

## BEECHING IS BACK

The ghost of the notorious Dr Beeching is coming back to haunt Britain in the 80s and 90s with reports of widescale closures threatened on branch lines.

The Settle to Carlisle may once have been a main line but wilful neglect by BR has even undermined its status as a branch. Even though the line now has a healthy business BR's doctrinaire attitude prevents it recognising that times are changing. It is still thinking of cutbacks instead of recognising the boom in rail travel that is apparent everywhere.

Worse, it is planning more closures. The Gainsborough to Barnetby line in Lincolnshire and Humberside is the latest victim lined up for execution. Sir Robert Reid has told the unions that the Government has asked BR to draw up a list of lines suitable for substitution.

Substitution is still being touted by the Department of Transport and BR as the "solution" for some branch lines despite its abject failure in the past, as the RDS book *Substitution* clearly points out.

The extent of the new batch of closures may be indicated by the fact that both BREL and Leyland have tendered to build 100 branch line trains - each a single car carrying 75 people. There has been a resounding silence from BR about who is to get the order or even whether any order is to be awarded.

All that BR will say is that the cuts will be "far short" of the much-rumoured 1000 miles.

The Lincs. line is clearly a test case and RDS will fight it as well as the other threats to the network.

A massive 80 000 signature petition against closure of the Settle to Carlisle line was presented to Parliament by a group of 28 MPs at the beginning of December.

Privatisation may well put more lines at risk.

The RDS anti-closure fund now stands at £333 and further donations will be welcomed by General Secretary Trevor Garrod. Thank you to all who have given. The "Substitution" book is available from Sales Officer Alan Harwood (address on back page).



Call to  
action  
from  
James  
Towler



see Centre Pages



### Winning with RDS

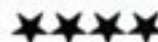
The RDS lottery winners for September were:

- 1 Mr Humphreys, Romford
- 2 D G Smart, Stirling
- 3 B D Walsh, Diss
- 4 R Dewhurst, Southampton  
(Prize pool £34.50)



October winners:

- 1 R V Worrall, Walsall
- 2 R H Dewhurst, Southampton
- 3 A N Renton North Berwick
- 4 P Ralph, Leeds  
(Prize pool £38.50)



November winners:

- 1 C N Mather, London NW6
- 2 R J Grainger, Salisbury
- 3 S J Mortimer, Poole
- 4 Miss P M Blackburn, Morecambe  
(Prize pool £40)

Now it's your chance to be a winner and help RDS at the same time. Fill in the enclosed form. The more members there are, the bigger will be the prizes.



## Not fair to anyone

The good life for many long distance rail commuters is coming to an end this month when huge fare rises are introduced, taking the price of some annual season tickets up to £3000.

The worst-hit are passengers from areas on the Peterborough to King's Cross, Swindon to Paddington and Rugby to Euston routes.

British Rail's argument that long-distance commuters were getting their travel cheaply whereas short-distance commuters were being penalised has a hollow ring. It sounds more like squeezing the market for what it can get out of it.

But the increases are really a result of the Government's aim to fatten BR for the bazaar (privatisation) while at the same time cutting grants. Subsidies to InterCity have already been completely withdrawn and others are being reduced.

As Labour MP Tam Dalyell explained: "British Rail is in an absolutely ludicrous situation, compared with the French and German railways. They desperately need money for investment and this Government's failure to subsidise the railways has forced the BR board to put up fares. I think we can thank our lucky stars they are not more severe."

In the West Country, estate agents are reporting that some people who commute to London are putting their houses up for sale and buying homes back in the capital.

The fare rises will undoubtedly pile on the pressure for more house building in the South-East and antagonise the commuter at the same time.

The present-day Grantham grocer's daughter who has to commute to London to get a better job will just have to grit her teeth - and complain to the Government.

In North Wales where customer levels fall in the winter, BR has cut day returns by a third. A North Wales residents railcard may also be introduced giving a further third off.

British Rail has been urged to lower fares on its off-peak services generally as a way of reducing pressure on the roads.

# High costs of roads

Britain's most expensive road is to built in London's Docklands. The one-mile stretch of road will cost £140 million and is called the Limehouse Link. Local community activists have fought for years against the plan but they now say: "How can a few tenants stand in the way of a scheme involving billions of pounds. Limehouse which is an old-fashioned East End community will never be the same again."

Point for comparison: It is estimated that the railway lines from Bletchley to Oxford and Aylesbury could be reopened for £5 million. The Bedford to Sandy line could be reopened for £10 million (see "Platform" Ed). For this £15 million outlay on the railways, real benefits would accrue.

## 'ROADS FOR THE FUTURE' - the RDS Response

The idea that road traffic can or should continue to grow is challenged in the RDS submission to the House of Commons Transport Committee's inquiry into "Roads for the Future".

"If road traffic continues to grow", we say, "the indirect cost to the community

(pollution, accidents, noise, vibration etc.) and the less quantifiable cost to the environment will grow. We believe this growth can and must be checked by the greater use of public transport, especially rail".

Our submission draws attention to the business won by rail through electrification, reopened stations and, in Tyneside and East London, via light rapid transit schemes. More balanced competition between road and rail would be achieved by phasing out company car "perks", reforming road tax and assessing road and rail investment on the same criteria.

The Committee is also able to look at "the impact of the Channel Tunnel on road demand". We remind it that a high-speed electrified railway across Kent and beyond will have less impact on the sensitive landscape than a six-lane concrete motorway. If such a link is properly integrated with the rest of the BR network and improvements to other lines are made, this will "enable the maximum amount of international passenger and freight traffic to make as much possible of its journey by rail".

Trevor Garrod



## What the papers say

The most ruthless gang of cutthroats you can imagine are small beer compared to the road lobby and the DoT. In the next decade, the use of cars will directly involve 100 000 deaths, 1 million serious injuries and 3 million slight injuries. The effects of pollution from cars may ultimately be even more terrifying but that's another story.

In Britain and America, about half of all urban space is devoted to cars. In Los Angeles, two-thirds of the space is for motor vehicles. Traffic in London meanwhile averages 8 mph. British Rail has the lowest subsidy of any nationwide rail system in Europe.

(New Cyclist)

When fares doubled in April 1982, overnight 18 per cent more cars streamed into London in the morning peak while public transport journeys fell by 15 per cent. There were an extra 11 road accidents every day. When fares were cut in May 1983, public transport usage increased by 20 per cent. Car commuting fell by 20 per cent over two years.

(Radical Scotland 1988)

The number of rail users in west Yorkshire has almost doubled in the last five years and is continuing to rise.

(Yorkshire Post)

Stockton, the town which boasted the world's first passenger train service, has been reduced to an unmanned hell. The town where Stephenson built 1 Rocket lost its InterCity link with London in the timetable introduced in October.

(Daily Telegraph)

The real problem has lain in a lack of money to rectify long-standing defects.

(East Anglian Daily Times leader on King's Cross fire report.)

A leaflet explaining why autumn leaves cause such chaos on Southern region has been produced by Waterloo man Jim Leaf.

(Daily Telegraph)

Most rush-hour traffic is driven by a lone, white, able-bodied male between 20 and 65. Thirteen per cent of people entering London in the rush-hour use cars. Consider the chaos this 13 per cent causes. The taxpayer subsidises company motoring by £4 billion each year - around 75 per cent of rush-hour traffic has a form of company subsidy.

(New Cyclist)



## BOOKSHELF

### The Railway Workshops of Britain 1823-1986

by Edgar J Larkin and John G Larkin.  
Macmillan.

5 September 1988 ISBN 0-333-39431-3

This is a history book with a difference. It analyses the past but also has some very relevant things to say about the present and future. It is neither scholarship for its own sake nor an exercise in nostalgia.

Starting with George Stephenson's Forth Street works in Newcastle, the growth of railway workshops is described. The authors explain the type of work done in each, and chart the changes as well as decline and closure.

The close-knit communities which developed round many of the works are also dealt with: homes, schools, libraries and churches built by the railway companies.

One of the significant facts recorded is that not one passenger was killed in a Great Western train accident from 1895 to 1941. We are then reminded: "Road accidents were estimated in 1984 to be costing some £2370 million a year."

Facts and figures pointing out the indirect costs of road transport support what RDS has been saying for years.

The authors then point out the potential offered by electrification, Channel Tunnel and the export market in rail equipment.

If you cannot afford the £25 for this 266 page hardbacked well-illustrated book, at least ask your local library to obtain it for you.

TJG



Reproduced by courtesy of New Scientist

I do not know offhand how many RDS members are car owners, as I am, but I suspect it may well be a large proportion. Car ownership is not incompatible with the wish for a vastly improved public transport system. Such a system brings environmental benefits (energy saving, pollution reduction), economic benefits (reduced journey times), vastly increased safety, and general health improvement (stress reduction). It is possible to actually do something productive (reading, writing, relaxing) while travelling by train which is not possible when driving.

But, even living in London with its vast (and improvable) public transport system, I still find the car making life easier. Heavy shopping, elderly relatives and late night socialising all provide a need for the car, when public transport either not practicable, or non-existent.

Many rural areas are now totally dependent on the car. It would be churlish to condemn anyone who lives in a rural area, and can afford to run a car, for doing so.

It is assumed by those organisations which claim to represent the motorist that I, by owning a car, automatically wish to see more motorways built, and more car use as a means of "mobility". I object to this. I also object to advertisers using the car as a symbol of status and power. The car is invaluable; it is also a dangerous machine made more dangerous by the reckless images constantly thrust under our noses by advertisers.

The car-owning proportion of RDS membership would, I respectfully assume, like to use our cars only when they are truly convenient or necessary, and do likewise with public transport.

Who is going to represent this group? The RAC, of which I am a member, campaigns on my behalf for more motorways, although it has never actually asked me or any other member whether or not we would prefer improved public transport instead. The AA, I believe, is similar. Perhaps a start might be made by RDS car owners in tackling these bodies.

## The Sparks Effect



This is BR's newest – and supposedly – best commuter train. It enters service this month on the overcrowded lines out of London's Liverpool Street. They will work to Cambridge and Southend Victoria.

The makers, BREL, believe that passengers will like the jerk-free Anglia Electrics. They are certainly better looking than other units and, with their Brush traction motors, they are hoped by BR to be more reliable than the Thameslink 319s. BREL say their power-operated doors and airsprung bogies will make longer journeys more comfortable.

On their own they will certainly not be enough to rescue London's rail services from chronic overcrowding.

But also this month Transport Secretary Paul Channon is expected to be examin-

ing the report of the Central London Rail Study into the possibility of new lines and extra investment.

Meanwhile the Midland Main Line electrification campaign enters a critical period with everyone waiting for the report of the feasibility study financed by the local authorities. Already 25kV overhead lines stretch from London St Pancras to Bedford.

At the same time people in King's Lynn are keeping their fingers crossed that BR will give the go-ahead next month for the 25kV wires to be extended from Cambridge.

BR itself is considering electrification as one of the options for the 125 mile route from Basingstoke to Exeter. The diesels on the line are getting too elderly.

# Private Purse

Privatisation would be at least a distraction, probably an irrelevance and potentially a disaster. That is the conclusion of an RDS study.

One thing that is certain, once the railways are privatised, profit-orientated companies will not be volunteering to run services that lose money or make very little money. Rural lines could close or be handed over to enthusiasts prepared to run the occasional steam train.

The key issues in the railway sell-off is their social and environmental role. What is it worth to keep death off the roads (5000 killed last year) and communities alive? And do we really want our cities and towns choked by poisons emitted from motor vehicles and our countryside brutalised by juggernaut race tracks?

Privatisation also begs other questions.

How could long-distance travellers switch from one operator to another? And if "unprofitable" lines are subsidised, is there really a case for handing over public cash to profit-making companies? And what about the asset strippers? Once the land has been disposed of, what use is a railway line to a company seeking to maximise profits?

It is the prospect of land development which excites would-be investors. BR itself says it has 11 200 acres surplus to requirements, worth billions of pounds. The "carrot" of land sales is already being touted as a way of getting BR off the Government's hands.

Turning to the passenger (sorry customer), the Government seems to believe that anything produced by the free market will be better than that offered by the state. Is the market really magic?

Will these questions be properly addressed by the BR board which is at the moment awaiting the report of its "steering group" on the options for privatisation?

For the moment the prospect for rail users is merely uncertainty and worry. RDS believes private cash may have a role in providing new stations or wagons. But the network is too important.

\*The RDS leaflet *Who Should Run our Trains?* is available from Publicity Officer Roland White.

### Nick Lewis

Took the photographs which appeared in RW 37, but he was not credited for this. Apologies to Nick and our readers for this omission.

# Fight, fight and fight

That was the message of James Towler, sacked Chairman of West Yorkshire TUCC, when he addressed the Tenth National Conference of Rail Users' Groups.

"Once again", said Mr Towler, "the railway is under threat of a new series of line and station closures". It was vital that the users' groups, the backbone of RDS, got their message across. They, together with the unions, were fighting for rail - in contrast with BR Management, who were bending over backwards to deliver whatever the Government asked of them.

"When roads are choked," he said, "the most effective solution is to upgrade the railways - the best way of increasing profitability is by increasing the quality of service".

"I shudder at the thought of a management buy-out," he said. "Railmen are derisive and contemptuous of their own management. They tell me they are ashamed of the way they are treating the customer."

"Improvements" in railway finances had often been made at the expense of the customer. Overcrowding, for instance, was a "nice little earner" for BR although much of the business was coming because the roads are increasingly choked. Yet the BRB is actually advocating bustitution!

"- we are going to have to fight, fight, and fight again to reclaim our rail network".

So said Mr Towler, and so say all of us.

Over forty delegates, representing users' groups and RDS branches from diverse parts of England, Scotland and Wales gathered at this day-long conference to hear and question expert speakers and swap ideas.

The morning's speakers were Gordon Pettitt (General Manager, BR Southern Region) and Simon Coventry (Marketing Manager, British Rail Engineering Ltd).



Guest: James Towler

After a lunch break during which delegates were able to browse through the excellent selection of RDS publications on display, a no-nonsense address from James Towler (ex-Chairman, West Yorkshire TUCC) roused delegates to later pass the following resolutions:

"This Conference urges BR to reconsider the withdrawal of the Annual Season Ticket Holder's Railcard and to restore it or replace it with a comparable facility available to Annual Season Ticket Holders nationwide".

"This Conference urges the Secretary of State for Transport to relieve the Settle-Carlisle and Blackburn-Hellfield lines, which should be retained as part of the national network".

And, a most important "bustitution resolution",

"This Conference regrets the news that BR is seeking to withdraw passenger services between Gainsborough and Barnetby and urges the Secretary of



Guest: Gordon Pettitt

State to provide adequate financial support for all railway routes".

## Prospects For the Nineties

"The growth in the economy which is forecast represents a tremendous opportunity for the railway to build on the increased traffic carried in 1987/8 and to go after new markets".

This mood of optimism marked the whole of Mr Pettitt's address to Conference. After considering the background to the national scene including a look at demand ("strongly linked to the state of the economy"), public spend on transport (falling), private sector funding and competition, he went on to discuss two specific developments - the Heathrow Link and the Channel Tunnel, finishing with a review of progress within Network SouthEast as a specific example of what can be done to change direction in one of BR's core businesses.

Population growth, together with a

## Faces at the conference



Graham Lund  
Scotland



Maurice Newman  
Walsall Rail Supporters



Mark Bigny  
Edenbridge Rail TA



David Fursdon  
Corbyrail



Mrs. Neville  
Scotland



Harold Sinclair  
Friends of W Highland

# GROUPS t again

decrease in the size of the average household had tended to increase traffic, but the economic health of the country (affecting the amount and frequency of travel and the quantity of goods to be moved) affected the demand for rail travel far more, in Mr Pettitt's view, than the level of Government subsidy.

"I draw the conclusion that success of railways is no longer dependent on Government support but more to do with the economy, quality of service, productivity and the dedication and ingenuity of the employees and managers" said Mr Pettitt, "we are moving into an era where railways will again be built because there is a viable financial case which investors are prepared to support".

## Comfort and Joy

Passenger comfort is, without doubt, highly dependent on rolling stock. It was therefore of considerable interest to Conference to hear Mr Simon Coventry of BREL give a (somewhat technical) talk on new rolling stock.

BR had moved to the specification of multiple units rather than hauled stock for InterCity work. Rolling stock in general was now becoming lighter and more aerodynamically styled. Slam doors were being eliminated and maintenance savings were generated by the use of proven sub-systems together with more rigorous specification and testing of components. Development of rolling stock was a "hard solid grind", requiring tremendous attention to detail.

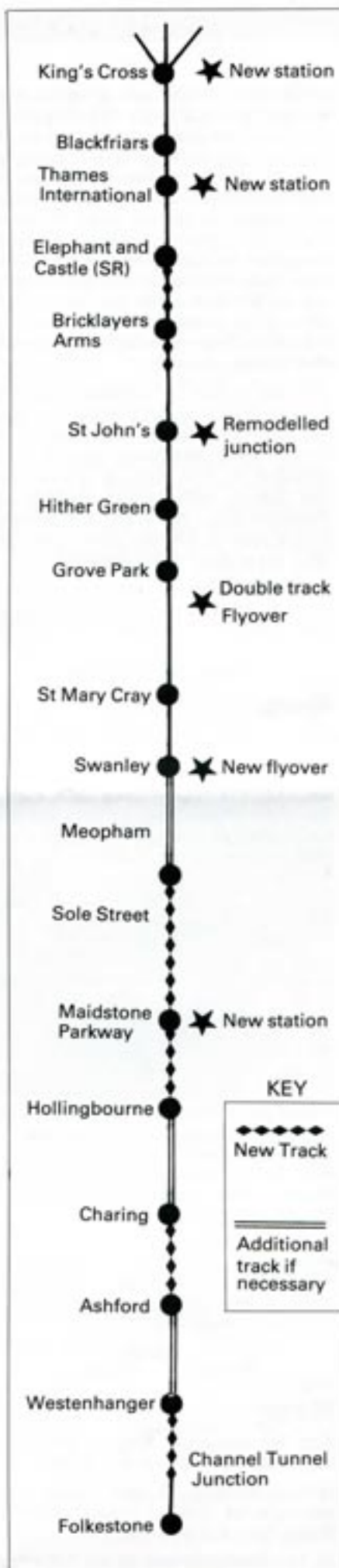
BREL were pushing the use of LRT in Docklands. Perhaps the most pertinent message to come from Mr Coventry's talk was: "Do not give up your rights of way - they may be needed for LRT. If you do nothing else don't lose a right of way, fight for them like hell".



Tom Taylor  
Lichfield Rail PG



Jim Wade  
Corbyrail



# Way under

BR managers are being over-cautious in estimating the amounts of business which can be gained from the Channel Tunnel. They are not helped in making a robust forward assessment by the uncertainty being cast over the railways as a result of the Government's privatisation suggestions.

RDS members from all parts of Great Britain are trying to inject some realism into official thinking by participating in the committees set up under section 40 of the Channel Tunnel Act to look at how BR can gain maximum advantage from the link to Europe which is now being constructed.

In addition, RDS submitted a five-page paper to BR's Channel Tunnel director at the end of November. We gave our considered view that the traffic forecasts on which the BR Study Report were based were "serious underestimates".

We urged that planning for extra route capacity between London and the tunnel must start now. We advocate the construction of a high-speed route from Ashford via Charing, Hollingbourne, Snodland, Meopham, Chislehurst, New Cross and Bricklayers Arms (with some new tunnels) to Blackfriars and the proposed new station, King's Cross International. Such a scheme would enable through trains to and from the Continent to travel north, to the Midlands, Scotland and possibly other regions.

Our letter to BR also points out that, as far as the London termini are concerned, not one single option is ideal but this one is infinitely preferable to a Waterloo terminal.

The RDS Channel Tunnel policy paper is available from Sales Officer Alan Harwood, price 75p inc p & p.

## European Rail Studies

Visit to West Berlin from June 24 to July 1 for Focus on Urban Transport. Films, talks, discussion and visits involving S-Bahn and U-Bahn expansion projects. Further details from The Secretary, Rail Transport Study Circle, 5 Elm Way, New Southgate, London N11 3NP. Closing date for bookings is March 25.

## Image making

BR's director of architecture, design and environment, Jane Priestman, will address the Rail Transport Study group on Improving the Image on January 24. The meeting is at 1845 at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine in Keppel Street, off Gower Street, London WC1. Admission fee £2.50

## Railcard Restrictions

Dear Sir,  
In Mr Allchin's letter (RW 37) he suggests that the Department of Transport would like to find a way to restrict the issue of railcards.

Sadly, BR already seems to have taken a first step in this direction with the decision to do away with the Annual Season Ticket Holder's Railcard from October 1988.

I recall that when the AST railcard was introduced a few years ago we were told by BR that this was a way of saying "thank you" to loyal customers.

The brief printed announcement that the railcard was to be withdrawn gave no reason. My inquiries have brought various responses from "Your guess is as good as mine" to the suggestion that it was "Administratively too expensive" to have so many different railcards.

Whatever the thinking behind the decision I cannot believe that it is commercially justified. There must be thousands of AST railcard holders who, like me, have made many weekend or day trips which they would otherwise not have made, or at least not have made by public transport.

From the public relations point of view, it seems a bad decision. Are those once-valued loyal customers now to assume that BR no longer feels the need to say "thank you"?

Yours sincerely,

J R Potter,  
Stourbridge,  
West Midlands

## A Sense of Realism

Dear Sir,  
Congratulations on your tenth anniversary issue. I share your delight at RDS membership approaching 2000 but, really, what a disappointingly low figure in comparison with the pro-road voice. I fear my own problems in recruitment mirror our real problem - that we include a minority of impractical dreamers who live in a fantasy world devoid of economic and practical realism. I have vigorously defended the credibility and realism of RDS on many occasions, but I despair when I read letters from members such as C Mather.

The Bedford-Cambridge trackbed is not only broken at Lord's Bridge but at some EIGHT other locations, including the approaches to Sandy. Thirteen luxury homes reside on the embankment trackbed at Blunham, but I will not tire readers with detailed accounts of the other irretrievable losses of the route (I have a detailed report available on request).

As Chairman of the Bedford-Bletchley

line's Users' Group, words fail me at the suggestion that the line east of Ridgmont be closed and re-routed. We have fought hard to turn around the fortunes of this oft-threatened line. Liddington, the busiest intermediate station, would lose its service while Millbrook, Stewartby and Kempston Hardwick would all be cut off from the rail map. New main-line stations to replace these are as far-fetched as the prospect of carving up prime agricultural land and homes in order to make the delusionary new routes possible.

With the gathering momentum of privatisation, RDS faces its biggest challenge yet, and our railways face their biggest threat since Beeching. We shall be effective if, and only if, we all face the future with united realism and determination. We must not promote impracticable dreams from members who are a blight on our credibility.

Yours faithfully,

Richard Crane  
Bedford

## West of Brighton

Dear Mr Willson,

I was pleased to see my letter (headed "Coastway Competition") appear in RW 37. However, whilst I appreciate the Editorial right to modify letters for publication, I regret that the final paragraph as published does not now really make sense. Allowing for your alterations, it should read something like this: "Assuming that BR cannot alter the service by diverting the 15 minutes past from Brighton to go to Eastbourne instead of Seaford, and providing a shuttle service to Lewes, there could be....".

Incidentally, no similar bus service has been introduced WEST of Brighton. This could well be because traffic congestion in this more thickly populated area would jeopardise time keeping, so the bus operators are content to leave BR with the business. But, east of Brighton, with much less development on the Downs, time keeping on the less-congested roads is easier.

Yours sincerely,

S R Allchin,  
Bognor Regis,  
West Sussex

## Private Question

Dear Sir,

How far would you support the following use of private sector capital?

a) The building of new routes - for example the Channel Tunnel to London Berne Gauge link railway.

b) The improvement of the infrastruc-

ture, for example, a basic 2500 mile Bern Gauge freight network.

c) Electrification - to allow the use of private capital to provide the electrical infrastructure requirements and to charge a toll for the use thereof.

d) New extra passenger services to open up new markets, for example a closer but cheaper service to London over different routes from those provided by BR, to give an example, in the West, Bristol - Bath - Bradford-on-Avon - Trowbridge - Westbury - Newbury - Reading - London, but not Paddington or Waterloo.

e) The Metro and Light Railway Networks, for example the Avon Metro.

f) At a later date, in the early 21st century, new light rural railways (please visit Switzerland where this is done well).

Everyone is concerned to see the best done for the railways; privatisation will not take place unless Mr Channon is convinced that it will offer the traveller a better deal.

We are in the business of obtaining more railways and therefore the RDS should not be held back by any political view whether the funding is private or not.

Yours faithfully,

Michael R Barrett,  
Chippenham,  
Wiltshire.

## To Fit the Crime?

Dear Sir,  
Punishing the Transport Minister by hanging him would not be a good idea as he would learn nothing from it.

Instead, he should be made to live in a rural area on a salary/pension which ruled out running a car.

That would be a much more severe punishment, especially if the judge sent him to an area which had lost its rail and bus services entirely.

Yours sincerely,

David Peters,  
Telford.

## 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

# REGIONAL NOTES

## MIDLANDS

The first new train service to be opened in the Walsall area for 50 years will start on April 1. The reopening of the 10-mile Walsall to Hednesford line has been secured after an eight-year campaign by RDS Midlands and its Walsall Rail Supporters offshoot. The West Midlands PTE and Staffordshire have agreed to fund five new stations with an hourly DMU shuttle. The service will operate as a five-year experiment on a marginal costs basis. New stations will be provided at Bloxwich, Broad Lane, Landywood, Cannock and Hednesford. Consultants forecast sufficient patronage for receipts to exceed costs by 1991.

Also in Staffordshire, final approval has been given for a new station at Tutbury to open in May 1989 allowing residents to take advantage of the Sprinter service on the Derby, Uttoxeter and Crewe line. The high-level platforms at Lichfield Trent Valley station reopened to passengers at the end of November when Cross-City line trains were extended from Lichfield City. Hopes are high for the electrification of the 30-mile Cross-City Lichfield-Birmingham-Redditch line.

The Midlands branch ran a successful DMU charter to York on October 15 and was planning a class 317 EMU charter from Walsall to Euston on December 3. Walsall Rail Supporters held a celebratory AGM on November 15 and heard the latest details of the Midlands Metro plans from a PTE slide presentation.

An adventurous DMU circular tour of the East Midlands is being planned for Saturday March 18. The train will cover Nuneaton, Tamworth, Stoke, Uttoxeter, Castle Donnington, Nottingham, Trovell, Toton, Leicester, Coalville, Burton and Whitacre. The fare is £12 for the 225-mile five-hour tour. Details from Ron Smith (tel: 021 351 5588).

The branch will be holding its AGM at Dr Johnson House, Birmingham, on Saturday February 25.

Alan Bevan

## YORKSHIRE

Trains in West and South Yorkshire are being increasingly well patronised in spite of the Government's negative attitude to rail. The figures for passengers by train in West Yorkshire in 1988 are expected to exceed 14 million. Seven Super Sprinter trains - bought by WYPTA - are now operating on services from York and Leeds to Manchester and Blackpool.

New stations are to be built on the Sheffield to Huddersfield line at Dodworth near Barnsley and at Berry Brow near Huddersfield. Burley Park station on the Leeds to Harrogate line is open-

ing at the end of November. But Selby, once an important main line station, has lost much of its passenger traffic owing to bad connections at Doncaster.

Breakdowns with Pacer trains have resulted in rush-hour cancellations over a wide area of Yorkshire from Hull to Huddersfield. On one occasion, 500 commuters returning to Ilkley were left stranded on Leeds station.

The Sheffield - Pontefract - York service which is said to be on the Government's hit list for closure may be saved by a scheme being considered by the WYPTA and British Rail. This would make use of the freight line through Featherstone and a new station would be opened at Pontefract. The existing stations at Monkhill and Baghill would probably be closed. Alternative services between York and Sheffield might be routed through Pontefract to Wakefield and Doncaster or to Barnsley and Sheffield.

North Yorkshire County Council is funding a £500 000 feasibility study into extending the M11 motorway from Cambridge over the Humber Bridge to Teesside.

British Rail has published a new Section 56 notice stating that it proposes to discontinue all passenger services over the Wortley curve at Leeds. However, the Wortley curve is no longer connected at either end, so the position will not change.

Denis Bradbury

## WALES

BR cut fares by a third from November in an attempt to boost traffic. The offer applies to all stations Holyhead, Blaenau, Chester and Chirk. The only restrictions are a minimum fare of £1.50 and travel after 0845 on weekdays. An increase in passengers was immediately evident. The cheap fares will run until this month when the results will be reviewed and hopefully extended to May.

A new rail link bus now runs every 10 minutes from Chester station to the city centre, single fare 16p.

The new May timetable will feature a completely revised service with a Chester to Bangor express Sprinter being followed by an all-stations Chester to Llandudno Sprinter. More trains and faster timings will result. InterCity services will also be accelerated.

Later Christmas shopper trains are being run on the Conwy Valley branch on Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays. New freight traffic on the branch is timber.

Dolwyddeln is being improved by the creation of a picnic area and a tourist information point. The new town station in Llanwrwst will perhaps be ready for

the National Eisteddfod this summer, although funding is proving difficult.

The Shrewsbury - Chester RUA recently held a successful public meeting in Wrexham. They have also produced an excellent folder on the line's attractions.

Radio signalling has been successfully introduced on the Cambrian. The investment is already paying dividends and the new Sunday services in particular are loading well.

The Vale of Rheidol Line has been sold to the Brecon Mountain Railway. It is hoped that there will still be close ties to the mainline services.

Early results from the Super Sprinter services from Cardiff to Liverpool and Manchester have been encouraging. Revenue is up by about 40% and costs have been much reduced. There have been few instances of overcrowding on these services although teething problems are still evident with the Class 155 units.

Heart of Wales line services have resumed over the Glanrhyd bridge, bringing to an end months of enforced substitution. The Heart of Wales Line Travellers Association recently ran a successful excursion to Blaenau Ffestiniog.

With the Aberdare branch now reopened, thoughts are turning to the restoration of passenger services to Tondy and Maesteg.

The reopening of the Ebbw Vale line is also being investigated in connection with the National Garden Festival in 1992. Singling of the track and the intensity of the freight service may cause problems.

Following "pressure", Pontypridd is to get a much improved service from next May.

Dave Sallery

## LONDON AND HOME COUNTIES

A new rail guide is proposed to cover the Greater London area and its environs with a target publication date of spring 1990. Anyone able to offer suitable material is invited to contact the editor designate, I McGill at 28 Chichester Park, Westbury, Wilts BA13 3AN as soon as possible. Do not send contributions at this stage, however. These will probably be required early in 1989.

Black and white photographs will be required for inside and colour transparencies for the cover. The text can be in the form of entire chapters on specific lines or towns and districts along the route, or notes on places of interest which can be incorporated with other material. The book is aimed at general readers, not just enthusiasts.

# REGIONAL NOTES

## EAST ANGLIA

Network SouthEast director Chris Green opened the new station at Arlesey – between Hitchin and Biggleswade – on October 1. It was the fruit of seeds first sown by RDS in the early 80s when member Mike Hadley started researching local demand. The branch promoted the idea in its Rail Strategy for East Anglia in 1984, there was a meeting in the village attended by 100 people the following year, and an action committee was formed chaired by RDS member and county councillor John Tizard.

A survey was conducted, three local authorities helped with the cost and now a sizeable community in Bedfordshire is back on the network after 30 years. The station is smart and tactfully designed and has a good car park and a swift hourly electric service to King's Cross and Peterborough. John Tizard was one of the first season ticket holders.

Hundreds of people used the station, mainly for shopping and leisure, on its first day when Trevor Garrod and Nick Lewis manned an RDS stall at the station entrance. It was, coincidentally, the society's tenth birthday.

Trevor Garrod

## SCOTLAND

The Scottish Branch have incurred the wrath of ScotRail's top managers – apparently because we dared to criticise some aspects of their new Sprinters. They have ignored the positive points we made in regard to what will be the first new rolling stock on Scotland's railways for many years. They have also ignored the fact that many others have criticised the Sprinters (the cycling lobby has been particularly vociferous). ScotRail have accused us of driving

people off their trains; we have replied pointing out that if anyone is driving passengers away it is the Government and their disastrous anti-rail policies.

We have been accused of being out of touch with what is happening on the railways. I wonder if those who run BR really know what it is like to be dependent on railways for work and leisure. Do they (or some politicians) know what it is like to experience lengthy delays (without information), cold stations, or late and overcrowded trains?

ScotRail have been advised that we will go on fighting for the railway industry and, if they are not prepared to put up a fight, it will make our task more difficult and more necessary. One specific criticism of the Sprinters is that there will simply not be enough of them; ScotRail's submission for new units made no allowance for growth and yet they

are hoping to attract more business. A recipe for disaster?

We held a seminar in Perth on 19 November. Speakers included Sir James Farquharson (RDS Vice-president), Frank Spaven (SAPT Vice-chairman) and Ken Sutherland (RDS Scottish Branch Research Officer). The topics were: the Channel Tunnel, international comparisons, Dornoch (inevitably), Dundee Interchange and privatisation.

Douglas G Smart

## SEVERNSIDE

On the BBC TV feature "Points West" on 26 October, Mr Jack Penrose, spokesman for Advanced Transport for Avon Ltd. stated that the firm is asking the Government for a grant of £13.5m; they are not asking Bristol area taxpayers for a penny.

Eric Barb



## BOOKSHELF

"Days Out by Bus and Train" by Dick Worrall, illustrated by Norman Lester. 76pp, 17 illustrations, 4 colour pages, 1 b&w photograph. Published by West Midlands Passenger Transport Executive at 60p (RDS members send 4 x 19p stamps to: D. Worrall, 60 Rowley St, Walsall WS1 2AY).

This information-packed booklet is strongly recommended for anyone who uses public transport for leisure travel in the West Midlands. Public transport campaigners will also be interested in studying this example of post-deregulation positivism from a PTE that won't lie down.

"Trains for Dereham". £1.50 + 30p p&p from C Newman, 2 Ascot Gardens, Dereham, Norfolk NR19 1QB (Tel. 0362 694772).

The Wymondham & Dereham Rail Action Committee has produced a book which, as well as celebrating the tenth anniversary of the first special train over the Dereham branch, spells out the reopening campaign in general and gives an informative history of the line from its birth in 1847, through the Beeching years, to its present day freight-only operation.

The book can also be obtained from Peter Wakefield (East Anglian Branch Sales Officer) or from Trevor Garrod (RDS General Secretary).

## The Little Green Book

This is the book that will tell you all you need to know about the RDS but were afraid to ask. It's called Fighting For Rail and is available at £2.15 (inc p & p) from Sales Officer Alan Harwood (address on back page). Also available is the little yellow book. It is called Busting – The Case Exploded and costs £2.15 from Alan. He can supply a range of other books, including A to Z of Rail Reopenings, as well as pamphlets, diaries and re-use labels. Send him an SAE for a list.

## Bustitution

This RDS publication is increasingly important with, for example, the threat to Gainsborough-Barnetby. The book is available from Alan Harwood (address on back page) at £1.80 plus 35p postage. Every Branch and users' group should have a supply – as should every member!

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# IN PARLIAMENT

No. 33

JANUARY 1989

## PREVIEW

### CHUNNEL TERMINAL AT STRATFORD

Plans for a new King's Cross station were about to be published at the time of writing and are now embodied in the King's Cross British Railways Bill. This will be controversial *NIGEL SPEARING*, Labour MP for Newham South, told me, since it will fix the main Channel Tunnel terminal in London before an overall strategic planning inquiry has been held.

East London MPs would prefer Stratford, he said.

Asked whether this was a realistic alternative, Mr Spearing said that he supported Newham Council, but that the real need was for a strategic inquiry. "The loss of the GLC had destroyed the machinery for providing one."

"No matter where the terminal is," he said, "there is no reason for not having a tunnel for east London, going under the Thames from Charlton to Canning Town. It would be only about a mile long. It could be built quickly, before the Kent high-speed line. It doesn't need to wait."

Furthermore, he said, the Select Committee on Private Bill procedure has deplored the use of Private Bills – as in this case – that displace or pre-empt planning decisions. The difficulties would become even more apparent in the New Year, when there would be a spate of conflicting reports and proposals for new roads and railways, including those recommended in the Central London Rail Study.

### PRIVATISATION 'GOOD FOR RAILWAYS'

*TONY SPELLER* (C. Devon North) told me he had been chatting over a meal with the Chairman of BR about the opportunities for expansion after privatisation. "I feel there is a huge potential for success in opening small lines that have been languishing for too long. The economics of railways are better than those of roads."

On Western Region, where his constituency is, Mr Speller has noticed that parkway stations, which are doing a good job, could do a better one if they provided security at night. "Security's very important."

"We can get a lot more traffic on the railways," he added. "Good for the economy and for the environment."

Regarding the high-speed line for the Channel Tunnel, Mr Speller wishes BR would quickly decide on the route rather than blight whole areas. "It makes the railway unpopular," he said.

JE

### Privatisation Bill lost

*Nicholas Bennett* (C. Pembroke) was refused permission to bring in a private member's Bill on 8 NOVEMBER to provide for the privatisation of BR. Moving for leave to bring in the Bill, he said that Peter Snape would oppose it and he was sponsored by the largest producer union, the National Union of Railwaymen. "I speak on behalf of a much larger group, the rail passengers."

Across the world, he continued, Governments were turning towards the private sector to help operate their railway systems. We could privatise station and carriage cleaning, maintenance, catering, security, portering and other services.

We could also set in train some experiments. At least three major towns were served by lines from different stations in London: Exeter, Birmingham and Cambridge. It would be feasible for different operators to run services to those towns. Isle of Wight services could be hived off to a private operator.

### Internal competition

"I do not accept the board's argument that competition with buses and airlines is enough. We must have internal competition. I therefore propose that a rail authority be established to ensure conditions of safety and fair play. Below that would be five or six regional infrastructure companies responsible for stations, signals and track.

"What about breakdowns? There is no redress in the form of financial claims against the railway system. Different operators will ensure that the service is better by providing for financial penalties against the operators who do not run the trains efficiently."

*Peter Snape* (Lab. West Bromwich East) said that much of the case for rail privatisation had a quaint, antiquated, back-to-the-future quality. The right-

wing Centre for Policy Studies had issued a report that was a fantasy of recreating not only the four pre-1947 companies, but going back to pre-1923, when there were almost 150 railway companies.

The golden age of railways never existed. Today's railway carries passengers faster and – provided one could get a seat – at a higher standard of comfort than ever before. "There is nothing wrong with BR that proper funding would not put right: everybody who cares about the future of our system knows that to be so."

### Impracticable idea

The track authority concept was a non-starter. The track authority would rent out space for competing services. Anybody with a shred of knowledge about operating practices would know how impracticable was that idea. "If a train full of proles run by one company comes to a standstill on the up line, it is no use the champagne swiggers on the Orient Express trying to overtake: that is not possible on a two-track railway. Unlike bus deregulation, one cannot cut short the route, jump the traffic lights, or miss out passengers standing at a stop to beat one's competitors.

"Fortunately, safety standards guarantee that few railway passengers lose their lives, compared with the 5,000 or so who are killed annually on Britain's roads."

On a division the question was negated by 184 votes to 109, a majority of 75.

### Settle-Carlisle bids

A debate to consider bids for the Settle-Carlisle line was asked for by *Bob Cryer* (Lab. Bradford South) during the weekly discussion about the next week's business on 3 NOVEMBER "We would at the same time discuss the Government's plans to close 1,000 miles of branch lines", he said.

As usual, the request for a debate was not accepted, but *Mr Wakeham* replied: "I can deal with great authority with the article in 'The Guardian' about the 1,000 miles of railway to be closed. The article is rubbish." He could not add to what had been said about the Settle-Carlisle line.

**COMMONS DEBATES** In the selected extracts from parliamentary speeches and answers to questions, which follow this **PREVIEW**, Commons replies are given by Transport Secretary, Paul Channon, or his Minister of State, Michael Portillo, or Under Secretary, Peter Bottomley.

C = Conservative, Lab. = Labour, SLD = Social & Liberal Democrat.

## Sell off the stations

Seizing the last opportunity before the Commons rose for the summer recess *Keith Mans* (C. Wyre) introduced a debate on rail privatisation at midnight on **28 JULY**.

He congratulated Mr Portillo on his appointment as Minister of State, saying his predecessor, Sir David Mitchell, had done much to improve efficiency within BR, and that he hoped Mr Portillo would continue the process.

We should build on what had been achieved, he said, in privatising parts of the BR network. "My proposals would create true competition and a better service. Some inspired entrepreneur might actually provide trains that guaranteed seats for passengers." Airlines had done it.

*Bob Cryer* (Lab. Bradford south): Like a Jumbo jet. There would be capacity for about 400 passengers to transport perhaps two or three."

*Mr Mans* "That is exactly the point. British Airways will put on an extra aircraft for three people. Once the stations have been sold off, we shall effectively have reduced BR to a national track authority."

*Mr Cryer* said that high speed trains were a demonstration of public innovation and high technology. That technology, introduced under public ownership, had been sold to many railways throughout the world. It was an outrageous act when the Government closed the workshops or forced them to be sold off.

BR was short of money. The HSTs were scheduled for mileages beyond their capability unless they received more maintenance, because there was not enough high speed units. More units would relieve the problem of breakdowns.

*David Shaw* (C. Dover) said the Government should not relax with BR privatisation. It would be easy to say it was too difficult, that it had been in the public sector too long. The Government should not go soft.

As for the rolling stock, there were opportunities for businessmen's carriages and office cubicles with telephones and fax and telex machines, and there could be tourism carriages with glass tops.

*Conal Gregory* (C. York) said the time had come for the Government to ask BR for its denationalisation strategy. "It may propose privatising region by region, or sector by sector, or, most probably, split the track and maintenance from the operators. I favour the latter."

*Quentin Davies* (C. Stamford & Spalding) said a monopoly would not seize the opportunities that a competitive firm would. "Ours is the only railway system in the world that makes one queue to get on the platform."

## Self-employed drivers

*Mrs Teresa Gorman* (C. Billericay) said she loved trains and wanted to see the railways improved. "There is a surplus of drivers, so there is no reason for trains to stop in the middle of nowhere because there is no driver. If some of them became private contract drivers, with licences, they could come in and take over trains when other drivers reach the end of their schedule. We could also have self-employed porters. In America they do a deal with the passenger on the cost of carrying the luggage."

*Robert Hughes* (Lab. Aberdeen north) said we were getting privatisation by stealth, which was distorting the whole transport market. "As soon as there is the slightest possibility of money being made, private capital is brought in to syphon off the gravy. As a result, morale within BR is debilitated. It is not a matter of privatisation but of allowing BR to use its initiative and expand." The deregulation of bus services had brought a poorer service for those on the periphery.

Before nationalisation, he said, the LMS and LNER had a nice cosy arrangement not to compete with each other.

## Opinion formers needed

Replying to the debate, *Mr Portillo* said he had no major announcement to make. "We have no plans to privatise BR at present and we are constantly reviewing our long-term options. None is ruled out. Objectives agreed between the Transport Secretary and the BR board called for vigorous measures to broaden participation of the private sector in providing services to the railway." MPs were familiar with earlier sell-offs and the policy would continue.

Privatisation had made progress under firm Government guidelines. Also necessary was the presence of opinion formers who created the climate in which enlightened changes could be made. "Such opinion formers have been with us tonight."

## King's Cross fire

The Fennell Report on the King's Cross fire was the subject of a report by the Transport Secretary on **10 NOVEMBER**. It concluded that the fire was started by a discarded match falling into accumulated grease and debris on the track of the escalator, and that it accelerated up the trench of the escalator until it burst into the booking hall, causing the deaths of 31 people.

Mr Fennell had made 157 recommendations, 33 of them most important and a further 59 important, said *Paul Channon*. Action was already under way, including the most urgent removal of wood paneling from escalators.

The investigation had shown major shortcomings, requiring a new

approach to safety management and fire prevention. "The chief inspecting officer of railways is now organising a special investigation of London Underground, with support from the Health and Safety Executive."

*John Prescott* (Lab. Hull East) said the inquiry was limited by terms of reference that prevented a fuller investigation of the real causes, which included obsession with reducing costs.

## Disastrous policy

"The report makes clear that responsibility for the monumental failure to provide adequate safety standards lies directly with the highest level of management, which enthusiastically implemented such a disastrous policy. There will be few regrets among Opposition Members at the departure of that management." (Sir Keith Bright and Dr Tony Ridley.)

Since this terrible tragedy, he continued, there had been four fires every week to which the London Fire Brigade had been called, and a serious fire every two weeks within the Underground system. What reassurance could he offer that proper precautions were being taken to avoid such disasters?

*Mr Channon* replied that the most energetic steps were being taken to remedy the deficiencies suggested in the report.

*Frank Dobson* (Lab. Holborn & St Pancras) suggested that the previous minister, Nicholas Ridley, talked only of economy and efficiency and not about safety. The railway inspectorates were insisting on higher safety standards in Hong Kong than they were demanding on London Underground.

*Mr Channon* said the Railway Inspectorate was setting up a special team with help from the Health and Safety Executive and the London Fire Brigade to examine the Underground safety management systems.

*Nigel Spearing* (Lab. Newham South) suggested that the budget of the lifts and escalators department of London Underground was cut from about £11 million to £6 million in three years. Did this not show an undue regard to economy?

*Mr Channon* replied that the inspector had stated that "there was no evidence that the overall level of subsidy available to London Regional Transport (LRT) was inadequate to finance necessary safety related spending."

## No clear explanation

*Robert Adley* (C. Christchurch) asked whether Sir Keith Bright had been appointed chairman of London Transport by Ken Livingstone, but was cut short by the Speaker (Bernard Weatherill)

*Robert Hughes* (Lab. Aberdeen North) suggested that the most dangerous thing about the Fennell report was that it

gave no precise explanation as to why the fire fireballed. Would there be further research? And would the minister say why he had not followed the doctrine of ministerial responsibility and offered his resignation?

*Mr Channon* said his resignation was not called for. He agreed about the great importance of finding a precise explanation for the fire.

### Years of negligence

*Simon Hughes* (SLD Southwark and Bermondsey) suggested that the tragic deaths followed four years of negligence on safety at the highest level of LRT management, according to the evidence. "Mr Fennell makes it clear in his report that safety was not given such a high priority as productivity and efficiency. What guarantee is there that the next four years will see safety any more highly regarded?"

*Mr Channon* replied that the report recommended a change in attitude towards safety, and he accepted that.

*Tom Cox* (Lab. Tooting) said that for years MPs, especially London ones, had brought the attention of ministers to the ongoing problems of LRT, which were repeatedly brushed aside. Had the minister seen the deplorable stations, and was he aware that many escalators did not work?

"When shall we hear from the minister that the people who run the Underground are committed to providing proper services coupled with safety, and that the balance sheet is no longer the sole criterion for the way LRT operates?"

*Mr Channon* replied that he was experienced at travelling on BR and the Underground. "We shall press ahead as fast as we can, consistent with safety, to improve standards."

*Tony Banks* (Lab. Newham North-West) said that at a meeting of London Labour MPs on 26 October 1987, Sir Keith Bright had said he believed the Government would "push us down until something starts to happen - that is until LRT told the Government there would be material deterioration in the service." Was it any wonder that Labour MPs held the Government's policies as much responsible for the fire as the match that caused it?

### Content to be judged

*Mr Channon* said he was content to be judged by those who read the report.

*Bernie Grant* (Lab. Tottenham) said that when London Transport was run by the GLC it monitored both revenue and capital spending very closely. Was not the minister, who ought to have been monitoring London Transport spending, in some way responsible for the tragedy?

*Mr Channon* replied that when the GLC was responsible for investment it was not difficult to monitor as it was exceed-

ingly small - about half what it is now - in the early 1980s.

*Martin Flannery* (Lab. Sheffield, Hillborough) said that as one who used King's Cross Underground station for years and went through it on the day in question, he put it to the minister that the cuts were obvious even to the travelling public. "Ticket collectors were constantly missing and the exit to King's Cross was regularly closed, so that everyone had to enter and leave the same way. Is it not futile for the Minister to talk about how much money was there, when we could see the cuts taking place all around us?"

*Mr Channon* said these comments were not borne out by the report, which specially dealt with staffing levels. The inspector found no evidence that the reduction in the number of staff contributed directly to the disaster.

*Harry Barnes* (Lab. Derbyshire NE) said that as this was not an isolated instance in terms of recent transport disasters such as Zeebrugge, would it not be appropriate to introduce national disaster legislation, based on that of the United States, Canada and France?

*Mr Channon* replied that the Home Secretary was considering this.

### Customs on board trains

Opening a series of questions about customs facilities on Chunnel trains, *Robin Corbett* (Lab. Erdington) asked on 24 OCTOBER if the Public Transport Minister understood that "users of the high-tech tunnel would expect matching facilities from Customs and Excise." Would he confirm that on-board facilities would improve "the present inadequate vigilance" at ports for drugs, explosives and weapons?

*Mr Portillo* said he emphasised that the Channel Tunnel Act required on-train controls for services north of London, if BR could provide acceptable facilities.

*Dafydd Wigley* (Welsh Nationalist, Caernarvon) said that not only on-train facilities were needed but also bonded warehouse provision away from south-east England and through traffic from the Irish Republic through Wales and England to the tunnel. Were all these aspects being considered?

*Mr Portillo* replied that under the Act BR was obliged to consult the regions about facilities for through services. Consultations were under way and the result of the deliberations would be made known towards the end of next year.

*Peter Snape* (Lab. West Bromwich East) said that on-train customs and immigration facilities were customary between countries such as East and West Germany, France and Switzerland, and, most remarkably, between Northern Ireland and the Irish Republic. Would the Minister try to overcome the Prime Minister's xenophobia?

*Mr Portillo* replied that the balance of probability seemed to be that there would be frontier controls at Waterloo for trains terminating in London and on-train controls for trains going further than London. "That has yet to be confirmed." Discussions were continuing.

### Settle-Carlisle line

A petition from supporters of the Settle-Carlisle railway was presented to the Commons on 19 OCTOBER. It asserted that the line provided an essential transport system, was a potentially important freight route and provided enjoyment for hundreds of thousands for its scenery and engineering heritage. It therefore called for the retention of the line as an integral part of the national rail network.

On 21 OCTOBER the Public Transport Minister replied to a written question from *Peter Pike* (Lab. Barnsley), asking for the publication of the minister's market research on the Settle-Carlisle railway, including passenger attitudes towards the desirability of keeping the line open and keeping it in the public sector, and the major purpose in closing it.

*Michael Portillo* replied that the report from the Transport Users' Consultative Committee had been studied. It was submitted in 1986 and a summary had been published. "We look forward to receiving a further report. We have seen the results of a survey by Cumbria county council into the usage of the line. It does not however cover any of the issues you mention. BR has recently submitted its updated financial case for wishing to discontinue services on the line."

### Penalty fare of £10

*Andrew F. Bennett* (Lab. Denton & Reddish) spoke on 10 NOVEMBER on the proposal to carry over to the next parliamentary session the Bill to enable LRT to impose penalty fares on passengers travelling without tickets. There was no justification for having one scheme in London and another elsewhere.

"The promoters must consider how they intend to justify the penalty system contained in the Bill. The penalty for travelling on a bus or the Docklands line without paying a fare is a £5 fine, but on other trains it is £10.

"It is fairly difficult to get on a bus without paying a fare, but on the railways, especially the Underground, the situation is far more complicated. It is common for people to have to board a train without the opportunity to buy a ticket. It is often difficult to tell whether it will be possible to buy a ticket at a tube station. There may be a machine issuing 50p tickets, but all the other machines may be shut down and the ticket office closed. Legislation on penalty fares should be national.

*Peter Hardy* (Lab. Wentworth) said he echoed Mr Bennett's comments. People were often placed in the embarrassing position of having to board public transport without having paid the fare and then running the risk of being criticised, embarrassed or made to feel guilty, when there were no grounds for criticism, embarrassment or guilt.

There was provision for passengers to be excused when there were no facilities for the sale of tickets, but it was a bit much to have to pass a Bill saying people would be excused a penalty when they were not at fault.

Would it not be better to ensure that such a position never arose? The Bill should be reviewed and the principles considered.

*Harry Cohen* (Lab. Leyton) said he would not like to see penalty fares cast in stone. All MPs knew of cases of violence against those who worked on buses and tubes, and penalty fares could become a reason for violence.

### Might breed violence

*Mr Bennett* intervened to say that if inspectors had to collect penalty fares, they could end by carrying large sums if they caught many offenders. The more people could be persuaded to pay other than in cash the better, so that no one was tempted to assault the inspector and grab the money.

That was an excellent point, said Mr Cohen. He favoured lighter penalties, but the courts must deal rigorously with assaults on bus drivers, tube workers and others in public transport services. He would not object to penalty fares while they were introduced against a background of cheap fares, giving people no excuse for trying to avoid paying. "I would ask LRT to comment on how penalty fares may affect violence."

*Dr John Marek* (Lab. Wrexham) said he was sponsored by the National Union of Railwaymen and wanted the Bill to be the best that could be produced. It would be better if the system were properly staffed so that it was difficult to escape payment. LRT should take the Bill away and perhaps talk to the unions, London boroughs and people in the community and bring it back in a much improved form.

The debate was adjourned until 14 NOVEMBER, when the Bill was objected to and therefore negatived.

### Worst tube station

Angel tube station is the worst in the entire Underground system, according to *Chris Smith* (Lab. Islington South and Finsbury). It was a danger to passenger safety, he said, when on 10 NOVEMBER he urged that the private Bill to ensure the improvement of the station should be carried over to the next parliamentary session.

Measures to ensure that the work went ahead included a new ticket hall and escalators, replacing lifts, "which work, at best, sporadically and at worst not at all." Most importantly, he added, there was provision for the removal of the island platform, which was extremely dangerous with the enormous increase in the number of passengers using Angel.

Office development in the vicinity meant that during the rush hour the press of people trying to get on and off the platform had become dangerously great.

### Should be upgraded

*Jeremy Hanley* (C. Richmond and Barnes) said he was a director of a company that recently moved close to Angel tube, which was symptomatic of the improvement in the area. It was a disgrace at the moment.

*Dr John Marek* (Lab. Wrexham) said that in the past six or seven years LRT had spent the minimum amount of money necessary to get the public to use the Underground, and that by spending a few more pennies it could have given the public the comfort and luxury they desired. All should welcome the £44 million to be spent to refurbish the station.

### Escalators not working

*Simon Hughes* (SLD Southwark & Bermondsey) said that the problem of non-functioning escalators in London was now substantial. Constituents wished there was less carrying over of repairs and less need to carry over the legislation.

*Dr Marek*, speaking again, said that an LRT plan was to be published proposing vital alterations to public transport. One of the suggestions was for a lozenge-shaped fast transport system with one apex of the lozenge at Angel and the other in south-west London.

The Bill was carried over to the new session.

### Overcrowding problems

Many MPs asked written questions on 19 APRIL about overcrowding on trains and asking for a statement. These included *Peter Snape* (Lab. West Bromwich east), *G.W.Allen* (Lab. Nottingham north), *Dr John Marek* (Lab. Wrexham), *Dr L.G.Moonie* (Lab. Kirkcaldy), *Dr David Marshall* (Lab. Shettleston), *J.McFall* (Lab. Dumbarton), *Miss M.Mowlam* (Lab. Redcar) and *P.P.Murphy* (Lab. Torfaen).

*Mr Mitchell* replied that he met the BR board chairman regularly to discuss matters of mutual interest, including quality of service objectives, which for Network SouthEast included load factor standards.

### Funding the fast link

*Nigel Spearing* (Lab. Newham South), in a written question on 21 OCTOBER concerning the London-Channel rail link, asked what proposals had been received for private funding.

BR would be inviting proposals from the private sector shortly, *Mr Portillo* replied.

*Dr John Marek* (Lab. Wrexham), during business questions on 10 November, drew attention to an early-day motion - a motion that is not usually debated but which appears on the order paper with the names of MPs who agree to support it.

It said that "customs and immigration formalities on all Channel Tunnel trains should be carried out on board the trains and not at passenger terminals."

*Dr Marek* asked for a debate on the subject, if there was any difficulty about the Government's acceding to the wishes expressed.

*John Wakeham* Leader of the House, said a debate might be convenient at some time. For Waterloo services, airport-type controls were the most practical and cost effective.

### High speed less needed

In a question to the Prime Minister on 1 NOVEMBER, *Robert Adley* (C. Christchurch) asked if she was aware of the apparent lack of co-ordination between the British Government through BR and the French Government through SNCF of the investment criteria governing the construction and development of rail services at each end of the line. Was this necessary, and if so, would she arrange for the two Departments of Transport to meet to discuss the matter?

*Mrs Thatcher* replied that he was probably referring to the fact that the French need the high-speed train in any event whereas we have not the same need on this side of the tunnel for services to London. "I will however look further into the matter."

How many representations about the proposed high-speed link had the Transport Department received, asked *Keith Speed* (C. Ashford) on 3 NOVEMBER, in a written question.

About 300, *Mr Portillo* replied, mainly from people concerned that they might be affected by one of the proposed routes. "We are encouraging BR to narrow down the options as quickly as possible."

*John Heddle* (C. Staffordshire Mid) asked in a written question on 2 OCTOBER if the Minister had yet received BR's submission for electrification of the cross-city line from Lichfield to Redditch via Birmingham New Street.

"I have not," said *Mr Portillo*.