

Railway Development News

Railway Development Society

A Voice for Rail Users

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RAIL/ROAD CONVERSION – "ISSUE CLOSED"

Ever since the infamous Hall & Smith Study of the mid 1970s we have constantly been told by the Road Lobby that the rights of way of railways could much more profitably be used as roads. B.R. therefore, (in the shape of Sir Peter Parker – before he retired) took a gamble last year by commissioning the study into Rail/Road Conversion the results of which were published on 15th March this year. A report *the potential for the conversion of some way routes in London into roads.* B.R.B. March 1984. ISBN 0 7003 00473. Whether or not B.R.'s gamble paid off is a matter for you, the reader to decide after reading these notes.

The terms of reference of the study were:—

"To examine the extent to which, by investing in parts of the railway system, it would be possible to release insufficiently used routes which might profitably convert into toll or metered roads." In choosing the routes to be studied it was reasoned that, if any railway lines now carrying traffic could be judged to be of greater value as part of the road system, it was likely that such lines could be identified in Greater London, where a very large network of radiating and orbital routes co-incide with a very large road traffic demand. A sample of ten rail route sections, on seven routes, was therefore examined, all them less heavily used than the main trunk routes, and consisting of both radial and orbital traffic. *The Board however stressed that the choice of routes was for illustrative purposes and did not in any way imply any prior decision to seek closure.*

The main conclusions of the Report are best summed up in the Press Release issued by the Board on the day of publication.

"Undertaken by consultants, Coopers & Lybrand Associates and steered by a committee which included Sir Alfred Sherman, the report shows that only one of the ten sections of route chosen for examination could be considered a "prima facie" case for conversion, viz. Marylebone—Northolt Junction. In all the cases examined it proved uneconomic to meet the design standards laid down by the Department of Transport's Highway Engineers because of the very large capital sums that would have been needed to reconstruct bridges, enlarge tunnels and widen the rights of way. In three cases the double-track formation would not even accommodate any width of two-way road. Only if the Department of

Transport was prepared to accept what would be "sub-standard" roads would the schemes be acceptable and, more importantly, if the Secretary of State was prepared to give consent to closure under the 1962 Transport Act procedure."

Even then road viability was only helped by assuming that the Public Service Obligation Grant would be retained (even if the rail passenger services were withdrawn), and in the event only one route passed the test and presented a prima facie case for further study. However, the resulting road (i.e. from Marylebone to Northolt) would be only 6.7 metres wide as against a standard of 7.3 metres (with one narrower section only 5.9 metres wide), and would have to be restricted to cars only feeding into the already congested highway network north of Baker Street – the only other alternative being for a limited "busway" for single deckers only with some sections limited to single-direction operation. The capital cost of this option was put at £16 million excluding the cost of a bus terminal at Marylebone, or any land.

The Board summed up the position by saying that it "considered the study to have been worthwhile because it throws an objective, independent light on to a controversy a particularly British disease" which has been raging for 25 years. We shall therefore now turn to the earlier report which was issued by the National Bus Company in January 1984 regarding the specific proposals for the Great Central Busway and to which the B.R. report is in effect a reply.

This report, *New uses for Redundant Railways. Study No.2. Joint Centre for Land Developments, University of Reading 1984,* concluded that conversion of 16.7km. (10.5 miles) of B.R. route, from Marylebone Station to Northolt Junction, to a 2-lane busway is feasible in technical terms, but that a 1km. length of new road would have to be built across open land to connect up with the existing road network. It argues that the entire route could be made suitable for 2-way operation of the tallest coaches now in service i.e. Metroliner, but concedes that speed would have to be reduced in the 2 main tunnels under St. John's Wood (to 34 m.p.h.) and that there would have to be a length of single-line operation through a "pinch-point" at West Hampstead.

(Continued on back page, col.1).

LET ROAD AND RAIL COMPETE ON EQUAL TERMS

That was the theme of the address delivered by RDS Chairman, Dr. Michael Caton, to the Society's Annual General Meeting held in ELY (Cambs) on 28th April, the text of which is reproduced below.

"Happily the turbulence sparked off by the train drivers' strike (in 1982) and the Serpell Report (in 1983) has now subsided and British Rail seems set on a steady course once again. Investment has been increased and a number of schemes, including electrification, building of new rolling stock and track improvements are now in hand. The Government has declared that there is no policy of major closures and, although this is hardly consistent with recent proposals to cut out the main lines from Settle to Carlisle and Goole to Hull, I do believe the next few years will see the BR network maintained at about its present size. The current drive for greater efficiency will also lead to a more cost-effective railway requiring less support from the taxpayer.

All this is commendable and appears to make good economic sense, but is it really the best policy for rail in Britain? What consideration is being given to the role of rail in the wider context of overall transport policy and the economic needs of the nation? It is a salutary fact that the recent reduction in Government support for BR was preceded by the issue of a White Paper announcing a £7,000 million road programme designed to meet the country's needs beyond the end of the century. As is always the case with road projects, this is justified on social need without a hint of improved efficiency within the road transport industry.

Indeed, some taxation policies actually encourage waste on the roads. Company cars, for instance, often conveying only the driver and thus hardly efficient users of fuel, cost the community at least £1,000 million per annum; more than the total support for BR. Yet this massive subsidy, which benefits mainly the better off, receives not a murmur of disapproval from those politicians who seem to resent handing out public money to BR! Also what justification is there, social or economic, for charging inter-city coach operators a licence fee which is only a fraction of that for a lorry or similar weight and less even than for a private car? In granting coaches the right to compete with rail the 1980 Transport Act did nothing to ensure that such competition is on equal terms.

The Minister of Transport, Mr. Nicholas Ridley, has recently been quoted as comparing transport operators with sweet or shoe shop owners who go bust if their businesses fail and no one suggests should be protected from competition. As it happens, however, shops compete on equal terms. This could be nearer the case in the transport arena if the Government decided to change the rules of competition to ensure fair play on all sides.

The right strategic decisions for transport will only be reached when road and rail are considered together with due regard for the technical merits each has to offer. When planning the road programme, for example, has due allowance been made for the fact that declining North Sea oil reserves may well precipitate a substantial rise in vehicle operating costs by the end of the century? Should not, therefore, some of the public money proposed for road building be diverted to investing in electric trains which can be powered from non-oil based energy sources?

The M25 around London and other orbital roads are fine for those who wish to drive around our big cities but available land space will never allow road vehicles to penetrate into city centres in unlimited numbers. Railways provide a centre to centre service but are often inconveniently sited to serve new housing areas on the city outskirts. Now is the time to build a series of "parkway" stations at the points where the main lines and orbital roads intersect to encourage motorists to drive to a rail-head and continue their journey by train. These stations may not always be justified in strict commercial terms but their contribution to the overall transport infrastructure would be substantial and they would permit numerous journeys to be completed in times unattainable by either rail or road alone.

Consideration must also be given to the impact of the Channel Tunnel which will effectively connect BR with the rail systems of mainland Europe. The new rail traffic generated from this source will permeate the entire BR network and must call into question the wisdom of the present programme of reducing route capacity by track singling, in the interest of short term economies. I believe then, that BR is generally on the right tracks but that National transport policy is in some respects confused and lacking in vision and imagination. Rail is worthy of more than this!"

MPLC

Severn Bridge — Press Cuttings wanted.

The Rail and Road Sub-Committee is considering the publication of a leaflet comparing expenditure on rail and road bridges and would be pleased to receive press cuttings concerning the Severn Bridge or any similar structure currently demanding heavy expenditure.

Material to: A. Oldfield, 14 Long Lane, Worrall, Sheffield S30 3AF.

Sixth National Conference of Rail Users' Groups, University College, London — 24th March 1984.

Each Rail Users' Groups Conference so far organised by RDS has seen increased attendance, reflecting the growth in the number of such groups. This year's conference was attended by over 90 representatives who heard David Mitchell, M.P. Under Secretary of State for Railways speak on "The Railways — Post Election, Post Serpell"

Dr. Caton, chairing the morning session, reminded the conference of achievements such as the 30% increase in traffic on the Oxford-Worcester line — due entirely to promotion by the local group and in spite of no service improvements having been made by BR. He told the Minister that what users most wanted was stability and investment and reminded press representatives present that railways are and can be an instrument of growth. Press reports tended to concentrate on the negative aspects of railway — the demise of the APT was widely reported yet the introduction of MkIII sleeper cars had received hardly a mention.

The Minister opened his speech by outlining developments in rail financing since the formation of BRB. It had been assumed that BR would be financially viable after Beeching but by 1982 revenue contribution had fallen to 50% and BRB had pressed for a review of Government financing — hence the Serpell Report. Serpell style cuts had now been rejected by the Minister as they would have a damaging effect on rural communities and lose feeder traffic to main lines. In his view conversion would be an environmental disaster; massive amounts of freight would be unleashed on to the roads while express coaches running on converted rail tracks would soon find their way on to the rest of the road network. Massive investment in rail on the other hand would not only entail a loss of funding to other public services but would also saddle BRB with the burden of servicing it.

The remaining option, to maintain the present network with more investment, was present policy which had been arrived at not only by a process of elimination but from the standpoint of conviction. Both the introduction of Sector Management and the Corporate Plan had been good moves likely to increase competitiveness. The Board would now be set clear objectives and left to achieve them without political interference.

It was not the Government's intention to embark on major closures but neither did they intend to put the railways "in aspic." From time to time the opportunity costs of lines would be appraised and singling, radio control, lightweight stock and even substitute buses under BR control considered. The Corporate Plan had envisaged a PSO Grant reduction to £635m by 1988 but the Government wished to bring this goal forward to 1986.

Since 1979, however, the railways had invested £200m; they had recently been

given the "go-ahead" for five major investment programmes totalling £120m while the external financing limit for 1984/5 anticipated a 40% increase in investment by 1986. The Government was ready to support any investment programme which stood by its merits, for example, the replacement programme for 100 DMUs had been approved in 3 weeks.

Mr. Mitchell also mentioned some positive R & D achievements of which he considered Derby should be proud: solid-state interlocking, the lightweight railbus and a stone-blower for track maintenance. The Government considered that Sec.8 Grants gave a good environmental return on investment; much traffic was carried on unsuitable roads to the detriment of villages. £100m had been provided under Sec. 8 since its introduction, resulting in 130 new or refurbished terminals and 1000 new wagons. The Department had just approved Grants totalling £3m (see Midland Notes ED), which together would allow 100,000 long-distance lorry movements a year.

Asked whether he thought that road and rail infrastructure costs should be financed on the same basis, as suggested by the EEC, he stated that the Council of Ministers had not in fact concluded its discussions on this matter. In the Government's view there was a strong case for increasing the contribution of the motor vehicle, although the continental pro-rail lobby were divided as to whether to subsidise rail or increase road taxes. He put the revenue from road and fuel tax at £9500m with road spending at £3000m p.a. (A gross underestimation — See RDN No. 19 ED).

A three-pronged question on closures asked if it were not a breach of the Conservative Election Manifesto that there were several closure proposals at present was it fair that at closure enquiries BR were allowed to put a wide variety of reasons for closure even though objectors could only cite personal hardship; and was any legislation contemplated to enable formal objection to closure of freight-only lines?

The Minister's reply to the first part is a must for inclusion in the political cynic's scrapbook — "our election manifesto did not state that there would be no route closures; merely that there was no programme of major route closures, that is not to say that lines will not close from time to time." Evidence of objectors to the TUCC(s) was not the sole factor taken into account in his decision and objections on other matters could be addressed to him. The freight sector of BR was run commercially and a decision to withdraw a service was their sole responsibility.

Questioned on the threatened Goole-Gilberdyke closure, which would mean the end of an economically viable line due to no fault of BR, he declined to comment (continued in next column)

JOHN BETJEMAN — A LOYAL AND KEEN VICE-PRESIDENT

All members will have been saddened by the death of Sir John Betjeman CBE, DL, a lifelong friend of railways (including trams) and a loyal supporter of the RDS.

He addressed what was almost the first public meeting of the Railway Development Association, as it then was, in Conway Hall. He spoke about railway architecture and attracted an audience of about 60 — quite a lot in the mid-Fifties. To attend the meeting he had put off a trip with his children to the Isle of Man, and arrived without having had time for a meal, eating a sausage roll.

Although more of an Englander than a European, he was an enthusiastic advocate of the Channel Tunnel. When a start was actually made on building the last one (the pilot tunnel) I asked him to sign a letter to the press (in November 1973) saying "Build it fast and save oil, save petrol," as there was a fuel crisis at the time.

"Good," he said, "but you ought to sign it not I!" but added "Yours in entire agreement, John Betjeman."

JE



On 24th June 1983 Sir John is seen naming loco No. 86229 at St. Pancras Station. With him are B.R. Chairman, Sir Peter Parker and L.M. Regional Manager, Jim O'Brien. Photo by courtesy of British Rail and Ian Allan Picture Library.

as this matter was now before him. He felt that the courts should be able to provide sufficient compensation for damage of the kind caused to Goole Swing Bridge.

Asked if it was equitable that cost benefit analysis should be applied to road but not rail funding he replied that investment in the commercial railway was expected to yield a 5% return, whereas that in the social railway was accepted when it produced savings. There was, sadly, no mention of extending cost benefit rather than cost effectiveness analysis to the railways.

Turning to electrification, Mr. Mitchell was asked to comment on the Department's policy of appraising each BR proposal in isolation whereas the 1981 report on electrification has stressed that *ad hoc* approval would be less satisfactory than a large scale plan. He replied that he wanted to be sure that electrification of any stretch of line would not incur higher operating cost and cited Tonbridge-Hastings and Royston-Cambridge as two cases where the economics of conversion had been "close", the deciding factor for the

former being the better acceleration of electric trains which would eliminate hold-ups caused by mixed traction in the London area.

On the subject of the East Coast Main Line he replied that a decision on electrification would be given once BR had produced their Inter-City strategy. Before approval it was important to know whether BR intended to run existing MkIII HST stock behind electric traction on the ECML or to cascade it to other lines. He declined to comment on track singling which he considered a matter for management. When a delegate mentioned an arithmetic error in Option A of the Serpell Report the Minister said that his Department would be "quietly forgetting Serpell."

After lunch delegates split into two groups; one to hear a lecture entitled "Problems and issues facing Provincial Services" by Dr. Lewis Lesley, Senior Lecturer in Transport Planning at Liverpool Polytechnic; and the other a talk on the "Future of Public Transport in Urban Areas" by Cllr. Sylvia Renilson, Vice-Chair of Transport, Merseyside Met. C.C.

BOOKSHELF

"Bring Back the Trains"

Following the successful reprint of the first edition of this RDS publication, a revised and enlarged second edition is now available. The last chapter, "The way forward", has been completely re-written to include observations on Serpell, TEST, the RDS petition, rail investment, politicians and the unions, progress made with re-openings since the first edition and the Speller amendment to the 1962 Transport Act. A new feature is an appendix giving a list of over 400 stations where RDS considers that the case for opening or re-opening is worth investigation.

The book is indispensable for those wishing to argue the case for re-openings and it is to be hoped that not only will members of RDS and users' groups buy personal copies but will also endeavour to sell as many copies as possible on behalf of RDS.

Copies are available from: F.J. Hastlow, RDS Sales Officer, 21 Norfolk Road, Sutton Coldfield B75 6SQ at £1.80 post paid.

Apart from stressing the lack of any positive steps to develop the potential of rural rail services (in line with similar residential development) Dr. Lesley concentrated on ways of (a) reducing their costs and (b) increasing revenue, and reminded delegates that whilst most rural lines have never been commercially viable they do, nevertheless, provide significant contributory revenue to Inter-City as feeders to the main lines. He described studies carried out by the Poly on individual lines (such as Wrexham-Bidston) and track rationalisation; simplified (i.e. radio) signalling; cheaper replacement rolling stock (i.e. railbuses) and new methods of operation to achieve the first objective — rejecting replacement bus services as "no solution!" The prime means of achieving (b) was seen in improved timetabling; provision of faster, more reliable and comfortable stock and its better utilisation, but more importantly by the opening up of new stations and new services to serve new markets.

Cllr. Renilson in her talk, stressed the achievements of the Metropolitan Counties since their inception and Merseyside was cited as a prime example of the co-ordination of services through P.T.E.s. Without an integrated transport system there would be a collapse of life as a whole because people would be unable to make trips for work; shopping; hospital and business. She listed the benefits of railways in the local transport system and said the Metro-Counties should aim for improvements in four areas: (a) freight; (b) passenger; (c) integration and (d) fares structures. In calling for an in-depth study of the role of Metropolitan authorities she utterly rejected the Government's proposals as outlined in its White Paper "Streamlining the Cities" saying that it would throw away all that they had achieved.

(continued on page 4, col.3).

MEMBERS' PLATFORM

"Bowling Down to the Road Lobby"

Sir,

Earlier last decade there were two public enquiries into the proposed M54 Motorway. These proposals were rejected!

The M54 relieves traffic basically from the A5 through Shropshire, a section of road which is very rarely busy — certainly inadequately busy to even contemplate the construction of an expensive motorway. For the benefit of the traffic on the A5 between Telford and Wolverhampton a few million pounds only could have been spent on road improvements which would surely suffice. Incidentally the M54 has cost approximately £65m.

It has been constructed over much arable farmland which could have been used for growing food. Such potentially useful land has therefore been replaced by petrol fumes. The routing of the Motorway also leaves much to be desired as it meets the M6 just south of the Hilton Park Service Area — at one of the busiest sections of motorway in the country. Also if the M54 generates its "own traffic" by the intervention of firms moving to Telford, then the problem of congestion on the M6 will be exacerbated. *The M54 will therefore CAUSE traffic problems rather than SOLVING THEM!*

The M54 runs south from Telford (rather than north), and if firms do move there they will also probably wish to transport their produce to the North as well as the South — thus adding enormously to the traffic on roads such as the A442, A41 and A49 etc.,. There is a perfectly good rail link from Telford to Wolverhampton which could be improved enormously by investing a mere fraction of the £65m. on a new rail passenger station and, more importantly, a new freightliner terminal with perhaps a few additional sidings for particular firms. Bearing in mind that far more Ton/Passenger miles can be made per unit of fuel by rail than by road it would be more *ecologically* sound to encourage transport by rail rather than road.

The M54 is yet another example of where *ecological* and therefore common sense policies have had to go by the board in the interests of building motorways for the sake of motorways — the growth of which has now reached malignant proportions. In 1979 the Conservatives, undertook not to spend money on any new motorways other than the M25 — the London Orbital — Promises . . . Promises!

R. H. B. Griffiths
Stoke-on-Trent

Sir,
"Is a new Logo really necessary?"

Forgive me for criticising the higher powers of the RDS, but which bright spark decided that we needed a new Logo? It seems change for the sake of change to me.

The existing one is distinctive and recognisable; even people who have never seen it before have told me they can decipher its meaning. It makes a good letter

heading and is also a useful doodle to draw on lecture notes and lecture theatre desks.

The new one on the other hand, simply using the letters R.D.S. is not suitable for any of these purposes. What will happen to RDS ties must also be in question? The old Logo, with an added message, could have been used for T-shirts, sweat-shirts, or without any message on sweaters.

If Geoffrey Roper's motion to change the Society's name had succeeded it would have made the new Logo instantly redundant. Surely this can not have been its only "Plus point".

Eddie Graves
Histon, Cambridge

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The Editor will consider for publication letters and articles on matters of general interest (such as the above). 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.

HAVE B.R. GOT IT WRONG FOR 20 YEARS ???

British Rail have withdrawn their Sec. 56 notices for the closure of both the Settle — Carlisle and Goole — Gilberdyke lines and are starting the closure process all over again.

This has been brought about by B.R.'s refusal to accept users of the "Dales Rail" services over the Settle — Carlisle line as being entitled to object to the closure proposals. However Sec. 58 of the 1962 Transport Act states that "Any user of any service affected by the closure of a line can object" thus not only are users of the Dalesrail services eligible to object but also travellers on the West Coast main line who are diverted over the Settle — Carlisle line because the line over Shap is closed at a weekend for maintenance.

It is largely due to detailed study of the Act by the Yorkshire TUCC that this has come to light, having been overlooked for the past 20 years or so. BR having reluctantly accepted this state of affairs also decided that it is applicable to the services running south of Goole to London & Manchester. The Yorkshire TUCC maintain that the Huddersfield to Denby Dale and the Wath Road junction to Goose Hill junction closure notices are also affected and are in correspondence with B.R. about this.

DJB

In view of similar doubts, drawn to our attention by the G.L.C., the London & Home Counties Branch are also pursuing with the TUCC for London the validity of the closure notices posted for the Stratford — Tottenham Hale service — see also REGIONAL NOTES.

JWB

(Rail Conference —)

Both speakers evoked lively discussion and questioning too detailed to recount here and the Conference was summed up by its Secretary, Trevor Garrod, who said that its very size proved that the pro-rail lobby was a growth industry and it was the task of RDS to make the railways a similar case. Politicians must be shown that rail cuts were politically unacceptable and that the railways should be developed — not destroyed — quoting the recent Transport 2000 "TEST Report" and the Society's own booklet "Bring Back the Trains". Most important of all rail groups should be "positive" in their approaches to B.R. management rather than just complaining of what was wrong with local services.

(Copies of the full Conference Report are available at 60p (incl. postage) from A. Harwood, 139 Harrowdene Gardens, Teddington, Middx. — make cheques payable to RDS).

..... STOP PRESS

GREEN LIGHT FOR SNOW HILL TUNNEL

The Government has finally approved the Birmingham, Snow Hill, rail link! The announcement by Mrs. Lynda Chalker was given on Thursday 12th April and will enable work on the £7.6m. scheme to start in October 1984. In addition to a new 4 platform station on the site of the former GWR Snow Hill station, tracks will be laid through the 596 yd. tunnel under the city centre linking-up with the existing lines at a point mid-way between Bordesley and Moor Street stations. The present Moor Street terminus is expected to become redundant when a 2-platform replacement is built alongside at the tunnel mouth.

The RDS Midlands Branch fought the original closure of the route in 1968 and has campaigned vigorously ever since for its re-opening. A further second stage development will still be required to extend the Snow Hill lines through Hockley and Handsworth to link up at Galton Junc. with the Kidderminster line and thus provide another cross-city suburban rail service. A branch to West Bromwich is also advocated by the RDS.

NORTH LONDON LINE — CITY LINK

Members are advised that formal notice has been posted by the B.R.B. under Sec. 56 (7) of the Transport Act 1962 for the withdrawal of rail passenger services between Broad Street and Dalston West Junction; the operative date to be 6th July 1986 — or the completion of the Graham Road curve — whichever is the later. It is, however, proposed that services from Richmond (not Watford) will be diverted to North Woolwich on completion of the electrification thereto (from Dalston) — due May 1985 — with connecting services to Liverpool Street via Stratford.

Objections to T.U.C.C. for London, 3/4 Gt. Marlborough Street, London W1V 2EA by 29th June 1984.

LONDON & HOME COUNTIES

Events in this area have moved fairly rapidly since our last report both on the domestic and the broader rail front. Two meetings organised by the Branch proved very successful, if not in the numbers attending then certainly in their content.

Firstly on 9th February, 20 or so members from south of the Thames attended an illustrated lecture in Croydon given by Richard W. Malins, from S.R. Chief Passenger Manager's Office at Waterloo, entitled "Caring for the Customer — some lessons from Europe"; whilst on 4th April about the same number from north of the river heard a stimulating talk at Friends' House, Euston, given by Len Dumelow, Secretary of the C.T.C.C. on the subject of "T.U.C.C.s — the Consumer Watchdog".

Both speakers evoked varied and pertinent questions and it is only a pity that more members were not able to hear what they had to say. The same must also regrettably, be said for support for the joint RDS/ADRPA Railtour from Marylebone to Milton Keynes on 9th June and, as seems likely from reports elsewhere in this issue, B.R. will definitely be putting forward proposals for the closure of Marylebone, it is important that we should give every support to the two main groups who will be fighting to retain a reasonable rail service (certainly if the aspirations of the National Bus Company are allowed to prevail) namely the Aylesbury & District Rail Passengers' and Marylebone Travellers' Associations who represent regular users of the Amersham — Aylesbury and High Wycombe services respectively.

Rail closures (as predicted in our last issue) look set to be the main target of our attention in the coming months and the Branch has now lodged formal objection to the withdrawal of rail passenger services between Stratford and Tottenham Hale. It is little wonder that few people use the line when one comes to check the times the few trains run—that is when they have not been cancelled—and RDS is pursuing with the BBC the apparent bias in a recent TV item on the subject. Furthermore BR could not have chosen a worse moment to put forward their closure proposals with the recent opening of a massive Ice Rink near the only station which would be closed (i.e. Lea Bridge). Having apparently made a slight "faux pas" in publication of the closure notices — which may have to be re-issued — perhaps it is not too late for B.R. to think again on this one.

The rail scene in London has, nevertheless, been dominated by the Government's proposals for London Regional Transport, the Bill for which received its Third Reading in the Commons on 9th April (and is reported in more detail "IN PARLIAMENT") and in anticipation of its provisions Southern Region has already turned down a six figure grant offer from the

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G.L.C. to double the frequency of one of its rail services — similar to that for the "Jazz Trains" between Liverpool Street and Enfield. The capacity of L.T. to provide a satisfactory alternative service for the users of Marylebone (at least for the Amersham — Aylesbury section) if B.R. carries out its stated intentions (announced on 15th March) for Marylebone—Northolt Junc., is a matter for serious doubt, even if the new regime under a Whitehall dominated PTA permitted it to do so. The only recent good news has been B.R.'s announcement of its intention to electrify the Wickford—Southminster line and to use more effectively the West London Line (See also Midlands Notes).

Discussions are, however, continuing with the G.L.C. and B.R. on the former's proposals to develop "Cross-London Links" (both via the West London Line and the Snow Hill Tunnel: Farringdon — Blackfriars) and our meeting with Gordon Pettitt, Deputy Director, London & South East, on 2nd February was frank and to the point and will, hopefully, lead to a closer working relationship with our Sector Management. On a more personal note the Branch was well represented on 18th April when the B.R. Area Manager (Ashford) unveiled a commemorative seat on Bearsted station (Kent) in memory of the endeavours of our late President, Rowland Victor Banks.

JWB

WEST MIDLANDS

Branch members attending the Rail Users' Conference (on 24th March) were particularly pleased to hear David Mitchell's announcement of the four Sec. 8 Grants totalling £3m. approved for rail freight facilities in the area. Round Oak Steel Terminal gets £1.59m.; Bardon Hill Quarry, Leics. £1.53m.; National Smokeless Fuels (nr. Coventry) receives £173,000 and English China Clays at Leicester receives £126,000. Meanwhile at Cradley Heath (which last year acquired a £250,000 car park and bus station) a new rail platform, ticket office, waiting room and other facilities costing a further £335,000 have been provided. Traffic on this line (to Stourbridge and Kidderminster) has recently increased by 23% and the SVR expect to open their new Kidderminster extension by July. The former Oldbury station has also been transformed at a cost of £1.3m. into the Sandwell and Dudley station to offer Inter-City services and new car-parking. It was due to come into use in May at the same time as the extension of the intensive Cross-city train service beyond Four Oaks to Blake Street on the Lichfield line. Also from May 14th better services were due to run between Birmingham and Cambridge, including a new Wolverhampton — Harwich service. Six trains a day will also be using the West London Line to reach Gatwick, including the 13.23 Hull—Brighton. From Paddington there will also be the 06.50 to Hull;

and the 10.25 HST to Malvern via Evesham. Paddington is also the destination of a direct Saturday DMU from Stratford-upon-Avon, via Bicester.

Local passenger numbers have increased by some 10% over the last 12 months despite the recession. Total arrivals and departures each weekday counted at New Street, Moor St. and Five Ways were 52,679 in November 1982 and 57,884 in November 1983. These exclude all other intermediate passengers and those using inter-city trains. Total patronage on Saturdays is higher than on weekdays. The Longbridge line carried its highest total of 15,110 passengers per day. Derby station is to be reconstructed at a cost of £3m.; and Crewe is to have a £14m. modernisation. The D.Tp. also have before them proposals by Telford Development Corporation; Salop C.C. and British Rail for the long-awaited £2m. Central Station.

On the more domestic scene our Charter train to York, on 14th April from Walsall, Rugeley and Hednesford was hauled by the requested Class 40 loco and without advertising all tickets were sold out within 6 weeks! On 9th May a public meeting is also due to be held in Cannock to promote the much sought after re-opening of the line and publication of the second edition of "Bring Back the Trains." Over 5,000 signatures were recently collected and handed in to Staffordshire County Council from local residents appealing for the new train service. Party visits have also been arranged; to Merseyside on 12th May and to the B.R. exhibition for the Sandwell & Dudley station on 17th May. Sponsorships are also being gathered to support Richard Hulse's cycle ride (of over 100 miles) to Metheringham in Lincs. on 19th May. In late May it is also planned to hold a "Rail Day" in Redditch and more Charter excursions are planned for the Summer.

Meanwhile the picturesque Churnet Valley (freight-only) line has been approved for passenger operation. On Easter Sunday & Monday plus all Sundays in June, July, August and September the North Staffordshire Rly. Co., (1978) will be offering a £1.95 ticket at their Cheddleton Staffs. headquarters for a short steam hauled ride at the station plus a 12 mile scenic diesel run from Cheddleton to Oakmoor, via Corral and Froghall.

AB

EAST ANGLIA

On April 7th our 56-page rail-based guide book to the region entitled "EAST ANGLIA BY RAIL" was launched at a reception given by the Branch at Needham Market, Suffolk. Those present included most of its authors, plus guests from B.R.; local councils and voluntary bodies such as the Womens' Institutes; Cyclists Touring Club and enthusiast groups. Publication of this book (in 3,000 copies) was the culmination of 9 months' work by the Branch. Copies can be obtained at £1.50

from Mr. P.R. Lawrence, 75 Maripit Lane, Norwich NR5 8XN.

On the wider rail front work has started on a halt at Roughton Road, on the southern outskirts of Cromer, as part of a job-creation scheme. This halt should be open by October and was first suggested by RDS (or to be more precise the former RIS) in 1975. The "Anglia Ranger" ticket has been re-launched by BR—and, after several years of pressure by RDS and local users' groups, has at last been extended to include the Sudbury Branch. Harwich, Hitchin and Spalding are also welcome new additions to the ticket—but as a consequence the price for a 1-day Ranger has been increased by 50%—to £7.50. This makes it unattractive for return trips of under 100 miles (e.g. Ipswich—Lowestoft) and we have been pressing B.R. to introduce some Day Returns on the "Paytrain" lines to make up for this.

Among special trains run through the Branch area or by local Groups were a further successful RDS charter from North Herts, on April 7th, carrying over 300 passengers over the Settle—Carlisle which unfortunately reduced the local cattle population by one head. Two specials run by affiliated groups included those by the North East Norfolk Travellers Assn. to the same destination, on 21st April and 5th May. Whether similar bovine slaughter also ensued is not reported but it is hoped that the locals are not becoming careless in anticipation of the line's imminent demise. Two further RDS specials are due to run to York and Scarborough; from Colchester on 24th June and from Wisbech on 1st July.

YORKSHIRE

At the Branch Meeting held in Leeds on 17th March, it was agreed to make strong representations to the candidates in the forthcoming Euro-Elections about the need to secure good rail links in the port of Hull and to press BR to apply for EEC funds towards the repair of the strategic bridge carrying the Doncaster—Hull line over the River Ouse at Goole. Over 3,000 objections to the closure proposals for the Goole—Gilberdyke line (affected by the above bridge) had been registered with the T.U.C.C. in York by the time the period for objections closed. This substantial figure is undoubtedly due to the magnificent work of the Goole Rail Action Committee who systematically canvassed the streets in Goole and the surrounding areas. 80% of the people questioned said they would not use the replacement bus services if the line were closed. The Action Committee had certainly achieved a lot in the 20 weeks of its existence, showing clearly the strength of local feeling on this issue.

In order to divert Doncaster—Hull trains via Selby it is understood that BR is arranging to buy an "apron of coal" underneath the line—at a cost of £60 million; whereas it would only cost £2 million to repair Goole Bridge! Another major issue concerning the Branch is the future

of services in the Halifax area, particularly in view of the likely closure proposals for the Dryclough Junc.—Greetland Junc. and Bradley Wood Junc.—Bradley Junc. lines—on which the only regular passenger service is the summer-only Bradford—Weymouth train.

The Branch has also issued a paper setting out the case for a new service from Sheffield to Bradford via Huddersfield and Halifax, using these routes. Such a service could also connect at Halifax with the planned Leeds—Preston service reported elsewhere in this issue.

However, there now seems to be a good chance that a central station will be built in Rotherham. A recent meeting between Rotherham Borough Council and S.Yorks. P.T.E. agreed on the need for the scheme. Plans are now being drawn up for the design of the station and the transfer of land. Turning to one of our old chestnuts, the Ministry of Transport has refused permission for the Stocksbridge by-pass, which will link the Woodhead road with the M1, to cut the Woodhead rail line in two between Sheffield and Penistone, but insists that the road must cross the line on a bridge. Sheffield City Council have been in the forefront of the fight to preserve the Woodhead line.

Finally a public meeting was due to be held in Bridlington on 19th April to launch a Rail Users' Group for the Hull—Scarborough line. Questionnaires sent out over the past few months have shown that there is considerable interest in obtaining an improved rail service.

DJB/TJG

SEVERN SIDE

Since the publication of a statement that neither BR nor Gloucs. C. C. could fund a simple replacement halt at Ashchurch, work has been carried out at Cheltenham to move the crossover to the carriage sidings as part of track alterations to slightly increase the speed of non-stopping trains. The money for this could perhaps have been better spent on the re-erection of many spare concrete platforms at preferred locations at Charfield, Stonehouse Oldends Lane, Toadsmoor Valley (Brimscombe), Cashes Green, Churchdown, Arle Court (Hatherley), Westbury on Severn, Prestbury Park, Cheltenham Stadium or even Cheltenham Central (St.James). A very disturbing letter from the BRB Chairman, passed to us by the local MP and Secretary of State for Transport, Nicholas Ridley, discloses the Boards' thoughts that existing trains between Cheltenham and Worcester may be withdrawn because of low patronage instead of the expected extra services by extension of Swindon to Cheltenham DMUs to Worcester in order to form attractive services to Ashchurch.

Stonehouse Parish Council reported on 13th April that it would recommend the re-opening of the Bristol Road station at Stonehouse to passengers, which is now a Coal Concentration Depot. The Branch Secretary has been actively pressing BR for this re-opening since July 1970 when County Plans were published in which the

station could be in the middle of the expanding Eastington/Stonehouse area. He has also suggested an alternative location only a train-length away at Oldends Crossing where a small field could become a car park and is equally convenient to the industrial estate and residential area developed since closure of the station to passengers. The forthcoming omission of calls at Stonehouse Burdett Road by a Paddington to Cheltenham HST (and return)—replacing existing DMUs—has aroused public objection. Local railway staff had requested calls at Stonehouse to be maintained for business visitors as well as local residents.

Strong public support has developed recently in the Swindon district towards reopening of Halts at Purton and Wootton Bassett, which our Secretary has been pursuing since 1970 and 1972 respectively, being an area where he has made extensive distribution of RDS literature. The Branch discussed these and other projects at their A.G.M. in Bristol on 14th April, being strongly in favour of Weymouth to Wootton Bassett DMUs being extended to Swindon. Calling at the remaining platform at Melksham (another re-opening) as well as at Chippenham and Wootton Bassett.

ERB

NORTH WEST

On the Oxenholme—Windermere line a successful public meeting was held in Kendal on 29th February, organised jointly by RDS and Transport 2000. The meeting was addressed by Area Manager, Stuart Palmer, who said that British Rail were examining the possibility of electrifying the branch as one way of replacing the ageing DMUs. On a less optimistic note he said the Board had not drawn up any definite plans for a new passenger station at Windermere—the present very basic facilities being a source of widespread local controversy (as Mr. Palmer discovered) ever since BR Property Board sold off the original station to a local supermarket chain. (Unlike Bath Green Park—it was presumably still in use!! ED.) A local users' group was formed for the line calling itself the LAKES LINE ACTION GROUP (LLAG). Membership Fee is £1.00 and should be sent to 15 Stanley Avenue, Penwortham, PR1 9RB.

Turning to the Fleetwood Branch, the local port handles over 2 million tonnes of freight a year which involves over 500—600 heavy lorry movements a day. None of this very substantial traffic is, however, handled by rail despite the proximity to the port of the Fleetwood railway line (which is a branch off the main Preston—Blackpool North line—from Poulton le Fylde). To redress this imbalance a new group has been formed calling itself the FLEETWOOD AND THORNTON RAIL ACTION '84. Mr.G.Boyle, (North West Branch Freight Officer and member of the National Freight Sub-Committee) was at its inaugural meeting and elected to its committee.

The Todmorden Rail Action Group is to run a railtour on Saturday 18th August

from Rose Grove & Todmorden to traverse the Settle & Carlisle line.

The Research project on the Ormskirk to Preston line will be well under way by the time members read these Notes. This work is being carried out under the leadership of Dr. Lewis Lesley who addressed one of the sessions at the Rail Users' Conference. O.P.T.A.—the local rail users' group recently met Mr. B. Wilson, Area Manager B.R. Merseyrail and among the subjects discussed was the possibility of the Association adopting Croston station.

With the looming Government threat to the future of the Metro-County Councils the North West Branch arranged a meeting to discuss the vacuum which would occur if this aim were achieved. Addressing the meeting was County Councillor Alf Rose, Chairman of the Merseyside Passenger Transport Committee. He said that abolition of the Metropolitan County Councils, and the transference of public transport to a joint board made up of district council representatives, would wipe out all the gains made in public transport since their creation. He felt that country-wide rail schemes would suffer and that public transport "No-Go" areas would develop. As a result of the meeting N.W.Branch submitted a 3-page Memorandum to the Department of the Environment setting out its views on the White Paper "Streamlining the Cities", the main conclusion being that the new arrangements would not be as efficient or as cost-effective as at present.

Reverting to Merseyside regarding the item in the NOVEMBER 83 issue of R.D.N. (at page 8, col.2) concerning the issue of Boarding Tickets on Merseyrail, the M.P.T.E. have advised that those passengers without either a valid ticket or a boarding ticket and who claim to have started their journey from a station which has a boarding ticket machine, are charged a standard fare of £1.50 for their journey. This applies whether the station is manned or un-manned at the time. Meanwhile Merseyside C.C. have been giving active consideration to the possibilities of purchasing outright, the entire Merseyrail network from British Rail. This idea has arisen, as a consequence of an exceptional number of breakdowns and points/signal failures during the last 12 months. However, negotiations with B.R. are only at an initial stage and the entire plan could of course come to nothing if the Government's plan to abolish the Metropolitan County Councils succeeds.

Nevertheless five Merseyside stations are to receive facelifts costing a total of £100,000. They are Broad Green, Roby, Huyton, Prescot and St. Helens Shaw Street. Merseyside County Council have

SUBSCRIPTIONS—If you have recently renewed your subscription to RDS a new MEMBERSHIP CARD IS ENCLOSED. If, however, your subscription falls due in the next few months A RENEWAL FORM IS ENCLOSED. A donation over and above your subscription will always be welcome.

promised £60,000 towards the project. After numerous complaints from passengers about overcrowding and cancellations on Merseyrail electric services, the MPTE have promised that the problems should be alleviated by 1985, when all class 508 EMUs are transferred from the Southern Region. The main problems have occurred on the Wirral Line, where the ageing class 503 units (some dating from 1938) have been prone to breakdowns. By Oct. 1985, all electric services will operate on a 15 minute frequency throughout the day, except evenings and Sundays when the frequency will be 30 minutes. It is also hoped to increase the peak-hour frequency of the Liverpool—Southport services to one train every 7½ minutes.

RW/MB

NORTH MIDLANDS

First, the good news!—A privatising was recently opened into the Kirton (Notts.) brickworks owned by Butterley Building Materials. Movement of bricks by rail is consequently expected to rise from 12.5m. (28,000 tonnes) to 16 million annually now that transshipment at Newark is no longer required. Charter trains are now operating from the Midland Railway Trust's station at Butterley. A Christmas shoppers' special ran to St. Pancras, and this was followed by a scenic tour to Settle, Carlisle and Newcastle. It is probable that BR will obtain grants from local authorities and the Football Trust to install reversible signalling and carry out improvements to Platform 6 at Nottingham Midland. This will give fans quicker access to the football grounds, and enable parcels traffic to be transferred to Midland from London Road Low Level, which will then be sold. Local authorities are also giving financial help towards other improvements at Nottingham Midland, which is used by 3 million passengers annually; also towards forecourt improvements at Newark Northgate, and raising a platform at Aslockton.

Now the not-so-good news!—The future of Nottingham to Newark services is uncertain. Notts. County Council has refused to contribute towards renewing life-expired lighting and raising platforms at Rolleston, which will therefore most probably be proposed for closure. Strong opposition to this was voiced at a public meeting held by the Lincoln—Nottingham Line Users' Association in February. Concern was also expressed over ideas to re-route the line's service via Newark Northgate and Bottesford, coupled with the closure of the level crossing with the East Coast Main Line. This would facilitate construction of the Newark northern by-pass road, but leave stations from Carlton to Newark Castle and Northgate stations, with reversal at the latter; Crewe trains on this run already have to reverse at Derby.

With the start of the new timetable in May, the "Master Cutler" from Sheffield will run via Derby, saving one trainset but depriving Alfreton & Mansfield Parkway of its premier train. Local press reports

suggest that this is merely a preliminary step to axing all Inter-City trains on the direct Nottingham to Sheffield route, leaving Alfreton with few, if any, trains. The expected storm of protest over this proposal should exceed that raised by the "Cutler" re-routing. The Derby fork of the Midland Main Line always scores over the Nottingham one because of slightly shorter mileage and higher line speeds, although Nottingham has the higher population and Derby already has Northeast-Southwest HST services.

RMG

LINCOLNSHIRE

Work started in February on a £1.7m. project to improve passenger facilities in Lincoln and to concentrate all services on the Central station. A 1½km line diverting off the Newark route is being built via part of the old avoiding line to run into Central from the west side. The scheme should be completed by May 1985. At Central station a further £175,000 is being spent on refurbishing the passenger and staff facilities.

SOUTH WALES

45 people attended a RDS Public Meeting held in Cardiff on 10th March, to discuss the future of local services in the area. Talks were given by Mike Watson, (Heart of Wales Line Travellers' Assn.) and John Davies, (BR Divisional Passenger Manager). It was agreed to set up a Federation of Users of the Valleys Lines; a steering committee was formed and most of those present joined the new group.

TJG

SCOTLAND

BR's objection to the decision of the Scottish Area Traffic Commissioners, which allows Merlin Express (Passenger Services) Ltd. to run a limited-stop coach service between Thurso, Wick and Inverness, has been over-ruled by the Secretary of State for Transport following an inquiry in Glasgow in November 1983.

BR's objections were based on the vulnerability of the rail line, which it considered could be closed if there was sufficient revenue extraction by Merlin. The commissioners thought that the forecasted £72,000 revenue loss could have only a marginal effect on BR finance, considering the £700,000 p.a. deficit which these BR services already incurred.

The Inquiry Inspector stated in one part of his report that BR "appears to seek a special status which precludes them from having to compete with other public transport". He described the proposed limited-stop services as a "non-subsidised commercial venture, albeit with fuel tax rebate and possible new bus grant". He did not find that it had been proved "beyond reasonable doubt" that the new licence was against the public interest, and reported to the Secretary of State accordingly.

(Rail/Road conversion —)

The full effectiveness of the busway would, however, depend on completion of certain road construction works now in the pipeline (itemised in the report) which are due for completion in 1988. The cost of the project is put at £10.3 million (without land and design costs); £2.85m. of which would be for conversion of the tunnels, including lighting and secondary lining. The cost of developing the terminal at Marylebone does not appear to be included. Much emphasis is placed on the fact that the disbenefits to residents along the corridor (of having coaches rather than trains) would be more than outweighed by the advantages to residents in Victoria, of the existing coach services to which could be transferred to Marylebone and that Westminster City Council is in favour of redevelopment of the site of Marylebone as a coach terminal for this reason. No mention is made of the possible effects on local residents at Marylebone or of the problems of "inter-lining" of coach passengers who may wish to change services (between Marylebone and Victoria).

Even the present scheme relies fortuitously on development by the B.R. Property Board of the road system for a new industrial estate at Neasden, without which it would have to provide its own connection to the North Circular Road (and the M1) and without which it might not be viable and one suspects that W.C.C.'s enthusiasm for the project may be engendered more by the means by which it can placate the ire of the local residents of Belgravia — by promising future relief. This, however, completely ignores the root cause of the problem which arises largely from current Government policy which is more effectively outlined by our Chairman in his report at the A.G.M. (reported elsewhere in this issue).

The main plank of the argument is that it takes about 33 minutes for coaches to get from the outskirts of London e.g. Heathrow and the M1 to Victoria whereas construction of the busway would reduce this to 15 mins. The time-saving to coach passengers is put at £2m. p.a. giving the scheme a Net Present Value of £8m. It is pointed out (in Para. 1.13) that trains have the privilege of travelling between the edge of London and their central London terminus on segregated congestion-free tracks reserved for their use, and that coaches should be given the same privilege but has it not been quietly forgotten how dearly B.R. pay for the privilege?

The proponents of the scheme appear to have little regard for the plight of the existing rail users of the route (except when it suits their arguments) but do however concede (in Para 4.18b) when rejecting one of the more extreme options (closure of the line beyond Moor Park — Aylesbury) that it would "arouse the hostility of commuters using the line; and such opposition is best avoided as far as possible." The reasons why the Secretary of State should look favourably on the Busway scheme when considering closure under the Transport Act 1962 (at para. 1.2) raises the odd smile and the graphic

description of the problems of access to the M1 in the introduction (Para.5) do not reflect well on the competence of the motorway builders and could be the scheme's entire undoing. One could point to many other anomalies but further comment seems superfluous if one has read the article by Stephen Morris in the April issue of "Buses" magazine which effectively demolishes the project and leaves it in bits all over the floor.

Whether the issue of rail/road conversion is indeed now "closed" and like BR's Jim O'Brien (Joint Managing Director — Railways) one can "put it to one side so that we can concentrate on making railways yet more productive, rather than having a continuous fight with the conversionists" will depend more on the aspirations of Sir Alfred Sherman and those of his ilk. JWB

RDS CHRISTMAS CARDS — WHAT YOU MISSED IN 83!

Last year the London & Home Counties Branch backed the production of a RDS Christmas Card but perhaps left its promotion too late in the year. You can, however, make up for this by purchasing supplies for 1984 NOW! The cards are still available at £1.50 per dozen (incl. P. & P.) and to what your appetite a reproduction of the front cover is shown below.

Depicting an East Anglian country station in winter, printed in sepia, the card was specially commissioned from a leading railway artist and RDS member. Order yours now from I.G.Crighton, 19 Oakdale Avenue, Kenton, Harrow, Middx. HA3 0UJ. (Make cheques payable to RDS (London & Home Counties). Further supplies will be printed when stocks are exhausted ONLY if demand warrants. (Actual Card size 6" x 4").



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ANTI-CLOSURE FUND — With the increasing number of closure proposals creeping up on us it is timely to remind members of the Society's Anti-Closure Fund — set up at the 1982 A.G.M. This now stands at about £200 but with the need for further grants to individual campaigns more funds are always needed and contributions should be sent to the Treasurer, M.J.Farahar, 35 Ashmere Grove, Ipswich, Suffolk IP4 2RE.

RDS Location Index—Help Wanted.

The Society's location index, which gives details and whereabouts of the many specialised books and publications held by the society, is in need of revision. A volunteer to undertake this task would be much appreciated and he or she should contact Mr. L. G. Hipperson at 16 Marsh View, Beccles, Suffolk, NR34 9RT.

IN PARLIAMENT

No. 21

JUNE 1984

Selected extracts from parliamentary questions and speeches in the period up to the Easter recess. Replies given by Transport Secretary, Nicholas Ridley, or his Under-Secretary of State, David Mitchell or Minister of State, Lynda Chalker.

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

Debates on Settle — Carlisle line and London Regional Transport Bill

These are the main items in this issue of parliamentary notes and include a long extract from material contained in an RDS leaflet on the importance of the Settle — Carlisle line as a freight artery.

Settle — Carlisle

MARCH 12* David Maclean (C. Penrith & Border), opening a debate on the Settle — Carlisle line, said he hoped they could keep all-party unanimity on the issue, even though they might disagree on other aspects of railway policy. BR, in a current publicity leaflet, described the line as "England's greatest historical scenic route," and "the most spectacular main line in England."

The Midland Railway built the line to connect its Skipton—Carnforth route with Carlisle, because originally it could not negotiate a satisfactory route with the London & North Western to use the Shap route. Agreement was however reached before construction started, but the Midland was refused parliamentary powers to abandon the scheme. Work started in 1869 and the line was opened in 1876. It was a double-track main line built to high standard, 72 miles from Settle Junction to Carlisle and the shortest route from the south-east, the east Midlands and south and west Yorkshire to Scotland.

Sir Hector Monro (C. Dumfries) intervened to say there was tremendous support for the line in Scotland. The train had frequently gone on through Dumfries, Kilmarnock and Glasgow. "People in those areas feel as much part of the campaign as supporters in Cumbria."

Steam trains welcomed in the late 1970s.

Mr. Maclean said he was delighted. In 1970 local stations had been closed, severely disadvantaging his constituents and beginning the spiral of decline. The line's real importance, however, was as a link between England and Scotland. At the beginning of 1982 it was part of the inter-city network, with three expresses each way between Nottingham, Carlisle and Glasgow. Despite poor marketing of the service by BR, it was well used. From May 17 1982 those trains were withdrawn. Mr. Peter Walton, one of his constituents, wrote in "Steam World" for October 1983 about the emergence in the late 1970s of direct links along this route to Scotland, and Mr. Maclean commented that the Nottingham — Glasgow trains were extremely well patronised. The Dales service

also came into being, initiated for day trippers, walkers, shoppers and cyclists on selected week-ends. Certain closed stations were partly refurbished. In the late 1970s the route welcomed steam trains and became the line for steam specials. Freight services made regular use of the line, which had the advantage of being able to offer paths to slow, heavy traffic without disrupting passenger services.

Mr. Maclean then read the following passage from an R.D.S. leaflet:—

"The Settle to Carlisle line has always been an important freight route. Not only were there plenty of local trains from quarries and farms; but a substantial number used the route as a fast link between the industrial centres of the Midlands, Yorkshire and Scotland. Until recently the line handled a large number of these freight trains. However, there have been some recent developments which are reducing the line's importance as a freight artery. For example: Trains that should use the Settle — Carlisle line are being rerouted on the other, less convenient lines. A classic example is the Cilltheroe to Scotland cement trains. These used to travel over the line as it was the most direct route. Now they travel south to Blackburn and use the already busy west coast main line. British Rail have turned away substantial local quarry traffic on the grounds that there are no locomotives available. This has made it necessary for lorries to use small, local, roads for which they are not suited."

"British Rail are planning to open the line for only one shift per day. This means that night freight, parcels and newspaper trains now have to use other routes."

Then (Mr. Maclean continued) BR's attitude appeared to change. In "The Times" of November 17, 1983 Alan Whitehouse wrote: "Behind the bald announcement (of BR's intention to apply for closure of the line, published that day) lies an extraordinary story of leaked documents, contradictory letters and reassurance to MPs and others, and a secret closure plan which had become partly implemented before its existence became known."

Closure notice delayed: fear of public outcry.

In "Steam World" the previous month (Mr. Maclean added), David Wilcocks had written: "BR made its decision to pursue the closure three years ago, but senior

management knew that any attempt to shut the line which was still part of the Inter City network and an important Anglo-Scottish freight link would involve a public outcry. The case would be immeasurably more powerful if it could demonstrate that the line was a loss-maker and surplus to requirements. So BR had been privately planning and executing the running down . . ."

The public enquiry would be held shortly, Mr. Maclean went on, and he was worried that the overwhelming mass of evidence in favour of the line would not be presented because the TUCC inquiry would be empowered to hear only evidence of hardship. "I ask the minister to note the tourist potential of the line, that the Steam Locomotive Owners Association is interested, that hundreds will suffer hardship and not be represented at the inquiry, because their stations were closed in 1970, that the inquiry will not consider freight potential, and also to note its diversionary route importance when the west coast main line is out of action."

It was not just a handful of enthusiasts making the fuss. He had been inundated with letters from constituents who complained that the timetabling introduced in May 1982 and 1983 had made the service unattractive. "I have also been sent pages of figures showing that passenger usage is not as low as BR claims. I hope those figures will be discussed at the public inquiry. If not, I shall send them to the Minister." After the closure announcement, Cumbria, West Yorkshire and Lancashire county councils had asked Planning Economic and Industrial Development Advisers to carry out an independent appraisal on the future of the line. The report was eagerly awaited as being the first really authoritative statement.

No application to EEC or Heritage Fund.

It was disturbing, he continued, that BR had been encouraged to apply for an EEC grant towards the restoration of Ribbleshead Viaduct but did not do so. Another option was a grant from the National Heritage Fund, but apparently BR did not follow up that option either.

The line should be retained for the following reasons. First, the hardship that could be caused to constituents. Second, the line was the most direct route between Glasgow and west and south Yorkshire. Third, it was the only sensible diversionary route for both west and east coast main lines. Fourth, heavy passenger load-

ings on service trains, steam excursions and Dalesrail weekend dmus had consistently demonstrated public demand. Fifth, there was every likelihood of substantial future growth in demand for speedlink services and, to a lesser extent, train-load freight. Sixth, the route was a uniquely spectacular part of our national rail heritage and a significant tourist attraction in its own right. Seventh, the line was of social importance to isolated communities through which it passed. "Give us a fighting chance to develop our full potential," he appealed.

Ron Lewis (Lab. Carlisle) said he was a member of the NUR and that it would be the utmost folly to close the line. More than 2,500 objections had been lodged. BR had lived up to its reputation of running the line down; passenger and freight services had been massacred to the extent that BR could now say that the line did not pay. The viaduct was in a bleak area and had stood for more than 100 years, battered by winds and storms. Very little had been done by way of repairs. Far more could have been done. "I lived through the Beeching era and was working for BR at the time. Lines were closed that should never have been closed, including the Carlisle-Silloth. It was a tragedy. I hope that common sense will prevail."

Structural problems of Ribbleshead Viaduct.

John Watson (C. Skipton & Ripon) said there had been no realistic attempt to promote the line's tourist potential. Promotional literature was poor. When passenger trains, surprisingly in the circumstances, became overcrowded, there had been reluctance to put on extra coaches. Most serious of all, an independent report being prepared for local authorities was likely to show that maintenance had been so run down that repairs to the value of £10 million would now be necessary. The problems of the Ribbleshead viaduct were well known and widely acknowledged. "But I understand that the structural problems of the line are far greater than they would ever have been if reasonable maintenance schedules had been maintained. That information might not be biblical in its accuracy, but if it is correct, the BR Board will have effectively have ensured that no one, neither it nor any other operator, will be able to run a service over the line at any time in the future."

Michael Meadowcroft (Lib. Leeds West) said his grand-father worked on the Lancashire & Yorkshire railway and his father on the LMS, but his argument in favour of the Settle-Carlisle line was not based on nostalgia. It was fascinating to see how tourism had developed in the north, and it was not just a matter of looking at green pastures. There were also attractions in industrial architecture and engineering. He agreed with Mr. Lewis that the case for maintaining railways had not been sufficiently argued and that railway closures had been based on shortsighted reasons.

"If the closures had been shortsighted, we must at least ensure that we do not

make similar mistakes. We can all think of stretches of railway line that were closed because they were not part of an operating pattern which, had they been retained, would now be extremely precious to us, if only because of tourism. Examples are the line between Whitby and Robin Hood's Bay, and the old Cheshire Lines Committee railway which went to Southport Lord Street. Can one imagine a line that would attract more tourism than that? It would be sad if we did not learn from what has gone before."

B.R. Cynical, Philistine, Unimaginative.

BR had a philistine-like attitude towards the line and was showing great cynicism, when what it needed was imagination and flair.

Peter Snape (Lab. West Bromwich East) said that few proposals for a line closure had met with so much opposition as this one. The method used by railway management to bring about this proposal was at best deplorable and at worst in direct contradiction of the aims and intentions of the House. The action of BR in 1982 when it diverted lucrative traffic away from the line prevented objectors from previous users of trains from as far as Nottingham and Glasgow having any say in the closure procedures.

Like Mr. Lewis, he was a member of the NUR, but his speech had nothing to do with the fact that both he and his father had worked for the railways. "We are seeing the first fruits of a policy that is denying investment to what should be a vital part of the country's transport infrastructure. These proposals are likely to be only the forerunners of further railway closure proposals in the not too distant future."

He had recently travelled over the line by special train, because of inconvenience to the scheduled services. The train was paid for by the NUR at normal commercial rates, but when first applied for it was refused by Eastern Region on the grounds that acceptance would be "contrary to Board policy". After a row the tune was changed and the management told the Yorkshire Post that it was all a misunderstanding. The management said it understood the NUR wished to use the train for nothing. "I know one gets nothing for nothing from that management, and it was never the intention of the union to ask for it. When we eventually managed to get our charter, stopping at the few remaining stations on the line, we were met by crowds of people, all of whom expressed their concern about the line's future."

Why BR party stayed on Carlisle platform.

"When we arrived at Carlisle, there was a party on the platform which did not approach any of the train's passengers, which included Mr. Hattersley in his capacity as deputy Labour Party leader and NUR general secretary James Knapp. BR's party included a man with the surprising

title of project manager for the Settle - Carlisle line. No attempt was made to involve any of those on the train in conversation about the line's future." He understood from various sources that the reason for the presence of management was to prevent a press conference from being held on railway property. If true, this would be in keeping with the general attitude of BR management, which appeared determined to butcher its own industry. If the closure proposal succeeded, it would be the first loss of a section of main line since the days of Beeching. The Friends of the Settle - Carlisle Association had been writing to MPs, while campaigns were being conducted by newspapers and local authorities throughout the north.

Replying to the debate, Mr. Mitchell said the Settle - Carlisle route passed through some of the most beautiful country in the world. The suggestion that BR had deliberately run down the line to enhance its chance of closure was one for BR to answer. He wished to see as soon possible the survey commissioned by local authorities into the condition of the viaduct.

Gary Waller (C. Keighley) intervened to ask if the minister acknowledged that although the viaduct was listed grade 2, listed structures were, unfortunately, demolished. Might BR, if closure of the line occurred, apply for the structure to be demolished because its upkeep was unreasonable?

Mr. Mitchell said he would bear the point in mind. Mr. Watson had said he had evidence of an error in BR's rail figures of the numbers of passengers, and he would be pleased to be sent that information. Mr. Meadowcroft had implied that BR were rigging the evidence. "We shall take into account what the line can do as well as what it is doing. I emphatically deny Mr. Snape's assertion that this is the first fruit of Government policy of denying investment to BR. Far from slashing expenditure on investment, a 40 per cent increase was expected in BR's investment between now and 1986. We shall take all relevant considerations into account in arriving at our decision."

Written questions, answers: Docklands railway.

FEBRUARY 16 Tom Cox (Lab. Tooting) asked what discussions the Minister had had with London Docklands development corporation on the development of a fully-automated rapid transport system for Docklands.

Mrs. Chalker said that in agreeing to commit financial resources to this project, the Government had made it clear to the corporation and the G.L.C., the clients for the project, that full advantage should be taken of existing technology. The Government expected to be satisfied that the selection procedures adopted had not ruled out tenders for a fully automated system.

Asked by Mr. Cox about the use of rubber-tired vehicles on the Docklands system, Mrs. Chalker said that before giving final approval the Government would need to be satisfied that all options had been properly considered.

FEBRUARY 27 Gordon Bagier (Lab. Sunderland South) asked what action the minister had taken on the study commissioned by his department into the feasibility of converting the Woodhead Tunnel rail route into a road.

Mrs. Chalker said the study was to help make available better information on conversion of redundant railways generally, not just the Woodhead route. They had studied the report with interest, but she had no plans for the conversion of any railway route into a road.

Chunnel: bank reports may be published.

FEBRUARY 29 David Atkinson (C. Bournemouth East) asked how many letters the Minister had received (a) in favour of the construction of a Channel Tunnel and (b) against it.

Mr. Mitchell, in a series of written replies, said over 1,200 letters had been sent to the Minister since March 1980. Only 88 arrived since March 1982, of which 52 were in favour of a link, 12 against, 24 neutral or simply seeking information.

Asked about construction costs, he replied that the UK/French study group reported in June 1982 that the likely cost of single and twin simultaneously constructed tunnels, at January 1981 prices, with a vehicle shuttle facility would be £1,537 and £1,877 million respectively. He expected the report of the group of British and French banks soon and arrangements for possible publication were being considered.

More than a million free travel permits.

APRIL 4* Concessionary fares concerned the House more than any other subject in the London Regional Transport Bill, said Mr. Ridley when he opened the debate on the report stage on April 4th. (The Bill is now waiting to go through the Lords.) A clause added in committee will facilitate the continued provision of travel permits for pensioners.

John Prescott (Lab. Hull East) said more than a million people benefited from the present free passes. He was sorry the scheme did not extend to the unemployed as in Brighton and some other places. The passes would no longer be valid between 4.30 and 6.30pm. Boroughs would be able to negotiate a change with LRT, and LRT would have to negotiate with more than 30 other bodies to provide a so-called uniform scheme.

Pensioners would be denied the evening peak period, which was one of the most valuable times to them. Many had to go to

hospitals, shopping and visiting their families and wanted to get home before dark. More services would operate under a private banner and not be obliged to provide a concessionary scheme. Private operators could run their services more profitably without taking pensioners into account. The London bus, as opposed to the private bus, would become known as the 'pensioner's bus'. The disadvantages in the Bill could be compared to one advantage; pensioners would be able to travel free from midnight to 1am—not a fair exchange for the disadvantages.

Eric Deakins (Lab. Walthamstow) said he had come across a pensioner couple in his constituency during the election campaign who asked rather excitedly what would happen to their travel permits. He looked at the Conservative election manifesto and found that although abolition of the GLC and metropolitan councils was clearly set out, there was not a word about the future of the travel passes. "I do not believe that the Government, when they put a pledge to abolish the GLC—probably a last-minute decision—into their manifesto, had worked out the full consequences. Had they done so, they would have prepared a defensive brief, pointing out what was going to happen to free passes."

Biggest boon to the aged since 1940s.

Pensioners loved their free passes. He believed it was agreed by members on all sides that this had been the biggest boon to pensioners since the 1940s. The minister had missed the important point that pensioners did not choose to travel in the rush hour and would not do so unless they had a compelling reason. Finally he hoped the minister would seriously consider making similar provisions throughout the country.

John Maples (C. Lewisham West) said that many of the changes so hotly debated were extremely recent. The scheme was started in the early 70s by certain London Boroughs and taken over by the GLC in 1973.

London was fortunate in having the best scheme in the country. It would still be the best scheme when the new legislation came into force. In many areas of the country pensioners had to pay half fare and in some—he believed Cornwall was one—there was no scheme at all. London's scheme would also be entrenched in statute. Criticism about the evening peak period had been grossly exaggerated. Pensioners would not suffer any awful hardships.

Stephen Ross (Lib. I of Wight) said many GLC pensioners had come to the Isle of Wight in the past 10 years. "At every election campaign I have fought they have asked why they cannot have the same type of scheme as they have enjoyed in London. As leader of the county council I have tried extremely hard to see what we can do to improve our scheme, but the more we try to put money into the kitty to provide perhaps even a half-fare scheme, the more we get complaints from the bus com-

pany to keep services going. We have had to face a complicated choice between whether to keep services going or have a concessionary fares scheme. As we get into the ever-stronger grip of the Environment Secretary the chances of ever being able to do more diminish."

"I utterly reject the Bill and the abolition of the GLC, but if we are to maintain benefits that pensioners have enjoyed, the Government must come up with a complicated scheme. It is a fact of life that once concessions have been given it is extremely difficult to take them away. A Green Paper produced by the Labour Government tried to introduce a national half-fares scheme. The time for that has come. Even if it is only a 25% scheme, a national scheme is called for."

Michael Shersby (C. Uxbridge) said that pensioners in Greater London badly needed mobility, as they did not live in compact communities in which much activity happened on their doorsteps. Travel was essential if they were to participate in social functions. On evening peak travel there was to be a local option which boroughs could buy into.

Primary motive to balance the books

Jeremy Corbyn (Lab. Islington North) said the Minister had spoken of LRT being run on "business lines". Did this not mean that the motives of profit, disposals of assets and of reductions in service to balance the books would be the primary motives, rather than what should be the primary motives of good planning for London and provision of a good public transport system. The level of service cuts implicit in the Government's taking control of LT would result in very high fares, a vastly reduced service, or a combination of both.

"That is part of the process of making London unique in western Europe as the capital without a transport system that is designed to be integrated, that links road planning with public transport planning, and that tries to provide a service rather than running a public service as a business. It is impossible to do that without destroying London through building roads and ruining the lives and livelihoods of many LT employees."

Mr. Ridley replied that there was no plan to close any tube station, stop any bus service, or doing any of the things constantly being alleged by Peter Snape (Lab. West Bromwich East). "This is simply scare tactics designed to cause anxiety and confusion."

Private operators would move in.

APRIL 9 Harry Cohen (Lab. Leyton) said the Bill contained many headaches for ratepayers, particularly in connection with privatisation. He foresaw that on marginally profitable routes at least private operators would move in and LRT would be increasingly dependent on private operators. Ratepayers could find that the burden on them increased. The Minister had

said that savings could be made by reducing fraud. The current GLC campaign had already reduced fraud considerably but when fares were increased, as would happen under the Bill, there would be more fraud. Talk about reducing fraud! "The best way to reduce fraud would be to kill the Bill, as the real fraud is the Government making out they are the ratepayers' friends."

Mr. Maples said it was possible to add up the maze of figures in almost any way that one wanted to suit one's argument. LRT might not be profitable for a long time, or ever, but bits of it would be profitable.

Some bus or tube services or tube line extensions might clearly make a substantial positive return, and in those circumstances it would be right for LRT to be able to borrow. Conservative members hoped that, through the Bill LRT would behave more commercially. Borrowing imposed discipline on how the enterprise was run.

Nigel Spearing (Lab. Newham South) said the Bill went slap bang against the major constitutional principle about taxation and representation. MPs would represent taxpayers over money that went to LRT and also ratepayers in respect of the precept that the Minister would, through a single vote, put on all London ratepayers. MPs would thus have a much wider responsibility regarding transport in London which he didn't welcome. It would be an extension of centralised power over local government such as we had never had before.

Jeremy Corbyn (Lab. Islington North) said that in most GLC elections transport had been the major issue. There were several LT and BR facilities at some risk. The North London Line was the subject of a considerable amount of GLC support in its development, maintenance, and possibly its long-term running costs.

North London Line at risk

"I believe the line has been put at risk by the management of BR; therefore I hope the Minister will assure us that the line is not at risk. I hope he will also assure us that, in the annual presentation of his London Transport Bill, we shall have at least nine months in which to consult our constituents to find out what they think of his proposals for London's transport.

"Nothing I have heard has led me to doubt the validity of GLC's fear that Arsenal tube station may be closed. How will people in that area learn what the Minister's proposals are for that station? It is not good enough to say that once a year the House will have a short debate on London's transport and vote on it. This is fundamentally important to the rest of the country, because if the Government are to take this kind of action in London, what future is there for democratic control of transport undertakings elsewhere?"

Is this a dry run for the rest of the country, so that eventually all public transport undertakings will be under the direct control of the Minister, with appointed boards that can sell off assets, cut services and licence operators at will?

Mr. Ridley replied that ratepayers were getting a better deal out of the Bill. Their contributions would be less than it had been, and as efficiency began to work its way in it would come down still further. On that basis, the whole of the Opposition's case did not need answering, because they had argued for the proposition that the opposite would happen.

Public transport better privately owned

Simon Hughes (Lib. Southwark, Bermondsey) said he hoped that privatisation would be ruled out. The bus and underground operations had to be run separately. When a Select Committee looked at the needs of LT, it did so because of the disastrous state of transport in the capital. It had been improved by a sensible fares structure and other actions by those responsible for it in the last few years. It would be improved fundamentally only if the Government realised that they had a responsibility not only to Londoners but also to the rest of the nation over London's transport system. Many Londoners needed guarantees that public transport would be cheap, efficient and economical, and that it would answer their needs. That could be guaranteed only if run in an integrated way. Under this legislation, the thread of accountability would be thin, there would be no guarantees and the people would be badly served.

Mr. Ridley replied: "It did not occur to me that the Liberal Party was the last defender of the public sector."

Mr. Hughes: There is no merit in making LT a fairground for the private operator when we need a co-ordinated development of the present system, which is getting better and needs to be improved rather than dismantled.

Mr. Ridley: "We are taking powers because we shall want them if we privatise parts of LT." There was no reason why public transport should not be privately owned. It would probably be better if it were. We were much more likely to get a decent service if the private sector were allowed to get on with the job than by relying on nationalised industry.

Mr. Ross, speaking later, again repeated his opposition to the Bill and said: "look at what happened in America, the greatest supporter of private enterprise. Why was it forced to nationalise its railways? Why did it bring in AMTRAK. Why can we not follow the French and have good public transport services, railways and under-

ground systems? Why do we not follow the example of the Germans and the Swiss? I resent what is happening.

Mrs. Chalker said she was confident that travellers would see a steadily improving system in London and the Bill was given a third reading.

PREVIEW

Railways have friends in all political parties, and none better than Mr. Tony Speller, Conservative MP for North Devon. Before his private member's Bill became law, BR were inhibited from re-opening closed lines or stations, because of the long procedure they would have to go through to close them again. Now this procedure no longer applies to experimental re-openings.

Many stations are back on the map as a result. "The potential is huge," Mr. Speller told me. "We've re-opened Pinhoe in my area (SR main line between Honiton and Exeter) and there are over 40 stations on the proposed list. The main success so far has been around Newcastle to service the Metro." He was proud, he said, to be the first mover of a '10-minute Bill' (as distinct from those given more time in which to be introduced) in 17 years to complete its stages and become law. "I'm a railway buff; not an antiquarian, I just think railways are the most efficient way of carrying people around."

What about re-opening lines, I asked him, rather than just stations? "I've got a couple of small lines in mind," he said, "but that's more difficult, because the tracks were taken up so fast when they were closed."

Turning to the vexed question of the London Regional Transport Bill, he was not opposed to LT becoming an independent body, "rather like the BBC." The Bill was having its third reading in the Commons on April 9, but he did not expect it to go through the Lords until June or July, ready for the Royal Assent later that month.

Chunnel OK this year

Our keen supporter, Mr. Stephen Ross, Liberal MP for the Isle of Wight, "hates the Bill from start to finish," and thinks that the need is to try and get outside bodies to have more say in the proposed administration. Although not a particular admirer of the GLC, he considers that "in running London Transport they haven't done too badly." Some provision was to be made for pensioners' travel, with a short curfew from 4.30 to 6p.m. but what about the rest of the country outside London?

There was no prospect of a tunnel to the Isle of Wight, but he thought the Channel Tunnel had a good chance of getting the go-ahead this year. "I'm an optimist. We have too many lorries on the road, and the Tunnel is a vital part of reducing the heavy traffic."

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