

SPECIAL REPORT: A REPRIEVE FOR THE PASSENGER TRAIN?

After a series of proposals, counter-proposals and compromises, the Nixon Administration and Congress have agreed on the establishment of a Federally-sponsored private corporation that will *try* to save and possibly rebuild the present 'bare-bones' U.S. long-haul passenger train network.

Originally, DOT Secretary Volpe had proposed a quasi-public corporation, *Railpax*, that would have taken over those passenger services deemed necessary and operated them until such time as they were no longer required. This proposal was attacked because those trains not selected would have been discontinued, and the *Railpax* service itself was designed to allow discontinuance of the remainder, all without any legal recourse on the part of the public.

With the *Railpax* proposal on the shelf, the Administration failed to offer a new proposal, and the Senate Commerce Committee approved and forwarded to the full Senate a proposal to subsidize existing services and provide funds for equipment purchase and maintenance under a four-year, \$435,000,000 authorization.

This latter program was not favored by President Nixon, but it provided the impetus necessary to push DOT and the Senate Commerce Committee into approving a compromise bill that has just received an overwhelming 78-3 approval by the full Senate, with little opposition foreseen for a similar favorable and quick verdict in the House. There is also little doubt that the President will quickly sign the bill into law.

The Senate bill, titled 'National Rail Passenger Corporation', will be set up similar to the Communications Satellite Corporation (Comsat) in that the board of directors will come from both private and public sectors. It will consist of three railroaders, four private investors and eight Presidential appointees. Railroads agreeing to join the Corporation would 'buy' their losing services and/or equipment into the new operation in return for common stock equal to the losses and/or value of the equipment exchanged. The services could then be operated by the corporation or contracted out to private, non-profit regional companies. Any carrier declining to join the Corporation or choosing to except certain runs would be forbidden to discontinue such services until 1975. Finally, the U.S. government will provide \$40,000,000 to support its share of the Corporation, plus the sum of \$60,000,000 in loan guarantees to cover advances made to purchase new equipment and repair carrier facilities, as well as \$75,000,000 to cover loans made by railroads to turn over their passenger services to the Corporation, the 'stock' serving as collateral.

ROBERT I. OLIPHANT

column one

(The following are excerpts from a letter to TC from reader Charles F. Rozema:)

You will find (enclosed) a copy of a leaflet put out by the Transit Crisis Coalition. (Ed. Note: The TCC is a New York group sponsoring a referendum on reduction of the NYCTA fare to 20¢ through a revised transit finance plan; the leaflet is too lengthy to reproduce here). The other weekend I spoke--did battle with, might be a better term--to some representatives of this group who were soliciting signatures on a petition at the Christopher Street/Sheridan Square station of IRT Line 1 in Manhattan. I am passing on the literature not so much because of the inherent merit of its assertions, but because it represents another viewpoint on the New York City transit system very much in its own way like John Kneiling's 'recommended' (TC 04/27/70) sally against the TA's operations in Trains.

Both of them, from opposite poles of the ideological spectrum, represent superficially attractive arguments. Both of them contain an element of truth.

But both of them are dangerous because, while being superficially plausible and factual, they seek to bend truth to conform to ideology. Kneiling attempts to deviate truth toward the right while the Coalition pulls toward the left. And both can work a good deal of mischief with their ideological rantings passed off as gospel to the uninformed.

Misinformation about the nature of the urban transportation problem is rife in North America--else why the constant effort to find a technological solution to a problem that is not technological, but institutional and financial.

I asked the Coalition representative to justify his contention that it wasn't the workers' salary increases that brought about the 30-cent fare in New York City. He didn't even know what the average motorman's salary was. His arguing prevented me from observing that the New York City transit fare has never, since 1953, been intended to pay for bond-debt interest, only 'operating' expenses, like salaries.

John Kneiling terms the New York City transit system an exercise in socialism. If it were that, the system's costs would be borne by society as a whole, not by the rider. At the very least, costs would be apportioned according to the benefits derived by users and non-users, not, as is presently the case, on the assumption that formerly separate properties continue to be competing, separate entities when they're not.

The auto lobby, with its clique of decentrists, city planners who hate cities and the like, can rest easy when 'friends' of public transportation sound off to justify their biases, not what is allegedly the subject of their fulminations.

--CHARLES F. ROZEMA

(TC readers are invited to send in their comments on the transportation industry, its methods and policies, for possible inclusion in this series of columns--Editor)

n e w s f r o n t

METROPOLITAN REPORT

D.C. TRANSIT IS STILL IN PRIVATE HANDS. A STRIKE CALLED FOR APRIL 26 WAS AVERTED BY INJUNCTION, AND NEGOTIATIONS ARE PROCEEDING TOWARD A SETTLEMENT THERE AND ON SUBSIDIARY WV&M LINES IN VIRGINIA. PUBLIC TAKEOVER OF THE SYSTEM WAS PLANNED IF THE WALKOUT HAD BECOME EFFECTIVE (AND WILL EVENTUALLY TAKE PLACE, REGARDLESS). THE CRISIS OF A SHUTDOWN HAS BEEN AVERTED FOR THE MOMENT, AND BUSES CONTINUE TO ROLL IN THE NATION'S CAPITAL.

THE ROCK ISLAND HAS PROPOSED TO "REALIGN" ITS CHICAGO-JOLIET COMMUTER SERVICE AND REDUCE INNER-CITY OPERATIONS, ESPECIALLY ON ITS "MAIN LINE" ROUTE. AS MIGHT HAVE BEEN EXPECTED, THERE HAS BEEN A SIGNIFICANT DECLINE IN SHORT-HAUL RIDING SINCE THE OPENING OF CTA'S DAN RYAN RAPID TRANSIT LINE NEARBY.

THE CHANGES, TO BECOME EFFECTIVE AT AN "EARLY DATE", HAVE BEEN FILED WITH THE ILLINOIS COMMERCE COMMISSION, AND WILL INCLUDE CONSOLIDATION OF 6 SOUTHBOUND AND 5 NORTHBOUND NON RUSH HOUR PAIRS OF WEEKDAY TRAINS BETWEEN CHICAGO-BLUE ISLAND-JOLIET, USING THE SUBURBAN LINE INSTEAD OF OPERATING SEPARATELY VIA THE MAIN LINE. IN ADDITION, 2 NORTHBOUND BLUE ISLAND SUBURBAN LOCALS WEEKDAYS AND ONE ROUND TRIP OVER THE SAME ROUTE ON SUNDAYS WOULD BE DISCONTINUED. ON SATURDAYS, 8 NORTHBOUND PAIRS AND 7 SOUTHBOUND PAIRS WOULD BE CONSOLIDATED VIA THE SUBURBAN LINE, AND ON SUNDAYS, 5 NORTHBOUND AND 6 SOUTH PAIRS WOULD RECEIVE A SIMILAR CONSOLIDATION. THE RAILROAD ADVERTISES 77 WEEKDAY TRAINS ON ITS PRESENT SCHEDULE; THE PROPOSED TIMECARD WOULD SHOW 63. PRESENT SATURDAY RUNS TOTAL 29; THIS WOULD BE CUT TO 29. SIMILARLY, 29 SUNDAY /HOLIDAY RUNS WOULD BE CUT TO 16.

LAST WEEK, THE LONG ISLAND BEGAN USING ITS NEW "METROPOLITAN" CARS ON THE JAMAICA-BROOKLYN SEGMENT OF ITS SYSTEM. THE FIRST TRAIN OF ALL NEW CARS TO OPERATE WAS THE "PHANTOM", SO-NAMED BECAUSE OF ITS LONG NON-APPEARANCE LAST SPRING AND SUMMER. HITHERTO, ONLY OLDER LI EQUIPMENT COULD USE THE LINE BECAUSE OF INCOMPATIBLE SIGNALS AND TIGHT CURVES. THESE CONDITIONS HAVE SINCE BEEN EASED.

THE BEE LINE TRANSIT CORPORATION, A CHROMALLOY AMERICAN (ATC) PROPERTY OPERATING CITY AND SUBURBAN SERVICE IN DANVILLE, ILLINOIS, HAS BEEN GRANTED PERMISSION BY THE ILLINOIS COMMERCE COMMISSION TO DISCONTINUE THAT SERVICE ON 30 DAYS' NOTICE. ACCORDINGLY, BEE LINE IS TO BECOME A CHARTER AND SCHOOL CARRIER ONLY EFFECTIVE MAY 31, 1970.

THE BATTLE CREEK TRANSIT AUTHORITY HAS PLACED UP FOR SALE ITS 15 GMC TGH 3101/3102 COACHES EFFECTIVE MAY 15. THERE IS NO WORD AS YET WHAT THE REPLACEMENT UNITS WILL BE....PREVOST OF CANADA, A MAJOR BUS BUILDER NORTH OF THE BORDER, HAS NAMED CROWN COACH OF LOS ANGELES, A VERSATILE BUILDER OF STANDARD AND CUSTOM COACHES AS ITS WEST COAST DISTRIBUTOR...TRANSIT IN PEORIA WILL APPARENTLY CONTINUE AFTER ALL, EVEN IF PEORIA CITY LINES CEASES ALL SERVICE SOON AS PLANNED. THE CITY COUNCIL HAS VOTED TO FINANCE BUS SERVICE THROUGH THE GREATER PEORIA MASS TRANSIT DISTRICT UNTIL A REFERENDUM CAN BE HELD—POSSIBLY AS EARLY AS JUNE 15.... THE PENN CENTRAL HAS BEEN HELD FULLY RESPONSIBLE FOR THE PANIC THAT FOLLOWED A TUNNEL FIRE LAST MAY IN WHICH 1 MAN WAS KILLED AND MORE THAN 100 INJURED. THE FIRE OCCURED AFTER A 4-CAR TRAIN DEVELOPED A SHORT CIRCUIT IN THE HUDSON RIVER TUNNEL. THE NEW JERSEY PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION, IN ASSIGNING THE BLAME, ORDERED THE ROAD TO MAKE 12 IMPROVEMENTS, INCLUDING EMERGENCY TRAINING FOR CREWMEN, HIGH-INTENSITY LIGHTING IN THE TUNNEL, WALKIE TALKIES FOR ALL CREWMEN AND ILLUMINATED EMERGENCY SIGNS INSIDE THE TUNNEL.

RAILWAYS

ALTHOUGH THERE IS NOW A FORESEEABLE END TO OUR WEEKLY REPORTS AND QUARTERLY SUMMARIES OF TRAIN-OFFS, U.S. RAILROADS FOR THE MOMENT CONTINUE TO HACK AWAY AT THE BONES. NEW PETITIONS INCLUDE CNETRAL OF GEORGIA 7-8, NANCY HANKS II, ATLANTA-SAVANNAH, AND 9-10, MAN O'WAR, ATLANTA-COLUMBUS TO THE GEORGIA PSC. IF THE PETITIONS ARE APPROVED, SOUTHERN WOULD CLOSE ITS TERMINAL STATION AND USE THE PEACHTREE STATION ONLY. ALSO PETITIONED WERE 15-16, ASHEVILLE SPECIAL, GREENSBORO-ASHEVILLE....PENN CENTRAL HAS ANOTHER "COMPLETE" PETITION UP, THIS TIME THE NEW LONDON-WORCESTER SERVICE (572-573-575/579 AND 578/580) FOR JUNE 7. THE SERVICE BEGAN IN THE EARLY 1950'S.

ICC CHAIRMAN GEORGE STAFFORD HAS DECIDED TO KEEP "GFEN" THE CZ DOCKET INDEFINITELY IN ORDER TO HEAR A SERIES OF APPEALS FROM UNIONS, N.A.R.P., THE CITY OF CHICAGO AND OTHERS. DIVISION 3 HAS RECONSIDERED ITS DECISION NOT TO HOLD HEARINGS ON SCL 51-52, AUGUSTA-FLORENCE; ALTHOUGH THE TRAIN HAS BEEN DISCONTINUED, HEARINGS WILL BE HELD AND SERVICE COULD BE REINSTATED IF REQUIRED....THE COMMISSION HAS DECIDED THAT SANTA FE MUST RUN 23-24, CHICAGO-LOS ANGELES, FOR ANOTHER 6 MONTHS (TO 11/05/70) AND 1-2 (THE SAN FRANCISCO CHIEF), CHICAGO-SAN FRANCISCO, FOR ANOTHER YEAR (TO 05/05/71).

THE UNITED TRANSPORTATION UNION HAS ASKED THAT THE ICC BE DISQUALIFIED FROM DECIDING ON PC'S PETITION TO DISCONTINUE 34 LONG HAUL TRAINS. THE UTU WANTS AN IMPARTIAL HEARING BOARD BECAUSE, ACCORDING TO THE PLEA, THE ICC COMPROMISED ITS NEUTRAL STANDING BY HOLDING A CLOSED DOOR MEETING WITH PC OFFICIALS 10 DAYS BEFORE THE PETITION WAS FILED....BURLINGTON NORTHERN HAS ISSUED A 40 PAGE BOOK OF "TOURS FOR THE WESTERN WONDERLAND", AVAIOABLE FROM THE BN TOUR DEPT., 547 W. JACKSON, CHICAGO 60606. WHILE WESTERN AIRLINES (PORTLAND-SAN FRANCISCO) AND BRANIFF (KANSAS CITY-MINNEAPOLIS) ARE USED, ALONG WITH ATSF'S EL CAPITAN/SUPER SHIEF AND SAN FRANCISCO CHIEF, CALIFORNIA ZEPHYR SERVICES ARE "STRANGELY" MISSING, AND SP IS USED ON UNESCORTED TOURS ONLY....THE LAHAINA-KAANAPALI & PACIFIC, A RESTORATION OF AN OLD-TIME HAWAIIAN SUGAR CANE RAILROAD, BEGAN PASSENGER SERVICE MAY 9 ON ITS ROUTE ALONG THE NORTHWEST COAST OF THE ISLAND OF MAUI. BRIGHTLY PAINTED OPEN SIDE PASSENGER CARS AND A CABOOSE WILL HAVE SEATS FOR 162 PASSENGERS FOR THE RUN BETWEEN LAHAINA AND THE KAAANAPALI BEACH RESORT AREA. AT A COST OF \$1,200,000, THE ROAD HAS BEEN BUILT AS A COPY OF A PLANTATION RAILROAD THAT OPERATED BETWEEN 1883 AND 1912. TWO OLD STEAM LOCOS OF THE SAME DESIGN AS HAWAIIAN ENGINES OF THAT PERIOD HAVE BEEN RESTORED BY KEYSTONE LIGHT RAILWAY ENGINE COMPANY OF PITTSBURGH. THIS WILL BE HAWAII'S FIRST PASSENGER SERVICE BY RAIL SINCE OAHU RAILWAY QUIT IN 1947.

AIR/LINES

EASTERN HAS APPLIED FOR NON STOP NEW YORK-PONCE, P.R. SERVICE....A NEW SUBURBAN SATELLITE TERMINAL FOR FIVE MAJORS HAS OPENED IN MANHASSET, L.I.....AMERICAN IS TO SPEND \$3,800,000 THIS YEAR FOR IMPROVEMENTS TO ITS O'HARE FACILITIES....ASTRONAUT FRANK BORMAN HAS JOINED EASTERN AS A VICE PRESIDENT....NORTHWEST IS LAYING OFF 72 PILOTS THIS WEEK, DUE TO THE SLACK IN PASSENGER TRAFFIC....UNITED ENTERS THE 747 ERA WITH SERVICE BETWEEN HONOLULU-LOS ANGELES AND SAN FRANCISCO JULY 23.