They Got the Bus Rolling

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TRANSPORTATION PROBLEMS constitute some of the major headaches of the people of the small rural communities in the Odenwald mountain range. Mueckenloch, a town of 1,000 inhabitants in Heidelberg County, had been such an isolated mountain town until July 16, 1950. The numerous commuters to industrial plants in Mannheim and Heidelberg were compelled to walk to distant railroad stations.

But today, one of the bright yellow buses of the Bundespost (German Postal System) connects Mueckenloch to the railroad station in Neckargmuend. Commuters no longer need to be away from their families for 12 or 14 hours every working day.

How was it possible that an age-old problem was solved at a time when town and county governments were confronted by a host of postwar problems which sometimes appeared to frustrate all efforts of local administrators? The Rhein-Neckar Zeitung, a Heidelberg newspaper, gave the answer in its July 18 issue. "A Mueckenloch Woman Asked for It at the Forum," said a three-column headline.

The forum referred to was held on October 13, 1949. One hundred and eighty citizens of Mueckenloch gathered in the school hall in order to discuss their problems with Mayor Karl Wieder, County Supervisor Herbert Klotz, County Councilor Karl Wetzel, Dr. Hermann Knorr, a deputy to the state legislature, and the HICOG Resident Officer stationed at Heidelberg.

AFTER MAYOR WIEDER had agreed to comply with the popular request for public town council meetings, Fraulein Herbeck took the floor. She demanded a bus line to connect the little mountain town with the rest of the world. The transportation problem was thoroughly discussed by all present and the interest of both the community and the panel members became focused upon it.

Two weeks later, Mayor Wieder invited the local county councilors, the mayor of Neckargemuend, the chairman of the Neckargemuend traffic improvement association, the Neckargemuend postmaster and the press to a conference in the nearby city of Neckargemuend. There Mayor Wieder successfully pleaded for the establishment of a bus line.

The postmaster who had been contacted immediately after the town meeting, announced that the Bundespost was willing to run a bus line from Neckargemuend to Mueckenloch, provided the county highway was properly repaired, widened and maintained. Four days before the conference, the Mueckenloch town government had addressed a petition to the county council, requesting repair of the county highway.

Deputy Knorr, publisher of the Rhein-Neckar Zeitung, campaigned in his paper for the bus line. "Bus Line to Mueckenloch Urgently Required; Commuters Entitled to Transportation," the paper proclaimed in its headlines. The county councilors advocated the establishment of the bus line and voted an appropriation for the repair and widening of the highway.

On April 22, at another town meeting in Mueckenloch, County Councilor Wetzel was able to report that construction work on the county highway was under way and that Mueckenloch would soon have its bus line.

THE INAUGURATION of the new bus line on July 16 was marked by a grand municipal celebration. Flags flew from all houses, the main street was decorated with young birch trees, and school children lined the highway. A brass band marched in, followed by the bus, which carried guests from the neighborhood towns. The school choir greeted the daily decorated bus with a song. Talks
were delivered by the mayors of Mueckenloch and the neighboring communities, the county supervisor and postal officials.

Neckargmuend's Mayor Heinrich Held emphasized that it was the town meeting which had initiated the efforts leading to the opening of the bus line. "The new bus line will bring progress to the community," declared the county supervisor.

To the people of Mueckenloch, their little yellow Bundespost bus today demonstrates that the people can contribute to the solution of local problems through the instrument of the town meeting.

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Socialization of Industry Opposed

THE MAJORITY of residents of the US Zone of Germany do not believe that the worker would be better off if industry were socialized, a survey conducted by the Reactions Analysis Staff, Office of Public Affairs, HICOG, revealed.

Results of the survey also disclosed that there has been a considerable shift of opinion on whether social ownership of industry offers the most advantage for the worker since November 1947, when a similar survey was conducted in the American zone and in western Berlin.

The 1950 survey, embracing a representative sampling of approximately 1,500 cases in the zone, 250 in Berlin and 160 in Bremen, showed that 54 percent do not feel that socialization would improve the lot of the worker. This represents an increase of 13 percentage points from the 41 percent who held such a view two and a half years ago.

Berliners registered an even greater shift of opinion with more than two out of three persons rejecting the idea that socialized industry would improve the economic position of the worker.

The workers themselves also thought far less of the socialization idea than they did in 1947. Their opinions are in line with those of the public at large. In the US Zone 58 percent — a 17-percent increase — said that the worker would not be better off. In Berlin the figure was higher, with 72 percent expressing such an opinion.

ALONG WITH ASCERTAINING current opinion on benefits to the worker, trained interviewers also delved into the extent of support of socialization. They found in the 30 months since the first survey that opposition to socialization of industry rose from 24 to 37 percent. At the same time, approval of socialization — for all or heavy industry — dropped from 49 to 38 percent. The opposition was most marked in Hesse, where there was a 23 percent change in opinion.

In Berlin, a similar trend has occurred where support for complete socialization has dropped from 22 percent in 1947 to 11 percent this year.

Searching political party attitudes in this field in which the Social Democratic Party (SPD) formerly espoused socialization, pollsters found there is far from unanimous conviction that even heavy industry — coal mines, iron and steel — should be socialized. On this particular issue, polling of SPD members in 1947 showed 50 percent in favor whereas in this year's survey support dropped to 38 percent. Disapproval in the SPD ranks has grown to where 32 percent oppose even partial socialization. Berliners, following the same trend, showed among its SPD adherents that opposition to socialization of only heavy industry had risen from 27 to 43 percent since 1947.

The survey also disclosed that the sharp decrease in support for socialization of German industry in whole or in part is general among all groups, rather than being confined to any particular segment. In no population group examined in the current survey did support for complete socialization exceed 14 percent, whereas in 1947 more than 25 percent in many groups were in favor. The study included groupings by education, income, sex, size of town, age, religion and occupation.