

Goole – Gilberdyke: More Borrowed Time?

As reported in our last issue, closure of the Settle–Carlisle line has, thanks to a campaign in which RDS and users' groups played no small part, been delayed. The establishment of the right to object by users travelling over the line rather than from stations threatened by closure has set an important precedent which will prove useful in future campaigns against closures. The long term future of the line is, of course, by no means secure and further intense efforts are needed to retain it.

The costs of a fixed structure, Ribbleshead Viaduct, which has suffered from a complete lack of any acceptable form of preventive maintenance, are largely responsible for the closure proposal.

There are similarities between the case of Settle–Carlisle and that of Goole–Gilberdyke. Here a fixed structure, the Goole swing bridge over the River Ouse, has suffered from repeated damage by ships and the projected cost of repairs is the principal reason for the closure proposal.

With the good news that B.R. and Humberside County Council have finally managed to agree that a payment of £800,000 from Humberside County Council to BR would ensure repairs it might seem that, if the meeting of Humberside County Council (taking place at a time of going to press) agrees on payment of this sum, then the line is saved. This is not necessarily so even though the reasons against closure are legion.

The line is double track with continuous welded rail and colour light signalling, money has recently been spent on providing Saltmarshe with deep drainage, and new cabling, costing £25,000 has been installed across the river.

The proposed alternative rail route between Doncaster and Selby has semaphore signalling controlled from manual boxes; IC125 trains would share this route with the replacement service leading to potential delays to both services. Furthermore, a swing bridge at Selby on this alternative route is presumably also prone to damage by passing vessels. Saltmarshe station, whether served by a truncated Goole–Gilberdyke line or by a replacement bus service would suffer from a marked deterioration in service and there is a possibility that it will be closed whether the line survives or not.



The much battered bridge at Goole.

Photo. Graham Wragg.

To cap all this the demolition costs of the Goole bridge are estimated at £1 million and B.R. are obliged to carry out this work should the line close.

Closure of this line, therefore, makes no economic sense. B.R. were prepared to pay out a million pounds in 1974 to keep it open but are now prepared to do so again only after intense pressure. The only possible rational reason for closure is the repeated damage to the Goole swing bridge by passing ships. There have been 19 such incidents in just over ten years for which B.R. has received meagre compensation – after the worst previous incident in 1973, mentioned above, B.R. spent a million pounds on repairs and received £15,016 compensation from the shipowners in return.

This is the nub of the problem. Even given good will to keep the line open on the part of B.R. (which, considering their apparently less than enthusiastic efforts to obtain either adequate compensation from shipowners, money from the EEC or Government funding towards replacement of such infrastructures, might seem doubtful) it is surely not their business to have to meet the cost of repairing damage which is no fault of

B.R. whatsoever. Neither should it be the business of the ratepayers of Humberside to come to B.R.'s rescue although, of course, given the circumstances, this intervention is much appreciated.

The liability of shipowners for damage done by their vessels needs to be increased. There are moves afoot to effect this but apparently such changes need ratification by all EEC member countries and could take several years. Even then the maximum liability for damage such as cited here would still be of the order of tens of thousands of pounds rather than hundreds of thousands.

This then is the unsatisfactory state of affairs regarding this line. Even if Humberside County Council pay B.R. £800,000 and the bridge is repaired there is still no guarantee that another ship will not hit it the day after these are completed – in which case the whole sorry business will have to be gone through again.

Much valuable work has been done by the Goole and District Railway Action Committee to save this line but, as in the case of Settle–Carlisle, the campaign is far from over. We must press for reform of the marine insurance laws and continue to fight against the closure of

Saltmarsh. Only when these aims are achieved can this otherwise profitable and socially and strategically useful line be considered secure against closure.
K.W.

BRITAIN'S GAIN, BOTSWANA'S LOSS

The Botswana Government has awarded a £625,000 contract to a British consultancy group to study the feasibility of building a railway across the Kalahari Desert for a distance of some 1400km. This is great news for British expertise and contractors if the project materialises but, wait for it, the bad news is that the group concerned is Henderson-Travers Morgan. A certain Alfred Goldstein of Serpell Report fame is leading the study.

Perhaps, as there is a lot of sand to spare, the answer will be that Botswana should build a concrete highway.

Leslie Freitag

A PRESSURE GROUP BY ANY OTHER NAME

Following the suggestion of a correspondent to RDN last year this journal, formerly "Railway Development News", now sports the title "Railwatch". After discussion of this possible new title by the RDN Editorial Board it was forwarded to the RDS National Executive, who approved the change of name at a meeting on 9th February.

The Society's public image relies heavily on the names it chooses for itself and its publications. There have been attempts to change the "Railway Development Society" to "Rail Development Campaign" and "Rail Development Society", the latter being rejected at the special general meeting of February 9th. The present name has in its favour that, given the growing status and effectiveness of RDS, a change of name at this crucial stage in its development would serve to confuse those who deal with the Society. This name, however, appears to present an image to some people of a group of steam preservationists and railway enthusiasts, which is the very image we wish to avoid.

Controversy over the name of the Society will doubtless continue for as long as it exists. RDS's predecessors, dating from the early fifties, bore the titles "Society for the Retention of Unremunerative Branch Lines in the U.K." (SRUBLUK), "Railway Invigoration Society" and "Railway Development Association", at least the first of which appears rather quaint in the super-hype PR world of the eighties. The state of play, as from this issue, is that "Railwatch" is the journal of the "Railway Development Society", which new title, we hope, will find favour both among members and the organisations with which we have dealings.

K.W.

Marylebone Inquiry postponed following threat of legal proceedings!

Shortly after a meeting held at Brent Town Hall on 30th January between representatives of 6 local authorities (G.L.C., London Boroughs of Brent, Ealing, Harrow, Hillingdon and Bucks. County Council) at which RDS and the local users' groups (Marylebone Travelers' and Aylesbury & District Rail Users') were represented the London Regional Passengers' Committee announced its intention to cancel the 3-day hearing (due for 25th-27th February) into the closure of Marylebone and the lines to Harrow and Northolt Junctions including the stations at Wembley Complex, Sudbury & Harrow Road, Sudbury Hill and Northolt Park.

The reason for this was undoubtedly the resolution (passed at such meeting) by Brent Council (and the other named authorities) to seek a judicial review in the High Court should satisfactory assurances not be forthcoming from the L.R.P.C. as to the way it intended to conduct the proceedings, in particular the right of objectors to cross-examine the witnesses from British Rail. The sought for assurances not being forthcoming the above named unanimously resolved to seek an injunction to restrain the proceedings. Further comment at this stage would be inappropriate but it is understood that June is now the earliest date that such hearings could be re-convened.

In the meantime RDS is supporting the joint initiative of the Association of Metropolitan Authorities and the County Councils Association (reported in the

January issue of "Modern Railways" at p.6, col.3) to seek a revision of the statutory procedures on rail closures which have remained largely unchanged since the enactment of Sec.56 of the Transport Act 1962 - at the beginning of the Beeching Era. The two Associations are proposing that at public hearings discussions should also be allowed on wider issues (than just "hardship") such as freight traffic, recent financial performance, including revenue the line may generate for other parts of the system, scope for improving financial performance, the role of the railways in the local community, national and government policies and the interdependence of lines within networks, both regional and national.

These issues are likely to be subject of a presentation to M.P.s a... Peers being organised by the Society's Parliamentary Committee within the next month or so; the RDS Re-openings Campaign and the inadequacy of Bus/Rail replacement being the other main topics. As members will see from items elsewhere in this (and previous issues) the tide seems to be turning against the Serpell approach to railways and we hope that 1985 will be the year in which the folly of continual cuts and closures will finally be realised and people will be persuaded to "TRY THE TRAIN AGAIN"!

The future of British Railways lies through DEVELOPMENT - and that includes construction of a rail-based Channel Tunnel - WHICH SHOULD BE BUILT NOW!

Any member interested in helping to compile such a book for another area should contact Trevor Garrod at 10 Clapham Road, Lowestoft NR32 1RQ.

TRAIN AND BIKE

In 1983 and 1984 several RDS members undertook sponsored cycle rides which, apart from being fun (sic!), were useful publicity and fund-raising events.

Friends of the Earth have designated May 11th-19th 1985 as National Bike Week and we hope to participate in this.

Thursday May 16th is set aside for events publicising bicycles and public transport and could be used by local RDS branches for publicising the bikes on trains facilities (or, in some places, lack of it!).

Sunday May 12th is set aside for rallies and sponsored rides; we in RDS hope to organise at least a couple of such rides to places that we are trying to get back on to the railway map. At the time of writing plans are to ride to Winslow (Bucks) and Corby (Northants) from their nearest railheads (at least ten miles away) and back.

FREIGHT REPORT

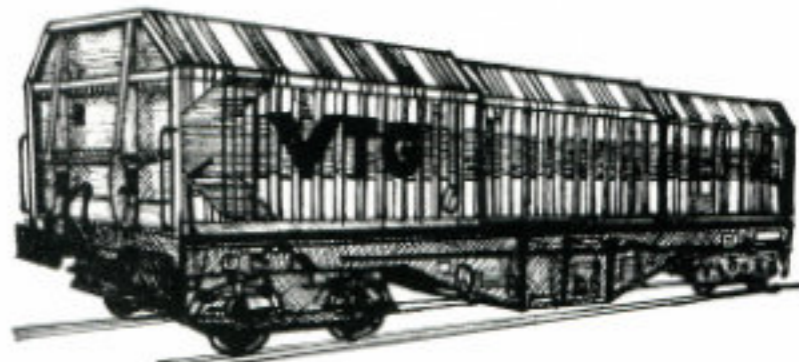
The Freight Sub-Committee has met at regular two-monthly intervals 26 times since its inauguration. Many freight topics have been discussed and pursued via BR, companies, county councils and private wagon operators. Although much of the work is done in confidence and cannot be published, members will perhaps be interested in three or four "sample" items from recent agendas.

At the last meeting in St. Ives, Cambridgeshire, we met a member of the U.K. management team of V.T.G. (U.K.) Ltd. This firm provides an excellent example of the large amount of private capital being invested in B.R. and the confidence private industry has in the developing "Speedlink" network. The manager of V.T.G. detailed the background of the German parent company, emphasising that the U.K. operation has justify its own operations separately from its massive progenitor. The V.T.G. German company operates 25,000 rail tank and bulk wagons, 7,000 rail tank containers, 2 wagon repair shops, 64 river-going vessels and also off-shore oil supply facilities. The managing industrial group "Preussag" has a world turnover of £200 million.

By contrast, V.T.G. (U.K.) is a small operation in terms of employees and relatively small in terms of wagons. The U.K. operation really started in 1977 when it became clear that B.R. was committed to some kinds of wagon-load traffics. The company then invested in wagons of continental design which were far ahead of their U.K. equivalents of that time. The gradual build-up of the fleet matched the traffic growth, which was at first slow but is now healthy and accelerating. At first 140 "Type One" four axle vans were built, soon to be followed by a "Type Two" variant of which 210 are now in service. Their 52 to 55 tonne load capacity, together with B.R.'s excellent "Speedlink" service, makes them very popular. Additionally 70 steel coil carriers, with telescopic hoods, were built and have proved very popular with the British steel industry. As a result 80 more are in course of construction and delivery will commence from April 1985. On completion of this delivery V.T.G. (U.K.) will have 505 high capacity vehicles in their U.K. fleet.

These wagons serve two distinct markets; one is the more obvious U.K.-Continent-U.K. route, on which vehicles display the title "V.T.G.-Ferrywagon", the other is the growing internal U.K. market. B.R. and V.T.G. cooperate in allocating the most suitable wagons to new traffics in internal U.K. workings.

On U.K.-Continental work the rates and volume of traffic reflect the weakness of the U.K. economy - the rates are higher and traffics stronger INTO



Britain. The rates for "southbound" traffic, where traffic volumes are lower, have to be flexible. It is, however, encouraging to learn that export traffic by rail is growing.

It was also encouraging to learn how closely the private wagon operators work with B.R. representatives and of the high regard the private operators have for the acumen of B.R. reps. In fact it was stated that B.R.'s operation and marketing LEADS Europe in many ways, but, unfortunately, not in volume. Encouraging too is the large investment in British gauge wagons not only by V.T.G. but also by Cargowaggon, Danzas, Transfesa and the various national rail systems. The Freight Sub-Committee are, needless to say, in touch with these other private wagon operators and also give them the leads that you have sent in for traffic potential.

More good news is the positive development of rock salt traffic by British Rail - this traffic was virtually all road-bound until recently. The RDS Freight Sub-Committee has been instrumental in encouraging B.R. to carry on the good work of expansion. As a result of an odd reply from Hampshire County Council to one of our member's periodic enquiries as to the council's attitude to rail freight (we urge councils to do something positive about putting their own freight on to rail instead of writing about it piously in structure plans) we surveyed every council in Britain about their rock salt supplies. Nearly all replied copiously, with the result that we were able to present a detailed paper on the possibilities of the expansion of the traffic from Winsford, Cheshire, to all parts of Britain.

B.R.'s Liverpool freight office had already expanded the traffic to Scotland's Regional Councils; Steve Wilkinson and George Boyle of the Freight Sub-Committee were invited to Liverpool to discuss the paper and were given a description of the very positive efforts B.R. now make to develop this traffic. There are also problems - not the least of these being corrosion in wagons and short circuiting of track circuits! We were very encouraged by a recent 'phone call from Liverpool, telling us that the first train load to Cambridgeshire for many years was about to arrive at St. Neots. Other consignments have gone to various southern counties. All

kinds of wagons have been pressed into service, including the two axle container flats as well as new containers built for the move into "Speedlink" by domestic coal traffic from England to Scotland.

Our news is not always good. A most worrying loss is the transfer to road of the brick traffic at Stewartby - this traffic was previously moved by "Freightliner" to King's Cross and Garston. Alerted by the excellent, very active, Bedford-Bletchley Line Users' Group, we joined them in a concerted action by writing to the London Brick Company, Bedfordshire County Council, Local M.P.s and Parish Councils. Beds.C.C. were alarmed about the huge increase in lorry traffic and made strenuous efforts to get the L.B.C. to change its mind - to no avail. The Freight Sub-Committee offered several ideas for rail alternatives - again to no avail. It is ironic that the C.E.G.B. is offering to buy property or give large double glazing grants to villages on the "temporary" lorry route to the projected Sizewell Power Station - lorry movements which will be equivalent to those to be permanent in the Bedford area. The C.E.G.B. has also offered to use rail for construction traffic. It is a pity that the L.B.C. has so little concern for its environment.

To end on a good note. It is pleasing that B.R. is responding to the rapidly growing timber industry in Scotland, where the great forests are now maturing. Many timber loads, for which all kinds of wagons have been pressed into service, are reported to be passing through Preston.

P. Wakefield (F.S.C. member)

SPEEDLINK

An article by Philip Beresford in the "Sunday Times" of 27th January 1985 caused apprehension among some "Speedlink" customers by speculating that the future of the "Speedlink" service was at risk because of financial losses due to the miners' strike. An enquiry by Peter Wakefield of the RDS Freight Sub-Committee to B.R. showed that this suggestion was entirely without foundation and that it had prompted B.R.'s Railfreight section to send a circular, stating that B.R. had no intention of withdrawing from "Speedlink", to its customers at the end of January.

MEMBERS' PLATFORM

Where RDS has succeeded

Sir,

A correspondent in your December issue suggests that RDS "has not really been successful" in publicising itself or convincing prospective members of its effectiveness or that it has "an effective and convincing campaign strategy".

As a member of the Society (and one of its predecessors) since 1968, I can assure recently joined members that RDS is more successful than it used to be.

Since 1978 we have published six books and at least a dozen different leaflets nationally; we now have a full page in every issue of "Rail Enthusiast", thanks to Leslie Freitag, and I have personally lost count of the number of radio and television broadcasts I have done since 1975.

Membership has trebled in six years, which indicates that we are getting through to more prospective members than we used to - but there is still plenty of room for improvement.

We do have a strategy - but perhaps the National Committee (or, dare I say it, the RDN Editorial board?) has not communicated this fully to the membership. For the record, that strategy includes:

(a) Building a structure of 15 regional branches (we have 10 so far and at least 2 more are due to be formed in early 1985).

(b) Forming users' groups on all secondary routes (more than 40 such groups have been formed since 1978).

(c) Systematic contact with MPs through our recently created Parliamentary Liaison Committee.

(d) Regular contact with BR management and unions nationally and structuring our specialist sub-committees (on Freight, Inter-City passenger etc.) to facilitate this.

(e) Taking every opportunity to comment on consultative documents issued by local and national government.

(f) Publicising railguides (e.g. to East Anglia and Lincolnshire) to persuade a non-enthusiast audience that rail travel - and, we hope, RDS - is a good thing.

(g) An Anti-Closure Fund and a strategy to fight cuts, which we have put into effect over March-Spalding, Settle-Carlisle, Goole-Gilberdyke and elsewhere.

Trevor Garrod
Lowestoft, Suffolk

Liverpool Street - Colchester

Sir,

As a society with the interests of railways at heart and apparently with the ear of British Rail, is there nothing we can do about the appalling service on the Liverpool Street to Colchester route?

Trains run on time perhaps once a week; they are half an hour late at Chelmsford several times a week and

there is a major disruption (derailment, fire, overhead lines down), causing delays of one hour or more, at least once a month. This, added to the generally decrepit state of stations and rolling stock, is hardly calculated to attract people to the railways. I am seriously thinking of moving house just to get away from it.

I realise that these problems are partly a consequence of lack of investment and spending on maintenance (a visit to W.Germany last summer showed me how a railway can be run given adequate commitment), but many of the problems appear to be due to operating methods exacerbated by a total lack of crisis management. The staff on the spot do their best (apart from the ones who don't turn up at all) but they usually have no information on what is happening or what action should be taken to alleviate the problem.

It is enough to turn a railway enthusiast into a busway supporter!

N. Ward
Chelmsford, Essex

South London Line Under Threat?

Sir,

There are ominous signs that the next London rail link to be threatened with closure could well be the South London Line from Victoria to London Bridge via Denmark Hill. Until a year ago this line had a regular service throughout the day but, in May 1984 this was drastically cut to Monday to Friday peak hours only, with no trains at all at weekends. Furthermore, of the trains that DO still run, a number start or terminate short of Victoria at Battersea Park, necessitating an inconvenient change there, while some trains have a booked wait of several minutes at Denmark Hill, resulting in an irritating extension of journey times. All these factors combine to make the line less and less attractive to passengers.

The two stations worst hit by the rundown are Wandsworth Road and Clapham, neither of which is served by any other trains. The decline is most marked at Clapham, which is now unstaffed, ill-lit and semi-derelict (despite part of it being a listed building) and now virtually devoid of shelter since the removal of the platform canopy. Despite this being a well-populated area the morning service here consists of a mere four trains in one direction and five in the other, at half-hour intervals. For some reason the first few trains of the day don't stop there at all. On these terms the station cannot hope to compete with Clapham North tube station just across the road, although, between them, these two stations provide a seldom-advertised but potentially quite useful BR/LT interchange.

I have written to BR about the sorry state of affairs on this line but, frankly, their reply gives little cause for optimism. The familiar signs of "progressive" rundown are already apparent. My view is that, if we are not careful, this will be the next London route to "get the chop".

Graham Larkbey
London SW17

(It is sad that the service cuts mentioned by Mr. Larkbey virtually coincided with the rebuilding of the burnt-out station building at Denmark Hill as a highly popular "real ale" pub. There was surely an opportunity here to increase rail use by means of an imaginative advertising campaign. Unfortunately Denmark Hill station does not even exhibit its name or a BR sign and even local people have been known to express surprise when told that it is still open! ED)

RDS in Wales

Sir,

I always enjoy and look forward to reading RDN. Regarding issue No.22 may I suggest that you make the front cover as attractive as possible by using photographs illustrating current rail development. As RDN is the mouthpiece of the Society it should have a striking cover, particularly when it is sent to M.P.s, V.I.P.s etc. I find it stimulating to see pictures of special trains and locomotives as it includes positive action by RDS. Please continue this feature!

On the 8th December last year I attended a well supported meeting called "RDS in Wales" in the area manager's office at Shrewsbury station. It was disappointing to learn that we have c. 30 or so members in Wales. In order to increase support why don't we introduce a cheaper subscription in the hope that we can persuade people to renew at the full rate? Or form line groups letting people join at a rate of, say, £1? Again this might stimulate more growth. We need RDS everywhere, particularly in Wales!

Chris Magner
Bridgenorth, Shropshire

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 official views of the Society. The Editor also reserves the right to make "cuts" and other alterations which retain the sense of the original copy.

We are always pleased to receive good quality black & white prints of subjects of interest to members for inclusion in the journal.

LONDON & HOME COUNTIES

As reported elsewhere in this issue RDS (London & Home Counties) has been given a respite from the un-ending round of rail-closure inquiries with the deferment of the L.R.P.C. hearing into the closure of Marylebone, until the Summer, which should enable it to develop its arguments against this short-sighted proposal more extensively. At the time of writing a Supplement by B.R. to the "Heads of Information" had only just been received by the Branch. RDS has been working in close co-operation with the local users' groups and meetings for objectors to discuss the implications, with each other and with BR were held at the end of January.

Less encouraging, however, was the news (announced 8th February) that the Minister had finally given his consent to the closure of Tunbridge Wells-Eridge, some 2 years after the T.U.C.C. Inquiry. After all this time it hardly seems worthwhile B.R. implementing the closure at all!

Meanwhile the London Regional Passengers' Committee submitted to the Secretary of State its report on the closure of Broad Street-Dalston Junction just before Christmas, largely supporting the points made by the RDS and other objectors at the Inquiry in October. In particular the call for a "High Level" station within the new complex to enable the "City Link" - the lifeline of the service - to be maintained. Unfortunately fate intervened towards the end of the year with a massive earth slip and embankment collapse at Hampstead Heath which has effectively cut the line in half, forcing BR to run a makeshift half-hourly service with a none too efficient alternative bus service between Camden Road and Willesden Junction.

The "rush-hours only" link between Camden Road and Willesden (Low Level) via Primrose Hill has, however, come into its own with an augmented all-day service to alleviate the position, but the present situation is still highly unsatisfactory and in its supplementary evidence submitted just before Christmas to the Secretary of State (on the closure of Broad Street) the Branch sought an assurance that BR would not be allowed to use it as an excuse to cut the service back even further, but also stressed the increasing age of its infrastructure and the need for greater investment to permit its proper maintenance or renewal.

The position on Stratford-Tottenham Hale also remains unclear and similar representations have been made. Notwithstanding a very successful "Train-in" was held towards the end of Sep-

REGIONAL NOTES

tember and a similar event is planned for Friday 15 March (See "RAILONDON" for full details).

Our A.G.M. at the House of Commons on 13 November mustered some 40 members; the Committee elections were something of a "cliff-hanger" worthy of the setting of the meeting but the Secretary of State for Transport apparently had other plans for our invited speakers, Peter Snape and Robert Adley, and our sponsor, Nigel Spearing, put together an impromptu talk on local transport topics. The main issues debated were the success of the £2 Senior Citizen fare, run during November, and representations to BR to repeat it have met with quite a helpful response. Meanwhile in response to another Resolution passed at the meeting a Members Forum has been arranged in London for 28 March, when, apart from the main topic "abolition of the GLC", members will be able to put down questions on Branch and Society policy on any railway matter affecting London and the South East (Branch members will have been separately notified in our Newsletter "RAILONDON").

Other meetings, including a Regional one in either Chelmsford or Tonbridge, are planned for the Spring but for the time being rail closures unfortunately tend to dominate the scene. The Branch guidebook "Kent and East Sussex by Rail" is coming along well but publication is not now planned until Spring 1986, to coincide with the completion of the electrification between Tonbridge and Hastings. Something to celebrate for a change!

John Barfield

WEST MIDLANDS

The West Midlands County Council has authorized expenditure of £250,000 to draft a Parliamentary Bill in the autumn for the initial 8-mile route of a street and underground rapid transit line. The route would run from Castle Bromwich in the east along the main Washwood Heath Road to Aston University where it would go underground to serve Snow Hill, New St. Civic Centre, and Five Ways at the west end of the city centre. Funds would be sought from the Government and the E.E.C. for its construction, which could not be completed before 1990.

To further the campaign to re-open the Cannock line the Walsall Rail Supporters have circulated a report to Councillors and the press which evidences enough usage to achieve break-even. Staffordshire County Council needs to spend a mere £197,000 to build three new stations and the report urges a positive decision. Also in January the West Midlands PTE suggested that a

new station may be built at Friar Park/Charlemont on the Walsall-Birmingham line. Since November the line's off-peak frequency has been increased to half-hourly and RDS volunteers aided publicity by producing 5,000 leaflets and distributing them around Hamstead station.

In response to our earlier suggestion, BR are now arranging two "Rail Weeks" at Redditch from 25 March to 6 April, when a Cinema Coach, two locomotives and various stands will be available. The RDS will be participating, not least to promote a Redditch-Portsmouth charter on May Day. The still increasingly popular Redditch train service will celebrate the fifth birthday of its improved timetable in May with a much enlarged car park and further service improvements.

On 18 January British Rail published formal notice of its plans to sever part of the Henley-in-Arden line and divert Stratford-upon-Avon services. Both routes would then be reduced to a 2-hourly frequency. The RDS (Midlands) will be vigorously aiding objectors and has published a new plan urging retention of the line, partly by singling but with a new semi-fast service which would retain the hourly service but would cut operating costs drastically. The RDS scheme entitled "Avon Express" has been widely circulated and it is hoped that BR can seriously consider it as an alternative to its severe and unnecessary closure plan. Objections were due to be with the T.U.C.C. for the Midlands, Room 408, Windsor House, 3 Temple Row, Birmingham, B2 5JX before 9th March. (Probably before this issue is in the hands of members ED.)

A start has been made on the long-awaited new station for Telford and from May 1986 BR hope to, start a new direct Aberystwyth-Euston intercity service using air-conditioned stock.

Alan Bevan

EAST ANGLIA

Branch Chairman, Steve Wilkinson, was interviewed on local television following the launch of "Rail Strategy for East Anglia", a major policy leaflet issued by the RDS at the end of November. Copies have gone to many people and organizations - including all local County Councillors. One result has been a meeting with a Bedfordshire County Councillor who is keen on reopening the station at Arlesey, between Hitchin and Biggleswade.

All members of Norfolk County Council Transport Committee were invited to the launch of "Rail Strategy" in Norwich, but all were obviously too busy either to attend or to send apologies. Norfolk County Council has refused to join the East Norfolk and Suffolk Rail Alliance,

saying that this would give the impression that it was not equally interested in other lines in the county.

This Alliance has been set up on the initiative of Great Yarmouth Borough Council, to be ready to fight the closure of the Reedham-Yarmouth line, if and when closure proposals are published. The Alliance is also planning to carry out surveys of users of the line in the coming months, and to promote more attractive services on it. Most Parish and District Councils affected by the line are members of the Alliance, as is RDS and, of course, the local users' group, East Norfolk Travellers' Association.

On the southern outskirts of Cromer, Roughton Road Halt (for which our Society started campaigning ten years ago) is not now expected to be open before May. The halt is being built as part of a job creation scheme, and, partly because of site access difficulties, work on it has been very spasmodic. RDS has again written expressing concern to North Norfolk District Council, which is paying for and supervising the work.

BR's Anglia East electrification scheme is making good progress and from 13 May, Ipswich should enjoy an electric train to Liverpool Street on average every 40 minutes. We look forward to celebrating the success of this service at a major RDS public meeting in Ipswich Town Hall at 2.0 p.m. on Saturday 8 June, when our guest speaker will be John Ellis, BR Assistant General Manager, Eastern Region.

On the evening of Tuesday 15 January, despite atrocious weather, there was a good attendance at an RDS public meeting in Cambridge. Mike Foulkes, BR Project Manager for the Anglia electrification scheme outlined the progress of the work, with particular reference to the Bishops Stortford-Cambridge line. He revealed that work should be complete by the end of 1986, although difficulties over power supplies from the CEGB would delay the start of electric services until May 1987. It is hoped that, after electrification, journey times from Cambridge to Liverpool Street will be reduced to 55 minutes, with further improvements following the remodelling and resignalling of Liverpool Street Station and its approaches. A new BR passenger survey and study will aim to improve services and minimize problems for passengers from north of Cambridge.

Mr Foulkes also revealed that BR is to make a fresh submission in the first half of this year to the Department of Transport on the electrification of the Cambridge-Royston line, to permit through services to King's Cross. They are confident that they have a better case than previously, and that authorization will soon be forthcoming.

Trevor Garrod

YORKSHIRE

After an 18-month battle, initiated by the Goole and District Railway Action Committee, British Rail have agreed to withdraw the Sec. 56 notice for the closure of the line from Goole to Gilberdyke. Following a meeting in January between British Rail and the Chairman of the Humberside County Council it has been agreed that the Council will pay British Rail £800,000 forthwith and that British Rail will then set about repairing the central jetty of the Goole Bridge and guarantee the use of the line for the next ten years. These arrangements were due to be confirmed by the Humberside Labour Group at their meeting on 21 January. In addition British Rail will stipulate that only one river channel is to be used by ships passing through the bridge and this will probably be floodlit at night. The line from Gilberdyke to Selby will be singled.

The Yorkshire T.U.C.C. is to be amalgamated with the North Eastern T.U.C.C. in April. The new T.U.C.C. will have its headquarters in York and the Committee will consist of equal numbers from Yorkshire and the North East.

It is expected that the Department of Transport will shortly announce which of the two alternative routes it has chosen for the extension of the Airedale Trunk Road from Cottingley, near Bingley, to Shipley. The Aire Valley Preservation Society, with 15 years of experience behind them, expects thousands of objections to the proposals, no matter which route is chosen, and promise the Department of Transport a very rough ride and possibly legal action. The Group maintain that if more money was put into public transport the road would not be needed at all, but such views are purely heresy to Whitehall.

British Rail are planning to modernize the stations at Thirsk and Northallerton at a cost of £138,000. They were hoping that local councils might provide £28,000 towards the cost. However, the North Yorkshire County Council, Northallerton Town Council and Hambleton District Council have all refused to make any contribution, so the stations may well finish up with a bus shelter on a bare platform. Railway expenditure has never been popular with the North Yorkshire councils.

Local Tourist Centres have indicated that there is a growing demand for a "Dales Rail" service between York and Wensleydale and the Wensleydale and Swaledale Transport Users' Group are trying to get this started, but one of the difficulties is that the platform at Leyburn has been demolished.

In South Yorkshire consideration is being given to starting some of the St. Pancras trains from Barnsley, instead of Sheffield, and also to the possibility of a late evening train from Sheffield to Huddersfield.

Dennis Bradbury

NORTH WEST

Cheshire County Council has produced a document entitled "The Role of Railways in Cheshire". The document was consultative and comments on it had to be with the County Council by 31st December 1984. The local Branch of RDS submitted a four-page response (available from the Branch on receipt of 50p. to cover cost of postage and printing). In response the Branch highlighted the following:—

(a) Electrification. There should be widespread electrification, in particular of the Hooton-Chester and Hooton-Helsby lines, as well as the Crewe to Holyhead (via Chester) and Liverpool to Manchester (via Warrington) lines.

(b) Line reopening. The Branch says that there is a case for reopening the goods-only line between Warrington, Lymm and Manchester to passengers.

(c) New stations. The Report says that there could be a case for new stations at Beeston Castle, Overpool and Marlands Road to which list the Branch added Mickle Trafford, Shaw Heath and Willaston.

(d) Refurbishing of stations. The Branch urges the local authorities and users' groups to undertake urgent action with respect to the several stations; namely Delamere, Ince & Elton, Ellesmere Port and Little Sutton.

(e) Line-singling. The Branch regrets BR's decision to single the 10-mile Chester-Wrexham line. We are concerned at the effect that this could have on service reliability as well as on future expansion. For this reason we suggest that BR either (i) retain the redundant track in situ for a trial period while the single-track service is monitored for reliability, or (ii) provide a modern passing loop roughly half-way along the line. We welcome BR's temporary decision not to single the Dee Marsh to Bidston section of the Wrexham-Bidston line.

Settle-Carlisle: The T.U.C.C. for the Yorkshire Area has now come forward with dates for public hearings into the closure proposals. They are:— Settle: 13,14,15 May; Skipton: 20/21 May; Leeds: 13,14,15, June 1985. There are growing moves to get a full public hearing into the closure under Sec. 90 of the 1962 Transport Act. This says that the Minister "...may hold inquiries for the purpose of his powers under this Act...". This move is strongly supported by the main local authorities along the line and, of course, by the Settle to Carlisle Joint Action Committee (the alliance of RDS, T2000 and FOSCLA). Such a hearing would not be limited in the evidence it could consider in the way that the T.U.C.C.s are.

To prove a point, several parish and town councils along the line want to see the restoration of a morning service into Carlisle, with a return late afternoon. This would be for students (especially) and commuters. At the moment students from places like Kirkby Stephen have an

almost impossible job to get to Carlisle. The SCJAC has long been arguing that there is a large latent demand for using the line which BR's sparse service does not in any way satisfy.

On the South Fylde line since BR axed the through morning commuter trains from Blackpool South and the corresponding evening returns the South Fylde Line Users' Association (formed by RDS and T2000) has been fighting to see these trains restored. It seems that BR have decided that they have a point. From May this year there will be a service from Manchester Victoria to Blackpool South leaving Manchester at 17.20. The group will now concentrate on winning a through train in the morning to Manchester.

At Windermere money is still needed to help improve the station (See RDN No.22). Anyone wishing to help this very worthwhile project or simply wishing to find out more about the line should write to:— Malcolm Conway, Secretary, Lakes Line Action Group, 6 Summer How, Shap Rnd, Kendal, Cumbria. Fears are growing locally that some popular trains are going to be axed from the line's timetable from May 1985. This will come about because of the recasting of the West Coast main line services into which this branch feeds.

Richard Watts

On Merseyside (concerning the item on Liverpool-St. Helens electrification in RDN No.21) it should have been said that Merseyside PTE and Merseyside County Council are undertaking the feasibility study. The involvement of BR is as a technical consultant and operator, acting on behalf of the Executive.

The Rock Ferry-Hooton electrification is on schedule for completion in July but users will have to wait until 30 September for the official start of the new service, to allow for a period of crew training on the new Class 508 units. The new station at Bromborough Rake will cost a little over £200,000 and is expected to be ready for the first day of electric service. The previously unstaffed station at Spital has been refurbished and is now fully manned. The go-ahead has been given for the development of a new car park and bus station at Hooton but controversy now surrounds the proposed bus/rail interchange at Bromborough, owing to a petition by local residents who feel that there will be a certain amount of danger as a result of an expected increase in frequency of buses using the facility. However, these fears appear to be somewhat exaggerated and it is hoped that the problem will soon be solved.

As a sheer coincidence, 1985 also sees the 100th Anniversary of the opening of the Mersey Railway. Some form of celebration may therefore be expected on commencement of the new service.

Mike Breslin

NORTH MIDLANDS

District councillors continue to oppose BR's plans to divert Sheffield-St. Pancras expresses via Derby instead of Alfreton and Mansfield Parkway. Local authorities contributed £60,000 towards the cost of building "Parkway" in 1973 to serve a catchment area of some 200,000 people, but future services seem likely to be limited to the two Scottish trains, a new Cambridge to Blackpool service replacing the Barrow-in-Furness train, and DMUs making up a two-hourly headway to Nottingham and Sheffield. A morning through train to London may be retained. At present the service is both infrequent and irregular, but does offer several through trains to the capital. The Association of District Councils continues to press for electrification of the Midland Main line from Bedford through to Sheffield.

Only a solitary letter in the local press marked the 20th anniversary of Mansfield's isolation from the passenger network. With a population risen to 59,000, the town remains the largest in Britain without a station; the nearest facility is at Parkway, over 8 miles distant. RDS will continue to campaign for the restoration of passenger trains, although this is unlikely until more flexible financial rules can be applied as suggested in the "Review of Rural Railways".

Various timetable improvements suggested by the Lincoln-Nottingham Rail Users' Group should be implemented in May, when services will run into the restored Central Station at Lincoln (instead of St. Marks), affording better connections and conditions besides economies in operation. The idea of possible rerouting via the Lowfields Branch and Newark Northgate, giving East Coast Main Line connections, has been abandoned. Some trains do currently serve both Newark stations by means of a double reversal; it has been suggested that a direct link between the two would eliminate one reversal and the expensive-to-maintain flat diamond crossings with the ECML. At the Nottingham end, BR have stated that a suggested station at Dunkirk to serve Nottingham University, the teaching hospital, and adjacent industry, would have to be funded by the local authorities.

There was a media launch at Derby in November for the prototype three-car Class 150 DMU, which is being tested in revenue-earning service on the steeply-graded Matlock Branch.

Malcolm Godall

LINCOLNSHIRE

RDS is pressing for Skegness to be restored to the "Golden Rail" scheme, and will be promoting the attractions of this resort and other rail-served places of interest in Lincolnshire and South Humberside in the forthcoming guide-

book "Lincolnshire by Rail". The book will be launched at a public meeting in St. Mary-le-Wigford Church Hall (next to Central Station) Lincoln, at 2.00 p.m. on Saturday 30 March.

Trevor Garrod

CORNWALL

At an RDS public meeting in Falmouth at the end of October 1984, the Falmouth Line Users' Association was formed, and its membership is growing steadily. RDS has now launched a survey of local opinion on the Newquay branch with a view to forming a similar users' group there.

Trevor Garrod

WALES

Rail users in South Wales now have a new organisation to speak up for them at a critical time of change. Glamorgan Rail Users' Federation (GRUF) is already taking part in consultation about the future of local services and commenting on BR timetable plans. Lines radiating from Cardiff to Barry, Penarth, Rhymney, Coryton, Merthyr and Treherbert are the first focus of attention for GRUF, which was set up following a local RDS meeting.

Secretary of State for Wales, Nicholas Edwards, is suggesting that the system's funding be handed over to a joint board of county councils, which would soon be subject to the normal overall control of local government spending and would be able to divert its share of the PSO grant to road schemes. GRUF is strongly opposing this move.

Positive action by BR on fares, marketing and a medium-term guarantee on the system's future have brought real gains in confidence and revenue, but there are threats from new road building and action by train crews over withdrawal of Sunday morning journeys.

It is hoped that the great success of the new, county funded Cathays station will open minds to the possibility of restoration of services to Aberdare. BR already have proposals of their own for halts to serve new housing areas. Cardiff itself is proposed as the location for a revolutionary elevated side-suspension "supertram" to take over from some local rail and bus services.

Glamorgan's other railway, the South Wales main line west to Swansea, is just as important as the valleys network for local travel and GRUF will be able to take up any users' issues on this route as its contacts and reputation grow. Membership and an information pack is open to all for a minimum of £1.00 from Mrs Peggy Mackay, 19 St. Mary's Road, Whitchurch, Cardiff, South Glamorgan, CF4 7AH.

Rod Mackay

As reported in our last issue BR plan to spend £5.5m. over the next two years on modernising the Cambrian Coast and Central Wales lines with radio signalling

and automating level crossings. The new Class 150 "Sprinter" DMUs are also destined for these services.

Crew training is also taking place at Shrewsbury for the Cambrian Line summer services in 1985, utilizing Class 37 locos. There is now an appreciable timber traffic from Scotland to Welsh-pool. BR are introducing North Wales-South Wales trains this summer.

Chris Magner

SCOTLAND

In Fife passenger services are safe for the time being over the Perth-Ladybank line and interest is growing in the need for a station at Newburgh. A campaign for a station at Wormit is in full swing. The Regional Council is to investigate. In supporting the Wormit Rail Action Group RDS has argued that if it reduces parking pressure in Dundee by as few as 40 spaces, a Wormit station would have justified its cost (with the implication that Tayside should contribute).

N.E.Fife District Council has been receiving letters from people who would like the solum of the former Leuchars Junction-St. Andrews railway turned into a cycle path, pending reinstatement of a railway. A Dunfermline District Council representative on the Fife Public Transport Working Group has suggested a Dunfermline-Stirling rail service (which would, of course, serve Alloa).

In Lothian Region the Lothian Cycle Campaign states that it would be feasible to establish a pedestrian/cycle path along the old Waverley line as far as Dalkeith. The height at which the Outer City By-pass would cross this path would be sufficient to provide clearance. There would, however, need to be a bridge instead of a continuous embankment. For further particulars apply to "SPOKES", 53 George IV Bridge, Edinburgh, EH1 1EJ. "The possibility of a reopened rail service" says "SPOKES", should be remembered".

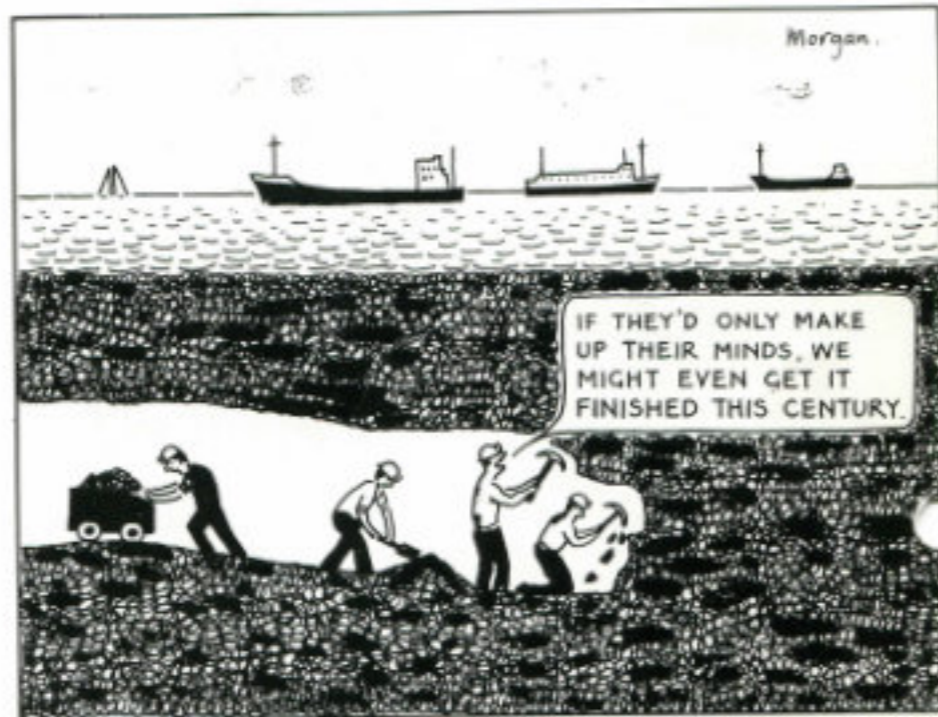
The argument in favour of the proposed Edinburgh Western Relief Road has been weakened by the completion of the Outer City By-pass, the provision of stations at Livingston North, Uphall and Saughton and the imminent reopening of the Bathgate line. If the Relief Road is built, one and a quarter miles of the quadrupled track between Haymarket and Saughton will have to be shifted to the north, thereby introducing curves into what is now a straight route.

In the North, in Mid November, two members met Mrs Winnie Ewing, MEP for the Highlands and Islands, to discuss the merits of a rail crossing of the Dornoch Firth to accompany the road crossing, construction of which is due to start in 1986. Mrs Ewing strongly supports the proposal as do Richard Cottrell, Conservative MEP for Bristol, the Lord Lieutenant of Caithness (Lord Thurso), the Chairman of Caithness District Council, who is also the Chairman of the Highland Region Transport Committee, and Golspie District Council. The pro-

posal is however opposed by Sutherland District Council.

In the North East, the re-opening, in September of last year, of Dyce station (closed in 1968) is regarded as "a resounding success". Grampian Region is shortly to decide whether £100,000 can be found for a station at Portlethen, south of Aberdeen. The "Northern Belle", a twice weekly excursion from Aberdeen to Dufftown (including a three course meal and a visit to Glenfiddich Distillery) ran during June, July and August of 1984 and will be repeated this year. Behind this venture is John Begg, a North East businessman, and it looks like saving the Keith-Dufftown Branch from closure.

Whilst the office of RDS (Scotland) is in principle manned from 10.00 to 18.00 on Tuesdays (see last issue) it is impossible to guarantee unfailing attendance. Anyone contemplating a visit is therefore recommended to telephone either Mrs H.Broadbent on (041 638 4721) or Mr F.H.Neville, the Hon. Secretary, on (0382 826398) in advance.



EDITOR'S NOTE: In a debate on the Channel Link in the House of Lords on 16th January of the 12 Peers who spoke most favoured a Bridge with 8 piers.

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

Asst-Editor: G.F.D.Cooper, 86 Jubilee Court, Hazell Hill, Bracknell, Berks. RG12 3QR

Sub-Editor & 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.

Mr Cooper is responsible for REGIONAL NOTES, Mr Willson for all other material. To ensure inclusion in the next issue (to be published in JUNE) all material must be in the hands of the appropriate Editor by WEDNESDAY 10th April.

Published by the RAILWAY DEVELOPMENT SOCIETY
BM-RDS, London WC1N 3XX. (Tel: 01-405 0463)

Printed by Print-Out, High Street, Histon, Cambridge.

STOP PRESS

Items for inclusion in this column should be as brief as possible and should concern either urgent notification of events or railway news of major importance. Closing date for copy is ONE MONTH after copy date for "Rail-watch".

RDS (Scotland) organised a very successful meeting entitled "Transport Planning - Looking for the right balance" at Glasgow City Halls on January 19th. Principal speaker was G.L.C. Transport Chair, Dave Wetzel, who held an audience of councillors, trade unionists, amenity associations and RDS members spellbound for at least an hour while he explained what the G.L.C. had done for the integration of transport in London, until the Government confiscated its powers.

A fuller report will appear in the next issue.

IN PARLIAMENT

No. 23

FEBRUARY 1985

PREVIEW

WAYS TO MAKE RAIL TRAVEL MORE POPULAR

These are eventful times for railway-watchers. Not everyone, however, is convinced by the slogan "THIS IS THE AGE OF THE TRAIN!" but there have been impressive developments in British Rail over the year just past, and more are awaited in 1985.

Speaking in the January recess, some M.P.s consider the prospects for the coming year.

Tony Speller (C. North Devon) great rail enthusiast though he is, says he wishes he could think the prospects were better. "I only wish that railway men were as keen as we are," he told me. "I wish railway staff had the same attitude to passengers as the employees of British Airways."

PROMOTING THE CONCEPT OF RE-OPENING

He has had some unhappy experiences on Western Region, where he does most of his travelling, to and from his Devon constituency - one train breaking down, the Cornish Riviera being half an hour late - although he admits that HSTs on other regions have been doing better.

"I work as hard as I can to promote the concept of rail re-opening," he says. "Three years ago there was a good surge of public feeling in favour of railways. Before that rail enthusiasts were looked upon as being slightly odd." Today there is a need for more to be done to keep the public feeling going. (Mr. Speller was the sponsor of a Private Member's Bill to facilitate the experimental re-opening of lines and stations).

"It's all happening in America" he said. "People are getting to like trains again. AMTRAK is becoming very popular. The trains are clean and bright in RED, WHITE and BLUE livery. The stations have been cleaned up. Announcements are made all the time on the

COMMONS DEBATES. In the selected extracts from parliamentary speeches and answers to questions, which follow this PREVIEW, Commons replies are given by Transport Secretary, Nicholas Ridley, or his Minister of State, Lynda Chalker, or Under-Secretary of State, David Mitchell.

C = Conservative, Lab. = Labour, L/A = Liberal Alliance.

Written replies are made either to written questions or to those intended for an oral reply but not reached in the 55 minutes each day allotted for the purpose.

journey. The U.S. is reversing a 50-year anti-rail trend."

"It is important to make use of the public address system. It helps to re-assure passengers and there is no reason why rail travel should not be a pleasure. Information can be given on tapes. The ride should be treated as fun, as on airliners. Too often the only announcements made on B.R. are for the meals service."

CHANNEL TUNNEL? YES, A SUPERB BOOST FOR B.R.

Now the 64,000 dollar question: WHAT ARE THE PROSPECTS FOR THE CHANNEL TUNNEL? "It's already agreed in principle," Mr. Speller says. "It's going to come," he thinks, and will be "a superb boost for B.R. Trains are a logical way to travel. The French understand our position - that we want to use private capital. Rail will become better than air travel for reaching many parts of the continent."

What about the bridge idea? Is it a non-starter? "I don't like tunnels," Mr. Speller says, "and I am told it's technically easier to build a bridge, but most people would be scared of the sheer principle of a bridge. What about its being struck by shipping in a fog? The Severn Bridge has given enough trouble, so how much worse would a Channel Bridge be?" The Tunnel would, however, be a vast employer of people, he added.

ELECTRIFICATION SHOULD BE SPEEDED UP

Nigel Spearing (Lab. Newham South) thinks the Transport Secretary will run into trouble in the coming year over rural transport with Members of his own party. This is of course a theme on which he spoke at the RDS, London & Home Counties Branch A.G.M. in November, when he remarked that representatives of the Conservative constituencies helped to save the day when lines in their locality were threatened.

The trouble now will be over buses, he said. Where railways were concerned, the important thing was that electrification should not be slowed down when it needed to be speeded up. In London the Docklands Light Railway was going ahead and meeting with no serious opposition.

Turning to the Channel Tunnel, the important thing was whether the likely return on private capital would be adequate.

TRANSPORT IN LONDON MUCH IMPROVED

Lord Jenkins of Putney - the Labour Peer who was a close friend of our late President, R.V.Banks - has similar doubts, he told me. "It's like cable television. Parliament went to the trouble of passing a Bill for it, but there was precious little sign of anybody taking advantage of it, because they doubted whether there was any profit in it. So with the TUNNEL. Private firms might not see enough profit in it, unless the French found the money; but they had long memories, and might be put off by remembering how the last attempt failed in 1975."

Lord Jenkins said he travelled little outside London nowadays. He thought public transport in London was better than it had been for a long time, and that it was a great shame the Government had interfered with the way the GLC were running it. The use now being made of the public address system on the Underground was an improvement.

"I vote in favour of rail and against road when I get the opportunity, and I help railways in any way I can."

INSUFFICIENT FUNDING FOR RAILWAYS

Stephen Ross (L/A, Isle of Wight) is particularly concerned about the likely effect of the change in the method of financing from the transport supplementary grant (TSG) to rate support grant (RSG). He is, in consequence,

gravely worried about the future of rail systems in the Metropolitan Counties, like Merseyside: even the Tyne & Wear Metro — a "marvellous system" — could be in jeopardy.

Isn't there anything to be pleased about in 1985 — like electrification? Yes, he told me, but the money for it should

THREAT OF 25% RAIL CUTS TO MANCHESTER

NOVEMBER 7th The subject of public transport costs and concessionary fares was raised by the Shadow Transport Secretary, Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Lab. Crewe and Nantwich) during the debate on the Queen's Speech, with which Parliament customarily opens its new session. It was on the second day of such debate (7/11/84) when she said that the Government intended to rate-cap authorities to such an extent that there would be no question of the revenue being made up to provide for bus and rail services.

The effect would be immediate. Manchester expected a 25% cut in rail services. It would be yet another nail in the economics of BR. "It is extraordinary that a party which cares so much about road transport never makes public the fact that if the Underground and bus services are running efficiently, it is far easier for drivers to find room on the roads to use their vehicles."

Minister's Marie Antoinette aspect

Public transport should be privatised, in the view of the Transport Secretary, said Mrs. Dunwoody. "His views have a Marie Antoinette aspect. He appears to be saying that even if there are no buses, one can always take a taxi."

It was important to understand how the Government could come to the conclusion, after 5 years of chipping away the foundations of public transport, that this would be the year of the give-away. Referring to Newcastle's Metro, she pointed out that the new 'light rail' network in Tyne & Wear produced a 63.7% increase in passenger journeys, which demonstrated that the public wanted efficient transport and would use it when it was at low rates. Increasingly they had shown their response to an imaginative fares policy. South Yorkshire put another three million passengers on the buses by using a low fare structure.

Public Transport was being decimated

Cuts in Metropolitan County grants would have a direct effect. Tyne & Wear reported that recent changes would mean a 25-30% cut in the next three years. There would also be a cut of 99 million passenger boardings over the

be used in other directions, like maintenance and modernisation schemes. Electrification should be separately funded. "The idea that BR should go into profit in three years is a lot of nonsense."

What about the Isle of Wight's remaining railway, Ryde to Shanklin? That's not in danger of closing, he says, and is not subsidised by the local authority. It can't

network. Redundancy pay for staff who lost their jobs would be £8 million — all effects that came from a desire to cut subsidies from £29.5 million to £15.8 million. How would the Government protect those who at present needed the concessionary fare system? How did they justify an idea that would deprive rural areas of an efficient bus service, make many town services unviable and lead, in a short time, to the decimation of a system of public transport that had been the pride of many people?

Mr. Ridley replied that the Government had been pursuing a consistent policy of opening transport services to competition. In rural areas, tendering for uneconomic services would provide the same services for less money or more service for the same money. Deregulation would also bring new opportunities to try new types of service, including shared taxis. More poor people and women were travelling by taxi, and they would be able to do so more cheaply if the taxis were shared. Government policy was to encourage the competition which in some industries holds down prices and provides the customer with alternative choices.

Grants system change would boost roads

NOVEMBER 13 The funding of public transport was further debated on 13/11/84 when the House approved an Order, changing the conditions for giving transport grants. In future funding would be through the rate support grant (RSG) as against the former transport supplementary grant (TSG).

Mrs. Chalker said the first priority for RSG was to focus grants more closely on roads-capital spending. The present system had proved inadequate and had not been able to prevent the use of grant for extravagant public transport subsidies. It had not met the overriding need for investment in major road schemes. The Government's proposals would put an end to these inadequacies.

Mrs. Dunwoody replied that the Government were saying that local authorities had been underspending their allocation for capital road schemes. But the Government's fears of low expenditure on capital road schemes were entirely false.

The real damage of this 'nasty little change' was the effect it would have on public transport, particularly BR. Passenger transport executives of the Metro-

politan Counties had expressed strong concern that moving their grant into RSG could cause only direct cuts.

While only the PTEs were directly affected, BR would be hit because the 1968 Transport Act gave local authorities a duty to subsidise non-profitable BR services. Without TSG, virtually all rail lines within the Metropolitan Counties, excluding Inter-City services, would close if the cash could not be found from elsewhere. BR stood to lose £80 million, or 10% of all its subsidies.

JE

Stephen Ross (L/A, Isle of Wight) said Mrs. Chalker had visited his constituency this year and must know that doing away with TSG would place them in considerable difficulty. "During the past few years," he said, "our transport policy plan has met with a fair response from the Government. We have had a good allocation." Could they do as well under the block grant system? He doubted very much and therefore could not support the Order.

Integrated system would disappear

Dr. John Marek (Lab. Wrexham) said it was likely that the type of integrated transport system that now existed in the Metropolitan Counties would disappear because of the limitations and restrictions placed on local authorities. BR would be worried about the Order. It would have more difficulty meeting objectives.

Matthew Paris (C. Derbyshire West) said he did not believe that moneys allocated for transport purposes were being properly spent when it was used simply to subsidise public transport.

The Order was approved by 253 votes to 169, a Government majority of 84.

Co-ordination of LRT and BR to continue

DECEMBER 3 In a written question, Sir John Biggs-Davison (C. Epping Forest), asked what arrangements had been made for the co-ordination of London Regional Transport (LRT) and BR. Sir John, it will be remembered, has supported the campaign against the possible closure of the Epping-Ongar extension of the Central Line tube.

Mrs. Chalker's reply stated that LRT and BR had a statutory duty (under the LRT Act 1984) to co-operate with each other. The London Passenger Transport Group had been set up, in which she and Mr. Ridley met the two Chairmen to

agree initiatives affecting the common interest of the operators.

DECEMBER 18 Tony Banks (Lab. Newham North-West) asked the S.S.T. as to what improvements had been initiated between LRT and BR, other than those already in hand or being planned, since the LRT Act came into effect?

Mrs. Chalker said that whilst the LRT Bill was before Parliament, the operators began work on a review of interchanges. That work was now being carried forward under the auspices of the London Passenger Transport Group. A number of interchange points were being examined with a view to identifying those where improvements could be made of most benefit to travellers.

LRT fares 'still too low' but fewer buses

A further question on LRT was answered the same day by Mr. Ridley in a written reply. Sidney Chapman (C. Chipping Barnet) asked what levy was proposed on London ratepayers in support of grants to LRT for 1985-86?

The Minister stated that the Government had set LRT the primary task of securing better value for money through improved efficiency. LRT's specific financial objective was to reduce the revenue support requirement to half the 1984-85 level of £190 million by 1987-88.

"Improving efficiency has enabled LRT to contain its proposed fares increase in January to an average of 9%, which will still leave fares about 10% lower, in real terms, than they were in May 1981, when the present GLC administration took office. LRT plans to maintain Underground services at their present level for 1985-86, and to reduce bus services slightly, in line with falling demand."

"An increase in resources for investment will enable LRT further to improve efficiency and to make public transport facilities more attractive to passengers, including, for example, a substantial programme of station modernisation."

No further increase in lorry weights

On the same day, in a debate on heavy lorries, the Transport Secretary was congratulated on all sides of the House for refusing to agree to the further increase in lorry weights, to 40 tonnes, demanded by the Common Market. MPs supporting the railways were enthusiastic.

Stephen Ross (L/A Isle of Wight) said: "I congratulate him on sticking to his guns and returning from Brussels without giving ground on his predecessor's undertaking that the 38 tonne limit will be maintained. Shall we be able to hold the line after February 28th 1987, which is when a decision must be made? We are not likely to spend £100 billion on

bridges in the meantime (as they would have to be strengthened), therefore we might be able to get away with it. If we spend rather more on roads, it will be more difficult to do so."

May be impossible to keep weights down

Nigel Spearing (Lab. Newham South) referred to a European Community transport document, stating that 'the state of certain portions of road network in Ireland and the UK does not make it possible to apply all the provisions of this directive (on lorry weights)', and that a decision should be taken by the end of February 1987.

Mr. Spearing said the legislative document was clearly linked to other matters, for example to the electrification of the railways. "Package bargaining in the EEC is now fashionable. When the House is faced with a request for an increase to 40 tonnes, it may be wrapped up in a vast financial package and we shall be unable to do very much about it."

Mr. Ridley said that, in Mr. Spearing's language, this was a package and a good one. For two and a bit years there was no pressure on us and the European Commission would review the state of our roads and report in February 1987.

He had visited weighbridges and had seen a major operation on the M1, taking selected lorries and checking them. Lorry drivers knew it was risky to drive overweight vehicles and that they were likely to be caught if they did.

Salford crash raises questions of safety

DECEMBER 4 A statement on the collision between a passenger train and an oil tank train near Manchester on 4th December was made by Mr. Ridley just before midnight on the same day.

At 10.45, he said, the 10.05 a.m. Manchester to Scarborough train, consisting of a diesel locomotive and seven coaches, ran into the back of a stationary oil tank train on the Manchester side of Eccles station, Salford. The locomotive and first two coaches of the passenger train were derailed, as were some of the oil tank wagons. Spilt gas oil caught fire.

Six serious accidents to passenger trains

The local signalman stopped other trains from approaching. Traffic on the adjacent M602 motorway was stopped and residents were evacuated from about 30 surrounding houses. The passenger train driver died in the crash and one passenger died in hospital. (A further passenger died later.) A total of 67 passengers and railway staff were taken to hospital and five were detained.

Peter Snape (Lab. West Bromwich East) said that in 1984 there had been six fairly serious accidents involving pass-

enger trains, and 18 passengers had been killed in moving traffic accidents. Was the line signalled by modern colour light signals, and had BR plans to amend its automatic warning system so that the driver had some aid in differentiating between a caution signal and one showing failure?

Mr. Ridley replied that the House would be wise to await the answers when the inquiry had been completed and published.

Winston Churchill (C. Davyhulme) congratulated the emergency services, particularly Park Hospital in his constituency. Would the minister consider, when volatile chemicals are being carried, having two empty buffer cars at the end of the train and one interposed between the engine and the first of the tankers?

Mr. Ridley replied that the Health and Safety Commission had been setting up an inquiry into the transport of dangerous goods by rail, and it would see what lessons could be learnt from this accident.

Stanley Orme (Lab. Salford East) said the accident had occurred in his constituency. The inspecting officer, in his report for 1981, had raised the question of restraints on public expenditure which might have an effect on rail safety.

Mr. Ridley said he did not think anything could be deduced from the inspector's report to suggest that the safety of the system had been impaired. BR would not accept financial targets involving any impairment.

Year's fatalities equals only one day on the roads

Robert Adley (C. Christchurch) said the signalman seemed to have done a great deal to prevent a more serious accident. "If there have been 18 fatalities on BR this year, it roughly equates to the number of people killed every day on our roads." It was incumbent (on the Government) to will the financial means to enable BR to employ the most up-to-date and modern equipment that man could devise.

Mr. Ridley paid tribute to the signalman and added that it took a very long time before inquiries could be properly conducted and their reports published. He had asked that their reports could be published a little earlier.

Alfred Morris (Lab. Manchester Wythenshawe) spoke of the work of the emergency services and urged that cuts in local government spending would not effect the efficiency of those services.

Mr. Ridley suggested that this was intruding on a wrong note!

Peter Thurnham (C. Bolton North-East) said that more than 300 people had been killed and injured in railway accidents this year, the worst year for fatal

accidents since 1975. Would BR be asked to carry out an urgent review of safety procedures?

Mr. Ridley replied that he would not entirely accept the figures without checking the exact period concerned. There had been statistically worse years. Careful inquiries were made of each accident by professional and impartial railway inspectorate staff.

Lewis Carter-Jones (Lab. Eccles) said the accident had occurred at the edge of his constituency. Had the emergency services not worked efficiently, this could have been a horrific tragedy, involving damage to the line, the roadway, the urban area and the population within it. He wanted the inquiry to take great care to consider the effect of moving dangerous loads through urban areas.

Mr. Ridley replied that a committee was being set up by the Health and Safety Commission to inquire into the general question of the safety of the transport of dangerous goods by rail. That inquiry would consider this accident.

Robert Waring (Lab. Liverpool West Derby) said the driver of the passenger train, Edward Croxford, lived in his constituency. On such occasions as this accident, the responsibility of many working men, including train drivers, was brought home. "I understand 300 passengers were on the train. When talking about the pay of such people, we should always think of their responsibilities. A suggestion has been made that the facility of drivers to override signals should be examined. I should like an assurance that there will be some separation of dangerous fuels from passenger trains."

Recent accidents not connected with cuts

Mr. Ridley replied that if the details were studied of the last few serious railway accidents and one came to the conclusion that they were nothing to do with cuts or safety records, passengers could be assured that those aspects were not a factor. That would clear up any attempt to make party political capital of the matter.

Ken Eastham (Lab. Manchester Blackley) said that one of the deceased was his constituent. There was increasing concern at the growing number of accidents; the shadow spokesman on transport had written to the Minister on August 1st, asking for an urgent inquiry into them. "There is growing feeling nowadays that there is a reduction in track maintenance, and that line maintenance, once on a four or five-week cycle, has now been extended to seven or eight weeks. If that is the case, it is most serious and must be urgently

reconsidered, even though we may have to pay more."

Mr. Ridley replied that this suggestion was to prejudice the inquiry, which was wrong, in case a misleading impression was given to the public.

Cyril Smith (L/A Rochdale) said it was reassuring that the result of the investigations into railway accidents this year would be collated. Members would be extremely interested to learn whether there was a common factor among these accidents.

Robert Litherland (Lab. Manchester Central) said that train crashes appeared to occur with frightening frequency. He hoped that no expense and effort would be spared to find the cause.

Terry Lewis (Lab. Worsley) said that he, *Mr. Orme* and *Mr. Carter-Jones* had had recent meetings with the health authorities, who had expressed their worry at the possibility of a major disaster that could not be coped with by the emergency services. "I should like an appraisal to be made of the reaction of the emergency services, especially the ambulance service. I am certain that everybody reacted remarkably well; however some of us are worried by cuts in the emergency services. This is not a political point. I hope the appraisal will be carried out and the findings communicated to the House."

Mr. Ridley said that the evidence was that the ambulance service was able to cope magnificently.

What Serpell Report said about safety

Dr. John Merck (Lab. Wrexham) asked: "Can you give an unequivocal guarantee that you repudiate the assertion in the Serpell Report that safety standards are too high and that there is a case for lowering them? Will you urge BR to examine its safety standards and make them as high as they were in previous years?"

Mr. Ridley replied that no conscientious railway board would accept safety standards other than the highest, and no railway inspectorate would allow standards other than of equal excellence. To suggest that a few accidents that happened recently represented an unsafe railway was to misread the situation. No message should go out that there was a deterioration.

Figures showed no growth in accidents

DECEMBER 18 Statistics about accidents were provided in a written answer on 18th December to *Mrs Dunwoody*, who asked: "How many accidents had there been on BR during 1984, and how many people were killed and injured on each occasion?"

Mr. Ridley replied: "There had been 64 significant accidents on BR up to that date involving passenger trains. Significant accidents, as defined in the Transport Department's published annual report on rail safety, were those actually or potentially hazardous to passengers."

Those during 1984 had resulted in 20 deaths - 17 passengers and three railway staff - 16 serious injuries and 259 minor injuries. The total number of significant accidents in 1984 was likely to be no greater than that in recent years and considerably below the number recorded during the 1970s."

Safety Devices

DECEMBER 7 On the subject of safety, *Peter Thurnham* (C. Bolton North-East) asked about the effectiveness of safety devices on three aspect light signals, and also for the number of passenger train accidents on BR in 1982, 1983 and 1984.

On 7/12/84 *Mr. Mitchell*, in a written reply, said that safety devices on signals included such things as the replacement of the previous signal to danger if a lamp bulb should fail, and the automatic warning system.

The number of significant accidents in 1982 was 66; fatalities: no passengers, 2 staff; 1983 78; fatalities: 2 passengers, no staff; 1984 (up to December) 62; fatalities: 17 passengers, 2 staff.

Thirteen of the passenger fatalities occurred in one accident at Polmont. About half the accidents were caused by errors and omissions on the part of railway staff, a third by mechanical defects, and the remainder by a variety of combination of causes.

BUS/RAIL REPLACEMENT

NOVEMBER 7 *Jack Ashley* (L. Stoke-on-Trent South) asked whether there were plans to encourage the substitution of buses for trains on certain lines.

Mr. Mitchell (in a written reply on 7th November) said that the House would be invited to approve enabling legislation this session. Under it BR, when seeking consent to the withdrawal of a rail service, could propose substitute bus services.

Mrs. Renee Short (Lab. Wolverhampton North-East) asked the Transport Secretary what resources would be made available to BR to enable it to provide suitable replacements of services or routes withdrawn from the network.

Mr. Mitchell (in a written reply on 21st December) said that when consent was given to withdraw a rail service, a substitute bus service could be subsidised through the Government's grant to BR for its passenger service.