

## SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

The Report describes the investigations carried out, the conclusions which were drawn, and the proposals which are made for the purpose of reshaping British Railways to suit modern conditions.

The thought underlying the whole Report is that the railways should be used to meet that part of the total transport requirement of the country for which they offer the best available means, and that they should cease to do things for which they are ill suited. To this end, studies were made to determine the extent to which the present pattern of the railways' services is consistent with the characteristics which distinguish railways as a mode of transport, namely:— the high cost of their specialised and exclusive route system, and their low cost per unit moved if traffic is carried in dense flows of well-loaded through trains. As a result, it is concluded that, in many respects, they are being used in ways which emphasise their disadvantages and fail to exploit their advantages.

The proposals for reshaping the railways are all directed towards giving them a route system, a pattern of traffics, and a mode of operation, such as to make the field which they cover one in which their merits predominate and in which they can be competitive.

To this end, it is proposed to build up traffic on the well-loaded routes, to foster those traffics which lend themselves to movement in well-loaded through trains, and to develop the new services necessary for that purpose. At the same time, it is proposed to close down routes which are so lightly loaded as to have no chance of paying their way, and to discontinue services which cannot be provided economically by rail. These proposals are, however, not so sweeping as to attempt to bring the railways to a final pattern in one stage, with the associated risks of abandoning too much or, alternatively, of spending wastefully.

Although railways can only be economic if routes carry dense traffic, density is so low over much of the system that revenue derived from the movement of passengers and freight over more than half the route miles of British Railways is insufficient to cover the cost of the route alone. In other words, revenue does not pay for the maintenance of the track and the maintenance and operation of the signalling system, quite apart from the cost of running trains, depots, yards and stations. Also, it is found that the cost of more than half of the stations is greater than the receipts from traffic which they originate.

Amongst traffics, stopping passenger services are exceptionally poor. As a group, they are very lightly loaded and do not cover their own movement costs. They account for most of the train miles on much of the lightly loaded route mileage, but also account for a considerable train mileage on more heavily loaded routes, and are one of the main causes for the continued existence of many of the small and uneconomic stations.

Fast and semi-fast, inter-city passenger trains are potentially profitable and need to be developed selectively, along with other forms of traffic on trunk routes. High peak traffics at holiday periods are, however, very unremunerative. They are dying away and provision for them will be reduced.

Suburban services feeding London come close to covering their full expenses, but give no margin to provide for costly increases in capacity, even though they are overloaded and demand goes on increasing.

Suburban services feeding other centres of population are serious loss makers, and it will not be possible to continue them satisfactorily without treating them as a part of a concerted system of transport for the cities which they serve.

Freight traffic, like passenger traffic, includes good flows, but also includes much which is unsuitable, or which is unsuitably handled by the railways at present. The greater part of all freight traffic is handled by the staging forward of individual wagons from yard to yard, instead of by through-train movement. This is costly, and causes transit times to be slow and variable. It also leads to low utilisation of wagons and necessitates the provision of a very large and costly wagon fleet.

Coal traffic as a whole just about pays its way, but, in spite of its suitability for through train movement, about two thirds of the total coal handled on rail still moves by the wagon-load. This is very largely due to the absence of facilities for train loading at the pits, and to the multiplicity of small receiving terminals to which coal is consigned. Block train movement is increasing, but substantial savings will result from acceleration of the change. This depends, in turn, upon provision of bunkers for train loading at the pits, bunkers for ship loading at the ports, and of coal concentration depots to which coal can be moved by rail for final road distribution to small industrial and domestic consumers.

Wagon-load freight traffic, other than coal, is a bad loss maker when taken as a group, but over half of it is siding-to-siding traffic, much of which moves in trainload quantities, and this makes a good contribution to system cost. One third of the remainder moves between sidings and docks, and this falls just short of covering its direct costs. The remaining 30 per cent. of the whole passes through stations, at one or both ends of its transit, and causes a loss relative to direct expenses which is so large that it submerges the credit margin on all the rest.

Freight sundries traffic is also a bad loss maker. It is handled at present between over 900 stations and depots, which causes very poor wagon loading and a high level of costly transshipment of the freight while in transit. Railways handle only about 45 per cent. of this traffic in the country, and do not select the flows which are most suitable for rail movement. If they are to stay in the business, British Railways must concentrate more upon the inter-city flows and reduce the number of depots handling this form of traffic to not more than a hundred.

Study of traffic not on rail shows that there is a considerable tonnage which is potentially good rail traffic. This includes about 8 m. tons which could be carried in train-load quantities, and a further 30 m. tons which is favourable to rail by virtue of the consignment sizes, lengths of haul, and terminal conditions. In addition, there is a further 16 m. tons which is potentially good traffic for a new kind of service—a Liner Train service—for the combined road and rail movement of containerised merchandise.

Preliminary studies of a system of liner train services, which might carry at least the 16 m. tons of new traffic referred to above and a similar quantity drawn from traffic which is now carried unremuneratively on rail, show such services to be very promising and likely to contribute substantially to support of the main railway network, if developed.

The steps proposed, to achieve the improvements referred to above, are:—

- (1) Discontinuance of many stopping passenger services.
- (2) Transfer of the modern multiple unit stock displaced to continuing services which are still steam locomotive hauled.
- (3) Closure of a high proportion of the total number of small stations to passenger traffic.
- (4) Selective improvement of inter-city passenger services and rationalisation of routes.

- (5) Damping down of seasonal peaks of passenger traffic and withdrawal of corridor coaching stock held for the purpose of covering them at present.
- (6) Co-ordination of suburban train and bus services and charges, in collaboration with municipal authorities, with the alternative of fare increases and possible closure of services.
- (7) Co-ordination of passenger parcels services with the Post Office.
- (8) Increase of block train movement of coal, by:—
  - a inducing the National Coal Board to provide train loading facilities at collieries;
  - b inducing the establishment of coal concentration depots, in collaboration with the National Coal Board and the distributors.
- (9) Reduction of the uneconomic freight traffic passing through small stations by closing them progressively, but with regard to the preservation of potentially good railway traffics, and by adjustment to charges.
- (10) Attraction of more siding-to-siding traffics suitable for through-train movement by operating such trains at the expense of the wagon forwarding system and by provision of time-tabled trains, of special stock, to meet customer requirements.
- (11) Study and development of a network of "Liner Train" services to carry flows of traffic which, though dense, are composed of consignments too small in themselves to justify through-train operation.
- (12) Concentration of freight sundries traffic upon about 100 main depots, many of them associated with Liner Train depots, and carriage of main flows of sundries on Liner Trains, probably coupled with passenger parcels, and possibly Post Office parcels and letters.
- (13) Rapid, progressive withdrawal of freight wagons over the next three years.
- (14) Continued replacement of steam by diesel locomotives for main line traction, up to a probable requirement of at least 3,750/4,250 (1,698 already in service and 950 on order at present).
- (15) Rationalisation of the composition and use of the Railways' road cartage fleet.

These various lines of action are strongly interdependent. If the whole plan is implemented with vigour, however, much (though not necessarily all) of the Railways' deficit should be eliminated by 1970.