

SETTLE CARLISLE — THE WORST COULD HAPPEN

The coming months will see renewed efforts by RDS and its partners in the Settle-Carlisle Joint Action Committee to save this threatened line and keep it in the national rail network.

On May 16, Public Transport Minister David Mitchell announced that he was "minded" to close the line and was looking for a buyer.

Mr Mitchell's statement played down the increased use of the line in recent years for tourism and leisure traffic, saying that BR was not particularly qualified for this business and should leave it to others.

The implications of this statement are

alarming. Is BR being told to withdraw from tourism, the largest growth industry in this country? Are the commendable growth efforts by BR's Provincial Sector and dozens of local users' groups to promote more off-peak leisure usage of provincial services to be ditched? What, then, will be the future of routes like Middlesbrough Whitby, Norwich-Sheringham and Exeter-Barnstaple — to say nothing of the Heart of Wales or the West Highland?

Many RDS members have already written to their MPs to protest about the implications of Mr Mitchell's statement. We urge them to do so now.

WOMEN IN BR

Only 17 women are qualified to drive British Rail trains, with the remaining 16,000 being men. That may not look like a very impressive equal opportunities record but, three years ago, there was only one woman driver.

Now BR is reportedly keen to take on more women in traditionally male jobs. In fact they have been required by law to give equal opportunities since 1975.

At least there are women near the top, with two on the British Railways Board as non-executive members. They are public relations specialist Adele Biss and accountant Kazia Cantor.

For the last three years, BR has also had an equality officer, Lesley Holland, who says she is satisfied that it is working hard to put things "right". BR is now more aware of the problem and has developed an action plan and a longer

term strategy to deal with it.

Targets have been set in various grades and she says the main idea is to encourage local managers to take on more women, particularly part-timers. Women will also be given greater encouragement to return to the railways after having a family.

In total there are 9266 women working for BR out of a workforce of 140,000. They are mainly in secretarial and clerical jobs, but they also feature in ticket offices and travel centres, as carriage cleaners, platform staff and in the engineering grades. There are 89 women guards.

One of the targets is to make sure that at least 50 per cent of staff hired for "white collar" jobs are female. With 47 per cent of BR's potential market being female, that seems like a reasonable first step.

on this topic. Notably absent was a representative from BR, who were castigated by David Blunkett, Leader of Sheffield City Council and MP for Brightside.

After seeing a BR video on the benefits of electrification members debated this topic for two hours and, despite reservations by Dennis Skinner (Lab. Bolsover) agreed to approach the Whips with a view to setting up an all-party Committee of MPs to get BR to the Conference table.

It is hoped that the report of the

Consultants appointed by the Consortium of Local Authorities on the future of the line will be available in the Autumn.

RDS AND PENALTY FARES

Following the RDS petition on the BR Penalty Fares Bill, we had useful correspondence with the British Rail Solicitor and two members appeared at a meeting of the House of Lords Select Committee.

Fare evasion is reckoned to lose BR £21m p.a. in revenue, and RDS is not opposed to stiffer fines against offenders. Our concern is that these measures should be coupled with safeguards for innocent passengers and with improved ticket-issuing facilities at stations.

The Bill, at present, refers to "adequate facilities", but does not define these (adequate facilities, for instance, might be those at which a passenger does not need to queue for more than five minutes to obtain a ticket).

BR are considering automatic machines issuing "authority to travel" tickets, which could be offset against fares paid on the train. We have said that such machines should be installed at all stations covered by the Penalty Fare scheme.

A further matter of concern to us is that the onus is on the passenger to prove that ticket facilities were inadequate, rather than on BR to prove that they were adequate!

We have been assured that all our points will be fully considered at the committee stage of the Bill.

WHAT THE PAPERS SAY

British Rail has advised a Motorail customer from Manchester to drive to London if he wants to take his car to Scotland on the train.

Guardian

A Labrador called Hutch had to have his photograph taken in a booth before BR would issue owner Judith Porter, 24, of Newark, Notts., with his season ticket.

Daily Telegraph

More than 24 per cent of heavy goods vehicles failed safety checks and more than half those failures were linked with faulty brakes.

Daily Cyclist

25 MPS AT COMMONS CAMPAIGN MEETING

Some 25 MPs, together with representatives of local authorities from Bedford to Sheffield, packed a House of Commons Committee Room on the afternoon of 7 June to hear RDS campaign leader, John Armstrong, put the case for electrification of the Midland Main Line.

Sponsored by Peter Fry (C. Wellingborough) and Margaret Beckett (Lab. Derby South) this was the best meeting so far we have organised at Westminster

A FOOL RUSHES IN

Elisabeth Jordan recounts her fight for Corbyrail

One evening in November 1983 five members of the RDS Northamptonshire area and a National Committee member met in my sitting room. Being very friendly people they invited me to join in, only my husband being a member at the time (the alternative was banishment to the kitchen with the ironing!).

During the previous summer they had organised a petition in Corby which was signed by over 5,000 people who wanted to see Corby station reopened to passenger services. This had been received by David Mitchell at the House of Commons in the autumn. Now the group were discussing the next steps to take.

They felt very strongly that it was necessary to prove that Corby people would use trains if they were available. A charter train seemed the only possibility and, while my husband was making coffee, I rashly offered to write an exploratory letter to BR. The next time Arthur's membership came up for renewal I was added as a family member.

Back came the reply agreeing to our request and quoting a price which included nearly £1,000 for work needed to make the platform usable, temporary lighting and staff. We now had a very daunting task ahead but it was too late to go back.

We would have liked to go to Glasgow, there being many first, second and third generation Scots in Corby, but BR's price and timings were not attractive. In the end we settled for York and Scarborough at fares of £12 for adults and £10 for children. Four hundred seats were available and a buffet service requested.

Now we needed £375 deposit. Neither we nor the RDS Executive had this money to spare. In the end we borrowed it from a member in the South of England and started to market the train. Corby Council helped with printing,

while six of us talked to the press, handed out leaflets in the town centre, got posters put up (in shops, factories and clubs), and generally did all we could to sell the tickets.

On 1 July nearly 300 people crowded onto Corby's platform. The train came in to loud cheers. Council Chairman Joe Sims made a short speech through a megaphone and a letter of support from our MP, William Powell was read. The local press photographed Councillor Sims waving the green flag, and we were off.

The train headboard bore the legend "Railway Development Society CORBY-RAIL First train for 18 years" (it was to be 21 years from closure to the reopening on 13 April 1987 when Joe Sims, later awarded the MBE, performed the reopening ceremony).

In spite of a raffle on board, there was a loss of nearly £500 due to a shortfall in ticket sales. After selling gooseberries from a member's garden, organising a Tombola at the Corby Highland Gathering and booking another train to visit the Liverpool Garden Festival in September we were in the black again. Since then we have had a reasonably healthy bank balance.

Most passengers on that first charter train joined the Corbyrail Supporters' group, which then became a corporate member of RDS. I have been the secretary of this group since its inception.

Between BR laying a path for the first charter train and the District Council improving the site for the reopening, members had to clear the path with their own gardening tools each time we ran a charter train. BBC Radio Northampton did an interview with background sounds of path clearing as we prepared for our train to Llandudno in 1985.

A carpenter on the Committee repaired the platform steps while a steel headboard was made by a steelworker (Corby was, and to a certain extent still

happened there should be publicised nation-wide because it is an example to the whole country. Local authorities there are leading the way."

More than £17 million is being invested in the Valleys network with more than £5 million of that coming from councils. Welsh Secretary Peter Walker is considering whether to approve phase two, creating nine new stations in Mid Glamorgan and five new stations for South Glamorgan. "The rail strategy has been a tremendous success," said Bill Williams, Mid Glamorgan's transport chairman.

is, a steel town) and first carried on our Portsmouth train in 1986. It also had pride of place on the first service train on reopening day.

Corbyrail continues to monitor the service, regularly suggesting improvements some of which are taken up. We continue to run charter trains but, as BR are making it more difficult to run them and the prices are becoming ridiculous, these may end soon.

We look to future developments including Electrification from Bedford to Corby (with or without Wonderworld), through connections to Thameslink and, possibly through services northwards to Oakham and Melton, which would also benefit those towns.

Who knows, when the Channel Tunnel and Wonderworld are both functioning we may have through trains from Corby to Paris!

THE MEMBERSHIP

It is not possible to be exact about the number of RDS members; people join, some resign, others get behind with their subscriptions and have to be written off (although most pay up after being reminded). Therefore we can, taking all these facts into consideration, estimate our present membership at 1800.

The Society's income stems primarily from member's subscriptions and donations. The effective work we do depends on the number of people we represent. Our target now is to have 2000 members by the end of the year and we need your help!

Regular advertisements in "Modern Railways" and "Rail Enthusiast" produce a steady flow of enquirers, of which 30% become members. These magazines reach only a small proportion of those who would support us were we brought to their attention.

Tell as many people as possible about the Society. If they seem at all interested, persuade them to join. Many members have been enrolled because someone spotted a pro-rail letter in a newspaper and contacted its sender. A hesitant friend or relative could have their subscription paid as a present.

You might like to sponsor a series of adverts in a magazine or newspaper (experience has shown single adverts to be ineffective). Donations and offers of sponsorship should be sent to Roland White, "Latymer", The Drive, Belmont SM2 4JT.

Finally, to all Branch Secretaries, I stress the importance of following up people in their area to whom I have sent details of the Society, and to let me have spare copies of their Branch Newsletters.

Lionel Boyllett
(Membership Promotion Officer)



Inside one of the new "Thameslink" Cross-London trains. Interior pictures by the artist Edward Pond illustrate some of the places through which the train passes. (Jack Ellis)

AGM REPORT

Our tenth AGM was one of the best. A hundred or so RDS members converged on Leicester, on a bright and breezy spring day, to be welcomed by a special message on the station's VDU screens by East Midlands Branch Chairman Elisabeth Jordan.

RDS National Chairman Alan Bevan reported a year of increased membership and strengthened organisation. The year's activities had ranged from the campaign for more electrification to protests against fare increases and from the publication of further rail guides to pressure (with some success) for action on company car perks.

The meeting was treated to a slide presentation by Mr Stephen Savery of Leicestershire-based Redland Aggregates. Starting with pictures of mineral lines at the turn of the century, he moved on to his experiences in the industry over the last thirty years.

Mr Savery had personally been involved in establishing a railhead at Ardingly, Sussex, in 1960 and later in the successful decision to re-lay 6 miles of track to serve Tytherington quarry in Gloucestershire, now used to move 1.5 to 2 million tons per annum.

The railways' share of aggregate traffic increased in the 1970s; Mr Savery had opened six rail-served depots with the help of section 8 grants from the government.

The highlight of his talk was the first public showing of a new discharge train run on April 20 from the company's Barrow railhead, near Loughborough,

to Cambridge. This train of close-coupled wagons, all linked by conveyor belt, could discharge its cargo of granite straight from the running line without the need for special sidings or fixed equipment. It had great potential for attracting more freight to rail.

Mr Savery answered a range of questions from members. Our President, Dr Caton expressed everyone's appreciation of this encouraging talk by a major Railfreight customer.

In the business part of the meeting, the proposed amendments to the RDS constitution were all carried overwhelmingly.

A resolution was passed condemning suggestions that VAT be charged on rail fares, while another called for improvements to communication from BR staff to passengers. A further resolution, in the interests of promoting fairer competition between road and rail, urged that excise licences for road coaches cost the same those for lorries of the same weight, that there be more stringent checks on lorry overloading and that BR should be given adequate resources to enable it to carry all the traffic on offer with enough spare capacity to cater for growth in demand.

The following were elected:

Chairman - Alan Bevan
Vice-Chairman - Steve Wilkinson
General Secretary - Trevor Garrod
Treasurer - John Gibbs
Membership Secretary - Frank Hastilow
Sales Officer - Alan Harwood
National Executive - John Barfield,

Helen Broadbent, Chris Burton, Mike Crowhurst, Andrew Macfarlane, David Sallery, John Saunders, Frank Tomlins, Peter Wakefield, Geoffrey Wyatt.

Tribute was paid to former treasurer Bob Wilson for his excellent work in developing a good financial system for the society. Martin Leech gave a useful financial statement, prepared at quite short notice, and was re-appointed Hon. Auditor.

Before and after the meeting, and during the break, Alan Harwood did a steady trade on his sales stand, as did Darryl Taylor-Smith and other East Midlands Branch members running the tea and coffee bar. Thank you to everyone for making this a lively, constructive and enjoyable gathering.

Trevor Garrod.

WHAT THE PAPERS SAY

Mother Shirley Slader, with her daughter, grandson and a pushchair, had to get off their train at unmanned Ystrad Rhondda and get back on again before they were allowed to buy a return ticket to Cardiff. They had been too late to buy a ticket at the manned station at Ton Pentre and the guard refused to sell them a return ticket on the train unless they reboarded at an unmanned station. They had to buy singles from Ton Pentre to Ystrad and then returns to Cardiff.

S Wales Echo

Demand has increased by 115 per cent on the St Pancras to Bedford line since electrification which has also boosted traffic to Hastings and Cambridge by 45 per cent.

Guardian

BR's Southern region enquiry service is London's busiest telephone line and one of the best in answering quickly.

Evening Standard

City of London firms urged the Government to pour more money into public transport to ease the stress of travelling to work. The efficiency of the City which contributed £9 billion to the balance of payments was being undermined by inadequate, overcrowded trains. A 25 per cent increase in the number of City jobs is forecast over the next 10 years but Network SouthEast planned an increase of only 2 per cent over the next five years.

Daily Telegraph

RAIL MART

RAILWATCH back nos. 24 to 32, 60p ea.; 1988 Diaries £2.30 ea.; Re-use label packs £1.50 ea.; Bring Back The Trains £1.80 ea. Prices all in. From the Sales Officer (address on back page).

PLATFORM

Comfortable Travel

Dear Mr Willson,
About four years ago the Women's Committee of the Ross, Cromarty and Skye Conservative Association took up the question of alcohol on trains. This was because it was often distressing for women travelling on their own over long distances in open carriages, particularly in winter, to find themselves in close proximity to card-playing drinking men on their way back to the various construction schemes. The situation has stabilised with a less itinerant work force, and no-one wishes to deny each group its pleasures, but the railways do offer much in the way of pleasant relaxed travel and should do so for all. The answer from ScotRail was that it would be impossible to have trains with all the computations of class, smoking/non-smoking and alcohol/non-alcohol etc.

If the railways are to re-develop they must not be afraid to offer something different from the cheaper buses. Railway journeys from areas such as the highlands should be, and often are, a source of pleasure in themselves. As an elderly lady I do enjoy the trolley and buffet services and not having to think about a picnic. The quality of the food is praiseworthy and especially so, I understand, on the trains in the north which get their supplies from the Inveroykel Trading Post. The popularity of the expensive tourist trains shows that service is appreciated.

I write, of course, with a feeling of despair because of the recent re-organisation in Scotland which has decreased local responsibilities and the recent timetable changes which are causing still further transfer to bus travel, particularly on the Inverness-Aberdeen line - a line which is so much safer than the notorious A96. That road most elderly women drivers prefer to avoid.

Yours sincerely,
F. Dorothy McFarlane,
Strathpeffer,
Ross-shire.

Politics

Dear Mr Willson,
I have been an RDS member for some years, during which time I have felt that politics should be kept out of railways - we have suffered too much over the years at the hands of politicians with a small "p".

Since 1983 I have been lobbying my MP (Richard Needham) about railway investment - it is always easier to get things done from inside rather than

outside a political party- and, to put the record straight, Stephen Wiltshire's statement that the Conservative party is not interested in railway investment is very wide of the mark.

I have found Mr Needham and the Minister helpful, interested and keen to know. They recognise the advantages of railways and are keen to make maximum use of the system.

Mr Needham and I have corresponded about many interesting projects. It is from these discussions that the Tiphock European Loading gauge Channel Tunnel to Scotland freight route to Scotland developed. However, I must put on record that the RDS Freight Committee were unable to help very much, being constrained by the policy article in our association constitution which is against private capital being used for railway investment. Please take a more flexible line on this - there is so much more which could be done to attract outside investment for all types of projects including electrification.

I have a dream that the railway system should, once again, be the transport mode of first choice. It should be hi-tech, modern, fast, efficient, economic, reliable and outside of political control. This can not be done only with public funds or one type of railway, so RDS can be as flexible as possible on both these scores. Once the infrastructure cost financing problem is overcome the system must be commercially viable, all 11 000 plus miles. There is more than one way to run a railway, once you have made up your mind that the network size is "set in stone".

Yours faithfully,
Michael R Barrett,
Chippenham,
Wiltshire.

Slide Shows

Dear Mr Willson,
For several years now, my husband and I have been giving A-V slide shows in South West Scotland on the subject of the old "Paddy" line which, until 1965, ran between Dumfries and Stranraer. We call our presentation "Requiem for a railway".

We hope to prepare a similar A-V presentation on the Settle line, but obviously hope that good sense will prevail and that this marvellous Railway will continue to function.

With best wishes,
Julia Cheetham,
Castle-Douglas,
Kircudbrightshire.

! Buses which stop to pick up passengers are blamed for slowing down car traffic by Sir Alfred Sherman. He says the answer to congestion is to convert railway lines into bus routes.

The Times

Consumer Power

Dear Mr Willson,
I am an enthusiastic lover of railroads. This is not only because I hate to fly, but because trains make me feel more secure than any other form of transportation. At great cost I will go out of my way to use a train, rather than a cheap charter flight to some European holiday destination.

Also, professionally, as a journalist with frequent assignments in London, I've ridden the trains between Perth and London for over three years and, on the whole, enjoyed the experience. I do feel that smokers are getting crowded into far too few carriages, that the trains to Scotland are too crowded, that the luggage racks are inadequate to the point of danger (i.e. blocking corridors) and that the use of radios by many young louts ought to be stamped out. I also regret the departure of the afternoon tea service. But having said all that - and I have complained on all these points without effect - I am a great believer in consumer power, and it is for this reason that I support the RDS.

Yours sincerely,
Joy Billington Dory,
Perth,
Scotland.

Passive Smoking

Dear Sir,
When will ScotRail catch up with the rest of the world in its provision for non-smokers? Even in Edinburgh Waverley there is nowhere to sit without the risk of somebody lighting up next to you. On the trains the carriages are still mainly half and half (smoking/non-smoking) without a proper barrier in between. As a result, the people in the non-smoking section have to suffer from smoke nearly as much as those in the smoking section. This is hardly a way for BR to look after or encourage passengers, now that the dangers of passive smoking are well established.

Yours faithfully,
M. M. Mellish (Mrs).

NOTES FOR CONTRIBUTORS

The Editor is always pleased to receive letters and articles for possible publication in RAILWATCH. Length should be kept to a minimum. Copy may be submitted on disc using the majority of word processing packages (which saves time when sub-editing), but handwritten and typed contributions are equally welcome.

Photographs should be good quality black and white or colour PRINTS (not slides).

Material may be shortened or otherwise edited while retaining the sense of the original. Opinions expressed by contributors are not necessarily those of the Editor, the Editorial Board or the Society.

BR PROPERTY BOARD

RDS is currently engaged in a study of the activities of this Board. Sometimes its actions have benefited rail users by, for example, the replacement of certain outdated Victorian stations, but others have not always been in the user's best interests.

Land which could have been used for station car parking, new freight sidings or reopened passenger routes has sometimes been sold, while buildings have been allowed to deteriorate, making some unstaffed stations particularly unattractive.

Members are urged to send details of both positive and negative developments in THEIR areas (in the last five years or so) to John Barfield (address on back page) by the end of August. We hope to issue a report in the Autumn.

TENTH NATIONAL CONFERENCE OF RAIL USER GROUPS

This annual event, organised by RDS, brings together representatives of local users' groups, RDS branches from all over Great Britain, and leading figures in the railway industry. Conference will be on Saturday October 22nd in University College, London, from 1100h till 1700h. Speakers will be Gordon Pettitt (BR Southern Region General Manager), Simon Coventry (Marketing Manager, BREL) and RDS Vice-President James Towler.

The charge per delegate is £3.50 (£4.50 for non-affiliated groups). For details, SAE to John Lark, 7 Gloucester Avenue, Gorleston, Gt. Yarmouth, Norfolk, NR31 7LT.

NEW RDS BOOKS

Bustitution-The Case Exploded, by Richard Watts, with help from several other members. Recommended reading for those people in positions of power who are keen to close railways and replace them by buses, this new book provides the facts, figures, background and arguments. Send £1.25 (plus 30p p&p) to our sales officer, Alan Harwood, 139 Harrowdene Gardens, Teddington, Middlesex TW11 0DN or visit a good bookshop (ISBN 0 901283 03 7).

Thames and Downs by Rail
Surrey & Sussex by Rail
Wales & The Marches by Rail

Each of these three new RDS Railguides is available now at £2.50 (plus 30p p&p) from Alan Harwood. They bring the number of titles in print to thirteen, and virtually complete our coverage of Great Britain.

CHANGE OF TREASURER

Welcome to our new National Treasurer,

John Gibbs, of 10 East View, Alexandra road, Heathfield, East Sussex TN21 8EG. John is a qualified accountant and we are grateful for his willingness to take over at quite short notice in March.

ANTI-CLOSURE FUND

Since 1982, hundreds of pounds have been raised and paid out of this fund to help RDS and affiliated rail users' groups to fight closures, ranging from Settle-Carlisle to Henley-in-Arden - Stratford-upon-Avon. It has recently been used to help the North Midlands Branch to put the case against closure of the Radford-Trowell link (near Nottingham) and to assist the East Anglia Branch with its token contribution towards maintenance of the once-threatened Reedham-Yarmouth line.

As long as the Department of Transport insists on BR looking at "bustitution" every time it wants to invest in new diesel multiple unit trains, it is important to keep the Fund topped up. Donations to the General Secretary, who has recently completed another sponsored cycle ride, with two other members, to raise money for the cause.

GLASGOW FOR PEOPLE

On 25 November 1987, representatives of various organisations met in the offices of the RDS (Scotland) to discuss opposition to the Ayr By-pass, which would put a dual carriageway along the Pollok Estate (near the Burrell Collection, through the former railway village of Corkerhill, through farmland and the Green Belt and through the village of Darnley).

Glasgow District Council, which had supported the road when it was first likely to be implemented (in 1980), had changed its view as the years went on and the ill effects of too much road traffic became apparent. The Council put in an objection and a public inquiry was scheduled for March 1988.

From this meeting was formed an umbrella "Glasgow for People" group comprising fourteen local and national organisations.

Alice Moseley, the Group's Secretary, put forward objections based on damage to the areas through which the road would pass and its likely tendency to generate new motor traffic. She also supported the RDS proposal to unite the railway lines in the north and south of Glasgow by means of the St John's link originally proposed in the Greater Glasgow Transportation Study in 1968.

Further information on "Glasgow for People": send 20p stamps to Alice Moseley, RDS, 113 West Regent St., Glasgow G2 2RU.

REGIONAL NOTES

WALES

BR Chester Area Manager, Eric Roberts, ran an excursion to Edinburgh from Holyhead and stations to Chester on 9 April. The train was a sell-out and three more excursions are promised for later in the year. Another local promotion has been reduced fares to James Pringle at Llanfair P.G. A major attempt to increase rail traffic has been the introduction of a "Chester Shoppers" ticket, offering a third off normal fares. This promotion was due to run until 28 May, and should help to encourage public awareness of the new timetable with its much-improved service. Gradual face-lifting of North Wales Coast stations continues, with Rhyl next in line for improvements. The initiative of Rhyl Town Council in this matter is to be applauded. Newly-privatised Crosville Wales are in the process of disposing of Rhyl bus station, where an RDS attempt to secure a transport interchange at the railway station met with no success. As in other parts of the country, local apathy towards public transport is a problem.

A matter of some concern is Sealink's decision to stop using British Transport Police at Holyhead. This will result in a reduction in the North Wales force from 11 to 3.

Parking problems on Chester have resulted in a flood of applications for out-of-town developments. Better access by public transport is the obvious answer, and the message could at last be getting through. Environmental improvements at Chester, including the celebrated trackside lawn, have met with much public approval, and were featured on BBC North-west recently.

The Wrexham-Bidston RUA have organised a loco-hauled excursion to Oxford on 7 May. The new timetable features minor improvements to their service.

Chester and North Wales RUA now have over 200 members enrolled. Trips have been organised to Cardiff, Edinburgh and London. Excellent liaison is being maintained with BR at Chester. The Membership secretary is J.Kendall, 43 Maes-y-Castell, Llanrhos, Llandudno LL30 1NG. Minimum membership fee is £1.

The North Wales Railway Circle is again providing a commentary and refreshment service on Sunday trains to Blaenau Ffestiniog. This service is no longer advertised as the Sunday shuttle, although Gwynedd County Council is still involved. BR tickets will now be valid on Sundays.

D Sallerup

SCOTLAND

RDS(Scotland) recently received a letter from the Research Officer of the Scottish Conservative party stating that neither they nor the Scottish development Department have the experience or knowledge to deal with our complaints regarding public transport in Scotland.

RDS(Scotland) has been accused in some quarters of being too political (but not by any of our members) and it is certainly the case that much of our propaganda in the past year has been strongly anti-Government. But what alternative do we have? When a government, by pursuing a policy of finance cuts, forces the railways to contract and prevents BR from satisfying the demand for rail services, what are we supposed to do? The fact that BR (ScotRail in particular) have capitulated to these disastrous policies makes it all the more necessary that RDS and others expose the consequences of the policies and at least try to bring an end to the incredible apathy of rail passengers in the face of deliberate discrimination against them.

RDS(Scotland) is, and always will be, politically independent. We are, for example, currently engaged in a bitter struggle, along with many like-minded bodies, against Labour-controlled Strathclyde Region in their attempt to obtain permission for their potentially damaging and wasteful Ayr Road scheme.

We would also be critical of Labour politicians for not fighting hard enough to stop the Scottish Development Agency from selling off land which, if developed, will prejudice for ever the possibility of building a joint travel interchange in Dundee. It seems that there is no difficulty in preserving vast acres of land for roads which may never be built, but it is unthinkable that politicians should reserve land for a vital public transport facility.

Meanwhile, Government/Road Lobby lies that better roads improve road safety have yet again been exposed. The Vale of Leven Hospital is reported to be busier than ever dealing with road casualties from the new fast stretches of the Loch Lomond Road. Will they ever learn?

Douglas S Smart.

YORKSHIRE

In April, BR notified the Department of Transport of its intention to withdraw the proposal to close the line from Huddersfield (Springwood Junction) to Denby Dale and to allow to lapse the closure consent given in 1982 for the line from Denby Dale to Penistone. This has ended a battle which has lasted for nearly eight years.

With the help of Henry Boot engineering and the Civil Engineering department of

Manchester University a plan has been drawn up to restore the rail link from Harrogate to Ripon and Northallerton. The line was closed in 1967, a replacement bus service to Thirsk station lasted a few weeks.

It is claimed that Ripon is becoming increasingly isolated with steadily deteriorating bus services and the roads congested with cars and heavy lorries. The original rail track was not safeguarded. Bridges have been demolished, land sold off to farmers and housing estates built across the track. MPs and local authorities are in favour of the scheme, which is estimated would cost between £10m and £14m. At a rather stormy meeting in Ripon it was decided to press the local authority for a professional survey.

Rydale District Council are to discuss with BR the possibility of restoring the link from Malton to Pickering to link up with the North Yorkshire Moors railway. It is considered that steam trains to Malton could give a big boost to the tourist industry. April saw the reopening of Cononley Station on the Keighley to Skipton line. This is only the second station to be opened in North Yorkshire, the first being Sherburn in Elmet.

CHESHIRE

Cheshire County Council is looking into the possibility of a new station at Mickle Trafford, north-east of Chester on the Warrington and Northwich lines - a sit suggested by North West branch in its response to CCC's document "The Role of Railways in Cheshire". Our affiliated user group, the Mid Cheshire Rail Users' Association ran a highly successful charter train to the Settle-Carlisle line on 9 April. The May timetable saw a big improvement in the service from Hertford on the West Coast main line, with many more Inter-City trains calling there, as well as the new two-hourly Liverpool-Cardiff Sprinter service.

Andrew D Macfarlane

MIDLANDS

This branch has been instrumental, with its affiliated group the Walsall Rail Supporters, in securing, in principle, the reopening to passenger traffic of the previously freight-only line between Walsall and Hednesford, with new stations at Bloxwich, Landywood, Cannock and Hednesford. The branch also operated a highly successful charter train over the same line in conjunction with WRS and the Lichfield Rail Promotion Group. The train ran from Lichfield via Walsall and Rugely to Chester and carried 500 passengers.

An action group has been set up to achieve the reopening of Kinsbury station in North Warwickshire and a public meeting was to be held on 15th June addressed by Mr D McKintosh, BR's Provincial Manager for East and West Midlands.

The new station at Bedworth opened on 14 May and the branch was invited to place its sales stand at Coventry station, which led to much information concerning rail matters being distributed. The branch was also represented at Birmingham Snow Hill on Midline Day, 23 April.

As part of RDS's 10th anniversary celebrations the branch will be operating a charter train to York from Rugely via Hednesford on 15 October. Details can be obtained from the Chairman at 25 Enfield Close, Erdington, Birmingham B23 5SE.

A R Wiggall

NORTH MIDLANDS

BR management turned out in force for the Lincoln-Nottingham Rail Users' Group meeting on 26 April. Newark and Sherwood Council staff explained plans for environmental improvements and development of derelict land around Newark Castle station, then BR fielded the usual complaints about unpunctuality and overcrowding. The summer 1988 timetable shows more off-peak trains on the line, but resources are insufficient to cater for peak-hour commuter traffic to Nottingham. There was discussion of the perennial conflict between villagers, who want an hourly service to all intermediate stations, and long-distance travellers who desire limited-stop journeys.

The "Mansfield Chad" gave prominence (in its issue dated 31 March) to our campaign for a restored passenger service to what is now believed to be Britain's largest town without one. We have put forward four possible options - ranging from a Pye Bridge - Mansfield shuttle to a rebuilt route from Nottingham via Hucknall. The closure of Mansfield Crown Farm Colliery in March, with the loss of 950 jobs, has jolted District Councillors and local MPs into renewed efforts for the provision of a rail passenger service to regenerate the local economy.

The TUCC hearing into the proposed Lenton-Radford-Trowell closure, near Nottingham, was due to be held on 19 May, with a long list of organisations listed to object. The summer 1988 timetable shows only two InterCity trains scheduled over this line, but an increased number of cross-country Provincial services making a pointless detour along the Toton high-level goods line between Nottingham and Alfreton. Nottinghamshire County Council are paying for further excavation of the infilled Annesley tunnel to determine the feasibility of reopening from Nottingham to Mansfield, which would use the threatened Lenton to Radford line. Capital costs are estimated at £6m, and contributions are being sought from local authorities and businesses.

RDS is active in promoting several promising schemes in and around South Derbyshire, in co-operation with

rail users' groups and other local organisations including civic societies and the Pelshall Road Action Group!

Staffordshire County Council have agreed to fund a feasibility study for the reopening of Tutbury station, serving Tutbury and Hatton on the Staffordshire/Derbyshire border. BR are willing to stop Derby-Crewe trains if someone funds the stations. We are also pressing for the proposed Leicester-Ashby (via Coalville) service to be extended to Derby via Burton. Staffordshire County Council have declined to support the scheme following strong objections from Burton Chamber of Trade who feel that a regular service to Leicester will take trade away from the town.

The branch is helping the Lichfield Rail promotion Group in putting forward the case for a Birmingham-Lichfield-Derby service, and there is considerable local support for reopening, and partial relaying, of Walsall-Brownhills-Lichfield as part of a possible Wolverhampton-Derby service.

Malcolm Goodall

GREATER MANCHESTER

The former Lostock Junction station west of Bolton, closed in 1966, reopened as Lostock Parkway with the introduction of the May timetable. Platforms are provided on the Bolton-Preston line only, but may appear on the Bolton-Wigan line in demand warrants additional services.

The "Windsor Link", a two-hourly Blackpool-Manchester Oxford Road-East Anglia Sprinter service, was introduced in May. Thus there is now a direct connection from South Manchester to Bolton, Preston and Blackpool, eliminating the need to cross Manchester. Full commissioning of the link will be in May 1989 when the Newcastle-Liverpool services will be diverted via Warrington Central, Manchester Piccadilly and Guide Bridge to Stalybridge. There will then be a half-hourly fast service

THE GLASGOW EAST KILBRIDE RAILWAY DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATION

In its 25 years of existence, the association has: helped to save the line from closure under the Beeching Report proposals, secured improvements in the service, assisted with publicity for the line and prevented singling of the stretch from Busby Junction to Busby planned for 1972. The 1983 Rail Review of Strathclyde Regional Council recommended electrification - by connecting the line to the already-electrified Neilston line near Muirend and cutting out the section through Giffnock and Thornliebank, which would have cost the loss of these stations and of a great many valuable links between stations along the line. However, the recent Rail

Review, taking note of the vigorous opposition of the Giffnock-Thornliebank Stations Action Group and of a very well-documented report prepared by RDS member Sandy Dennison, has now recommended that the section and its stations should be kept.

Electrification (for the moment anyway) has been dropped, as has the connection into the Neilston Line, but a passing loop will be built near Hairmyres station on the single line between Busby and East Kilbride so that the May 1989 service should provide a half hourly service (using Sprinters), something quite impossible with the single line until now. This will also allow a proper peak hour service for people travelling into East Kilbride to work, as well as to Glasgow.

Andrew D Macfarlane

EAST MIDLANDS

On 25 March, a quarter century almost to the day after publication of the Beeching Plan, 100 delegates representing almost every local authority from Bedford to Barnsley attended the RDS conference in Leicester and pledged to work together for electrification of the important route through the East and North Midlands into Yorkshire. Our member John Armstrong, who organised the conference, said "The enormous interest shown today by local

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Helen Broadbent

authorities, unions, business and MPs shows how vital the electrification of the Midland line is to the future of the region". The next stage of the campaign will be a meeting in the House of Commons, with Derby South MP Margaret Beckett as one of the sponsors, in early June.

We are concerned about the stagnation of the Roade proposals and have just completed a study of Bedfordshire rail services, including the controversial Bedford-Sandy trackbed. We have set up a Leicestershire and Northants. Rail Action Committee (LAMRAC). Formed equally of six parish councils and RDS (we provide secretarial support), its role is to work for stations at Barrow upon Soar, Sileby, Syston, Kibworth and Desborough. We have had some (extremely successful) packed public meetings and now we have a good LAMRAC Committee, plus the start of self-help groups in two of the villages.

Forming a group like this sets a precedent for RDS. It is much easier than forming single groups for each community, it heightens interest, improves the image and makes councils more willing to listen. Interestingly, the "Evening Telegraph" has taken the lead in working for Desborough station. We have attended open days, continued to show interest in through Melton Mowbray-Kettering services, the reopening of Croft station and monitoring the the new Birmingham-East Anglia and Coventry-Nottingham service.

The problem is, all this needs more workers. We desperately need more researchers, artists, typists and people to generate ideas and publicity, but anyone willing to help will be most welcome.

Darryl Taylor Smith.

LINCOLNSHIRE

The branch has been assisting local people in their campaigns against BR's proposals to reduce staffing levels at Market Rasen, Habrough and Barnetby. The most vociferous campaign was at Barnetby, where BR wanted to remove staff completely (the station is at present staffed 17 hours a day and receives Red Star parcels). A petition of over 1400 signatures was raised which, together with full media publicity, caused serious embarrassment to BR management and forced them to reconsider their plans for this important junction station. Staffing will now be retained for a nine-hour day; parcels facilities will also be retained. This was hailed as a great victory in the local press and on TV.

Our member Peter Clarricoates has continued his campaign for station reopening at Helpringham, Donington and Pinchbeck (between Sleaford and Spalding). Petitions have been raised in the three villages and considerable

interest has been generated. Attention is now focused on Donnington, where RDS was to have funded a door-to-door petition of 2000 households in June, aiming to prove to BR and the local councils that there is sufficient demand to justify reopening. The site was to have visited by Trevor Garrod, Clare Zilahi and Richard Pili on 11 June as part of a sponsored cycle ride. Elsewhere there has been interest in reopenings, notably at Misterton (near Gainsborough) where Branch Chairman Brian Hastings was due to address the annual Parish Assembly on 3 May.

Don't be discouraged when BR management give your carefully thought-out ideas the brush-off! The difficulty of travelling between towns such as Grantham, Newark and Retford since the withdrawal of the two-hourly King's Cross-York trains was described in RAIL TYNE-TRENT No. 21. In that issue were details of improvements suggested by our member John Saunders. Although there was a negative response at the time, we now find that the entire King's Cross-Leeds/Newcastle service will be retimed on a regular-interval basis from May, with a much more regular pattern of stops at intermediate towns. There will, for instance, be a train every two hours calling at Doncaster, Retford, Newark and Grantham, where connections will be available to East Anglia on the cross-country service from Lancashire. All the improvements are made by intelligent use of existing resources, as the electric trains are not due to run in public service north of Peterborough until August. House prices, however, are rising rapidly in Grantham and Newark in anticipation of the "Electrification Effect" (i.e. the improved possibility of commuting to London).

Phil Strong/Malcom Goodall

EAST ANGLIA

On 2 May, BR held open days at Cambridge (to mark completion of electrification from Royston) and Colchester. RDS had a stall at each event, publicising the Society and selling its publications.

The planned special train from Dereham on 14 May had to be cancelled because BR did not have any spare stock - yet another instance of how intensively diesel units have to be used nowadays. However, it is hoped that this situation will have eased sufficiently for the proposed special from this freight-only line to run on 28 August. Details from Chris Pearson, 75 Crown Rd, Dereham, Norfolk NR20 4AE.

Celebrations to mark the reopening of Arlesey station (between Hitchin and Biggleswade) are planned for 1 October - which is also the 10th birthday of RDS.

Local authorities, in a move which would have been unthinkable a few years ago, are providing money to subsidise an electric service to King's

Lynn. On 28 April Norfolk County Council promised £100 000, while King's Lynn and West Norfolk Borough Council set aside £650 000 and Breckland District Council has promised a smaller amount.

This spring has seen a radical improvement in cross-country services between East Anglia, the Midlands and the North West with, for example, services from Harwich to Blackpool, Norwich to Manchester and, for the first time in decades, a through train from Lowestoft to Birmingham. Not all the Sprinter units intended for the new services were available in May, however, and fears that they may not be able to cope with new demands have been voiced.

RDS is monitoring the new service - both good and bad points. Please let Darryl Taylor-Smith (4 Linden Avenue, Countesthorpe, Leicester LE8 3PG) have a brief report of any train you have used since 16 May on the Harwich/Ipswich/Norwich - Birmingham/Manchester/Liverpool/Blackpool group of services. Don't feel your experiences are not significant. They are.

SEVERNSIDE

A new "Box Parkway" station has been suggested to relieve traffic congestion in Bath, being convenient for the residents of Bathford, Bathampton and Batheaston, as well as Box. Reopening of stations has been requested at Saltford Marina and St Anne's park to reduce commuter traffic in Bath and Bristol and encourage leisure travel by train.

Consideration has been requested for a new train service between Melksham and Bristol following factory closures in Melksham. These trains would need the direct chord link at Bradford Junction, which BR Engineering and Signal Departments have programmed to dismantle next year. Recent correspon-

dence in the "Wiltshire Times" indicates public interest in such new trains which would permit acceleration of the Yeovil to Bristol service. No official closure notice for the Bradford chord seems to have been planned. We recall that this section was used by the former London-Devizes-Bristol trains and that the Closure Proposal Notice for the Devizes route was delayed until a month after these trains had been withdrawn.

Platform plans for Yate have been altered to accommodate 3-car sprinters. New offices and industries in Swindon have created car parking problems and Motorway congestion. The Severnside Branch has brought the Light Rail idea to the attention of the local authority for this future city, and similar possibilities have been explored in the Stroud Valley, Gloucester and Cheltenham.

Eric Barbary.

LONDON AND HOME COUNTIES

The public meeting in Lewisham jointly with SoLLTA (the South London Line user group) was quite successful, with 22 people present. The situation remains that BR offers to run a half-hourly off-peak Victoria-Dartford train, serving present peak-only South London Line stations and via Lewisham and Woolwich, provided the boroughs involved will guarantee total revenue support of up to £250 000. Only Lewisham has offered its share, as Lambeth want to see a South London line station at Brixton first. BR require this guarantee due to Government financial constraints, meaning BR cannot risk anything even slightly dubious of its financial return. Nevertheless, some very minor improvements are to be made even now, such as tidying up and signposting the stations.

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