

RDS AND FARES

Rail fares rose by an average of 6.5% on January 10; this is more than the rate of inflation. The reason can be traced to decreasing Government financial support for British Rail.

RDS produced 10 000 special leaflets with the message 'Rail Fares Up - Don't Complain to BR; Write to Your MP.' Thanks to all those members who distributed these. Supplies are still available from Roland White, 'Latymer', The Drive, Belmont, Surrey SM2 4JT. They give a concise and readable explanation of the financial constraints on BR.

It is in the interests of the vast majority of rail users that fare evasion should be

dealt with firmly and effectively. BR has introduced into Parliament a Penalty Fares Bill, which can help in this respect.

The present wording of the Bill, however, needs clarifying. It could be used to penalise bona fide passengers who have to choose between waiting for an unreasonable amount of time in a ticket office queue or missing their train. It could victimise users of unstaffed or inadequately staffed stations.

For these reasons, RDS has deposited a Petition against the Bill, in a bid to change it so that its provisions are clearer and fairer.

RDS TENTH ANNIVERSARY

Work is in progress on a booklet to mark our tenth anniversary, on October 1 1988 - and to serve as an introduction to the Society, its policies and achievements.

Several members are contributing to the text, but we also need photographs of, for example, station reopenings or electrification schemes for which we have campaigned or special trains or other events that we have organised. Any member with suitable pictures should contact the General Secretary by the end of May.

Each Branch is being asked to mount a special meeting or event to celebrate the anniversary. Later in the autumn we shall also hold our tenth National Conference of Rail Users' Groups, for which three high-level speakers have already accepted invitations. More details about this and the anniversary celebrations will be in the next Railwatch.

RDS HIGHLIGHTS REOPENINGS 25 YEARS AFTER BEECHING

In March 1963, 'The Reshaping of British Railways' (otherwise known as the Beeching Plan), was published by the then BR Chairman, Dr Beeching. It was the biggest single programme of line and station closures ever embarked upon in this country. The predecessors of our society fought against these closures - sometimes succeeding but, all too often, failing. We were much smaller then and the idea of subsidising public transport was less acceptable in those days.

Now, a quarter of a century later, we are highlighting some of the positive things that have happened since the Beeching era. 150 stations have been added to the BR network since the mid-1960s. Some freight-only lines have also been restored to passengers. Often, local authorities, and sometimes other bodies, have provided cash for this; in many cases local people have campaigned for such reopenings or totally new stations.

At the end of March RDS published a new book: 'A to Z of Rail Reopenings'. It contains a list of all new or reopened stations with brief details (where appropriate) of cost and how and why they were reopened. It also gives guidance on how local communities can press for more such reopenings; it is, therefore, both a record of achievement and a handbook for future action.

'A to Z of Rail Reopenings' is principally the work of our Chairman, Alan Bevan, but many other members have assisted with it. Members who order from our Sales Officer, (Alan Harwood, 139 Harrowdene Gardens, Teddington, Middlesex TW11 0DN) before April 30 will receive it at £1.80 post free. After this date add 30p postage.

DEAR CHANCELLOR...

RDS General Secretary Trevor Garrod wrote to the Chancellor of the Exchequer in the run-up to the Budget, urging him to take account of the following:

1. Heavy road vehicles should be taxed at a rate which reflects their environmental impact. Weight limits should be enforced and preferably reduced to lessen costly damage to roads and motorways. Consideration should also be given to higher taxation for coaches, since these are heavier than cars and yet are taxed at the same rate.
2. Tax relief on company cars should be curtailed. Ordinary private usage of a car should be distinguished from genuine business use.
3. Tax on vehicles should be replaced by tax on vehicle use. This measure, like the curtailment of company car tax relief, would encourage more rational use of public and private transport.
4. We hope that the Government will resist pressure to impose VAT on public transport fares, since this would not encourage greater use of trains and buses.

FILMS AND VIDEOS

Some RDS members probably possess films or videos of modern railway interest which would be suitable for showing at meetings. Member Alan Lott has kindly agreed to co-ordinate information about this and make it available to branches and users' groups.

If you have such material, please let Mr Lott know subject, length, technical details and whether you would be willing to show it on your own equipment or lend it to meeting organisers. His address is 6 Richmond Rd., Caversham Heights, Reading, Berks RG4 7PP.

1987 RAIL USER GROUPS CONFERENCE

Public Now More Articulate

Peter Snape expressed the opinion that, whatever happened after 1991, the present rail network would remain intact. The railway had beaten its 1983 financial objectives, reducing the operating loss in all three passenger-carrying sectors and reducing the operating subsidy. This had led to a fall in the standards of service and a reduction in staff. Likewise, the balance sheet approach to Railfreight had led to an operating surplus but a fall in traffic, which would continue to decline.

With the private motorist subsidising the road freight operator and Britain with the lowest proportion of its rail network electrified than any European

country other than Portugal, the 'pro-road juggernaut' would continue to roll on. On the brighter side, the present railway was more customer oriented than ten years ago, and a public more aware of the threat to the railways, and more articulate, could put pressure on a Government not to reduce the size of the system. The Channel Tunnel should be the biggest boost to the railway since the Great Central Main line was built.

Exciting Times for the Provincial Sector

This was the message given by Dr. Paul Prescott to Conference. The bulk of railway development was now going on in the Provincial Sector, the management of which had at least convinced the Department of Transport that closing down all Scotland's Provincial Sector railways would be a high price to pay for savings of £20m. Revenue was up by 10% and market research, of which none had been carried out before 1983, had now identified the requirements of passengers: through trains from everywhere to everywhere (there is no dominant node in the Provincial Network), faster journey times, more frequent services and greater comfort. The various classes of 'Sprinter' train would go a long way towards satisfying the last three requirements.

The following two resolutions were carried unopposed and almost unanimously:

'This conference notes Professor Scott's finding that the majority of accidents at level crossings are the fault of road users. It therefore calls on the Department of Transport to reimburse BR fully for any money it has to spend on additional safety measures at these crossings.'

'This conference is appalled at the recent rise in InterCity fares to ease overcrowding. Problems of overcrowding on the roads are not tackled in this way. We urge Parliament and the Department of Transport to adopt a more equitable way of assessing road and rail investment and to provide proper revenue support for BR to carry out works necessary.'

What the Papers Say

More people drown in cars than in boating accidents each year according to the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents. Drink is the main cause.

Daily Express

Use of BR metropolitan services has increased by 14% since bus deregulation.

Financial Times 18/1/88

Rail freight transport in Britain is now cheaper than road for distances over 175 miles and Railfreight is forecasting a profit next year of £53m.

Financial Times 21/1/88

PLATFORM

Bustitution

Dear Sir,

Perhaps whoever coined the word "bustitution" can find words for the following concepts:

1. Withdrawal of trains without replacement by buses. I have tried to secure a bus link from Cambridge (connecting from Norwich, Ipswich etc.) to Milton Keynes, connecting with principal overnight trains, after the direct route via Peterborough disappears.
2. Simultaneous withdrawal of buses and trains on a corridor (Tilbury Ferry used to have good buses and trains for Essex/Kent passengers, now it has few of either).
3. Provision of a new train service which skirts the main population centres in an area, without much in the way of bus links thereto (the Settle-Carlisle line should have connections to the Lake District, Yorkshire Dales and Northern Pennines from Garsdale, Kirby Stephen and Langwathby stations. All that we've been given is a purely local service at the first two).

Whatever the demerits of buses, the fact remains that they are often essential to complete rail journeys, and there is an urgent need for a campaign for bus/rail coordination.

Yours sincerely

Simon Norton
Cambridge

St Denys Light Rail

Dear Sir,

Diverting Cardiff-Portsmouth trains via Botley would increase journey times and add to the considerable line congestion between St Denys and Eastleigh. The Botley-Fareham section is only single track, and cannot easily be re-doubled - firstly because of the M27 bridge at Funtley and, secondly, due to development of the trackbed of the erstwhile Fareham loop.

Light rail could certainly play a major role in South Hampshire, but, I would suggest, in the form of new routes to places such as Hedge End, Netley Marsh and Lordshill which are not currently served by rail. Elsewhere, restoration of passenger services to Gosport, Fawley and Chandlers Ford would probably require extension of BR services rather than light rail, partly because of the need to accommodate freight traffic.

Yours faithfully,

Philip Bisatt
St Denys
Southampton

Londoner's Blinkers

Dear Sir,

I was very surprised to read Professor Willmore's letter about the Heathrow Rail Link and his assertion that "it is the Londoner's blinkers which prevent them from weighing such slight delays against all the hours which can be saved for all the people who don't want to go into London on their way between Britain and other countries."

It is the London Regional Passengers' Committee's experience that it is not Londoners but people from other parts of the country wishing to travel to London who oppose intermediate stops in train services. We have long argued that there should be a sensible series of outer London railheads served by most longer distance trains as well as local services, thus providing a useful cascade which would avoid just the type of unnecessary journeys into central London referred to by Professor Willmore.

Our representations have been countered by rail users elsewhere and British Rail, who say that such additional stops are unpopular and discourage some potential rail use.

I would, however, also take issue with Professor Willmore's suggestion that the rail link to Heathrow should be by means of a bus link from a new station on the Western Region main line. We would totally oppose such a concept - passengers want a direct service involving as few interchanges as possible. Ideally we believe that the proposed new service should run from a point in the centre of London (certainly further in than Paddington) to Heathrow (serving all existing and possible future terminals) and then back out again and on to Reading, thus providing the direct link from the West.

Yours faithfully

Rufus Barnes
Secretary
London Regional Passengers Committee
London WC2

Road to Wigan Pier

Dear Sir,

Mr Chaplin writes, in the February issue, that Dumfries has an abysmal train service, as no doubt it has. So have many places on the West Coast Main Line. Ask him to have a look at Wigan and see what might be his fate, unless he happened to want to go to Liverpool.

For some reason known only to the Higher Powers, the West Coast Main Line, in terms of intermediate stations, is assumed to have only two main points of call: Milton Keynes and Preston.

Yours sincerely,

Robert Keys
Stalbridge
Dorset

REGIONAL NOTES

WALES

A new users' group – the Chester and North Wales Rail Users' Association, has been set up in conjunction with the BR area manager at Chester. RDS is well represented on the committee, and great things are expected from this association. A meeting was arranged at Betws-y-Coed on 9 January to promote the Conwy Valley line, emphasis being placed on improving winter patronage, providing a new halt at Llanrwst, and adoption of stations by local groups. The station at Dolwyddelan has been provisionally adopted by the North Wales Railway Circle (affiliated to the RDS). A reduced-rate trip to Cardiff was arranged for 12 March, and there is to be a membership drive.

On the North Wales coast line, the sleeper service is to receive more promotional publicity, and "Cuisine 2000" vehicles were to be introduced in March. The extensive improvements to the A55 have resulted in a substantial amount of freight traffic, for road construction, to Conwy Morfa, where a siding has been installed. Completion of this road will lead to much stiffer competition for BR, hence RDS pushes at every opportunity for electrification of Crewe-Holyhead. The new timetable for North Wales promises substantial improvements: a regular interval service with more through trains.

In South Wales, the introduction of Super Sprinters will improve journey times and frequencies, albeit at the cost of reduced capacity at busy periods. There will be three through Cardiff-Penzance services, hourly services to both Portsmouth and Crewe, an increased Birmingham service and two to North Wales. The troubles on the Cardiff Valleys network have been mostly overcome, although more Sprinters would be welcome.

The Cambrian lines are continuing their resurgence; this summer will see the introduction of some three car Sprinters, easing overcrowding and improving fare collection. An improved weekday service and an all-year-round Sunday service will be introduced with the new timetable. Communication with BR will be improved by the appointment of a new Provincial Services Manager for Wales – John Davies, based in Cardiff with an assistant in Chester.

D. Sallery

Mother of two Mrs Marylyn Jones resigned from her job at a building society because she was embarrassed at being late for work so many times. She blamed BR's unreliable service between her home at Caerphilly and her work in Cardiff.

South Wales Echo 13/11/87

SCOTLAND

Following the items in the February Railwatch on Stanley Clinton Davis's brilliant speech and the equally pertinent opinion of the EEC Economic and Social Committee, the Scottish Development Department advised RDS (Scotland) that it was not in the least interested (about par for the course for that totally road-oriented body) and the Department of Transport has now advised Douglas Smart (Hon. Sec. RDS Scotland) that it has no intention of responding to these papers. This is quite scandalous and makes it difficult to avoid the conclusion that, judging by their transport policy, the present Government has no regard whatsoever for the environment and for road safety.

Following the item on the Dundee Interchange, we were shocked to learn that the Scottish Development agency was now actively marketing this site, possibly prejudicing for ever the chance of sensible and badly-needed public transport co-ordination in Dundee. RDS (Scotland) is now trying to mobilize public opinion to stop this short-sighted move, which is typical of the indifference shown towards public transport in Scotland.

The Scottish Branch have welcomed the publication of a new monthly magazine 'Railway Digest Scotland' (£1.30 per issue, £15.60 per year from Barry Turner, Shore Rd., Dornoch). The Branch distributed 3000 anti-fares increase leaflets in the two weeks following the January increases, and are now distributing another two thousand.

Douglas G. Smart

LANCASHIRE AND CUMBRIA

Our corporate member Ribbles Valley Rail plan a RailDay on Saturday 23 April, with a series of return trips between Preston and Skipton via Clitheroe. New for this season is a flat fare for children (aged 5 to 16) of £1, and a programme of guided walks led by the Ramblers' Association.

The Omskirck-Preston Travellers' Association held a further meeting in Southport on Tuesday 22 March to boost the case for the Burscough Curves. A new leaflet, setting out the case for these, was launched at the meeting. This leaflet was sponsored in part by RDS North Western Branch. For details contact Richard Watts at 15 Stanley Avenue, Penwortham, Lancs. PR1 9RB.

Our corporate members the Lakes Line Action Group have launched an appeal for Kendal Station. The group hopes to see a number of major improvements including a new shelter and landscaping. The Branch has

donated £50. Anyone interested should contact RDS member Malcom Conway at 6 Sumner How, Shap Road, Kendal, Cumbria.

The Jarvis scheme, outlined in the last edition of Railwatch is also looking at the tourist potential of the Ribbles Valley line. They have asked Ron Cotton to look at the feasibility of plugging this line into the Settle-Carlisle line, so that the Manchester, Merseyside and Lancashire Markets can be then plugged into Settle-Carlisle.

Richard Watts

NORTH MIDLANDS

Yet another collection of railway nostalgia hit the bookstalls recently, this one featuring Midland lines in Nottinghamshire, and gloomily predicting their continued decline as collieries close. Happily, an increasing number of local authorities are coming round to the more positive view that rail development can help regenerate the local economy. Notts. County Council favours the more ambitious of the RDS proposals for restoration of passenger services to Mansfield, via reopened Annesley tunnel, and press statements by various local councils call for Midland Main Line electrification and a link-up to the Eurotunnel as promoted by East Midlands RDS.

The branch is actively involved in plans to reopen Tutbury station between Derby and Uttoxeter, to serve the growing villages of Tutbury (in Staffordshire) and Hatton (in Derbyshire). Several stations have reopened in recent years, with Derbyshire County Council support, but in this case the lead is being taken by Staffordshire, who are likely to proceed with a detailed investigation following pressure from various groups, including RDS Midlands.

The RDS believe that the time is right for reinstating the passenger train service between Nottingham, Hucknall, Mansfield and Worksop. The previous service was unaccountably withdrawn in 1964. Since then, the population of towns and villages along the route has grown significantly, but there are few bus services to the railway stations at Worksop and Nottingham, and road congestion gets worse. Unemployment has become a serious problem, particularly due to colliery closures. A restored train service would increase access to local employment opportunities without adding to road congestion, help to stimulate economic growth and feed passengers directly into a variety of InterCity and cross-country train services at Nottingham.

Previous attempts to reopen the line have been unsuccessful, but since the passing of the Speller act, BR and local authorities working together have implemented several imaginative schemes. One problem for the Nottingham to Worksop line is the present circuitous route through Langley Mill.

Nevertheless, we urge that an experimental service be started without delay, paving the way for a service along the Nottingham-Hucknall-Kirby-Mansfield-Workshop route.

Malcom Goodall

SEVERN SIDE

Rail freight transits have been delayed by marshalling-yard congestion and shortage of locomotive drivers in consequence of plans by the DOT for a new Severn road bridge at Caldicot, Gwent. This is because of estimated extra road traffic by the mid 1990s. The likely use of Trailer Train intermodal vehicles passing through the Severn Tunnel does not seem to have been considered.

Railway land has been released for future road works, causing closure of the Severn Tunnel Marshalling Yard and Motive Power Depot. Since retirements the staff transferred to Gloucester have been insufficient to cope with all the numerous extra trains retimed to exchange traffic at Gloucester Yard.

A public notice issued by BR about proposed withdrawal of freight handling at Gloucester and Westbury was badly worded; they have confirmed that freight, preferably regular, will still be accepted.

A TV advertisement still encourages the use of InterCity trains, although there has been much overcrowding of High Speed Trains. Additional calls are to be made at Swindon, but there are plans to house an additional 30 000 people in a new suburb. We have proposed the restoration of the M&SW line from Swindon towards Cricklade to serve this area because existing roads would become unacceptably congested.

There are active local rail groups at Wooten Bassett and Corsham; the former enlarged town could be served by Melksham trains, but BR propose to reduce this service in accordance with a timetable which is not designed to maximise patronage, the reason given being shortage of old DMU rolling stock. An allocation of Sprinters would make it possible to restore the Stroud Valley frequency and revise the Swindon-Westbury-Weymouth pattern.

Reopening projects are still going ahead at Somerton, Langport and Yate, but there is still doubt about County Council finance for Ashchurch. In the meantime Parish and Town Councils and the general public are supporting efforts for reopening at Stonehouse, Berkeley Road and Charfield in the knowledge that extra trains are being planned between Gloucester and Bristol.

Eric Barbery

EAST ANGLIA

RDS General Secretary Trevor Garrod was on BBC Television "Look East" on 5 January. Asked about BR's performance

40 years after nationalisation he described it as creditable in the circumstances, given the tight constraints within which they had to operate. "We spend less public money", he added, "supporting and investing in our rail system than any other EEC country except Greece".

Branch Secretary Peter Lawrence and "Rail East" Editor John Brodribb had a useful meeting with the Chairman of the Transport Users' Consultative Committee for Eastern England.

Saturday 14 May is due to see another special passenger train from Dereham, on one of the freight-only lines that we want to see reopened. It will run to Peterborough and Orton Mere (for the Nene Valley Railway) with a fare of £7.50 (child £5). Details and bookings to Chris Pearson, 75 Crown Road, East Dereham, Norfolk NR20 4AE (enclosing SAE).

Also in May, the Wymondham-Dereham Action Committee will publish "Trains For Dereham", a new book to mark 10 years of passenger excursions from Dereham and putting the case for permanent reopening. The book will be well illustrated and will cost £1.75 (+20p p&p) from RDS Branch Sales Officer Peter Wakefield, 43 High St., Oakington, Cambridge CB4 5AG.

The next Branch Meeting will be at Colchester Library (nearest station St Botolphs) at 2 pm on Saturday 21 May. Guest speaker will be BR Area Manager Michael Holden. Members of neighbouring Branches will be welcome.

'Rail East' is published quarterly by the Branch. Members of other branches may subscribe by sending £2 a year (includes postage) to John Page, 18 Somerset Close, Cambridge CB4 2HW.

Trevor Garrod

LONDON AND HOME COUNTIES

The text (on computer disc) of 'Surrey and Sussex by Rail' is now with Jarrolds. A final selection of photographs is being compiled by the Editor, Graham Collett. Publication is anticipated in May/June.

At the time of writing the Branch is trying to organise a 'Rail Development Week' 11-16 April 1988, to concentrate on South and West London. The only firm activity so far arranged is a public meeting at Lewisham Town Hall, Catford, on 13 April, to further the development of the South London Line, in conjunction with the South London Line Travellers Association (SoLLTA) which the branch recently helped to found.

A joint meeting with the East Midlands Branch is to be held (at a venue in Bedford still to be fixed) on the afternoon of Saturday 18 June, to discuss matters relating to Thameslink, the Midland Main Line and any connecting Provincial services. It is hoped to recommend a specific train from Brighton, reaching Bedford before lunch, on which other members may meet. Any RDS member is welcome; SAE to H.T. Jones, Flat 2, 11 Guildford Rd., Tunbridge Wells, Kent TN11 1SW to receive details when arranged.

Winnersh Station

Early morning commuters at this station were given a double bonus on 15 February - a swish new station and a champagne breakfast. BR handed out Buck's Fizz and sausages to celebrate the opening, performed by Wokingham MP John Redwood, of the redesigned station complex. The £110 000 refit included a new ticket office at street level. More trains are planned on the line from May.

H.T. Jones

RAILWATCH is edited by: Keith Willson, 7, Brockley Gardens, London SE4 1SZ

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

Circulation Manager: (who should be notified in case of non-receipt etc., of Railwatch) J.W. Barfield, 108, Berwick Road, London E16 3DS.

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Mr Cooper is responsible for REGIONAL NOTES, Mr Willson for all other material. Copy for the next issue, to be published in July, must be in the hands of Mr. Cooper by SATURDAY 23rd APRIL or Mr. Willson by SATURDAY 30th APRIL.

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Administrative Officer: R. Snow, 48, The Park, Great Bookham, Leatherhead, Surrey, KT23 3LS (Tel: Bookham (0372) 52863).

Membership Secretary: F. Hastilow, 49 Irnham Road, Four Oaks, Sutton Coldfield, West Midlands, B74 2TQ. (Tel: 021- 354 4025).

General Secretary: T. Garrod, 15 Clapham Road, Lowestoft, Suffolk, NR32 1RQ. (Tel: (0502) 81721).