



Inquiry into the West Coast Main Line Modernisation Programme.

Mr Withrington's Closing Statement.

Preface.

During 2001 our director, Mr Withrington, appear on behalf of the Railway Conversion Campaign at the Public Inquiry into the West Coast Main Line Modernisation Programme. His Closing Statement and Railtrack's rejoinder are available here because they demonstrate that Railtrack's immensely expensive Inquiry team could do nothing to overturn any of the fundamental facts presented by Mr Withrington, and it is those facts and the underlying research which form a significant part of this Web site.

However, Transwatch itself does not canvas for wholesale Railway Conversion. Instead, and before any policy is developed, Transwatch believes the facts should be established leaving others to draw their own conclusions. Meanwhile unprofitable railways, or those threatened with closure, should be paved to enable express coach services to provide feeders to the main lines.

More generally Transwatch is interested in making the best use of land already committed to transport in the interests of the community as a whole.

Mr Withrington's Closing follows.

Inquiry Ref. GEN/With/1051/C1

Objection to
Railtrack (West Coast Main Line) Order

Closing statement

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Wp ref. railcon/close

1 SUMMARY

- 1.1 Railtrack's modernisation is to cost £60 billion. That has had no effect on the share price which originally valued the company at a paltry £5 billion. Hence the programme is, in purely financial terms, like burning 600,000 houses each worth £100,000, the residential accommodation for 1.5 million people or destroying the product of 60,000 working men's lives. Similar scaled numbers apply to the West Coast Main Line Modernisation programme, part of which is the subject of this inquiry.
- 1.2 The evidence I have brought to this inquiry shows that, contrary to popular belief, the replacement of the railway lines by a road surface managed to avoid congestion would:
 - Multiply the productivity of the network by a factor in the range 3 to 5 while reducing costs by a similar amount.
 - Create the opportunity for great environmental improvements by the removal of traffic from existing roads.
 - Reduce energy consumption by (30-50)%
 - Reduce casualty costs significantly.
 - Release the development potential of endless derelict railway and other land in the hearts of our towns and cities.
- 1.3 If that is so then Railtrack's modernisation programme and the WCMLM can in no way support overarching Government policy summarised here as providing best value for money while protecting the environment, reducing fuel consumption, reducing casualty costs and providing accessibility for the nation.
- 1.4 Probably, first time readers will regard that with incredulity, for rail has come to occupy a territory close to heaven in the hearts and minds of most people. However, against expectation, my case has proved impregnable to challenge. That is because the case is rooted in national statistics and ordinary arithmetic, none of which can be overturned in a discussion devoted to finding the truth. In contrast the rail Modernisation Programme depends on misrepresentation on a massive scale, carried on by the railway lobby for decades.
- 1.5 The following sets out the key issues on a point by point basis along with appropriate comment and references.

2 SUBJECT OF INQUIRY

2.1 This inquiry is confined to a small section of the WCMLM costing only £0.314 billion out of the total of £(6.3-9) billion. Hence it could be argued that the strategic issues I have raised are outside the terms of reference of the inquiry.

2.2 However, the inquiry works sit within the WCMLM which sits within the £60 billion Modernisation Programme which sits within Government policy. Additionally, Railtrack has called Government policy, and European Policy, in support of its case. Hence the strategic issues are central to the matter, providing the Inspectors with good reasons for including my case in their report. I have every hope that they will indeed take a sufficiently wide view of their brief to enable them to do that.

3 PRIVATISATION

3.1 Privatisation, contrary to Mr Byers' belief, has been a brilliant success for, under privatisation, passenger-km rose by 30% while deaths to passengers were reduced significantly due to the elimination of slam doors. Additionally privatisation ensured the actual costs to the nation could not be concealed.

3.2 Now that the system has, in all but name, been re-nationalised the latter advantage may be lost. However, the immense cost of rail and all the practical problems will remain unchanged. Perhaps Mr Byers should be made aware of that lest he believes re-jigging the management structure can magically make the bills go away.

4 FINANCE

4.1 Railtrack's fixed assets include 32,000 kilometres of track, 2,500 stations, 40,000 assorted bridges, tunnels and viaducts, 90 maintenance depots and over 1000 freight terminals. The replacement cost is in excess of £300 billion.

4.2 Paragraph 1 of the summary rehearses the scale of the £60 billion Modernisation Programme, within which the subject of this inquiry sits, in terms of housing and working lives. It is also instructive to compare the £60 billion, and the now £(6.3-9) billion for the WCMLM with other headline figures e.g.

(a) £(1-2) billion for the loss of the World Trade Centre - enough to shake the foundations of the insurance industry and to impact on the stock markets around the world.

(b) £1 billion for combating AIDS worldwide.

(c) £8 billion aid to Chile.

(d) £20 billion for the destruction wrought by the El Nino.

(e) £100 billion for Argentina's foreign debt where default may drive the world into recession.

4.3 It follows that the £60 billion modernisation programme and the £(6.3-9) billion

WCMLM are not small beer. Additionally there is annual subsidy to Railtrack of £(1-2) billion excluding the seemingly endless exceptional maintenance programme.

4.4 Neither the subsidy, the Modernisation Programme, itself effectively guaranteed by the government, or the £300 billion replacement cost of the fixed assets have prevented the share price from collapsing, confirming that financial disasters do not come much bigger than this Modernisation Programme. The loss will damage the economy of the nation for decades.

4.5 The fact is tolerated because of the strongly held belief that rail is far safer, has far higher capacity, and is far kinder to the environment than road transport ever can be. However, as we have seen and as I summarise below, nothing could be further from the truth.

5 COMPARISONS - RAIL VERSUS ROAD FUEL CONSUMPTION

5.1 Passenger rail uses 2 to 3 times the fuel required by replacement bus and coach services. [Para 2.8.2. of main evidence GEN/WITH/1051/P1 and section 7 of the paper with the title "Railways Myth and Maths", read to the British Association for the Advancement of Science]. (Unchallenged by Railtrack, although there was extensive cross examination to do with the thermal efficiency of power stations, set at 35% in calculations. Criticism of that number is brushed aside in para 2.2 of the Rebuttal and comment following cross examination, GEN/WITH/01051/P1R4).

5.2 Rail freight is no more fuel efficient than lorries after allowing for the drag in and out to freight terminals. Main evidence (corrected) (GEN/WITH/1051/P1) paragraphs 2.8.5 to 2.8.9. (Unchallenged).

5.3 The combination of the above shows that if the rail function were carried out by buses and lorries there would be a reduction in energy consumption of between 30% and 50%, see Railways Myth and Maths. (Unchallenged).

CAPACITY AND USAGE

5.4 Rail has one quarter to one third the capacity to move people compared with express bus services using roads managed to avoid congestion: Main evidence, Section 2.5. (Unchallenged). Similarly the density of use, in terms of people or freight, that rail achieves on its immense network, serving the hearts of our towns and cities, is between one fifth and one third the density achieved on the motorway and trunk road networks, see GEN/WITH/1051 P1R3 Appendix A1 latest version. (Unchallenged).

5.5 Rail carries the equivalent of only 300 buses plus lorries per day averaged over the 32,000 km of track, compared with 15,000 vehicles per day per lane on the M1: Main evidence 2.3.2. (An attempted challenge by Railtrack failed when it transpired Mr Ash had (a) confused one way with two way flows in my evidence (b) used 8.5 tonnes

as the average lorry load when 13 tonnes would be the more correct number (see GEN/WITH/1051/P1R4 paragraph 3.1(b) where the value 12 should read 13) - Mr Ash had overlooked the fact that most rail freight is bulk freight).

SPEED AND COMFORT

- 5.6 Buses on motor roads managed to avoid congestion would offer journey times equivalent to, or shorter than, those offered by rail for distances up to 80 miles, encompassing 90% of rail journeys. For longer journeys the train would be faster. However, subsidised rail fares are (a) up to over 5 times the cost of competing and profitable express coach services despite those services suffering congestion, and (b) over 8 times forecast express coach fares (GEN/WITH/1051/P1R4 and associated schedule). Despite that Mr Ash, for Railtrack, doubted that replacement bus services would attract as many passengers as rail does. I comment that even on the longest journeys such as London to Glasgow, where rail may save 2 hours compared with a replacement express bus service, fares reduced from £175 to perhaps £20 would be compelling for most passengers.
- 5.7 Many people view buses with horror, probably because they have seldom been in a modern coach. However, during the last year some rail passengers who had been assigned to coaches said to me that the coach was more comfortable than rail. Others may find the knee room in a coach cramped. That could be solved by removing one row of seats. Probably London commuters, now suffering standing in crush conditions, would welcome a service at one third the cost providing seats for everyone and a service frequency perhaps 10 times as great as currently enjoy. In contrast, long distance passengers would lose the option to roam. However, when trains are full, that option is seldom exercised. Additionally, long distance coaches would provide toilets, television, a buffet service etc. according demand.

DEATH RATES AND CASUALTY COSTS

- 5.8 Rail kills more people per passenger-km than would express buses operating in similar conditions - see Appendix 6a to main evidence, "Railways Myth and Maths", and the DETR publication Focus on Public Transport. (Unchallenged). However, Sir Robert Horton in the Annual report of 1998/9 said "Rail is approximately 27 times safer (measured in terms of fatalities and serious injuries) than road". What greater misrepresentation of the facts can there be than that?
- 5.9 In an attempt to mount a challenge:
- (a) Railtrack provided an extract from the 1999/00 Year End Safety Performance Report (RT/GEN/RP/P1b). That document does nothing but create confusion

particularly where it inexplicably divides the rail death rate by two so as to be "in vehicle occupant basis" (their grammar not mine). In that context I commented "why not divide the death rate by the number of people in a battle ship - death rates are arrived at by dividing deaths by passenger kilometres - nothing can alter that".

(b) Mr Ash suggested, in paragraph 3.18 of his rebuttal RT/GEN/WITH/1051/R to my evidence, that fatal, serious and slight casualties for road should be suitably weighted and added together for comparison with the recorded casualties for rail. I commented that rail **does not** record slight casualties, a very large category indeed, and that "minor" casualties to passengers by rail mean those taken directly to hospital by ambulance from the scene of the accident, a much more damaged category of person than a serious road casualty. However, against reasonable expectation I presented, very recently to this inquiry, new evidence providing **casualty costs** for rail and bus on non-urban roads for all classes of movement casualty. That evidence meets Mr Ash's suggestion. Quoting from the conclusion to that paper - "Subject to some caveats:

- (i) Buses provide the lower casualty costs on all comparisons despite the heavy bias in favour of rail built into the calculations.
- (ii) Deaths in train accidents, the main focus of Railtrack reporting, account for only (10-15)% of all casualty costs in train accidents and hence to only (2-4)% of all casualties costs in movement accidents." I was astonished at the latter since I, along, I dare say, with most people, believed that deaths alone were of overriding importance only to find the facts providing a quite different story.

SAFETY EXPENDITURE

5.10 Previously I said the cost of stopping the SPAD amounts to some £14 million per life saved. (Main Evidence paragraph 2.7.8 and Railways Myth and Maths paragraph 8.16) Additionally the Advance Train Protection System may save 3 lives per year at a cost of £48 million per life (Letter to Railtrack dated 20th August). I compared those values with the cost of a fatality used to evaluate road schemes, namely £1 million at 2000 prices. Consequently it appeared that rail was prepared to sacrifice between 13 and 47 lives on the road system for every life saved on the railways. (Railtrack has not responded to either of those statements).

5.11 However, in the light of the recent evidence providing total casualty costs per fatality (and if the lives saved are all in train accidents) then the casualty cost per fatality rises

from the £1 million to £(6.5-11) million. That reduces the overspend by rail per life saved to the more manageable proportions of between a factor of 1.3 and 2.2 for stopping the SPAD and between 4.6 and 7.4 for the ATPS.

TRACK AND ROLLING STOCK COSTS

- 5.12 Track maintenance costs for rail are 6 to 8 times higher than for buses and lorries: Main evidence, Section 2.6. (Unchallenged).
- 5.13 The unit cost of the WCMLM is 5 to 8 times higher than building the M1 from scratch, Railways Myth and Maths (replacing main evidence at 2.6.7 because the relevant track length for the WCMLM is now cited by Railtrack as 1,000 km instead of the 1840 km originally assumed). (Unchallenged).
- 5.14 Passenger rolling stock for rail has annual capital costs 3 times the equivalent for buses after taking account of the different sizes and life spans of the vehicles: Main evidence, 2.6.6. (Unchallenged).

DISRUPTION

- 5.15 Rail is disrupted for weeks or months by an accident which would be cleared on the road system within hours. Indeed this very expensive low capacity system is perhaps uniquely susceptible to trivial events, such as a schoolboy prank, and may be disrupted for hours by minor environmental effects embracing a falling bird's nest, dew on the line, the wrong sort of snow, leaves on the line and too much sun. In contrast road is robust. (see main evidence at 2.9 and rebuttal to Railtrack's safety papers) (Unchallenged).

ENGINEERING FACTORS

- 5.16 The engineering consequences of steel wheel on steel rail are:
- The need for near perfect track laying, incorporating pre-tensioning the rails, and a meticulous maintenance strategy.
 - Immense stress between rail and wheel, leading to metal fatigue, reference the now legendary gauge corner cracking - requiring inspection at a near microscopic level.
 - A great loss in operational flexibility compared with road transport.
 - Stopping distances up to 4 times longer than required by road vehicles (Main evidence 2.10, Myth and Maths, section 11) so contributing to death and mayhem in the face of events such as the Land Rover at Great Heck which fell onto the track in February 2001. I comment that a high speed train is like a blind bullet - quite unable to stop within the sight distance of the driver.

5.17 Those seemingly trivial engineering facts provide the fundamental reason for the poor financial and operational performance of rail compared with road. (Unchallenged).

6 CONVERSION WIDTHS

6.1 The minimum width for two way road adequate for lorries is 6 metres, e.g. the Banbury Lane crossing Northants. The width of a two track railway line is generally adequate for a 10 metre road with no verges. Where railways approach towns and cities there is often room for a dual 2 or 3 lane motor road. The alignments are superb. Nobody at this inquiry has suggested the widths are too narrow although often people are deceive by the 4ft-8½in railway gauge and the perspective of a pair of railway lines curving away to the horizon. In practice these alignments are more than adequate for high quality motor roads. If cost benefit analysis proved the value of widening then widening could be provided, but there is no good operational reason for spending lots of money that way. (Unchallenged)

CONVERSION COSTS

6.2 Conversion of the entire rail network to motor roads including works at stations etc. would cost £(6-12) billion at a1999 prices, a fraction of the cost of the Modernisation programme. (Main evidence paragraph 2.11.5 and witness statement section 8). (Unchallenged).

6.3 I note that the conversion cost was based on a unit cost of £75 /sq. m, inclusive of all ancillary and station works. The estimate is drawn from the Hall/Smith Report 'Better use of Railways' and the companion volume 'Comments and Rejoinders', extracts attached to main evidence. In support of those numbers I further cite 'The Truth about Transport' where, in the last paragraph on page 29, we find a unit cost of £140,000 /km for a 7.3m carriageway at 1991 prices, equivalent to £25 /sq. m at 1999 prices but void of station works. That suggests my estimate may be at least double the actual conversion cost, rather than being too low.

6.4 Additionally, it is worth noting the huge exaggeration of conversion costs which arise when estimates fall into the hands of railway people, reference Cooper and Spaven in 'Comments and Rejoinders' (extract at appendix 10 to main evidence) and the third paragraph on page 29 of 'The Truth about Transport'. Referring to the latter, we find that a railway conversion for a single carriageway road, estimated at £4.5 million by Balfour Beatty, came back from the Department as a dual carriageway costing 12 million, only to find the old road being rebuilt as a single carriageway 40 years later.

CONVERSION STRATEGY

- 6.5 Conversion strategy was discussed at length. I contended that, given adequate pre-planning, an interim road surface for the West Coast Main Line, adequate for express buses and lorries, could be in place within a few months of the closure of the railway. Plant and material would be stockpiled so that construction could start simultaneously on sections each a few miles in length. During construction there would be special traffic orders in place to ensure buses could move free of congestion in London and other cities. Additionally the near-side lane and hard shoulders of the motorways could be reserved for buses and lorries. After all, the hard shoulders alone have a capacity greater than a four track railway. In any event (a) the nation coped quite well for months when, with no warning, the entire network was substantially closed following Hatfield and the floods (b) preserving the railways as railways is itself an immense disruption - an average flow per track of only 300 buses plus lorries per day, at such very high cost, when a replacement road would carry thousands.

MANAGING CONGESTION

- 6.5 It would be irresponsible to allow congestion to grow unfettered so negating the value of the converted routes. Indeed it is irresponsible of Government to have allowed congestion to clog existing roads. It would also be irresponsible to limit use of the new roads so that they came to be used to only a fraction of their potential.
- 6.6 Options for control range from limiting access to certain classes of vehicle through to road pricing where drivers may have in-vehicle displays informing them of their expenditure. That is the preferred option. As with all markets, price would be adjusted to balance supply and demand. There has been no challenge to that which is in any case in line with mainstream thinking.

DEVELOPMENT POTENTIAL

- 6.7 Mr Moss in his evidence suggested that railways attract development, raising the question as to whether Mr Moss has ever visited a railway station. The plain facts are that most railway stations are places of dreams, usually surrounded by dereliction - sidings lying idle in the sun of Government subsidy for all to see. In contrast development goes wherever there is good road access.
- 6.8 Hence it is clear that if the rail network were converted to motor roads managed to avoid congestion many hundreds of hectares of derelict railway land in the heart of our towns and cities would become productive and immensely valuable. What other way but conversion is there to unlock that potential?

7 GOVERNMENT AWARENESS

- 7.1 The Government is not aware of any of that. Instead it has been misled on a massive scale. Consequently all and sundry believe that rail is, in some magical way, sustainable and efficient. That is why the nation is in the process of wasting £60 billion, on hardware which will achieve almost nothing in transport terms. Instead that immense expenditure will merely preserve the magnificent image of rail while allowing grown men to play with a full sized toy train set, see the careers article from The New Civil Engineer of 30 May 2001 and paragraph 25 of the League's publication 'Railways into Roads. What the League said in 1958 and what the Experts are saying now, September 1974'.
- 7.2 (The government's 10 year plan says the target is to increase passenger usage by 50% from a base of 6% and freight by 80% from a base of 11%. Perhaps Ministers and Secretaries of State do not understand that a 50% increase in passenger-km from the base of 6% means a rise to 9% of the total - not a rise to 56%. That would explain why they are so keen to spend the £60 billion).

8 THE WEST COAST MAIN LINE MODERNISATION FORECASTS

- 8.1 According to the forecasts in Exhibit 4 from RT/GEN/NA/P1b passenger-km on the WCMLM will triple by 2030, an astonishing claim by any measure. Section 3 of the Witness Statement [GEN/WITH/1051/P1(2)] and Section 9 of the Rebuttal and Comment following cross examination [GEN/WITH/1051/P1R4] illustrate how flimsy the forecasts model is, for that model depends on projecting the trends for the period 1994 to 1999 forward for 30 years, with never a saturation level in sight.
- 8.2 Additionally (a) the "model" has not been validated against the previous 30 years, when there was no growth at all (b) there is an assumption that, net of inflation, fares will be reduced by 1% annually between 1998 and 2002 after which fares will match inflation. However, over the period of this inquiry, unregulated fares on the WCML are said to have risen by 10%. Against that background my view is that growth, far from achieving a factor of 3, will lie in the range zero to 50% at best.

COSTS AND COST BENEFIT ANALYSIS

- 8.3 Section 3.1 of Main evidence [GEN/WITH/1051/P1] sets out the very large cost increases which the WCMLM has incurred, namely a rise from £2.35 billion in 1997 to £4.7 billion in 1999 to some £5.7 billion in January 2000. At the start of the inquiry we, at last, had it confirmed that the division of costs were as follows.....

WCMLM costs £(billions)

The CIP *		Enhancement	
Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 1	Phase 2
1.3	2.7	0.4	1.4
4		1.8	
5.8			
* Core Investment Programme			

- 8.4 Railtrack claim that only the £1.8 billion "enhancement" is open to cost benefit analysis. I cast doubt on that arguing that the division between the CIP and the Enhancements had been "arbitered" so as to favour the cost benefit analysis by at least £1 billion. We then find the New Civil Engineer (one of the two premier marketing magazines for Railtrack) reporting (a) on 14th June 2001, that costs had risen to £6.3 billion and could rise to £9 billion (we do not know yet the division of the increase between CIP and the Enhancements) (b) on 18th October, that Phase 2 is to be abandoned, see my letter of 22nd October. As I pointed out in that letter, the implication is that the £2.7 billion from phase 2 of the CIP is in no way "essential". Consequently the £2.7 billion should be classed as an enhancement and added to the cost open to cost benefit analysis (illustrating the over cautious nature of my original estimate of £1 billion). That leads to the scheme yielding a substantial negative Net Present Value, rather than the positive one of £1.65 billion canvassed by Railtrack - destroying the original conclusion at a stroke. (There has been no response from Railtrack to any of that).
- 8.5 Additionally the cost benefit analysis depended upon (a) incremental fare revenue amounting to £1.35 billion, itself dependant on the forecast that demand will rise by a factor of at least 3 and (b) ignoring, or largely ignoring, the fact that the incremental revenue would be extracted from, and therefore a loss to, other areas of the economy.
- 8.6 (A particular example of the light nature of Railtrack's presentations is the Business Case for the Lichfield Sector, which I have not previously commented upon. Astonishingly, and like most of the other Railtrack documentation, that evidence, although entitled "Business Case", does not even contain a cost estimate. However, the evidence does contain a summary of the incremental benefits which I criticise (a) on the same grounds as the whole scheme analysis (b) because the £0.34 bn freight benefits quoted in the proof appear unreasonable since (i) door to door journey times for new rail freight would be longer than by road due to the need to interchange (ii) fuel consumption door to door by rail would be the same as by road (iii) track maintenance costs by rail are 6 times higher than by road (iv) the capital costs of railways are several times those of roads.
- 8.7 In any event the extraordinary cost increases for the WCMLM cast doubt on the professionalism of Railtrack and upon the whole of Railtrack's case. Against such a

chaotic state of affairs, who other than Railtrack would dare bring a proposal on this scale into the public domain?

8.8 Against that background I cite Professor Allan Day's (London School of Economics) belief that Cost Benefit Analyses for the railways are "laundered" until they give the right answer and Dalgleish's belief that the analyses are rubber stamped by the Government's Civil Servants so as to give the illusion of respectability. (see 'The Truth about Transport' page 30). Hence my view is that the cost benefit which is the subject of this inquiry has indeed been laundered and laundered on a massive scale. Meanwhile Railtrack has made no effective response to my comments, preferring silence or to hide behind the fig leaf that the analysis has been approved.

8.9 Lastly, ref. 5.12 above, under the heading costs, the cost per track km of the WCMLM is an astonishing 5-8 times that of the M1 built from scratch, including land.

USAGE

8.10 In section 3.2 of main evidence [GEN/WITH/101/P1], I point out the trivial use which rail makes of the great facility that the West Coast Main Line is. The passenger flow at Euston could be satisfied by less than one bus per minute per track over 18 hours. The daily passenger flow could be discharged in 2 hours. We then find that the effect of the modernisation programme on capacity will be to allow flow to increase by the equivalent of less than one bus or lorry per minute per track. Such a flow increase would be quite lost on a motor road. Railtrack's best effort to discredit that was to claim freight trains average the equivalent of 43 lorries rather than the 30 I assumed. Subsequently I demonstrate, by reference to survey data, that the value 30 is in fact generous. [Railtrack have not responded to that].

9 MOTIVES AND PERSUASION

9.1 I have no interest in misrepresenting the facts so as to attack the railways. On the contrary the architectural purity and glorious history of rail provides a powerful motive for supporting the preservation of rail in the face of the facts. Hence, it is with a sense of great sadness that I find there is no basis for the belief that rail can provide efficient transport compared with road.

9.2 Against that background my motive is to represent the facts with as little bias as possible. That is why I have been at pains to correct minor errors and in particular, and by way of example, why I (a) very recently withdrew a paragraph comparing deaths per vehicle-km from Appendix 6a when I realised that the comparison was misleading since it overlooked differences in vehicle occupancy. (b) drew attention in paragraph 5.12 of this statement to the effect of the recent evidence on total casualty

costs on the calculated overspend arising from the SPAD and ATPS, a detail in original evidence which would otherwise have been misleading.

- 9.3 I can only guess at the railway lobby's motives since the facts are so powerfully in favour of conversion. Perhaps it is that new ideas take decades to be accepted. Alternatively the motives may be purely cynical, or perhaps the railway myth has become so powerful that railway people are simply blinded by that myth - a kind of treason to suggest anything but undying loyalty to the cause - "my country - the railways - right or wrong".
- 9.4 What is certain is that the facts in favour of conversion have been plain for at least 50 years. Why then does the rail lobby pretend that rail is "27 times safer than road" when, like for like, road transport offers the safer environment, use the word "minor" to describe very serious injuries by rail, pretend to ministers that a freight train path is equivalent to 50 lorries when 25 would be more accurate, and pretend that rail out performs road on all counts when it is road that out performs rail, not by a few percent, but by several hundred percent?
- 9.5 I comment that, as with the dinosaurs, the railway lobby will find that size alone is no guarantee against extinction for sooner or latter the new idea will prevail. The railways then will vanish along with the cart and the horse.
- 9.6 In any event it is I who appear to hold the machine gun loaded with facts. Whether that turns out to be persuasive remains to be seen for in contrast Railtrack holds a fearful magic wand.

10 CONCLUSION

- 10.1 Of course the foregoing is only a brief summary of the substantial volume of evidence, rebuttal by Railtrack, counter rebuttal etc. available to our inspectors. However, I have every confidence that our inspectors will cross reference and check all that so as to establish their own views. Probably they will find that none of my substantive points has suffered any serious challenge. Should relief be required from all those numbers I commend to them the previously cited League publication "Railways into roads " September 1974 which, despite its date, reads as though written for this inquiry. All those points taken together provide an overwhelming case for the conversion of the National Rail system to a network of motor roads managed to avoid congestion.
- 10.2 In contrast and quoting from page 29 of "The Truth about Transport": "Stewart Joy, Chief Economist to British Rail, referred to former members of the British Transport

Commission for their part in tricking governments into massive expenditure on railways as either knaves or fools. There were no libel actions but Joy was too honest a man to work with railway men and was forced out". We are now several decades forward and the scandal continues, for what greater distortion from the truth could there be than the railway myth, culminating as it does in Railtrack's £60 billion modernisation programme and with this inquiry?

10.3 To echo Stewart Joy, although we do not have corruption in the form of "brown envelopes" or bribes in The West, it is a common enough experience to find that many if not most people often find it expedient to concur with a policy, so as to retain their well paid jobs, however strong the case against that policy may be. That is immensely damaging to the nation, for how can government ever be expected to make sensible decisions in such an environment?

10.4 Hence, I beg the inspector to draw the Secretary of State's attention to:

- (i) the folly of wasting the £314,000,000 which is the immediate subject of this inquiry; an act equivalent to wasting 314 working lives.
- (ii) the greater folly of the supporting expenditure of (at least) £(6.3-9) billion for the WCMLM, equivalent to wasting 6,300 to 9,000 working lives.
- (iii) the final folly of allocating £60 billion (half from private investment) to modernise the railways; equivalent to wasting 60,000 working lives.
- (iv) The very large savings in resources, taxes, fuel, and deaths and the very large productivity and environmental gains to be had from converting the rail network to motor roads managed to avoid congestion.

10.5 It is my hope that our inspectors will indeed take the opportunity to convert this inquiry from a very expensive and exhausting side show, with foregone conclusions, into an event which will influence policy for decades. Rather than perishing like most of us, as though they had never been, our inspectors may then be remembered as famous men - the Bushby/Whalley report - a turning point both in the history of Transport and coincidentally in the probity of government.

10.6 Meanwhile I shall not stop here for I am developing links to the Cabinet and have to hand the addresses of the top 100 share holders in Railtrack. They own over 40% of the stock and will be most interested to find that conversion would multiply productivity of the track by 3 to 5 while dividing costs by a similar amount, for in what other way can their losses be recovered?

10.7 I rest my case. Thank you very much.