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PROGRESS REPORTNo. 89DECEMBER 1971CLOSURE COMPROMISE UNACCEPTABLE

✗ Fears that the Government intends to initiate a wholesale slaughter of the railway system as a result of the withdrawal of grant aid have been somewhat allayed by a recent press report that a compromise solution now seems likely and only some fifteen services, mainly in rural areas, are likely to be added to the closure list.

At first sight this may sound reassuring. Fifteen closures does seem insignificant compared to the massive cuts of the Beeching era. However, the railway system has now been contracted to such an extent that practically every new closure is likely to give rise to social consequences far in excess of those resulting from the loss of a comparable rail mileage ten years ago. It was once possible, when the railway authorities proposed a closure, for them to point to other railways in the vicinity to which users might transfer their custom. But, in the much thinned network of today, most rural lines are the sole remaining rail links to very extensive areas. This is shown only too clearly by a glance at the current rail maps of Wales, Northern Scotland, South-West England and East Anglia.

Moreover, almost all remaining rural lines have already been identified as socially necessary and accordingly given grant aid under the provisions of the 1968 Transport Act. Several have also been refused closure by previous ministers. Unless, therefore, there has been a marked change in circumstances - and this is most unlikely to have occurred in only three years - any attempt to withdraw grant aid must be seen as political interference of the kind that the railways have suffered to their detriment on not a few occasions in the past two decades.

Furthermore, past events have also shown that one compromise plan can readily lead to another. If these fifteen lines are now conceded, this or a future government can confidently be expected to present us with another batch of closures as part of another "deal" for the railways in a few years' time. On closures, therefore, we must now, with perhaps the occasional exception, call a complete halt if Britain is to retain a railway system worthy of the name. But it is the politicians rather than British Rail against whom we now need to make our stand. ✗

TAKE ACTION NOW

✗ Our advice to all rural communities who wish to avoid being a victim of the latest threats is to act now. Don't wait for closure notices to appear. Railway Invigoration Society policy for the past two years has been to encourage communities to take joint action with British Rail to

develop rail traffic. Groups with which we are working have assisted British Rail with publicity campaigns and by making known local travel requirements, so that trains can be run in a manner which is most likely to attract business. Joint action of this sort, which can demonstrate growth potential, is probably the best means of convincing the Government of the need to keep a railway going. We urge further active extension of this principle to all grant aided lines. ✕

LOCAL AUTHORITY GRANTS

✓✕ Under the 1968 Transport Act, provision is made for local authorities to grant aid uneconomic rail service. This is a course of action well-worth consideration, especially where state aid is not forthcoming. The Spalding-Peterborough line has recently been re-opened following the granting of such aid. Similar action by local authorities is under consideration in some other areas.

We have recently established that a local authority would not necessarily be required to pay the full grant as reached under the Cooper Brothers' formula, since it would not be asked to contribute to terminal costs which are shared by other grant aided services. It is also possible for a local authority to grant aid in the short term, i.e., by excluding annual grant for renewal of assets which would not need replacement for some time in the future. This would reduce the amount of annual grant, but, when such assets do eventually require renewal, the cost would need to be found from another source or the railway would be closed. This short term aid is well-worth making as a means of keeping threatened services in operation until such time as more permanent arrangements can be made for the long term future. ✕

MORE BOUQUETS

✓✕ The Society issued the following press release to the Press on 19th August:-

"The Railway Inigation Society welcomes the news of the go-ahead for electrifying the lines out of King's Cross - a project which the Society has advocated for many years. It is hoped that it will be quickly followed by the electrification of all the remaining diesel commuter and interconnecting lines in the Greater London region, so that no London commuters will have to suffer these very unsatisfactory and pollution generating services.

The Society also welcomes the news of the go-ahead for the Fleet line." ✕

(See also report from London and Home Counties Branch, p. 10.)

"ENGLAND DON'T LET THIS HAPPEN TO YOU"

With the comment that "letters to the editor need to be brief for publication, but there's always an exception to the rule for one such as this", the September issue of Rail News publishes a half-page communication from William R. Wright, of Cranford, New Jersey, USA. We have received permission from the editor to reprint as much of this letter as we wish. Space preclude a complete reproduction, which is unfortunate, as the letter contains so much of relevance to the transport scene in the UK, although it deals entirely with the position in the States.

The following are a few examples of the thought-provoking material contained in the letter

"We had a fine transportation system based on railroads, inter-urban trolley lines and suburban street cars which gave relatively fast, frequent service to virtually every community in the United States."

"We have the situation today that more than half the communities in the United States cannot be reached by any form of public transportation. Our headlong worship of the auto is directly responsible for this situation."

In Los Angeles, California, "more than 60 per cent of the land area of the city is used exclusively for highways, streets and parking lots."

"Now we have 93 per cent of our population travelling by car and complete transportation chaos. England, don't let this happen to you."

NATIONAL COUNCIL ON INLAND TRANSPORT

Mr. R. V. Banks, our Press and Publicity Officer, has been elected to the national executive committee of the NCIT as an individual member of that organisation. Dr. M. P. L. Caton continues on the executive committee as the official representative of the Railway Invigoration Society.

At the annual general meeting of the NCIT held on 1st October, Mr. Banks proposed: "That, in view of the Government's declared intention to withdraw grant aid from socially necessary railway services and failure to re-open or keep intact the formation of those already closed, the NCIT will take immediate steps to inaugurate a massive public campaign against this policy, in co-operation with all other interested parties, and that a small representative ad hoc committee of these parties will be set up as soon as possible with the single term of reference to plan all aspects of the campaign."

This proposal was carried unanimously and plans for the campaign are now going ahead, with the full co-operation of the Railway Invigoration Society.

WHAT FUTURE FOR COUNTRY BUSES AND TRAINS?

A one-day conference with the above title was held at the Central Hall, Westminster, on 19th October. It was intended primarily, but not exclusively, for councillors and officers of local authorities and was organised by the Rural District Councils Association.

The Railway Invigoration Society was represented by Mr. R. V. Banks.

The opening address was given by Mr. Eldon Griffiths, M.P., Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment. Other speakers were Mr. J. S. Gilks, Assistant Secretary of the Rural District Councils Association; Mr. D. W. Glassborow, Chief Planning and Development Officer of the National Bus Company; Mr. A. E. T. Griffiths, Executive Director (Passenger) of the British Railways Board; Mr. L. H. Smith, General Manager of Leicester City Transport; and a representative of the Post Office Corporation.

Mr. Eldon Griffiths' speech was most disappointing. All his arguments could be refuted,

but question time was severely limited and he did not stay to hear the other speeches. The address by Mr. A. E. T. Griffiths was very good and effectively answered several of Mr. Eldon Griffiths' anti-rail statements.

As a result of the press report of this conference, our Chairman, Dr. M. P. L. Caton, had a letter published in the Daily Telegraph of 28th October. Dr. Caton drew attention to the misleading statement by Mr. Eldon Griffiths that "the Government is paying £30 million a year to keep unprofitable rural rail services going". According to Dr. Caton, "much of this expenditure is used to pay for track, stations and administrative costs which are shared with other services, including the inter-city routes, the viability of which would be seriously impaired if grant aid were withdrawn on a significant scale. Because of this and the fact that removal of feeder services would lead to loss of much main-line revenue, closures on the scale suggested by Mr. Griffiths would soon plunge the railways into annual deficits on the scale that obtained before the 1968 Act."

SOUTH EASTERN PUBLIC TRANSPORT DEVELOPMENT GROUP

✓ X An organisation with the above name was formed at a meeting held in Tonbridge, Kent, on 10th September. It comprises the following railway travellers' associations: X Ashford & Hastings Rail Users' Association; Brighton & Area Commuters' Association; East Sussex Travellers' Association; Hastings, Bexhill & District Season Ticket Holders' Association; Lewes-Uckfield Joint Rail Committee; Oxted & District Railway Travellers' Association; Surrey & Kent Rail Travellers' Association; Tonbridge & District Railway Travellers' Association; Tunbridge Wells & District Railway Travellers' Association. X

The Group will campaign for a comprehensive railway system, integrated with other forms of public transport and underwritten by an investment policy which will meet the growing demand of the South-East.

The prime aims of the Group are to press for:-

- (1) immediate funding for
 - (a) electrification of the Oxted and Hastings lines;
 - (b) resignalling at London Bridge;
 - (c) track reorganisation at New Cross.
- (2) retention of the Ashford Hastings line and other "public service" lines threatened by closure
- (3) revision of British Rail's fare policy;
- (4) co-ordination of transport facilities and urban development.

The first big effort of the Group is to give all support to the fight to save the Hastings-Ashford line. A meeting to discuss this matter has been arranged with Kent County Council.

Enquiries from organisations who are sympathetic to the Group's aims will be most welcome and should be addressed to the Group Secretary, Mr. John Watkinson, of 2, South Grove, Tunbridge Wells, Kent.

The Railway Invigoration Society, the Railway Development Association and the National

Council on Inland Transport are in close co-operation with the Group through a liaison officer, Mr. E. V. Banks, of 121, Ashford Road, Bearsted, Maidstone, Kent. Mr. Banks is Press and Publicity Officer of the RIS. ✕

BY RAIL INTO THE EIGHTIES

The above is the title of an eight-page special report on the modernisation of British Rail which was published in The Guardian of 15th September.

Topics covered include finance, technology, British Rail workshops, freight, railway catering and the Channel Tunnel. There is also an account of an interview with Mr. Richard Marsh, the new Chairman of the British Railways Board.

The report contains much material of great interest to all those who have concern for the future of railways in this country.

Attention is also directed to an article entitled "Why do the world's railways lose money?" by John Ogilvie, CEng, MIMechE, which was published in the May 1971 issue of The Professional Engineer. The Chairman of the RIS has said that he has found in the article nothing with which he can disagree.

THE INFERNAL COMBUSTION ENGINE

In 1951 there were 2½ million cars on the roads of Great Britain. Today there are 11½ million!

An excellent commentary on the increasing congestion on Britain's roads was provided by a Cummings cartoon which appeared in the Daily Express of 15th September. It shows a motorway absolutely crammed with vehicles of all shapes and sizes, including one resembling a tank which bears a notice: " 'Rolls' Impregnable, uncrushable by lorries." A roadside board bears the information: "Services one mile: petrol, meals, undertaker." A blonde girl in a tiny two-seater car is reading a newspaper with the headline: "More railways to close." The caption to the cartoon sums up the whole situation thus: "If they closed motorways instead of rail line, we'd stand a sporting chance of reaching pensionable age."

RAILWAYS SAVE FUEL

✕ According to the Chicago Sun-Times, ✕ Professor Richard A. Rice of Pittsburgh's Carnegie-Mellon University has devised an index of transport efficiency which indicates that a 10-car double-decker suburban railroad train is the most efficient people-mover available. Such a train can haul 200 persons one mile on a gallon of fuel. Buses handle 120 passenger miles per gallon and the auto is far down the ladder of efficiency at 30 passenger miles per gallon. ✕ (With acknowledgements to the US "News from National Association of Railroad Passengers", July 1971). ✕

OUR VIEWS PUBLICISED

This Society is receiving wide publicity through a letter, signed by the General Secretary, which appeared in the November issue of Health and Efficiency. The letter draws attention to restoration of through passenger trains from Paris to Hyères, near Toulon, on the south coast of France, and to the doubling of track on the rail-only causeway to Westerland, on the North Frisian island of Sylt (Germany).

In a letter published in the Daily Telegraph of the 2nd October, Mr. John Hunt, MP, stated that he was not in favour of "hundreds of thousands of foreign tourists, not to mention the visitors to London from other parts of the United Kingdom", enjoying "artificially low fares at the expense of the ratepaying residents of Greater London." In a rejoinder which appeared in the newspaper's issue of the 12th October, our Press and Publicity Officer, Mr. R. V. Banks, urged that Mr. Hunt "should pause to think of the alternatives." Mr. Banks stated that "the roads of London, choked with private transport because of the lack of inexpensive and reliable public transport, will cost the ratepayers much more in the long run". He added: "In any case, I should have thought that the visitors to London, whether from home or abroad, will bring more money to the area than they take out in the form of subsidised public transport."

NEW CORPORATE MEMBERS

We welcome the following local authorities to corporate membership of the Society:-

- City of New Sarum Council (Salisbury, Wiltshire)
- Oldham County Borough Council (Lancashire)
- Wakefield County Borough Council (West Riding of Yorkshire)
- Warrington Rural District Council (Lancashire)

IN PARLIAMENT

Selections from the official reports House of Commons

Questions

SSE = Secretary of State for the Environment.

All the following answers were written.

4th August Rail closures (bus services) Mr. Normanton (Cheadle) asked the SSE if he will ease the financial burden placed on bus companies by the requirements to provide the additional bus services which are the condition of his consent to a rail closure. Mr. Peyton The Transport Act, 1968, saddled the National Bus Company and the Scottish Transport Group with the cost of additional bus services required as a condition of consent to a rail closure. This obligation represents a serious financial burden to these two companies, faced as they are by falling demand and sharply rising costs. The Government have decided, therefore, to contribute up to £450,000 in the current financial year towards the cost of the provision of these additional bus services by the

National Bus Company and, should the need arise, the Scottish Transport Group. A summer supplementary estimate has been presented to the House. This will not affect the standing arrangements whereby the period during which these replacement bus services are subject to Ministerial consent is normally limited to two years.

5th August British Railways Board (bus services) Mr. Loveridge (Hornchurch) asked the SSE whether he will relieve the British Railways Board of their responsibilities for subsidising privately-operated bus services provided in connection with the withdrawal in the past of certain rail passenger services; and whether he will make a statement. Mr. Peyton I have decided that a variation should be made under section 54(5) of the Transport Act, 1968, to the conditions imposed when consents were given by my predecessors at various times since 1964 to the discontinuance of certain railway passenger services. The main effect of this variation is to remove from the Railways Board the residual obligation to bear the cost of certain rail replacement bus services for which the responsibility has not been transferred to the National Bus Company or the Scottish Transport Group and which have been in operation for more than two years.

It will be for the local authorities and other local interests concerned to consider in each case, where necessary, whether there is a continuing need for any of the bus services concerned, the possible use of the powers of grant-aid under section 34 of the Transport Act, 1948, or any other ways of meeting the need. To give time for such consideration and for any necessary local consultations, the variation will not take effect until six months from today.

20th October Fleet line Mr. Spearing (Acton) asked the SSE when he intends to announce his decision concerning the Fleet line. Mr. Peter Walker I announced my decision on 18th August to pay 75 per cent. grant towards the cost of the first stage of the line, from Baker Street to the Strand. This is a commitment of £26 million, the biggest grant ever made to London Transport. Mr. Spearing I thank the right hon. Gentleman for that reply and for his statement after the question was tabled, but is he aware that many people feel that the section from New Cross to the Strand is as important as the line from the Strand to Baker Street? If he is making some inquiry, would it not be a good thing to authorise that work now, as it can stand on its own feet? Mr. Walker The Dockland Study is an important aspect here and I am advised that this stage had to go ahead first. We will make a decision in plenty of time for the next stage if it is decided that it is the correct thing to do. Mr. Selwyn Gummer (Lewisham, West) Will my right hon. Friend bear in mind that the stretch of line from Lewisham to New Cross is a vital link now that the arrangements for motorways and similar roads in the area seem to be going ahead? May we have an early decision on this point, so that the local authority may make suitable preparations for the reception of this end of the line? Mr. Walker As soon as we know the results of the Dockland Study, which is of immense importance to London as a whole, we will make a decision. The grant for the first stage, the extra bus grants, investments for trains, and so forth, that I have announced show that the Government are doing far more for London Transport than any of their predecessors did.

22nd October

Railway closures (Wales) Mr. Elystan Morgan (Cardiganshire) asked the SSE if he will withhold

the granting of consent for any railway closures in Wales and the other development areas of Great Britain until Her Majesty's Government are more able to estimate the nature of regional policies permissible for the United Kingdom within the European Economic Community. Mr. Peyton No.

Railways (subsidies) Mr. Elystan Morgan asked the SSE what is the approximate sum which is currently being spent by Her Majesty's Government to subsidise loss-making railways in Wales and England respectively. Mr. Peyton Approximately £5.3 million and £51.8 million respectively for 1971.

25th October Channel Tunnel (feasibility study) Mr. Adley (Bristol, North-East) asked the SSE if, during the period of feasibility study of the Channel Tunnel, he will take into account the likely increase in rail traffic between Bristol and the Channel Tunnel consequent upon the decision to proceed with the development of the Bristol West Dock. Mr. Peyton All relevant and significant factors will be taken into account in the course of the Channel Tunnel studies.

5th November Railways (rolling stock) Mr. Bagier (Sunderland, South) asked the SSE (1) what proposals have been submitted to him by the British Railways Board for capital expenditure to extend its freight rolling stock; and if he will make a statement; (2) what proposals have been submitted to him by the British Railways Board for capital expenditure to extend its passenger rolling stock; and if he will make a statement. Mr. Peyton Three proposals have been submitted for my approval this year: £16 million on 600 inter-city passenger coaches, £2 million on 500 high-capacity wagons, and £12 million on 90 car-sets for the Great Northern suburban services. I have approved all of these.

European Economic Community Mr. Spearing (Acton) asked the SSE when he will be able to announce the procedural adjustments that he expects will be required in respect of domestic policy for rail, road, and inland waterway transport in the event of having to comply with regulations 1191-2/69 and 1107-8/70 of the Commission of the European Economic Community. Mr. Peyton Not for some time. Transitional periods of up to a year after accession have been agreed with the Community in order to allow time for discussions with the industries concerned and with the Commission.

Ministerial responsibilities Mr. Arthur Jones (Northamptonshire, South) asked the Minister what changes he is making in the allocation of responsibilities among his supporting Ministers. Mr. Peter Walker I have asked the Minister for Transport Industries to take over from the Minister for Local Government and Development the responsibility for all planning and transport casework in the Greater London Council area and for traffic policy generally. The Minister for Local Government and Development continues to be responsible for planning policy generally and for casework outside Greater London.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

(For conditions of acceptance, see previous progress report. p.2.)

Oil v. coal

I am doubtful whether, in the argument for strengthening the railway system, sufficient weight

is given to the fact that the world's oilfields are rapidly being exhausted. According to details published in various issues of "The Ecologist", there may not be much more than ten years' supply left if the increasing annual use of private motor vehicles continues unchecked at the same rate of growth as has obtained in recent years. It may well be that, before many of the private cars now in use wear out, the enforcement of strict petrol rationing will make them worthless relics of a prodigal squandering of this planet's natural resources.

It is paradoxical that the reserves of un-mined coal in this country and many others are sufficient for several centuries. This is available for electric power-stations, as well as for a future generation of coal-fired railway engines when the last few barrels of oil have been sucked out of the Alaskan north shore field. The fact that the oil companies have been driven to such remote and hostile quarters of the earth in their search for oil is, to my mind, ominous.

Does anyone know of any government that is facing up to this urgent problem now, while there is still time for making the public realise that, in a few years' time, if they want to travel, they will have to choose between (a) public transport by rail, supported by local (only) bus services, (b) walking, (c) cycling?

T. Donald Teague,
18, Pellhurst Road,
Ryde, Isle of Wight.

BOOKSHELF

Leavitt, Helen. Superhighway - superhoax. New York, Ballantine Books, 1971. * (Should*be obtainable from good bookshops, but, in case of difficulty, can be ordered from the American Book Service, Excel House, Excel Court, Whitcomb Street, London, W. C. 2.) * paperback. £0.40 (postage £0.15).

✕ It has become a commonplace among those who are concerned about the transport crisis (and particularly that the most socially useful railways are in danger) that the example of the United States is the one to avoid. While this is true to a large extent, it must not be supposed that the railways are no longer in business in the USA (American industry still depends very greatly on the US railways' freight services), nor that all Americans are slaves of the automobile, pressuring for more and more highways to be built. This useful book sets the record straight with some hard-hitting stories of federal and state highway programmes.

As in the United Kingdom, the road lobby is both powerful and active, having large funds available to support its actions. Nevertheless, amenity groups across the nation are, gradually, making their voices heard. Hence AMTRAK, the Government-sponsored railway passenger network, about which we hope to report in a future issue.

✕ Miss Leavitt gives some startling facts - for instance, twice as much is spent on automobile transportation as on all forms of education (\$120 billion a year) - and shows how staggeringly naive are some of the assumptions of the road lobbyists. At a House of Representatives hearing:-

Question: Is it not true that the highway system needs of the United States of America are almost without limit, and will they not be almost without limit on and on? Answer: I hope so!

Not surprisingly, Miss Leavitt concludes that public transport can provide many, if not all, of the answers, though the book does not end on a hopeful note. It should be of great interest to members of this Society. ✕

R. Macqueen

REPORTS FROM BRANCHES AND AREAS

BRANCHES

London and Home Counties

The annual general meeting of the Branch took place at the end of September, when the Chairman, Vice-Chairman and Secretary were all re-elected. The Vice-Chairman has been nominated for membership of the London Transport Passenger Committee, but, at the time of going to press, it is not known whether the Greater London Council will agree to appoint him.

✕ The campaign to save the Ashford-Hastings line continues. A plea for its retention was contained in a letter, signed by the Mayors of Rye and Winchelsea and others, which appeared in The Times of 1st November. The letter stated that "bus services in the area have been getting progressively worse since a totally unheralded decision in 1969 by the then Minister of Transport that the line should be closed, subject to 'adequate alternative public transport'." In stressing the contribution made by this line to the revenue of other lines, the writers point out that "one of its significant attributes is that it is part of the only direct line between the Channel ports and the south coast holiday resorts from Hastings to Brighton and beyond" and that "a decision on the Channel Tunnel will be made in the next two years or so." ✕

✕ Mr. R. V. Banks, Press and Publicity Officer of the RIS, Dr. Daniel of the Railway Development Association and Mr. A. R. Mordaunt of the East Sussex Passengers' Association were guests of Mr. F. Paterson, Central Divisional Manager of Southern Region, British Rail, when the problems both for users and British Rail, caused by the absence of passenger trains on the Lewes-Uckfield line (service withdrawn 5th May, 1969) were discussed. ✕

Mr. Banks represents the RIS on the Ashford-Hastings Joint Committee (mostly local authority representatives) and on the Ashford & Hastings Rail Users' Association.

✕ A Government grant of 75% has been made towards the infrastructure of stage one (Baker Street-Strand) of the Fleet underground line from Stanmore to Lewisham. A similar grant has been made towards the cost of electrifying British Rail's suburban service from King's Cross and Moorgate to Royston via Welwyn Garden City and Hertford North. Construction of the first part of the 3½ mile London (Heathrow) Airport underground link with Hounslow West has begun. The Victoria line was completed with the 3½ mile stretch between Victoria and Brixton was opened to the public on 23rd July. ✕

Transmark, the consultancy firm recently formed by the British Railways Board, is one of organisations which is to enter into a partnership with the Greater London Council for the purpose

of carrying out a new transportation survey of London. The other body concerned is Social and Community Planning Research. Certain London boroughs are co-operating in the survey.

✓X The TUCC public inquiry into the proposed withdrawal of the Bedford-Bletchley passenger service took place on 28th July. Much opposition was displayed. X

Chislehurst Colliery station (Canterbury West-Ramsgate line) was closed to passengers from 4th October.

✓X British Rail propose to withdraw the West Croydon-Mitcham-Wimbledon passenger service. X

The Branch Committee has decided not to object to the proposed closure of East Brixton station (Victoria-London Bridge line), as no member would suffer hardship as a result of this proposal being carried into effect. However, if any member is likely to suffer any personal hardship from any proposed closure in the area covered by the London and Home Counties Branch, would they please notify the Branch Secretary of the nature of the hardship as soon as the notice of proposed closure is issued.

✓X Local committees are being set up by people living in places served by the North London line (Broad Street-Richmond) in order to campaign for the retention and improvement of this service. The inaugural meeting of one of these committees, centred on Islington, was attended by the Secretary and another member of the Branch. X

Northern England

✓X The Branch is very pleased to report an improved service between Newcastle, Sunderland, Teesside and Darlington, which came into operation on 4th October. An hourly service operates on weekdays (two-hourly on Sundays from midday) from Newcastle to Darlington via Sunderland, calling at all stations except Greatham and Dinsdale. This provides a direct service from many stations to Darlington, whereas under the old service Darlington could be reached only with a change at Thornaby. The old hourly service between Newcastle and Middlesbrough remains; on Sundays the two-hourly service provides through trains to Redcar Central. Another welcome point is that British Rail has taken an unusual step in opening new stations at Allen's West and Teesside Airport (between Eaglescliffe and Darlington).

British Rail claims that it is providing a service between South Shields and Sunderland by improving the connections at Pelaw. As a direct service between these two points was withdrawn a few years ago, because BR said that there was no demand for it, this claim is rather ironic. It is not possible to restore the direct service, because the track between Tyne Dock and East Bolden no longer exists. Nevertheless, there is some slight comfort in knowing that those who claimed there was a need for such a service have now been proved to be correct by BR's own action.

We still await, with some trepidation, the takeover of the North Tyneside line by the Tyneside Passenger Transport Executive. As stated in the last report, the PTE is hinting at economies. Already it is talking of replacing the all-night trains with buses and it does not

want the Riverside branch. For the last few years, this line has been used by only a very limited number of workers' trains, but these are of vital importance to many employees of Tyne's shipyard and engineering works. ✕

The air-conditioned coaches, which have operated on certain Newcastle-London trains since 12th July, have, from 18th October, been put into service on trains to Scotland via Newcastle.

✕ Bradford County Borough Council and the British Railways Board have a joint plan to develop £3,800,000 rail/bus interchange in the centre of the city. This is the most ambitious scheme of the kind so far approved by the Department of the Environment. ✕

Wessex

✕ A successful meeting of the Branch was held in the Council Chambers of the Winchester Rural District Council on 14th September. The Dorset Evening Echo gave good coverage to the Branch's proposals for new timetabling of the Weymouth-Bristol service and the associated Bridport branch service, together with a proposed bus integration scheme.

After two TUCC enquiries and two recommendations that the service should remain, the Minister has approved the closure of the Southampton-Winchester-Alton passenger service, subject to alternative buses being provided. ✕ The Deputy Clerk of Winchester RDC tried to meet the Minister with a deputation on this issue, but was refused an interview. The closure decision caused much local resentment, because of the dubious figures presented by BR and the lack of consideration which it gave to a 144% increase in passengers. ✕

Buffet facilities were withdrawn from the Portsmouth-Bristol passenger trains as from 4th October. No Government grant has so far been given to this service to cover 1972, as is also the case with the Isle of Wight service.

Southampton City Council is considering plans for a £10 million transport interchange in the centre of the city on a site near the Civic Centre.

✕ The Branch has held joint film evenings with Meon Valley Railway Society and has recruited new members as a result. Other events (which will be fully reported in our next issue) include the annual general meeting of the Branch and a film night at the Hay Wain Inn, Cadnam. ✕

AREAS

Devon and Cornwall

At the time of going to press, negotiations are taking place with a view to the Dart Valley Light Railway Co. buying from British Rail the Paignton-Kingswear line, the future of which has been uncertain for the last few years. It is now known that BR intends to close the line as soon as possible. It is hoped that Devon County Council will be prepared to subsidise it until such time as the Dart Valley Co. can take the line over.

The Ashburton-Buckfastleigh section of the Dart Valley line is now being removed to make

way for trunk road improvements, as envisaged in an earlier report. The Buckfastleigh section, however, has had another successful season and it is pleasing to note that several excursion trains from British Rail have worked over it.

It is regrettable that British Rail has seen fit to discontinue the through Exeter-Brighton service as from 4th October. This originally ran to and from Plymouth, but was cut back to Exeter when the Okehampton-Bere Alston section was closed. It was then retimed so that only one set of rolling stock would be required for the daily service in each direction. Western Region will still operate a train in each direction, at the old times, between Salisbury and Exeter, but this will do little to alleviate hardship, as passengers will now have to change at Salisbury, where connections between these trains and the Southampton line are not good.

The bus services between Okehampton-Tavistock and Seaton-Honiton have been withdrawn. Tavistock and Seaton had already lost their rail services - May, 1968, and March, 1968 respectively - and Okehampton is about to suffer the same fate.

Although not shown in the current regional timetable, a Sunday service ran between Bodmin Road and Newquay from 20th June to 29th August.

Norfolk (North and West)

Norfolk County Council has stated that it is not willing to subsidise Eastern Counties bus service no. 406 between Wymondham and East Dereham, which replaced a rail service withdrawn from 4th October, 1969. Moreover, after the end of 1971, the Council will cease to subsidise the same company's service between East Dereham and Wells-next-the-Sea (no. 405); this replaced a train service which closed from 5th October, 1964. The Council has, however, agreed to subsidise no. 408, which was provided as a substitute for the rail service between North Walsham and Mundesley.

The Divisional Manager, Norwich, of British Rail is having a series of meetings with local authorities through whose district the Norwich-Sheringham line runs. He has stated that British Rail has no intention of closing the line to passenger traffic.

North-Western England

✓ The Society's Greater Manchester & North Lancashire and Merseyside Areas have been combined to form a new Area with the above title. The decision to effect the merger was taken at a special open meeting held at the Victoria Hotel, Wigan, on 18th September.

Mr. J. Honeysett, a member of the Branches and Areas Sub-Committee, outlined the role of the Society in the North-West. He said that it was necessary to arouse public opinion so that it supported the implementation of the proposed upgradings of railway systems within the South-East Lancashire & North-East Cheshire and Merseyside conurbations. Full advantage of the Crewe to Glasgow electrification must be taken by publicising the need for the Preston-Blackpool, Carnforth-Barrow, Lancaster-Morecambe, Preston-Bolton-Manchester, Wigan-Liverpool and Liverpool-Manchester lines to be electrified also.

Mr. P. Johnson said that there was need for a much better Trans-Pennine rail service and

the Glasgow-Edinburgh push-pull trains offered food for thought in this context. He stressed the need for people who would be actively interested in promoting the local railway systems. It was necessary to point out to the public that successive governments had steadily eroded the investment levels available to British Rail. This resulted in the polluted traffic chaos now experienced by commuters everywhere.

The meeting received press coverage by Wigan and Preston newspapers.

Mr. P. Johnson, who was elected Secretary of the new Area, has been co-opted to the committee of the High Peak Railway Passengers' Association, which covers the Manchester-Stockport-Buxton and Edale Valley lines. ✕

✓✕ British Rail is making a determined effort to boost traffic on the commuter lines into Liverpool. Henceforth, these will bear the collective title of Merseyrail, with three sub-divisions. Services into Lime Street will be called the City line (publicity colour: red), those into Exchange, the Northern line (blue) and those into Central (Low Level), the Wirral line (green). As a first stage, services on the Wirral line services to Rock Ferry, New Brighton and West Kirby have been improved. The summer Sunday services are continuing until further notice and weekday off-peak services have been increased.

Although the TUC pointed out to the Department of the Environment that withdrawal of the Southport-Lime Street passenger service would cause considerable inconvenience, the Secretary of State has given unconditional consent to this proposal being implemented.

Mr. John Peyton, Minister of Transport, said on a visit to Liverpool on 4th November, that priority must be given to public transport over the private motorist in towns and cities. ✕

✓✕ The Merseyside Passenger Transport Authority takes over Merseyside commuter lines from 1st January, 1972, but Government financial aid will continue for the next two years, although this will be cut by 10% next year and 20% in 1973. From 1974, financial responsibility will be transferred completely to local ratepayers. ✕

North and Central Wales

✓✕ The TUC for Wales and Monmouthshire has recommended that the Cambrian Coast line should be retained. The Committee considered that widespread hardship would result if the service ceased and is unable to suggest any alternative. At the public inquiry into the proposal to withdraw the rail passenger service, a representative of Crosville Motor Services Ltd. said that the Company would not be able to run an alternative bus service.

Could there be a reprieve for the Cambrian Coast line? Advance publicity for the London Midland Region's "Merrymaker" programme promises trips to the Cambrian Coast for next year. This could mean that the Society's efforts have been rewarded with success. ✕

✓✕ The Department of the Environment has agreed to make a 75% grant towards the cost (£8,000) of re-opening Shotton (low level) station, as Cheshire County Council has assured the Secretary of State that the district councils affected will find the other 25%. ✕

Northern Scotland

✓✕ In 1971 the Inverness-Kyle of Lochalsh line experienced its heaviest summer season for some years. Many privately chartered trains from various parts of Scotland and England have used the line and have been well patronised. As we went to press, the ministerial decision on the future of this line was still awaited. ✕

The Scottish Railway Preservation Society has definitely abandoned its Boat of Garten-Aviemore scheme, but an independent Strathspey Railway Company has been formed with the object of undertaking something similar.

OTHER NEWS

✓✕ Consultants commissioned jointly by Birmingham City Council and the Department of the Environment have recommended a £50 million scheme for a rail rapid transit system between Four Oaks and Longbridge. ✕ This will be a third-rail electrified line, 17 miles in length, will follow a new tunnel under the city centre and will utilise existing rail lines to the north and south. Other similar lines are planned in the Birmingham conurbation.

The consultants said that the new rail service should be supported by a feeder bus system giving frequent and convenient access to the stations. Duplicating bus services should be withdrawn and many of the remaining routes orientated to feed into the rail station. They also recommended sufficient car parking to encourage "park and ride". ✕

The Department of the Environment has approved the proposed bus service to take the place of the North Warwick line (Tyseley-Bearley West Junction), rejecting the appeal against the services, on the ground of inadequacy, which was made to the Minister of Transport by several local authorities in 1969.

The Tucc public hearing into the proposed withdrawal of the passenger service between Birmingham Snow Hill and Wolverhampton (low level) took place on 14th July. The Committee have reported to the Department of the Environment that the alternative bus services are already having difficulty in coping with the demand at peak periods and it is unable to suggest methods of alleviating the hardship which withdrawal of the rail service would cause.

Two members have reported upon their efforts in opposing the proposed closure of Ashchurch station on the Birmingham-Gloucester line. The Tucc hearing was held on 28th July, but was most poorly attended by objectors. The Secretary of State for the Environment has since consented to the closure. However, residents of Ashchurch and others interested are not accepting this as the last word and the fight continues, including efforts by a member who had already entered into considerable correspondence with various officials and bodies concerned with the matter.

Ashchurch is one of several likely sites for new town development. Other places in the same county, Gloucestershire, which have also been considered for expansion include Thornbury, Yate, Eastington and Dymock, where stations have been closed or the railway already dismantled.

So as to eliminate a level crossing, a road has been constructed alongside the site of the former station at Haresfield (about six miles off Gloucester) and traffic will cross the railway by the existing bridge. The cost of this $\frac{1}{4}$ mile road is reported as £24,000, which will be paid by British Rail.

When the new British Railways Board Chairman, Mr. Richard Marsh, took part recently in a BBC "Any questions?" programme at Tewkesbury, he travelled by train to Cheltenham and, en route, saw the new Haresfield road under construction.

Other sites are being considered for similar treatment.

The Romney, Hythe and Dymchurch Railway faces its first deficit next year. Shareholders have been urged to sell the line to a non-profit-making preservation society. It has been reported that a syndicate headed by Mr. W. Alpine is interested in acquiring the railway and would plough back profits.

Lord Ailsa has given 12 months' notice of his intention to terminate his lease of the Isle of Man Railway from 31st March, 1971, but it is understood that the Manx Government will make some arrangement for its re-opening for the 1972 season.

EDITORIAL ANNOUNCEMENT

Editor: Mr. L. G. Hipperson, 24a Cable Road, Hoylake, Wirral, Cheshire, L47 2BD.
(Telephone: 051 632 4374)

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 March, 1972), all material must be submitted to reach the appropriate editor by Saturday, 29th January, 1972.

PUBLISHED by the RAILWAY INVIGORATION SOCIETY

Chairman: Dr. M. P. L. Caton, 10, Grosvenor Gardens, Upminster, Essex.
General Secretary: Mr. J. M. Stanley, M. A., 12 Westcombe Park Road, London, S. E. 3.
Membership Secretary: Mr. D. J. Bradbury, 59, Dore Road, Dore, Sheffield.

MR. RICHARD MARSH

✓ X The Chairman of the Railway Invigoration Society wrote on its behalf to the new Chairman of the British Railways Board, Mr. Richard Marsh, to congratulate him on his appointment. Dr. Caton said that "we hope that, under your chairmanship, not only will the inter-city rail services continue to gain traffic but also those routes at present grant aided will be developed and abandoned lines restored where alternative transport has failed to provide an acceptable alternative. It is our aim on the political front to press for the provision of adequate Government financial support to permit the retention and development of a comprehensive railway system, which we consider to be vital to national transport requirements."

In a reply, which carried his personal signature, Mr. Marsh said: "I very much appreciate the kindness of your Society in offering your congratulations. The railways are faced with a difficult year, but I am greatly encouraged by the considerable and growing public interest in the wider problems." X

PARLIAMENT

✓ X The Society is continuing to seek support for the setting up of a railways group in the House of Commons. Following the interest in this shown by Mr. Robert Adley, as mentioned in our last report, we have taken up the matter with several other MPs. We hope soon to have aroused enough support to enable us to initiate the calling of a small meeting of MPs to discuss the issues involved.

Will all our members please help us by contacting their own MP and seeking his support for the policy we have put forward in our recent pamphlet "Railways in the seventies" (copies available on request from the General Secretary). We shall be pleased if members would inform us of any support they are able to enlist in this way, so that we can make sure that as many pro-railway MPs as possible are added to our circulation list. X

MEETING WITH MR. ERIC MERRILL

✓ X The Society's Chairman and Publicity Officer recently had a meeting over lunch with Mr. Eric Merrill, Controller of Public Relations and Publicity for the British Railways Board. This followed some correspondence in which Mr. Merrill commented on our recent policy statement and proposals on fares. We greatly valued this opportunity to discuss a number of railway topics with such a senior officer of British Rail.

In contrast to the Beeching days, it is clear that the Society's objectives are now largely in accord with the policies of British Rail. Our chief task is to convince the politicians and local authorities of the need to direct a much greater proportion of transport expenditure in favour of railways, so that the present network may be maintained and developed to serve the nation in the manner of which it is technically capable. X

LETTERS IN THE NATIONAL PRESS

Three letters written by officials on behalf of the Society have been published in national newspapers in recent months. They will continue to write to the Press whenever possible on current railway topics.

We note that one or two members, writing in a private capacity, have also had letters on railway matters published recently. But we would like to see many more such letters and we make a renewed appeal for help from members by their writing to the national Press as frequently as they can. We hope, of course, that members will also continue writing to their local newspapers.

FARES AND FACILITIES SUB-COMMITTEE

✕ The Continental Sub-Committee was recently reorganised and merged with the Fares Sub-Committee, with the new title of the Fares and Facilities Sub-Committee. If any members have any views on Continental services, and on fares and facilities offered that might be of importance nationally, rather than at branch level, will they please write to:- Mr. R. Macqueen, of 20 Culgaith Gardens, Enfield, Middlesex.

Suggestions that have been made recently have involved the re-casting of the Newhaven-Dieppe timetable to provide better connections with French services in Paris and British ones in London. It is understood that the railways themselves have begun examination of the schedules. Among RIS suggestions was the introduction of a West Country-Brighton service connecting with the steamers, so as to give better (and cheaper) transits to the French capital and beyond, and slight revision of the Stirling motorail service to achieve the same results for Scottish travellers. A Sealink ferry service to Brittany is rumoured and the Sub-Committee will press for this to be rail-linked. Protests have been made to the SNCF about poor connections in Paris with the best French domestic services and about the poor quality stock used on Calais services. The Sub-Committee is in touch with the American National Association of Railroad Passengers and other groups elsewhere.

The Society's National Committee has directed the Sub-Committee to investigate the possible effects on this country's railway system of our entry into the European Economic Community and of the construction of a Channel Tunnel. Reports should be issued fairly soon. ✕

TIMETABLES

Mr. E. H. Longland, one of the Assistant Secretaries of the RIS, submitted to the Western Region of British Rail, some months ago, a new Sunday timetable, giving an improved passenger service, for the Par-Newquay line. As British Rail has not agreed with his suggestions, he has taken up the matter with the South Western Transport Users' Consultative Committee. The Wessex Branch has produced schemes for new timetables on the Weymouth-Bristol and Maiden Newton-Bridport lines.

The National Committee is anxious that other branches and areas should produce similar schemes and a letter on this matter has been, or will be, sent to branch secretaries and area representatives.

PUBLICITY

The Society has, through its Publicity Sub-Committee, recently published two new publicity leaflets. Copies of these, also membership application forms, may be obtained from the Press and Publicity Officer, Mr. R. V. Banks, of 121, Ashford Road, Bearsted, Maidstone, Kent.

BARKING-KENTISH TOWN LINE

The running down of this line has commenced. The timetable has been altered, so that connections with the Tilbury line are missed by one minute at Barking. All four electronic indicator boards on Barking station fail to illuminate to show departures on the Kentish Town line, but they still illuminate to show those on other lines. The Society has been in touch with Eastern Region, BR, about this matter.

EXCURSIONS

Members living in the London area who are interested in the "Merrymaker" excursions planned for 1972 should write to the Divisional Manager, British Rail, London Midland Region, Eversholt House, 163 Eversholt Street, London, NW1 1BG, quoting reference PX7/DM/MMB/1 and mentioning the Railway Invigoration Society.

NORTHERN ENGLAND BRANCH

✓ X Despite the mention in the last progress report that the Branch required a new Chairman and Secretary and the plea for a good attendance at the recent annual general meeting, only four members were present. Those attending were the retiring Secretary, together with three other members none of who were in a position to fill either of the vacancies for officials.

With great regret, it was agreed that it does not seem likely that the Branch can continue to operate at the present time. Nevertheless, it was felt that we should not cease to function until members had been given a final chance to volunteer to fill the vacancies. Consequently, it was agreed that the Branch should remain in being until 31st January next and Mr. Mains said that he was willing to act as Secretary until this date.

If any person is willing to volunteer to be Chairman or Secretary, would they please contact Mr. Mains at 113 Manor House Road, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE2 2LY, or get into touch with the Society's General Secretary, Mr. J. M. Stanley, of 12 Westcombe Park Road, London, S. E. 3. Should there be no volunteers by 31st January, 1972, the activities of the Branch will cease from that date. X

THREE COUNTIES BULLETIN

✓ X Another bulletin has been distributed to members living in the area which was covered by the defunct Three Counties Branch, i. e., Gloucestershire, Herefordshire, Worcestershire. It was compiled by National Committee member Mr. E. R. Barbery, of 39 Marling Crescent, Paganhill, Stroud, Glos., GL54 9Q. Any member in the three counties who has not received a copy should get into touch with Mr. Barbery. X

OPEN UNIVERSITY

One of the films National Committee member Mr. R. Macqueen has worked on in the Open

University social science series is about railway electrification. Transmission is scheduled for 29th April, 1972.

SUBSCRIPTIONS

A subscription renewal form for 1972 is enclosed with this members only supplement.

SALES LIST

Members are asked to kindly make the following amendment to the sales list enclosed with the last progress report:-

The title of the first work mentioned should read:

"Forgotten stations of Greater London."

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING, 1972

Preliminary notice is given that the next annual general meeting of the Railway Invigoration Society will be held on Saturday, 15th April, 1972, in Yeovil, Somerset, which is situated in the parliamentary constituency of Mr. John Peyton, the present Minister of Transport. Local arrangements will be made by our Wessex Branch.

BRANCH SECRETARIES AND AREA REPRESENTATIVES

Amendment to list shown in members only supplement no. 6 (March, 1971)

AREAS

North Western England

This new Area came into existence on 18th September. It is a combination of the Greater Manchester & North Lancashire and Merseyside areas.

The Area Representative is:- Mr. P.R. Johnson, 33 Hurdsfield Road, Stockport,
Cheshire, SK2 7ND.

CONTRIBUTORS, PLEASE NOTE!

Contributors are once again urged to submit their material on time.

In future, so as to facilitate the due preparation and distribution of the progress report, the arrangement of the last two years whereby urgent late news would be accepted up to a week after the normal "deadline" will be discontinued. This means that, if inclusion in a particular issue is to be ensured, all material must be sent to the appropriate editor so as to reach him by the date given in the editorial announcement at the end of the previous progress report.

EDITORIAL THANKS

The editors are most grateful to all those who have helped to make this progress report and members supplement bumper issues.

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