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The day a Highland railway died . . .

to travel to the areas now without stations will buy tickets to the next nearest stations and continue to visit the North by rail. This seems a reasonable enough hope but as they have not credited the now-closed stations with any share of that cash in any case, this does not affect the question much.

Road burden

At the back of it all is the question of what the people are to do unless fleets of buses become available. The answer seems to be that unless they have cars already or add to the road burden by buying more cars, they will just have to do without that wider community life which would serve to keep the Highlands populated and keep the inhabitants, especially the young folk, contented.

The Rev. William Macleod, Provost of Dornoch, after many protests by his council and the other Highland local authorities, simply cannot understand how the B.T.C. hope to make an economic or practicable scheme of carrying all the Dornoch freight by road from Bonar Bridge along 15 miles of

inadequate highway. Mr Macleod speaks for every merchant, farmer, exporter and importer.

Only the hard-headed among the the sentimental Highlanders believe that steel-tyred wheels will ever again run on the two branch railway lines just closed.

The Fortrose line has been used for goods trains since passengers ceased to be carried nine years ago. Parts of it were recently relaid. The Dornoch branch line, never capable of bearing heavy locomotives, is in good condition though composed

mostly of short-length rails, now going out of production.

They point to the fact that other branch lines, closed as long ago as ten years, have not been lifted and sent to the scrapyard.

On all sides, of course, it is agreed that steam-locomotives will be unlikely to reappear. If the cheap diesel power of to-day is justified anywhere, it is on the isolated lines where the single coach and maybe a couple of freight trucks make up the ideal and economic train for passenger and goods traffic alike.

THE END OF
THE LINE

A tiny but stout-hearted light engine pulled three crowded passenger coaches out of Dornoch on Saturday—and sentimental Highlanders were sad and more than a little angry at the sight.

Many packed the platform of Dornoch Station; others crushed into the three carriages—and all this to be in at the death of a railway.

The railway was the branch line between Dornoch and The Mound, one of the two latest lines to be closed by the British Transport Commission as "uneconomic."

The other was the Muir of Ord-Fortrose line.

But it was the 58-year-old Dornoch route that attracted most attention.

Dornoch stationmaster George Sim anticipated a full complement of passengers for the final run and ordered two extra coaches. They were packed.

Many people bought tickets but boycotted the last run—like 64-year-old Dornoch newsagent Mr Angus Munro. He bought the very first tickets to be sold for the line away back in 1902—and on Saturday he bought the last.

Protest

But as a protest against the line's closing he didn't use them.

Sadness was mixed with a certain gaiety as teenagers joined the crowds. But civic heads remained aloof from anything remotely resembling light-heartedness and banter.

In the background is a sorrowful tale of people flocking back to the railways only to find their local station being axed not long afterwards.

Branch lines and bad timing of trains apart, the public have been going back to the trains in large numbers in recent years.

Beaulieu, on the main line, is now closed, but two years ago the station was dealing with 322 season ticket holders who work

by

James McEwan

in Inverness. There are now 537—and it needs a lot of buses to carry 537 people daily.

Total journeys through Beaulieu in 1958 were 19,338—a fairly substantial traffic in cash irrespective of the question of service to the public and public convenience.

Of course, what the Highlands are most annoyed about is the B.T.C. attitude that cash paid into small stations should decide the issue. They have refused to take notice of the traffic involving people who buy their tickets for Beaulieu, and other stations, at Edinburgh, Glasgow, Perth, Inverness or elsewhere in Scotland or England.

Ignored

B.T.C. dropped original plans to include cuts on the Inverness-Kyle of Lochalsh line (over £4000). They have ignored the true saving that would have been effected by a change-over from steam to diesel—a development that was supposed to be planned for the area long before any question of cuts arose but which has not been put into action north or west of Inverness.

The B.T.C. hope that English and Scottish passengers wishing