

S R U B L U K

The Society for the Reinvigoration of Unremunerative Branch Lines in the United Kingdom

The Branch Line Reinvigoration Society

ANNUAL REPORT, FOR THE YEAR 1960/61, AND
PROGRESS REPORT, APRIL/MAY, 1961.

THE NEW COMMITTEE.

The new Committee, elected at the Annual General Meeting held on 26 April, 1961, is as follows:-

Chairman and Editor Dr. M.F.L.Caton, 10 Grosvenor Gardens, Upminster, Essex.

General Secretary Mr. J.W.Parfield, Central House, Finsbury Square,
London E.C.2.

Honorary Treasurer Mr. P.E.Postgate, 173 Barnsbury Road, London N.1.

Membership Secretary Mr. C.J.Folkinghorne, 20 Ridge Crest, Enfield, Middx.

Committee Members Mr. G.R.Croughton, Fen-dy, 27 Tolmers Gardens, Cuffley,
Potters Bar, Middlesex.

Mr. J.P.Groves, 46 Stonepark Avenue, Beckenham, Kent.

Mr. G.F.Manley, 42 Hillsborough Court, London N.W.6.

Mr. R.G.Pullen, 36 Nevern Square, London S.W.5.

Co-oped Members Mr. K.G.Judd, 68 Mayfield Avenue, Crpington, Kent.

Mr. N.J.Watt, Watt's Folly, Arkesden, Saffron Walden,
Essex.

Delegates from the
Railway Development
Association and the
Branch Line Society
respectively who attend
meetings to provide
liaison with those
societies.

Mr. E.R.Davis, 105 Brentway, London N.3.

Mr. J.M.Firth, 22 Ingham Road, London N.W.6.

PROCEEDINGS OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING.

Chairman's Report.

Mr. Manley opened his address by referring to the two reinvigoration parties that had been held during the past year. Both were a great success and a number of new members were enrolled. The trips received satisfactory press coverage.

The position of individual lines was next discussed with particular reference to the work of the Society. The Buckingham to Banbury branch which was closed eventually towards the end of the year was of particular note as it was the first to be run on the lines suggested by the Society - i.e., with diesel rail cars and additional unstaffed halts. In spite of the large increase in traffic and receipts, however, the local T.U.C.C. agreed eventually to the withdrawal of the passenger service. This branch had been visited on an earlier reinvigoration party.

The Westerham Branch, which also had been visited by a reinvigoration party, had been reprieved, and would remain open for the time being. Since this line is very near to London and has a considerable commuter traffic, it will probably be electrified or diesel operated.

S.R.U.B.L.U.K. had put forward a case to the T.U.C.C. in co-operation with the local Chamber of Trade regarding the proposed closure of the Colne Valley line. The local T.U.C.C. had refused since to agree to the closure and this was an encouraging step forward. (Details are reported later in this circular).

The Chairman next referred to the recent report of the Central T.U.C.C. which throws new light on branch line closures. Figures have shown that economies effected by branch line closures amounted in the last year to only £4½ million and that this was very little compared to the railways' total annual deficit of £84million. No doubt the Committee would wake up to the dangers of indiscriminate closures which appear to yield little saving compared to the hardship caused by the loss of a public service.

With regard to rural transport, it was true that branch lines did not pay, but neither did rural bus services; for which subsidies were now being asked. There is no reason why branch lines should not be treated in a similar way.

Some general problems of the railways were next discussed and the Chairman mentioned the fact that recent chaos had revealed what could happen when the railwaymen decided to work to rule as a protest. If every rule was observed

the railways would almost come to a standstill and it was time that the rules were revised and brought up to date. No doubt the new railway management which had been set up would look into this.

The work of the Stedeford Committee on the future of the railways was next mentioned, the findings of which were not published. The government White Paper on Future Railway Policy, published as a result of these findings, has produced some headaches for British Railways. Of the four members of the Committee, the most notable was Dr. Richard Beeching, who had recently been appointed to manage the railways for the next five years. S.R.U.B.L.U.K. was writing to Dr. Beeching to put forward the Society's case regarding branch lines.

The authorities should not cease to try to make the public more railway conscious. Public relations was still a very weak spot with the Transport Commission and more should be done to exploit new types of traffic such as car sleepers for which there is a great demand.

The co-ordination of rail and air was another source of new traffic and in this connection the Chairman produced an advertisement from a daily newspaper entitled 'Travel by train to your plane'. Lord Douglas, Chairman of British European Airways, had called for an early investigation into a possible rail link to London Airport.

The Chairman next mentioned the need to bring the nineteenth century stations in Great Britain up to modern standards. He also mentioned sleeping cars and said that this service should be further exploited as the demand exceeded the supply. The prices charged for sleeping berths were reasonable.

Ending with a warning, the Chairman noted that there was always talk of the competition between road and rail but there was a new powerful competitor in the form of internal air travel and this should not be underestimated. The number of regular flights between London and the provincial centres had greatly increased in recent years and the air services, unlike the railways, are not bound by out of date rules. In the U.S.A., where the railways have almost been given up for lost, it is air travel and not the roads that has caused this decline. Measures to combat air competition should be taken and British Railways should do much more to convince the public of the advantages of rail travel. It is always wise to keep alert and alive to the enemy.

The Chairman then invited questions and comments from the meeting. Mr. Postgate asked whether Dr. Beeching would be concerned with the freight side of the railways as this was an aspect where the antiquity of the accounting procedure and the mass of paper work was most apparent. He quoted an instance where a merchant he knew found that the best way to send goods from London to East Anglia was by the Western Region! The Chairman confirmed that Dr. Beeching would be concerned with all aspects of the railways.

Dr. Caton, referring to the air competition with the railway between London and Manchester, asked why the air services were proving such a draw since the fastest train, the Midland Pullman, took very little longer than the plane with the road journey to and from the airports added. Mr. Manley pointed out that although the Midland Pullman did not take a lot longer than the air journey the trains at the other times of the day were slower and the plane provided a considerable saving and was becoming very popular with businessmen whose time is very valuable. It was agreed that the railways will be in a much better position to retaliate when the Euston to Manchester service is electrified.

Mr. Ravenor thought that S.R.U.P.L.U.K. should take more interest in the proposed new tube line between Walthamstow and Victoria rather than stress the need for a rail link to London Airport as he considered it would be of greater benefit to the public. The Chairman agreed that the new tube line would be of great value to the ordinary traveller to London and would help to ease the congestion on the roads. On the other hand the line to London Airport would cater for a different class of passenger, i.e., many different people travelling once or twice against a number of people making the same journey every day. It would be a branch line and S.R.U.P.L.U.K. is concerned with branch lines.

Mr. Croughton considered that the Society should stress the need for better co-ordination between the railways and local bus services and quoted an example where the bus left one minute after the arrival of the train; there being at least a five minute walk between the station and the bus stop! The Jack Committee, in its investigation into rural bus services had touched on this matter in their report. There should also be better advertisement of train and bus services, preferably together in some prominent part of the town or village. Through bookings from bus to railway should be considered so that passengers could alight from the bus and go directly to the train.

Timetables should be arranged so that bus services connect with as many

trains as possible. Where practicable bus routes should be diverted to call at the stations even if it meant a slight detour, this being of particular benefit to passengers with luggage. Mr. Polkinghorne considered that more use should be made of the area around the stations for bus parks to assist with this co-ordination and it was agreed that bus stations should not be located at the opposite end of the town to the railway station.

The Chairman pointed out that even the co-ordination between different railway routes left much to be desired.

Membership Secretary's Report.

As the Membership Secretary was unable to be present, the Honorary Treasurer was called upon to give a review of the membership position and to answer any questions. The number of fully paid up members was about sixty. The Chairman stated that several members had so far not renewed but a number of new members had joined. A reminder to those who had not so far renewed this year would be sent with the report of the Annual General Meeting and it was suggested that those who had lapsed in earlier years should be circularised inviting them to re-join. Any suggestions as to how to increase the membership would be welcome, and members could help in this by encouraging others to join the Society. Publicity in the press was also useful and the work of the Society had been reported in a number of newspapers recently which had brought in many enquiries.

Mr. Croughton suggested that more S.R.U.P.I.U.K. literature should be distributed on reinvigoration parties and at other times. Mr. Postgate considered however, that such advertising would be wasteful and did not think that the amount of gain would justify the expenditure.

Election of New Committee.

The new Committee was duly elected as listed on the front page of this report. Mr. Manley stated that he did not wish to stand again as Chairman as he considered that someone new should take over the appointment. A vote of thanks was passed in appreciation of his Chairmanship over the past three years.

Any Other Business.

Mr. Manley referred to the fact that the Annual General Meeting had been held this year on a weekday, but the attendance had been poor. It was agreed to ask members to write in and let the Committee know whether they would

prefer future Annual General Meetings to be held on a weekday or a Saturday,

The meeting ended with a report of the Sub-Committee which had been set up to consider the future of the Cheltenham to Kingham line. An account of this report appears later in this Circular.

COLNE AND STOUR VALLEY REINVIGORATION PARTY.

Members are reminded of this event which will take place on June 10, details of which were given in the last Progress Report. The party will meet at 10:0 am at the Main Booking Office, Liverpool Street, Eastern Region, for departure by the 10:30 am train, arriving back at 5:43 pm. Those members and others who have not already sent the fare (21/9, or 10/11 if under 14), to the Membership Secretary, may pay on the day.

WESTERN REGION REINVIGORATION PARTY.

A further reinvigoration party has been arranged for Saturday September 2, visiting the Radley - Abingdon, Oxford - Witney - Fairford, and Oxford - Thame - Princes Risborough branches. Details will appear in the next Progress Report.

RECENT PROCEEDINGS OF THE COMMITTEE OF INTEREST.

Colne Valley Line.

Members will recall that S.R.U.B.I.U.K. submitted a written objection to the East Anglian Transport Users Consultative Committee regarding the proposed closure of the Colne Valley line and that a member of the S.R.U.B.I.U.K. Committee attended the T.U.C.C. hearing to support the objection. The T.U.C.C. have now made the following recommendation:- "That the proposed withdrawal of the passenger service on the Colne Valley Line and the proposed severance of the line between Yeldham and Haverhill be deferred until such time as the Main Line from Colchester has been electrified."

"An additional reason for recommending deferment is that it is considered undesirable to comply with the British Transport Commission's proposals to close this line until such time as official policy is clarified as to the closure of branch lines at present regarded as unremunerative, but serving an existing or potential "social need"."

The above recommendation is encouraging news. The matter will now be considered by the Transport Users Central Consultative Committee and we await their decision anxiously. X

West Drayton to Uxbridge.

Members will recall that a short time ago S.R.U.B.I.U.K.

communicated with the Western Region regarding the lack of name boards outside the two stations in the West Drayton to Uxbridge Branch and this has resulted in the erection of suitable boards at Cowley station. Further to this we are now pleased to report that notices have since been erected at Uxbridge station, West Drayton to Staines Branch.

One of our members has drawn our attention to the inadequacy of information in Staines regarding the Western Region service to West Drayton. The Southern Region have recently erected a direction sign in the town centre close to the W.R. Station which simply reads 'Station' and points in the direction of the Southern Station. It is felt that this information is misleading and S.R.U.P.L.U.K. accordingly has communicated with Western Region and suggested a direction sign to Staines W.R. Station be installed, and that a joint departure table might be erected at both stations and possibly elsewhere in the town. As a result we are pleased to report that the Western Region now have in hand the provision of a sign adjoining the existing Southern Region sign and referring specifically to the W.R. Station. The suggestion of joint timetables is under consideration.

Cheltenham to Kingham Line - A S.R.U.P.L.U.K. Survey.

A S.R.U.P.L.U.K. Sub-Committee was appointed recently to enquire into the report that British Railways are considering the withdrawal of the passenger services between Cheltenham and Kingham, to report on the present state of the line, and its future potentialities for passengers. The Sub-Committee visited the line on Saturday April 15, and travelled on 7 of the 12 trains, operating on that date. A total of 60 passengers were interviewed to find out for what purpose they were using the line and to what extent they would be inconvenienced if the service were to be withdrawn. The passengers were also asked whether they were satisfied with the present service and whether they had any suggestions for its improvement.

It was found that exactly half the passengers interviewed were travelling either to or from an intermediate station on the line whilst the remainder were using it as a through route. Many passengers were travelling between Cheltenham and London since, apart from being the cheaper route, it is in many cases the quicker between the two towns. Of the through passengers a large proportion were travelling between the Oxford area and Western Gloucestershire, also South Wales, notably Lynney and Cardiff. A number of the sixty passengers

complained of the poor connections with the South Wales and Birmingham trains at Cheltenham Spa (Malvern Road). For example the 12:38 pm train from Kingham misses connections at Cheltenham with the Inter-City Diesel Trains to Birmingham and South Wales by three minutes and one minute respectively. There were also complaints of unreasonably long waits at Kingham. Apart from this criticism, most of the passengers agreed that the present service of six trains in each direction, weekdays only, is quite adequate for their normal requirements although one or two persons would have liked a train leaving Cheltenham at about 4:0 pm or a late evening departure at about 10:15 pm.

As regards local traffic, Bourton-on-the-Water is undoubtedly the busiest station and apart from serving the local residents, caters for a certain amount of tourist traffic. Rail excursions were operated to Bourton on Bank Holidays but we understand that certain excursion facilities normally provided at Easter were withdrawn this year. The population of Stow-on-the-Wold is only slightly less than that of Bourton but as the station is 1½ miles from the town, it is poorly patronised. No. railway timetables or posters were visible in the centre of the town nor is there any signpost to direct people to the station which is situated unobtrusively in a hollow, shielded on one side by a row of evergreens, and the passer-by could be forgiven for failing to notice it. Notgrove station is situated midway between several villages and is poorly patronised; Andoversford Junction station also deals with little traffic since the interchange facilities with the Midland and South Western Joint line almost ceased to exist. Charlton Kings Halt appears to deal with little traffic - the poor conditions of the station buildings is hardly likely to encourage rail travel - but Cheltenham (Leckhampton) is understood to be used regularly by students of the local technical college.

A fair selection of special cheap day tickets is available between most of the stations, and Cheltenham, Oxford, and Gloucester, but it appears that they are poorly advertised. Excursion fares operate to London on four days a week by the train leaving Cheltenham at 6:30 am but these facilities are not available from Cheltenham itself, by this route, which is a cause of dissatisfaction locally.

The Sub-Committee established that the threat of closure is still only a rumour, and no official announcement has been made. As a result of this survey

some suggestions have been made which, it is felt, if adopted, would attract more traffic to the line and effect economies, both of which are essential if the line is to remain open. The suggestions are as follows:-

- (a) That the connections at Kingham be tightened up and that better connections be provided at Cheltenham for South Wales and Birmingham;
- (b) That the line be operated by a Diesel Multiple Unit or a steam auto train in order to reduce terminal time. A diesel set would also enable the service to be speeded up and the improved view from the rail car would appeal to tourists;
- (c) That all intermediate stations except Bourton-on-the-Water be reduced to unstaffed halts;
- (d) That every attempt be made to boost Bourton (and also Stow) as tourist attractions and that excursion trains be run and excursion bookings by ordinary trains be made available from stations in the Midlands and in the London Area;
- (e) That special cheap fares be augmented where necessary and prominently advertised;
- (f) That adequate signposting and nameboards be provided at Stow;
- (g) That the return halves of rail tickets from local stations to Cheltenham be made available by late evening buses (late evening trains are not operated and it would probably be uneconomic to do so).

Proposals (a), (e), and (f) have been submitted to British Railways for their consideration.

Midland and South Western Junction Line.

The M. & S.W.J. Line between Cheltenham and Andover is now faced with withdrawal of passenger services. The Cirencester - Swindon, Marlborough - Savernake (Low Level), and Tidworth - Andover sections will be retained for freight and the remainder of the line closed completely. S.R.U.P.L.U.K. has submitted a representation to the T.U.C.C. objecting to the closure and pointing out that this line, besides connecting a number of important towns, is a valuable through route connecting Southampton and the South of England with Cheltenham for the Midlands and the North. It was pointed out that it appears that such through traffic has been discouraged in recent years to the extent that only one through train is operated daily in each direction, and this

requires, in the South to North direction, a departure from Southampton Central at the unreasonably early hour of 5:49 am! This line could be made a useful link in the National railway system if an adequate service were provided making good main line connections. It was also stressed that if the closure is carried out as planned, the town of Marlborough, population 6,000, will lose all its passenger services and it is essential that such a town should have adequate rail connections to the national railway network.

A member of S.R.U.R.L.U.K. will be attending the T.U.C.C. hearing in June in order to support and enlarge upon the written representation.

Oxford to Fairford.

S.R.U.R.L.U.K. have been in communication with the Clerk of the Oxfordshire County Council regarding the proposed closure of the Oxford - Witney - Fairford line, and our offer of assistance has been gladly accepted. This is yet another line where the timetable has been greatly reduced in recent years with consequent discouragement of traffic. The times of the trains are inconvenient too, for example the first train from Fairford arrives in Oxford too late for factory workers and too early for office workers. The second train, which starts from Carterton, arrives in Oxford too late for shop workers and too late to connect with the popular train to London.

S.R.U.R.L.U.K. has submitted an objection to the T.U.C.C. regarding this line and emphasising that Witney (population 8,700), the largest town on the line, requires an adequate rail service.

Leicester to Rugby.

SRUPLUK has been in correspondence with local councils concerned with the closure of the Leicester to Rugby (Midland) branch and a Sub-Committee has recently conducted a survey of this line. The result will be published in the next Progress Report. As we go to press, however, we regret to say that the T.U.C.C. have recommended closure.

BRANCH LINE PATRONISATION.

It would be a great help in furthering the work of the Society if, where possible, members would keep an account of passenger loading figures on all branch and stopping main line trains on which they travel. Mr. G.R. Croughton, of 27 Tolmers Gardens, Cuffley, Potters Bar, Middlesex, has agreed to co-ordinate this work and he will be pleased to receive any information in this connection. In order to standardise the information sent in by different

members it would be useful if members could submit the details under the following headings:-

Name of Station; Number of passengers (a) joining, (b) alighting,
(c) going forward.

Children apparently under 14 should be counted as half. It is not necessary to distinguish between first and second class passengers; and railway staff in uniform should be disregarded. The member should include himself in the numbers.

NEWS OF OTHER BRANCH LINES.

We understand that that the Amlwch line in Anglesea is to go before the T.U.C.C. shortly. This line has been under the threat of closure for some time. It is rumoured that the Taunton to Farnstaple line may close.

The proposed Preservation Society for the Kent and East Sussex line was inaugurated on May 13 and was attended by about 125 people including a S.R.U.R.L.U.K. representative. The Preservation Society's proposals are to purchase the permanent way and lease the land and buildings and to operate both freight and passenger services. The initial intention would be to run a full daily summer service, mainly for tourists, although the needs of local residents would certainly not be overlooked. In winter the service would be developed to suit local users.

We hear from Mr. L. Fipperson that the East Anglian Area T.U.C.C. has decided to recommend that the 9:30 pm train from Norwich to Dereham should run through to Fakenham and Wells for a trial period of three months. At present it is impossible for people who live beyond Dereham to get home from London by a departure later than 3:30 pm. Less encouraging news comes as a warning from the Great Eastern Line Manager that there will be a little more pruning of the railway service in Norfolk and Suffolk as even the diesels have not made some of these branch lines pay, and the railway authorities are told clearly from the Government to run the railways purely as a commercial proposition.

The B.T.C. have turned down suggestions that a diesel car service should be operated on the Ashchurch to Upton-upon-Severn line. The T.U.C.C. have now recommended closure.

The latest news regarding the Westerham branch is that the Central T.U.C.C. have decided to recommend to the Minister of Transport that it should remain open on social grounds.

The Irringham Tramway is expected to close on July 1.

The T.U.C.C. have also approved the closure of the Bewdley to Woolferton line, subject to the provision of one passenger train in each direction over the Bewdley to Tenbury Wells section.

The number of trains operating on the Banff has been doubled in the Summer timetable.

A new halt, known as Colnbrook Estate Halt, has been built between West Drayton and Colnbrook on the W.R. line to Staines to serve an industrial estate.

Chairman and Editor:- Dr. M.P.L.Caton, 10 Grosvenor Gardens, Uxminster, Essex.
General Secretary:- Mr. J.W.Barfield, Central House, Finsbury Square, London E.C.2.
Membership Secretary:- Mr. C.J.Volkinghorne, 20 Ridge Crest, Enfield, Middlesex.

To the Membership Secretary, SEUPLUK,
20 Ridge Crest, Enfield, Middx.

- (a) Please enrol me as a member of SEUPLUK. I enclose a remittance for 10/6 (if a Junior, 6/-, and I confirm that I was under 21 on 1 January, 1961).
- (b) Please renew my membership to SEUPLUK. I enclose my subscription of 10/6 (if a Junior, 6/-, and I confirm that I was under 21 on 1 January, 1961.)
- (c) I enclose a donation towards the funds of.....
- (d) Please send details of Membership and your Manifesto to the following:-

.....
.....
.....

Please delete (a), (b), (c), or (d),
as appropriate.

NAME (IN CAPITALS).....

ADDRESS.....

Date.....
