

RAILWAY INVIGORATION SOCIETY

Hon. Chairman :-

M. P. L. CATON, PH.D., 10 GROSVENOR GARDENS, UPMINSTER, ESSEX.
(TELEPHONE : UPMINSTER 5991)

Vice-Presidents :-

JOHN BETJEMAN, ESQ., C.B.E. LORD KINROSS
PROFESSOR C. L. MOWAT, M.A., PH.D. TORQUIL NICHOLSON, ESQ., B.Sc., A.M.I.E.E.

PROGRESS REPORT NO. 75

JUNE 1968

THE STATE OF BRITAIN'S RAILWAYS

(Copy of the Chairman's address delivered at the annual general meeting of the Society held in Caxton Hall, Westminster, London, S. W. 1. on 20th April, 1968.)

✓ The past year, with the succession of White Papers leading up to the Transport Bill, has been of the greatest importance for the railways and the outcome of the legislation now before Parliament will undoubtedly have a decisive effect on the future of rail transport in Britain.

It is gratifying to note that the new policy gives effect to several matters, for which this Society has been pressing for many years. Thus, the railways are to be relieved of some of the unfair financial burdens which they have had to bear so long, such as the crossings and road bridges. The Society is endeavouring to have introduced, also, a change to relieve BR of their present requirement to make good losses resulting from the concessionary fares they are required to grant to military personnel and several other classes of passengers. We consider that BR should be properly compensated for this by the authority responsible.

✓ The most important change of policy to which the Bill gives effect, however, is the recognition that Britain needs a comprehensive railway system which should be stabilised as soon as possible at about 11,000 miles and not reduced to the 8,000 miles proposed under Lord Beeching. ✓ The payment of direct subsidies for the maintenance of unprofitable routes is another measure long advocated by this Society and we hasten to add that this is not money down the drain, which Britain can ill afford at the time of an economic crisis, but a cheaper alternative to closure which would in all probability give rise to greater social costs.

✓ The new policy, however, still leaves much to be desired since, even with the 11,000 mile network, over 2,000 miles remain as candidates for closure. If these lines are closed the effect will be even more disastrous than that of the Beeching closures already carried out, especially as most of the services now threatened are of greater social importance than those axed previously. (continued overleaf)

GET YOUR COPY OF THE SOCIETY'S PUBLICATION 'THE GREAT ISLE OF WIGHT TRAIN ROBBERY' ... See special announcement on p. 4.

2.

✗ When will the utter folly of the closure policy be realised? Five years ago, when Marples and Beeching were at the height of their activity, we were told that the extensive closures then planned would play a major part in reducing the deficit which it was hoped would be eliminated by 1970. Now, after over 80% of these closures and several others have been carried out, the deficit is bigger than ever! Hasn't it occurred to anyone that it might be an idea to give the patient a new medicine, this time taking an occasional look to see whether it is curing instead of killing him? ✗

The failure to reduce the deficit this way is not hard to find - closure of feeder lines has inevitably led to loss of traffic on other routes to the point where they, too, become unprofitable. Evidence for this was revealed in this Society's post-closure survey on the Stroud Valley line in Gloucestershire, where 70% of former users said that they used other rail services less as a result of closure of their local line, yet loss of contributory revenue is not allowed for when calculating savings from closures!

✗ Despite the more favourable policy under the present Government, much of the same old perverted thinking over closures continues. The White Paper on Railway Policy, published in November, 1967, assumes that the withdrawal of passenger services from the 2,000 miles of grey and thin black lines shown on the map published by BR would save £14 million per annum. This works out at the fantastic average of £7,000 per mile! Recently a number of these lines have been submitted to the TUCCs and we have examined the individual figures in the documents sent to objectors and have not found one that loses at half this rate. The majority, in fact, average around £1,000 to £2,000 and losses of £7,000 would not be approached even if the passengers were carried free! ✗

Furthermore, we are now in little doubt, as we have long suspected, that at the time of the Beeching plan the possibility of cheaper operation as an alternative to closure was never seriously considered. In his book 'I tried to run a railway' Mr. G. F. Fiennes, former General Manager, Eastern Region, BR, said: "They laid it down in general that rural railways did not pay, which was true, and could never pay, which was false".

Recently the Eastern Region, with the economies embodied in 'basic railway' operation, has shown that unprofitable lines can be made to pay. We have for years been saying this could be done but have been prevented from challenging BR figures and putting across schemes for cheaper operation at TUCC Hearings. Repeatedly the Government has turned down suggestions that such hearings should be widened in scope to permit discussion of these and other important relevant matters. Why is this? Have they got something to hide from us that they should apparently not wish to allow an honest debate?

Apart from hardship to passengers the closures are having an equally serious effect on freight traffic. The new Transport Bill envisages a transfer of freight from road to rail, yet closure of routes and depots has meant that in some cases the railways cannot any longer provide the services the customer wants and he is having to use road transport whether he likes it or not. How can the railways play their proper role in the nation's economy if they are so stripped of their assets that they are physically incapable of doing what is required of them?

Our task in the coming months is all too clear: we must impress upon the authorities the utter folly of proceeding with any further closures. Instead let economies be effected by increasing efficiency and by cheaper operation, and real savings. Given a fair deal by our politicians, railways need not then be a serious liability, but an asset which will prove increasingly valuable as the years go by and congestion on the roads gets worse.

The success of the London-Manchester electrification scheme has shown that people want railways and are prepared to use them, if they are given a good enough service. Let us see they get service and call a halt to the process of run-down and closure which has produced only fictitious economies and has caused so much inconvenience and hardship to the travelling public. ✕

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The fifteenth annual general meeting of the Society took place at Caxton Hall, Westminster, London, S. W. 1. on Saturday, 20th April. It was attended by 29 members, including representatives of the Railway Development Association and the East Anglian Daily Times.

Reports

A booklet containing copies of the various reports presented to the meeting is enclosed to members with this progress report. The following amendments should be made: -

- p. 3. North-Eastern Branch . . . para. 3, last line: amend date to "1968"
- p. 4. Accounts for the year 1967. Delete at foot of page: "Subject to audit".
The accounts were audited before the meeting by Francis L. Pike and R. H. Moody.

Resolutions

The meeting passed the following resolutions, copies of which have been sent to the Minister of Transport, BR, each Economic Planning Council and selected M. P. s: -

(1) The Railway Invigoration Society in general meeting, having regard to the apparent serious lack of existing machinery to deal with complaints against the Railway Board's failure to carry out their existing duties, as defined in section 3 of the Transport Act, 1962, many of which are not covered by the powers of the TUCGs, as defined in that Act, respectfully requests Her Majesty's Government to introduce legislation extending the power of the Parliamentary Commissioner to deal with the Board's activities and with complaints submitted through the proper channels arising out of the Board's performance, or failure to perform such duties, with particular reference to safety and to financial and other losses suffered by users.

✕ (2) This meeting (a) urges the British Railways Board to play a greater role in improving passenger and freight services in areas which have been given priority by the Government for industrial and other economic expansion; (b) strongly condemns the publishing of closure proposals for lines (e. g. Darlington-Richmond) which have already been refused by previous Ministers of Transport and asks that no other lines for which closure has been refused (e. g. Haltwhistle-Alston) within the last five years will again be subject to closure proposals; (c) expresses its deep regret at the large number of lines excluded from the "British railways network for development" and calls for them to be transferred to the development category; (d) deplores the proposed closure

this scandal of false figures and to do our utmost to impress upon the Ministry staff responsible the true cost of keeping these lines open. In addition, we would point out that even the TUCC figures greatly exaggerate the savings expected from closure, since they ignore loss of contributory revenue and do not reflect the cheapest mode of operation.

TRANSPORT USERS' CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEES

✓x The Central TUCC, in its latest report, recommends that the scope of TUCC inquiries should be widened. However, the Government will still not agree that the powers of TUCCs should be increased, except that under the new Transport Bill TUCCs will be concerned with freight in addition to their existing interest in passenger services.

This Society will continue to press for TUCCs to enjoy those additional rights which we have advocated for so long in our progress reports and by other means. ✕

THE NEW MINISTER

✓x At present, little is known about Mr. Richard Marsh, the new Minister of Transport. His predecessor, Mrs. Barbara Castle, was probably the most sympathetic Minister to our cause for a very long time. Will Mr. Marsh live up to her example? In particular, will he stand up against vested interests in road transport and give priority to the transport needs of the nation?

The recent dropping from the Transport Bill of clauses which would have required extra dues from heavy road vehicles to cover the extra costs to which they give rise and payments for moving wide and exceptional loads by road is a typical example of this pampering to vested interests. The new Minister needs to be strong enough to resist this sort of thing. ✕

CORPORATE MEMBERS

The Society welcomed the following new corporate members: -

The Borough Councils of Whitehaven and Workington, both in Cumberland.
Northallerton Urban District Council (Yorkshire - North Riding).

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The editor will consider for publication letters on matters of general interest to members. Any opinions expressed, however, must not be taken as necessarily reflecting the official views and policies of the Society. The editor reserves the right to make 'cuts'. Letters should normally be signed by writers' real names. Only in exceptional circumstances, which must be clearly stated in a covering note, will a letter be accepted for publication under a nom de plume.

How not to run a railway

Under the heading "How not to run a railway" in progress report No. 74, you ask readers' opinions on the action of BR in cutting out the last trains on the Llandudno Junction - Blaenau Ffestiniog line.

There may have been some special circumstances in this case, but, in general, it is my considered opinion that BR are both stupid and underhand. They are stupid in that every reduction in their services to the public assists in removing rail transport from the eye, and, therefore, the mind of the potential traveller. Passengers lost on branch and secondary lines are passengers also lost on main lines. The deterioration in the finances of BR over the last four years points to the fallacy of the Marples/Beeching theories.

There is plenty of evidence that BR act in an underhand way when they have made up their mind to shut down a particular service or line. This is not new and it was a method used well before the Beeching closures. I have been personally told by railwaymen on a number of occasions of a variety of means of bringing about a decline in the use of some service that BR wish to close. Some of your readers may remember how the Cheltenham - Andover (M & SW J) service was removed from Lansdown station to St. James station in the former town. I was told that this was done with the express intention of removing useful connections with trains to and from Birmingham and the North. Concurrent with deliberate attempts to drive away traffic is the policy of maintaining all the most expensive methods of operation.

There is no doubt in my mind that, by a combination of these underhand methods, BR have been able to put up a seemingly good case for closure. The tragedy is that they got away with it. Now it is almost too late. Many recognise the stupidity of the Marples/Beeching theory, but few, if any, will admit to the underhand methods that are used to bring about these closures.

D. W. Mountain,
34, Harbury Road,
Carshalton, Surrey.

Bouquet

May I express appreciation of the quite admirably produced and highly convenient format in which the RIS progress report now appears?

M. M. Dalston (Miss),
Idbury, Kingham, Oxford.

(Thank you, Miss Dalston. Any editor, of course, is always very gratified to receive a letter on the lines of the above. We hasten to acknowledge, however, the very ready and valuable co-operation of our printers. - Ed.)

REPORTS FROM BRANCHES AND AREA REPRESENTATIVES.

(Edited by Mr. H. R. Purser, 30, Staines Road, Feltham, Middlesex)

Readers seeking more details on particular items should contact the appropriate representatives.

London Branch (London Passenger Transport Area)

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

✓
✗ A showing of BR films took place on the evening of 14th May at Caxton Hall, London, S. W. 1.

On Tuesday, 9th July, there will be a "meeting on wheels", i. e. , a tour of some London suburban lines. Details will be announced later.

It is also proposed to hold a joint public meeting with the Railway Development Association later this year. The subject will be "Cross London links" and the probable date and venue is 1st October at Caxton Hall. ✗

Although primarily catering for members in the LPTB area, the Branch is very anxious to make it known that all RIS members are welcome to attend these meetings.

Any member who would like to receive notices of these meetings sent to him should write to the Acting Branch Chairman asking to be included in the London Branch mailing list.

Services on the South London line have improved now that work on the Grosvenor Road bridge has been completed.

The freight-only line from Harpenden to Hemel Hempstead is to be bought by the Hemel Hempstead Light Concrete Co. , Ltd.

The St. Pancras-Bedford commuter service appears to have deteriorated with the substitution of Craven units for Rolls-Royce powered sets. The Craven units have a greatly reduced seating capacity and complaints of overcrowding are frequent.

East Suffolk/East Norfolk Branch

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

✓
✗ The public inquiry into the proposed closure of the Great Yarmouth (Southtown) - Lowestoft (Central) line arranged for 12th March has been postponed until September to enable the Tucc to study the traffic in the summer season.

The Society has received the minutes of the East Suffolk Standing Joint Transport Conference meeting held on 8th February. At this meeting, 13 points concerned with transport co-ordination were discussed and it was resolved to circulate a questionnaire in order to ascertain the views of councils and organisations in the area on the adequacy of road/rail interchange and allied topics. The meeting was attended by the Passenger Transport Co-ordinating Committee ...

(East Anglian Region) representative and it is good news that the road/rail interchange subject is now being considered. It is also good to note that the Conference, which was set up initially at the time of the threat to the East Suffolk line, continues to meet as required to bring the local authorities' representatives face to face with those of BR and the Eastern Counties Omnibus Co. ✕

Northern England Branch

Branch Secretary:

Mr. R. K. Mains, 114, Manor House Road,
Jesmond, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, 2,
NE2 2LY.

✕ The first annual meeting of this branch was held in Newcastle on 23rd March. It was resolved to change the name to "Northern England Branch" in order to represent more accurately the Branch's increased activities. Representatives of the Newcastle District Council of the National Union of Railwaymen attended and resolutions were passed calling for urgent improvements in Northern England's rail services. ✕

Northumberland, County Durham and the North Riding of Yorkshire.

✕ On 10th April, the Branch held a conference in Hartlepool Municipal Buildings regarding the need to improve rail services between Tyneside, Wearside and Teesside and to reform Transport Users' Consultative Committees. Further action is to be taken in due course and the Branch Committee is presently examining the most suitable course.

Regarding the Darlington-Richmond line, the case for retention was discussed at the Branch's conference held in Darlington Town Hall on 30th March. Mr. E. J. Fletcher, M. P. for Darlington attended. Although BR has been very unco-operative regarding the Branch's development plans, the Branch Committee is most grateful to Mr. Fletcher for his valuable assistance. The TUCC hearing will be held on 7th June and the Branch will be represented. In the meantime, the Branch hopes to issue a memorandum on this line. ✕

Cumberland, Westmorland and the East and West Ridings of Yorkshire

The Branch intends to take a greater interest in railway matters concerning these counties in the future and suggestions from members would be welcome.

In March, BR published proposals for the closure of the Scarborough-Hull main line, which, if implemented, would isolate Filey, Bridlington and Beverley from the railway map. Opposition is widespread and includes that of the Branch. The line is heavily relied upon by both holiday-makers and commuters. Although the line is supposed, at present, to be running at a heavy loss, that is no reason why it could not be made more viable through greater efficiency. Moreover, development of the services on the line could solve some of the increasing transport problems in the East Riding. It is interesting to note that the number of rail passengers at Bridlington during the Easter weekend was greater this year than for the same period last year.

✕ The Branch is campaigning for the re-opening and development of the Harrogate-Ripon-Northallerton line, which could become part of a through route linking Merseyside and the West

Riding with Teesside and Tyneside. Issues involved were discussed at the conference held on 30th March (see above). ✕

Copies of the Branch's latest report (issued in February) are available from the Branch Secretary, price one shilling each.

Isle of Wight

Area Representative: Mr. R. E. Burroughs, 3, Spring Hill,
Ventnor, Isle of Wight.

✕ County Council officials will shortly be meeting BR and Ministry of Transport delegates in a final endeavour to get the Shanklin-Ventnor line re-opened. It can be proved that closure of the Shanklin-Ventnor section of the Ryde-Ventnor line has led to a far greater loss of revenue than originally claimed by BR. ✕

(See also special announcement about "The great Isle of Wight train robbery" on p. 4)

Devon and Cornwall

Area Representative: Mr. A. E. Wilkinson, 41, Cross Street,
Northam, Bideford, Devon.

Brunel's famous Royal Albert Bridge is to be re-inforced with steel bracing ties at a cost of £80,000 to enable it to carry the latest waggons of 100 tons gross weight, running in trains of 1,000 tons. In announcing this, the Divisional Manager added that BR wanted to "lay the bogey that the bridge was falling down and that the railway from Plymouth to Penzance would be closed." This was very comforting news for those in Cornwall who, up to now, have been beset by rumours.

✕ Local efforts to get passenger services permanently restored between Barnstaple Junction and Torrington, because of the uncertainty of the road bridge at Bideford, have, so far, proved unsuccessful. BR has informed Torrington Town Council that, unless the Council were prepared to underwrite costs of approximately £100 per week, the question of re-instating the passenger service could not be further considered. This figure appears rather high considering that the line is used daily for milk and clay traffic. ✕

It was announced that the St. Ives branch was to be completely closed for two weeks (16th-30th April) due to track relaying and that special road services were to be substituted. Our corporate member St. Ives Borough Council has made strong representations about many features of the new timetable, such as big gaps in between the services and poor main line connections at St. Erth.

A protest meeting has been held in Exeter regarding the coal concentration depot established at the former motive-power depot at Exmouth Junction. Complaints were made that the depot was injurious to health, was an eyesore and that heavy lorries using it were creating a road hazard. We have referred to this very unsatisfactory project in earlier progress reports, emphasising the futility of using heavy lorries over inadequate roads to convey coal to places still served by rail.

Norfolk (North and West)

Area Representative:

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

✓x On 24th April, Mr. Thomas attended the public hearing held by the TUC for the East Anglian Area to consider the hardship that would result if the King's Lynn-Hunstanton passenger train service were withdrawn. It was a very lively meeting and the chairman threatened to close it if interruptions and disturbances were continued.

Our representative spoke on behalf of some eighty objectors, but he was not allowed to comment on running costs and the economics of the line, although he managed to point out that it had not been given a fair time to prove itself as a "basic railway" line. x

✓x The TUC inquiry into the proposal to withdraw passenger services on the Norwich-Sheringham-Cromer line will be held in Blackfriars Hall, Norwich, on 16th July. A similar inquiry regarding the Dereham-Wymondham line was held in the City Hall, Norwich, on 28th May.

The Minister's verdict on the future of these three lines will be eagerly awaited. Withdrawal of the passenger services now running along them would leave much of Norfolk - England's fourth largest county - with a very poor 'bus service as the only form of public transport. x

North Wales

Area Representative:

(vacancy)

✓x The proposed closure of three passenger stations in Anglesey - Rhosneigr, Ty Croes and Bodorgan - has been rejected by the Minister. Decision had previously been deferred (see progress report No. 64.). The latest announcement is most gratifying to us, as it accords with one of the recommendations made in our memorandum on the North Wales coast line (NW. 1) published in March, 1965. x

Northern Scotland

Area Representative:

Mr. F. G. Thompson, 17, Viewfield Road,
Culcabock, Inverness.

BR has streamlined its managerial team at Inverness. This now comprises a 3-man team headed by a Commercial Officer, assisted by an Outdoor Superintendent and a Depot Engineer. The smaller, but more flexible, administration, is in keeping with reduction in Highland lines staff in recent years, but it is claimed that it is able to deal with all matters requiring quick decisions.

✓x It was stated in Parliament on 12th February that there was no current proposal to close the Dingwall-Kyle of Lochalsh line, although this does not form part of the basic network for development. However, the observation cars on this line and on the Mallaig line have been withdrawn (see last progress report, p. 12) as BR considers it uneconomic to replace the worn-out ones. x

OTHER NEWSGeneral

Our member Mr. D. F. Taylor, of Long Melford, in Suffolk, has referred to the Parliamentary Commissioner (the "Ombudsman") the circumstances of the closure of the Stour Valley line.

X The public inquiry into the proposed closure to passenger traffic of the Central Wales line took place at Llandrindod Wells on 14th and 15th May. X

With the start of this season's services, the Ffestiniog Railway has been extended to Dduallt.

Owing to snow blocks on roads out of Douglas, special passenger services were run on the Isle of Man Railway on 5th and 6th February.

Reduced to unstaffed halts: - Various stations on the Reading-Tonbridge line; all stations on the Minehead branch; all stations on the Bury-Rawtenstall line; Reddish South and Denton stations (Stockport-Stalybridge line); Caerau, Cymmer Afan and Maesteg stations (Bridgend-Treherbert line).

Passenger service closures: (a) effected: From 6th November, 1967: Pen Cob halt and Pen-y-Bryn halt (Ffestiniog Railway); From 5th February: Scawby & Hibaldstow station (Gainsborough-Barnetby line). From 4th March: Birmingham New St. -Nuneaton-Leicester London Road-Nottingham Midland (local services only); Birmingham New St. -Derby Midland via Tamworth. .(contd. overleaf) .

VENUE OF 1969 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING: In accordance with a resolution passed at the recent annual general meeting, the National Committee is obliged to ascertain the views of all members as to whether or not the 1969 annual general meeting should be held outside London. Therefore, you are earnestly requested. to fill in the slip below and post it to the address shown. The slip has been so devised that readers can remove it without losing essential text from this progress report.

(local services only); From 25th March: Gloucester-Stratford on Avon; From 6th May: Bedford St. John's-Bletchley (Oxford-Cambridge line now completely closed to passenger traffic); Aberdeen-Elgin (local services via Buckie and via Craigellachie) (Inverurie, Inch, Huntly and Keith Junction remain open).

(b) approved: Matlock-Chinley (Derby-Manchester trains to be diverted via Chesterfield and Hope Valley line); Manchester Victoria-Stockport.

(c) proposed: Peterborough-Spalding-Boston; Firsby-Grimsby; Willoughby-Mablethorpe; Lincoln-Woodhall Junction-Firsby.

BR do not intend to proceed with the closure of Bamford, Hathersage, Grindleford and Dore & Totley stations (Hope Valley line), approval for which was given by the Minister in 1966. It has been decided that it is cheaper to retain these stations! This is most welcome news, particularly to rambblers.

No objections were received by the Scottish TUCC against the proposal to withdraw passenger trains between Ayr and Heads of Ayr and the closure is expected to take place in September.

EDITORIAL ANNOUNCEMENT

Contributions to the next issue (to be published in September) should be sent, by 1st August, as follows: -

Branch and area reports	-	Mr. H. R. Purser, 30, Staines Road, Feltham, Middlesex.
All other matter	-	Mr. L. G. Hipperson, 21, Ullet Road, Sefton Park, Liverpool, 17. (Telephone: Sefton Park 3446)