

# RAILWAY INVIGORATION SOCIETY

for the retention and modernisation of railway services

39 MARSHAM COURT, MARSHAM STREET, LONDON S.W.1. (Tel. 01-834 1335)

Chairman: M. P. L. CATON, Ph.D.

Vice-Presidents:

John Betjeman Esq., C.B.E., Lord Kinross, Lord Popplewell, C.B.E. J.P., Prof. C. L. Mowat, M.A., Ph.D.  
The Very Rev. J. H. S. Wild, M.A., (Dean of Durham)  
Torquil Nicholson Esq., B.Sc., A.M.I.E.E.,

Private and Confidential

SEPTEMBER, 1969.

PROGRESS REPORT No. 80.

## CLOSURE ACCOUNTANCY

✓✗ The Society continues to work for a more realistic approach to the current dilemma whereby lines are faced with closure because it is considered they cannot justify the subsidy required by the Ministry cost formula. ✗ At the recent inquiry held by the TUCC into the proposal to close the Romford to Upminster line, it was claimed that this service loses annually a sum of £40,500, an incredible amount for a railway of only 3½ miles of single track, run by one diesel set! In fact, we know that the reason for this is that substantial terminal and administrative costs are debited to the line which would still have to be paid by BR if the service is withdrawn. The real saving from closure would be a mere fraction of this figure and probably zero or even negative when allowance is made for the £18,000 per annum required to subsidise the replacement bus service. ✗

The Chairman of the TUCC, however, stated that the financial aspects of the closure could not be discussed at the meeting, but he agreed to receive further financial information from the railway representative after the meeting, in private. The Society's representative at the hearing, Mr. R. V. Banks, then asked if the TUCC would also receive our views on the finances of the line in private, but this was refused. What sort of justice is this that hears one side of a case but refuses the other? This absurd situation does justice to nobody and only serves to create ill feeling all round. The Society is endeavouring to discuss the matter with the Central TUCC in the context of this latest episode, which typifies what has happened at many previous hearings when we shall put forward our case for a widening of the scope of inquiries to include financial and other matters at present excluded.

We are also continuing our efforts at Parliamentary level through the Railway Reform Group, but despite continued pressure by this group of MPs the Minister still refuses to publish the cost formula. However, certain details of this formula are now known to us and we have received an independent chartered accountant's view which is severely critical of its use for the purpose of assessing closures. ✗

Meanwhile, we are taking up individual closure cases as they arise. Since the TUCC will not allow discussion of financial matters, it is essential that this be taken up at Ministry level as soon as possible after the TUCC issues its report on the case to the Minister. We have assisted several local action groups in this way and will be pleased to cooperate with any other group or local authority with making such an approach. The position we always put forward is that the only figure relevant to closure cases is the amount BR would save and no more than this. The resulting loss is usually about one-third of the amount required by the Ministry formula.

#### THE BOMBASTIC BRIGADIER BOOBS AGAIN

With characteristic effrontery, Brigadier T. I. Lloyd, long leader of the Railway Conversion League which has achieved a 50% success rate in its aim to deprive these islands of their public rail transport, implied in a letter to the Times on 24th June, 1969, that road transport is as safe if not safer than the railways. Yet, whilst figures vary from country to country, the accepted average safety ratios of road, air, and rail, are that road is 1,000 times and air 100 times as dangerous as rail.

Unfortunately, the scrupulous manner of collection and presentation of railway statistics is such as to give ample opportunity to people like the Brigadier who have their own private axes to grind. In his analysis the Brigadier failed to discriminate between accidents and casualties and this leads to the conclusion that, "on the average, a journey of 100 miles on BR is as likely to be interrupted by some mishap or other to the vehicle, as one of 470 miles on the M1." The Brigadier is however wrong when he says that, "On BR an accident has to comply with a very narrow definition in order to be recorded as a train accident", even if his comparison of BR with the M1, thus excluding pedestrian casualties, is valid. In fact, the clerks in BRs accident offices and district inspectors spend the greater part of their time pursuing such "accidents" as tail lamps left off trains and irregularities in block working. So meticulous are the railways in their pursuit of safety that minormisdemeanours are regarded as accidents even when no accident has occurred, whereas the majority of accidents on the M1 would only be reported (a) if they really were accidents and not simply instances of bad driving and (b) if the participants were honest or the damage so severe that the accident had to be reported.

This is not the whole story. Another reason why railway casualty rates are inflated when compared with road, is that the railway figures include industrial accidents in locomotive depots etc. Many accidents must occur in garages that by the same token should be counted as road accidents. Further, one of the main causes of railway accidents is road transport, not only by vehicles making improper use of occupation and ungated level crossings or parking on tramways, but also by causing injury to railwaymen going about their duties by road. In 1965 there were 1 death, 15 serious injuries and 137 minor injuries to railway servants struck by "vehicles (other than rail)" in the line of duty. Presumably they were not all decapitated by low flying aircraft or crushed by runaway canal barges.

## LOCAL DEVELOPMENT GROUPS

Arising out of discussion at our latest AGM, the Society is taking immediate steps to encourage the formation of local railway development groups. Our Branches and Area Sub-Committee will shortly be issuing a memorandum containing suggested activities for such groups, but, in brief, the idea is to bring together local organisations and individuals with the railway management to take joint steps to develop lines or groups of lines. We hope to initiate such groups as a matter of policy, in as many areas as possible. X

## ORGANISATION OF THE SOCIETY

In accordance with paragraph 21 of the Society's Constitution, the National Committee has elected from amongst its members the following officers :-

Vice-Chairmen :	Messrs. R.V. Banks, J.W. Barfield, J.M. Firth.
Assistant Secretaries :	Messrs. J.W. Barfield, R.G. Pullen.
Membership Secretary :	Mr. D.J. Bradbury.
Press & Parliamentary Liaison Officer :	Mr. R.V. Banks.
Hon. Legal Adviser :	Mr. R.G. Pullen.*
Progress Report Editor :	Mr. L.G. Hipperson.
" " Sub-Editor :	Mr. H.R. Purser. *
Distribution Officer :	Mr. H.G.M. Rogers. * (provisional)
Cuttings Officer :	Mr. B.R. Sageman.
Sales Officer :	Vacant.

\* co-option

## MEMBER TO VISIT CANADIAN RAILWAYS

The Society extends its best wishes to member Mr. A.C. Tarbat, of Wells (Somerset), on the occasion of his retirement from teaching. Mr. Tarbat has travelled widely over the railways of Britain and is now making plans to cross Canada by CNR in the autumn, a journey he has looked forward to for many years.

## SIR JOHN BETJEMAN

We congratulate John Betjeman, one of our vice-presidents, upon the Knighthood conferred upon him in the latest Birthday Honours.

## YOUR HELP IS STILL NEEDED !

Despite the appeal for contributions made in our last issue, we very much regret that this issue has had to be reduced to eight pages (from the usual twelve), owing to lack of material. A renewed plea is made, not only for copy but also that it should be submitted to the appropriate editor in good time (see editorial announcement on p. 8).

REPORTS FROM BRANCHES AND AREA REPRESENTATIVESBRANCHESLondon and Home Counties (Middlesex, Essex, Surrey, Kent, Sussex, Herts., Bucks., and Berks.)

Chairman : Mr. R. V. Banks, 121, Ashford Road,  
Bearsted, Maidstone, Kent.

✓  
✗ We much regret that the TUC has reported to the Minister of Transport that no material hardship would arise if the Wembley Stadium branch were closed. In the light of this, the Minister has consented to the closure. More encouraging, however, is the news that the Ombudsman has been asked to investigate the Minister's consent to the closure of the Lewes-Uckfield line. ✗ The TUC has reported on the hardship which would be caused should the High Wycombe-Bourne End line close to passenger traffic and has made suggestions for its alleviation.

Lifting of the track on the Oxford-Princes Risborough line commenced in the quarter from a point west of Thame Shell-BP depot in the direction of Morris Cowley. The through line had been finally severed in November, 1968, at this point, at the time Thame signal-box was closed. The Line remains open for Shell-BP traffic between Princes Risborough and Thame and for traffic at the other end of the branch between Kennington Junction and Morris Cowley.

East Suffolk/East Norfolk

Secretary : Mrs. O. E. Awty, 28, Field Stile Road,  
Southwold, Suffolk.

✓  
✗ Although the Minister has given permission to BR to close the Great Yarmouth-Lowestoft line, it is conditional in the first place upon buses being provided. That these buses will not convey perambulators and bicycles is of no concern to urban minds, but the point of interest, and, therefore, that which railway users must press home to the Minister and their own member of Parliament, is that in East Anglia it is said that the existing bus services are only fully maintained by crews working overtime. Recently there have been several minor accidents with buses going off the road without involving other vehicles. This points either to over-tiredness on the part of the drivers or to the appallingly bad condition of certain main roads. To provide the new service it would presumably be necessary to curtail some existing non-profit making routes. ✗

The railway bus link between Southwold and Halesworth is very frail now, with a wait of anything up to an hour on weekdays and up to two hours eight minutes on Sundays at an unmanned Halesworth halt. No signs of civilisation exist beyond a few platform benches exposed to the weather. There is only one good bus connection during the day and one broken seat outside the station on which to wait. Suitcases and other luggage are chargeable on the bus unless taken to a seat.

The branch committee will be meeting to act on this and other matters.

Merseyside and West Lancashire

Secretary : Mr. A. S. Fyne, 2, Chester Avenue,  
Southport, Lancashire.

The second annual general meeting of the Branch was held in Liverpool on 14th June. Mr. P.T. Byrne resigned as Secretary and was replaced by Mr. A.S. Fyne. The new Branch Chairman is Mr. L.G. Hipperson, who takes the place of Mr. Fyne.

✓ We are very pleased that the Minister of Transport has refused consent to the withdrawal of the Ormskirk-Preston local passenger service. The Society can justly claim a share in the achieving of this satisfactory decision, as we opposed the proposal when it was first mooted and published a memoranda which gave our views on it. ✗

The Minister has agreed to the closure of Coppull and Balshaw Lane " Euxton stations, although the TUCC had reported to him that such would cause severe hardship. Among the bodies which objected to this proposal was this Society.

The Ombudsman has cleared the Ministry of Transport of allegations that this department mishandled proposals for the closure of Todd Lane Junction station.

A R E A SDevon and Cornwall

Representative : Mr. A.E. Wilkinson, 13, Richmond Green,  
Churchill Way, Appledore, Bideford. Devon.

A visit to Exeter Central Station on a Saturday in July found it in a very "rationalized" condition. The large entrance hall, together with ticket office, bookstall and train indicator, had been closed and passengers entered the station via the old luggage entrance. A large "kiosk" had been erected in place of the ticket barrier and from here the clerk issued tickets, collected tickets, operated turnstiles and answered enquiries. In place of the train indicator were timetable posters and a blackboard, but none of them contained any information regarding summer Saturday main line services ! BR are now concentrating everything on Exeter St. Davids which is not so convenient for the city centre.

✓ ✗ The local MP is contacting the Minister of Transport regarding the inadequate bus services between Barnstaple Junction and Bideford and particularly the lack of co-ordination at Barnstaple Junction. The Society has suggested to Bideford Town Council that the only satisfactory solution is the restoration of a simplified passenger train service, at least during the summer months, as the line is in daily use for milk and clay traffic. ✗

The summer Saturday surcharge is proving very unpopular and there is evidence that even more traffic has been lost to the roads. On a recent summer Saturday train from Cornwall to Paddington, there were no refreshment facilities whatsoever, and passengers had to sustain themselves from a platform trolley at Exeter St. Davids.

Isle of Wight

Representative : Mr. R.E. Burroughs, Spring Vale,  
The Grove, Ventnor, Isle of Wight.

✓ After three years of negotiations, the decision has been made not to re-open the four mile line from Shanklin to Ventnor. The cost of re-opening this single track line was originally given as £80,000, but three years later this had rocketed to £264,000. It is inconceivable that the local authorities should have accepted this staggering increase without putting up a fight, but they did. The bait used was the promise of money for so-called road improvements, which, in many cases, mean the spoilation of the island's beautiful country roads so that huge six-wheeled coaches may tear along them at ever-increasing speeds.

The Society's aims on the island will now be to prevent the planned closure of the Ryde St. Johns Road to Shanklin line from taking place and to give all assistance to the Vectrail Society in its efforts to acquire and run the Ryde to Cowes line. ✗

Mid-Hampshire

Representative : Mr. M.F. Lockyer, 55, Lipscombe Rise,  
Alton, Hampshire.

The following report has been submitted by Mr. F. Clifton Sherriff :-

✓✗ The figure of £96,000 which BR claims as the annual deficit on the mid-Hants. line for purposes of grant-aid has been effectively demolished by the representatives of the objectors to closure after consultation with eminent transport experts and with this Society. A careful analysis of the figures shows that, in reality, the annual deficit is barely one-third of the claimed total for a 16-mile stretch of single line with three unstaffed stations and one partly staffed, with crossing loop. Asked by Mr. Clive Jacobs in a recent BBC South television interview whether he regarded the BR figure as false, Mr. John Taylor (Deputy Clerk to the Winchester RDC and leader of the objectors) replied that they were "blatantly and outrageously inaccurate."

A recent census showed that this route (which Mr. Jacobs described as "the line which British Rail seem unable to close") is carrying nearly 1,000 passenger movements a day - an increase of about 10% on weekdays and 50% on Sundays, in comparison with the figures presented at the TUCC enquiry in April, 1968, and the figure is still rising. In spite of this not inconsiderable increase in passenger movements and an 8% increase in fares, BR has succeeded in "losing" some 40% of the passenger earnings compared with the TUCC inquiry figures!

The really disturbing aspect of this, and doubtless many other closures, is that the representatives of the objectors are never voluntarily furnished with the grant-aid deficit figure claimed by BR - which is usually vastly greater than the "deficit" figure previously presented. Had the objectors in the Mid-Hants. case not asked for this grant-aid figure, they would never had had the opportunity of refuting it. And the Minister might well have

accepted it on its face value and consequently have been prejudiced in his decision by a figure which was "blatantly and outrageously inaccurate." It is understood that the Ministry has referred the figures back to BR for re-examination. X

Norfolk (North and West)

Representative : Mr. M. R. Thomas,  
16, King's Lynn Road,  
Hunstanton, Norfolk.

The Minister of Transport has consented to closure of the Dereham-Wymondham line. The traffic commissioners have approved the application by Eastern Counties Omnibus Co. to run a substitute bus service, despite strong objections by three local authorities on the grounds, mainly, that the B1135 was unsuitable for buses.

Somerset, Dorset and Western Hampshire

Representative : The Rev. W. Martin Andrew,  
30, Richmond Wood Road,  
Bournemouth, BH8 9DH.

X The last-ditch effort by the local councils to save the Swanage Branch by opposing the application for the necessary licences to operate the alternative bus services failed, the transport commissioners considering that the added congestion on the already crowded roads was not sufficient to justify their refusing the application. The branch will accordingly close on 6th October, as already notified. X

The Isle of Purbeck Preservation Group has been formed with a view to taking over the branch line and obtaining running powers over the main line and giving a diesel-hauled passenger service between Wareham and Swanage. X

The Salisbury-Exeter line proved itself as a valuable diversionary route to the West Country on 5th July, when, following a derailment between Taunton and Exeter, all the Paddington-Plymouth-Penzance expresses were diverted via Castle Cary and Yeovil Junction to Exeter. There was inconvenience to Waterloo passengers travelling to Exeter as their trains terminated at Yeovil to make room for the expresses, bus services being provided for passengers to intermediate stations beyond. It is understood that the few remaining guards and locomen were called upon to act as pilotmen on the diverted trains.

On the occasion of the recent visit of H.M. the Queen to Dorset, the station at Wimborne Minster, which closed on 2nd May, 1964, and had become completely derelict, was hastily put in something like order to enable Her Majesty to board the Royal train there.

✓ X The Manchester rapid-transit scheme (see PR No. 73, p.3) has been postponed pending further study of transport needs in the conurbation, although BR is to spend £1,000,000 on modernizing the Manchester-Altrincham electric line, a heavily-used commuter route. X

On the Preston-Colne line, a survey, commissioned by the Ministry of Transport, was carried out by BR in early June in order to ascertain social needs.

Blackpool North station will become the town's main terminus for Manchester and Euston trains under plans announced by BR to take effect in May, 1970.

The Tucc for Scotland has reported that no hardship would be caused if the Cowdenbeath-Perth line were closed to passenger traffic.

Reduced to unstaffed halts : Birmingham Snow Hill and all intermediate stations on the line to Wolverhampton Low Level; a large number of stations on various lines in Lincolnshire and Nottinghamshire.

Passenger service closures :

- (a) Effected From 4th May : Nottingham Arkwright Street-Rugby Central ; Newport-on-Tay-East branch.
- (b) Approved by the Minister : Macclesfield-Marple (Rose Hill), although the Tucc reported great hardship (Marple to remain open under a social grant); New Mills-Hayfield (Derbyshire); Cleethorpes-Immingham Dock; Thornton Junction-Leven (Fife).
- (c) Proposed : Nothing to report.
- (d) Relieved : Bristol Temple Meads-Severn Beach; Cleethorpes-New Holland; Barton-on-Humber-New Holland.

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EDITORIAL ANNOUNCEMENT

Editor : Mr. L. G. Hipperson, 21, Ullet Road, Liverpool, L17 3BL.

(Telephone : 051 733 3446)

Sub-Editor : Mr. H. R. Purser, 30, Staines Road, Feltham, Middlesex.

Mr. Purser is responsible for branch and area reports. Mr. Hipperson for all other matter. To ensure inclusion in the next issue (to be published in December), material must be submitted by 1st November (except that urgent late news may be sent to Mr. Hipperson to reach him by 8th November.)

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PUBLISHED by the RAILWAY INVIGORATION SOCIETY

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

General Secretary : Mr. J.M. Stanley, 11, Berkeley Court, Tulse Hill, London, S.W.2.

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

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