

RAIL EAST

Newsletter of the East Anglian Branch of the Railway Development Society

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PRIVATISATION UPDATE

A Gallup survey among rail users, carried out for the Daily Telegraph, revealed that 71% were against privatisation of the railway. Indeed, a mere 8% felt they would derive any benefit whilst 30% thought it would not make any difference at all. Such results were unlikely to have surprised most Daily Telegraph readers nearly a thousand of whom responded to a recent RDS advertisement in the paper.

Anglia Television viewers showed a similar resistance when 86% of them voted, by telephone, against the Government's proposals for BR. This was part of a late-night programme on transport involving a large studio audience and presenting contributions from General Secretary Trevor Garrod and Branch Secretary Nick Dibben. It was certainly a lively if somewhat shallow debate.

The high level of public concern over the implications of the Railways Bill led a number of Conservative MP's to table several amendments to the legislation. These included safeguards for Railcards and greater protection against higher fares and cuts in services. That some of these amendments were included in the third reading of the Railways Bill shows that public pressure upon MP's can be effective. The legislation was passed on May 25th and the Bill now goes to the House of Lords for further scrutiny.

Even at this stage, however, the Railways Bill is still undecided on such matters as minimum service levels and a scale of track charges, both of which will have an important effect on train services in the region. Until they are known it is difficult to see how anyone can seriously claim that privatisation will be successful. It is therefore still essential for members to lobby both their MP and any local member of the House of Lords, on this topic.

GREEN TRANSPORT WEEK 19 - 26 JUNE

Concern about the impact of transport upon the environment continues to grow. Green Transport Week aims to increase this awareness by focusing people's attention on those modes of transport which minimise environmental damage. Naturally rail has its part to play and the RDS will be joining in nationally with a range of activities:

- * Branch members Clara Zilahi and Trevor Garrod are making a two-wheeled contribution in the form of a sponsored cycle-ride to Wilton near Salisbury. Offers of sponsorship will be very welcome. Their addresses are on the back page.
- * New leaflets will be published on re-opening railway lines and green transport 'lifestyles'.
- * Re-Opening conference in Maesteg on June 26. Maesteg was returned to the passenger rail network last October and is proving how rail can help local transport. The Conference charge is £5 which includes lunch. Details from Ian Murray, 5 The Green (!) Avenue, Porthcawl, CF36 3AX.
- * Locally we will have displays at libraries in Felixstowe, Thetford and Colchester.
- * Our main Branch event will be the public meeting at Ipswich Town Hall on June 19 starting at 14.30. Guest Speaker will be John Dennis, from BR Railfreight Distribution who will talk about the Channel Tunnel and the anticipated impact upon Railfreight.
- * Ipswich Buses will be operating a combined bus and rail ticket promotion during the week.
- * In addition, other groups such as Transport 2000, FOE, and some Rail User groups, will be putting on other local displays. Keep an eye out for them in your local press or at the library.

This document only contains the front cover.

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