

ON JANUARY 29, 1979, SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION BROCK ADAMS ANNOUNCED MASSIVE CUT-BACKS IN THE AMTRAK PASSENGER-TRAIN SYSTEM. THIS PROPOSAL WOULD REDUCE AMTRAK SERVICE 43 PERCENT NATIONWIDE.

IN THE STATE OF WEST VIRGINIA, AND PARTICULARLY IN THE SOUTHERN PORTION, SERVICE IS DRASITCALLY REDUCED. THE CURTAILMENT OF SERVICE BY THE CARDINAL AND HILLTOPPER ROUTES, SEVER AN IMPORTANT LINK TO CINCINNATI AND CHICAGO, IN THE WEST; AND TO ROANOKE, WASHINGTON AND NEW YORK, IN THE EAST. WITH APPALACHIAN HIGHWAYS BEING WHAT THEY ARE AND WITH NO AIR-PASSENGER SERVICE IN MANY CITIES AND TOWNS, WEST VIRGINIA RESIDENTS WILL BE LEFT TO THEIR OWN MEANS OF TRANSPORTATION OVER LONG DISTANCES. OTHER RURAL RESIDENTS THROUGHOUT THE NATION WILL BE FACED WITH A SIMILAR SITUATION.

WEST VIRGINIA IS OF COURSE NO THE ONLY STATE ADVERSELY AFFECTED BY DOT'S RECOMMENDATIONS. H. RES. 93, WHICH I INTRODUCED TO DISAPPROVE OF SECRETARY ADAM'S PROPOSALS, HAS DRAWN SUPPORT FROM NUMEROUS MEMBERS OF CONGRESS FROM BOTH RURAL AND URBAN STATES.

ON MARCH 5, THE TRANSPORTATION AND COMMERCE SUBCOMMITTEE OF THE SENATE WILL HOLD HEARINGS ON THE AMTRAK CUT-BACKS. ON APRIL 3 AND 4, A INTERSTATE AND COMMERCE SUBCOMMITTEE OF THE HOUSE WILL ALSO ADDRESS THE REDUCTIONS.

DURING 1977, FIGURES FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION SHOW THAT 72,689 PEOPLE EITHER BOARDED OR DEPARTED THE CARDINAL AND HILLTOPPER AT 10 WEST VIRGINIA STATIONS.

ON THE CARDINAL ROUTE, THE BUSIEST STATIONS WERE HUNTINGTON, CHARLESTON AND PRINCE. ON THE HILLTOPPER, BLUEFIELD AND WILLIAMSON WERE THE BUSIEST.

AMTRAK IS NOT YET TEN YEARS OLD. THOSE WHO BELIEVE THAT THE SYSTEM IS A WORTHWHILE ENDEAVOR, SHOULD: ADMIT THE SYSTEMS PROBLEMS, END THE HARASSMENT, PROVIDE NECESSARY NEW EQUIPMENT, ADD A BROADER ROUTE STRUCTURE WITH A MORE CONVENIENT SCHEDULE, AND UNDERTAKE A MORE AGGRESSIVE MARKETING CAMPAIGN. SUCH A TEST, IN THE OVERALL CONTEXT OF TRANSPORTATION EXPENDITURES, WOULD COST PEANUTS.

MANY AGREE THAT AMTRAK IS NOT A MONEY MAKER. AS A MATTER OF FACT, VERY FEW PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION SYSTEMS MAKE MONEY, AS IS THE CASE WITH THE METRO SUBWAY SYSTEM IN WASHINGTON D.C. HOWEVER, MAKING MONEY IS NOT THE OBJECTIVE, PROVIDING A NEEDED PUBLIC SERVICE IS.