

# Railwatch

AN INDEPENDENT VOICE FOR RAIL USERS

NO 58 DECEMBER 1993

90p

**‘ I have been to England. I have looked at the way they are trying to privatise British Rail. And I know it will fail. ’**

— Masashi Matsuda, President JR East, Japanese railways

Virtually everyone knows it won't work but the Government pressed ahead anyway. The privatisation Bill completed its shoddy and jambolic passage through Parliament on 4 November.

A whole host of inexperienced outsiders are now let loose to meddle and tinker with the railway system when what it obviously needs is proper investment.

The Railways Act gives no safeguards about fare levels, family railcards, minimum service levels and many other reasonable public concerns. The Bill's progress merely highlighted the contempt with which the Government views the industry and its users.

British Rail is relegated to the position of operator of "last resort" even though it is more efficient than many private companies and internationally recognised as a success.

Rail workers are insulted for clinging to the ideals of working for a public service. Rail users have been largely ignored.

In turn though the Government is now viewed with suspicion by an increasing number of people who have closely watched its appalling handling of this "ghastly Bill".

Rail workers believe the Treasury is trying to jack their £4 billion pension fund. Users expect fares to rise, services to be cut and eventually lines to be at risk.

After a series of secret deals, the suspicion remains that there is a hidden agenda behind this legislation, inspired either by the dead hand of the Treasury or the malign influence of the road lobby.

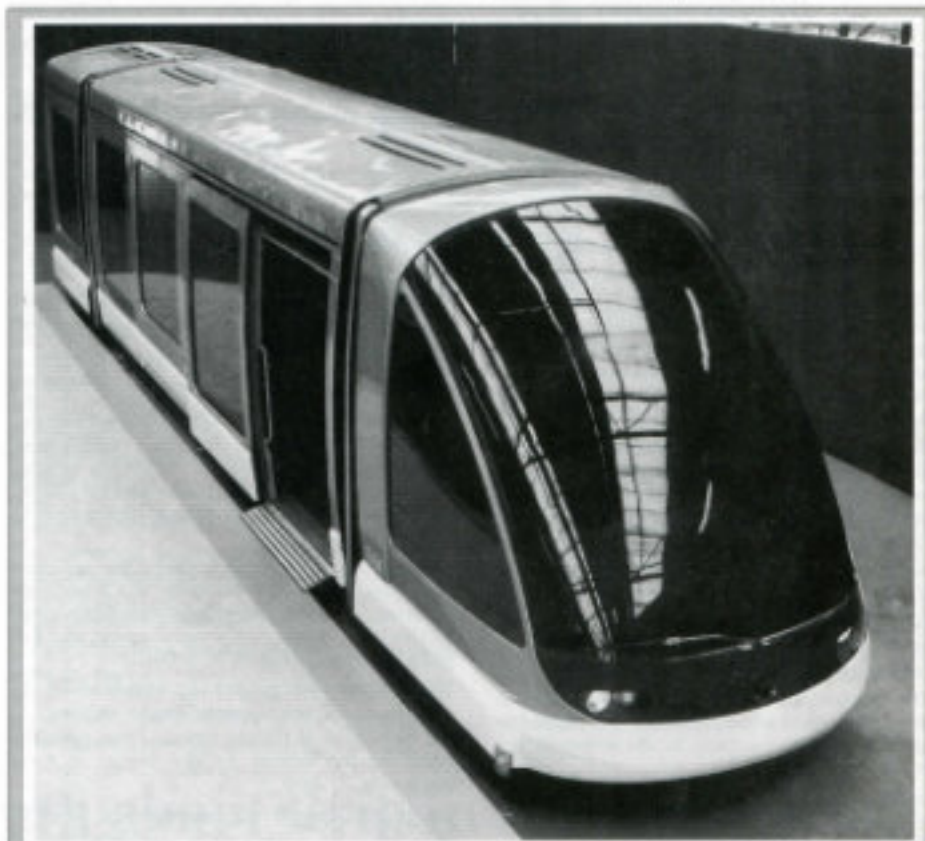
To add insult to injury, the Government is now considering spending millions of pounds sending out 20 million leaflets explaining its position.

Members of RDS and just about every rail expert in Britain, as well as visiting foreigners, have been warning the Government and Tory MPs that privatisation will be a disaster.

As many as 83% of the public have also denounced it, according to one survey, and 93% of senior rail managers, according to another.

Suzanne May of Transport 2000 told a Save Our Railways rally in October: "It seems to be a policy designed to push people on to the roads just when there is an awareness that we must reduce use of the car to protect the environment and reduce pollution."

Bishop Hugh Montefiore said: "It will be an



**This is the sleek new face of the tram. Made in Britain by ABB, it will be exported to Strasbourg in February. By the end of 1994, 26 of the low-floor vehicles will be operating. While a few British cities have woken up to the tram's advantages, most remain locked in their fatal love affair with the car. It's about time they cleaned up their track record.** Picture: ABB

unmitigated disaster for the British people — and the Government."

Labour's John Prescott said: "This has absolutely nothing to do with providing a better rail service or saving money. It will actually cost more money. It is all about robbing the rail workers' pension fund."

Meanwhile Transport Secretary John MacGregor is still boasting of the Government's "huge road programme".

More than ever, RDS general secretary Trevor

Garrod warned the rail users conference: "We need a strong, well-informed and articulate rail users lobby if privateers are to muscle in and start running the trains we rely on." We must complain loudly whenever there is a deterioration of services.

And we are still waiting for proper go-aheads for a whole series of rail projects — Thameslink 2000, the Channel Tunnel fast link, CrossRail, Dornoch, electrification of the Midland main line and upgrading the West Coast main line.

## Helping hand for disabled

Several members have pointed out that *Railwatch* is difficult to read for people with sight problems so we are considering two initiatives. First editorial board member James Apsley is looking into the question of providing *Railwatch* on audio tape. Second we will be offering limited numbers of double-size *Railwatch* to members.

There are several RDS committee members with special interest in the needs of the disabled and the national executive has appointed Peter Lawrence (tel 0603 743446) as officer for the disabled.

One member is at present researching a pilot TV programme on transport matters which might raise some of the issues which concern disabled travellers.

We would like to hear from people who would be interested in the tape, the large size *Railwatch* or might like to talk about the TV programme. In the first instance, please contact editor Ray King, 4 Christchurch Square, London E9 7HU (081 985 8548). InterCity has a good record of providing facilities for dis-

abled travellers and other organisations are learning too. European Passenger Services is intending to make facilities available for disabled people to travel in international trains through the Channel Tunnel. There will be positions for two wheelchair users per train in first class, although first class fares will not be levied. Lavatories and sleeper trains will also be accessible to wheelchairs.

At Waterloo International there will be ramps, lifts, travellers, escalators and a low-level desk without windows in the ticket office. There will also be tactile platform edges to alert blind people.

Union Railways are providing a double pack of audio cassettes to 1,000 organisations throughout North and East London, Kent and Essex to help blind and partially sighted people understand the plan to build the fast link from the Channel Tunnel to London.

Union Railways has produced the tapes in association with Talking Newspapers Enterprises of Heathfield, Sussex (Claire Campbell 0435 866102).

# Just the job

Investment in railways is one of the best ways to stimulate the economy and creates twice as many jobs as road building.

Not only does it guarantee jobs in high-tech industries making trains, advanced signalling equipment and information technology, it also expands the use of the most efficient transport mode — railways.

Building more roads however creates a few jobs for tipper lorry drivers and low-grade labourers but encourages use of the most wasteful transport mode — roads.

British-based railway equipment makers and design-and-build teams need investment at home if they are to continue to be successful in export markets.

This market is becoming ever more lucrative as the world cries out for advanced railway systems.

The Americans are considering buying a high-speed rail system virtually off the shelf but while they make up their minds they are testing a French TGV, a German ICE and a Swedish tilting train. A British train was noticeably absent.

The British Government has still not woken up to this changing world. It has delayed rail improvement projects and starved the railways of investment cash. Yet Secretary of State John MacGregor has justified his M25 widening proposals on the grounds of creating jobs in the construction industry.

Up to a point! But they will be short-term jobs. Building line 1 of the Midland Metro by contrast would create 1,100 jobs, then 100 people will be needed to operate it and further 1,500 jobs will be created through economic regeneration.

A new leaflet on jobs and rail investment is included with this copy of *Railwatch*. Please send it on to a key person who might be influenced by it, whether an MP, a local councillor or a newspaper, ideally with a covering letter urging that it should be read carefully.

If you require extra copies, send an SAE to our publicity officer, Roland White, Latymer, The Drive, Belmont, Surrey SM2 7DJ.

If you think more copies of the leaflet should be printed so that it can be more widely circulated, please enclose a donation which will go to printing costs. We have so far produced 6,000, most of which were paid for by RDS.

The Railway Industry Association made a small donation to extend the print run.

### Lesson one in privatisation

Tory hopes of a private train running to their party conference in Blackpool collapsed when not enough delegates were prepared to pay the £95 return fare.

# Many-headed monster

One of the major themes of the rail users conference in October was how we are all going to learn to deal with the many-headed monster which the Government has let loose on the rail system with its privatisation plans.

Even before Parliament gave its approval for the change, British Rail was in the throes of another wide-ranging series of reorganisations.

Privatisation's immediate effect will be to turn InterCity from a single entity which is making a £100 million profit into eight train operating companies most of which will need to be subsidised.

This ironic side effect was revealed by the best known railwayman of our time Chris Green, InterCity's managing director, who was guest speaker at the conference.

"We will make a big profit one day and be needing a subsidy the next." He joked: "The railways in Britain are world leaders at reorganisation."

He also agreed that privatisation would mean that there were more jobs for managers after being told by one delegate that 35 additional managers had been recruited to run the Gatwick Express now that it was a shadow franchise.

He also admitted that Network SouthEast had recruited 10 people to "walk the platforms" to persuade people to choose NSE trains rather than the Gatwick Express.

Mr Green, who is returning to ScotRail to lead it into the uncertain post-privatisation era, was given an enthusiastic welcome by the 120 delegates at the conference.

He predicted that there will be ferocious battles for funding if the railway is to be turned into a modern system.

Mr Green, who has already revitalised ScotRail and Network SouthEast, pointed out that InterCity operates 780 trains a day — roughly equivalent to the number of planes flown by British Airways.

Each of the new Channel Tunnel trains will be equivalent to two jumbo jets and Waterloo International could hold the equivalent of 10 jumbos. But the big advantage of the railways is the massive capacity they still have, compared to the traffic-ridden roads and airports.

## The expensive truth about Britain's loading gauge

By GEORGE BOYLE

The last issue of *Railwatch* contained an article about the restrictive UK loading gauge and a new report that alleges that conversion to a proposed "piggyback gauge" can be made for some £300 million — one tenth of the previous estimates.

It sounds too good to be true, and unfortunately it is. We would all like to see the UK gauge able to cope with continental size wagons or even the slimmed down piggyback gauge.

But this report has made a crucial error in its assumptions about the existing loading gauge which has caused this tenfold reduction in estimated costs.

In studying the existing loading gauge, the consultants have assumed that all bridges rebuilt for electrification purposes were built

## RUG 93

Rail User Groups conference  
University College London  
23 October 1993

Rail has come to the rescue of road-congested Heathrow in the shape of the new link to Paddington which would take people to central London in 15 minutes compared to the 60 minutes it takes on the Tube.

And the French were preparing high-speed trains to break through the 300 mph barrier. The TGV now has the take-off speed of a jet and is the natural choice for journeys of up to 300 miles.

British InterCity has 40% of the market for journeys of 250 miles.

Rail would also be the best way for British travellers to get to Paris and Brussels.

In Britain, the big question was how many liabilities would the new train operating companies be saddled with? Who would be taking responsibility for maintaining the Forth Bridge for instance? And who would want to rely on subsidies from the Treasury?

There was already a marked reluctance to provide cash for CrossRail which was more important than the Channel Tunnel fast link because it would transform life for 10 million people.

"Of course the right time to authorise these things is in the middle of a recession," said Mr Green. "But I can't imagine it happening in Britain. We are in an investment limbo. Just look at the row there has been even over the funding of the Jubilee line."

He reminded us that Britain's prototype 225 high speed train is sitting in a shed in Derby because there was no money to upgrade the West Coast main line.

"Britain invented the tilting train but Sweden built it," said Mr Green. He revealed that the electrical infrastructure on the West Coast main line is well past its best.

"We have to start up the trains in turn. If we

started them all up together, it would blow the fuse."

He said the InterCity 125, "still my favourite train", would keep the Great Western main line going until around the year 2,000. Then it would have to be electrified although a tilting diesel might serve Plymouth.

He revealed that InterCity was opening a telesales office in Newcastle (0800 430450) so people can buy rail tickets with "plastic money" and have them delivered to their homes.

Answering a question about cycles on trains, Mr Green promised: "I must look at this when I get to Scotland where there is a great demand. But there are no easy solutions."

Giving advice to groups who wanted to fight to keep network benefits, Mr Green said: "Target the things that really matter."

At the conference workshop sessions in the afternoon, delegates did just that.

One group studied publicity and media relations while another tried to identify problems which would be thrown up by privatisation and find solutions for user groups trying to tackle them.

One of the overriding themes was that local authorities will have to take greater interest in rail, as central government tries to divest itself of the responsibility.

RDS president Michael Caton had this message for delegates: "Keep on at your MPs. If rail privatisation fails it is going to be a huge political failure for the Government. Keep up the pressure."

**See for yourself:** There are a limited number of places available for an RDS visit on Thursday 27 January at 1330 to the new Waterloo International station. If interested, please send an SAE to Paul Krebs, 24 Bartok House, 30 Lansdowne Walk, London W11 3LT.

**Go for it:** Places are available after the official opening of the Channel Tunnel on 6 May on the Eurostar trains from London for day trips to Paris, Lille, or Brussels. Cost would probably be around £70. If you are interested, please write to Roland White, Latymer, The Drive, Belmont, Surrey SM2 7DJ. Please state your preferred destination, time of departure from London and whether you would like organised sightseeing, a transport visit or to go off on your own. Enclose an SAE.

TREVOR  
GARROD'S  
VIEW



Europe  
here  
we go

When the Channel Tunnel opens next year, it will be 30 years since I first set foot on foreign soil. It is also nearly 30 years since I had to write an essay entitled *Le Tunnel sous la Manche* (The Tunnel under the Channel) for A-level French.

In those days, it was still possible to board an old-style steamer at Harwich and watch cars being lowered by crane into the hold.

The three decades since have seen roll-on roll-off ferries become virtually universal. Meanwhile there has also been a vast increase in air traffic.

Britain's entry into the European Community made the movement of people and goods between the 12 countries much easier.

The Channel Tunnel gives Britain a fixed rail link to Europe for the first time and is vital in allowing rail to compete in the international transport world.

Its commissioning over the coming months will be a cause for celebration by those of us in RDS who have campaigned for it.

A team of RDS members and supporters has been working on a book, *Europe beyond the Tunnel*, which will be published in March jointly with Leading Edge.

The book encourages people to travel by train to the near continent and is the logical extension to our Britain by Rail books. Look out for details in the next *Railwatch*.

We have pressed for years for a high speed line from London to the tunnel, such as the French have already built and the Belgians are building.

Our international and EC committee recently produced an eight-page report on the Channel Tunnel fast link. It has been sent to nearly 50 bodies including the Department of Transport, British Rail and local authorities.

We had meetings in summer and early

autumn with Union Railways, Kent County Council, the London Borough of Newham and Ashford Borough Council.

No one route is perfect (as the citizens of Amiens, who yearned in vain to be on the French high speed line, will tell you) but the more argument there is about details and alternatives, the longer we will have to wait for the line to be built and the greater will be the pressure for new roads and motorways to be built through Kent.

Our enthusiasm for the tunnel does not close our eyes to other links with the Continent however. We do not expect the ferry companies to shut up shop when it opens and rail links to ports should be maintained.

That is why we lodged an objection to the closure of Dover Western Docks station. At the very least, it should remain open until the effect of the tunnel on the ferries is fully evaluated.

Another aspect of our international work is forging links with similar organisations in other countries. In October, during a visit to Paris, I met members of the FNAUT (National Federation of Associations of Transport Users) which provides a voice for users of rail and other environment-friendly modes of transport.

We are endeavouring to establish a relationship with the Verkehrs Club Deutschland which has similar aims. Our freight committee made useful contacts in Germany when it was researching the carriage of hazardous cargo.

With European elections as well as the tunnel opening in the next six months, RDS needs to expand these links. We would be pleased to hear from other members with potentially useful contacts on the Continent.

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



# Ivory towers of pollution

By **TREVOR GARROD**

The Department of Transport has failed to address the impact of transport on the environment. A recent document issued in the name of Transport Secretary John MacGregor suggested that motorists could help "the environment" by not throwing litter out of their car windows. Wow!

We have over the years tried to persuade the department to wake up to reality and treat rail fairly. Recently we also sent comments on its *Paying for Better Motorways* document.

Although there are obvious problems like traffic diverting on to even less suitable roads, RDS welcomes the principle of limiting the demand for road space by charging. The demand for rail space is already constrained by having expensive tickets at peak times.

We suggest that a first step to road pricing would be to abolish road tax while at the same time increasing fuel duty. In the long term, sophisticated charging for urban road space could raise revenue to be invested in local transport.

We also suggest that revenue could be raised by abolishing company car tax concessions and by taxing car parking in central areas.

The Department of Transport — often accused of being the department of roads — occupies a tower block in Marsham Street, next door to the Department of the Environment which seems to have a few more robust ideas about transport than its neighbour.

It has issued draft planning policy guidance note 13 which suggests that abandoned rail routes should be preserved so the option of reopening is retained.

That is only sensible and reflects RDS policy. It is the reason why we and Transport 2000 called for the Bedford southern bypass to be carried over the Bedford-Sandy trackbed on a bridge.

We have also spelled out the environmental advantages of rail in a response to a DoE consultation paper on sustainable development strategy. We called for more electrification, new stations and reopenings coupled with fiscal measures to allow rail to compete with road on a level playing field.

We also sent the DoE further copies of the 1992 RDS document *Our Environment - A Bigger Role for Rail* (£5.25 post free from our sales office).

We have not yet reached the ideal world in which transport decisions are made on environmental as well as commercial and political grounds, but at least the DoE is making a few modest steps in the right direction.

One of its biggest failings however is the proper monitoring of traffic pollution levels. Test sites have been put in quiet streets, parks and pedestrian areas giving a misleading impression of the dangers at the kerbside. Even here "very poor" air quality was reported.

The Department of the Environment has only 12 urban air quality monitoring stations, while Germany has 200.

So inadequate and misleading is it that the European Commission was considering taking Britain to the European Court. Traffic fumes are now blamed for the explosion in asthma cases among children. 2,000 people a year now die in asthma attacks, more victims of the Government's policy of promoting car use.

Laboratory tests at St Bartholomew's Hospital in London have found that the body's production of chemicals which trigger asthma increases fivefold after exposure to levels of nitrogen dioxide found at the roadside.

Friends of the Earth accuse the Government of massaging the statistics to disguise the levels of pollution.

# Escape from the freeze

New electric trains made their public debut in October to provide Birmingham with a modern Cross-city service.

The three-car 90 mph trains are running from Lichfield to Redditch cutting journey times by 20 minutes. The project was approved in 1990 when the Tory government was worried about losing the Mid-Staffordshire by-election.

Commuters had been getting increasingly angry about delays and cancellations to services operated by 30-year-old diesels.

Now though, while rail projects throughout Britain are frozen, the Cross-city trains are running.

However the muddled anti-rail thinking at the Department of Transport and the Treasury which delayed the project is revealed in a new book about the line written by RDS member John Boynton.

John's book *Rails Across the City* admits there is little hope that this backward thinking will change in the near future, especially with the added problem of privatisation.

His 112-page book is aimed at both rail enthusiasts and general reader and is the first book about the 33-mile line from its Victorian beginnings in 1837 to the present day.

He talked to rail workers, including one who began his career at Bourville shed in 1916, as well as delving into official BR archives.

He gives authentic glimpses into railway life, including the traumatic arrival of ambulance trains at Selly Oak with wounded soldiers from the First World War battle of the Somme.

He also reveals the enthusiasm which greeted the first diesels in the 1950s and how the line became the busiest diesel-operated line in the world, carrying 30,000 passengers per day.

The book contains over 80 photographs, including ones of the Lichfield line under construction during the 1880s, and newly discovered pictures of the Sutton Coldfield crash of 1955. There are many studies of steam and diesel by local amateur photographer Peter Shoemith.

The 24 maps and plans include Cadbury's internal railway at its fullest extent.

The early days of the railway saw the first widespread use of imported locomotives and the world's first Post Office trains. It was also realised here as early as 1841 that a national integrated network was preferable to hostile



Before the electric age dawned for Birmingham's Cross-city line: A Redditch diesel unit tackles the snow at Longbridge Junction, January 1982. Picture: Peter Shoemith

competition. What a pity that we have determinedly ignorant political masters!

*Rails Across the City* is published by Midland Books, PO Box 323, Kidderrin, Worcs DY10 4YY. ISBN 0 9522248 0 1 printed on art paper with laminated pages and costs £9.95 including post and pack can be obtained direct from the publisher (make cheques payable to Midland Books). A donation of 50p will be made to RDS national funds for each order. I mention that you are a member of RDS.

## Abroad on the Broads

A new book which helps the rail ramblers discover the distinctive areas of North Norfolk and the Broads has just been published by friendly Leading Edge.

The publisher joined forces with the Authority and Regional Railways to produce what it believes is the "essential" new guide which also includes the Suffolk B. Author Debbie Bartlett was jointly fun leading Edge and the Broads Authority. Additional support from British Rail. It includes fascinating historical information

about the area, particularly the development of its rail network, which even today provides probably the best enjoyed by any national park area in Britain.

There are 17 self-guided trails starting and finishing at railway stations, many of which also offer the option for those travelling by boat, of starting from a convenient mooring. Among walks featured are routes from Berney Arms station on Halvergate Marshes to the Norwich-Great Yarmouth via Reedham line, identified by many commentators as vulnerable to closure under privatisation proposals.

The publishers and the Broads Authority hope that the book — which is generously illustrated with black and white and colour photographs by Richard Denyer — will help increase awareness and use of this and other lines in the area.

The book will be available from Broads Authority information centres as well as good bookshops.

Discovering *North Norfolk and the Broads* by Debbie Bartlett is published by Leading Edge Press & Publishing. ISBN 0 948135 31 X. It is available for £7.75 (including post and packing) from RDS Sales, 139 Harrowdene Gardens, Teddington, Middx TW11 0DN. Make cheques payable to RDS.

## And now for some more good vs on reopenings

By **ALAN BEVAN**

This year's RDS national draw raised £1,500 for the national reopenings campaign. We will be spending the money carefully to ensure that more stations reopen in future.

Following the success of our reopenings conferences at Nottingham and Maesteg, we will be holding another at Clitheroe on 4 June. Full details in the next *Railwatch*.

Despite the way the Government has starved the railways of cash while lavishing it on new roads, 15 stations did reopen in 1992-3. They were Bentley, Featherstone, Pontefract Tanshell, Streethouse, Pencoed, Glenrothes with

Thornton, Hornbeam Park, Pontyclun, Castle Street, Maesteg Ewenny Road, Tondy, Garth, Wildmill and Whifflet.

Sixteen more stations have reopened (seven in 1993-4: Adwick, Hucknall, Lead, Manchester Airport, Gretna Kirkwood, Bargeddie, Bailleston, Vernon, Carmyle, Maryhill, Sun Lambhill, Possil Park, Ashfield, Per Digby). In the New Year, we will tell you another 30 or so stations opening in 1994.

Next year the Norwich to Yarmouth Reedham celebrates its 150 year anniversary. It will provide an opportunity to high

service the line has already given and its importance to today's transport infrastructure. Many other lines celebrate their 150th next year. A little historical research could give user groups an ideal opportunity for publicity.

● **New Futures for Rural Rail** conference at York on 28 January. Details from Paul Salvesson, Transnet, 6 School Lane, Berry Brow, Huddersfield HD4 7LT. Phone 0484 665273. Fax 081 854 3640.

● A report from Leicester City Council sets out the substantial cost benefits of traffic calming. £1 million has been spent on 74 streets, saving £680,000 a year in accident costs. The annual rate of return is an impressive 70%.

## LOCAL ACTION

### North West

By **Robert Cummings**

**Olympian task:** The failure of Manchester's Olympic bid has cast doubts on a number of exciting rail infrastructure projects including a rail loop around the city centre and a light railway through East Manchester to Ashton-under-Lyne. A successful bid would also have secured the go-ahead for vital electrification works between Manchester and Blackpool as well as on the Liverpool-Manchester-York route and Metrolink lines to Salford Quays, Trafford Park, Oldham and Rochdale. The branch will be keeping up the pressure to ensure these vital projects commence. Officials from BR, local authorities and Manchester Airport have been urging the Government for loan guarantees to allow work to start on a south facing curve for the highly successful airport line before parliamentary powers expire.

**Premier problem:** News of the Government's failure to award its £150 million leasing concession to the desperately underfunded West Coast main line has angered local rail users and politicians. This decision is particularly upsetting when, at the drop of a hat, millions can be found for a motorway to run alongside the existing M62 which will destroy 362 homes and blight thousands more. Campaigners have promised the Government a battle that will make Twyford Down pale into insignificance.

**Fare puzzle:** A new Merseyrail electric service started running between Liverpool and Chester with the winter timetable, reducing journey times and cutting out the need to change on to a diesel shuttle at Hooton. While Merseyrail has reduced fares on the route, passengers on the Wirral lines travelling beyond Liverpool on Saver tickets have been faced with fare rises of up to 25% (Port Sunlight to Manchester increased from £7.90 to £9.80). It is assumed this is an accountability exercise designed to bolster the finances of the Merseyrail electric services — about the only North West lines to attract any private sector interest.

**Useful:** The branch has helped form a new rail user group for the lines to Marple and New Mills from Manchester. The Goyt Valley Rail Users Association is affiliated to the RDS and can count on forty plus members after only one public meeting — at which RDS leaflets were freely available. We hope to give a helping hand to a second group, formed in Mossley after speculation that the station would be closed because of low platforms. Though it would appear that this is not the case, we believe there is enough interest to form a users group on the line which links Manchester Victoria and Huddersfield.

### Scotland

By **Douglas Smart**

**Subsidised cars:** The *All Change* document produced by Central Regional Council promoting a switch of funds from road to public transport was an excellent example for other regional councils to follow. At least that's what we thought. Sadly we have now had to tell Central it might as well tear up *All Change*. Central decided to shelve the much-vaunted reopening of Stirling-Alloa as soon as ScotRail said it could not afford its contribution. But Central went ahead with a £3.4 million car park for Stirling which required a £15 per head contribution from local government taxpayers. Cost for the project has already gone through the roof. We have told

Central that car parks should not be subsidised by taxpayers.

**Let's be fair:** We have also called for safety improvements at level crossings to be paid for by road users because it is stupid, law-breaking motorists who cause the problems.

**Protest now:** I urge everyone to phone the Scottish Office hotline, 0345 741741, to protest about the office's obsession with roads at the expense of rail.

**Write on:** An expert analysis of the railway scene, including a prediction of impending disaster caused by privatisation, was provided at a branch meeting by *The Scotsman's* Allan McLean, the only transport correspondent in Scotland. The other papers have motoring correspondents. He pointed out that all the men who make decisions on transport do so from the back of chauffeur-driven motor cars.

### South West

By **Gerard Duddridge**

**Tender touch:** The new station for Ivybridge (population 9,357) and district is set to go ahead. Devon County Council has put the associated construction work out to tender for commencement in December this year. The plans suggest that it will be at Rutt Lane on the far east side of the town. Only 41% of the town will be within a mile of the station, as Dartmoor to the north and the A38 trunk road to the south have dictated an east-west elongation to the town's growth. The branch suggested the old goods yard site to bring 86% of the town within one mile of the station, but it appears that health and safety criteria relating to the track cant and platforms rule this out.

**Promotion:** The county is promoting the new Exe Vale station on the Exmouth branch in Exeter, to be built near the M5 motorway junction and Sowton industrial estate. A Sunday service on the Exeter-Okelhampton line, as a prelude to a full commuter service, is being considered. It is also examining the feasibility of reopening Cullompton (Exeter-Taunton) and Kingskerswell on the Paignton branch, a route which might see its trains extended to Goodrington (where land is available for park and ride) and perhaps even Churston to serve Brixham two miles away, a town twice the size of Ivybridge.

**Bridging the gap:** Another welcome development must be the completion of the footbridge across the river Dart, to Totnes, to give access from the BR station to the preserved Backfastleigh line.

**Cost penalty:** The long-planned diversion of the Newquay branch from the Luxulyan route, to bring it direct to St Austell on upgraded/rebuilt mineral lines via St Dennis Junction-Burgallow is unlikely to take place. Health and safety requirements relating to the line in the vicinity of the china clay pits have forced up costs.

**Scope for improvement:** Devon and Cornwall escaped the savage rail cuts this winter. But problems remain, such as the absence of evening and Sunday services on the Looe and Newquay branches. Even from Exeter, there is no winter Sunday service towards Plymouth and Exmouth until after midday.

● 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.



# WESTMINSTER

## Tube investment

There has been a substantial investment in modernising the London Transport Central Line in recent times. Elsewhere on London Transport we all know of defective stations, said **John Marshall** (Con, Hendon) on 26 July.

On many routes, he said, the rolling stock is old, uninviting, graffiti ridden, and often rather dirty. In fact the first impression of London for overseas visitors was based on the Northern and District lines; they would not return to, for example, the US saying that London was a modern city.

In Autumn 1992 the Government cut investment in the core services. **Keith Hill** (Lab, Streatham) said that hundreds if not thousands of his residents in the Clapham and Balham districts of Streatham rely on the Northern line stations of Clapham Common, Clapham South and Balham for their day-to-day travel needs.

Speaking as a member of the Select Committee on Transport, he confirmed that the background is that of persistent long-term decline in the quality and efficiency of our transport system in London, gross overcrowding on our rail and underground lines and at our stations.

But congestion and an inadequate public transport system brings problems and formidable costs as well. The implications of neglect of our transport infrastructure for London's already precarious economy are both dire and well attested.

In the 1992 autumn statement, London Underground's capital budget was slashed by 30% — an immediate result of which will be the delay until 1998 of the full upgrading of the stations at the southern end of the Northern line. More alarming still was the fact that the Underground investment programme would mean a delay in the modernisation of rolling

stock, track and signalling on the Northern line until the year 2005 — 10 years away. That is if the modernisation ever takes place.

As Mr Denis Tunnicliffe, Managing Director of London Underground, has said: "What a way to run a railway? The London commuter is being forced to pay the price of the government's economic mismanagement."

The Government would have a chance in the Budget of committing a sustained and higher level of funding. Few would deny that London's transport system is in a poor state, said **Tony Banks** (Lab, Newham NW). That is to acknowledge that it has been underfunded for years.

"The last Labour GLC declared its intention to invest heavily in capital projects in London Transport. The Conservative government of the day used various devices to block our aim."

Mr Banks said one needs to look at the position today to see how the Government has let London down badly.

## Modern metro

There was a time, Mr Banks added, when we thought that the Government, changing its mind, realised how important it was to invest in an efficient transport system for the capital city; it would be to the benefit not merely of London but the whole economy.

Just before the 1992 General Election, in the 1991 autumn statement, the Government made a commitment to provide investment to meet the target of a "decently modern metro". The Government safely won the election of April 1992, having promised new projects such as CrossRail and the Jubilee Line extension.

Such projects are often quoted by the Government when it talks of record sums of investment for future years. Construction has not even begun. Having safely won the

election of 1992, they managed to renege on all of their promises. The 1992 autumn statement is crucial to what is happening to London Underground in particular. In November 1991 the then Secretary for Transport had pledged the necessary investment and said that by 1993-94 London Underground investment in the existing railway should be more than £700 million a year. It had not worked out that way.

## Trams come back

"I remember travelling on exactly the same trains that run today, when I made the journey from my school at Kennington Oval to Tooting," said Mr Banks. The stations also seemed remarkably the same.

Trams were running in those days. He did not know whether the Minister was old enough to remember trams and trolley buses. "I was a babe in arms at the time, but I still remember them and much deplore their passing."

Trams had their guaranteed road space, and no one got in the way of one of those great clanking vehicles. Introduced in their place were unenforceable bus lanes. But now Croydon is considering a tramlink, and there are trams in Manchester and Sheffield.

Trams are making a comeback. They never left some continental cities. The government got transport planning badly wrong. London and other cities have suffered as a consequence.

## The debate on privatisation

The Government announced on 28 October that it would accept the Lords amendment allowing BR to bid for franchises. Transport Minister **Lord Caille** said: "The Government accepts that there might be circumstances in which it might be appropriate for BR to be a franchisee."

"But the Government remains of the view that it would not be appropriate to treat BR in the same way as other potential franchisees."

He said the Government would table its own amendments to restrict BR's right to bid. Labour's **Loré Clinton-Davis** accused Transport Secretary **John MacGregor** of sleight of hand and trying to subvert the will of the House of Lords. Liberal Democrat **Loré Toroff**

asked if it was intended to make BR the franchisee of last resort. On 1 November, the Government announced that it would give only two days for the House of Commons to consider 470 Lords amendments. Then the Transport Secretary said the discussion would also be guillotined. Labour deputy leader **Margaret Beckett** (Lab Derby S) said cutting the time for debate was a constitutional outrage because the Bill had been fundamentally re-written since it was last in the Commons. She told ministers: "You're a gutless bunch. You know there is no support for this Bill in the country or the House, and you've run away from it."

**Gerrymandering**  
Labour transport spokesman **Brian Wilson** (Cunningham N) said: "The body of opinion outside the Commons will be that this discredited legislation is being rushed through by people who fear debate on these matters." He said the opposition objected to the way the measure was being altered "right up to the eleventh hour in the 59th minute". At Prime Minister's Question Time, **Doug Hoyle** (Lab Warrington N) told Mr Major: "The imposition of a guillotine on the Railways Bill is an affront to democracy that has caused disquiet not only on this side of the House but on his benches as well because it will curtail discussion on such vital subjects as pensions, railcards and the British Rail bid for franchises and it will be seen by the public as a cheap, gerrymandering attempt to get an unpopular measure through this House." Mr Major denied it was a negation of democracy. Former Tory Leader of the House **John Biffen** (Con, Shropshire N) said MPs should not have to despatch this extensive and contentious legislation in two days. Backbenchers should stand up for their rights. Before the guillotine was announced, Mr Simpson said the "rail fragmentation" being brought in by the Government would reportedly need next year's annual grant to the railways to be almost doubled to £2 billion.

"This phenomenal increase in taxpayers' subsidy would not go towards developing our railways but towards paying for the gargantuan additional costs inherent in rail fragmentation

and privatisation. The proposed level of grant is far in excess of what has ever been given to British Rail.

If British Rail were given an annual grant of £2 billion, nobody would be talking about privatising the railway. We would be boasting like our continental neighbours of how good our state railway is." As it was, "not a single extra train would run, not a single extra passenger would be carried." It would go towards the cost of rail privatisation.

**Madcap**  
**Nick Harvey** (Lib Dem, Devon N) said the Government had earlier talked of holding back the floodgates of private sector interest in the railways.

There is virtually nobody showing any interest whatever in coming in. This whole madcap plan for privatisation is now dependent on management-employee buy-outs. The Government is flogging a dead horse." He said the guillotine was another example of Government incompetence, like the poll tax. He said: "If they didn't railroad things through in such an arrogant way, they wouldn't have to come back to put right their own mistakes. It's little wonder that we are already hearing rumours that the Government is realising that the Bill before us is technically incompetent and that another Bill may have to be brought back in the next session to clear up some of the loose ends."

**Contemptuous**  
**Brian Wilson** was contemptuous of the deal "stitched up" with potential Tory rebels to get the Bill through. He said: "What we are left with now is a total contradiction. Yes British Rail will be allowed to bid but only if the Franchise Director can find nobody else to bid against them and if he can, British Rail will be sent off into undignified retreat as the operator of last resort."

"That is not fair competition. It is a rigged perversion of competition. It is deeply contemptuous of British Rail and its workforce." "It is also deeply contemptuous of the British taxpayer because what the Secretary of State is saying is that even if BR is the most effective potential bidder, in fact especially if BR is the most effective potential bidder against a private interest, then BR will be excluded from competing to clear the way for that private bidder."

# WATCH

## Pathetically few

**Keith Hill** said the real truth was that virtually no interest was being shown in the proposed franchises.

"Isn't the Government trying to exclude BR in order to make it easier for the pathetically few private bidders, however expensive and however inefficient they are likely to be, to enter the scene? Former public transport minister **David Mitchell** (Con, Hampshire NW) said if BR were to bid, the private sector would be frightened off. He regretted that the Lords had amended the Bill to allow BR to bid.

**Tim Rathbone** (Con, Lewes) said: "I particularly welcome the requirement on the Franchising Director to promote competition for franchises. I hope Mr MacGregor will confirm that in most cases this will require the inclusion of BR in the bidding process, to promote competition, and to provide the benchmark against which new entrants to the railway will and can be judged."

**Gradualist**  
**Gary Waller** (Con Keighley) said he welcomed the fact that the Government had not gone for a "big bang". "It has gone for a gradualist approach. As time goes by, the benefits of this legislation will become clearer." But **John Prescott** (Lab, Hull E) warned: "We believe it should be a public sector railway. We want people who believe in a publicly owned system running a public railway system."

Public Transport Minister **Roger Freeman** said: "We are talking about the management and staff of BR, either alone or in conjunction with other private sector companies, joining to bid for franchises." BR would not be allowed to bid in all circumstances. He said no decision had been taken on the financial regime for Railtrack. It would be decided after the Budget.

His boss **John MacGregor** said the Government now accepted that BR should have the right to bid for franchises.

**Discretion**  
But he added: "The Franchising Director may exclude BR from bidding but only when he considers it to be desirable to do so in the interests of promoting management and employee bids, in promoting competition for franchises, of encouraging new entry into the industry or of

preventing or reducing market dominance in the provision of passenger railway services." The Franchising Director would have discretion in deciding whether BR should bid.

**John Prescott** also attacked the Government over the British Rail pension fund. He said: "The Government is attempting to rob pensioners of their rights and their pensions." He said ministers had reneged on the terms for safeguarding the fund.

## Arrogance

Former BR chairman and transport minister **Loré Marshall** said: "BR management will be left with no purpose except to supervise its own decline and the decline of rail services." "To do that by accident would be disgraceful. To do it deliberately out of sheer arrogance is near criminal." The Lords defeated the Government three times and insisted that the Commons had another look at the Bill. Then however the Government turned up the pressure on its backbench MPs, took out its top hats in a bizarre ritual which also saw some MPs putting handkerchiefs on their heads. **John Prescott** said: "This controversial rail Bill, this arrogant Government, this incompetent Secretary of State has reduced this Parliament to a running farce today. He added: "The Lords are trying to protect the pockets of the taxpayer. The whole purpose of privatisation is to take public money and put it into private pockets."

**Brian Wilson** said: "The Government has lost the argument. Rail privatisation is discredited. Now the Government will have to live with the consequences of its actions — at a series of elections."

**Waiting**  
The Commons eventually sent the Bill back to the Lords who were kept waiting so long that they adjourned until the next day. Unfortunately, the Lords, despite the fact that 83% of the population did not want this Bill to go through, decided not to obstruct it further because they did not want to provoke a constitutional crisis. The Bill received royal assent on 5 November.



Labour arguments as scaremongering. On 3 November, the House of Lords made the Government panic by insisting that BR should be allowed to bid for franchises on the same basis as private companies. But **Loré Peaton** also warned: "It is a poor Bill likely to have some very bad consequences and will create a great deal of muddle and confusion."

More time is needed for debate because the Bill had been radically altered in the Lords. We are not wasting time. It is an issue which affects 250,000 pensioners and railway workers. It is about money that is in their funds which the Government has no right to claim but is about to attempt to claim — on the second anniversary of the Maxwell swindle of pension funds. This is an issue of the Government breaking its word. This is an issue of deliberate deceit. The guillotine is designed to cover up the actions of a dishonest government."

He said that when the National Bus Company was broken up, £150 million had gone straight from the busmen's fund into the Treasury.

**Precedent**  
"It is not a new precedent to pinch from the pension funds. They've already done it with National Bus. They are already starting to do it with the rail and it is a matter of judgment as to whether you can believe the Secretary of State's word that they are not intending to do that."

**Glenis Jackson** (Lab Hampstead and Highgate) criticised the lack of guarantees and the lack of time given by the Government for debate. She said many BR pensioners now believed the initials BR no longer stand for British Railways but for Bank Raid. **John Heppell** (Lab, Notts E), a railway pensioner, said the Government had no right to take part of his pension and put it in the Treasury.

"The Government has made it clear that their intention all along is to take my money. This Government talks about competition and privatising but what they've done is nationalise my pension."

**John MacGregor** dismissed the



# '25 years late' Jubilee line

The biggest development in Europe — around London's Canary Wharf — is at last to get its own Tube line.

The Government decision in October to give the go-ahead to the Jubilee line extension comes four years after it was given another go-ahead by the Government — and 25 years after London Transport deposited the first Bill for the line.

The four-year delay alone is estimated to have cost £300 million in taxpayers' money.

It has taken that long to winkle a promise of £400 million out of financiers picking over the body of the collapsed property empire which built Canary Wharf. Large amounts of this "private" capital though is in fact coming from the public European Investment Bank.

As ever, the Government shows remarkable sleight of hand but it is not an encouraging example of its policy of insisting on the private sector helping to fund new public transport projects. If new roads were subjected to similar tests, few would ever be built.

As it is, Britain's most expensive new road — the notorious £255 million one-mile long Limehouse link which also serves Canary Wharf — has already been built entirely with taxpayers' money. By comparison, the Government's contribution of £1.5 billion to the 10-mile long Jubilee extension is superb value.

The danger now of course is that the Government will try to escape its responsibility to fund CrossRail (which is much more important than the Jubilee line) and a whole string of other vital rail projects.

CrossRail will make a real contribution to easing congestion in London, both on the rail system, particularly the Central line, and on the roads. By comparison, the Jubilee has a limited value.

We must demand money is spent on sensible rail projects before one penny more is wasted on widening London's M25 orbital motorway. No more four-year or 25-year waits!

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\* British Rail Research is now prepared, at a price, to help with computer simulations of new railway proposals, new stations and light rail proposals. RDS branches and user groups are unlikely to be able to afford this but local authorities can. Contact: Roy Hartle, PO Box 2, London Road, Derby DE24 8YB. Phone 0332 264661. Fax 0332 264913.

\* If you know of cycle hire facilities near stations, please contact RDS cycle officer Malcolm Conway at 58 Greengate Lane, Kendal, Cumbria LA9 5LL. (phone 0539 726285).



A long way to go: The first British-built 13.5 metre curtain-sided swap body is transferred from a road vehicle to a rail wagon at the Trafford Park exhibition. This is one of 12 to be supplied by European Intermodal Products to international freight company Hay Pallock

## Making the freight connection

By GEORGE BOYLE

The lack of conventional rail wagons was noticeable at the Freightconnection 93 exhibition in October. The emphasis this year at Trafford Park Euroterminal, Manchester, was on swap bodies and containers.

Roadrailer (Bimodal) Ltd showed their new Tautliner trailer. Three box-van Roadrailers and rail bogies were also on display at Salford. This equipment is being tested at present by the Transport Development Group between Coatbridge, near Glasgow and Stratford, East London.

Crane and fork lift makers gave demonstrations of how efficiently swap bodies and containers could be handled.

One of the most impressive exhibits was the new five-unit covered car carrier. Each set is 66 metres long, double decked and has an overall roof which rises with the sides, high into the air to facilitate loading.

When closed, the roof hooks over end doors, making it impossible to tamper with the contents.

Probably the best located stand inside was the

Rail Freight Group who liaise closely with the RDS freight committee. All the new proposed freight terminal sites seemed to be represented including Daventry, Hams Hall, Doncaster and Mossend.

The associated conference heard the £400 million investment in Channel Tunnel services described by Ian Brown, managing director of Railfreight Distribution.

There was scepticism when Public Transport Minister Roger Freeman spoke about the future of rail freight after privatisation.

Most experts believe the Government has lost an opportunity to expand rail freight. A vast amount of freight has recently been lost to road and it will be difficult to win it back.

Private companies will need encouragement to come in and because Railtrack will charge, firms what the market will bear, there will be no incentive for operators to cut costs. Nor will Railtrack have an incentive to cut costs.

The Rail Freight Group held a press conference in London just after the show to warn that the three large regional companies the Government plans to create would be monopolies and prevent new entrants who will also find it virtually impossible to operate trains through the Channel Tunnel.

● Next year's Freightconnection exhibition will be held at Royal Victoria Dock, London, from 4-6 October. For details: 0543 419600.

● Local councils worried about the effects of falling freight traffic and privatisation on the Newcastle-Sunderland-Middlesbrough route have commissioned Arup Transportation to carry out a development study.

● Railtrack, Eurotunnel and 23 other bodies are paying £60,000 for a study into intermodal transport, including piggy-back.

● The Pedestrians Association of 126 Aldersgate Street, London EC1A 4JQ has launched an advice and information helpline number called WalkWays: 071 490 0750.

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

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

Administration: Reg Snow, 40 The Park, Great Bookham, Leatherhead, Surrey KT23 3LS (Tel 0372 452863)

Sales: Alan Harwood, 139 Rowdene Gardens, Teddington, Middlesex TW11 6DN

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

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

Membership Secretary: Elisabeth Jordan, 13 Amhill Road, Gillingham, Dorset, 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.

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