In attacking the value judgment of lecturers in general and of my statistical approach, Mr. Fairbrother is, in effect, saying ‘I have no evidence, but ask that my hunches and values be trusted and widely accepted’—Yours faithfully,

W. F. LOVERING
Department of Control Engineering
University of Surrey
Guildford, Surrey, England
2nd October 1973

High-speed transport


If changing vehicles is some useful function, which I really doubt, it could be done by one vehicle on the same track catching up on the other while they are both moving.

Ten years ago, I put forward a scheme that would enable, with a proper control system, vehicles to run at high speed along parallel tracks without any digging or interference. Indeed, with development of a dual-track vehicle (simile to the British Rail’s defunct Roadrail), it could be used on the roads for both: rail and motor cars.

At a phenologically decentralised signalling scheme that depended on a vehicle knowing the distance between other vehicles in front and behind, the maximum braking deceleration and its own velocity it can be shown mathematically that, with this system, the ultimate objective of filling railways with vehicles almost touching, achievable, unlike the present crush of vehicles on the roads.

It remains connected that the control systems may be by the mechanical dog. In other words, with a proper control system, much of the present unmechanised Victorian engineering could simply phase itself out.—Yours faithfully,

A. SANDMAN
119 Upper Mealines
Harlow, Essex, England

* See June 1963, Nov. 1963 and March 1964 issues of Control Engineering

Dear Sir—In his article, Mr. Hollingbery suggests that only by making use of a completely new rail system is optimum use be made of high-speed trains, and he concludes by saying that “all the benefits are those of a very significant and probably uneconomic system”.

At any rate, the existing capital assets in the development of transport services in the UK. How much I agree! But I think that perhaps, owing to lack of space, he has omitted the main point about de-

While we tinker with trains, someone else will put a runway through the station and shut down the entire track because it’s cheaper.—Yours faithfully,

D. VOLT
44 Alexandra Drive
Surbiton, Surrey KT5 9AF
England
12th October 1973

Dear Sir—The contribution by P. L. Hollingbery brings to mind an observation of the late Mr. Heath Robinson and those of Keystone with his visual rendering of an imaginary police force. In the graphic, there is, too, a murderer with wife and kids and luggage and spades over between moving trains doing this in the allotted 1-2min. Not everybody travelling between Inverness and Penzance is, however, a briefcase and an umbrella; but I forget, if you do travel between these two stations you do not have to change!

What, however, is genuine in Mr. Hollingbery’s vision is that the High-speed railway could arrive anywhere where there are four tracks available, they are used in pairs, two on the left and two on the right, for trains moving in the same direction with different speeds. In other words, one train comes from one terminal, the other goes to the other, both going in the same direction, there is no need to shift 200t as bridges, once again stressing in mind the wife and kids, and luggage etc.? What is the choice of route and thinking possibly of the Channel Tunnel, would not Inverness–Palermo be more sensible?

I believe that British Rail could persuade its partners on the Continent to raise their platforms?—Yours faithfully,

M. SWISS
34 Meadow Way
Webley, Middx., England
10th October 1973

[P. L. Hollingbery writes: Mr. Swiss is wrong in supposing that the idea for dynamic interchange comes from a film of the Keystone Cops. The film was actually one of Agatha Christie and called, I believe, ‘Murder she wrote.’] Yes, I believe, in the dramatic sequence, the heroine, Miss Marple, is travelling in a West of England express from Paddington and with a murder taking place in a train travelling in the same direction on an adjacent track.

 Seriously, though, the 1-2min suggested in my article was based on observation of what happens when passenger trains stop at stations; any allowance for dynamic interchange would not seriously interfere with the operating philosophy. However, next time Mr. Swiss is in London, the Bakerloo Line to London he might check to see if the doors are open to the evening rush hour, 100% usually sufficient.

When one considers what little old-fashioned trains we have present to put up with (especially in all those backward countries of the world which have benefited from the the benefit of an enlightened Board of Trade insisting on minimum platform lengths), my proposal that dynamic interchange constitutes an essential breakthrough.

In a study of technology for high-speed ground transport, reported by the Institute of Electrical Engineers, Inst. Elec. Electron. Engrs., workers at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology proposed a switching of passenger-carrying capsules be-