

Business Mail 021-236 3366. Ext. 592/521. Telex 337552.

BR says sale of a million names 'is no con-trick'

British Rail today defended its decision to sell the names and addresses of one million pensioners to a life insurance firm. A spokesman said BR chiefs were considering extending the scheme to give more firms access to details of more than a million other people,

including the young and disabled. He dismissed reported criticism by MPs, and pressure groups for the elderly and BR users by saying: "In no way is this a con-trick." BR first decided two years ago to give the names and addresses of its one million senior citizen rail card holders

to SAI UK Ltd., a British subsidiary, based in Camberley, Surrey, of an American firm. SAI put the information on a computer and sent reminders to the pensioners when the £12-a-year railcards — for half price travel — were due for renewal.

The company was also allowed to send out literature for Lloyd's Life. The decision was taken by BR without consultation with the Central Transport Consultative Committee of the National Association of Rail Passengers and for more than a year without the permission of the pensioners themselves.

Brockhouse profit

Brockhouse, the West Bromwich-based engineering and foundries group, reported its first six months of profit since 1980. In the first six months of the year it had lost £795,000, but by the end of the year, reported yesterday, this loss had been cut to £682,000.

That compared with a £1,568,000 loss for the year ending September, 1982, but £500,000 of the recovery came from a lower interest bill.

Mr. Reg Parkes, chairman, said a weaker and slower than expected recovery would mean the company had to speed up restructuring plans. The dividend is just 0.1p.

BL systems in Telecom move

by STEPHEN STARD

BL Systems, the high technology arm of the giant cars group, is pressing the Government to let it take on British Telecom.

The company, based in Redditch, wants to be allowed to offer a telecommunications service to businesses in direct competition with BT and its newly created private challenger, Mercury.

BL Systems was created in 1980 by the then

BL chairman Sir Michael Edwardes to develop the use of information technology within the group's plants, and to link them with a national grid of cables.

As a result, BL plants and offices are joined up by a microwave communications network which allows an employee to dial a colleague in another plant as an "internal call."

The problem for BL systems is that eventually the various parts of the group will be sold off to private industry, leaving the information technology stranded.

It would like to sell to the rapidly expanding markets outside, but under the present law, only Mercury is licensed by the Government to sell in competition with BT.

As a starter, BL Systems would like to add BL dealers to their network, but eventually it would want to look outside the motor industry.

If it is not allowed to compete with BT on its own, the company would consider a link with Mercury.

Industry welcomes noise victory

The Confederation of British Industry is welcoming the rejection yesterday of Common Market noise-cutting plans which could cost British industry more than £1 billion.

The Brussels Commission wants to introduce compulsory sound protection measures in factories and workshops when noise reaches 85 decibels — the equivalent of a typical car radio.

A CBI study published earlier this month says the cost of complying with the plan would be more than double the cost of meeting the existing advisory British level of 90 decibels — the sound of a large bulldozer from 10 metres.

After a meeting yesterday the European Parliament's environment committee is to recommend Euro-MPs to press for the 90 decibel maximum limit throughout Europe.

"Delighted" The CBI study showed it would cost a steel works employing 30,000 people about £5 million to meet existing British noise requirements. It would cost the same steel works £145 million to get noise levels down to 85 decibels.

The CBI said: "We are delighted. This is a step in the right direction and we hope the European Parliament will adopt this more realistic objective."

C and W shares offered at 275p

The Government is to raise at least £275 million by selling half its shareholding in the giant telecommunications business Cable and Wireless.

Investors are being offered the chance to subscribe for the 100 million shares which are being sold at a minimum tender price of 275p each.

This represents a discount on the price in the market today of 293p — a 2p improvement — and suggests that the Government has got the timing of its sale about right and the offer should go well.

The Stock Market has been keenly awaiting details of the sale foreshadowed last month by Treasury Secretary John Moore.

Cable and Wireless specialises in setting up telephone systems around the world from as far afield as the United States and China.

Shares in the group were first offered to the public two years ago and since then profits have soared. The latest sale will leave the Government holding around 22 per cent of the group.

In 1981, when the Government sold 50 per cent of C and W it raised £224 million and the offer was six times over subscribed.

System X wins another contract

Coventry-based GEC and Plessey have won the contract to supply the advanced System X telephone exchange to Hull.

Hull has the only independent telephone service in Britain, and is the first important contract System X has captured against foreign competition.

British Telecom, which £300 million helping to develop System X, has been the only large customer so far.

The initial order from Hull is worth more than £5 million for three exchanges.

Another £5m

Hull plans orders worth another £5 million for 11 more exchanges by the end of the decade.

The Hull telephone department was the only private company to fight off nationalisation. It stressed that its decision to take System X was based on business criteria, and not just following BT.

LATEST STOCK PRICES

Gold: Gold fixed at 375.90 up 0.275. FT INDEX At 11 am FT index up 3.2 at 730

Table with columns for BRITISH FUNDS and various fund names like Philips LP, Racal, and FTI.

Table with columns for AUSTRALIANS and various fund names like BHP, BHP Mining, and WPM.

Table with columns for US & CANADIAN and various fund names like BP Canada, Can Pac, and Gen Motors.

Table with columns for BANKS & HP and various bank names like Barclays, Hambros, and Hill Samuel.

Table with columns for BREWERIES etc and various brewery names like Allied Lyons, Bass, and Beckett.

Table with columns for BUILDING etc and various building names like ANEC, Barrcliff, and Bath Portland.

Table with columns for CHEMICAL and various chemical names like Croda, Flunols, and ICI.

Table with columns for ELECTRICAL & RADIO and various electrical names like BICC, BSB, and Cable & Wire.

Table with columns for FT INDEX and various stock indices like Taiye Lyte, Racal, and Unilever.

Table with columns for INSURANCE and various insurance names like Britannic, AAG, and Ger Accident.

Table with columns for MINES-FINANCE and various names like Anglo American, A.G. Gold, and Charter Cons.

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Foreign Exchanges

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£10m tape drive deal

Thorn EMI Datatec, Britain's leading tape drive company, has won a £10 million original equipment manufacturer order for half-inch streaming tape drives from Hewlett Packard, one of the Major U.S. computer manufacturers.

Business briefs

The contract is one of the largest for these drives and could lead to future business with Hewlett Packard totaling £27 million.

Falling

Farmers' incomes are expected to fall by up to 15 per cent this year after a 45 per cent average in 1982, said Sir Michael Franklin, Permanent Secretary at the Ministry of Agriculture, speaking in Sutton Coldfield.

Buy-up

UK Provident of Salisbury, one of Britain's fastest-growing mutual life assurance companies, is buying £1.5 million worth of computer equipment from ICL, the London-based computer manufacturer.

Opened

A newly renovated office block in the centre of Solihull was officially opened by the Mayor, Councillor Miriam Harris. Saddlers Court in Warwick Road, will be let for offices.

Business briefs

Early trading lacked direction without a lead from Wall Street following its Thanksgiving holiday closure and it was again left to special situations to provide most of what little initial interest there was.

£200m Rolls order

Rolls-Royce has won a £200 million order for its new Taycar engine, giving the hope of a big spin-off for West Midlands suppliers.

Duke opening health HQ

The Duke of Kent will open a Birmingham University's £750,000 Institute of Occupational Health on Tuesday.

Railway facelifts

Environmental improvements are planned at Lichfield Trent Valley, Shenstone and Burton-on-Trent railway stations. The Manpower Services Commission is organising the work and Staffordshire County Council will make a £7,500 contribution. Other stations in the county are expected to be included in later schemes.

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