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NEWSLETTER

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Editor: Robin Vowels
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 We'd like to be able to acknowledge in the same issue those tireless workers who assemble the Newsletter and prepare the mailing out, but that isn't possible since the Newsletter is printed first (obviously). Instead, we include the names of those who have assisted in recent issues, and without whose help none of this would be possible.

John Alexopoulos,
 David Bowd,
 Bill Devine,
 Ken McIntyre,
 Patrick O'Connor,
 John Prideaux,
 Chris Pidd,
 Robin Vowels,
 Denise Young.



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The Public Transport Users' Association

The PTUA is a voluntary, non-party political, non-profit organization of public transport users.

Its function is to lobby the Government for a modern, adequate, efficient public transport system. Our plan for improved public transport calls for optimum use of trains, trams and buses in the interests of our scarce fuel resources, and protection of the environment. It also calls for the incorporation of the advantages of the various modes of transport in the most cost-efficient and energy-efficient manner.

The PTUA prepares briefs and submissions, liaises with transport managers through regular meetings, makes representations to the Transport Minister on suggestions, complaints, etc. It conducts media interviews, speaks at public meetings, prepares articles and letters to the press, publishes and distributes leaflets.

Meetings

Members are invited to attend Council and annual general meetings.

The PTUA council meets on the first Wednesday of each month (except January) at the Presbyterian Assembly Hall, 1st Floor, 156 Collins Street Melbourne at 5.30 pm (Just down from Fussell Street). (Please note that there is a mezzanine, and that if you use the stairs, be sure to climb two flights.)

The Annual General Meeting is usually held in July. A public figure is invited to speak. At this meeting, office bearers are elected, annual reports are delivered, and other business conducted.

Membership

Membership includes regular issues of the Newsletter for the basic subscription of \$5 annually. A concession membership is available for \$3 annually. Those who can afford to are requested to become Donor Members at \$10 per year, or to make donations towards the cost of printing, postage, hire of halls for meetings, and so on. All members have equal status and their category of membership may be changed when subscriptions are renewed.

Newsletter

The PTUA Newsletter is published by and for members of the Public Transport Users' Association. Members are encouraged to contribute articles to the Newsletter. Members may like to offer their help in preparing the Newsletter on a regular or casual basis.

Address all correspondence to The Secretary, PTUA, Ormond 3163. Tel.

Cover:

The railway seems engulfed beneath this ultimate of freeway exchanges near Sylmar in California. (Photo courtesy of Pacific News)

However, read in our overseas section of the rail revival in California.

EDITORIAL A CHANGE AT THE HELM

Mr Roper, recently Minister for Health, has been appointed Transport Minister.

Does this mean that we will have a healthy transport system? Will public transport get an injection of funds? Or a transfusion of new personnel?

Or will it mean an autopsy? More appendectomies? Or even a tonsillectomy or two?

Could it mean a transplant? Or will it be a case of plain old AIDS (Arrival Deficiency Syndrome)? Will there be another bypass to complement Bayswater to Croydon? Will management suffer a stroke?

Will we ever see new arteries to prevent VFL thrombosis? What can be done to reverse Doncastration?

Perhaps what is needed is a new vision. A trip to an ophthalmist might be just what is required to envisage the promised line from Frankston to Dandenong.

Lonie leprosy has spread back to St Kilda, and seems likely to overtake Port Melbourne and Upfield.

Recently vandalcytes invaded our system resulting in mutant blue cells. This condition could be serious, as all the red cells have already been killed off. But our interests are being looked after by a rearguard action of helpful T-cells. Perhaps some silver cells could be cloned off, and the possibility of resurrection of red cells should not be ruled out. And who knows what might happen with in vitro fertilization? We may yet see a real light rail vehicle, a cross between a train and a tram. However, a virulent liver complaint — unionban hepatitis — has so far prevented safe delivery.

We wish Dr Roper safe operating in the public transport theatre.

Let us hope he can re-invigorate the patient, and can restore arterial peace. He cannot afford repeated outbreaks of fighting among the unioncytes for representation of members.

The prescription should include a stimulant for the Spring Street and Spencer Street brains, aspirin to improve co-ordination and efficiency, quinine to quell bouts of material unrest, and maybe a valium for himself.

— Robin Vowels

Dear Reader,

This bumper issue is the outcome of producing a small January issue when our funds were diverted to election matters. Several substantial articles had to be held over. We are sure that this issue will make interesting reading.

We suggest you put your feet up, curl up on the sofa, take yourself to bed or whatever your fancy, and relax for a while.

The Newsletter contains the usual variety of straight informative features, opinionated reports, and articles with a distinct lobbying bent. Not unnaturally, we have something to say about the recent state election, and have included two full analyses.

The Overseas section has been considerably expanded with a report on high-speed rail construction in West Germany, and of renaissance in the USA and the UK. The interstate section features Sydney to Melbourne transport services, while the Melbourne scene is taken with reports on a recent transport seminar and on the controversial St Kilda railway line. There is even a line from our Treasurer on the success of discount fares.

The Overseas section is expected to be spruced up with up-to-the-minute reports from our hardworking Secretary who is off on a three-month holiday in Europe from mid-May. We have no idea what he's going to do over there, but don't be too surprised to hear he catches a train or two. Look out in the June and August issues for a word from Ken.



TRANSPORT AFTER THE ELECTIONS

The PTUA congratulates the Cain Government on its re-election to office.

Public Transport was a major issue which decided the result of the 1982 election.

At that election, the Opposition made a number of promises to improve and extend public transport. The PTUA has been critical of the Government's failure to implement those promises.

On the credit side —

- The Government has continued the contracts initiated by the former Government to replace old trains and trams with new ones. Visibly these appear to be good — but the new ones are mere replacements for the old red rattlers and Harris trains — they are not additions to the total fleet which still remains totally inadequate for daily needs. Hence the daily cancellations and breakdowns. We are still travelling in the asbestos-riddled blue Harris trains, which Mr Crabb claimed are "safe", yet he buried them in the ground because of the danger from asbestos! Patronage of country trains increased because of new rolling stock.
- The Metropolitan Transit Authority was formed to co-ordinate train, tram and bus services. The MTA, with its new breed of managers, is still finding its feet in some respects, and has some way to go to co-ordinate the various modes of transport and to dramatically improve efficiency and performance standards.
- User representation on the MTA and its Regional Boards was effected though for the first year of the formation of the MTA, a non-user was appointed. Our protests lead to my appointment since 1984. For the first time, users have a direct voice in major decisions (even if it is a solitary voice) affecting public transport. Representation on the Regional Boards assists with input on local decisions.
- Some improvements are seen in train punctuality, but we are still far from standards acceptable to users.
- The East Preston tram line was extended to La Trobe University.
- The Altona train line was extended to Laverton; the Geelong line was electrified to Werribee.
- Construction of the duplication of the Ringwood to Bayswater line, and the third line from Caulfield to Mordialloc — commenced by the former Government — were continued.
- The St Kilda and Port Melbourne lines were re-opened, but Healesville and Mornington were not restored, and new plans by the Government could see the closure again of the St Kilda rail line.
- Construction of country carriages initiated by the former Government was continued and extended.

On the debit side —

- The Government failed to reduce fares and to introduce a simpler fare structure. November 1983 saw massive fare increases, removal of the conveyance allowance for students and a complicated Neighbourhood system has hit the pockets of those with large families and low incomes. The increase in the non-Labor vote in strong Labor seats, is an indication of these sections of the community protesting about these higher charges.
- No new lines were constructed (four were promised for trains). The Preston to Bundoora tram extension (in Mr Cain's electorate) was constructed with Federal Government funds. The proposed light rail line to Doncaster was changed to a freeway plan, and the rail reservation sold off to the public.
- The C3 freeway in Mulgrave, and the West Gate freeway extension — both opposed

TRANSPORT AFTER THE ELECTIONS (Continued)

when the present Government was in opposition — were the first major road projects undertaken when the Government came to office!

Protests from the Labor Party rank-and-file on these reversals of policies and promises lead to the formation of a new political party — the Public Transport Party — which polled 7% of the votes in the three seats it contested!

- A new rail station was opened at Westona, but two stations adjacent were closed!
- The Transport Minister was burdened with a dual portfolio and the industrial affairs duties took precedence over his transport responsibilities. Given the Government's attempt to show that it can handle industrial problems better than its predecessor, some industrial problems seemed to be stifled to ensure this image.

Strangely enough, during the election campaign a compliant media failed to show up the failure of the Government to implement its major promises or its reversal of them — the C3 and West Gate freeway issues, for example. Cosmetic jobs like painting trains and trams a new colour, impressed the public of new changes.

The Opposition failed to ram home the Government's policy failures and reversals.

Clearly the Government needs to lift its performance in the next four years, or its 1% margin will dwindle further. The 1985 policy spoke only of road projects — the good rail and tram promises of the 1982 election have been forgotten.

What of the next four years?

We must have a full-time transport minister to look after after the interests of users of the system, who can meet them, and who can travel the system to learn of its shortcomings.

Public transport needs must take precedence over road projects, until the former catches up on an equal footing with roads, given the decades of neglect of the public transport system. Poor track and signal conditions lead to frequent and costly rail derailments. Our country and metropolitan services still need vast improvements in punctuality and efficiency to attract greater patronage.

New technology and cost reductions in administration must be introduced together with better staff productivity.

Present plans to kill the system in St Kilda and Port Melbourne must be scrapped and more sensible plans to service the needs of the travelling public and to increase patronage must be implemented.

The stranglehold the road lobby has on planners and the bureaucracy of the Transport Ministry must be broken so that real transport planning for better services, better land use and environmental protection can be implemented.

User needs must take precedence over the needs of workers in the industry or of sectional interests.

Public Transport users must be given value for their money.

— Ken McIntyre



THAT WAS A PUBLIC TRANSPORT ELECTION THAT WAS

The lead-up to the last State election didn't look good for public transport as an issue, with both the major parties managing to leave it off their shopping list of priorities.

If the emergence of the Public Transport Party achieved nothing else, it at least caused those two words to magically reappear in the editorials of the Melbourne dailies.

The campaign was fought in three seats — Knox, Melbourne and Prahran — capturing nearly 8% of first preference votes in one electorate — not bad for a 'single issue' party!

In fact, the scope and platform of the party encompassed land use, economic and environmental issues with a few heavy serves at the prevailing promotion of freeway and big bad road hysteria in the outer suburbs of the garden state.

Rather than a vote-winner for the Labor contenders in the electorates of Bennetswood and Syndal, the C3 Freeway turned out to be a non-issue, and both members lost their seats.

The decision to mount a challenge was taken by the Public Transport Party (PTP) only on the eve of the election, allowing a bare six weeks to campaign through the daily press; to print and distribute 40,000 leaflets; and to arrange the manning (and womaning) of about 30 polling booths.

Almost as gratifying and surprising as the result was the mixture of support and blank opposition by the media.

While television, radio, and the dailies were most helpful, no press release issued by the party was carried by a local paper circulating in the Prahran area because the Editor didn't think the issues were relevant!

Of the three electorates, no better example can be found than the Minister of Transport's very own of the potential for the future breakdown and dislocation of our society.

Many streets in Knox are remarkable for the numbers of front and back yards filled with cars — a sight to gladden the hard hearts of Ford, Shell and Firestone — but no comfort for the woolly-headed optimists who would have us believe that the Los Angeles disaster cannot be repeated in Melbourne.

Another fact emerged quite strongly from the response in the inner suburbs. Residents there are becoming heartily fed up with the unequal burden of filth being dumped on them by the intrusion of their brothers and sisters who insist on the right to drive a smog box to work.

Aspiring politicians in both the major political parties who delude themselves into believing that they can win on the strength of present transport policies and priorities will be in for a rude shock when the votes of an increasingly better-informed electorate are mobilized against them.

— Rod Bryant

[Congratulations to the three candidates: Janet Walker for Melbourne, Alan Parker for Prahran, and Tom Tyrer for Knox — Ed.]

[References to the Minister of Transport and to Knox are, of course, references to the former Transport Minister and to his electorate.]



RESTRUCTURE MOTORING COSTS

The present position in our campaign

The PTUA believes that there is considerable discrimination against any person who owns a motor car, but uses the train frequently. Every motorist has to pay a large sum — typically \$250 — each year for registration and third party insurance. If he only uses his car occasionally, he contributes very little to road wear and accident risk for which this amount is used. In fact, *he subsidises the person who always uses a car and never pays a train fare.*

The PTUA believes that a much fairer procedure would be to replace motor vehicle registration and third party insurance by a levy on petrol, so that the user pays. In 1983 the levy required was estimated by the Federal Department of Transport to be ten cents a litre. For more than 50% of motorists, the dearer petrol would be more than offset by the elimination of the \$250 per year fixed charge, and the PTUA has made several submissions to the Government to advocate this proposal.

In 1983, the Federal Transport Minister, Mr Morris, indicated that he would be ready to impose such a levy if all the states agreed. Unfortunately, Queensland refused, and the Australian Transport Advisory Council (which comprises the Federal and State Transport Ministers) called for the Federal Department of Transport to prepare a detailed analysis of the proposal. The PTUA has requested a copy of this analysis under the Freedom of Information Act. The Act requires that where requested documents contain information provided by State Governments, those states must be consulted before a decision on access is made. Accordingly, our request was referred to all State Governments, and all except one of those Governments agreed to our request. The exception was, not surprisingly, Queensland, which objected on the basis that "in the formulation of Government policies, it is necessary that Ministers have full and frank discussions uninhibited by the need to temper debate to meet sectional pressures, and can express opinions freely without public commitment or exposure".

The PTUA's view is that such grounds may be relevant to debate between ministers, but are scarcely applicable to a report, prepared by a Government department, which will be confined to matters of fact and the consequences of various options.

At present the PTUA has asked for a review of the decision to refuse access to the analysis.

— Dr Doug. Sherman,
President

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF DONATIONS: October 1984 to March 1985

Mr F. Fisher
Mr R.L. Andrew
Dr G.C. Kenney
Mr R.P. Wakeham
Mr T.J. Tottenham
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Mr S.G. Jones
Mr R.P. Wakeham
Cheltenham Chamber of Commerce & Industry
Citizens Against Freeways

Mr W.M. McKerracher
Mr G.E. Rosman
2 Anonymous

NEW MEMBERS

The TTA welcomes the following new members who joined to 4th March 1985.

Mr R.J. Boulter
Mr J.B. Lorkin
Miss D.L. Osborne
Dr N.E. Ryan
Mrs M. Sciortino
Mr M.J. Crowley
Mr A. Ficker
Mr A.J. Semple
Mr J.G. van Rooyen

Mr C. Daskalopoulos
Mr B.D.L. Neil
Mrs D.B. Ray
Mr M.E. Saville
Mr D.A. Tokell
Mr T. Dent
Mr N. Hall
Mrs J. Sikiotis

TRANSPORT SEMINAR AT RMIT

A one-day seminar was held on 22nd March at the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology to discuss the effects of Melbourne's large-scale re-development — such as the Chia project in South Yarra and Museum Station — on existing transport policies.

Speakers were drawn from diverse groups and included architects, consultants, local councils, traders and resident groups. Attendees were found from a broad spectrum of employments, including the Premier's Department and the Transport Ministry. What follows is a summary of the pertinent issues, and which, in the main, are offered without comment. [Anyone wishing to comment may like to drop a line to the Editor.]

Nelson English (Nelson English, Loxton & Andrews Pty Ltd) felt that large projects had only a marginal effect on transport, and that the road system had the capacity to absorb the increase. Melbourne, he said, had a good grid system of roads. He opined that large projects out of the city may increase public transport costs, but would not increase private transport conflicts, except marginally.

Lechi Ord, speaking for the Melbourne City Council, said that Council encourages the importance of the Central Business District (CBD) because of its superior accessibility via a good public transport service. She said that tram and train networks should be extended because public transport is cheaper, speedier, safer, and had the greatest capacity. It was less destructive environmentally. Developments such as the Lynch Bridge project at Flemington and the Chia project at South Yarra would increase the use of public transport, she continued. She stated Council policy was that roads should be adequate to meet off-peak traffic needs. Roads in the Council's area were generally sufficient, and capacity can be improved by better management. Council favoured the principle of arterial roads, to preclude "through traffic" from residential areas, she said.

A Port Melbourne councillor said that his Council supported the light rail scheme to replace the Port Melbourne line, that is, of bringing the Port Melbourne railway into Clarendon Street in South Melbourne, and to bring light rail vehicles (LRVs) into a city loop along Collins, Spring and Bourke Streets. Melbourne City Council opposed further tram traffic in these streets because they were already running at capacity.

The inner councils of Fitzroy and Collingwood echoed the Melbourne City Council's arterial road policy for restraining non-local traffic from entering residential streets; these councils gave highest planning priority to pedestrian, bicycle and public transport facilities (in that order), and lowest priority to the private commuter motor vehicle. They favoured the Fairway tram priority system. Mr Peele, City Engineer, Fitzroy, criticized the former MMTB and its successor, the MTA, for not having adequate forward plans, while at the Government's doorstep he laid the charge that it had not integrated the transport authorities to achieve co-operation. Pam Jenkins of Collingwood Council said that her Council urged the Government to favour public transport, and said that fares were "inordinately high" for middle area residents.

Brunswick Council, like the Melbourne City Council, favoured the Western Bypass [from the Tullamarine Freeway to the West Gate Bridge]. It was dubious of upgrading St Georges Road to three traffic lanes each way (where would the traffic go, the speaker queried). Council did not mind light rail on the Upfield line, but wanted to keep its existing tram and train lines.

Prahran was the "rebel" council. Referring to the "protectionist" policies adopted by other inner councils to keep out cars, Mayor Mary Duffy said that "unless councils adapt, their future was grim". She said that a better road transport system meant more jobs. She said that the "Fairway system was a disaster beyond belief". [If the writer

TRANSPORT SEMINAR AT RMIT (Continued)

may be permitted to venture his opinion here, it is clear that street public transport in Prahran is in chaos in some areas of Prahran.]

Some references were made to the effect of Coles moving its head office from the city to Toorak.

John Loder of Loder & Bayly claimed that Melbournians outlayed \$1,000 million each year on private transport (capital cost), not including running cost. He said that such amounts could justify the construction of small-vehicle public transport system that provided door-to-door transport. Such a system would be completely automated, and would have stopping places off the main lines. He did not put a price on the scheme.

Glen Holdsworth (TTM Consulting Pty Ltd) spoke on road networks. He said that retaining the existing road network wasn't a possibility, and that it therefore meant that two practicable options were open:

- (1) to improve the existing network based on current needs; or
- (2) to improve the existing network based on anticipated needs.

He said that the former option was being pursued.

John Sanderson, Chief Traffic Manager of the RACV said that it was "essential to provide a transport system recognizing the relative importance of each mode". He said the RACV supported "development, to improve accessibility and to enhance the attractiveness of the city of Melbourne to all the community". In urging the improvement of the road network, he cited the importance of the commercial vehicle. His one-liner, "Public transport should be cost-effective, just as roads are", went unchallenged. It was no surprise to hear that the RACV supports the inner ring road concept:—

to the west, an extension to the Tullamarine Freeway extension;

to the east, Punt Road;

to the north, east to the Tullamarine Freeway; and

to the south, the West Gate Bridge and South-Eastern Freeway via a tunnel under the Domain.

Costing of these projects was not provided, but he did suggest the Federal Government might come to the party with funds if the road links could be shown to be part of a national highway. He did, however, note — in an understatement — that the north connection "obviously has some environmental problems". The John Connell Group (UK consultants) put a figure of \$130 million on the simplest environmentally acceptable Domain tunnel.

Ian Wallis (Travers Morgan Pty Ltd) spoke on public transport issues. He said the Government favoured new developments close to public transport. He produced statistics showing that 59% of trips to the CBD were by public transport. However, he noted that only 16% of all trips were by public transport. The number of commuter trips by public transport fell away sharply as one moved out of the "inner ring" — roughly embodying the tram network. [As these figures were of 1981 and 1978 origin, it is likely that the percentages have moved to favour public transport, as patronage is now the best for approx 15 years.]

I would like to thank the Management Development Centre at RMIT for the complimentary invitation.

Robin Vowels



PTUA MEETING WITH MTA MANAGEMENT

As part of the on-going liason between the PTUA and MTA management, a meeting was held on 1st November 1984 at MTA head office. Present from the MTA were Messrs L. Strouse (Chairman of the MTA), J. Grigg, D. Snell, A. Dunn and K. Moran. The PTUA team comprised Dr D. Sherman and Messrs K. McIntyre, D. Bowd, P. O'Connor and I. Powell.

The discussion that took place centered on the following matters:

- * Punctuality of trains;
- * Development of the Jolimont rail yards;
- * Collins Street Fairway;
- * Regional bus studies;
- * Car park policy in the CBD;
- * Police operations concerning tram priority;
- * Safety zones for tram pedestrians;
- * Tram services at the Royal Show; and
- * Obstruction and nuisance caused by students on trains.

Some of the important aspects that arose during discussion were:

- The MTA had introduced a system for its senior officers to travel by train daily to monitor performance. (Since our inception in 1976, we had continually called for such a system.) We highlighted to the MTA the poor public image created by the same trains consistently running late, and called for action to remedy this situation.
- Changes and innovations introduced in the Ringwood Neighbourhood will be maintained and utilized in the bus studies being conducted and planned in other neighbourhoods.

The PTUA appreciates the cordial and constructive discussions that mark these meetings.

Liason between the TTA and rail managers were inaugurated under the auspices of the former Transport Minister Mr Maclellan. Unfortunately we did not always get satisfactory responses from VicRail management. We are happy to report a change in attitude and response from the MTA chairman and his managers. Any management should appreciate feedback and suggestions from its customers. In this case, both managers and users have a common interest — namely an efficient transport system

— Ken McIntyre

ANOTHER DISGRACEFUL RAIL STRIKE

The state-wide train strike in November brought on by a rail union protest over a staffing decision taken in another state, demonstrates the contempt with which rail unions treat their paying customers. But for their patronage, rail workers and their unions would have no jobs.

It is of no apparent concern to the unions that over 200,000 commuters risked their jobs. Tens of thousands of students commenced their HSC and University examinations on Monday 12th November. Added to the normal exam tensions were the worries of getting to examination centres. It was easy for Mr Crabb to tell students to ask their parents and friends to drive them to centres. Parents and friends would need their cars, if they owned one, to get to work themselves.

With an annual deficit of over \$432 million, and with over 70% of its expenditure on the railways going to cover salaries of managers, unions should be wary of inciting users to abandon the system by their misuse of industrial power.

— Ken McIntyre

STRIKING AT THE USER

Until 1982, rail unions conducted strikes with the main intention of bringing down the Government, as they often stated. Unions were oblivious to the disruption they were causing to their customers, the future of the system, and — ultimately — their own jobs.

One of the reasons for the massive decline in patronage since 1970 (by over 38%) was public dissatisfaction. (The other major reason was the unreliability of the system.) Repeated surveys and studies conducted by our Association confirmed this fact.

When the present Government came to office in 1982, one of its boasts was that there would be a better industrial climate. For some time, unions suppressed their industrial weapon so as not to embarrass the Government and "rock the boat". A new management drawn mainly from the private sector, was introduced.

Soon, however, the feelings of disenchantment with the Government and management were apparent.

A classic case occurred in March 1984. Rail unions stopped all trains because a rail worker had to wait 9 minutes for his meal to be served in the rail canteen. Mr Crabb immediately carpeted his rail managers, and visited the spot himself to meet the workers.

Indications are apparent that the marriage between the Government and unions is falling apart, with the unions becoming disenchanted with the former Minister and the new managers whom they dub as "hot shot outsiders with no experience or knowledge in rail matters".

New technology to contain the deficit and which inherently has a basis for staff reduction, are looked upon with suspicion by the unions.

The strike on 13 & 14 November 1984 on the proposed manning levels of freight trains was a demarcation dispute over which union is to get the job of Train Observer. Disputes over who will drive the light rail vehicles, which union will get the second position in Centralized Traffic Control (electronic signalling system), which union should private bus drivers join, are still unresolved and seem likely to cause further disruption. The Opposition has released secret documents that highlight the future industrial scene on the railways.

Unionists seem to have no concern for the destructive effects the strikes have on users, the system and its future, and their own jobs. Each strike causes more users to desert the system for their cars, as they cannot risk losing their jobs by being late or by not turning up at all. Higher deficits following less patronage means cuts in services and jobs and the vicious merry-go-round continues. The end result is that the unions ultimately suffer with fewer jobs; the users suffer with fewer services, and the car lobby grows stronger with their ranks swelled with an influx of car users.

Public transport and its users will be the ultimate losers. — Ken McIntyre

LETTERS LETTERS LETTERS LETTERS LETTERS
Sir, I would like to call attention to two matters.

First, the very poor condition of the blue trains. They are dirty and covered in disgusting graffiti. Many of the lights don't work and occasionally the doors stick. They are an open invitation to vandals.

The next matter is the unfair distribution of new trains. The train on which I normally travel is almost always a blue train. I have complained to the railways and received illogical and unsatisfactory replies. If we have to travel consistently on third class transport, third class fares should be available. — Noellen Ward, Albert Park

DISCOUNTED TICKETS UNDER WAY

The PTUA is now selling Yearly and Half-yearly Travelcards to our members at substantial discounts (\$20 to \$90 off the normal price, depending on Neighbourhoods and periods of availability). Since the beginning of this year, sales have been as follows:

January	1
February	4
March	10
April	12
TOTAL	27

Approximately half of these tickets were purchased by new members. Twenty-seven members are now enjoying the benefit of these long-term periodical tickets at a considerable saving on the normal price. The saving is even greater when compared with the cost of daily or weekly Travelcards over a similar period. As well as the cash savings, the inconvenience of queuing for daily or weekly Travelcards is avoided.

From experience thus far, it appears that members applying for these tickets are clear on the pricing, but there is still some uncertainty about the requirements regarding photographs and closing dates for applications.

Application Closing Date

One of the reasons for the Metropolitan Transit Authority offering these discounts is that by processing them in a batch and well in advance, they can better utilize their clerical staff. We are required by the MTA to lodge the pre-processed and aggregated applications three weeks before the beginning of the month in which they are to be first used.

This means that the PTUA needs to receive the applications on or before the 5th day of the preceding month in order to process them, to allow cheques to clear, and to deliver them to the MTA on time.

Members should ensure that their applications are posted so as to reach the Treasurer by the required date. If this date falls on a week-end or public holiday, earlier posting will be necessary. Earlier postings also help by spreading the workload for the Treasurer.

Applications received too late will have to be held over for another month or, if requested, returned to the applicant.

Photographs

If applicants do not already possess a photocard issued by the MTA, they will need to supply a suitable photograph of themselves with their ticket application.

This photograph may be either colour or black-and-white, but should be reasonably recent and show a distinct facial image with the head filling an area 25mm wide by 30mm high. The photographs will be trimmed to this standard size by the MTA when the photocards are being prepared. However, for ease of handling, a somewhat larger overall print size, say 40mm by 50mm, is preferred.

The photograph opposite of a well-known personage who has recently become more closely involved with public transport, will serve to illustrate the point. This photo is trimmed to the required final size, but the frame



Photo courtesy of MS Newsletter

DISCOUNTED TICKETS UNDER WAY (Continued)

around it indicates the approximate size of print desired for convenient handling.

It is to be hoped that many more members will take advantage of these discounted tickets and that this significant cost-saving compared with our modest membership subscription will encourage others to join the PTUA. Members are urged to recruit their friends and colleagues.

While the Public Transport Users' Association is much more than a Ticket Club, the availability of these discounts should help swell our membership ranks, and if new and old members are prepared to make a co-ordinated effort to help, we should be much better placed to achieve our goal of a first-rate public transport system with all its social and economic ramifications.

— David Bowd,
Hon Treasurer

ASBESTOS DANGER IN BLUE HARRIS TRAINS

Asbestos is used to line the walls of Melbourne's blue Harris trains. Asbestos has long been known to cause mesothelioma — a form of cancer that is inevitably fatal.

The use of asbestos in trains was banned in Britain in 1969, and British Rail spent several million pounds in decontaminating its 7000 odd trains since that year.

The former Government entered into a contract with a private firm in 1981 to remove asbestos from Harris trains. In opposition, Mr Crabb urged this action. However, on coming to office in 1982 the Labor Government, under its then Transport Minister Mr Crabb, scrapped this contract.

In 1983, our Association had information that a serious danger existed for passengers travelling in these trains. On September 1983 the TTA called on Mr Crabb to give the facts on the dangers of asbestos faced by train travellers. In his reply dated 10 November 1983, Mr Crabb stated that "the risk to the travelling public was negligible even in the worst imaginable situation".

We were not satisfied with this reply, and requested the reports on which this stand was taken, and for the reasons the contract for removal of asbestos (arranged by the previous Government), was cancelled by Mr Crabb. This request was refused. MLC Hon. M. Birrell requested on our behalf under the Freedom of Information Act. Again it was refused!

It is interesting to note that to appease the unions, asbestos was sealed in the drivers' and guards' compartments.

A few months ago, Mr Crabb buried some Harris carriages in Clayton because of the danger from asbestos. Now the MTA management is removing Harris trains from service because vandalism has exposed asbestos.

How can it be that only a few months ago, the risk to the travelling public was negligible even in the worst imaginable situation, and now the trains are being buried and are being withdrawn from service?

It is obvious that the Minister did not give us the facts on the dangers from asbestos.

Several lines are serviced solely by blue Harris trains — for example, St Kilda, Sandringham, and Port Melbourne. One third of the suburban fleet consists of Harris trains. If they have suddenly become dangerous, how will daily train services survive without massive dislocations and delays?

— Ken McIntyre

Saying goodbye to the six-cylinder Holden has been like anticipating the departure of a disgruntled migrant — you knew he had to go, but you weren't sure when.

The motor was a slightly re-vamped and scaled-down version of a pre-war Chevrolet design and had a remarkable production run. However its demise is the beginning of the bitter end of Australia's association with the American giant as other than an assembler of bits and pieces.

The original Holden company was, appropriately enough, a supplier to the horse and buggy trade. It landed in the hands of the General just in time to be re-launched by Prime Minister Ben Chifley not long before his death. The factory was to create jobs for returned servicemen and to switch to making bombs and tanks if the need arose. With manufacturing plants in all the eastern Australian states, GMH provided the rationale for importing streams of people to jobs that nobody else would, by choice, undertake. The smart got out early, leaving others to join the dole parade as GMH started a three-state shutdown.

The Holden never lived up to expectations as an export earner, although some sales were made where competition was thin. The Asian market tapered off sharply when the parent General objected to unfavourable comparisons being made between the better-assembled and finished Holden *Brougham* and the dinosaurs coming out of the American factories.

There are some intriguing parallels between the activities of the General in Australia and in the U.S. American G.M. were alleged to have bought up and pulled out electric railways in no less than 45 American cities.† The General's public transport services purchased buses from the General to replace the trains. This enabled GM to replace the bus services with cars. (This is what the RACV means when it says cars are public transport.) GMH probably never made a serious offer for VicRail, but they did supply a number of burnt-out executives.

Just as G.M. America colluded with big oil and rubber in the public transport purchases, GMH stuck with its old friends down under.

But Holden were to make some of their biggest impacts on non-motorised Australians. The company adorned their cars with a thoroughly lethal range of pedestrian skewers. These weapons disappeared on the '63 model only to return by popular demand and in a different form on the notorious "pedestrian slicer" of 1965. This car had two blades that stuck out from alongside the headlamps. The protuberances were prone to rust through, but the General kept the sport alive by supplying them as spare parts to be welded back in position.

Holden advertising ranged from the institutional *Australia's Own Car* to the imitative *We got football, meat pies, kangaroos and Holden cars*. This was a straight copy of an American jingle that finished with hamburgers and Chevrolets. Attempts were made to berate us for our lack of patriotism when sales of the model started to go into decline. *This is Australia, isn't it?* brayed the ad. Nobody seemed to know. Later the company tried to sooth commercial radio listeners by assuring them that Camira motors were exported to two countries. They didn't mention that the 1800cc version of the same motor is exported in much larger quantities from South America to participants in the World Car Concept. It all had a faint ring of desperation about it.

The history of GMH in Australia seems to underscore the futility of protracted local manufacture under heavy protective tariffs — repatriating profits that were earlier quite considerable yet making Australia over-dependent for employment on an industry of dubious value. Lemming-like we seem to want to repeat the Los Angeles experiment (GMH finally acquired Los Angeles' electric rail system in 1939). The time-worn philosophy that what is good for GMH and its oriental colleagues and competitors must be good for us, has resulted in Aussie getting an ulcer every time the General gets a gut ache.

Thousands of Australians will remember the Holden Six with some affection —

Others look at our extended cities, our massive energy consumption, and our world record death and injury rates and wish the General and his friends had stayed at home.

—Rod Bryant

† See Clive Beed, *Melbourne Development and Planning*, page 37.

AROUND THE STATE

Transport Study

V/LINE is to make a detailed study of all transport services in the Goulburn valley and residents are being urged to have a say in the study. [Former] Transport Minister, Mr Crabb, said the reviews were aimed at improving transport in non-metropolitan areas during the next year. They would help provide the most effective and efficient public transport network throughout Victoria.

Preliminary work on the study started in January and it should be finished at the end of March. The study area will take in the shires of Nathalia, Deakin, Waranga, Cobram, Tungamah, Shepparton, Rodney, Violet Town, Euroa and Goulburn, and the cities of Echuca, Shepparton and Kyabram.

Mr Crabb said further studies would be made in the La Trobe Valley, starting in March, the North-West Region in May, the Western Region in July, the Northern Region in September, and the North-East Region in November. Each study would take about three months, and would be undertaken by a study team of V/LINE officers who would examine the total operation of public transport in each area.

Each study also would be advertised widely in local media, and written submissions would be sought from interested people and organizations.

— *Reproduced with permission from Newsrail, March 1985.*

[The Gippsland Study is under way. It was announced in the Age on 10th April, and covers the Shires of Buln Buln, Warragul, Narracan, Mirboo, Morwell, Traralgon, Rosedale, Maffra, Avon, Bairnsdale, Omeo, Tambo, Orbost, Moe and Sale.]

CONCESSION FOR FOR COUNTRY TRAVELLERS

The Metropolitan Transit Authority is to be commended for introducing attractive concessions to rail commuters who purchase half-yearly and yearly tickets. These concessions are made available through organizations who bulk-buy the tickets.

We commend this innovation as it attracts patronage to the system and promotes patronage on a long-term basis.

However, commuters who travel into the city from country towns or between country towns are denied this concession, and we believe that the discrimination should be removed.

Country train travellers must be given the same concessions and should be encouraged to a long-term commitment to travel through the purchase of half-yearly tickets.

We call upon the Minister to direct V/LINE and the MTA to arrange for the introduction of concessions as soon as possible.

— Ken McIntyre

BUS SUBSTITUTIONS — a creeping disease?

It is with some concern that we note that a number of train services are being replaced with buses under the guise of "staff shortages".

Five services Monday to Friday on the Bacchus Marsh line were replaced by buses, and one on Saturday, commencing 19th November 1984, while other services have been thinned out. Similar changes were instituted in the Kyneton line. [Newsrail, January 1985]

The latest to go is a Sunday Melbourne to Pakenham train, which has been replaced by a bus between Dandenong and Pakenham. [The Sun, April 1985]

— R. V.

TRAMS TO RETURN TO BIRMINGHAM

Not too many years ago, I lived and worked in Birmingham, a city that was not noted for the quality of its railway network or its soccer teams. We lived just outside the boundary, 5 miles out, and I worked in the city. The only method of transport was by bus, as it was for the vast majority of "Brummies", and if we covered the journey of 5 miles in 30 minutes we considered that we had had a good run, 40 minutes was acceptable and 50 minutes was not unknown. The streets in the centre were teeming with buses: everywhere you looked there were buses, buses and yet more buses. The air in the city streets was pure exhaust: any flora withered and died, while at some intersections the road surface had been almost washed up onto the pavement, similar to waves welling out from the underside of a surfboard, by the sideways pressure of heavy buses making right and left-hand turns. These days I travel from Caulfield to Richmond in about 8 minutes, which is considerably further than it was in my heyday from Quinton to Birmingham.

There was some rail: the old LMS and GWR main lines passed through on their way north and south, east and west, so some suburbs were well served. Pre and post war, some suburbs had also been served by tram, but in the post war climate there seemed to be prejudice against trams (I still cannot fathom why) and they ripped up the entire network — as they did in London, Sheffield and countless cities in USA ... giving the old tram routes to the bus. Rationalization resulted in the abandonment of the old GWR routes in part, reducing the access by rail and thus increasing yet again the diesel bus. And so Birmingham progressed, and in the process slowly ground to a crawl each and every day despite the provisions of some freeways, flyovers and flyunders. The private car dominated the city sprawl, and inevitably the road toll mounted despite the millions invested in attempts to prevent it (vide Melbourne).

Recently the conurbation that consists of Birmingham in the centre, Coventry to the south-east, Wolverhampton to the north-west and hundreds of former villages that are now indistinguishable from each other in the industrial morass of the Midlands, all merged into one county unit known as West Midlands, and initially the new council relied heavily upon the bus, linking all the towns that made up the conurbation by bus routes. As time went on, the limitation of a public transport unit that uses the same rights of way as the private car became pitifully obvious.

The result has been an ambitious plan to go Metro, not quite on the same lines as London, Paris or Moscow, but a refreshing modernistic thinking. Existing rail routes are to be upgraded — this has already occurred with the *Cross City Line* that runs from Reddich to Lichfield, former LMS tracks that carried less traffic as alternative rail routes carried the "through" traffic to Bristol, Oxford and the north. The Cross City Line was an outstanding success. Plans are afoot for a second cross-city line, reactivating the disused GWR tunnel across the city to Snow Hill, and thence to Stourbridge, thus connecting the latter once more with Solihull and Stratford.

Other brand new routes are planned, flowing east, west north and south — in some cases utilizing old tram reserves. A Light Rail System is being planned, this time using standard gauge instead of the 3'6" used by the old trams. There will thus be interchanges between the new LRT system and the normal "heavy" rail, one great advantage over Melbourne. Assuming that final sanction and funds are granted — and I see no reason why they shouldn't be — the outlook for Birmingham and the West Midlands promises to be interesting and exciting. Completion has been projected for 1997: I hope that I may be able to see it. In 1984 I was in Birmingham briefly, travelling along my old route in from Kidderminster via Stourbridge. (After marriage I insisted on living near one of the few rail access points — no more buses for me!) This was very enjoyable, but the venture into the city streets was NOT. Buses there were in profusion; the streets were filled with a blue haze that was plain to see — and smell. The new streets and ring road showed visible signs of wear and tear. Over New Street Station, now the only station since the demise of Snow Hill (until its resurrection), there was a vast shopping centre reminiscent of Southland, Centre-

TRAMS TO RETURN TO BIRMINGHAM (Continued)

Point or Karingal Hub — a tremendous idea to boost rail travel that has been employed in Sydney in places like Chatswood.

I cannot wait to see the new LRT and ride on it. It may even improve access to the grounds of Aston Villa, Birmingham City and West Bromwich Albion which are all presently glorified traffic jams. LRT should increase the crowds and thus enhance the performance of all three soccer teams so that the quality of Birmingham's suburban travel and soccer teams may no longer be a joke.

— Ray Scott,
Frankston

RAIL REVIVAL IN THE U.S.A.

In the 1950s and 1960s the USA went through a phase of closing down many of its rail systems and constructing and expanding freeways and highways. Petrol was cheap and supplies seemed unlimited.

A rude awakening faced Americans when supplies of petrol and its pricing came under the control of the O.P.E.C. group. In the 1970s, America was forced to re-discover the railways, while in Europe, where rail systems continued to flourish, there was a renaissance of rail passenger services, with high-speed train services reaching new heights in progress, development and efficiency.

In Australia — a country normally 10 to 20 years behind transport developments in the more advanced countries — the U.S.A. disease of downgrading and closing rail services commenced in the 1970s. Successive Victorian Governments — strongly influenced by road lobby groups and transport bureaucrats — tried to convert Melbourne into another Los Angeles. The same practice continues today long after the U.S.A. — on which they modelled their ideas — was rebuilding its rail systems at more than fifty times the cost of pulling them out.

From our sister organization in the U.S.A. (the National Association of Railroad Passengers), we hear that the city of Sacramento (California) is constructing 28km of a light rail system, funded primarily from the cancellation and trade-in of 7 km of freeway!

San Jose, also in California, is constructing a 33km light rail system costing US\$382 million, and which will be the first rail transit system to be funded from the 1-Federal petrol tax, set aside for transit!

Other cities such as Los Angeles, San Francisco and San Diego, have planned extensions to their public transport systems costing hundreds of million of dollars.

The State of California is the leader in light rail systems in the U.S.A. Road lobby and anti-rail bureaucrats and politicians in Victoria and the rest of Australia, are left with egg on their faces, because the models they present have all turned their backs on road expansion. Let us hope it will not take the usual 20 years for this lesson to sink in. In the meanwhile, taxpayers and public transport users will be paying for their folly.

The The Federal Government reneged on its promises of the 1983 elections to build the Alice Springs to Darwin rail line. In its policy for the 1984 elections, all its emphasis is on roads. Regrettably our demands for funds for a Bi-Centennial Rail Project between the capital cities and costing only 10% of the funds the Government has allocated for Bi-Centennial road projects, have been turned down "owing to budgetary restrictions".

(Rail Revival continued on page 25)

— Ken McIntyre

Tunnelling for a new train

An almost straight stretch of track is being laid for a highspeed rail link between Hanover and Würzburg.

Every six hours a muffled thud echoes through the hilltops of Hesse's uplands. A few minutes later a small cloud of smoke appears, revealing the mouth of a new tunnel. This is just one of 62 tunnels in a new Hanover-Würzburg rail link which is designed to revitalise the German Federal Railways. If all goes as planned, from 1991 onwards this important, 327 kilometre long north-south route will be served by super-trains reaching a speed of 250 kilometres an hour.

A good third of the newly laid track is accounted for by tunnels, the shortest only 245 metres, the longest just under eleven kilometres. In all, 116 kilometres of track are in tunnels, 34 kilometres on bridges. Because this route has been designed for speeds of 250 kilometres an hour, the curve radius barely goes below seven kilometres and even freight

trains are planned to travel at 120, the inclines are never allowed to exceed 1.25 percent. This posed considerable problems for the planners, especially as the new line passes through the hard rock massifs of Hesse and Bavaria. Before construction work began 2,000 test drillings were carried out between Hanover and Würzburg to study the firmness, stratification and jointing of these mountain ranges.

Today Germany's largest construction project provides a total of 2,000 jobs. Those involved include specialists from abroad, such as Austrian mining experts with experience in Alpine tunnelling. They find this terrain hardly less of a challenge, than conditions in the Alps. A major difficulty is the mottled sandstone of the Spessart region. Construction work in this section is consuming a million Marks a day. The

83 kilometre stretch between Fulda and Würzburg alone necessitates the building of 17 tunnels with a total length of 34 kilometres through the Rhön and Spessart regions. Progress is painfully slow in the constricted shafts, where compressed air has to be pumped in to make working conditions at all tolerable. Austrian tunnel construction technology is generally considered the best and most advanced but still one twelve-hour shift – work goes round the clock – advances only twenty metres at the most. Every six hours blasting takes place. Then the working crew clear the shaft of rock (up to 500 truck loads daily) and secure the new section with girders and steel webbing mats. The final stage is a twenty centimetre thick layer of concrete applied with a spray gun. The tunnel sections being con-

TUNNELLING ... (Cont.)

structed in this project are the world's largest. Even on a straight stretch of track a sectional area of some 80 square metres is necessary – forty per cent more than is usually allowed for in today's twin-track tunnels. Curving stretches require even larger sections, and here the tunnel has the appearance of a gaping cavern.

The bridges are no less monumental. The Main Valley bridge near Gemünden, for instance, spans the river with a length of 798.7 metres. In order to avoid obstructing shipping it was necessary to forego the use of pillars. The result is the world's longest pre-stressed concrete railway bridge. Not surprisingly, tunnel and bridge construction is the most costly item in the 13,500 million Mark project. Yet this engineering work is a necessary feature of a straight route speeds. The new track will also dispense with other obstacles: roads and lanes will cross the railway tracks by means of bridges, and level crossings will be a thing of the past. At intervals of roughly twenty kilometres there will be station sidings where express trains can pass freight trains without having to slow down. Construction work began in 1980, but the preliminary planning stage goes right back to 1971. Even at that time it was obvious that the largely obsolete railway network (in 1985 rail travel in Germany will be 150 years old) could no longer cope with current demand – particularly because it had originally been laid out primarily on an East-West axis, whereas since the separation of

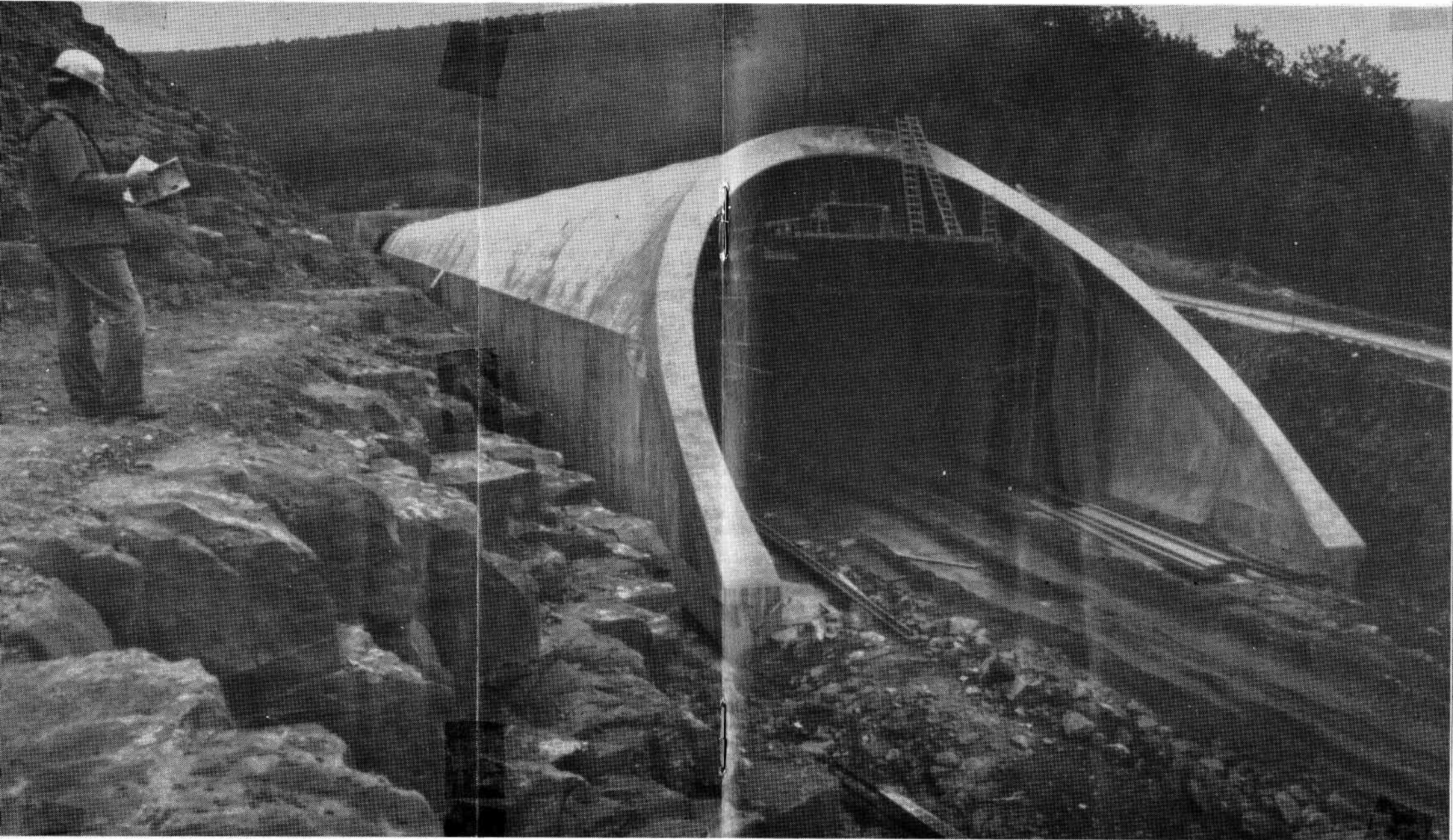


Sixty-two tunnels have to be built for the new Hanover—Würzburg rail link. This much-frequented route is the centre-piece of a programme to modernize and expand the German railway network. Thirteen stretches of track are to be upgraded and four rebuilt altogether.

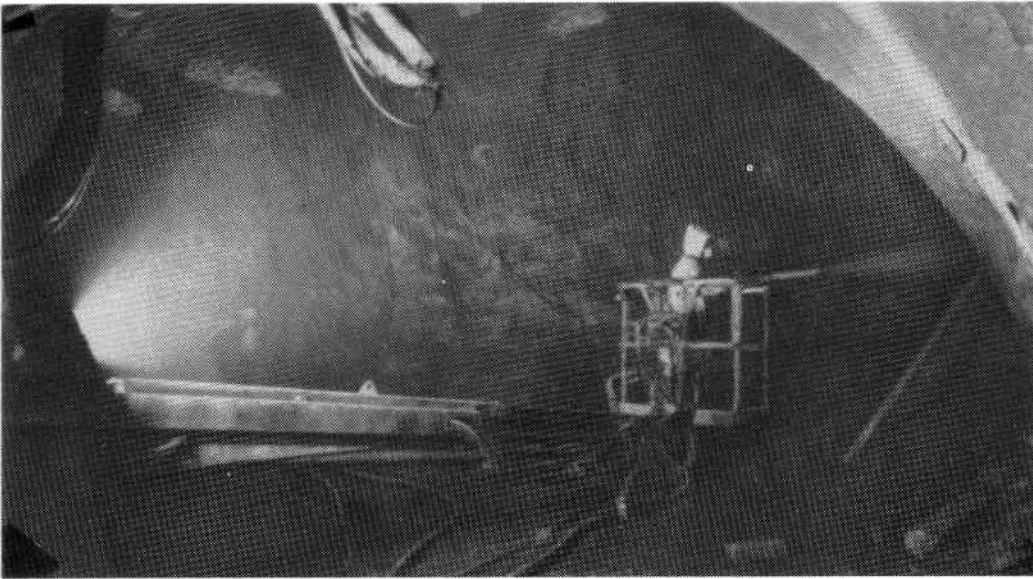
Germany the emphasis has been on North-South traffic. The result was winding and over-frequented routes and hence excessive travel times. This in its turn meant that the railways lost ground and customers, and losses grew. The intensive program of modernisation is aimed at making the railways competitive again. The initial programme outline was drawn up in 1971 and then finalized in the so-called Federal Communications Route Plan of 1980. This envisages

the financing of thirteen upgraded and two newly constructed routes by 1990. In the following years two further newly constructed lines are to be added.

As early as 1985 passenger trains will be travelling at 200 kmh on tracks that were upgraded in 1970. Also currently under construction is a 99 kilometre stretch of new track linking Mannheim and Stuttgart. Yet pride of place in the modernisation programme goes to the Hanover—



One of the tunnels for the high-speed rail link between Hanover and Wurzburg.



It is like being in a mine shaft for the construction workers in the vast tunnels of the new railway link. After the rock has been blasted, spray guns are used to apply a twenty centimetre thick layer of concrete. (Photo) This reinforces the tunnel walls.

TUNNELLING FOR A NEW TRAIN (Cont.)

Würzburg route. This is one of the busiest railway lines in the Federal Republic of Germany. Being an extension of the Bremen-Hanover and Hamburg-Hanover routes, it serves as the connection between the North German ports and southern Germany and hence – in a wider context – between the Scandinavian countries and Austria, Switzerland and Germany. Upgrading this stretch of track would barely have been possible because it winds its way through mountainous country. Only by constructing a new, almost straight railway line is it possible to cut travel times. When opened, the Hanover-Würzburg rail link will take only one hour and 45 minutes – half the time required today.

The German plans are of

course in part an emulation of the French train à grande vitesse, which reaches speeds of up to 260 kilometres an hour on the Paris-Lyon route and has been an unprecedented success. The German answer to the French supertrain is the 120 series locomotive, which will first operate in 1985 on a 23 kilometre test track. During trials the 11,000 HP locomotive has already been taken up to 350, although as yet only in a test bay. In daily service – on the Hanover-Würzburg run – it will be limited to a maximum speed of a mere 250. The new high-speed line is the most extensive and difficult construction project ever undertaken by the Federal Railways. A special department was created for the purpose, its three sections collaborating

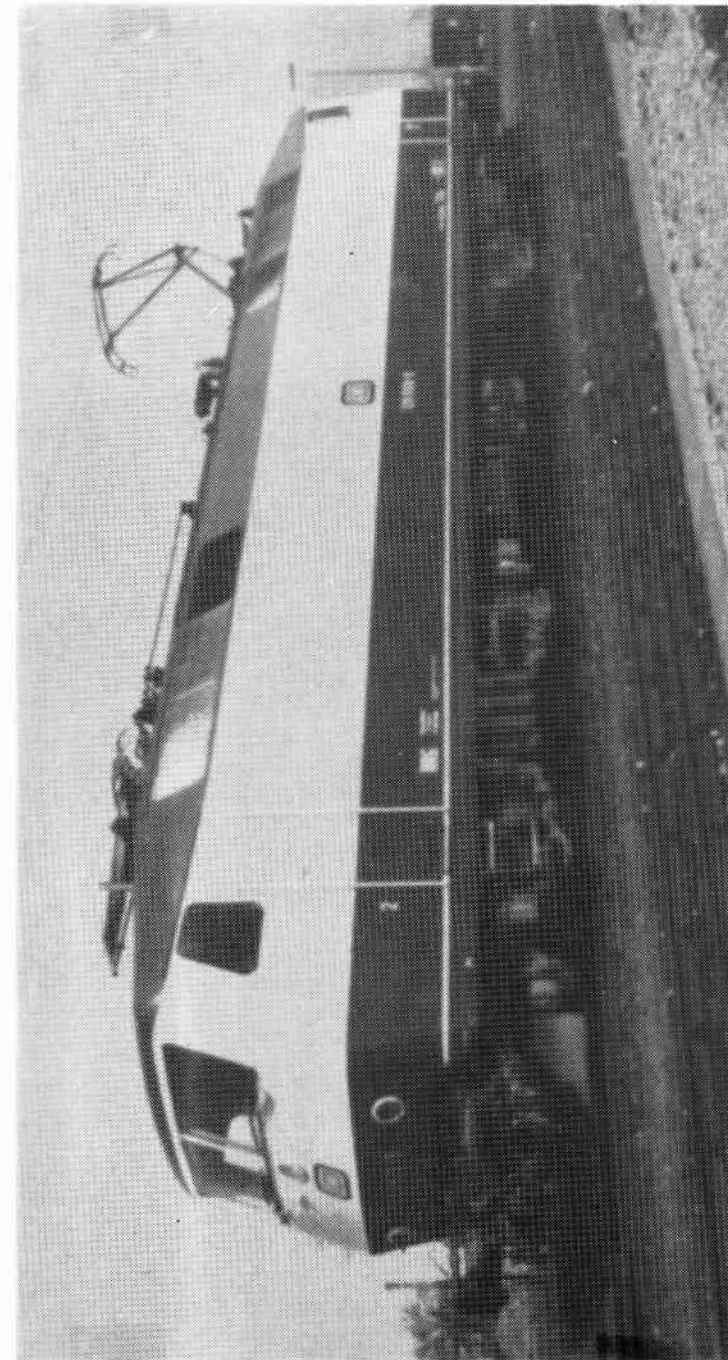
TUNNELLING ... (Cont.)

with private engineering firms to carry out and supervise the construction work.

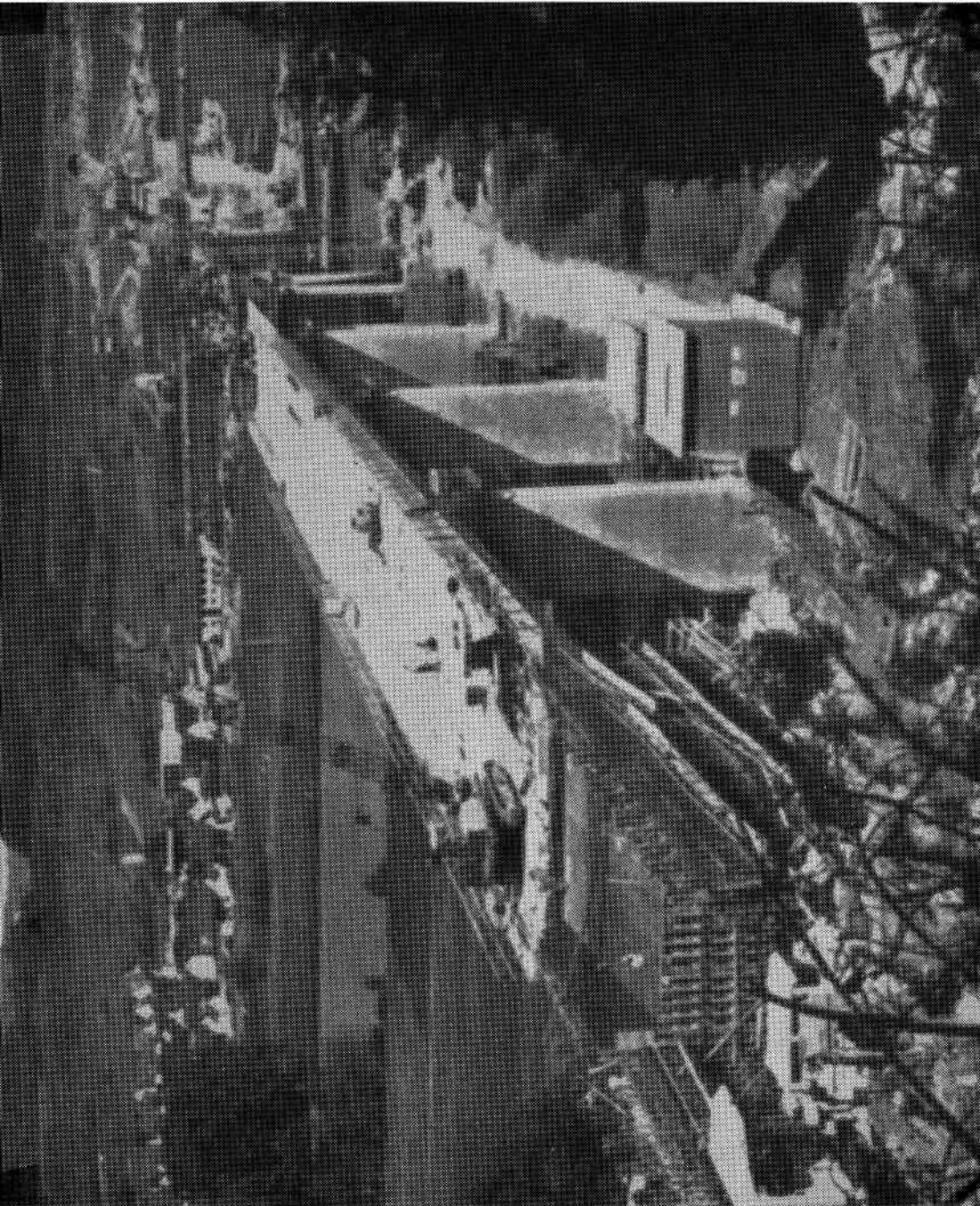
The last investment is already proving worthwhile in terms of the employment situation. If the new Mannheim-Stuttgart route is included, a total of 28,000 secure jobs have been created for ten years, covering the construction, iron and steel and electrical sectors. Moreover, seventy percent of the Hanover-Würzburg route lies in the proximity of the GDR border – an economically relatively underdeveloped area which needs new jobs.

There is plenty of work still to be done on the project: none of the finishing touches – like signals and conductor lines – have yet been added. But 75 percent of the route is already under construction, and every day new sites are added, with their complement of generators, giant bulldozers, dump trucks and concrete mixers. The high-speed track will take up 935 hectares of land in all. Yet the damage done to the countryside will be relatively small. Hardly has the cement dried on the embankments and tunnel openings when the bare patches of ground are planted with new shrubs.

Civil protest campaigns which began by opposing the project have gradually withdrawn, and so far not a single compulsory purchase order has been necessary. Even the environmentalists have had few grounds for complaint because the planners themselves have kept a watchful eye on the countryside. One example: an embankment was moved a hundred yards to avoid damaging a rare variety of orchid. RH



Eleven thousand HP is the performance capacity of the new 120-series superlocomotive, five prototypes of which are currently undergoing trials. In the nineties they will cut travel time between Hanover and Würzburg by half, reaching a speed of 250 kph.



The Main Valley bridge near Gemunden is an engineering masterpiece: completed in only eighteen months, its central section spanning the Main has an unsupported length of 135 metres.

RAIL REVIVAL IN THE U.S.A. (Continued from page 17)

Sacramento & San Jose

In March 1984, Sacramento began construction work on a transit mall for its \$131 million (US) 28km light rail system, consisting of two lines radiating from the city. One is to the east and the other is to the north-east. Twenty-six trams are on order, and some of the system is expected to open in 1986. Three grade-separation projects (that is, elimination of level crossings) have already been completed.

Also in March 1984, work began on San Jose's \$382 million 33km light rail system which will have 50 trams and 30 stations as well as a city mall. Half of the system should open in 1987.

Los Angeles

Los Angeles has been preparing to build a 33 km north-south tram line from the city to Long Beach. Now it will have a 27km east-west line to be built in the median of the Century Freeway.

The decision to construct the east-west tramline began rather curiously. A public referendum approved the eventual construction of the tramline along the freeway. Local officials had considered building a busway in the median initially and converting it to rail at a later time. But the Los Angeles County Transportation Commission (LACTC) voted to commence the rail project promptly, to take advantage of existing funding opportunities and to avoid the disruption of future conversion. The LACTC decided that the operating cost for the rail line would be less than that of the busway, by as much as US\$9 million a year. This difference is due to the higher labour costs of buses versus rail where large numbers of riders are involved. If the busway were to be built initially, converting it to rail later would cost about twice as much in today's dollars.

Construction of the Los Angeles to Long Beach line is expected to commence in the northern summer, and funding for the \$400 to \$450 million project will come entirely from county sales tax money. Twenty-eight km of the route will be on a former rail right-of-way and the remaining 10km will be on streets.

San Francisco & San Diego

In San Francisco, a 5km extension to its tramway is being planned to Balboa Park Railway Station (a station in the BART system).

San Diego, which opened its system in 1981, is planning a 25km branch from Imperial Station to El Cajon. The estimated cost is US\$113 million. The first 7km are already under construction and should be open in mid-1986. All the land for the remaining route has been acquired.

— Source: NEWS, August 1984, National Association of Railroad Passengers.

Gulf Coast Train Approved

Gulf Coast travellers were to be offered a new service from 29th April 1984 along the Mississippi coast when Amtrak began a daily New Orleans to Mobile train service. The new train services the cities of New Orleans, Waveland, Gulfport, Biloxi, Pascagoula and Mobile, cities that have been without passenger trains for 13 years. The 230km route is expected to be covered in about 3½ hours.

— Source: National Association of Railroad Passengers



DUBLIN GOES ELECTRIC

On July 23, Dublin introduced its new electrified rail system, called DART. Passenger traffic on that day was 50% higher than on a normal day's operation under the old diesel system.

The immediate popularity of the new service, allied to the fact that for the first week only, a limited schedule was operated, led to overcrowding on several of the early morning commuter trains, with some would-be passengers being left behind. On the second morning, six extra trains were put on to alleviate overcrowding. One of the trains commenced from Bray at the southern extremity of the route, 5 minutes late. Further along the route it was 15 minutes late. Delays were caused by crush crowds leaning against doors, preventing them from closing automatically. Drivers had to use a public address system to ask passengers to stand clear. Delays were also caused by auxiliary diesel trains being used to pick up passengers left behind by electric trains.

This electrified system, with less than 38 kilometres of track, cost 113 million, and has a capacity to move 80,000 passengers a day. It has been the subject of industrial disputes which prevented the system from starting up for over a year. Within a day of its commencing operation, another strike was threatened by drivers who wanted a 24% increase in wages to take trains up and down the line. It is not known how that dispute was resolved.

— *The Irish Times*, 24 July 1984.

TRAM BRAKES IN WEST GERMANY

In Karlsruhe-Ettingen, passengers standing in a tram do not have to look for a strap when their tram starts and stops.

A new direct current control method now makes it possible to start, accelerate and brake without the slightest jerk. Welcome features of the new trams include comfortable interiors and low running costs: when the brakes are applied, energy is automatically fed back into the overhead supply.

— *Source: Scala No. 11.1984*

BRITISH RAIL PROVIDES FOR THE DISABLED

Over the past four years, British Rail has designed new stations and carriages with the needs of the disabled in mind. British Rail plans to modify 55 major stations so that they are fully accessible and usable by people with differing disabilities. The facilities include dedicated parking places, ramps, toilets, stairs and platform edges marked to aid those with sight defects, induction loops at ticket windows to help those with hearing aids, and better signing and adaption of lifts to passenger operation. With these stations in operation (expected at the end of 1984), there would be a core of well-used stations catering for the needs of both the short and long-distance handicapped traveller.

Carriage design has provided wide entrance doors (some automatic), grab handles, and removable seats so that wheelchairs may be accommodated. Sleeper coaches have interconnecting doors between pairs of compartments. New carriages for inter-city and suburban use have lower floors and automatic sliding doors.

— *From TRANSPORT ACTION, Transport 2000 Canada Newsletter, March 1984.*

Opposite: Cartoon by Martin Turner courtesy *The Irish Times*.



A COMPUTERIZED RAIL MARSHALLING YARD

Hamburg-Maschen, on the edge of the Luneburg Heath, is Europe's first computerized rail marshalling yard where wagons are shunted fully automatically by computers.

Every day, 200 trains with a total of 7,000 wagons leave the seven kilometre long and 1 km wide station. They transport 88,000 tonnes of goods all over Germany. Personnel are no longer required for throwing points: the computer has it all under control. All its operations are done in a fraction of the time taken by men. Even the locomotive is remotely controlled.

The yard now employs 20% of the staff required at conventional marshalling yards.

— Ken McIntyre

INTERSTATE NEWS BOUQUETS AND BRICKBATS

On a new year holiday trip, V/LINE showed that they can rise to the occasion when something special crops up, but for something routine, that's another story altogether.

Bouquets

Our interstate holiday trip commenced on an afternoon Albury train in early January. Shortly after leaving Seymour, my daughter became ill. I advised the guard, who obtained the conductor, who radiod the driver who radiod ahead. Within a few minutes of our alighting at Euroa, an ambulance arrived. Three times during that day, the stationmaster called at the hospital, twice to ascertain what our changed travel requirements were, and once to deliver our luggage. I considered that to be "above and beyond".

Brickbats

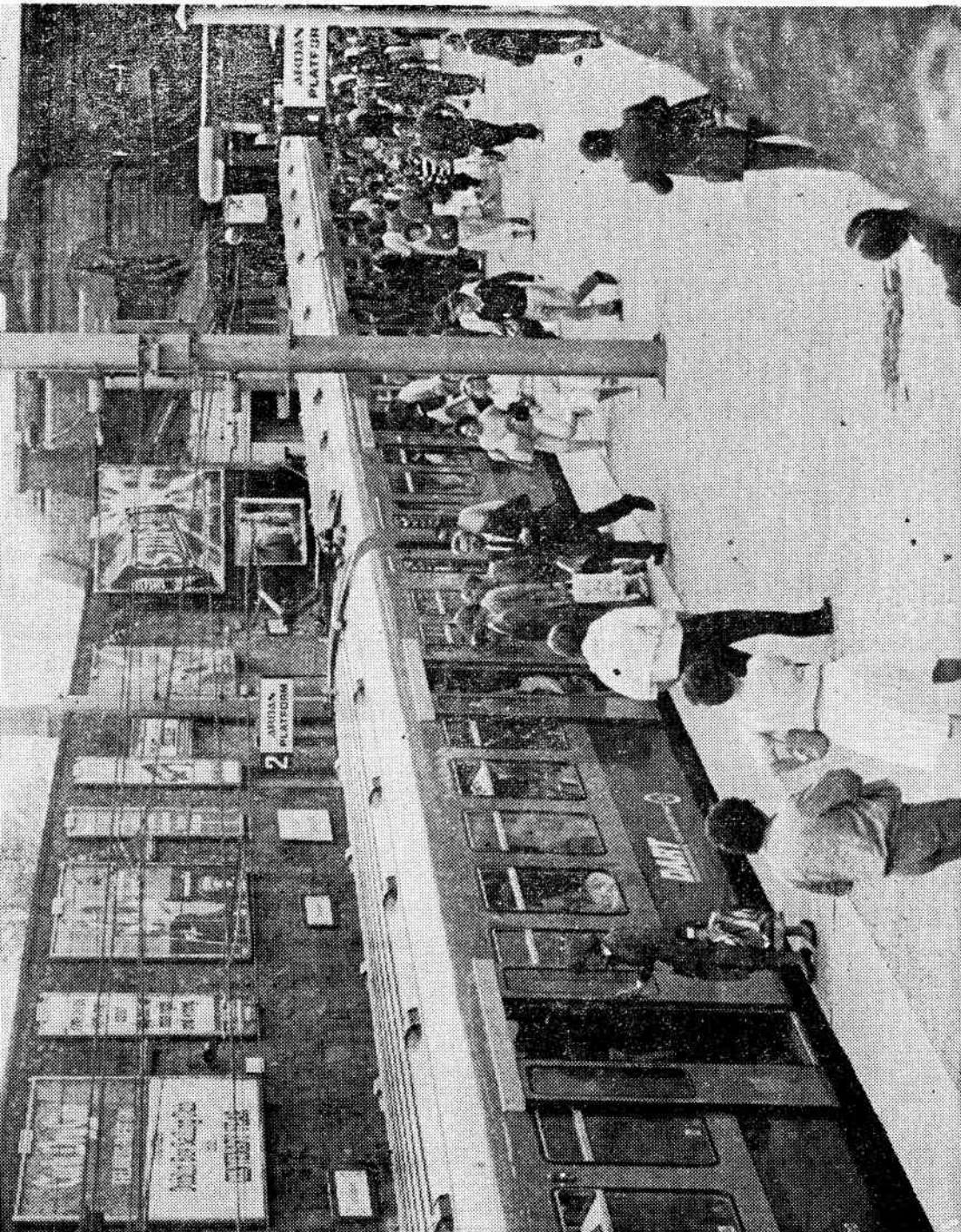
In late January, we departed again, this time on the Intercapital Daylight bus (there was a NSW train strike). Shortly after departing Albury, we made a 20-minute halt for a late lunch at a road-side stop. There was only one attendant. There was nothing prepared (no sandwiches) nor anything hot. The railways had not made any arrangements about meals. Back at Albury, we had had a 20-minute wait while railway staff fiddled around organizing new passengers into seats. About 200 metres from Albury railway station, there is a Kentucky Fried Chicken restaurant where we could have obtained any amount of food. (Combined with the 20-minute lunch stop, we could have had a leisurely 40-minute lunch break). The evening meal stop was similarly short.

On the return journey on 2 February, we took the Intercapital Daylight Express. The power car (which provides air-conditioning) was defective in Sydney Central. The train started on time, but we were put into Flemington (Sydney) siding for 50 minutes while an attempt was made to rectify it. By June, the front two cars were unsanitary, as there was no water, and the air-conditioning had failed again. Nevertheless, by Albury, we had made up all but 15 minutes of the lost time.

At Albury, no attempt was made to replenish the water supply.

At Wodonga, we suffered further delay, and again along the way to Melbourne, as a consequence of two signal failures. Thus we lost an hour on the short run from Albury to Melbourne.

In my opinion the service both ways was of an unsatisfactory standard for an interstate journey. Even the organization of the bus was not up to the impeccable standard obtained from private operators charging a mere \$25 (the V/LINE bus fare was \$56). (And what was the purpose of having a guard on the bus?) — Robin Vowels



One of the new Dublin Area Rapid Transit (DART) electric trains at Dun Laoghaire. Note the externally-mounted sliding doors. (Photo courtesy of The Irish Times.)

XPT INTO VICTORIA

In March 1984, a presentation was made to the Victorian AFULE and other unions regarding the future of passenger services in the Melbourne to Sydney corridor. The following report, prepared by Divisional President Bill Patterson, appeared in the AFULE Divisional News.

The future of overnight passenger services on this corridor was placed under a cloud in the latter part of 1983 when it was being proposed that the Southern Aurora and Spirit of Progress should run as a combined train owing to passenger down-turn.

The unions were informed that the rail share of the market had been declining over a number of years [and no wonder; see below — Ed]; however, in the past two years passenger traffic had fallen off by 25%. Contributing factors to the drop in this period were the introduction of reduced air fares by East-West Airlines and upgrading of the Hume Highway which paved the way for heavy discounting by the road coach operators.

At the present time, the rail share is approximately 305,000 passenger journeys per annum, which represents about 4% of the travel market between Melbourne and Sydney. V/LINE expect further pressure to be put on by its competitors by way of quality and cost-effectiveness of their operations.

Their position from an economic point of view then becomes one of either quitting the passenger services altogether, or carrying out a dramatic improvement. Their choice is the latter, that is, to upgrade the service to enable it to compete with their competitors. Three options were considered as ways of improving the service:—

- (1) Refurbish the existing carriages and combine the two overnight trains in an endeavour to lower costs;
- (2) Replace all existing trains with the proposed new Intercity carriages and use conventional locomotives to haul them; and
- (3) Replace all existing trains with two XPT sets.

Option 1: To consider upgrading of existing services is unacceptable to V/LINE on three counts. First, it constitutes no perceived improvement in the market place. Merely a cosmetic effect to the old trains to run existing train schedules. Secondly, the cars [carriages] would ultimately require a greater commitment of capital than either of the replacement options owing to their age — Spirit of Progress 24 to 47 years old, Southern Aurora 22 years old, Inter-Capital Daylight 32 to 36 years old. Thirdly, continuation of the existing services involves operating cost being significantly higher than it would be [by] using fast new trains.

Option 2: Whilst the proposed V/LINE Intercity cars would have the capacity to cater for the service, they would be difficult to sell to the New South Wales public owing to the travellers in that State becoming XPT orientated. The Intercity train would generally require two locomotives if it were to maintain comparative schedules with the XPT and would, in fact, be 15% lower in operating costs. However, it would not be marketable in New South Wales.

Option 3: On financial grounds, XPT is the most expensive option costing more to build and operate, primarily owing to its push-pull configuration which demands two captive locomotives per train. Allowing for maintenance and failures, six XPT locomotives would be necessary. The XPT has gained a distinct marketing edge owing to its popular image in N.S.W., and advance publicity suggests the same in Victoria.

— Reprinted with permission from Railway Digest, August 1984.

[Just who made the presentation to the unions is not explained. One of the options not covered is that of actually reducing fares to match those of the private bus operators. That would probably

XPT INTO VICTORIA (continued)

at least double patronage. It is not surprising that patronage is declining in view of the poor service currently offered: late trains, sub-standard facilities (for example, no water, faulty air-conditioning, restricted meal times on the Spirit, and so on. These problems have nothing to do with the carriages themselves. The decline in patronage has nothing to do with upgrading the Hume Highway, either. It is simply that private operators are charging \$25 for a one-way trip. Their organization is good, and there have not been any problems. On the other hand, virtually every interstate train trip I have made in recent years has been marred by some organizational problem.

As regards the XPT, the fare from Albury to Sydney is \$53 while the economy fare from Melbourne to Sydney by train was \$56. The train fare has been upped again in the past couple of months. On this basis, the minimum fare between Melbourne and Sydney by XPT would be \$80 at the old rates. — Ed]

MELBOURNE TO SYDNEY SERVICES

The interstate rail services to Sydney are the Inter-Capital Daylight Express, which provides a daily (except Sunday) daytime journey, the Spirit of Progress, which provides mainly seating but limited sleeping facilities, and the Southern Aurora, which provides only sleeping berths — the latter two trains running nightly.

If the three existing trains to Sydney are replaced, we need to be sure that the replacements are better in every way. That is, the comfort, journey time and the fare structure all need to be improved. Both the XPT and the Victorian N-cars [Intercity cars] ride very well, but this standard needs to be preserved at higher speeds. [We do not know how well the N-cars will perform at higher speeds. It is unlikely that they can run at 160kph; the proposed new country carriages would. — Ed.] The XPT seating should be improved, while the interior of the N-cars is a little harsh in appearance. An interstate train should have high standard catering arrangements — not the unreliable buffet service we have now. The need to market the rail journey has been mentioned, but no-one in railway circles has yet come up with a recipe for reliability. This is a must if the train is to remain as a viable alternative. Instead, we read that the image of the XPT is needed. This in my opinion is wrong. If 160kph conventional locomotives had a "bullet snout" and a distinctive coat of paint, this image would be just as easily marketed as the XPT, provided basics of reliability and service are provided.

If the three trains are to be retained, the stops now made by the Daylight are probably satisfactory, with the need for engine changing removed at Albury, but the running time in Victoria must be markedly reduced in order to cut the schedule by at least two hours. Most of the reduction in time would need to be made in Victoria, as north of Juneee, gradients and curvature are constant and severe. This leads to the necessity for improved track in this State, a fact that is obvious to anyone travelling by train, and the observation that with the A-class locomotives capable of 150kph, it is the track that should receive first priority.

The question of whether the Spirit of Progress and Southern Aurora are replaced with one train or two is an interesting one. The Spirit makes too many stops in NSW and if only one train is used, these stops would then need to be made by the NSW XPT. A running time of 10 hours in theory would allow one set to operate both the night and the day service, but few of us would have a belief that this is a practical idea. It may be more practical if running time can be reduced to less than 10 hours by the elimination of stops such as the one the Aurora makes for a crew change and to load mail at Goulburn. Then again, there is little point from the passenger's point of view in getting to the destination at an early hour of the morning, so a slow overnight journey perhaps does not matter.

The bottom line in this discussion is, of course, the cost. With the XPT option

MELBOURNE TO SYDNEY SERVICES (Continued)

15% higher in cost than high-speed Intercity style, the current shortage of capital, the dubious superior marketing edge of the XPT option, good public acceptance of V/LINE's N-sets and present country timetable, and greater flexibility in locomotive rostering, the Intercity option would seem to be superior. The greatest argument against the XPT trains is in the estimated fares needed to meet a 50% cost recovery.

Would the public pay \$70 first, \$49 Economy on an XPT? [Minimum fare at least \$85 at today's figures — Ed.] Of course, they would not know that they could have travelled on an Intercity for \$54 / \$39, but there are the present V/LINE country fares to use as a yardstick, and there is that ever-present stream of road vehicles going up and down the Hume Highway at \$25.

When the internal XPT fares are examined, we see that the fare from Sydney to Kempsey, 460km, is \$28.80 Economy, but \$48.80 by XPT. This is in sharp contrast to the present Sydney to Melbourne economy fare of \$56 for 960km. Recall that the Economy travel option does not exist on the XPT. Could a joint N.S.W. / Victorian XPT afford to offer economy travel? Again, if we try to look into the future, what guarantee is there that if XPT trains run the interstate services, that there will not be fare rises in proportion to the internal NSW fares?

All this makes one wonder whether the railway authorities are really interested in providing a service for the public in the best possible way, or putting on trains which look superficially attractive, yet are unreasonably expensive to travel on.

— Howard Girdler,
Mornington

HIGH SPEED TRAIN FOR BRISBANE

A high speed train between Brisbane and Robina on the Gold Coast is expected to commence operations by 1989 at a cost of \$136.8 million.

By 1991 the rail link's income is expected to recover its costs of operations and by the year 2004 it is expected that all annual costs including servicing of capital will be balanced by receipts.

The estimated return fare is \$10 including the anticipated inflation rate of up to 10%.

Trains will run at speeds of 160kph and the journey will be covered in 65 minutes. A new design of rolling stock will be used for the trains.

Major upgrading of the track between Central and Benleigh will also be undertaken as part of the project.

(On the other hand, the XPT will be limited to 130kph owing to the inferior track and signalling facilities on the Victorian railway system. Queensland, it seems, will have better high-speed trains than Melbourne.)

— Ken McIntyre

SYDNEY TO GET NEW TRAINS

New double-decker commuter trains are to be built. The trains are to be air-conditioned and are to have TV passenger security, improved seating, smoother acceleration and braking, and communication between crews and passengers. It is expected that the trains will be more reliable and easier to maintain. They will also be faster (130kph). Each 8-car train will accommodate 2172 passengers. Tenders for 450 carriages will be called.

— Source: Newsrail, March 1985.

THE HOLLYWOOD AIR

Starsky and Hutch are slowing down,
Their lungs are full of lead.

The man of steel is tarnished;
Lois Lane is sick in bed.

The Bionic Man is chronic, his
Transistors are polluted.

We'd ask them out to Melbourne,
But the air's already — ed!

— Rod Bryant

MELBOURNE THE SMOG CAPITAL OF AUSTRALIA

Melbourne is the smog capital of Australia and is the fourth-worst affected big city in the world, according to the Environment Protection Authority.

The only large cities with worse air pollution are Los Angeles, Tokyo and Mexico City. Cars are the main cause of Melbourne's pollution. The worst smog occurs between October and April, on days when light northerly breezes carry the emissions from vehicles and industry out over the bay.

— Extracted from the Age, 28th November 1984.

TRAIN INDICATORS — A waste of Taxpayers' Money

The underground rail loop was opened on 26 January 1981. As part of the multi-million dollar signal system, train indicator boards were provided at Richmond Station to advise passengers of the departure times of trains.

Thousands of passengers, especially in the morning peak, change at Richmond from trains travelling via the loop, to trains going direct to Flinders Street Station and vice versa. It is also used as a staging point for passengers travelling from one south-east station to another (south-eastern station).

A computer displayed train timings according to the timetable. With 95% of trains running late, the information displayed was farcical because the times were not updated to reflect actual departure times.

Following our criticism and demands for action, the rail managers informed us that they were unable to change the computer program controlling the display board, and disconnected the system.

Since 1982, we have asked the Transport Minister to bring in computer expertise from the private sector to rectify this deficiency.

Regrettably, no action has been taken. Millions of dollars of taxpayers' money has been spent on this facility to provide a service to train travellers. To continue to keep the display disconnected is a criminal waste of money and is condemned by our Association.

We call for action from the new Minister to restore a much-needed passenger facility.

— Ken McIntyre

ST KILDA RAIL REVISITED

The Story so far

Shortly after being elected in 1982, the Government proposed that the St Kilda railway be abandoned, and that a new light rail service be instituted which used part of the rail reservation.

The route would commence in Carlyle Street at St Kilda Road, move west to Luna Park, along the Esplanade to St Kilda Railway Station. There the route would follow the existing rail reservation to Clarendon Street where it would resume street service along to Spencer Street, thence into a city loop comprised of Collins, Spring and Bourke Streets.

This scheme — favoured by the then Transport Minister Mr Crabb — relied on picking up patronage from existing train and tram routes — specifically tram routes 15/16 (St Kilda/City/Moreland) and Routes 10/12 (St Kilda/City/Preston). In fact, it would involve the abandonment of tram routes 15/16 and 10/12.

Too Costly

This grandiose scheme is the embryo of a desire to re-vitalize the St Kilda rail line, but that desire has lead planners in the wrong direction. It requires the outlay of millions of dollars in:

- (1) removal of rail signalling and power supplies on the St Kilda line, and possibly the overhead itself;
- (2) installation of substation(s) for trams;
- (3) conversion of the track from broad gauge to standard gauge, and may even involve relaying some or all of the track;
- (4) constructing new ramps at Clarendon Street and a new intersection controlled by traffic lights;
- (5) a link along Spring street, to connect Bourke and Collins Street;
- (6) a link at Bourke & Spence Streets; and
- (7) a link at St Kilda Station into Fitzroy Street.

The expenditure of a sum of money as large as this to replace an existing adequate facility with an inferior one is an irresponsible waste of taxpayers' funds.

What are the Alternatives?

Suppose, for a moment, that it is desirable to provide a service to Collins Street (or Bourke Street) from St Kilda. Is there not already an existing tram line for most of the route? Obviously, yes, there is. And by providing a 20-metre link from Park Street into Fitzroy Street St Kilda, there would then be provision for Route 10/12 trams to commence from the desired terminus in Carlyle Street at St Kilda Road, and to journey to Collins Street along the existing route through South Melbourne.

This route has **three** important advantages over the Government's scheme:

- The existing route 10/12 bisects the relatively narrow strip of residential area of Middle Park and Albert Park. It is ideally sited to service residents throughout that area. On the other hand, the St Kilda train line skirts the area; (on the remote side of the rail line, there is a park) it provides only one station. More stations could be installed, but at significant cost because of the elevation of the railway.

In other words, the existing tram route is vastly superior in amenity, no matter how good the proposed service could ever become.

- The existing route 10/12 bisects the South Melbourne shopping centre. In off-peak times, there is steady use of the existing route 10/12 by shoppers. In contrast, the train is relatively inaccessible to the shopping centre. An extended tram route would

ST KILDA RAIL REVISITED (Continued)

provide access to St Kilda shopping centre and entertainment, as well as to the South Melbourne shopping centre.

- Its cost would be about \$100,000 to install a link from Park Street into Fitzroy Street. The alternative using the train reservation would cost millions of dollars.

And deleting routes 10 and 15 would lose all the cross-connections to routes 70, 77, 8, 72, 6, 5, 64, 3, and 67.

The only reason the Government has to pursue this white elephant is to be seen to "save" the St Kilda line. But it would spend millions of dollars to achieve this, when the equivalent could be achieved with one-thirtieth of the outlay.

The St Kilda railway is used by those who want to be whisked direct to Flinders Street to connect with other trains and by those who work near Flinders Street. Existing tram services already provide alternate and more convenient dispersal of passengers within the city (Collins Street & Swanston Street & University).

The PTUA supports the retention of the St Kilda rail line, but believes it should be extended through St Kilda. This service would have marginal impact on existing fixed rail patronage in the area, and would provide superior service for residents of St Kilda and beyond, where the existing feeder service is a bus. The PTUA is of the opinion that this would provide extra patronage for the St Kilda line, guaranteeing its future as a fast commuter service.

It is not that St Kilda is a remote place lacking transport facilities. It is a well-established suburb which is the confluence of 7 tram routes (five of them termini), one train line and bus routes.

Clearly it is irrational to embark on this proposal. There are no grounds on which it can be justified (economic, patronage, convenience) when a superior alternative is available at little cost.

If there are funds, let them be spent on extending the rail line into the St Kilda residential area and beyond.

— Robin Vowels

RINGWOOD BUS STUDY AN INNOVATION

Transport services for far too long have been decided by politicians and transport bureaucrats who did not use the services themselves.

The recent studies into bus services in various neighbourhoods initiated by the MTA were an innovation because for the first time, users, community groups and local councils were asked to make submissions on new services and changes to existing services.

The implementation of some of these changes, with better marketing and information facilities in the Ringwood Neighbourhood is welcome and the MTA is to be commended.

However, as with the best-laid plans of man, the success of these changes depends on two basic factors:

- That staff ensure efficient running at all times. Buses and trains running late put out the schedules of the connecting services.
- Having asked for these changes, the public have committed themselves to using them. With public transport services, governments follow the maxim that "If you don't use them, you lose them".

— Ken McIntyre

EXPRESS RUNNING — GOOD NEWS

Express running has been extended on the Belgrave line. Two trains (one each way) now daily run express from Ferntree Gully to Ringwood (as well as through the inner stations).

One, in the morning peak, previously stopped all stations in the Ferntree Gully to Ringwood stretch. Being one of the few running directly to Flinders street, it was also very popular. It's not clear what is being done for the people who used to catch it at stations now bypassed.

The evening one is all good news, being an additional trip leaving Flinders Street at 4.47pm via the Loop.

— *Norm Melford*

EMPTY TRAINS

It's a great feeling to sit on a platform watching a train "Not taking passengers" depart for your destination! Quite a few such scheduled empty trains still run on the system. Although they mostly run "against the peak", surely there would be negligible cost in allowing the few people who might want to use them to do so? My previous approaches to VicRail about this have brought the response that they like to keep these trains empty to allow schedules to be varied for general operational flexibility. It's no doubt debatable whether the frequency of this being exploited would exceed the frequency with which passenger-carrying trips are already cancelled, late, or truncated.

— *Norm Melford*

[Once it has been decided to send a train to a given destination, surely it's not beyond the realm of possibility to allow such trains to pick up and set down passengers wherever the train is scheduled to stop? — *Ed.*]

SHOTGUN TIMETABLE CHANGES

With the indecent haste of a shotgun wedding, the MTA announced that a completely new suburban timetable was to commence on 14th April, giving just one working days' notice (three calendar days). We expect that a lot of people will not hear of the changes until they begin to use the services next week. We also expect that there will be local shortages of timetable booklets.

It seems that the MTA does not learn from its mistakes. The previous time that a major change was made, booklets describing the Neighborhood scheme were not available until the day before its introduction; tickets were not provided until the day of the change.

The MTA says that it has been planning the changes for a year, but one thing it certainly forgot — *the users*.

ANOTHER OF THE SAME

The sudden state-wide rail strike on 28th March was brought on by another demarcation dispute, this time in country Maryborough, over the use of more rail tractors for shunting wagons instead of the use of shunting locomotives. The AFULE covers drivers of locomotives, and the ARU covers drivers of rail tractors.

That people all over the state should be inconvenienced by this totally irresponsible action over freight handling is an indictment of the unions, rail managers, and Government.

The union rightly deserves the contempt of the travelling public.

Not fourteen months ago, the state secretary of the AFULE wrote in a union newsletter that "the strike was extremely damaging to the image of the railways . . . [and was] . . . tearing our industry apart". [AGE, 10 January 1984]. Yet in reckless haste the AFULE followed the course it deplored so strongly just last year.

— *Robin Vowels*

LETTERS LETTERS LETTERS LETTERS LETTERS

Sir,

The following sequence of events *did* happen (on Wednesday 13th February 1985); they were *not* exceptional. I offer it

(a) for the insight it provides about the public transport system and how it serves [sic] its public, and

(b) as a counter to arguments that seek to reduce expenditure on public transport — for I assume that those who argue this way do not want to subject public transport users to quite the level of insecurity and inconvenience shown here.

9.00am Silver train stopped between stations for ½ hour. Driver unable to inform passengers of cause as there is no intercom.

9.40am Train arrives — my bike is gone from its usual spot at the station. Minutes later, a puffing station master returns it, apologizes and offers thanks. He had used it to race down the tracks to free a stalled train which had caused "my" earlier holdup. It was a small consolation for my delay.

5.00pm A derailment delays all trains returning to Melbourne. I recognize the signs on arriving at the station and 'phone ahead to say I'll arrive for a 6pm meeting at 6.30pm. Station master then announces the delay and the single public phone grows a long queue. Since I *did* get to 'phone and I have some work I can do sitting on the platform, I still feel that I'm holding my own.

5.30pm Train arrives.

5.40pm Arrive at a major station at the same time as a parallel express heading the same way. Passengers in my train grab belongings and rush to clamber on to the express, hoping to make up lost time. I just make it, with a bruise, as the express moves off. I notice I've left a small article in the slow train, but no matter, maybe I'm winning now?

5.50pm Arrive at the inner destination to find that vandals have removed the valve from the rear tyre of my other bike (there is no "safe" place to leave it). But I carry a large tool kit with spares (cyclists have no "RACV"); perhaps I'll still win? But no, I have only two of the three pieces needed. It looks as if I've been defeated. However, there is a friendly newsagent nearby, and previous experience revealed that he keeps a stock of spare parts for his paper-boys' bikes: will he be open? He is, and he's happy and able to help.

6.30pm I do indeed arrive.

Was life intended to be this difficult? Is such a diabolical level of personal organization necessary to survive without a car?

— *Frank Fisher,
Clayton*

The Secretary,
Sir,

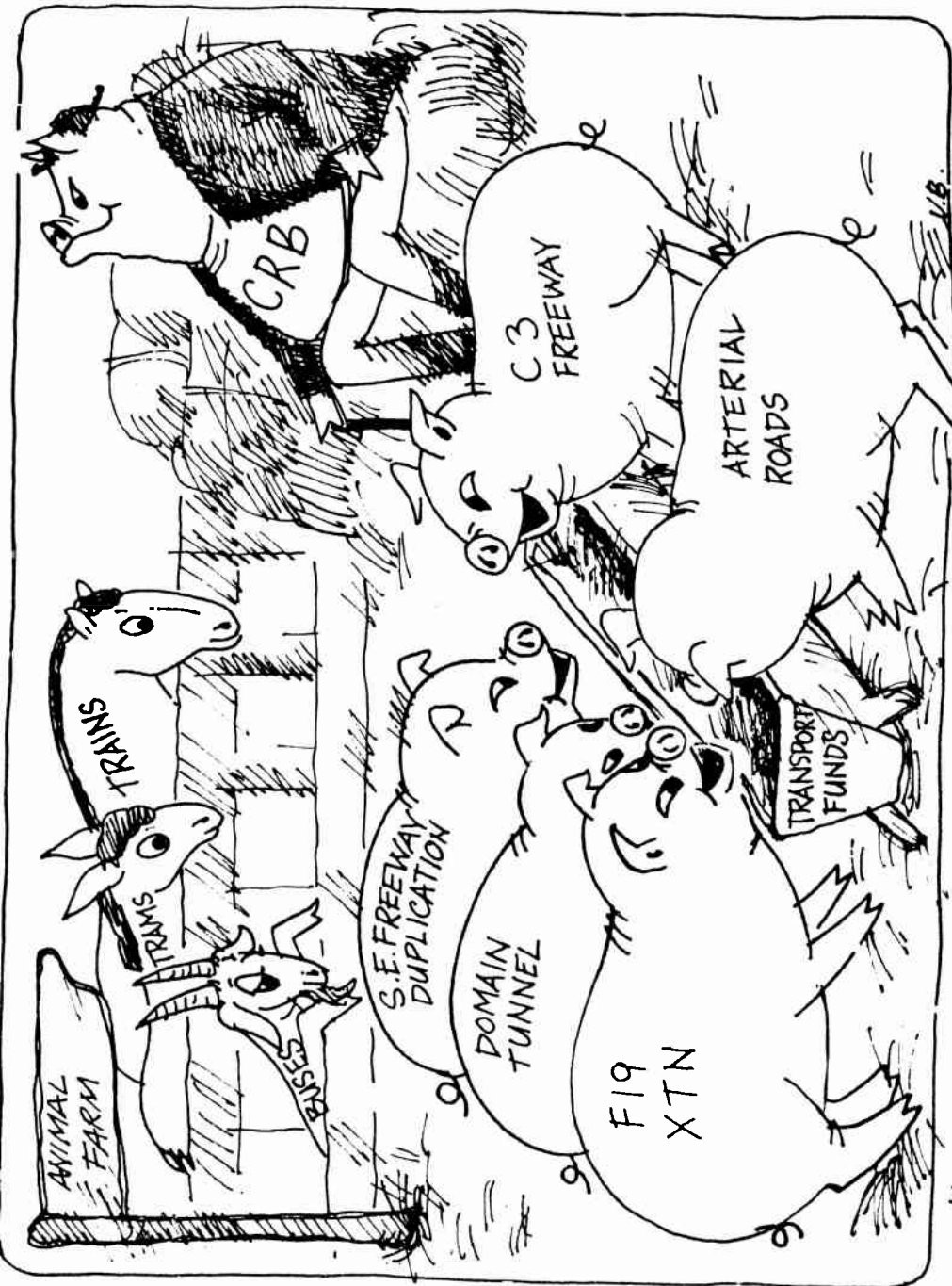
3 February 1985

I would like to congratulate you on the excellent work that you and your committee are doing for public transport.

The Newsletter is very well produced and written, and the articles most interesting.

I hope you will continue with the good work for many more years.

— *Les Newbond,
St Kilda*



“ BUT SOME ANIMALS ARE MORE EQUAL THAN OTHERS! ”

Sir,

The January issue of the Newsletter contains an item, *Country Rail Patronage Up*. By promoting use of off-peak country trains through discounting, V/LINE claims to have maintained patronage on peak trains and attracted new passengers to off-peak services.

City dwellers may not be aware that peak trains are those which run at week-ends when many young people return to country towns to be with family and friends. Most of these travellers would prefer to live in the country, but having undertaken study, apprenticeships or employment in the city, they are severely disadvantaged by having to buy peak travel tickets each week-end, often out of meagre apprenticeship wages.

Whilst discounting may be an acceptable way to run a hire car business, it is a thoroughly confusing and unfair method of attracting customers to public transport. V/LINE would win far more friends (and passengers) if it reduced fares at the week-ends when the majority of people travel, or better still, revert to the former system when there was more consistency and less of a bargain basement approach to fare structure.

— M. Rimington,
Mordialloc

NOTICE

Your Secretary Ken McIntyre will be on a three-month holiday in Europe from mid-May.

Please send all subscription renewals and applications for half-yearly and yearly tickets direct to the Treasurer David Bowd at [REDACTED], Rosanna 3084.

During the period 15 May to 16 August, please address all other correspondence to the President Dr Doug Sherman at [REDACTED], Glen Iris 3146.

Dr Sherman will also be handling media liason. His phone number is [REDACTED] after hours.

THOSE UNMANNED STATION BLUES

For some time the Ministry has been having talks with unions on de-manning suburban railway stations. In a “one-step-forward-two-steps-back” approach, the Government proposes that major stations would be kept open, but lesser stations would be kept permanently unmanned, while others would be staffed only at peak times.

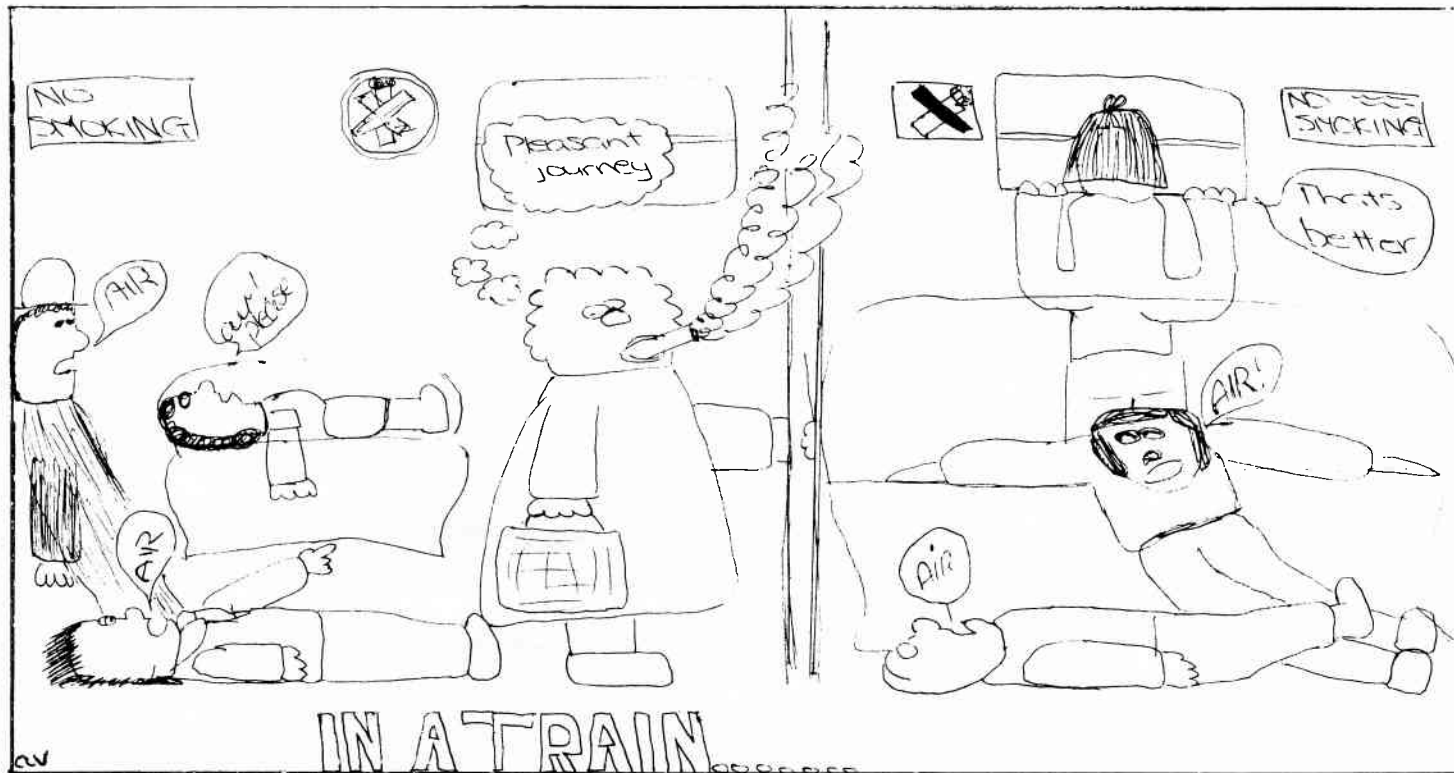
This about-turn seems curious in view of the Government's policy of manning suburban stations — a policy which it implemented on coming to office in 1982.

The press claimed that no action would be taken (to implement the change) until after the state election.

Not unnaturally, the rail unions are displeased, and might explain why they have been a bit ‘toe-ey’ lately.

The PTUA is keen to see stations manned for passenger security and to avoid freeloaders.

— Source: Melbourne City Sunday, No. 9, 16 December 1984



NO SMOKING PLEASE

Here's another social comment from our worthy scribe,

On smoking on public transport, side by side
 With those who prefer to take in clean air,
 What joy it is to find it pure in there.

Tram crews could set a good example
 And refrain where're they handle
 Tickets, change; do they think we're fools?
 How else can they have passengers observe the rules?

There's one sure way on trains remote,†
 To guarantee air free from smoke,
 And that's to have a separate compartment
 Where those who indulge can seek contentment.

† Obscure reference to country trains.

— R.V.