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MAY 2007

ASLEF
Journal



Trident

Defence policy
up in the air

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the ASLEF Journal

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Outdated gun laws belong in another era



Whenever I feel angry or annoyed about events in the UK, I'm sometimes soothed by the thought that, well, there are worse places to live. Countries like Zimbabwe, for instance, where a racist and increasingly deranged Mugabe continues to bully his people. Like Iraq, where the appalling death toll grows by the day. Like Colombia where 80 trade unionists have been murdered by state forces over the last twelve months.

But I'm not just grateful that I don't live in the poorer countries of the world. There is a lot wrong with the richest of all: the United States. I am writing this column on the day that 32 young people were shot dead in America by a fellow student.

I confess I don't understand the American obsession with their Second Amendment, their 'basic freedom' to 'bear arms'. The reasoning – back in 1789 when it was introduced – was that Americans needed 'a well regulated militia'. Today there are another 32 victims of this out-dated folly.

The job of the state should be to ensure not that everyone should have the right to carry arms – but the reverse. It should be in the business of ensuring that no one needs a gun. Hillary Clinton says the Second Amendment isn't really relevant in 21st century America. How right she is.

One day last year I happened to read two reports on the same day about arguments between car drivers. In London one man had been arrested for punching the other driver. In New York a man was arrested for shooting his antagonist. Doesn't that say something important?

My concern is that there is a process that what happens in America eventually happens here – and it will, if we are not constantly on our guard. The sad fact is that guns are attractive. Look at your television any night of the week and see how many programmes (often imported from over the Atlantic) feature a gun-carrying hero. In fact, it is easier to count those that do not. A gun is a mark of manhood, and murder is an every-day event. It is – on television – normal.

Yes, we have our problems with safety both at work and on our streets. A few weeks ago one of our brothers from Carmarthen was the victim of a stupid and criminal act when bricks were thrown at his train. Every day sees some form of violence in our communities: but at least we're not 'bearing arms'. We must never do so if we are to cling to our belief that we are a 'civilised society'.

Union wants to make Scotland test case for public rail

NEWS emerged last month that not-for-profit Network Rail has been talking to ministers north of the border about taking control of trains as well as track in Scotland. The move, which has ASLEF support, could be used as a test-case for the rest of UK rail.

The union's Scottish Organiser Kevin Lindsay says, 'We have been fighting for years to see Scotland's rail returned to public hands and while the current proposal isn't our ideal position, it would be a major step forward.' Keith Norman insists that it is a perfect opportunity for an in-depth trial which could 'mark the beginning of the end of UK rail's 'fragmented, profit-motivated and inefficient' privatisation experiment.

Labour's Scottish election manifesto, published on Tuesday, contains a thinly veiled reference to the idea of Scotland pioneering a new structure for the rail industry, saying, 'The case for running the Scottish franchise on a not-for-profit basis needs to be fully examined as part of the preparation for the next franchise.'

Bristow Muldoon, who chairs Labour's Scottish Policy Forum, went slightly further when he declared, 'I believe there is a high possibility that reintegrating tracks and trains would deliver better value for money.' He pointed out that savings could be reinvested in improving the infrastructure or reducing fares and said the taxpayer would not have to pay so much in subsidies. ScotRail will receive £1.9 billion over the seven years to 2011.

He saw Network Rail as a possible operator of such a model but added that Labour was not opposed ideologically to private sector involvement in the railways. It simply wanted to

find the best way of operating the system in the interests of passengers and taxpayers.

The Times reported that Network Rail's next Chief Executive, Iain Coucher, held private talks with senior Labour politicians at the party's Scottish conference in November and indicated that Network Rail would be willing to cooperate with plans to reintegrate Scotland's tracks and trains. A new integrated operation could be introduced in 2011, when First ScotRail's franchise is due to be renegotiated.

Scotland would be ideal for a trial of this nature because its network is largely self-contained, with more than 90 per cent of services run by First ScotRail. The only exceptions are the crossborder long-distance trains



run by Virgin and GNER, which would not be included in the test.

This year the UK's rail network is being subsidised to the tune of £5 billion – over three times what British Rail received. Public funding was supposed to be phased out under privatisation but in fact it has risen sharply over the past ten years - despite a doubling in income from fares.

'It would be a major step forward if this experiment goes forward – although I'm not entirely sure what is to be

tried. You don't need to be a rail specialist to know privatisation has failed – you need to be a passenger,' Keith Norman says.

'Ending the fragmentation of the industry is clearly logical – something even the Conservatives have now accepted. They now want to reintegrate tracks and trains, but they seem to be working on a rather pointless plan to split the network into regions, each of which would be controlled by a single private company.'

FIRST FOR CHILTERN AS TICKETS GET MOBILE



CHILTERN RAILWAYS has installed self-service scanners to read mobile tickets sent as barcodes to passengers' phones in the second phase of a pilot project.

The train operator is the first in the UK to introduce the mobile phone barcodes as an alternative to paper tickets. The first stage of the 'E-day' project, carried out with partners YourRail, Cubic Transportation Systems, Mobiqua and ts.com, saw 6,000 mobile tickets sold through the company's website in three months.

In the second phase of the plan, two scanning devices have now been attached to the ticket gates at London's Marylebone station to allow passengers to scan their own phones and open the gates.

ANGER OVER DELAYS TO WALES RAIL WORK

Network Rail managed to come under fire in South Wales after Easter even though it is engaged in a £400 million programme to improve train services in the region. Signalling work over-ran by a week on the main line between Swansea and Cardiff forcing passengers to travel by bus. The work also caused disruption for rail travellers from Cardiff to London with trains only running once an hour - rather than every half hour.

MORE US FLIGHTS AS REGULATION ENDS

ON 23 March it was decided to end all regulation on Atlantic flights. European Union governments agreed to deregulate the \$18 billion (£9.2 billion) trans-Atlantic airline market, endorsing a treaty with the US that analysts say will vastly increase air traffic by lowering prices and encouraging mergers.

The only regulated market now will be within the US, where the Americans are not allowing any competition. The deal will also scrap rules letting only British Airways, Virgin Atlantic Airways Ltd, American Airlines and United Airlines fly between the US and London's Heathrow - Europe's busiest airport.

The accord will increase annual EU- US traffic by 26 million passengers to about 73 million over five years, according to a study for the European Commission.

Carmarthen driver faces two major rail hazards in a month

Carmarthen driver Mike Sullivan has experienced two of the worst hazards to face drivers within the space of a month. Two weeks after coming back to work following a collision with a car that was idling over a level crossing, Mike was injured by hooligans throwing bricks at his train.

In the first incident Mike was driving from Pembroke Dock to Swansea at 8 in the evening when a 20 year old student decided to cross the line in front of him at an unmanned crossing. To cross, she needed to manually open gates at both sides of the track. She opened the first gate and then – almost unbelievably – parked her car on the

line while she went to open the gate at the other side.

In the second incident Mike was near Pembrey station driving in the opposite direction – from Swansea to Pembroke Dock when bricks were thrown at his train at about half past six in the evening. He suffered cuts to his face when the glass shattered in the cab.

LOCAL BRANCH ANGER

John Boreham, secretary of ASLEF's Carmarthen branch, was infuriated at the lead story in the local newspaper, which began with the words, 'A student had a miraculous escape when a train smashed



This photograph is only a mock-up. Mike was in a collision with a car that was idling over a level crossing



SUNDERLAND TO LONDON – BY WAY OF CHINA! Passengers in the North-East could soon be stepping aboard express trains arriving from China. Grand Central is to launch its Sunderland-London services this month using current rolling stock trains – but it proposes to introduce Chinese-built trains from the middle of

2010. This would be a first on UK - and European - railways. The company insists that the Chinese 'Polaris' diesel fleet will be an improvement on the existing high-speed trains – and says it will be more environmentally-friendly as well as modern. Grand Central says the new train will be a modern version of the popular HST and there are suggestions that the Department for Transport is currently examining other Chinese trains - which could be cheaper to build and buy - for regional rail services in the UK.

CAPITAL WIN FOR NEWCASTLE RAIL Research by rail firm GNER shows that travelling by train from Newcastle to London is consistently more reliable than by plane. Figures from industry regulators the Civil Aviation Authority and GNER performance data showed 34.2% more GNER journeys were on time compared to planes on the route during 2006.

ADVENZA FAILINGS Advenza Freight has been found to have inadequate driver safety files so that it is unable to show that its drivers are competent to carry out this work – and that it has inadequate driver management policies to enable 'risks to drivers and others to be minimised'. It has been served enforcement notices to make it comply with regulations.



SARDINE UPDATE Transport 2000's 'Sardine Man' campaign against rail overcrowding (which we covered in the April Journal) proved an eye-catching success. The finny figures squeezed onto some of the most overcrowded trains in England and Wales to highlight the need for government investment to increase capacity and relieve congestion on the rail network. The national tour began at Eastleigh Train Depot – as a reminder of how many empty train carriages sit idle, while overcrowding goes on unabated. Transport 2000 has identified the 10 lines it says are in most urgent need of increased capacity. It says they are:

- Journey... Running over capacity by: Durham to Newcastle (7:59 train) : 88% (a)
- Cambridge to London Liverpool Street (7:18 train): 85% (b)
- Eccleston Park to Liverpool Lime Street (7:53 train): 85% (c)
- Cardiff to Maesteg (17:21 train): 78% (d)
- Humphrey Park to Manchester Oxford Road (8:14 train): 75% (c)
- Morpeth to Newcastle (8:00 train): 58% (a)
- Barnsley to Leeds (7:31 train): 57% (e)
- Sheffield to Leeds (7:14 train): 53% (e)
- Sutton to Luton (16:33 train): 50% (b)
- Northampton to Birmingham New Street (7:26 train): 45% (f)

into her car at a level crossing.'

'It's almost incredible,' John says. 'Here is a potentially life-threatening incident – in which our member was completely blameless – and all the attention is focussed on the driver of the car. Network Rail is, of course, carrying out an investigation, but I understand that no criminal proceedings are likely to be taken against the car driver.'

'I don't understand this at all – when so many lives were potentially put at risk.'

'Our members face this type of incident almost on a daily basis – yet we seem to get no sympathy at all.'

'I fully support the union's case for having track-to-train surveillance systems – but in the interim the public should be aware that they have responsibilities as well. Yes, unmanned level crossings are dangerous – but there needs to be more consideration and concern for our members whose lives are literally on the line.'

'NO EXCUSES' SAYS GS

Keith Norman said he was 'deeply angry' at news that another train driver had been injured because hooligans threw bricks at Mike's train.

'What kind of person is foolish and callous enough to carry out such vandalism?' Keith asked. 'Youth' or 'Boredom in school holidays' are not excuses. Regardless of their age, these people can see the consequences and know the risks. They are criminals.'

Keith says there must be a 'constant and unrelenting campaign of education in schools – but it must also be underlined at home. Young people need to have it made clear at home that they have to keep away from railways.'

'Mike Sullivan could have been killed by a callous act that could also destroy the life of a foolish child.'



Support for Colombian trade unionists

In an attempt to highlight the ongoing plight of trade unionist in Colombia - 80 were assassinated last year alone - Justice for Colombia staged a commemoration event in front of the Colombian Embassy in London on 20 March. 80 British trade unionists held a placard with the name of one of our murdered colleagues.

Keith Norman was one of 17 British general secretaries who participated in the event. Despite a number of protests by the TUC the UK Government still gives military aid to the Colombian armed forces, mainly by sending British troops to Colombia to provide training. The Colombian military has the worst human rights record of any military in the Western hemisphere. Photo: Sam Green

EWS WANTS FREIGHT INCLUDED IN RAIL REVIEW

Britain's largest rail freight operator has warned that road congestion and pollution will soar if the government ignores the freight industry. EWS is demanding that freight is included in the government's 'blueprint for the railways' to be published this summer. It will specify what the government wants from the passenger rail network between 2009 and 2014 and how much it will spend - but at present freight will not be included.

Graeme Smith, planning director at EWS, said transport secretary Douglas Alexander cannot ignore the findings of two Treasury-commissioned reports which back the case for rail freight. The Eddington study calls for investment in infrastructure at ports and the Stern report detailed the consequences of unrestricted carbon emissions.

FALL IN FREIGHT TRAFFIC

The amount of freight carried on UK railways in the third

quarter of last year fell year on year. Some 27 million tonnes were lifted in July-September 2006/07, down 3.9% on the same quarter in 2005/06. This followed a 7.2% increase over July-September 2004/5.

FIRST GROUP SIGNS UP MAN WHO LIVES IN DARK

Alastair Campbell has become a consultant to First Group. He is advising the company, which operates across Britain, Europe and the United States - on brand image, charity partnerships and sports sponsorship.

The former tabloid journalist, who is to receive a £1 million advance on his diaries to be published in the summer, was apparently hired by First Group at the end of last year.

As he is a consultant, his fees will not be disclosed in the company's annual report. A spokesman says that the amount he will be paid is 'commercially sensitive'.

Nice to see Alastair has a sensitive side.

Your journey starts here...

Direct Rail Services (DRS) is a successful, innovative company with an excellent reputation for the delivery of first-class services. DRS was established in 1995 and began with only 5 members of traincrew all based at one depot. Our continued success in the rail industry means that over 10 years on we have traincrew based at eight locations throughout the country.

TRAINEE RAILHEAD OPERATIVE/TRAIN(WO)MAN

Starting salary: £17,525 per annum increasing to £20,417 upon completion of training + Company Bonus (up to £600) and £4000 Retainer. To be based in Bicester and London - Bicester is subject to new business contracts.

You will be required to undertake relevant training and assessments in line with DRS's trainman/woman training programme in order to be competent to carry out fully qualified duties as required to support DRS customer requirements. Ideally having knowledge of the rail industry, you will eventually be responsible for carrying out all trainmen / women duties associated with the movement of our specialist freight. This will include marshalling, shunting, and train preparation. With an ability to adopt flexible working practices you will maintain / improve the high standards of housekeeping and safety in your working area. To support rail movements you will be required to carry out road vehicle driving activities as needed and therefore a full clean driving licence will be essential. Ideally you will possess a Personal Track Safety Certificate and RST, alternatively you will be willing to work towards them.

If you feel you have the relevant skills and knowledge for the above positions and would like to apply please contact the Recruitment section on 01228 406682 for an application form and further details. Previous applicants need not apply.

QUALIFIED TRAIN DRIVERS

Starting Salary: £31,226 per annum increasing to £34,228 per annum upon satisfactory completion of probationary period + Company Bonus (up to £600) and £4000 Retainer. To be based in Carlisle, Grangemouth, Inverness, Crewe, London and Bicester - Bicester is subject to new business contracts.

With 2 years post qualifying experience as a train driver, you will be an enthusiastic and flexible individual who carries out their driver duties to a high standard and ensures that they adhere to all relevant safety requirements. Using your experience of the rail industry you will develop and maintain all necessary route knowledge as well as studying and gaining a first class understanding of our safety regulations. Following training you will carry out driver, trainman / woman and RST duties and will be required to obtain a Personal Track Safety Certificate to maintain and enhance your existing skills. Experience of driving freight trains, would be highly desirable. Successful applicants should hold a full UK driving licence and meet the required GO/RT3251 group medical standard.

Closing date: Monday 4th June 2007 at 12 noon



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AMSTERDAM TRIALS TRAM FREIGHT

LAST MONTH the City of Amsterdam had a three-week trial of a pilot scheme operating cargo trams through the inner city. The tram 'freight trains' ran on the existing tram system of the Municipal Transportation Company (GVB). The trial was carried out City Cargo Nederland.

The Cargo tram operation was restricted to lines with sufficient free capacity to avoid conflicts with passenger trams, and also to the period 0700 - 2300 to avoid making too much noise at night. Backers of the project claimed that it could reduce particle pollution of the air by 15%.

During the trial the trams used were modified GVB trams. The city council will decide later this month whether to continue this new way of transporting cargo.

According to calculations by City Cargo Nederland the air pollution in the inner city can be reduced by up to 20% if the number of freight trucks in the main city area can be reduced by 50%. Recent measurements have shown that certain busy streets in Amsterdam generate more air pollution for nearby housing than is allowed under the city's regulations.

'Exhaust gases from motorised transport are still the biggest cause of air pollution,' says city environment spokesperson Alderwoman Marijke Vos. 'We intend to introduce a series of measures aimed at securing less, and cleaner, traffic.'

The Amsterdam College of Aldermen has initiated an Air Quality Action Plan. The plan comprises fifty measures for improving Amsterdam's air quality. For example, the City of Amsterdam's own fleet of vehicles will be made cleaner - and civil servants will learn how to drive in a more environmentally friendly way.

The astonishing thing for many UK visitors to the bicycle-obsessed Dutch capital is that the air there appears to be dramatically better than most of its UK counterparts.



approximately 55% of the driving team as members. Sadly this has now dropped to around 25% - the result of drivers moving to mainline rail companies or in a few cases, retirement. Unfortunately we are presently unable to introduce ourselves to new trainee drivers during their induction week. This means that our recruitment is rather slow and has to be by word of mouth, as we are not even afforded any notice board space at the depot.

To help with our recruitment we send personal invitations to interested drivers to attend our branch meetings and hold a couple of social events each year. All operations staff from our company are invited to these events - and so too all members of ASLEF. For those of you who may be interested we will be holding our next barbecue on the 27 May at the Tamworth Arms, Tamworth Road, Croydon. The nearest tram stops are Central and Church Street. We look forward to seeing you there!

Konrad Turner Branch Chair



FLYING THE ASLEF FLAG ON CROYDON TRAMS

SOME of you may remember an article in the May 2002 edition of the Locomotive Journal introducing our newly formed branch - impressively called Croydon Tram/Light Rail No 1. This short article is to bring you up to date with what we've been doing.

Our Branch members all drive on the Croydon Tramlink

system. Most drivers are new to the rail industry at the time of their employment and become more and more aware of the complexities and responsibilities that are involved in driving a rail vehicle as their training progresses.

We formed the branch in August 2000 because we felt that the union that was recognised by the management to negotiate on behalf of the drivers seems to many of us not to be best suited to our needs. Today, although our ASLEF branch is still not recognised by the management for negotiations regarding pay and conditions, our Depot Rep is recognised as a union representative at disciplinary hearings. This means that we are able to keep our branch in the forefront.

When our branch was originally set up we had

NEW EDINBURGH TRAM PROJECT

WORK has begun on Edinburgh's tram scheme in Leith after ministers gave the go-ahead for the £592m project. Ministers have released £60 million of funding which enabled a start to be made on diverting and protecting utility pipes and cables in preparation for the first phase of the proposed tram network.

Transport Minister Tavish Scott said, 'Trams will give passengers a safe, environmental travel choice, a choice which will see reduced congestion and reduced emissions,' adding that the development work would be done by a single contractor - Tie - to minimise disruption in Edinburgh, save money and ensure the project was delivered.

A spokesperson for Transport Edinburgh Limited, the company that will operate the system, said it was the first step to delivering trams by 2010.





legs. I have worked exclusively on these units since summer 1988.

In January 2004 I underwent major surgery on my right foot for a ruptured tendon. The surgeon who carried out the operation placed the cause of this injury entirely on the DSD pedal and the conditions of seats in the cabs. He also said he would expect to see more and more train drivers with this condition and needing surgery to put it right. I was off work for 51 weeks and needed intense physiotherapy and was in constant pain for many weeks. I virtually had to learn to walk again. I made a claim against my employer through ASLEF - which proved unsuccessful.

Now, 3 years later, my left foot is playing me up and I am afraid it is the same problem. I am sure that the seats and the DSD pedals in class 319 units are to blame. I would urge anyone with a foot problem or leg pain to see a specialist as soon as possible.

There is a problem with these cabs - and it needs sorting out.

R.V. Mundy Bedford



This is a photo that one of our FGW drivers passed to me, showing a particular growth on the floor of an HST cab.

The thought crossed my mind that if they happen to be 'magic mushrooms' - do we need to be worried about drug and alcohol tests in our cabs?

Steve Austin Secretary - Paddington Branch

SQUASHED



SNAPS

Dear Journal

You recently asked for pictures of particularly dirty cabs of class 66 locomotives. Well, what do you think about these pictures (above left and top right)? They were taken in March - and I hope they give you some idea of the disgusting state of the cab - but it really must have been seen with the eyes to be believed!

The cab was completely caked in coal dust (and the other cab was the same). All the controls and gauges were covered in it. The seat was absolutely filthy. This I think is the worst class 66 I have come across since their introduction - but there is a lot of competition! From Anoni Mouse.

LEG PROBLEMS WITH 319 CABS

I read with interest the small piece in the April Issue of the Journal about class 319 seats and the effect they have on the

NOW WE'VE GOT A SQUASH SONG!

The inventiveness of ASLEF members never ceases to astonish! We didn't expect to have a Squash Theme Song when we began this campaign - but - here it is! Many thanks to Rebekah Peterson for an admirable effort which, she says, should be sung to the tune of 'Mud, Glorious Mud'!!

**Squash, squash we demand squash
Our cab conditions are nothing too posh
So now let's explain
Just why we complain
The ASLEF campaign of why we demand squash.**

**Safe, safe S is for safe
Poor cab design means this won't be the case
And Q is for quiet
We just cannot lie at
The noise and vibration that makes it unsafe.**

**You, me, all of us do
Need user-friendly cabs, that is the U
And A is for air-con
It just isn't fair on
The Driver to work on too hot, or turned blue.**

**Seats, we need special seats
No more discomfort from stretching to reach
And H we contend
Is for healthy, let's end
The poor working conditions and safety law breach.**

**Squash, squash, we demand squash
Our cab conditions are nothing too posh
So now we've explained
Just why we complain
The ASLEF campaign of why we demand SQUASH!**

CHILDCARE AND PENSIONS FEATURE AT WOMEN'S TUC

ASLEF was represented at the March Women's TUC Conference in Scarborough by Marion Butcher, Collette Gibson, Gillian McVittie and myself. We were supported by Equalities Adviser Sharon Allen and National Organiser Andy Reed.

Delegates called on the TUC to provide childcare facilities for delegates with children attending TUC Women's Conferences. They did not want the TUC to restrict childcare to 'session hours', and thus debar children of school age being allowed to attend conference with their parent. The TUC argued it could not condone parents removing their children from school during term time.

Conference felt this was not a decision for the TUC, but for the parents in consultation with their child's school. How can the TUC fight for parental rights and then impose their own restrictions? This became the motion to be sent forward to the main TUC conference later this year.

Collette Gibson spoke in support of the motion, arguing passionately that it is not up to the TUC to 'police' whether women should be able to bring their children with them to conference.

Gillian McVittie seconded the motion calling for the link

between pension increases and earnings to be restored - and before 2012! She said women were being 'mugged' of their pensions by successive governments for daring to stay at home to rear families.

I moved the very emotive motion on Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) - an illegal practise that is being carried out in the UK on girls as young as 4! This barbaric mutilation - often incorrectly referred to as 'female circumcision' leads to infection, fertility problems, complications with pregnancy and childbirth, pain, psychological damage and even death. ASLEF's motion called for this issue to be put back on the agenda in the communities where it is common practice, in order to stop it.

The delegation attended a number of



TUC General Secretary Brendan Barber joins the ASLEF delegation to the Women's TUC Conference in a rendition of 'Calamity Train' - a musical ode to privatisation madness!

fringe meetings, including the 'Charter for Women' fringe and a fringe meeting on pensions organised by the NPC where Equalities Adviser, Sharon Allen was one of the speakers.

On a personal note I would like to thank all those who supported my re-election to the TUC Women's Committee for a further year.

Pauline Cawood Leeds Branch

ASLEF PLAYS ITS PART AT PENSIONERS CONVENTION

MEMBERS of the Retired Members' Section (RMS) Committee, along with two working colleagues from Kings Cross Branch - Bro Les Muir and Sister Wendy Hurst - attended the National Pensioners Convention (NPC) and Trade Union Conference in late March.

The conference - of almost 90 delegates - was opened by NPC President Frank Cooper who welcomed delegates and introduced the Chair, Steve Cottingham of solicitors O.H. Parsons & Partners, the Conference sponsors.

NPC General Secretary Joe Harris spoke about the value of today's State Pension - producing some eye-opening figures showing that the level of pensions was well below the official poverty line of £125 p/w - and mentioned the Treasury annually 'raiding' National Insurance Funds.

Dr. Jay Ginn of Surrey University spoke on Private Pension Failures, inequalities of private pensions and their unfairness to women, and the Pensions Bill 2006 now going through Parliament.

Barbara Switzer of NAW spoke on the need to improve women's pensions and stressed the inequality of State Pensions, while Jenny Bremner (AMICUS) condemned the Health Service for failing to support our needs. Dave Anderson - the MP for Blaydon - concentrated on what he thought the Chancellor should have included in his recent Budget Speech.

After lunch we had speakers from TSSA, AMICUS, RMT, UCATT and the NUJ - along with ASLEF'S Andy Reed who gave an excellent presentation on social justice for pensioners.

Time was set aside for questions and discussions from the floor on the way forward. Speakers stressed the need for full TUC support. The TUC was criticised for a lack of enthusiasm for supporting the pensioners' just cause - and for failing to make an appearance at the Conference.

Alan Taylor RMS Committee Member

*Andy Reed spoke on social justice
Inset: ASLEF delegates listen to the debate at the pensioners' conference*



ASLEF's executive committee last month decided to recommend **John McDonnell MP** as its favoured candidate in the forthcoming election for Leader of the Labour Party. We therefore offered John the opportunity to explain the main points of his platform to our members in the Journal. This is what he wrote ...

THE VOICE OF TRADE UNIONISTS MUST BE HEARD IN LABOUR'S LEADERSHIP ELECTION

THERE is widespread speculation that Tony Blair will stand down as Prime Minister in May – following his 10th anniversary as Prime Minister and after the Scottish and Welsh elections.

Following that announcement the Labour Party NEC will meet and the timetable for the election of the new leader will be implemented. The first stage in that process will be an invitation for MPs to nominate candidates for the leadership, and those with 44 or more nominations will go forward to the ballot of all Labour Party members and trade union affiliates.

As an affiliated trade union, ASLEF has a key role to play in deciding the next Labour party leader and Prime Minister. I have put my name forward so that all of us in the labour movement can debate the policies needed to secure Labour in power.

The Labour Government has introduced a number of good policies in the past 10 years, but there are some crucial areas where a real change of direction is needed. As ASLEF members, you will be keenly aware of three of these:

- Transport policy
- Public services
- The future of trade union



Behind the scenes John McDonnell MP works with union committees

rights

As a member of the ASLEF Parliamentary Group, I have led campaigns in a number of these areas. Last year I hosted a seminar on the environmental case for rail, bringing together the Department for Transport, TUC, and all the rail unions to emphasise the key role that the railways can play in a number of policy areas, from social exclusion and protecting environment, to boosting the economy. It's now clear to us all that we need a dramatic increase in rail investment, but to ensure that this money is used effectively and not for private profit. We need rail to be brought back into public ownership.

Last year I convened the Public Services Not Private Profit (PSNPP) campaign, uniting 16 public sector trade unions (including ASLEF), which organised a lobby of Parliament attended by over 2,000 trade unionists in June 2006. This campaign was very much the forerunner of the TUC Speak Up for Public Services campaign which lobbied Parliament in January this year. Meanwhile PSNPP meetings continue to take place across the country. The central thrust of this campaign is to promote public services



John has campaigned tirelessly for union rights

like rail and to end privatisation.

I am also currently sponsoring the Trade Union Freedom Bill through Parliament. The Bill is backed by the TUC and Labour Party conference to establish basic trade union rights in this country in line with the rest of Europe. Workers in Britain should have the same basic trade union rights to prevent exploitation and to secure decent pay, pensions and working conditions.

For all of these reasons it is important that we have the opportunity to debate the future of the Labour Government and the future of our country. The Labour Party leadership election will enable us to have that debate, but the debate won't even start unless I can secure sufficient support from Labour MPs to get on the ballot paper. There are a number of simple things you can do to help us:

Contact your local Labour MP to urge them to nominate me

Join the Labour Party and exercise your vote as an ASLEF member to ensure that you have a say in this election

Start the debate on the leadership and future policy direction through your ASLEF branch. Your local branch can also lobby your local Labour MP.

Like any campaign we need



your support by passing resolutions expressing support for my campaign, assisting in distributing campaign materials to members and by your branch making a donation to the campaign.

It was the trade union movement that founded the Labour Party 100 years ago – and today it is no less essential that trade unionists are heard in this crucial election.



John McDonnell MP, the 51-year-old MP for Hayes and Harlington, is a former official of both the

National Union of Mineworkers and the TUC. Born 51 years ago to a Liverpool docker and a shopworker, John is currently chair of the Labour Representation Committee, the Socialist Campaign Group and 'Public Services Not Private Profit'.

■ For more information about his Leadership bid contact his campaign office on 020 7529 8296 or email: info@john4leader.org.uk / www.john4leader.org.uk. Correspondence and donations can be sent to: John4Leader, PO Box 2378, London, E5 9QU

WHY I VOTED AGAINST TRIDENT – AND RESIGNED MY GOVERNMENT POST



Jim Devine has resigned his Government post as parliamentary private secretary to Health Minister Rosie Winterton in protest over plans to replace the Trident nuclear weapons system. Here he explains the background to his decision.

I would like to begin by saying that I am very proud of our Labour Government. In my constituency, we have seen record employment, the introduction of a national minimum wage, dignity for pensioners and record investment in our public services.

It was, therefore, an immensely difficult decision to resign my post in the Department of Health – a job I thoroughly enjoyed – to register my opposition to the renewal of Trident.

My opposition is based on my firm belief that there is no military, political nor practical reason to renew this weapon. There are a number of factors that led me to vote against the renewal of Trident which I will outline in this article.

NOT A PACIFIST

It is claimed that costs of renewal will come to at least £20 billion and could be as much as £75 billion. I am however, no pacifist. I believe that this money should be spent on improving the equipment, accommodation and pay of our Armed Forces.

Ever since Tony Blair became leader of the party, he has claimed that New Labour was a complete break from the past. Therefore, Trident was his opportunity to prove that he truly is a moderniser. It was Harold Wilson who built,

launched and named the Polaris fleet. Jim Callaghan struck the first deal on Trident in a beach hut with the then American President, Jimmy Carter. What better example of Old Labour could Tony Blair have in Wilson and Callaghan?

WHO IS THE ENEMY?

With the breakup of the Soviet Union, I would like to know who the enemy actually is in the 21st Century and under what circumstances the British government would find it necessary to launch Trident.

Unlike the 70s and the 80s we do not face the might of the USSR and the Warsaw Pact, in fact, most of the satellite countries are now joining the European Union, and NATO is still in existence today. It has been suggested that our current national security is most threatened by Islamic fundamentalism. Nuclear weapons will not deter a suicide bomber who actively courts martyrdom, and if we were ever foolish enough to seek retribution through the launch of a latter day Hiroshima on a Muslim City, we would inspire fanatical terrorism against us for generations.

NOT AN INDEPENDENT DETERRENT

There are also serious questions regarding the independence of the

Trident system. The system, at every level, would be dependent on US cooperation. The Pentagon would own and lease the Trident missiles to the UK - an arrangement described as 'rent-a-rocket' by Denis Healy. Indeed, just at a time when the nation yearns for a more autonomous relationship with the US we would be increasing our involvement with, and dependence on, the Whitehouse.

Furthermore, maintaining the UK's nuclear weapons whilst hypocritically attempting to persuade Iran (amongst others) that their behaviour would compromise global security, is an absurd, dangerous and unsustainable position. Although there remain anxieties regarding nuclear proliferation, more nations have relinquished nuclear weapons in the last generation than have developed them. Brazil, Argentina, Ukraine and South Africa have all given up nuclear weapons and they do not regard themselves more at risk or less safe than before. Our Labour Government needs to fully support the Non-

Proliferation Treaty and do it's absolute best to stop the proliferation of nuclear weapons.

A PROPER DEBATE?

MPs tell me that the Hunting with Hounds Bill took up nearly 800 hours of Parliamentary time. On 14 March 2007 the House of Commons voted to renew Trident after less than 8 hours debate. My contribution was limited to 4 minutes. In my view, this is a totally unacceptable way to determine the defence strategy of this country for the next 40 or 50 years.

Since the Trident vote in the Commons I have been inundated with messages of support.

I would like to thank ASLEF, including lay and executive members, and full-time officers who have supported my stance. Your support and involvement is much appreciated and is of great reassurance to me.

■ *Jim was Robin Cook's election agent and became MP for Livingston after Robin died. He works closely with ASLEF on Scottish affairs and UK transport matters and was previously a full time officer with the health union UNISON.*

'A VISION OF HELL'

– Keith Norman speaks about the Ladbroke Grove disaster

KEITH NORMAN has been closely involved with the Ladbroke Grove tragedy ever since that fateful day - 5 October 1999 - which took the lives of 31 people and injured hundreds. 'I have lived with the memories of that day for the past seven years,' he says. 'It will always be with me.'

Keith was told of the accident moments after it happened. 'As the details were passed on to me, I felt a terrible numbness - which rapidly changed to outrage and anger.'

Keith was the regional officer covering the Paddington line at the time, and was asked by then general secretary Mick Rix to deal with the disaster on the union's behalf. 'I shall never forget going to the scene of the crash. It was the darkest nightmare a railway man can have. It is something none of us ever wants to see - and there it was in front of my eyes. It is impossible to put into words how deeply I was touched by a sense of helplessness and sadness. It was a train driver's vision of hell.'

Keith's first thoughts were for the two drivers who had died - and whose families he needed to visit to offer whatever support he could. 'There was

nothing I could say - but it was important to be there,' he says.

'I spent three of the longest weeks of my life as ASLEF's representative at the Cullen Enquiry into the crash. Every day I went to Westminster Central Hall as the details of the crash were gone over, time after time. Every day I witnessed the despair and anger of the relatives of the dead and saw the awful scars on those who had survived.'

'Many of the relatives brought blown-up photographs of their dead family members, deliberately facing the witness box where evidence of a catalogue of failures grew daily. It was a remorseless litany of facts that showed how unnecessary this tragedy had been - and how easily, in retrospect, it could have been avoided.'

The general secretary of the day suggested Keith took a break - but he couldn't. 'Mick asked me if it was 'getting to me'. I told him, 'Of course it is. I would have to be a sick and sorry man if it did not.' It was not something I could walk away from - then, or now.'

Like so many of the victims' families, one of the worst things was the interminable wait before any action began against those he feels are responsible for the crash. 'It seemed to drag on forever. There was no closure, no final act. We all grew more angry as we seemed to be ignored or dismissed. It just kept turning over and over in my mind.'

'It is possible to have too many committees.' Trial judge when faced by a vast list of safety-related committees that had been set up since Ladbroke Grove.
'A desire to maximise profit was not a cause of the Ladbroke Grove rail crash.' Network Rail's defending counsel, Nigel Sweeney QC

'I spoke to union members, the families, railways experts, signalling engineers, lawyers, the emergency services - and no one had any answers to the question on all our tongues: 'Why? Why had this happened?''

Even at the end of the trial, Keith feels nothing has really been concluded. 'I still turn over in my mind the fact that there had been warning after warning about SN109, from different drivers on different days over a period of years. And nothing was done.'

'And now, at the end of the legal trial, no one has taken responsibility for a series of failures. It leaves a sick feeling about a terrible injustice and a wicked waste of human life.'

'For the outsider, the events at Blackfriars Crown Court last month marked the end of the case. For the families of the drivers, the dead and the injured it will last a lifetime. For me, Ladbroke Grove will never go away.'

'The reality is that a financial penalty will reduce the ability (of Network Rail) to make improvements to the safety of the network.' Network Rail's defending counsel, Nigel Sweeney QC calling for a small fine.





FINAL DAYS OF THE TRIAL

The final day of evidence at Blackfriars Crown Court was quite extraordinary as the solicitors for Railtrack/Network Rail made strenuous efforts to justify the unforgiveable.

The company had been found guilty of serious breaches of health and safety regulations.

- In court its barrister
- admitted that signal SN109 had been passed at danger a significant number of times and that no action had been taken by the company.
 - confessed that SN109 did not meet the visibility criterion. The regulations lay down that the signal should have been fully visible for 188 metres. It was not. It was only visible for 164 metres – so visibility was 13% less than it should have been to achieve the minimum – the lowest that they could get away with.
 - conceded that the signal did not conform to the Railway Route Standard.
 - admitted that the company had failed

‘Early one sunny morning, on October 5 1999, an incident of catastrophic damage and destruction left 31 people dead and over 400 others injured at a location quite close to the centre of London. This was no terrorist attack, but to many who have suffered and still suffer it must have seemed as senseless and unnecessary.’ Philip Mott the prosecuting QC - who may not have been unaware that the defence QC was the prosecutor at the trial of the July 2006 London bombers.



£352,720 bonus

£504,000 for John Armitt

£450,000 for Iain Coucher

£335,750 each for Peter and Ron Henderson.

WHERE DOES THE MONEY GO?

ASLEF general secretary Keith Norman called for fines imposed on Railtrack/Network Rail to be taken from the bonuses of senior managers. Otherwise, he says - the bill will be paid by you.

This is because Network Rail is a private company limited by guarantee which does not pay dividends to shareholders – because it hasn't got any. It has 'members' who 'hold the Board to account for their management of the business and monitor their standards of corporate governance'.

The central money comes from the taxpayer. Then Network Rail, by collecting access charges from operating companies, intends to make itself at least self-supporting. The company is regulated by the Office of Rail Regulation (ORR) and says that 'all our profits go straight back into improving the railway'.

Well, not quite all. Some go to pay salaries. In the case of the board – according to the latest available Annual Report (2006) – this included £504,000 for Chairman John Armitt, £450,000 for Iain Coucher and £335,750 each for Peter and Ron Henderson.

And then there are the bonuses for efficiency – Mr Armitt received a £352,720 bonus last year - and this time it is expected he will pocket in excess of £400,000.

The terrible injustice of what will happen with the fine was pointed out in court. The money will be taken out of the company and paid to the government – which effectively owns the company! Where the fine money will end up is anybody's guess.

So the only people to suffer from the fine will be the travelling public – because the fine will mean that the company spends less on the rail infrastructure of this country.

In short – the company makes literally fatal mistakes – and you suffer for it. Keith Norman says this is clearly unjust. 'The obvious thing would be to insist that the money for the fine does not lessen the amount available for rail infrastructure. It should, in my view, come from funds that were not going to be used for this purpose.'

'Why not insist therefore that it is taken from the bonuses that are being paid to board members? If they can't live on salaries approaching half a million pounds a year they should make way for people who can.'

Keith also insisted that the case underlines the urgent need for legislation on corporate manslaughter that has real teeth and will act as a serious deterrent to those who fail to conform to established safety regulations.

to conduct an adequate risk assessment of the area around SN109.

And then – he pleaded with the judge not to make the penalty too strict on the grounds that efforts had been made to improve safety standards since the crash! He boasted that since Ladbroke Grove the company had spent £26 million in efforts to minimise SPADs.

To those who had been closely involved in the tragedy – including the families of the bereaved who sat watching these events - it was almost breathtaking. It was like the stable-boy

looking for praise for having secured the stable door very carefully several years after the horse had left.

The barrister said, 'It is a very different landscape now that which applied in October 1999.' Which completely missed the point that it had taken a terrible human cost to do something that self evidently needed to be done as a matter of course.

'Much of what I have heard over these days has been nothing less than sickening,' said ASLEF general secretary Keith Norman.

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Leeds to a happy retirement!

LEEDS Branch recently celebrated the retirement of 4 members from Northern Rail.

We had a very good evening, plenty to eat - and of course plenty to drink! With over 100 years combined service to the industry we wish our brothers a very happy and long retirement.

Brother Graham Liversidge received his 50-year medallion from District 4 Organiser Nicky Whitehead. Graham has been a stalwart of Leeds Branch and even in retirement I know he will remain an active member of our branch.

Sincere thanks go to National Organiser Andy Reed who came along to



Pauline Cawood (left) Graham Liversidge (centre with 50 year medallion) and Nicky Whitehead

present retirement certificates to members and bouquets to their wives, also many thanks to Nicky Whitehead who despite having an extremely busy schedule also joined us on the evening. One final

thanks must go to Mandy Whitehead Nicky's wife, who always comes and supports any event that we have at Leeds.

Pauline Cawood Secretary
- Leeds Branch

Aylesbury bid farewell to Dave Harmer

EVERYONE is welcome to a Retirement Presentation Evening (8 until late) for Dave Harmer at the newly-built Railway Club in Aylesbury on 4 May.

Dave retired in December 2006 after ill health, but happily he's now well on the mend and he's just got back from a well deserved holiday. He's been in ASLEF for 35 years and it has always been a privilege to work with this warm, friendly and down-to-earth workmate. His smile is always ready and he always has something positive to say.

Dave started his railway career as a porter at Oxford and later Aylesbury Station. Three years later he applied to join the footplate grade. I first met him when he began work at the new BOP at Stonebridge Park during a time of new concepts and many changes.

Secondman was then a new way into the line of promotion as a trainee driver, shortly after the end of the fireman grade. Dave started at a new mixed work depot with a new fleet of class 25 Diesel locos, and class 86 Electrics.

Dave can tell many a tale about each of the depots at which he worked in his rich railway career - notably one concerning Roger French's stag night! He was assistant and then Secretary of the Aylesbury Railway Club following his transfer to Bletchley. He worked as a driver at Aylesbury, Euston, Marylebone and finally back to Aylesbury.

While we're all sorry to see Dave leave, I'm we haven't seen the last of him. He's the salt of the earth and all his colleagues at Aylesbury and on Chiltern wish him all the best.

Jim Gillard Secretary -
Aylesbury branch

'DON'T IGNORE THEM JUST BECAUSE THEY'RE RETIRED!' SAY BISHOPS STORTFORD



THE wise words above came from someone who is himself retired, Tony West - a former ASLEF AGS, who is now secretary of the Retired Members Section.

Tony, with retired Kings Cross man P.J. Smith and several of our own members, visited our February branch meeting - and how right he is!

Those in the 'Senior Link' have a lifetime of active membership and a wealth of experience and advice which shouldn't be ignored just because they are retired. Membership of the RMS is free for the first year and only £10 per year after that - so there's no excuse to let them go!

Tony explained how the RMS worked for its members, and how, with the NPC, it campaigns for improved pensions and concessions for pensioners.

P.J. Smith was his usual passionate self, pointing out that many pensioners who receive state pensions live below the poverty level set by the same government that pays the pension. He said pensions are even linked to inflation levels - they just depend on that happy chappy Mr Brown.

It was a pleasure to see Tony again, and it's always a delight to listen to 'PJ' giving forth!

Dave Lowe Secretary - Bishops Stortford branch

RAMSGATE REUNITED!

ON THE 5 April I set off to the Southern Rail Staff Reunion at Ramsgate. Alan Taylor (RMS Committee Member ex Norwood) joined my train at Waterloo East. He was followed, at Tonbridge, by Dave Weddle (another RMS Committee Member) Ray Cooper (ASLEF RMS, Hither Green). As we proceeded, other retired railway employees joined the train – and soon the banter started! Tales were relived, legs were pulled, news was up-dated – and time flew! It seemed no time before we joined the others at the Ramsgate's Red Arrow Club to enjoy their annual reunion.

People had come from far and wide. I always feel good when I see so many enjoying the fruits of their labour. It's good to know that so many comrades have the physically and mentally able to do so. Remember – you're a long time dead, so spread the word! In fact, remember to mark 5 July on your calendar and get yourself along to the next re-union at Tonbridge.

I was pleased to see Dave Bull the ASLEF Ramsgate Branch Secretary there representing his branch and I'd



Ron Dann, Jack Martin, Peter Webb, Albert Divers, Rocky Knight (all Gillingham) with Mick Towsley (Stroud) and John Hopday (Ramsgate)

like – on behalf of all those who attended – to say a big 'thank you' to Collin and Brenda Barnett, the committee and the Red Arrow bar staff, who once again came up trumps, and worked their butts off to make our day a good one. I know the best compliment you can pay to them is to be there.

Peter (PJ) Smith- Reporter - RMS

A fair wind at Greenwich!

Under the able leadership of Branch Secretary Phil O'Brien and Chairman Gary Comfort, the North Greenwich Branch has gone from strength to strength. Moral at the depot has improved since Simon Grove took over at the TOM and the local Level 1 committee has made great strides forward.

The branch is kept fully informed and receives regular reports from our EC member Terry Wilkinson, Steve Grant and representatives from both the Train Safety Council and the Train Council. We've also become more outward-looking and affiliated to the very active Medway Trades Council. Other ASLEF branches from the area – like Gillingham – have affiliated, along with some from London who have members living in our area.

Our branch social activities are taking off and we had a good evening bidding farewell to Phil Dye who retired on ill health grounds. Phil has been an activist in ASLEF for over 30 years - so it was no surprise to see how many London Underground people turned up to the event. He will stay on as one of our two delegates to the trades council.

Reflecting our desire to improve communication between branch and member, we're setting up a 'line-based' magazine in conjunction with Steve Connolly, the secretary of the Wembley Park Branch – and we hope to have regular reports in future ASLEF Journals.

As a new depot is opening at Stratford we intend to recommend to the EC that we change our branch name to 'Jubilee East' to reflect the Branch coverage of the East end of the line - as there will be two depots. In the interim, we've invited the General Secretary to our next Branch meeting.

M. Beck North Greenwich Branch

FIRST CLASS AT NOTTINGHAM

THE March meeting of the Nottingham branch was particularly well attended, due in no small part to the fact that Brothers Dave Calfe, Mick Whelan and Len Sidebotham were able to attend. I hope we can keep up the high standard of this first class meeting.

Dave and Mick gave us an excellent update on recent activities within ASLEF, including the SQUASH campaign when they explained problems with the FOCs and difficulties with class 66 locos. The 66 complaints had been exacerbated by the revelation that these cabs had air-conditioning installed when they were exported to Poland. It makes you wonder what else was removed!

Moving on to franchise re-mapping, the speakers said ASLEF is still being kept in the dark about issues which directly affect our members. There had been some progress with problems at Virgin which should enable us to sort out the depot split at New Street.

The potentially dangerous practice of drivers working for 'open access' companies in their own time was also discussed. It appears that no central record are kept, so there is even more onus on members – apart from the fact that it takes work from other members.

Mick Whelan thanked the DFC for its work toward a new 'high grade duty' agreement.

Finally the branch marked the fact that some members had reached important milestones. Bros Andy Jones and Nick Jacobs received their 5 year badges, Bro Dave Vernon was given his 20 year award and Bro Ian Widdowson received his 40 year award.

Finally Bro John Oldershaw stepped up to received his retirement certificate. This great servant to ASLEF retired after 43 years on the footplate and having served a total of 25 years different LLCs including Nottingham, Coalville and Toton. We wish him a long and relaxing retirement. The meeting closed with thanks from the floor led by Bro Malcolm Goulding.

Nicholas Jacobs Vice Chairman – Nottingham Branch

KEEPING TRACK *WHAT THE UNION WAS DOING 100 AND 50 YEARS AGO*

Looking through the pages of back issues of ASLEF's Locomotive Journal, we find that 100 years ago management were proposing that driving cease to be a specialist activity! and that 50 years ago drivers found that new technology caused real problems for our grades ...

100 YEARS AGO ...

Bank Engine sent this report to the magazine in May 1907 concerning a lively meeting to discuss management proposals for 'all-grades' working at Edge Hill ...

"Seeing the above placarded up, in company with four more of our branch members we went to hear what they had to say in favour of the all-grades movement. We went early to avoid the crush, but we might just as well have sauntered slowly along. A resolution was moved:-

"That seeing the economic changes which were taking place on the railways the time was ripe for an all-grades movement".

'.....to hear a signalman off the N.E. Railway trying to flounder through the intricacies of a locomotiveman's work was painful in the extreme. He could not keep from passing a scathing remark or two in conclusion concerning Mr.Fox. However, when he had concluded Brother Cottrell, from our branch, asked him one or two questions. His only answer to two of them was complete ignorance, and the other one he answered wrong, so that he had to be corrected. An A.S.R.S. driver then asked how it was that firemen who had fired for him had their money reduced, although their servitude increased. The answer Mr Lorraine made was that they could do nothing till other grades were organized better.....In conclusion, I must say that this meeting plainly showed, better than any of our own meetings could have done, the necessity of having a separate society for the locomotive fraternity. It showed very plainly that the A.S.R.S. are using the organized locomotive-men to secure better conditions for other grades."

50 YEARS AGO ...

In May 1957 D.K.Pullen wrote about the stresses and strains on drivers involved in the great changes from steam to diesel to electrification ...

"Reference to fast trains, quick turn-round and intensified services prompts the question, "What has been the cost to the man at the Front End?"

The transition from steam to electric or diesel driving is not an easy phases in the career of a Driver. Many men in the first few months of electrical work find that there is a vast deal of difference in the two jobs. It is one thing to stand behind the familiar "security" of a locomotive boiler, with another pair of eyes and hands available on the footplate. It is entirely another to sit immediately over the running rail, moving all the time in an altogether more intense service – knowing that all the responsibility is yours...Headaches, presumably caused through added concentration and a certain psychological "pull" , are often experienced by our men during those first months. It is all very well for the newspapers to talk of there being "no case for a fireman on a fireless train", but there is rather more in this job than at first meets the eye.

".....SHOCK – of the type experienced by all too many of our men when a gang of platelayers scrambles at the last moment out of the path of an oncoming train; when, indeed, fatalities occur in this manner; accidents at level crossings and other points at which the public have access to the line; the hundred-and-one other minor shocks which leave the Driver temporarily numbed of tongue and weak at the knee. The accumulative effect of such happenings often too much for the human frame to take – hence failure to pass the Medical Officer. This is a high price for our men to pay."

(Extracts selected and edited by Jane Pimlott)

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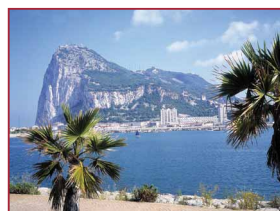
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Ian 'Nelly' Nelson – a great loss for us all

IT IS with deep regret that I have to pass the sad news of the passing of Glasgow Branch member and ASLEF activist Ian Nelson.

'Nelly' as he was best known to all was one of life's true characters - he was the master of the one-liners and was often the life and soul of the party.

But when it came to branch and LLC business he was always at the forefront of passing and moving resolutions and ensuring that ASLEF Glasgow Branch would support any cause worth fighting.

Indeed during the branch's darkest hour in the 90s Nelly stepped in and ensured the Branch was not about to fold.

He along with some others worked hard to bring the branch back to what Nelly jokingly called 'the biggest and the best'.

He served as a member of LLC and Company Council. Perhaps his finest time was during the dispute in 2002 on the picket line, organising social activities and standing toe-to-toe with management.

Anyone attending his funeral would have seen by the numbers attending how much he was liked and loved.

I had the honour along with District Organiser Kevin (aka 'Billy') Lindsay of addressing the mourners and I told a few stories about my time with Nelly. I could write a book about this man - and it would be a best seller.

Margaret, Mark and Chris have lost a father and a husband. I and a number of his close friends have lost a part of our family. ASLEF has lost a true activist.

Nelly we will never forget you.

Ian Smith – Secretary - Glasgow Branch

to York but he was a regular visitor with his retired friends. A short illness in February 2007 took him from his wife and family aged 74. Our thoughts and condolences are with them.

Dick Bennett, a local man from the Newton Heath area started work at the shed in July 1941 until depot closure in July 1985. He followed the move to Manchester Victoria until retirement in 1990 at 65 years old with 49 years of service.

He was a quiet man, well respected by all who worked with him for his knowledge and attitude to his profession.

Dick moved to Gloucestershire in retirement where following illness he died aged 82. His family returned him to Manchester for his funeral on 13 March 2007. Our thoughts are with his wife and family at this their time of loss.

S Black Retired Members Section – Newton Heath

JOE GUNTER – HONORARY MEMBER

This is just to notify members of the sorry news that Joe Gunter, RMS Kings Cross Branch, has died.

Joe has not long been granted honorary membership and was the first black member to receive it.

Peter Smith Kings Cross reporter

BRO. PETER JOSHI – AN EXAMPLE TO FOLLOW

It is with deepest sadness that I have to report the passing of Bro. Peter (Pravin) Joshi who died suddenly after a short illness aged 63.

Peter was the kind of locomotive man who would have been the motivation for any Branch Officer or Representative.

He first and foremost always supported ASLEF. He hardly ever went sick. He never complained – ever - about anything. His career boasted an unblemished operational record spanning over 40 years.

This quietly spoken, unassuming man who came and went on his rostered turn, with his easy smile, great sense of humour and gentle demeanour, quietly did his job without bothering anybody.

If Peter Joshi had a problem, you knew it was a real problem – and any rep would have moved heaven and earth to resolve it - if he'd ever had one.

He began his railway life at Preston, moving through the old BR PT&R for his rate of

pay to Lostock Hall, Wolverhampton, Guide Bridge, Stonebridge Park, Broad Street and finally Euston.

His quiet demeanour belied an fantastic intellect that he sacrificed very young to work and support his family both in Tanzania (where he came from) and for his children and grandchildren in life and into further education.

His principle desire was to the most honourable of pastimes in retirement - to spend more time with his wife Joshna and the family he adored.

It is with our deepest sympathies and a shared loss that our thoughts are with them all at this sad time.

Cliff Holloway Secretary – Euston Branch

NEWTON HEATH LOSES TWO COLLEAGUES

It is with great sadness I report the loss of our retired drivers who shared 97 years of service:

Derek Boswell started his loco career at his local depot Agecroft in December 1949.

The Salford depots were caught up early in the

Beeching cuts - and closure saw Derek move up the road to Patricroft in 1966 for two years before another closure took him to Newton Heath in 1968.

'Bozzy' was a popular member at the shed with strong views about his job, our conditions - and his football team Man City.

Medical reasons found him a position in the shed link until retirement in 1997 with 48 years service. He retired

Change of address form

Name.....

Address.....

.....Postcode.....

Phone.....

Branch.....

Membership No.....

Employer.....

THE RAILWAY BENEFIT FUND

The Railway Benefit Fund is the rail industry's charity formed to support railway staff, active and retired, and their dependants. Its motto – 'Looking after our own' - reminds us that charity begins at home, and many of our colleagues in the industry who encounter difficulty or hardship have good reason to be extremely grateful that the charity exists.

One of these, Billy Davies (28) a signaller in the Shrewsbury area, received £3,300 to help his severely autistic son to receive specialist treatment at a world leading centre in the USA. Network Rail and Virgin Trains offered transport for the family but there was still a shortfall to be raised. Billy had never heard of the RBF but fortunately for him a colleague on the charity's area committee spotted a press article and got in touch with the charity, who contacted him.

Chairman of the charity, David Allen, a former Director of Finance at British Rail, says. 'People are often surprised that there is a need for such a charity in the modern industry, but I can assure you that there is.

'We get requests for financial assistance beyond that which we can possibly support and we know that there is a lot more real hardship out there caused by illness, loss of work or by the effect of rising costs on older pensioners. A lot of people need our help.

'Yet, falling income, particularly from investments has made us cut back in order to balance the books, significant deficits having been incurred since 1998. In 2006 only 30% of our income came from current giving - the rest relies heavily on past investments.'

780 GRANTS IN 2006

'We need the industry to know about the RBF. We can help railway people in a variety of ways which employers can't', says David. 'In 2006 we gave 780 grants to a value of over £490,000. Their values ranging from a few hundred to over £1,000.'

Here are just some of the ways in which the charity can help:-

- funding shortfalls in nursing home fees
- helping disabled people to buy powered vehicles and making life easier for them by providing other mobility aids and help around their homes
- providing child care grants and meeting the costs of equipment and clothing etc for parents who are suffering long term sickness or who have had to retire early through ill health.
- helping with the increasing costs of funerals

A TYPICAL CASE

Imagine 22 year old Joanne Cooper's joy when she found that she was able to help her Dad as a result of calling the RBF. Her Dad works for Network Rail at Wolverhampton but he was away from work because of sickness. Worse, they had had a fire at home and because of the extensive damage had been re-housed until repairs had been done and new carpets and curtains could be replaced. The extensive smoke damage also meant that her Mum and Dad needed new clothes. Joanne, in her third year at University, had been helping her parents with some of the things they needed from her student loan. The RBF sent some money to her father straight away and promised more when the cost of replacement furniture etc was known. They then made a large grant to cover the cost of a new carpet and curtains. But that wasn't the end of it, the RBF is helping Joanne too with a quarterly cheque to make life so much easier for her as she continues her studies.

Mobility is a major problem for thousands of people young and old. The RBF probably gives more grants to help people buy scooters and electric wheelchairs than for any other purpose. If you can't get out and about life becomes very restricting.

But the problem is – as ever – money. 'Employers are usually very helpful and supportive, but there comes a time when they can no longer carry on this support. That's when the charity can help hundreds of people each year. But we need a lot more income if it is to be truly effective,' says David..

TWO THINGS WE CAN DO - NOW

The RBF is much more than just a charity – it is our own industry benefit fund. It is there to help us, and, as they say,

'Charity begins at home' - or as the RBF believes, 'Looking after our own' is up to us. And we have two ways of achieving this.

First, we can tell any colleagues who are having a really difficult time for personal reasons that the RBF is there to help.

Second, we should all be giving to the charity. Our company has a payroll giving scheme. Why not give a little each month to the RBF, through payroll? Every ten pounds given is worth almost £13 to the charity after the Gift Aid tax break.

- Railways Benefit Fund can be reached at Electra Way, Crewe, Cheshire, CW1 6HS or by phone on 01270 251 316



'Looking after our own'

LETTERS to the EDITOR



YOU TELL US

These are the pages where you talk to us. We welcome your letters, either by mail to the Journal at 9 Arkwright Road London NW3 6AB or by email to journal@aslef.org.uk

Because of our space constraints, please try to keep your contributions as short as you can.

This month we continue our STAR LETTER feature. The immensely lucky winner will pocket a rich range of ASLEF regalia!

Squash in your eye

I WRITE in response to the letter from my colleague Arno Brooks, chairman of our Knottingley branch. The SQUASH stickers do not litter your cab. They are strategically placed to catch your eye. We are trying to fight our own corner in the SQUASH campaign but we're not helped by the fact that we don't help ourselves.

Each loco cab that has had a sticker placed in it has been 'badged' in this way because of the state they have been left in - and, as Bro Brooks will verify, there are quite a few bad examples.

The SQUASH campaign we support is being jeopardised by the very people it is designed to help. As matters stand at the moment, the SQUASH logo should read:

- Smoke filled
- Quarry like
- Untidy
- Ash filled
- Strewn with litter
- Health hazards

And just for the record Bro Arno - the stickers have also appeared in other places where they undoubtedly do

some good - just ask my local MP!

Daren Morgan Vice Chairman - Knottingley Branch

Remarkable Perth-ormance

I'D LIKE to thank the general secretary and all head office staff on behalf of the members of Perth branch who made the long (and sometimes arduous!) trip to Arkwright Road for a branch visit last month. Special thanks to Gary Fabian for his interesting tour.

We all enjoyed the trip despite - some minor excesses the previous night. Having seen the photos we took of such an imposing building, the lightheights who failed to attend now regret missing the tour. We all hope it isn't our last visit.

Thanks again

Grant Murchie Secretary - Perth branch

A Winter's tale

I READ the letter from Anne Winter of Salisbury (April Journal) with a mixture of sadness and anger. Sadness that another colleague is suffering post traumatic stress - and anger that this situation is common throughout our industry.

I have had three fatalities in 46 years footplate service on steam, diesel and electric traction, 34 years as a driver.

GNER management is probably no better or worse than any other TOC as I was

Faversham finds its place in the sun!



I HAVE been asked by my delegates, from Faversham Branch, to write a note of thanks regarding our recent visit to Head Office. We were greeted and escorted around by Gary Fabian, who proved to be a mine of information about the history of our union and its historical links with others. He also gave an in-depth insight into the history of Arkwright Road and the previous owners.

We were introduced to members of the Executive Committee and to busy and friendly staff members in various departments around the building.

Unfortunately Simon Weller, our EC member was called away on union business, but Terry Wilkinson (District 8) was a more than adequate substitute! After some light refreshments it was enlightening to be able to share a table with Terry and the General Secretary and have an open and honest discussion about union matters.

We were also joined by former AGS and leading light of the Retired Members Section, Tony West. He not only entertained us but also evangelised the importance of supporting and of affiliating to the RMS.

All in all a thoroughly enjoyable day, I recommend all branches take the opportunity to visit.

Many thanks!

Steve Gurdler Secretary - Faversham Branch

offered and accepted counselling after my last fatality. The person from York HQ was a trained counsellor but as he was not a footplate man there was no empathy between us. I'm afraid the session did nothing for me.

At a recent safety update

meeting the DTM. taking the meeting raised the subject of fatalities and suggested maybe that drivers who had experienced fatalities could act as mentors to drivers who had just been involved in these situations as suggested by Anne Winter. I immediately

Ipswich badge raises £240 for baby care unit



WHEN members of the Ipswich branch produced 25th Anniversary (1982) badges, they decided to donate £2 from each badge sold to the Ipswich Hospital Special Baby Care Unit.

Drivers Andy Derrett and Trevor Southgate - who work for Freightliner and 'one' Railway respectively - would like to thank all those who purchased a badge. The initiative raised a total of £240. Our picture shows Andy and Trevor presenting the cheque to Carol Tubin, the Ward Manager at the Neonatal Unit of Ipswich NHS Trust.

Trevor Southgate Secretary - LLC Ipswich 'one' Railway

Value the Political Fund



AS A fellow branch member of Bro Flett, I feel that I must reply to his letter in the April edition of the Journal.

Peter is right when he says that he has sought the support of the branch to look into his 'political fund' proposals. As Secretary I have written to Head Office as instructed by the majority of members at the meeting.

My own view however - and I've said as much at the branch - is that we need to retain a political fund. I disagree with Peter's assertion that ASLEF gets little in return for supporting Labour MPs.

I think that a great many people confuse the Labour Party with the Labour Government. This Union supports MPs in the Labour Party, some of whom are highly critical of Government Policy and say so in the House of Commons. If we withdraw funding for these people then we lose any influence that we have in the corridors of power.

I would also like to challenge Peter's view that there is little improvement in the rail network. On the famous Settle to Carlisle line there have been record levels of track renewal; compare this with the record of the Tory government - that wanted to close the line!

I'd also like to quote from our local paper - The Craven Herald: 'Investment totalling £2 million is to be spent on signalling at Hellifield Station to improve capacity. The work is part of £200 million programme in the North West in the next two years. It forms part of a £2.4 billion programme being carried out nationally. For the first time on record over £1 billion per year will be spent on improving the network.'

These are not insignificant sums of money invested by a Labour Government and whilst I agree that a great deal is wasted in dividends to shareholders of passenger franchises, government policy can be changed. One of the ways to achieve that is for ASLEF to be able to influence and sponsor MPs in the House of Commons.

Martin Exley Secretary - Skipton Branch

summer. In fact Mr Harris writes that 'the working conditions for drivers is a matter between drivers and their employers' and that IF (and note that word) IF there are real health and safety concerns, these should be raised with HMRI (which as you know is part of the office of Rail Regulation). It seems that despite your EDM the politicians do not care or fully understand ASLEF's stance in this matter.

I have told my local MP that I would inform you at Head Office, and have again asked for his support - which I do not think will be forthcoming

I thought you should be aware that support for this affair will be hard-won - if any comes our way at all.

Finally I note there is still very little news concerning London Underground members in the Journal despite having a large ASLEF membership all in one company.

Mick Moloney Edgware Road Branch, Hammersmith and City

asked the DTM to put my name forward. Since then - nothing! Maybe management thought that the scheme may cost and eat into their precious budgets.

Therefore, I ask ASLEF to take up this problem as a matter of urgency and put pressure on the various TOCs to take seriously the idea of mentor drivers - or ASLEF could implement the scheme themselves.

Finally I would like to wish Anne Winter a speedy recovery and hope that the idea of mentor drivers be implemented - with or without management taking part - to hopefully minimise the effects of these horrific incidents.

Alan Grenfell Gateshead & Newcastle Branch

Why should we retire at 60?

THIS union thinks we should be compulsorily retired at 60 whether we like it or not. I started as a secondman in 1973 and am now 54 and have a great job driving with Freightliner.

I like my job and don't want to retire early. I also want to help my daughter financially through her studies at

university and medical school. I resent the view that I should stop working to become a pensioner when I am still active, capable and satisfied with my job and earning good money.

It is very easy making dogmatic decisions about how other people should lead their lives but many of us don't relish the prospect of becoming pensioners.

Optional retirement at 60 would be good for some people but compulsory retirement for someone fit, healthy and motivated is an unacceptable form of ageism.

Arno Brooks Chairman Knottingley and Ferrybridge Branch

Politicians not interested in cabs

ON taking the hint in a recent Journal, I decided to contact my local MP to see if he would support EDM247 on excessive heat in cabs. I copied the pro-forma letter and sent it to him. He would not commit to signing, and in due course he forwarded it to Tom Harris at the DfT. (No, I've never heard of him either!)

Basically politicians do not seem at all interested in supporting the concern over excessive cab heat in the

CLASSIFIED ADVERTISEMENTS

To advertise in the ASLEF Journal please contact Sarah Francis on 020 7317 8600 or sfrancis@aslef.org.uk



NEW! ASLEF LGBT Badges are now available for sale. If you wish to purchase one send a cheque made payable to ASLEF for £5.00 (this includes postage and packaging) to the Equalities Adviser at ASLEF Head Office.

CLASS 90 locomotive Tie Slides, Cufflinks & Badges, available in high quality gold & silver plate. Tie Slides £5, Badges £3.50, Cufflinks £9.00. Postage £1.00 per order. Contact Brian Aitkenhead on 07957403679 or at 19 Pine Close, Rendlesham, Woodbridge, Suffolk, IP12 2GD.

COLLECTOR requires ASLEF-Coalville NUM 1984/5 strike badge. Will pay £200. Also ASLEF 1982 strike badges, centenary and closure badges. Also NUR badges. Desperate for Bedford 1982 strike badge in chrome or gilt; Portsmouth 1982 strike and Doncaster 1982 gilt strike badge. Contact Barry Jones on 01709 588648 or at 25 Windermere Close, Mexborough, South Yorkshire. S64 0PT.

BOURNEMOUTH LOYALTY BADGE: The Bournemouth branch is offering a limited number of loyalty badges, struck following the 2006 dispute with SWT. For more information on this rare collector's item please contact Driver 'Hans' Kristian Jendesen, Flat 42, Burlington Mansions East, Bournemouth BH5 1AT. First badge donated to head office, others on first come, first served basis. Price £5 including p&p. Cheques made out to Mr. K. Jendesen

TRAIN DRIVER requires all ASLEF badges, strike, depot closure & centenary. Also interested in other British Railway badges, small signs & small railway items. Prices negotiable. Please call 0208-569-7381 or 07930-419850

ORLANDO VILLA FOR RENT details: www.thehavenvilla-florida.co.uk or TEL : 0208 441 8526.



KEIR HARDIE: A REMARKABLE LIFE

ASLEF's executive committee has contributed £250 towards the cost of a statue in Aberdare, South Wales to commemorate Keir Hardie, one of the founders of the Labour Party. These are some of the highlights of his remarkable life ...

THE bronze bust in Aberdare, the town Hardie represented from 1900, is a copy of one at the House of Commons. It sits on a stone plinth made from Indian granite, donated by the Indian government in recognition of Hardie's championing of the independence of that country. Two ministers from the Indian High Commission were present as it was unveiled recently by Cynon Valley MP Ann Clwyd.

James Keir Hardie's life is a remarkable story. He was born in Newhouse, North Lanarkshire in 1856, the illegitimate son of Mary Keir, a servant from Legbrannock, near Motherwell. She later married David Hardie, a carpenter and the family moved to Glasgow.

Hardie grew up in poverty and worked in local pits from the age of 11. He never went to school but his mother taught him to read, and he taught himself to write. He set up a union branch at his colliery and in 1880 led the first ever strike by Lanarkshire miners. As a result he was blacklisted and eventually moved to Cumnock in Ayrshire to

become a journalist. He also became a fervent convert to Christianity, the organising secretary of the Scottish Miners Federation and editor of *The Miner*.

FROM UNION LEADER TO POLITICAL ACTIVIST

Disillusioned with Gladstone's Liberal Party, Hardie became a socialist and in April 1888 he stood as an independent labour candidate in Mid Lanark – where he finished last! He had more success four years later when he was invited to stand for the constituency of West Ham in London's East End. When he took his seat he created a storm by refusing to wear the 'parliamentary uniform' of frock coat and top hat and by advocating such measures as graduated income tax, free

schooling, pensions, the abolition of the House of Lords and the women's right to vote. Speeches he made in favour of self-rule in India and equal rights for non-whites in South Africa resulted in riots!

In 1893, Hardie and others formed the Independent Labour Party. The following year he created uproar in the House of Commons when he attacked the monarchy, accusing it of ignoring the deaths of 251 miners in Pontypridd. In 1895 he lost his West Ham seat and devoted the next five years to building up the Labour movement. This culminated in 1900 when a meeting of unions and socialist groups formed the Labour Representation Committee, which in 1906 took the name of the Labour Party.

FROM MINER TO MERTHYR In 1900 Hardie was elected as the junior MP for the dual constituency of Merthyr Tydfil and Aberdare. He was one of only two Labour MPs elected that year.

Labour made significant political inroads in the 1906 election, greatly aided by an electoral pact it made with the Liberals. In order to challenge the deeply unpopular Conservative government led by Arthur

Balfour, the two parties agreed not to stand against each other in 30 constituencies in order to avoid splitting the anti-Tory vote. The tactic was enormously successful. The Tories were swept from power, the Prime Minister lost his seat – and 29 Labour MPs were elected.

Four years later 40 Labour MPs were returned to Parliament and Hardie was once more chosen as leader. It was not an easy time for him – many of his views were not shared by his colleagues, especially his commitment to giving women the vote. In 1908 he resigned as leader of the Labour Party.

AFTER THE LEADERSHIP

Hardie spent the rest of his life campaigning for votes for women and developing a closer relationship with Sylvia Pankhurst. He also campaigned for self-rule for India and an end to segregation in South Africa.

Hardie also fell out with many members of the Labour Party over the outbreak of the First World War in 1914. A pacifist, Hardie tried to organise a national strike against Britain's participation, supported conscientious objectors and despite being unwell, took part in several anti-war demonstrations. He died in a Glasgow hospital in September 1915.



ASLEF'S legal services - your rights for their wrongs!

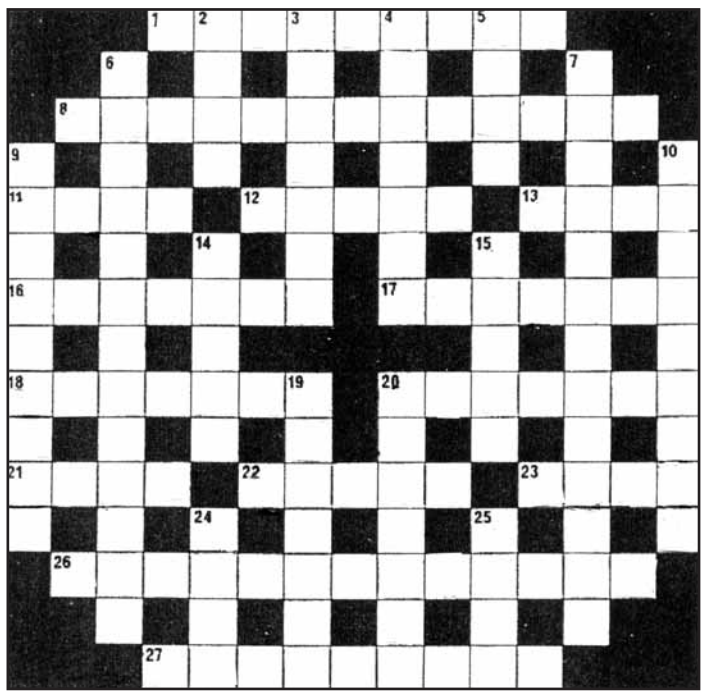
FREE LEGAL ADVICE ASLEF also provides first class free legal advice - both for members and for their dependents. In the first six months of this year we have secured £1,442,360 in compensation claims! Call the helpline on 0808 100 8009

EMERGENCIES If you are an ASLEF member who is arrested or being interviewed by the police and need legal assistance – day or night – you can call the members' Emergency Hotline on 07980 996159.

SACKINGS OR OTHER PROBLEMS AT WORK Harassment, discrimination or bullying? If your local, branch or district representative is unavailable, call the Industrial Relations department at union headquarters (020 7317 8600) or email info@aslef.org.uk



Prize Crossword No. 13 set by TLC



- Clues Across**
- 1 Designated 'city of culture' for 2008 (9)
 - 8 Seems like a very long journey! (4.5.4)
 - 11 Exhibiting a temper (4)
 - 12 Vast expanse of water (5)
 - 13 Worn by a horse rider (4)
 - 16 Disregards, pays no attention to (7)
 - 17 Showing contempt (7)
 - 18 Whimsical garden features (7)
 - 20 Mystical (7)
 - 21 Best way to travel in comfort (4)
 - 22 Person organising transactions between two parties (5)
 - 23 End of prayer (4)
 - 26 He's in charge of raw recruits (8,5)
 - 27 Found on the seashore (9)

- ing Harry Potter films (7)
- 4 Money up front (7)
- 5 On Her Majesties Service – in brief (4)
- 6 Criss-cross pattern may be seen on the railway track (8,5)
- 7 A green oasis of 220 acres located in South London (7,6)
- 9 Pay this to travel by rail (5,4)
- 10 Old fashioned dress (9)
- 14 Beaten path through rough country (5)
- 15 Habit, custom (5)
- 19 Traffic lights (7)
- 20 Sea cow (7)
- 24 Lecherous look (4)
- 25 Be unsuccessful (4)

- Clues Down**
- 2 Frosted drink (4)
 - 3 Special ones used in mak-



The winner of this month's crossword will receive Marks & Spencer vouchers to the value of £25

MARKS & SPENCER

Solution to Prize Crossword No 12 which appeared in the April edition of the ASLEF Journal. Congratulations to **Neil Leach** from **Bristol**.

ACROSS 1 White City 8 Telephone Bill 11 Utah 12 Green 13 Ante 16 Echelon 17 Nureyev 18 Radiate 20 Sniffle 21 Iron 22 Beard 23 Coat 26 As far as it goes 27 Tightened **DOWN** 2 Heel 3 Teheran 4 Canteen 5 Toby 6 Detached house 7 Plenty of money 9 Tube train 10 Serviette 14 Clean 15 Train 19 Eyewash 20 Sardine 24 Taxi 25 Ogre

Thanks for all your responses to the twelfth ASLEF crossword in the April edition. If you complete this month's crossword please send the solution to the Editor, ASLEF Journal, 9 Arkwright Road, London NW3 6AB by the end of the month.

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.....

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