



# Railway Development NEWS

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## ARMITAGE - "ENOUGH IS ENOUGH"

Some time ago both R.D.S. and Transport 2000\* related strange goings on at the Department of Transport. Something about a "rigged inquiry to get round the political obstacles to change" and "help improve the sadly tarnished image of the road transport industry." The end result of this was the setting up of the Armitage Inquiry into the case for heavier lorries. Now that the results have been published • the Road Lobby appears to have got its way but we could have been spared the somewhat childish exercise carried out by "Marplan" for the FTA, NFC and RHA which has done nothing to allay the above suspicions.

Apart from the likely effects of the introduction of heavier lorries, as recommended by Armitage - albeit not to the full EEC standard - what has the Inquiry revealed? Certainly that heavy lorries, and the heaviest in particular, are not liked by the public, despite the findings of Marplan, and that "car drivers and cyclists are intimidated by the size of lorries and sometimes by the way they are driven." Also that the road haulage industry expects officialdom to catch up with its needs (witness speed limits and the size of lorries) but above all that it has managed to provide transport on the cheap or as the report puts it "by externalising its costs" i.e. making someone else pay for such things as lorry parking by using streets and laybys. Also by under-taxation of the heaviest lorries which compete with rail.

Having stated these brief facts let us look into the matter in more detail. The Report finds that the mileage of articulated lorries is now 5 times greater than it was in 1960, and that more than 80% of the mileage is accounted for by the heaviest lorries. Ton-miles have gone up 4 fold between 1968 and 1979, two-thirds of this by lorries over 24 tons. One anomaly is that the average cost per ton-mile of road is 5 times that of rail but it is admitted that road haulage prices are kept down to those of the cheapest operator (presumably with the smallest overheads). In the last 10 years the total number of lorries has declined by 11% and, as we shall see, this seems to be the main plank in the argument for heavier lorries.

Nevertheless the subject of "track costs" is one of which both RIS and RDA have made a study over many years and the report once more reveals the extent of "hidden subsidies" to the road transport industry, for, whilst the excess of taxes paid by hauliers over road track costs was expected to be £40m in 1980/81, 125,000 of the lorries concerned do not pay their full track costs; mainly the heavier ones, over 85,000 of which are only paying 82%, representing a subsidy to each 4 axle 32.5 tonne lorry of £800 p.a. The Report also points out that no allowance is made for public accident costs, reckoned by the D.Tp. in 1979/80 to be £50m or to the cost of damage to underground services by the use of heavier lorries, a subject upon which it recommends more research.

One significant point it makes is that very few people who submitted evidence attempted to look to the future; least of all the road haulage industry itself. The price of Derv may go up more than anticipated and the effects of the limit on drivers' hours may have a profound effect. Nevertheless it has been forecast that the mileage of lorries of over 25 tonnes could increase by between 50%-71% by the year 2000.

\*R.D.N. No. 3 (April 1979, p.2). Transport Retort, Vol. 2, Nos. 11 and 12 (November and December 1978).

• Report of the Inquiry into Lorries, People and the Environment, HMSO, December 1980 (by Sir Arthur Armitage, MA, LLB, LL.D.).

Having accepted the environmental nuisance of lorries what steps are proposed to reduce it? The possibility of reducing lorry traffic by transfer to rail is played down on the ground that "a large part of our industry is irretrievably committed to the lorry. . . . the railway has physically shrunk to such extent that it cannot offer a geographically comprehensive service by rail alone" but sees "the Sec. 8 Grant scheme as giving good value in reducing the environmental effect of lorries." So far £26m has been committed and 87 projects grant aided resulting in 16½m tonnes being transferred to rail. Also such projects (for private sidings etc.) have helped some companies to keep rail facilities they might otherwise have closed down. In general it considers the scope of the scheme should be broadened, to include Freightliners and Sealink and for grants of more than 50% (up to 80%) provided it does not become a general subsidy for Railfreight.

So far as getting lorries away from people is concerned whilst "many are against spending more on roads because of the environmental and resource costs of the roads and the further encouragement they believe it would give to lorries" Armitage recommends that "the absolute decline in road building, and the decline in its share of total public expenditure should be reversed." (Another one up for the Road Lobby). In the construction of freight complexes, however, it does recommend, if there is demand from users, they should be connected to the railway, if necessary with the aid of Sec. 8 Grant.

Turning to the lorries themselves it hopes that further improvements in safety may come from the recent restriction on drivers' hours and maximum daily driving distances, particularly as their rate of involvement in fatal accidents per mile travelled is still about 40% higher than that of other vehicles.

One important recommendation (which largely explains our title) is that there should be *no more significant increases in the permitted maximum dimensions of lorries* and that there should be, for the first time a maximum permitted height for lorries to prevent "bridge bashing" and sums up the position in the following terms:

"The official approach hitherto has been concerned more with matching regulations on dimensions to the needs of the haulage industry than with approaching the matter from the point of view of the size of lorries which roads and local environments can take." "Implementation of the proposals we have made on dimensions would remove the threat of even bigger lorries and thereby make a large contribution to containing the adverse effects of lorries on people and the environment."

Turning to the final crux of the issue, namely heavier lorries, it points to the suggestion by the Foster Committee that between 5% and 20% of damage to roads is caused by overloading which is costing the taxpayer between £10m and £50m p.a., and also finds that 70% of lorries are already exceeding the 40mph speed limit, but the main argument is that heavier lorries will lead to lesser lorries (a reduction of 370m lorry miles if EEC lorries were permitted). By reducing the number of lorries in use (by 13%) savings of up to £150m p.a. (at 1980 prices) could be achieved most of which would be passed on to the customer. But at what cost to the taxpayer?

Apart from road damage the principal problem is with bridges and, as the survey by Husband & Co., for the D.Tp. has revealed, the cost of strengthening or rebuilding them to take the heaviest EEC axle combinations (11 tonne single driving and 24 tonne tri-axle) could be between £350m and £1,200m if all bridges and viaducts had to be dealt with. It does, however, argue that the cost could be recouped by higher taxation on the heavier lorries (we have heard this before - but WHEN ED.) or through grants from the EEC.

Nevertheless it confidently predicts that heavier lorries (with the reduced maximum axle weights proposed) will not entail having to strengthen many bridges and concludes "where will it all end. . .? The answer is simple: it will end right here. The reason is bridges. 44 tonnes is the maximum weight of lorry of present dimensions that can be tolerated on the bridges of this country, and an important part of our recommendations is that there should be no further increase in maximum dimensions. We are sure that the public will be well served by such a commitment."

Will it all end here? I doubt we have heard the last of this matter? (See also Members' Only Supplement).

Details of the Society's evidence to Armitage are available in "Railfreight or Juggernaut" (reprinted Autumn 1980) from RDS Sales, "Latymer," The Drive, Belmont, Surrey, SM2 7DJ. Price 45p including postage.

## RAIL RESTORATION

As well as campaigning for the retention of the existing rail network, RDS continues to press actively for the restoration of certain closed lines to the passenger network, and to encourage the formation of local Rail Action Committees to promote the idea.

Many such committees – on, for example the Wisbech, Dereham, Reapham, Louth and Bideford lines – have run successful excursion trains for local people.

These and other Groups were brought together in Peterborough on 6th December for the first National Reopenings Conference organised by RDS. The Conference was due to discuss problems and achievements so far on individual lines; costings; the possible role of private fund-raising; special trains; and pressing the reopenings issue in the national political arena.

The reopenings issue has, of course, been raised in Parliament as a result of Tony Speller's Bill, which aimed to ease the way for experimental reopenings, but for which there was insufficient time in the last Session. RDS has maintained contact with Mr Speller and assured him of our support. In November he told us:

"I will ask officially whether the Minister would be prepared to take this under his wing, and whether there is any prospect of Transport legislation during the current Session into which my Bill could be incorporated as a couple of clauses. As this is a Bill which has all-party support and appears to have Ministerial acceptance, I think we have every hope of a favourable end – let us just hope that the end is nigh!"

T.J.G

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## WITH THIS ISSUE

"IN PARLIAMENT" – "MEMBERS ONLY SUPPLEMENT" – "A.G.M. NOTICE"

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## R.D.S. DIARY

Don't forget the Society's A.G.M. in SHEFFIELD on 25th APRIL – MAKE A DATE IN YOUR DIARY – NOW!! and bring the Agenda along with you to the meeting.

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## SPEED AND SOLIDARITY

That was the theme of the Resolutions passed by the representatives of 32 local groups who attended the Society's Second National Conference of Rail Users' Groups held in Derby on 25th October.

Speed in that the Government was urged to "act promptly to help alleviate B.R.'s twin financial problems of (i) insufficient investment stretching back over several years and (ii) financial support for socially necessary rail services which in fact is declining in real terms."

Solidarity in that Groups present pledged themselves "to assist each other in the event of a closure proposal being made for any individual lines covered by them; recognising that any individual service is used not only by people from its immediate catchment area, but also from much further afield."

Between them the delegates represented a combined membership of 3,140 and it was a considerable achievement to get together so many, from places as far apart as Bideford, Mid-Wales, Tunbridge Wells, Yarmouth, Cleethorpes and Merseyside – slightly more than attended the First Conference in London on 29th March (fully reported in our June issue p.5).

After a brief report of the meeting held on 4th July 1980 between an RDS delegation and Kenneth Clarke M.P., Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Transport, a most enlightening talk was given by Mr Norman Shelley, of B.R.'s Research & Development Division at Derby. He illustrated the work being done at Derby to produce a "Half price railway" in the more rural areas – with lightweight vehicles, simplified and automated level crossings and the use of radio to replace conventional signalling.

Delegates were left with the impression that there is no shortage of ideas to improve railway operation, only the money to implement them, and it is up to bodies like our own to press for the necessary investment. It was therefore appropriate that the Conference passed unanimously the above two resolutions. Other issues discussed included the activities of the B.R. Property Board; the question of tax concessions on company cars and the scope for financial measures to encourage rail commuters; problems of promotion and maintenance of unstaffed stations and relations between users' groups and local authorities.

The gathering closed with discussion on the policy for future Conferences and it has since been agreed to hold one General One per year and perhaps one or more Regional Conferences. A few copies of the full Conference Report, sent to all those who attended, are available to individual RDS Members on application to: T.J. Garrod, 15, Clapham Road, Lowestoft, Suffolk, enclosing 30p. for printing and postage.

## TAX CONCESSIONS

The Conference decided to form a Study Group which would investigate the benefits of tax concessions for commuters, changes in the tax allowances on company cars, and firms giving free or cheap rail travel as a 'perk'. Dr Caton and Mr Townend have started collecting evidence: they hope to report to the next National Users' Group Conference. Any members with views to contribute should contact Dr Caton at 10 Grosvenor Gardens, UPMINSTER, Essex, RM14 1DJ.

## FREIGHT REPORT

**SCRAP BY RAIL IN THE EIGHTIES** - Considerable progress is reported by the Working Party which was set up by the parties concerned to identify the least cost solution to the carriage of scrap by rail. Their latest report confirms acceptance of an offer setting up a new company STANDARD RAILFREIGHT LTD., to provide a complete service in the manufacture and supply of sufficient wagons and the responsibility for carriage charges. The plan, which is subject to certain assurances from the public and private sector steel works is for new wagons to enter service as the B.R. wagons are phased out. Negotiations are now going on between all parties concerned. Let us hope the project will soon take to the rails.

The RDS Freight Sub-Committee suggested this idea months ago!

**NEW CHINA CLAY WAGONS** - The Standard Railway Wagon Co., have received an order for 8 covered hopper wagons to supplement the existing fleet of Polybulk wagons owned by Tiger Railcar Leasing Ltd.

**WHERE THERE'S MUCK THERE'S MONEY** - British Rail and the Greater Manchester Council are negotiating for a contract to remove refuse from the City to a series of suitable landfill sites and this could represent up to 750,000 tonnes of new business for B.R. The first site is already under construction at Dean Lane, Newton Heath, and is expected to be in operation by August.

**FERTILISER CONTRACT** - British Rail has won a ten year contract worth £25m for the carriage of products for UK Fertilisers to the company's depots nationwide.

**SID & BILL AGREE!** - In a recent letter to the Convenor of the RDS Freight Sub-Committee, Bill Sirs, General Secretary of the Iron and Steel Trades Confederation has confirmed that he has told Sidney Weighell, General Secretary of the NUR that his Union "will do everything in its power to ensure that we continue to use B.R., and if possible increase the use." - T&GWU please note!!!

**AMA Report now in print (At Last!)** - The long awaited AMA report "ROAD AND RAIL FREIGHT" (See previous issue p.9) has at long last seen the light of day and has predictably been "condemned" by the FTA and RHA. Conclusions favourable to rail are:

- that with the relevance of energy conservation rail has a balance of advantage over road which could justify support for strengthening the existing rail network.
- A more positive attitude is needed to the development of installations with rail connections and the policy of not aiding schemes (thru. Sec. 8 Grant) where a condition of planning permission or where they would go ahead anyway should be reversed. The criterion should be to grant aid all schemes where viability can be proved.
- B.R. should have regional and national liaison officers with the freight transport industry to develop new outlets.
- Sites for Inter-modal freight centres should be positively identified.
- Local Authorities should encourage intended development at strategic railhead sites. (Not a document to set the world alight in view of the time we have been waiting but a useful first step by this Local Authority Association. ED.)

**LESS ROAD TRAFFIC IN PARTS OF CAMBRIDGESHIRE** - The new CIBA GEIGY railhead at their Duxford factory is now in operation. There is a spur off the main King's Lynn-Cambridge-Liverpool Street line at their plant with ample refuge sidings, weigh-bridge and a company "locomotive". This should ensure that villages in the area see less heavy lorries plundering through inadequate roads.

**PET FOOD TO WISBECH** - This was the outcome of a recent £2,500,000 Speedlink contract signed up with Spillers to convey for 5 years, over 300 tonnes a day of their canned petfood from Paisley to their central distribution depot at Wisbech. Wrested from the road haulage industry it represents about 80% of the production of the company's Barrhead factory, the remainder destined for Scottish customers.

**NEWSPAPER TRAFFIC STAYS ON RAIL** - Following lengthy negotiations B.R. has secured renewal of its newspaper carrying contract with seven of the national publishing groups. Worth £100 million over 5 years it has taken eight months of hard bargaining to convince the trade that B.R. can deliver the goods on time. With an 8 hour deadline from printing room to the remotest newsagent and delivery boys it will certainly keep B.R. on its toes but perhaps its overall reliability in all weathers is the secret.

**RISING PROFITS FOR FL.** - Despite the steel strike Freightliners managed to turn in a trading profit of £900,000 for the first half of 1980. Revenue for the first 6 months was £31.7m - a 29% increase on the corresponding period in 1979. About 400,000 containers were carried, 27,000 more than in the first half of 1979.

S.F.W.

## WOODHEAD MUST BE KEPT

British Rail have announced a closure date of 1st June for the electrified Woodhead freight route from Sheffield and Wath to Manchester. The Society therefore, in co-operation with the National Council on Inland Transport, held a well-attended protest meeting in Manchester on Saturday 1st November, attended by representatives of most groups opposed to its closure.

The National Committee of RDS, meeting the following week, agreed to take steps to set up a Joint Action Committee of all these groups, to co-ordinate activities against such closure, and our Lancashire Representative, Mr R.N. Watts, will be convening the first meeting in Manchester on 6th December.

Could new technology save the Woodhead line? This was one of the interesting proposals that arose during the November 1st meeting. British Rail claim that they could save £2½ million by closing the line, through savings in electricity and signal maintenance. It was suggested, however, that one inexpensive way of giving the line a future would be to install radio signalling for the 25 trains presently using it. These could, as an interim measure, be diesel hauled, the wires removed but the catenary poles and insulators retained for further use. B.R. claim that it would cost £25m. to re-electrify the line to 25KV, but this figure has been challenged as it is based on the cost of converting the Liverpool Street-Sheffield line and includes the cost of raising bridge clearances. This latter would not apply to the Woodhead line as all bridges have enough clearance for 25KV wires.

Mr Paul White, of the Glossop, Hadfield & Longendale Special Transport Action Group, expressed concern about the effects that withdrawal of the freight services via the Woodhead Tunnel would have on the local EMU service to Glossop and Hadfield. B.R. reported that the extra subsidy required from Greater Manchester P.T.E. would be, in 1978, £170,000, but by 1979 this had risen to £300,000. In 1980, prompted by local protest, B.R. have reduced the sum to £50,000. "How can we have faith in these figures?" he asked. As costs rose, he feared that the Broadbottom-Hadfield section, which is outside the GMPTE, area, would be closed - a thought shared by ASLEF President Bill Rinksley.

STOP PRESS - see next page.

## INTERNATIONAL SCENE

The RDS International Committee met for the first time on 5th November and reviewed the Society's contacts both in Europe and the rest of the world.

R.O.V.E.R. - De Reiziger (The Traveller) in its October number, a very well produced quarterly, now in its third year, published by Stichting Reizigers Openbaar Vervoer (Rover) - public transport users - with whom we exchange publications, contains a full page report by our friend Mr van Onselen who came as an observer to our A.G.M. in Bristol last May.

ROVER links some 24 public transport users local groups in Holland and is concerned with both bus and train and tram matters which wider concern is pointed out in the article. Mr van Onselen also referred to our publication "Can Bus Replace Train?" and the various resolutions passed at the A.G.M. and gave an outline of the Society, its history and membership, and stressed the Society's call for more investment.

That also applies in Holland, but it is significant that their government, last Summer, sanctioned the supply of 220 units to cope with the increasing passenger business as much as in replacement of existing rolling stock. Passenger traffic appears to have grown by 4.5% between 1978 and 1979 and the same trend seems to have continued in 1980. The 8.5bn. passenger kilometers in 1979 are expected to grow to 10bn. by 1985, and ROVER point out the need for infra-structure development. One could only wish that the picture here was the same!!!

K.M.

SPAIN & MORROCCO - are considering the construction of a tunnel under the Straits of Gibraltar.

SWITZERLAND - The RE 6/6 locomotives have now travelled over two million kilometers without a single failure on the most exacting route in the world - the Gotthard line.

A Swiss Federal Commission appointed to study an overall Swiss transport system has recommended that the country's three International Airports be linked to the railway network. After completion of the line to Zurich Airport, opened in June last year, plans have been made for a rail connection to Geneva Cointrin Airport. Geneva Airport will then act as a rail-head terminus for some 130 Inter-City express and regional trains connecting it to the Vaud and Valais Regions as well as to the Fribourg - Berne - Zurich and Neuchatel - Bienne lines. It is hoped that the constructional work (Est. Cost 189m. SF.) can begin in 1982 for completion in 1987.

E.E.C. - The new Chairman of the European Conference of Transport Ministers is to be Kurt Gscheide of West Germany who plans to concentrate on infrastructure and energy.

## WOODHEAD - THE FIGHT IS ON!

The meeting on 6th December decided that the umbrella body for the vital Woodhead campaign should be the GLOSSOP, HADFIELD AND LONGDENDALE SPECIAL TRANSPORT ACTION GROUP. All groups and individuals opposed to the Woodhead closure are urged to affiliate to this co-ordinating group (RDS is already affiliated to it nationally). Send offers of help and affiliation fees (groups £3.00; individuals £1.00) to Mr P. White, 57 Platt Street, Padfield, Hadfield, HYDE, Cheshire, SK14 7EJ. Make cheques etc payable to 'GHLSTAG'.

## REGIONAL NOTES

### LONDON AND HOME COUNTIES

Expectations are high that once again a successful case of hardship has been made out against the proposed closure of the last six miles of the Central Line tube. (from Epping to Ongar) Dr Frank Tomlins, who represented the Branch at the October hearing of the T.U.C.C., was hopeful that this third threat to the line in 45 years would be defeated.

He pointed out in his submission that the line could be made more attractive in many ways: by lower fares - (they have been increased tenfold in as many years); by a more frequent service than the present one (every 40 mins) and by running a few faster trains. The present stopping service takes 57 mins. for the 23 miles from Liverpool Street. Was L.T. the right organisation to run it? A B.R. service semi-fast from Broad Street or Liverpool Street would entail a little capital expenditure at Leyton.

The alternative bus service, now competing, is much worse, running at hourly intervals, taking at least 24 mins. from Epping to Ongar (as against the train's 14 mins.) and this despite the fact that the train's 630 volt D.C. slows it down in places. Against the quoted loss on the line of £750,000 p.a. Dr Tomlins has estimated that £450,000 in contributory revenue would be lost by closure. A very high proportion of the Epping - Ongar passengers go to London, and so L.T. would not be able to reduce operating costs significantly on the London-Epping section if the end stub were removed.

Turning to the Home Counties a visit to the disused line from Appledore to Dungeness in Kent is likely to be arranged in the Spring together with a survey of local opinion on the Ashford-Hastings line. Chairman Charles Rowe in his address to the Branch A.G.M. on 2nd October, stressed the growing demand for a restored passenger service from the Lydd area making a visit to the line all the more propitious.

Recalling the very successful campaign against closure of the Braintree line (now flourishing and electrified) the Branch is also liaising with the East Anglian Branch on the question of a rail access to Stansted should it be enlarged. Not that the Branch advocates the enlargement of airports which as Dr Tomlins has pointed out would be unnecessary if the APT and the Channel Tunnel were to be developed. Mr Rowe in summing up his speech referred to the imminent introduction of APT - likening it to "Concorde" (wonderful technology which outstrips practical capability but Mr G.F. Manley forecast that APT would be filled whereas in air travel there would never be enough demand for first class travel.

### WEST MIDLANDS

The proposed new station for Telford (New Town) is a little nearer fruition following agreement between the Development Corporation and B.R. to share the costs. Despite their public transport responsibilities Salop C.C. do not appear to be contributing.

From June 1981 an improved Malvern-Worcester-Birmingham train service is to be provided as a fast hourly facility. The improved Redditch service has seen still more usage following recent mass publicity and the Development Corporation is asking the DoE to agree to a further year of funding for the trains. A one week half-price fare offer in November doubled usage and resulted in Saturday morning trains leaving full from Redditch where the car park was full to overflowing. The local Users' Group (RARUA) have participated in the publicity exercise and arranged a public meeting in Redditch on 19th January.

The Branch A.G.M. was held in Birmingham on 18th October and the guest speaker, Mr S. Newey, gave a stimulating illustrated address on "The Cost Effective Railway". Members of the RDS Midlands Branch also visited the B.R. Technical Centre at Derby on 5th November and inspected the LEV railbus; rode on the magnetic levitation vehicle and saw other interesting projects.

Within the Branch's area schemes for 1980/81 are: bus/rail interchanges at Sutton Coldfield and Cradley Heath extension of the Cross-City Line northwards beyond Four Oaks and the provision of a new turnback facility at Blake Street in 1982/3.

The October Motor Show at the NEC gave B.R. a greater share of the visiting traffic who used its 7-11 (a.m.) 15 min. interval service from Euston to Birmingham International and also travelled via the 24 extra trains direct from the North West, North East and South West which necessitated stabling as far away as Northampton and Banbury.

### SOUTH EAST MIDLANDS

A good time was had by all the 350 passengers on the special train run by this newly formed Branch of RDS from Stevenage, Hitchin and Peterborough to Derbyshire on 20th September. A series of trips and activities were laid on from stations on the Matlock line for which thanks are due to local RDS and Transport 2000 members. Thought is now being given to the chartering of a train from North Herts. to one of the East Coast resorts next Summer.

The Branch's efforts to encourage more leisure use of lines in its area have met a favourable response from B.R. which has taken up our suggestion of a Weekend Ranger at £3 giving unlimited travel in the area bounded by Enfield, Hatfield, Huntingdon and Cambridge. Other continuing activities of the Branch include campaigns for the re-opening of the stations at Arlesey and Watton-at-Stone and practical help in improving the environment at Letchworth. The Bletchley - Bedford Rail Users' Group has experienced a steady growth and looks forward to enrolling its one hundredth member. A meeting has been held with the B.R. Area Manager and a series of local leaflets produced and distributed.

### EAST ANGLIA

The Light Experimental Vehicle (LEV) has been operating two daily return runs carrying passengers on the East Suffolk Line during the Autumn. On November 1st RDS became the first body (other than the U.S. Government) to privately charter this railbus for an excursion from Felixstowe and Ipswich to Cambridge. Whilst excursionists spent the afternoon in Cambridge a short return run was made to Bury St. Edmunds. On both trips, all 40 seats were taken, a lot of interest was created and good press publicity obtained. Participants commented favourably on the much quieter ride given by LEV, compared with the ageing DMUs and the smoothness of the ride, at least on continuous welded rail though a few stray rattles were noted when travelling at speed.

Film of the LEV during its earlier trials on the E. Suffolk Line was shown at the RDS Branch meeting on 27th September. Also at the meeting Committee Member Mr P. Wakefield presented a Paper on East Anglia's links with the Midlands and North. This was based on a suggestion made by many members in East Anglia and elsewhere. He congratulated BR on the improvements to the Norwich-Birmingham services in recent years and made some constructive comments on congestion at Peterborough. He also suggested an Ipswich-Crewe through service, for which several members thought there was a demand and a complete restructuring of the service on the March-Lincoln-Doncaster route. After further discussion by the Branch Committee Mr Wakefield's proposals are being sent to B.R.

The Branch responded promptly to the news that 400 off-peak trains were to be cut by writing to all E. Anglian M.Ps, an action which also received good media publicity. Our letter pointed out the extent of Government responsibility for B.R.'s financial problems. RDS and local rail users' groups continue to promote local services, and fare bargains to London and the Midlands; and special shoppers' tickets to Norwich from local lines in the pre-Christmas period.

The Branch Secretary and Chairman appeared to give evidence at 48 hours notice at the Ipswich By-Pass Inquiry.

This road scheme is now stated to cost nearly £70 million including £6m. for a section which would just duplicate part of the existing A12. We could think of many good uses to which such a sum could be put on the railways of our region! We are however pleased to report the opening of two new freight railheads for which we have actively pressed at Duxford, for CIBA-Geigy, and Cambridge, for Tilbury Roadstone.

B.R. has submitted to the Government plans for electrification beyond Bishops Stortford to Cambridge; over the Royston-Cambridge route and from Colchester to Ipswich and Harwich. In anticipation of the former the £30m. resignalling scheme is well under way with a new Signal Box at Cambridge to replace 14 manual boxes and track re-modelling in the area.

### YORKSHIRE

Sir Peter Parker has stated that the St. Pancras-Leicester-Sheffield route has top priority for main line electrification as over the last 4 years passenger usage has increased by 4%. In Leeds consideration is being given to providing a station next to Leeds United Football Ground at Eland Road.

Closure of the passenger services on the Sheffield-Huddersfield line between Woodburn Junction and Denby Dale and between Clayton West and Penistone, scheduled for 3rd January has been postponed pending a T.U.C.C. Inquiry. About 500 objections have been lodged and this is expected to be held in March.

The Branch's own objection stresses the following points:

- (1) The alternative train services between Huddersfield and Halifax and the Midlands and South West of England are inadequate and time consuming, whilst direct travel to the East Midlands and Lincolnshire by train will be almost impossible.
- (2) The proposed truncation of the line from Huddersfield at Denby Dale would give an unviable train service which is unlikely to last more than a year.
- (3) At a time when the population of Penistone is increasing to withdraw all train services would cause hardship. Apart from the fact that people living in Penistone work in Sheffield or Huddersfield, the town is poorly served with shops and this necessitates travelling to Barnsley, Sheffield or Huddersfield. There is a reasonably good bus service to Barnsley but that to Sheffield is poor.
- (4) No additional bus services are proposed for a line used by 255,000 passengers a year.

On a brighter note South Yorkshire County Council has submitted plans to the Government for developing rail travel in the area. Amongst the proposals are a plan to build a new station in the centre of Rotherham to replace the present one at Masborough which is nearly a mile from the town centre; to re-open the disused platforms at Dore, serving the Chesterfield line and restore the footbridge and in the long term to build a new station at Totley, a developing area on the Hope Valley line.

The West Yorkshire P.T.E. have informed the Branch that when the 1981/2 timetable comes into force Trans-Pennine Inter-City trains between Newcastle and Liverpool will call at Dewsbury. This is in response to representations made by the Branch in May 1979 that following the retiming of trains between Leeds and Huddersfield commuters to Dewsbury from both directions were faced with a wait of about 35 minutes when returning from work in the evening.

### NORTH WEST ENGLAND

Cumbria County Council and British Rail have joined forces to produce a "Rail Charter" for the County to stimulate and expand rail travel in the area. The aim is to exploit the network to the full and give attention to:

- (i) maximising opportunities for long distance and local passenger travel;
- (ii) investment in Cumbrian branch lines;
- (iii) establishing "gateway" stations;
- (iv) co-ordinating rail and bus timetables and providing additional services;
- (v) moving bulk and dangerous freight by rail wherever possible to help safeguard the public and the environment.

Cumbria County Council have also given B.R. a grant of £10,000 towards the cost of rebuilding Whitehaven station and is allocating £25,000 for 1981 and 1982 to assist improvement plans. On the Windermere branch Kendal station is to have all redundant buildings demolished and suitable new structures put up. The stations on the branch are to be repainted; Windermere itself is to be a "gateway" station with new rail turnround facilities; a bus interchange, a carpark and a tourist centre. Ulverston is to have a £78,000 new ticket office.

"STELLA" (Support the East Lancashire Line Association) have produced a document called "The Missing Link" which states the case for re-opening the Colne-Skipton line. Closure of this has effectively cut off communities in the Aire Valley and Dales area from Lancashire and the Fylde coast, causing long detours. Nearly 500,000 people have lost their most direct and convenient rail link to the west and consequently swell the number of cars on the roads. STELLA is calling for the electrification of: Skipton-Preston; Leeds-Skipton; Blackburn-Manchester and Preston-Blackpool and for the re-opening of the Clitheroe branch with new stations at Whalley and Langho. The actions of hooligans have, however, caused loss of the 23.22 train from Colne to Blackburn.

### GREATER MANCHESTER

Stockport station is undergoing a £16,000 facelift which includes sandblasting, repair and repainting. A new group to "Support the Oldham-Rochdale-Manchester Line (STORM)" is to campaign to save and develop the line which has faced possible closure since 1973. In liaison with other groups the Committee has secured press publicity and is actively involved in re-opening campaigns for the Castleton-Bury branch and Middleton Junction line for which it has raised a 2,000 name petition. Via the local press the group has also drawn public attention to the new signalling of the Shaw-Rochdale line which cost £120,000 in 1980 but will bring savings of this order by 1986. Greater Manchester Transport Committee is to ask British Rail to look at ways of marketing the trans-Pennine freight route between Lancashire and Yorkshire, via the Woodhead Tunnel with a view to increasing its use. (See also p.7).

### NORTH EAST ENGLAND

Tyneside Metro duly opened on 11th August with services being operated between Haymarket and Tynemouth, via Benton. From the same day trains from Newcastle Central to Tynemouth, via Wallsend, were withdrawn. Rail link buses are operating until Metro is introduced on this stretch, but Heaton is now totally closed and the station buildings have been demolished. In the early stages the Metro ran into all sorts of problems, including a minor derailment at South Gosforth, on 14th August which brought the whole system to a halt for several hours. Other troubles stemmed from breakdowns and difficulties on the vehicles; long queues at ticket machines; snapping of overhead wires and power failure. Fortunately the services now seem to be operating reliably at most times and are well used.

Complaints have been made about the noise of the Metro between Haymarket and South Gosforth caused by old jointed track. Plans for an open crossing at Howden, similar to the one at Fawden, have aroused strong opposition. Plans to open further sections of line are being delayed and the Haymarket-Kenton Bank Foot section, due to open this Autumn has been held up because of the earlier difficulties. A shortage of Metro drivers is also suspected. Elsewhere B.R. have introduced a 3-month trial local service to meet complaints about mid-day services between Newcastle and Durham and have agreed to run an additional train in both directions. Plans to re-open the Consett-Newcastle line now appear to be in doubt as Durham County Council is reluctant to spend £750,000 on 8 new stations and about as much again on running costs.

### MERSEYSIDE

From 6th October Merseyrail effected some off-peak service economies by reducing frequencies from Liverpool to Southport and Ormskirk to 20 mins. and 30 mins. respectively. All stations, except Bromborough, between Rock Ferry and Chester have been closed on Sundays for many years, but operating economies effected earlier in the year produced an expected service improvement for this line on Sundays. From 12th October all Sunday trains now stop additionally at Bebington, Port Sunlight, Spital, Hooton and Upton by Chester. The economies were those reported in the June issue of R.D.N. i.e. reduced staffing and Paytrain operation. All these stations now open on Sundays are totally unmanned on that day.

There was a good turnout on the evening of 31st October for the second meeting of the Bidston-Wrexham Users' Group at Hawarden. Present at the meeting to outline the difficulties and answer questions were the Stoke Divisional Manager and the Chester Area Manager of B.R. Both are committed to the line and gave personal guarantees of its future, so long as no profound changes take place in the level of P.S.O. Grant. The Group and B.R. agreed to help each other promote the line and the outcome of the meeting was most optimistic for the future.

### DERBYSHIRE

Our Area Representative, Mr S.J. Hartropp and Mr T. Griffin from Transport 2000, were among a large number of delegates who attended a conference on public transport organised by Derbyshire County Council on 7th November. The conference was mainly concerned with buses, but the need for good bus/rail connections also figured prominently in the discussion. Mr Hartropp has also been assured by B.R. that there will be no cuts in local trains in the Derby area when the 1981 timetable commences. Indeed, Matlock is to get an extra peak-hour train.

## SOUTH WEST ENGLAND

In its 3 years of Summer operation the "park and ride" scheme at Lelant saltings on the St. Erth-St. Ives line in Cornwall has been used by a  $\frac{1}{2}$  million motorists.

Sevenside has also had its share of economy cuts by B.R. in its efforts to break even, so much so that the Gloucester to London service is to be drastically reduced this month from 5 trains a day to only one each way (the 07.26 to London and the 16.22 return). Notwithstanding the local representative of RDS is still pressing B.R. to re-open Chipping Sodbury station, not only to fill empty seats on trains between Swindon and Bristol Parkway but to serve the growing development area of Yate/Sodbury and at a recent meeting of local representatives held in Salisbury the prospects were reported to be encouraging.

On the West Somerset Railway, Western National O.C. have warned that Minehead bus station may have to be sold to afford economies. All the more reason for the NUR to lift its futile blockade of the remaining section between Bishops Lydeard and Taunton. Unless this is done Minehead may finally lose its last links to the outside world - a sorry day for this popular resort.

To the south, in Wessex, Dorset County Council has recently received a report from Coopers & Lybrand on the future of the Swanage-Wareham railway and has invited public comment on 3 options: (1) No Railway; (2) Tourist steam railway to Corfe Castle or (3) TSR between Swanage and Furzebrook with the option of establishing a scheduled service to Wareham at some future date. At the meeting of Local Representatives referred to above it was agreed to press for Option 3 in support of the Swanage-Wareham Railway Group.

## SCOTLAND

Over the 108 mile single track line from Inverness to Wick the 8 signal boxes are now transmitting bell code messages to each other via a radio link which also affords a speech facility with 17 locos using the route. The new system, which cost £160,000, replaces some 40 miles of lineside poles and telephone wires brought down in previous years' blizzards.

In the Glasgow area RDS is in contact with the Kilmalcolm Canal Line Committee in their efforts to prevent withdrawal of the rail service. In a recent letter to "The Scotsman" Mr G.A. Davidson, Chairman of the K-C line Committee stated: "We . . . are fighting for transport for the un-motorised of all sorts, aged, young, infirm, poor and for those who just feel unhappy at being forced to use a car. We believe that all these have a right to civilised transport equal to that of the motorist."

## WALES

The Cambrian Coast Line Action Group are producing a CAMBRIAN AND NORTH WALES Handbook for 1981 promoting the North Wales rail system. This will have descriptions of the Great Little trains; B.R. lines and a Tenth Anniversary feature on the Action Group. To defray the cost of publication some adverts will be included. The Handbook will be illustrated and sell at about £1.00 per copy\*

The Group are hoping that the bridge at Barmouth will be open for next Summer's DMU traffic as any repair work could not take place until the Winter of 1981/82. In the meantime maximum use of the line must be made. In a written reply the transport Minister has said that he has not given any consideration to the replacement of Welsh rural rail lines by bus services.

\*From: C.C.L.A.G., 25 Durval Road, Bridgnorth, Salop.

## LINCS. AND SOUTH HUMBERSIDE

An RDS Public Meeting was held in Lincoln on 22nd November on the subject "The future of your local trains". The South Humberside Rail Users' Group is chartering an HST on Saturday 10th January to run from Grimsby to London and will help the local campaign to secure the Inter-City network for the area. Meanwhile Grimsby-Louth Rail Group is running a special train over the freight-only line on 20th December and is hoping to have the track retained.

SHRUG is about to issue a report entitled "Humberlink" - The County Connection" which it is hoped will bring to the attention of the public the new service which will come into operation on the opening of the Humber Bridge in the Spring. There will be an hourly service between Cleethorpes and Barton-on-Humber where the trains will connect with an express bus link between Hull and Scunthorpe. Journeys will be more frequent and faster for a comparable fare.

## RAIL LINES AND STATIONS UNDER THREAT

Epping-Ongar (L.T.E.) (See report on p. 9).

Coulsdon North (S.R.) (Table 178).

Selsdon, Coombe Road, Bingham Road, (S.R.) (Table 199).

Kilmalcolm-Paisley-Glasgow (Sc.R.) (Table 220).

Barking-Kentish Town (L.M.R.) (Table 2) Agreed by D.Tp. to terminate at Gospel Oak on 6/1/81 with Kentish Town West re-opening late in 1981.

Barmouth Estuary Viaduct (L.M.R.) (Table 76) temporarily closed. (See report on p. 14).

Cheltenham-Stratford-upon-Avon (freight line closed and now proposed for disposal by BRPB).

Sheffield-Penistone-Huddersfield-Clayton West (Table 33) (See report on p. 11).

Glossop-Woodhead-Sheffield/Wath (freight line to close 1/6/81) (See above).

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