

# Oh what a pantomime!

*BR chairman Sir Bob Reid thought he was in a pantomime when he heard the Government announce that the Channel Tunnel high-speed rail link ought to approach London from the East via Stratford. BR was committed to an approach through South London. He said the Government's route will take people where they don't want to go, will cost £750 million more — and take longer to build. Eurotunnel's chief executive said it was a "complete disaster". Transport Secretary Malcolm Rifkind was defensive when asked how long it would be before the link was complete. 2005 may now be the most likely date — 12 years after the tunnel will open.*

The Government announcement leaves an enormous number of questions unanswered, the biggest of course being who is going to pay for the link. Without that vital decision being taken of course, nothing will happen.

A Press release regretting the announcement was issued immediately by the society, jointly with the National Council on Inland Transport and Transport 2000.

It pointed out that we had called for a speedy go-ahead on BR's chosen southern route and appealed for the decision to be reversed.

We pointed out that a further delay of three or more years would be likely, before even the planning situation will have been clarified and details of the route demarcated. Construction of BR's link could at least have been completed in this century.

The route via Stratford will take us into the next decade and it will not be useful for 50,000 Kent commuters who need improvements to their services urgently.

Nor there will be a high speed link to Waterloo station, where BR's first international terminal is under construction.

The Stratford route lends itself to vast, road-orientated development in East London.

The new line via Stratford will it seems not carry freight, thus destroying one of the biggest environmental arguments in favour of that route.

It is highly unlikely that the private sector will fund the route, having backed away from the cheaper route via South London which promised a higher revenue return.

But while the society is unhappy with the decision not to go ahead immediately with a high-speed link, it will still be possible to arrive in Paris three hours after leaving Waterloo — when the tunnel opens in two years time.

## European rail tickets? Only from the bus station, Sir!

An RDS member trying to book an Inter Rail ticket at Bedford station this summer was referred to Victoria.

On further investigation, however, he discovered that a 300-yard walk to Bedford bus station enabled him to buy his Inter Rail ticket at the National Travelworld shop!

Ipswich has applied to become a city — but the town's rail station cannot sell international rail tickets.

However, 22 miles away down the East Suffolk line at Saxmundham (population around 2,000), another RDS member was able to buy train, ferry and train tickets for a journey from Ipswich to Hamburg via Harwich and the Hook of Holland! The manager of Galaxy Travel, a wholly-owned

subsidiary of Eastern Counties Omnibus Company, at Saxmundham bus station, is pleased to provide this service.

In the recent RDS report, *A Ticket to Europe?*, we made several recommendations, including one that any station serving a population centre of over 100,000 (such as Ipswich) ought to be able to sell Continental tickets.

This point was broadly accepted by Mr R A Furby, of British Rail International, when RDS members Chris Borland, John Barfield and David Martins met him and three colleagues in August.

The meeting also discussed the range of destinations available in the Euro 400 scheme and other recommendations in our report, including better publicity for those booking facilities which do exist.

We were informed that a training manager had been appointed to make booking office staff more conversant with Continental bookings and enquiries.

We look forward to many more improvements by June 1993. Our report, *A Ticket to Europe?*, is still available at £2.50 (post free) from RDS sales officer Alan Harwood, 139 Harrowdene Gardens, Teddington, Middx TW11 0DN

## Beyond the Channel Tunnel by Rail

Steady progress is being made with this new RDS book, planned for publication in the spring of 1993. Apart from the writing of articles and collection of photographs, correspondence is under way with Continental railway administrations over likely changes in their services once the Channel Tunnel is open.

As well as describing rail routes and services, our book will highlight interesting towns and cities that will be within easy, or fairly easy, reach of Great Britain by train from June 1993.

Articles have been, or are being, written on Paris, Lille, Brussels, Antwerp and various Flemish towns. We do, however, need people to write about Cologne, Bonn, Amiens, Arras, Rheims, Rouen, Tours, Orleans and Verdun.

If you can help, please contact the General Secretary as soon as possible. An article of between 200 and 500 words is normally required. Has any member travelled on the following stretches of line: Metz/Nancy - Strasbourg, Cologne - Trier, Liège - Luxembourg. Which of our members have travelled south or west of Paris by TGV? Please contact the General Secretary if you have, as your help will be appreciated. Help us to compile a book that will really make an impact in 1993.

## An appeal for rail

*For the first time ever, an RDS member addressed the Tory Party conference this year. Peter Wood gave the audience at Blackpool a few home truths about transport. He told them:*

All countries need an efficient transport system. It is important economically because it helps business move goods fast and cheap.

British industry must have the necessary transport infrastructure to meet the competitive challenges of the Single European Market and the Channel Tunnel as well as to rise to the demands of the 21st century.

Efficient transport is important, too, for the quality of life. People want to travel more. We must facilitate that. Rail, road, air and sea must each play their part in the economic life of Britain. There should not be investment in one at the

expense of another. If more traffic is to go by rail we do need more electrification of main lines as well as busy commuter routes such as Sunderland - Newcastle - Hexham. We do need to get on with building a Channel Tunnel high speed link that will also benefit Kent commuters — and with through services to Scotland and the regions sooner rather than later. We do need to expand intermodal rail freight, improve cross-London services and continue to open new stations and re-open some lines. Sir Bob Reid's *Future Rail plan* is worth backing.

Improving the transport infrastructure does not come cheap. It makes sense to attract additional private funds rather than rely solely on public expenditure.

If private business is willing to fund new roads and bridges, good. If it is willing to invest in the Channel Tunnel rail link and, like the Central Railway Group, finance a new freight line, even better.

Especially in urban areas we also need to look at other measures to increase transport efficiency.

Road pricing, light rail, strict enforcement of parking regulations, red routes, bus lanes and priority for buses at traffic lights are all worth encouraging to help ensure our highways are also clearways.

"Business as appropriate; government as necessary" is not a bad summary of our party's philosophy.

BR is a business. There is no reason why it has to be state owned.

Parts of BR are profitable. Some socially desirable services in both rural and urban areas will probably never be profitable. We need to repeat the pledge given in the Citizen's Charter about bus deregulation in London: "We shall ensure that socially necessary services continue to be provided even if they are not financially viable."

There is no reason why privatisation should lead to cutbacks or closures. Indeed, I believe the 1990s are scheduled to become a decade of railway expansion. Central government (through the Public Service Obligation grant), county councils and PTEs help fund socially necessary services now.

All we need to do is to build upon these arrangements ensuring, for example, that in return for public funding, a minimum level of service is provided.

The Private Wagon Federation, which represents rail freight users, expressing its support for privatisation, has said that capital should be provided for major infrastructure developments which may not be commercially justified to take into account both environmental and social benefits.

We need to take that argument on board and make clear that there is no reason why privatisation should, for example, threaten through ticketing or compromise safety.

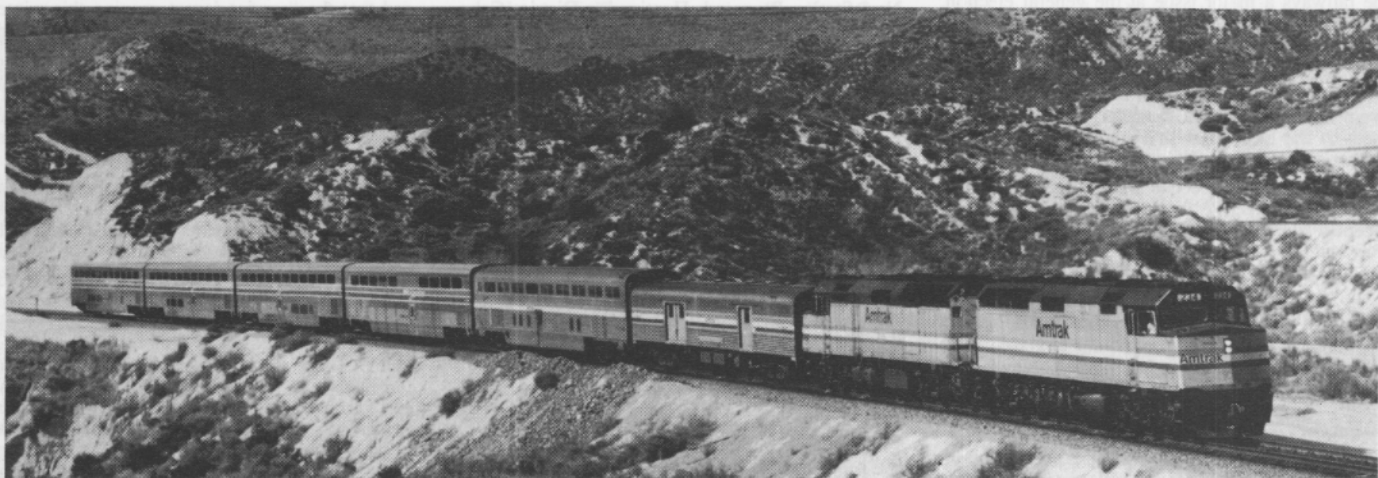
Rail and road, public and private, they should be seen not as alternatives, but as equal contributors to providing a transport system for the decades ahead.

## Envelope re-use labels

RDS envelope re-use labels are now available with a new slogan: For Cleaner Air, Go by Rail.

£1.80 per 100 post free from RDS sales officer, 139 Harrowdene Gardens, Teddington, Middx TW11 0DN. Cheques payable to Railway Development Society.

# One helluva way to go



**Amtrak allows you to see America in grand style and safety. 45,000 each year are killed on American roads**

By JOHN BARFIELD

Attempts to re-establish a meaningful rail passenger service in America have been bedevilled by an annual battle over cash.

But this year the Amtrak network celebrates its 20th birthday, despite a lifetime of crises as successive administrations tried to cut public spending.

Although it still has to stagger through from year to year with no long-term guarantee of adequate resources, it now seems inconceivable that the American public will allow Amtrak to die.

The administrations, particularly Reagan's, have continually tried to ditch Amtrak, labelling it an expensive and unnecessary "welfare programme".

Even now President Bush has shown himself basically against funding for both Amtrak and mass transit rail. No-one in the White House has been sympathetic to Amtrak since its inception in 1971.

The people's representatives in Congress, however, have consistently come to Amtrak's aid and there is an ever-increasing body of opinion throughout the nation ready to defend the public's right to get back on track.

It was pointed out to the then Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger in 1986 that the annual subsidy to Amtrak would run the Pentagon for only 21

hours. Amtrak is the public name for the National Railroad Passenger Corporation which is organised as a private company. The US Secretary for Transportation, however, has a seat on the board and the government contributes a fifth of its total operating costs, while also providing additional capital funding.

New York State has also contributed £93 million to upgrade track to 110 mph as a way of reducing road congestion.

Over £1.5 billion has been invested by Amtrak in the North-East corridor between Washington and Boston and in 1991 a new commuter service began between Washington and North Carolina.

By European standards, the Americans still have a helluva way to go. They have nothing remotely like our high-speed trains or the French TGV. There has been only limited electrification, between Washington and Boston.

But Amtrak now operates 250 inter-city trains a day and carries 40 million passengers a year, 22 million on its inter-city services and 18 million on commuter trains. The public are increasingly returning to the habit of train travel.

Amtrak ordered 140 new Superliner coaches in 1991 and has plans for 150 mph trains on the North-East corridor. California has recently voted £1.9 million for better trains.

This is in contrast to 1958 when rail had only four

per cent of the inter-city market. By 1988 the Amtrak board was able to give the go-ahead for some extensive equipment investment, using property as collateral. Property now contributes £24 million a year to Amtrak's finances.

Another major landmark was 1986 which saw RAILPAC, a Californian organisation similar to RDS, going national and another organisation, the United Rail Passengers Association, set up by a Jacksonville businessman.

The dangers of relying on individual state funding were exposed in 1984 when the Silver Palm service from Tampa to Miami was withdrawn because Florida withdrew its cash support. Only by resort to the courts was a partial reprieve obtained for the service.

In 1985, the Gulf Coast Limited was withdrawn when Florida, Alabama and Missouri withdrew their cash aid.

As in Britain, roads devour the whole "sack of grain" given to transport as a whole.

"Roads get the grain and the rest of transportation gets the sack," said Amtrak president Alan Boyd in 1979.

■ A 200 mph Texas triangle high speed line costing £3.2 billion is to be built linking San Antonio, Austin, Fort Worth, Dallas and Houston by 1998. Sixteen other high-speed rail projects are being considered.

## A computer-aided plea for help

By TREVOR JONES

I was appointed computer officer for the society earlier this year and apologise for continuing delays in keeping the computerised membership up to date. I would be pleased to hear from anyone, preferably south of London, who has suitable equipment and would like to help.

The membership is held across four single-sided floppy disks processed by MicroP software (DATASTAR, INFOTAR [in the WORDSTAR family, though WORDSTAR is not needed]) on an IBM-compatible.

Frank Hastilow (our membership secretary) should shortly have the RDS computer to help his front-office work, meanwhile I use my own computer. I have also written some BASIC programs to produce membership lists superior to those available by the standard software.

Printing the whole membership in BASIC takes

about 2 hours 30 minutes on my computer, but using system software only about 1 hour 20 minutes.

Address labels are produced both for the quarterly Railwatch and, on request, for various branch newsletters. I think some of this work could be shared by the expedient of sending disks between different computer owners, although clearly one person must be responsible for holding the masterfile of about 2400 membership records.

Information of general interest:

Frank Hastilow receives all membership renewals, and banks the money, then periodically forwards the paperwork to me for processing on the computer. Because the process is mostly manual, mistakes can occur; computer errors may be notified direct to me, but general membership matters should go to Mr Hastilow.

Also, because of holidays and other commitments,

big delays can occur in updating the files. Furthermore our 15 branches are only occasionally notified of changes, so will inevitably be using slightly out-of-date lists for a time.

I hope to develop a system of giving each branch a full branch membership list once a quarter. But members must accept that all this is done by voluntary officers in their spare time, who do take holidays and have other commitments in life.

One point queried by several members is why the surname comes before the forenames or initials. Our files were set up in that way to enable alphabetical lists to be produced. This could be changed but would for now be too much work whilst I'm doing the system on my own. If someone else could do the routine renewals updates, I could concentrate on developing the system; or vice-versa. Contact me at 67 Guildford Park Avenue, Guildford, Surrey GU2 5NH