

# SRUTH

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DI-ARDAOIN, 26mh LATHA DE'N T-SAMHAINN 1970 THURSDAY, 26th NOVEMBER 1970 No. 96 Sixpence



The sandy soil of the Uists is particularly suitable for most kinds of bulbs. The large-scale project in North Uist is at present used to cultivate daffodil and other bulbs. Our photo shows daffodil heads being removed by a private grower in South Uist. Photo: Kenneth Robertson, Daliburgh, South Uist.

## LOCHABER JOBS SURVEY

The Highlands and Islands would welcome suitable work Development Board, with the either full or part-time. The support of the recently formed Lochaber Development Committee, have commissioned a Gallup Poll to carry out a detailed survey of female employment availability in Fort William and District. Announcing this in Inverness yesterday, Mr Keith Farquharson, Deputy Director of the Board's Industrial Promotion and Marketing Division said: It is generally agreed that the Fort William area needs new industry, and the Highland Board is anxious to help. In order to make an effective approach to industrialists, we must be able to give them the basic information they need before they can take a decision.

"A most important question here is the size of the labour force available. Official statistics give a fairly accurate picture of the male labour supply, but we believe that there may be quite a few women, not at present registered for employment, who

result of the survey. Each person interviewed would be asked whether they would be willing for their name and other relevant information to be given to a new firm setting up in business in the Fort William district. This would, said Mr Farquharson, help new enterprises to recruit a labour force, and could in itself help to attract new industry. But if anyone wished their answers to remain confidential they could say so, and no personal information would be disclosed.

Where interviewers found nobody at home on two separate occasions, they will be asked to return at a later date. (Continued on page 8)

### Comunn nan Croitear

Air a'choigeamh dùilleig air an 12mh de'n t-Samhainn rinn sinn mearachd ann a bhith toirt ionnradh air Comisean nan Croitear an aite "Comunn nan Croitear". Tha sinn dùilich ma chuir seo dragh no mì-thuicheadhas an raibhad duine sam bith. Fear-deasachaidh.

## COMMON MARKET FEARS

The Ross and Cromarty Constituency Association of the Scottish National Party has written to the Prime Minister, Mr Edward Heath, asking him to clarify his Government's attitude to the future of crofting, in view of the current negotiations for United Kingdom membership of the Common Market. "You must be aware that the European common agricultural policy aims at the closure of all small farms below a minimum size," the letter goes on. "The application of this policy in Scotland, if United Kingdom membership succeeds, would threaten the existence of the 18,000 crofts in the Highland Counties. The Scottish Nation is entitled to know what safeguards the United Kingdom Government offers for the preservation of the traditional pattern of life in Scotland."

## MORAG

Chualas gum faca dithis dhaoine uile bhiasht mhor. Thug iad Morag oirre. Carson? Tha i ann an Loch Morar thatar ag radh. Bheil e fìor? Tha buidheann rannsachaidh a sasunn ag radh a nis gu bheil iad cinnteach leis an fhiosrachadh a tha aca gu bheil i ann. Tha iad ag radh a bharrachd gun deach a fàicinn seachd uairean fichead. Tha i, a reir sgeoil is coltais, dluth air da fhichead troigh

ann am faid agus tha a ceann coltach ri ceann easgairn no ceann nathrach.

'S iomadh uair a chunnacas cnap fiodha is mainglain air air fiodh 's an usge agus bha a h-uile duine dearbhte gun robh uile bhiasht ann. Bheil sin fìor an seo? Chan urrainn do dhuine radh bheil no nach eil. Co dhìubh nuair a bha dibhearan a' dol sìos ann am Loch Nis agus a leig na h-Amairigeanaich dheth peillear meallaidh bha aon dhìubh de. arbha gum faca e coslach

(Continued on page 8)



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# Review Order

## THERE ARE MORE THINGS . . .

Ben MacDhui has featured in many a night's telling of strange stories, particularly tales about the Big Grey Man. Now his story is the subject of a book by Afflek Gray. It is a fascinating one.

Mr Gray has researched the subject and gone outside his subject on a few occasions for material which he thinks is related and which goes some way to explaining the experiences of so many people on and near Ben MacDhui.

The influence of places on some sensitive people is beyond doubt. What is the cause of this is as yet beyond the means of the scientist to explain, if, indeed, it is relevant for a scientist to explain what by training he is most likely to reject.

There are many things, events, happenings and personal experiences which cannot be explained, the origins of which belong to some other world which, though invisible, is yet a part of ours.

The Big Grey Man of Ben MacDhui comes into the category of influences which bear on mere mortals to affect them so profoundly.

Mr Gray first takes us to the experience of Professor Norman Collie in 1891 when he was on the mountain. After that climbers, some no doubt with imaginations sharpened by hearing tales of other's experiences, contribute to a growing store of legend, fact and the inexplicable. Wendy Wood, for instance, who has known gifts of second sight and a heightened ability to experience psychical happenings, relates the terror which gripped her in the pass of Lairig Ghru.

Mr Gray goes on to devote a chapter on mountain spectres and another on the Spectre of the Brocken in the German Harz Mountains.

What is of great interest is the postulation concerning the Big Grey Man and the Bodhisattva, 'one of the five Perfected Men who control the destinies of this world and who meet once a year in the cave in the Himalayas'. It is the belief of Sir Hugh Rankin, of Blairgowrie, that one of these Men lives permanently in the Cairngorms.

Ghostly music and voices, footsteps, footprints in the snow, space visitors and cosmic communications are all subjects which Mr Gray wisely takes into his book for discussion and as food for thought for the reader, who can then form his own opinions within the framework of his own experiences in life.

Theories abound about the Big Grey Man of Ben MacDhui. Some are credible; others much less so. Says W. H. Murray, a well-known Scottish mountaineer:

'Like you, I have had no supernatural experience on mountains, nor do I know anyone who has. I know nothing of the Grey Man a-

part from Norman Collie's experience.

'I do not imply by this that I think other people's experiences are invalid. To the contrary, I think so-called supernatural experiences are preserved beyond a reasonable doubt, but I am of the opinion that it is either of natural character, or sub-natural rather than 'above' nature.

'By sub-natural I mean effects that are less real than natural because they are less permanent, fleeting in the sense of not being based on anything that endures in time or place.

'That Norman Collie had a psychic experience on Ben MacDhui is (for me) certain. To ascribe the cause to a Fear Liath Mor is, however, quite another matter'.

Mr Gray leaves us with the question to work out for ourselves. Whatever our answer, and it must be an individual one, characterised by our own feelings for the things which baffle scientific explanations, Mr Gray is to be congratulated in threading together to form a story of all the bits and pieces of evidence, memories, opinions, and personal experiences about the Big Grey Man.

For fascinating reading the book is well worth its price. The illustrations are adequate though they might have been more dramatic in their presentation of the mountain to convey the sense of solitude which this mountain definitely offers. The cover design too is striking and most appropriate.

The Big Grey Man of Ben MacDhui' by Afflek Gray; 40s; Impulse Publications Ltd 28 Guild Street, Aberdeen.

## THE CLAY YERD

David Morrison has kept a faithful relationship with the Scots as a worthwhile, effective and telling medium for his poetic expression. Maybe this relationship started out, say in The Saxon Toon, as with the friendship of an old broken down tramp who needed only the price of a cup of hot tea, a cigarette, a worn jacket, and the like, to restore some of his lost faith in the goodness of the human race of which he was a part but rejected by it because of his differing views of life and living.

If so, then Morrison has proved that such a relationship, born out of a basic and fundamental sympathy for the Scots, can improve the giver more than the one who receives.

In The Clay Yerd, Morrison's third collection in less than four years, there is a wide range of subject-matter virtually all, however, laying bare the author's concern for his country.

His excellent use of Scots is no barrier to the reader's understanding of many of the poems, for it is a language acquired through hard pract-

ice, constant everyday usage, and tested by the measures laid down by MacDiarmid and others. It is the poet's confidence that seems to shine through on every page of the book; confidence in his ability to express the feelings of others through his verse. But there is also much of the poet in the verses.

Some are very personal, and one wishes one had the same ability to say things the way Morrison has said them in this, these poems become the property of Everyman.

This is a good collection. As the first edition is only 100 copies, purchase 'right away is advised.

'The Clay Yerd' by David Morrison; 10s; Scotia, Morven View, Reaster, Lyth, by Wick, Caithness.



## COMUNN NA CANAIN ALBANNAICH

The Comunn na Canain Albannaich (Scottish Language Society) has recently accepted a motif for the Comunn, designed by Seumas Donn, a CNCA member in East Kilbride.

The design was based on an outer circle, symbolic of eternity, infinity and strength. The addition of an inner circle creates a traditional Celtic design, yet retains the above qualities. The sub-division represents the Gaelic and English membership of the Comunn. This is because the Celtic heritage in these modern times must be expressed bi-lingually.

The designer has presented a modern symbol to appeal to the younger elements.

Language is necessary for the communication of truth, and the circle by its artistic perfection, is perhaps the simplest graphic expression of truth.

## Faillte Do Lybster

### THE PORTLAND ARMS

extends a warm welcome

Good Fare and a Fine Collar

See Anelling

Salmon Fishing, Trout Fishing

# over to you:

Sir,

The prospects of saving our railways or even re-opening closed lines seem to be slender. Decisions are made by Officials in Whitehall, and the Minister acts as a rubber-stamp. Every closure makes the next closure easier, and objections only postpone the proposed closure; many of them have been as ineffective as appeals against a jail sentence or pleas to an M.P. to disobey his Party Whip.

At the end of 1963 the Vigilantes were formed to oppose the closures outlined in the Beeching Report. They won a reprieve for the railways North of Inverness, but within three years the leaders were at cross purposes with each other and the MacPuff organisation (as the Vigilantes were known) petered out.

Busses are no substitute for the trains, and our roads are over congested with heavy traffic which should go by rail. But the trouble is deep-rooted and the remedy does not lie with any one political party. There should be a through train from Aberdeen to Kyle of Lochalsh to connect with the steamer services to the Outer Hebrides: A rail link between Newtonmore and Tulloch on the West Highland Line near Loch Laggan) would have made it possible to have a direct train service between Aberdeen and Fort William. Every railway closure destroys a potential source of development.

Continental tours need not necessarily begin in London, they can easily start at Aberdeen or Edinburgh, which are ideal centres for trade with Scandinavia and the Baltic. A sparsely populated area cannot support a transport service run on a profit-making basis. Nor can it support commercial competition which can provide the Public with choice and protect them against the evils of monopoly. If we want our country to have a balanced economy which will work — and I have not the slightest doubt that that is the earnest desire of us all whatever political party we may support — then every-thing possible should be done to promote the welfare and prosperity of the Highlands and Islands and the Far North; much of this depends on the services rail and sea transport provide. The growth of tourism is a considerable source of revenue to the Highlands, and to those rail-

ways where the scenery is of major attraction. The overpopulated areas should not be returned to develop at the expense of the underpopulated areas.

The Highlands have endured two hundred years neglect and mal-administration, and only the painful ordeal of trial and error can enable the Highlands to play their proper part in the life of Scotland, of Great Britain and of

the World. Much of the trouble can be traced to the defeat of Prince Charles Edward Stuart at Culloden Moor and within forty five years of Culloden there was the French Revolution which led to the Napoleonic Wars. The Napoleonic Wars ended with the Industrial Revolution and the vicious Clearances which left large areas of the Highlands forelorn and desolate.

Various efforts were made to stop the rot, but in too many instances they were too little and too late. Industries South of the Border, offered good money and paid good dividends. In spite of all this Scotland was able to build a railway system whose quality of service was second to none.

In the years following the First World War, the traffic which used to go by rail, started going by road. The rot went even further at the end of the Second World War when bus fares were infinitely cheaper than train fares. In the overpopulated Midlands and South East England the railways can make good practical party. There should be the stiffest competition from road transport; this is quite impossible in the underpopulated Highlands, the Borders and the South West.

There is the added complication. In England the railways cater for a densely populated, highly industrialised urban area. In Scotland it is the reverse: The railways must serve a sparsely populated rural area, of which the chief industries are agriculture and forestry. But we need the railways for the transport of timber, agricultural produce, fish and various Highland goods as much as we need the railways for the transport of coal and the heavy goods manufactured in the Midlands, Lancashire and Glasgow.

It is quite in order to close small branch lines whose services are now obsolete and have long ceased to have any economic value. Where there is duplication of services and competition is economically impossible, it is quite feasible that one of them must go. It is quite another matter when it comes to closing the rail-ways to Kyle of Lochalsh, Mallaig, the Galloway line between Dumfries and Stranraer, the Borders line between Edinburgh and Carlisle via Galashiels and Hawick, and the lines through Forfar and Kinross.

The Labour Party denounced the Beeching Report with all the force they could muster; but as soon as they were returned to power they proceeded to implement the proposals they had denounced when in opposition, and after giving an assurance there were going to be no more railway closures.

We threw out the Tories in the 1964 Election, and we are thoroughly disillusioned with Labour, England has lost all

(Continued on page 8)



# THE PROBLEM OF LANGUAGE REVIVAL

*Linguistic Struggles by P. Berresford Ellis and Seumas Mac a' Ghobhainn*

Today 3.5 million people speak the Armenian language (or Hahyeren) in the Soviet Socialist Republic of Armenia (population 2.2 millions) and in small pockets of Georgia, Azerbaijan and Iran. "History," says one book on Armenia, "can boast of few examples when a people on the brink of destruction was able to muster strength and courage enough for complete revival." In a period of 50 years by progressive five year educational plans, the people of Armenia have journeyed from a dying linguistic and cultural community to what they are now calling "The Golden Age of National Culture."

The Armenians are an ancient people. An ancient state in the Armenian area was founded in 880 B.C. The American state as we know it today emerged in 624 B. C. but was subdued by Persia in 520 B. C. However, foreign invasions were cut short by brief spells of revival and development.

In 301 A. D. Tridates III of Armenia was the first ruler to declare Christianity a state religion. At the same time the creation of the Armenian alphabet by Mesrob Mashtots (circa 396 A. D.) had a

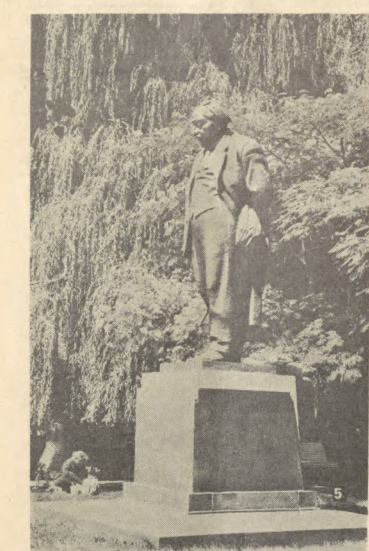
## ARMENIA

decisive impact on the development of literature and culture. Numerous works were translated into Armenian including the Bible and other religious works, as well as those of ancient writers and scholars such as Aristotle, Plato, Eusebius of Caesarea and Zeno. The Armenians reached a pinnacle of cultural achievement and Armenian scholars became renown for works on philosophy, mathematics, cosmography and geography.

In the 16th Century, however, Armenia was turned into a battleground between the Osman Turkish empire and the Safavid Persian empire who, in 1639, divided Armenia between them. West Armenia went to Turkey and East Armenia went to Persia.

The invaders brought ruin and devastation with them as all imperialist invaders the world over. Armenia was set back culturally and economically. Armenians began to emigrate on mass scale to the Mediterranean countries and to Russia and Poland.

The conquerors reduced all Armenians to serfdom and there followed a severe cultural, political and religious oppression. The conquerors even carried out several systematic massacres of the population.



A great poet of The Armenian National Awakening — Avetik Isakyan

ation. The Armenians fought back but their small, divided country was helpless against two of the world's biggest empires.

Despite the cultural oppression Armenian literature still flourished at the centres of Ani, Nor-Gitak, Akhpat-Sinan, Glarzor and Tatev. And even though the epoch was not favourable for the development of national literature, the lyrical poetry of medieval Armenia was to quote the Russian poet Valery Brusov, "one of the glorious victories of the human spirit in world chronicles."

Saat-Nova (1712-95) was one of the most distinguished poets of his time who wrote in Armenian, Georgian and Azerbaijan. He was the first to show, during this period of severe persecution, that Armenian poetry was alive and ever.

During the 16th to 19th Centuries many centres of culture emerged in the Armenian emigrant colonies in the various countries of Europe, Asia and America. It was in the United States of America that the first Armenian publishing houses were established and these played an important part in the development of Armenian literature.

During these centuries the Armenians sought to free themselves from the yoke of cultural, political and economic oppression and to recreate an independent Armenian nation.

From the period of 1801 to 1901 the Russian Empire began the annexation of Persian dominated territories. By 1828 they had annexed East Armenia from Persian rule.

Now the Russians began to stamp their own national culture and language on the Armenians who, at first, had felt themselves saved from the threat of assimilation by physical destruction by the Persians. The Armenians of East Armenia threw in their lot with the Russian revolutionary movement.

The 19th Century saw the birth of Armenia's language struggle. Heading the struggle was Khachatur Abovyan (1805-48), a talented writer and poet, playwright and teacher, and a democratic enlightener. Abovyan is considered the founder of the new Armenian literature.

Until the 19th Century the few people who were able to write in Armenian wrote in the old literary standard of the 5th Century known as *Grabar*. Abovyan, realising that literacy was of prime importance in saving the dying Armenian language, decided that Armenian would have to be modernised. Abovyan began to write in "the new Armenian language," *Ashkharabar*. He authored the first Armenian novel, *The Wounds of Armenia*, which is valuable not only from the literary but from the historical point of view. The theme of the novel is the liberation of Armenia from imperialist oppression, the delivery of its people from the darkness of illiteracy and the restoration of the national language.

Abovyan had many followers who joined his great "cultural revolution." The poet, literary critic and philosopher, Mikael Nalbandyan (1829-66) was considered the leader of the revolutionary-democratic movement. Nalbandyan wrote: "No nation has the right to destroy another nation. Let every nation develop freely in all its splendour." Another writer, Arutyun Svachyan, was Nalbandyan's closest comrade-in-arms.

The Armenian writers of the nationalist-revolutionary school are well known. Avetik Isakyan's great poem *Abu-Lala-Maari* has been translated into many languages. The Russian poet, Brusov, has noted that Armenian poetry (of this period) should be compulsory for every educated person, just as are the works of the Hellenic playwrights, Dante's Comedy, Shakespeare's plays and Hugo's poems.

During this period there were many uprisings all brutally crushed by the Turks and the Russians. In 1902 the Union of Armenian Social Democrats was formed with its organs of the press, the so-called *Proletariat*, published in Armenian. The revolutionary movement in East Armenia began to gather strength.

In Turkish dominated West Armenia, feudalism and illiteracy prevailed in all spheres of economic and social life. Sultan Abdul-Mamid like his philosophy-successor Hitler, worked out a "final solution" for his Armenian problem which envisaged the annihilation of the entire population. Special armed troops called *Hamidie*, named after the Sultan, were formed to eliminate the Armenians. Massacres were carried out in Sasun, Erzerum, Trapezund, Van, Harberd, Constantinople, Marash and other places. Over 300,000 Armenians were exterminated while 80,000 managed to flee abroad. The rest of the world protested while the Turks continued their genocide.

At the beginning of World War One, the Young Turks' government, carrying on the chauvinistic traditions of the Turkish empire, called up all Armenian men between 15 and 60 years for "military service". Those who were called up never returned to Armenia but were secretly exterminated. In April, 1915, secret instructions were sent to all military administrative authorities ordering the annihilation or evacuation of the remaining West Armenian population into the Arabian desert. More than 1,000,000 children, women and old people were massacred, more than 600,000 were driven into the desert to die of privation and exposure. Only a few hundred thousand Armenians managed to flee into East Armenia or other countries.

World opinion cried out against the brutal crimes perpetrated by the Turkish imperialists. Anatole France said: "Armenia is suffering, she is in her death throes, but she will revive . . . a people that is so eager to live will not die."

The Armenians in the townships of Van, Shapin-Garaisar, Zeitun, Seudiyia, Shatak and other places, amazed the world by a heroic but unequal defence against the Turks before being destroyed.

In Russia, Tsarism was overthrown and then came the Bolshevik October Revolution. In East Armenia the Dashnaks seized power with the aid of Turkish troops who marched through the country, leaving murder and devastation in their wake. The Dashnaks were not Armenian nationalists but Persian and Turkish landowners as well as Russian landowners who, seeing the fall of their class in Russia, decided to safeguard their position in Armenia. The years of Dashnak rule (1918-20) was another grim page in Armenian history, a time of ceaseless warfare and massacres.

On November 29, 1920, an armed uprising of the working people of Armenia led by the Armenian Communist Party drove the Dashnaks out and with them the Turkish troops. Prominent Armenian writers and language fanatics, such as Ovanes Tunanyan, Alexander Shirvanzade, Ovanes Ioannianyan, Nar-Dos, Avetik Isakyan and Derenik Demirchiryan saw the establishment of a Socialist Armenian Republic as the first step to bring the language and literacy to all Armenian peoples.

Shirvanzade wrote in 1925: "I believe in the existence of Armenia. I believe in this and am ready to glorify new Armenia and devote to her the rest of my life. I believe in the strength, nobility, patriotism and sincerity of its young government. Know how difficult it is to rehabilitate a country which has handed the heritage of degenerate elements, but I know what mighty hands the Armenian worker and peasant have."

Indeed, the task of restoration seemed impossible. In 1920 Armenia had only a few schools which were closed to working people and the only languages taught at these schools were, of course, Russian and Turkish. Sixty per cent of the population was totally illiterate. Only a few were literate in Armenian while literacy usually meant that in Russian.

On this foundation it seemed impossible to get the language back on its feet. Where would the teachers be found to undertake such a task?

The Armenian Communist Party, which now formed the government, immediately declared that the official language of the Armenian Republic would be Armenian. National minorities inhabiting the country would be provided with facilities for developing and utiliz-

## Gaelic Broadcasts

Thursday, 26th November  
1.30 p.m. Da Cheathramh agus Fonn  
1.40 p.m. News in Gaelic

Friday, 27th November  
1.30 p.m. Da Cheathramh agus Fonn  
1.40 p.m. News in Gaelic

7.30 p.m. Selin an Duan So: Concert of Gaelic songs requested by listeners.

8.00 p.m. Cur is Dluh, The Toronto Gaels: Ceilidh and conversation with the members of the Gaelic Society of Toronto. Fear-an-tìghe: Curdo MacDonald who comes from Crowlister, Lewis (recorded)

Sunday, 29th November  
2.00 p.m. Studio Service by Rev. Norman Macdonald, Ardchattan (recorded)

Monday, 30th November  
1.30 p.m. Da Cheathramh agus Fonn  
1.40 p.m. News in Gaelic  
6.20 p.m. Television—Se Ur Beatha with The MacDonald Sisters and guests Donald A. MacPhail, Aly Bain and Mike Whyllans (recorded)

Tuesday, 1st December  
1.30 p.m. Da Cheathramh agus Fonn  
1.40 p.m. News in Gaelic

Wednesday, 2nd December  
1.30 p.m. Da Cheathramh agus Fonn  
1.40 p.m. News in Gaelic  
6.15 p.m. Piping: Piobrach and light music for the bagpipes played by Pipe-Major Donald MacLeod (recorded)

Thursday, 3rd December  
1.30 p.m. Da Cheathramh agus Fonn  
1.40 p.m. News in Gaelic

Friday, 4th December  
1.30 p.m. Da Cheathramh agus Fonn  
1.40 p.m. News in Gaelic

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"Few areas of the transport field present more difficult human problems than those connected by the winding levels of rural transport. We must start from the fact that most people in the country either do not own cars or have access to them and we are therefore left with a situation where public transport provides for a limited number of people, whereas either do not own cars or cannot more about transport needs of the local people. Then there is the problem of the use of improvisation, by unconventional methods and by adopting existing services of all kinds to meet the needs of the people." (Mr. Michael Heseltine, M.P. (Tavistock) Parliamentary Secretary, Minister of Transport at a meeting at Hoxton, Devon, Wednesday, 30th September 1970.)

In a debate in the House of Commons on 24th November, 1969 Mr. Heseltine, then a member of the Opposition had previously called to attention the plight of people who move to a rural area for work but find it difficult to find within a year or two bus and rail links are cut off and they are without any means of communication between neighbouring towns and villages.

"We are aware of those who because of physical disability are unable to get to work, to drive are faced with increasing isolation in the countryside — the 1968 Transport Act is possibly the most relevant of many of our transport problems today."

One of the surprising features after the return of the Tory Government were persons responsible for Transport within the Government had moved from Members of Parliament who previously represented rural areas to Members from rural areas. One would therefore expect a more realistic and knowledgeable appreciation of the problems as it affects rural areas.

"I suggest that a modern railway can play a major role in the development of the quality of life in this country and that the British Rail contribution in the area of social responsibility is possibly more relevant than that of many other undertakings — I suggest that a research priority should be to evaluate the potential of existing road and rail transport infrastructures in this country rather than other developments. One of the main reasons for social responsibility may be to heavy; the penalty of not meeting them will be heavier." (Mr. Robert A. Long, Director of British Rail, writing in the Autumn 1970 — "Journal of Business Policy" — Bradford University Management Centre).

The common factor which emanates from these sources is that here we have two men, one in the Government and one in British Transport, who have the ability to see how the pattern of transport over all the country, including rural areas, could be improved in the service of the community. The Chairman of British Rail (Sir Henry Johnson) has already stated:

"To aid planning, he hoped loss-making lines would be grant aided for longer than the current one, two or three years." (B.R. Rail News — April 1970). Unfortunately, this outlook does not manifest itself in the Scottish Region of British Railways. The Chairman and General Manager, (Mr. G. W. Stewart) has been going round the Highlands spreading money and glory and despondency. In a reference to the Oban line;

"He imagines that support will be forthcoming which would ensure the future of the line for a further three years." (Oban Times, 18th September 1970).

On the Inverness-Wick line we are told that during 1972, the Minister of Transport would consider,

in the light of circumstances prevailing at that time any renewed application which the

# THE RAILWAY LINE

by ALEX D. CRAIG

Railways Board might submit?

furthermore, we are told that the management and operation of freight services, which are the responsibility of British Rail, should be withdrawn without Ministerial consent. (Northern Times, 13th February, 1970).

The Scottish Regional Board of British Railways appear to be unaware that the primary function of the Highlands and Islands Development Board is to improve the economic and social well being of the people who live and work there. They appear to be quite oblivious of the tourist industry — they closed the Aviemore-Forres line just as the Aviemore Centre was opening up. When industry is arriving in the Highlands — the Invergordon complex, they withdrew their Senior Executive Officer and reduced the Inverness Headquarters to the status of a branch office.

After 26 years on Scotland's railways, nine of them spent working on the Highland Railways from Wick to Strathgairn, I can claim to have some knowledge of the problems. Public transport services cannot exist on the simple formula of supply and demand. Even in the United States, the home of capitalism, public transport services are being withdrawn from the Highlands it is to be determined by economics, then how many roads should be closed and can we go on providing essential services of water, electricity, telephone, postal services, radio or television. Until such times as the area be able to self supporting community, there must be assistance from Government sources.

With the economic climate prevailing at the present time and the Government committed to cuts in expenditure, grants to unremunerative lines will be subject to the strictest of controls. The future of the Kyle line is to depend on the figures which British Rail will produce, then such figures must be subject to microscopic examination.

B.R. continue to operate conventional trains all the year round resulting often in cross haulage of goods which is quite unnecessary and merely inflates costs. They have made no attempt to develop the passenger freight train on the Kyle line which did operate on this line at one time. The Observation and Camping Coaches should be restored.

A brief experiment was made with diesel rail coaches and there is conflicting opinions on their performance, but no satisfactory explanation was ever given. Some obscure reason about difficult gradients was advanced. The summary of diesel coaches on the Kyle line today's figure would be withdrawn and return always manage the difficult climb out of Oban station, which is worse than anything likely to be found on the Kyle line. It seems strange that with the very excellent Railway Research team at Derby progressing the Advances Passengers on rural railways are being tried out. The gradients on the Kyle line would present no difficulty to the railway engineer.

In 1962, British Rail were successfully operating their Six Lochs Tour from Glasgow to Killin via Cander and Ardsheal. The diesel sets running 142 miles and carrying 115 passengers never found any difficulty with the Balquhiter/Glenogle or the Ardull/Crianich gradient. They cost 6/1d per mile to operate. The triple diesel sets carrying 172 passengers were costing 8/1d per mile. Today's figure would probably be around 10/- to 14/- respectively. The public fare in 1962 was 12/6d. They were much appreciated by the passengers in view of their excellent all round

Concern has been expressed in Scottish railway circles that in spite of shrinkage of running lines and sidings (1948 — 7482 miles; 1965 — 4154 miles) with less than 2000 stations, the railway network has been an alarming increase in the number of administrative and supervisory posts. It has been estimated that the Scottish Regional H.Q. in Glasgow there is 500 staff surplus to requirements. This is a hidden expenditure of £3 million. A part of these costs being set against the Highland Railways?

There should be a properly organised campaign to encourage still further the ever growing tourist industry. Why not a car ferry service to Kyle and also Oban? Publicity material should be produced in January each year, not a belated attempt to sell the line mid-way through the summer season.

Before any closure notice is posted for the Kyle line, there should be no delay in the study of greater co-ordination of all transport services in the Kyle area similar to that taking place in Devon and West Suffolk should be undertaken. The unconventional services operated by Mr. Heseltine, would include the use of the dual-mode road vehicle from the 12 seater mini-bus to the standard 40 seater bus, which can be adapted to operate on road and rail equally. It can also carry small parcels and mail. Heavier freight can be carried by lorries similarly fitted.

The present stations on the Kyle line should become the local information centres, sub-post offices, and travel agents. They would be staffed as a focal point and the cost of staffing would be borne by British Rail, the Highlands and Islands Development Board, the Postal Authorities and the Local Authorities.

This would provide a new form of transport facilities with an essential factor of making use of the existing rail track. It would ensure the track remains for the use of the conventional trains when required. With the growth of the tourist industry and the lack of adequate roads, it would be critical to have the railways lying idle.

"The purpose of the Board is to enable the Highlands of Scotland to play a major role in the development of the economic and social development of the Nation. To this end a Board has been established to co-ordinate the (Highlands and Islands (Scotland) Act, HMSO 1965.

Where does HIBD stand in the future of the Kyle line? The statement of the year 1967, by Mr. Stewart, Director of the transport and tourist division of the Board when visiting Kyle of Lochalsh on 16th April 1967, stated that the Kyle line should be closed in the South-West Ross District Council;

"We feel the case for its retention is a very weak one. In view of the large number of facts on which to base a full-scale case for the line — or indeed any case at all, — it would be much happier to do something about the employment situation than to try to fight for the railway when we can't see the facts.

Shades of Inverurie! Recent pronouncements by the HIBD leaves people confused about their attitude to the proposed closure of the line. As many as twenty-two towns and villages in the Highlands can be defined as centres of travel-to-work areas in which the tourist trip is or would be sufficient to support modern industrial and/or commercial activity on a worthwhile scale." (The potential labour catchment area of Portree is 5,500. (The Scottish Economy 1965 to 1970 — A Plan for Expans-

sion, HMSO Cmnd. 2864, January 1966).

A road rail bus leaving Portree at 6.15 — 10.15 — 13.30 and 15.05 proceeding via Kyle and Dingwall would provide connections at Inverness for passengers travelling the Highlands. There need be no Aberdeen, Edinburgh, Glasgow rail closures.

and London. It would also have connections at Portree for the Lig Ferry to the Isle of Lewis.

Passengers on the Isle of Skye would be picked up near their home yet travel the greater part of their journey to Inverness by rail, with no disturbance.

Suitably fitted lorries could convey livestock straight from the fields via Kyle and Dingwall to Inverness, travelling the greater part of the journey by rail.

This is only one example of a properly integrated transport system which can operate throughout the Highlands. There need be no Aberdeen, Edinburgh, Glasgow rail closures.

## The Problem of Language Revival

(Continued from page 6)

ing their national languages in cultural and governmental institutions. A five year educational plan was drawn up. The first Congress of the Soviets of Armenia adopted the principals in the Constitution of the Armenian SSR on January 31st, 1924. Armenia joined the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

In the 50 years of Armenian self government, illiteracy had long been done away with and today every fourth citizen is studying. There are 1,600 general schools, 195 work and study groups, 45 specialised secondary schools, and 12 higher educational institutions. There are 177 students per 10,000 population. Falling back into its old traditions today Armenia produces a number of remarkable scientists and scholars and its Academy of Sciences, Institute of Physics, Institute of Fine Organic Chemistry are rated high in the world of science.

The first Armenian theatre was built in 69 B. C. under Tigranes 11. Theatrical tradition flourishes in Armenia under the domination by Persian and Turk. The theatrical tradition was carried on by emigrants in Lvov, Venice and Madras. During the Cultural Revival an Armenian theatre was established in Tiflis in 1836 but did not survive long.

It was astonishing that the Armenian people, whose theatrical culture is 2,000 years old, did not have a single theatre in their native country before 1921. In that year the Armenian Government established the first State theatre in Yerevan. Now the Armenian theatre has been revived to its glory and the Armenian Theatrical Studio in Moscow, Tbilisi, Baku, Yerevan and Leninakan are famous among Soviet actors.

Newspapers, magazines, radio and television are now an integral part of everyday life. Even in the most remote mountain settlements previously known for their complete illiteracy, one will find newspapers, magazines and books.

Over 80 newspapers are published with a total circulation of 730,000. There are 100 magazines and one periodical with an annual printing of 3.5 million copies which are published in Armenian, Russian, Azerbaijani and Kurdish. There are four publishing houses, the largest of which is Aianast, which issues over 800 books in eight million copies annually in the four languages. Armenian radio also transmits in the four languages and programmes are broadcast for Armenians living abroad.

Today the Union of Armenian Writers is one of the strongest in the U.S.S.R. and such writers as Eghis Charents, Araz Vshaturian, Gekah Saryan, Nairi Zarian and Amayak Siras are especially well known.

The progress that Armenia has made in 50 years is truly astounding. A colonial territory of Tsarist Russia and Imperial Turkey only half a century ago, today Armenia renders considerable technical and economic aid to the developing countries of Asia and Africa. Goods are exported to England, France, Belgium, Italy, Sweden, Germany, Netherlands, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria, Cuba, Yugoslavia and Middle Eastern countries. Armenian canned goods and electronic equipment are exported to over 70 countries while building materials lie on the market with those of Sweden and Italy. Aid is given for industrial projects to India, Ceylon, Syria, Iraq, Algeria, Iran, Somali, U.A.R, Vietnam, Czechoslovakia and Cuba.

The ancient country of Armenia, culturally sound again, is living through its second spring.

The success of the Armenian Republic, whose population is slightly less than that of Wales, is truly a remarkable one. Economically rich and culturally healthy where once were illiterate, dying cultural communities who were also victims of an insidious genocide, Armenia is a fascinating example of a country becoming a healthy community again against all impossible odds. It is the answer lies in the comment of Anatole France: "Armenia is suffocating, she is on her death bed, but she will revive... a people that is so eager to live will not die."

(To be continued)

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