

Rail takeover eyed in New Hampshire

★N.H. RAILROADS

Continued from Page 29

The 329-page report concluded that, "The present fractured corporate structure ... severely handicaps railways in developing rail traffic and in handling rail shipments efficiently. Because the railroads must perform as an integrated system, strong and progressive railroads are dependent on weak and less responsive roads."

It voiced reservations about the policy of providing Federal subsidies of federally guaranteed loans to help the industry, as was provided in the newly passed bill.

"Money, per se, does not always cure productivity and marketing problems ... The government should be cautious about investing in what may be obsolete technologies.

"Investments in rehabilitating light-density rail lines, constructing high-capacity automated classification yards, and adding

to the fleet of conventional boxcars could actually be counterproductive in the sense that such investments deepen the commitment of the industry to what may well be out-moded techniques and could thereby aggravate the problems of the industry."

It also recommended:

—As a possible tradeoff with the unions, which insist on keeping certain work rules, the government might offer to help reform and support the Railway Retirement System (RRS) which is heading for actuarial trouble. The RRS, established in 1935, is the railroad workers' equivalent of the Social Security system.

—Much greater emphasis should be placed on containerization and "piggy-back" trailer movements; more specially-designed cars for particular types of cargo for unit trains (all cars of which carry the same type of cargo, such as those that



The newly christened locomotive "Styles Bridges" (right) is coupled with another engine in the Boston

Maine railroad yard in the New Hampshire capital of Concord as a supervisor gives engineers directions.

haul coal from mines in West Virginia to a power plant at Bow, N.H.); shorter but more frequent trains, which could result in reduced labor costs.

—The trend towards 100-ton "jumbo" cars and huge rail classification yards (where cars of various freights are sorted for different destinations) is a mistake. The giant cars do too much damage to track structures, and too much time is lost in shuffling cars of very long trains in the classification yards.

—Insufficient attention has been paid to modern "management systems," including sophisticated, automated computer-based technology for freight car movements; modern managerial accounting methods are underutilized; and more heed should be paid to marketing, planning, research and development and quality of services.

The report also suggested that the government might help by buying rail rights of way whose light traffic density

justifies abandonment "and whose values in other uses, public and private, often might be greater."

Among these latter uses, it added, might be using the abandoned corridors for biking and hiking trails, nature walks, for snowmobiles and even for state "linear parks."

The task force was established in June 1972 by two agencies within the White House—The Council of Economic Advisers and the Office of Science

and Technology — and the National Commission on Productivity.

Its members also included Amherst College Prof. James R. Nelson and A. Scheffer Lang, formerly of MIT, and now with the Association of American Railroads.