

RAILWAY INVIGORATION SOCIETY

for the retention and modernisation of railway services

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P R O G R E S S R E P O R T

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MINISTERIAL GRANTS

✓ In an House of Commons written answer published in "Hansard" of 18th December, 1969, cols. 395-401, Mr. Frederick Mulley, the Minister of Transport, announced details of those unremunerative passenger railway services for which he is issuing undertakings to pay grant in 1970, and in subsequent years, together with the amount of grant payable for each service in 1970.

This answer contains information so vital to our work that we should like to reproduce it in full, but many claims on our space prevent our so doing. Members are urged to make every attempt, however, to see the appropriate issue of "Hansard" and, if they have not done this already, to read the full answer. Meanwhile, we very much hope that the following important extracts will be of value.

✓ "I have decided to undertake to pay grant for various periods for 120 services and for the services forming the London commuter networks. This is in addition to the services for which undertakings covering 1970 and, in some cases, 1971 are already in force. Total expenditure on all these services in 1970 is likely to be in the region of £58 million." ✕

"In deciding the length of the undertaking attached to any particular service, I have had to take into account a number of different considerations. In some cases, revised patterns of service may be envisaged, either on the grant-aided service itself or on associated services; the Railways Board has been unable to predict beyond the end of 1970 the financial results of new patterns of service yet to be introduced. It is still the long-term aim that eventually all undertakings shall be for three years, not least since this will help to equalise the work load both on the Railways Board and on the Ministry in preparing and processing grant applications, so that only one third of the total will have to be processed in any one year. It has, therefore, been necessary for such reasons to give one or two-year undertakings for certain of the services." ✕

✓ ✕ A list of grants included in the answer indicates that 45 services will receive aid for 1970, 1971 and 1972. 42 will receive grants for 1970 and 1971 and 26 for 1970 only. The Euston to Stranraer (boat trains) service will receive a grant for six months only, during which period the most suitable future arrangements for providing the service will be examined. The list does not give details of the London commuter services which will receive grant aid.

Mr. Mulley also gave details of seven services for which on the information available to him, concerning social and economic need, he did not think that he would be justified in giving an

undertaking for a longer period than two years.

"Before giving any further undertaking to grant-aid any of these services after 31st December 1971, I shall require more cogent evidence of social or economic need for their continuation. I have, therefore, told the Board that I am unlikely to renew grant unless I have previously refused consent to a statutory closure proposal . . . If I eventually consent to closure, the service concerned might be withdrawn, and the grant terminated, during the period of the undertaking."

The seven services are as follows (with the amount of grant to be made in 1970 shown in brackets in each case):- Keswick-Carlisle (£95,000); Bury-Rawtenstall (£104,000); Haltwhistle-Alston (£43,000); Watford-Croxley Green (£38,000); Inverness-Kyle of Lochalsh (£179,000); Huddersfield-Wakefield (£47,000); Oldham-Rochdale section of Manchester-Oldham-Rochdale service (£469,000) (for whole service).

The work of this Society in the immediate future is obvious from Mr. Mulley's statement, for it clearly indicates the extent to which individual railway lines in the United Kingdom are threatened with closure. Already our appropriate branch committees and area representatives are giving top priority to the preparation of cases for the retention of passenger services on the seven lines enumerated above. ✕

ROAD V. RAIL

Fourteen miles of motorway by-passing Hamilton (Lanarkshire) cost £16m. The motorway has a capacity of about 50,000 people per hour and it is about 100 feet wide.

Compare this road with a twin-track rail route. The latter costs about £1m. per mile, has a capacity of 60,000 people per hour and is about 20 feet wide.

Can there be any argument as to which is the superior?

In this European Conservation Year, one is forcibly reminded of the insatiable appetite of roads for land, much of it needed for food production and for man's recreation in the broad sense.

The third of the 1969 Reith lectures (printed in *The Listener*, 27th November, 1969) contained a frightful picture by Professor Frank Fraser Darling of the present-day pollution of the air in great cities which is caused by the car, "with its imperfect internal combustion engine", and the diesel lorry, with "its dense black fumes".

ROAD VEHICLE TAX

The Society has written to the Chancellor of the Exchequer to suggest a reassessment of motor vehicle taxation whereby operators would pay a greater share of their costs in fuel tax and correspondingly less in licence duties. This would bring about a fairer system of charging, since an individual operator would pay for the roads and services to the extent to which he used them rather than by a lump annual sum which bears no relation to the mileage covered. This would provide a fairer comparison with rail travel which is largely paid for as and when required.

We have received a reply that our submission will be considered by the Chancellor when he frames his budget.

SOUTHERN INTO THE SEVENTIES

The above is the title of a press release issued on 2nd December last. It contains details of a 10-year plan proposed by Mr. Lance Ibbotson, Chairman and General Manager of the Southern Region of British Rail. The comprehensiveness of the plan is indicated by its subject headings. These are as follows:- fares, London terminal stations, other stations, information to passengers, rolling stock, electrification, signalling, staff and administration, continuous welded rail, freight, services, revenue, investment. Capital expenditure proposed totals about £220m.

So often in the past have we had to rebuke British Rail for running down and neglecting its assets, that we find it a most agreeable task to welcome the publication of proposals for modernisation and development. Lack of space prevents our quoting from the press release, but a copy is held by our Publicity Officer (Mr. R. V. Banks, 121, Ashford Road, Bearsted, Maidstone, Kent).

NEW VICE-PRESIDENT.

We welcome the well-known journalist and broadcaster, Mr. John Arlott, O.B.E., as a Vice-President of the Society.

CORPORATE MEMBERS

We welcome to the Society the following new corporate members:-

District Council No. 4 of the Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen, Goring-by-Sea, Worthing Sussex
 Summerseat Action Committee Summerseat, Bury, Lancashire.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

(For conditions of acceptance, see last issue, p.3.)

Letter from America.

Nearly all of our railroads are only interested in eliminating passenger service. But in a few cities (Boston, New York, Philadelphia, Chicago) there has been a revitalization of rail commuter service with government help at local, state, and/or national level. But most of our cities have no commuter service at all and the long-distance and inter-city passenger service is disappearing rapidly. One exception is the New York-Washington (226 miles) service, where the "Metroliners" were introduced at the beginning of this year and are proving very popular. The service began with one (or two) round trip(s) daily (in addition to "conventional" trains). At present there are six round trips daily, soon to be expanded to nine round trips. This has caused a reversal in the downward trend of passenger haulage on this line - even the "conventional" trains on this route are getting more passengers. This is a joint project of the US Department of Transportation and the Penn Central Railroad and is supposed to be an experiment to decide whether rail passenger service is worth developing - whether there would be a demand for such service if it were improved.

As a member of the National Association of Railroad Passengers (the US counterpart to the Railway Invigoration Society), I have received its December, 1969, newsletter and this seems to indicate that the tide may be turning here. Considerable interest is being shown in Congress and various bills are being introduced to stop the erosion of the passenger service. So far no legislation has been passed, but Hon. John A. Volpe, Secretary of Transportation, has recently made a statement that he has changed his mind about long distance passenger service within the past year and he now considers that it has a place in our transportation system. Actually the passenger picture here in recent years appears to me much more gloomy than in Britain. I have not heard anywhere a statement that British Railways considers that there is no place for the passenger train. Your recently-electricified London-Birmingham-Manchester-Liverpool network, plus the accelerated service on the East Coast route, plus the Bournemouth electrification, plus the new designs of passenger coaches, all seem to indicate that even British Railways does not intend to completely eliminate passenger services as many of our railways want to and some have already succeeded in doing. In addition, the transportation policy in this country since the Transportation Act of 1958 has been to actively encourage railroads to eliminate passenger service and to concentrate on air and highway transportation. But this seems to be changing and I hope it is not too late. Also the Interstate Commerce Commission appears to be giving consent to abandon service in fewer instances, now that the number of trains is so low that we are in danger of losing all inter-city service. ✕

John R. Bowman, Jr., 314, N. Lime St.,
Lancaster, Pa., 17602, USA.

Fare-dodging in non-corridor trains

I understand from RIS progress report 81 that passengers on the Isle of Wight railway will have to purchase their tickets on the train for much of the year. The trains used there are, of course, ex-London Transport tube trains, in 3- and 4-car units, and they are not corridor trains. Are we to expect British Rail to provide a conductor/guard in each coach of these trains to collect fares, or will the guard get wet on rainy days as he passes through the emergency door between each coach to collect fares? Or are hundreds of passengers going to have free rides?

In this area, there are now many stations unstaffed on Sundays and on weekday off-peak hours. But unfortunately, non-corridor trains are still used on the Brighton-Portsmouth, Bognor-Victoria and other lines. Therefore, many passengers travelling between two such unstaffed halts are able to dodge paying their fares. Is the Sunday closure of such stations as Christ's Hospital and Amberley an admittance of tremendous loss on the line incurred through fare-dodging?

The rolling stock used on these lines was introduced in 1935, and I am sure that, if the new 4-car corridor trains, now widely used on the Southern Region, were used on these lines efficiently, much fare-dodging would be brought to an end.

Stephen Sealy, 38, Beacon Square,
Emsworth, Hants., PO10 7HU.

A cautionary tale

I feel that I must pass on to the Railway Invigoration Society an awful cautionary tale! If ever chickens are coming home to roost they are doing so in mid-Somerset to-day.

No greater madness can have prevailed than that of the closure of the Cheddar Valley line for freight - a line which skirts a considerable number of quarries. The Government gave a contract for stone for the M5 to a firm at Dulcote quarries, just outside Wells. Till comparatively recent years, all loading was done at its rail sidings on the spot, and, had not arbitrary removal of track taken place very recently at certain points, this arrangement could easily have come into action again; and rail trucks (instead of lorries from all over the county) been hired by the contractors. As it is, there is a flow of traffic day and night (except Sundays) non-stop. This forms the one subject of conversation in Wells and all the Cheddar Valley neighbourhood. It is sheer nightmare, especially for villages on the very narrow road between here and Cheddar.

The closure of the Cheddar Valley line has also caused much inconvenience to strawberry growers, of which there are a large number in the area.

Alan C. Tarbat, 7, The Liberty,
Wells, Somerset.

(Action at last!) Just as we go to press, we have received from Mr. Tarbat another letter with which he enclosed a cutting from the "Wells Journal" of 13th February. According to this newspaper, "a new railway link between Merehead quarry and the old Cheddar Valley railway line to Witham Friary will enable more stone, both from the Merehead and Dulcote quarries of Foster Yeoman, Ltd. to be sent by rail ... It is hoped that eventually up to half of the production at Merehead will be carried by rail. Already some stone for destinations east of the quarry is being sent by rail from Dulcote." Mr. Tarbat points out that the Wells-Yatton section of the Cheddar Valley line cannot be used for the conveyance of stone, owing to "the removal of its track at Axbridge and the insertion of the by-pass at that point." - Ed.)

THE WEST MIDLANDS RAPID TRANSIT JOINT COMMITTEE

✓✗ Monthly meetings have been held since last September between representatives of the Railway Invigoration Society and of four other societies to discuss the development of a new rapid transit artery through the West Midlands conurbation. The other societies are the Railway Development Association, the Light Railway Transport League, the National Council on Inland Transport and the Electric Railway Society.

The first consideration of the joint committee formed in this way has been to view the possibilities of a rapid transit network going from the defunct main line station Snow Hill in Birmingham to Shirley, along the North Warwick line and to Solihull along the Banbury line. As a second phase, the committee has considered the development of a rapid transit network to the north-west, viz., Wolverhampton and Stourbridge. All these proposals are outlined in a publication, "Speed-rail: a low-cost rapid transit system", copies of which are obtainable at one shilling each (including postage and packing) from N. Jones, Esq., (Hon. Secretary, Railway Development Association (West Midlands Branch)), 34, Beckbury Road, Birmingham, 29.

An informal meeting took place on 5th December between some members of the Rapid Transit Committee and Mr. J. K. Williams, of the West Midlands Transportation Study Group. Also present was Mr. McKillop, a representative of De Leur, O'Hennessy, Chadwick, O'Heocha

and Partners, the Birmingham rapid transit survey consultants.

At a recent meeting of the Rapid Transit Committee in Birmingham, it was agreed to forward to British Rail a revised timetable for improving passenger services on the Wolverhampton (Low Level) to Birmingham (Snow Hill) section. ✕

B. Cole, 29, Belmont Road,
Penn, Wolverhampton, Staffs., WV4 5UD.

REPORTS FROM BRANCHES AND AREAS

BRANCHES

London and Home Counties

✓✕ The Branch held a meeting on 5th January at which Mr. Williams of the Executive Council of ASLEF spoke and answered questions. The meeting was successful, although the attendance was not large. Future meetings are planned for May and July and it is hoped to organise a rail tour. ✕

The traffic commissioners' enquiry into applications for licences for additional buses to replace the Ashford-Ore passenger train service is to be held this month.

✓✕ London Transport Executive intended to close the Epping-Ongar section of the Central line on Sundays from last month, but has postponed this pending a decision as to whether all passenger services on the section should be proposed for withdrawal. Chigwell station, on the Woodford-Hainault branch of the Central line, which was also to have been closed on Sundays, is to remain open with the help of a subsidy from the local council. The Society's (National) Chairman, Dr. Caton, recently addressed a public meeting held by the local residents' association in protest at the proposed weekend closure of Roding Valley, next station to Chigwell. Following representations by local MPs to London Transport, we are pleased to report that Saturday closure has been postponed until the autumn and that a local authority grant to support the retention of the Sunday service is under consideration. ✕

We understand that a proposal to close the Neasden-South Ruislip line (Midland Region) has been issued. If this information is correct, the Branch will be objecting to the proposal.

The Branch appeals to all members who live in the Greater London Council area to ask their local candidates for the borough elections to be held in April about their attitude to public transport in general and the Society's aims in particular.

East Suffolk/East Norfolk

✓✕ A recent public meeting at Halesworth (Suffolk) voted unanimously in favour of the revival of the East Suffolk Travellers' Association, which was suspended in 1967. The Branch is co-operating with the Association, as it did when the latter was previously in existence. ✕

British Rail plans to demolish Lowestoft Central station and to build an office block and shops on the site. A new station would be built a short distance away, in Denmark Road.

Northern England

This Branch has written to the Passenger Transport Authority for Tyneside advancing its views regarding rail passenger services in the area. The representations stressed the need to make the best possible use of rail transport facilities in the belief that development in that direction will reduce operating losses besides resulting in more useful rail services.

In a statement issued in December, the Branch expressed disquiet about the future of the Haltwhistle-Alston, (Carlisle)-Penrith-Keswick and Huddersfield-Wakefield passenger train services.

Admittedly British Rail has taken steps to reduce costs on the first two lines, but practically nothing has been done to increase traffic. This is particularly so with the Keswick line which since its reprieve in 1966 has had its facilities reduced, whereas there is tremendous scope for development. A more positive approach by British Rail could well lead to this line's playing a greater role in linking the Lake District with the rest of the country. With the possibility of the west coast route electrification being extended from Weaver Junction to Glasgow, the Branch considers that the case for the retention of the Penrith-Keswick line, with development as an important feeder service, is strengthened. The Branch strongly favours such extension of electrification, which would benefit, amongst other areas, Cumberland and Westmorland.

As for the Huddersfield-Wakefield service, its prime importance is to provide Huddersfield passengers with connections for long distance expresses at Wakefield. The frequency of trains on this route should be increased to provide improved facilities for both local and long distance passengers. The idea of discontinuing the service should be abandoned.

The Minister of Transport has approved withdrawal of the Carlisle-Skipton local rail service. This is most unfortunate, as the Branch believes this service could be developed to cater for increased recreational travel in the Yorkshire Dales.

The Branch is particularly concerned about the ending on 2nd February of the Skipton-Colne passenger service. This had been under threat of withdrawal only since November, 1968. In 1967 the route was included in the "British railways network for development." X

In a previous progress report, it was stated that the Branch supported the private company which aims to reopen and develop the Waverley route (Carlisle-Hawick-Edinburgh). Whilst the plans of the Border Union Railway Company are very encouraging an announcement by the British Railways Board said that it had broken off negotiations with the Company. However, a Company spokesman said on the same day that the negotiations were by no means over!

Further news is eagerly awaited. It is to be hoped that these negotiations will reach a satisfactory conclusion.

AREASDevon and Cornwall

✓✗ The Minister of Transport has given his consent to the withdrawal of passenger train services between Barnstaple Junction and Ilfracombe as soon as the stipulated extra bus services are licensed, which should be before the summer season starts.

In making this decision, the Minister admits that summer holidaymakers present a problem for road transport, but maintains that this is only at its worst during July and August and that many holidaymakers are finding alternative means of transport anyway. For the remainder of the year, the existing bus services, with slight amendment, were considered adequate. To keep the line open for another twelve months would have required grant aid of £96,000.

It will be recalled that the Society made its own investigation into the cost of running the line and issued a statement of its own figures. Subsequently, the TUCC for the South West, having heard ample evidence, recommended that the line should be kept open.

A few years ago, the line was singled, signalling was simplified and the system of "one engine in steam" was introduced; most stations became unmanned halts.

Ilfracombe was formerly the terminus for the main portion of the Atlantic Coast Express, but since 1964 the through trains from Waterloo have been replaced by a local service from Exeter, supplemented in summer by through trains from Paddington, which have also been slowly reduced. For the past few years, there has been no Sunday service during the winter. ✗

This area is being hit by the withdrawal of subsidies for certain rail-replacement bus services, a particular example being the bus service between Sidmouth and the nearest railhead at Honiton, provided to replace the closed Sidmouth branch line. This bus service may now be withdrawn, except for Summer Saturdays.

✓✗ British Rail is in danger of losing its remunerative clay traffic on the Barnstaple Junction-Torrington Line, because of its refusal to replace its life-expired steam cranes, which load the clay for export into ships at Fremington. The two clay companies concerned are now faced with the inevitable fact that they may have to dispatch their product in fleets of lorries to the nearest harbours over narrow, hilly, winding roads. This is a clear case of the railway being the most suitable means of transport for the job. ✗

Isle of Wight

✓✗ When the Shanklin to Ventnor railway closure was agreed to by the Minister of Transport, a condition was that a bus should connect with every train at Shanklin. As predicted by the Society's representative at the time, the state-owned Island's monopolistic bus company (one director held high office at Waterloo) has now applied to the traffic commissioners for permission to reduce this service. As soon as full details are known, a very strong objection will be lodged by the Society.

This breach of faith is, unfortunately, only what has come to be expected from British Rail and its associated bus companies. It is also a grave warning to those fighting rail closures in other

parts of the country that promises of replacement bus services cannot be relied upon. ✕

Greater Manchester

✕ By the time this progress report appears in print, the first meeting of members in the area will have been held. This is a big step forward.

Our attention has been drawn to the Minister of Transport's announcement that the Bury-Rawtenstall and Rochdale-Oldham lines will not qualify for a grant after 1971, unless there is some change in the social need for the lines. On the former line, the town council at Ramsbottom has "washed its hands" of the matter. It prefers to press for road improvements. This, of course, has been taken up with the Council by RIS members and will be pursued vigorously in the future. ✕

The South East Lancashire and North East Cheshire Passenger Transport Authority is confining its announcements to matters of bus operation for the present. It has said nothing definite about rail subsidies or otherwise.

✕ The passenger service between Manchester Piccadilly and Sheffield Victoria was withdrawn from 5th January and Dunford Bridge and Sheffield Victoria stations closed from the same date. Replacement services consist of buses, plus a rail express service between Manchester Piccadilly and Sheffield Midland. The New Mills to Hayfield (Derbyshire) and Macclesfield to Marple (Rose Hill) passenger services were also withdrawn from 5th January. ✕

From 4th May, overnight trains between Manchester and Glasgow and vice versa will be withdrawn.

Merseyside

✕ The future of the Liverpool Central (high level) - Gateacre line looks brighter. Although, according to British Rail, the deficit incurred in operating this line is over £100,000 per year, the Ministry of Transport and Liverpool Corporation have each agreed to make a grant of £53,000 towards keeping the line's finances on an even keel during 1970. At last, British Rail is considering plans which would do much to reduce the cost of running the line. It is proposed to withdraw staff from all stations on the line except for Liverpool Central and Hunt's Cross, and to introduce conductor-guards on the trains. Other proposals relate to simplified track and signalling arrangements. ✕

The Liverpool terminal of trains between the city and Glasgow will be Lime Street station from 4th May. Overnight sleeping-car trains in each direction will be withdrawn from the same date; an official announcement states that these services are uneconomic.

Southport Chapel Street station is to be rebuilt and the redevelopment will include a shopping complex. This work will take two years and will cost £1,000,000. ✕

In the House of Commons recently, Mr. Edwin Brooks, MP for Bebington, said that £25m., which would be the cost of building a bridge across the Mersey, would be better spent providing efficient, reliable and comfortable public transport in the district. Merseyside's present public

transport system was heading for complete collapse. His answer to the problem would be to make public transport in the inner area totally free or extremely cheap and to pay for it out of rate and taxes

Somerset, Dorset and Western Hampshire

✓✗ As the Minister of Transport has not yet given his decision on the appeal by local councils against the granting of licences for additional bus services to replace passenger trains on the Wareham-Swanage branch, British Rail has announced that the service on the line will continue until the end of the 1970 summer. Our corporate member Swanage UDC continues to press the Ministry of Transport to investigate the figures provided by British Rail to justify the line's closure, so far without success. ✗

Shaftesbury RDC (Dorset) has been told by the Ministry of Transport that there is no move afoot to end through trains from Exeter to Waterloo. British Rail has also issued a denial that there is any such intention, adding that, as this line is grant-aided, the ultimate decision was for the Minister rather than British Rail. In fact, the Exeter-Salisbury section has been awarded a three-year grant.

In announcing details of his ten-year plan for the Southern Region, Mr. Lance Ibbotson, Chairman of the Region, stated that receipts on the Bournemouth line had risen from £2.8 to just over £4m. since electrification and that it was proposed to have an hourly service of fast trains from Waterloo to Southampton, capable of 100 m.p.h. running. He also announced the proposed electrification of the Bournemouth-Weymouth line.

The new station at Poole is under construction. It is a little to the west of the present station and, to that extent, further from the bus station. It is hoped to open the new booking office this month. At a date to be announced, parcels and delivery services (other than to-be-called-for parcels) are to be transferred to Bournemouth and the old station buildings demolished.

Three Counties (Gloucestershire, Herefordshire, Worcestershire)

Passenger trains between Hartlebury-Kidderminster (via Stourport-on-Severn and via Bewdley) were withdrawn from 5th January, but the Minister has refused consent to the proposed closure to passenger traffic of Lydney station and Caldicot halt. The Minister has, however, agreed to the cessation of Bristol-Bath local trains. This means that St. Anne's Park and Saltford stations will be closed, but Oldfield Park and Keynsham & Somerdale stations will be served by main line trains during peak hours.

North and Central Wales

✓✗ It is noted with regret that British Rail closed the Bangor-Caernarvon line to all traffic from 5th January. Three "connectional" buses (if a wait of between 25 and 40 minutes is accepted as a connection!) in either direction are being run between Bangor station and Pwllheli (via Caernarvon). An attempt is being made to persuade the authorities to run slightly more buses, as

two important long-distance trains remain unserved. British Rail's answer to this has been: "Based on our figures on the use of this service, there was no justification for a connecting service bus" (off one of the trains referred above).

An event relevant to the whole of Wales was the journey by Mrs. Eirene White, MP (Minister of State at the Welsh Office) over the Shrewsbury-Llanelli (Central Wales) line on Tuesday, 13th January. In a subsequent interview on BBC Wales, Mrs. White suggested an improved service and also "pony-trekking specials" during the summer months. This must surely be the first time for some years that a member of the Government has suggested such daring innovations on British Rail! Congratulations, Mrs. White!! ✕

Attempts are being made to persuade British Rail to extend the list of 31 different destinations which can be booked from Llanfairfechan and Penmaenmawr stations on the main Chester-Holyhead line.

The TUCC public inquiry into the proposed closure of Central and Exchange stations at Wrexham and the diversion of trains into Wrexham General station was held in that town on 27th January. Fears for the future of the New Brighton-Wrexham line were expressed by objectors.

North of Scotland

We are grateful to RIS member Mr. E. L. Acton (of Dingwall, Ross-shire) for providing the following news:-

✓✕ The Kyle line was blocked for fifty yards beyond Strathcarron by a landslide on 2nd November last year. The line was cleared in late December, but fear of further landslides has kept the final 17 $\frac{3}{4}$ -mile stretch closed. Protective retaining walls and an avalanche tunnel are being built. In the meantime, substitute bus services cover the Kyle of Lochalsh-Strathcarron section. The 4.55 a.m. from Kyle is replaced throughout by bus, normally supplemented by either another bus or a taxi from Dingwall. This does not necessarily depend upon demand, as on the Monday after Christmas there was a bus from Dingwall for seven people, but on the Monday after New Year's Day a mini-bus and a taxi were provided for eighteen passengers, most of whom had luggage. These services which run by bus to Strathcarron and train thence to Inverness arrive in Inverness about $\frac{3}{4}$ hour late. Much of the freight traffic is going by road. It is highly probable that this will continue after the railway re-opens.

On the Inverness-Thurso/Wick line new sidings have been laid in at a smelter site and a considerable volume of traffic is hoped for. The decelerated passenger service still operates. Despite the severe speed restrictions at the new-type level crossings, trains appear to keep time. The crossings, formerly manned, are now equipped with flashing lights and bells, but possess no barriers!

The Inverness-Aberdeen services continue to be fairly well used. There is some block train working of grain, etc., for distilleries from Aberdeen to Elgin. Keith also appears to handle a reasonable amount of traffic. Most passenger traffic on the line appears to be in the form of trips to Aberdeen for shopping purposes and suchlike. One gets the impression that little is done to encourage rail travel from Aberdeen. Inverurie is to some extent commuter while the other

towns are agricultural centres or airfield-base towns (e.g., Elgin, with the Lossiemouth air station, and RAF, Kinloss, near Forres). All in all it is probably much easier to encourage travel to Aberdeen than to encourage travel from the city. At least attempts to encourage travel to Aberdeen are made with some success. Slightly accelerated services might be possible, although the singling of the line could make this difficult. Much of the Aberdeen to Keith section has been singled recently and the ultimate aim seems to be to single the whole section (that between Inverness and Keith has been a single line for some years). When the process has been completed, a Sunday service may be introduced between Aberdeen and Inverness.

It is proposed to resite Fort William station 700 yards to the north-east of its present position so as to facilitate improvement to the A82 road. ✕

OTHER NEWS

Midland Region is to introduce faster services between London and Glasgow from 4th May. Certain trains will complete the journey in under six hours. On the non-electrified part of the route two diesel engines will be coupled together.

British Rail is willing to re-open the Walsall-Rugeley passenger service (closed 1966) provided "someone will pay for it". Local authorities interested include Rugeley UDC, Cannock UDA and Cannock RDC.

The Minister of Transport has granted a light railway order for the Severn Valley line to be worked south of Bridgnorth. In view of this, the Severn Valley Railway Company may have steam passenger trains operating on the line from Easter. The passenger service provided by British Rail closed down in 1963.

Passenger service closures:- (a) Effected From 5th January: Cowdenbeath North Junction-Hilton-Perth). (b) Approved by the Minister: Lincoln (Central)-Midville-Firsby; Willoughby-Mablethorpe; Grimsby-Firsby; Peterborough-Boston. (Resulting from the last two closures, Grimsby-London through trains to be re-routed via Lincoln and Newark).

EDITORIAL ANNOUNCEMENT

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Mr. Purser is responsible for branch and area reports, Mr. Hipperson for all other matter. To ensure inclusion in the next issue (to be published in June), material must be submitted to the appropriate editor so as to reach him by 1st May (except that urgent late news will be received by Mr. Hipperson up to 9th May).

PUBLISHED by the RAILWAY INVIGORATION SOCIETY

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RAILWAY INVIGORATION SOCIETY

PROGRESS REPORT No. 82.

MARCH 1970.

MEMBERS ONLY SUPPLEMENT: ISSUE No. 2

RAILWAY REFORM GROUP

✓✕ The Society's Chairman recently had another meeting with Mr. Alan Lee Williams, MP, Chairman of the House of Commons Railway Reform Group. Mr. Williams has kindly circulated to members of the Group a memorandum summarising the Society's policy on railways. ✕ This memorandum, ✕ which we hope to publish as soon as possible, ✕ outlines the part a properly-developed rail system could play in rescuing our environment from the consequences of excessive road development. It stresses that future investment in railways should be based on social grounds and cost/benefit studies, not on the unrealistic concept of the profitability of railways taken in isolation. Reasons are given for the failure of the closure policy to reduce the railway deficit and attention is drawn to the misleading impression of individual rail losses given by the grant formula. The Society's efforts to enlist public support in the setting up of development groups is put forward as a positive contribution to ensuring the future of many cross-country and feeder services. ✕

Mr. Williams plans to call a meeting to enable our memorandum to be discussed by the Reform Group. This is most heartening news. At last we have the beginnings of a railway Parliamentary lobby which has been needed for so long to counteract the massive pressures from road interests. However, this will only succeed if a substantial number of MPs are kept actively interested. We appeal to our members to contact, in a private capacity, their own MP and to explain to him the importance of diverting more resources to rail development. The Society's Chairman will be pleased to hear from any members who have made such contacts, so that interested MPs can be approached officially by the National Committee.

Copies of the memorandum mentioned above have also been sent to Mr. Edward Taylor, MP, Conservative spokesman on railways, who has kindly distributed them to members of his party's transport committee. ✕

LOCAL DEVELOPMENT GROUPS

✓✕ We have selected the Salisbury-Exeter line for the first service where we hope to set up a local development group. Interested parties in the area are being contacted. We plan to hold an initial meeting shortly. This line has been given a renewed grant for three years, sufficient time for a concerted effort by the local communities and British Rail to increase traffic to a point where the long-term future is assured. ✕

We consider it important that similar efforts should be made with all grant-aided services, especially where subsidies are for only one year or where the Minister has stated that further evidence of social need is required before current grants will be renewed.

Any member willing to assist in this most important work is asked to contact their local representative or the General Secretary. ✕

CONTINENTAL MATTERS

✓✗ Then, just as I feel convinced that the end of all things is at hand, we are standing quietly at the platform of the Dover station, and five minutes later at the pier. The Calais boats heaving beneath us, painfully suggestive of stomachic inversion. Mail bags, luggage and sleepy passengers are all huddled down a gangway of 45 degrees declension and all is hurry, confusion, and crush.

"Our iron roads" - F.S. Williams.

This, written in the middle of the last century, is happily no longer true, any more than is the old saw "Harwich for the Continent - Dover for the Incontinent". There are, however, a number of things about British Rail's continental services that might be improved and the Society's Continental Sub-Committee is attempting to do this. A vigorous new management has listened sympathetically to some of our suggestions and is considering others. These include the provision of new through services to connect with steamers and avoid London changes (we have suggested a cheap way of conducting a survey on passengers' requirements) and improvement of catering facilities on certain routes.

We are also keeping an eye on the likely development of through traffic if and when the Channel Tunnel is built.

Without members' comments and suggestions, however, some of our work has a poor basis. The members of the Committee are all frequent users of continental services and they know what is best for them and for the people they talk to. The more information they have, the more they will know about your requirements and the more they will be able to help you. Please let us know what you think. ✗

FINANCIAL

Mr. R. E. Burroughs, who was elected Treasurer at our last annual general meeting, has resigned. The National Committee has made special arrangements concerning the Society's finances. These will remain in force until the next annual general meeting. Mr. R. Macqueen, of 20, Culgaith Gardens, Enfield, Middlesex, has been appointed Acting Treasurer and will be assisted by Mr. L. G. Hipperson, of Flat 1a, 12 Alexandra Drive, Liverpool, L17 8TD. All ordinary inquiries, such as members' claims for expenses and payments agreed by the National Committee will be dealt with by Mr. Hipperson. Other matters will be attended to by Mr. Macqueen, but members are warned that there may be delays in replying to their letters, owing to the Acting Treasurer's absence.

MERSEYSIDE

✓✗ Owing to the low number of members of the Society living in the district and to difficulties which have been experienced in finding suitable persons willing to be branch officials, the committee of the Merseyside Branch unanimously agreed at a meeting held in January to recommend to the Branches and Areas Sub-Committee of the National Committee that the Branch should cease to exist for the time being.

The necessity for this recommendation was a disappointment to the Branch Committee, not...

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A full notice and agenda of the
meeting will be sent to every
member.

least to Mr. P. T. Byrne. Elected Branch Secretary at the inaugural meeting, he held this office for over a year and then became an ordinary committee member. Not only in these capacities, but also as an area representative for two years before the Branch was formed, he has been a most active worker on behalf of the Society.

The Branches and Areas Sub-Committee has accepted the Branch Committee's recommendation. Mr. L. G. Hipperson, of Flat 1a, 12, Alexandra Drive, Liverpool, L17 8TD, has become Acting Area Representative, at the invitation of the Sub-Committee, until such time as a permanent appointment can be made.

Members in the area are urged to do all that they can to recruit newcomers to the Society, in the hope that eventually the Branch may be revived. Recruiting literature may be obtained from Mr. Hipperson.

It is also hoped that the Acting Area Representative, assisted by other members, will be able to make contact with line users' committees in the area with a view to the setting up of local development groups. ✕

BRANCH SECRETARIES AND AREA REPRESENTATIVES

Amendments to list on p. iv, Members only supplement No.1.

Branches

Merseyside Temporarily disbanded - see announcement above.

Areas

Devon and Cornwall Mr. Wilkinson's address is now:-- 17, Daneshay, Northam, Bideford, Devon.

Merseyside See announcement above.

North and Central Wales (formerly North Wales)

As this area is larger than originally anticipated, the Branches and Areas Sub-Committee has decided that this should be reflected in a revised title.

The area consists of the counties of Anglesey, Caernarvonshire, Cardiganshire, Denbighshire, Flintshire, Merioneth and Montgomeryshire and that portion of the county of Shropshire which lies north of the Shrewsbury-Aberystwyth line and west of the Shrewsbury-Crewe line (including these two lines), also that part of Cheshire which is not included in any other area.

The area representative, Mr. T. R. Dumper, has moved to "Wavecrest", The Promenade, Llanfairfechan, Caernarvonshire.

SUBSCRIPTIONS : All who have not renewed their subscriptions (these were due on 1st January) are asked to do so without further delay. Renewal forms, preferably with the banker's section completed (otherwise accompanied by the appropriate remittance), should be sent to our Membership Secretary, Mr. D. J. Bradbury, of 59, Dore Road, Dore, Sheffield. He looks forward to hearing from those who are in arrears!

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