

EEC – The Benefits of Rail

Britain has been alone in the European Economic Community in making persistent reductions in the level of financial support for its urban and rural public transport. The attitude that it somehow benefits travellers to have a scrimped and inferior means of public transport is a particularly British one. RDS have stated the arguments for fair assessment of all modes of transport and the proper development of public transport one and time again. Now a recent speech by EEC Commissioner Stanley Clinton Davies, together with an opinion from the Economic and Social Committee of the EEC have vindicated the demands of the RDS for a complete change in the Government's policy and spending priorities in transport.

At the International Symposium on Europe's Railways (Manheim, October 1987) Commissioner Davies made three major points relating to the benefits of railways as compared to roads:

- (1) Railways minimise congestion and maximise land use. Ten metres width of rail track are required to carry 40,000 passengers per hour, whereas the corresponding figures for bus and car are 35 and 135 metres respectively (International Road Transport Union statistics).
- (2) Trains have significant marginal advantages in a world of finite energy supplies. Railways use 3% of the total energy dedicated to transport inside the community while accounting for 23% of freight and 9% of passenger transport, while

road uses 85% of energy and accounts for 61% of freight and 85% of passenger transport.

- (3) Trains are infinitely safer. Each year 50,000 people are killed and 2m injured on Europe's roads while, although rail accidents do occur, the railways have an excellent safety record.

"New initiatives should be taken at the European level", Mr Davies said, "to build on the many advantages which railways offer. For too long perhaps, rail has been the poor relation in the development of the Community transport policy."

RDS (Scotland) have challenged Malcolm Rifkind to respond positively to this speech, which advocates what RDS has been pressing governments to do for many years (without success), namely that road and rail be treated on an equal footing. Support for this approach also comes from a 1986 report of the Joint Committee of EEC railways which calls on member states to recognise that, in a competitive market, railways are subjected to more restrictive obligations than their competitors, including the cost of their infrastructure.

An RDS leaflet, to be produced early this year, will stress the fact that Britain is the odd one out in terms of transport policy in the EEC. Meanwhile it is up to all of us to continue to make these points time again, as we have done in the past, until such time as the truth wins through.

NAO Report on Heavy Lorries

Heavy lorries are causing at least £600m worth of damage to roads and bridges every year, according to a report* issued by the National Audit Office last year. It appears that the Department of Transport is not doing all it really can to get to grips with the problem – of which Governments have been aware for the last 20 years without any attempt at solution. In 1983, in fact, the Government added to the problem by legalising the 38-tonne lorry. So now 55,000 bridges will need to be strengthened at a cost of a further £700m.

It is impossible to estimate the damage caused to buildings and underground

installations. It does, however, provide some statistics which show the hidden costs of the Government's mistaken transport policy. British Gas attributes £65m of the £195m it spends on road repairs each year to heavy lorries. Overloading of lorries is believed to cause £50m a year, while surveys show that up to 22% exceed even the present limit.

More sensible policies prevail in Switzerland, where the lorry weight limit is 28 tonnes and the authorities try to ensure that foreign juggernauts go piggy-back on a train through their country. The Austrian Government,

which shares the anger of environmentalists at the massive influx of lorries from the EEC, is planning to provide low loader rail wagons to the same end as the Swiss authorities. A night-time 37 mph speed limit has been imposed on one motorway to reduce disturbance; the Transport Minister having warned that if this limit is not respected a total night-time lorry ban will be effected.

These continental policies begin to have relevance to Britain as the Channel Tunnel gets ever closer; private sector wagon companies are trying to find a way to get big continental freight wagons to other parts of Britain than Waterloo as passenger trains arrive from France in 1993 (a route via the threatened Settle-Carlisle line could well be the best way to Glasgow).

There must be a message here for all rail campaigners but, whilst the Department of Transport conducts itself as if it were a branch of the British Road Federation, the future looks bleak. If you have any doubts on this score the NAO report is compulsory reading.

*National Audit Office. Department of Transport: Regulation of Heavy Lorries. July 1987. HMSO. £10.50.

"Bustitution" Doesn't Work

British Rail has applied to the Department of Transport for permission to invest in more "Sprinter" diesel trains.

The Department has told BR to look instead at line closures (up to 41 routes) and bus substitution.

All the experience of the last quarter of a century has shown that "bustitution" rarely works. How many bus services introduced to replace rail lines closed in the 1960s survive today? Very few. For, in most cases, no more than 25% of rail users turned to replacement buses. The rest either bought cars, travelled less or stopped making particular journeys altogether.

There have been ample studies of the ineffectiveness of bus replacement. One of the most convincing was the Policy Studies Institute report "Social Consequences of Rail Closures." Our society produced a book, "Can Bus Replace Train?" in 1977. This book sold 9000 copies and, undoubtedly helped to defeat attempts to impose bustitution by the Government of that day.

If bustitution were introduced, what savings would ensue? BR undertook a

study recently and showed that a mere £15m would be saved, at most. How many hundred metres of motorway would that build? If the Government really wants to save that sort of money, a minor tightening of company car tax concessions would do the job!

It is the task of RDS to fight such closure proposals, and we are tackling it in various ways. Already, letters have gone to the Ministers concerned, expressing our opposition, while many RDS members have also written directly to their MPs.

Our member Richard Watts is preparing a new book, updating the arguments and studies of "Can Bus Replace Train?" It is planned to publish this at Easter 1988. Offers of help should reach Richard by the end of January at 15 Stanley Avenue, Penwortham, Preston, Lancs PR1 9RB. Photos would be especially welcome.

We must keep our Anti-Closure Fund topped up. Donations are always welcomed by the General Secretary.

Finally, as well as defensive measures, we have to keep on the offensive, promoting rail services. The more people who use them, especially in the off-peak, the less threat there will be to them. That is one reason why our Railguide series is so important. There are plenty of guidebooks on the market encouraging people to travel by road; ours is the only comprehensive nationwide series encouraging them to go by rail.

In addition to the ten titles in print (all available from our Sales Officer), work is now almost complete on three more titles for publication in May. Watch the next Railwatch for details and a pre-publication offer to members.

Trevor Garrod.

What the Papers Say.

Light rail may be chosen as the main force of public transport in and around the Cardiff Bay Development Area because of its minimal environmental impact compared with other forms of transport. Cardiff Central station would be the most likely main interchange point, from which the first stage to the new County Hall would cost about £5m. (Western Mail 3.9.87)

A new £1m Railfreight marshalling yard at Margam, South Wales, is nearly complete. Knuckle yard is expected to save BR £300,000 a year in operating costs. It will handle steel, coal and lime as well as Speedlink trains. The old hump yard, opened in 1962, will then be redundant. Knuckle has 18 sidings, while Hump had 52.

(Western Mail 18.9.87)

The cancellation of the 0715 train from Lydney to Cardiff has forced non-driver Jackie Willans to leave her job. Jackie said: "BR say not enough people

are using that stop at Lydney, but the people who do use it rely on it." BR's response: "We regret the inconvenience caused."

(South Wales Echo 18.9.87)

Private companies are "knocking at the door" wanting a part of the £200m scheme to build a Midland Metro. The old GWR line would be brought back into service to provide the first link, from Birmingham Snow Hill to Wolverhampton, followed by lines to Walsall, Stourbridge, Sutton Coldfield and a separate scheme for Coventry.

(Railway Gazette International October 1987)

Britain is still a substantial net exporter of rail vehicles and associated equipment, holding almost 10% of the world market.

(House of Lords Select Committee)

RDS Calls for Trains to Heathrow

RDS submitted five pages of comment on the recent Heathrow Airport Access Study to the Department of Transport in October, with copies to BR and the British Airports Authority.

We stress the need for a conventional electrified rail link to the airport, linking the Western Region main line and the Southern Region Waterloo-Reading line, with triangular junctions at either end. Trains could then run from Woking, Reading and further afield, as well as from Central London.

As Paddington is not the best terminus for central London, we call for further investigation of the possibility of running airport trains along the Metropolitan line to serve Kings Cross, Farringdon, Liverpool Street and, possibly, beyond.

From the General Secretary's Postbag

The General Secretary was pleased to receive news from InterCity that most of the fares increases, imposed in June, to discourage overcrowding were withdrawn in October. A copy of BR's press release announcing this has also been sent to us, but it did not seem to receive much prominence in the news media.

Trevor Garrod has been in further correspondence with the BRB over the case for strengthening the British Transport Police in order to protect the vast majority of law-abiding rail travellers, and the desirability of this being funded out of general taxation.

A letter has gone to Public Transport Minister David Mitchell MP, asking if the Government will give extra financial help to BR in the aftermath of the October storms. It is reported that clearing tracks, repair work and lost revenue cost BR £9m - plus the cost of replacing the bridge over the River Tywi. Various local authorities have received Government aid for their clearing operations, why not BR?

RDS People

Lord Ross, of Newport (Isle of Wight), has accepted our invitation to become a Vice-President of RDS. As Stephen Ross, he was Liberal MP for the Island for several years, but stood down at the last election.

Reg Snow, our Administrative Officer, has been re-elected as a member of the Board of Transport 2000 Ltd., the transport and environmental organisation to which RDS is affiliated.

Trevor Garrod and John Lark have both contributed articles on transport to a new Penguin book for secondary schools, "Whose side are you on?", which is to be published later this year.

Chris Burton and Paul Clark, of the RDS Passenger Committee, had a useful discussion with InterCity Marketing manager in December.

Lottery Prize Winners

September: P Wilson (Leeds), M Savage (Cleethorpes), M Breslin (Liverpool), Mr & Mrs Fisher (Essex), K Neill (Warndon).

October: R Herr (London), G Roper (Cambridge), I Turner (Norfolk), J Hancock (Derby), P Lighton (Surrey).

November: R White (Surrey), J Barfield (London), S Mortimer (Dorset), G Roper (Cambridge), K Headly (Melton Mowbray).

Reg Snow would be pleased to let any member have details of the lottery, participation in which swells the funds of the Society.

Rail User Groups Conference Report

Trevor Jones has produced a report of the September 1987 RDS Conference of Rail User Groups. This six-page report summarises the main speeches (from Peter Snape MP, Labour Party transport spokesperson and Dr Paul Prescott, BRD Provincial Marketing Manager) and contributions from the floor. Copies are available from H.T. Jones, Flat 2, 11 Guildford Road, Tunbridge Wells, Kent TN11 1SW, price £1 (payable to RDS). There is also available an expanded 10 page version, price £2.

This Conference will also be reported, in brief, in the next issue of Railwatch.

Membership Cards

As an administrative economy, members will not, in future, automatically receive a renewal membership card unless they specifically request one and enclose a stamped addressed envelope with their subscriptions. A revised date code at the bottom left of the Railwatch envelope label will confirm that the renewal has been processed.

Proof of membership at meetings, such as the AGM, will be furnished by the envelope in which papers for the meeting were received.



This photograph (courtesy of Tony Woolf of Preston) demonstrates the inequitable funding of roads versus railways in the U.K. Taken at Penmaenmawr in North Wales, it shows the Crewe to Holyhead railway on the right, and work proceeding on the A55 road on the left. The whole 105½ miles of the railway could be electrified at a current estimate of £34m. In contrast, the improvements to parts of the A55 road are presently costing £550m, and the final likely cost could be nearer to £1,000m, including a road tunnel under the river Conwy.

Railway Financing

I would like to comment on the front page review (Railwatch 33) of the recent Parliamentary Transport Committee report on railway financing.

This review highlights, quite correctly, two of the positive recommendations of the report regarding the social role of Inter City services and grants for maintaining historic structures. These are two out of a total of 29 recommendations, most of which are useful and would be of some benefit to rail users if implemented (one could also, for example, quote the recommendation to reconsider the Dornoch Bridge project), although, in the current political climate, it is doubtful whether any of them will be considered by the government.

It needs to be said, however, that this report is, like The Curate's Egg, good in parts and has a number of serious faults and omissions. Very noticeable among these is a tendency to accept without question a number of very dubious assumptions from the (overwhelmingly road-biased) Department of Transport. For example:

- (1) On investment appraisal (Paras. 49 & 190) "the Department's view is that there is no significant distortion between road and rail investment arising from the use of Cost/Benefit Analysis for road schemes whilst investment criteria are applied to the railways".

- (2) On the favourable tax treatment of company cars (Para. 35) "the Department's view is that this is a matter of taxation rather than a transport issue". This subject is dealt with in one very inadequate paragraph, although it is obvious from the summary of proceedings of the committee that a large chunk was deleted from the draft report which went into considerable detail on this, quoting studies by TEST and others, showing clearly the impact of company cars on rail travel.

- (3) Most remarkable of all, in Para. 50, after the environmental benefits of rail freight over road haulage have been acknowledged – "the Department argues that heavy lorries cover their track costs with an adequate margin to allow for environmental impact and that as private enterprises they also cover their operating costs."

The issue of track costs is mentioned briefly in an annex to the report, which recognises that this is a subject worthy of more detailed investigation. That is hardly good enough in such a detailed general survey; railways are fully responsible for their track costs and are expected to compete with road transport, the infrastructure of which is paid for out of public money and gives, therefore, an enormous inbuilt advantage to road users. Delegates to the

BAHN 2000 convention in Basel last June learned how this anomaly has been tackled in Switzerland by the Government taking responsibility for the Swiss Federal Railway's infrastructure costs. This type of solution, or replacing operating subsidy by infrastructure grants, should be considered in a report such as this.

The report also deals, at length but rather inconclusively, with the problems of sectorisation (mainly to do with cost allocation). Many of these problems could disappear if there were a more sensible approach to track costs. Bus substitution raises its ugly head again as a means of providing "cheaper" public transport. This discussion ignores the fact that the running costs of bus and train are similar when track costs are discounted.

In view of shortcomings such as these, it is interesting to note that the committee which produced the report was chaired by an NUR-sponsored MP and included an RDS member. The conclusions were obviously only agreed after much debate and perhaps compromise between MPs of various political persuasions. This leads me to another subject which has been arisen in Railwatch – the involvement (or not) of RDS in politics. It is regrettable that, in Britain of all countries, the fortunes of railways and rail users are dependent on which party happens to be in power. It follows that RDS is, whether it likes it or not, a political organisation (albeit interested only in a single issue) and must attempt to influence politicians of all parties.

Stephen Wiltshire

Red Star Parcels

In 1982, BR took the controversial decision to pull out of its traditional collection and delivery parcels services and concentrate on mail, newspapers and the premium Red Star operation. Red Star has since become BR's fastest growing business, doubling traffic volume in one year and, recently, recruiting 40 new sales staff. Clearly, the trend to low stocks and fast delivery has seen Red Star offering the right service at the right price at the right time.

Many RDS members are probably Red Star users, while others may well know of significant potential traffic which the sales force has not yet reached. If you have comments on Red Star, or details of worthwhile leads for increasing its business, National Executive member John Saunders would like to hear from you at Stockwell Gate, Whaplode, Spalding, PE12 6UE, from whence he will forward, in strict confidence, suitable details to Red Star. He is also interested in producing an address list to facilitate informal contact between those Society members using Red Star or other services offered by the parcels sector.

PLATFORM

Services in South West Scotland

Dear Sir,

I was delighted to read Mr Druce's letter, in the October Railwatch, concerning Gretna Green. He is correct in suggesting a re-opening but, although we have suggested this to BR and the Regional Council (together with re-openings at Eastriggs, Thornhill and New Cummock), we have a battle on our hands to retain a service at all. Arran station is now unstaffed, the night sleeper services go via Lockerbie and all InterCity services are to be removed. We fear the possibility of closure between Dumfries and Kilmarnock unless the Provincial Sector can be persuaded to run through services such as, say, Newcastle-Ayr and Dundee-Stranraer.

I stated on local radio recently that Dumfries, as a town of some 30,000 inhabitants, has probably the worst service of any comparable town of this size in the UK - some gaps in the service are 3 hours and one in the morning reaches over 4 hours! At present there is a public campaign involving Regional and District Councils, MPs, RDS and the NUR. This line needs all the support it can get. It is regarded as a Cinderella and I am looking for help from as many Princes as I can find!

Yours faithfully,

Brian Chaplin,
Area Representative,
Dumfries and Galloway,
Kircudbright.

Privatisation

Sir,

In the autumn Railwatch, a correspondent complains of "strong political bias" in the leading article on privatisation.

That leading article was setting out RDS policy on that issue, - which is to oppose it, unless and until, we are convinced that it would definitely benefit rail users.

The RDS leaflet on Privatisation, "Rail Network - or Rail Fragments" mentions no political party by name. The leading article does mention the Conservative party (three times), but we in RDS can hardly ignore the statements and actions (or lack of them) of a party which is likely to be governing this country for the next 3-4 years.

Despite, however, our opposition to wholesale privatisation of BR, we can still welcome involvement of private enterprise in providing additions to BR's basic services and facilities. It is a good idea for private caterers to introduce trolley services on trains which had no refreshment facilities before, as bet-

ween Bedford and St Pancras. At least two breweries have given cash for the refurbishment or rebuilding of Southern Region stations, while a Building Society sponsored a service between Preston and Bradford which led to the re-opening of the Coppyit line.

Sensible initiatives of this type are a surer way to improve rail services and facilities than the ideologically-motivated imposition of privatisation.

Yours sincerely,

Trevor Garrod,
General Secretary,
RDS.

Heathrow Rail Link

Sir,

Your article on the Heathrow Rail Link (Railwatch 33) suffers badly from London-blinkeredness when it raises the question of the suitability of Paddington and asks, almost as an afterthought, whether there should be a rail link westwards to Reading. There already is a line connecting London through Reading to places far beyond; the problem is not to connect Reading or London into that excellent system. It is to connect Heathrow.

The natural place is at Stockley Bridge, on the Western Region Main Line north of the Central Terminal Area. The natural mode (considering that the terminals are only a few miles from the railway line) is by shuttle coach. The construction required in the immediate vicinity of the railway is trivial (just a pair of platforms under the bridge, with a neighbouring minibus station with a service interval of a minute or so). Most, if not all, of the main line trains would stop; we should realise that access to the World via Heathrow, viewed from the West of Britain, could be as least as attractive as getting into London.

The major rail improvements required to extend the western catchment to the north are to upgrade the connection from the West Coast Main Line to Reading via Birmingham New Street, Birmingham International and Oxford. The connection to the Channel Tunnel would continue southwards from Reading via a new international station south of Redhill (giving coach or rail connection to Gatwick) to join the main line at Tonbridge. In this way, a minimum of new rail mileage could enable us to develop several links between major airports and our newly international rail system.

It has been objected that putting additional stops on main lines out of London slows down InterCity traffic. So it does, by a few minutes each stop. It is the Londoners' blinkers which prevent

them from weighing such slight delays against all the hours which can be saved for all the people who don't want to go into London in their way between Britain and other countries. Motorists have been given the M25 to keep them out of this overgrown traffic jam. Why can't rail users have a by-pass too?

Yours Truly,

P. L. Willmore,
Visiting Professor,
Department of Cybernetics,
University of Reading.

Portsmouth-Southampton

Dear Sir,

The use of the Fareham-Eastleigh line as part of a Portsmouth-Southampton electrification (Bruce Oliver RW 32) is certainly worthy of consideration. But what future would the Netly line have?

Perhaps the answer would be light rail. Light rail vehicles (LRVs), having faster acceleration and braking than conventional trains, would reduce end-to-end timings on the route; high maximum acceleration and deceleration are more important than high maximum speed on a corkscrew route with frequent stops. If overhead current collection were employed it might be possible to shorten the route considerably by using the A3025 road bridge over the Itchen for street-running (an articulated twin unit LRV is about as heavy as a juggernaut and should cause no major engineering problems with the bridge itself).

Perhaps the basic light rail route outlined above could be extended from Fareham to Gosport and, finances permitting, in tunnel to Portsmouth. The Gosport-Fareham corridor is served by rail at one extremity only and, even without a Gosport-Portsmouth tunnel, light rail would form a useful link into Network SouthEast.

Yours faithfully,

C Mather,
London NW6.

The Politics of Railfreight

Dear Sir,

Following an interesting, if somewhat disturbing, visit to South Wales, I am more convinced than ever that we are being taken for a ride by government and civil servants who profess to care about the environment.

I refer to the level of freight currently being moved by rail. Anyone who lives in South Wales will be only too aware of the transfer of much coal traffic to road transport over the last decade (not just because of the miners' strike) and the devastating environmental impact this is having in places like Barry, Neath, Pyle etc. Being of a cynical nature I had expected a fair amount of road haulage, but the reality exceeded my wildest expectations.

The real cause of the problem is the long-standing neglect of the railway industry by governments of both major parties. BR staff are the lowest paid railway workers in Europe; there are not enough wagons to carry the traffic even now on offer and the whole structure of transport costs is so biased against rail as to make effective competition for business impossible. Naturally, such a combination of factors breeds industrial unrest, with the inevitable consequences. No wonder Friends of The Earth are giving transport issues such a high priority in their campaigns.

Yours faithfully,

Philip Bisatt,
Taunton,
Somerset.

Letters to the Editor

The editor is always pleased to receive letters, articles and black and white photographs for possible publication in *Railwatch*. Material may be shortened (otherwise edited, while retaining the use of the original copy. Opinions expressed in *Railwatch* are not necessarily those of the Editor, the Editorial Board or the Society.

RTSC Spring Seminar for Alexandra Palace

The Rail Transport Study Circle will be holding its Spring Seminar on Saturday 19 March at the Alexandra Palace. Our guest speaker will be Mr John Cronin, Depot Engineer at BR InterCity Wood Green Depot. His paper will be entitled "The High Speed Traction Concept" and an interesting feature will be BR's new class 91 locomotive, *Electra*, the first ten of which will be based at this depot.

Further details and booking forms from: RTSC Liaison Officer, 108 Berwick Road, London E16 3DS.

RTSC Annual Convention In Holland

The 1988 Convention will be held in Arnhem from 9-16 July under the title: "A Co-ordinated Transport System".

Focus will be on three main projects: the Flevo line (a new urban railway under construction to serve two satellite towns), the Amsterdam Schiphol Airport link line and the Supertram light rapid transit (linking Utrecht with the suburbs).

Closing date for bookings 2 April. Further details from RTSC Liaison Officer (address above).

Chunnel

As a practical gesture of support for the Channel Tunnel project, RDS has applied for a block of shares in Eurotunnel. We would be interested to hear, in confidence, from RDS members who have also bought these shares. Please write to the General Secretary (address on foot of back page) indicating the amount of your holding.

REGIONAL NOTES

SCOTLAND

The Society's Scottish Secretary, Douglas Smart, wrote to Lord James Douglas-Hamilton, of the Scottish Development Department (SDD), congratulating him on his appointment and urging him to reconsider the decision not to build a vital rail link at Dornoch, as recommended by the Tory controlled Commons Transport Committee. Mr Smart pointed out that the combination of severe cuts in financial support for BR and unfair competition was damaging the interests of rail passengers. The SDD's astonishing and unacceptable reply included a statement that there is no connection between the reduction in grant to BR and the quality of rail services!

RDS(Scotland), in a press release quoted in both the *Aberdeen Press* and the *Berwickshire News*, cited as obvious examples of the disastrous financial strategy applied to the railways: the loss of sleepers from Dunbar, Berwick and Newcastle, the rundown of the Dumfries-Kilmarnock line and the replacement of 3-car DMUs by 2-car Sprinters, in addition to the "Dornochgate" scandal.

In a further press release, printed almost in full in the "Dundee Courier", the Branch condemned the decision of Tayside Regional Council to abandon the integrated train and bus travel centre at Tay Bridge station. They claimed that this is a short-sighted decision which will be condemned by future generations and urged all parties to get together to try again to bring about what is a perfectly simple, but essential, element in a much-needed plan to integrate all public transport services radiating from Dundee. There are difficulties caused by bus deregulation but, nevertheless, if there was the political will to achieve integration it would be done. It is vital that bus travellers to and from places outside Dundee, as well as its housing schemes, should be able to travel south by rail without the long walk involved in getting from the bus station to the railway station. At the very least, the land which could be used for a bus station must not be built over, so that it will be available when a more sensible political climate prevails.

RDS Scotland have contacted a number of MPs, urging them to make present policy towards the railways a matter of major parliamentary action.

Douglas Smart

YORKSHIRE

At a well-attended October meeting in Brighouse, organised by Mr Towler, there was wholehearted support for the

re-opening of Brighouse station. The West Yorkshire PTE is pledged to this proposal, coupled with restoration of a Huddersfield-Halifax-Bradford service, subject to funds being available. It will probably be another three years before this scheme comes to fruition.

At a public meeting, held in Bradford in November, a campaign was launched to put Bradford back on the railway map. This meeting was organised by Bradford Metropolitan District Council and RDS Yorkshire branch. Prior to nationalisation Bradford was the railway metropolis of Yorkshire but, over the years, rail services have been slashed. Forster Square station has been butchered and Exchange Station turned into a virtual bus station, renamed "Interchange", with the railway as an annexe.

Ten years ago Bradford had six trains a day to London. In the May 1988 timetable there will be one - with increased journey time. Whilst local trains are grossly overcrowded, such long-distance trains as there are run half empty because commuters are travelling by road to New Pudsey or Wakefield. Although Bradford is the fifth largest district in the country - and 50% of its households have no car - its stations are underused.

The meeting considered that, to get better train services, a cross-city link between the two stations was essential (this scheme, which had been on the go for many years, would involve a second north-south corridor as an alternative to that existing through Leeds) and that better access to the West Coast Main Line (possibly Bradford to Crewe via Stalybridge and Stockport) was needed.

Huddersfield-Sheffield

Six years ago, RDS called a public meeting in Huddersfield to form the Huddersfield-Penistone-Sheffield Rail Users' Association - at a time when this route was under threat of closure. For most of the association's lifespan the line's future has been uncertain, but now it seems more assured following the conclusion of new financial arrangements with South and West Yorkshire PTEs.

The 1987 AGM on 31st October, therefore, took place in a much more optimistic atmosphere, with Chairman Richard Fieldhouse paying particular tribute to Kirklees and Barnsley Borough Councils for their helpful attitude. There must now be an attempt to improve reliability of the service, together with a fresh look at its possible extension northwards to Halifax and Bradford.

Councillor Fred Pickles promised that full advantage would be taken of the railway on Denby Dale Pie Day (3

September 1988), when thousands of visitors were expected, and hoped that a Sunday Ramblers' service could be introduced, as this had proved popular on other lines in the North of England.

Timetables

Whilst the 1988 timetable is likely to see more frequent trains on most of the lines in West Yorkshire, no such improvements are planned for the Sheffield to York service via Pontefract. This is mainly because Pontefract is the only town of any size between Rotherham and York. The Pontefract & District Rail Action Group considers that restoration of the track on two short curves would make all the difference. The first curve is at South Emsall, linking the Pontefract line to the north with the Wakefield to Doncaster line. The second is at Pontefract, just north of Baghill station, linking the York line with that from Goole to Leeds. In both cases, embankments and bridges are all in position. The already a frequent DMU service from Doncaster to Leeds, part of which could be diverted via Pontefract, using Baghill station, which is more convenient for the town centre than the isolated and vandalised station at Monkhill.

Dennis Bradbury and Trevor Garrod

NORTH WEST

Lancashire and Cumbria

Settle-Carlisle is again very much in the news. The Minister is in a dilemma. It is quite clear that, unless outside funding is obtained, he will have to close the line. Thus, the latest initiative of the Settle-Carlisle Joint Action Committee should provide a solution.

This committee has held top level discussions with the MSC and the engineering firm of J.Jarvis (who have become the first national managing agent for the MSC in the construction industry). The MSC has agreed to fund a feasibility study into the creation of a 72 mile "tourism corridor" along the line, this will be undertaken by Jarvis. The scheme would involve the restoration of all stations and structures along the line, the creation of a theme museum based on the Hoffman lime kiln at Horton, an educational/visitor interpretation centre at Garsdale and restoration of Hellifield station. The scheme does not involve privatisation as Jarvis have made it clear that they do not wish to operate trains.

Lancashire County Council

Lancashire County Council have issued a public transport consultative document outlining their plans for bus/rail services, on which RDS will be commenting in detail. The document, disappointingly, mentions no electrification projects, nor does it give much encouragement to campaigns seeking to re-open lines to passengers. On the plus side, the Council is embarking on a three

year £90,000 small station improvement scheme jointly with BR and is considering a rolling programme of station re-openings - could Coppul (on the Liverpool Lime Street service, be the first?

OPTA

At a very successful public meeting, held in Southport on Thursday 6 October by the Omskirk to Preston Travellers' Association, an action Committee was set up to co-ordinate the Burscough Curves campaign. A local authority study is examining not only the engineering costs of the scheme but also the potential demand for rail services from Preston to Southport.

Ribble Valley Rail

Our corporate member, Ribble Valley Rail, held another successful Rail Day on Saturday 24 October. About 650 people took to the rails when four return trips were operated between Preston and Clitheroe. In the long term the group hopes to commission a study into the re-opening of the Blackburn-Hellifield line.

Richard Watts

Cheshire

In view of widespread local concern about the quality of service on the Manchester-Northwich-Chester line, and the poor condition of several of the stations, a very well-attended public meeting was held in Knutsford on 29 October. A user group for the line, the Mid-Cheshire Rail Users Association was set up at this meeting.

A representative from BR said that they were doing their best, although staffing levels were continually having to be reviewed. He said that there were no immediate plans to introduce new rolling stock on the line, but Sprinter units would be introduced in three years time. If, however, the proposed Greater Manchester Light Rail Transit system was inaugurated between Altringham and Manchester, the Chester line would be diverted via Stockport, adding 12 minutes to the existing journey time. For passengers from (say) Knutsford to Manchester this would represent an increase of journey time of 40%.

Meeting (and Group) Chairman Andrew Macfarlane expressed the hope that through-running on the existing route would be maintained. The new association will be campaigning hard on this issue. Andrew also stated a strong case for new stations at Mickle Trafford (2 miles outside Chester) and Shaw Heath (between Knutsford and Mobberly). In both cases there had been a considerable amount of development around the station sites. Other proposals were made for an hourly Sunday

service, through trains to the North Wales coast and disabled access to platforms at Knutsford and Piccadilly.

Details of the association can be obtained from Andrew Macfarlane at 16 Willow Green, Knutsford WA16 6AX (Annual Membership £1). The group is planning to run a special train to the Settle-Carlisle line in spring 1988.

The 19 October brought excellent news for rail travellers in West Cheshire when the Cheshire County Council agreed to fund £193,000 of the £263,000 cost of a new station at Overpool (between Little Sutton and Ellesmere Port, on the Hooton-Helsby line. EEC grant aid could be available for up to 50% of the cost of the station, which will serve the west end of Ellesmere Port. As if that were not good news enough, they also agreed to earmark between £1m and £1.5m towards third rail electrification of the Hooton-Chester Ellesmere port lines (by 1991) and £40,000 towards the £250,000 cost of a feasibility report into electrification of the Crewe-Holyhead main line (which is supported by Clwyd and Gwynedd County Councils. The possibility of a loop line (underground or light rail) serving Chester city centre is also being investigated.

Andrew Macfarlane.

West Midlands

Staffordshire County Council has withdrawn support for re-opening the Cannock line to local passenger services. The Department of Transport agreed to £210,000 expenditure on three new stations to serve the Walsall-Cannock-Hednesford line in 1987/8, but Staffordshire promptly decided to add this sum to the £9m being spent on roads! Heavy protests have been pursued in the press, in letters to Councillors and a public meeting. To date the County has remained defensive and negative. The viable and proved scheme now seems doomed unless Staffordshire has a last minute change of heart.

Warwickshire, however, have just surprised everyone by agreeing to contribute £50,000 for a new station at Bedworth, where a new Coventry-Nuneaton service will open in May 1988. At the end of October the Midlands TUC recommended to the Secretary of State that BR's request to sever the North Warwick line be refused, as serious hardship would ensue and there is potential for economies. New stations at Moor Street and Snow Hill, opened in October, see the culmination of many years of RDS lobbying. The PTA have now authorised a detailed study for an extension to Smethwick West, including two new stations. On the Walsall line plans are being made for a new station, at the south end of Bestcot yards, known as Tame Bridge.

The Midlands Committee have been lobbying heavily against the purchase of Class 155 Sprinters for suburban commuter services and have found support from the PTA for a more suitable design which might operate on the Snow Hill services from 1991. We have been anxious to secure electrification of the Cross-City line and, following the circulation of several detailed papers, the PTA have agreed to seek the necessary Department of Transport approval. At the Lichfield City end BR are now planning to extend services a short distance to Trent Valley.

RDS ran a charter from Walsall to London Euston, via Birmingham, on Saturday 5 December.

A. Bevan

NORTH MIDLANDS

RDS North Midlands continues to support the Venture Rail excursions from the Matlock and Derby area. On Friday 14 November 500 passengers travelled to St Pancras for Christmas shopping and the Lord Mayor's show.

At the AGM of the Lincoln-Newark-Nottingham Rail Users' Group (held in Lowdham in November) the new BR Area Manager, Sam Reed, introduced two of his colleagues, customer service manager Tim Edwards and Midland Cross-Country Resources Assistant Andrew Brown, to an attentive audience.

Mr Edwards outlined recent positive changes on the line, including the new Sprinter trains, and various station improvements, but stated that a late evening train from Nottingham is still not available until resumed level crossing automation reduces staffing costs. Mr Brown gave an exciting preview of surprising service improvements in store for May 1988. As part of the expansion of North West-East Anglia services (long promoted by RDS East Anglia) the Nottingham-Sheffield route will have an hourly service. On the Nottingham-Lincoln line gaps in the present timetable will be filled by fast trains from Birmingham, which will call at Newark Northgate for East Coast Main Line connections and continue to Grimsby and Cleethorpes. This will give an hourly service from Birmingham to Derby, Nottingham, Newark and Lincoln, with alternative trains continuing to Cleethorpes. A totally new service is an hourly Nottingham to Coventry train via Loughborough, Leicester and Nuneaton which follows a route advocated by the RDS Midland Main Line Electrification booklet.

Leicestershire County Council have commissioned a study from Leeds University on the feasibility of re-opening the Leicester-Ashby goods line to passengers. RDS member John Hancock

has contacted local authorities and MPs about extending the scheme to Gresley and Burton-on-Trent. Meanwhile, in Nottinghamshire, the County Council have also commissioned a study into re-opening the Nottingham-Mansfield line. Two routes are to be examined: a circuitous one via Toton and a shorter route via a re-opened Annesley tunnel, as suggested by RDS. The shorter, currently available, route via Radford is, curiously, not on the agenda. Closure plans, however, were announced in November for the Mansfield Junction-Radford-Trowell section, preparing the way for building development on the Lenton east curve, essential for the Mansfield service. RDS and Transport 2000 issued a joint press release in November, strongly condemning the closure proposals and urging people to object to the TUCC and the County Council Planning Department.

Malcolm Goodall

SOUTH WEST

Wessex

A major victory for the Branch has come with news of the go-ahead for a new station at Hedge End North, between Eastleigh and Fareham. This will serve a growing suburb of Southampton and is something for which the Branch (and notably its Chairman, John Honeysett) has campaigned for several years. The new station should be open next autumn.

In November, BR resubmitted plans to electrify the routes from Southampton and Eastleigh to Portsmouth – a project which the Branch has consistently advocated and for which Hampshire County Council has offered some finance.

Members are reminded that the AGM will be on Saturday 20 February in Salisbury.

Trevor Garrod

Severnside

Following conferences between BR and the County Councils of Avon, Cornwall, Devon, Dorset, Gloucestershire, Somerset and Wiltshire, a glossy illustrated brochure, "Rail opportunities in the South-West", was issued at the end of September. It states that co-operation between County Councils on rail matters is vital because the majority of journeys, both passenger and freight, cross county boundaries. A reduction of journey time by the "Cornishman" of two hours is quoted and further speed increases are planned (presumably by omitting stops and worsening connection possibilities).

In many parts of the South-West, tourism is the major element of the local economy, resulting in summer patronage three times the winter level on some lines. Councils have declared continuing support to rural lines, helping to main-

tain the rural economy. The brochure confirms that a new station is to open at Ashchurch in 1989, while feasibility studies are under way into re-openings at Worle, Yate, Wootton Bassett, Chipping Campden, Corsham, Ivybridge, Somerton, Langport and Wellington, together with a new stopping service between Westbury and Exeter. Access to stations and the design of rolling stock will take account of the needs of disabled travellers.

The Councils will assess congested road networks and investigate rail-based "Park and Ride" services where appropriate. They will press for a widening of eligibility for Section 8 grants for new private sidings, examining the justification for expanding the definition of environmental benefit, such as the diversion of dangerous goods to rail. Councils will also promote the use of rail networks, where appropriate, in their tourist literature.

The Severnside branch has responded to the brochure with several pages of comment to the General Manager, BR Western Region.

Eric Barbary

EAST ANGLIA

"Making Tracks For St Ives" was the title of an 18-page report issued by the Branch this autumn – the most detailed study yet of the case for re-opening, and electrifying, the line from Cambridge to St Ives. Our report shows how such a scheme would ease traffic congestion in Cambridge and ease transport to the fast-growing areas to the north and west of the city. In addition to the stations served before the line closed to passengers in the 1970s, there should be at least three new ones, and through services should operate from the line southwards to Stansted Airport and indeed to London.

The RDS report, principally the work of Steve Wilkinson, Peter Wakefield and Stephen Lawrence, received front-page treatment in the local press, with the Cambridge Evening News, in an editorial, stating that our plans need "urgent consideration". The report has been sent to local authorities (who would be expected to pay some of the cost) and to BR, whose initial response has been to take it seriously. The cost of trackwork, we estimate, would be about £1.3m (with electrification a further £1.58m). With automatic crossings, signalling, new stations etc., we put the total cost of this 15-mile route, serving a catchment area of up to 100,000 people, at £3.6m.

Encouraging news on the re-openings front comes from the western end of our region, where Arlesley is to be added back to the network. This small town between Hitchin and Biggleswade lost its passenger service in 1959, but is now to have a £600,000 station on the East Coast Main Line with hourly electric trains between London and Peter-

borough. RDS launched a campaign for this re-opening three years ago. Almost all the local authorities have been persuaded to contribute money to the scheme and the first trains will stop at Arlesey in October 1988 if not before.

We have congratulated King's Lynn and West Norfolk Borough Council on their well-researched new booklet putting the case for electrification from Cambridge to King's Lynn. Their study dovetails well with our own campaign and points out that, if the line is given the go-ahead soon, electric trains could be operating on it by 1991.

An interesting new promotional idea has come from our corporate members, the Sudbury and Marks Tey Rail Users' Association. Early morning commuters can now have a swim in the pool at the Kingfisher Leisure Centre, next to Sudbury station, at a discount, before catching their train to work!

There have been two useful and constructive Branch meetings this autumn: In Norwich on 26 September, with BR area manager Tony Hudson, and in Cambridge on 21 November with the head of InterCity catering. The next Branch meeting will be the AGM, to be held at 2.00 p.m. on Saturday 27 February in the Central Library, Bury St Edmunds.

Members of neighbouring Branches are welcome to attend, but not, of course, to vote.

Trevor Garrod

LONDON & HOME COUNTIES

Sparse Support for Cross-town Line

From May 1988 there will be only one daily cross-London InterCity train to and from Dover, routed via Bromley South and Chatham, to the disadvantage of Tonbridge and Ashford. This reduction is caused by poor loadings and by BR simply not being able to afford further risk money while trying to build up the service. BR consider the low loadings to be due to the slow journey across London (no faster than by underground), together with the drop-off in traditional continental rail/boat traffic in conjunction with which the trains were timetabled. But it is also felt locally that there has been insufficient publicity for the trains and that they were not suitably timed for passengers from the south, certainly not for day trips to the north. Mr Jones knows one elderly near-neighbour who will miss travel to the north without having to use the underground. The morning northbound train may also be missed for its speedy local journey as far as Bromley South, where a surprisingly large number of people were recently seen to alight; there are no through electric trains from Tonbridge to Bromley and the through service from Ashford is very slow.

Chelsea Meeting gives Thumbs-down for WEIR

The meeting (reported in Railwatch 32) to discuss the implications for the West London Railway of the proposed "Western Environmental Improvement Route" finally took place on Thursday 29 October at Chelsea Town Hall, with Harley Sherlock (of both T2000 and LATA) in the chair. A capacity audience of over 150 gave a decisive thumbs-down to the third attempt by the Department of Transport to build an extension of the M40 down through Chelsea Creek to Wandsworth.

Nick Raynesford, former Labour MP for Fulham, gave a brief history of previous attempts to foist this road on the local populace, while Nick Lester, of the Association of London Authorities, explained why it would not solve the problems of the Earls Court corridor. Nick Alexander of BR then explained how it might affect future proposals to develop the West London Railway for passengers and freight, particularly in the light of the Channel Tunnel.

Those present formed a broad cross-section of the local community and it is significant that even those who demanded relief for the present Earls Court one-way system (especially when there are events at Earls Court and Stamford Bridge) were not convinced that the Department's proposals were the right ones. Hence the following resolution was passed with only two dissensions:

"Relief is urgently needed for the Earls Court Corridor, but traffic through the area must be reduced rather than increased. This meeting therefore rejects the large-scale road building outlined in WEIR and calls for the safeguarding of an increased-capacity West London Railway Line."

This is the largest and most successful public meeting with which RDS has been associated in recent years. It fully justified the efforts of its sponsors (namely RDS, T2000, NCIT and, most importantly, the Chelsea Riverside Action Group, which stands to lose the most if this scheme is bulldozed through.

RDS is always pleased to have the opportunity to put forward the arguments for rail alternatives to major road schemes, and we have certainly not heard the last of this issue. A further major meeting is planned for the spring of 1988.

Gala Days

On Saturday 26 and Sunday 27 September, BR held gala days on the newly-electrified East Grinstead line, with unlimited travel from East Croydon at £1 per day, including also the Uckfield line on the Saturday. A 15-minute interval service was run from East Croydon, carrying many people. In conjunction with this, RDS held a local meeting in East Grinstead for an hour or two in the afternoon, in an attempt to help local RDS member Laurence Skinnerton form a rail users' group for the town. Although few people attended this meeting, it did attract the local press and the Town Clerk, as well as at least one genuine commuter, and something useful may yet come of it. Anyone living in the area who wishes to join such a group should contact Laurence Skinnerton, 14 Dorset Avenue, East Grinstead, West Sussex RH19 2AA. A stamped addressed envelope will no doubt be appreciated.

Trevor Jones was invited by BBC2 TV to appear with Chris Green (Network SouthEast Director) on "Friday Report" on 11 December.

Trevor Jones and John Barfield.

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IN PARLIAMENT

No. 30

FEBRUARY 1988

PREVIEW

OFF TO A GOOD START – INCLUDING LIGHT RAIL

Prospects for both rail and light rail looked promising in the opening weeks of 1988, according to sympathetic MPs. This was certainly the optimistic feeling of *Peter Snape*, M.P. for West Bromwich East and Opposition spokesman for transport, when he expressed the hope that the RDS would continue to be "such an effective exponent of rail transport."

"Let us hope that the rosy picture so often painted by BR actually appears," he added. Innovations to be welcomed on our "often unfairly maligned railway system" were the class 90 locomotives – i.e. 110 mph electrics on the west coast route – and the introduction of more early morning and late evening services to and from London.

About Dornoch Firth – the Scottish inlet where there is doubt whether the proposed bridge will include a rail as well as a road crossing – he says: "Let us hope the obvious decision is taken to include a rail bridge."

He hopes that in this, as in other schemes, Government departments and BR management will work together instead of separately. But in local government he welcomes the "continued faith in their commuter railway shown by the financial contributions of many local authorities."

LIGHT RAIL SCHEMES 'AN EXCITING VISION'

While he welcomes new rolling stock, he deplores the fact that only half as many coaches are being produced as the number withdrawn. Another backward step is the increase in fares above inflation levels.

But light railway schemes – in Manchester, West Midlands and South Yorkshire – he sees as an "exciting vision." Might there not be labour disputes, I suggested, as to whether the vehicles were trams or trains, as happened in Newcastle? "That was settled amicably," he said. "So it would be again."

BETTER NEWS FROM WESTERN REGION

Tony Speller (C. Devon North), whose legislation has done marvels in re-opening stations, says he has little fresh news at the moment. It's a case of no news is good news, as he has almost nothing but praise, at least for Western Region, whose timekeeping between Paddington and Exeter he finds much improved.

The reservation he has to make is about the way inter-City trains now run into Exeter St Davids on the centre platform instead of alongside the exit, as they always did. When he asked why, he was told the change had been inspired by a computer at Crewe.

Has he any more ideas in the way of amending legislation to further encourage opening more lines and stations? "I'm always ready to hear suggestions," he told me.

JE

Opposition hits out at transport policy

A rare all-day debate on transport was the subject chosen by the opposition for one of the days allotted to them **17 NOVEMBER**. It was introduced by *Robert Hughes*, who represents the Labour seat of *Aberdeen North*.

A formal motion "condemned the harmful effects" of Government transport policies, and "deplored" reductions in the quality of service across all public transport. Singled out for attack were higher fares, damage to the environment, inadequate investment, reduced safety standards, failure to back the British transport manufacturing industry and putting profit above service to the customer. The Government was urged to co-ordinate services across all modes of transport.

BR should learn from its own experience, *Mr Hughes* said, "when it has, quite exceptionally, followed the course of action that we advised". The St. Pancras – Bedford line received multiple investment on trains, track and signals, and the effect was a 40% increase in usage. If new trains only had been provided, the traffic increase would probably have been only 8%.

VAT a looming threat

Mr Hughes warned: "a time bomb is ticking away in the EEC, and it will have a widespread effect on all public transport fares". There was a prospect of VAT being applied to passenger fares, the rate of which might be harmonised within the Community. The Prime Minister had been silent about VAT on fares. He wanted the minister to say he would veto any imposition of VAT on bus, train and air fares.

Turning to Scotland, he regretted that BR refused to consider electrification from Edinburgh to Aberdeen as not being commercially viable. BR was a national network and the east coast main line was part of the network from Aberdeen to London. "The whole matter must be looked at again. Similarly I urge the Government to seriously consider their attitude to the Durnoch Firth rail bridge, because I believe it is essential to the socio-economic future of the North of Scotland."

Transport Secretary, *Paul Channon*, replied that the Government had agreed in principle to sizeable investment in the international high-speed Channel services, and since June 1979 no investment project that BR submitted had been turned down.

"We have authorised 1,333 track miles of electrified railway: London to Cambridge, London to Norwich, Tonbridge to Hastings, Bournemouth to Weymouth, and east coast electrification to Leeds, York and Edinburgh – the largest single rail investment for 25 years and the biggest-ever electrification scheme. It is well ahead of schedule."

Mrs Winifred Ewing (Scot. Nat. Moray) intervened to ask why rail electrification stopped at Edinburgh, "thus leaving the oil capital of Europe stranded, with no electrified line running up the east coast." (of Scotland)

Fares up above inflation

Mr Channon replied that any worthwhile investment scheme put by BR would not be turned down. On the subject of fares, he said, that taking account of discounts, over the past three years average fares had increased by under 4% in real terms. What concerned people was when they paid higher fares without corresponding improvements in quality. He was deter-

COMMONS DEBATES In the selected extracts from parliamentary speeches and answers to questions, which follow this PREVIEW, Commons replies are given by Transport Secretary, Paul Channon, or his Minister of State, David Mitchell.

C = Conservative, Lab. = Labour, UA = Liberal Alliance.

mined to ensure that fare increases were matched by increases in quality.

Martin Flannery (Lab. Hillsborough) intervened to speak of the increasing size of heavy lorries that was destroying the roads. The minister had not mentioned the fundamental cause of the breakdown and destruction of our roads.

Mr Channon replied that whatever criticisms there were, at least the Government had been providing a service for the country by increasing capital investment in almost every section of transport to an unparalleled extent.

"An exciting development in transport," he continued, "is the new co-operation between Government and private enterprise in providing transport infrastructure. The private sector finances new investment for a reasonable return on capital, and the taxpayer receives - often at no cost - a valuable addition to the transport system. Roughly half the cost of work now under way to extend the Docklands Light Railway to Bank station will be met by the private sector. The whole cost of the eastward extension of the line will be met by private sector developers from increased land values."

Case for more support

Richard Livsey (Lib/All Brecon & Radnor) said he believed the financial targets for the railways had been too tight, "certainly in comparison with other west European countries, where railways are more heavily subsidised. A case can certainly be made out for more Government support, particularly in the light of the crowding on the road system."

"We need rapid, hourly, city-to-city services, and an efficient feeder network in the regions and in Scotland and Wales, to feed into the overall network. We also need modernisation, and more of the system should be electrified. That will require more investment. We need electrification on all our main routes. It is very serious that the South Wales and Bristol route is not to be electrified. Nor is the Aberdeen to Edinburgh route. That is because of the need to feed into the Channel Tunnel. Routes with no electrification will be at a disadvantage."

Mr Mitchell intervened to ask in what way the multiple-unit Sprinters were inferior to electrification. That would mean a substantial outlay in costs and virtually no difference in what the customer received.

Why cross London?

Mr Livsey replied that he welcomed the Sprinters. However, they were not using the entire network. "Electrification will be essential to take the railway into the 21st Century. Because of the Channel Tunnel, electrification will be extremely important for through trains to the continent."

"The Channel tunnel is an epoch-making development. It is essential that the regions of England and the countries of Wales and Scotland should be plugged into the Channel Tunnel system. I cannot see why all the trains have to go through London to get to the tunnel. No doubt when Brunel constructed large parts of the Great Western Railway, he was anxious to get to Paddington, but if he were living now, he would be anxious to take the quickest possible route to the south coast."

Robert Adley (C Christchurch) intervened to say that the South Eastern Railway built the Tonbridge - Redhill line for the Channel tunnel in the 1870s.

Mr Livsey said this covered a point he was about to make; that the development of Reading station was more important than some of the developments in London. He then spoke of the sleeper services in north east England.

Central Wales bridge

"I enter a plea to the minister about the Central Wales line," he added. "It travels through five marginal seats and must be of significance to the House." It was important that the Glanrhyd Bridge (which had just collapsed at the time of his speech) should be replaced as soon as possible. "I know that BR is actively pursuing new designs for the bridge and I hope they will be completed soon. He also spoke of Dornoch Firth, regretting that permission had not been given for a rail line to run alongside the road on the proposed bridge there. "That could be done cost-effectively."

Mr Adley spoke of intimidatory driving of coaches on motorways, when timetables called for "impossible" average speeds to be attained to compete with BR. The effects on the community of low-fare coaches had not been anywhere fully examined. Regardless of the public interest, commuter coaches were scattered and parked all over London and other cities.

'Crazy' motorway policy

"It is crazy to devote scarce resources to the building of more and more motorways, especially round London where we have a good rail network." He welcomed with half a cheer the proposed London (Paddington) to Heathrow express rail link. It dealt with only half the problem. There should be a loop providing a proper rail service from Heathrow to both Paddington and Waterloo.

"We desperately need new tube lines in London, and many of our major principal cities need much better rail services. We hear that the Government are to spend more millions of pounds on the M25. When will they spend millions on improving matters on, for example, the Victoria line at Victoria? I am worried by the overcrowding on London Regional Transport. I welcome the DLR, but it is a pity we are building a railway that

is incompatible with the rest of the LRT railways. We cannot run LRT trains on the DLR, so this good little system will remain physically unconnected with the rest of London's rail transport."

David Marshall (Lab. Shettleston) said there was an unanswerable case for massive investment in BR on environmental and energy conservation grounds. "The Dornoch Firth crossing needs a rail bridge to be built at the same time as the road bridge. The Government's refusal to approve it is an absolute scandal. BR does not come out of that with much credit, as it accepted the Government's decision. I ask the minister to rethink."

Ieuan Wyn Jones (Welsh Nat. Ynys Mon) urged the minister to use his influence with BR to ensure that north and south Wales lines were electrified as a priority.

Lorry transfer to rail

David Bevan (C. Birmingham Yard) said he had recently been impressed by the transfer of lorry journeys to rail between the west country and London. "One lorry a minute was taken off the roads of Somerset, Wiltshire, Hampshire and West London, through the single expedient of giving a Government grant of £3,700,000 towards an £8m terminal to the AMC Roadstone Corporation for automatic limestone loading on to the railways. What a sensible use that is of our ground transportation infrastructure! This country was now experiencing the most massive upturn in tourism," he continued. "People and vehicles are flooding over, and that will be expedited by the successful advance of the Channel tunnel project."

He complimented the minister on his plans to invest £1 billion in the next five years in BR rolling stock and the £100 million contract just awarded to B. Engineering (BREL). "We must get BR to address itself to the vast investment needed in the rolling stock programme, even before we proceed to the many metro-rail schemes that are needed, as are light railways. In looking at such schemes, we must also remedy the lack of investment in local railway stock."

Busiest roads in Europe

Roy Hughes (Lab. Newport East) said there could be little prospect of relieving congestion on our trunk roads and motorways. Traffic density on the roads was already the highest in Europe - well above the figures for Italy, France, West Germany and Belgium. Users and residents were suffering as congestion rose.

Investment was needed to ensure an easier transfer of loads from one form of transport to another. Grants for sidings and rail freight facilities should be increased. Electrification was needed from London to South Wales and Crewe to Holyhead. The Central Electricity Generating Board moved about 100,000

tonnes of coal by road to Uskmouth power station and more coal was blended at Newport dock and carried by road. That freight should go by rail.

Michael Irvine (C Ipswich) protested at the overcrowding and un-punctuality in peak hours in East Anglia and particularly on the journey from Colchester to London. "The knee-jerk action is to blame the management of the line. The trouble goes back further, but some progress is being made. We are beginning to get better rolling stock, although Eastern Region has a history of being handed the left-overs. In a fast-growing area it was important to take future needs into account. If the money due to be spent on the Channel Tunnel were to go instead on improving the infrastructure of this country's transport, there would be considerable benefits all round.

Tont Lloyd (Lab. Stretford) wound up the debate for the opposition, in place of the usual spokesman, Peter Snape, who was in hospital. There was an ideological split, Mr Lloyd said, between the minister, extolling Government policies, and back benchers who opposed those policies. Like a magician, the minister spoke of £300 million worth of goodies a year on offer to LRT. "We welcome that investment because it is badly needed."

Dornoch Bridge: no call

Mr Mitchell, replying to the debate, said that investment in LRT was now higher than it had ever been, and LRT was carrying more passengers than it had ever carried. Regarding Dornoch bridge, there was no application from BR for investment approval.

As for electrification to Aberdeen, what was wrong with the HST 125, which went faster to Aberdeen than trains on the electric west coast main line? Turning to Mr Adley's reference to the potential of a BR route through Redhill, for the benefit of the Channel tunnel, he said the joint consultation committee that meets in Kent had commissioned a study. As a result there would be a further reappraisal of the capacity and route of Eurotunnel traffic. A report would be available next summer.

Members' constituents had reason to be glad that buses had been deregulated. Scores of estates throughout the country had now bus services that did not have them before.

The formal motion was defeated by 293 votes to 200, a Government majority of 93.

DLR 'should cross river'

The London Docklands Railway (Beckton) Bill, providing for the DLR's eastward extension, was given an unopposed second reading on 10 DECEMBER.

Neil Thorne (C Ilford South) opening the debate on the Bill, said that since the line opened the volume of passengers

had exceeded all expectations. "LRT is being besieged from all directions to extend the network across the river to Greenwich and north-east to Barking." The extension to Beckton was being promoted by LRT, on behalf of the London Docklands Development Corporation.

Nigel Spearing (Lab. Newham South) said he could not understand why the LDDC would not concede the idea of the train calling at Canning Town. This was one of the major community centres in east London and a natural centre for transport interchange.

Ron Leighton (Lab. Newham North-East) said that for cost reasons an inadequate railway had been built and then bits were being added on. "Is it not likely that the Canning Town loop will be added? It would be much cheaper to build it now."

Peter Shore (Lab. Bethnal Green & Stepney) said that lessons were to be drawn from experience with the DLR so far, which he hoped would be applied to the proposed extension. There was the problem of excessive noise, particularly on the stretch along Cable Street. Specified noise limits had been exceeded. The reason was the poor noise insulation quality of the concrete and steel elevated structures.

Other points were loss of privacy - residents' homes were overlooked - and safety in the broadest sense: unmanned stations might give rise to serious vandalism problems.

Tony Banks (Lab. Newham North-West) intervened to say that LRT's cost-cutting exercise reduced the margin of safety on the bus and Underground systems. Would Mr Shore say any more about the safety aspects of the DLR?

Mr Shore: "This point is at the back of all our minds when we discuss rail transport in London and the disaster at King's Cross station. Special dangers are associated with underground systems as opposed to overground systems."

more light rail wanted

Tony Lloyd (Lab. Manchester Stretford) said light rail systems were to be welcomed; the more of them the better.

Mr Mitchell said the Government supported the Bill to allow the eastern extension of the line. "An extension to Beckton is seen as crucial and will help to revitalise the royal docks area." He agreed with Mr Lloyd about the potential of light rail. The docklands line would lead a considerable field, but he did not understand why Mr Lloyd regarded spending public money as a virility symbol.

Mr Lloyd asked why investment in roads should be supported by the public sector and public transport by the private sector. Would the minister only develop public transport systems that could be funded by private-sector capital?

Mr Mitchell replied that a way had not been found for those enjoying enhanced land values as a result of a road being built to contribute towards its cost. Equally, those who suffered a drop in value did not receive a contribution. The Government did not believe that public transport should be developed only where it would be paid for by the private sector. Where there was a need for public transport, the need should be defined. Taxpayers should be sheltered from having to fork out if private resources could achieve the same end. There would be no cutting corners on safety.

Mr Leighton said that his main criticism was that DLR was inadequate. People had called it a toy railway, even a Mickey Mouse railway, the sort of railway one might see in Disneyland: "it is an elevated tram."

Error to lose trams

"I do not want the House to think I have anything against trams; they were a very good form of transport. Abroad I have been to cities that have excellent tram services. Their trams look more like railways than this one."

Intervening, **Mr Banks** said he also had an affection for trams. Transport planners made a major error when they removed them from London's streets.

Mr Leighton again expressed his affection for trams, but said that the DLR would be shown to be inadequate and would have to be rebuilt and strengthened. He was brought up in a London transport family and his father once had a job as a porter on the Underground.

"They were the people on every station who used to sweep the platforms, keep them clean and wash them. On some stations there were even gardens and flowers. Could people remember when there were things called toilets on stations? At the moment the DLR was like a bright new button, but how long would that be so if its stations were understaffed? Under-financing was a false economy."

Mr Banks said that painted on a bridge over Burdett Road was a slogan that said: 'Toffs out.' It aptly summed up the attitude of people in the east end to the characters moving into the area. "We talk about cutting staffing levels on public transport, but when it comes to air travel, a major selling point is the service that passengers receive. I do not see why a person travelling on a no. 25 bus should not be equally welcomed aboard, and why buses and trains should continually cut comfort and safety when other forms of transport emphasise those things."

Winding up the debate, **Mr. Thorne** said he was glad members on both sides welcomed the Bill, which he believed was a step in the right direction.

King's Cross: oldest tube

As is usual on such occasions as the King's Cross fire, the Transport Secretary, *Paul Channon*, made a statement about the accident immediately after Question Time the next afternoon 19 NOVEMBER.

Among speakers in the brief discussion that followed were *Robert Adley* and *Nigel Spearing* (Lab. Newham South). *Mr Adley* remarked that King's Cross tube station was part of the oldest tube railway in the world. To improve public transport new lines should be built and the old ones modernised and invested in to keep them up to scratch.

Mr Spearing said that for some months London MPs had been expressing concern about the safety of the Underground, as evidenced by a question that day. In striking the balance between efficiency and safety, management decisions should receive the widest possible consent.

Settle - Carlisle question

G.R. Cryer (Lab. Bradford south) asked, in a written question on 16 NOVEMBER who was funding the study on the Settle - Carlisle corridor by J.Jarvis and Sons PLC, besides the Manpower Services Commission?

John Lee, a Department of Employment minister, replied that a feasibility study followed discussions between the Ribblesdale Trust, Jarvis's and the MSC. It was being funded by the MSC and Jarvis's. The total cost would be more than £10,000 to which the MSC was contributing £5,000.

The purpose of the study was to seek opportunities to mount projects in the area, whether under the community programme or others. The MSC would decide which projects would be undertaken and invite sponsors to discuss them.

In a written question from *E.A. Mathew* (Lab. Carlisle) on 30 NOVEMBER the minister was asked what delayed his decision on the Carlisle - Settle line?

Mr Mitchell replied that since receiving the board's financial case last December (1986), he had had to consider many representations, including comprehensive statements from both the local authorities and Friends of the Line.

Sleepers under threat

Questions were asked about services in south-west Scotland when *Sir Hector Monro* (C Dumfries) introduced a debate on the subject at 6am after an all-night session on 8 DECEMBER.

"I am a great commuter and there is no greater supporter in the House for travelling by rail," he said. Proposed reductions in train services would have

a damaging effect on the economy. Trains were grossly overcrowded and passengers would be driven to travel either by bus to London or car to Carlisle.

William McKelvey (Lab. Kilmarnock and Loudoun) spoke of trains that were to be rerouted. There had been no consultation with any of the areas concerned, the trade unions or any of the regional or district councils. "We do not want routes to be selected on the basis of figures supplied by BR. We are looking not for a decreased service in area which has suffered economic blows, but the reverse." Neither the French nor the Germans, he declared, would dream of closing a railway in any part of their country that was in any way comparable with Dumfries.

John Home Robertson (Lab. East Lothian) said it was becoming clear that BR wanted to pick up sleeper passengers only at the major centres, such as Edinburgh, Glasgow and Carlisle, and that anyone from intermediate stations would have to whistle. "Sleeper services have great potential, but on both the east and west coasts BR seem hell-bent on sabotaging that part of the business by deterring potential customers." In some areas the sleeper service could appropriately be described as the secret service. One could not understand BR unless it wanted to do away with the service.

"The impression is given that the service is run by accountants rather than railwaymen and London accountants at that - a disturbing consideration for Scotland. This slide-rule approach means that passengers have to travel to main line centres or lump it."

Mr Mitchell replied that BR was told that its inter-city sector would not be eligible for public sector obligation grant after the end of that financial year. This was a tough target for BR - the objective of making a 2.7% return as a current operating profit on net assets before interest by 1989-90. It is in this context that BR has examined its inter-city routes to see where the level of service does not correspond to customer demand. One conclusion is that some existing sleeper services cannot be justified.

"At the same time as it is withdrawing trains, BR is introducing four new sleeper services that will link major centres of population in Scotland, the West Midlands and the south coast of England. Sleeper services are being tailored to meet market demand."

Sir Hector Monro intervened to say that people would be thoroughly disappointed that no one was able to defend their point of view. "It appears that BR is always right, whatever it says and whatever its facts and figures. The travelling public do not seem to matter. I am disappointed that the minister is not prepared to arbitrate himself on our

behalf and tell BR that it is wrong. Elected representatives know that BR is wrong, but we are not getting any support."

Mr Mitchell admitted that "as the situation now stands," night passengers from Kilmarnock or Dumfries to London would have a 2-hour wait at Carlisle. A number of MPs were to meet Dr Prideaux, who was responsible for marketing, and was able to flesh out the bare information.

HOUSE OF LORDS

Railway electrification

On 26 NOVEMBER, *Lord Gainford* (C) asked what proportion of the railways were electrified and what was the timetable for future schemes?

Lord Brabazon of Tara, Parliamentary Under-Secretary for Transport, replied that BR would have 7,523 electrified track miles when present schemes were completed. That was 38% of the total network. Electrification to Weymouth, Royston to Cambridge and Watford to St. Albans were due to be finished in 1988. London to Edinburgh should be ready in May 1991.

Lord Gainford asked the minister if he had any information that could encourage the north east of England, "my old homeland."

Progress on the east coast main line was ahead of schedule, replied *Lord Brabazon*. "There should be no problem in meeting the target, on the London to Leeds service, of August 1988 - a year earlier than planned. Full electric service from London to Huntingdon and Peterborough had started in May, slightly ahead of schedule."

Lord Teviot (C) asked how much faster the journey from London to Edinburgh would be when the line is electrified.

Lord Brabazon replied that it was hoped to reduce the time by 40 minutes, thus improving on the 125 train's four hours 40 minutes by making it four hours exactly.

Lord Underhill (leader of the Labour Group) asked if faster progress would not have been made but for two financial aspects. One was that investment in BR for the next five years was estimated at £600 million per annum, whereas in 1952 the plan was for investment at the rate of £800 million per annum. Secondly, during the period 1982-85 the under-spend of the expenditure limit was £332 million.

Lord Brabazon replied that no electrification proposals had been turned down since the Government had been in office. As regards electrification, between 1974 and 79, £41 million a year was spent at today's prices. Since 1979 an average of £72 million a year had been spent at today's prices.