

## Driver Only Operation: The RDS View

Once again, industrial action on the railways has been narrowly avoided. The central issue, again, is the introduction of driver only operation (DOO) on passenger and freight trains.

There is no doubt that, in the present climate, any form of industrial action can only lead to irreversable loss of revenue, both passenger and freight, to say nothing of the loss of more jobs than such action is designed to protect. There are arguments on both sides in this dispute and a settlement is needed which not only satisfies B.R.'s concern with economic operation and the N.U.R.'s concern with its members' jobs but which meets wider needs affecting rail users.

Rail has no monopoly, it has to operate in a competitive environment and, for the most part, this competition is unfair. We have laboured this point, with numerous examples, in past editions of "Railwatch" and are continuing to campaign for fairer competition between various transport modes. In the long run, however, our task will be made easier if Railfreight costs can be kept to a minimum with modern technology used effectively. If, therefore, in certain areas, freight trains can be run without guards and still be operated as safely as at present, then DOO should go ahead.

On the passenger side, however, we are generally opposed to DOO, and urge management not to press ahead with this. At a time when express coach

companies are increasing their facilities for customer comfort and attention, the withdrawal of the guard from passenger trains is equivalent to reducing such facilities. Apart from considerations of operational safety, the guard provides a service to handicapped passengers and deters vandalism, molestation and fare evasion, while acting in a P.R. capacity. It could be argued, in fact, that more on-train staff are required on certain late night and peak hour services. R.D.S. made the above points in a press release at the time of the N.U.R. ballot.

We hope that a solution can be found to this dispute, which is long standing and which, periodically, develops into confrontation capable of more economic damage to B.R. than any economic boost that DOO could provide. After all, B.R. has lost around £100,000 a week through turning away freight business due to non-availability of locomotives and stock. A recent Harris Report has stated that an extra £10m of passenger business a year could be attracted if the present restrictions on bicycle carriage were dropped. Furthermore, the potential for damage by politically-motivated measures, such as bus deregulation and abolition of the P.T.E.s, is huge.

The DOO issue can and should be solved by careful negotiation which balances real cost savings against customer and staff disbenefit and which, with sensible deployment of staff, provides a better service to the user.

K.W.

## SETTLE-CARLISLE CLOSURE WOULD HIT FARMERS

Among the 20,000 formal objectors to the closure of the Settle-Carlisle route is Mr Ian Taylor, parts manager of the family firm of Robert Taylor & Sons of Bentham (near Lancaster). This business, founded 125 years ago as a blacksmiths and wheelwrights, now supplies and maintains farm machinery, including among its activities a spares distribution service to local farmers for tractor spares from David Brown Case Parts Supply at Batley. Parts for this service are delivered by Red Star parcels via the Leeds-Settle-Carlisle route and, as Mr Taylor explains in his objection, this service is quicker and/or cheaper than that which can be provided by roads; parts required by a customer are often in their hands the same day and certainly by the next morning, while the cost of carriage by Red Star has sometimes been less than 10% of that demanded by road carriers.

This level of service is not only vital during harvest time, when a few hours can be significant, but all the year round for the continued operation of silage cutters for cattle feed, for example. The company is continually increasing its business with B.R. and would find it impossible to continue receiving and despatching spares all over the country at the same level of economy and efficiency were Settle station to close. "How could we do without it?" writes Mr Taylor. Other Settle industries which would be affected by closure are quarries, veterinary surgeons, agricultural engineers, nurseries and boarding schools. Our thanks to Mr Taylor for informing us of the damage which will be done to this particular area by closure - damage which will be done to agriculture and industry over a much wider area if this line is closed for "economic" reasons.

Even more recently we have been advised that the Settle - Carlisle could also be helping with the famine in Africa! "Rail Aid" is a scheme whereby one pound (£) of every five received from the sale of day saver tickets for the line during the month of October will be donated to "Live Aid".

Settle - Carlisle Joint Action Committee Secretary, Peter Horton said: "The development of Rail Aid is great news. I hope that everybody with an interest in

## ELECTRIFICATION: THE NEXT STEPS

Some ten electrification schemes are now in progress on BR - an encouraging situation compared with that of 3 or 4 years ago. However, we still do not have a rolling programme of electrification, enabling BR and the equipment manufacturers to plan ahead over the long term. RDS is now working on a study of where the next batch of schemes should be - and hopes, in the New Year, to bring out a report with recommended priorities. Anyone interested in helping with this should contact the Secretary of the Branches & Areas Ctee. Adrian Fawcett, 5 Ambryn Rd., New Inn, Pontypool, Gwent, NP4 0NX.

## A.G.M. - 1986

Provisional arrangements have been made to hold the 1986 A.G.M. in Cardiff on 19th April - please note the date in your diary.

## New Treasurer

At its meeting on 7th September the National Executive agreed to the appointment of Mr. R. Wilson as the Society's Treasurer until the next A.G.M. His address (and details of all other Officers, Committees and Branch & Area Representatives) is contained in the Members' Handbook Supplement enclosed to all members with this issue.

this line will take the opportunity to enjoy a trip on England's most scenic railway and at the same time help the starving in Africa."

The BR spokesman for "Rail Aid" is Mr Ron Cotton 061228 2141 x 2010 to whom any further enquiries should be addressed.

## BEDFORD TO BLETCHLEY

British Rail have strange ways of rewarding success. In the first six months of the improved rail service between Bletchley and Bedford Midland, inaugurated in May 1984, largely owing to the efforts of the Bedford to Bletchley Rail Users Association, passenger figures rose by up to 60%. In response BR introduced a much inferior timetable in May 1985 with poor connections and fewer Saturday trains. The two busiest services have been withdrawn and the trains now sit idle at Bedford for more than two hours! The local users group fought hard against these changes and as from October the two popular Saturday trains will run again. Other adjustments are being made which will improve connections into Inter-City trains at Bedford.

The Association's special train from Bedford to Eastbourne on 27 April consisted of the newly refurbished carriages now used for the "Midland Executive" St. Pancras - Nottingham services hauled by a powerful class 47 locomotive. Passengers joined at every station on the branch and after the last pick-up point, Leighton Buzzard, the train sped south towards Euston, leaving the main line near Willesden Junction to reach Clapham Junction via the West London Extension line. One hundred and seventy passengers out of the total of five hundred and thirty left the train at Haywards Heath for a fascinating side-trip on the Bluebell Line from Sheffield Park to Horsted Keynes and back. These passengers were conveyed by bus to Eastbourne there to join the return special train, one refurbished coach of which was found to be unserviceable owing to a hot box. This minor mishap notwithstanding, a good time was had by all, and our thanks are due to everyone who helped to make our day a success, particularly our friends at Bedford Midland Station, Bryan Scale Models, Lidlington and Aspley Guise Post Office, who sold tickets for the train, and Travellers Fare, who supplied welcome hot drinks and sandwiches throughout the day.

The Association intends to operate a further special train, in this case a DMU, on Saturday 7 December 1985 from Bletchley to Birmingham, Worcester and the Severn Valley Railway, thus giving a choice of Christmas shopping or a ride on the SVR's "Santa Specials". Full details from Richard Crane, 23 Hatfield Crescent, Bedford.

Richard Crane

## RAIL CONNECTIONS AT LIVERPOOL — HORNBY TO MOVE BY RAIL AGAIN

No, not Hornby toy trains, but exciting developments affecting Hornby Dock and others. Over the last few months the city of Liverpool has been in the news for all the wrong reasons, but, a recent announcement by the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company has shone a light through all the gloom and despondency - The Port of Liverpool has taken a major step in its continuing drive to attract new traffic.

A five-figure sum has been invested in reconnecting the port's deep water berths to the B.R. network - a rail link right into the heart of the U.K.'s first fully operational freeport. The link will enter the dock from the south (at Strand Road gate) and serve both Gladstone and Hornby docks, widening the range of cargoes handled at the docks and making Liverpool the best served U.K. port in terms of facilities for containers, bulks and other cargoes. "This extension will enable Freeport clients to explore the potential of what could be a competitive freight rate system by rail" said Freeport Manager Frank Robotham.

It is interesting to note that funds are being applied for from E.E.C. monies because, apparently, Section 8 grants take a long time to process. Over the years, the R.D.S. Freight Sub-Committee

has heard this from various sources - not least the Private Wagon Federation. When this topic was raised on a visit to a Minister promises were made that this would be looked into. It is appreciated that there should be safeguards to see that Government money is wisely spent but we can, no doubt, all recall various schemes where this criterion has not been applied - notably certain road schemes! As a general rule, of course, projects cannot be aided from two different U.K. sources but the rules of the European Development fund do not preclude a second grant for the same purposes. In this case a Section 8 grant would be paid net by a E.R.D.F. grant. This means that, say, on a rail project costing £1m which received a 50% grant from the E.R.D.F. a section 8 grant could be paid, but only on the balance of £0.5m.

There is no doubt that these developments are welcomed by the R.D.S. and we can only hope that the recent industrial unrest will not detract from the confidence of potential customers. The Freight Sub-Committee will be keeping a watchful eye on this welcome project and we wish all concerned every success.

Steve Wilkinson

## FREIGHT REPORT

The Freight Sub-Committee (F.S.C.) held its July meeting in Ely, where a visit was made to the GG Papworth Ltd. freight distribution depot, which has been set up in the buildings and area formerly occupied by the British Sugar Corporation's sugar refinery at Queen Adelaide. They took over the factory in 1982 and have ever since been remodeling the extensive rail layout to their own requirements, gutting and rebuilding the huge ex-factory buildings for storage purposes. At the time of our visit, the vast machinery hall was being changed into a grain store, and an adjacent area was being cleared for an even bigger store. We were most impressed at the enthusiasm of the manager of the depot for obtaining traffics for rail. The company, previously a road-only haulage firm, sees rail as important now and in the future, for sound commercial reasons plus very clear environmental ones. In spite of continuous rebuilding the depot has already handled many thousands of tonnes of several bulk powder commodities. An increasing amount of finished manufactured goods for distribution is building up. It seemed that whatever was offered could be handled, whatever the difficulty. The manager praised most fulsomely the very positive attitudes of local railway staff at all levels, who were

most delighted at all the extra traffic. We were certainly left with the impression that, if this depot was typical of the growing number throughout the country, then B.R.'s Speedlink and train-load traffics will continue to grow at a tremendous rate.

The very number of private depots did lead us to feel that B.R. ought to set more formal liaison, a kind of "contact clearing house", between the private depots. Freight tends to be handled exclusively by one firm or sometimes with B.R. We felt that more traffic could be handled between distant, quite independent, private depots if there were some kind of formal contact set up by B.R. that daily quizzed each depot via telex links as to their requirements.

Steve Wilkinson, the F.S.C. Secretary, was recently invited to attend two very significant "unveilings":

On Thursday 20th June he was invited to Warminster in Wiltshire to attend the official reception for the arrival of the first revenue-earning run of a prototype refrigeration unit attached to an Interfrigo wagon. The vehicle ran overnight on normal Speedlink services from Grimsby to Warminster with a full load of fish. The F.S.C. has been interested in promoting the use of refrigerated wagons for some time, especially on

runs from the Northwest of Scotland. We were delighted to be informed several months ago of the intense research being undertaken by the Standard Railway Company Ltd. of Heywood, Lancashire, for B.R. and the G.L.C. The frozen food company, Flying Goose Ltd., of Warminster were also involved we later learned. This company, hopefully the forerunner of many more in the U.K., see this wagon as opening up the use of rail for their products in both U.K. and Europe. The G.L.C. contributed half of the £230,000 developmental cost, as it identified the lack of this type of wagon as a weak link in the Speedlink armoury. Five million tons of frozen food move into London every year and they hope that the noisy refrigerated heavyweight lorries, unloading in the night, will be greatly reduced by a fleet of B.R. wagons.

The freezing system, perfected by Standard Wagon Company, uses the wagon's own movement to create the necessary cooling, which cuts out the present clumsy and expensive ice filling techniques. The eventual aim is to produce a system that can be in a deep-frozen or chilled mode according to traffic. On such a big scale as a road or rail wagon such a technique has yet to be perfected anywhere. If B.R. can get such a wagon, it will certainly give Speedlink a tool that will be unrivalled in the transport of temperature controlled goods. We congratulate B.R., G.L.C., Standard Wagon Company and Flying Goose for their enterprise and success to date and look forward to seeing Standard's own build of refrigerated wagons.

A new branch line in Norfolk! The national press certainly missed this opening of a new railway into deepest Norfolk. The new line, 1.25 miles long, links Messrs. R. Johnson's grain silos with the Ely - Norwich line at Eccles Road Station. It is single track with two long sidings at each end. The official opening was on 10th July by Mr. David Mitchell M.P. Part of the £700,000 cost was by Government section 8 grant. Steve Wilkinson was invited to the opening as your representative and had the honour of being one of the ten passengers on the Ministerial D.M.U. from Cambridge to the end of the branch. Already big traffic tonnages are being handled by T.S.L.'s "Grainflow" vehicles. It is intended that the sidings be used for a variety of other traffics in due course. Immediately, over 7,000 lorry movements per year will cease to foul Norfolk's fine countryside.

Several other new traffics are (or will be) relieving the roads of Norfolk of many thousand more lorry trips a year - for example timber from Brandon, more grain from a near-completed silo complex on ex M & GN marshalling yards at South Lynn, canned food products from North East Norfolk and roofing tiles from Dereham. Note that these are

## Cuts in Investment no answer — says NUR General Secretary

This year's R.D.S. Annual Conference (the Seventh) of Rail Users' Groups was late to accommodate the guest speaker, Jimmy Knapp, General Secretary of the N.U.R.

Attendance was down slightly, perhaps for this reason, but on 15th June, in somewhat more amenable weather than 1984 when even Transport Under-Secretary, David Mitchell MP, came in somewhat damp - about 60-70 delegates from over 30 local groups heard Mr. Knapp speak on an Alternative Strategy for British Rail.

He welcomed the opportunity to speak at the conference (following in the footsteps of Ray Buckton in 1982) as he considered it was in everyone's interest for a dialogue to take place between the rail unions and bodies representing rail users. 1980-1985 (under a Tory Government) had been a time of rapid change on the railways, the B.R.B. having been set the target to reduce its required subsidy from £943m. in 1983 to £708m. in 1986 (the latter target having been previously set for 1988).

The rail unions had fought these cuts but being classed by the media as the "bad guys" had had difficulty in putting their points across. He saw these cuts resulting in the following 5 effects:-

- (a) the beginning of Serpell type "closures by stealth";\*
- (b) reduction in rolling stock capacity resulting in overcrowded trains;
- (c) reductions in track maintenance leading to a drop in safety standards;
- (d) longer gaps between examination of signalling equipment;
- (e) swingeing cuts in the capacity of railway workshops resulting in some 4,800 redundancies - including the total closure of Swindon Works - as a result of less frequent maintenance of rolling

\* even as we go to press the Daily Telegraph of 29/9/85 revealed another secret closure programme to be implemented when the 1985 Transport Bill becomes law.

recent additions to the substantial flows of longer standing freight traffic along the March - Ely - Norwich/Lynn lines. I stress these growing traffics because there is strong Norfolk County Council pressure for vast sums to dual the county's trunk roads. Every extra rail wagon load eases the pressure on these roads. Yet certain councillors, most prominent of whom is Cllr. Coutts, have recently called for the closure of the railway on the grounds that little freight and few passengers use it (N.B. there have been recent irate letters in the local

stock - and leading to more new construction going to foreign companies (see also in Parliament).

The rail unions' industrial action during the coal strike, he said, had been designed to protect jobs in coal - one of the railways' main freight traffics, other branches of which had been lost to BR simply due to the unavailability of enough wagons. NUR's alternative strategy was to press for:-

- (i) a large programme of electrifying up to 75% of the network by the year 2000;
- (ii) modernisation and an increased number of locomotives and rolling stock;
- (iii) a cheap fares policy (cf. Greater London Council's "Fares Fair");
- (iv) more rail-linked sidings and rail/road transshipment facilities;
- (v) making road hauliers pay their way;
- (vi) more new stations, cross-city links and cross country routes;
- (vii) improved rail access to ports and airports;
- (viii) the building of more freight wagons (BR's policy is to scrap all 16 and 20 ton wagons by 1990);
- (ix) reintroduction of passenger services on freight lines; and
- (x) the building of a channel tunnel - there being a serious risk that a road-only link would be built.

Delegates found Mr. Knapp to be less than the "ogre" the media had made him out to be with his broad scottish brogue and quiet humour and he faced a barrage of useful and relevant questions from those present.

Other sessions at the Conference were addressed by Trevor Garrod, (on positive rail promotion), Graham Tolliday (on the influence of the Road Lobby); and Tony Jones of B.R.'s Derby Technical Centre, (on design of passenger rolling stock).

A full report of this interesting conference can be obtained at 60p. from Alan Harwood, 139, Harrowdene Gardens, Teddington, Middx.

press complaining bitterly about gross overcrowding on many of the long distance trains from the Midlands to the East Coast).

Finally, if you know of any potential traffic or any factory that could potentially have a private siding, please send us the fullest possible details. Get in touch with any F.S.C. member or with me at 43, High Street, Oakington, Cambridge CB4 5AG.

Peter Wakefield

## MEMBERS' PLATFORM

### Crossing the Irish Sea

Sir,

When, hopefully, a fixed link is established across the Channel allowing through rail services between the U.K. and mainland Europe, I wonder if there is a possibility of establishing a train ferry facility across the Irish Sea for freight traffic.

The change of gauge could be accommodated by bogie changing facilities, as happens at the Franco-Spanish border. Whether there would be enough traffic to make such a facility profitable is another matter, but it is surely a subject worthy of further investigation.

P.E.Scott  
Sandown, Isle of Wight

### The "Scotrail" approach

Sir,

I would like to suggest to all Rail User Groups that they adapt the "ScotRail" policy of making stations more attractive by placing signs in the manner of "ScotRail, Welcome to CRIANLARICH" at their local station. It makes a big impression to see a sign welcoming you to the station and effective and attractive publicity (using logos, symbols and special effects), transforms the customer's impression.

Chris Magner  
Bridgenorth  
Shropshire

### Loaned File

Sir,

At the Rail User Groups' Conference on 24th March 1984 I loaned a file to an R.D.S. member and have since lost his address. The file contained correspondence between Mr. Robert Aickman, Sir John Betjeman and myself.

I wonder if the member concerned could kindly let me know how things stand and if he can now return the file?

O.H.Prosser  
23 Harcourt Road  
Bristol BS6 7RQ

### Errata

Sir,

A couple of points arising from the last "Railwatch"—

On the East Suffolk line, single-line working is currently by the "staff and ticket" system, and not as printed. I think this was my mistake in the original article. We are currently engaged in a

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row with B.R., which has already penetrated Board level, over their refusal to install the promised loop at Beccles, to the detriment of the service and timekeeping. Radio signalling is promised for 24th November, but the final crossing conversions will not be until early December.

Also, our other long-standing stalwart was Mrs. Briscoe and not as stated at the end of Gerry Fiennes obituary. Whilst mentioning that name, his widow, Mrs. Jean Fiennes, has agreed to take over as President of E.S.T.A.

John Brodribb,  
Secretary,  
East Suffolk Travellers' Association,  
Beccles,  
Suffolk.

### 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.

### "A FUTURE FOR RURAL RAILWAYS"

The RDS East Anglian Branch will be publishing a high-quality 4-page leaflet, putting the case for investment in automatic crossings, radio signalling etc. to coincide with the completion of the East Suffolk Line modernisation project, expected for late November. The leaflet will show how new technology can improve the prospects of many other rural lines, and aid some reopenings. Several RDS Branches, users' groups and individual members around the country have already ordered copies. There is no charge, although a donation to East Anglian Branch funds would not be refused. Order NOW from John Brodribb, 12 Kemp's Lane, Beccles, Suffolk, NR34 9XA.

### RDS ANTI-CLOSURE FUND

In mid-August this fund stood at £90.11, after grants had been made from it to help those fighting the Tunbridge Wells - Eridge line closure and the Marylebone closure proposal. It has been possible for RDS to donate several hundred pounds to local branches and groups fighting closures, since this fund was set up in 1982. Thanks to all who have donated to it during that time. The fund is dependent entirely on voluntary donations, and more are always gratefully received by Trevor Garrod, 15 Clapham Road, Lowestoft, NR32 1RQ.

## NEW SALES OFFICER STILL NEEDED!

A volunteer is needed to fill the post of R.D.S. sales officer, which has again fallen vacant. Roland White is temporarily filling the position (which involves selling R.D.S. literature at events such as the A.G.M. and Users' Groups' Conference), but would be grateful if anyone interested in doing this job permanently would contact him at "Latymer", The Drive, Belmont, Surrey SM2 7DJ.

\*(This supercedes the announcement in the last issue of RAILWATCH. ED.)

### SPONSORED CYCLE RIDES

Members of the East Anglian and East Midlands Branches and RDS Scotland took part in Sponsored Cycle Rides on Sunday May 12th as part of National Bike Week. As well as publicising virtues of the "train-and-bike" combination, riders raised some £250. Of this, £118 was for the Northants Scanner Appeal, as a result of gallant efforts by Corby member Dave Fursden on a borrowed machine. Clara Zilahi raised £44.20 to help the campaign to save the Settle - Carlisle line, while Trevor Garrod raised £66 for the RDS Anti-Closure Fund. Scottish member Anthony Kay, with an intriguing mixture of train and bike around Fife and Tayside, raised the rest of the money for the RDS Scotland Campaign Fund.

Thanks to all who sponsored riders this year. It would be nice to see events staged in some other areas for the 1986 National Bike Week, which will be the last week in May. If you are at all interested - and you don't have to be young, super-fit owners of multi-gear racers doing 100 miles a day - please contact, in the first instance, Trevor Garrod, 15 Clapham Road, Lowestoft, NR32 1RQ.

### STOP PRESS

### CYCLISTS TOURING CLUB

Cyclists travel "under their own steam" yet appreciate the value of the railways.

The Cyclists Touring Club, which started in 1878, is still going strong. Our National Magazine, 'Cyclotouring' (bi-monthly) is available to non-members at £6.10 per annum, or comes to CTC members as one of the benefits of membership.

Details: CTC, 'Cyclotouring', 69 Meadow, Godalming, Surrey GU7 3HS.

## REGIONAL NOTES

### LONDON & HOME COUNTIES

With the legal proceedings over Marylebone bringing most (if not all) rail closure inquiries to a halt the Branch – at last – has a chance to concentrate on other matters. The joint Local Authorities' Working Party when it met at Brent Town Hall on 23rd July resolved to appeal against the decision of Kennedy J. (reported in our last issue). The London Regional Passengers' Committee had in any event decided to further postpone the Inquiry, due to be held on 17th, 18th and 21st June. The appeal is not due to be heard until 6th November so it now seems unlikely that LRPC will hold an Inquiry until early 1986.

The position on Tunbridge Wells – Eridge was equally disappointing for not only was the local action group unable to obtain a judicial review of the Minister's closure decision but due to the skill of BR's lawyers was precluded from presenting to the Court some of its most cogent evidence. In the event the last train ran on 6th July and the junction (to Tunbridge Wells West) was promptly ripped up, as the writer observed from the top of Grove Hill Tunnel on 1st September.

The Branch's public meeting in Chelmsford on 25th June was attended by over 30 people, very few of whom were RDS members. After a showing of the RUF Video "Give Rail a Future" Cllr. Guy Shorter, Chairman of Chelmsford Borough Council's Transport Committee, explained his authority's commitment to the building of a new station at Springfield to relieve congestion at Chelmsford's main station. Following a lively discussion, the meeting voted overwhelmingly in favour of calling a further meeting in the Autumn and this is scheduled to be held on 7th October when a speaker from British Rail will give its answers to the proposal. Despite approaches by RDS the attitude of Essex County Council is yet to be ascertained.

On 21st September about a dozen members made a round trip from Charing Cross to Liverpool Street, via Gravesend, Tilbury, Southend and Southminster and were able to observe the progress being made by BR in wiring up the remaining unelectrified artery to what is in fact quite a remote part of South Essex.

Work on our local guide book "Kent & East Sussex by Rail" is moving apace with special features on Canterbury and Tunbridge Wells under way. We are now seeking suitable pictures (and potential advertisers) and the General Editor, H. Trevor Jones would welcome details from members at Flat 2, 11 Guildford Road, Tunbridge Wells, Kent, TN1 1SW. One useful spinoff from

the exercise is contact with the Kent Federation of Amenity Societies who have produced a useful "Rail Trail" leaflet on the Maidstone West – Paddock Wood line details of which will of course feature in the book.

It is proposed to launch the publication next Spring to coincide with completion of the electrification from Tonbridge to Hastings and plans are also afoot to hire an EMU for a preview of the works (from either Gillingham or Tonbridge to Hastings and Brighton) as part of the celebrations. The next Branch Meeting will be an illustrated lecture by Mr Jones, who is also Chairman of the Tunbridge Wells & District RTA, at Fred Tallant Hall, Euston, on 3rd December and the Branch A.G.M. is scheduled for mid February – hopefully at County Hall with a speaker from the GLC.

With the pending demise of that body the Branch is supporting the production of a national RDS leaflet against new motorways in London – the main reason we suspect for its abolition – and is following with great interest the spectacular progress on construction of the Docklands Light Railway which was the subject of a special feature article in the latest issue of the Branch Newsletter RAILONDON.

John Barfield

### WEST MIDLANDS

Having gone into considerable debt to launch its new book "Midlands by Rail" the Branch Committee is very much preoccupied in pursuing sales. All recipients have been most complimentary of the glossy 64page book which contains many colour pictures and maps to accompany the detailed text describing twelve routes and a vast number of town and country attractions. At only 2.25 (post free) it is a gift. So for a good bargain and to help us balance the books will all members who have not yet acquired a copy please write NOW to RDS, 21, Norfolk Road, Sutton Coldfield, B75 6SQ.

To further boost funds and membership we are planning to run a DMU charter from Walsall to Chester on Saturday 5th October. On Tuesday 1st October Bob Smalley, BR's Route Manager (cross country InterCity) is also due to give an illustrated lecture on the plans and policies for the NE/NW – SW/S.Coast services at Dr. Johnson House, Birmingham – a regular venue for our meetings. As part of a County Council "Transport Week" 14th/20th October, we shall be holding a Public Meeting in Walsall on 15th October.

Development of the Snow Hill site is proceeding with 3 "chocolate box" offices already built and ground works

well under way for multistorey car parks to straddle the new station. Contractors have been cleaning and repairing the 596 yd. tunnel which is in very good condition. The reopened rail service is expected early 1987. At the Moor St. end plans for a 10 million redevelopment have been announced with integral pedestrian access to the new platforms at the tunnel portal.

Ridership of the EMU Walsall – Birmingham line continues to increase following modest service improvements and our volunteer promotion of the line. Offpeak services (Mon/Fri) have increased ridership by some 29% and Saturday travel has gone up by 10%. Quite good for a line once threatened with closure! On the Redditch line we have managed to thwart a reduction of the offpeak trains, and at Lichfield we participated in a BR "Rail Sale" promotion event on 3rd August. With your help in reducing outstanding stocks of "Midlands by Rail" we hope to survive for more rail promotion in 1986!

Alan Bevan

### EAST ANGLIA

Campaigning for more rail freight has been an important part of the Branch's work in recent months, and we were encouraged by the opening of a new rail link across open fields at Eccles Road, on the Norwich – Ely line, to serve a new grain depot. Branch Chairman, Steve Wilkinson, had been active in supporting this 700,000 scheme and was invited to the opening on 10th July by David Mitchell MP.

Timber traffic from nearby Thetford Forest has also started to go by rail from Brandon – potential traffic to which we drew BR's attention some five years ago. At King's Lynn, imported timber is going by rail again for the first time in many years, while a new rail-connected scrap-metal yard has opened at Cambridge. The RDS Freight Sub-Committee lobbied hard in the late 1970s to keep this sort of traffic on the rails, at a time when rolling stock problems meant that it might be forced on to the roads. Encouraged by these trends, we have mounted further pressure for regular container traffic to go by train from the new Lowestoft depot, and have written letters of support for Felixstowe Dock & Railway Company, which has applied for a government grant towards a direct rail link to its new container depot.

There are, however, people who oppose more rail freight, notably Norfolk County Council Transport Committee Chairman, Ian Coutts, who caused controversy at the end of July by refusing the Council's support for a railhead for fertilizer traffic at Cantley, between Norwich and Yarmouth. Mr Coutts sees "no

longterm future for branch lines" and is indeed on record as advocating the closure of Norfolk's rail link with the Midlands. When views like this are expressed in high places, it is all the more important that we have an active pro-rail lobby, as expressed by RDS and its affiliated rail users' groups. We have written to many newly elected County Councillors explaining our views on transport and letters have also gone to local MPs urging them to support the RDS position on the Channel Tunnel. By the end of August, seven special passenger trains had been run by RDS or its associated groups over various East Anglian lines, including the Society's "Derbyshire Adventurer" Inter-City special from Colchester to Matlock on 30th July.

The new edition of our railguide "East Anglia by Rail" is on sale throughout the region and was described in our local review as "informative as well as readable.... From the flat of the fens to the undulant coastal railways, the reader is taken on a varied journey before he even sets foot on a train". The book is published by Jarrolds at £1.95 (ISBN 0 7117 0192 X). In case of difficulty individual copies may also be ordered from Peter Lawrence, 75, Marlpit Lane, Norwich, NR5 8XN

Fuller news of local activities and developments is contained in the Branch's Newsletter "RAIL EAST" sent free to all members once a quarter. Members from other areas who would like to receive it should write to Trevor Garrod, 15, Clapham Road, Lowestoft, NR32 1RQ. A donation of 1 a year towards costs would be appreciated.

Finally back to Cllr. Coutts: at a recent meeting he said that he would like to hear from people who thought that rail lines should be closed. RDS members from other areas, who may well have been in Norfolk by rail on holiday or business, may like to write to him at 2, The Close, Norwich, NR1 4DJ.

Trevor Garrod

## YORKSHIRE

In an attempt to improve West Yorkshire PTE's proposals to reduce the number of through trains a day between Bradford and Ilkley to one in each direction the Wharfedale Rail Users' Group submitted a timetable which would give three through trains in the morning and three in the evening. The Director General of the PTE said that such a plan would be so expensive that it would be financially impossible to put into force.

The North West TUCC have pointed out that the PTE should not underestimate the loss of passengers that is likely to result from the proposed new timetable and that there would be an additional expenditure of 10,000 just to provide a facility for terminating trains at Guiseley.

West Yorkshire County Council have decided to withdraw support for the Airedale Trunk Road as the Department of Transport refuses to sanction the building of a road between Cottingley Bar, near Bingley, through Saltaire to link up with the Shipley bypass, for environmental reasons. Whilst the County Council were keen on building the whole road, they maintain that the plan for the road from Kildwick to Bingley as proposed in the Inspector's Report would have so little effect in relieving traffic congestion in Bradford that the 60 million estimated cost would not be justified.

Thirsk and Northallerton stations are being modernised. Hambleton District Council is providing financial assistance for Thirsk, but refuse to give any help for Northallerton station on the grounds that British Rail carried out one of their wellknown "butchering" jobs some years ago, leaving a perfectly good station virtually a ruin.

It has leaked out that the North Yorkshire County Council has been planning to upgrade the A684 road through Wensleydale to provide a main link between the A1 and the M6. Suspicion was aroused in 1984 when a sudden increase in the number of heavy lorries travelling through Wensleydale was noticed. This plan has brought widespread protests from every town and village in the dale and it has been pointed out that the rail link through the dale from Leyburn to Garsdale could be brought back into use at a fraction of the cost for upgrading the A684. Meanwhile a British Rail spokesman is quoted as saying that to reopen the line through Wensleydale would cost as much as the 60 million Selby main line diversion. The County Council has ordered a 're-think' on upgrading the A684.

Denis Bradbury

## WESSEX

A meeting of the Wessex Branch was held in Southampton on 21st June, when RDS National Executive Member Trevor Garrod spoke about the national issues upon which the Society was campaigning, and their relevance for Wessex. Guest speaker was Mr Keith Hacker, BR Area Manager at Southampton, who gave a wide-ranging talk on developments in this area, including the possible extension of electrification from Bournemouth to Weymouth; the potential of new oil traffic by rail; the open station concept and the pros and cons of "plugging the gap" in the local electrified network between Southampton and Portsmouth.

Acting Branch Chairman, Geoffrey Vinter, has now had to resign owing to pressure of other commitments. Any local member interested in taking on this post, or in serving on the Branch Committee, should contact the Branch

Secretary, Charles Morgan, 41, Gallaghers Mead, Andover, Hants.

Trevor Garrod

## NORTH WEST

Plans to form a rail users' group on the Furness Line (Preston/Lancaster to Barrow-in-Furness) have now been finalized. A public meeting was held in Grange-over-Sands on Wednesday 4th September which was attended by representatives of British Rail and the TUCC.

The Ormskirk to Preston Travellers' Association (OPTA), a corporate member of RDS, has recently adopted Burscough Junction station and hopes to initiate a MSC scheme there to improve the station car park and general environment.

The line has recently earned a new name. Mr R. Bates, Passenger Services Manager, Merseyside was the judge in a competition organized jointly by OPTA and BR and chose WEST LANCASHIRE LINE as the winning name. The name will appear on local publicity for the line and already the local Area Manager, Bryan Wilson, is producing individual station timetable leaflets for the line bearing that name.

The Association also ran a special train to York on Bank Holiday Monday, 26th August. This followed an earlier trip to Carlisle over the threatened Settle to Carlisle line.

The campaign to restore a direct Preston to Southport link, via Burscough Bridge, is gaining momentum. Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council is supporting the scheme and OPTA is meeting representatives of the Council to discuss this further.

On the South Fylde Line our corporate member (SFLUA) are campaigning to get it extended from Blackpool South towards Central Blackpool. At present the most likely terminus for the line, if extended, would be Chapel Street. This would be very close to the site of the original Blackpool Central Station.

The group are also seeking urgent improvements to Blackpool South station. Most of the site was taken over by Blackpool Borough Council and buildings razed to make way for a multi-million pound road scheme. Whilst work on the new road has gone ahead quickly, the same cannot be said for the new station at South. The present arrangements are very unsafe and a serious accident could occur at any time.

Following the High Court proceedings over Marylebone there will not be any TUCC public hearings into the closure of Settle/Carlisle until this issue is finally resolved. However, in order to be fully prepared for a TUCC Inquiry when it eventually takes place the Joint Action Committee is arranging conferences of objectors.

Richard Watts

On Merseyside the PTE has shelved its plans for Liverpool - St. Helens electrification, stating that the scheme would cost between 35m. and 45m., including extensive tunnelling beneath Liverpool. It would also require a Parliamentary Bill but with the advent of the current Transport Bill and its provisions, the PTE has now decided that it would be extremely rash to commit itself to such an expensive project at the present time. As there are so many unknown factors affecting the future of transport within the Metropolitan County areas, the Branch reluctantly sympathizes with the PTE. It hopes, however, that once the dust has settled on the Transport Bill, the scheme will be considered again but this is unlikely to occur for at least a couple of years.

Mike Breslin

## NORTH EAST

A useful meeting of members was held in Darlington on 1st June, and by a time this issue is circulated, a further meeting and film show should have been held there. Work has also started on a railguide for the area, which it is hoped to publish at Easter 1986.

Issues being pursued by RDS include the case for electrification of the Northallerton - Stockton - Ferryhill "loop" once East Coast Main Line electrification reaches this area, and the establishment of a more direct Middlesbrough - Stockton - Durham - Newcastle service on its northern half. Such a service could also give a better deal to Chester-le-Street and enable a small number of stations to be reopened.

Trevor Garrod

## NORTH MIDLANDS

An encouraging number of new developments occurred this summer, including special passenger trains on freightonly lines; a new crosscountry train and the promise of a new station. A private consortium chartered the prototype "Sprinter" class 150 units to provide a very successful service from Derby to the well-dressing celebrations at Wirksworth in May. This also gave people their first chance of a shopping trip by rail from Wirksworth since 1947! On the other side of the Peak District, local authorities and Peak Rail Operations ran a Summer Saturday and Sunday service from New Mills Central to Buxton, via the scenic Great Rocks Dale and Ashwood Dale route. A half-hour programme on BBC TV in July gave an excellent account of Peak Rail's efforts to reopen the spectacular line from Matlock to Buxton.

Crosscountry links from this area to East Anglia are improved by the replacement of the Barrow to Nottingham train by a Blackpool to Nottingham and Cambridge service, which supplements the "European" and calls at many industrial

and university cities. On the Sheffield to Nottingham section of this route the infrequent and irregular timetable was improved somewhat by an additional summer train to Nottingham in the morning for shopping and to connect into the "Jolly Fisherman" excursions to Skegness.

Next year will probably see more St. Pancras expresses diverted away from the Alfreton route to give a slightly quicker journey to London (and incidentally a very frequent Sheffield to Derby service), while Nottingham is promised a Sprinter DMU service to give a more evenly spaced but still infrequent timetable to the north. Moreover, these trains will first head south west and then run via Toton if the Radford to Trowell track is closed. Nottingham City Council is very concerned about HSTs to London, but would be happy to convert the direct route to Yorkshire into building land and a cycle track. On a brighter note the Sprinters will call at a new Langley Mill station which is to be paid for by local authorities.

The draft 1986/7 Lincoln to Newark and Nottingham timetable has slightly fewer trains which will generally continue through to Derby and Birmingham.

Malcolm Goodall

## EAST MIDLANDS

RDS has stressed, after a meeting in Leicester on 13th July, that it wants to see a proper InterCity type electrification of the Midland Main Line north of Bedford. To follow up our widely discussed Midland Main Line Strategy and Electrification report (still available at 75p. from Daryl TaylorSmith, 4, Linden Avenue, Countesthorpe, Leicester), local members are working upon further studies of what pattern of services should be aimed at on an electrified line and its connecting routes and it is hoped to publish these findings early in the New Year. Meanwhile RDS members have also been active in a leafleting campaign to promote Narborough station on the Leicester - Nuneaton line.

Trevor Garrod

## LINCOLNSHIRE

"This handsome guide is not merely a handbook for visitors but a companion for any traveller by train, a book to make any journey more interesting, more lively. It is an informed and informative passport to travelling pleasure and an eyeopener to the great county of Lincolnshire." So wrote the Grimsby Evening Telegraph about our book "Lincolnshire by Rail", on sale at many bookshops from Cambridge to Doncaster and from Nottingham to Cleethorpes. It costs 1.80 and may also be obtained direct from John Saunders, Stockwell Gate, Whaplode, Spalding, Lincs. PE12 6UE.

Marketing the book has naturally been a major Branch activity in recent months, but members also found time to hold a meeting with the BR Area Manager at Lincoln on 1st June. A stall was also manned at Spalding on the day of the Annual Flower Parade, when members of the Lincolnshire and East Anglian Branches distributed and sold RDS literature.

The next full meeting of the Branch was due to be held on Saturday 12th October when members would be given a talk by John Brodribb, Secretary of ESTA on the East Suffolk modernisation scheme and its relevance for other areas.

Trevor Garrod

## ICKNIELD

Believers in the infallibility of transport planners had their faith severely jolted this summer when Mrs Lynda Chalker advised M1 road users to use the railways. This succinct advice came when announcing long delays due to what BR call "wrong line working". The trouble came from a Marples era bridge built ignoring the Brunel advice to "build as high and wide as possible." New tarmac raised the floor, putting the soffit into the kinetic envelope. Scientists call the effect on high lorries "rip off". The ministerial advice faced several difficulties in practice. A Hero of the Yorkie Revolution closed the parallel Great Central route, diagonal feeders do not exist, the stub services into Marylebone are circumscribed to preempt closure, and BR had closed Crewe on the longdistance NW/SE route and offered buses instead. Now that is transport planning!

In the days when Didcot was in Berkshire planning permission was granted to build a power station for the CEBG on condition that coal destined for it was moved by rail. During the miners' strike train crews took sympathy action and refused to move coal trains. This display of union solidarity, whilst wholly laudable, has done more damage to the longterm prosperity of the railways than the mines. Too bad that the railwaymen did not persuade fellow contributors to Labour Party funds, the T.& GWU to withdraw in sympathy. Perhaps they forgot that the T.& G. represents the lorry drivers who demonstrated that the way to stay in business is to sell the product as hard as possible. Permission has recently been given to send the traffic by road against much local opposition!

Branch Meetings are generally held in Slough on the first Wednesday in each month; Telephone 0753 30178.

Lyndon Elias

## SOUTH WEST

On four Saturdays in the summer of 1985 (25 May, 27 July and 10 & 24 August) two excursion round trips were operated on the Exeter to Okehampton line, which was closed to passengers in June 1972. West Devon Borough Council sponsored this venture with a revenue guarantee of 280 per Saturday. At the time of writing two of the Saturdays have passed and the trips have been a great success, carrying good loads in both directions. This augurs well for the prospects of further use of this line being made to carry passengers, and in fact provisional plans for a Christmas shopping trip on the line are already under discussion.

William Davies

## WALES

Saturday train services on the Cambrian Line have been improved by the use of class 37 diesel locomotives (for the first time since 1966). Timekeeping has been much better - in fact some Saturday services have actually run on time! Loadings on the Cambrian Line have been good, but the "Sunday Shuttles" organized by the Cambrian Coast Line Action Group between Barmouth and Pwllheli got off to a slow start. CCAG wishes to thank all RDS members who supported the venture. The Conwy Valley Sunday trains have, however, been well supported.

Welshpool Goods Yard, which closed for a time in 1984, now handles traffic (mostly Scottish timber, it being cheaper than Welsh timber) worth 0.5m. per annum. Recently so much traffic was in the yard that a class 47 loco had to run from Shrewsbury to Welshpool and back to shunt wagons from one side of the yard to the other! Welshpool Station Action Group ran a packed Caersws - Ayr charter in July. Unfortunately there have been fewer special trains than of late on the Cambrian Lines this year.

Mid Wales Development have recently renovated the old Llanidloes station for light industrial use. MWD have also organised a successful festival of transport in Welshpool with several connecting trains, including the 150 Sprinter, and have a large scale rail exhibition in Newtown.

Chris Magner

## SCOTLAND

On 31 July there was a wellattended, gentlemanly public meeting in Glasgow's Central Hotel. It was organised by the Rail Federation. Chris Green, General Manager of SCOTRAIL, Malcolm Waugh, Chairman of Strathclyde Roads and Transportation Committee and David Mitchell MP., were the main speakers. Less than 48 hours later a piece of obtuseness (or of provocation)

had caused the fateful Glasgow guards' strike to start. Our former Branch cochairman, John Scanlon, who happens to have been for a number of years secretary of the Glasgow No. 5 Branch of the NUR mainly involved, had already penned a letter appealing to both management and his old union to avoid conflict and this letter forms the substance of our "emergency" Branch Notes No. 10.

The Church of Scotland's organiser of industrial chaplains, Rev. Donald Ross, already well known to us for his thorough understanding of the human side of railway operating, supported John Scanlon's letter and got it published in Glasgow evening papers and on Radio Clyde. Unfortunately this was found, procedurally, to be the reason why the church could not participate in a more ambitious joint message in favour of industrial peace on the railways which we tried to promulgate and which, in the particular circumstances, could not be done quickly without the church's help. At the time of writing we are at a loss what to do next!

Rather paradoxically at this moment of crisis news has arrived that the BRB is now officially behind the project for a rail crossing of the Dornoch Firth and that an influential "right of centre" politician has sent a letter to officials SUPPORTING the crossClyde rail link for scheduled PTE passenger services

advocated by RDS and SAPT members for the past eleven years (it is actually an official proposal which all others have chosen to forget) As previously RDS members in other Branches are invited to request a copy of our current Branch Notes by sending 2 x 13p. stamps and SAE to Top Floor, 113, West Regent Street, Glasgow, G2 2RU.

Frank Neville

## FOE Questionnaire enclosed with this issue

Many R.D.S. members will know that Friends of the Earth run a major campaign to improve facilities for everyday cyclists. As part of its activities, FoE has, in common with other national organisations, the often thankless task of negotiating with B.R. about cycle carriage on trains.

In addition to their current disputes about taking bikes on H.S.T.s and the provision of sufficient space in new rolling stock, FoE are conducting a campaign for improved cycle parking at B.R. stations. To this end they are asking R.D.S. members to help them complete a national picture by filling in the enclosed questionnaire on cycle parking and returning it to their national transport campaigner Don Mathew, at 377 City Road, London EC1V 1NA. Additionally, Don would welcome any support over the other two questions in contention.



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# IN PARLIAMENT

No. 25

OCTOBER 1985

## PREVIEW

### BR TO RUN OVER DOCKLANDS LINE

One reason why the Docklands Railway is being built so fast is because it is physically separate from BR. But it may not remain so entirely. **NIGEL SPEARING**, MP for Newham South, tells me that BR want to be able to use the light railway for occasional freight traffic.

What a good idea! Unfortunately, some Docklands people don't think so; they are afraid of the noise. So Mr. Spearing's message is: "Not to worry. People don't realise how quiet modern stock can be. You can hardly hear it at 70 miles an hour."

Other troubles are looming in the area. An eastward extension of the line looks likely, and this should obviously connect with the proposed small airport, STOL (short take-off and landing). The GLC, however, is opposed to having any airport.

Mr. Spearing tells me he has spoken on TV in favour of the light railway serving Canning Town, with a station there. Docklands Development Corporation claim this would cost an extra £5 million, which Mr. Spearing finds "very surprising", as "a bridge would be required in either case." He is asking for a full breakdown in the comparative costs.

He also thinks the Snow Hill tunnel is taking too long to open and costing too much. He is asking if a new station in the tunnel is part of the cost, and if so, is a station there really necessary?

JE

### Support for rail in P.T.A. areas

**JUNE 13** *Peter Snape* (Lab. West Bromwich East) asked what were the criteria on which district councils would be allowed to secede from passenger transport authorities (PTAs) in respect of railways; whether they would include arrangements to continue support for rail services within that district council's area, and whether he would take into account the effect on the rail network throughout the PTA's area of any such secession?

*Mr. Mitchell*, quoting from the White Paper, said the Government would be prepared to consider proposals by individual districts to provide separate services. But before such arrangements were made, the Government would have to be satisfied about the relationship between the district and the PTA in respect of facilities such as rail services which benefited the whole metropolitan area.

In a written question, *Mr. Snape* asked what arrangements would be made in PTE areas for the continuation of financial support to section 20 rail services in the event that one or more district councils secedes from the joint board arrangements?

*Mr. Mitchell* replied that it would depend on the individual case. The Local Government Bill provided for secession to be approved on the basis either that a district council would remain a member of the PTA for certain services, such as section 20 arrangements, while taking over responsibility for public transport in other fields, or that it would secede for all purposes.

### Metropolitan Counties future of grants

**JULY 22** *Peter Snape* (Lab. W. Bromwich E) asked about the future of "section 20" grants after the abolition of the metropolitan counties. *Mr. Mitchell* had been reported in "Modern Railways" to have said that district councils would not be allowed to secede from section 20 arrangements.

*Mr. Ridley* replied that he would not wish a district council to be able to get out of its obligations under section 20 by secession, but there could be cases where there were no obligations.

*Stephen Ross* (L/A Isle of Wight) said BR was not sure about its future, particularly in rail operations such as Tyne & Wear metro. Would payments at least be guaranteed until the metropolitan authorities had disappeared and district councils had taken over?

*Mr. Ridley* replied that there was no suggestion of changing section 20 grants either now or after abolition. Secession would not take place until some time after abolition.

### Docklands line: hope for further stage?

**JULY 22** *Sydney Chapman* (C. Chipping Barnet) asked for a report on construction of the light railway in London docklands.

*Mrs. Chalker*: "The project is well up to schedule. We expect the railway to be in full operation by mid-1987 - on time and within budget."

*Mr. Chapman* asked if this new infrastructure, together with the regeneration of the docklands, was the best form of capital investment. "If and when application is made for more grants to complete stage two of this exciting new enterprise, would the Government consider it sympathetically?"

*Mrs. Chalker* replied that London Docklands Development Corporation was doing an excellent job. "We have not yet received any proposals for a further stage of the docklands light railway, but if it is received, it will be given the best possible consideration."

*John Cartwright* (SD Woolwich) asked if in view of the importance of providing good public transport links to the proposed STOLport in the Royal group of docks, would any proposal to extend the railway to serve STOLport be favourably considered?

*Mrs. Chalker* said any proposal for an extension would be carefully considered, in the light of the important regeneration of docklands.

*Teddy Taylor* (C. Southend E) asked if what *Mr. Chapman* described as an exciting new venture would lead to further delays on the Fenchurch Street line?

As an old habitué of the Fenchurch Street line *Mrs. Chalker* said, she knew what he meant. "I shall see what more can be done about the line, on which so many people suffer."

*Simon Hughes* (LA Southwark, Bermondsey) said the minister had accepted that south-east London was under served. As the light railway was only north of the river, would the minister give an assurance about the possible extension of the Bakerloo Line, whether above or below ground level, from Elephant & Castle, through

**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.

Bricklayers Arms and south Bermondsey, to Surrey Docks, and, perhaps, Mr. Cartwright's constituency, Woolwich and Thamesmead, which would have the largest growing population in London in the next 10 years?

*Mrs. Chalker:* "A grandiose picture. Any sensible cost-effective proposal will be fully considered."

### Electrification wanted on Midland Main Line

**JULY 1** *Roger Freeman* (C. Kettering) said his constituents wanted to see the Midland main line electrified from St. Pancras through Kettering to Yorkshire – the whole line. Secondly, they wanted to see Kettering retain its status as an inter-city interchange station.

*Mr. Mitchell:* BR has not submitted a proposal to electrify to Kettering. It is only three years since BR demonstrated its commitment to the Midland main line by introducing HSTs on the route. That has meant a 20-minute saving on the run to Sheffield and has resulted in a substantial increase in customers.

As for electrification generally, BR is not held back in its requests. Today I have given BR consent to re-open and electrify the Snow Hill tunnel in London.

*Mrs. Margaret Beckett* (Lab. Derby S) said that communities served by the Midland line hoped that the Government would encourage BR to make a proposal for electrification. Many would also like to see British built stock running on the line. Would the minister consider lifting the ban on BREL's ability to compete in tendering for locomotives?

*Mr. Mitchell* said it was not for ministers to twist the arm of BR about priority for individual investment projects.

*Terence Higgins* (C. Worthing) asked to what extent promises of improved productivity on the Bedford – St. Pancras line had been delivered by the unions concerned.

*Mr. Mitchell* said this was a sensitive topic on which there were continuing negotiations and he would not like to make them more difficult.

*Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody* said the minister was dodging the basic question of going to BREL for locomotives. Was it not cheaper and more efficient to keep BREL workshops fully occupied?

*Mr. Mitchell* said BREL was involved as a sub-contractor in more than one potential bid for the contract about which she was concerned.

**JULY 1** *Mr. Mitchell* said, in a written reply to *Sir Bernard Braine* (C. Castle Point), that he had written that day to the chairman of BR, giving approval to plans to reinstate the Snow Hill link, and for the construction of new electric multiple units to operate services through the tunnel.

The rolling stock cascade resulting from the introduction of these new vehicles would also benefit rail travellers on suburban services to both Liverpool Street and Euston. The scheme as a whole would cost £54 million

### Problems of cycles on inter-city trains

**JULY 1** *Anthony Stean* (C. South Hams, Liverpool) asked for a statement on the research paper "Cycles on Trains" commissioned by BR. The two most favoured recommendations in the report by the Harris people, said Mr. Stean, were that charges for bicycles on BR should stop and that the ban on the inter-city rail network should cease. "Are you aware that £7 million of additional income is being lost by the unhelpful attitude of BR?"

*Mr. Mitchell:* "I assure you, as chairman of the all-party Friends of Cycling group that I know of no plans by BR to extend its restrictions. There are restrictions on HSTs because there is not enough space to take large quantities of luggage and other paraphernalia. I shall report your remarks to the BR chairman."

### How Chunnel proposals would be assessed

*Sydney Chapman* (C. Chipping Barnet) asked what arrangements are being made for the assessment of proposals from promoters of a Channel fixed link when these are received at the end of October?

In a written reply, *Mr. Ridley* said the assessment of proposals would be carried out jointly by the British and French Governments. To help the British Government in this he would appoint consultants in engineering, to report on all aspects of the proposed structures. Consultants would also be appointed in other fields, such as appraising the environmental impact and on the overall co-ordination of the assessment.

### Rail capacity at Felixstowe to be almost doubled

**MAY 13** *Mr. Mitchell* said railway capacity at Felixstowe would be almost doubled for the opening of a new terminal when the Felixstowe Dock and Railway Bill was given a second reading. Explaining the need for the Bill, *Eldon Griffiths* (C. Bury St. Edmunds) said it was generally acknowledged that Felixstowe had become the most successful port in the UK.

It was a container port and the central point was that they tended to be distributed within a country no longer by small vessels but were landed at one mother point and carried round the country on rail and motorway networks.

About one-fifth of the containers handled today in Rotterdam were destined for, or originated from Britain. Unless a port like Felixstowe could develop, we should add more and more to export and import costs in the charge for shunting boxes back and forth across the North Sea.

*Mr. Mitchell*, in the course of his reply, said that on the question of the railway line, his department had received application for section 8 grant for the Felixstowe link line and terminal expansion at a total cost of £4.377 million, to build up railway capacity from the current 140,000 containers per annum to 265,000.

"The House may recall that section 8 grants are the way in which Government contribute to environmental protection by encouraging movement of goods off the roads and principally by rail."

### Stansted rail link study to be ready this year

**JUNE 17** *Mr. Ridley*, opening a debate on airports policy, spoke of having to provide capacity in the south-east for between 72 and 79 million air passengers a year by 1995. Aircraft noise at Stansted was being significantly reduced by bans on noisier aircraft types.

In the light of the decision on phasing the development of this airport, BR would be examining the case for a rail link. The cheapest option would be a simple spur to the Liverpool Street – Cambridge line costing perhaps £50 million.

"The options will be assessed on exactly the same terms as a rail link to Manchester Airport. I understand that BR thinks that the Stansted study could be completed by the end of this year. The Manchester study could probably be completed sooner than that."

*Andrew F. Bennett* (Lab. Denton and Reddish) said that some people in the Manchester area were worried that BR might be loading the question of the airport link because of its reluctance to see people changing from train to plane to travel from Manchester to London. Would Mr. Ridley make sure that the development of the rail link was looked at in terms of its international impact, rather than in terms of its competition with BR on rail journeys from Manchester to London?

*Mr. Ridley* said he would seek to make sure of that. It was for BR to work out the figures and appraise the nature of the investment. "It is for me to approve it and I shall make sure that this work is done properly. It will also be done in conjunction with Manchester City Council and Manchester international airport."

## Would BR be funded for airport links?

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Lab. Crewe and Nantwich) said that if BR carried out developments affecting Heathrow and Manchester, would the minister offer BR additional money to finance those considerable developments?

If he intended that BR should find the cash from within its own resources, there would be automatic cuts elsewhere in BR services. He should make the position clear about that.

## Heathrow rail access must be improved

Sir Humphrey Atkins (C. Spelthorne) spoke of the difficulties of going to Heathrow by road at busy times. The flyovers, the M4 and the approach tunnel became completely blocked at various times of the day. The journey is frequently a misery. It would be difficult and expensive to improve the access.

"The Underground is of enormous benefit to Heathrow, but in the long term there must be improvements, especially if there are to be more passengers. The journey takes longer than that to Gatwick. Another difficulty is that it is not easy for people with luggage. Accommodation for luggage is not good on the trains or on the platforms.

"People with luggage find greater difficulty than, for example, on the Gatwick to Victoria service. The rail service to Heathrow would need to be an overground service run by BR. That would be enormously expensive. However, the minister will study those matters, and I hope we shall be made aware of the outcome.

Stephen Ross (L/A Isle of Wight) said he agreed with Sir Humphrey about public transport access to Heathrow. The rail link to Manchester would be a firm commitment now. It should not just be up to BR to survey it and come up with the report in about six months.

"I am glad to hear that it is likely to come before Christmas. A firm commitment that the rail link will be built would give the airport a tremendous boost and perhaps encourage one of the independents to establish its main base at Manchester, for that is what I believe Manchester desperately needs. Manchester would then join Gatwick and Birmingham, and they would be the only three major airports I know of with truly integrated transport systems, providing through routes to many parts of the country.

The Piccadilly line into Heathrow left a great deal to be desired. It was slow, uncomfortable and inadequate. Instead of inviting BR to consider various propositions, the minister should instruct BR to produce a firm scheme and provide the necessary finance for a direct rail link into Heathrow.

## Prestwick under used with no rail link

Prestwick might have a future if it had a rail link. Schipol already had one rail link and by next June would offer rail connections throughout the Netherlands, and even farther afield. "We live in an overcrowded island which cries out for good public transport. Why have we been so slow off the mark? Heathrow should have been connected to the BR network years ago. There are still no firm plans for that."

Donald Stewart (Scottish Nationalist, Western Isles) said that in 1983 Scottish airports handled only 5.2% of UK international air passenger movements. An excellent airport such as Prestwick remained grossly underutilised at about 16% of capacity.

"When the interests of the south-east are at stake, the Government will rush in to be helpful. In the case of Heathrow, they may go ahead with a new BR service similar to the one between Victoria and Gatwick.

Prestwick is a different case because it is in Scotland. We have been pressing for a fast rail link between Prestwick and Glasgow for years to help the development of the airport. Without that it is at a real disadvantage. Only now do the Government mention the possibility of opening a station on the Glasgow - Ayr line, and even then there is no clear commitment that the type of fast link necessary will be provided."

## Rail access vital for Scottish airports

John Wilkinson (C. Ruislip, Northwood) said that if Stansted was not to become a white elephant, it must have good surface access; otherwise it would become another Narita. It must not take three hours to get from an airport. Coming from Stansted, heaven help anybody in the rush hour at the end of the M11 who wanted to get to the centre of London. Rail links were crucial, as they were to Feltham and Iver from Heathrow, and from Prestwick. Heathrow was an incomparable national asset.

Lewis Carter-Jones (Lab. Eccles) said that Manchester had a marvellous airport but for having no rail link. A White Paper stated that there would be a rail link for Stansted, and the minister should agree that there should be one for Manchester by the same token. It was essential for Manchester.

David Lambie (Lab. Cunninghame S.) said he could not justify expenditure on rail connections for Heathrow and Stansted unless Scotland had the same assurances. Prestwick needed a station similar to Gatwick. If the infrastructure was built up, Scottish airports would have a future.

## "Turn shuttle into a train." says B.R.

Andrew F. Bennett (Lab. Denton & Reddish) said it was sad that although Manchester airport was within two miles of the railway and that for the last ten years people had been talking about making the link, the furthest they had got was a feasibility study. The minister should study in detail the position of BR.

It was running a major advertising campaign, trying to draw people away from the Manchester - Heathrow shuttle and on to the railways. At virtually all stations in the Manchester area were pictures of an aeroplane with the question: "How can you improve the shuttle? Turn it into a train."

"I do not blame BR, although I must cynically point out that if only it had kept its existing services up to May, rather than reduce the frequency of the trains, it would have done better in terms of competing with the shuttle."

"Many people fear that because BR sees itself competing with the Heathrow shuttle, it is less sympathetic to putting in the two-mile rail link. Yet it is vital that the link is made. It would improve the journey time for many people."

## Through trains wanted from Scotland to South Coast

JULY 22 Tam Dalyell (Lab. Linlithgow) asked if the Government was helping BR "with its imaginative scheme for parkways at places such as Iver?" (A convenient station on WR for Heathrow). Could BR also be provided with help in re-routing trains from Scotland and the North, through Willesden Junction, to the South coast?

Mrs. Chalker said the Government encouraged park-n-ride schemes where they could reasonably be accommodated. Additional schemes were being investigated, but they could not cope with the many tourist coaches that came to London bringing people to stay or visit places in the capital.

## LRT makes good progress in reducing costs

MAY 13 David Evenett (C. Erith and Crayford) asked in a written question if the minister was satisfied with the performance of London Regional Transport against the objectives set?

Mrs. Chalker said in her written answer that LRT had made good progress towards the objectives set it in July last year. It expected to exceed the target reduction of 2½% in unit costs this year.

Separate subsidiary companies had been established for LRT's bus, underground and bus engineering activities, and the first batch of bus routes had been put out to tender. New liaison arrangements with BR had been estab-

lished and a new unit to improve facilities for disabled people had been set up.

**JULY 22** *Dr. Ian Twinn* (C. Edmon-ton) asked what initiatives had resulted from increased co-operation between LRT and BR?

*Mr. Ridley:* "We have made considerable progress with the new capital-card, with plans for improving interchanges between BR and LRT stations, and with bringing together the standards of station maintenance and investment appraisal which the two organisations have performed differently. Benefits from the meetings will flow quickly."

### Co-operation between Welsh authorities and BR

**JULY 18** Increased partnership between BR and local authorities in Wales was advocated by the Welsh Secretary, *Nicholas Edwards*. He made a written reply on the subject at the request of *C.R. Raffan* (C. Delyn).

Speaking of replies to the consultation paper, "Local choice in public transport," Mr. Edwards said the main suggestion put forward in the paper was that county councils might in future become more directly involved in financing certain local rail services. There was considerable support for the principle of local involvement, but the idea that county councils might provide revenue support for services on a number of local lines was not generally welcomed.

"A concern of respondents was that the practical difficulties arising from this transfer of responsibilities would outweigh the advantages. I have reached the conclusion that the idea of making county councils responsible for providing revenue support should not be pursued."

"The consultation focussed attention on the importance that a wide cross section of people and organisations in Wales attach to the Welsh rail network. I very much welcome the fact that there has been an increase in the scale and number of cases in which Welsh local authorities have co-operated with BR to provide improved services or facilities, and more initiatives of this nature are planned."

"As a result of the co-operative efforts of BR, local authorities, Government agencies and the Welsh office, services have been improved and costs reduced on the Shrewsbury to Aberystwyth, Cambrian coast and Central Wales lines."

Increased partnership between local authorities and BR was the best way of helping to secure the future of Welsh railways and of achieving increased local involvement, and he would write

to all local authorities in Wales reminding them of the powers available and urging them to consider how they might make use of them. BR would welcome the opportunity to work more closely with Welsh authorities and build on the successful joint initiatives already taken.

### Tunnel hazards: Severn trains regulated

**FEBRUARY 27** *Gareth Wardell* (Lab. Gower) asked the minister if he would introduce legislation to require that trains carrying hazardous materials were not permitted to pass through tunnels more than 100 metres long at the same time as passenger trains.

*Mr. Mitchell*, in a written reply, said: "No. This would place an unwarranted restriction on the movement of hazardous goods by rail, which has a good safety record in this country. The inspector inquiring into the derailment and subsequent fire in Summit tunnel last December is, however, examining the possible need for more control of the movement of hazardous goods trains through tunnels."

"BR already regulates trains passing through the Severn Tunnel, so as to ensure that passenger trains are not in the tunnel at the same time as trains conveying hazardous goods."

### Bill to end tolls on Forth and Tay bridges

**MAY 7** *Gordon Brown* (Lab. Dunfermline E) presented a Bill to abolish tolls on the Forth and Tay road bridges, which was given a formal first reading.

He said that Fife was the only county in Britain where people had to pay tolls on the south as they entered and on the north as they left. The Government could not satisfactorily explain to anyone the criteria whereby tolls were selectively imposed.

Eleven million vehicles crossed the Forth bridge every year. It was an indispensable part of the British motorway system. The cost of abolishing tolls would be small, but the economic benefit in uninterrupted flow of traffic would be substantial.

### Bus operators to be reduced to tiny units

**MAY 21** *Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody* (Shadow Transport Secretary) heavily criticised the Transport Bill, which is concerned with the privatisation of buses. "Competition is at the heart of our policy for buses" said Mr. Mitchell.

*Mrs. Dunwoody* said the National Bus Company and other bus operators were apparently to be broken down into tiny units. At present the co-ordination of timetabling and services was of most

use to the traveller.

*Mr. Mitchell* said the Government was taking away the special, privileged position of the bus industry and making it like any other industry in that it had to compete, without cartelisation or price rigging.

## HOUSE OF LORDS

### TUCC procedure not good enough, peers are told

**JULY 29** *Lord Carmichael of Kelvingrove* (Lab.), in a debate on the Transport Bill, moved an amendment to require proposed line closures to be the subject of a public enquiry, rather than a Tucc hearing. "This is basically a bus Bill," he said, "but railway closures have serious implications for the highway system."

If BR wished to initiate a replacement bus service, the Bill should make it clear that the Transport Users' Consultative Committee procedure would have to be invoked. There had been public dissatisfaction with replacement bus services; many had been promised to run for two years but had only lasted a year or six months.

It was also important that the procedure for a rail closure was changed; something between the existing Tucc inquiry and a much more detailed one.

*The Earl of Caithness* (replied for the Government) that the suggestion that a public enquiry might be more appropriate than a Tucc hearing was not new, but the Government was not persuaded to alter the long-standing procedures for dealing with closure cases.

Under the provisions in the Bill, the BR board might include a proposal to secure provision of a bus substitution service in place of rail. This service had a chance of getting subsidy and grant. It would be protected and could only be removed after extensive consideration.

*Lord Carmichael* said that in the early days of fairly small branch line closures, there was a good case for local Tuccs to look at them. Rail closures were now fairly important ones, such as Settle - Carlisle, or the inter-city line between Leeds and Sheffield. There was also the Glasgow - Kilmacollm line down to Paisley, where the local authority managed to get a wider inquiry than would have been obtained from a Tucc, which was greatly restricted and only allowed to deal with hardship. There was dissatisfaction with the procedure and the public were asking for more. Certainly something would be done; perhaps it would be appropriate in another kind of Bill.

**The amendment was withdrawn.**