

# MORE RAIL-CAR PROTESTERS

## 'Crazy and Topsy-Turvy' Economics

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"In common with many others round this table, I have not travelled on the rail-car for many years," said Mr. D. A. V. Harper at a special meeting of Stroud Urban District Council, called on Monday evening to consider the proposals of the British Transport Commission to withdraw the Chalford-Stroud-Gloucester rail-car service because of serious financial loss.

In making this comment Mr. Harper was probably aligning himself with many who are expressing concern at the loss of the service. They do not use the service themselves, or very seldom.

Mr. H. L. Dean, one of the strongest objectors at Monday's meeting, confessed that he used the service but little, usually in icy weather when other forms of transport could not operate.

However, a somewhat unusual comment came in the form of a letter to the Council from Mr. C. H. A. Townley, M.A., A.M.I.Mech.E., A.M.I.E.E., of Rodborough House.

### PLAYING DOWN COSTS

He said that as far as the Gloucester-Chalford rail-car service was concerned, he could not help feeling that British Railways were playing down the cost of providing alternative road services, while at the same time inflating the cost of the present rail-car service, and its replacement with diesel trains.

The cost they give for the alternative road service would not cover the capital charges for the two new buses which the Bristol Omnibus Company say they will require, let alone the operating and maintenance costs.

The differential between the operating costs of diesel trains and the existing steam trains seems to be totally at variance with the economies usually claimed for the former type traction — lower fuel costs, lower standby costs, lower maintenance costs, and a train crew of two instead of three.

After a fairly brisk discussion the U.D.C. decided to send a letter against the proposal to the Western Area Transport Users Consultative Committee, also to ask Mr. Anthony Kershaw, M.P., to "take it up most strongly with the Minister of Transport."

### CHAMBER OF TRADE LETTER

At the beginning of the meeting the clerk (Mr. J. D. Wilson) mentioned that the Stroud Chamber of Trade had sent a letter making representations to the Transport Users Consultative Committee.

They talk about Stonehouse being served by the Bristol-Gloucester line. Mr. T. B. Cameron said, "and I don't say how many trains stop at Stonehouse during the course of the day. It would be most illuminating to find out. I think, during the whole day, it is two up and two down."

"A most disastrous thing" was how Mr. Dean saw the matter. What about using the railways to relieve congestion of the roads? Could they not make rail travel more attractive with cheaper fares?

How were people visiting friends in the Gloucester hospitals to manage. What would be the position when Stroud Hospital was closed and hospitals centred on Gloucester?

What of the serious inconvenience of mothers with young children in prams?

And how, asked Mr. Dean, was he

### CHURCH MEMBERS' CONCERN

At a meeting of Ebley Congregational Church, on March 14, members unanimously agreed that a letter should be sent on their behalf to the S.W. Area Transport Users Consultative Committee urging that the rail-car service between Chalford and Gloucester should be retained, this service being of such value to local people.

At the same time members asked that a letter be sent to the appropriate authority expressing their great concern regarding the proposal to close the Stroud General Hospital in a few years, and asking whether such a scheme could be reconsidered.

to get anything from 50 to 80 children to Stratford Park Swimming Pool on a Friday without the rail-car? He could not see them going on the buses.

### MAJOR LOSS

"We have grown up with this service and it would be a major loss to this area if it was taken away from us," he concluded.

Some suggestions for making the service pay better came from various members. Mr. John Hillier thought a halt at Tuffley would tap the big developments there and Mr. David Hargest suggested it would be a good idea to extend the service to Frampton Mansell and also to give the new 2/7 Gloucester return fare a fair trial.

Mr. Harper considered the railways had a case for economies. They might be a tremendous saving to the tax payer.

"If everything in this service is to be measured by pure £.s.d., I can see, in a few years time, that the bus services will come off, said Mr. W. K. Preston. "Is every village to be isolated?"

Mr. G. H. Bullock wanted the service rejuvenated. He saw a great potential in it.

The chairman (Mrs. P. E. Parker) spoke of the heavy use of the rail-cars by hospital visitors to Gloucester on Wednesdays and Saturday.

"Have you tried to board a bus at Cainscross on a Saturday, going to Gloucester?" she asked. "It is practically impossible. It is full up from the start."

The decision to protest against the proposals was carried unanimously. It was agreed that the Clerk should represent the U.D.C. at any public enquiry on the proposal.

There was also a protest when the Stroud and District Employment Committee met on March 15.

The matter was raised by Mr. W. A. Daniels and Mr. H. R. Greening said that if some people, who at present worked at Gloucester, found they could not get there, they would have to be found employment in Stroud.

### 200 SIGNATURES TO PETITION

There is also strong opposition coming from the residents of Cainscross, Ebley and Cashes Green area, many of whom have signed a petition of protest.

The petition says the closure would

cause great inconvenience and hardship. Mrs. Irene McKee, a teacher at Ebley Primary School, who has collected nearly two hundred signatures, said that everyone was deeply concerned about the matter.

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### RAIL-CAR ENQUIRY

A public inquiry is to be held in Gloucester on May 9 about the proposal to scrap the Gloucester-Chalford railcar service.

Many objections from the Stroud district have been lodged with the South West Transport Users' Consultative Council. A spokesman of the TUC at Bristol said that although the number of objectors was considerable it was not exceptional.

The inquiry will be at the Gloucester RDC offices in Brunswick Square, starting at 10.15 a.m.