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

No. 95

JUNE 1973THE TRANSPORT CRISIS

(Text of the Chairman's address delivered at the annual general meeting of the Society held in Ely, Cambridgeshire, on 14th April, 1973)

✓X Whilst it is gratifying that the Government is now showing considerable caution over giving consent to rail closures, at least in the short term, it is a great disappointment that the past year has failed to bring much-needed plans for the further development of the railways. As a result, the long term future of much of the railway system still remains uncertain.

Meanwhile, the road transport crisis, which more than anything underlines the need for greater use of the railways, continues to worsen at an alarming pace as traffic congestion becomes more acute and the appalling toll of accidents continues unabated.

It has now become obvious that the limit of solving these problems by building more roads is rapidly being reached, since the new and improved roads generate more traffic which in turn creates a demand for yet more road construction, a process which is thus self-perpetuating. Furthermore, the extent to which road construction is using up valuable land, as well as demanding the ruthless demolition of property, is meeting increasing public criticism as more and more people show their resentment of this reckless destruction of town and countryside.

Yet, despite the fact that the railways could take much of this traffic off the roads at a fraction of the cost of the extra road expenditure required, relatively little is being done to encourage their expansion and development. Why is this? Government studies into the problem are being carried out, but this is nothing new - in fact the future of the railways has been re-appraised by one government after another for a very long time. The way ahead should now be clear - what is needed is action without delay.

The blame for this dragging of feet does not lie with British Rail, but with successive governments who have given way far too easily to the powerful pressures of the road lobby, instead of putting the overall transport needs of the Nation first. As a result, by far the greater part of the national transport budget has been allocated to roads with little effort being made to assess the Nation's transport needs as a whole. Railways have been at the end of the queue for investment and, when they have been allocated government money, it has often been with reluctance. For instance, the excessive delay in giving the go-ahead for the Crewe-Glasgow electrification and the criticism often levied at the payment of 50 million pounds a year in grant aid to unprofitable rail services contrast sharply with the thousands of millions of pounds

spent on roads without any thought of expecting a return on normally accepted terms.

Symptomatic of this policy is what appears to be a very anti-railway view held by certain sections of the Civil Service. This was made evident last Autumn when the Government 'Blue Book', leaked by the press, envisaged the closure of some forty per cent of the railway system for the sole reason, so it seemed, of producing an annual net saving of £9 million per annum, a sum so small compared to the railways annual turnover that it can hardly be regarded as significant. It was, of course, denied at Ministerial level that this represented Government policy, but the detailed manner in which it had been drawn up strongly suggested, nevertheless, that it represents the views of a substantial anti-railway group within the corridors of power; especially when this is coupled with other press reports which have appeared in recent years, such as the reference in The Times last August to Civil Service proposals that would virtually eliminate the entire railway system by 1980.

The extent to which those who advocate drastic reduction of the railway system can misrepresent the facts has been shown in a series of articles which have appeared in The Economist, where it was proposed that much of the system should be torn up and the routes converted into reserved roads for buses. This, it is alleged, would be a cheaper alternative to rail. It completely ignores, however, the fact that buses are only apparently cheap as operated at present because they run on roads where the maintenance costs are shared with the operators of other vehicles. If they were run on reserved tracks they would of course be expected to bear the full cost of track construction and maintenance, traffic control and signalling in much the same way as do the railways. This is to say nothing of the fact that buses are, by their very nature, physically incapable of offering anything like the standard of speed and comfort which is inherent in rail transport.

Those who persist in distorting the finances of transport in this manner only serve to perpetuate the imbalance that has been largely responsible for producing Britain's transport crisis. What is needed instead is a complete reappraisal of Government attitude towards the railways with the object of placing rail as far as possible on the same financial footing as the roads. To achieve this we would suggest that British Rail should receive government grants towards the provision of track, signalling, stations, bridges, level crossings and other structures, especially where this would enable the provision of a substantially improved service which would alleviate road congestion or obviate new road construction which might severely damage the environment. A few such grants have been made - for example for the electrification of the Great Northern Line suburban service - but they must be made available on a far wider scale.

In addition to assisting with the provision of high-speed inter-city routes and with commuter services, grants should be made available to permit the development of cross-country lines. This would give British Rail the incentive to provide attractive services on routes at present relatively poorly served, such as from East Anglia to the Midlands. It would also permit the restoration of key routes which have been hastily abandoned in the past but where there is a growing potential for new traffic, such as along the Oxford-Cambridge axis.

If the railways are to realise their true potential they must be seen, not just as a means of

providing for traffic that cannot be carried in any other way, such as for commuters in major cities, but as the principal alternative to the roads. To this end it is necessary to develop the entire railway network to provide a transport system of a standard which the public in a motorised society will use regularly in preference to their cars and which will attract a much greater share of the nation's freight. That this can be done has been shown by the success of development of rail services, such as the electrification northwards from Euston, where traffic has increased dramatically despite the existence of parallel motorways. We now ask the politicians to give the financial support to enable the provision over the whole system of the fast, safe, pollution-free services which are only possible on rail.

RESOLUTIONS

Resolutions passed at our annual general meeting this year were as follows:-

- (1) The railway network should be maintained at its present size, no more routes being proposed for closure. Consideration should be given to the re-opening of routes, particularly where this would alleviate road congestion or serve new population centres.
- (2) In order that abandoned railway routes can be reinstated when appropriate, the formation of such routes should be retained indefinitely and should in no circumstances be disposed of piecemeal.
- (3) Grant aid for specific railway services should be authorised for periods sufficient to ensure the most efficient development of those services.
- (4) The basis of calculation of grant aid (the "Cooper Brothers formula") should be re-considered as at present it gives a distorted picture of the cost of maintaining aided services.
- (5) Financial information published in connection with the maintenance of rail services should permit a proper assessment by the public of the cost of providing such services or alternative road services. X

PUBLICITY

Press reports of this year's annual general meeting appeared in such diverse papers as the Sunday Times and the Lancashire Evening Post.

"RAILWAYS IN THE SEVENTIES"

Initial sales of the Society's latest publication have been most encouraging. Copies are still available from Mrs. Barfield, 35, Collinsdale, Camden Walk, London, N.1. (40p. each, plus 4p. postage and packing).

Among the reviews which have appeared we would draw our readers' attention to those in The Guardian and The Scotsman of 14th February and in the May issue of Rail News (the newspaper of British Rail), Railway Magazine and Arrive (the journal of the Pedestrians' Assoc. for Road Safety).

CHELTENHAM TO STRATFORD-ON-AVON LINE REPRIEVED!

✓X British Rail has decided not to close the Cheltenham to Stratford-on-Avon via Honeybourne line, as this is required for slower trains. This means that the line will continue to be used for, at least, freight traffic.

Prominent in the fight to keep this line open has been our recently-revived Three Counties Branch, under the most energetic leadership of its secretary, Mr. J. H. M. Fawdry, who was able to proudly announce the good news of its reprieve at the Society's annual general meeting in Ely on 14th April.

While British Rail's decision has caused great jubilation - particularly in Cheltenham: to our members who live there, to those of similar bodies in that town and to local conservationists generally - the effect on Cheltenham Town Council has been entirely the reverse. The Council had planned to convert into a road the section of line between Lansdown junction and Cheltenham Racecourse station as the central feature of the town's development plan. Now it has been forced to change its ideas completely, so that it appears that town centre traffic will be restricted, greater use will be made of public transport and schemes for new urban roads will be dropped. The carrying out of such a policy would do much to preserve the essential character of Cheltenham as an outstanding example of a planned Regency town.

Prior to the announcement about the reprieve of the Honeybourne line, Mr. Fawdry had commenced negotiations with British Rail for a weekend passenger service between Gloucester and Stratford. The Three Counties Branch ran a trial service, using a chartered three-car diesel-multiple-unit set, on Sunday, 13th May. We congratulate both the very generous anonymous person who met the cost of hiring the set and the Branch on an excellent example of practical railway invigoration. A full account of the venture will appear in our next issue. X

ASHFORD-HASTINGS LINE: "A TEST CASE"

✓X The fight to save this line continues and the Railway Invigoration Society is still playing its full part in the campaign.

The traffic commissioners' inquiry into applications for the operation of substitute buses has been postponed indefinitely at the request of the local authorities. These are negotiating with British Rail as to the possibility of the authorities providing financial assistance towards keeping the line open. X

OUR ENERGETIC PUBLICITY OFFICER!

Mr. R. V. Banks, our Press and Publicity Officer, is still carrying out a wide variety of tasks on behalf of this Society. For instance, he is our representative on the national committee of Transport 2,000. He also represents us on the committee of the South-Eastern Group of that body. On 16th February, Mr. Banks chaired a public meeting held in the Royal Pavilion, Brighton, as part of the campaign for the restoration of the Lewes-Uckfield line.

The event was organised by the Lewes-Uckfield Joint Rail Committee.

IN PARLIAMENT

Selections from the official reports

House of Commons

Questions and answers

SSE = Secretary of State for the Environment

An asterisk denotes an oral answer; those not so marked were written.

29th January Unremunerative railway services Mr. Elystan Morgan (Cardiganshire) asked the SSE whether there is any factor connected with Great Britain's entry into the EEC which inhibits a grant for unremunerative railway lines in Great Britain being made for a period of three years. Mr. Peyton The three-year statutory limit will not apply after 1st January, 1974, when EEC regulation 1191/69 comes into force. There will then be no specific limit applicable.

31st January Railways (advanced passenger trains) Mr. Buchanan (Glasgow, Springburn) asked the SSE whether progress is being made on the development of the diesel-powered high-speed train and the advanced passenger train. Mr. Peyton The prototype high-speed diesel train should begin its operating trials in the late spring. The advanced passenger train should do so in two or three years' time.

1st February Mid-Hampshire Railway Rear-Admiral Morgan-Giles (Winchester) asked the SSE whether he will delay granting permission for the disposal of the track and formation of the Mid-Hampshire Railway until experience has shown whether the alternative bus services prove satisfactory. Mr. Peyton The Railways Board is free to dispose of the track as soon as services are withdrawn, unless someone pays it not to.

Advanced passenger trains Mr. Adley (Bristol, North-East) asked the SSE at what distance the advanced passenger train is best able to operate in relation to its ability to reach and sustain very high speed on standard British Rail track. Mr. Peyton This varies according to route conditions. Studies for the London-Manchester and London-Glasgow routes - 189 miles and 401 miles respectively - indicate that the advanced passenger train would be profitable on these routes in comparison with other existing or potential transport systems.

7th February Railways (capital investment) Mr. Edward Taylor (Glasgow, Cathcart) asked the SSE how much capital investment has been incurred by British Rail in the most annual period for which figures are available; and by what percentage, at constant prices, this figure exceeds or is less than the figure 10 years previously. Mr. Peyton The amount is £108 million, which is just under 25 per cent less than on the 50 per cent, larger system of 1962.

Railways (industrial and dock areas) Mr. Judd (Portsmouth, West) asked the SSE whether he will make a statement on the Government's policy towards the development of rail networks as distinct from road networks in areas of industrial or dock development. Mr. Peyton consider proposals on their merit.

7th February Merseyside Passenger Transport Authority (grants) Mr. Dell (Birkenhead) asked the

SSE what estimate he has made of the 1973 grant to be paid, under section 20 of the Transport Act, 1968, in respect of the following services within the Merseyside Passenger Transport Authority: Liverpool-Birkenhead-New Brighton, Liverpool-Birkenhead-Rock Ferry and Liverpool-Birkenhead-West Kirby; and how that estimate compares with grants made in previous years absolutely and as a percentage of the aggregate amount of expenditure incurred by the Passenger Transport Executive. Mr. Peyton Following is the information:-

Merseyside Passenger Transport Executive - Grants for Internal Rail Passenger Services

	1970 100% DOE Grant * Final £	1971 100% DOE Grant * Final £	1972 90% DOE Grant * Revised £	1973 80% DOE Grant * Estimated £
Liverpool to New Brighton	124,000	107,000	96,300	181,600
Liverpool to Rock Ferry	164,000	125,000	112,500	152,000
Liverpool to West Kirby	159,000	163,000	146,700	228,000
Totals	<u>447,000</u>	<u>395,000</u>	<u>355,500</u>	<u>561,600</u>

* Grant paid under section 39 of the Transport Act 1968

+ Grant paid/payable under section 20 of the Transport Act 1968

The 1973 estimate (total) represents an increase of 80 per cent. over 1970, 70 per cent. over 1971 and 63 per cent. over 1972.

Local railway services (aid) Mr. Dell asked the SSE whether the policy of section 20 (8) (b) of the Transport Act, 1968, will continue to be applicable to financial support for loss-making railway services covered by it after 1st January, 1974. Mr. Peyton Yes.

13th February Railways Mr. James Johnson (Kingston-upon-Hull, West) asked the SSE what was the total amount of subsidy given to local railway lines on the grounds of social need for 1972, nationally and regionally; and what were their respective earnings, regionally and nationally, for the years 1969 to 1972. Mr. Peyton The total grant for 1972 is estimated to be about £66 million and total earnings about £158 million. Regional figures for 1972 are not yet available.

<u>Region</u>	<u>Earnings</u>		
	1969 £m.	1970 £m.	1971 £m.
Eastern	14.7	25.5	29.0
London Midland	16.6	17.0	20.7
Southern	58.0	63.9	75.9
Western	4.2	5.0	5.7
Scottish	8.0	8.5	8.3
	<u>101.5</u>	<u>119.9</u>	<u>139.6</u>
adjustments not identifiable with individual services or regions	-	.8+	.8+
	<u>101.5</u>	<u>120.7</u>	<u>140.4</u>

14th February Railways Mr. McNamara (Kingston-upon-Hull, North) asked the SSE what was the amount of subsidy given on the grounds of social need for 1972 on the Hull-Bridlington-Scarborough line; and what were the earnings for that year and estimated earnings for 1972-73 and 1973-4. Mr. Peyton Grant for 1972 under section 39 of the Transport Act, 1968, for the Hull-Bridlington-Scarborough rail passenger service is estimated at 519,000, assuming estimated earnings of £240,000. A further £161,000 is payable under section 40 pending removal of surplus facilities from the route. Earnings for 1973 are estimated at £291,000; no estimate is available for 1974.

Mr. McNamara asked the SSE (1) what subsidy has been given on the ground of social need for the Hull-Sheffield line and its earnings for the year 1972; and (2) what subsidy has been given on the grounds of social need for the Hull-Leeds and Hull-York lines and their respective earnings for the year 1972. Mr. Peyton The estimated figures are as follows:-

	Grant S. 39 £000	Grant S. 40 £000	Earnings £000
Hull-Doncaster	326	19	321
Doncaster-Sheffield	203	23	98
Hull-Leeds	479	35	339
York-Selby-Doncaster-Hull (including Hull-York service)	167	6	76

Mr. Prescott (Kingston-upon-Hull, East) asked the SSE what subsidies have been given on the ground of social need for the Leeds-Goole, Leeds-York and Doncaster-Sheffield lines for the years 1969 to 1972; and what were their respective earnings. Mr. Peyton The following subsidies have been given under sections 39 and 40 of the Transport Act, 1968:-

	1969 £000	1970 £000	1971 £000	1972 (estimated) £000
Leeds-Goole:				
S. 39	97	117	127	140
S. 40	5	5	4	4
Earnings	22	22	30	30
Leeds-York:				
S. 39	137	166	203	236
S. 40	9	9	8	8
Earnings	174	184	213	220
Doncaster-Sheffield:				
S. 39	113	106	124	203
S. 40	28	28	28	23
Earnings	91	95	91	98

Mr. Prescott asked the SSE what advice his Department has received from

British Rail concerning possible loss of traffic if the proposed investment in the Doncaster-Sheffield Canal should be undertaken. Mr. Peyton None.

Mr. Prescott asked the SSE whether the subsidies at present given to railway lines on social need due review in 1974 will be given by the Government or the European Commission; whether the European Community regulation 1191/69 will affect this; and if so, in what way. Mr. Peyton The EEC regulations will have some effect on procedures, but the Government will continue to decide - and pay for - the services to be grant-aided.

20th February Railway closures Mr. Knox (Leek) asked the SSE how many miles of railway lines were closed between October, 1959, and October, 1964, between November, 1964, and June, 1970, and since July, 1970. Mr. Peyton The only information readily available is in calendar year terms, as follows:- 1960 to 1964 - 2,234 route miles; 1965 to 1970 - 4,219 route miles; 1970 to 1972 - 281 route miles.

1st March Railway closures Mr. Knox asked the SSE if he will list the railway lines closed since 1959, their mileage and the dates of closure. Mr. Peyton The only information readily available relates to the closure of lines to passenger trains from 6th January, 1964. Following is the information:- (see columns 438-446 of the House of Commons "Hansard")

House of Lords

Questions and answers

* 27th February Light railway orders: Central Wales line The Earl of Kinnoull asked Her Majesty's Government whether they are now able to say when the draft for a light railway order for the Central Wales line (Craven Arms to Llanelli) will be implemented; whether there are plans for other similar orders; and whether they will make a statement on the usefulness of such orders as the means of reducing overall costs of railway services in areas of light traffic. Lord Mowbray and Stourton My Lords, the order was made on March 29, 1972, and the line is already operating as a light railway. It is for the Railways Board to decide whether they consider this might offer practical or economic advantages and my right honourable Friend would judge such applications on their individual merits. The Earl of Kinnoull ... May I ask what savings is estimated this order will effect upon that branch line? Lord Mowbray and Stourton ... There will be an estimated saving of about 10 per cent. Lord Champion My Lords, can the noble Lord tell us whether the Railways Board have made any other applications in relation to other areas? Lord Mowbray and Stourton My Lords, I am not at this moment aware of any other applications that the Railways Board have made to make railways into light railways.

Debates

7th March Transport problems and the railways Lord Poplewell called attention to this matter and moved for papers. The ensuing debate covered difficulties in London, Scotland, East Anglia and other parts of the United Kingdom; the "Cooper Brothers formula"; press leaks; juggernauts; freight; the proposed Channel Tunnel (see cols. 1148-1262 of the House of Lords "Hansard" for full text of the debate) (at the end of the debate, the motion for papers was, by leave, withdrawn).

PADDINGTON-BIRMINGHAM EXPRESSES: As from 7th May, all but one of the remaining Paddington-high Wycombe-Birmingham expresses in each direction were diverted via Reading and Oxford (see also p.10).

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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

Buses are no alternative to trains

Your leading article in progress report No. 93 (December 1972) hits the nail on the head in referring to extreme anti-railway views in official circles, in other words at the Department of the Environment. Evidence of this is found in one of the more recent white papers in the statement that the medium of public transport in general will, "for the foreseeable future", be the bus; also in the same document that an objective is to make bus travel more attractive ("less unattractive" would be the correct phrase).

Personal correspondence has in the past elicited the information that subsidies paid to bus services are less than those paid to corresponding rail services. Of course, the rail loss is all the loss, probably generously calculated. No one has yet worked out what true road vehicle costs amount to. At present the road fund licence for a 64-seat double-decker bus for a year is £34, a ridiculous figure. True cost would probably be at least ten times as much.

And what is the cost of the generous free concessions now being made to buses? Bus-only lanes - tramways are a far more efficient instrument at the cost of less road space. No access - except for buses. Weight restriction - except for buses.

It is in fact scandalous that what little remains of the public transport system appears to be at the mercy of officials who appear to have been brain-washed into the attitude of planning on the lines that buses can provide an alternative for, to revert to the terms above quoted, "the foreseeable future", and this is putting it into as polite terms as possible. Such planning forces people to take to their own transport, as it has done in the case of

H. Proctor,
19, Steade Road, Sheffield, S7 1DS.

Bring back joy into rail travel

I would like to see some joy and interest put back into railways.

One gets in at one station, flashes past others or even stops at them, and gets out at one's destination. Things of interest, such as the White Horse of Westbury are unknown and unobserved. Travellers keep their heads down upon what pass as magazines today.

There should be maps given away, at the booking offices and travel agencies - quite simple affairs, with the towns passed on that route and objects of interest noted.

Derelict messes that remain when stations are torn down by British Rail should be cleared up.

Great stretches of beautiful wild flowers are passed - inaccessible to the public, than good-ness, and only at risk to the pathological sprayers. These should be named.

Let us enjoy our countryside before the extremely fast, hermetically sealed monstrosities are all that is left to us.

Perhaps a tiny advertisement for the attractions of the towns passed would pay for the whole venture, but not, I hope, swamp it.

Audrey Henson (Dr.)
8, Stafford Street, London, W. 1.

REPORTS FROM BRANCHES AND AREAS

BRANCHES

London and Home Counties

✓ British Rail has announced its national plans for electrification during the next ten to twenty years. In the home counties it is intended to extend third-rail electrification to East Grinstead, Uckfield and the Marylebone-Aylesbury line (via Amersham and High Wycombe). It is planned to electrify with the 25Kv overhead system the Paddington-Reading-Oxford, Bishops Stortford-Cambridge and St. Pancras-Bedford lines.

Meanwhile, good progress is being made with the Great Northern suburban electrification scheme. It is intended that the full inner suburban services (Moorgate-Welwyn Garden City/Hertford) will commence in the spring of 1976, though a partial electric service should be running beforehand. The outer suburban service is due to begin in the spring of the following year. To facilitate the work, the Northern City line (Moorgate-Drayton Park) will have to be closed for a time. It has now been decided to electrify both tracks north of Hertford instead of just one bi-directional track, as had been the original intention, although there appears to be no immediate prospect that any of the intermediate stations between Hertford and Stevenage will be re-opened.

With the introduction of the new timetables on 7th May, many train services in the Branch area, as in the country generally, were re-organised, owing, in a large number of cases, to the acceleration of inter-city trains. The principal alterations included the following:-

Fenchurch Street - Southend - Shoeburyness - more frequent service.

King's Cross - The North - acceleration of inter-city services, including some calling additionally at Stevenage.

Marylebone-High Wycombe-Aylesbury/Banbury - off-peak frequency improved to half-hourly, with some trains extended to Banbury to connect with Birmingham trains. Peak-hour services re-organised. (see also p. 8.)

Paddington-Slough - off-peak local train frequency improved to half-hourly.

Reading-Guildford-Redhill-Tonbridge - Sunday frequency improved to hourly during the summer months (May to September inclusive)

Victoria-Ramsgate/Canterbury East/Sheerness - re-organised off-peak services with acceleration of Ramsgate trains.

Victoria-Canterbury frequency improved to half-hourly.

✓ X Rail study team under the chairmanship of Sir David Barran has been set up jointly by the Department of the Environment, the Greater London Council, British Rail and London Transport to provide a sound basis for planning the future of London's railway services. It is hoped that the study, which should be completed by early next year, will help to integrate public transport in London. Research for the study will be undertaken by the Greater London Transport Group, the standing liaison body of various transport interests. X

Plans to use the Underground for freight have been turned down by the Greater London Council.

Strand (LT) station is to be closed from sometime this year until 1976 so as to facilitate construction of the Fleet line.

British Rail has been asked to link London to the proposed Maplin Airport by means of a specially-built railway to provide a train every ten minutes to each of the multiple airline terminals. This could mean a train a minute in both directions over a distance of 50-55 miles and a journey time of 40 minutes. The target date for completion of the scheme is 1980.

A new halt at Merrow, near Guildford, on the Surbiton-Cogham-Guildford line, is likely to be built if talks between British Rail and the local council succeed.

A commuters' forum has been held recently on some morning trains from Brighton to London. Regular travellers were invited to question Mr. Frank Patterson, Divisional Manager of the Southern Central Division, during the hour's journey. The forum was the original idea of Mr. Andrew Bowden, M. P. for Kempton, Brighton, who was chairman of the venture. A similar undertaking is planned to take place on the Portsmouth-Brighton-Hastings coastal route.

✓ X The new station at Stevenage, situated about one mile south of the present station, is to be opened on 23rd July, from which date the old station should be closed. X

East Anglian

✓ X Negotiations are still continuing for the re-opening of the Cambridge-St. Ives branch. Six local authorities are taking an active interest in the scheme to run pay-trains on the 14-mile line. Estimated cost of re-opening is £110,000. The passenger service was withdrawn from 5th October, 1970.

Another possible candidate for re-opening is Higham station, between Bury St. Edmunds and Newmarket. British Rail has told the local council that it will cost £1,000 to reinstate the down platform and generally tidy up the premises; and that, if the authority is prepared to pay for this, the station can be re-opened. X

The freight line along the south side of Lake Lothing, at Lowestoft, whose traffic had greatly diminished in recent years, has now been closed.

East Suffolk County Council has set up a working party with British Rail, the Eastern Counties Omnibus Company and the Post Office to examine ways of improving public transport in the county.

Some concern has been expressed at a British Rail proposal to merge Norwich Division with

that based on Liverpool Street. British Rail staff in Norwich have formed an action committee to fight this proposal (a similar one was rejected three years ago). Local MPs are also expressing concern.

The new Eastern Region timetable shows no drastic changes in East Anglian services. There is some speed-up on the Norwich-London route - fastest trains now take 1 hour 55 minutes instead of 2 hours. Even those trains with additional stops at Stowmarket and Diss are now up to 8 minutes quicker. The Manchester boat train from Harwich now travels via Peterborough-Grantham-Nottingham instead of March-Lincoln-Doncaster. This move has evoked protests from some local authorities, but British Rail argues that the train should serve the largest centres of population.

There have been attempts by some local people to get Bentley station, between Ipswich and Manningtree, re-opened. The station was closed from 7th November, 1966, and, despite an initial refusal from British Rail, the campaign continues.

On 3rd March, British Rail moved 8,000 Norwich City football fans in 12 special trains to either Wembley Central or Liverpool Street to see their team in the League Cup final. The mammoth operation meant bringing coaching stock from as far away as Crewe, locomotives from March and catering staff from all over the Eastern Region. Timekeeping was good and the whole operation ran very smoothly.

Bedford Midland Road station is to be rebuilt a few yards north of its present site. The task is expected to be completed in 1975 or 1976.

Three Counties

✓X The annual general meeting of this Branch was held on 16th March. On 31st March, the Branch organised a public meeting at the Shaftesbury Hall, Cheltenham, as part of the SOS (Save our Services) Campaign. Among the speakers were Sir Douglas Dodds-Parker, MP for Cheltenham; Dr. Michael P. L. Caton, Chairman of the Railway Invigoration Society; Mr. Sidney Weighell, Secretary of Transport 2,000; and Dr. Adrian Morgan, of the Conservation Society. There was a collection for the Campaign Fund.

Members of the Branch assisted with a survey of Cheltenham's road traffic carried out on the 22nd, 23rd and 24th March.

From 7th May, the 07.20 train from Cheltenham to Paddington and the 17.21 train from Reading to Cheltenham (both running via Swindon) have operated from and to Worcester.

(see also "Cheltenham to Stratford-on-Avon line reprieved!" on page 4) X

Wessex

✓X As reported in our last issue, the Winchester-Alton line was closed from 5th February. The last British Rail service on the line ran on 4th February, not without incident and demonstrations

however. There were last-minute attempts to keep the line in operation. Local authorities promised sufficient money to keep the service running for another six months until the Mid-Hants Railway Company could take over this summer. British Rail declined the offer, mainly on the grounds that it would be necessary to go through the closure procedure once again; this would take two years, during which time British Rail would have to provide a service. However, the Mid-Hants Railway Company has set up an office at Alresford station and Hampshire County Council is to pay British Rail interest on the scrap value of the track, so that it will not be lifted pending future developments. Also concerned in possible preservation of the line is a consortium of a private company and local authorities. This plans to run a service along the whole of the existing track from Winchester to Alton, whereas the Mid-Hants Railway Company has a scheme for a service between Alton and Alresford only. Secretary of the consortium is Mr. F. Clifton Sherriff, of Myrtle Farm, Ropley, Alresford, Hampshire; he is a member of this Society. ✕

✓✕ Local efforts are still being made to get a privately-operated service established on the Swanage branch line, which closed from 2nd January, 1972. The County Surveyor of Dorset has been asked to look at suggested alternative routes for a Corfe by-pass, at least one of which would not be over the course of the railway.

Withdrawal of the service on the Bridport branch line was deferred for three months from 1st January. The line is still shown as operating in the new Western Region timetable which came into effect from 7th May. ✕

✓✕ Also from 7th May, there have been seven through trains per day between Bristol and Portsmouth in each direction. The Branch had campaigned for this for three years and our only regret is that the stock will, for the time being, consist of Hampshire 3-car DEMUs. ✕

AREAS

North-Eastern England

✓ Our correspondent in the North-East reports:-

✓✕ As stated in the last progress report, consent has been given to the closure of the Haltwhistle-Alston line, but not until May, 1975, so as to give time for the improvement of the road system in the area. The Government has stated that it will provide the £300,000 which the scheme will cost in its view, but Northumberland County Council has studied ten potential road routes and estimate the cost at £306,000 to £577,000. The County Council says that the cheaper schemes should be ruled out, because of their vulnerability to snow. On the evidence available, the Council is strongly opposed to closure of the railway and is negotiating to purchase it. Strong support is being given by Haltwhistle and Alston rural district councils; also by the Northumbria Tourist Board, which is confident that a grant could be obtained from the English Tourist Board. In the meantime, the South Tynedale Railway Preservation Society has been formed by a group of enthusiasts. ✕

✓✕ An unopposed second reading has been given to the parliamentary bill which provides for Tyneside's proposed rapid-transit system. Property owners are contesting a section of the bill.

which, they say, gives the Tyneside Passenger Transport Executive too many sweeping powers to acquire buildings. The PTE has said that the powers are unlikely to be used, but Newcastle City Council is also worried about several city centre buildings which it believes could be at risk. X

United Automobile Services have been given permission to extend their coach services between the North-East and London to include various new pick-up points. Objections to these new points lodged by British Rail were over-ruled, apart from those in Wallsend, North Shields and Tynemouth. These places have a frequent service of trains and the traffic commissioners accepted the submission that coach services from these areas could take passengers from the railways. Perhaps this might be a lesson to those in high places as to the value of branch lines as feeder services, for several of the pick-up points approved were in areas which have lost rail services altogether or where the rail services are very irregular.

British Rail has turned down the request for re-opening of the Durham-Consett line (see last progress report, p. 12).

With effect from 7th May, the 17.08 train from Newcastle, which formerly ran to Alnmouth, has operated only as far as Morpeth. Alnmouth Urban District Council has lodged strong protests with British Rail and other bodies. Alnmouth station already has a very limited service and its branch line link to Alnmouth was closed some years ago.

✓X The Department of the Environment has consented to the closure of the Riverside branch of the North Tyneside service. This means discontinuance of all passenger trains over the section of line from Riverside junction to Percy Main junction and closure of the stations at St. Peters, Walker, Carville, Point Pleasant and Willington Quay. The financial position for 1973 as estimated in arriving at the size of grant required to maintain this service is that the total costs would be £100,000 and the earnings £15,000. The predominant view of the Transport Users' Consultative Committee for the North-East Area was that a moderate degree of hardship, because of increased journey times and delays from road congestion, would be caused to a small number of passengers and that others would suffer inconvenience. The Tyneside Passenger Transport Authority did not consider that the Riverside branch justified inclusion in its new network, believing that a reorganised bus service could cover this area more easily and cheaply. The Department of the Environment has stipulated that the rail service should not be withdrawn before 20th July to allow sufficient time for road service licences to be arranged for the proposed augmented bus service. X

North-Western England

On the north-west coast route to Scotland, the section between Weaver Junction (north of Acton Bridge station) and Bamfurlong (near Wigan) received electric power on 19th March. The section between Bamfurlong and Preston was due to be energised on 28th May. North of Preston, switching on is planned to take place next year.

Little news has been received of happenings in the Manchester conurbation. Tunnelling for the Manchester underground railway is expected to start next January and the SELNEC PTE has

decide to retain the Oldham-Rochdale railway service.

✗ Considerably more information has come from Merseyside. Test borings are now being made along the route of the proposed £4½m, 3½-mile tunnel to house an electric line from Liverpool Central to Edge Hill. Liverpool City Council has granted planning permission to British Rail for the demolition of the old North-Western Hotel, which stands in front of Lime Street station, and its replacement by a massive office block, incorporating shops. Electrification of the Aintree-Bootle line is scheduled for completion by September, 1974. British Rail has applied for a 75% grant towards the cost of electrifying the line between Rock Ferry and Chester (a new station at Eastham Rake is a possibility of this scheme). ✗ From 7th May, a much improved service has been provided between Liverpool Exchange and Ormskirk. Southport station has been completely rebuilt at a cost of £1½m. The Friends of the Earth (Merseyside Branch) and Liverpool Branch of the National Union of Railwaymen have set up a joint working party to study the consequences of the closure of railways in the Liverpool area. ✗

North and Central Wales

At Aberystwyth, an action committee has been set up, under the chairmanship of the Mayor, to campaign for the retention of the line to Shrewsbury. The committee will co-operate with neighbouring local authorities.

The Welsh Railways Action Group is pressing for the re-opening of the Gaerwen-Amlwch (Anglesey) line, this was closed to passengers from 8th December, 1964.

Llanfairpwllgwyngyllgogerychwymdrobwlilllantysiliogogoch station (Anglesey) was re-opened from 7th May.

North of Scotland

✗ There has been a renewal of the campaign to save the Kyle line. This is based on the following factors:- (1) road improvements in the area are not scheduled to be completed until 1974-7; (2) the possibility of the setting-up of a torpedo testing range off Wester Ross; (3) the chance that oil-rigs may operate off the Scottish west coast.

Alness station (between Dingwall and Invergordon) on the Inverness-Wick/Thurso line, which was closed to passengers from 13th June 1960, was re-opened as an unstaffed halt on 7th May. During the period that the station was closed, the situation in the district has changed completely. With the coming of the new British Aluminium smelter at Invergordon and the construction of a dry dock at Nigg for the building of oil rigs to operate in the North Sea, Alness has become a dormitory town.

The Stornoway-Ullapool ferry service came into operation on 26th March and replaced the service between Mallaig and Stornoway. Buses from and to Inverness connect with the new ferry. ✗

NEW STATION AT ALFRETON From 7th May, Alferton and Mansfield Parkway station (Derbyshire) was opened. It will serve the residential and industrial area around Mansfield, Alferton, Kirby-in-Ashfield, and Sutton-in-Ashfield. The new station is a few hundred yards from the old

Alfreton station, which was closed in 1966 and subsequently demolished. It is served by inter-city trains running between London and Sheffield and it is fed by frequent buses.

WHAT OTHER SOCIETIES ARE DOING

Keighley and Worth Valley Preservation Society supports the Keighley and Worth Valley Light Railway Ltd., which has been running a scheduled train service between Keighley (link with British Rail) and Oxenhope (4½ miles) since 1968. A tourist attraction is the Brontë Museum, for which Haworth station is convenient. Trains are normally diesel-hauled in the morning and evening and steam-hauled in the afternoon. Membership Secretary: Mr. David Moorhouse, "Strathlea", Skipton Road, Utley, Keighley, Yorkshire, BD20 6HJ.

Lakeside Railway Society supports the Lakeside and Haverthwaite Railway Co. Ltd., in the operation of a passenger service (3½ miles) between the stations in the company's title. The service was re-opened on 2nd May by the Bishop of Wakefield (The Rt. Rev. Eric Treacy), thus restoring rail connection with steamers on Lake Windermere. Address for enquiries, 230, Ribblesdale Avenue Preston, PR2 6QN.

North Yorkshire Moors Historical Railway Trust opened a service to the public on Easter Sunday with trains between Grosmont and Pickering. A trial shuttle service operated between Whitby and Grosmont on the spring bank holiday. Address for enquiries: Mr. A. Peterson, 12, Staindrop Drive Middlesbrough, Teesside.

Scottish Association for Public Transport (formerly Scottish Railway Development Association) The South-West Scotland Group proposes to organise a combined rail and road trip on Saturday 11th August, with the object of showing what can be done with co-ordinated transport. This will take the form of two separate parties, one starting from Newcastle and the other from Glasgow. Full details from Miss V. M. Cunningham, Honorary Secretary, S. W. Scotland Gp., SAPT, 43, Wallace Street, Dumfries, DG1 2LP

CORRECTIONS to last progress report, p. 6, line 3: "from 1962 to 1972" should read "from 1962 to 1971"; pp. 10 & 11: references to "Newmarket and District Rail Travellers' Association" should read "Newmarket and District Rail Users' Association"; p. 13, para. 1, last line: "£200" should read £200m. "

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 September), material must be submitted to the appropriate editor so as to reach him by Saturday, 28th July.

PUBLISHED BY THE RAILWAY INVIGORATION SOCIETY

Chairman: Dr. M. P. L. Caton, 10, Grosvenor Gardens, Upminster, Essex.
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Membership Secretary: Mr. D. J. Bradbury, 59 Dore Road, Dore, Sheffield.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Reports

✓ The following is an abridged version of the report of the Technical Sub-Committee which was presented to the annual general meeting held in Ely, Cambs., on 14th April:-

A great deal of information has been assembled by members of the Technical Sub-Committee on shunting and wagon-load traffic. At least one member has participated in one project for its development.

A West Country member has again sent many useful ideas to the centre and these have been passed forward, whenever possible, by suitable channels to influential organisations.

Advice has been given to outside parties assembling evidence for both the Greater London Council enquiry and the present independent enquiry into transport policy.

A bibliography of railway economics has been produced. This was deliberately produced quickly to meet the specific threat of the Department of the Environment secret report. In consequence, consultation was limited and proof reading left to the typewriting company, with not always happy results. Many of the criticisms made stem directly from the intent to lure prejudiced economists into fresh fields ... It is, however, clear from feedback that the bibliography has been widely read in British Rail, London Transport Executive and academic circles.

✓ The dwindling world supply of petrol is now serious. It is anticipated that petrol rationing will begin in the United States next year. It is not clear what the effect of this on the economics of railway electrification will be. The Society should, however, press for the retention and re-opening of rural railways. The cost of running a motor car will rise steeply during the next ten years. The electric car will only provide relief if nuclear power can be made pollution-free and developed quickly enough. There are serious doubts on both counts. ✗

Railways have made great strides in automation in recent years, though these have yet to be applied on a wide scale in Britain. Though this country leads the world in the application of power signalling to main lines, we have yet to see modern cheap-to-operate equipment installed on local routes. The culprit here is probably the Department of the Environment's method of grant aid. Automatic stations are now being introduced in the Netherlands and Ireland. British Rail are making very good progress in the introduction of their TOPS freight control system. The automatic branch-line accumulator railcar which could be introduced on local lines to replace the high labour cost road bus is, however, a long overdue invention.

✗ The past year has seen some of the most ignorant and prejudiced attacks on rail transport

yet by academic economists. These included:-

- (1) a series of articles in The Economist;
- (2) an article by Mr. Edward Smith, of the Greater London Council, in the Journal of Transport Economics and Policy, January 1973, pp. 20-31, entitled "An economic comparison of urban railways and express bus services";
- (3) an article by Professor Alan Day in The Observer of 18th March, 1973, advocating the conversion of railways to busways (Professor Day is an economic adviser to the British Road Federation);
- (4) a book by the former Chief Economist of British Railways, Mr. S. Joy. "The train that ran away" (Ian Allan, 1973, £3 or £1.25 (paperback)) is extremely convincing to the uninformed layman and academic economist. Its publication could be as ominous for the future of British Rail as the original Beeching report (British Railways Board, The reshaping of British Railways, HMSO, 1963, 2 pts.)

However, a book by Mr. Harry Hopkins, "The numbers game: the bland totalitarianism" (Secker & Warburg, 1973, £2.80), contains a strong attack on the methodology of the railway closure economists.

The creation of 45 new county authorities and several new towns imposes severe responsibilities on this Society and parallel ones, such as the Light Railway Transport League. County planning officers and highway engineers are becoming increasingly interested in the possibilities of using existing railways or building new ones. Unfortunately, due to comparison being made with underground railways and because of adverse American literature, opportunities are often being dismissed as being too costly without proper examination. All members should urge their local councillors to investigate Continental developments at first hand. This kind of development is not at present in British Rail's remit. County officers are interested but ignorant. Here is a real opportunity for the Society to act. X

Copies of all other reports presented to the annual general meeting are contained in a booklet enclosed with this members only supplement.

Officers and National Committee, 1973-4

All vice-presidents, as shown at the head of the main progress report, were re-elected.

The following officials were re-elected:-

- M. P. L. Caton, Esq., Ph.D., as Chairman;
- J. M. Stanley, Esq., M.A., as General Secretary;
- A. J. C. Read, Esq., F.C.I.S., as Honorary Auditor.

The following was elected Treasurer:-

Mr. D. Maudlin, 4, Churchill Avenue, Newmarket, Suffolk, CB8 0BU.

The following were re-elected to the National Committee:-

... Mrs. R. Colyer; Messrs. R. V. Banks, E. R. Barbery, J. W. Barfield, D. J. Bradbury; G. L. Collett, L. G. Hipperson, A. F. Johnson, R. Macqueen, N. P. C. Madsen, G. F. Manley, H. R. Purser, H. G. M. Rogers, B. R. Sageman, R. H. Whittaker.

Two new members were elected to the National Committee, viz :-

Messrs. A. C. B. Mercer and P. G. Scott.

In addition, all branch secretaries and area representatives are ex-officio members of the National Committee.

Honorary member : J. R. Ogilvie, Esq., C. Eng., M. I. Mech. E., was elected an honorary member of the Society in recognition of his invaluable assistance in matters requiring technical expertise.

Subscriptions : The meeting agreed that subscription rates should remain unaltered for the year 1974.

Annual General meeting, 1974 : Various suggestions were made as to a suitable place for the 1974 annual general meeting, but it was agreed that the decision as to the actual venue should be left to the National Committee.

Executive Committee : It was agreed that the day-to-day running of the Society should continue to be carried out by a small Executive Committee.

Resolutions : Details of the resolutions passed at the meeting are given in the main progress report.

Two resolutions submitted by Mr. J. H. M. Fawdry were left for consideration by the National Committee. These concerned (a) the desirability of extending the electrification of the railway network, and (b) the need to provide services capable of attracting more freight traffic to the railways.

TRANSPORT IN THE CONURBATIONS

✓✗ A meeting of representative RIS members from the English conurbations was held in Birmingham on 17th February.

Points from the reports presented included the following:-

Greater London The Greater London Council had agreed to increase the amount of capital grants to London Transport, to waive the requirement to transfer £2m. per annum and to avoid any fare increase in 1973. The Council was also pressing for more grants from the central government and for the introduction of owner liability for parking offences to tighten control on private motorists. The retention of two-man operation of buses on heavily used routes was a major departure from plans and applied particularly in the central area.

West Midlands The Chairman of the Passenger Transport Authority wanted to see all the remaining lines in the area electrified and the Cannock and Camp Hill lines re-opened. A Transport 2,000 meeting had been held in Birmingham.

South-East Lancashire and North-East Cheshire Frequency of trains on the Buxton line would be increased in the new timetable (1973-4). The bus service introduced to replace the Buxton-Ashbourne line some years ago had been almost entirely withdrawn. A meeting of Transport 2,000 had been held recently in Manchester.

The meeting discussed the advisability of centralising the telephone service for a number of stations in the area on Stockport, but opinion was divided. Also discussed was the staffing of stations and the possibility of local authorities taking over responsibility for the maintenance of and facilities at, local stations.

Merseyside British Steel Corporation plans to close down Shotton steel works did not augur well for the future of the New Brighton-Wrexham line.

General conclusions reached at the meeting were that adverse trends in the passenger transport areas appeared to have been halted, at least for the time being, but it was agreed that a further meeting should be held in the autumn, possibly in Liverpool, to review the situation. X

AMMUNITION

The answers to the questionnaire distributed to members with the June progress report last year showed that "Bookshelf" was very much the least popular feature. As a result, we decided to discontinue book reviews, except for information on the Society's publications and those written by members.

Nevertheless, we make no apology whatsoever for directing members' attention to "A case for the railways" (October, 1972), a pamphlet of 13 foolscap pages (duplicated) which has been prepared for the Conservation Society by members of its National Working Party on Roads and Transportation. This is full of facts and figures which we feel sure that members will find helpful in their efforts to advance the cause of public rail transport. Copies of the pamphlet are available (20p. each) from one of the members of the Working Party, Mrs. Irene Coates, of 18, Priory Avenue, London, W.4.

For many years, the Railway Invigoration Society was almost alone in pressing for the retention and modernisation of railways on socio-economic grounds. It is very heartening to us that we are now joined in the fight by an ever-increasing body of conservationists, planners and similar people. As Dr. Caton, our Chairman, said in his address at the annual general meeting of the Society in Yeovil, Somerset, last year, "throughout the world a railway revival is in full swing and the cranks of yesterday are the 'with-it' people of today."

As the result of the introduction of "Ammunition", one of our East Anglian members has suggested that the Society should undertake a survey into the social costs arising from the closure of railways in a sample area. This idea has been passed to our appropriate officials.