONFERENCE OF RAIL USERS' GROUPS

The Society's next major event is to take place on Saturday, March 24th at University College, London. Each year, the number of delegates attending our users' groups conference has been greater than the previous year. This time we hope to continue that trend. Our guest speaker will be Parliamentary Under-Secretary at the Department of Transport, David Mitchell M.P. There will also be specialist speakers on "Provincial Services" and the "Conurbations". All users' groups and RDS Branches/Areas should already have received invitations. Individual members interested in attending (subject to limitations on space) should send a SAE to Mr. T.J. Garrod, 15, Clapham Road, Lowestoft, Suffolk, NR32 1RQ.



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R.D.S. TRIP TO YORK 3rd DECEMBER 1983.

"The Railway Development Society is an extremely important body as far as BR is concerned, they do much for the railways, including putting on specials like the one timetabled for 3rd December from Hertford North to York. All stations are therefore instructed to make announcements to their customers wishing them a good day out and the compliments of the season."

This message was sent out in the weekly instructions to staff at all stations where the RDS Special was picking up, Hertford North and all stations to Cambridge. Motive power Class 47106 complete with commemorative headboard and the two organisers left King's Cross at 05.55 to pick up first customer, a BR courier at Crews Hill before reaching Hertford North at 6.40 where 175 intrepid travellers were waiting. The picture was repeated at Watton-at-Stone, where 90 boarded, nearly 5% of the village, including the Parish Chairman. The story was repeated all the way to Cambridge with the two-coach platform at Foxton witnessing its first 10-coach train ever!

Full details of "How to organise a Special Train—with a difference" are included in the fact sheet referred to on p.2 of our last issue but suffice to say the train was to prove a point—that there is a demand from even rural areas for railways and interesting excursions. The organisers experienced considerable reservations from BR staff and even RDS members as to the wisdom of running this train but in the event it was filled to capacity with a substantial waiting list and not by RDS members or "enthusiasts" but ordinary members of the public.

The organisers would like to thank those members of the E. Anglia and London Branches who worked so hard on the

day to ensure everything went smoothly. Several new members have been made and both the RDS and railways have received much valuable publicity locally.

WLF/MH

REOPENINGS CONFERENCE

Members of RDS and reopening campaigns from East Anglia, the East and West Midlands, Yorkshire, the London area and the South West met at Kettering for a conference on October 29th. RDS Reopenings Committee Chairman, Trevor Garrod, reviewing the national situation, stressed that we must "make the running" in deciding the terms in which the debate on the railways' future should be conducted. Some politicians and people in management were constantly looking at ways of cutting back the system; "We should press for expansion, not contraction."

Station reopenings were continuing and had reached 80 since 1965. (RDS has just produced a new version of the Watton-at-Stone leaflet, listing the seven new or re-opened stations on BR in 1963. This is obtainable from Mr. W.L. Freitag, 22, Cravells Road, Harpenden, Herts. AL5 1BD). The re-routing of Bletchley trains into Bedford Midland station, due to take place in May 1984, was something for which RDS had campaigned for some 3 years.

Reports of progress with various other reopening campaigns around the country were given. It was notable that Tony Speller's Amendment to the 1962 Transport Act, providing for experimental reopenings, had not so far been used for what it was originally intended, viz. restoring an experimental passenger service on a freight-only line in a Shire County. We must therefore step up the pressure for a small group of such experiments. One delegate suggested that we should make 1984 "The Year of Speller's Amendment."

TJG

BOOKSHELF

"Stopping Train Britain"

We have not made a habit in recent years of reviewing railway books, however where they are particularly relevant to our objectives we make occasional exceptions. This book is a modern travel companion which can do nothing but enhance and encourage rail travel for anyone picking up a copy and is capable of being lured away from their own internal combustion engine to the delight of seeing Britain from another angle.

Most of the chapters were serialised in the "Observer" colour magazine but the quality of the book surpasses any individuals attempt to keep the poorer news type print in reasonable condition. Let us hope that the Chapter on the Settle to Carlisle line will not cause the book to become dated by its closure.

The author even comes across the proverbial lank haired, eczema scarred youth weighed down with loco badges, who unfortunately epitomises the so-called rail enthusiasts (sic.) Perhaps the irksome side of the book is the aloofness of the writer, who prefers to avoid any mention of the real railway potential save that of providing him with a comfortable living. It is an era which he claims is coming to an end but which this Society is convinced has a future.

My personal opinion of journalists is that they have a duty to be objective and critical but when they become a little more than social historians, they have lost their "raison d'être". "Stopping Train Britain" however avoids becoming the dry gazetteer so common in railway literature and is a worthy addition to any bookshelf, but the objectivity is regrettably missing.

WLF

* Hodder & Stoughton, 1983. £10.95

SPONSORED CYCLE RIDE

In June 1983, a small group of RDS members undertook a sponsored cycle ride to the re-opened Watton-at-Stone station in Hertfordshire. The Re-openings Sub-Committee hopes to arrange one (or more) such rides to a re-opened station this year—if possible—to co-incide with National Bike Week—May 13–19. Suggestions for destinations, and volunteers to ride anything from 10 to 100 miles, probably on May 19th, should be sent to Mr. J.W. Page, 34, Hereward Close, Histon, Cambridge, CB4 4LS.

RAIL DEVELOPMENT

ENTERPRISES—new offer:—

(a) Watton-at-Stone reproduction station name stickers, complete with opening date—now available.

(b) Car Sticker "OVERNIGHT. I'M THE GREATEST" BR Night Star Parcels Service.

(a) 50p. + SAE (6"x3")., (b) FREE but enclose SAE. From address in last issue (p.2, col. 3). Remaining items available while stocks last.

MEMBERS' PLATFORM

"Where are the Women?"

Dear Sir,

The Editor asks why there are few women in the RDS, although they are predominant users of public transport. May the reason not be that the RDS does not concern itself with the mode of transport they need more than any other? There is, indeed, no RDS-type body representing the interests of bus users and one is urgently needed. Many rail users have written off the buses as a practical means of getting from A to B. This is certainly concordant with the competence of their management (or lack of it), but if the following measures were adopted I believe that there would be a transformation in the quality of our transport system, and the railways would benefit by regaining much of the traffic they lost due to past feeder route closures.

(1) Many of our rural buses would be replaced by new long-distance (60 miles or so) routes. Some of these would run as "rail-link" type routes, while others would simply cater for cross-country traffic on routes where no rail facilities exist;

(2) All routes, bus and rail, would where possible be run on a regular-interval timetable. This would assist the provision of connections, which would be done on a comprehensive basis;

(3) Comprehensive bus/rail timetables would be produced. Unlike existing bus timetables, they would not be subject to unexpected alterations, but would be altered 3 times a year, just as existing BR services are;

(4) The consumer voice would be heard at both "village" and "regional" levels where these new-style buses were concerned. At present only the former seems to be considered at all, so that the buses lose a great deal of longer distance and holiday traffic.

P.S. I would be interested in hearing from others who share my views, particularly if they could help in starting a bus subsidiary or counterpart of the RDS.

Simon Norton
Cambridge.

"Don't Bash the Arts Council"

— reply

Sir,

Mr. K. R. Shaw is upset at my reference to subsidies to the Arts Council in general and to ballet and opera in particular. This whole question of what is to receive taxpayers' cash and what is not is an issue of the greatest importance now and at any time. In Communist Russia, which I have visited twice, all things cultural are heavily subsidised, frivolous things, such as tourist souvenirs and clothes, are expensive. Public transport is favoured and is incredibly cheap. In a way, perhaps London is seeking to emulate the USSR under Ken Livingstone, with an abundance of musical activity in many concert halls, mostly subsidised, and with attempts to restrain the cost of bus and tube fares.

After a lifetime of teaching, now retired, I find myself on a pension well below the official poverty level in the UK. I have no complaints — if I had sought wealth I should have gone in for football or pop music. But I fail to see why I should pay tax so that ballet and opera can be provided for well-heeled inhabitants of London while I have to be content with music (which I adore as long as it is classical) mostly comes from records or radio. Recently a pile of old car tyres masquerading as "modern art" was sabotaged by someone: was he perhaps another OAP with strong views on degenerate art forms?

Perhaps it was tactless of me to refer to ballet and opera. There are so many other forms of public expenditure of dubious importance. Londoners have many free bridges linking the two halves of the city, whereas elsewhere, as here in Merseyside, or Humberside, or the Severn Bridge quite substantial charges are involved in crossing the river. How much did the Thames Barge cost?

The subsidy paid to support road transport in the UK is at least £8,000m. according to figures from the TUCC, compared with a figure of about £800m. for BR. In referring to various subsidies I was trying to show that BR cannot fairly compete with road transport unless the two modes are put on the same basis, i.e. that the track bed (or road) is paid for by government plus signalling, stations, etc., leaving only the actual running costs as a legitimate source of expenditure.

G. R. Tolliday
Birkenhead, Merseyside.

The Editor 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".

I.P.G. CONFERENCE — 9th DECEMBER 1983.

The Infrastructure Planning Group, a committee set up by the Institution of Civil Engineers, held a debate on 9th December on "The Future of the Railways." Over 300 delegates from organisations such as R.D.S., Transport 2000, the N.U.R. (who should, perhaps, have had a speaker on the platform), R. Travers-Morgan (I), and many individuals from B.R.'s "infrastructure" staff, heard speakers from B.R. and the P.T.Es and also Hazel Duffy (F.T. Transport Correspondent).

Tom Bradley (ex-Chairman, Commons Select Committee on Transport) summarised the problems we all know so well, and condemned the terms on which Serpell was asked to make his report. For the B.R.B. Jim O'Brien smoothly welcomed his instructions from the Minister and looked forward to the challenge of fulfilling the Corporate Plan. More meaty (and more worrying) was M. C. Purbrick's (B.R.B. Director of Civil Engineering) resumé of the state of the infrastructure, and the amounts spent on it — less than

the European average (as a percentage of capital) and less than the Department of Transport's own recommendation.

He described his job as providing the infrastructure needed for the Sector Directors' planned operations, but, as usual, all adjustments are downward — e.g. line singling—despite the increased traffic forecasts. Speakers from the P.T.Es gave a good picture of the work of authorities running successful public transport networks; Hazel Duffy was worried by two things, the lack of the words "social value", and the feeling that The Question ("what do we want of B.R." — Sir Peter Parker) had not yet been properly answered. Overall she believed that services would continue to crumble as stop-go cutbacks took the place of real action.

Among the points made from the floor, G.R. Tolliday (for R.D.S.), in a very pithy combination of questions not satisfactorily answered from the platform, pressed the case for proper comparison of rail and road costs. Other contributors detailed the poor state of B.R. infrastructure and called for longer term planning. The IPG will report to the Government, and B.R. during the next few months.

RJPT

R.D.S. DIARY — (of RDS & others Special Trains)

March/April — RDS/Corby District Council. Corby to Glasgow/Edinburgh. Details: SAE Mrs. A. Jordan, 13, Arnhill Road, Gretton, Corby.

24th March — Welshpool Station Action Group. Welshpool — Edinburgh. Picking up all stations to CHESTER & WARRINGTON, bus connections from MACHYNLETH. £10. Details: M. Douglas, 53, Gungrog Park, Welshpool, POWYS.

7th or 14th April — RDS North Herts. Hertford North to Keighley and over Seaboard & Carlisle — possible stops for picking up in NOTTINGHAM and SHEFFIELD. Details: SAE, 22, Cravells Road, Harpenden, Herts.

14th April — Cotswold Line Promotion Group. Oxford and most stations to Worcester then York. Details: J.E. Stanley, 4, Sandford Rise, Charlbury, Oxon OX7 3SZ

21st April — N.E.N.T.A. North Walsham and stations to March, Keighley and Carlisle. £14 including steam trip at Keighley. Details phone WALSLEY 650715.

5th May — Repeat of N.E.N.T.A. trip of 21st April.

5th May — Marlow & Maidenhead Rail Passengers' Assn. Marlow to Central Wales Line, circular tour. Details: L. Smith, 44, Kidmore Rd. Caversham, Berks RG4 7LU

9th June — RDS London Branch/Aylesbury & District Rail Passengers' Assn. Marylebone to Milton Keynes with intermediate stops at key stations, including Quainton Road. £7 return Marylebone, £5 Aylesbury. Details: SAE to F. Green, 6 Parton Close, Wendover, BUCKS.

REGIONAL NOTES

LONDON & HOME COUNTIES

As most of the news in this column is likely to be bad in the coming months perhaps we should start off with the good. As predicted in our last issue, the Minister finally approved the £24m. electrification of the Tonbridge—Hastings line on 29th October, an eleventh hour decision if ever there was one. This welcome event was fully reported in the last issue of the Branch Newsletter "RAILONDON" where it was stressed that any further delay would have resulted in a situation where the existing rolling-stock would have been life-expired before the new electric service could be introduced. May 1986 is now scheduled as the completion date and as B.R. has a good record in completion of major works we shall at least have something to look forward to in 2 years time.

This is therefore an opportune moment to reflect on the effort which has gone into securing the approval of this major rail investment and as our correspondent in "RAIL ENTHUSIAST" put it "Much credit must go to B.R. for their persistence in pushing an electrification scheme which broke the Ministry criteria for investment..." but who was in fact pushing B.R. (and the Government)? RDS with (and through) associated Groups at Tonbridge, Tunbridge Wells and Hastings, St. Leonards and Bexhill, not to mention the sterling efforts of the local M.P.s have surely proved the growing strength of the Rail Users' Movement which (as reported elsewhere) will this year be addressed at its Annual Conference by no less than a Government Minister. It is difficult to believe that such a decision would have been reached *without* the efforts of *all* those mentioned above to whom our grateful thanks are due.

Turning now to more serious matters response to the Branch's Memorandum on the proposals for London Regional Transport have been quite favourable and a delegation of Branch officers met officials at the Department of Transport to discuss the matter in more detail on 17th November — a meeting with British Rail L.&S.E. sector management is also to take place on 2nd February. We are now moving into the political arena and the Branch Committee considered its response to the Bill — published in December — and the Lobby of Parliament (on 17th January) organised by the Trade Union Movement, at its meeting on 11th. Nevertheless we echo the sentiments of TRANSPORT 2000 that this is a forerunner of the Government's efforts to stifle the influence of local government on public transport development so that it can launch forth — unimpeded — on a further massive road-building programme. All the indications are that once the G.L.C. has been abolished (assuming the Government succeeds with this aim), the road building plans of the Standing Conference on London & South East Reg-

ional Planning will be proclaimed as the solution to all the Region's problems. It is our task to ensure that this does *not* happen!

On more local issues discussions have continued with British Rail over its plans for the future redevelopment of Liverpool Street at which we affirmed our long-standing aim to see a restored East London Line link into that terminus. It seems, however, that the proposals may have to be trimmed down — with less platforms and approach tracks — which could seriously impair the scope for increased capacity which is what the scheme was all about in the first place. The permanent diversion of all Richmond—Broad Street trains to North Woolwich on completion of the G.L.C. funded electrification, with only a peak-hour service of dual-voltage Watford trains into Liverpool Street via a single-line link at Graham Road now seems to be the order of the day but B.R. seem to accept that this will require a further T.U.C.C. Inquiry, and closure notices for the Worship Street—Dalston Junction section may have appeared by the time members read these Notes. So far we are still to be convinced that closure of the Kingsland corridor is the best solution and depending upon the response from local users' groups a formal objection is almost certain to be lodged.

Finally our campaign on the future of the Marylebone—Aylesbury line is to be expressed in a more tangible form with a joint railtour to Milton Keynes (reported elsewhere in this issue) in conjunction with the local rail users' group and we would ask all members to give their fullest support. Other events organised for members have included an illustrated lecture on "Light Rail in Austria" held at Friends House, Euston, on 23rd November and on 9th February Mr. R. Malins, of S.R. Chief Passenger Manager's office is due to give a talk entitled "Caring for the customer — lessons from Europe" this time at an "out of town" venue, namely Croydon, details of which will already have been notified to local members. Following the appeal to Branch members last year which brought in almost £150 the Committee, at its meeting on 11th January agreed to purchase appropriate display equipment in time for its first exhibition this year to be held at High Wycombe on 11th February.

JWB

WEST MIDLANDS

Both Staffs. and West Midlands County Councils have urged B.R. to defer closure of the 10 mile Walsall—Brownhills—Lichfield freight line pending a review of future passenger and freight needs. However at a public meeting in Stratford-on-Avon on 14th December B.R. made clear its intention to press ahead with severance of the North Warwicks. line south of Henley-in-Arden and to operate a reduced service of 2 hourly trains. There was strong opposition at the meeting and, of course B.R.

have still to obtain removal of the Court Injunction before any closure notices can go up. RDS and other groups are actively pursuing opposition to B.R.'s plans and we have published alternative economy schemes.

At a public meeting in Walsall on 22nd November an RDS scheme to provide an Aldridge—Walsall train service was announced. Requiring just one platform the trains would take just 6 mins. (compared with a 15 min. journey by bus). The meeting also stressed objections to closure of the Brownhills line and commented on plans to divert pedestrian access after 7.0p.m. at Walsall station. A public meeting was also convened by the Bromsgrove Passenger Action Committee on 24th November to oppose B.R.'s plans to reduce its 9 trains a day to 5. Some 70 residents who attended heard of problems related to train movements, pathing and the split responsibility between WR and LMR. At Redditch a new 4 week ticket was introduced on 27th November offering bus and rail travel between Birmingham and Redditch plus bus travel in the Redditch New Town for just £26.

Passenger numbers on West Midlands trains increased by 14% in the 12 months to June 1983. Every line achieved an increase ranging from 3% on the NEC line to 26% on the Kidderminster route. New car parks are about to be embarked upon at Bescot and at Hall Green. In May B.R. will begin running HSTs "under the wires" on Manchester/Liverpool — Birmingham — South West services. Amongst the track reduction schemes in the Branch's area are "dequadrification" in Walsall and Duddeston; singling the 20 miles through Uttoxeter; singling 39 miles Shrewsbury—Green Lane crossing and singling 12 miles Ledbury — Shelwick Junction.

On 14th April 1984 the Branch will be running an Inter-city charter train from Rugeley — Hednesford — Walsall and New Street to York; travelling out via Tamworth and Chesterfield; returning via Huddersfield and Stockport. Finally, on 15th October the Branch was host to a very successful Conference on the "Future of Rail Services in Metropolitan Areas" reported more fully elsewhere in this issue.

AB

EAST ANGLIA

After many years of campaigning (particularly by the local Branch of RDS) the Society is pleased to note that at long last electrification has been agreed by the Minister for the Cambridge—Bishops Cleeve line. However the short piece of track between Shepreth Branch Junction and Royston has *NOT* been included in the scheme. As the figure quoted was £2m. — it does seem rather short-sighted to leave this section. Bear in mind the cost that will be entailed to bring the contractors back into the area at a later date, and, if the two lines had been electrified at the same time

the benefit to British Rail in allowing for better operational flexibility.

The current Cambridge/Liverpool Street services are a very poor advert in general for BR and the staff have apologised to our East Anglian members for the type of service that they are having to run. If it were not for their dedication the service would be much worse! The Cambridge electrification schemes have been going backwards and forwards for so many years between the D.Tp. and B.R. that it seemed they would eventually disappear into oblivion like the proverbial "ooslam bird". The saddest part of the whole affair is that whilst the Royston to Cambridge service could be run on the existing electrical supplies, the 25-mile stretch to Bishops Stortford will require a new main power source from the national grid and apparently the CEGB requires 2½ years notice of new connections!

The RDS therefore welcomes the announcement with sadness that the Royston service has not been included. Pressure must therefore be brought upon the Government to change their minds and allow the additional funding to electrify BOTH routes, thus avoiding the inconvenient change of trains at Royston. Several years ago when the East Anglian Branch carried out an on-train survey it was very apparent that the two services cater for very different markets.

On 19th November our corporate member the North East Norfolk Travellers' Association carried over 400 people from North Walsham and 5 other Norfolk stations to London on a Shoppers' Special. This was the third charter train organised by NENTA in 1983. The Association has offered part of the profits as a donation to BR to help pay for the refurbishment of North Walsham station.

RDS issued a 4-page report on services between East Anglia, the East Midlands and the North during the Autumn. This listed a dozen suggestions for improvement, including better through services and connections on the Colchester - Ipswich - Peterborough - Nottingham axis; and better connections for the north at Peterborough at certain times of the day. Our suggestions have been received sympathetically by the Transport Users' Consultative Committee, who have been having serious discussions on them with BR management. A delegation from the Branch also met the Liverpool Street Divisional Manager on 21st December principally to express users' concern at some of the "singling" proposals in East Anglia. In particular on parts of the Stowmarket - Norwich and Norwich - Ely lines - all of which are "main" rather than simply "branch" lines. RDS is also supporting its corporate member the East Suffolk Travellers' Association in its fight to retain a Lowestoft - London through train, which BR propose to replace by a DMU connection at Ipswich in May. Over 5,000 leaflets have been produced and distributed.

The Branch is working on a new book "East Anglia by Rail" a rail-orientated guide book to the Region, including des-

criptions of 15 routes and places of interest easily accessible by rail. This is due to be published in 3,000 copies this coming Easter. Plans are also well advanced for more special trains in the region during 1984, including one from each of the Wisbech and Dereham freight-only lines. Branch members Steve Wilkinson and Peter Wakefield have been in close touch with the coal merchants federation, in a bid to ensure that as many depots as possible continue to receive coal by rail when the old type of wagons are phased out - later this year.

Finally the Branch AGM is due to be held on Saturday 25th February at the Central Library, Clapham Road, Lowestoft, starting at 2.00p.m. Following the business part of the meeting, there will be a talk by Don Mathew, Transport Campaigner of Friends of the Earth, with whom RDS has campaigned successfully on many occasions.

SFW/TJG

YORKSHIRE

British Rail is going ahead with plans to close the Boothferry Swing Bridge near Goole, and thus sever the rail link from Goole to Hull. It is expected that the closure notices will be published by the time members read these Notes. The 125 year old bridge swings on an island jetty in the River Ouse which is in need of extensive repair. In 1973 the bridge was partially demolished by a German freighter and cost B.R. almost £1 million to repair whilst only a few thousand pounds in damages was recovered from the shipping company. Since then the jetty has been struck by passing ships on an average of 3-4 times a year. It seems that B.R. has never been able to obtain commensurate compensation for the damage caused and one is left wondering why insurance and depreciation should not cover these contingencies.

B.R. claim that to repair the bridge would cost well over £2 million as against £1m. for its demolition but the cost of a new station at Goole would be little short of a second million. The rail link would be replaced by buses with an additional service to the Saltmarsh area at present served by the trains although at the moment they admit to having no funds available to support such a service. A local DMU service would run from Goole to Doncaster to connect with the Inter-City trains.

At a well-attended public meeting held in Goole in mid-December it was stated that the roads in the Salt-marsh area are quite unsuited for a bus service, being narrow, unfenced and adjacent to deep water-filled dykes. There is widespread opposition in Goole to the closure proposals which are seen as a threat to the trade of the town. There is similar opposition in Hull which would be left with only one rail link to the west by way of Selby - disregarding the circuitous route to York via Bridlington and Scarborough. Goole & District Railway Action Group has been formed to co-ordinate opposition to the plan and the local branch of RDS is in close contact with them.

N.Yorks County Council is to study the cost of re-opening five closed stations in and around York in an effort to relieve road congestion in the City. Hitherto the County Council has been distinctly lukewarm to rail developments in its area and is not opposing closure of the Settle - Carlisle line. However it has given financial support to an automated level crossing near Bedale on the freight-only Wensleydale line.

DJB

SEVERN SIDE

Displays at special public events and libraries, widespread distribution of leaflets and the sale of RDS publications in bookshops, newsagents and model railway shops has brought in a few new members but whilst many Parish Councils have expressed support for proposals to re-open local stations as halts they have not so far responded by joining the Society.

The subject of line "singling" is to the fore in this issue and experience in Severn side should serve as a warning with the extensive reduction of trackage countrywide forecast in the November "Rail Enthusiast". Absence of a passing loop between Swindon and Kemble worsens late-running especially when the route carries diverted trains. Delays at Kemble can result in connections being missed at Swindon with a consequential risk of failure to reach Gatwick and Heathrow Airports in time for reserved flights. With large numbers of commuters using High Speed Trains much overcrowding is experienced on the Paddington - Swindon section. Accordingly a proposal has been sent to B.R. to operate a new Inter-Regional service which would enable many long distance travellers to avoid Paddington altogether. viz Gloucester to London Victoria.

Only a skeleton bus service now operates between Stonehouse and Gloucester because B.R. has gained most of the business. Several of the most popular services are overcrowded even without the extra summertime business or motorists who abandon vehicles during the worst Winter weather. An emergency service with a double deck bus could not cope with all the passengers at Stonehouse when the 7.30 Swindon - Worcester was diverted via Badminton recently. A diverted Freightliner train stuck on the incline at Sapperton and the DMU had to run through to Bristol Parkway to reverse causing heavy delay to connecting services at Gloucester. A shorter emergency route could have been provided to link Chipping Sodbury and Yate but development has now taken place on the former Westerleigh East Curve.

If the Stroud - Standish Junc. singled proposal is pursued the restoration of single platform halts at Cashes Green and Ebley would be possible but extra rolling stock would be required. Re-opening of a halt at Minety on the singled section between Swindon and Kemble would provide useful access to the Cotswold Water Park. These proposals have been put forward on

a number of occasions over the last 10 years but the extra time needed for calls at such halts would pose timetabling problems for connections at Cheltenham, Gloucester and Swindon.

Singling of parts of the Western Region line to Exeter provide similar opportunities and Branch members have been consulted on the prospects for Lavington, Somerton and Langport. The intended length of the section to be singled is as yet unknown. Similarly whether any of the London-South West HSTs would have to be re-routed via Bristol. Studies continue into possible new service patterns in Avon Somerset, Gloucestershire and Wiltshire with the increasing public preference for cheaper and faster rail services (than by bus). Many of the proposed locations already have adequate car-parking space (or suitable adjacent ground) so country folk would not have to drive many miles to a railhead although trains can be missed when intending passengers have to compete with the overflow from nearby Super-cets.

ERB

NORTH WEST

On Saturday 17th December 1983 a special train on the Settle - Carlisle line conveyed many representatives from local authorities who have contributed to the cost of hiring P.E.I.D.A. to do a full survey of the line. The survey, costing £34,000 is being shared by Cumbria, West Yorks. and Lancs. County Councils, other local authorities, the English Tourist Board and the Countryside Commission. At a special Press Conference held in Garside their spokesman said that the line was important for a number of reasons: (a) It provides a service to the community; (b) It is essential for the future of tourism in the area; (c) It provides jobs in an area with high unemployment; and (d) closure of the Settle-Carlisle may foreshadow other rail closures in the area.

It is interesting to note that British Rail's Project Manager for the Settle-Carlisle line was included in the party on board the special train and that B.R. have contributed to the PEIDA study the sum of £2,000. Shortly after this trip BR posted up the long-awaited Sec. 56 (7) closure notices. The objection period runs from December 24th until February 4th 1984. Needless to say the Settle to Carlisle Joint Action Committee have objected very strongly to the timing; the short period allowed and are seeking an extension.

Now that the closure notices have been posted the Settle to Carlisle Joint Action Committee have produced a leaflet and 4,000 are being distributed door to door along the length of the line. Further public meetings are being arranged especially at Kirkby Stephen, Keighley and Bradford. Interest in the campaign is coming from all quarters and Peter Horton, Secretary of the J.A.C. is being inundated with requests for help and information. Those wishing more particulars should contact him at 31, Harcourt Road, Lancaster, LA1 2NZ.

In connection with the future of the Oxenholme-Windermere line the North West Branch held a public meeting at Kendal on 7th January in order to form a rail users' group for the line. Speakers were Richard Watts (Branch Chairman) and Peter Horton (V. Chairman). This line, which Serpell said should be closed, could play a much more important role in relieving the road congestion in the Windermere area during the Summer. It might also be possible to develop a "park & ride" scheme on it similar to those on some Cornish holiday lines.

Meanwhile on the Copypit Line (Rose Grove - Todmorden) B.R. has recently announced measures which will avert its threatened closure. Between Leeds and Preston, the service will be for an experimental period of 2 years and consist of 5 trains a day. In the original list of lines to close published with announcement of B.R.'s Corporate Plan last year, Copypit now seems to have earned a reprieve. A new service, which is due to start in October this year, will also bring about a welcome improvement on the East Lancs. Line and help combat competition from express coaches recently introduced from Preston to Burnley via Blackburn, Accrington on opening of the M65. On Leeds - Skipton/Carnforth loco-hauled trains from Hull to Lancaster are also due to be introduced with this year's May Timetable.

Finally the forthcoming International Garden Festival in Liverpool, during 1984, is to be served by a Light Railway. A 15in. gauge line is presently being constructed and will be operated by the Romney, Hythe and Dymchurch Railway Co., Main-line access to the Festival site will be via St. Michaels station on the Liverpool (Central) - Hunts Cross line. In addition to those mentioned in previous issues, the M.P.T.E. is considering new stations at the following sites: Bowring Park, Huyton Quarry, Whiston and Marshalls Cross - all on the Lime Street - St. Helens line; and Maghull North - on the Central - Ormskirk

RW/MB

NORTH MIDLANDS

At a meeting in Nottingham, on November 26th, the Society's Ninth Branch was formed, covering the counties of Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire, following a substantial growth in membership in recent months. A Committee of six was elected and discussions took place on priorities for RDS campaigning in the area. In particular the scope for a Nottingham-Birmingham direct service was examined, and a new joint approach to BR is likely, between Transport 2000 and the Midlands and N. Midlands Branches of RDS. An encouraging report was received from the Newark - Nottingham - Lincoln Rail Users' Assn., recently formed on RDS initiative. The campaign for a restored passenger service to Mansfield and re-opened stations for certain other towns, e.g. Ilkeston, will also feature in the activities of the new Branch.

TJG

LINCOLNSHIRE

Our corporate member, the South East Lincolnshire Travellers' Assn. held its AGM at Skegness on November 12th. BR's Area Manager told the meeting that the line from Grantham was safe "for the next five years at least" and hinted that the opening hours of Skegness station might be extended. With the gradual automation of level crossings, the high running costs which were BR's original pretext for introducing a 10-hour shift on the line are being reduced - and it is the RDS view that BR must be pressed to extend the hours of opening of the Boston - Skegness section. We welcome this first hint that they are indeed looking at the possibility. Further welcome news given at the meeting was that Lincolnshire County Council now pays for 150 school students to be taken by train from Metheringham and Ruskington into Lincoln each day and 110 from Heckington.

TJG

DEVON

British Rail have now named their price for the Bideford and Barnstaple railway. The total price for the 9½ mile stretch of line of £313,000 works out at about £34,000 per mile. The North Devon Railway Preservation Society have decided to form a company, and invite people to buy shares in an attempt to raise this sum of money and buy and run the line.

WD

SCOTLAND

The main concern of the Branch in the last few months has been the Serpell-type inquiry into the future of Strathclyde's grant-aided rail services (as reported in our last issue - p.8) the publication date of which was revealed by Malcolm Waugh, Chairman of the Regional Council's highways & transportation committee, at the Branch's first public meeting, which was held in Glasgow City Halls, on 26th November. The meeting had been designed as an exercise in public education in anticipation of the working party report and our timing seems to have been right. It was attended by about 100 people, largely from community councils, tenants' associations, churches, trade unions and amenity bodies.

The Chair was taken by Dr. Nicolette Carlaw, twice an Ecology Party candidate for Glasgow constituencies in Parliamentary elections and the first main speaker, R.A. Wood, Tyne & Wear PTE's marketing and information officer showed a film and gave an informative talk. A simple truth was eloquent. The Tynesiders had decided - and they had acted! Ken Sutherland, RDS (Scotland); who is a lecturer in geography and modern studies, spoke next. The Glaswegians had drawn up some splendid plans for railway development but, after the first instalment, had put them on the shelf (meantime continuing with the urban motorway programme).

Many of the audience were clearly pained by the contrast and a forest of hands were raised in support of the resolution which appeared on the agenda, as follows:—

"That this meeting, not satisfied with the rate of progress towards the provision of a modernised and integrated public passenger transport system for Strathclyde, calls upon the Railway Development Society (Scotland) to confer with other bodies and individuals believing in this objective with a view to obtaining for it a high planning and greater investment priority."

At the end of the meeting, Cllr. Waugh remarked that he had heard much which was worth noting and that the long awaited Working Group's report would be published on 13th December. In the event it appeared on 12th and one might be excused for thinking that he had in fact noted what had been worth noting and *had allowed his mind to be changed*. We had not really dared hope for the electrification to East Kilbride and Cumbernauld (in the report) and the increased frequency to Kilmarnock. (The Largs electrification, also highly satisfactory news, had been foreshadowed by the local M.P.). The proposed closures were not as drastic as press leaks had led us to fear. We will, however, fight these (and the line singlings and somewhat excessive degree of de-staffing of stations) which the Working Group have presented as being an inseparable part of the package.

Whether or not our fighting stance (on 26th November) helped to secure this more palatable package we will nevertheless continue the fight to make the local rail user as well off in terms of service as he is able to be. — Also on 26th November "Friends of the West Highland Line" held a successful meeting in Oban. Attended by about 40 people it was lively, long and detailed. Speakers included Cllr. David Webster, for many years an energetic promoter of tourism in the area; Colin Shearer, BR's area manager, and Ken McIntyre of NUR Oban Branch.

Cllr. Webster advocated a co-ordinated approach by local authorities to obtain more railway investment (with support from the EEC) and Mr. Shearer said that local businesses and BR were drawing up a "balance sheet" for the line to promote both passenger & freight traffic and promised that improvements in rolling stock would be made in time for the 1984 season when (as in 1983) a Sunday timetable would operate.

Both meetings received good coverage in the press and on the BBC and RDS representatives were interviewed on a number of issues — including one broadcast in Gaelic.

FHN/JWB

"TRACK SINGLING"

"Bottlenecks" is the title of a new RDS leaflet, putting what we consider a balanced view on track singling proposals. Available from Mr. Freitag (address above).

dertaken — will never be known because of the differing laws of the two countries, but in this country at least one commentator has "raised the issue" and as I write a revolt of Tory "Backbench" M.P.s has just taken place over its "rate-capping" proposals including a former Prime Minister and others of former Cabinet rank.

What, however, has this all to do with British Rail you may ask? The answer is simple — "Bridges". Apart from the obvious threat to many of the Board's older over-bridges as a result of the introduction of heavier lorries it faces increasing problems with many of its major structures — all at least 100 years old. If a motorway viaduct becomes unsafe — even if it is only a few years old — the money is usually found to repair it. What of Barmouth, Ribbleshead, the bridge at Goole (See Regional Notes)? Even the Sudbury Branch may have to close if major repairs become necessary to the Chapple viaduct!

What double standards rule government attitudes to road and rail or is it just part of an attempt to introduce Serpell by the back door? The only glimmer of hope is the emergence of a view, expressed by Ian Phillips, Director of Finance and Planning at L.T., a contributor to the Conference referred to in the last Regional Notes (p.5, col.2) who, in a recent article in the international magazine "Mass Transit" extolled the virtues of cost benefit analysis to justify financial support for public transport.

If the Government get their way, however, by the time such a view becomes received wisdom in official circles most of the authorities who practice it could well have disappeared.

JWB

* Monthly Magazine of "Transport 2000 Ltd."

With acknowledgements to "Committee for Better Transit Inc.", New York.

AYLESBURY USERS' GROUP

Mention is not normally made of specific Users' Groups except under "REGIONAL NOTES", but as this group was established to fight for the line's survival and from money from the Anti-Closure Fund, it is of sufficient importance for all members. Following the meeting reported in the last RDN (at page 5, col.2.) another held at Gt. Missenden was equally well-attended.

An Aylesbury & District Rail Passengers' Assn. was set up and all members in the area or concerned with the future of the line (from Marylebone) are urged to join. John Craven of "Newsround" has contributed to their funds. They are organising a special train on 9th June (see elsewhere). Membership min. £1.00; details from David Gray, "Alicante", Risborough Road, Terrick, Aylesbury, Bucks.



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

L.T. Bill gets rough passage

The most controversial transport measure going through Parliament at the moment is the London Regional Transport Bill — the legislation designed to take away London Transport from the Greater London Council. These proposals are very unpopular with Londoners, according to an opinion survey published in mid-December. A quota poll showed not only a heavy majority in favour of GLC transport policies, but also a six per cent swing in their favour against a poll taken five months earlier.

After some delay, the Bill was eventually given a second reading on 13 December by 309 votes to 165, a Government majority of 144.

Buses & tubes to be separate subsidiaries

DECEMBER 13* Opening the debate *Mr. Ridley* said the purpose of the Bill was to improve London's transport. It marked the end of an unsuccessful 14-year experiment. It was proposed simply to keep London Transport as it is, but to transfer control of it from the GLC to the Government. The London Transport Executive would assume its new name, London Regional Transport.

LRT's bus and underground operations would be established as separate subsidiaries under LRT as a holding body. Separate companies would be accountable for their own performance.

Nigel Spearing (Lab. Newham South) intervened to ask: "Isn't that explanation the opposite of what you said earlier about LT remaining much as it was before? Do you agree that the arrangement you have just explained goes back to before 1912 in terms of integration of buses and railways?"

Mr. Ridley: "I was referring to the statutory position. Instead of re-forming a new LT, we are simply taking the existing one and transferring it back to the Government. At the same time we are making separate companies."

A long term reason for the Bill was the need for closer co-operation between London's bus and underground services and British Rail. The two operators would be subject to compatible policy and financial framework. He would set up a liaison committee consisting of the two bodies. LRT would assume the functions of subsidising authority to BR's services in the London region. LRT would become the sole authority responsible for the allocation

of resources among London's major public transport operators.

Robert Adley (C. Christchurch) said the closer the operations of BR and LT could be brought together the better. Could BR take over the railway operations of LRT?

Loosening a monopoly dating from 1933

Mr. Ridley said it was possible to foresee that happening, but he did not think that was the solution to the problems many people had in mind. It was more a question of phasing the interchanges among bus, rail and tube terminals so that passengers could move around easily. The securing of better value for money would be one of the first and most important tasks of the new chairman of LRT and his board.

The main bus company would be encouraged to form smaller subsidiaries to take further the decentralisation already started, and the ancillary services, such as engineering and maintenance, could be established as subsidiary companies and sell their services in competition with other suppliers. Another objective was the involvement of the private sector. LRT would be under an obligation to involve independent suppliers wherever this made economic sense. There were many possibilities, such as the use of low capacity vehicles in outlying areas, where there was a demand but not sufficient to justify the use of LRT's buses. They would be seeking to loosen the monopolistic position that LT had held since 1933. An elected body for the LRT board was simply not workable. Ratepayers could, through their MPs, question the call that LRT made on public funds.

Turning to concessionary fares for the elderly and disabled, he said that the Bill did not kill the scheme.

Harry Greenway (C. Ealing North) said the passes were important to a million pensioners; would the minister seek power for them to continue?

Mr. Ridley replied that it would not be right for the Government to legislate to take away what was the function of local government London boroughs would take over that responsibility.

Tony Banks (Lab. Newham North-West) said the London Boroughs Association had no statutory powers to compel boroughs to join in the concessionary fares scheme. The decision would be discretionary.

Mr. Ridley: "Perhaps you will therefore address your entreaties to the London

Boroughs rather than to me."

Hugh Dykes (C. Harrow East) said the concessionary system was vital to pensioners; the minister was risking skating lightly over this serious subject. Which other London boroughs had expressed reservations?

Mr. Ridley: "There are differences of opinion in some Conservative-controlled boroughs over the best method of providing concessionary fares, but not about whether they should be provided. I rely on you to ensure that your pensioners are protected by your borough. Boroughs have two years in which they can come forward with a scheme."

Bill 'designed' to raise fares, reduce services.

John Prescott (Lab. Kingston-on-Hull, East and shadow defence secretary) said the Bill would eventually increase real fares and reduce services. It was designed to do that. Since 1970 there had been a decline in the use of nearly all transportation systems. Some was due to the use of cars, some to the decline of population of inner cities and some due to increasing costs due to the explosion in oil prices. It was not simply an argument of efficiency.

Evidence suggested that low fares led to greater use of the transport system. South Yorkshire PTE — where one could travel six miles for 11p — was the only one that had reversed the decline in public transport.

A greater level of public support was seen in this country as an ideological difference between both sides of the House. It was not viewed as such in America and Europe. More resources relieved congestion, conserved energy, reduced accidents, and led to the maximum use of assets in which investment had already been made. After the doubling of fares in London, accidents increased by nearly 3,000 in four months. LT had argued that service cuts and fare increases could lead to the loss of 6,000 jobs, at a cost to the Government of £30 million merely to fund those on the dole. If the minister would also reassure pensioners that they would still have concessionary travel passes, it would end uncertainty.

Only way of breaking 'pensioners' scheme.

Mr. Spearing intervened to say that no Conservative GLC would concede a change in the concessionary scheme, as it could not stand it at an election. The only way for the minister to break the pensioners' scheme was to give the option to some of

the boroughs.

That was right *Mr. Prescott* continued. The Select Committee on Transport had made it clear that the system should not be handled by the Transport Department ("we do not believe that the transport problems of London are so acute as to justify depriving London's electorate of a major role in transport decision-making.") The Bill would produce a Whitehall-directed quango to meet the needs of the Treasury rather than those of transport.

Edward Leigh (C. Gainsborough & Horn-castle) said it took five and a half people to run one LT bus compared with three to run a National Bus Company bus and one to run a private bus. The GLC had failed and LT must be taken out of its control. LT was not oriented towards the consumer. He had lived for 17 years on the No.9 bus route — which had not changed in 100 years. He would not be disappointed when it was reformed and moved with the times.

Organisation held up as worldwide model.

Mr. Spearing said that many London bus routes had remained the same in the central area — Nos.9 and 11 were prime examples — because the roads and shops had stayed the same; a built-up area that existed before the motor car. It had not been easy for the GLC to take over from the LCC in 1969. The LCC ran a magnificent and successful municipal transport service, probably the biggest tramway network in western Europe, under various administrations including the Conservatives, who subsidised the trams. The present Bill would put the clock back to before 1933. The Bill that created London Passenger Board was finally piloted through the House by the Liberal P.J.Pybus, and had all-party support.

In 1912 bus and underground services were integrated, because underground was built on a promoter's trick and was kept alive by bus services. Since buses faced competition from the car, the underground had supported them. What the Bill proposed was disintegration. Two men should be mentioned on the day their creation was destroyed: one a grocer's boy in Lambeth (Herbert Morrison), the other a tram conductor in Detroit (Lord Ashfield). "It was through their efforts that LT was created." Both men were born in this country and ended up on different sides of the House. The Bill broke up an organisation that had been held up as a model worldwide. Lord Ashfield, in 1933, wanted fusion, but this Bill would bring only confusion.

Sir Philip Goodhart (C. Beckenham) said his constituency's prosperity had been dependent on good transport links with central London. A third of his constituents did not have cars. Part of the problem had been met by the proliferation of minicab companies, which were the unsung heroes of suburban travel. A middle way should be available between the few lumbering

buses and the flexible but expensive minicabs. The gap could be filled by minibuses, which in Hong Kong carried 10 per cent of passengers using public transport.

"I have received scores of coupons about concessionary travel for pensioners. To some extent I welcome them, because scare campaigns tend to rebound on those who start them." He hoped pensioners' fears would be put to rest.

Recipe for muddle and incompetence.

Stephen Ross (Lib. Isle of Wight) said the Bill was "ill timed, wrongly conceived, and a recipe for muddle, meanness and ministerial incompetence." For those of us who still have faith in local democracy it is a sad day.

We should reconstruct local government in favour of regional authorities, to take in health and other services, including transport. London and much of local government needs a strong leader with power to get things done; to sort out the traffic in the metropolis, which is a disgrace. It is a waste of time taking a delegation to the Department of Transport hoping for a concession. If one had the backing of power and finance, the red carpet would be put down.

The Bill puts the clock back. Total absence of local accountability and the tenuous level of national accountability are overbearing objections, but only marginally more objectionable than some of its other features."

Not motivated by desire to improve transport.

"It is motivated by a desire to abolish the GLC, not to improve London's transport provision. LT is not overfunded, as some would like to make out. London desperately needs a decent transport system, subject to proper democratic control. The Bill makes it almost impossible to achieve that control, and the sooner it is dispatched to the dustbin the better."

Jeremy Hanley (C. Richmond & Barnes) said many people took to the roads because LT had let them down. The only way to rescue people from the misery of driving into London was to get them back on to LT and BR. Commuters could not rely on the transport provided: there was no guarantee that buses would be at the stops on time or not be full; people could not budget in the knowledge that fares would be consistent over the year and strikes occurred far too often.

He welcomed the scheme of the Bill but would prefer the Exchequer subsidy to be greater than the one third suggested. If waste and inefficiency could be routed out by fully professional management at all levels and London Regional Transport could be run as a service to commuters on good business principles and not as a sinecure for its staff, people would flock back to it.

Passengers beyond Woodford payed over the odds.

Harry Cohen (Lab. Leyton) said the Bill had nothing to do with the travel mode of Londoners. It was dogma overriding financial common sense. Private buses, competing on the profitable routes, would curtail the revenue of LRT, leaving less to finance uneconomic but socially necessary services. Would private operators work without having control of fares? They would claim: "We run luxury buses and are entitled to charge luxury fares."

Jeremy Hayes (C. Harlow) said the Bill's provisions that concerned him most were those affecting commuters in his constituency living outside the London area. There was terrible discrimination against people who used the Central Line beyond Woodford. They were paying way above the odds. Unless the Government gave a commitment to help these people, the Bill would not be in the interests of the commuter or of a co-ordinated transport policy.

Tom Cox (Lab. Tooting) said that an efficient public transport service would come about only when meaningful subsidies were paid. The railway system in France, not only the Metro, was prospering and more people were using it. This was possible because of the Government subsidy and the general efficiency of those working on the railways. He also spoke of buses adapted to carry disabled people and said that in Wandsworth one such vehicle made 280 trips in October alone. What would happen to this scheme? It could be destroyed.

Made no economic, social or transport sense.

Richard Tracey (C. Surbiton) said he welcomed the scope for privatisation of the services, so that transport services could progress into the 21st century. Many entrepreneurs could come up with original ideas. The Bill brought us out of the localised political world of the GLC: we would think national.

Tony Banks (Lab. Newham North-West) said if County Hall were controlled by almost anyone other than Mr. Livingstone, the question of abolishing the GLC would never have arisen. Conservative members of the GLC were violently opposed to the proposals being advanced by their colleagues. The French understood the social and economic benefits which emanate from a heavily subsidised transport system, as would anyone with an understanding of economics other than those acquired in a Grantham shop. The Bill was the result of political spite and made no economic, social or transport sense.

Tony Baldry (C. Banbury) said if anyone who had a bright idea was allowed to run private bus services, they would go for the profitable routes and thus ensure greater losses for the loss-making routes. A host of buses would inevitably make losses. "We have been round this hoop before, as Mr.

Spearing said. It is sad that the Labour Party has still not got a statue of Herbert Morrison sitting on its benches. At least he had the national interest at heart.

However, he was convinced that the GLC was not fit to have control of LT. The Bill was worth supporting, but one should not be surprised if in the next couple of years people applied for licences to run private bus services throughout London.

Chris Smith (Lab. Islington South) said that logically the speech by Mr. Baldry should have led him to the conclusion to vote against the Bill.

Debate on 'statement of objectives'

OCTOBER 24* *Mr. Ridley* said that after hearing debate on the Serpell report, he had that day sent a statement of objectives to the chairman of the BR Board. "This puts paid to scare stories about the network."

It said: "Your guiding objective should be to run an efficient railway, providing good value for money. Services should be reliable, attractive and punctual, at acceptable fares and charges, and the cost to the taxpayer should be reduced. "The board's current plan shows the requirement for PSO grant from central government falling to about £700m. (at 1983 prices) in 1986. The Government wants you to go faster than this and reduce the grant to £635m. in 1986.

"It is not our intention that you should embark on a programme of major route closures. At the same time I should welcome your views on the practicability of introducing some guaranteed and subsidised substitute bus services, where appropriate on local transport and value-for-money grounds. I shall want you to work closely with London Regional Transport, when set up, and with other public transport operators, to provide a better deal for travellers in and around London and avoid wasteful duplication.

"Improved efficiency must make a full contribution to keeping down fares. Freight business should achieve a current cost of 5 per cent in 1988. I want you to win as much freight business from road as possible. The objective for the parcels business should be to continue to earn a proper commercial return. "I look forward to receiving the Board's review of Inter-City business. The Government wants improvements in your industrial relations machinery, which has slowed down the pace of change. Sealink must be made ready for privatisation as soon as possible. The Government looks to the private sector for more supply and support services, including catering, and the Board should pursue a vigorous policy of property development and disposal.

"Rationalisation of BR Engineering's excess capacity should be completed as soon as possible. Review by the middle of next year the options for BREL, including those for privatisation. Rolling stock sh-

Peter Snape (Lab. West Bromwich East) said that when investment for innovation was forthcoming, for example on the Tyne & Wear metro, one-person operation was possible. It had not been possible in London because investment had not been forthcoming, and it would not be possible if the Bill went through. It was against the investment programme to install radio communication with drivers that the NUR was on the point of reaching agreement with LT about one-person operation on the Metropolitan & City Line. The minister was in for a long and hard battle in committee.

Mrs. Chalker replied to the debate and the Bill was read a second time.

ould be procured where possible by competitive tendering."

Mr. Ridley agreed that investment was vital to the future efficiency of the railways. "We shall look with favour on proposals for investment, provided they are properly costed and will yield a reasonable rate of return."

Ian Wigglesworth (SDP: Stockton South) said that if that was the case, had not an overwhelming case been made out for investment in electrification?

Mr. Ridley said he was awaiting the inter-city strategy of BR: when BR put forward plans for inter-city business to achieve its expected rate of return, that would be the time to consider major investments.

Robert Adley (C. Christchurch) said "If I were the chairman (having received the statement of objectives), I should reply 'Dear minister, your charming letter, with elegant phrases such as 'value for money' and 'highly competitive market' does not tell me anything at all. Please tell me whether you will provide the funds to electrify the railway and provide the country with the modern network that we need'. The chairman would also say that BR covers a higher percentage of its fares than almost any other railway in the world from its own revenues. He is constantly asked to prepare accounts showing track costs and so forth, while his competitors on the roads have all their costs paid under general taxation. Can you answer these questions?"

Mr. Ridley replied that he was offering the railways "sizeable sums", within which would be ample funds for the investment programme. He thought all MPs accepted that investment should be directed towards improving the performance and quality of the railway and not just be investment for investment's sake.

Stephen Ross (Lib. Isle of Wight) said he wished the minister had taken longer to consider the implications of his future guidelines. He suspected that the information and advice given by the Department was anti-rail, and that his contribution had done nothing to improve the morale of the railways. "I am not satisfied with the rolling stock in the south and a great many

people agree with me." Would BR retain a substantial shareholding in Sealink?

Mr. Ridley replied that there was a particular rolling stock problem in the Isle of Wight because of the gauge and track. "The Department is not anti-rail, nor am I. Far from it. I believe the proposals will be welcomed by the railways." He did not know what would be the exact method for the privatisation of Sealink.

What was meant by 'no major route closures?'

Robert Hughes (Lab. Aberdeen North) said the statement made no mention of electrification, which had been shuttlecocked between the Government and BR. Presumably all the sums would have to be re-done. On BR claims alone the minister was withdrawing over £200 million of financial support in three years. This could only be brought about by service cuts, line closures, fare rises and accelerated job losses. Some 30,000 rail jobs were lost between 1970 and 1979, and a further 42,500 would go between 1981 and 1985.

You want substitute bus services guaranteed. These guarantees did not last long after the Beeching report. What do you mean by "no major route closures?" A 10 20 or 30 per cent cut or more? BR made it clear it was opposed to the privatisation of BREL. BR must have full in-house capacity to provide its rolling stock, and this provides a basis for exports. The minister will have to do better than this if he is to live down the tag of "Lawson's office boy."

Mr. Ridley said this was a document of hope. Substitute bus services had to be guaranteed if they replaced a railway line: this was a worthwhile way to improve transport facilities. On the subject of BREL, it must be highly competitive to win orders from both BR and overseas. The smaller the subsidy we gave BR, the greater would be the national achievement.

Terence Higgins (C. Worthing) asked if further investment should not depend on the removal of restrictive trade practices, as the experience of the St. Pancras line must not be repeated.

Mr. Ridley agreed that productivity was the key to the future of the network. He congratulated the railways on what they had already done and urged them to do more.

Is 70 mile Settle - Carlisle a major line?

Ron Lewis (Lab. Carlisle) asked: "Do you consider the 70-mile stretch of railway from Settle to Carlisle to be a major line? If asked by the BR board to close that line, will you, in view of the outcry from all parts of the country, see that the proposal is blocked?"

Mr. Ridley replied that if such a proposal came to him, he would consider it on its merits. "I must not do or say anything that would or might appear to prejudice my position."

Sir David Price (C. Eastleigh) said Conservative members welcomed the statement that there was no need for any major reduction in the network. Did the minister accept that to reduce subsidies it was important to increase capital expenditure? One could see in BREL that to reduce the need for maintenance we needed new stock.

Mr. Ridley said there would have to be a rationalisation. Finance must be tackled first.

Donald Anderson (Lab. Swansea East) asked if it was firm Government policy that in no circumstances would any public money be at risk, either directly by subvention or indirectly by some form of insurance policy.

Mr. Ridley replied that the Government had made its position clear and there could be no departure from it.

Electrification schemes in Glasgow area.

John Maxton (Lab. Glasgow Cathcart) asked what were the proposals for further electrification in Scotland.

Mr. Mitchell replied that the BR board had sent an outline appraisal of electrification of the line between Edinburgh and Newcastle. It was considering various schemes in the Glasgow area in conjunction with Strathclyde passenger transport executive.

Mr. Maxton said the BR board had been looking to electrification of the line from London to Edinburgh. When would he decide on this project, which would make industry more efficient in the north-east and Scotland?

Mr. Mitchell said the Government must first see detailed proposals from the Board.

L.A. Kirkwood (Lib. Roxburgh & Berwickshire) asked if the Government would give early consideration to electrifying the whole route, London to Edinburgh, "as no single act would give more confidence to the rail industry north of the border."

Mr. Mitchell said the whole question was bound up with BR's strategy for inter-city.

Robert Hughes (Lab. Aberdeen North): BR has said on innumerable occasions that the most significant investment decision required was for electrification of the east coast main line.

Mr. Mitchell: "The ball is in BR's court. When we receive proposals for inter-city, we shall be in a position to make progress."

Barry Henderson (C. Fife North-East) asked about proposals for electrification north of Edinburgh and was told none had been received:

Safety standards the highest in history.

Bryan Gould (Lab. Dagenham) asked what steps would be taken to ensure that safety standards on BR were maintained.

Mr. Mitchell: "This year's report by the chief inspecting officer of railways will show that railways in Britain were safer in 1982 than at any time in their history. I know that the BR Board, which is statutorily responsible for rail safety, is determined to maintain these standards."

Channel Tunnel Banks to report soon.

OCTOBER 24* *George Foulkes* (Lab. Carrick, Cumbernauld & Doon Valley) asked for a statement on the Channel Tunnel.

Mr. Ridley said he hoped to receive "very shortly" the report of the group of British and French banks on private financing of the various schemes that had been advanced.

Mr. Foulkes: "Will you favour twin rail tunnels of 6m. diameter, and not the elaborate bridge and tunnel combined proposed by Ian MacGregor?"

Mr. Ridley: "All possible propositions and designs are still open. The banks' report will comment on the cost and financing difficulties with each project."

Den Dover (C. Chorley) asked him to accept that the many groups who had made proposals felt an urgent need for the alternatives to be narrowed down, so that they could put more effort into finding the necessary backing.

Southend line for sale Proposals invited.

OCTOBER 27 *D. Amess* (C. Basildon) asked if the minister would commission a study of the feasibility of privatising the Fenchurch St. — Shoeburyness line.

Mr. Mitchell said the Government had told the BR Board that they would welcome proposals for more private sector finance, but the initiative in respect of particular lines must come from the private sector.

Fewer trains, horrific queues at St. Pancras.

NOVEMBER 14*

Martin Flannery (Lab. Sheffield Hillsborough) asked if the minister accepted that on routes to the north, particularly the line to Sheffield, fewer trains were running. "Although they are faster, the interval between them is twice as long. There are fewer carriages on each train and fewer staff than there have ever been for many years. That is resulting in chaos. The queues at St. Pancras are horrific. The minister should see for himself, especially on Fridays. Many people say that more money is needed if we are to run the railways properly."

Mr. Ridley replied that he would give a fascinating insight into the figures. The total grant from the Government and local government at 1983 prices was £831 million in 1979 and £929 million in 1983, a considerable increase. "I hope that thro-

ugh increased efficiency we shall be able to reduce that figure. If you have problems about any line, you should write to the chairman of BR."

NOVEMBER 15 *Thomas Sackville* (C. Bolton West) asked what percentage of BR carriages were equipped to take wheelchairs.

Mr. Mitchell: I understand from the board that about 60 per cent of its inter-city rolling stock is equipped to take wheelchair-bound passengers, but only a small percentage of other rolling stock is similarly equipped. When the Board designs new carriages, provision for the disabled is made.

Ted Leadbitter (Lab. Hartlepool) asked what representations had been received on the Serpell Report?

Mr. Mitchell: "We have received well over 1,000 letters, including a number of petitions. They have covered a wide range of issues, most of which were based on the quite incorrect assumption that the Serpell report recommended major cuts in the network."

PREVIEW

No M.P. has a much lower opinion of the Government's proposals for London than Mr. Stephen Ross, the Liberal representative for the Isle of Wight. He is of course a keen RDS supporter, and thinks the London Regional Transport Bill would be better in the dustbin. "My fear is that it will get through," he told me, speaking during the Christmas recess, "although we shall battle hard against it in committee." The best hope of defeating it, he said, was in the Lords. It was due to go to a standing committee on JANUARY 18 and he thought it would take two months or more to complete its stages.

I asked him, incidentally, about the prospects of a tunnel to the Isle of Wight which the RDS had expressed some interest in. This topic was often discussed on the Island, Mr. Ross said, but he was not enthusiastic about it, as 70 per cent of the population were against it, fearing that it would cause the island to be inundated with tourists. He thought a bridge across the western Solent stood a better chance than a tunnel.

About what remains of the island's rail way, he said, there is no challenge to the frequent and well-used service from Ryde to Shanklin — worked by nostalgically ancient London tube trains. There might even be a chance he said, of restoring steam on a line to Newport, where the county owned part of the track.

(Mr. Ross was, of course, one of the M.P.s who accompanied RDS officers to Downing Street with a petition against the Serpell Report in June last year.)

JE