

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

The Branch Line Reinvigoration Society PROGRESS REPORT - AUGUST/SEPTEMBER, 1961.

WESTERN REGION REINVIGORATION PARTY.

Another successful Reinvigoration Party took place on September 2nd. X The tour began at Faddington and proceeded to Radley for a visit to the Abingdon Line. At Abingdon the Party was received by the Town Clerk who conducted members of the Committee to the Guildhall for a discussion with the Mayor. Although there is no immediate threat to the Abingdon branch there is considerable local concern for its future and it was agreed that the position should be watched very carefully. The time table will be examined to see if there are any ways in which the service might be improved. A single unit railcar has recently been introduced on the line and it is hoped that this is a good sign.

The next branch to be visited was the Oxford-Witney-Fairford line, the closure of which is still being considered by the Central T.U.C.C. During the journey on this line, meetings were held with the Clerk to the Council at Lechlade, a representative of Fairford Council, and the Chairman of Witney Urban District Council all of whom were very concerned about the future of the line. It was agreed that there had been no attempts to make the line pay and considerable dissatisfaction was expressed at the disgraceful way in which the Public Hearing of the Closure had been conducted by the T.U.C.C. Proper consideration was not given to a number of points raised by objectors.

The tour continued from Oxford to Thame where the party was met by our new member Mr. Purser and an interesting discussion followed on the future of the Thame branch. Although the stations are well sited in relation to the centres they serve, most of the traffic from the area to Oxford is now carried by the more frequent bus service. It appears that the main traffic flow from the line is in the direction of London via Princes Risborough and it was suggested that efforts should be made to encourage this; perhaps by extending the Marylebone to Princes Risborough diesel service to Thame or by restoring the through London to Oxford service via Thame.

Reports on the Reinvigoration Party appeared in the local and National press.

RECENT PROCEEDINGS OF THE COMMITTEE OF GENERAL INTEREST.

Chester - Denbigh Line.

The closure of the Chester - Denbigh - Ruthin line is shortly to be considered by the T.U.C.C., and SRUPLUK has co-operated further with the Chester-Denbigh-Ruthin Train Users Association. X The P.T.C. memorandum on the closure has been examined and suggestions made for improving the service and making it more economic. These include reducing stations to unstaffed halts, the reduction to single track of the Mold Junction to Bodfari Section, and replacement of the steam service by diesel units with appropriate recasting of the timetable.

This line carries considerable traffic and the very considerable hardship that will be caused if it closes is being made clear by the Train Users Association. Many residents in the area would be unable to reach their place of work and would be forced to give up their job or to move away from the district. X

We welcome the Train Users Association as a corporate member of SRUPLUK.
South Wales.

The alarming list of closures in Monmouthshire, including the including the Newport Valley services, is being opposed by the Railway Development Association. SRUPLUK has communicated with the R.D.A. member who is co-ordinating this work and some suggestions have been made for improving the services on these routes.
Lines in the Barnard Castle Area.

The Barnard Castle to Middleton-in-Teesdale and Bishop Auckland lines are now threatened with closure and SRUPLUK has communicated with local councils in the area. Further news will appear in due course.

We also understand that the fight to save the Barnard Castle to Penrith line is by no means over.

Colne Valley.

We have not yet heard whether the joint committee of the local authorities in the Colne Valley is to send a deputation to the Minister of Transport.

A recent letter from the Chairman of SRUPLUK to the Secretary of the Central T.U.C.C. has revealed that the T.U.C.C. apparently is unaware of the suggestion of the Town and Country Planning Association that the population of Ealstead should be increased to 60,000. This Association is, however, a voluntary body and the recommendation does not represent official policy;

but if the population does increase to any extent the lack of rail passenger services will be very severely felt.

Leicester to Rugby.

No news of the date of the closure of the Leicester to Rugby (Midland) line is yet available. The line was visited again recently by a SRUPLUK member, and found to be well patronised, about 80 passengers being carried at one point.

Somerset and Dorset.

SRUPLUK has written recently to F.R. Western Region to enquire whether it is correct that the Somerset and Dorset line is to be closed. We understand that the future of the Bath to Templecombe section is in doubt, but there appears to be no threat at the moment.

A.G.M. Referendum.

The Chairman would like to thank those members who have completed the referendum regarding the Annual General Meeting which appeared in the last circular. The response so far, however, has been rather poor and it would be appreciated if more members would send in their replies.

LAKE DISTRICT ENQUIRY.

Members will recall that a short time ago SRUPLUK communicated with the independent committee set up to enquire into the problems of Lake District transport. The findings have been published recently in a booklet entitled "Lake District Transport Report". This contains a full account of the survey and road and rail transport are both considered in full detail. The Coniston and Keswick lines are given special consideration, in particular the economics. In the case of the Keswick branch it is considered that the deficit could be reduced by half. Road-rail co-operation is also discussed.

This publication will be of considerable interest to SRUPLUK members, and may be obtained, price 7/6d, from Messrs. David and Charles, 39 Strand, Dawlish, Devon.

NEWS OF THE BRANCHES.

The closure of the Midland and South Western Junction Line took place from September 11th.

The recent recommendation of the Central T.U.C.C. that the Westerham Valley line should remain open has been over-ruled by the Minister of Transport; the closure is scheduled for October 30th. The Westerham Branch Line Passengers

Association is to take steps to persuade the Minister to alter his decision and is to present a petition to the House of Commons.

It is intended to withdraw the Southport to Ormskirk passenger service and to close New Lane station.

Alarming closures proposed in Scotland, we understand, include the Edinburgh to Galashiels via Peebles line and the Edinburgh Suburban service. Regarding the latter, it is understood that they are well patronised in peak hours but run empty during the morning and mid afternoon. A correspondent in a local paper has suggested that this is due to a total lack of publicity.

It is proposed to close the Blackburn to Fellfield line to passengers.

The service on the Wakefield to Bradford line has been drastically cut in the winter timetable and it is thought that Ossett station may be on the closure list.

The Yorkshire Area T.U.C.C. has recommended closure of the Keighley-Oxenhope line.

A preservation society has been formed with the intention of reopening the section of the Welsh Highland Railway between Reddgelert and Nantmor.

We are pleased to report that the Gaerwen to Amlwch line has had a reprieve, the T.U.C.C. for Wales having decided to recommend that it should remain open. The T.U.C.C. are satisfied that alternative passenger facilities for a number of persons, which is substantial in relation to the population of the area, are either inadequate, or non-existent. They also consider that there is some scope for further economy of operation on the line. Alternative bus services could only be provided at a loss comparable with that of the train services.

A British Railways spokesman has stated recently that no decision has been made about the future of the Salisbury-Fordingbridge-West Moors line, but this and the Brockenhurst-Ringwood-Broadstone line are under investigation.

Stretton (near Clay Cross) was due to close to passengers on September 11th.

Mow Cop (between Manchester and Stoke) and Thornhill (near Dewsbury) are being considered for closure.

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