

## How The Bill Fails Bus and Rail

As we go to press, the 1985 Transport Bill is about to enter its committee stage in the Lords. This bill, although concerned with how bus services will be run (or perhaps not run), will, if not substantially amended, have considerable detrimental effect not only on bus services but also on cross-country rail services.

In May, Don Matthew (Friends of the Earth) spoke at an R.D.S.-organised presentation to M.P.s at the Commons. His address highlighted several possible disastrous consequences of this bill—many of which have been voiced by bus operators, local authorities, professional organisations and consumer groups alike. He questioned the purpose of the bill (said to have been originally introduced to cut state subsidy); the Secretary of State had appraised subsidies in the Shire Counties as "about right" and, furthermore, abolition of Metropolitan Counties, together with rigid government control on local authority spending, made a bill for this purpose unnecessary. Other benefits cited by government for this doctrinaire and ill-conceived legislation are that through "fair competition" and "market forces" a better service will be provided for the consumer. The consumer has, in fact, responded by forming the National Federation of Bus Users\* and, through the National Consumer Council, has recently drafted a long new clause to the bill. This, in effect, asks for the bus user's equivalent of a T.U.C.C.

Deregulation of stage carriage routes will enable small operators to compete, at peak times, with long-established operators—further cutting the profit-

ability of their remaining routes and leading to a vicious spiral of decline. In addition, "cowboys" and established operators alike will be free to compete with B.R. on cross-country routes.

R.D.S. has often commented on the gross discrepancies between the ways in which road and rail operators bear their respective shares of transport infrastructure costs. There is no way in which such competition can be fair to rail. According to Mr. Matthew, there would be an effect on rail revenue not only on marginal lines but on profitable services such as Derby-Matlock, Norwich-Cromer, Cardiff-Merthyr Tydfil, Manchester-Blackpool, Sheffield-Barnsley and Boston-Grantham.

This bill, together with abolition of the Metropolitan Authorities, will destroy what little integration of public transport has so far been achieved and concentrate services on corridor routes with the consequent decline of vital secondary routes. Britain is the only country in Europe to have suffered a marked decline in the number of bus passengers in the decade 1971-1981 while investment in, and coordination of, public transport has produced increases in bus passenger journeys as high as 135% (Italy) and 65% (Portugal). There should not be an "either-or" situation with regard to public transport. All modes should, with proper planning complement each other for the benefit of both the user and environment.

\*Secretary: Michael Dearing, 6 Holmhurst Lane, St Leonards on sea, East Sussex TN37 7LW.

### Audrey Hyacinth Henson

It is with deep regret that we have to report the passing of one of our more notable lady members, in her mid Eighties.

Qualifying as a Surgeon in the mid Twenties (Charing Cross & King's College) she may not have had to battle like Elizabeth Garrett Anderson but women had not even then been fully accepted in medicine.

Nevertheless she undoubtedly reached the height of her profession as OP Officer at Moorfields Eye Hospital specialising in that field, she told me, because the other alternative, more familiar to our lady members, did not appeal to her.

To members of RIS (and latterly RDS) she will be remembered as the gracious

host of the many little gatherings since the mid Sixties (particularly of the Branches & Areas Committee) which took place round the ornate table in her waiting room to plan the development of RDS as we know it today.

She joined the Society as a result of our campaign against closure of the Somerset & Dorset Railway and even in latter years regularly commuted to Somerset to hold surgeries and consultations.

As Secretary of the Mayfair Labour Party for a time and a love of things Russian she was more a Radical Socialist than a Communist but, apart from animal welfare her other abiding passion was the cause of railways and to members of RDS she will be sorely missed.

JWB

## MORE ROAD AND RAIL COSTS REVEALED

It was with dismay that I read in R.D.N. number 22 that motorists are under charged and OVER-taxed when I, in fact, wrote "under-charged and UNDER-taxed", which is more in keeping with the rest of my letter (apologies for this error in proof-reading ED).

In all fairness, however, I failed to mention that publication of the Coopers-Lybrand report was greeted with a remarkable silence by those with a craving for more and more road space and I should have mentioned the blow that the report dealt to the motorist.

Many are of the opinion that rail to road conversion is dead while others, outside R.D.S. of course, believe conversion of Marylebone-Northolt still worthy of consideration. The cost of converting this route is estimated at £15.95 million by Coopers-Lybrand while the National Bus Company puts the cost of busway conversion at £10.3 million. It is the latter estimate which I shall compare with the cost of railway electrification.

Among recently authorised electrification schemes is the single track Southminster-Wickford branch which will cost £3 million to electrify 16.5 miles - 5.5 miles per million. It has a passing loop en route and two platforms at Southminster whose lengths I do not know. Their inclusion can only increase the estimate of 26.4 track lane km, thus lowering my cost-per-mile estimate of £113,600 per track lane km. Let us now apply this to Marylebone-Northolt.

According to Coopers-Lybrand the distance from the buffer stops at Marylebone to Northolt is 16.1km and, assuming four platforms plus sidings at Marylebone this might stretch to 33.5 track lane km, which, on the basis of the Southminster line, would cost just under £3.8 million. Cost of third rail and overhead electrification seem to run neck and neck these days but if absorption of the line into L.R.T. is the desired aim then 3rd rail would be preferable - in which case feeder points already exist at Neasden, Harrow and Wembley. If, on the other hand, the strategy is to provide a Marylebone-Milton Keynes service via Aylesbury then this would favour 25kV, for which a feeder point exists at Wembley.

The object of this exercise is to provide an answer to the conversionists. The financial costs have been stated above but another aspect is energy consumption. A notable example of conversion occurred on the Paris Metro, where the substitution of rubber for steel tyre brought a steep rise in energy costs. The provision of a steering wheel on each vehicle will do nothing to alter this damning factor against a busway, guided or otherwise, and the fact that the Paris Metro has not converted any more lines surely tells its own story.

This concludes my tentative survey to date; the N.B.C. estimate of £10.3m compare with my own very tentative estimate of £3.8m. Neither of these include the capital cost of vehicles and my figure might, of course, require more spade work which I am sure will bury railway conversion much deeper.

Any volunteers?

Kenneth Shaw

## SWELLING THE RANKS

The life-blood of any society is its members. It is from among their ranks that its future leaders are drawn. In a pressure-group such as ours, most of our income is derived from members' subscriptions (and donations). In all approaches to "authority", the greater number of people we claim to represent, the greater our influence.

Although membership is increasing it has not yet reached the stage when we can afford to undertake effectively all we would wish i.e. opposing closures; reopening of lines and stations; restoring a meaningful amount of freight to rail and campaigning for a rail-based Channel Tunnel.

Prospective members become known to us (and RDS to them) in a number of ways; replies to letters in the press; society advertisements in various periodicals etc., To all of these we send a Membership Promotion Pack including, where available, copies of local Newsletters, an entry form and invitation to membership.

Your help is urgently required in gaining new members and if you know of any prospective members please let us have details. We cannot monitor all newspapers, particularly local ones, and your assistance in identifying writers of pro rail letters who might be potential members would be appreciated.

Please send such information to our Membership Promotion Officer, Mr L.J.Boylett, 15, Athenaeum Road, London N20 9AA, who will welcome the opportunity of bringing the Society to their attention in the manner described above. Thank you!

## MEMBERSHIP CARDS

The Membership Secretary apologises for the delay in sending membership cards to some new and re-joined members. This is due to delays in the computerisation of the membership records.

## Recent Developments on the East Suffolk Line

The East Suffolk Line, which connects Ipswich and Lowestoft, is one of the rural railways that has been selected as a testbed for various schemes that, it is hoped, will make such lines viable. Ipswich itself is in the throes of modernisation, and received its first scheduled electric trains in May of this year.

Notable events on the East Suffolk Line in the past twelve months have included singling of the section from Melton to Saxmundham - the former "down line" was relaid with track recovered from the East Coast Main Line at Selby, while the former "up line" has been lifted (a part of it remains at Ufford, however, where a bridge over the River Deben was damaged by flooding earlier this year). Train services were suspended for almost a week and a replacement bus service provided, while the "down line" was severed and slewed into the "up line" on a temporary basis. Trains will continue to be worked over the single track section, using the electric tablet system, until radio signalling is introduced.

Also on the signalling side, Colchester power box is progressively extending its sphere of control, which had reached as far as Ipswich (East Suffolk Junction) by 7th April 1984 and now extends to Claydon. Further extensions as far as Haughley are imminent and, when Norwich-Thorpe is modernised, it too will be controlled from Colchester.

Melton station reopened on 3rd September 1984, having closed to passengers on 2nd May 1955. The necessary refurbishment was funded by Suffolk County Council and Suffolk Coastal District Council and involved repainting the station building and extending the platforms, together with the provision of signs, noticeboards and a seat. British Rail say that they would have been unable to justify the cost of reopening without financial assistance but that this new station is attracting a satisfactory level of traffic. There is, however, some abstraction from nearby Woodbridge, which is somewhat offset by the award of contracts from Suffolk County Council for the carriage of students to college in Ipswich.

A similar contract for taking students

to Lowestoft College, reported to be worth about £30,000 p.a., necessitated some alterations to the timetable, notably the first "down" train, which had its connection to Norwich removed, and to a late afternoon train to Ipswich. This train had an enforced wait at Saxmundham (while a "down" train cleared the single line section from Melton), which caused the London connection to be missed. British Rail responded swiftly to protests by extending it to Colchester, allowing a connection with an electric working from Clacton to Liverpool Street. Great things are promised when the main line electrification is introduced, but, at the moment, it seems to be a case of "jam tomorrow"!

The other major change on the East Suffolk has been the progressive introduction of "open" level crossings of the locally monitored type. The road user sees an amber light followed by flashing red and receives an audible warning signal, whilst the train driver receives a white light when these systems start to work. Should the crossing fail, sufficient distance is allowed for the train to be brought safely to a stand clear of crossing. This is achieved by the imposition of a speed limit on trains, and work to improve visibility. There are no barriers of any kind, apart from the cattle grids across the railway track.

Although expensive to install, the crossings are cheap in operation as there are no cables or other monitoring apparatus, which is needed where barriers are involved. There has been local concern about the safety of these crossings, and there was an accident on 1st February at Middleton Crossing, near Darsham, when a train and car collided, killing the passenger in the car. The train was able to continue to Lowestoft, some two hours late. It appears that the crossing was in full working order and that the car apparently "jumped the lights", although the official report is awaited.

The East Anglian Branch of RDS has called publicly for severe penalties against road users who abuse these crossings, although one would think that this sort of risk would be sufficient deterrent. The latest crossing to be rebuilt is at Wenham, near Halesworth; radio-control cannot be brought in until the crossings are all converted. Watch this space!

John Brodribb



## FREIGHT REPORT

The last meeting of the Freight Sub-Committee (FSC) was held at PROCOR wagon works at Horbury, Wakefield. There, in addition to the routine business of the meeting, members of the FSC were privileged to meet members of PROCOR's management team and be conducted on a tour of the works. Amongst the various wagons being built or repaired was one small bogie which looked insignificant alongside its larger brothers. This bogie, however, is the most exciting development to enter the railfreight scene for many years.

Its wheels are a little over 18" in diameter, which enables the floor height of a wagon to be lowered to 26" above rail level. BR is thus able, for the first time, to contemplate "Piggyback" type services with road vehicles. Notional designs of this type of wagon have been produced. With the BR loading gauge being so restrictive in comparison with that of continental railways, the extra cubic capacity that the lower floor gives to a wagon should give Railfreight a vital boost as it strives for increased efficiency.

At almost every turn members of the FSC hear the words "SUPERCUBE ROAD TRAILER" mentioned. These high capacity road lorries are a major threat to Railfreight:

The new breed of rail wagon will enable BR to "better" anything that the road haulier can offer in cubic capacity. At the moment a prototype container flat is undergoing tests at Derby. This flat will be able to carry 9'6" high containers, a task impossible at present with existing designs. PROCOR see a bright future for the new bogie and its range of wagon designs and we certainly wish them well.

Van den Burgh & Jurgens, better known as Stork Margerine, from Bromborough in the Wirral, presently receive all their edible oils direct to the factory by coastal shipping. This state of affairs is to end with the reinstatement of a rail link into the factory, to where oil will be railed from Purfleet. This traffic is said to be of

the order of 250,000 tonnes per annum.

Now that the Miner's strike has ended, BR is engaged in the long hard fight to regain coal traffic from the road hauliers. Shortly after the 38 tonnes weight limit was authorised on the roads, members of the FSC met a high level freight manager at BRB headquarters. In that meeting the manager said that the biggest single threat to Railfreight was the 38 tonne tipper lorry. What a pity that the road hauliers have been given fourteen months to demonstrate their efficiency. One example of the hard work to come is the long haul Maryport to Fiddlers Ferry Merry-go-round circuit. Before the strike there were five trains a day. Now that the strike, during which traffic was blacked, has ended the contract has been renewed - for TWO trains a day. The remainder still goes by road and coastal shipping to other power stations. On a happier note, the two-axle container flats (mentioned in the last issue) are at last seeing service carrying the traffic for which they were built, i.e. domestic coal from England to Scotland.

The trials and tribulations of the International Railfreight Division continue unabated. Faced with the need to reduce shipping costs in order to compete with the RO-RO Lorries BR's preferred option appears to be to concentrate on Dover with a new purpose-built terminal. Having been faced with tough French trade union opposition to lower manning levels on their vessels and, having successfully negotiated those reductions, it must be frustrating to BR to have British Ferries (Sealink) no longer willing to agree to the savings and the whole future of train ferry services seems to be once again under threat.

It is BR's stated aim to have another hundred private sidings in operation by the end of the decade. The FSC are actively looking to identify potential sites to assist BR in this task and we hope to be in a position to report successes in this column in future.

George Boyle

## WANTED - NEW TREASURER!

Due to personal commitments our present Treasurer was forced to resign at the AGM and to date no new appointment has been made. Trevor Garrod is holding the fort for the time being but has made it clear that this is purely an emergency stop-gap measure.

Without a Treasurer the Society cannot function properly. With over 1,500 members we must have at least a few with experience of accounting matters; a knowledge of the workings of VAT would be desirable - but not essential.

If you feel able to cope with this challenging post (or in fact know another likely candidate) - a member recently retired with business experience would be particularly suitable - write now for further particulars to:- Richard Townsend, St. Julians, Sevenoaks, Kent.

This post must be filled promptly!!!

## R.T.S.C.

The Rail Transport Study Circle was set up in September 1984 as a self-financing adjunct of the Society to organise Conferences and Seminars which may be of interest to members of RDS (and others). It reports to the Finance & General Purposes Committee and works with other Committees in relation to particular projects.

The present programme of events is as follows:-

### "RAIL LINK WITH EUROPE"

Sat. SEPTEMBER 14th - GREAT NORTHERN HOTEL, KING'S CROSS.

Conference Fee:-  
5.00 (Accommodation limited - early booking essential)

SOCIAL & EDUCATIONAL WEEKEND to be held from October 25-27 at YORK.

The purpose of this event is to highlight major rail projects now being undertaken in the UK & EEC. This year the focus is on the East Coast Main Line Electrification Scheme and the seminar will be addressed by Mr G. Payne its Project Manager.

On the social side it will give officers and members alike an opportunity to meet and get to know one another.

\*in conjunction with the International & EEC Committee.

For further details (including all-in Package Costs for the Social Weekend) and Booking Form, send Foolscap SAE (indicating which event - or both - in which interested) to:-

RAIL STUDIES OFFICER (RTSC), 206, Alexandra Park Road, London N22 4VQ



## MEMBERS' PLATFORM

### Britain's Gain, Botswana's Loss

Following the above article in RW No. 23 we received a letter from Henderson Busby International Ltd., which we publish, with their consent, below:-

Sir,

I refer to the article written by Leslie Freitag entitled "Britain's Gain, Botswana's Loss" in the March edition of "Railwatch".

We feel that we must put the record straight concerning the Trans Kalahari Railway Study and record that it is unreasonable to associate work that this firm is doing with the Serpell Report. We have, of course, made allowance for the fact that your item was not properly researched but it is, in our opinion, both misleading and flippant.

The study was awarded to the Henderson Travers Morgan Group and the Leadership invested in Henderson Busby International who were responsible for traffic forecasts and financial evaluation. The project Leader was the undersigned and Mr Goldstein did not, as you incorrectly reported, lead the study.

If eventually the coal mining industry in Botswana is developed the potential traffic is in excess of ten million tonnes per annum. In these circumstances you will readily recognise that no transport engineer would consider a concrete highway.

Henderson Busby International Ltd., B.M.Green, Project Director, Trans Kalahari Railway Study.

(We apologise for any factual inaccuracies in the article, which was accepted for publication in good faith.ED)

### Open Stations

Sir,

Guard checking ticket on DMU and replying to my questions about the efficiency of the "open station" system (as at Leicester):-

"They (BR) expect to lose 40% of the fares. Last week a man thumped the inspector when he was asked to buy a ticket."

His first sentence confirms my experience that tickets are checked on only about 60% of journeys.

Assuming that his second statement is true, was the offender penalised with the maximum penalty for fare evasion - plus a second charge of assault? If not why not?

G.S.Angell  
Kidderminster, Worcs.

## 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 Soci-

ety. 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.

### Frontiers for action in South West Scotland

I have just moved up to Dumfries and Galloway and am reminded how beautiful and little known this region of Scotland really is. The two largest towns are Dumfries and Stranraer which, in the pre-Beeching era, were connected by the direct scenic "Paddy Line". There is some local interest in restoring this link but, as yet, BR and the Regional Council are not too interested.

What can RDS do in a rural area such as this? I feel that it can begin to do a lot - by encouraging all concerned to make the most effective use of what remains of the rail system. Some priorities, line by line, might include:-

(a) Nith Valley Route (Carlisle via Kilmarnock).

(i) A more regular interval between services - perhaps every two hours - which is the basic frequency southwards from Dumfries but not northwards;

(ii) Some services running to Ayr, giving extra connections to and from Stranraer and making more use of the Kilmarnock to Ayr "loop";

(iii) Improvements to stations - especially Annan;

(iv) Better timekeeping on some services, especially the 10.20 ex Euston (even booking office staff at Dumfries have written to RAILNEWS about this!).

(b) Stranraer-Glasgow (via Ayr).

(i) Why do so many Irish lorry operators use the A75 and not rail? RDS ought to find out, after all Hockton Haulage Company have got a section 8 grant for a container siding at Stranraer. Perhaps others might follow if a case were made?

(ii) Wider publicity of cheap fare schemes from Stranraer to Ayr or Glasgow;

(iii) Greater use of Barnhill as a rail/bus interchange for Newton Stewart;

(iv) Investigation of the feasibility of an Ayr to Kilmarnock local service.

(c) West Coast Main Line.  
Make more use of Lockerbie.

(d) Marketing.

An Awayday "Landcruise" package could be introduced between Dumfries and Stranraer (or vice versa) which included a one-way journey via the Nith Valley and a return via the Galloway Rail Coach Link. If accompanied by a pamphlet, this could be of interest to tourists, as well as giving an overall view of regional rail travel (BR at Ayr are investigating this possibility).

Finally, I agree with Trevor Garrod (RW, March 1985) when he stated that RDS can be effective if pressure is applied at the right places, at the right times. A lot of the aims stated above are achievable in the fairly short term.

Brian Chaplin  
(Area Rep. for Dumfries  
and Galloway)

## ..... STOP PRESS .....

### Marylebone Enquiry Postponed

Further to the report in Regional Notes we have now received a press release from the London Regional Passengers' Committee confirming that the inquiry into the closure of Marylebone has been further postponed due to the lodging of an appeal against the High Court judgement.

### Vice Presidents

We are pleased to announce that following have agreed to become vice-presidents of RDS following the decision at the A.G.M.:-

Tony Speller M.P. and Stephen Ross M.P.

### Gerard Fiennes

It is with regret that we have to report the death of a further notable worthy within our ranks. For many years a vice-president of the National Council on Inland Transport Gerry Fiennes was, in later years, more well known to our East Anglian Branch members, having retired from his post as one of the more controversial general managers of the Eastern Region of BR, to Aldeburgh in Suffolk.

Members at the branch meeting in Ipswich on 8th June stood in a moments silence to respect his memory, and that of another local member, Miss Bliss.

### Stratford-Tottenham Hale

Shortly before another very successful "train in" on 7th June, attended by senior officers of the London & Home Counties branch, we were advised that the final date for closure of Stratford-Tottenham Hale has been set for 5th July.

### Sales Officer

Following the advert in the last issue of "Railwatch" we are pleased to announce that the National Executive at its meeting on 4th May confirmed the appointment of Miss Dawn Smith to this post.

Her office is at 18 Grove Road, Sutton, Surrey, and she will be pleased to deal with orders at that address.

## REGIONAL NOTES

### LONDON & HOME COUNTIES

Whilst rail closures still dominate the scene in London and the South East the stage has now been moved to the Strand with at least two closure cases being challenged in the Courts.

That against the London Regional Passenger Committee's Inquiry procedures, relative to the Marylebone proposal, was heard in the High Court on 29th/30th April and whilst the arguments put forward by Counsel for the GLC, Brent and other local Boroughs seemed fairly convincing the judge found in favour of LRPC. Unless an appeal is lodged the Inquiry was due to be held on 17th, 18th and 21st June and at the time of writing our representatives were ready for the fray.

The Tunbridge Wells-Eridge saga was one of the subjects discussed at the Branch's successful Members' Forum, held at Fred Tallant Hall, Euston on 28th March when members also indicated their attitude to fighting motorway proposals i.e. that this is not something that is considered to be an RDS priority, thereby mirroring the trend revealed in the recent national membership survey. A need was, however, seen to identify local lines which might be considered by BR as further candidates for closure and to take active steps to secure their retention and development.

The recent proposals by a private company, Surrey Downs Ltd., to run the Tonbridge-Uckfield line (which includes Tunbridge Wells-Eridge) as a partnership with BR prompted the Branch to ask the Minister to reconsider his closure decision until the feasibility of this scheme had been investigated but in the event a local action group was formed which has been considering challenging the Minister's decision in the High Court. RDS for its part has put its money where its mouth is by making a grant of £50 towards the legal costs from the Anti-Closure Fund. Meanwhile the news that BR is considering submitting an application to the D.Tp. to electrify the East Grinstead line also prompts us to ask why the Uckfield line should not also be included, with Tunbridge Wells-Eridge retained as a vital operational link.

Even the Stratford-Tottenham Hale line will not lie down for whilst services into Broad Street were, from 13th May reduced to rush-hours only (from Watford) with the diversion of the Richmond trains to the newly-electrified North Woolwich line, the service on this "forgotten line" has if anything been improved. The second "Train-in" to Lea Bridge on 15th March was so successful that another was set for 7th June, once more to be accompanied by folk band "Aunt Fortescues Bluesrockers". Never-

theless with the granting of Ministerial approval to closure of both this and the Dalston-Broad Street line it seems only a matter of time before the end. For the time being, however (until the Graham Road curve into Liverpool Street is completed) a skeleton service of trains will still run into Broad Street.

The first of the Branch's programme of Regional Meetings was due to be held in Chelmsford, on 25th June, supported by ASLEF the subject being "IT'S YOUR RAILWAY" - speakers to include a representative from Chelmsford Borough Council, to explain the proposals for a station at Springfield, with the RUF video presentation "Give Rail a Future" a major attraction. Another reason for holding this meeting was highlighted in the Letters column of the last RAILWATCH and the LRPC has been severely critical of BR's handling of the services between Liverpool Street and Colchester. Even Transport Under-Secretary, David Mitchell, seemed to be aware of this when, at the Society's presentation at the House of Commons on 9th May, he referred to "the Liverpool Street syndrome."

A further similar meeting, in Maidstone is planned for the Autumn and more detailed news of local events was imparted to members in the latest issue of the Branch Newsletter RAILONDON at the end of May.

John Barfield

### WEST MIDLANDS

Rail users responded in strength to British Rail's proposals to sever the present 24.5 mile Stratford-on-Avon Birmingham Line and sent in a total of 7,077 objections to the T.U.C.C. In addition the Committee has received complaints as to the validity of the closure notice and B.R. has been asked to re-advertise the proposal with fuller details of the resultant services. The Local Authorities have also united in their opposition to the closure and are planning to use consultants to produce a report and recommendations for the line.

Details of the RDS plan to reduce infrastructure and retain the line for semi-fast trains were given prominence when Alan Bevan was given a 3-minute interview on B.B.C. "Midlands Today" 6.30 News on Friday 22nd February. Together with other action groups the RDS is planning a public meeting in Henley-in-Arden on Monday 10th June. On Both Sat. & Sun., 8th & 9th June the North Warwick Line was due to carry four steam trains per day in each direction organised by the Birmingham Railway Museum.

Although the D.Tp. has refused to accept Staffordshire's T.P.P. bid for the £197,000 scheme to re-open the Cannock line the County Council has decided to seek E.E.C. funding. MEPs and officials visited the line on 19th Feb. On Saturday 27th April our Walsall Rail Supporters ran an 11-coach charter train from Hednesford (Cannock Line) to Llandudno.

May Day (6th May) saw our Redditch Line User Group running its charter to Portsmouth. With the new timetable Redditch had its morning peak hour trains starting earlier and spaced out at 30 min intervals, instead of 15 mins. The station car park has been much improved and slightly extended. On Sat. 30th March the RDS and the Redditch Group also participated in a BR sponsored Rail Day at the station which usefully promoted rail services and our activities.

In April the new Class 150 "Sprinter" was to be found in service on trials along the Birmingham "Cross-City" line between Lichfield and Redditch and reports to date are most favourable. Also brand new for the Midlands is the new guide "MIDLANDS BY RAIL" produced by the Midlands Branch, price £1.95. Send your order NOW! to RDS, 21, Norfolk Road, Four Oaks, B75 6SQ. To help the campaign against de-regulation of public transport the branch has held public meetings in Wolverhampton, Walsall and Sutton Coldfield; produced and circulated leaflets; and protested to all MPs in the region.

Alan Bevan

### EAST ANGLIA

British Rail's new timetable contains two welcome improvements for which the East Anglian Branch has been campaigning for some time. The up postal train from Norwich to Liverpool Street, via Cambridge, has been reinstated as a passenger train, leaving Norwich at 22.45. Four years ago, this and similar overnight trains were barred to passengers as part of a BR internal accounting change. Thanks to BR's change of heart Thetford people will again be able to have an evening out in Norwich by public transport; now we must urge that this train's stops at Wymondham and Attleborough also be reinstated. The other welcome improvement is the introduction of a Blackpool-Cambridge train in the morning, returning in the afternoon. For five years we have been putting the case for more through trains between East Anglia and the North West.

The second, enlarged edition of our railguide, EAST ANGLIA BY RAIL, was published at the end of April by Jarrolds. It includes new sections on the Hitchin-Peterborough route, the Nene Valley

and North Norfolk steam lines, walks around major towns and cities and how to get to some stately homes by public transport. This important RDS book costs £1.95 from Peter Lawrence, 75, Marlipit Lane, Norwich, NR5 8XN, or from any good bookshop.

Concern has been expressed recently by commuters at Royston and Colchester about deteriorating services, and in each town a new rail users' group has been set up. RDS members are on the steering committee of both new groups and we hope that each will address itself not just to commuters problems but to issues facing all local rail users. As has been shown by our affiliated users group at Sudbury, the health of any service can also be improved by boosting off-peak leisure usage.

RDS members John Tizard and Trevor Garrod spoke at a packed meeting in the village hall at Arlesey, on the main line between Hitchin and Biggleswade, which led to the setting up of an action committee to press for a new station (the previous two serving this large village having been closed in 1959). The issue is being seriously considered by Bedfordshire County Council. Meanwhile, another RDS member, David Green, is canvassing the idea of a new station at Fletton Parkway, on the southern outskirts of Peterborough, while useful contact has also been established with two parish councils seeking station re-openings on the main line between Stowmarket and Diss.

Our corporate member, the North Norfolk Travellers' Association carried 350 passengers on the first of five special trains this season. On Easter Saturday the special started at North Walsham and picked up at several other Norfolk stations before travelling to Harrogate and York, behind locomotive 47 487 - the first one locally to be repainted in the new Inter-City livery. NENTA has also succeeded in getting its recommendations accepted by BR for a new-style Sunday service on the Sheringham line, and looks forward to the opening of Roughton Road Halt, near Cromer, promised by BR for 13th May.

Meanwhile, another of our corporate members, the East Suffolk Travellers' Association, is planning to conduct a survey on the trains between Lowestoft and Ipswich in early June, to ascertain the demand for a late evening and winter Sunday morning service. Such additional trains will be easier for BR to provide once the East Suffolk modernization scheme is complete in October.

Trevor Garrod

## YORKSHIRE

The West Yorkshire PTE is to close Altofts and Woodlesford stations on the line from Normanton to Leeds, thereby

saving £900,000 a year in support costs to British Rail. Normanton will be served by trains from Castleford & Knottingly travelling via Wakefield to Leeds; the Sheffield, Barnsley, Leeds services will be re-routed by Wakefield (Westgate). About 200 passengers a day use the trains between Woodlesford and Leeds - they will have to travel by bus!

The PTE has plans to save a further £200,000 by reducing the train services between Ilkley, Leeds and Bradford. A new timetable is proposed for October in which the morning & evening commuter trains, which are very full will be reduced in number. These proposals have produced an angry response and the Wharfedale Rail Users Group has been formed to fight for the services.

The Goole Swing Bridge has only been reprieved and not saved. The Agreement between British Rail and the Humberside County Council following the payment of 800,000 is said by the Goole Rail Action Committee to be riddled with loopholes.

Services are only guaranteed till 1989 and the repair work on the central jetty is only to be of a standard capable of lasting for ten years from the Agreement and not from the date of completion. At present this work is expected to commence towards the end of the year - hardly the best time when the river is often in flood.

Dore station is being largely demolished. The Hope Valley line, which carries a good deal of traffic has been singled through the station. The platforms serving the Chesterfield line are being demolished prior to realigning the track on the sharp curve through the station. British Rail claim that these measures will save £80,000 and give a faster inter-city service to London (the total distance involved is about half a mile). This means that there is now no hope of trains stopping at Dore for the benefit of passengers wanting to travel to Chesterfield or Nottingham, when the new Leeds-Nottingham service starts in 1986.

British Rail claim that consultation with the South Yorkshire PTE shows that there is no demand for a service from Dore to Chesterfield, but then the bus-orientated South Yorkshire PTE does not give financial support to the Sheffield-Dore rail service and does not want to know about the existence of Dore station.

Dennis Bradbury

## NORTH WEST

On the Furness line BR is replacing most of the through loco-hauled trains between Barrow, Lancaster and Preston with DMU shuttles. This has provoked considerable local controversy, especially as the line is very busy in the summer months. As a result of this the North West Branch intends to form a users' group on the line later this year (probably in June/July). Any member

who would like to help set up the group please contact the Branch Chairman on Preston 743371.

On the Fylde Line there is considerable concern at BR's plan to axe the 09.34 Inter-City train from Blackpool North to Euston from May this year. This train is very popular with holidaymakers and regularly leaves Blackpool with 200+ people on board. The service is being withdrawn owing to the recasting of BR's West Coast Main Line Inter-City services. Concern is being expressed in Blackpool that this is the start of a rundown of the resort's Inter-City services.

The local NUR Branch has formed an action group - FLAG (Fylde Line Action Group) to fight for the retention of this service. As part of their campaign they called a public meeting in Blackpool on Friday 29th March. The RDS was present at this meeting and the Branch Chairman spoke of the need for rail services to be improved, not cut, and for the line to be electrified.

On the South Fylde Line BR plan to build a new station at St. Annes to replace the old and very dilapidated structure there. Also a new station is to be built at Blackpool South. From May 1986 it is likely that this line will be combined with the Preston to Ormskirk line and most services will operate through from Ormskirk to Blackpool South.

Further to the piece about the Settle to Carlisle line in our March issue the public hearing dates announced by the Yorkshire TUCC have been postponed. The urgency for getting local services restored on the line has intensified following Cumbria County Council's decision to halve its revenue support to the buses. Ribblesdale have announced that most of the bus services operating from Penrith to Appleby, Kirkby Stephen, Lazonby and Carlisle will disappear as a result, and the bus depot in Penrith be closed.

The Settle to Carlisle Joint Action Committee called a very successful liaison meeting of objectors to the closure of the line in Settle on 9th April. The Action Committee has also commissioned TEST (who wrote the highly successful reports for T2000 "BR A European Railway" to undertake a study of the Settle to Carlisle and Blackburn to Hellifield, via Clitheroe, lines. The main purpose of the study is to further the work done by PEIDA and to look at the financial implications of operating a variety of different services on the line. So far as the Blackburn to Hellifield line is concerned the report is looking at the restoration of a passenger service to Clitheroe from Blackburn. The South Ribblesdale Borough Council has given a very large contribution to the work and has always advocated the restoration of passenger services to Clitheroe.

On the Ormskirk to Preston Line the local Passengers Association (OPTA) are planning to adopt a station at Rufford. This will be the second station that the group has "adopted" from BR. The group is also running a special train over the Settle to Carlisle line in May and intends to make a donation from the proceeds of the trip to the Settle to Carlisle campaign.

Richard Watts

## NORTH MIDLANDS

In 1984 Nottinghamshire County Council produced a strategy document called "The Midland Main Line: The Way Ahead", pressing for continued investment and electrification. Their campaign continued with a very well-attended conference in Nottingham in March 1985. Speakers were drawn from the Chamber of Commerce, Transport 2000, the NUR and BR. The RDS strategy document, produced by the East Midlands Branch in response to the Council's ideas, suggests many additional services to feed an electrified Midland Main Line and received wide publicity in the media.

Part of the direct Nottingham to Mansfield line may be used as a test track for industrial machinery between Linby and Newstead. This puts another obstacle in the way of an eventual restoration of the passenger service to Mansfield. Steel is again being delivered to the Butterley Company in Derbyshire by rail, via Codnor Park and the Midland Railway Trust's line. There have also been occasional outgoing loads, usually major bridge sections for British Rail.

Malcolm Goodall

## EAST MIDLANDS

The eleventh branch of RDS, covering Leicestershire, Northamptonshire and much of Bedfordshire was launched at a meeting in Kettering on 9th March when three officers and a Committee of seven were elected. Secretary of the new Branch is Greg Moran, 22, Edinburgh Road, Kettering. The Branch issued its first Newsletter EAST MID RAIL, a few days later and is actively pursuing campaigns started by local members prior to its formation - including Corby reopening and a new station at Roade, plus a users' group on the Peterborough-Leicester line.

A major activity has been the RDS study, MIDLAND MAIN LINE: ELECTRIFICATION AND STRATEGY (referred to elsewhere in these notes) copies of which can be obtained (at 75p.) from Darryl Taylor-Smith, 4, Linden Avenue, Countesthorpe, Leicester, LE8 3PG. This document gained publicity on Central Television and in the Daily Telegraph. It has been widely circulated to BR, local Councils and M.P.s putting the case for electrification from Bedford up to Derby, Nottingham, Sheffield and Leeds, and improvements to connecting services.

BR's initial response has been to say that electrification is unlikely before the year 2000, since High Speed Trains will be available on the line until then. Yet this argument is not being applied to the East Coast Main Line, where electrification is to be completed in 1991 and HSTs then transferred to other cross-country routes. So why apply it to the Midland Main Line?

(The Minister - in a reply to the Parliamentary Liaison Committee - while noting the document with interest states that it is really up to BR to make the running.ED)

Trevor Garrod

## LINCOLNSHIRE

Branch Secretary, Philip Strong was interviewed by Radio Lincolnshire about publication by the Branch of LINCOLNSHIRE BY RAIL on 30th March.

Speaking at the launch of the book, at the Branch Meeting in Lincoln, editor Trevor Garrod, gave two important reasons for the Society's choice of Lincolnshire and South Humberside for its second rail-based guidebook. As a tourist area, these two counties deserved to be better known, especially as they were within relatively easy reach, by rail, of the large populations of Yorkshire, the Midlands and even London. Anything that could be done to encourage leisure use of the regions's rail network would strengthen the case for retaining and improving it.

Secondly, the area had several good examples of a local authority giving modest but useful financial help towards rail improvements, e.g. level crossing modernization and station refurbishment. Such examples should be publicized, to set a precedent for some less enlightened "Shire Counties".

LINCOLNSHIRE BY RAIL is 52 pages, illustrated, and costs 1.80 (plus 20p. postage) from John Saunders, Stockwell Gate, Whaplode, Spalding, Lincs. PE12 6UE.

We are giving encouragement to new moves to reopen Donington station between Sleaford and Spalding. Unfortunately, this section of line currently only has three regular passenger trains in each direction, and more frequent

service would make a reopened Donington Halt more attractive. In this connection, the suggestion in the Midland Main Line Strategic Study (referred to elsewhere) for a more frequent and attractive service between Peterborough and Lincoln, is relevant and has received local press publicity.

Trevor Garrod

## ICKNIELD

That was the name chosen by members meeting in Reading on 13th April for the Society's twelfth Branch covering the counties of Buckinghamshire, Berkshire and Oxfordshire (plus Kings Sutton in Northants). The Branch Chairman is L.I.Elias, 78, Rochford Gardens, Slough, Berks. SL2 5XJ, the post of Secretary being at present (we understand) vacant. A major meeting is planned in Oxford during June; a railtour in the Autumn and further details of the Branch's programme can be obtained by sending an SAE to Lyndon Elias at the above address. Further volunteers for the Branch Committee will also be welcome.

Despite protests by local action groups the new station at Winnersh Triangle is to be built without any provision for disabled travellers. Access to the island platform will be by stairs. The existing Winnersh station, although heavily vandalised and in a filthy and disgusting state, does have sloping paths leading from street level down to both platforms.

## SOUTH WEST

In Cornwall a second rail users' group has been formed on RDS initiative: the Newquay Association of Rail Users was formed in, appropriately, the Great Western Hotel, Newquay, on 3rd April.

The meeting followed an RDS survey of local opinion, the main results of which were: most people regarded the number of trains on the line as "about right" but there was a case for a winter Sunday service; there was a need for more local advertising of the trains, at locations other than stations. Better connections at Par were called for and a possible new halt at Tren creek on the outskirts of Newquay. The new group therefore has a number of issues to tackle in the coming months.

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**RAILWATCH** 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.

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In Devon we are pleased to announce the appointment of a new RDS Representative: Mrs. Joan Fuller, 25, Sweetbriar Lane, Heavitree, Exeter, EX1 3AF (Tel. 79245).

Trevor Garrod

## WALES

The Cambrian Coast Line Action Group is organizing a charter rail service on Sundays 21 and 28 July and 4, 11, 18 and 25 August between Barmouth and Pwllheli in order to provide a public service. Gwynedd County Council, which does such an excellent job in promoting the Welsh rail system, is supporting the venture. This is the fifth year of operation of the CCAG Sunday trains. The service will connect with the morning and evening Birmingham-Barmouth train service. RDS members are urgently asked to support the service. Connections at cheap fares are available with the Festiniog Railway. RDS in Wales has its own magazine RAILWALES and any news items, press cuttings etc., are always welcome and should be sent to: Chris Magner, 25, Dunval Road, Bridgenorth, Shropshire, WV16 4NA. I am also trying to start a collection of colour slides to promote the Cambrian Line and would be grateful for any donated slides for use in talks for this purpose.

BR held two successive rail weeks from 1 to 13 April on the Cambrian Coast

line, with rail fares reduced by 50% between Aberystwyth and Pwllheli. BR has a long-term oil contract from Ellesmere Port to Aberystwyth, and there are proposals to redevelop Aberystwyth station with new BR facilities. Gwynedd County Council are again running a Sunday service on the Conwy Valley Branch (Llandudno-Blaenau) on 21 and 28 July and 4, 11, 18 & 25 August, days on which no normal BR service is operated.

Chris Magner

## SCOTLAND

On 23 March, as guests of Scotrail and the Scottish Association for Public Transport, we rode on a special train from Edinburgh to Bathgate, there to be welcomed by a brass band and a chain-bedecked chairman of the District Council. After lunch we heard an impressively positive address by Chris Green, General Manager of Scotrail (the new description for BR's Scottish Region). It contained the information that the reinstatement in about a year's time of passenger services on the Edinburgh-Bathgate line, requiring three new trains and three new stations, will cost little more than 1.5m.

On 2 April we were the final objector to be heard in the 12-day long Steps Bypass Inquiry. We argued that the perceived need for the by-pass was magnified by the company car scandal (costing on average £75 a year in tax to

each of the 85% of households which do not enjoy the use of one) and by motor fuel prices which disregard the possible value of the world's finite oil supply to future generations. The by-pass would require 34.2 hectares of agricultural land, more than the entire area of the second smallest of the seven farms from which land would need to be taken.

The QC representing the Scottish Development Department and Strathclyde Regional Council said these arguments were remote from "the real world" and were "obscure". His "real world" had a limited future, we retorted. If the Report and the Secretary of State's decision go against us (we probably will not know this for a month or two) there is still the possibility of trying to make this into an election issue for the Scottish Regional Council elections due in May 1986.

On 2 May we were due to be heard by Dundee District Council's Development Control Committee as objectors to the completion of the City's inner ring road. One could have literally scores of railway stations for the same price. We contend that time has removed much of the importance which this project at one time seemed to have.

Very soon Scotrail will be meeting the Scottish Development Department to discuss a rail crossing of the Dornoch Firth. It will be a question of finding the finance. The SDD holds that objections to a road-only bridge on the grounds that a railway should be incorporated are not legally valid. However, no Inquiry is likely sooner than a year from now and we will only know towards the end of this year whether an Inquiry will be held at all (one will only be needed if the SDD is unable to negotiate with objectors to withdraw their objections).

An error crept into the report about Scotland in the last RAILWATCH (No. 23)! Edinburgh Outer City Bypass has NOT been completed. The point here is that the need for an Edinburgh Western Relief Road can only be assessed AFTER the Outer City Bypass HAS been completed - an argument which the authorities refuse to understand.

With Brian Chaplin's arrival in SW Scotland and his willingness to be active on behalf of RDS we look forward to a reawakening of interest in the reinstatement of a Dumfries-Castle Douglas-Newton Stewart-Stranraer railway. This could bring the whole of SE England within reach of Belfast by convenient day journey by rail and ship.

RDS members outwith Scotland may obtain the latest issue of our Branch Notes by sending SAE (9" x 6" please) and 2 x 13p stamps to us at: Top Right, 113, W. Regent Street, Glasgow, G2 2RU.

Frank Neville



# TWILIGHT OF BRITISH RAIL?

DR MICHAEL R. BONAVIA

Since the second world war the railways of Britain have undergone no end of change with nationalisation, closures, rationalisation, reorganisation, damaging strikes by its own workforce and others in related industries, doubtful decisions by its own management and interference by government. Dr Bonavia served in high office on BR through much of this period, retiring in the mid 1970s as Director of the abortive Channel Tunnel project. He writes at first hand from a wealth of inside knowledge, especially of the last two decades on BR which he describes as the twilight years. He questions whether the present management set-up is right, and criticises the freedom which the engineers have had in evolving costly modernisation schemes which in some cases produce little in hard cash returns. He assesses how the great general managers of the past would view the railways of today and delves into the minefields of rail catering, the single manning issue for train crews, the roles of the unions and the ministry, and the friends, foes and enemies within. Dr Bonavia is convinced that the modern railway has a future but says that standards must be improved. His text is hard hitting but constructively critical of a service which is always in the public eye and which has had more than its fair share of problems.

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## PREVIEW

MPs of all political shades who take an interest in railways are feeling reasonably pleased with the immediate prospects for development.

### BETTER AND BETTER ON WESTERN REGION

Tony Speller (C. North Devon) who does most of his travelling in that part of the country says things are looking up on the Western Region. Mr. Sidney Newey, W.R. General Manager, recently asked to west country MPs at the Commons about what they are doing to improve the services. Mr. Speller, who does everything possible to keep the interest going in railway matters among his colleagues, told me; "A TUCC speaker from Bristol is coming to talk to us soon. You can now get from Paddington to Exeter in two hours, which is quite something."

"Some of my fellow MPs get stropky about unpunctuality," he said, "but I've only had one complaint about bad timekeeping this year from a constituent, so it can't be too bad. New signalling is being installed at Exeter, which causes delays, but so do engineering works on motorways, and nobody objects to that."

The timetable was being improved, he said, by logically running trains at more convenient times, even when the frequency might be reduced. He would like to see the extension of day return tickets 1st class for business travellers and more reductions for one passenger accompanying another. He thought the new fare structure, being introduced in Mid-May, was an improvement.

### NEW PARK 'N' RIDE STATION IN NORTH DEVON

Other good developments were the introduction of new diesel units between Barnstaple and Exeter, and the movement of a station, Tiverton Junction, to Sampford Peverall, more than three miles away. He is delighted at this, as it will provide another "Parkway" station likely to attract business people.

What about the Channel Tunnel? - Mr. Speller agrees that this is very important, and he thinks the prospects are certainly improving. He is firmly in support of a tunnel (rather than a bridge) which would "run the risk of being hit by a 100,000-ton tanker. People would worry about that" he suggested, "and there would also be fantastic winds." But he thinks that the danger of a bridge being decided upon cannot be entirely ruled out.

### DOCKLANDS LINE MUCH LIKE A TRAMWAY?

Nigel Spearing (Lab. Newham South) is enthusiastic about progress in the London area, and points out that the extension of third rail electrification to North Woolwich is the first extension of its kind since the third rail electrification to Bournemouth.

Mr. Spearing relies heavily on public transport; otherwise he uses his bike. "I practice what I preach," he told me. "I've never had a car and never wanted one."

He is pleased with progress on the first two phases of the Docklands Light Railway and thinks that from a signalling point of view it will be rather like a tramway, although the coaches, for which the order has been placed, will resemble those of the Tyne & Wear Metro.

Current will be 600 volts DC, with side pick-up (probably underneath pick-up, the people on the job told me.) This makes it safer for workers walking on the track or for stray animals.\* The third phase, to Beckton, is not yet agreed on. "There's a local row about whether or not it crosses Bow Creek," Mr. Spearing says.

\*(Yes we do have a farm on the Isle of Dogs ED)

### BRITISH RAIL - MUCH TO PLAY FOR

VISCOUNT SIDMOUTH - one of those independent peers who sits on the cross benches - is a former railwayman and president of the National Council on Inland Transport, so it is encouraging to

find he is also optimistic about the future of railways today. "There's a lot to play for", he told me.

He thought that the last chairman, Sir Peter Parker, lost confidence and lost heart. Having graduated himself from being a traffic apprentice in the old LNER to becoming chief operating superintendent of East African Railways, he thinks that BR is doing very well and far from being the "spent force" that some people still imagine.

As secretary of the Parliamentary Channel Tunnel Group, he considers that prospects are brightening for what is now called the "fixed link". He thinks it will be in the form of a twin bore tunnel, and that the diameter should be seven metres.

JE

### Legislation to deal with GLC after court setback

JANUARY 29 Mr. Ridley, in a statement about the court judgement concerning the payment of grants by the GLC to London Regional Transport, said the Government took over responsibility for LRT on June 29, 1984. The GLC had budgeted to pay grants to London Transport for the whole of 1984-85.

Parliament granted powers for the GLC to be directed to continue paying grants until the end of March 1985. This direction was subsequently challenged by the GLC and quashed by the High Court. The effect of the judgement would be to reduce the money available to LRT by over £50 million at a late stage in the financial year. Any new direction under existing legislation would not end the damaging uncertainty. "In the circumstances, the Government consider that the matter can be settled only by the authority of Parliament. I shall shortly introduce new legislation to enable Parliament to determine once and for all the amount to be paid to LRT by the GLC."

Peter Snape (Lab. West Bromwich East) asked if the minister was aware that his proposal was a constitutional outrage. Any attempt to legislate would be strenuously and rigorously opposed by all Opposition members who

**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.

believed in the rule of law, and that any Labour minister who behaved in the same cavalier manner would be pilloried by the whole of Fleet Street.

### Flouting verdict would earn derision

To use the Government's majority to force through retrospective legislation to flout the verdict of the court was to condone the minister's improper and illegal behaviour, to defy the traditions of the House and to earn the contempt and derision of all true democrats who deplored his shameless arrogance and political chicanery.

*Mr. Ridley* said the member had overreacted. The court took a different view of the Government's powers from what had been intended, and he would be misleading the House if he did not seek to put it right.

*John Maples* (C. Lewisham West) said it had been made clear in discussing the clauses in question that the unspent balance of moneys raised for subsidising London's bus and tube services was to be paid over to LRT.

*Mr. Ridley*: "Quite right; what I told Parliament does not appear to have been reflected in the court's interpretation..."

*Mr. Snape*: "It means that the Government were wrong."

*Mr. Ridley*: "No, I said that the legislation does not mean what I told Parliament it meant, therefore it is proper for me to put that error right."

*Tony Banks* (Lab. Newham North-West) said that the minister had revealed his incompetence; he did not understand his own legislation. Was the true figure £50 million, £60 million or £73 million?

*Mr. Ridley* said that when announcing the intention to legislate, it was not normal practice to discuss details, let alone complicated figures.

*Harry Cohen* (Lab. Leyton) said the minister thought he was above the law, even his own law. Taking the vendetta against the GLC into new retrospective legislation was a constitutional disgrace.

*Mr. Ridley*: "I do not claim to be a lawyer, but you know even less about these matters than I do."

### Resolution paves way for revised legislation

**FEBRUARY 7** *Mr. Ridley* said: "I intended to appeal against the High Court judgement, but having studied the judgement, I concluded that it was the Act itself that did not correspond with our intentions. The Government had no option but to bring a new Bill before

Parliament." He introduced a "ways and means" resolution to pave the way for a Bill to determine the total of grants payable by the GLC to London Regional Transport.

"Before we hear the voice of London, intoning as though in a seance through the medium of Crewe and Nantwich (the constituency of Mrs. Dunwoody), I challenge Mrs. Dunwoody to tell us whether she will oppose a measure that will protect the interests of London passengers, rate and taxpayers, or whether she will vote to rob them of money they have paid for public transport, to give the GLC a windfall to spend on God knows what."

*Mrs. Dunwoody* (shadow Transport Secretary) said that the Government made an error and charged £10.2 million above the maximum allowed, which the minister conceded after the court verdict. He used five methods to take a total of £73 million from the GLC, and on every one he was found guilty by a court of law. If the money went back to the GLC, all would go to reduce the rate. If it went to LRT, only two-thirds would go back to the ratepayers. So much for the boast that the minister was worried about London ratepayers.

The Government intended to charge the GLC £73 million more than they had a legal right to demand. Now as a great concession, they would charge only £50 million more - to conceal the cuts made in LRT since it was taken over by Whitehall. "As far as the Government are concerned, the GLC can pay for a Whitehall-run service." Fares were now higher and services had become worse.

### Opposition entitled to a bit of a giggle

*Frank Dobson* (Lab. Holborn & St. Pancras) said that if others ran their businesses or departments as the minister was running his, they would be hounded out of office.

*Martin Stevens* (C. Fulham) said Opposition MPs were entitled to a bit of a giggle about something that went wrong, but they should not make such absurd accusations. The GLC resembled the modern Labour Party, like a flash city financier who was too fly to break the law.

*Stephen Ross* (L/A Isle of Wight) said: "We are seeing tonight what happens when one divorces the upper tier of local government from its proper role as a transport authority and places it in the hands of civil servants and an arrogant minister. The breakdown in relations between central and local government is a tragedy not only for this House but for the whole UK."

The minister was breaching the undertaking he gave that the money was to cover running LRT; it was widely admitted that £50 million was not needed for that purpose. That was the

burden of the court judgement. The minister was more profligate with ratepayers' money than the GLC, which he frequently attacked.

### Reasonable for GLC to pay, but was the sum too much?

*Nigel Spearing* (Lab. Newham South) said he wished to be strictly fair to the minister. There was a clause in the Bill allowing money to be transferred from the GLC in the transitional period of six months or so, when transport would be under the minister rather than the GLC. That was perfectly reasonable. It was alleged, however, that the amount levied was in excess of the amount required by LRT in the balancing period. The minister had not so far rebutted the allegation. The figure bruited around was in excess of £50 million. "I assume that all the additional revenue, over and above the requirements for this year, will be used for improving the service or reducing fares. Like most of my constituents, I do not own a car, and this issue is vital to the quality of transport."

*Mr. Ridley* replied that he gave the assurance categorically.

**When the resolution was agreed to, a Bill specifying the sum to be paid by the GLC to LRT was given a formal first reading.**

### Minister compared to Inspector Clouseau

**FEBRUARY 19** *Mr. Ridley* moved that the London Regional Transport (Amendment) Bill be read a second time. This was to determine how much grant should be paid by the GLC to LRT. If he had gone through the process of appeal, he said, he might end up without the correct amount having to be paid. The risks were too great, so he had brought the Bill before the House to enable it to decide correctly.

*Mrs. Dunwoody* said that the GLC was claiming that the minister was asking for sums of money to which he was not entitled.

*John Cartwright* (SD/A Woolwich) said the minister gave an undertaking that it was not his intention that LRT should end up with a surplus as a result of the money that the GLC was directed to pay to it, yet it seemed clear that that was what would happen.

*Harry Cohen* (Lab. Leyton) said it was not unexpected for politicians to praise their own policies, but in this case it was like Inspector Clouseau praising his policing powers. The minister had Inspector Clouseau's incompetence but not his charm. His handling of LRT had been abysmal.

*Mr. Spearing* said the Bill should not have been before the House but should have been a subject for County Hall and the borough councils. The Capital-card

scheme which the GLC had intended to introduce – to aid the movement of passengers between BR and LRT – would have cost 37% less than the scheme introduced under the aegis of the Government.

### Ways to stop vandalism and violence

*Frank Dobson* (Lab. Holborn & St. Pancras) said the GLC had planned to increase both bus and train miles, to integrate LT and BR ticketing and to seek 1.5% improvement in productivity per year for 3 years.

Now we are getting down to the barmy old spiral that LT had gone down for years.

"Considerable efforts should be made – they might have been by the GLC but are not likely to be made by LRT and BR – to get into schools and colleges and persuade young people not to be violent on our transport system, and that vandalism should be reduced. We need co-ordination between responsible bodies – between London Transport and BR – because at the moment their approach on how to stop people lobbing rocks over a bridge is different. One of them fences off a line, the other does not: 'daft as brushes,' to quote the Tory party chairman. The GLC was vilified for recruiting more staff for LT. That has come to an end – to save a few measly million quid. Refurbishment of stations helps to reduce violence."

The GLC, he added, made proposals to help BR finance improvements to some of its stations. People could take a pride in their job and not sit in ticket collecting boxes with water running down their necks. There was no proposition that London ratepayers should send people to the moon, only that the standard of all LRT stations should be raised to the level of the best.

*Harry Greenway* (C. Ealing North) said that for LRT to be running London's transport was a breath of fresh air for Londoners. There was a new atmosphere of reasonableness and helpfulness. LRT's current ban on smoking ought to be considered carefully. Fraud on LT was being tackled. LRT should look at the possibility of introducing the French carnet, and flat-rate fares should be looked at again.

Winding up the debate *Mr. Ridley* said it was Parliament, not the court, that should decide how much money should be paid by the GLC to LRT, who would be £50 million short if the Bill was not enacted.

The Bill was given a second reading by 266 votes to 197, a Government majority of 69. The following day it was discussed by a committee of the whole House, given a third reading and passed.

### RDS meets Minister & MPs to discuss Transport Bill.

Problems of the Transport Bill were discussed by RDS members and MPs in a Commons Committee Room on May 9th. Under-Secretary of State David Mitchell, spoke of the Heritage Fund to be set up to maintain BR's historic buildings and structures and Shadow Transport Minister, Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody heard and answered some of our questions about how the proposed legislation – mainly about privatisation of buses – would affect railways.

Among those from RDS were Dr. Michael Caton, John Barfield, Oliver Lovell and Don Matheu with other members of the Parliamentary Liaison Committee. In the chair was Peter Snape, who said the exercise had been valuable, and that the presentation of the Society's case had been "very professional." Mrs. Dunwoody said that whenever the Opposition attacked the Government's arguments for the Bill, the minister "moved the goal posts."

The Second Reading debate had taken place almost two months before on **FEBRUARY 12.**

*Mr. Ridley*, introducing the Bill, said it was a major part of the Government's legislative programme. The National Bus Company was required to submit plans for the disposal of its operations to the private sector, and to implement those agreed plans within three years. The railways board could put forward proposals for bus substitution in situations where existing rail services were making significant operating losses.

*Mrs. Dunwoody* said this was not a Bill about improving public transport: it was about two pet obsessions of the minister. One was privatisation, the other deregulation. It was worth noting that since the National Bus Company was formed, nearly all the private companies had pulled out and put their money into different types of operation.

### Halt rail closures reopen some lines

*Stephen Ross* (L/A Isle of Wight) said that splitting the National Bus Company up into smaller operating units was unlikely to be successful. "The proposed break-up of the municipal public transport authorities is a retrograde step, especially in a place such as Tyne & Wear which, by common consent, has built up the finest co-ordinated transport system in the country."

"The future of concessionary fares does not bear thinking about. Existing schemes and through booking arrangements are at great risk. I believe the time has come to halt all rail closures and even to re-open some lines. Our small overcrowded island cries out for a comprehensive rail network. The con-

tinuing chapter of hideous road accidents should persuade us of the need for this priceless asset."

### Tyne & Wear Metro envy of the world

*Harry Cowans* (Lab. Tyne Bridge) said the Tyne & Wear Metro was the envy of the world; even the minister thought it was a marvellous concept and had said so, yet the co-ordinated transport system that made it possible was to be removed from the local authority. If one believed that something was marvellous, one did not remove the means of building it up.

*David Marshall* (Lab. Glasgow Shettleston) said the Strathclyde rail review was the result of long negotiations between BR and Strathclyde region. The Bill could mean the disintegration of that review, with an adverse effect on BR's income. It would mean taking a new look at many services, such as the electrification and investments proposed for the Glasgow to Ayrshire corridor. If the main routes between Ayr and Glasgow were to be ripped off by cowboy operators, what chance was there of improvements in rail services? What was the point of BR spending millions of pounds, if cowboy bus operators were to cream off all the profits?

If deregulation was the answer to all transport problems, why was London being left out of the Bill? If London had special circumstances an equally good case could be made out for Strathclyde.

The second reading was carried by 288 votes to 205, a Government majority of 83.

### Plans for Channel Link 'this great adventure'

**APRIL 2** *Mr. Ridley* made a statement after question time about the Channel fixed link. He said that in November he met French ministers responsible for transport to discuss the possibility of a fixed link across the Channel. "We agreed that this project should be financed without support from public funds or Government guarantees against commercial or technical risks."

At a further meeting on March 20, final texts of the guidelines were agreed and the closing date for proposals was to be October 31 this year. The two Governments aimed to reach a decision by about the end of the year on which proposal, if any, should be enabled to go ahead.

"I cannot yet tell whether a fixed link will be built across the Channel or not. The private sector has a unique opportunity. I wish the promoters well in this great endeavour."

*Mrs. Dunwoody* said: "We welcome any suggestion of considerable investment in the infrastructure. We have been

asking the Government for many years for precisely this sort of development, with its impact on jobs and industry. Would the environmental impact be a paramount consideration?"

Mr. Ridley replied that any contender would be asked to put forward an environmental impact study of his proposals on the English side. The French would have a different procedure on their side. Channel traffic was likely to double by the year 2000, which would leave room for both fixed link and a large ferry industry, possibly as large as now.

### All options open, tunnel or bridge

Bruce Millan (Lab. Glasgow Govan) said the link would represent expenditure for the benefit of south-east England, where there was already over concentration of population and economic activity.

Mr. Ridley replied that a great deal of the capital would be foot-loose international capital, which might not come to these islands at all if the project did not go ahead. "If there is to be a tunnel under the Channel, it must start from Kent rather than Glasgow."

Stephen Ross (L/A Isle of Wight) said that he and his bench welcomed the statement, which was a change and a pleasure. "We believe that this is an imaginative idea, and that a link should have been built long ago. Will you confirm that all options are open: rail only, road-bridge, bridge and tunnel, and assure the House that once bids are in there will be no delay in reaching a decision?"

Mr. Ridley replied that all options were open. "The ones we know about and the ones we have not yet heard about, provided they meet the criteria and come in time. The firm intention of the two governments is to reach a decision by the end of the year, if possible. The French are as keen as we are to do this."

Toby Jessel (C. Twickenham) asked if the minister could be certain that no French Government, perhaps to further their bargaining position on some completely different matter, would make a threat to close the tunnel at the other end.

Mr. Ridley said we were seeking to sign a treaty with the French about that. "The predictions are that a sizeable ferry industry will remain, as an alternative method of getting goods and people across the Channel. I believe the French will wish to sign a treaty, which will be an added protection."

Robert Adley (C. Christchurch) asked: "Do you recall the sad political circumstances which surrounded the fact that the late Anthony Crosland was obliged

to cancel the previous tunnel? Would you take on board the importance of getting all-party support for the project, bearing in mind that there are people in all parties who do not want it?"

### Support bodes well for giving it a fair wind

Mr. Ridley: "I have been encouraged by the wide support so far. That bodes well for the House being prepared to give a good proposal a fair wind."

Teddy Taylor (C. Southend East) said the unanimous decision of the five banks' review was that there was no way in which this could be financed without external guarantees. Would there therefore be no question of national guarantees by the back door through the EEC? "If no proposal comes forward by the end of the year, will you finally bury this silly and outmoded white elephant?"

Mr. Ridley replied that the new factor in the situation was that, despite what the banks had said in their report, miraculously they now found that they thought they could finance the scheme without access to public funds or public guarantees. "It may be that you will see something in that transformation. There will be no EEC funds or guarantees for the link, because that would merely be public money channelled through another route."

### Only 5 fires on the underground in 10 years

JANUARY 9 Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Lab. Crewe and Nantwich, shadow Transport Secretary) asked how many fires had occurred on the London Underground in the past 10 years?

Mr. Ridley (in a written reply) gave a table showing that there were no fires on trains affecting passenger services in the six years from 1975 to 1980. There were two such fires in 1981 and one in each of the three following years. There were from one to a maximum of eight fires in stations, signal boxes or alongside the track in each of the 10 years.

The reply stated: "as well as the recent fire at Oxford Circus, the figures include three serious incidents, each of which was the subject of a formal inquiry and a published report. These were at Finsbury Park in 1976, Goodge Street in 1981, and between Wood Green and Bounds Green in 1982. All other incidents were minor. The causes include arson, ignition of dust by sparks from the conductor rails, and carelessly discarded cigarettes."

### Impressive decrease in accidents to railway-men

JANUARY 22 Dr. Ian Twinn (C. Edmonton) asked how many railway employees were killed or seriously injured in accidents while on duty in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Mitchell replied that the figures showed a significant decrease, the 1984 figures being the lowest ever recorded. "The improvement reflects the considerable effort put into accident prevention in recent years in the railway industry." The table showed a maximum number of serious or fatal accidents to railwaymen of 850 in 1979, followed by a steady decline to 145 in 1984. Numbers struck by trains fell from a maximum of 131 in 1975, declining almost continuously to 32 in 1984.

### Collisions at Rugby and Winchester

JANUARY 24 James Pawsey (C. Rugby & Kenilworth) asked what action had been taken to prevent the recurrence of the accident which took place at Rugby on December 9 1984, when two trains collided on the same line, and if disciplinary action had been taken resulting from the inquiry?

Mr. Ridley stated in a written reply that the accident occurred when a BR engineers train was propelled past a danger signal on to the main line and into the path of an approaching passenger train, the driver of which was able to slow down. The collision occurred at slow speed; two passengers received minor injuries. BR was taking the necessary action to prevent a recurrence. BR had taken disciplinary action against members of its staff held responsible for the accident.

JANUARY 30 John Brown (C. Winchester) asked about the circumstances surrounding the train crash at Popham tunnel, Milcheldever, near Winchester, on Saturday January 26.

Mr. Ridley said in a written reply that before 5 am that day a Bournemouth-Woking multiple unit train conveying railway staff ran into a minor chalk slip. The train's collector shoes were damaged and the train immobilised.

A diesel-electric locomotive was sent from Worting Junction to assist the train, but collided heavily with it. The locomotive driver and his assistant were trapped in the cab and suffered leg injuries. Four BR employees and a postal sorter, all on the train, were treated for minor injuries.

### Yorkshire rail closure under consideration

APRIL 29 Mrs. Dunwoody asked if the minister would reject the proposed closure of the link lines between Halifax and Huddersfield until such time as BR had provided a new service from Sheffield to Huddersfield and Bradford.

Mr. Ridley said he was considering the report submitted by the transport users' consultative Committee for Yorkshire and in due course would decide whether to give consent to the closure.