

## VII-Conclusion

There is no doubt that, on the assumptions outlined in the report, an expanding market exists for both freight and passenger transport. Nevertheless, the volume of railway traffic has been declining, and it follows that the railway share of the total traffic has been falling even faster. The railways must reshape, and redeploy their assets and service, so as to concentrate on cheap bulk movement, if the decline is to be arrested and reversed. The railways will then play their full part in helping forward the pace of industrial growth itself.

**A prime requirement is that the cost of providing the railway track and signalling per unit of traffic passing over it should be reduced to a level which enables services to be provided on a competitive basis.** Opportunity exists, specifically, for expansion of the railway carryings of merchandise, oil, and iron and steel, but only if the services are provided in an efficient manner and at a competitive price.

If such changes are made, the railways could increase their carryings of freight, and, even allowing for some decline in the passenger traffic at the shorter distances, **the overall demand for rail transport over the trunk routes could show an appreciable increase in the next twenty years.**

The present network of through routes is under-utilised and, if the rail-ways take advantage of technological progress in signalling and movement, then the disparity between capacity and use will become greater. **It is demonstrably practicable to channel the through movement over a reduced network of lines amounting to some 3,000 route miles rather than the 7,500 miles provided today.**

The overall effect of these changes would be to reduce route costs over the trunk routes, on the basis used in Table 4, to about one-half of their present level. As important, however, is the effect of concentration of through movement on other costs. None of the route costs discussed in the report includes the costs of associated sidings, yards, stations and depots, but greater utilisation will reduce the unit cost of providing and maintaining these assets also. The utilisation of locomotives, train crews, and other staff and equipment will also be substantially improved by working a simplified and intensively used system.

Thus, if the railways concentrate on cheap bulk movement, their prospects as trunk carriers can be revived. The danger is that failure to change, to modernise, and to concentrate, will cause the present decline to continue. **The real choice is between an excessive and increasingly un-economic system, with a corresponding tendency for the railways as a whole to fall into disrepute and decay, or the selective development and intensive utilisation of a more limited trunk route system.**

It must be remembered that the survey looked ahead twenty years and that the process of reaching the situation described above is bound to progress by a number of stages. The present report, as a basis for future investment, will have to be reassessed from time to time. The effect on the future extent of the trunk route system will be gradual. As has already been said, this report is not a prelude to closures on a grand scale: it is, rather, a basis for more definitive, stepwise planning of route rationalisation.

The economic and demographic forecasts required for so long term a traffic forecast must be recognised to be subject to wide margins of error. The same applies, in a scarcely lesser degree, to the forecast of technological change in the transport field, on which the future

balance of competitive power will depend. Other circumstances, too, over which the railways have no control, for example, freedom of use, cost of use, and availability of roads, may change, and, in changing, alter the market for rail transport.

A system too neatly tailored to the estimated future traffic level might well prove inadequate to carry a substantial part of the profitable traffic on offer. A measure of surplus capacity must therefore be provided for and is, indeed, to some extent inevitable, since traffic potential does not everywhere fit neatly the capacity which can be provided by a railway. In the case of the system indicated this surplus capacity amounts to about one-third.

### ***Other considerations***

The relationship between the trunk network and the commuter networks must be established. The largest parts of the London commuter network, on the South and East sides of London, are more or less isolated from the trunk network, but there are other cases, such as the North and West sides of London and, to a less extent, the provincial centres, where future commuter requirements must be provided for when considering line capacity and passenger terminals.

A further factor will be the Channel Tunnel. The trunk system has been designed to accommodate Channel Tunnel traffic, so far as it can be fore-seen at present, but this must be re-examined as the Tunnel comes nearer to reality and its traffic patterns can be more clearly foreseen.

**This study provides a basis for positive planning.** Once the lines most likely to form the trunk rail network during the next twenty years have been determined, the railways will be better able to develop routes, operating methods, and services, to cater for the main traffic flows of the country at economic prices. **It will also be possible to concentrate railway investment upon the selected trunk routes in the confidence that, on this railway of the future, the essential dense flows of traffic will be maintained.**

For the sake of clarity, it is emphasised that non-selection of lines for intensive development does not necessarily mean that they will be abandoned in the foreseeable future, nor even that money will not be spent upon some of them to improve their suitability for their continuing purpose. It is emphasised that the developed trunk lines will be supported by several thousand miles of freight feeder lines, and that clarification of the position with regard to trunk route development will facilitate decisions about the feeder network. It is also emphasised that the provision of capacity for commuter traffics into the main urban areas is the subject of separate consideration.

Furthermore, it can be seen from the following table that the estimates in this report envisage a substantial increase in trunk railway traffic.

**TABLE 11 - RAILWAY TRUNK TRAFFIC**  
**Comparison between 1964 and 1984 Estimate**

	1964			1984		
	Tons/ Passengers	Tons/ Passenger Miles	Equivalent Train Miles Per Day	Tons/ Passengers	Tons/ Passenger Miles	Equivalent Train Miles Per Day
Coal	45	4,500	50,000	45	3,500	25,000
Iron and Steel	25	2,500	45,000	30	4,000	40,000
Oil	5	500	5,000	15	2,000j	15,000
Other Freight, including General Merchandise	25	4,500	150,000	75	15,000	180,000
Total Freight	100	12,000	250,000	165	24,500	260,000
Passengers	30	5,000	100,000	25	4,500	50,000