

## Editorial

Decline in rail transportation of goods may soon take a swing in the opposite direction, if Federal Highway Administrator Norbert T. Tiemann has his way.

Speaking out in what amounts to the first positive stand for sensible movement of goods over long distances, he predicts that pressures of growth and shortages of energy will dictate greater use of railroads in the future. Pressures for increasing the current size and weight limits on motor carriers, pressures to develop separate rights-of-ways for passenger and freight vehicles, pressures to develop other modes of freight transportation—all these and others are causing the present Administration to once again turn to America's most economical transportation system.

Why the delay? Box cars (freight units) coupled end to end and pulled by a single power source represent rolling economies in fuel, space and efficiency. For long distance terrestrial hauling, railroads have always been the most economical mode.

Yet, during our lifetime, changes in technology have nurtured the maturity of transportation systems such as airplanes, pipelines, autos and trucks. Industry's race to develop, build, compete, expand and profit has perpetuated the long-haul-by-truck-to-save-time concept.

So when railroads began slipping off their mighty throne, multi-wheeled leviathans lumbered onto highways built originally for passenger traffic and

## Let's Put The Railroads To Work

skimmed the graveyard off the long haul, high ticket value items. The result is that in 1972, combinations of trailer and semi-trailer vehicles totaling 990,000 traveled almost 47 billion miles and consumed over 8.5 billion gallons of fuel.

In short, we now have paid dearly to buy those few hours of precious time.

Administrator Tiemann now has proposed that we develop a long-range solution. He suggests shifting freight from roads to rails in a coordinated system of freight transportation. To carry his idea ahead motor carriers would perform pick-up and delivery services, and short-haul intercity movements. Intermodal terminals could be jointly operated. Railroads would handle the line-haul portion of long distance movements. Thus "... railroads become the wholesalers of transportation ... while motor carriers would become, in effect, retailers of transportation," he says.

The Green Industry stands to gain from this directly. Greater use of railroads will necessitate more and better maintenance of rights-of-ways. The possibility of separate highways for motor carriers moving freight short distances creates more miles to be patrolled in vegetation care. Terminals will mean bareground weed control to reduce the chance of fire, etc. Landscaping will be needed. Tree and ornamental care possibilities emerge.

American railroads. Who needs them? We all need them.

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