

CHANNEL: TUNNEL OR BRIDGE?

France is regarding the English Channel with renewed interest. That tunnel is again in the public eye. Its advocates are optimistic. How wasteful, they say, that storms should often keep cross Channel ships harbour-bound for days on end - in this day and age.

Near Dover the old workings are still regularly inspected. This was the start of the pilot tunnel, begun about 1880, but abandoned when the Navy and Army said that a tunnel would leave Britain open to invasion. In those days it would have been necessary to build a pilot tunnel first, to find out the nature of the seabed. Not so, nowadays.

This is how the French see it; a comparatively simple engineering job, boring from each side, to meet somewhere about the middle, the cost, about £130-million.

But why not a bridge, instead of a tunnel? It would take not only trains, but cars, at the rate of 6,000 an hour. This maybe is the modern way to do it. At each end they plan a station, with customs, a restaurant and radar towers. By train-ferry, and air, too, thousands of cars go to the Continent yearly; though it's safe to say, only a fraction of the number there'd be we had a tunnel or bridge. As the overall traffic will be greatly increased if we go into the Common Market, the airlines will benefit as well. Paris will seem like our home town. Crossing the Channel will seem like a run up the M-1., or going Pullman to Brighton. As a barrier, it will handicap us no more.