



Picture: ROBERT ARMITSTEAD

GUEST SPOT: By **BOB CROW**, general secretary of the rail union RMT

RMT has launched a highly successful campaign to keep South Eastern Trains in the public sector.

Nearly 100 MPs have signed Early Day Motion 254, which demands that the re-privatisation of SET is halted and that this important franchise is kept under the control of the Strategic Rail Authority rather than handed to yet another profit-hungry privateer.

We see this as a first step to creating a re-integrated and publicly owned railway.

Under public management South Eastern Trains has shown a dramatic improvement in the punctuality of the service.

Figures released by the SRA reveal that SET ran 74.6 per cent of its trains on time in the last quarter of 2003 – almost nine per cent better than the same period in 2002, when Connex was still running the franchise.

The company has also taken on more staff to get the trains moving again.

Even before the figures were published, more than 70 per cent of people agreed that train operations should be brought back home to the public sector.

It is clear from the local response to the RMT campaign that even more are con-

vinced now, and the campaign is growing daily.

The decision by Network Rail to bring rail maintenance back in-house in order to “ensure greater consistency of maintenance and deliver efficiency savings” has also been widely welcomed following years of chaos due to the privatisation in 1996.

This failure of the private sector to deliver makes the handing over of track maintenance to the same privateers on London Underground even more irrational.

The introduction of PPP on the Underground must be reversed and RMT will be fighting just as hard, with just as much public support, to reverse such a disastrous policy.

I welcome this opportunity, through *Railwatch*, to speak to others who are as concerned as we are about public transport. I believe that together we can bring about real change.

Postcards to send to MPs and details of the RMT campaigns are available from: www.rmt.org.uk, info@rmt.org.uk, or RMT Unity House, 39 Chalton Street, London NW1 1JD. Tel: 020 787 4771.

Coal on track

A Freightliner train of empty coal wagons passes through England's highest main line station – at Dent on the Settle-Carlisle line – in this picture by Robert Armitstead.

In the background can be seen snow fences to prevent the line being blocked during the winter.

The hills are well-walked by present-day ramblers but years ago the inhabitants of Dentdale would dig for coal here.

The nearby road is still called the Coal Road and is a challenge to anyone trying to explore this part of the dales by bike.

This is one of many evocative pictures in a new “inspirational” guidebook *Iron Roads* North of Leeds which also covers the line to Morecambe and Lancaster and that to Harrogate and York.

Published by Wayzgoose, the book is well up to the high standards of the other four books in the series which feature excellent photographs, unique maps and interesting detail about the railway and the area it goes through.

It costs £5.99 and is published by Wayzgoose, Park View, Tatenhill Common, Staffordshire DE13 9RS. Tel: 01283 713674 www.wayzgoose.org.uk ISBN 0 9545383 5 8