

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

The Branch Line Reinvigoration Society

PROGRESS REPORT - JANUARY 1960.

A happy New Year to all our members, and the Committee hope that during the coming year we will be able to bring increasing pressure on the authorities to give more than lip-service to the problems of rural rail services.

SUBSCRIPTIONS - 1960. Subscriptions are due on January 1st, and all members are asked to be good enough to remit their subscriptions as soon as possible to the Membership Secretary. A form for this purpose is included with this circular. The Membership Secretary reports with appreciation the large number of members who included a donation with their subscription in 1959, and hopes that members will continue in 1960 this excellent habit.

The Railway Development Association state that the Banbury (Merton Street) to Buckingham Branch is closing on 2 January, 1960. When the matter was considered by the T.U.C.C., the matter was deferred, owing to the fact that the figures quoted did not appear to be above suspicion. In fact, it transpired that the cost of running the Banbury - Buckingham line included the cost of running the steam operated Buckingham - Bletchley Line, although the line to be closed is operated by a single unit diesel railcar! No doubt the members can form their own opinions of the likely accuracy of "losses" quoted for other lines, when in this case when the costs of running a completely different branch were included.

Mr. Hipperson of Cheltenham reports that the only two services a day on the Fingham to Chipping Norton Branch give very poor main line connections; and these services are run primarily for the workers at the Chipping Norton blanket factory, which means that it is unlikely that British Railways will make any alterations for the other few passengers; accordingly the possibility of other traffic offering here is remote.

SRUBLUK has heard nothing more regarding the proposed closing (as reported) of the Honeybourne - Cheltenham line; we knew that this route had been earmarked for centralised traffic control, and we are still trying to get official

clarification of the position. It appears that one faction is in favour of closure, and another faction is in favour of modernisation!

There was very little local opposition to the closure of the Newbury - Lambourn Line when the enquiry was held at Charing Cross. Probably, in the circumstances, not surprising. This line is closing on 2 January, 1960. A concession is made in respect of goods traffic to Welford Park for the benefit of the U.S. Forces Base there, only. Apparently the U.S. Forces requirements carry greater weight with the B.T.C. than do the British Public. Em...

On the Winchester - Newbury Line feeling is stronger, but it is felt by SRUPLUK that if this line closes, Newbury - Didcot is pretty certain to follow, as these two lines constitute the through route from Didcot to Southampton.

Mr. Jennings, M.P. for Burton-on-Trent has been lashing out; he has stated in an article in the Manchester Guardian that the T.U.C.C. set-up is a farce, appointed by the British Transport Commission, and heavily loaded against the public. (With this we must agree). He intends to protest in the House of Commons if the Wutbury to Burton on Trent Line is closed. His past experience with T.U.C.C.'s has not been a particularly happy one; and he feels that the airing in the Press that his views have had has enabled him to meet a wider public, who apparently feel the same.

Major Ross-Lewin, our member at St. Olaves, Norfolk, has resigned because we have not had so much success as he had hoped. He is going to continue campaigning outside SRUPLUK, but very largely on our lines. As he lived on the recently closed line from Beccles to Yarmouth we feel that his resignation is more of a personal protest that we were not successful in retaining his particular line.

Major Walker, our member at Cheltenham, has now been appointed Vice-President of the Gloucestershire Railway Society, on which we offer our congratulations. He is particularly interested in the Honeybourne - Cheltenham Line (see above) and also the Cheltenham - Andover Line. He states that the Excursion tickets to London are available only on the Cheltenham Spa Express, which is full (usually over-full) - yet alternative trains are almost empty, and these tickets are not available on those trains.

Mr. Yarrow, of Jarrow, Northumberland, states that the Alston - Haltwhistle Line has been reprieved for the time being; it has been converted to diesel

traction, and this is most encouraging, since previously it was proposed to close this line. It is evident that the change of heart would not have taken place without action by SRUPLUK. If the line had been closed, the alternative would have been a difficult 11-mile journey by bus, with awkward connections at Ealtwistle.

PUBLIC MEETING. Members are reminded of the Public Meeting that takes place during January. The details are as follows:-

FRIENDS HOUSE, EUSTON ROAD, LONDON, N.W.1,

WEDNESDAY, 27 JANUARY, 1960, AT 7:30 pm.,

When Mr. L.J.Roll - one of our prominent members - will deliver an address regarding his experiences whilst he was opposing the closure of the Midland and Great Northern Line; from local to Ministerial level. It is hoped that all members will make every effort to attend. Although the meeting is taking place at Friends' House, it is not, of course, sponsored by the Society of Friends, but is exclusively a SRUPLUK meeting.

Finally, may we remind you (whilst the matter is still fresh in your minds) to forward your 1960 subscription? A form is at the foot of this letter to help you.

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

To the Membership Secretary,
c/o 68, Mayfield Avenue, Orpington, Kent.

I enclose my subscription for 1960 amounting to 10/6 (Junior Members under 21, 6/-), together with a donation to the funds amounting to £ ; : .
If Junior Membership is claimed, I confirm that I am under 21 on 1 January, 1960.

(Name)

BLOCK LETTERS, PLEASE!

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