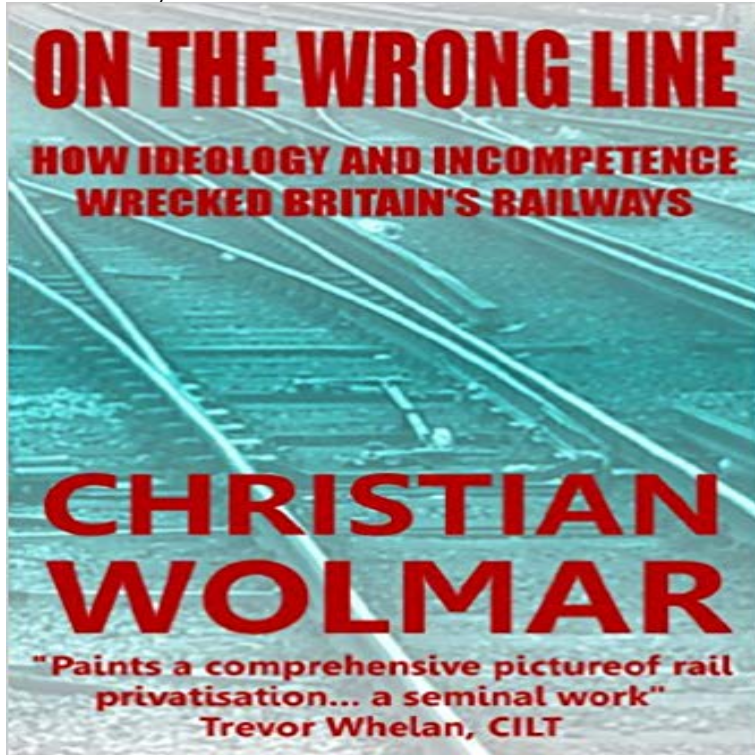


# On the Wrong Line: How Ideology and Incompetence Wrecked Britain's Railways



Description Britain's rail privatisation was one of the greatest political failures of recent history. A well-functioning industry was torn apart to satisfy political dogma and privatised in a way that not only compromised safety and wrecked performance but also resulted in financial melt-down. In this acclaimed book, an update to his earlier work *Broken Rails*, Christian Wolmar revealed the causes of the collapse of the railway system, following the Hatfield accident, barely five years after John Major's ill-thought-out privatisation. *On the Wrong Line* goes on to expose the failure of New Labour to get to grips with the legacy it inherited from the Tories and raised wider issues about the competence of the Blair government and the Department for Transport. Wolmar argues that only a new approach will create the railway Britain needs. He makes a persuasive case for a return to a rational railway in which the disparate pieces created by the Tories' privatisation are reassembled into a functioning network. This book, with a new preface for the Kindle edition, serves as a valuable reminder of the risks of privatising a single, state-owned service and splitting it into many competing entities, each linked by contracts rather than a shared service ethos. Unfortunately, this lesson does not appear to have been learned by the Coalition Government, which first let the West Coast Main Line franchise process collapse into farce and now seems dedicated to destroying first the National Health Service the way the Tories wrecked the railways, and then doing the same to education. Finally, in a new appendix, this edition contains a never-before-published three page statement written by Sir John Major on the privatisation of the railways; a subject he never mentions once in his autobiography. *On The Wrong Line* is the book to read if you've ever wondered: Why the UK rail network has become the most

expensive in Europe Why the privatised railway costs the taxpayer more now than before it was sold off Why we have so many rail franchises, and what they're actually for Why Railtrack failed - was it suicide or lynching? How a few bankers and former BR managers made hundreds of millions from rail privatisation, at the taxpayers expense How the Major government botched privatisation, putting ideology ahead of practicality, and New Labour failed to get to grips with the problem Reviews This book can be recommended to anyone who wishes to understand the bewildering and often scurrilous way in which critical national transport policy is developed. You will not be disappointed - Trevor Whelan, CILT

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