

# 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*

PROGRESS REPORT - JUNE, 1960.

INTRODUCING THE NEW MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY. The new membership secretary of SRUBLUK is Mr. J.P. Groves, 46 Stonepark Avenue, Beckenham, Kent, to whom all subscriptions should be forwarded in future, and who will be pleased to send details of the Society to prospective members on request.

RECENT TRANSACTIONS OF THE COMMITTEE. The Committee considered the terms of the letter to be despatched to the Chairman of the Railway Board who is receiving representations regarding ways of improving (and saving) British Railways; the letter was approved, and our representations have now been lodged.

The Kent Reinvigoration Party was discussed, further details of which will follow. Members are asked to note that the date proposed is September 10th and not the 11th, as mentioned in the May Report.

The Committee have decided to revert to their former policy and insert advertisements regarding SRUBLUK in the Railway Journals - a policy that has been in abeyance for several years.

It appears that some members are not very clear regarding the purpose of SRUBLUK Reinvigoration Parties; and the Committee wish it to be known that they serve three purposes:-

- (a) They draw attention to the Society, and its objects and policy;
- (b) They draw attention to the Branch Line Problem;
- (c) They provide an outing on branch lines for members.

The Committee now have a liaison member with the South Devon Railway Society, thereby improving our links with the other societies.

The close similarity of views between the Branch Line Society and SRUBLUK was again considered, and although our aims are not identical with theirs, it was felt that joint consultations with that Society should take place later this year, if at all possible.

Amongst the lines considered, the Staines West Branch was examined, and a report of this line will appear in the July issue of the Progress Report. The chief reason for British Railways proposing its closure is the large expense

in connection with the renewal of a viaduct.

OTHER NEWS OF INTEREST TO MEMBERS. The Committee have had under consideration for some time the question of increasing the news content of the Progress Report, and starting with this issue, the news content is considerably enlarged, as SRUBLUK has made arrangements to receive a much greater amount of news of Branch Lines than before. This increase is experimental; members are invited to send their comments to the Chairman as soon as possible.

The SRUBLUK view on the essential place of Branch Lines is spreading; this is the conclusion to be drawn from the speech of Mr. J.L.Simons, speaking at the Annual Conference of A.S.L.E.F. at Paignton. Amongst many other hard punches - most of which could have been lifted from our Manifesto - he said:- "I have never heard it suggested that people living in isolated districts should be denied postal, gas, or electricity services; but that is what happens often at these places so far as transport service is concerned; being brought about by the Commission's insistence to consider each service in isolation." More power to his elbow; we can provide him with plenty of cogent arguments for future speeches. It is a pity that pressure on space precludes us reporting his speech in full.

As no doubt most members know, the closure has taken place of The Mound Junction - Dornoch, as well as the closure of 20 stations between Inverness and Wick. Strong resistance to these closures was made by the M.P.'s concerned, the Scottish Trades Union Congress Highlands Committee, and many others; and is all the more perplexing since a report is still awaited regarding the Government's proposals regarding the complete integration of the rail, road, sea, and air services in the Highlands in order to boost the Tourist Industry. Surely this report (which is appearing very shortly) could have been awaited before making these closures, at the commencement of the Tourist Season? Two brilliant pieces of timing have come out of this affair - firstly, the Inverness Town Council had asked for a deputation to be received by Headquarters Scottish Region, and this was finally arranged for the day before the closures took place, and in London! It is difficult to understand why Scottish Region Headquarters wished to receive a deputation from Inverness so far south. The other wonderful piece of timing is in the revised services. A train arrives at Inverness at 11:16 am just too late to connect with the 11:5 am to Wick. Accordingly passengers have to wait to 4:35 pm in Inverness. Deliberate, or forgetfulness?

Fifteen stations on the line Shrewsbury to Chester will be proposed for closure, British Railways announce. The only stations to remain will be Gobowen, Chirk, Ruabon, and Wrexham, which will have a semi-fast diesel service, subject to the Consultative Committee agreeing.

St. Anthony's, on the Newcastle Riverside route, is to close. There are no regular passenger trains, but occasional workmen's trains. Other closures in the Newcastle district are as follows:-

Port Clarence Goods Depot to become a public delivery siding;

Murton Junction Public Delivery Siding to be closed;

Lanbley Fell Public Delivery Siding to be closed; and

Lanbley and Slaggyford freight services to be withdrawn completely;

Kent Electrification - it is announced in this connection that a large number of goods depots throughout Kent will be dispensed with during the next few months. The names of the depots in question have not yet been announced, but we may be able to give details in the next Progress Report.

Llanwern (South Wales) is to close, it has been announced. This is despite a large new steel works that is being built near to the station, so the workers will have to go by bus.

Worth Valley Line (Keighley to Oxenhope) which was threatened with closure, has been granted a reprieve. On June 13 an experimental diesel service was introduced. This new service provides five additional trains each way Monday to Thursday, six on Fridays, and seven on Saturdays.

Lofthouse and Outwood, on the line from Wakefield (Westgate) to Leeds (Central) closed on June 13; and on the same day the passenger service was withdrawn from Eunslet, near Leeds.

Medge Hall, near Doncaster, is to close - the service consists of three trains on Saturdays only - on two buses on Saturdays being routed through the village. There were no objectors to the closure.

At Halifax three goods depots are to close - St. Paul's, Pellon, and Eolmfield. Alternative facilities will still be available at the four Halifax Depots still OPEN. Passenger traffic at these Halifax stations ceased in 1916.

Barnstaple (Victoria) on the line from Taunton closed on June 13. British Railways stated that in view of the facilities available at Barnstaple Junct. and Town the closure has been agreed to by the Consultative Committee.

Chettisham on the line from Ely to March, closed on June 13 to passengers. The service was one train each way, weekdays; passengers will be catered for at Ely (the next station) and the parcels collection and delivery service will be continued.

On June 27 the line from Bury St. Edmunds to Thetford line was closed to all traffic. Passengers services were withdrawn on June 7th, 1953. In view of the great interest in this line on the running of the last passenger train, we hope to include further details in our next bulletin. It is claimed that the closure will save "more than £9000 per year".

Middlewood (Higher) has been proposed for closure. This station is between Higher Poynton and Figh Lane and passenger services no longer operate. Middlewood (Lower) on the Manchester (London Road) - Stockport - Buxton Line, will remain open for all traffic. It is claimed that this closure will make the startling saving of £507. A report of the Consultative Committee Meeting will appear in the next issue, and it is understood that the objectors include all the local authorities concerned.

The fate of Tutbury Jinnie (from the branch of that ilk) is becoming a cause celebre. As in the view of the Member of Parliament for Burton, "Justice was not seen to be done" it is announced the Ministry of Transport has ordered a fresh enquiry into the fate of this line. The previous case where a second enquiry took place was the justly famous "Bluebell" Line.

The Kent County Council are objecting to the closure of the line from Gravesend to Allhallows and also to Grain, to passengers, and the complete closure of the Dunton Green - Westerham Branch. It is claimed that much hardship to schoolchildren, to wives who use the line a lot for shopping, and to workers at Grain Refinery in respect of the Grain line, and as regards the Westerham Line, that many people rely on the line who live in Westerham and who work in London. If this line is closed, then Westerham will be the nearest town to London with no rail service.

Members will recall that the passenger service was withdrawn from the Watlington - Princes Risborough branch in July, 1957, but that goods services were retained between Watlington and Chinnor. The Commission now propose to withdraw this goods service, and there is much local objection particularly from the farmers, who rely of the line for the removal of sugar beet, a strong local crop.

Moss Side and Wrea Green on the coast line between Blackpool and Kirkham are threatened with closure. Many local authorities are objecting, including the Fylde Hospital Management Committee, because many of the staff and visitors come by train, since the hospital adjoins Moss Side Station. In addition, the hospital is being enlarged, and will rely more than ever on staff living away. There is also a housing estate development adjoining the line, and also a caravan site which has already received over 1700 bookings this season. The objectors claimed that much hardship would be caused by the closure. The decision will be announced shortly.

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The Committee hope that members like the new slant in the progress report regarding news of closures and other events on the branches; and the Chairman would welcome comments on this. He would like to know in particular whether members would like this part of the report expanded, and more detail given of these news items.

It is regretted that this issue is so late in appearing, which is due to staff holidays, and the change over to the new system of more branch news. The July issue will follow in a fortnight.

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