



## Call from on high

Motorists sitting in M25 traffic jams were the target for InterCity's latest skyhigh advertising campaign. A new airship flew over London's notorious orbital motorway during the morning and evening rush hours to remind drivers that there is a more sensible, environmentally acceptable way to travel.

For one week in October, the airship was based at Denham airfield and covered the northern sector of the motorway. For a second week, it moored at Redhill airfield and covered the southern section. Hugh Band, managing director of the Airship and Balloon Company, said: "We are delighted InterCity was the launch customer for our airship."

# Privatisation in the sidings

Rail campaigners have been warned not to assume privatisation has gone away just because Transport Secretary Cecil Parkinson has failed to make the expected announcement about how and when it would be carried out.

With the problems of water and electricity, privatisation is unpopular and it is likely that Mr Parkinson has made a tactical retreat, said Mr Ward Hope, editor of the respected *Railway Gazette International*.

"Clearly it has dropped down the Government's list of priorities," he told delegates at the 11th annual conference of rail users groups in London in November.

Legislation is not going to be completed for at least another four years even if the Tories win the next General Election. But he added: "We should not be complacent. It is still on the agenda."

"There is obviously confusion about how to go about it. Three sets of consultants were hired by the Government and BR to investigate ways and means."

"It is a sad commentary on the way the British conduct debates on an issue of great public interest that none of these consultants' reports was published. I can tell you, however, that their prognosis was not encouraging and did not point decisively to one option."

Mr Hope analysed what benefits could be expected to be gained from rail privatisation but concluded that it had virtually nothing to offer passengers. He said: "I can only see drawbacks in privatising BR passenger services."

He added: "As a means to promote efficiency,

## But don't drop your guard

BR is the one state railway in the world that is least in need of privatisation."

It is recognised that BR is already one of the most cost-effective in the world. InterCity and Freight are in profit and Network SouthEast is raising nearly 90 per cent of its costs from revenue which is an "amazing achievement" for a commuter railway.

He listed some of BR's problems including overcrowding, cancellations, and unmanned stations, adding: "These problems are the RESULT of the efficiency drive in a transport world where the dice are loaded in favour of roads. Until the 'playing field' is levelled, rail problems will get worse. There is a rising tide of criticism of the unequal way in which road and rail investment is assessed."

"An important part of the cost-benefit case for building the M20 is the saving of life by transferring traffic from the dangerous A20 running through villages. But BR is explicitly forbidden to count the saving of life through transfer of people from the A20/M20 to a new high-speed railway."

Subsidies could achieve real quality improvements. Austria is to copy Switzerland by

introducing an hourly service between most cities and towns as well as insisting on connections of less than 15 minutes. By contrast, BR says anything less than 15 minutes cannot be relied on as a connection.

Investment in France and Japan has also paid handsome dividends particularly with high-speed services like the TGV and the Bullet trains which have a flawless safety record, with not one passenger killed."

And don't fall for the myth that Japan's railways have been privatised. They have been split into six geographical chunks and a national freight company which is able to operate on the track of the other companies. They are companies with shares but all the shares are owned by the government. The companies continue to work together (as directed) and the railways' historic debt (about the size of Brazil's) has been written off.

Switzerland too has private railways but they often have a large element of public finance input and they are NOT revenue orientated.

The British Government's strategy of relying on private finance lies in ruins. Mr Hope said: "There is a tremendous confusion and uncertainty on this side, compared to the French side. We just don't know where we are. And that's privatisation."

He said the Eurotunnel project is close to being wrecked, partly because it is subject to the whims of statutory bodies demanding unrealistic safety precautions. The cost of an Alpine shuttle wagon is around £100 000 but Eurotunnel's wagons will

## 11th annual conference of rail users groups



# Use your brains, invest in trains

## Rest your brain – on the train

# Use your brain, go by train

These are some of the slogans which can be used for Railway Development Week from 25 to 31 March.

The society will publish a book called *New Railways* by Mike Crowhurst and Chris Amundson. A four-page leaflet co-ordinated by John Armstrong will also be published, dealing with our national strategy, including our policy on investment, reopenings, new lines and electrification.

Just one of the many events planned is a ceremony at Greater Manchester Museum of Science and Industry. This is housed in Liverpool

Road station, one of the great historical sites of the railway age. It is an ideal venue for the local branch to launch their Rail Strategy for the North West on Thursday 29 March. The meeting which starts at 11am will also be promoting the new Peaks and Plains by Rail.

A special train from Worksop, through Mansfield and via the newly reopened Langley Mill station is one of the North Midlands branch's favourite ideas for Rail Development Week. There's nothing like a train stopping at the station to convince the Press, radio, TV and public that things are beginning to happen.

## Privatisation is sidelined

cost £1 million. He said: "If Eurotunnel was a government project, it could resist and negotiate."

There is also disinformation. "People in south-east London were led to believe the Channel Tunnel trains would sound like Concorde when in fact they will be no noisier than any others. Yet dozens of road schemes are given the go-ahead with no national publicity at all."

He added: "The Channel Tunnel link is an infrastructure need of national importance. It is also in an appalling mess because the Government has stood back and not taken the proper responsibility. When asked what route the line should take, Mr Parkinson said: This is not a matter for Government."

There were, however, real opportunities in privatising freight. At present BR had only three per cent (in revenue terms) of British freight and the European railways had failed dismally to win international traffic.

"If we had big companies like TNT marketing

rail freight on an international basis, something really positive could come out of the privatisation debate. The European commissioner for transport had already suggested throwing open the community's railways to private operators.

The afternoon session for the 65 delegates at the conference divided into three workshop sessions, dealing with, among other things, political campaigning.

The problem of late-night trains being withdrawn in several areas was also raised. Councils have stepped in to save them and local government financing has become so crucial that next year's conference might target on their role.

The conference also passed a resolution calling for the appointment of a BR chairman with a sound knowledge of the railway industry and a commitment to improving the system and its share of the market.

The main conference report is available for £1 (post free) from John Lark, 7 Gloucester Avenue, Gorleston, Great Yarmouth, NR31

TREVOR

GARROD'S

VIEW



Rail users

pay their

taxes too

Some politicians seem to think there are two distinct groups of people – taxpayers and rail passengers – with the taxpayers subsidising the passengers.

When I challenged Public Transport Minister Michael Portillo over the Gainsborough – Barnetby closure proposal (how much evidence incidentally does the Government want, after 25 years, to show that bus cannot replace train?), he talked airily about saving taxpayers' money. More recent correspondence with the Minister and his private secretary has produced similar statements, the implication being that not all rail passengers pay taxes.

When I asked for figures to prove this, the Department of Transport climbed down, admitting that all rail passengers pay indirect taxes – and "many" also pay direct taxes!

The department's spokeswoman then shifted her

ground and would have me believe that poorer taxpayers who do not travel by train are subsidising richer taxpayers who do! I asked her for figures, or source materials, to prove this. At the time of writing, I am still waiting.

Pensioners, families and young people using their railcards will doubtless be interested to know that they are among the richer sections of society.

Meanwhile, we in RDS must stress two points:

FIRST As rail users, we are entitled to expect some of our taxes to be used to subsidise train services, especially when the Government grant to BR is less than the "hidden subsidy" to company car owners.

SECOND As road users, we have every right to ask for some of our taxes to be used to attract more traffic to rail, thus relieving pollution, danger and congestion.



## What the papers say

Don't blame BR; they're doing their best. First they were abandoned by the Government... Now in turn they have been let down by the City.

The Guardian 4.11.89

Company car tax concessions (worth £1.5 billion) add up to more than all the subsidies to public transport, says the Association of London Authorities in a report called *Keeping London Moving*. The association says the concessions should be abolished and the money spent on trains and buses.

Today 24.10.89

London Crossrail and Thameslink upgrading have been shelved by the Government. The Treasury is being blamed.

The Guardian 6.11.89

A Chinaman arrested in Leiden for having no documents claims he fell asleep on a train in China – and woke up in the Netherlands.

Western Mail 16.9.89

Flanders and Wallonia, the two parts of Belgium, are squabbling to get the best services from the Channel Tunnel.

Transport Review November 10

British companies will need better than average transport links to prosper when they will be situated far from the economic heart of the European single market.

Financial Times 18.9.89

A daily charge of £3 for using a car in London would reduce congestion but road pricing is also a potent means of reducing pollution, another external cost imposed by motorists.

Financial Times 25.9.89

Labour Transport spokesman John Prescott said: "We have no intention of discouraging car ownership but we are determined to promote more sensible car use."

Daily Telegraph 29.9.89

Contracts have been awarded to build a one-mile stretch of four-lane road on London's Isle of Dogs. At £300 million, it is claimed to be Britain's most expensive road. By contrast the complete cost of the Docklands Light Railway extension to Beckton will add up to £240 million.

Financial Times 11.9.89

A survey shows that nearly half the population is very worried about the environment. More than 2 million people are actively doing something about it.

Green Magazine October 1989

Motor vehicles are responsible for about three-quarters of the pollution problems in California which is introducing a package of measures to restrict car use, including banning any new drive-in banks, restaurants etc.

Observer 3.9.89

A lack of government aid leaves Eurotunnel investors with a stake in Britain's biggest white elephant since the magnox nuclear reactor.

The Guardian 21.9.89

BR estimates vandalism costs Southern Region at least £2 million a year. New seat cushions cost £70 each, double-glazed windows cost £56 and lightbulbs 30p each.

West Sussex Gazette 31.8.89

Italian lorry drivers blockaded the Brenner Pass into Austria in a vain bid to bully Austria into abandoning curbs on foreign juggernauts.

Observer 24.9.89



# Government is the weak link

The boss of Britain's largest private rail fleet criticised the Government for failing in its duty to provide a rail network to meet the opportunities of a European future. Mr JEREMY GOTCH also questioned why Britain is hanging on to its old loading gauge.

Mr Gotch, managing director of CAIB UK Ltd, said Britain might have to reconsider its approach to the gauge question.

"Only one per cent of European wagons are able to run into Britain," he said. "Looking at us from Europe, the private wagon operators don't understand how Britain can be throwing away the opportunities of the Channel Tunnel."

Mr Gotch, whose company operates tanks, hoppers, powder wagons and open boxes for the aggregates, chemicals and petroleum industries, said the car distributors had already called for a Berne gauge route at least to Sheerness in Kent.

Speaking at a rail transport conference at London's Alexandra Palace in October, Mr Gotch called for a primary network of Berne gauge dimensions throughout Britain.

"This will never be justified on a short-term basis which would attract private capital. Nor will such investment be justified by a railway operating to the financial objectives which the Government has set for BR."

He added: "I do not quarrel with a policy which seeks to make railways profitable, nor do I argue against the privatisation of the railways. But such a policy shifts the obligation for investment in the long-term infrastructure on to central government."

"The politicians cannot have it both ways. Now is the time for the acceptance of a policy of development of the rail infrastructure."

"We will never get an ideal world unless we go

## LINE-UP OF SPEAKERS



Bert Goote

Jeremy Gotch



Peter Dunkerley

Stephen Joseph

for it. We have to point out the long-term socio-economic benefits of rail as well as the inadequacies of the present system."

Mr Gotch specifically called for government investment to enable Railfreight to provide a proper network of depots. He warned that some private depots could close.

He praised BR managers for their "wide awake" approach but said they were being set only half the task.

"In Germany, BR is admired for what it is doing.

German Railways are saying that they want to get to grips with costs in the same ways as BR."

He added: "We must convince both major parties of the merit in rail investment. There is a growing interest in cost benefit analysis as a way of providing a fairer and broader basis for investment in transport."

He warned BR that reliability is as important as speed. Vandalism is a major problem in Britain when it is not in continental Europe.

He said: "Here slabs of concrete are dropped through the windscreens of cars being transported by rail."

He also stressed the importance of getting investment decisions right.

"When I place an order for a wagon, it takes one year to build and 20 years to pay off."

He estimated that 4500 new wagons able to run on both British and continental lines would need to be built by 1992, with 1000 for car carrying and 1000 for containers. But he warned of a dilution of effort if BR tried to invest in wagons too. That could be left to the private operators.

He called for a stable three-sided approach:

**BRITISH RAIL** should invest to make itself profitable and technically advanced.

**THE GOVERNMENT** should invest in creating a rail network to meet the opportunities of a European future.

**PRIVATE COMPANIES** can be left to invest in equipment, skills and management to build a stable service industry.

But Mr Gotch warned: "At present, it is the Government commitment which is lacking which leaves us with a two-sided triangle."

# A golden opportunity for rail

One of the successful ways of getting big lorries off the roads of Switzerland and Austria has been the development, with government support, of "roll-on/roll-off" services where lorries and their contents are transported by special trains, said Mr BERT GOOTE, railway business manager for Eurotunnel.

As part of this process, for instance, all overnight international lorries were to be banned by Austria from December 1989.

Mr Goote said it would be politically unlikely that Britain would allow whole lorries to be

forced on to the rails but there was hope of a transfer from road to rail in the development of swap bodies. This allows the load to be switched easily from one mode to the other.

He predicted that, even in Britain, 1 000 lorryloads a day would switch to rail from day one of the channel tunnel opening. That was the equivalent of a 20km traffic queue and would mean less pollution, greater energy savings and a reduction in noise levels.

He said that 6 000 special wagons for interna-

tional freight traffic would be needed immediately and the eventual total would be 8 000.

When the tunnel opens, there will be a freight shuttle (carrying road vehicles) at least every six minutes, and sometimes every three. In addition, there would be 27 international freight trains a day.

But he identified the loading gauge difference as one of the potential problems which could prevent the railways from taking advantage of a "golden opportunity".

# Roads are the real threat

The dangers of continental-size rail wagons disgorging their loads on to the roads at Ashford or Maidstone were pointed out by Mr STEPHEN JOSEPH of Transport 2000.

The Channel Tunnel could actually make road problems in Kent worse and the problem was exacerbated by the loading gauge difference as well as the rules on rail investment.

"BR has to balance the books so there is actually an incentive for it to create congestion in

suburban trains because getting full trains looks like a good return on investment," he said.

"If the railways are run in this way, their environmental benefits cannot be achieved."

He pointed out that Paris requires road hauliers to tranship all freight from large vehicles to small ones on the outskirts of the city.

"There is also a ban on large lorries at weekends in France, Germany and Switzerland and generally more controls on lorry movement."

## POLLUTION

In thousands of tonnes

	Rail	Road
Carbon dioxide (Adds to global warming)	2000	98000
Nitrogen oxides (Destroys lung tissue)	35	1031
Carbon monoxide (Poisonous at 0.3% conc.)	13	4470
Hydrocarbons (Can be carcinogenic)	9	664

1987 figures. Source: HMSO



## NEWSWATCH

A new RDS leaflet about privatisation is called *Who Should Run Our Railways? - Second Thoughts*. It was prompted by the downbeat references to privatisation at the Tory Party conference in October by Transport Secretary Cecil Parkinson. He may well be having second thoughts himself about the wisdom of selling off BR and splitting it up. Our leaflet aims to give him and his colleagues further food for thought.

We quote the recent report from the Government's financial advisers Lazards, concluding that some of the options would just not be feasible. We ask: Don't we really need a more balanced Government attitude to transport and especially to rail investment and support?

Our leaflet recommends sensible partnership between the private sectors, as ought to be happening over the Channel Tunnel link, and draws attention to our book on privatisation *Who Should Run Our Railways?* The book costs £1.95 post free from Alan Harwood (address back page). The leaflet can be obtained free from Roland White (address back page) and is ideal for sending to your MP.

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The RDS lottery winners for September were: 1 David Stocks, Sheffield, £31; 2 K H King, Preston, £15.50; 3 Ray King, London E9, £7.75; 4 R M Best, Nuneaton, £7.75. Prize pool £62. October: 1 Mike Breslin, Liverpool, £29.50; 2 W R Skinnerton, East Grinstead, £14.76; 3 Mr and Mrs P Smith, Blackburn, £7.37; 4 Douglas Smart, Stirling, £7.37. Prize pool £59. November: 1 Geoffrey Langstaff, Co Durham, £30.50; 2 B W Plant, Walsall, £15.26; 3 Mr M J Savage, Cleethorpes, £7.62; 4 Ms Edina Lewis, London WC2, £7.62. Prize pool £61.

The lottery needs even more members to make the prizes better. You can help the society raise money and have a chance to win yourself. Details from Dave Finch, 28 Nevill Avenue, Kidderminster, Worcs

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Would you like to help with an RDS video. Member David Pitt is investigating the making of one - and perhaps ultimately a series of videos - based on our popular *By Rail* books. These would concentrate on the more unusual and interesting routes - journeys of surprise as they are called in one of the books - but also demonstrate the ease and relative comfort of visiting many tourist attractions by rail.

We shall need sponsorship to produce a video of professional standard and an efficient distribution system. If you can help, or have suggestions, please contact David Pitt at 50 Riverside, Cambridge CB5 8HN.

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The IRA is known to raise a large part of its funds by running protection rackets among lorry and taxi operators so it is perhaps not surprising that there has been bombing and disruption on the Belfast - Dublin railway line. Is there now a Provisional wing of the road lobby?

As we know, people like trains, and there are plans to upgrade Larne - Dublin with long welded track, new signalling and rolling stock. It's difficult to present logical arguments to terrorists about why they should leave the railway alone but at least some brave people are trying.

A group of moderates, including official Unionists and Fine Gael, ran Peace Trains on 28 October between Dublin and Belfast, to protest against the anti-rail policies of Sinn Fein/IRA. The trains were of course disrupted by bomb threats and only time will tell whether people power or terrorist violence will be more effective.



# A fatter future

*NICHOLAS HAMMOND has been a keen supporter of the Channel Tunnel and is unhappy with RDS attitudes to the BR loading gauge. In a personal appeal, he calls on the society to change its policy and be "more flexible".*

The Labour Party's transport policy includes suggestions that loading gauges should be made more generous. It says: "Using existing track, bridges would be raised and tunnels improved to allow higher loads including containers and lorries to be carried from the Channel link."

At least the Labour Party realises that railway development in the 1990s must mean that British railways become compatible with European railways because of the tunnel.

How sad then that RDS should have become so backward-looking as to advocate that the BR loading gauge is satisfactory and that only slight adjustments need be made to the arch haunches of overbridges to pass containers. The society's "do nothing" approach to accommodating continental wagons on British soil is not an alternative policy, it is a defeat. It is acquiescence in the face of pressure from a government which is overtly anti-rail.

Mrs Thatcher's government would like to spend all transport investment on roads and has probably told BR to keep quiet about the Berne gauge problem. By dint of too cosy a relationship with BR, the rot has spread to RDS, so RDS members have been duped and the society is not



Nicholas Hammond

## A personal plea to change the BR loading gauge

the vibrant campaigning body I originally felt proud and privileged to join.

While I do not agree with this RDS backward-looking attitude, one has to concede that there are technical objections to loading gauge conversion. The tunnels, bridges and platforms on French railways can allow for wagons one foot taller than those in Britain, six inches wider on either side and, at platform heights, eight inches wider on either side. It is the high arch platforms that are the real problem. Total conversion of BR to the Berne gauge is out of the question. The costs would be astronomical, there would be severe disruption to services and the lowering of platforms would be very unpopular. Can there not be a modest way of accommodat-

# A heavy drain on E

*Various options to cope with the gauge problem have been scrutinised over a period of four years by the RDS freight committee before an eventual policy was agreed with BR and the Private Wagon Federation. The policy was approved by the RDS annual general meeting last year although it was expected to be reviewed again briefly by the freight committee in November. STEVE WILKINSON and GEORGE BOYLE spell out the situation.*

The cost factor so outweighs all other considerations that it is unrealistic even to put forward a scheme for conversion to Berne gauge in Britain. Swap bodies suitable for road and rail and small-wheel wagons able to take large containers are the hope for the future.

Unfortunately Berne gauge seems to have acquired a mystique all of its own. Apparently all we have to do is to convert to UIC gauge (Union Internationale des Chemins de Fer) and all our troubles will be over. The reality is very different. UIC gauge would make no difference to daytime passenger services. It would make a marginal difference to sleeping car services by allowing three-high berths. It would make only a marginal difference to freight services.

Certain loads currently out of gauge could be carried, but BR's miserly percentage of national takings owes far more to Government anti-rail bias. BR could easily triple its loadings with this bias removed.

Conversion of even a few strategic routes to UIC gauge would cost thousands of millions of £s. A debt of this magnitude loaded on to BR would rapidly lead to its demise. The interest charges on such a debt would make the cost of small-wheel bogie wagons, for the small percentage of

loads actually needing them, seem very small indeed.

Of course if the Government was prepared to give a direct grant to BR of, say, £5 billion for conversion, I would gladly accept it. But I could still think of better uses for the money: electrification, new lines, reopenings, improved rolling stock and many other things. As such grants will not be given by this or any other government, we can return to the real world. People link the coming of the Channel Tunnel with the need for UIC gauge, so let us assess its impact. It is only two tracks. Fifty per cent of its capacity is dedicated to road shuttles. The remaining 50 per cent, more than half the passenger traffic which could not conceivably justify the cost of conversion in increased revenue.

So we are left with less than 25 per cent of its



Market forces: European industry is



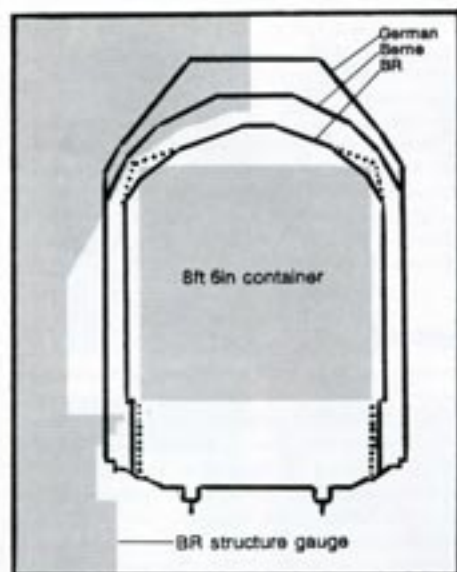
# for rail freight



ing French freight wagons at a politically acceptable cost, say £3 to £4 billion? May I put my own ideas? As the tunnel generates traffic, there will need to be a new railway freight route across the Network SouthEast zone. The new line could run alongside the high speed line to Medway, turning north-west to Dartford and through a tunnel under the Thames, continuing parallel to the M25 on its north-eastern side, and veering off to the north-east of Epping. Crossing the Cambridge line, following the Hertford East branch and the Hertford North loop, it would follow the East Coast Main Line to a burrowing junction under Hitchin station.

From the north-west of Hitchin, there are thousands of miles of abandoned or rundown (particularly ex-Midland Railway) double track beds which could be occupied by single tracks giving generous Berne gauge clearances. At Bedford, the Oxford line could give access to the ex-Great Western system. Most of this freight-only network would be single track with lengthy passing places, using diesel traction. BR passenger trains could use stretches as useful links but obviously there would be no high platforms along this freight-only network. The Set-Carlisle route could be given a genuinely profitable new lease of life.

The credibility of RDS could be at stake if it does not produce sensible proposals for the development of Britain's railways to make them compatible with those of Europe. If Spain, a



Loading gauges compared. Dotted line shows BR's W5 plus modifications

relatively poor country, can commit herself to spending £10 billion modernising her railways because of the single market in 1992, cannot RDS bring forward imaginative proposals for loading gauge compatibility? At a time of Thatcherism's demise, RDS has nothing to lose.

## R's slender purse

capacity. The speed differential between freight and passenger-trains effectively reduces this figure to less than 20 per cent.

BR expect to have around 35 freight paths each way per day. It has already contracted for 27 freights each way per day. We have therefore only to fill eight trains each way per day to be full to capacity. We believe that with a little marketing, such a figure is easily attainable.

If we can fill all the available space with BR gauge traffic, why spend thousands of millions converting the gauge? Even if the spare capacity could not be filled, 16 trains a day cannot justify the required expenditure. When a second tunnel is built and 200 paths per day become available, the positions could be reviewed.

It could be thought that internal piggyback traffic will make all the difference. In fact, piggyback



Increasingly turning to swap bodies

only survives in Germany because of heavy government subsidy and in Switzerland by punitive road legislation, neither of which will be forthcoming here.

All new BR lines – and reconstruction where possible – are already to a gauge larger than UIC. We support that. We do not agree with conversion for its own sake. The cost has to be weighed against increased revenue otherwise what was meant to be a benefit becomes a financial millstone.

We have already urged BR to extend its network passed for the transport of 8ft 6in ISO containers on standard Freightliner flat wagons and to set up road/rail depots so no major customer is more than 30 miles from a railhead. We have also identified the Midland main line as the best place to start if BR agreed to a one-route-at-a-time conversion to Berne gauge. We also identified a possible new route across London via New Cross and the North London lines.

Even so, in 1987, we recommended BR to look at making useful adjustments at minimum expense by concentrating on the "top corner" of its W5 freight loading gauge. We said small adjustments at platform levels might be possible too.

The greatest disadvantage of converting to Berne gauge would be the enormous cost and the years of disruption to the many types of BR customer. Every station platform, every passenger coach and virtually every bridge and tunnel would have to be altered.

There would also be a risk if only part of the network was converted. The rest might atrophy. Would Berne gauge ever reach Inverness, Bangor, Penzance, let alone Wick, Holyhead or Milford Haven?

## BRANCHES

### Wessex

Southampton will get an hourly direct service to Gatwick Airport following electrification of St Denys to Portcreek and Farlington junctions and Eastleigh – Fareham. Network SouthEast director Chris Green explained how a completely new pattern of services will result. On a two-year trial basis, NSE will operate an electric service from Southampton to London Victoria via Fareham. Havant, Hove, Haywards Heath, Gatwick Airport, East Croydon and Victoria.

Work has started on rebuilding Eastleigh station, with BR putting up 50 per cent of the cost, with Eastleigh borough council and Hampshire county council each providing 25 per cent. A lift is to be provided for passengers with disabilities.

We welcome the plan to rebuild Southampton (Eastleigh) Parkway 500 metres further north but are also calling for four tracks to be provided. The new owner of Southampton (Eastleigh) airport, Peter de Savary, is keen to press ahead with providing multi-million pound new facilities at the airport which would need to be tied in with the rail station.

An RDS member is suggesting using the on-street Weymouth to Weymouth Quay line for a tram service involving private enterprise.

We hope co-operation between Hampshire county council and Network SouthEast will provide a link on the Isle of Wight between the NSE electrified line from Ryde Pier Head to Shanklin and the preserved steam railway from Ashly to Haven Street.

An Eastleigh Transport Heritage Centre may be set up by the borough. Branch chairman Jon Honeysett submitted a prospectus of RDS suggestions to the borough's director of leisure and tourism.

Peter Madsen

### Lancashire and Cumbria

The West Lancashire line will have an hourly service from May. The local users' group, the Ormskirk Preston Travellers Association, welcome BR's move but have severe reservations about the loss of certain well-used peak hour services. The association will hold public meetings early in the New Year to find out how commuters will be affected.

The Manchester to Southport line will get a half-hourly service from May which is good news for the campaign to restore Burscough curves. It will ease the plight of passengers who were last year subjected to serious overcrowding. There were even reports of passengers being left behind at intermediate stations such as Burscough Bridge.

Cumbria County Council is looking at the possibility of reopening Gilsland station on the Carlisle to Newcastle line. This would be linked into the development of Birdoswald fort on Hadrian's Wall as a major tourist site.

At long last, major repairs have been made to Ribbleshead viaduct on the Settle – Carlisle line. Over a two-week period, BR engineering teams worked not just on the viaduct but on many other structures along the line. BR Provincial's manager with responsibility for the line, Roger Cobbe, has made it clear that from May there will be an extra service each way on the line and that all services will be loco-hauled. There will be at least five coaches with the possibility of strengthening to 10 at peak times. However, the Skipton to Lancaster line loses one of its services and the evening service is drastically retimed from Leeds.

Richard Watts



# BRANCHES

## Midlands

DMU breakdowns, delays and cancellations are getting worse in the Midlands, mainly because of a serious shortage of fitters at Tyseley. The continued use of "clapped out" 30-year-old diesels is attracting headline attacks on BR. West Midlands PTA has repeatedly protested to BR, warning of the consequences. Only seven class 150 Sprinters have been available at Tyseley since October. Fifty more Sprinters have been promised for May 1990 after a high-level "confrontation" on 7 November. Meanwhile services deteriorate, passengers defect and we are still waiting for government approval for electrification of the Cross-City line. The application was made in January!

We are pleased the Cannock trains we campaigned for have exceeded official predictions (3800 to 5000). There were actually 5700 trips per week within six months. BR and the local councils are now keen to extend the Walsall - Hednesford train to Rugeley and Stafford but probably not for a year or so because of rolling stock problems.

Walsall is destined to become a very busy interchange with plans by the councils, the PTA and BR to reopen for passengers the Stourbridge - Dudley - Walsall freight line and with the Midland Metro use of Walsall.

Proposals have also been put to the councils for reopening the Walsall - Brownhills - Lichfield line for both freight and passenger. A slide show presentation is now available for showing to local groups. A new booklet called *The Brownhills Connection* has been published by Walsall Rail Supporters. It costs 75p (post free) from WRS, 38 Somerset Road, Walsall WS4 2DP.

Worcestershire County Council has agreed to spend £60000 on a second platform at Bromsgrove station. Work begins in January on a new Tame Bridge station at the south end of Bescot marshalling yards. It will open in May 1990.

Alan Bevan

## East Anglia

What was for years a rather forbidding, gloomy, unstaffed station is now a bright and attractive gateway to the market town of Wymondham and a pleasant place to wait for a train. The main building, dating from 1844, has been converted by RDS member David Turner into a piano showroom and restaurant, with local railwayana to add interest. Another member, Leslie Howes, has helped Mr Turner in the renovation. It's a good example of partnership between BR and private enterprise.

In October, the station was the venue for the launch of the third edition of *East Anglia by Rail*. The first edition, published in 1984, was the first RDS railguide. Branch chairman Peter Wakefield said the new version should stimulate even more people to explore the region by train. Wymondham (pronounced Windham) would itself be a good place to visit.

Trevor Garrod

## London and Home Counties

After three years of working as a private lobbying body, the Wealden Line Campaign is now open to membership. This decision was taken following considerable public interest in getting involved. In the past few months, members have been joining from towns such as Croydon, East Grinstead, Edenbridge, Tonbridge, Tunbridge Wells, Crowborough, Uckfield, Lewes, Brighton, Eastbourne, Newhaven and Seaford. This demonstrates the extent

of public interest in completing the rail network which currently has a gap of just seven miles between Lewes and Uckfield and the desire to see the route regenerated as a useful part of the rail system serving East Sussex, West Kent and Surrey.

Annual membership costs £2 while a permanent subscription is on offer at £10. We are not seeking to buy or operate any part of the railway but we are working to achieve the eventual reinstatement and electrification of the Lewes - Oxted route to be operated by Network SouthEast. Those interested in supporting the campaign should send a stamped, addressed envelope to: Wealden Line Campaign, PO Box 645, Uckfield, TN22 5BZ.

## Scotland

A circular has been sent to all local authorities between Glasgow and Edinburgh suggesting they should unite to fight for electrification of the Edinburgh - Glasgow line, in a similar way to the CREATE fight for electrification to Aberdeen. RDS wants to see both campaigns complement each other rather than compete. We want a rolling programme following completion of the Edinburgh - Carstairs scheme. We are worried by remarks from ScotRail that Carstairs electrification could be used to re-route through trains from Glasgow to Newcastle and the south, leading to the downgrading of the Falkirk High line.

The Scottish Football Association and promoters of a national stadium have been advised that a rail station on a main line must be an essential element of any stadium which might replace Hampden Park.

A Euro MP has been asked to follow up a report which suggested there could be fraud involved in overproviding for European road plans.

Lothian Region has been congratulated for its imaginative light rapid transit system for Edinburgh, in contrast to Strathclyde which has a gigantic road building programme yet gives minimal support for rail development. The Labour party has been challenged to justify its Strathclyde policy and to give a pledge, following the publication of its transport policy, that a rail bridge will be built at Dornoch.

The branch will be formally criticising the Government's policy document on routes south of Edinburgh. It has ignored the potential of the rail lines and makes no mention of the environment.

A paper is being prepared for the Scottish Convention suggesting that rail matters should be devolved to any Scottish government which may be set up.

Douglas Smart

## Yorkshire

Hull curfew: the winter timetable resulted in a cutback of late evening trains serving Hull. To make major savings in signalbox staffing on the line from Hull to Goole and Selby, late-night trains from Sheffield and Manchester are being terminated at Goole and Selby. The last train from Hull to Doncaster leaves at 2015, to Leeds at 2243, while on the Wolds line, the last train to Bridlington leaves at 2200. Humberside County Council is trying to relieve these siege conditions by providing late evening replacement buses (bustitution?).

Cash curves: The TUCC inquiry into the proposed closure of curves at Gascoigne Wood and Milford South junction near Selby as well as

the Anlaby curve in Hull is to be held on 23 and 24 November. The Anlaby curve carries no regular service, but enables excursions, some steam-hauled, from the west to travel on to the Wolds line without having to go into Paragon station and reverse. This short length of line was built in 1964 to replace a nearby curve which had three level crossings. Hull city council paid £45000 towards it, probably equivalent to hundreds of thousands of pounds at today's prices. The closure of this curve will not save a fortune for BR. Other reasons are suspected.

Quality control: Breakdowns and staff recruitment problems have been causing havoc with rush-hour trains. Thirty-year-old DMUs have long passed their life expectancy, Pacer trains have been waiting for gearboxes and there is a shortage of fitters at Neville Hill depot in Leeds. On one occasion, passengers in a Pacer from Sheffield to Huddersfield were stranded for six hours near Penistone.

Action stations: Selby Action Group has been campaigning for a morning and evening train between Selby and York to be diverted by Church Fenton to serve the Sherburn industrial estate. Many people in Selby work on this estate and there is no public transport. BR has rejected the idea saying it would interfere with coal trains.

Doncaster: South Yorkshire PTA is considering opening a station near Adwick le Street on Doncaster - Wakefield line which would relieve the appalling traffic congestion on roads into Doncaster town centre.

Denis Bradbury

## Wales

Reaction to an RDS scheme for reopening the Bangor - Caernarfon line has been very favourable although finding the £4.5 million needed remains a problem. A report on the scheme was produced by Dave Sallery, Steve Jones and Rod Fairley.

Llanwrst signal box is doing a leaning tower of Pisa and to replace it would cost £100000. Ever keen to save money, Provincial has instead opted to remove the passing loop and reduce services to seven trains a day which would mean there would be no room for charter trains or nuclear flasks.

North Wales seems to be the place where old DMUs are sent to die. There is a terrible shortage of spares and currently 27 units are out of action with the result that trains have cancelled and buses run instead (bustitution).

There have been problems with the introduction of an hourly service on the Wrexham - Bidston line which has been accompanied by off-peak station closures.

Ty-Croes signalbox on Anglesey has been condemned resulting in poor timekeeping between Bangor and Holyhead although Provincial is looking at introducing automatic colour light signalling between Garwen and Valley.

We are monitoring reports that savage cuts in station staff are being proposed for North Wales. All the 155 Sprinters are reported to be back in action in South Wales. There have been big timetable changes on the Cardiff Valley services with Sunday services between Penarth and Coryton being axed and late-evening trains reduced. A joint report (with Transport 2000) is being produced on passenger reopening of Newport to Abertillery and Ebbw Vale.

A West Wales Line Users' Group was set up at a meeting in Tenby on 11 November.

Rod Fairley



# PLATFORM

## Missing links

I wholeheartedly endorse Graham Nalty's analysis of interurban links and the case for "filling in" strategic gaps in the network. The cost of so doing, even when track has been removed, would be "small beer" when compared to current levels of expenditure on new roads.

However, one or two further corridors, also lacking any competitive rail service, spring to mind. Bournemouth and Poole, with over 300000 people, are very poorly served except from London. Try making a trip to, say, Bristol or Plymouth!

Another "missing link" which I have been made aware of by colleagues on the south coast and in the midlands is that from Leicester, Derby and Nottingham to the south via Oxford. The need to travel via Birmingham New Street tends to encourage all but the committed rail user to drive down the M1, thence M25 and M3, road congestion permitting!

One wonders how politicians can spend so much time arguing about who owns the rail network, rather than taking proper steps to improve it.

*Philip Bisatt  
31 Honeywall House  
Stoke-on-Trent*

## Congratulations

One congratulates Graham Nalty on his suggestion of A Network for the 90s. But oh dear Wales!

In the Wales branch notes, RDS was credited with proposing a light rail scheme for Cardiff Bay. In fact it was the Glamorgan Rail Users' Federation who produced two sets of proposals for rail transport in the Bay area.

Incidentally I have to travel from Cardiff to Oxford Polytechnic which runs regular courses of interest to certain professionals working in South Wales. A Swindon - Peterborough service would undoubtedly help access. It would be even better if it started at Bristol and called at Parkway. At present I am having to use the car.

*Chris Amundson  
11 Cheriton Drive  
Thornhill  
Cardiff*

## Greater harvests still

We in the Huddersfield - Penistone - Sheffield Rail Users Association were most interested in Graham Nalty's proposals (Railwatch 41) for developing new Sprinter links for the 1990s.

Over the years we have repeatedly called for a rough Sheffield - Bradford service via Huddersfield. Obviously the simplest means of achieving this would be by extending the existing Penistone line trains, but they would not yield attractive end-to-end journey times.

A semi-fast service needs to be established along the route, serving the five main centres of population - Sheffield, Barnsley, Huddersfield, Halifax and Bradford - plus Shepley, Penistone, Brighouse and Elland. Both Brighouse and Elland are already on West Yorkshire PTE's list for reopening. Such a service could form the northern leg of a cross-country link so that places north of Sheffield could enjoy regular direct trains to the Midlands and South.

A positive response is needed from BR Provincial because our line is totally dependent on dual PTA funding, even for the cross-border Penistone - Denby Dale section. Although sectorisation has supposedly generated a positive approach to developing new services, there are few signs of this locally. The trademark of BR Eastern Region seems to be negative thinking.

Provincial rightly claims the success of its Sprinter revolution is attributable to the creation

of a wide range of new through journey opportunities. It has recognised at last how much passengers detested changing trains. Having accepted this basic fact, it is reaping the benefits, with even greater harvests still available.

Fear should not be allowed to dictate the shape and size of an enlarged network. Population should be a key factor. Five major Yorkshire centres of population, boasting a combined population in excess of 1 million could be linked by a Sheffield - Bradford service. Old prejudices should be rejected so our line can fulfil the strategic role it is capable of in releasing Bradford from its present elongated siding status from Leeds. Come on Provincial, be brave, be bold.

*Andrew Oldfield  
14 Long Lane  
Worrall, Sheffield*

## Poor old Beeching

Poor old Beeching is the man we all love to hate, but let us remember his positive contribution and that politicians of one colour employed him, while politicians of another colour carried out his closure proposals together with a few of their own. Every time I want a laugh, all I have to do is refer to a map of Barbara Castle's "basic" railway system of 1967, where lines to places like Keswick, Earby, Rawtenstall, Okehampton and St Ives (Cambs) were stated to be part of a new strategic network, only to be declared candidates for closure by the same administration three years later. Beeching cannot be blamed for the closure of the Oxford - Cambridge line. On the contrary, his report earmarked this line for development.

Whoever is to blame for 25 years of stupidity, Railwatch 41 catalogues some exciting new possibilities that were unthinkable seven years ago. We can now talk about rebuilding railways without being discounted as nostalgic rail freaks. In fact the reconstruction of a few miles of track between the main lines out of London can revolutionise cross-country travel. Sandy - Bedford is one example and Huntingdon to Cambridge is another.

But I am not sure Graham Nalty has picked a winner by advocating the revival of the 18-mile Northampton - Market Harborough line. Surely reopening the nine miles of Wellingborough - Northampton, with perhaps a park-and-ride station at Earls Barton, is a more cost-effective proposition, offering an alternative link between Birmingham and East Anglia, while passing through a completely different set of important towns and cities.

*David Green  
The Bank Flat  
222 High Road  
Tottenham  
London N15 4AJ*

## Pacer to the Lakes

I am prompted to mention a gap in our Yorkshire rail services - a complete lack of through services from Leeds and Bradford to the Lakes. While not as commercially attractive as the services listed in A Network for the 90s, it is worthy of more consideration.

I submit a summer, and less frequent winter, facility between Leeds and Windermere would probably be a commercial success. Sprinters would be better but Pacers are better than nothing. A Leeds to Lancaster Pacer that, instead of proceeding to Morecambe, went instead to Oxenholme and Windermere would be a boon.

There is also a potential for a Leeds - Barrow service with Grange over Sands being a popular spot.

*John Keavey  
17 Uplands  
Skipton  
North Yorks*

## Answer to terror

May I notify Irish members of either nationality of the petition being organised to urge the two governments to maintain the Belfast to Dublin railway line against which, together with lines wholly in Northern Ireland, the IRA are waging a campaign of opposition.

The bombing started last December and, in February this year, the Sinn Fein/IRA organisation said that, over the next few years, it would ensure that the cross-border route closes permanently.

In Ireland this petition, prepared by the Irish Congress of Trade Unions is available for signing in places of work, shopping centres etc. Those who would wish to add weight to the petition but who live in Great Britain might write to their MPs and/or to the petition organisers: The Irish Congress of Trade Unions, 3 Wellington Park, Belfast 9 (phone Belfast 681726) or 19 Raglan Road, Dublin 4 (phone Dublin 680641).

*Ian C Downey  
Waterford  
Ireland*

## Cheap trams

Light rail is promoted as the answer to many town's traffic problems but in the past trams were also used in a rural environment. Wolverton to Stony Stratford is an example of a light inter-urban railway. There are many other examples of towns which were once linked by branch lines but which now can only rely on a mediocre bus service as an alternative to the car.

The track may have been lifted but the route of many of these lines, together with redundant buildings and bridges, still remain. Some have been built on, creating obstacles to reinstatement. But there must be cases where a full standard railway might be too expensive but a tram or light railway could be built.

*Philip Gray  
27 Murswell Lane  
Silverstone*

With the destructive policies pursued in respect of closed lines in recent years, many routes have been obstructed by building development. Using tramway or light railway technology, these lines could still be relaid. Light railways can penetrate developments which might obstruct a conventional railway. For instance they can be laid tramway fashion in the roads of housing estates built on former station sites.

*Jonathan Dalton  
2 Regency Court, Enys Road  
Eastbourne, Sussex*

Congratulations on the centre spread of the last Railwatch. RDS members could remind their MPs of the problems by sending them a copy, plus one to the chairman of the Public Accounts Committee. The death toll of all the rail disasters is insignificant (though terrible) compared to the annual road slaughter. An inquiry into the Department of Transport, its policies and its supporters is long overdue.

*E Ratcliffe  
3 St John Street  
Manchester M27 2XF*

Railways and public transport generally get very poor attention from the media. Reference to travel always takes it for granted that travel means car. Holiday travel articles always give particulars of car hire at destinations, never an indication of local public transport. If they do, it will be in patronising tone of "as the quaint little trains chug their way through the mountains" or "take the dear old tram as it clanks through the streets". What irritates me most is the attitude that everybody has a car.

*Stanley Allchin  
16 Mulberry Court  
Bognor Regis*



# Rails for Prosperity – a national strategy

By JOHN ARMSTRONG

I believe RDS should publish a national strategy, *Rails for Prosperity*, to promote the case for national rail investment on a scale comparable to the Government's recent £12 billion Roads for Prosperity policy statement.

RDS needs to co-ordinate more closely the policies it is advancing on the Channel Tunnel, Section 40 plans, electrification, freight services and railway finance and ownership.

These issues were discussed by a special national executive meeting at Leicester and, as an initial step, it was agreed to publish a New Year Message on the importance of rail investment in the 90s and to publish a four-page strategy leaflet summarising the key elements of a national investment plan.

A weekend working conference is also planned to consider how the component parts of our policy can be fitted together into a national strategy, including details of regional priority schemes.

Regrettably the much-heralded Rail Renaissance and Age of the Train show no sign of changing the Government's penny-pinching attitude to rail investment. The failure to fund vital links to the Channel Tunnel, Cross-London routes and major regional electrification and modernisation schemes reveals the hill which we still have to climb.

At present rates of progress we shall be facing a rail crisis rather than a rail renaissance. How should the society tackle these problems? Let Railwatch know your views.

## U-turn on electrification

Only eight years ago, it was decided that an electrification programme would make good commercial sense, quite apart from any environmental arguments. A report was produced jointly by the Department of Transport and the British Railways Board.

Unhappily a proper programme was not implemented, and individual schemes have been approved on a piecemeal basis, often only after intensive lobbying as was the case with the East Coast main line.

RDS general secretary Trevor Garrod asked the DoT for an explanation. The department points out that oil prices have gone down and that it no longer believes what it said in 1981. Officials also excuse themselves by pointing out that there has been a decline in economic activity since then and unemployment has increased.

These are short-term and pathetic excuses. Most European countries have a much greater proportion of their network electrified than we have. Trevor has also contacted the transport ministries and railway administrations of other European countries to find out what their policies are and what criteria they use to decide on electrification schemes. We shall explain how railways help to drive Europe's healthy economy in our next issue.

RDS has consistently demanded an effective programme of electrification. Our argument is outlined in a four-page leaflet called *The Importance of Being Earnest about Electrification*. It puts the case for a rolling programme of electrification which must include the Midland main line from Bedford to Nottingham, Derby and Sheffield.

The leaflet must go to MPs and local councillors and other individuals who YOU will be able to identify. Please order your free copies from Roland White (address back page) and make sure our argument is a winner.

While InterCity has been celebrating the launch



Diesel HST under 25kv wires at Bedford

of IC225 electrics on the East Coast main line, BR has not responded with alacrity to the strategy report which demonstrated a clear case for electrifying the Midland main line, north of Bedford.

The Midland is increasingly seen as a test case on the future intentions of BR towards electrification and there was considerable media interest in Sir Bob Reid's visit to Leicester in October.

He cast doubts on the financial case, the ability of electrification to speed up the service significantly, and doubted the prospects of a direct passenger service to Europe. His comments did nothing, however, to put off the campaigners.

We shall be publishing a tabloid newspaper called *Midland Mainliner* this month to act as a popular focus to fight for 1995 completion – to coincide with the opening of King's Cross International.

### NEWSWATCH

An RDS petition urging the Government not to allow fare increases above the rate of inflation was completed on 11 November, which was also incidentally chosen as Vehicle Emissions Day of Action by Friends of the Earth. Only nine days previously, on 2 November, it was announced that fares would go up by between 9 and 15 per cent. The 6000 name petition was being handed in to the Department of Transport.

Winners of the RDS photo contest will be decided on Saturday 3 February at a public meeting organised by RDS North West at Manchester Town Hall. Railway writer and photographer Tom Heavyside will decide which pictures will grace the society's 1991 calendar.

RDS expects to be increasingly involved in European lobbying in the 1990s. We already have a list of members who are competent in French, German and Spanish, though more would be welcome. Now we want to find people with experience of Italian, Portuguese, Greek, Dutch and Danish. Please contact Trevor Garrod (address back page) if you can help.

The entire Ivanhoe line between Leicester and Derby (via Coalville) could be reopened for £9 million if a section 56 grant is forthcoming from the Department of Transport. The application is being made by Derbyshire County Council which is prepared to put up £1.5 million. Leicestershire County Council. Sixteen stations would be reopened, including Willington and Castle Gresley.

### UNFARE

Rail investment in 1988  
**£629 million**  
(mainly from fares)  
Road investment in 1988  
**£3,254 million**  
(mainly from tax and rates)

### ADVERT

Read *Industrial Heritage* magazine. Transport – mining – industrial. Send 50p for sample. 17 Uplands, Skipton, BD23 1BT.

Railwatch welcomes advertising. Small ads cost 20p per word. Display rates are available from the editor.

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