

Railwatch

AN INDEPENDENT VOICE FOR RAIL USERS

RAILWAY DEVELOPMENT SOCIETY

NO 57

OCTOBER 1993

90p

Great train robbery

Britain looks like paying a high price for privatisation with the railways costing 15% more to operate. British Rail has estimated that the costs of privatisation could add up to £200 million and is considering putting fares by 10 per cent to help pay for it.

The Government will also have to come up with massive amounts of cash to maintain services at their current levels in the new regime.

If it does not come up with the money, train services and even lines will be axed. But the Government has already said it plans to limit spending on rail in 1993-4 to £550 million, half the 1991-2 figure.

The Government will not give any guarantees about line closures, service levels or rolling stock types if privatisation goes ahead. Public Transport Roger Freeman gave this clear warning to a meeting of rail managers in July.

Mr Freeman also claimed that the Government's decision to privatise the railways came after a long period of consultation.

In fact the majority of British people do not want it, and almost every rail expert has warned against it.

Yet the privatisation Bill went through its committee stage in the House of Lords in July. The Bill was amended to allow British Rail to bid for franchises. When the Lords return from their "summer" holidays on 11 October, it may take only two days for the Bill to go through report stage and third reading.

It will then go back to the Commons where it could be law quickly if the Government accepts it in its amended form.

Experts who have watched the Government's zig-zagging progress so far are either despairing or incensed.

Railway photographer Colin Garratt describes privatisation as an act of political imbecility. He added: "It is a squalid opting out of responsibility to the nation."

Railway Gazette International attacked the "malicious incompetence of the British Government".

International Freighting Weekly said the Government has mishandled the privatisation issue so freight customers were confused and restive.

Professor W P Bradshaw of Oxford University said no reputable company would want to be involved on the present terms.

Lord Tombs warns that privatisation will cause a paralysis of decision and planning, with a built-in system for passing the buck. The public too is highly suspicious. The Government certainly doesn't help its posi-



Pig power: This big piggy bank was carried to British Rail's Euston headquarters to remind the Government it should be switching £23 billion of the roads budget to rail to improve public transport. Full story: Page 6

Picture by Edina Lewis

tion by claiming bus deregulation has been a success. It has been a disaster for anyone who uses buses.

Not surprisingly Mr Freeman is getting fed up with being told his Government has got it wrong. Rather than act on what he is being told, he claims his proposals are "too complex for the public to understand".

Far from waking up to the modern world, the Cabinet is still hankering after a nostalgic past that did not exist.

With Thameslink and long-distance Regional trains, the adverse effects of the old regional set-up were being addressed. A return would be a mistake. There are even reports that, in the search for franchise simplicity, some Thameslink services are being axed. If that happens, privatisation will be undermining one of the greatest steps forward rail has ever taken in Britain.

Railtrack chairman Bob Horton has also indicated that the financial screws will be tightened even further.

In the tired old language of the early 1980s, he insisted: "We need a new lean, fit machine."

Most rail users would disagree. They have

already suffered from penny-pinching for too long. But Mr Horton is unlikely to be listening. In a Railnews interview, he said: "I believe the best committee is a committee of one."

RDS members could and should write to their MPs over the summer, so that when Parliament reassembles in the autumn, MPs will have no excuse for voting in favour of rail privatisation. Mr Horton must not be allowed to hijack the railway system.

It belongs to us. If there are any changes in the regime, there must be a clear guarantee that there will be no closures and that services will be better and cheaper than before.

The Government showed its true colours by announcing plans to make it easier to build new roads.

It has also cleared the way for 44-tonne lorries under the guise of operating them only to rail depots. Road hauliers, renowned for their success in flouting the law and confident that the Government will turn a blind eye, will profit from the decision.

Transport Secretary John MacGregor is still trying to justify going down Dead End Street.

InterCity's vision for the next century

Rail can be a "knight in shining armour" for the next century, InterCity director Chris Green has predicted.

Trains can give people greater mobility while protecting the environment and they can improve everyone's quality of life by cutting road congestion.

Mr Green told the Royal Society that just diverting the Great Western main line under Heathrow airport would be of enormous strategic advantage. It would change the shape of transport in Britain, allowing direct InterCity services to 12 major destinations.

The market was enormous because 45 million people arrive at Heathrow annually - without cars. Mr Green said the potential of such a move had been shown at Frankfurt, Zurich and Charles de Gaulle airports. He said

InterCity wanted to develop 155 mph running on all main lines over the next 30 years. The tilt train concept could be revamped for West Coast services from London to Glasgow giving a 4 hour 30 minute timing.

Both the Great Western and Midland main lines could be electrified when the existing high speed diesel trains fall due for renewal at the turn of the century.

On the East Coast main line, new signalling would allow the existing 125 mph trains to go at 140 mph. £1 billion spent on straightening out the route from Newcastle to London would allow speeds to be upped to 155 mph.

Mr Green has been a key figure in Britain's railway renaissance. He revamped ScotRail, then gave Network SouthEast a brighter and more optimistic future before moving to

InterCity. It was predicted last year that he would have been made chairman of British Rail if Labour had won the general election.

Rail Users Conference

Mr Green will be guest speaker at the RDS-sponsored National Rail Users Conference in London on 23 October.

The major event in the RDS calendar, will be held in the Christopher Tuck lecture theatre, University College, Gower Street, London WC1 from 1000 to 1700. The college is close to Euston station.

The fee is £6 per head (£7.50 for non members), plus an optional £5 for a buffet lunch. For details and booking, contact John Bigny, 15 Plough Walk, Edenbridge, Kent TN8 6DU.

Sprinting back to Maesteg

By TREVOR GARROD

A warm welcome awaited more than 60 RDS members who went to Maesteg for the National Conference on Rail Reopenings.

Most came on the new Sprinter trains which now give the small town a rail link to the Welsh capital. Our train stopped at the reopened stations of Pontyclun and Pencoed where we picked up large numbers of people going shopping in Bridgend.

Then we turned up the branch which had been without regular passenger trains for 22 years. The first halt was Wildmill where a glass shelter on the platform serves an estate on the edge of Bridgend.

Tondu is still a junction for freight and has a landscaped car park for passengers.

After climbing through a narrow wooded valley, we stopped at Garth and then at Ewenny Road where we picked up a few people travelling into Maesteg.

The town's modest terminus is next to a supermarket car park where there is a connecting bus waiting to take people into the rural areas.

The conference on 26 June was held at the Sports Centre, imaginatively adapted from old industrial premises, and owned by RDS corporate member, Ogwr district council.

Delegates were welcomed by national executive member Ian Murray and chairman Steve Wilkinson warned of the dangers of privatisation and the need to continue campaigning.

Councillor Lyn Jenkins described how the reopening of Maesteg station had helped the town by bringing visitors and business in. He traced the reopening campaign back to a small group of local people who chartered three excursion trains in the late 1970s.

Mr D Goodwin, principal engineer of Mid-Glamorgan County Council, said Cathays in 1983 had been the first station to be reopened in South Wales since the war.

The reopening of the Aberdare line in 1988 had been very successful and prompted the council to look at Maesteg, particularly because it could help reduce congestion in Cardiff. Gateway supermarkets agreed to give trains access to the town again and a special train was run in 1990.

The council bought new trains but could only afford two-car platforms. The total cost of the scheme was £4 million which included the purchase of three Pacer units and £700,000 for track work and the new halts.

A £6 million scheme was now under way for a new local service and five more stations on the main line between Bridgend and Swansea.

Mr Goodwin said smaller unitary authorities and a fragmented British Rail might make future work difficult. He said a passenger transport authority might be needed for South Wales.

Mid-Glamorgan was also looking at extending the Aberdare line to Hirwaun as an alternative to upgrading the main road in the Pontypridd area, said Theo Steel, Regional Railways director for South Wales and the West.

He urged delegates to carry on questioning railway managers because new technical developments could bring new service possibilities. Partnership between BR and local



The line to exports

British-built railway vehicles could soon be helping to relieve the terrible traffic congestion in Bangkok. The Thai capital is planning to build a 40-mile long metro system and ABB Transportation of Derby is bidding to supply 350 cars like the prototype above. This is just the sort of project that Britain should be involved in. Investment in rail creates high-quality, high-skill jobs in this country and supports firms which manufacture high-tech equipment which can and should be exported. Wasting money on roads, by contrast, creates only short-term low-skill jobs and sucks in imported motor vehicles to the detriment of both the balance of payments and the environment.

authorities usually started with small things, like station car parks and gardens, before moving on to station rebuilding, new stations and then line rebuilding.

Elsewhere in his area, there were prospects for a new station next to the Tesco supermarket on the Exmouth line, a station for Ivybridge, Devon, and a station for Coaley Junction following the offer of money by Gloucestershire County Council.

The reopening of Yate had been very successful, and Worle reopened ahead of residential development which was now taking place. But Mr Steel said the possible division of Gloucestershire into eight unitary authorities could be "a challenge".

Tests were being carried out to see if door mechanisms could be adjusted so that three-car Turbo trains could call at two-car platforms. He said the European Regional Development grants which could help to improve infrastructure had been cut from 50% to 25%.

RDS general secretary Trevor Garrod said 260 stations had now been reopened since the 1970s and the idea was no longer "eccentric".

But protecting abandoned routes was important for the future.

East Anglian branch chairman Peter Wakefield warned campaigners not to expect too much. You had to be patient and accept that ideas planted in councillors' minds sometimes took years to bear fruit.

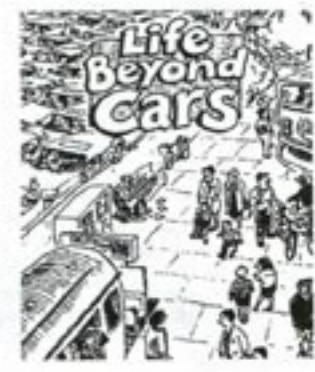
Tim Whelan said the Football Supporters Association pressed for new or reopened stations to serve football grounds. BR however was being difficult about providing a new station for Scunthorpe's new ground.

Richard Pill reported that the proposed Bedford southern bypass could dash hopes of reopening the Bedford to Sandy line which was a key route in reinstating east-west rail links. Transport 200 and RDS had appeared at a public inquiry and called for a bridge to be provided over the trackbed.

Alan Bevan said the new-look Warwickshire County Council was abandoning a road scheme at Stratford-on-Avon which would have made rebuilding the line south to Honeybourne difficult. The recent changes in the political complexion of many councils could open up new opportunities for rail.

Life Beyond Cars

A new booklet explains how your lifestyle does not have to be dominated by the infernal combustion engine. £2.25 including post and packing from Alan Harwood, 139 Harrowdene Gardens, Teddington, Middx TW11 0DN. Make cheques payable to RDS.



TREVOR
GARROD'S
VIEW



Making our
voice
stronger

The last Railwatch carried a cartoon of Messrs Major and MacGregor as driver and fireman of a train about to head off the end of a track into deep, uncharted waters.

It was not just a joke. Mr Major has spoken of privatising, then semi-privatising, then commercialising the railways and has changed his mind at least once as to how he might do this. Mr MacGregor has promised us 12 years of reorganisation as this grand enterprise unfolds. On another occasion, he claimed it would take three years.

Do they know what they are doing? If they succeed in forcing through legislation, one thing is clear: our rail system faces an unwanted period of uncertainty and instability.

In such a scenario, a strong well-organised voice for rail users is vital. RDS provides that voice.

How fit are we? Our society has grown by 20% in less than a year. With a membership of over 3,000, we are three times as big as we were a decade ago. We have six times the membership and therefore resources that we had in the late 1970s. Although we do not yet have full-time staff, we are able to pay honoraria to a team of two administrative officers and three recently appointed assistants.

We now have many more allies in the shape of rail user groups throughout the country.

Further steps are being taken to strengthen our voice. A brochure has just been printed and widely distributed among media people, listing key RDS members around the country who are willing to speak on our behalf. On 6 November, we are holding a media workshop at which members of RDS and its affiliated local users groups can learn how to be even more effective when dealing with the press, radio and TV.

Developing dialogue with railway managers and unions, officials and politicians is ongoing. Fresh approaches have to be made constantly when managers are replaced, officers retire or politicians lose their seats.

We need to show such people that RDS represents large numbers of people, that we are capable of running the proverbial "booze-up in a brewery", and that we are ready and able to put money where our mouths are.

We have not just called over the years for the building of the Channel Tunnel. We have also bought shares in Eurotunnel. Ten years ago, we helped to reopen Watton-at-Stone station in Hertfordshire by donating money. Now our Midlands branch is raising money for a reopened station at Whittington, Shropshire.

This summer we spent £160 producing a leaflet *Sprint Across England* to publicise the through service between East Anglia, the Midlands and the North West. Our *By Rail* books, initially launched thanks to money donated and loaned by RDS members, represent the only series of rail-based guide books covering all of Great Britain.

Our independence is a strength which we must exploit. One Conservative MP recently remarked to a colleague that our press adverts on the privatisation issue must have been funded by the rail unions. I can assure him they were not. We welcome donations from trade unions, just as we would welcome donations from Conservative MPs. But union donations represent a tiny fraction of our income. The RDS annual balance sheet shows clearly the source of our money.

Within the principles I have indicated, we may need to adapt some of our policies and tactics in the light of the threatened journey into uncharted waters.

That is why we shall be holding a special seminar at Leicester on 2 October, 15 years almost to the day since RDS was formed. Places are limited. Some are already taken up. But active members who would be interested in in-depth discussion are welcome to apply to me for further details. Our national conference of rail users on 23 October will then develop further the society's future strategy.

● Trevor Garrod is general secretary of RDS and writes a column every four weeks for the magazine *RAIL*.

Drawing ahead

By REG SNOW and TREVOR GARROD

Members responded generously to the 1993 reopenings campaign draw which raised £1,500.

The money will be used over the next 12 months to fund both national and local campaigns for reopening stations, lines and new railways.

One of the first calls on the money was for a reprint of the leaflet *Bring Back Our Tracks* which has proved very popular.

It describes 10 key routes of abandoned railways which should be protected pending possible future rebuilding and is aimed especially at local councils.

The Department of the Environment, in its planning policy guidance on transport number 15, has asked local councils to safeguard railway routes where there is a reasonable chance that these will be needed in the future.

We have written to Environment Secretary John Gummer commending his department on this policy.

First prize of £400 in the 1993 RDS reopenings draw went to Nigel Kitching of 12 Oswin Avenue, Balby, Doncaster DN4 0PA.

Second prize of £200 went to W G Robinson, 183 Sutton Road, Kidderminster, Worcs DY11 6QN.

Third prize of £100 was won by Ms J Greet of Flat A, 7 Dalkeith Road, Ilford, Essex IG1 1JD.

The £50 fourth prize went to L McDonald, 6 Afton Drive, Renfrew, Scotland PA4 0UN.

Book prizes went to Nick and Teresa Cotterell, 7 Mill Close, Credenhill, Hereford HR4 7EQ, Mark Parry, 98 Redhall Crescent, Leeds LS11 8DY, R Kelshaw, 5 Wycombe Avenue, Gorton, Manchester M18 8SS and E W Shaw, 180 Lingwell Gate Lane, Lofthouse, Wakefield WF3 3JS.

Other books were won by Mrs K M Moriarty, 34 Cannonside, Fetcham, Leatherhead, Surrey KT22 9LE, Duncan Gordon, 92 Norbiton Avenue, Kingston, Surrey KT1 3QP, B Jowett, 8 Deepdale Drive, Leasingham, Sleaford, Lincs NG34 8LR and L Caffery, 5 St Margarets Court, Crossgate, Durham DH1 4QY.

Would you like to help produce *Railwatch*? We need help. If you are interested, please contact Ray King, 4 Christchurch Square, London E9 7HU (tel 081 985 8548).

Price on the margins

Although I am reluctant to shoot down such an attractively pro-railway idea as that put forward by the Reverend P L Roberts in July's *Railwatch*, I am afraid that the comparison of total AA running costs with rail ticket costs only applies if the prospective traveller does not own a car at all.

Once you own a car, a large part of the running costs are fixed - car tax, insurance and depreciation being the most obvious.

Under these circumstances, the relevant costs are the marginal costs, the extra incurred in making that particular journey - fuel, with a small addition for tyres, oil and other consumables.

My daughter, therefore, living in London, with good access to public transport, and not currently owning a car, should compare the total cost of buying and running one with the cost of making journeys by public transport.

I, by contrast, working as an agricultural broadcaster in rural Lincolnshire and living in a disused railway station in the heart of the county, have no choice but to own and use a car for most of my work - even if all the old lines were reinstated. I can only, economically speaking, compare my petrol costs with the train fare.

Despite the cold economic reality, I enjoy travelling by train, continue to do so - and support the RDS. But it would be self-delusion to expect the same to apply to the rest of the travelling public.

Alan Stennett, presenter of the "very good railway programme" on BBC Radio Lincolnshire (mentioned in Railwatch 56), Woodhall Junction, Kirkstead Bridge, Woodhall Spa, Lincolnshire LN10 6QX

Warning to Britain

I have visited Britain a good many times since my first visit in 1957 and have always travelled mainly by British Rail, using the Britrail pass, or one of its predecessors. I keep up with the news of BR which has always been a pleasurable, convenient, safe and relaxing way to travel.

The dark days of Beeching faded away and it appeared that BR was recovering. Now, with the present Government's arrogant decree that BR must be privatised, things look as bad as under Beeching.

To take a nationwide, integrated network, fragment it and hive off the pieces to private companies, most of which have no railway experience, will be a disaster. I cannot understand how anyone outside a lunatic asylum could have any doubt about this.

Nobody says roads must be profitable and they conveniently forget that roads never were and never can be profitable. So why does the Government have this double standard?

The railways must be kept together as an integrated network. If all unprofitable parts of the system are closed, the profitable parts will shrivel and die because they need the traffic fed to them by the rest of the system. They would not think of treating the road network this way.

The car and the lorry are the greatest despoilers of the environment ever invented. They are the cause of air pollution, the greenhouse effect and global warming, and acid rain. They force us to depend on oil from the unstable Middle East.

They also erode the tax base and cause hard-

ship for all taxpayers because land for roads is not taxable.

People give lip service to saving the environment but turn their backs on the one action which would do most to solve the problems, instituting a transport policy which would get as much traffic as possible back on the fuel-efficient and environmentally benign railways.

I live in a country which, together with Canada, has the worst transport non-policy of any "civilised" country. Amtrak is supposed to be profitable by the year 2000. It appeared to be heading that way but with the recession, it is going the other. I knew this would happen. Even if the economy were good and Amtrak became profitable, there would always be a recession at some point in the future.

Amtrak has to pinch pennies and does not have enough money to maintain its equipment, let alone to expand. This results in frequent breakdowns and late trains and the annual circus when Amtrak must beg Congress for its annual pittance.

The deregulated, private enterprise freight railways which Amtrak must use for its passenger trains are free to abandon any lines they wish. This results in huge gaps in our once great system.

Each year, they glibly announce that their goal is to "streamline" or "downsize" their system by so many thousand miles and this is applauded as a "good business decision". Far from it, this is a disaster for both freight and passenger services.

Freight often has to go twice as far and there is no alternative if there are line blockages. Many industries have changed to lorries because they know that if they build a plant along a railroad, as likely as not the railroad will be abandoned.

I have given these facts as a warning of what will happen to British railways if someone does not teach the Government some sense.

John J Bosman Jr., RDS member 0052, 314 North Lime Street, Lancaster, Pennsylvania 17602, USA

Please read on

Railwatch is hard to read for old eyes, the print being too small and pale. Can you not reduce verbiage and increase print size?

A Quist, member number 4120, Old Heathfield, East Sussex

Editor's note: In an attempt to make Railwatch easier to read, we are experimenting with a new typeface in this issue. Apologies to readers who have had difficulties.

BR out of tune

In the last *Railwatch*, you rightly condemn the increased charges for conveying cycles by train, but cyclists are not the only victims of the recent alterations to charges for conveying luggage.

I am a cellist and I find that I now have to pay half the adult fare to take my cello with me by train, which increases the cost of my journey by 75% (I am a railcard holder).

I only take my cello with me about twice a year, but when I do, it is nearly always on a long journey - Lancaster to Rye, Sussex.

It is outrageous that I should have to pay an extra £30 or so for this journey when it is

possible to take an alsatian dog free of charge - or a bicycle for £6.

BR seems intent on driving custom away. Most cellists have cars (although I do not) and they will use them when they learn of this charge. They might well be deterred from going by train even without their cello.

BR might think that cellists are a tiny minority they can safely offend but the same charge is faced by anyone carrying more than two suitcases and a briefcase.

One big advantage of rail over buses and coaches - its load-carrying ability - suddenly ceases to be a selling point, because it is outweighed by this charge.

BR so often seems to enjoy indulging in a sort of anti-marketing. RDS should campaign on this issue.

Tom Barney, 11 Shaw Street, Lancaster

Keep the family card

It is disappointing, to say the least, that the future of the family railcard appears not to have been safeguarded.

I fear that many families will not be prepared to pay the vastly increased fares, resulting in greater use of coach or car or they will simply no longer travel to distant destinations.

I have been using family railcards over a number of years to take parties of Scouts sightseeing in Scotland. Without the railcard, there would be no long-distance trips. The railways, Scottish tourism and the Scouts would be losers.

The figures are alarming for one adult and four children, taking a journey from a London suburban station to Kyle of Lochalsh.

With railcard: one adult at £72.10, plus four children at £1. Total £76.10.

Without railcard: one adult at £97.40 plus four children at £48.70. Total £292.20.

Difference: £216.10

It has been proved time and time again that special promotions, Boots, Shell, Kellogg's, railcards and rover tickets, generate travel.

If InterCity had a railcard which was not valid on Regional, people would think more than twice before using the train.

Shell petrol is valid on motorways and secondary roads. You don't need to change to Esso.

John Parkin, 59 Beechwood Court, West Street Lane, Carshalton, Surrey SM5 2QA

Memories of Robert Adley

"Robert Adley, a self confessed railway fanatic...", so began your obituary in *Railwatch* 56. Why do you denigrate Mr Adley by the use of such an expression? Surely an interest in railways does not warrant a self confession? Does this mean for instance that I am a self confessed editor? Surely this appellation should only be reserved for criminals and child molesters?

Murray Brown, Editor, *RAIL* magazine, Apex House, Oundle Road, Peterborough PE2 9NP

Railwatch reply: We were not denigrating Mr Adley. The article was a tribute to him. Many enthusiasts and advocates of rail would stop short of describing themselves as fanatics. RDS campaigns for rail as a sane and sensible mode of travel. Mr Adley, however, was more than an enthusiast or an advocate. He confessed: "I am a railway fanatic." It is not yet however criminal to confess your love, admiration or even fanaticism.

British Rail at a loss

By DAVID BIGG

The £164 million reported loss of British Rail for 1992-3 is grossly understated. If you include the subsidy of £1,155 million, the loss rises to £1,319 million (or £1.3 billion).

InterCity made a profit of £10 million compared with just £2 million in 1991-2.

The two biggest loss makers were Regional Railways and, more importantly from the Government's point of view, Network SouthEast which is heavily dependent on commuters who still account for over 65% of its revenue.

Central London has been badly hurt by the recession so the daily fall in numbers travelling from 403,000 to 377,000 will come as no great surprise and helps explain the overall increase in state subsidy from £892 million in 1991-2 to £1,155 million in 1992-3.

It is impossible to compare these figures with last year's because of a change in accounting procedures. It could be argued that the losses are therefore understated.

Investment in British Rail, which has a highly uncertain future with the threat of privatisation hanging over it, is at an all-time high at £1,384 million compared with £1,008 million in the previous year. But again these figures disguise the fact that the bulk of this expenditure is for the Channel Tunnel services and on safety measures following the Clapham rail crash.

It is worth noting that not one passenger was killed last year, a startling achievement, compared to the thousands who die on the roads.

It is clear that in the run-up to privatisation, British Rail will be forced to cut costs. As a result, some towns and villages will see greatly reduced off-peak services from October with some reduced to a peak-hour service only.

Some BR divisions have a zero capital spend for 1993-4 even though fare increases have been well above the rate of inflation for years. Last January saw NSE raise fares by an average of 8.5% when inflation stood at 3.7%. Britain now has the highest fares in Europe and there should be a price freeze in 1994 since inflation is at its lowest for 30 years, at 1.2%.

I will now give my half year review of RDS finances. It looks as if turnover will be around £45,000. It seems likely that we will have a loss of £2,000, as reserves built up in previous years have been used to finance the anti-privatisation campaign.

There is also the book *Beyond the Channel Tunnel by Rail* to be financed in December although income from it may come in 1994. We also now have five administrative officers who are overworked and underpaid. They are fulfilling an essential function in relieving key officers who are under pressure from the continued increase in RDS membership.

For the society, 1994 will be a year of consolidation. Another administrative officer may be appointed and there is the possibility of a booklet on light rail as the Sheffield system becomes operational. Obviously if there is a loss this year I will want to claw this back as we prepare to go forward to still bigger and better things in 1995.

● David Bigg is national treasurer of RDS and is also chairman of Witham and Braintree Rail Users Association.

THE ONLY TRANSPORT FOR THE FUTURE

By BILL COLLINS

A colourful, glossy book called *Britain's Railway The Only Transport for the Future* features many excellent pictures by the famous photographer Colin Garratt.

The 62-page A4 size book pays tribute to BR's achievements, particularly since sectorisation and roundly condemns the Government for its attempts at privatisation.

Mr Garratt warns that forcing the disintegration of British Rail would be an "act of political imbecility and a squalid opting out of responsibility to the nation and its industrial infrastructure".

He rightly points out that BR is a finely balanced machine and is a national asset uniquely able to respond to traffic congestion and environmental damage.

The book forms an attractive and readable overview of BR and its various sectors.

● An excellent little guidebook, the *Tavo-uvy Guide to the Settle Line* is now published by Leading Edge. It can be read in either direction of travel. Both books are available by post from RDS. See Page 6.

Breaking the cycle

Six million people in Britain own and use bicycles regularly. Another nine million people also own them but are too frightened to use them because of the pollution and dangerous anarchy on our roads, overseen by the Department of Transport.

In Holland, 27 per cent of all journeys are by bike. In Britain, it is only two per cent. The response from the Department of Transport, which is spending £32 billion of our money on new roads: "It is not our role to encourage people to cycle - particularly in view of the significantly high accident rate. Cycling is one of the least safe forms of transport."

A charitable group called Sustrans is now doing what the Department of Transport should have done - building safe, long-distance cycle routes, often based on disused rail alignments. Details from Sustrans, 35 King Street, Bristol BS1 4DZ (tel 0272 268893). It also has offices in Glasgow and Co. Durham. John Grimshaw of Sustrans said: "The core of our transport problem is that the Department of Transport sees itself as the Department of

Motorised Vehicles, and that is Britain's tragedy.

"If it saw itself as the Department of Transport, I'm sure it would not even contemplate the privatisation of the railways, or if it did it would be in a way which ensured the system is extended, not contracted."

RDS winners

Lottery winners for May: Douglas Smart, Edinburgh £64, Miss C Marchant, Esler £40, Peter Kearney, Tewkesbury £24, D Guppy, Birmingham £16, D H Stock, Lytham £8, Christopher Lindley, Sutton Coldfield £8.

June: Andrew Bull, Macclesfield £61.60, Richard Bish, Flitwick £38.50, Philip Ralph, Leeds £23.10, P Hutchinson, Watford £15.40, J L Horton, Stowmarket £7.70, John White, Hadley Wood £7.70.

July: Barry Buttigieg, Croydon £59.20, Christopher Lindley, Sutton Coldfield £37, David Miles, Sheffield £22.20, George Lillie, Alnwick £14.80, F J Griffiths, Nottingham £7.40, Alan Williams, Osnabrück £7.40.

If you would like to join the lottery for one year, send a cheque for £12 to Dave Finch, 28 Neville Avenue, Kidderminster, Worcs DY11 7AL. Make cheques payable to RDS and include your membership number.

● The Rail Defence Fund, our resource for fighting cuts and closures, currently stands at £548. The latest recipient of a £100 grant from the fund was the North East branch for its campaign to save the Weardale line.

● The speech by Eurotunnel commercial director Christopher Garnett at the annual meeting of RDS was only summarised in the last *Railwatch*. For a full transcript of his talk, send £1 to John Bigny, 15 Plough Walk, Edenbridge, Kent TN8 6DU.

● Thinking the unthinkable: The future of the West Coast main line, for years known as Britain's Premier Line, is now the centre of speculation. The Government insists its future is secure but is reluctant to spend money to upgrade it. Labour's John Prescott says the Government's attempt to cobble together a private enterprise funding package for it may leave the section from Preston to Glasgow vulnerable.

● Intermodal conference and exhibition to be held 6-8 December at Hamburg. Details from Cargo Systems 081 330 3911

The Trek to the Train

Robert Griffiths was shocked by changes in his home city of Stoke-on-Trent which made it more difficult for people to get to the railway station. Then he started looking at other cities and towns and discovered that Stoke was not unique. This booklet shows how the planners have gone wrong. This 12-page RDS publication is available for 75p post free from Alan Harwood, 139 Harrowdene Gardens, Teddington, Middx TW11 0DN. Make cheques payable to RDS.

THE TREK TO THE TRAIN



By Robert Griffiths

Beware of the trap

RDS has been told that Conservative Central Office is urging party spokesmen to make criticisms of BR management and staff wherever possible.

This is all part of the effort to convince the public that the Government is right to privatise BR. So far a vast majority of the public know it is a mistake.

However infuriated we may sometimes feel if a BR manager does something silly, it would be wise to think twice about making public attacks on BR. At least then we would avoid falling into a shabby political trap.

The Government has deliberately kept BR short of cash, knowing that it would be forced to make unpopular cuts to services.

At least there have been fewer Government spokesmen talking of rail schemes going ahead lately. The truth is that most of them are on hold.

Even one of the cheapest ones, the London Underground's plans to extend the East London line, has still not been given the real go-ahead. It awaits an order from Transport Secretary John MacGregor and LT admits it has no idea how long that process will take.

Of course Mr MacGregor has been busy elsewhere, trying to persuade private companies to take over British Rail's money-spinning routes. Even if Mr MacGregor had a rush of blood to the head, the Treasury will keep its purse clamped shut until at least 1996.

Meanwhile lorryloads of our money are being tipped into unpopular new roads through areas like Twyford Down, near Winchester.

Local action

● The Association of Metropolitan Authorities estimates that its co-operation with Regional Railways has helped to remove 30,000 cars a day from entering major city centres. As a result, 381,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide and 3,000 tonnes of carbon monoxide is not released into our already polluted air.

● The rail users group at Attenborough, Notts, raised their grievances at a meeting in July with Regional Railways district manager David McIntosh. They told him they wanted a new shelter, information screens to warn of delays or cancellations and better links to Loughborough and Leicester. Chairman Andrew Walker can be contacted on 0602 256115.

Books by post

High Speed Trains - Fast Tracks to the Future	£9.99
Two Way Guide to the Settle - Carlisle Line	£4.50
Britain's Railway. The Only Transport for the Future	£5.74
Traffic Congestion: Is There a Way Out?	£9.95
Our Environment: A Bigger Role for Rail	£5.25
Birdwatching by Train	£6.70

All prices include post and packing.

Make cheques payable to RDS.

Other books can be ordered through RDS. Send orders or an SAE for a list to Sales Officer, 139 Harrowdene Gardens, Teddington, Middx TW11 0DN

Stop the roadhogs

Edina Lewis took to the streets of London in June to help other protesters carry "£23 billion" from the notorious headquarters of the Department of Transport in Marsham Street to the British Rail offices at Euston.

The idea was to show our blinkered and outdated politicians that they should stop flytipping taxpayers' money into road building and do something sensible for a change — use the money to expand rail services.

Unfortunately British Rail has been reduced to the status of a beggar so it failed to provide a representative at Euston to accept the generous "subsidy". It is so far under the thumb that it is frightened to upset the chauffeur-driven politicians. Here is Edina's report.

About a thousand people assembled in Marsham Street - with police very much in evidence at the start. When they realised that the march was peaceful and presented no problem, they reduced their presence substantially.

I understand that the police chief said later that he greatly enjoyed the rally.

There was a good media presence and the timing of various stages of the march was tailored to TV programming.

The protest was a colourful affair with a wide variety of organisations involved including Friends of the Earth, the Pedestrians' Association and a handful of RDS people.

There were some excellent posters, banners and slogans and I hope that RDS will have some banners ready for any such occasion in the future.

There were also people from the Travellers' Bookshop of 35 Cecil Court, London WC2N 4EZ (071 836 9132) who were publicising their selection of "rail not road" books which includes RDS publications.

A delegation from the march delivered a new report to 10 Downing Street. Published by the anti-road building alliance Alarm UK, which also organised the march, it is entitled Transport 21: An Alternative Transport Budget.

The march then continued along Whitehall, the Strand, Kingsway and Woburn Place, headed by the pink money-box pig and large sacks of token money, labelled in millions of pounds.

The march was enlivened by the voices of a small group of singers, the North London Street Choir, who distributed song sheets and sang songs specially written for the occasion.

What was surprising — and encouraging — was the interest shown by passers-by who included many foreign tourists. The small RDS contingent handed out a thousand RDS leaflets and helped to explain what the march was all about.

What was disappointing and inexplicable was the behaviour of British Rail. The BR authorities had been very co-operative during most of the preparatory period but then suddenly changed their attitude. About 10 days before the march, they said they would not accept the money. Despite this regrettable and extraordinary defection which undermined the purpose of the march, the event



Bags of money: But BR was too frightened to upset the Government by accepting it



That's my boy: A youngster wheels "£1 million" on a wheelbarrow while other protesters show the road hogs that the writing is on the wall

Pictures: Edina Lewis

was very worthwhile, especially for the interest and publicity it created. The anti-road lobby had another reason to celebrate after the announcement that the Government was abandoning its aim to blast a dual carriageway road through Oxleas Wood in Greenwich. Its decision came shortly after the British

Road Federation - the source of Government transport policies - said it would rather divert the new road to Thamesmead. Another 160 other important wildlife havens are threatened by new road schemes in Britain. The most notorious scheme is the M3 motorway slashing through Twyford Down.

LOCAL ACTION

Lincolnshire

By Paul Jowett and Brian Hastings

Out of time: Lincolnshire County Council separated their excellent bus-rail timetables from May. The new bus timetables do not contain rail information. There is however an excellent 25p county rail timetable which RDS helped with.

Back to the drawing board: Regional Railways by contrast produced some absolutely useless timetables at the same time, particularly the leaflet for the Nottingham - Skegness joint line. This was presumably a cost-cutting exercise but it gave ammunition to rail critics. The RR leaflet failed to give services to local stations. The first batch was also full of mistakes and was reprinted. Regional realised its error and the leaflets will revert to their old format in October. The Joint Line timetables for platform display also had mistakes in them and gave limited information, omitting through and connecting services.

Locals shunted aside: Improving services for holidaymakers to Skegness has had the unfortunate side effect of cutting Saturday trains at local stations like Heckington which had boasted an hourly service. The locals are expected to get their Saturday trains back in October. The reason for this switch is that the holiday trade is more lucrative.

The popular refreshment room at Skegness is threatened with closure in October "because of European Community rules".

More cuts: Sunday trains are threatened in the October timetable. Lincoln may have only three trains! The Government has brought this about by cutting BR's public sector obligation grant. County and district councils met on 27 July and called for a meeting with Public Transport Minister Roger Freeman.

Privatisation blight: All is quiet with regard to Spalding electrification. Nothing is moving on the Sleaford - Spalding modernisation or on reopening plans for Pinchbeck and Donington. Promised promotions in the Sleaford, Boston and Skegness areas are not happening. The Government's privatisation drive has put everything in limbo.

Motorway madness: The new Lincolnshire County Council is controlled by Labour and the Liberal Democrats but it still advocates building the motorway link to the M11. The election was obviously not a victory for common sense on transport.

Mean times: Skegness peak services may have to be reshaped because of severe overcrowding from Wainfleet. More 156s are needed but the Government has kept the railways so short of cash, that there are none spare.

Threatened again! Because the Government has cut the public sector obligation grant by 20%, the Gainsborough - Barnetby line is threatened again. Regional Railways North East plans to withdraw Monday - Friday services from 4 October. The service will run on Saturdays only. RDS and the Brigg and Gainsborough user group have pointed out that the low present demand results from the inconvenient current timetable which effectively rules out use of the line for commuter, school or even shopping trips from Brigg or Kirton Lindsey. Humberside and Lincolnshire county councils, together with West Lindsey district council and Glanford borough council are to meet rail officials to try to avert the cuts. The line was earmarked for closure four years ago but was reprieved after our campaign.

More cuts: The railhead of Market Rasen is

suffering from timetable cuts. More are planned. Valuable Saturday leisure and shopping business into Lincoln has been prejudiced by the reduction of Saturday services. There is now no late afternoon service from Lincoln to Market Rasen and no Sunday trains on the Cleethorpes - Newark line from 10 October. We have urged Regional Railways Central to think again.

Cutbacks: Platform lengths at Barnetby have been cut back to 113 metres after the withdrawal of the Cleethorpes - London InterCity service. The new station shelters have been widely criticised. It seems promises given at the time of de-staffing have been broken.

Swing bridge: Delays to Manchester - Cleethorpes and Doncaster - Scunthorpe local services have occurred with a series of failures in hot weather of the Keadby Canal swing bridge. Buses had to be used between Crowle and Scunthorpe. Costly plans to renew the bridge mechanism have been deferred because of the cost. If it was a road, of course, it would have been repaired by now.

Joint approach: RDS has welcomed a promotional initiative which gives two tickets for the price of one by using a coupon within the new Lincolnshire County Council Rail Times booklet. Gainsborough member Cyril Clark has been campaigning for lower price day return shopping opportunities on the joint line to counter aggressive bus competition.

East Anglia

By Trevor Garrod

People in action: Branch secretary Nick Dibben addressed the Standing Conference of East Anglian Local Authorities on 16 June, the first time RDS has been invited to address this body. Trevor Garrod will speak at the quarterly meeting of Suffolk Rural Voice on 23 November. Peter Lawrence organised the branch to take part in a 10-day rail exhibition at Norwich Castle at the end of July.

Silly little cards: We welcomed Regional Railways decision to revert to more normal, comprehensive timetables from October. We were among many bodies who criticised the silly little cards issued this summer and we are glad that management has admitted and rectified this error.

Severnside

By Eric Barbery

Coaley Junction has been chosen as the first railway station to be opened in Gloucestershire since the Beeching era. Gloucestershire County Council has decided to give £225,000 towards the scheme in preference to similar projects at Ashchurch, near Tewkesbury, and Charfield, near Wotton-under-Edge. It is hoped the new station could be open by the new year.

London and Home Counties

By Howard Thomas

Mud brains: Ridiculous ideas about concreting over railway lines and turning them into bus ways have been mooted by Badgerline buses. This company is also reported to be "interested" in the London, Tilbury and Southend!

Blocked minds: The incompetence of bus companies in providing information even about their own services is surpassed only by their reluctance to inform passengers of other services. Nowhere is this worse than at Chelmsford where Eastern National and Thamesway operate. Both are subsidiaries of Badgerline.

LOCAL ACTION

North East

By Gordon Barclay

A good Yarm: Cleveland County Council has agreed in principle to fund a new station at Yarm which could be served by the recently extended TransPennine service to Middlesbrough.

October revolution: Cleveland has also contributed to the launch of a direct Saltburn - Newcastle service via Middlesbrough and Darlington. If finance can be sorted out, the service should start with the new timetable in October. This direct service would be about 20 minutes quicker than existing Newcastle - Middlesbrough services making it more competitive with journeys on the A19 trunk road.

Future imperfect: Berwick-upon-Tweed borough council held a very successful public meeting in the town on 7 May to debate the future of rail services for Berwick and the Borders. RDS was represented by Geoff Longstaff who reported that the meeting was very well attended despite being held during the day when many people would have been unable to be there because of work. Two local MPs attended together with representatives of various local councils. The meeting was generally hostile to the Government's plans for rail privatisation.

Public debate: Northumberland County Council has sent an urgent message to its four local MPs as it grows increasingly concerned about the future of local rail services in the county after privatisation. Conservative MP for Hexham Peter Atkinson has agreed to address an RDS public meeting in Hexham in September to debate the Government's privatisation plans and the likely consequences for the Tyne Valley line.

Limbo line: The North East branch is continuing talks with local authorities in County Durham over the future of the Wear Valley line and the Ferryhill - Pelaw line which remains in limbo.

Light fantastic: The branch was very fortunate to have Tyne and Wear Passenger Transport Executive director general David Howard as its guest speaker at our June meeting. The relatively short time it took to get the Metro system into operation contrasts with the time it has taken to implement other tramway schemes. The Metro has required little modification, compared to London's Docklands Light Railway, and is a tribute to those who designed the system in the early days. If agreement can be reached with Railtrack, expect to see Metro cars at Sunderland before the end of the decade. Other Metro routes are also likely to see increased frequency.

Public debate: The branch plans a public meeting on how privatisation could affect the Tyne Valley line. Local Tory MP Peter Atkinson will talk on the merits of privatisation in general and its implications for the Carlisle - Newcastle route. The public will be given the chance to question Mr Atkinson and the RDS speaker. The meeting will be held at The Beaumont Hotel, Beaumont Street, Hexham, at 1930. It is 10 minutes from the rail station and close to the bus station. The meeting will be timed to allow people to catch trains home.

BR is removing track from the Pelaw - Ferryhill line but it appears one line remains in place, thus effectively singling the presently disused line. Track remains on the recently closed single track line to Eastgate in the Wear Valley. Increasing coal and limestone traffic on the East Coast main line north of Ferryhill is causing concern about the availability of adequate

freight paths between InterCity and Regional Express services. It demonstrates the importance of retaining an alternative line to Tyneside via Pelaw.

Scotland

By Douglas Smart

Peaceful way out: Scottish Tory MPs and newspapers failed to respond to our initiative following the announcement that the Trident contract was to be switched from Rosyth to Devonport. We pointed out that Rosyth had already proved itself capable of diversifying into railway rolling stock refurbishment. We suggested that the Government should make an immediate cash injection into BR and London Underground to allow this work to be expanded. We said this would be a practical way of implementing the peace dividend following the end of the Cold War.

We said such a move would alleviate unemployment in Fife but would also go some way to solving at a stroke the pressing problems of overcrowded and inadequate rolling stock.

Contempt for public transport users: The Government's White Paper on local government reorganisation was largely greeted as an exercise in gerrymandering and contained a single paragraph on the transport implications. The same amount of space was devoted to the district courts and the registration of births, marriages and deaths - and half as many words as were devoted to archives! A dozen Scottish newspapers published letters from the branch pointing out that this shows the contempt which the Tories have for bus and rail users. In the few areas where regions are retained as single-tier authorities, the change will not be too drastic for transport but in those areas where the regions are to be broken up, we fear that the smaller councils will be unable to carry out transport functions properly. We have pointed out that if joint arrangements between councils are attempted, it only takes one stupid one to mess things up.

Don't smash the network: A leading travel agent in Scotland has told the Government that the proposals for breaking up BR will create frightening ticketing and accounting problems. The branch wrote to 25 Scottish peers advising them that the rail privatisation Bill would have to be amended to ensure that all the network benefits are retained. We have received a number of supportive comments.

In line for funds: It now seems certain that the Highlands and Islands will receive a funding bonus from the European Community. We will be campaigning to see that rail developments, especially a Dornoch crossing, will be included among the projects to be funded. The cash must not be squandered on yet more road building.

Wessex

By Peter Argent

Wise counsel: Former public transport minister Sir David Mitchell spoke to the branch in July on rail privatisation and was "better informed" after feedback from members.

Buying space: As part of the Christchurch by-election campaign, the branch outlined its views on rail privatisation in an advertisement in the local press. The Tory lost to the Liberal Democrat in the biggest ever recorded anti-government swing.

Road hogs out, trains in: A seminar on the future of the Westbury - Weymouth line was held in Weymouth in June with encouraging support from local authorities, Regional Railways and Bristol University. The line should be

developed in the same way as branches in Devon and Cornwall. The branch is ready to support promotional work. Delegates travelled on a special train along the Weymouth Quay line which was blocked by an illegally parked Porsche car. It was unceremoniously removed.

West Midlands

By Alan Bevan

Link station: A new £3 million two-level station is being built at Galton Junction alongside the canal cutting at the intersection of the New Street - Wolverhampton and Snow Hill - Stourbridge lines.

Reopening: The restoration of the former Great Western line from Smethwick to Snow Hill is proceeding well for reopening by May 1995. The Passenger Transport Authority plans to restore local trains on the six-mile Dudley - Walsall line in 1994-5. RDS wants to see the next six miles to Stourbridge reopened too.

Convention centre: By 1995 a new station will be opened at the north end of New Street tunnel to serve the International Convention Centre and National Indoor Arena.

A remarkable transformation has been achieved on the Cross-City line between Lichfield and Redditch. Even rural Alvechurch station has been rebuilt at a cost of £232,000. After teething problems, the new class 323 trains should be operating by the end of the year.

Shropshire County Council has given priority to building a new Whittington station on the Shrewsbury - Chester line and RDS is helping to raise the £100,000 needed.

Staffordshire County Council is keen to see trains extended from Hednesford to a new Rugeley town station, as well as electrification of the 15-mile Walsall - Cannock - Rugeley line.

Our new booklet *Rail Developments for Warwickshire* calls for seven new stations and the development of a north-south service linking Nuneaton, Bedworth, Coventry, Kenilworth and Leamington Spa. The county council is also working on a new Kingsbury station with help from an EC grant.

The Networker Turbo trains are proving popular on the London services which now link Worcester, Stratford and Snow Hill.

North West

By Robert Cummings

Don't do it: Transport Secretary John MacGregor has been warned not to close Ditton station. The Transport Users Consultative Committee called for greater use of the station.

Bring back the Rocket: Cuts in Government support have forced maintenance to be reduced and resulting speed restrictions. The Ormskirk - Preston line is limited to 50 mph. An emergency timetable will have to be introduced. Stephenson's Rocket could have kept to the 20 mph limit on parts of the Colne branch. The Wrexham - Bidston line has extended journey times. Locomotives and old-style diesel multiple units have been banned from the Blackburn - Hellifield line because of a weak bridge.

Speed machine: InterCity and GEC-Alsthom ran a borrowed IC225 train on the West Coast main line for a week to impress local authorities and the media and to win Government support for upgrading the line. The Government should of course give the go-ahead both for a better West Coast main line service and new Networkers for Kent.

North Midlands

By Malcolm Goodall

People like trains: The reopened Robin Hood Line from Newstead to Hucknall and Nottingham is proving very popular. Passenger figures are better than anticipated at over 6,500 journeys per week. Saturday trains account for 1,960 of these, and the usual twin-car class 156 diesel multiple-unit is regularly strengthened by the addition of a single-car class 153 unit to relieve overloading.

Extra train: Nottinghamshire County Council is considering hiring a second train from October, to double the service frequency to half-hourly on Saturdays and Monday to Friday peak periods.

Bus feeders: Three Rail-Link bus services connect with the trains. Cheap combined bus/train tickets are also valid on the Nottingham City Nipper. There is Monday to Friday summer service from Newstead station to Newstead Abbey, Longdale Craft Centre, and White Post Farm Park and the Butterfly Centre.

Bicycles are carried free of charge on the Newstead line. Unfortunately, accommodation is limited to just two cycles at busy times, or more off-peak at the conductor's discretion.

Workshop station booking office is now staffed only in the morning. RDS pointed out to Regional Railways management that transactions such as Railcard purchase and train enquiries are now impossible for most of the day and the risk of vandalism is increased. In a very frank reply, a railway spokesman regretted the changes which he said were a direct result of continued reductions in the PSO grant from the Government. He also requested help in persuading the district council and local businesses to make use of the space available in the listed station buildings, perhaps for a cafeteria or tourist information office, and this is being pursued.

Reopening hope: There are renewed efforts to get a feasibility study for reopening Kegworth station on the Loughborough to Trent Junction line, which adjoins the village of Sutton Bonington and the University of Nottingham School of Agriculture. The parish council found considerable interest from local residents. Rushcliffe Borough Council has also indicated its support, but was unable to get the proposal included in the Nottinghamshire Structure Plan. A reopened station could be served by trains on the existing Nottingham to Coventry service, or, by arrangement with Leicestershire County Council, a northward extension of the Leicester - Loughborough Ivanhoe Line. A longer-term option could be a Bedford to Nottingham stopping service.

Thames Valley

By Trevor Garrod

Bicester Rail day got off to a good start when the chairman of Cherwell District Council blew a whistle and the Mayor of Bicester waved a green flag. More than 300 people visited the exhibition on 3 July staged by the Oxon and Bucks Rail Action Committee in the Methodist Church Hall. Centrepiece of the hall was a large model railway built by Chris Wright, showing how the lines from Bicester and Aylesbury to Milton Keynes might operate if restored to the passenger network. Contact Chris Wright at 83 Blackmoor Gate, Fuzton, Milton Keynes MK4 1DD if you would like to show the model railway elsewhere. It will be on display at Wolverton open day on Saturday 25 September.

Loading the dice

Eurotunnel believes it has found a way round the problem of transporting lorries piggy back on trains.

Increasingly in Europe, lorries and semi trailers are forced on to trains because of the unacceptable damage they cause in sensitive areas like the Alps.

In Britain, Government Ministers have been delighted to use the excuse that the British loading gauge is too small to allow lorries to be carried on rail wagons. But now Eurotunnel believes there are cheap ways round the problem of the British loading gauge.

It says that existing 25 kV electrified routes, like the East and West Coast main lines would require little alteration.

The big cost factor in the past has always been perceived as the need to shave every passenger platform.

But a new study by consultants Alastair Dick, Mike Garrett and Dorian Baker concludes that platforms do not need to be altered.

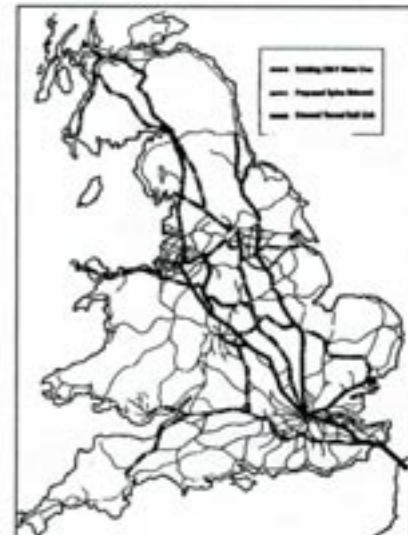
They argue that for £300 million a useful core network could be converted to accept both piggy back lorries and other intermodal vehicles.

The Department of Transport which has been instrumental in preventing large-scale improvements to Britain's railways told the Government only last year that such a conversion would cost £3-4 billion.

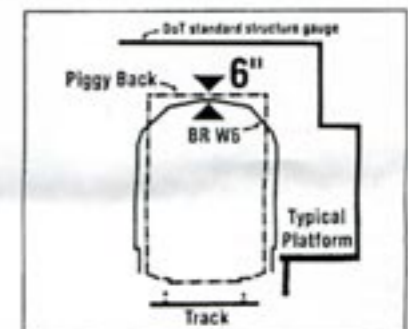
The study concludes that 1.2 million lorry journeys per annum could be switched from road to rail.

The report of the study, *The Loading Gauge Issue - Moving International Freight by Road to Rail*, urges the Government and the European Commission to sponsor independent studies to get reliable cost estimates. The 36-page report is available from the Eurotunnel Exhibition Centre, price £5.

Nicholas Hammond writes: A European Commission report on combined transport proposes paying grants to rail to offset the fact that road transport pays so little towards its infrastructure costs. Road transport does not pay for real



Thick lines mark the proposed core piggy back network



long-term costs and to make matters worse, road hauliers cheat and break the law to give themselves an even greater cost advantage over rail.

The commission says rail has a great role to play in limiting carbon dioxide emissions, improving energy efficiency and reducing congestion on the roads.

Perhaps Transport Secretary John MacGregor should take this EC report to bed with him.

Lumbered by luggage rules

Changes in the rules for taking luggage by train have brought a flood of complaints to British Rail. People who take more than three pieces of luggage now have to pay half fare for every extra bag. Up to two dogs, cats, other animals and prams go free but cycles cost £3 per single journey on InterCity and Regional Railways. But at least InterCity lifted its ban on tandems after protests. Regional is lumbered with inadequate trains (thanks to the Government) but has used this as an excuse to make life more difficult for cyclists.

Disabled officer

Peter Lawrence now represents disabled people's interests in RDS. He can be contacted at 75 Marl Pit lane, Norwich NR5 8XN (tel 0603 743446).

Private dreams and reality

When Britain's railways were private, they paid little or no dividends to shareholders.

Working conditions for staff were often appalling. They were noted for low wages. Apart from occasional trains, regular high-speed services were not achieved until after nationalisation.

Guide to Europe

Europe Beyond the Tunnel will be out in a few months time. This 128-page illustrated book will be published jointly by RDS and Leading Edge and is packed with fascinating information about rail trips that can be made in 1994 from London to Paris, Brussels, the Rhine gorge, the Alps, Ardennes and many other places - via the Channel Tunnel.

In the picture

Video footage of special trains, reopened stations, or newly electrified routes is wanted for an RDS video. If you have some video material or would be willing to take some shots over the coming months, please contact David Pitt, 50 Riverside, Cambridge.

WESTMINSTER

Transport Minister for London Steven Norris told the Commons on 20 MAY that negotiations were still continuing on funding for the Jubilee line extension to Canary Wharf.

John Austin-Walker (Lab, Woolwich) asked whether it was the dead hand of the Treasury or the dithering of the Prime Minister stopping the scheme. Tony Banks (Lab, Newham NW) said: "The Minister's department has issued more press statements on the Jubilee line extension going ahead than I have had hot dinners."

CrossRail Project

The object of the CrossRail project is to relieve pressure on the most crowded sections of London's Underground. "I know from my experience the very strong backing for the project," said David Lidington (Conservative, Aylesbury), moving the second reading of the Crossrail Bill on 8 JUNE.

It was a private Bill, promoted by British Rail and London Underground. The CrossRail project was one of the recommendations of the Central London Rail Study published in January 1989. It involved the construction of a new underground in twin tunnels deep underneath central London, starting under Paddington station and ending east of Liverpool Street station. At both the eastern and western ends of that central London stretch, the new link would connect with existing railways. At Stratford, east London, passengers could change to the Docklands Light Railway. Mr Lidington said CrossRail fits into a long-term pattern of adapting London's railways to meet the extra demands from passengers over the years. It was also intrinsically worthwhile for the immediate benefits it would bring.

Need for new lines

New lines are needed urgently, said Brian Wilson (Labour, Canningham North). The current scheme was born out of

a 60 per cent increase in passenger traffic on London Underground between 1982 and 1989. "My friend Tony Banks says the Greater London Council put it forward." The benefit of CrossRail would be to relieve overcrowding on the Central Line, reduce journey times across the south-east, create 19 interchanges with the existing network, relieve overcrowding at stations by moving 30,000 passengers a day to change at Liverpool Street and provide better quality trains.

"There is a desperate need for better quality trains to maintain a railway manufacturing industry. Since the CrossRail Bill was deposited in 1991, plans for the project had been refined. We support CrossRail, together with other major infrastructure projects, on environmental grounds and, perhaps above all, because we realise we will not get out of the recession without kick-starts to the economy."

Mr Norris said he welcomed the opportunity to confirm the Government's support for the Bill. "My friend the Member for Aylesbury had done a magnificent job."

Peter Shore (Lab, Bethnal Green) said that Mr Norris had expressed enthusiasm for private participation in the project, but of what order of magnitude was he thinking? Mr Norris replied that one cannot anticipate what the final result will be; they were looking for the private sector to be fundamentally involved in taking the project forward. "That would involve fairly sizeable funds being injected by the private sector."

What really underpins the argument, he added, was that the project involved the private sector taking on a measure of risk.

Sir Trevor Skeet (Con, Bedfordshire N) said a private venture was an excellent idea. Bearing in mind that we had a public sector borrowing requirement for next year of £50 billion, would the Government

give a guarantee that they would come up with the money? Mr Norris said Sir Trevor was experienced enough to know that there were no given guarantees for expenditure. Buckinghamshire County Council strongly supports the CrossRail project, said Cheryl Gillan (Con, Chesham & Amersham). "Without this important development, central and southern Buckinghamshire would be significantly frustrated."

For any public transport system to be successful, she said, it needs the basic criteria of accessibility and frequency. Capacity and frequency were being increased. They would particularly like the links to Heathrow and the Channel Tunnel route.

First crossrail

Nigel Sparing (Lab, Newham S) said that anyone who found himself living in the late 1850s would find himself on familiar ground. "There were a number of Bills before the House, one of which established the Metropolitan Railway. It was the first London crossrail, and virtually the first underground railway in the world. Questions of finance, planning, services and all the issues which the Commons will discuss were also live issues 140 years ago. "At that time there were also discussions about the salubrious residential areas of Paddington which would be connected to the city by the new rapid means of transport. Members will be surprised to know that, until 1939, trains ran from Southall to Paddington."

"The first crossrail company that gave those extra facilities owned the track and the tunnels, signalling the trains and allowing the Great Western Railway to come in at the other end."

The second crossrail was the District Railway Company, with its original terminus at Mansion House. At one time one could walk to Westminster underground station and get a train to Windsor via the link at Ealing."

In the Lords, Lord Clinton-Davis (Lab) derided the privatisation Bill as inexplicable, implausible and without a friend in the world. "It fragments the railway system at the time when we need a national system. He said that under Mrs Thatcher, the railways were substantially neglected and

virtually discarded. The present administration was sacrificing British Rail on the altar of dogma. The present proposals were complex, bureaucratic, ill-considered and costly. Huge numbers of legal agreements will be necessary, 10,000 for InterCity alone. The cost of operating the railways will increase by 15%. "The outcome will be waste, frustration, bureaucracy and perhaps a few quick profits for the lucky ones. It is a mistake for which the Government, Britain and the travelling public as a whole will pay."

Lords Questions

Lord Clinton-Davis said on 1 JULY that the Railways Bill had introduced some difficulties in what the Government was proposing. Therefore the Lords were urged to consider with care whether the arrangements for BR pensions after privatisation could appropriately be left to delegated legislation.

Lord Renton (Con) said that in the case of a long and detailed Bill such as this, it is good to declare the intention and to do so at an early part of the Bill. "Having said that, I may as well disclose that I started my working life in 1931, after coming down from Oxford, in Paddington Station for the Great Western Railway. Alas, I was not a railway porter. I was not a porter, I was not paid. However, I became a railway enthusiast and I still am."

He accepted the views expressed by Lord Tordoff (Liberal-Democrat) and Lord Ewing (Lab) that they needed to have a new railway scheme which would, from the public point of view, make it attractive to travel by train instead of increasing the traffic on our roads.

The Railways Bill rests on a triad, said Lord Carmichael of Kelvingrove (Lab). We wish to find out what is the Government's view on it. The Bill rests on a triad of rail masters who control a large supporting cast.

"It is a unique venture separating the trains from the tracks on which they run and requiring both the providers of the infrastructure and the operators of the train services to operate commercially. Nowhere else in the world, nor in the entire history of this country, have these things been done." The first member of the triad operates unanimously. The name of Railtrack exists

WATCH

nowhere except in "a guide to the Government's proposals". The Government hopes that soon Railtrack will be running the trains of a myriad of operating companies. Most will hold franchises, with BR itself operating companies.

The second person in the triad is the regulator - a Godfather-like creature. He is to grant licences, guard access rights and seek to protect and promote the users' interests. He will also develop the railway services. Regulators in other privatisations, notably of gas, electricity and telephones, have looked after the availability of services.

The third member of the triad is the franchising director. He is the human face. As someone put it, he is the Mr Nice Guy, the smoothie, the specifier of passenger services for the public good.

Lord Ewing warned: "Far from having a national rail strategy, we shall have a fragmented rail strategy."

"If there is no national strategy, it will be our fault as parliamentarians."

Baroness Castle (Lab) paid tribute to British Rail which had served us magnificently, despite being underfunded, constantly sniped at and with roads always being given preference.

Lord Rodgers (Liberal-Democrat) simply asked: "Why do we have this legislation at all?"

Many new problems

"I have yet to hear anyone speak with any degree of enthusiasm for this measure," said Lord Pevsot of Yeovil (Con) on 5 JULY.

"It seems to me that importing a whole range of new problems is not necessarily the best means of solving those problems with which one is or ought to be familiar."

He wanted to make it clear that this privatisation differed in important respects from others that have come along. First, there was to be no immediate transfer of any significant property to the private sector. Second, a radical change of structure within BR will come first.

"There then arises the question of the continuing and unquantified contribution from public funds. That was not a feature of any of the previous important measures of privatisation. "Can I also be told what will be the reaction to a bid from a foreign-owned railway with support from its government?"

Major changes

In April 1994 there will be major changes. They will not wait for the entry of the private sector, BR will be subject to yet another far-reaching reorganisation. Many of the staff would be doing much the same thing in the same place but they will be aware of changes, not all of them sensible or easy to understand, and some will seem plain stupid.

"I cannot help thinking that under these circumstances the errors of BR will quickly be forgotten or at least forgiven, while those who deny BR the right to bid will incur a considerable measure of censure."

Lord Marsh (Independent) said: "I am not wedded to nationalisation. Quite the reverse. I believe that if we have to privatise, it would be difficult to find a more asinine way of doing so."

Lord Teviot (Con) appealed for rail user groups to be given a role in the consultation process before a franchise is awarded. He said: "The rail user groups now play a significant and constructive role in representing the interests of passengers in their area and at present work closely with British Rail. I understand there are now over 200 such groups in the country."

An invisible man

Railtrack is the sort of invisible man in this farce produced by the Government, said Lord Clinton-Davis on 15 JULY. "In my submission, Railtrack is a vital player and certainly merits a mention in the Railways Bill." Railtrack was all about what functions it would perform. "Who is to provide information at stations? Who is to be responsible for the security of passengers?"

"Are we to understand that BR will start restructuring itself for franchising on the assumption that maintenance depots are currently owned by vertically-integrated profit centres but where a station is used by a single franchisee, the lease will be vested with the franchisee?"

Retrograde idea

Lord Annan (Independent) said: "I have never understood," he said, "how one can run a railway in which the track is separate from those who put the trains over it. Therefore the amendment is a noble attempt to make more sense of that policy." Lord Boyd-Carpenter, he said,



drew attention to a clause which stated that "Railtrack shall not be permitted to sell or in any other way dispose of assets vested in it by the Secretary of State."

Lord Annan said he believed this was a retrograde idea. Under a Labour Government in the 1960s and 70s, BR was encouraged to sell large quantities of derelict land, where houses were built to the great advantage of the country.

Disused railways

Allowing disused railways to be taken over by local authorities was discussed by Lord Wade of Chorlton (Con). Too much onus was placed, he said, on the rail operator.

"It expects the rail operator to maintain the line until the local operator decides whether it wants to use it. That is to place an unfair responsibility on the rail operator."

If the rail operator no longer needed to use the line, the local authority must decide whether it wants it. It must make the decision immediately. The matter must end there.

But Lord Cochrane (Con) said there was a "need to preserve routes virtually in their entirety". He said that in the past, a shortsighted view was taken and a "great deal of trouble caused". Five houses built over former tracks were stopping the Croydon tram link scheme.

The rural side

On the rural side, one is worried that it might become no longer economically viable for the franchisee to use the line for freight, but there might be other uses for it which could be of considerable benefit to the rural economy. Rural lines form important links. If they are not used for rail they could be easily converted to road use. They could be converted for short distances.

They could be used for other activities. The local authority may feel it appropriate to act as the lead organisation to bring sources of finance and continue to operate a rail line which was seen locally to be of importance in providing jobs.

We have already seen examples of links into urban areas being no longer used. However, they are important links which could be used for other services into

urban areas. Lord Carmichael warned that there was nothing to stop road hauliers buying privatised rail companies and transferring the former BR traffic to road.

He said the railways need more encouragement "but I can't see they are likely to be given it."

Safety levels

BR staff operate in an environment that is increasingly constrained by cash limits which are far too rigid. That is not conducive to establishing the high safety levels that the public demands.

A few years ago the safety level on BR was of the highest standard, said Lord Clinton-Davis on 19 JULY.

What happened at Clapham Junction and King's Cross led to very sharp criticism of the railway inspectorate being made by the inspectors - lack of attention to London Underground issues in the latter case.

"I do not believe that sufficient attention was addressed to the issue of the inspectorate itself being too small. Safety requires teamwork of the highest order."

Too fragmented

There was anxiety, he said, that privatisation would further fragment an organisation that is probably too fragmented already. Safety validation was very helpful if the regime was well-established; but it was not the whole or even the main protection of safety. In all areas of transport are excellent employers in the private sector. Many recognise the desirability of combining with trade unions. The Health and Safety Commission and its executive should be supreme on safety matters.

On privatisation in general, Lord Tordoff said: "Taxpayers should be made aware they are funding an expensive exercise." Lord Clinton-Davis added: "We are introducing a fragmentary railway system instead of a national network."

On 21 JULY Lord Carmichael warned that rail freight operators are at a "tremendous" financial disadvantage despite rail's overall economic and environmental advantages. He added: "Perhaps at a later stage, we will be able to create a level playing field."

Pet project for cyclists

By TREVOR GARROD

Why Wilton? I wondered as I pedalled westwards in the driving rain with four other RDS members.

Less than an hour after we set off from Eastleigh station in Hampshire for the 28-mile ride into Wiltshire, the rain started. It carried on raining for most of the next five hours.

But we and two other groups of cyclists heading for Wilton from Basingstoke and Castle Cary wanted to publicise the case for reopening a station at Wilton.

In fact Wilton should never have lost its station in the first place. This small compact town, three miles west of Salisbury, is a tourist attraction — with Wilton House and Park, together with an historic ceramics factory in one of the main streets.

Visitors can pause to watch a gentle game of bowls on an immaculate green by a tree-fringed river or admire the old houses grouped round a market square. But they can't come by train.

A reopened station here would clearly benefit local people too, as has been the case at Templecombe and Feniton, further down the line.

Local people, members of the Wessex branch and the media were on hand at Wilton when we arrived. Our ride was reported in the local press and featured on Meridian TV.

So perhaps it was worth it. At least it allowed us to reflect on the varied nature of the area we travelled through.

Eastleigh, our starting point, has long been an important railway centre and local RDS member Peter Madsen has recently completed his term of office as Mayor.

Chandlers Ford is a widespread residential area which could benefit a great deal by the reopening of its station.

Mottisfont Dunbridge where we stopped for a pub lunch is set in attractive countryside and its station could be exploited a great deal more as a way to enjoy the area without a car.

Salisbury gave the impression of being hostile to cyclists. Stuck on a traffic-clogged "relief road", we had to cycle out of our way just to gain access to the town. An ugly, awkward one-way system made it impossible to find our way through. Even the locals could not direct us through the motorised maze.

Thanks by the way to all members and friends who sponsored us. Personally I raised £115, half of which has gone to the RDS Rail Defence Fund (to fight cuts and closures) and half to the Imperial Fund for Cancer Research.



It's a dog's life without a railway station at Wilton

Picture: Margaret King

Other members raised cash for the Asthma Research Campaign.

The RDS 1994 sponsored cycle ride could be in the North of England or Scotland if there are a few members willing to organise or participate. I should be pleased to hear from anyone who is interested.

NEWSWATCH

● A special train is being run over the "mothballed" Bletchley - Oxford line from High Wycombe, Aylesbury, Winslow, Bicester Town, Islip, Oxford and other destinations on 4 September to Portsmouth and Southsea. Tickets are £17 (£15 from Oxford). Details from 0296 713064 or 0908 502473.

● A whole-day rail tour which includes the reopened Robin Hood line is being planned by the Council for the Protection of Rural England for 9 October. Price is around £19. Details: Duncan Collins, Church End, Main Street, Kinoulton, Nottingham NG12 3EL.

● Ninth-rate Britain: Top spenders on rail in 1993: 1 USA £2553m, 2 France £2453m, 3 Germany £2306m, 4 Italy £1341m, 5 Netherlands £1015m, 6 Switzerland £1003m, 7 Korea £873m, 8 Spain £826m, 9 Britain £807m, 10 Australia £720m. Source: International Railway Journal.

● Law breakers: Lorries are restricted to 40 mph on single carriageway roads. More than 60% of them break the law. A similar percentage of cars break the 70 mph m-way limit.

● The Tory Government which sold off the National Bus Company in the 1980s gave assurances over asset stripping. The assurances proved worthless. The same Government is now giving us assurances about rail closures, fares, railcards and a host of other important issues.

● The Freight Connection exhibition and conference is in Manchester on 5 to 7 October. Details: 071 730 0430. The exhibition at the Euroterminal, World Freight Centre, Trafford Park, is free. Light Rail 93 is at Birmingham on 23 to 25 November.

● A two-day conference on rail privatisation is being held at the Selfridge Hotel in London on 17 and 18 November. Speakers include Transport Secretary John MacGregor, Railway Regulator John Swift, Franchise Director Roger Salmon, Railtrack's commercial director David Moss, Stagecoach managing director Brian Cox and Trainload Freight managing director Leslie Smith. For details, phone AIC on 071 779 8848.

● RDS envelope re-use labels are available with the slogan: For Cleaner Air, Go by Rail. £1.80 per 100 post free from RDS Sales, 139 Harrowdene Gardens, Teddington, Middx TW11 0DN. Cheques payable to Railway Development Society.

Railwatch is edited by Ray King, 4 Christchurch Square, London E9 7HU (Tel 081 985 8548)

Circulation: James Apsey, Hillside House, Acle, Norwich NR13 3DH

Subscription supplies (£3.30 annually): Alan Coker, 11 Franklin Road, Ipswich, Suffolk IP3 9DX

All copy for the next issue, to be published in December, must be in the hands of Mr King by 15 October

Published by the Railway Development Society, an independent voluntary body

General Secretary: Trevor Garrod, 15 Clapham Road, Lowestoft, Suffolk NR32 1RQ (Tel 0502 581721)

Administration: Reg Snow, 48 The Park, Great Bookham, Leatherhead, Surrey KT23 3LS (Tel 0372 452863)

Sales: Alan Harwood, 139 Harrowdene Gardens, Teddington, Middx TW11 0DN

Press officer: David Pickersgill, 171 Lower Oxford Street, Castleford, Yorkshire WF10 4AQ (Tel 0977 510909)

Publicity officer: Roland White, Latymer, The Drive, Belmont, Surrey SM2 7DJ (for free publicity leaflets)

Membership Secretary: Elisabeth Jordan, 13 Amhill Road, Greeton, Corby, Northants NN17 3DN. Membership: £10 per year; pensioners, students and unemployed £5; user groups and parish councils £10; other local authorities £30; companies £40. Families £1 extra per member, after £10

Printed by Print-Out, High Street, Histon, Cambridge CB4 4JD (Tel: 0223 232709)

ISSN 0267-5943