

RAILWAY INVIGORATION SOCIETY

Hon. Chairman :-

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PROGRESS REPORT NO. 73

NOVEMBER 1967

RESIGNATION OF MR. FIENNES

✓
The resignation of Mr. G. F. Fiennes, General Manager of BR Eastern Region, following the publication in "Modern Railways" of extracts from his controversial book "I tried to run a railway", in which he criticised the BR management, received headline news. The newspapers, however, did not mention Mr. Fiennes' severe criticism of the Beeching closures policy and, as has so often been the case in the past, they seem to have deliberately omitted any suggestion that this policy was wrong. Thus, as was pointed out by Dr. A. W. T. Daniel, chairman of the National Council on Inland Transport, at the conference held a few days later at which Mr. Fiennes was the speaker, although the press widely quoted the following sentence from Mr. Fiennes' book: "I do not believe that the British Railways Boards, except for a short time under the great and good Doctor, put the duty of breaking even first," they did not mention such quotations such as these: "In 1962, the Marples/Beeching axis began to define their territorial ambitions about rural railways. They laid it down in general that rural railways did not pay, which was true; and could never pay, which was false", and referring to the "basic railways" recently introduced, "We avoided a bus subsidy of some £3,000 a year at a cost of heating, lighting and maintaining the four stations, and of fuel for stopping the trains of around £1,000 Of such is the crass folly of parts of the Beeching Plan". (our underlining)

We suggest that this book should be made compulsory reading for those MPs, civil servants, journalists and others who are still under the illusion that closures are necessary to reduce the BR deficit. It may be obtained from the Society's Sales Department, price per copy 35s. plus 2s. postage.

Success so far achieved by the introduction of "basic railways" was made clear by Mr. Fiennes in his address to the NCIT. The economies introduced are already saving over £600,000 a year in Norfolk and Suffolk. Of eleven services recently reviewed, only three

are still hopelessly uneconomic, three actually show a surplus and the remaining five show so small a deficit that it would be more costly to close them than to keep them open. Mr. Fienne said he expected the "basic railway" to spread across the country. ✕

WHITE PAPER ON "TRANSPORT POLICY" : PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS

✕ The Ministry of Transport White Paper on "Transport policy" (Cmnd. 3439) was published at the beginning of November and is obtainable from HMSO or through any bookseller, price 3s. 9d. per copy. It incorporates the report of the Joint Steering Group of which the chairman is John Morris, MP, Joint Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Transport. Below is a list of some of the main features of the White Paper and the Society's preliminary observations. We are studying the Paper in detail and will publish our full comments as soon as possible.

1. As foreshadowed in earlier statements, the Government intends to bring to an end the drastic pruning of railway lines necessitated by the 1962 Act and to maintain a basic route network of 11,000 miles, i. e. , those lines shown in black on the map published in March, compared with the present system of 13,200 miles.
2. Grants will be made to maintain uneconomic but socially essential lines. Financial estimates given assume, however, that the lines shown in grey in the March map will be closed by 1969. Although these services must go through the usual Tucc procedure before they can be closed, are we, in fact, being told that their withdrawal is a foregone conclusion? This is most disturbing and we have written to the Minister to seek clarification of the position.
3. The Minister can refuse the payment of a subsidy and, when this happens, presumably the service will be withdrawn. Thus, even the "black" lines do not necessarily have their future secured.
4. Financial estimates for the subsidies assume that the lines concerned will, in many cases, be operated more cheaply than at present. However, we should like an assurance that "basic railway" operation (which can reduce losses to a fraction of their present figure) will be employed wherever possible. Clearly, if the "black" lines can be run more cheaply than envisaged at present by the Government, the funds extracted from the Treasury for purpose of subsidy may well stretch to cover the "grey" lines as well.
5. Grants are also envisaged to enable the railways to introduce economies such as removal of surplus track and signalling throughout the system. This is a sensible move to encourage efficiency
6. The railways will be relieved in part of their obligation to maintain road bridges and level crossings. They are at present required to pay for these in full and the

Society has on many occasions asked for rectification of this injustice. May we emphasise that this is not a subsidy for BR: it removes BR's obligation to subsidise the roads!

The Paper thus has much to commend, but, since it envisages around seventy more closures, we have no time for complacency. Have we, in fact, another "Beeching" in disguise, in some ways more serious than its famous predecessor in that most of the services envisaged for closure are of greater social importance than those eliminated earlier? ✕

EAST ANGLIA

✕ British Rail has announced its intention to close the Norwich-Cromer-Sheringham, King's Lynn-Hunstanton and Lowestoft-Yarmouth lines. These are all "grey" lines of considerable social importance. Any published proposals to close them will be strongly opposed by the Society. (See also area report from Norfolk (North and West), p. 10.) ✕

RAILWAY FARES

The Society's study of railway fares is almost complete and we hope to publish a memorandum on the subject shortly. We are also making a study of railway public relations and communications and would be glad to have the views of members on this subject, which should be sent to the General Secretary.

MANCHESTER CITY COUNCIL WANTS RAILWAYS

Manchester City Council has accepted the report of a working party which was set up to study public transport in the conurbation. The working party consisted of representatives of the Council, BR and the Ministry of Transport and accepted the recommendations of consultants that the Council should proceed with a £61 million high-speed railway system, including several miles of underground line in the city centre. The plan is based on the duorail, which, according to the consultants, has been tested and proved in the London underground system. They state that the duorail could interchange with existing rail routes. The working party report is emphatic in its conclusions that "Steps need to be taken now to provide better public transport as an alternative to commuting by car."

It is most gratifying to know that the local authority of at least one great city in the United Kingdom is so whole-heartedly in favour of the railway as the basis of its future transport system.

THE RAILWAY IS THE BEST WAY

While the Liverpool dockers were on strike recently, a company at Willenhall, Staffordshire, began to use the Trans-Siberian Railway for sending their products to Japan. The firm, John Harper and Co., ironfounders and domestic hardware manufacturers, has found

the rail route is two weeks quicker than that by sea - and as cheap. Because of these factors, the marketing director of the firm, Mr. Malcolm Harper, has stated that they will continue to use the overland route. The Society is watching this situation with great interest.

CORPORATE MEMBERS

The Society welcomes the following new corporate member: -
Caernarvonshire County Council.

SUBSCRIPTIONS

Renewed subscriptions to the Society are due on 1st January. But subscriptions for 1968 may be sent to the Membership Secretary (address on back page) before that date and such action would do much to ease his burden.

Members are reminded that, by resolution passed at this year's annual general meeting, subscription rates were increased. The new rates are as follows: -

	Full year from 1st Jan.	Half year from 1st July
Ordinary members (aged 18 and over)	20s.	12s. 6d.
Junior members (aged under 18)	12s. 6d.	7s.
Old age pensioners	12s. 6d.	7s.
Full time students	12s. 6d.	7s.
Corporate members	30s.	17s. 6d.

RECRUITMENT

Apart from renewing their subscriptions promptly, all members are asked to do their utmost to recruit new people to our fold. The larger we are in numbers, the more effective the voice with which we shall be able to speak. Suitable recruiting literature may be obtained from the General Secretary (address on the back page).

UNDER NEW MANAGEMENT

As readers of our last issue will already be aware, Dr. Caton, chairman of this Society, has relinquished editorship of these progress reports after performing this task so admirably for several years. His leading articles concerning our views on railway matters have been quoted in many journals and in various other quarters; and have helped in no small measure in bringing the Society to the influential position which it now occupies. Our views are now listened to with respect by many, not least in the highest official quarters. Dr. Caton's contribution to this state of affairs has been outstanding.

This issue is the first under new management. The fresh editorial team will do their utmost to maintain the high standards which they have been set. To achieve this aim, they need not only the active support of officials and National Committee but also of ordinary members. The latter are the backbone of any society, but particularly of one such as ours, for our membership is spread all over the United Kingdom and, indeed, we have several members who live abroad.

An earnest appeal is, therefore, made for contributions to the Society's progress reports. Please send your news, letters, etc., as indicated in the editorial announcement at the end of this issue.

REPORTS FROM BRANCHES AND AREA REPRESENTATIVES

(Edited by Mr. H. R. Purser, The Elms, Thame, Oxon.)

Readers who wish for more information about particular items should write to the appropriate representatives.

East Suffolk/East Norfolk Branch

Branch Secretary:

Mr. B. R. A. Cooper, 1, St. Paul's Close,
Aldeburgh, Suffolk.

✓x There has been a noticeable increase in passenger traffic since the introduction of reduced fares earlier in the year. An improved edition of the pocket timetable for the East Suffolk line is available free from the Branch Secretary.

(Stop Press The Minister of Transport has disagreed with the view of the Tucc that severe hardship would result if the summer passenger train services were withdrawn from Felixstowe Beach station. The Minister has consented to the closure of the line between Felixstowe Beach and Felixstowe Town stations, subject to all 'bus services on route No. 201 operating to and from Manor Road.) x

North-Eastern Branch (Northumberland, County Durham and the North Riding of Yorkshire)

Branch Secretary:

Mr. R. K. Mains, 114, Manor House Road, Jesmond,
Newcastle-upon-Tyne, 2.

✓x The Branch's conference, on 9th September, in Darlington Town Hall, regarding the future of the Darlington-Richmond line was well represented and received favourable press publicity. Resolutions, calling for the retention and development of the line, were passed unanimously and copies were forwarded to various bodies, including BR. Another conference is to be held on 16th December. x

✕ The Branch is pressing for the retention of Alwick, Beal and Belford stations as unstaffed halts and believes that these stations would be much more busy if greater attempts were made to attract more passengers. Closure of Widdrington station has been refused and a ministerial decision on the future of Pegswood station has been deferred. British Rail have agreed to retain Seaton Carew station as an unstaffed halt following two years of continual opposition to closure moves. The Branch is examining the possibility of a direct regular interval train service linking South Shields and Middlesbrough, which would, amongst other advantages, improve the facilities at Seaton Carew. ✕

The Branch's last report, issued at the end of October, deals with the large amount of work undertaken by the Branch and may be obtained from the Branch Secretary (address at the head of this report), price one shilling (excluding postage).

Lines for which the North-Eastern Branch has assumed responsibility outside its designated area

The Branch believes that operating costs on the Penrith-Keswick and Oxenholme-Windermere lines can be substantially reduced by singling sections of double track and converting certain intermediate stations to unstaffed halts. There is also room for improved services, particularly on summer Sundays. Already sixteen stations between Barrow-in-Furness, Whitehaven and Carlisle have been converted to unstaffed halts.

The Branch strongly supports development of the Leeds-Carnforth/Carlisle lines, notwithstanding plans to electrify the west coast main line. The Branch has given assistance to Keighley Council of Social Services, which is planning to carry out an opinion poll regarding the importance of the town's rail facilities.

In recent months there has been a very serious deterioration in cheap day fare facilities at stations on the Carnforth-Barrow line. The Branch has protested strongly to BR and our corporate member Grange UDC has written to the local MP.

Three Counties Branch (Gloucestershire, Herefordshire, Worcestershire)

Branch Chairman:

Mr. W. H. Parker, M. B. E., Well Meadow,
Pontshill, Ross-on-Wye, Herefordshire.

No report has been received from the Branch for inclusion in this issue, but the following proposed withdrawals of passenger services in its area have been announced: -

Stratford-on-Avon -- Honeybourne line; Honeybourne and Pershore stations
(nominal date in all cases: 1st January, 1968).

London Branch (London Passenger Transport Area)

Branch Chairman:

Mr. P. H. Bailey, 17, Chadbury Court,
Watford Way, London, N. W. 7.

✓
✗ The inaugural meeting of the Society's London Branch took place at Caxton Hall, London, on Wednesday, 11th October. Chairman for the meeting was Mr. G. F. Manley of the National Committee. The Society's General Secretary, Mr. J. W. Barfield, was also present to welcome the members and to give guidance on the proper functioning of the Branch. Mr. Bailey, who had been acting as Area Representative for the London Area, outlined the objects and future activities of the Branch.

There followed an informal discussion, during which members were invited to voice their suggestions for improving public transport facilities in and around London. Ideas put forward covered a wide range, including a passenger link between Willesden and Clapham Junction (thus forming an outer circle), an improved commuter service on the North London line and better connections on the South London line.

✗ The formation of a London Branch was then formally moved and accepted. A secretary and a committee of five were elected, the committee having powers to co-opt.

No further report has been received from the new Branch. However, the following additional items have been culled from various sources: -

Electrification of the Lea Valley line (Clapton-Cheshunt) has been approved, it should be completed by 1969.

Plumstead station is to be closed and will be replaced by a new station at Thamesmead, $\frac{3}{4}$ mile away, which will cater for commuters from the new town to be built on the Erith marshes.

Plans are being drawn up for the merger of King's Cross and St. Pancras stations. Present indications are that the latter will disappear; the inner suburban GN services will be diverted to Moorgate via the Northern City line; and services to the east midlands and Leeds will be improved. ✗

South-Eastern England (excluding London Passenger Transport Area)

Area Representatives:	(Kent)	Mr. R. V Banks, 121, Ashford Road, Bearsted, Maidstone, Kent.
	(Sussex)	Mr. C A. Rylands, 3, Priory Court, Mountfield Road, Lewes, Sussex.

Mr. Banks reports: -

✓
✗ Although not on the massive scale of the famous Hurst Green-Lewes-Tunbridge Wells TUC inquiry last April, a very large number of residents turned up at the inquiry held at Ashford on 6th and 7th September to hear objections to the proposed closure of the Ashford-Hastings line. The TUC had received 467 objections, including a poll from the Winchelsea Travel Association of 1,118 signatures.

Once again, the principal objectors, including the local authorities, were

represented by John Gower, Q. C. , who had again been excellently briefed by our member Mr. R. G. Pullen in his capacity as clerk to the local action committee.

The principal points made by Mr. Gower were that the alternative road system was totally inadequate to deal with the increased traffic if the railway closed, the planned expansion of Ashford to a town of 75,000 inhabitants by 1981, the fact that over 10,000 people (17,000 in August) used the line every weekend and that more than 1,400 used Rye station, the principal town en route, every week.

No statement has so far been issued by the Tucc, but objectors left the inquiry convinced that the only course open to the Committee was a strong recommendation to retain the service.

The Society's Kent representative attended the inquiry on both days. ✕

Much local indignation has been aroused by the Minister of Transport's decision not to allow the Rother Valley Railway Co. , Ltd. , to operate the private railway between Tenterden and Robertsbridge. The Minister's reasons for her refusal included concern over the financial reserves available to deal with any possible emergency, objections over the re-opening of level crossings and, a new factor, the possibility that within the next twenty years certain of the roads crossing the railway may have to be rebuilt as dual carriageways and road overbridges would involve considerable public funds.

A press statement issued by the company in September shows that this decision will be strenuously opposed; and the latest move has been to obtain a temporary injunction to prevent BR removing the track.

✕ (Stop press The public inquiry into the proposed withdrawal of the Hailsham - Polegate service and the closure of Hailsham station due to be held on 28th November. Ed.) ✕

Isle of Wight

Area Representative:

Mr. R. E. Burroughs, 3, Spring Hill,
Ventnor, I. O. W.

✕ Ventnor UDC has now given unanimous support to Isle of Wight County Council in their "last ditch" effort to get the Shanklin-Ventnor line electrified and re-opened. The I. O. W. Rail Manager has stated in an interview that the electricified Ryde-Shanklin line is making more money than the old steam service.

The Area Representative is taking up with BR the numerous complaints received from holiday visitors who were refused through bookings to Ventnor from their local stations, although this facility was promised when the station was closed. The local council has received

"very many" complaints regarding delays and missed connections with the Shanklin-Ventnor replacement bus service; these are being referred to the Minister of Transport. X

Somerset, Dorset and Western Hampshire

Area Representative: Rev. W. M. Andrew, 30, Richmond Wood Road,
Bournemouth, Hampshire.

X Reference was made in the last report to certain indications pointing to an early intention on the part of the Railways Board to close the branch line from Wareham to Swanage. The matter was carried further when, on 18th October, BR announced in the national press (Times and Daily Telegraph) its intention to close the line, which includes the stations of Corfe Castle and Swanage. The formal notices have not so far been given, but the local authorities concerned, supported by numerous local organisations, are already actively preparing to do battle for the line and in this they have the support of the local MP, Mr. Evelyn King. X

Devon and Cornwall

Area Representative: Mr. A. E. Wilkinson, 41, Cross Street, Northam,
Bideford, Devon.
(N. B. Change of address)

A surprising announcement is that the Western Region are considering leasing their clay loading wharves at Fowey to English Clays Lovering Pochin and Co., Ltd., and, furthermore, that the company may be allowed to use the course of the Par-Fowey line as a lorry route.

As a result of coal now being transported to north Devon by road from the Exeter railhead, the price to local consumers is to be increased.

The Minister has given permission to BR to dispose of the track of the former Taunton-Barnstaple line, also the Okehampton-Bude line. It had originally been stipulated that the latter's track must be preserved.

Plans are afoot to make the Barnstaple-Ilfracombe line more economical; these include the singling of the track and operating the line on the "one engine in steam" principle. It is hoped that this move may help to delay further thoughts of rail closure.

Railwaymen at Exeter are still dissatisfied with the Western Region management and have repeated their earlier appeal for an inquiry into the working of the whole region. The matter has been raised again with their local MP.

Norfolk (North and West)

Area Representative:

Mr. M. R. Thomas, "Shangri-la",
16, King's Lynn Road, Hunstanton, Norfolk.

✓x We are pleased to announce the appointment of Mr. Thomas as our representative for the above area. This comes at an opportune time, as two important holiday lines (King's Lynn-Hunstanton and Norwich-Cromer-Sheringham) are under a veiled threat of closure following an announcement made by Mr. Hankins, Divisional Manager at Norwich, during a recent television interview. No official notices of proposed closures have so far appeared.

Following the initial approaches made by the Society to local authorities and interested individuals in this area, further contacts will be made and, in co-operation with local bodies, active steps will be taken to oppose any closure proposals. ✕

The Dereham -Wymondham line has been added to the Reshaping Plan.

Merseyside, Wirral and West Lancashire

Area Representative:

Mr. P. Byrne, 13, Kilmorey Park, Hoole,
Chester.
(Change of address until further notice)

✓x Birkenhead Woodside station closed on Saturday, 4th November, with the last trains to and from Chester, the Society being represented on the last train to Chester.

Liverpool City Council has refused to meet the £80,000 deficit on the Liverpool Central-Gateacre line, so steps can now be taken to close it.

Efforts are being made to form a branch of the Society in this area and an open meeting will be held shortly in either Liverpool or Birkenhead.

(Stop press As this progress report went to press, it was learned that Tucc public inquiries into rationalisation proposals for the Southport-Wigan-Manchester Victoria line had been fixed for 16th and 17th November at Southport and Manchester respectively. Ed.) ✕

NEWS OF OTHER LINESSouthern and Eastern England

Recent closures include South Aylesbury halt (Princes Risborough-Aylesbury line) from 5th June; and Ardleigh station (between Colchester and Manningtree) from 6th November.

The Tucc public inquiry into the proposed withdrawal of passenger services from

Grareley and Porton stations and Idmiston halt (on the Basingstoke-Salisbury line) took place at Andover on 31st October. A similar inquiry into the proposed closure of the March-Wisbech line was held on 10th October.

Conductor guards now operate on the Winchester-Alton line.

Midlands

The Minister has approved withdrawal of several "stopping" passenger services. These include Birmingham New Street-Nuneaton-Leicester London Road-Nottingham Midland; Birmingham New Street-Derby Midland via Tamworth; and Leicester London Road-Wellingborough.

There have been changes in the use of stations in Nottingham. From 3rd July, Nottingham London Road (high level) was closed to passenger traffic. As a result, Grantham-Nottingham trains have been diverted to Nottingham Midland. From 4th September, Nottingham Victoria closed to passengers and Nottingham Arkwright Street was re-opened to be the terminus for trains to and from Rugby Central.

Northern England

Only three objections to the proposed withdrawal of passenger trains from the Manchester Victoria-Stockport Edgeley line were received by the TUGC for the NW Area. The Committee, therefore, decided to hold no public inquiry into the proposal.

Wales

✓x The Minister has stated that she would offer no objection to publication by BR of proposals to close the Central Wales line (Craven Arms-Llanelli). If BR do publish such proposals, this would be the second time. x

The public inquiry into the proposed closure of the Pembroke Dock-Whitland line took place at Tenby on 11th October.

✓x There has been completed the first of two surveys in connection with the cost-benefit study on the Cambrian Coast line. x

Scotland

The Paisley Abercorn-Renfrew Wharf line was closed to passengers from 5th June; and Kingskettle station, Fife (Thornton Junction-Leuchars Junction line) lost its passenger service from 4th September.

Ministerial consent has been given to the closure of 32 stations on the Aberdeen-Keith-Elgin line, but has been refused in the case of Inch station (between Aberdeen and Huntly). Ardrossan Town station is to lose its passenger service, following official approval.

From 5th June, Dunlop and Stewarton stations (Glasgow Central-Kilmarnock via Barrhead line) were re-opened.

The following short branches have been added to the Reshaping Plan: -
Heads of Ayr; Newport-on-Tay East; North Berwick.

Perth station is to be modernised and reduced in size.

LATE NEWS

✓✗ BR has announced its intention to publish, most probably before readers receive this progress report, proposals for the withdrawal of passenger services between Shrewsbury and Swansea over the Central Wales line. A tremendous number of objections are expected. ✗

✓✗ Liverpool City Council has turned down a recommendation from its transport committee that substitute 'buses should be provided in the event of closure of the Gateacre line. ✗

EDITORIAL ANNOUNCEMENT

Contributions to the next issues should be sent, by 1st February, 1968, as follows: -

Branch and area reports - Mr. H. R. Purser, The Elms, Thame, Oxon
(N. B. Change of address)

All other matter - Mr. L. G. Hipperson, 21, Ullet Road,
Sefton Park, Liverpool, 17
(telephone: Sefton Park 3446)

Chairman: Dr. M. P. L. Caton,
10, Grosvenor Gardens, Upminster, Essex.

General Secretary: Mr. J. W. Barfield,
66, Ewhurst Road, London. S. W. 4.

Membership Secretary: Mr. D. J. Bradbury,
59, Dore Road, Dore, Sheffield.
