

# B&M Railroad President Claims Trucking Troubles

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PORTSMOUTH, Jan. 29 — Alan Dustin, president of the Boston and Maine Railroad, is not a man with simple problems.

His railroad is bankrupt. His railroad's track is a mess. No one will lend him money. And he is cut off from taxpayer dollars since his company is not part of the enormous government-subsidized Conrail system.

Yet these are not the worst of Alan Dustin's troubles. True, he hasn't enough free cash to run his railroad effectively. And true, his days are haunted with the effects of past neglect and mismanagement in the railroad industry.

But these problems Alan Dustin can handle. What he can't tolerate are trucks. Not only are trucks taking away

traffic that rightfully should be his, but, he says, they are doing so only at the expense of the taxpayer.

## TRAINS VS. TRUCKS

While the railroad strives to survive under the load of maintenance, fuel and right-of-way costs, trucks, Dustin says, are, at least in the last category, getting almost a free ride.

According to Dustin, who spoke recently at the Portsmouth Chamber of Commerce Breakfast Forum, the railroad pays 25 cents of every dollar for right-of-way costs, while the truck industry pays only about five cents per dollar in highway user fees, a charge, he says, that hasn't increased in years.

The real crime as far as Dustin is concerned is that he believes the volume of traffic to

make a railroad successful is there, but it is moving on the highways with the taxpayer footing the bill for right-of-way costs.

Forced to pay for its own right-of-way ownership and maintenance, the railroad must charge higher rates and consequently loses business.

"The basic problem," he says, "is that we cannot compete with subsidized transportation."

Dustin says he wouldn't mind having railroads replaced by trucks if the railroad was inefficient.

"But we're not," he insists. "We can move four times as much load per BTU of energy as trucks. But that advantage is wiped out if we have to pay for our right-of-way. One thing the citizens must realize is that if they want railroads in a free

enterprise system, they are

going to have to work towards equity in the modes of transportation."

The Boston and Maine is the only bankrupt railroad in the northeast and one of few in the country that is not part of the government's Conrail system.

The B and M employs about 3,000 persons and has 4,000 cars plus 170 diesel locomotives covering a five-state region with 1,400 route miles, a large porportion of which are in New Hampshire.

## MORALE BOOSTER

The railroad is now in its fifth year of a track revitalization program and Dustin is working hard to improve the morale of the company.

"It may seem strange to say, but the B and M was bankrupt in many other ways besides financially," he says.

Although the B and M can obtain no federal grants and with its high-risk status is blocked from banks, help has come from the New England Regional Commission, which furnished grants for an intensified labor program.

In addition, Dustin says the company's recently concluded sale of 270 miles of track to the Massachusetts Bay Transit Authority (MBTA) could help cut into the B and M's large debt.

Dustin is pleased with these accomplishments and is proud that his railroad is still independent and has not been "swallowed up by the government."

But things could get worse. If attitudes don't change towards railroads, he says, within 10 years all lines will be nationalized.

"There will always be railroads," he says. "The question is will they be in the free enterprise system or nationalized and a burden on the taxpayer. It all depends on the attitude in Washington and whether people decide they want to exploit the most efficient transportation system known to man — the railroad."

Barbara Strauch is our correspondent in the Seacoast area. Know any news? Call her at 431-8652.

FRANKFORT, Ky. — The nation produced 60,066,318 tax gallons of whisky in 1975, down from the 75.1 million gallons produced in 1974. About 43.8 million gallons of 1975's output came from Kentucky.



ALAN DUSTIN, president of the Boston and Maine Railroad, told a Portsmouth Chamber of Commerce gathering recently if attitudes don't change towards railroads, all lines will be nationalized within 10 years. The B&M is one of few lines in the country that has not been swallowed up by the government's Conrail system. (Photo by Barbara Strauch)



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