

The Journal

# End of the line or game of bluff?

**ALL travellers will be holding their collective breath as they try to digest the implications of GNER's Court defeat yesterday.**

ere, they will wonder, does this leave the Coast mainline franchise holder? What will the court ruling have on services, what price will travellers have to pay?

t the franchise cost GNER an awful lot of y is well known, as is the fact that a risk-g safety net is contained within it, court-f the Department of Transport.

ther words, it wasn't all bad news. Why, ssibility of 'open access operators' run-er services was even flagged up too.

if the company must have known what it getting into – and will have expected to a profit while it was doing it – GNER is ot to pass up the chance to renegotiate al with the department.

strictly business. And don't bet against being successful either.

le those uncertainties remain to be ad-ed, the imminent arrival of Grand Central ays' services appears to be unalloyed news for rail travellers in Sunderland, ide and North Yorkshire.

our trains a day to London from Wearside se shorter journeys and cheap fares to e from those parts of the region. But when es start in December, Grand Central will to entice some, perhaps all, of its cus-s away from GNER.

re face of the new competition, perhaps ainline franchise holder will do what r mongers say: sell up and walk away. here are substantial profits still to be by an operator with time to react, and the edge and incentive to do so effectively.

no surprise then that some believe 's spirited opposition to be a hard headed of bluff, aimed at draining an opponent's roes and reducing the franchise bill.

e that to be the case, one could expect a war to be unleashed, long before Grand l has set a single bogey on the tracks

# Voic

## Suspension of trade talks dashed hopes

**C**AMPAIGNERS in the North-East worked tirelessly last year on the Make Poverty History campaign, which produced some impressive commitments from world leaders on aid and debt cancellation.

However, the potential offered by these commitments is dwarfed by the development potential of global trade reforms: if Africa, East Asia, South Asia and Latin America increased their share of world exports by just 1%, it could lift 28 million people out of poverty. However, such hopes were dashed by Monday's suspension of World Trade Organisation talks.

The current round of world trade negotiations began almost five years ago when rich countries agreed to a "development round": reform of the grossly biased rules of international trade so that developing countries could begin to trade their way out of poverty.

Rich countries currently protect their markets from international competition through the use of subsidies, quotas and tariffs. This prevents poor countries from selling their produce abroad and means artificially cheap, subsidised goods from the North undercut developing country producers in their own countries.

Talks were suspended because rich countries refused to make meaningful cuts to these unfair protection measures and developing countries showed great strength and unity in refusing to give in to rich country demands, demands that went completely against the spirit of the original development round.

Failure to reform the massive imbalances in trade rules represents a betrayal to developing countries and the cost of delay is enormous. Existing rules prevent developing countries from competing on equal terms in international trade.

And as the hope of global talks through the WTO fade, the US and EU are increasingly turning to trade talks with small regional groups of countries where they use their negotiating weight to try and force through what they could not get from the WTO.

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## Failure to park in garages criticised



**ALI JOHN** permission

## Church monger

**B**ELIEVE programme to achieve nc of the past. It it is clear tha war at first h

Churchill e appears we slavery be in beyond.

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Sounds lik good for the

Christian p Commandme "thou shalt n of good ver