

# Railway Development News

Railway Development Society

A Voice for Rail Users

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## EAST COAST ELECTRIFICATION — AT LAST! R.D.S. CHAIRMAN COMMENTS

At long last the electrification of the East Coast Main Line from London to Leeds, Newcastle and Edinburgh has received Ministerial approval. This is by far the most important step forward for B.R. for many years and confirms Government promises that investment will be authorised where a good case can be made out. The £306 million project, due for completion by 1991, is expected to show a 7% return on investment (allowing for inflation) and result in a 25% reduction in fuel costs and 50% improvement in reliability. Not least it will provide the Eastern side of Britain with a transport artery capable of operating independently of oil reserves, which might have a precarious future.

It is disappointing, however, that electrification is not expected to generate much additional business — presumably because journey time will only be marginally less than that with the existing high speed diesels. The project, in fact, reflects the main thrust of much recent investment in B.R. which has been directed towards improving efficiency rather than improving traffic. This is commendable as far as it goes, but surely the time has come to plan for the expanding railway. It is only necessary to take a look at the number of cars and coaches running along routes to the north to realise the potential for attracting many more passengers to rail.

B.R.'s competitive position would improve if, to permit fair competition, the

hidden subsidies enjoyed by coaches and company cars were eliminated, but attention also must be given to bridging the gap between the inter city railhead and the passengers' home or destination. The fact is that far more people live within a short driving distance of the M25 London orbital motorway than reside in the King's Cross area. This motorway, when complete, will give all of outer London direct access to the A1 and other radial routes which will inevitably give motorists and coach operators from these areas a head-start over B.R. unless steps are taken to improve attractiveness of the overall journey by rail — not just the main line component. Part of the answer would be to construct a parkway station situated near to the intersection of the M25 and the East Coast Main Line. This, with appropriate promotion, should encourage substantial numbers of motorists to park and ride rather than undertake the long drive to the North. Serious consideration should also be given to the extension of some ECML services across London to directly serve the populous area south of London and ultimately the Channel Tunnel. This and other cross London rail routes should be considered by the Government not on strictly commercial terms but using the cost benefit criteria used to justify the motorway programme. This would give proper emphasis to the community benefits they would bring, not least in reducing road congestion and accidents.

MPLC

## Fought to preserve what he found valuable

R.D.S. was represented when a prayer of thanks for Sir John Betjeman's "delight in trains and railways and the Underground" was said at the Thanksgiving Service for the late Poet Laureate (and Vice-President) in Westminster Abbey on June 29th.

"Let us give thanks for the way he enriched the life of us all," continued Alan Luff, the Precentor, "and for his courage in leading the fight to preserve the things he found valuable."

A congregation of 2,000 filled the Abbey to capacity. Two of his poems were

read: "South London Sketch" and "Treberrithick," his favourite Cornish village. "Such were the notes our once-loved poet sang." Dr. Robert Runcie (Archbishop of Canterbury) gave the blessing.

JE

## A.G.M. — 1985

Provisional arrangements have been made for the 1985 Annual General Meeting to be held in Unity Hall, Wakefield, Yorks. on Saturday 20th April. Please make a note in your diary.

## "Review of Rural Railways" Eight out of Ten

This report, produced in July by a joint working party of BR and the Association of County Councils contains many constructive suggestions. It questions, for instance, the need for railways to be fenced in arable or remote areas and asks whether the cost of maintaining "listed" railway buildings or other structures should not come from Government aid rather than from the Public Service Obligation payment.

The report repeats points made by our Society over several years such as the need for simplified level crossings and new diesel trains. A most constructive suggestion is that County Councils should offer finance to BR on a marginal basis to improve a service (e.g. to run extra trains late at night or on Sundays) rather than subsidising the entire service. Indeed, the Review has several interesting things to say about secondary services which question the way in which costs are allocated at present.

For instance, the PSO grant is made on the assumption that the railway exists primarily for the carriage of passengers yet one could quote routes, such as those in South Humberside, where freight is surely as important. This assumption militates against the re-introduction of passenger services on certain freight-only lines and the Review is surely correct in suggesting that "a less rigidly defined approach..... would be helpful in offering possibilities for wider support for new passenger services via local authorities and is continuing to be explored.

Unfortunately, amid the various constructive suggestions also lurks the hoary old chestnut of replacing some train services by buses. As the RDS East Anglian Branch Secretary pointed out in an interview on Radio Norfolk (and also in a letter to the "Eastern Daily Press") this idea was totally discredited in the 1960s when rarely more than 20% of former rail users turned to the replacement buses which were themselves usually withdrawn after a short period.

The RDS views on the good and bad points of this Review have been sent to all County Councils and to BR together with a copy of our 1977 booklet "Can Bus Replace Train?" (still available at 45p incl. postage) from RDS Sales, 21, Norfolk Road, Sutton Coldfield, B75 6SQ.

TJG

## "Transportation in Metropolitan Areas"

(Report of a Conference organised by Merseyside County Council and held at Liverpool University on Friday 29th June 1984)

This should have been a useful and constructive conference but my impression of it was that, being a preaching to the converted, it failed to make much impact — a view shared to some extent by its Chairman, Prof. Sir Colin Buchanan (author of the Government-inspired document "Traffic in Towns"), in his final summing-up.

The delegates numbered 145, the majority being local government officers from the Metropolitan areas and Shire counties. There were also representatives from trade unions, environmental associations, motor-ing organisations and private companies as well as from RDS. As so often happens, rail users' associations (such as the Ormskirk to Preston TA, Wrexham to Bidston RUA and Bebington Rail Action Group) were not invited.

The organisers had asked the Department of Transport to provide a speaker to put the Government's case for abolition of the GLC and Met. Counties — no such speaker appeared! One would have thought that Mrs. Lynda Chalker, MP for Wallacey (didn't Ernest Marples come from there?) number two at the D.Tp. or even David Mitchell MP, might have risked appearing in the "Lions den", but no. In the event it fell to Prof. Kenneth Gwilliam, Head of the Institute of Transport Studies at Leeds University, to attempt to put the case by proxy, but he failed to be convincing. (Copies of his books on "Transport in the Metropolitan Areas" were offered free to delegates — these are incidentally *not* in favour of abolition).

The case against abolition was put by John Prescott, MP for a Hull constituency who mentioned that he had known Liverpool as a former merchant seaman and pointed out that many local people lacked access to a car. He quoted Nicholas Ridley as saying that he liked cars, seeing them as a symbol of the motorist's individuality, and referred to the expensive damage to roads, bridges and sewers caused by heavy lorries. Mr. Prescott considered the cheap fares policy of the Met. Counties to be environmentally sound. The case for the authorities was put by Stuart Mustow, County Engineer to the West Midlands County Council. With a mass of diagrams and statistics he concentrated on the road-building problems in his area and, I felt, contributed little to the general debate and was followed by Prof. Gwilliam, who stated the academic case, referring to the Government's desire to use private enterprise wherever possible.

After lunch there were three speakers: Bob Cross, Controller Northern Region of the FTA, who spoke on freight movement, Nick Lester, (of the now abolished London Transport Passengers' Committee) who spoke on public transport and David

Gent, Director of the British Road Federation who spoke on behalf of the "Road User". Thus in the whole conference, only Nick Lester spoke for the ordinary user of public transport (revealing that he had lost his job that very day). He spoke ably on the problems of those dependent on public transport but mentioned that the greater part of individual movement is actually on foot. He said that two-thirds of the population is without a driving licence and stressed that good public transport at a reasonable cost is essential in a civilised society.

Bob Cross, made an impassioned plea for greater expenditure on roads and for bigger and better lorries. Despite a quite hostile response from the audience he continued to point out how essential they were to the well-being of the nation and seemed totally unaware that many people shared an opposing view. Similarly, David Gent urged the road lobby's case, but did admit that good rail transport had its uses in limited areas.

The speakers were followed by an "Open Forum", chaired by Hazel Duffy, Transport and Local Government correspondent of the "Financial Times". By now some delegates were beginning to leave and little of interest was discussed and Sir Colin Buchanan in summing up expressed the somewhat disappointing view with which I opened this report.

GRT

(The above is the personal view of Mr. Tolliday who whilst a regular contributor to R.D.N. is not a member of the Editorial Board. It does not necessarily reflect the opinions of either the Editor or the Society. ED).

## Reopenings Sub-Committee Progress Report

The work of this Committee, in pressing the case for expansion of the rail network and highlighting successes in this field, aims to counter the view of those in the "corridors of power" who seem to be continually bent on "paring it down!"

On May 19th the re-opened stations at Moss Side (Lancs.), Saltaire (Yorks.) and Metheringham (Lincs.) were descended upon by members of four RDS Branches who undertook sponsored cycle rides there and raised well over £200. The second edition of the Society's book "Bring Back the Trains" (reviewed in the last issue of RDS) is already out of date insofar as Kilmours and Auchinleck stations, listed in the Appendix as possible candidates for re-opening, received their first trains in May.

A copy of the new edition of BBTT has been sent to every County Council in England and Wales and every Regional Council in Scotland. To date replies of varying degrees of helpfulness have been received. Meanwhile the Committee has been building up a library of material which could be of assistance to local re-opening campaigns which includes case studies of particular schemes with costings and surveys. Any member with similar material should send it to R.J.Wakefield, Station House, Oakington, Cambridge, CB4 5AH.

It is hoped to produce a high quality leaflet on the case for re-openings early in 1985.

TJG

LET ROAD AND RAIL  
COMPETE ON EQUAL TERMS

# Bring Back the Trains.

THERE IS a case for re-opening up to 500 miles of rail route and up to 400 stations.

Read about it, and about the progress made so far, in the new enlarged edition of our book.

**BRING BACK THE TRAINS** is 68 pages, illustrated, and costs £1.50 plus 30p postage.

ORDER NOW! From Mr. F. J. Hastilow, 21, Norfolk Road, Four Oaks, Sutton Coldfield, West Midlands. B75 6SQ



RDS "YORKSHIRE ADVENTURER" loading at Malton on 24th June 1984

Photo. A.J. Barfield

### "CAN BUS REPLACE TRAIN? — U. S. STYLE"

"AMTRAK ridership to and from Pinellas County (Fla) continues to fall in April 1984 (since the Corporation provided a substitute bus ED) and was off 54.8% compared to April 1983.

Pinellas County ridership for February 1984 fell 39.1% from February 1983 and 47.8% in March 1984 from March 1983. The figures that AMTRAK provided for April 1984 show that only 1,899 Pinellas County riders used AMTRAK's rail/bus service compared to the 4,202 passengers in April 1983 who used AMTRAK's direct passenger rail service to and from Pinellas County.

During the first three months the rail/bus service has been in operation, Pinellas County ridership has fallen 47.6%. Only 6,861 Pinellas County passengers have used the rail/bus service in April 1984 compared to 13,086 Pinellas County passengers who in April 1983 rode the trains directly to and from Pinellas County.

**SUBSCRIPTIONS** — With this issue of R.D.N. will be enclosed to those members who have recently renewed their ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION a new MEMBERSHIP CARD. (look inside the envelope). If however your subscription is due within the next 3 months A RENEWAL FORM is enclosed. Please return it with your remittance as soon as possible and a DONATION over and above your Subscription will always be gratefully received.

As an alternative to payment of 2 years' subscription at a time members are encouraged to pay by Bankers' Order and if this method is preferred please complete the form attached and return it to the Hon. Treasurer at the address indicated.

AMTRAK estimates that the revenue loss per Pinellas County passenger is \$57.38, which means AMTRAK in the first three months of rail/bus operation has already lost \$419,440.50. Using the same formula, AMTRAK's loss for the first 12 months of rail/bus operation would be \$1.7 million, \$400,000 more than its projected annual savings.

Can Bus Replace Train? — certainly not in the State of Florida!

(Extract from a letter published in the July issue of "TRACK-4", News-sheet of the South East Transportation Coalition, Georgia, U.S.A.) which is on the RDN exchange list.

U.S.A. may elect its first woman Vice-President. Remember you heard about her first in "RAILWAY DEVELOPMENT NEWS" (See R.D.N. No. 19, p1 col 2). If she gets elected she certainly is not a toad for the roads lobby!!

JWB

### "How to form a Users' Group" By one who knows

At a meeting convened by the RDS in Bedford in March 1980 the Bedford to Bletchley Rail Users' Association was formed and drew up its plans to promote and improve the Bedford to Bletchley branch line in order to secure its future. Early leafletting surprised many local inhabitants of the villages along the line when they discovered their local railway had not been closed years ago! Timetables for every individual station community — 9 in all — were produced and delivered by association members, and two packed Annual General Meetings confirmed by 1982 that the association was established

and here to stay. Membership soon rose to over 150 and funds allowed for further leaflets, newspaper adverts etc., Gradually an atmosphere of hopelessness began to turn into one of optimism — a feeling that spread to the local authorities and even to British Rail!

Regular contact and some meetings were established with BR area management and a spirit of friendship and co-operation replaced the initial feeling of annoyed tolerance that had been forthcoming from certain staff. But still the number one problem at the Bedford end remained, St. John's station was by now in a terminal state of decay and neglect. Bedford Midland had been completely rebuilt and by 1982 had been graced with new electric services to London and Inter-City 125 services North to the East Midlands. Hapless Bletchley line passengers were faced with a difficult 30 minute trudge between the two stations. The association argued long and hard for the extension of the line to Bedford Midland. Again initial apathy and ridiculous estimates of the costs involved were gradually replaced by good discussions and a most positive approach by British Rail which resulted in their agreement to carry out the substantial work involved to upgrade track and signalling.

The association gave BR every encouragement but had one outstanding fear and that was that however better Midland would be (than St. John's) for the terminus of the line the latter did serve an important area of South Bedford and a large Girls School that was a source of quite a few passengers each weekday. And so it was argued that a replacement station in the St. John's area should be included in the extension plans. BR nodded approval but had no spare resources in their budget and so the association lobbied for a grant from the County Council, not known for their generosity in rail matters. Rather unexpectedly, after several tense meetings the authority agreed to meet a large proportion of the costs for a station at exactly the site requested by the association. BR for their credit saw the merits of the case and provided the balance required.

And so to today, 1984 has seen the biggest single improvement to the Bedford to Bletchley rail service for over 20 years, with the diversion to Midland and the opening of the new St. John's station taking place on Monday 14th May (1984). Association members were invited to the Civic Celebrations and on to the BR opening special train as a mark of gratitude for the part played in bringing this about. Only one mile of track has been opened up to passenger traffic and one new station provided but it has signalled the start of a new future and new prosperity for the Bedford to Bletchley branch line.

Richard Crane

(Richard is Chairman of BBRUA and a member of the Society's National Committee).

## MEMBERS' PLATFORM

### "A Future for Marylebone"

Sir,

I suggest the following compromise plan for the future of Marylebone Station. This plan takes into account the high development value of the site.

A new station, with interchange facilities with LT, would be built on the site of the existing re-fuelling sidings. The new site would incorporate overhead office space while the old site would be sold for development. In order to provide a reasonable traffic flow all traffic from Chesham and Amersham to Harrow would revert to BR and be routed into Marylebone. It is important to realise that passengers will not accept the proposed change of trains at Amersham when travelling between London and Aylesbury.

The Banbury service should be extended to Stratford-on-Avon and marketed as a prestige tourist service in conjunction with the English Tourist Board. Aylesbury via High Wycombe services should be extended to Milton Keynes, connecting at Bletchley with the Bedford service extended to Oxford.

Coaches and cars would use the old Uxbridge trackbed, with a park and ride scheme operating from alongside Western Avenue and suitably close for the M25 and the M40. With the West London service, and the possibility of services via Snow Hill tunnel, the campaign should be renewed for a major interchange at West Hampstead to include the Marylebone line.

Francis B. Blake  
Seer Green  
Bucks.

### "Railway Finance"

Dear Sir,

I joined the R.D.A. in the early 1960s following the publication of a letter in a Birmingham newspaper by a member advocating parity in accounting between rail and road transport.

Are we any nearer to this?

Do railways still have to show a profit on the capital value of the whole railway network as well as providing traffic control and a range of facilities which have little or no counterpart in bus and coach finances?

If I'm completely wrong in this will someone tell me.

If I'm right, why doesn't the RDS draw attention to so fundamental a matter as the whole cost to the country of both, and do it in season and out of season and ad nauseum?

P.S. Could any member with a flair for finance suggest what would happen to coach fares if they included a profit on a reasonable proportion of the capital cost of all motorways and highways as well as something for the facilities equivalent to those provided by rail.

Walter Court  
Whitstable, Kent.

### "Where are the Women (II)"

Dear Sir,

In issue No.18 you ask where are the women? I suggest that there is always a problem in attracting women to any subject which is matter-of-fact, scientific or technical. In my (steam) train-spotting days it was unusual to find girls interested in railways although I have recently encountered a few women (steam) enthusiasts.

Subjects like CND and ecology have an emotional interest for women where railways do not. Perhaps the best way to attract women would be through wives and girlfriends and through social events. For example, whereas women will not take much interest in our local astronomy group, they can be tempted to cheese and wine parties. This may not be what RDS is about even if such an event were practical. However any local group big enough might like to have a go.

Thomas E. Rookes  
St. Giles, Lincoln.

### "A new title for R.D.N.?"

Sir,

The June 1983 issue of R.D.News saw a welcome change in format, resulting in an informative and well-produced journal, which has undoubtedly helped in boosting the Society's image.

In my opinion however, the title — 'Railway Development News' is rather cumbersome and not in keeping with the Society's forward looking image. This point would be particularly relevant, if ever the national media actually started

quoting RDS policy. Such a press statement as ... "the Railway Development Society, in their journal Railway Development News, says ..." sounds extremely unwieldy.

I therefore propose that a change should now be made and I would like to suggest 'Railwatch' as a new title for the RDS journal.

What do other members think?

Mike Breslin  
Anfield, Liverpool

(The above arrived too late for consideration at the last meeting of the RDN Editorial Board but in the meantime I feel the matter should be aired more widely ED).

### "Bring Back the New Logo"

May I, as winner of the recent RDS logo competition, answer Eddy Graves criticism of the design.

Firstly the "Wheel and Flash" logo does not get recognised as being associated with train travel, and it is for precisely this reason that there is a requirement for a design that needs no explanation. The prize-winning design, using the letters "RDS", incorporates the wedge nose of an HST in the letter "S" and the diagonal band in the "R". The curves of the right sides of the letters "R" and "D" use the same proportions as the corners of an HST power car.

It was in fact from a "doodle" that the concept came and, after a while, I realised that this design principle can also be applied to the shape of an APT cab or the snout of an A4 Pacific. It can therefore be (Continued back page Col. 2)



RDS/ADRPA Special at Milton Keynes — 9th June 1984

Photo. A.J.Barfield

## REGIONAL NOTES

### LONDON & HOME COUNTIES

Problems in London and the South East seem to come in threes at the moment, particularly on the rail closure front. Firstly objections to the withdrawal of the Stratford-Tottenham Hale service were heard by the T.U.C.C. for London on 27th June when the Branch was represented by Vice-Chairman, Frank Tomlins and Secretary David Martins. Our arguments in favour of restoring an interchange between Hackney Central and Hackney Downs, if withdrawal of the direct service was considered inevitable, seemed to go down well with the T.U.C.C. and it remains to be seen what the Committee's report will recommend. This may in fact be the last one it will produce as, with the passing of the London Regional Transport Act at the end of June, all future rail closure proposals will be considered by the new London Regional Passengers' Committee whose address is now:-

Room 24, Goldencross House, Duncannon Street, Strand, W.C.2.

Our memorandum on the withdrawal of rail passenger services between Dalston (West Junction) and Broad Street will in fact be considered by that body on a date yet to be announced but with the staff virtually working out of packing cases (due to the re-organisation) this may be some time into the Autumn. Our objection to this closure (purely to facilitate the redevelopment of Liverpool Street - albeit on a less grandiose scale) is being co-ordinated with those of the local users' groups whose pre-closure campaign of meetings culminated in a very successful "train-in" on the 13.45 ex Richmond on 23rd June with balloons, decorated stations a clown, travellers in period costume and an assortment of local M.P.s and Councillors who held an impromptu meeting at Broad Street on arrival attended by some 100 people. Never before had the decaying grandeur of this period edifice rung to the sound of protest songs on a Saturday afternoon. The serious task of opposing this damaging threat to the future of the North London Line is yet to get under way. Undoubtedly this and the most controversial of the three proposals (i.e. Marylebone - Northolt Junction) will be taxing the resources of the Branch in the year to come.

In anticipation of B.R.'s announcement RDS and the local rail users' group (ADSPA) ran a very successful special train from Marylebone to Milton Keynes on Saturday 9th June when some 250-300 passengers travelled on a 4-car chartered DMU over the freight-only line between Aylesbury and Bletchley including part of the former Oxford - Cambridge line and for the first time were able to observe the WCML from the now legendary freight flyover at Bletchley. The contrast between the leisurely pace of the Aylesbury - Bletchley section and the ultra-modern shopping complex at Milton Keynes -

truly a space-age city - was breathtaking and the reaction of the rail enthusiasts at Quainton Road Railway Centre when a whole hoard of visitors descended on their complex (By Rail!!!) was second only to the crowd which thronged Winslow station when the train passed through. Not only is there clearly a potential for restoring a northern outlet from Buckinghamshire's County town to its newest city but the residents of Winslow made it quite clear what they want in the way of transport to the outside world.

The train was greeted at Wembley Complex (which has the most to lose on the line itself) by a Silver Band and conveyed many local civic dignitaries - at least as far as High Wycombe - including the indomitable Iltyd Harrington, Deputy Leader of the G.L.C. resplendent in morning dress. Almost predictably B.R. posted closure notices to coincide with the Summer Holidays (at the end of July), and the closing date for objections (after some protest from RDS and local groups) was extended to 7th September. Future policy on the closure of Marylebone - Northolt will depend on the outcome of continuing talks with B.R. and L.R.T. but as it seems likely that neither can provide a satisfactory alternative for present users a formal objection will be lodged with LRPC. Other plans re the future of Marylebone - in particular the controversial busway proposals will be reported in our next issue.

Meanwhile the Branch has to adjust to a whole new scene in London with the passing of the LRT Act 1984 under which the G.L.C. has now lost its power both to control and provide grant aid to L.T. and B.R. Whether such schemes as the West London Line and re-opening of the Snow Hill Tunnel will now be dropped remains to be seen but the Branch will endeavour to secure their implementation by the new Transport Authority. Even as I write the Secretary of State has confirmed the introduction of a Travelcard to cover both LRT and BR services (as originally envisaged by the G.L.C.) but has also forecast a massive cut-back in grant aid in the coming years - fares to be held down by means of productivity measures. Whether this will lead to cuts and closures only time will tell, but what is certain is that the Government, the GLC and the London Docklands Development Corporation are committed to the Docklands Light Railway and Dave Wetzel has been photographed "breaking ground" with Tony Ridley of LT and Corporation Chairman, Nigel Brookes.

On a more domestic note by the time member receive R.D.N. a new Branch should have been formed to cover Bucks., Berks. and Oxon, at a meeting in Kidlington (Oxford) on 15th September.

JWB

### WEST MIDLANDS

Following approval for the Snow Hill rail link, reconstruction of the bridges and area around the Moor Street portal are

planned to commence in the current financial year. Completion of the link to Snow Hill is intended for May 1987. At the same time the Henley-in-Arden route to Stratford-upon-Avon is being threatened. It would appear that the 1969 Injunction to prevent closure has been lifted and BR are expected to proceed with plans to sever the 4 miles south of Henley.

The BR report on the Walsall-Cannock - Hednesford line confirms that re-opening is feasible and that 4 new stations would cost some £330,000. The operating costs of £567,000 for an hourly service would be shared between Staffordshire and West Midlands. The scheme has been programmed for 1985/6 with possible completion in the late 1986. On Sunday 10th June the local RDS Branch ran an 11-coach charter train from the Hednesford line to Portsmouth which proved most satisfactory.

A new Inter-City link has been suggested by RDS for the Nuneaton-Coventry line. A DMU shuttle is proposed to afford good connections to the several main line services. The new SVR station at Kidderminster was due to open in August with bargain through fares being charged from West Midlands stations.

Over the last 2 years passenger numbers on the Redditch branch have increased by 33% to a total of 1,300 trips per day. Bank Holiday trains have now been introduced along with a fair sprinkling of BR excursions. The Redditch Rail Users' Group plans a charter to Matlock on 28th August. RDS members have participated in briefing and debates on the West Midlands County Council Plans for an extensive Rapid Transit system which would utilise both road and rail corridors. The scheme has considerable merit and implications which will require detailed study and comments by the Branch Committee.

AB

### EAST ANGLIA

Guest speaker at the Branch Meeting held in Cambridge on 2nd June was Bill Parker, King's Cross Divisional Manager of British Rail, who considered that BR was responding well to changing markets - something it had not always done in the past. He reviewed local traffic and operation in some detail, announcing that the recently-approved Cambridge electrification scheme should be completed in 1987. In the more immediate future he predicted improvements in carriage cleanliness locally. Freight reliability had improved and grain traffic in particular was doing very well. Carrying of metal and industrial sand had dropped off somewhat because of the economic situation.

Mr. Parker made two suggestions for action by RDS: to help publicise B.R.'s efforts to cater for the disabled; and to press for a national fund to help BR preserve those of its buildings, structures etc., which were "part of the national heritage".

Among points put to him by members were: inadequate facilities for bicycles and prams on Great Northern Electric trains; appointing Red Star agents at towns with unstaffed stations.

Also in June, RDS exhibition material was on display as part of the 125th anniversary celebrations of the East Suffolk Line. Organised by our corporate member the East Suffolk Travellers' Assn. these included a reception on the actual date of the anniversary; a special train; three exhibitions; and publication of an anniversary brochure. BR's contribution included posters and leaflets (which we helped to distribute) and a special maximum fare of £1.25 on the line for a month.

On June 24th, 350 people were taken by RDS charter train from Colchester and all stations to Ely, via Bury St. Edmunds, to York, Malton and Scarborough. The train picked up passengers at four unstaffed stations which are not normally served by either excursions or Inter-City trains. A week later, on July 1st, a second charter train was run by RDS to Scarborough, from the freight-only Wisbech line. It was our sixth special over this line since 1978, the first locomotive-hauled one with a buffet, and carried over 200 passengers on a smooth and memorable journey.

The Branch wrote to twelve candidates in the four constituencies covering East Anglia during the EEC election campaign. Nine of the twelve replied—a considerably better response than at the last elections in 1979, and perhaps reflecting a more serious attention being paid to transport issues by most candidates. Useful views were received on the Channel Tunnel, rail links to the ports, transport co-ordination and lorry regulations. These form a useful basis for the dialogue which we shall need to conduct with the newly elected MEPs.

At the time of closure of the March—Spalding line, two years ago, BR gave assurances that convenient connections would be provided at Peterborough for passengers between East Anglia and Lincolnshire. This was indeed the case in 1983/4; but in the new timetable, the journey time on the most popular morning train from Cambridge has been extended by 46 minutes because of longer waiting time at Peterborough. How long are such promises supposed to last? Branch Committee Member, Peter Wakefield, has therefore made representations to BR. Finally as we go to press (at the end of July) BR has announced that it has abandoned its proposal to single 10 miles of the Norwich main line around Diss as part of the electrification programme.

The Autumn Meeting of the Branch will be held on Saturday 22nd September at 2.00pm in the Assembly House, Theatre Street, Norwich. After branch business, there will be a video showing of the recent "Brass Tacks" programme on Juggernauts which created widespread interest for its revelations about lorry taxes and the costs of road transport to the community.

## YORKSHIRE

After a vast expenditure of time, money and inconvenience to a great many people the Inspector at the Airedale Trunk Road Inquiry produced a scheme which brought general approval from the residents in the Aire Valley. He proposed that the road should run from Kildwick to the western side of Keighley, use the existing roads through Keighley, thus preserving the industrial area from demolition and then continue to Bingley ending at Cottingley Bar just east of the town. However Whitehall has tossed the recommendations aside and is determined that the road should go through Saltaire to join up with the Shipley eastern bypass.

In a pretence of consultation an exhibition was arranged to show the alternatives. One route would cut through Roberts Park, a local beauty spot, demolishing a recently built school in the process and overshadowing the beautiful church built by Sir Titus Salt. The other route would follow the railway. In the course of which Saltaire station which has just been re-opened would be demolished as well as a number of houses, which have stood unchanged for 110 years. The proposals have caused dismay in Saltaire and questions are being asked about the value of public inquiries if the recommendations are rejected when they do not conform with the wishes of the Ministry of Transport.

British Rail have issued closure notices for five short connecting lines in West Yorkshire, occasionally used by excursion trains for diversions. The lines in themselves do not seem to be of much consequence, but their closure will have devastating effect on the railway network. Not only will any hope of restoring a Bradford—Huddersfield service be lost forever, but the Sheffield to Manchester service, diverted when the Hope Valley line is closed could only be operated by endless reversals. To discourage would-be passengers on the Bradford—Weymouth train which uses some of these lines the train has been re-timed to leave Bradford at about 5.30a.m.

At the T.U.C.C. Inquiry in Wakefield into BR's proposal to close the Midland main line between Wath Road junction and Goose Hill junction the Chairman stated that he believed the Inquiry to be illegal because the Board had refused to re-issue the Sec. 56 Notice to include "Any user of any service affected." Sherburn-in-Elmet station on the line from York to Leeds however was re-opened on 9th July for an experimental period of six months. Pursuing their policy of discouraging would-be passengers British Rail's new timetables contain a number of unpleasant surprises. There are long gaps in the services from Sheffield to Birmingham, Liverpool and Lincoln, the popular Edinburgh to Plymouth train which was very overcrowded has been taken off and the Yorkshire T.U.C.C. report that the new timetables have resulted in a record number of letters of complaint.

## SEVERNSIDE

Although the ability of HSTs to cope with steep gradients was challenged, BR has refused to retain and exploit the more suitable route via Tavistock, Oakhampton, Toddington and Stratford upon Avon. There have been many failures of one power unit and heavy delays attaching and detaching banking locomotives (presumably at Bromsgrove ED.) More delays are incurred through out of course running on track shared with other services with the risk of missed connections and complete disorganisation of travel to airports as well as upsetting business appointments. The Inter-City "Heart to Heart" slogan of yesteryear was set aside on the Bristol—Birmingham route by retiming some Expresses to avoid Gloucester, but the schedules are too ambitious to achieve reliability. Special attention is to be given when approaching and climbing the steepest inclines to give a clear path to an HST running with one failed power car avoiding need for banking assistance. Passengers also complain about failure to increase HST and locomotive-hauled formation leading to gross overcrowding, which can preclude the operation of refreshment trolleys and prevent access to toilets.

Acute overcrowding on the Gloucester to Newport line, where some services are still diagrammed to only a single unit rail-car has been alleviated by running a 3-car set on Saturdays only from Bristol to Gloucester to strengthen the Chepstow service. Although some former regular users of overcrowded Stroud Valley 3-car DMUs have now turned to their cars, loadings have been maintained as Stonehouse continues to expand with commuting to Gloucester and Cheltenham. Passengers have realised that the same Season Ticket fare is charged to Gloucester from Stonehouse as from Stroud and Stonehouse has lost revenue accordingly. Thus a Stonehouse resident may make extra journeys in the evenings and at weekends to Stroud and back without the need to purchase a ticket.

## NORTH WEST

The newly formed Fleetwood and Thornton Rail Action '84 Group were due to meet London Midland Region Manager, M. Southgate, on 25th July when they hoped to present their case for the restoration of freight services over the branch from Poulton-le-Fylde to Fleetwood. The group also hope to see passenger services re-instated over the branch in the longer term.

The Ormskirk to Preston Travellers' Association (OPTA) have now adopted Croston station. Working parties have been visiting the station regularly since 27th May. The Group has also submitted a Memorandum to the House of Commons Select Committee, which is currently looking into the financing of public transport—road, rail ferry and air. The Group feel that the present method of financing BR through PSO and EFL needs to be revised

and replaced by a system that gives more safeguards to the users. They also see the present blanket subsidy as the main cause of the very arbitrary cuts that BR has made in provincial services over the last few years. The local Area Manager, Mr. B. Wilson, is, however, planning to set up a Customer Care Panel for both the Ormskirk to Preston and Ormskirk to Liverpool Central lines.

Plans for the electrification of the Blackpool - Manchester line are expected to be submitted to the Department of Transport before the end of the year. Preparatory work in connection with resignalling is under way in the Brindle Heath and Bolton areas. In addition an EEC grant has been given towards pre-electrication work on the Preston - Blackpool section. The cost of the scheme is put at £36.5m. of which Lancashire County Council is planning to provide £2½m. and Greater Manchester £7½m. Unconnected with this scheme is the £2m. rebuilding of Bolton station where it is planned to provide new buildings, a small station and a car park.

Lostock Hall station (on the East Lancashire Preston - Colne Line) was reopened on Monday 14th May. This follows a determined campaign begun in 1975 by T.2000 (North West) and the NUR (Lostock Hall Branch). Lancashire County Council backed the scheme and eventually a new station was built costing over £100,000 just to the east of the original one.

British Rail are planning to operate a new service of 5 trains a day from Preston to Leeds via the Copy Pit (Rose Grove - Todmorden) line one which was on the "hit list" when it published its latest Corporate Plan. The plan is to run a new experimental service at about 2-hourly intervals from 1st October. Coincidentally, the National and Provincial have recently taken over the Burnley Building Society and moved their head office to Bradford, with many of their staff making the journey over the Pennines by Minibus. To overcome this problem the Building Society agreed with B.R. to provide a daily passenger service for its workers (also over Copy Pit) which is also available to the public.

Turning to the "Cause Célèbre" following extensive lobbying by the Yorkshire area T.U.C.C. and others over the wording of the Sec. 56 closure notice for the Settle - Carlisle line (and others in Yorkshire) a second period for objections was won and by the time members read these Notes (whilst the period will have ended), it is hoped that over 5,000 objections will have been lodged. In order to advise local

## HELP!

Our member Ray King is compiling an up-to-date list for the RDS of books, reports, and other publications on railways and related topics. Would Branch Secretaries or any members who have literature they would be prepared to make available please contact him at: 4 Christchurch Square, London E9 7HU.

users of their rights the Settle to Carlisle Joint Action Committee organised a special open top bus plus band to tour the communities along the line on Saturday 30th June.

Finally, on Merseyside, a feasibility study is currently being undertaken by BR into third-rail electrification between Liverpool and St. Helens (Shaw Street). The Study, due to be completed in October, will also include the feasibility of linking the line to the Liverpool - Southport line via a new tunnel between Edge Hill and Central. BR is also giving consideration to 25 kV electrification to St. Helens (from Lime Street) as an alternative.

Greater Manchester also plans to go ahead with 8 new rail stations over the next 2 years at Humphrey Park (Urmston) Mill Hill (Middleton), Flowery Field (Hyde), Smithy Bridge (Rochdale), Derker (Oldham), Ryder Brow (Belle View), Woodmoor (Stockport) and Hay Fold (Atherton) + Salford University on the Windsor Link.

RW/MB

## NORTH MIDLANDS

Branch officials were elected at a meeting of local members held in Derby on 29th June, and the possibility of running a special train from the Alfreton or Derby areas was discussed. BR plans to eventually concentrate St. Pancras to Sheffield trains on the Derby route, leaving Alfreton & Mansfield Parkway to be served by an inter-urban service from Nottingham to Sheffield and West Yorkshire. A twice-daily bus service started this year from Mansfield to Doncaster railway station to facilitate northbound travel. The question of restoring trains to Mansfield Town (centre for a catchment area of 150,000 people) has again been raised with the County Council, but evoked a negative response. However, the Planning and Transportation Dept. are looking into the cost of necessary repairs to Rolleston station.

Loadings on the Matlock branch line trains could well be improved by the opening of a cable car system from Matlock Bath station to the "Heights of Abraham" a noted tourist attraction, and excursion trains have already been run there. The Nottingham-Lincoln line Users' Group is to run a railtour on Saturday 22nd September, picking up at all stations on the Lincoln - Newark (Castle) - Nottingham line and running to Liverpool for the International Garden Festival. Peak Rail Operations have now received outline planning permission for the final section of line from Matlock to Rowsley and it is hoped to commence running passenger trains from Matlock in 1985. At the Buxton end of the line, a new bridge is required to give access to Ashwood Dale and thence eventually to Matlock.

RMG

## LEICESTERSHIRE

An RDS meeting was held in Melton Mowbray on 9th June, to launch the latest edition of "BRING BACK THE TRAINS" locally and to discuss ways of improving

the Leicester-Peterborough route. Leicestershire County Council have shown a positive interest in some reopened stations on the line, and RDS is actively encouraging them in this. It is hoped to call a further meeting, to form a pressure group for the line, probably at Oakham, in the Autumn.

TJG

## LINCOLNSHIRE

A meeting of local RDS members was due to take place in Lincoln on 7th July to discuss the formation of a Lincolnshire Branch. Membership in this county (and South Humberside) has grown slowly but steadily in recent years and it should now be possible to launch a viable RDS Branch.

TJG

## NORTHAMPTONSHIRE

Corby people had their first opportunity for 18 years to travel from their local station on Sunday July 1st, when an RDS special train called. Starting at Kettering, the special picked up passengers at Corby, Oakham and Melton Mowbray before heading to York and Scarborough (to which destination it was beaten by 10 minutes by the RDS Wisbech special mentioned above!) Among over 300 passengers on board were the Chairman of Corby District Council and his wife.

The event received good coverage by the local news media and was an important step forward in our campaign for the restoration of passenger services to Corby. It was the culmination of many weeks of work by our local members, who have gained the active support of the local MP and District Council of this, one of the largest towns in the country without passenger trains.

TJG

## CORNWALL

A public meeting was organised jointly by RDS and the Bodmin Line Committee in Bodmin on 31st May and attracted 35 people. RDS National Committee member, Trevor Garrod, outlined the Society's aims and their relevance to Cornwall - particularly the need to make tourists aware of the County's rail network; and the scope for users' groups on the four branches (Looe, Newquay, Falmouth and St. Ives).

The Bodmin Line Committee is interested in purchasing the now disused lines from Bodmin Parkway to Bodmin General and beyond, for a summer steam service, a diesel passenger service in the winter and possibly also freight. Its Secretary, Chris Tankard, explained the case for this to the meeting. The third speaker was BR's local manager, Rusty Eplett, who outlined the efforts which he was making to promote the image of Cornish Railways and gain new business.

TJG

## SCOTLAND

Since our last report the local Branch of RDS has been in correspondence with 33 of the candidates who contested the eight Scottish seats in the E.E.C. Elections. Of these 9 were sympathetic to rail; 2 were not sure and 2 acknowledged for a reply later. 20 did not reply. Of the replies received no respondent disagreed with our point that U.K. railways are worse treated than those on the Continent and none took exception to our suggestion that "those wishing to work for the railways are complementary to those wishing to travel on them and, given appropriate book-keeping the complementarity could be realised with a modest demand on other resources.

One reply in particular warrants quoting:- "I particularly agree with your point that pressure to reduce staff arises from an outdated form of accountancy. It is far better to employ people to provide a necessary public service than to have them on the dole...." The Branch proposes to continue correspondence with its MEPs in the hope that discussion on a European level can release us from the ingrained habits epitomised by the standard union response of industrial action as a solution to all problems which confront them .... however meritorious may be their case.

The Branch has also been active in the Strathclyde Region in opposition to motorway schemes such as the M80, Stepps Bypass and another which would effectively sever the Parkhead railway solum (Maryville to West of Fullarton). It also argues that the time to consider more motorway schemes would be after the filling of the conspicuous gap in the railway network — namely St. Enoch/Bridge/St. John's link.

Meanwhile the threat to the Settle — Carlisle line is not forgotten north of the border and at the time of writing objections have been lodged by Central Regional Council and Roxburgh, W. Lothian and Edinburgh District Councils. Finally the much-heralded introduction of a rival coach service between Inverness and Wick / Thurso by Merlin Express (reported in our last issue) appears to have fallen on its face as the operator has suddenly "ceased to operate" for reasons which we have so far been unable to ascertain!!!!

### R.D.S. CHRISTMAS CARDS STILL AVAILABLE

Following response to the advert in the last issue of R.D.N. it has been found necessary to obtain a further supply of the R.D.S. Christmas Cards, published in 1983, to meet orders received and a further 1,000 have now been printed.

Approximately 2-300 remain in stock so there is still time to get some and your orders would be welcome by I.G. Crighton, 19, Oakdale Avenue, Kenton, Harrow, Middx. HA3 0QJ. Cards are £1.50 per doz. (incl. envelopes, p.&p.). Please make cheques payable to RDS (London & Home Counties).

(Members Platform continued)

used to sell products to the broadest spectrum of rail advocacy — except the streamlined.

I suspect that Eddy Graves has a second edition copy of "Bring Back the Trains" which has misconstrued the Logo — its concept got lost between my drawing board and the printers. Consequently the communication, by subliminal means, of what RDS is about was not effected.

The weakness of the "Wheel and Flash" design is that, except to initiates, it fails to convey our association with railways. Worse, it commits RDS to a form of traction which sells solutions not to the problems of the rail customer but to those of the railway operator. If you don't believe me ask yourself how electrification will solve the problems of London Transport's customers. But that's another story.

Lyndon Elias  
Slough, Berks.

### "Bullet & Branch Trains in Japan"

Sir,

Recently, I travelled by the Government owned 'Bullet Train' from Tokyo to Kyoto en route to a town called Nara where the Select Committee on Energy met research experts from Japanese industry. What made it so special to one of the most pro-rail MPs at Westminster is that at Kyoto one leaves the Bullet Train and takes a private railway, — yes, a private railway, for the one hour journey to Nara.

The train was full and spotless. It is a branch line from Kyoto Terminus to Nara and, when the train arrived in Kyoto, the

doors opened to let the people out and were then locked for a few moments. A lady whisked through each coach collecting the refuse and cleaning the carriage, the doors re-opened, we boarded and a hostess handed out cool towels. The same lady, a few minutes later, came down the train offering soft drinks and sandwich style refreshments.

The Japanese like to practice their English and a young couple sitting beside me in the Pullman type car told me that this is a flourishing line run at a profit because it runs both for local traffic on a timetable which ties in with the National Railway to Tokyo and Hiroshima. In essence, it takes visitors to Nara which is the old Capital and something of a holiday resort, commuters from Nara into the bigger towns like Kyoto and connecting passengers to the big Cities.

The units are two or four carriage diesels and I have never been in so clean or so pleasant a conveyance. My new found friends told me that nobody bothers to drive from Nara to Kyoto by car — the railway is clean, reasonably priced and always on time. An object lesson for railways on this side of the World and especially for endangered Branch Lines.

Tony Speller MP,  
House of Commons  
London SW1 0AA

### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The Editor will consider for publication letters and articles (such as the above). Any opinions expressed, however, must not be taken as necessarily reflecting the views of the Society.



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RAILWAY DEVELOPMENT NEWS is edited by Keith Willson, 11a, Aspinall Road, London S.E.4.

Sub-Editor: A. Bevan, 12, Morris Field Croft, Hall Green, Birmingham, B28 0RN.

Circulation Manager: to whom any advice of non-receipt etc., of R.D.N. should be sent: J.W. Barfield, 108 Berwick Road, London E16 3DS.

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# IN PARLIAMENT

No. 22

SEPTEMBER 1984

Selected extracts from parliamentary questions and speeches in the period up to the summer recess. Commons 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, L/A = Liberal/Alliance.

An asterisk denotes the reply was given orally.

## Morpeth crash showed strength and stability of BR coaches

*Mr. Mitchell* made a statement on the derailment of the sleeping car train from Aberdeen on the Morpeth curve. This was in reply to a private notice question from *Peter Snape* (Lab. West Bromwich East) the day after the accident, which was on Tuesday night.

**JUNE 25\*** *Mr. Mitchell:* The accident involving the 19.50 train from Aberdeen to London, occurred on the tight curve to the south of Morpeth station at about 20 minutes to 1 o'clock early yesterday. There were 76 passengers and a number of railway staff on board. Initially 38 people were taken to hospital, but by Sunday morning only three men, all railway staff, were still detained. None of them was seriously injured.

The train left the rails near the start of the curve, which has a permanent speed restriction of 50 mph. It continued across the other line and down the embankment, turning on its side in the process. It struck two dwellings. The cause of the accident seems to have been excessive speed on entering the curve. The reason for this has not yet been established.

### Previous derailment was more serious

*Mr. Snape:* I ask the minister to reflect on his statement that the cause of the crash appears to be excessive speed. As his department has appointed an inspector to investigate the cause of the accident, are we not in danger of prejudging the issue? Is it true that the site of the accident was that of an even more dangerous one in 1969? Do you know of any plans to ease the curvature and increase the speed limit? Will the inquiry be held in public? Will there be compensation for householders whose property was damaged? Finally, the rolling stock. Despite the apparent severity of the accident, every passenger has been released from hospital. Is that not a credit to BR Engineering Ltd. which built the rolling stock?

*Mr. Mitchell:* A derailment took place on this stretch of line on May 7 1969. The inspecting officer concluded that the accident was caused by a lapse of concentration on the part of the driver. It would be wrong for me to speculate further on the cause of this latest accident. As to proposals for altering the line, we should await

the result of the inquiry. Claims for compensation are met by BR, which has a good record for doing so responsibly.

The rolling stock was some of the new sleeping car stock. I agree that it has been shown to have great strength. That is a matter on which those at BR Engineering who built it should be congratulated.

### Time should not be made up at expense of safety

*Conal Gregory* (Con. York) asked the Minister to see that no pressure was put on BR management, as a result of the investigation, to tell staff to make up time. "If it is found that someone is falling behind time, it should not be made up at the expense of safety."

*Mr. Mitchell* replied that the safety record of BR was outstanding. Whether disciplinary procedures in relation to late trains might or might not be a contributory factor was a question for the inquiry.

*John Ryman* (Lab. Blyth Valley) said that the 1969 disaster had involved six people being killed and 120 injured on the same curve, so had any steps been taken to make the curve less dangerous? And why had the minister expressed an opinion on the possible cause of the disaster?

### Rail safety compared with other options

*Mr. Mitchell* replied that the train in the previous accident was also travelling south and would have passed speed indications saying "reduce to 80 miles an hour," then to 70, then to 50 miles an hour. Operating instructions should therefore be adequate, but it might be better to leave these matters to the inquiry.

*Robert Adley* (C. Christchurch) said it was an unspoken compliment to BR's safety record that accidents such as this were occasions for a private notice question, whereas 16 people were killed and 900 maimed every day on our roads. When would we impose the same safety standards on road users as BR was forced to impose on its trains?

*Mr. Mitchell* replied that he took the point and did not think he was expected to give a detailed answer. It was a sign how safe rail travel was compared with other options.

*Michael Meadowcroft* (L/A Leeds West) asked if any automatic train control device was available to give audible warning of excessive speed. In view of the security and amazing stability of the coaches made by BREL, would there be any impact on other services from lack of availability of those vehicles?

*Mr. Mitchell* said the non-availability of stock was a matter for BR management, but he would draw their attention to the MP's concern. The inquiry would take place in July and results would be published as soon as they were available.

*Roland Boyes* (Lab. Houghton and Washington) asked the minister to withdraw his "outrageous and scandalous remark" about the accident appearing to be due to excessive speed. The Opposition would be happier if he did.

*Mr. Mitchell* replied: "I cannot unsay what I have said. I am advised that I have given correct information. We already know that there was no track failure."

*Tam Dalyell* (Lab. Linlithgow) said that as a regular user of the line he would like to know when repairs would be completed. The Minister had handsomely congratulated BREL on its excellent workmanship; should they not think again about putting work to outside contractors that had been traditionally done by BREL?

*Mr. Mitchell* replied that the line should be open to traffic the next morning: BR should be congratulated on that. Meanwhile trains were being diverted by the Blythe Tyne line, adding one hour to the journey.

*Frank Dobson* (Lab. Holborn & St. Pancras) intervened to say "It's a good thing the line is still there."

*Mr. Mitchell* said as there was no programme of major route closures it was no surprise that the line was still there. It did not matter whether the purchase of rolling stock was from one firm or another: the specifications were those of BR's own designs.

*Dr. John Marek* (Lab. Wrexham) asked if all new BR rolling stock would be of the same design and strength as that that crashed.

*Mr. Mitchell:* "I cannot conceivably give that assurance."

## Bromley wants more through trains

**APRIL 30\*** *Roger Sims* (C. Chislehurst) raised the subject of reduced services on the branch line from Grove Park to Bromley North in the summer timetable, on the motion for the adjournment. As it was by then 3 am, the debate actually took place on May 1.

Hitherto there had been five through trains from Bromley North to Charing Cross or Cannon Street at peak hours, Mr. Sims said. At other times there was a shuttle service to Grove Park. Now there would be only one through train morning and evening and a shuttle service the rest of the time. "Train services are our life blood. We have no Underground."

*Mr. Mitchell* replied that there had been changes in the travel pattern and that the number of passengers coming into central London by Southern Region in peak hours had declined by over 12% in the past four years. Timetable changes were also a response to recommendations of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission.

It was inevitable that some services were reduced where demand had fallen, but where demand was high or likely to increase, improvements were planned. For example, the new non-stop Victoria-Gatwick service made Gatwick the nearest airport to Westminster in terms of time. BR's decision to withdraw through services reflected the fact that these trains were much more lightly loaded than those on other routes at the same time of day. Peak loading in the rush hour could be as low as 36%, so a better distribution of the service on other parts of the network was reasonable.

It was true that some of Mr. Sims's constituents would get a seat at Bromley North or Sundridge Park, and having trooped over the footbridge at Grove Park would then have to stand all the way into London. But the overcrowding problem was not as bad as was sometimes made out. BR estimated that from May 14 only two trains leaving Grove Park in the peak hours would be loaded beyond their seating capacity.

### 'Improvements taking place all the time'

This did not mean that only two trains would have standing passengers. Trains could often be packed at the front, when there were still empty seats at the back. "I look on BR to be prepared to make further adjustments if experience suggests that would be appropriate. In the Board's 1983 annual report, published on April 18, the BR chairman emphasised the need to satisfy the customer by giving value for money: improving the match between supply and demand, to improve the efficiency of its operations and make room for improved standards of service.

"Substantial investment in the southern region is designed to improve services on the commuter network. Later this morning I shall open an important new stage in the Brighton resignalling project at a total cost of about £120 million.

Smaller scale investments take place all the time to improve information facilities for passengers, to improve standards of cleanliness on trains and to carry out improvements to stations and station facilities."

### Chunnel — Govt. will only give political guarantees

**JUNE 18\*** *Dr. John Marek* (Lab. Wrexham) asked the Minister when he expected to meet his French opposite number to discuss the report on finance for a fixed cross channel link.

*Mr. Ridley* replied that he was in regular contact with the French Minister and would have further discussions when they had assessed reactions to the report.

*Dr. Marek* asked if the Minister realised that such a project needed Government encouragement and commitment.

*Mr. Ridley* said: "we must give the interested groups time to come forward with proposals. If any group has proposals that do not involve either Government funding or guarantees of an economic or commercial nature, we shall certainly consider them sympathetically and try to assist. The Government are prepared to give only political guarantees and to assist with such things as treaties with the French and other risks that might be involved in construction." The Government were not contemplating giving one penny of taxpayers' money.

### Private sector must have fully developed plans

*Gordon Wilson* (Scottish National Party, Dundee East) said an effect of the link would be to create jobs in Northern France and the south-east of England. Would it not be right to give priority to improving transport communications generally and providing a common transport subsidy? That would enable firms in Scotland and the north of England and Northern Ireland to market goods in the EEC without facing the crippling cost of transport.

*Mr. Ridley* replied that there was already a cross-Firth link in the Tay bridge, serving his part of Scotland. "I am not sure that it would be right to give advantages in the form of money or guarantees to those who want a fixed Channel link as opposed to those who wish to provide ships and ferries to carry our trade to Europe.

*Roger Moate* (C. Faversham) said that at an early stage the Government would want to settle all the speculation and uncertainty. What was the time scale involved?

*Mr. Ridley* replied that the Government would need to give statutory treaty and access facilitation on this side of the Channel.

*Robert Hughes* (Lab. Aberdeen North): "What does that mean?"

*Mr. Ridley*: "Building the roads or railways that lead to the mouth of the tunnel. The private sector must come forward with

fully developed plans before we can work out a time scale.

*Donald Anderson* (Lab. Swansea East) asked if the Government would in no case give financial assistance but stand aloof from the project, even at the risk of its foundering yet again.

*Mr. Ridley*: "It will be necessary to agree a treaty with the French and to examine the maritime and navigational risks to ensure that they are acceptable. It will probably be necessary to give a guarantee that the project will not be interrupted by political actions beyond the control of the promoters. Beyond that the Government are not prepared to go."

### New legislation for bus/rail replacement

**JUNE 21** *Michael Brown* (C. Brigg & Cleethorpes) asked what action the Minister was taking over the suggestion of the Select Committee on Transport about bus substitution for rail services.

*Mr. Ridley*, in a written reply, said it was not intended that BR should embark on a programme of major route closures, but within the context of that policy he shared the Select Committee's view that "there is a strong case for bus substitution where existing rail services are making significant operating losses and where buses can provide travellers with a reasonable alternative service at substantially lower costs."

It was essential to give travellers confidence in the continuity of substitute services. BR should be responsible for providing the services. Any bus substitute service must be of good quality, attractive, guaranteed and, where necessary, subsidised.

BR chairman welcomed the idea and had stressed that substitute bus service should be an integral part of the rail network and protected by a closure procedure comparable to that for rail services. The existing law was inadequate for this purpose. "I have decided therefore to introduce legislation at the earliest opportunity." Essential features of his proposals were, first, that no bus substitute service would be introduced before the existing statutory procedure governing rail service closure had been completed.

Secondly, where BR considered a substitute bus would offer a practical alternative to the existing rail service and provide better value, it would make clear in its closure proposal the intention to seek provision of the bus service.

Thirdly, the substitute bus service would be protected by a closure procedure similar to that for rail passenger services, so as to provide the safeguard for continuity. Fourthly, if the bus service could not be self-financing, it would be subsidised through the grant to BR for public service obligation.

## 150 light railbuses 100 DMUs on the way

**JULY 17\*** *Jack Straw* (Lab. Blackburn) opened a debate on rail communications in North-east Lancashire on the motion for the adjournment. He said that the services from Preston to Colne and the connecting service from Blackburn to Manchester were vital commuter links.

They still used diesel multiple units (DMUs) that were first introduced in 1959. They were well past their useful life, and because they were clapped out the timings had been extended. This meant that whereas before the new timetable, introduced in May, 17 of the daily services from Manchester connected at Blackburn with trains to Colne, now only 10 did so; the other seven often arrived two or three minutes after the train from Blackburn had gone.

"We will no longer accept it if the problem is shuffled off to BR. The minister holds the purse strings. We need a pledge from the Government that those two vital lines will have a long future and not be subjected to Serpell cuts."

*Peter Pike* (Lab. Burnley) said there was a great need for an improvement in the railway network in north-east Lancashire. From Burnley there was only one train an hour to Preston, which took over an hour.

*Mrs. Chalker* replied that BR had plans to renew the entire fleet of multiple units over the next few years and was working on the investment. "Since the beginning of the year we have approved investment in 150 lightweight railbuses and 100 medium-weight DMUs, together worth nearly £50 million. Those vehicles are for BR's provincial services, though it will be for BR to decide where they will be used.

"I know that BR wishes to have four further DMUs built in the near future. The Government will do their bit to create the modern and efficient railway that our people want. There have been problems since the new timetable was introduced in changing at Blackburn for Manchester. BR has received a number of complaints and has made adjustments to the timetable. Revised times have been publicised." BR was putting the operational difficulties right.

## E.C.M.L. to be electrified

**JULY 30\*** *Archy Kirkwood* (L/A Roxburgh & Berwickshire) asked for a statement on electrification of the east coast main line.

*Mr. Ridley*, in an extension of question time, replied that he had consented to electrification of the line to Edinburgh via Newcastle, together with the branch to Leeds, at a cost of £306 million at 1983 prices. A detailed and rigorous appraisal showed the proposal to be justified on its financial merits.

*Mr. Kirkwood* said the decision had been taken the previous Thursday but the announcement had been delayed till the

Monday, although it was the most important investment announcement for 25 years. Was it true that BR expected to get a real return of 7% on the investment? The Government had not contributed any money. Would the increase in productivity be passed on to passengers and freight users, and would the Minister use his good offices to ensure that the electrification proposals were implemented at the Edinburgh end as well as the London end when work started?

## Investment showed a good return

*Mr. Ridley*: When confronted with good news you can do nothing but cavil at the way it is announced. Somehow journalists got hold of the story on Friday. To cries of "leak" he replied: "Yes, there was a leak. It is pointless to deny it. I confirm that the project has passed a 7% test discount rate, which is why it is commercial. Your other questions are matters for the judgement of BR."

*Stephen Darrell* (C. Loughborough) said this welcome decision showed that the Government were prepared to stand behind good investment proposals for BR. Was it not incumbent on management and unions in BR to deliver the goods they promised?

*Mr. Ridley* said it should be seen as a triumph for BR to have improved its productivity to the point where it could make this investment pay.

*Robert Hughes* (Lab. Aberdeen North) asked what consideration had been given to extending electrification to Aberdeen.

*Mr. Ridley* said BR had not applied for the further extension.

*Dr. Brian Mawhinney* (C. Peterborough) thanked the Minister on behalf of his constituents for his insistence on getting the right proposals before acting.

*Mr. Ridley* said increased expenditure on infrastructure seemed to be cavilled at by the Opposition but not by Conservatives.

*Merlyn Rees* (Lab. Morley & Leeds South) said that to talk about a branch line from Doncaster to Leeds was to denigrate the most important city in Yorkshire. Should there not be an electrified link between York and Leeds?

*Alexander Pollock* (C. Moray) said that if this investment was successful, logically they could look forward to further electrification, extending to north-east Scotland.

*Mr. Ridley* replied that the Government approved this investment as it showed a good rate of return. This would continue to be the criterion in deciding whether further electrification was justified. "I do not want it to be taken as a green light for electrification everywhere.

*Peter Snape* (Lab. West Bromwich East): "Why have we not seen the inter-city strategy report, of which this proposal was merely a small part? Can you guarantee the future of railway workers at

York, Crewe and Derby?" Would their fate be similar to that of the workers at Shildon and Swindon who, despite being praised for their productivity not so long ago, had now been given a ticket for the dole queue?

*Mr. Ridley* replied that the inter-city strategy had been received and approved and that BR would soon publish a copy, which did not include commercially sensitive information. "I have not yet received the board's review of the future of BREL."

## LT: fares 'might need to rise'

**JULY 30\*** *Tony Banks* (Lab. Newham north-west) asked what directives the Minister had given to London Regional Transport about fares and subsidies. Would fares rise by 25% next year, and would there be a 21-million mile cut in bus mileage, a 9-million mile cut in underground mileage and a loss of 9,000 jobs?

*Mr. Ridley*: "I utterly deny all the figures you have invented."

*Hugh Dykes* (C. Harrow East) asked if the Government was enthusiastic to continue the no-smoking ban.

*Mr. Ridley*: "As a smoker myself, you put me in a corner. I must rely on the time-honoured ministerial statement that that is a matter for the Board."

*John Cartwright* (Lab. Woolwich East) asked if London Regional Transport would be able to undertake the long-overdue capital investment necessary to provide London with a modern, up-to-date, efficient transport system.

*Mr. Ridley* said that one of the advantages of being able to reduce revenue subsidies by half during the next three years was that more money would be available for capital investment, therefore improving the system.

*Toby Jessel* (C. Twickenham) said that as the buses and tubes no longer belonged to the GLC, would he ask the Chairman of LRT to take down the black posters that said "GLC working for London" and replace them with red ones saying "GLC working for Moscow."

*Mr. Ridley* said the posters arose out of a contract between LT as it was and the GLC. "If you would like to enter into a contract to advertise on the buses, the Chairman of LRT would be happy to discuss it."

*Nigel Spearing* (Lab. Newham South) asked if the Minister agreed with a report in the Standard that Mrs. Chalker has said fares would rise by 20%. The Chairman of LRT had said that under his direction it would be necessary to reduce the number of jobs by 6,000.

*Mr. Ridley* replied that he should not read headlines without reading through to the words used. Mrs. Chalker had said that although fares might need to rise roughly in line with inflation, there might have to be an initial adjustment.

## Remains of cow at crash scene

**JULY 31\*** *Mr. Mitchell* made a statement on the previous evening's fatal accident in Scotland, in reply to a private notice question from *Harry Ewing* (Lab. Falkirk East).

He said that 13 passengers were killed when the 17.30 Edinburgh to Glasgow train was derailed one mile to the west of Polmont station. A further 41 passengers and three railway staff were taken to hospital. Twenty-eight people were still detained next morning, including the driver. An inspecting officer of railways reported next morning that the remains of a cow were close to the point of the initial derailment. Neither he nor BR engineers found any fault with the track. An inquiry would be held in public and its report would be published.

*Mr. Ewing* urged that any recommendations emerging from the public inquiry should be implemented as quickly as possible, to ensure that such a tragedy was not to be repeated in another part of the country.

*Michael Hurst* (C. Strathkelvin & Bearsden) urged that as a matter of urgency BR should undertake a survey of track-side fencing, so that stray animals did not come on to the track in future.

*Malcolm Bruce* (L/A Gordon) said that a train passing along a line shortly before the crash saw a panic-stricken cow there, but, for reasons that were not clear, was not able to communicate the fact to the other train. Would the Minister ensure that this aspect was investigated?

*Dennis Canavan* (Lab. Falkirk West) said that at such times we appreciate the essential nature, value and capability of the National Health Service and the magnificent dedication of its workers.

*Mr. Mitchell* agreed.

## Safety element in push-pull working

*Dr. Norman Godman* (Lab. Greenock & Port Glasgow) said he was a former commuter on the line and two years ago was on a Glasgow-Edinburgh train when it collided with a goods train near Linlithgow. Injuries then were but a few bumps and bruises. "My question relates to BR's claim to transport passengers from one city centre to another in a very short time. Perhaps such strict timetabling places heavy demands not only on employees, but on what might prove to be ageing locomotives and rolling stock. I hope those conducting the inquiry will examine those fears, if only to allay them."

*Mr. Mitchell* said these matters would be covered by the inquiry; rail was the safest method of travel in this country.

*Robert Adley* (C. Christchurch) asked if the Minister was aware that the same method of operation (pushing from the back) was used on the Waterloo - Weymouth line. "Investigation is required as

to whether this is the cause of any problems. Finally, we should never forget that BR has a magnificent safety record, and that more people are killed daily on the roads than were killed yesterday in Falkirk."

*Mr. Mitchell* replied that the same type of propulsion was used on several lines and there had been no reports of accidents associated with it before.

*Peter Snape* (Lab. West Bromwich East) invited the Minister to comment further on the safety aspects of high-speed push-pull operation - especially in the light of the carnage of this uniquely horrific accident, compared with the lack of injuries and virtually no damage to rolling-stock at Morpeth, when a locomotive was pulling the train.

If the animal that caused the accident was on the line due to vandalism, would the Minister undertake a nationwide campaign against vandalism and trespass on BR property?

*Mr. Mitchell* replied that the safety element in push-pull rolling stock would be fully considered. As to the comparison with other accidents, the rolling stock was totally different from that at Morpeth, and no direct comparison could be drawn. He agreed about the dangers that flowed from vandalism and trespass, and if lessons arose from that in this case, they would be followed up.

## Anxiety about derailments

**AUGUST 1\*** *John McWilliam* (Lab. Blaydon) asked about a train derailment near Newcastle which occurred on the morning of the last day before the summer recess - a day given to "adjournment time" - debates on pre-arranged subjects. He was given permission to raise "such an important issue."

*Mr. Ridley* said that at 8.56 that morning the 7.45 Leeds-Edinburgh high speed train became derailed near Tyne yard signal box south of Newcastle. Initial reports were that of 200 passengers 26 had been injured. None of the injuries were believed to be serious.

The train was formed of eight passenger coaches with a power coach at each end, and was travelling, over the 40 mph slow line when the derailment occurred. Six passenger coaches and one power car were derailed; one of the coaches was on its side, another down an embankment. "It is too early to give any indication of the cause of the derailment. I shall ask the railway inspectorate to institute an inquiry".

*John Prescott* (Lab. Kingston-on-Hull East) expressed anxiety about the number and causes of derailments. He hoped the Minister would consider seriously the report of the inspector and the amount of money being spent on track and maintenance.

## HOUSE OF LORDS

**MAY 17** During the committee stage of the London Regional Transport Bill, our friend (and Vice-President) Lord Jenkins of Putney voted in favour of amendments seeking to modify the Government's proposals for setting up London Regional Transport, so that the new body would be adequately funded to enable concessions to pensioners and the disabled to be continued at the current level.

(Subsequently in the Commons the Government was persuaded to let these concessions stand.)

*Lord Pitt of Hampstead* (Lab) said that in the scheme being recommended by the Government at that stage, restrictions were to be placed on peak hour travel. These restrictions had been found unnecessary in the past and a handicap to old people. As a general practitioner he had had patients asking to see him early, so that they could then get away to catch the bus before 4 o'clock.

## PREVIEW

The most dramatic news at the moment is that of the east coast route electrification, but in the view of *Mr. Nigel Spearing* Labour MP for Newham South, other very significant developments are in the offing. If the metropolitan counties are to be abolished, how will the passenger transport executives (PTEs) be controlled? This, he suggested to me, and plans for "working together" between LT and BR under the new London Regional Transport are subjects to be carefully watched.

Because of the outward movement of London's population, he said rush hour congestion on the tubes and commuter lines is less today than formerly, no matter how heavy it may still appear. Yet the London regional rail network has large fixed costs, regardless of how much it is used. Hence the value of extending the availability of travel cards to all London lines, and at the same time a new and better all-London rail map was badly needed.

A Peer whose railway interests are also strongest in the London area is Lord Jenkins, who tells me he is always on the side of the railways, having been an old friend of "Monty" Banks, our late President. He would like to have been more successful, he says to opposing the transfer of LT to a new authority, and hopes to have better luck in, at very least, modifying the legislation proposed to put an end to the GLC and Metropolitan counties.

JE

After browsing through these Notes readers will no doubt appreciate the irony of complaints about cuts in the train services from Bromley - the very place where the whole "Fares Fair" controversy started!!!