

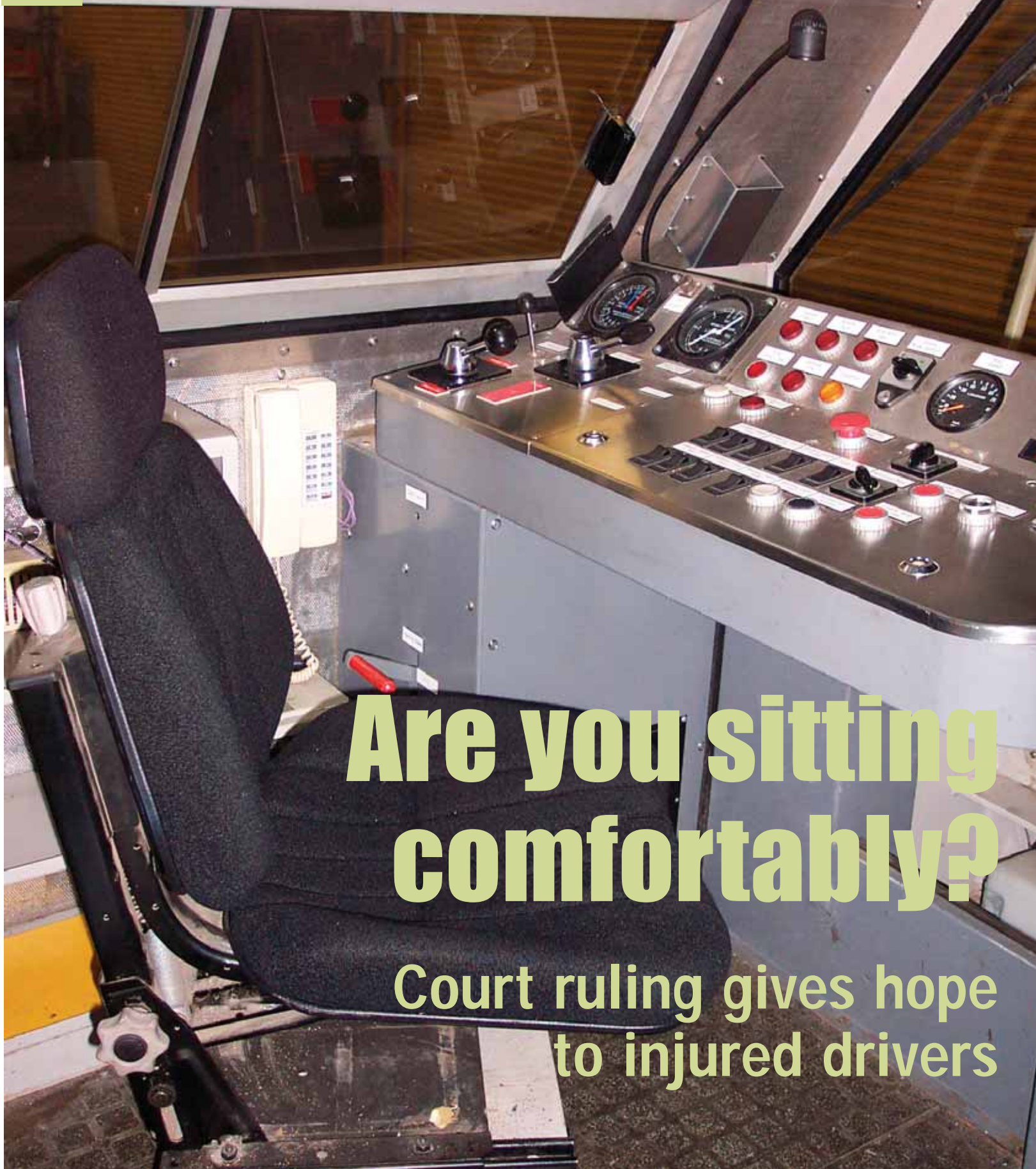
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ASLEF

OCTOBER 2007

Journal



Are you sitting comfortably?

Court ruling gives hope to injured drivers



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the ASLEF Journal

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AN AUTUMN OF CONFERENCE DISCONTENT



WE KEEP hearing about a winter of discontent. Well, I tend to have an autumn of discontent when I go to the TUC and Labour Party conferences. You see, I don't think we have proper conferences any more. We have trade shows for the union movement and marketing jamborees for the Labour 'brand'.

Both these events seem desperate to show that all the delegates agree with each other, all the time, on everything. If this were true there would be no point in our meeting anyway, and – wouldn't life be dull?

Do we have differences of opinion? Of course we do! My argument with the people who arrange these meetings is that they see debate as something to avoid. I think it is the opposite. I believe that as soon as any trade union or political party ceases to exchange views on policy and tactics – it is time to call the Co-op's funeral services. The organisation is dead.

As soon as you refuse to have your ideas tested, you are an autocrat. And as soon as you are an autocrat, you are anti-democratic. And as soon as you are anti-democratic, you are opposed to everything that trade unions and the Labour Party stand for.

Do I want to have my beliefs tested in argument? Well, not especially, as you ask! But seriously I accept that debate is essential and fruitful. If your ideas can't stand up to argument, they should be abandoned. That applies equally to me as an individual, to the general council of the TUC and to ministers in a Labour government.

Change doesn't come through our leaders telling us what to believe. That was Stalin's model – and one we rejected many years ago. Change comes when we accept a more powerful argument. I wasn't told as a young man that I had to alter my views on women's equality or on sexual politics. My attitudes changed because I was convinced the 'new' ideas of the time were right.

TUC and Labour Party chiefs seem to think debate is something to be avoided. I couldn't disagree more. I believe that the only way that a union or a political party stays alive and progresses is through argument. Any meeting called simply so the delegates can agree with the top table is pointless: it is a side-show, not a conference.

And it makes me very discontented.

Health Executive cuts cloud hazards conference

Martin Greig from ASLEF's Neasden branch reports on this year's Hazards Conference

At the opening plenary session of this year's Hazards conference we discovered that the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) is about to be cut by 300 staff - and its London Headquarters will close. To our dismay we were also informed that nobody from the Government had accepted their invitation to attend the conference.

Yet during this same session a speaker from the Battersea Crane Disaster Action Group (BCDAG) pointed out that fatalities in the construction industry have risen by 25% over the past 5 years. BCDAG

campaigns for improved safety measures with cranes and the construction industry as a whole. Fiona Murie (Building and Woodworkers International) emphasised how Health and Safety is central to the organisational and campaigning element of the movement. She said that there are over 100,000 fatalities on sites every year - and insisted that most are preventable.

One of the debates I attended concerned the 'Retreat from Enforcement'. This clearly illustrated how the reduction of Inspectors - due to cuts within the HSE - leads directly to an

increase in accidents and fatalities at work.

The fact that the number of Enforcement Notices issued in 2006 was almost half that of 2002 has only encouraged employers to be even more negligent. The emphasis now is less inspections and more self regulation, like Management Safety Systems or Profit before Safety. During a workshop on Provisional Improvement Notices for Reps, (PINS) it was stated that the Health and Safety Commission will not approve the introduction of PINS.

This is because they don't trust Health and Safety Reps and they fear the system would be abused. However, since their introduction in Australia, they have only been used as a last

resort and have proved to be very successful.

The main message reiterated in this conference was how important it is to engage our members into taking collective action with regard to Health and Safety issues. Without doubt, this is the way to get results.

● ASLEF was represented by four health and safety reps: Sister C. Ingram (Newport) along with Bros D. Lowrie (Yoker), Bro. C. Barrie (Edinburgh No.2) and myself.

● No less than 17 ASLEF branches, along with the EC, sponsored the conference: which as a percentage of members must put the union top of the safety awareness league! In contrast, 1 RMT and 1 TSSA branch offered sponsorship.



NETWORK RAIL FINED £2.4M OVER PORTSMOUTH SIGNALS

The Office of Rail Regulation (ORR) has fined Network Rail £2.4m for 'weaknesses in the planning and execution' of the Portsmouth resignalling scheme. Network Rail had appealed against the decision, originally announced at the end of July.

The ORR said the penalty was for a breach of its network licence in failing to evaluate and mitigate the risks associated with the project adequately, and for failing to manage its contractor in line with best practice.

£10,000 BOOST FOR SEVERN VALLEY RAILWAY

The Severn Valley Railway, which was hard-hit in the August flooding, has received an unexpected £10,000 donation from an unnamed member of the public who lives in Hertfordshire.

The Marketing Manager of Severn Valley, John Leach, said: "I believe he is one of our members and was very

concerned to hear what had happened and wanted to help."

Repair work is expected to cost in the region of £2.5m. So far £390,000 has been raised from a public appeal.

EUROTUNNEL PROFIT SHOCK

Eurotunnel is performing ahead of its business plan and could return to profit next year. The company's CEO says his target is to make the company

New trains slated as 'too heavy for track'

A REPORT from the Office of Rail Regulation (ORR) has claimed that new trains are damaging railway tracks and adding to passenger delays. It says the latest generation of rolling stock - which is heavier than old slam-door carriages - is stressing rails and increasing the number of track faults. The new heavier trains have been introduced by rail operators over the last two years.

The report says defects are particularly common on busy routes in the South East, where the number of temporary



speed restrictions caused by wear had not fallen since the same period last year. Delays blamed on Network Rail were up as a result.

The report also identified over 1,000 track, points and signal breakdowns every week.

profitable by 2008. The company's debts have been reduced from £6.2bn to £2.8bn.

GERMAN RAILWORKERS CHARGED

Three railworkers in Germany have been charged with manslaughter following a high speed train crash that killed 23 people.

The deaths occurred when the Transrapid magnetic levitation train smashed into a maintenance vehicle on a stretch of test track in the

Emsland district of the western city of Osnabrueck. The charge will be involuntary manslaughter due to negligence as prosecutors say the crash was due to human error.

BOMBARDIER BOMBS OVER METRONET

Canadian train and aircraft manufacturer Bombardier has reported a second quarter loss having written off £80.4m due to its investment in London Underground maintenance contractor Metronet Rail.

Goodbye Transport 2000 – hello Campaign for Better Transport

CAMPAIGNING organisation Transport 2000 has changed its name to the Campaign for Better Transport. At a TUC fringe meeting, its leader Steven Joseph said he wanted genuine choice in transport – which was not the case in rural areas.

'Government policy has made these people 'car dependent' – and it continues to do so by not reopening lines such as that at Skipton; by failing to back a high-speed north-south rail link and not giving its full backing to electrification which would make the country 'greener and cleaner'.

He pointed to the Dutch example where, when new towns are established,



Amsterdam builds tram links before putting up new housing Photo: Els Dekker

the first priority is to introduce a public transport system. Stephen also spoke of other secondary effects of not providing public transport. 'Traffic hot spots lead to cancers and asthma – and where there is a lot of traffic parents are loath to allow their children to cycle or cross roads. This leads to obesity.'

Upgrade for UK Riviera sleeper

THROUGHOUT 2005 the union was active in the campaign to retain the night sleeper service from London to Cornwall. The Journal of January 2006 celebrated the government insisting that continuing the 'Night Riviera' would be a condition of any new franchise. At the time we said it provided a genuine service to business and holiday-makers, took traffic off the roads and increased public attachment to rail.

How right we were! First Great Western has announced that it is updating its Sleeper Service, also known as the Night Riviera Sleeper, which runs between Penzance and London Paddington. The

contract has been awarded to Railcare in Wolverton – and the company is aiming to provide 'a refreshed interior that is more akin to a hotel room than a train carriage'. Carpets, taps and blinds will be replaced and the quality of bed linen and towels will be improved.

Work has already started on upgrading the 17 carriages and is expected to be completed by March 2008.

A statement from FGW said the company 'has always had a strong commitment to the Sleeper Service'. Which is odd considering they were proposing ending it two years ago!

BROWNE OFF WITH 2% Gordon Brown received a muted response when he told the TUC Congress that he would insist on 2% pay limit in public services 'in order to avoid a return to the 'boom and bust' economy of the past'. He said pay restraint was needed to 'face up to the global economy and stop inflation spiralling out of control'.

Trade unionists were not convinced. 'It's Catch-22,' said one delegate. 'It means you can't have a decent pay rise when the economy is doing well – and you certainly can't have one when it's doing badly. So you don't get one at all.'

MIDLANDS SIGNAL CABLE THEFTS Thieves in the Midlands are targeting the railways by stealing large quantities of signal cable and equipment which they then sell for scrap. Two months ago train services between Nuneaton, Bedworth and Coventry were cancelled all day after thieves stole line-side equipment which caused signal failure.

ASLEF member wins Health & Safety case

AN ASLEF member who was prevented from fulfilling his health and safety role by London Underground has won thousands of pounds compensation in a resounding victory at an employment tribunal.

London Underground was found to have "wilfully and deliberately" flouted health and safety law by refusing to allow Paul McCarthy, 47, to inspect four tube lines. The Tribunal said it could see "little if any attempt" by London Underground to comply with health and safety law when it prevented Mr McCarthy from inspecting the Hammersmith and City, District, Metropolitan and Waterloo and City lines. As a health and safety representative it was his role to inspect the Tube network to check that it was a safe working environment for all staff.

The Tribunal, which awarded Mr McCarthy £11,500 plus costs, said it was surprising that senior management had not attended the Employment Tribunal to explain why they had decided not to comply with the law.

It also found that London Underground's defence of the claim had been "misconceived and unreasonable".

As a current employee Mr McCarthy was unable to comment on the outcome of the case. However, his union representative, District Organiser Steve Grant said: "ASLEF will continue to defend industrially and if needs be -legally - all our members' health, safety and welfare, no matter where they work or whatever operational grade they are in. We will be asking the Health & Safety Executive to consider prosecutions for the people responsible for these breaches and asking LU what disciplinary action they are taking against them for compromising their employees' safety."



LORENE FABIAN who many ASLEF people will know from her role as a tutor at Dunstable College, and is the partner of Gary who works at ASLEF head office, was presented with the Women's TUC gold badge for her contribution to trade unionism and especially women's issues. Keith Norman presented her with flowers to mark the occasion.

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Doncaster, Immingham and North East area

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Berlin meeting over EWS takeover

 Union Vice-President Tosh McDonald reports ...

LAST month an ASLEF team of myself, the National Organiser and Nicky Whitehead went to Berlin to meet representatives of the German rail union Transnet to discuss the implications of the acquisition of EWS and Euro Cargo by Deutsche Bahn (DB).

Central to the discussions were the issues of cross border working, social dumping, the liberalisation of freight operations in the EU and the acquisition of other European freight operations by DB.

The competition between railway companies created by the effects of the liberalisation of the common transport market has resulted in a new set of challenges for unions to address.

While we can see many similarities in how competition has affected the rail freight industry in both mainland Europe and the UK, we in Britain have started from a disadvantage – because the former state railway (British Rail) was not allowed any part in the post privatised railway. In mainland Europe this was not the case. State-owned operators such as DB have been allowed to continue to operate - and indeed they have expanded into multinational operations.

DB has already taken over rail freight operations in Denmark and the Netherlands. We wanted to look at how DB has conducted its business in these countries – so that we can get an insight into what we can expect our members to face in EWS & Euro Cargo.

We found that in both cases the existing management were initially given time to fit into the Railion (DB's railfreight group) business plan. If they proved unable to meet the required targets, Railion has come in and imposed its will – by replacing the management, cutting the workforce and reducing the number of locations.

The majority of staff remaining after the 'restructuring' have been Drivers - but the productivity demanded has often meant

they are facing an increased number of duties. Transnet representatives say that the 'restructuring' process has been as painful as it has been drawn-out. In Germany it has been going on for 10 years - and in Denmark for 8!

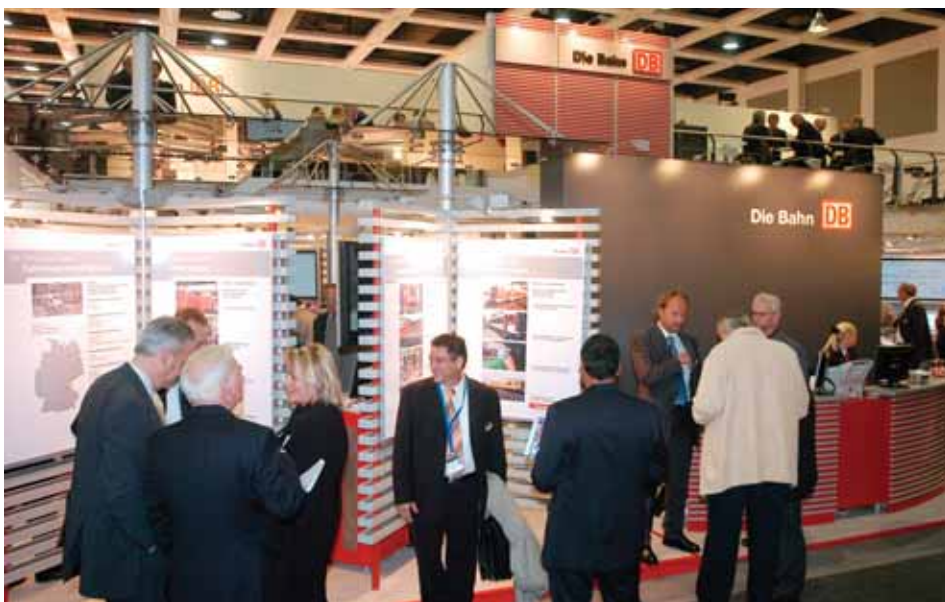
On a more positive note Railion do have a European Works Council - and we will be entitled to representation on that body from an individual who is employed by the company. The union Transnet told us they have seats on the supervisory board - and will inform ASLEF immediately of any decisions affecting our members.

In fact its supervisory board members had been informed of the circumstances surrounding the DB acquisition of EWS & Euro Cargo. The decision to buy EWS was more of a political than a business

decision. DB had been getting frustrated in their attempts to reach agreement with SNCF in France to enable them to operate on French railways - and so the acquisition of Euro Cargo was an easier solution. EWS came free with Euro Cargo almost like a 'buy one get one free' deal – of the sort you'd usually associate with double glazing sales.

Railion are also looking at railfreight operations in Spain and eyeing the Hungarian and Slovenian state railways.

ASLEF will host a further meeting with the Transnet union in the UK in November. We hope to have EWS representatives present and to have selected an EWS employee to sit on the European Works Council by then. A member of the EWS council might be the best option.



Deutsche Bahn is the successor of the former state railways of Germany

UNION TO BALLOT MIDLAND MAINLINE OVER PENSIONS ASLEF is to ballot its members in Midland Mainline (MML), accusing the company of 'underhand tactics' by its refusal to enhance pension provision when pay improvements have been agreed in the past.

District Organiser Mick Whelan says the particular difficulty has arisen from a 'bizarre' management interpretation of a pay deal struck in 2001 – and the union says that some members' pensions will be £2,000 to £3,000 down as a result of the company's interpretation of the agreement.

MML claims that pay agreements only covered 'future service' – which the union contests. 'This was not the agreement we struck and the union will not tolerate any lessening of our member's pension provision,' said general secretary Keith Norman. **RYANAIR AD CLAIMS UNTRUE** Union-hostile airline Ryanair has been rapped on the knuckles for making bogus comparisons with Eurostar in a recent advertisement. The airline claimed its flights to Belgium were quicker and cheaper than taking Eurostar – but the Advertising Standards Authority has told the Irish budget airline to can the ads – because they're not true.

BOB'S BANJO The RMT's Bob Crow came up with one of his celebrated colourful phrases when he heard he had been replaced on the TUC's General Council by a representative of the Musician's Union. Bob declared, 'They've replaced a striker with a banjo player!'



Transport system is 'too important for free market'

THE TUC Congress was unanimous: transport is of such major environmental, economic and social importance that it's too important to leave to the open market. 'Every day brings fresh evidence that privatisation works against the public interest,' declared ASLEF's Keith Norman.

'If British Rail had the funds that are paid out as subsidies to private firms today - we would have the best railway in the world.' He also stressed the need for a 'joined up' integrated transport system as he reiterated that, 'You can't control what you don't own.'

RMT president John Leach insisted that the failures of Metronet had cost the taxpayer £1 million a week. 'Privatisation means private firms constantly taking money out of our industry,' he said.

Gerry Doherty from the TSSA said, 'Labour come to power committed to return our railways to the public sector. They have not done it. Transport unions will remind them of that fact wherever and whenever we have the chance.' He declared, 'This government has not got a transport policy - it has a gridlock policy!'

Harriet Yeo, also from TSSA, called on the TUC to campaign for government assistance for moving freight by rail. 'Rail freight may not seem sexy to you,' she conceded. 'But I'll tell



Keith speaks on transport Photo: Ken Capstick

you what - it does it for me!

She was backing an ASLEF proposition welcoming the government's stated aim of 'a significant shift to rail freight' and its announcement in June 2006 to award £44 million in new rail freight grants.

ASLEF also supported calls by the seafarers union Nautilus to expand the use of waterborne transport. Nautilus points out that it is incredible that an island nation like the UK seems to have turned its back on water when it comes to transport. ASLEF backed a call to enter into the European 'maritime motorway' - which would enable increasing amounts of freight to be moved to shipping.

RELIGION NO EXCUSE FOR VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

ASLEF president Alan Donnelly spoke movingly about the stoning to death of 17-year-old Du'a Khalil Aswad in Kurdistan - evidence that so-called 'honour' crime is on the increase. 'Because she entered into a relationship they considered 'unsuitable', she was stripped, taunted, beaten, kicked and stoned to death by

a mob in May 2007,' Alan said. 'This barbarism was put onto the Internet to warn off other young people who may fall in love with someone from the 'wrong' religion, clan or caste.'

'Honour' crimes encompass a variety of manifestations of violence against women, including killings, assaults, imprisonments and forced marriages. It is estimated that around 13 women a year in the

UK are murdered in so called 'honour crimes' and worldwide 15 women a day lose their lives.

'There is no 'honour' in taking another persons life,' Alan concluded. 'Murder is murder. Along with the Muslim Council of Britain, ASLEF supports the right of people to choose the religion and partner of their choice. We condemn so-called 'honour crime'.

GOVERNMENT CONDEMNED FOR MILITARY SUPPORT FOR COLOMBIA



ASLEF delegate Mark Steele insisted that UK government military aid for Colombia is

immoral and must be halted. 'It is a disgrace that people acting in our name are supplying guns to a regime that murders trade unionists,' Mark declared.

'It is incredible that our government gives military support to the regime of President Alvaro Uribe when it is obvious that army-backed paramilitary death-squads are an integral part of the state machine.'

'Having a new Prime Minister offers a real opportunity to shift foreign policy towards Colombia. We want him to back a peace initiative to bring an end to a conflict that has for decades inflicted misery on the Colombian people. This must include an end to British military aid to Colombia.

'Until this happens, our taxes are funding the assassinations of our Colombian sisters and brothers. Colombia doesn't need guns. It needs peace.'

NO RECOMMENDATION ON EUROPE VOTE



CONGRESS agreed that the government must conduct a referendum on the proposed

European Constitution, but rejected a call by the RMT, supported by ASLEF's Brian Corbett, for a 'No' recommendation to be made.

Brian said that the TUC already had policy on the issue - and that nothing had changed since it was established. 'ASLEF is not anti-Europe,' Brian declared. 'But the Europe we support is one that stands for social justice, for a sharing society and improved standards for European workers.'

'The Europe we reject is one that stands for privatisation and free market dogma. Sadly that is the one on offer and we must campaign for a 'No' vote.'



The ASLEF delegation to the 2007 TUC

KEEPING TRACK...

100 YEARS AGO ...

Letter from "Monmouth"

"Sir, - In perusing the local papers of this district I was rather surprised that Mr. James Williams, assistant secretary to the A.S.R.S., should call his sister society a bastard, he was not good enough to say whose bastard. To my way of thinking he did not show very good breeding, as I should have thought a man in his position would have had a little better cultivation. Men of his class are the means of widening the breach between the various railway servants instead of closing it. Mr Williams is following in the steps of Mr Bell, who, when he was organising secretary had to make a report of his week's work to the R.R. The report generally consisted chiefly of how he had abused the men belonging to the ASLE&F.

If Mr. Bell and others of his class had left this abuse alone at that time and had worked at organising my firm belief is that there would be far less non-unionists in the service to-day. All this controversy coming out between the two societies has been the means of many men not joining either society, as it was a good excuse with some men, to the writer's knowledge, who said they would not join until they had found out who was right and who was wrong."

50 YEARS AGO ...

The Tunnel by C.Brooks

"Recently the Channel Tunnel has again been in the news; and, who knows? Perhaps one day it may materialise. I'm all in favour, and I think it will do British Railways the world of good, and go a long way to promote peace in this crazy century. (How could you fight the bloke who clipped your ticket last week?)

Imagine the future:

Toram Beg, with his family, decide to holiday in Switzerland. Putting on his best McKillop tartan kilt, and filling the sporran heavily with bawbees (it's a draughty place, Edinburgh, and never let it be said a McKillop revealed Scotland's best-guarded secret-do they wear anything underneath?), he then orders out the dapple greys and sets off for Waverley.

As the carriage drives off, the neighbours lift the curtains to peep, and say, in that fascinating Edinburgh accent, "Where's 'e orf to?"

Along Princes Street the horses clip-clop over the cobbles until, arrived at Waverley, the party joins the magnificent train, headed by a glittering electric engine. "Right away!" and before Spearmint could say "puff" the train is ripped out of the station at 30 m.p.h.

Onwards rushes the train over the jointless rails, and is soon over the border into God's Own Country. Through Carlisle the train tears on, and before long it is at Whitehall Junction. It takes about nine minutes from Sheffield to Chesterfield, and much more of this will straighten the spire. Now, along the E.V.R. to Trent and Leicester. Knebworth is passed at such terrific speed that it set's the windmill's ancient sails spinning in the draught....

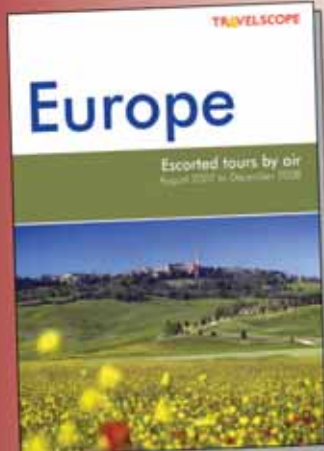
....Cricklewood station is reached, and the train stops so that a set of Cricklewood sewer rats can relieve the train crew. (Note, I said "set".) Off again, and soon through Kentish Town, and then, crossing over at Islip Street (once Paul's Road), the train plunges "down the hole" through King's Cross and Farringdon Street, then up the 1 in 39 of Snow Hill the electric engine takes the 600-ton train at ease. Across Blackfriars Bridge and then a fast run right through the Channel Tunnel to France, where relief is provided by a French crew.

At last, and in a very short time, Toram and family are in Switzerland. The train stops, and he reaches for his luggage only to find, to his dismay, that he has put the horse's nosebag on the rack instead of his suitcase.

(Where's he going for his next holiday? Well, he's waiting for the Russians to build that bridge to Alaska, then he's having a "foreign pass" to New York!)"

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IT'S THE DURHAM MINERS GALA!

- a report from Philip Devonport of the union's Stratford Branch

THIS was the fourth year in succession that the ASLEF Stratford Branch banner has travelled up to Durham from East London to take part in what must be - along with the Tolpuddle Martyrs' Festival - the largest yearly gathering of trade unionists and members of the labour movement in the UK.

Although this is the 123rd year of the 'big meeting', the event is not shrinking but growing - the proof being this year's excellent attendance of around 70,000 people.

The day began around 9 o'clock in the morning with a procession of union and political banners - I counted over 50. We made our way through the crowd-filled streets of Durham down to the racecourse.

A good number of the National Union of Mineworker's (NUM) banners were accompanied by the brass bands of many of the long-closed pits. We normally ask nicely and tag on to the back of one of these. As we were arranging this to our pleasant surprise we met some members from ASLEF Brighton branch setting up their banner.

It seems strange that two ASLEF banners travel over 250 miles to march through Durham with over 15 different unions. Maybe next year we'll be accompanied by more local ASLEF branches!

This is also an international event and miners attended from across the globe including Hungarians and Poles. German miners in their pit uniforms strode through



the crowds.

Once down at the racecourse we were treated to a selection of speeches by guests including Dennis Skinner, MP for Bolsover; Ian Lavery, the NUM President; Paul Kenny (the general secretary of the GMB); TUC deputy general secretary Frances O'Grady; and Tony Woodley, one of the leaders of UNITE.

In the early afternoon the banners and bands retraced their steps through the centre of Durham. Our Brighton colleagues had beaten an early retreat southwards,



intent on attending the Tolpuddle Festival the next day! Sadly the Stratford gang couldn't match Brighton's devotion. We retired to the pub.

5 GALA POINTS

- The first Durham Miners' Gala took place in 1871 in Wharton Park, Durham, following the creation of the Durham Miners' Association in 1869.
- At its peak the Gala attracted over 250,000 people - 6 times the population of Durham!
- The highlight of the gala consists of a parade of banners, each typically accompanied by a brass band. New banners are traditionally marched up to the Cathedral for blessing by the Bishop of Durham.
- Most banners represent 'lodges' (branches) of the NUM in the Durham Area but increasingly banners from other unions are present.
- Although at one point there were over 100 mines open in Durham Coalfield, today no deep mines remain in the area. Even if a colliery is closed, the banner is often still marched.

NEWS IN BRIEF

DID YOU SHELTER IN THE TUBE DURING THE BLITZ?

Former ASLEF member Dave Welsh is producing an oral history of life sheltering in the Tube during the Blitz and wants to know if we have any readers who could assist him. There is no oral record of these times and he wants to record experiences and place them on a website.

Dave says it was only after mass occupations of stations and a huge demonstration in 1940 that the authorities allowed people to shelter underground. Until then it had been prohibited.

Dave can be contacted on 0207 8370845 by email at davidwelsh83@btinternet.com

or by mail at 15 Wellington Road, Norwich, NR2 3HT

COST OF RAIL TRAVEL 'WILL CONTINUE TO RISE'

Government plans to hike the price of train fares as a continuing policy to reduce rail subsidy have been questioned by the rail regulator ORR.

Reacting to a series of high profile fare increases, ORR chief Bill Emery questioned 'whether the department's policy on fares provides the appropriate level of protection for the consumer'.

The Government's five year railway strategy, published last month, proposes a near doubling of the fare payers' contribution to the cost of running trains. By 2014 passengers will foot three-

quarters of the bill, rising from £5bn currently to £9bn, as the Government reduces its annual subsidy from \$4.5bn to £3bn.

SCOTS FREIGHT MOVE

25,000 freight carrying road journeys have been eliminated by the award of a major grant to Direct Rail Services (DRS) in Scotland.

The £750,000 grant from the Scottish Government's Rail Environmental Benefit Procurement Scheme (REPS) will keep freight containers between Grangemouth and Aberdeen on the railways. REPS provides subsidies for rail freight, where rail is more expensive than road.

Kevin Lindsay, ASLEF's Scottish organiser, welcomed the move for 'saving

congestion, improving the environment and encouraging rail.'

DIGITAL HEARING AIDS

Rail Safety board RSSB is studying how staff who don't comply with the hearing standard can return to safety-critical duties by using improved hearing aid technology. The research is due to report in mid 2008.

Current railway group standards insist that employees' hearing should meet standards without a hearing aid - but also say hearing aids may be used to further improve hearing.

The project will identify improvements in hearing aids - including digital technology - since the hearing standard was introduced in 1976.

East meets North

Ken Livingstone explains how a suburban rail network controlled by the Mayor's Office will become an integral part of transport services for the capital



FROM November of this year, the North London Railway will become the first part of the London suburban rail network to be transferred to control by the Mayor of London. This will allow rail services to be expanded, with more drivers and trains, and properly integrated with Tube and bus services in the capital. There will be a massive investment of more than £1.4 billion in the East London Line Extension and the North London Railway, providing an orbital rail service through parts of London that desperately need better public transport. The new network, which is to be branded 'London Overground', will have greater capacity and higher levels of staffing, safety, security and customer service.

The extended East London Line will open in 2010, and from 2011 it will be joined with the North London line to create a new railway around the city serving 20 London boroughs, including some of the poorest.

The new service will create around 400 extra jobs, including many extra train drivers. The pension rights of existing staff will be fully protected.

The new services will be operated under a franchise strictly specified and controlled by Transport for London. As Mayor, I will set the fares, and all revenue will go to Transport for London. The purchase of trains and the specification of services will also be under public sector control.

I would like to have gone further to bring the entire service under full public control. But that option was never on the table. The choice was between devolving a franchised service to London's control, with £1.4 billion investment in better services and more jobs, or no devolution and no new

investment.

The successful bidders for the new franchise, MTR Laing, will simply be paid to run the services.

The East London Line will close in December so that the major engineering works necessary to extend the line can take place. All those currently employed on the East London Line will be redeployed to other positions within London Underground without changes to their terms and conditions.

If we are able to make a success of this project, I believe that the government will devolve control of other parts of the capital's suburban rail network to London, allowing step-by-step progress to a fully integrated public transport system. This will be of particular benefit to areas like south, south east, east and north east London which are less well served by the Tube.

It will be a big step forward for passengers and staff with a bigger and better rail network serving London.



ASLEF General Secretary Keith Norman responds....

Undoubtedly the Mayor is right. The North London Railway will be a huge advance for London as city, its infrastructure and for the majority of railway workers – and so we welcome it. The extension and integration of the railway system and the creation of many new jobs through the opening of new stations will only enhance the business of rail as a whole and will provide a far more effective transport network for the residents of the capital.

However, while we're looking forward to working closely with the Mayor, and we welcome the fact that he has overall responsibility for the North London Railway, we do have a number of caveats amongst our enthusiasm for a new railway system.

Firstly, we're disappointed that a golden opportunity was missed to put the North London Railway fully under public control. Why was this never discussed as a viable option? It's seems mystifying that MTR Laing are being paid to run the services when London Underground, already in Transport For London (TFL), are being stripped of an existing public service (East London Line) and could have easily ran the new service. And why is rolling stock being purchased from non-UK manufacturers?

Secondly, with the ELL being closed for 4 years (at great public expense) and our members being deployed in other areas with no right of return to their original jobs – even though this was the initial promise from ELL – it's easy to see there will be a huge cost to individuals. Agreements with London Underground Limited (LUL), reached for the protection of our members, are already being breached and attempts to change them further are an ongoing concern of this union. LUL train operators were told their licenses would be recognised on the main line. This is apparently not now the case.

So while we broadly welcome the new jobs and opportunities inherent in the building of the North London Line, there are many issues we're not comfortable with and so we urge the Mayor to continue to listen to the concerns of railway workers and ASLEF members as we all work towards the improvement of London's railways.



ARE YOU SITTING COMFORTABLY?



Seating in train cabs is an intricate part of the union's Squash campaign – and this month we report on activities undertaken by people at radically different parts of the union's structure. Rob Porter is our tenacious safety rep in Newcastle – and Thompsons are the union's solicitors ...

SITTING on your backside can be a painful business. Ask any driver of a 156 and he'll let you know exactly where it hurts. Because while it probably still beats heavy lifting, the pitfalls of poor seating when driving a train can be just as physically detrimental.

This is something Rob Porter, the Aslef Health and Safety rep for Gateshead and Newcastle, knew all about when he began level 3 of his TUC Certificate in Occupational Health and Safety course. So when he was asked, as part of the course, to pursue a year long project, he knew precisely where he was going to spend his time – in the cab. What he didn't know was that his project findings would be the

catalyst for significant improvements in the driving environment of the 156.

Initially, he decided to look at the 142. "I was required to carry out a survey or body-mapping exercise on a workplace problem which affected my members. I choose the Class 142. I gave out 40 body maps to drivers who were asked to tick boxes where pain or discomfort was felt after sitting in these seats for a period of time. I got a great response but their main concern was 'are you going to do this for the 156?'

Apparently, the bulkhead fitted seats of the Class 156 were a nightmare. So Rob repeated the survey. What came back was that the seat was uncomfortable because the armrest was attached to the bulkhead

and not the adjustable seat, the primary driving controls were in the wrong place and to use the Drivers Safety Device (DSD) the driver had to put his foot in a totally unnatural position.

Thinking these were hugely significant findings for the welfare of his members, he took his report to his employer Northern Rail. But they weren't interested. Laced with jargon and a heavy slice of condescension they basically told Rob he wasn't trained in ergonomics (practical design) and so his findings weren't relevant.

Even though Rob kept pushing in his regular Health and Safety meetings with Northern Rail by pointing out that 55 per cent of 156 drivers were in almost

constant pain, it seemed he was beating his head against a brick wall and he thought it had died a death. That was until one day he heard that the company had, unbeknownst to him or the union, commissioned an ergonomic report from the mechanical engineers at Deltarail into the comfortability and usability of the 156 cab. Rob was surprised but thrilled. "I was ecstatic. It's a badly designed seat and my job is to help our members in precisely these matters."

But his surprise didn't end there. When he finally saw the no-doubt costly DeltaRail report, a large part of the findings were his work - repeated verbatim. All his drawings, survey results and pie charts had been used to back up the findings of the engineers. Yet Northern Rail refused to acknowledge this and had actively tried to prevent Rob seeing the report by claiming it was a controlled document. Rob couldn't even get hold of the architect of the report, Senior Mechanical Engineer, Stuart Cokayne.

However, the Journal has managed to pin Stuart Cokayne down. This is what he said: "without Rob's data it wouldn't have happened. He put a very good questionnaire together. There was a lot of informed and accurate questions. He has a good understanding of the drivers' needs. We took his survey, went to look at the cab and then applied our specialised ergonomic software to the cab of the 156. Since these trains were built in the 80s the nation has grown. We could easily see the seat adjustment was poor but the big concern was the space for the lower leg."

Stuart Cokayne and DeltaRail came to precisely the same conclusions as Rob - that the existing driver's seat needs to be replaced; that there needs to be an alteration to the location of the DSD pedal and a complete relocation of the primary controls. But what was even more astonishing for Rob was that Northern Rail was claiming his report results as its own. At one point in Mr Cokayne's report he says of one of his findings .."this is supported by the results of the survey completed by Northern Rail."

Rob says he's not concerned that Northern Rail haven't acknowledged his and the union's work at highlighting this major failing of the 156. "It's not about me or Aslef - it's about the drivers. Now 1,400 train drivers will benefit hugely from our work. Northern Rail will be spending around £100,000 upgrading the cabs. That's the important thing."

So as we approach European Health and Safety Week (Oct 21-26), where the focus will be on musculoskeletal disorders, which are the biggest cause of absence from work in almost all EU member states, no doubt Northern Rail will be tipping their hat to Rob Porter for making them look like a forward thinking, 21st century organisation. Don't hold your breath.

ERGONOMICALLY CHALLENGED

ASLEF has secured a court ruling which will give hope to drivers who were injured due to unsuitable cab seating, writes Jenny Walsh

HOURS spent in a cramped train cab sitting awkwardly on an uncomfortable seat has taken its toll on many drivers' backs. Now ASLEF has secured an important court ruling that will give hope to those who have suffered back injuries as a result of the poor design of seats.

David Eaglen drove 155 and 158 diesel units for Arriva Trains Northern across the Pennines from the early 1990s.

In 2003 he reported to his employer that he had injured his back. He said this was because of the shape and design of the seat in the 158s which required him to sit far back and, with the shape of the seat cushion, adopt an awkward posture. The seat was so flat and low at the back and raised at the front that his legs were actually higher than his bottom.

Pressing down on the DSD pedal while sitting in such an unnatural position put painful pressure on David's legs and the raised seat dug into his thigh.

This aggravated an already bad back.

The Court agreed with David that the design of the seat on the 158 was a breach of the Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations (PUWER) 1998. This is significant because 44 158 units were overhauled a few years ago but the same design of seat that caused David such discomfort was installed.

The trouble with PUWER is that the duty under Regulation 4 which deals with the selection of work equipment for employees is not strict. It requires employers only to select "suitable" equipment. The codes of practice to the regulations say that ergonomic risks should be taken into account when selecting work equipment.

Arriva argued there was no foreseeable risk at all from providing these types of seats. Yet in court the Judge took evidence of the foreseeability of the risk from two ergonomists. One described the seating angle as putting the body and legs at an acute angle (less than 90 degrees) which resulted in discomfort to the lower back.

An open angle greater than 90 degrees between the trunk and thighs is needed to avoid injury. Therefore, the



ergonomist said, the seats represent "a foreseeable risk of discomfort".

Both medical experts in the case - the one for the claimant and the one for the defendant - recognised a link between postural problems and aggravation of back injuries so the Judge found that it followed that a properly conducted risk assessment would have recognised the risk of injury was foreseeable.

Arriva was therefore in breach of duty in retaining seats with a risk of injury after PUWER 1998 came in and also in breach of PUWER for failing to select suitable work equipment when the cabs were overhauled and identical seating was provided to the defective previous design.

The Conservative Party is suggesting that health and safety legislation be scrapped or reformed to reduce "burdens" on business. But the case of Eaglen v Arriva is as obvious an example of any that if employers simply take more care with their workers' health and safety and respect the relatively light touch legislation that exists in the UK, they will reap the financial rewards.

Not only will they have a fitter, healthier workforce taking fewer days off sick, but they will avoid the costly legal action they will inevitably face when they breach regulations.

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TRAINS COUNCIL All year the Trains Council have attended meetings about the forthcoming closure of the East London Line, the opening of a new depot at Stratford and Work Life Balance. Sometimes it has felt as though we have been stuck in a revolving door. We think we have an agreement until the next meeting when management say, 'That wasn't what we meant to say - we want to change the agreement!'

EAST LONDON LINE ASLEF didn't accept that the line should be privatised after it was refurbished, but we entered discussions to protect Train Operators jobs at New Cross and avoid penalising people on the transfer lists to other depots. Eventually we, with the New Cross reps, managed to protect the jobs of all the Train Operators by agreeing East London Line drivers working on the line when it closed could go to the depot of their choice. They would ghost the roster but not pick up a rostered position until the pool operators and all those on the transfer list on 23 October 2006 had been rostered.

We insisted on definite information about the opening of Stratford and the future of North Greenwich - as this would have a bearing on where New Cross drivers would want to go to.

35 drivers nominated to go to Leytonstone - and now management want to change the agreement because too many want the Central Line! We await proposals.

STRATFORD DEPOT Staff Side were told some time ago that as part of the Jubilee Line upgrade, a new depot would open at Stratford and that we would be kept informed of developments. We insisted on proper consultation on the impact on drivers at North Greenwich, New Cross and the surrounding area. However, despite our demands, neither the local reps nor the Trains Council have been informed about plans for North Greenwich. At a recent meeting it emerged that management have

asked their own side for a meeting because they are not aware of plans for the Jubilee Line! This is despite the fact that they intend to open the depot early next year.

WORK LIFE BALANCE As a result of legislation on Work Life Balance we have tabled proposals to LUL including extending the fixed link rosters, reducing hours working on Monday to Fridays, and a variation of the job share agreement. We also sought to give Pool Operators more than 3 days notice of their duties. We await a response but in the interim Level One committees may, if they wish to, discuss introducing fixed link rosters.

We have had a number of issues referred to us from level one committees about case conferences on attendance, sickness interviews and managers conducting interviews in train cabs, temporary Instructor Operators and representation at new depots.

CASE CONFERENCES Staff side were dismayed that some depots were conducting 'non-attendance' case conferences even when the drivers concerned had already given 'return to work' dates. Management struggled to justify this by saying that it was possible that those Drivers might not actually resume when they said they would! We believed management were trying to bypass the employee right to have a rep present at these meetings. The chair conceded that the Attendance at Work procedure and the support pack would be adhered to.

SICKNESS INTERVIEWS The ex-TOM at Queens Park felt he could amend the Attendance at Work procedure so he didn't have to wait for a driver to have been off sick for 28 Days and so be entitled to representation. He decided that he would bring them in early. Following union representations TOMs have now been told that anyone attending a sickness review -

irrespective of how long they have been off - is entitled to representation and must be informed of this right.

Surprise, surprise - management at the next meeting said they interpreted the agreement differently - and wanted to 'clarify' the agreement. In the interim ASLEF says anyone asked to attend any meeting with a manager about sickness or attendance should have a rep present.

FACT FINDING INTERVIEWS IN CABS The union is aware of DMTs - despite the safety risks - conducting fact finding interviews while the Train Operator was driving the train. Local TOMs have given local reps assurances that this would cease and all DMTs were informed - but the practice did not stop. In one case a Train Operator was dismissed. It has now been agreed to cease these interviews and the T/Op concerned was reinstated with no loss of pay or status following an ASLEF strike ballot on the Northern Line.

TEMPORARY I/OPS Jubilee management appointed Temporary I/Ops on the line to cover upgrade training. We opposed this because you cannot be seconded into this post as the Standards don't allow it. Having first agreed with us, management now insist they have the right to continue. This has now gone to the next level of the negotiating machinery.

REPRESENTATION AT NEW DEPOTS We have pressed for some time to have Industrial Relations reps at Hammersmith and Loughton recognised. Management have refused unless we agree to reduce the number of Reps in other areas. Reluctantly, we tabled proposals in order to secure recognition for these reps. Surprise, surprise our proposals 'didn't go far enough'. They are due to table counter-proposals.

For more information or advice, call the numbers which are in your diary or posted in ASLEF notice cases.



JOHN MARKS 45 YEARS IN ASLEF



JOHN MOULD from the union's Eastbourne branch was presented with a badge to commemorate 45 years of ASLEF membership at union headquarters last month. He told Keith Norman that he began work on the platform at Colden Beach before moving onto the footplate in 1962.

Eastbourne branch officials and district EC member Simon Weller accompanied John to Arkwright Road to mark this landmark in his union history.

ANOTHER SUCCESS FOR NEWTON HEATH

ON July 5 the 'The Branch 105 fund' once again arranged a reunion of retired drivers, staff of other grades and other friends together at the Millgate, Failsworth in Manchester. There was another excellent attendance and we stood to pay our respects to those friends who were no longer with us.

We'd also like to pay our respects to the retired men who travelled to Manchester for this reunion. It was a pleasure to welcome retired ASLEF officers Terry Clarke and Les Johnson, who were close to our members in their active days. It was also nice to see staff who have moved on in their careers to other depots but still feel the pull of Newton Heath.

Once again special thanks to Mike Wood for his organisation, including a great buffet, raffles and photos from previous years, again helped by John Patterson and Doug Oxer – and a special thanks to active members of the '105 Club' who by their weekly contributions allow this great function to take place. Thanks to you all.

J. M. Black Retired
Members' Section

NICE ONE CYRIL

I WOULD like to thank ASLEF for allowing me to present retired driver Cyril Ades with his 50 year medallion. Cyril started his railway career as a temper fitters mate at St Leonard's shed in 1945 transferring on to the footplate in 1946. He transferred to Hither Green in 1959 for his appointment in the old Dual link before moving to Orpington the following year where he stayed until retiring in 1996. Cyril was one of our loyal members and also one of our fund raisers during the miners' strike. Although not as mobile as he used, his memory remains top-notch! We wish you many more years, Cyril!

Ray Cooper
Hither Green RMS

BRANCH EVENTS AND REUNIONS

ASLEF website editor Sarah Francis would like to remind members that if they would like their forthcoming events to appear on the union website, they should email details to info@aslef.org.uk

FORTHCOMING UNION EVENTS

Black and Ethnic Minority Consultative Committee Open Meeting 2007 Thursday 11th October, 1.30-4.00 at ASLEF Head Office in London

Open to all ASLEF Black and Ethnic Minority members – Contact Sharon Allen the Equalities Adviser on 0207 317 8600 or SAllen@aslef.org.uk if you would like to attend

LGBT Consultative Committee Open Meeting 2007 Tuesday 23rd October, 1.30-4.00 at ASLEF Head Office in London

Open to all ASLEF LGBT members – Contact Sharon Allen (see above) if you would like to attend

Joint ASLEF / FBU LGBT Weekend School 2007 Friday 19th October – Sunday 21st October, at Wortley Hall, Wortley, Near Sheffield

Limited number of places open to LGBT members on a first come first served basis – priority will be given to people who have not previously attended these schools - Contact Sharon Allen (see above) if you would like to attend

Retired Members Section Annual General Meeting 2007 Tuesday 20th November, 11.00am-1.00pm ASLEF Head Office in London

Open to all ASLEF RMS members – Sharon Allen will

issue invitations shortly to all RMS members

Retired Members Section Annual Forum 2007 Friday 2nd – Sunday 4th November, at NUM's Low Hall in Scalby, Near Scarborough

Open to all ASLEF RMS members – Limited number of places open to RMS members on a first come first served basis – priority will be given to people who have not previously attended an Annual Forum. Sharon Allen will issue invitations shortly to all RMS members

Women's Consultative Committee Open Meeting 2007 Wednesday 10th October, 1.30-4.00 at ASLEF Head Office in London

Open to all ASLEF women members – Contact Sharon Allen if you would like to attend



The Jolly Boys in their natural habitat!

MEDALLIONS FOR THE JOLLY BOYS OF SWANSEA!

ON Tuesday the 28 August, two of the 'Jolly Boys' - retired drivers Alfie Broome and Bob Durham - were presented with medallions to mark 50 years of union membership.

We were honoured to have our General Secretary, Keith Norman, and our District Organiser, Stan Moran, in attendance.

Our Chairman, Bro Steve Williams welcomed Keith who thanked the branch for their invitation and gave an up to date report on the state of our union. He then presented the recipients with their medallions.

I was called upon to say a vote of thanks, and presented the GS with a



Keith with Alfie and Bob

'Jolly Boys' shirt. The 'Jolly Boys' are a group of retired and active members who meet once a month at different locations to socialise with a pint of 'smooth' and keep abreast of what's going on in the world - and sometimes putting it right! After the presentations, we all retired and had that pint of 'smooth' - or Guinness in my case.

John Rosier Secretary - Swansea Branch

TALKING OF TOTON ...

IT'S BEEN a long time since we wrote a branch report to the Journal, mainly due to the upheavals since we became part of EWS.

We've had our latest batch of men taking redundancy recently - branch numbers are down to about 60 - and this time we lost a lot of branch stalwarts - including our branch sec Bro Stewart Richardson and our company council rep Bro Bob Peach. Sincere thanks to both of them for their sterling work. We'll miss them and wish them a long and happy retirement.

I'm stepping down as Chair as we have a lot of younger men ready to take up the reins. I stayed as vice chair to help but the new blood have proved themselves more than capable. We should never be afraid to hand over to young members - branches will survive, just give them their chance.

In our latest meeting many subjects we raised - but mainly the uncertainly following the take-over of EWS by DB Rail Germany. Other topics were the level playing field that is not happening. ASLEF members working for other freight companies must see what is happening with the cherry picking of work which makes EWS members fear for their jobs. There is a lot of skulduggery going on. We urge our EC to make this a priority because it's not new work - it's undercutting - and it is costing ASLEF members in EWS their jobs.

There was some discussion of membership subs and although the changes were accepted we also need to look carefully at how the union is run - including our prized - but costly - Arkwright Road headquarters. We might also want to discuss whether we need different sections in the union. We are all drivers and must work as one for the good of all, not for a minority.

Brother M Seville Vice Chair - Tipton Branch

WELL MET IN WEYMOUTH

I'M proud to report that 15 of our 22 members were present at the branch meeting held on 26 July at a session attended by No1 District Organiser Graham Morris and the South West Trains Company Council. Both personally and as a branch I'd like to thank Graham, Nigel, Shaun and Martin for making the time to come to the end of the line in wilds of deepest (but sunny!) Dorset.

Before giving their reports, Graham Morris presented Bro Clive True with his 45 year ASLEF badge and his 2006 Weymouth Strike Loyalty badge. Graham divulged a few details about Clive's antics in the BR days when he knew him on the South Central - but these cannot be repeated in polite company!

Bro Martin Dye of the Company Council presented Bro Alan Owen with his 30 year ASLEF badge. In addition to further unrepeatabe items, Martin said he thought Alan had transferred to Weymouth because he was useless driving the 'Rat Hole' (Waterloo & City) stock! Finally I presented a 2006 Weymouth Strike Loyalty badge (No30) to Bro Graham Morris, for the badge display at ASLEF HQ at Arkwright Road.

Rick Patterson Branch Secretary - Weymouth



27 OCTOBER DATE FOR YORK

The 7th York RES reunion will take place on Saturday 27 October at the York RI from 7pm to 11pm. All ex York RES traincrew and others are welcome. Usual buffet laid on.



FAT BOY: Jem sits astride the iconic Harley Davidson. Jem finds that the job allows more time to do things and he can avoid the Saturday crush except when supporting Arsenal! Copy and Photos: Nick West

EASY RIDER

CHANGING career in your mid-to-late thirties is something that many of us fantasise about but few of us do. Jem Bover found himself as sales manager of a small publishing firm but bored out of his mind and desperate for a new challenge – so he decided to make the move. He's now a train driver working for South Eastern out of the Slade Green depot.

"I saw an ad in the Evening Standard at the end of 1999. I was desperate to change jobs. I was sales manager of a very small publishing company and money was tight, very tight. I wasn't going anywhere career-wise and I was due to get married. I knew I had to move on."

Retraining for a new job or even just finding out what it is

you really want to do with your days is a trial for many of us. Apart from the fear of leaving the known to jump into the unknown, there's the fear of failure and possible financial ruin, so it takes a great deal of thought. But sometimes fate has a guiding hand – which is exactly what happened to Jem.

"My fiancée was training as a doctor in Liverpool but wanted to come back down south and live near her family in Erith. Erith is right by the Slade Green depot. It was pure coincidence but when I saw what was then Connex South East looking for drivers out of Slade Green, I knew I was going to apply."

Jem knew it would be a complete change of lifestyle from the regularity of a 9-5 to a

shift system but he knew he had to give it a go. "I hadn't been in the classroom for over 20 years and I found it very hard. I used to swot up with one of the other guys on the course but I found the rules and regs very difficult. I took me my two goes to pass it. But all the way through I had no doubts about what I was doing."

However, he found the selection process a little strange. "I thought it was completely bizarre. It started with about 20 of us. They'd set us a test, we'd finish it, put our papers down and then have a coffee. When we came back in the recruiters called out three names and asked them to come with them. And they were never seen again! And this went on all day until there

was only four of us. I knew I was doing ok because I was still in the room but I thought I blew it in the interview."

"I called Julie to say I'd blown it, as all they seemed to want was some huge incident from my past life where I'd barrelled into a crisis and sorted it all out. But I didn't have one. I was just totally honest and said I was very laid back and nothing phased me. But I thought this didn't seem like it was enough."

But it was and Jem loved being a driver from day one. "It's something I feel really comfortable with. The cab is my office. There's no phone, fax or manager looking over my shoulder – I'd finally got rid of all that nonsense, and I love the fact my day is all mapped out for me on a sheet of paper. While I'm doing the early morning rush hour trains I'm glad I'm up the front."

Jem says his whole life has changed. He lives ten minutes from work with his wife Julie, who's now a GP and as she's currently working three days a week they find they can spend time together when other couples can't. "It's changed my life. I'm better off and I've got a more flexible life. I can get things done in the week now. It means I miss the Saturday crush."

Big fans of Arsenal, Jem, his wife and his 76 year old dad use his right to free rail travel to go to London to watch their beloved Gunners, where they've been silver members for fourteen years. He also finds more time to go biking with his elder brother, Nigel, as they are both Harley Davidson owners. "I've got a 'Fat Boy'. It's the iconic Harley Davidson. The one in Terminator 2. It's the definitive Harley."

Jem knows he made the right choice to change career in his thirties. "Being a train driver is a good life and it's an important role. I believe that in my lifetime there will always be a rail industry – so I can work in it till I retire. We have four guys at Slade Green who've all done 50 years on the railways. Which industries can show you that nowadays – it's incredible."

Would you be prepared to be featured in future editions of this column, or know someone who would be a good subject? If you do, please let us know at the ASLEF Journal, 9 Arkwright Road, London NW3 6AB or journal@aslef.org.uk

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!

TOSH MCDONALD, the union's Vice President, wrote an article in the September Journal arguing that the 4-day week must be implemented throughout the industry if we are to stave off threats of redundancy. He wanted his article to provoke a debate on the issue – and he hasn't been disappointed. Here are some of the responses we're received so far. We've made Steve Smith's reply this month's Star Letter - not because we agree with it, but because it's so well argued ...

How do you get to 4 days?

I'D LIKE to respond to Tosh McDonald's article in the September Journal regarding the four day week. Although he talks about 156 rest days a year - he doesn't say how we can get it in practice.

If it is achieved by working 4 x11-hour shifts (something I have done myself in the past) then I suggest the union is going backwards. I was always bought up to work an eight hour day, and although drivers are on good money the majority of turns exceed eight

No link between 4 day week and redundancies

HAVING just read in Septembers' Journal Tosh McDonalds article concerning the four day week there are some points I wish to bring up. As someone who has Economic and Business Finance qualifications I cannot see any of his arguments concerning redundancies holding up. Institutionalised overtime does not invite redundancies, in fact quite the opposite. A private company generally considers redundancies for three main reasons; 1) a reaction to rising external costs, 2) increased competition leading to falling sales, or 3) due to technological advances reducing the amount of workers needed. In all these cases a company which depends on institutionalised overtime can cut this overtime before shedding labour.

In most TOCs it doesn't really make a difference, the chances of redundancies are the same with a four day week as a five. The rural railways only operate a minimal service and commuter railways would need major and sustained economic downturn to reduce services. But TOCs like Cross Country and certainly FOCs face different challenges. In order to win more freight on the rails costs have to be flexible and, unfortunately, now without Government help. Put simply if a freight company takes on more drivers to achieve a four day week and later loses business then it will have to shed drivers. If it covers extra work with overtime it can then reduce that overtime without resorting to redundancies.

Mr McDonald there are many good arguments, not least concerning safety, in support of us achieving a four day week - but reducing redundancies isn't one of them.

Steve Smith – Grove Park

hours.

At the end of the day it boils down to this: the more time you spend at work on a weekly roster, the more time you have off. 11-hour turns individually drain you and as Mr McDonald is released from his duties allegedly to fight the driver's cause - some other driver will be doing his long shift for him

Les Gibbins Cleethorpes

Our problem is keeping a 4-day week

I READ with interest the article on page 9 of September's Locomotive Journal, regarding the four day week.

As a driver for Northern Rail in Manchester, I have enjoyed a four day week ever since this was hard won from First North Western. We have an excellent rest day pattern too, with a long weekend every three weeks. Sundays are outside this, but these only amount to about 4 every 20 weeks of so. Even then, if you don't want to work your booked Sunday, there is a strong chance that someone else will be willing to get the overtime. The system works, and everyone seems happy with it.

Yet it seems that we may be losing this - and the culprit is ASLEF itself!

Northern are attempting to harmonise our conditions with Yorkshire drivers on the Arriva terms and conditions. They have a 5 day week, which

includes Sundays, and looking at their links, they have no pattern to their rest days at all. I have shown copies of my link to Yorkshire based drivers and they have been impressed by our rest day pattern.

So far, the Yorkshire side has slowly but steadily imposed its work practices over ours, and we in the West fear that our four day week is the next thing to go. At every branch meeting he attends, we tell Colin Smith (district secretary) that we are happy with the status quo, but this seems to fall on deaf ears, and appears to be news to him! He tells us he knows how hard we fought for this, but seems unwilling or unable to get the message across to his Yorkshire equivalent.

True, the Yorkshire salary is about £3,500 higher, but our extra day off per week is priceless. Plus, the Arriva drivers do 25% more commuting than us, with all the hassle and expense that that entails.

ASLEF's handling of the situation has been poor. There is little information given to staff about progress on the issue, the union is playing silly games by linking the 2007 pay increase with harmonisation, and does its best to be undemocratic by not listening to what we tell it time and time again at branch meetings.

For us, the four day week is a reality - and we don't want ASLEF to lose it for us. It is

time to make this a line in the sand.

Andy Parr Newton Heath branch

Money and greed

156 is a good score at darts, it might even be a multiple unit. But it is more than these, much more. 156 is the number of free days per year our union through the ASLEF Charter is offering us as members. So why as members are we still through our own choice working institutionalised overtime? Money and greed. I suppose you could say it is human nature but I think and believe we should look beyond the greed element and look to the future – a future for ourselves and others.

If we as members stop this institutionalised overtime this 'others' I refer to are the people who are not yet drivers, the TOCs and FOCs would have to create vacancies. We would be giving people the opportunity to join the rail industry and strengthen our union through members.

156? I hope this number now has a new meaning.

Vincent Sweeney
Tyne Yard Branch

Rope trick

I WOULD like to thank Mick Whelan for representing me in my hearing with Amey Rail.

Mick did a marvellous job

LETTERS to the EDITOR

Continued from page 19

turning things round, despite Amey's reluctance to let him see any information they had! I have never seen anybody tie people up in knots as much as Mick did.

Thanks, Mick. You are a gent.

Andy Collins Birmingham

Top Marks for Kings Lynn

THROUGH our Journal I would - as a candidate in the recent elections for TUC delegate - like to offer my congratulations to Brother Mark Steele of Kings Lynn branch on his election to represent the district at this year's conference.

I would also like to thank all the candidates who took the time to take part in the election, and especially to offer my sincere thanks to all the branches who voted for me.

This was my first ever nomination for this post and therefore its fair to say I am not as well known as other members so I was extremely surprised and honoured to see so many branches willing to support my nomination which secured a third place.

Chris Pearson Norwich Branch

Remembering Fred - 25 years on

MY late husband Fred Jones (a driver at Bath Road, Bristol Depot) was a member of ASLEF for forty one years. I asked if I could still have the Journal sent to me - that was seven and a half years ago - even though, unfortunately, I am now partially sighted and deaf.

I'm writing to commemorate the 25th anniversary of the ASLEF dispute over flexible rostering. My husband - and I - were deeply involved in this dispute. We held meetings in our house and I was always ready with coffee, tea and cakes. My husband said he wouldn't go back to work even if it cost us the house - and I was right behind him.

Later I explained that one engine driver not returning

wouldn't make any difference and so he went back.

I wish to thank your General Secretary Keith Norman for his great article on Mrs Thatcher's union bashing.

Mrs Sylvia Jones
Bristol Branch

I'm alive! honest!

IN THE last few months many people have phoned my wife to console her as they had heard that I had passed away. To correct this error I would like to borrow a famous quotation and say, 'The rumours of my demise are greatly exaggerated!' I retired in 1992 after 50 years service. During that time I worked for 25 years at Ripple Lane and was involved in most activities at the depot. Following a family tragedy I had to leave the depot and worked my last 10 years in the Norwich area. However, with God willing I will reach the grand old age of 80 in November - when my state pension will increase by 25p!

With this extra wealth I intend to have a party and invite my old friends and colleagues, including those who heard the rumours of my demise, and even those who started it. Then as my old London East Enders would say, 'We will have a right old knees up!'

Bob Lilly Norwich

United in solidarity?

WHILST inter-union solidarity and co-operation should be welcomed for the greater benefit of the working classes, should we be wary of UNITE'S intentions after the recent 'Memorandum of Understanding' signed between our two unions?

The product of a merger between the T&G and AMICUS, UNITE is now the single largest union in the UK, with a membership of 2 million, representing almost a third of the unionised workforce. Whilst talks of any merger involving ASLEF have been dismissed, it is easy to see how we could lose our independence - contrary to our EC President's address at this year's AAD.

Whilst 'unity is strength' one

danger of such mergers is that it makes it easier for the ruling class to control if it can influence or even corrupt at the highest level. Looking back at the history of the labour movement and trade unionism, this is not unknown. Very recently the T&G have quietly paid out £1.7 million in compensation to the sacked Liverpool Dockers who were so badly let down by their own leadership. Earlier this year, in its version of our Journal, AMICUS ultimately supported TRIDENT on the grounds that 7,000 jobs would be threatened if it was scrapped. At an estimated minimum cost to us, the taxpayer, of £76 billion over 30 years TRIDENT could be scrapped, the 7,000 workers paid to sit at home and much-needed finance pumped into public services, affordable housing and buying back our railways from the privateers.

UNITE should now be using its considerable resources to organise and recruit the millions of non-unionised workers of this country who are having to endure conditions that we left behind long ago - and in this endeavour we should all offer our full support.

I believe that if ASLEF, instead of referring to the pages of Alice in Wonderland, signed a Memorandum of Understanding to promote unity with all the other rail unions, in particular the RMT, and worked towards 'agreed objectives' - especially regarding recruitment - it would go a long way to heal the rift between us - and better serve the interests of all railway employees.

Tony Whitehead Kirkdale Branch

Thanks for CICA result

THROUGH the pages of the Journal I would like to thank Thompsons solicitors for the work they carried out on my behalf following a fatality I was involved in last year. I have recently been awarded compensation from the CICA for the trauma I suffered following this incident. I would

recommend any ASLEF member who has the misfortune to be involved in such an incident to contact ASLEF's solicitors, Thompsons, for help.

David Bushell EWS -
Dollands Moor

Kind Wolves

I WOULD like to offer my sincere thanks to all the members at Wolverhampton branch for their kind donation collected for our son's trip to Florida this month. He is really looking forward to it - and the money will come in very useful. We cannot thank you enough for what you have done for Daniel.

Driver Wayne Peach
Wolverhampton

Thanks

I WOULD like to thank the free legal advice team for their help in putting me in touch with Thompsons Solicitors in Hanley, Stoke on Trent and the wonderful Rebecca Horleston. Rebecca and Thompsons were wonderful from start to finish. I had no hassle or stress, just first class service. I think ASLEF and Thompsons, also all the persons that helped in my claim.

L R Riddle

(Mr Riddle donated £100 to the Railway Children's Fund)

Muck and BRASS

WE hoped our large contribution increases and diligence had secured our defined benefit pensions but my recent communication from the fund holder casts doubt about this.

The Pension Assured Fund - the most secure fund which offers a pound-for-pound plus bonuses on retirement - is to be denied any future contributions, and the leaflet states that there are no guarantees that his fund will not be closed in the future and it contents transferred.

This is an attack on our BRASS funds which compromise our own individual savings for retirement, yet some scandalous commentators are accusing those who

save for their retirement in this way as being selfish and a restriction on recruitment. This is disgraceful; on my company, drivers are the only group who do not have fully backdated 100% pensions.

When the John Major government privatised the railways they hoped to destroy the system but set up a 'safeguarded pension scheme' to allow remnants of the work force to live above the poverty in retirement and therefore keep quiet. However, world circumstances changed everything and, as any driver will know when they purchased petrol during the recent fuel crises, we changed from being 'Those BR. Scum' to 'our strategic workers'. This has had the effect of elevating the work force and rejuvenating our pension scheme with the result that those sitting in envy of it wish to claw back.

Management are in the same scheme and stand to be clobbered with the rest of us.

Our pension trustees and representatives must fight to ensure that those who have carefully provided for their retirements are not made the scapegoats and forced to fund others who set different lifestyle priorities. If the fund must be changed to fulfil the Actuary's requirements those with assets in the Pension Assured Fund must have their personal funds frozen on the full pro rate basis as would be applied on their retirements. We must stop the practice of allowing management to create hundreds of jobs with 100% pensionable pay which we are

Tunnel vision guides freight decision

THE General Secretary in the August 2007 Journal addressed an article to Ruth Kelly, the new Minister for Transport, where one of the points was to seek a commitment to encouraging freight on rail.

Rail freight expansion in this country is impeded by being in a losing battle for route availability with the rapidly expanding rail passenger business. To overcome this problem Britain urgently needs dedicated rail freight lines. This is particularly evident when one considers the present rapidly worsening lorry clogged road network between Merseyside, Greater Manchester, Yorkshire, Humberside and the North East.



To overcome this problem the construction of a dedicated rail freight line across the Pennines with an extension to the South of England (including the Channel Tunnel) is an urgent requirement. However, plans to construct a new freight line across the Pennines, using the disused Woodhead Tunnel (completed in 1954) have not only been given the cold shoulder by successive governments but Network Rail is reportedly in the process of handing the tunnel over to the electricity authorities which plan to install electricity cables through it.

Bill Ronksley

Sheffield Midland Branch (Retired Members Section)

having to pay for.

And we are still allowing the pension fund to invest in Hedge Funds; could our pension representatives please note that the four main Hedge Funds in the United Kingdom have recently pledged money to the Conservative Party to bring about a return of a Tory government which will then finish the job of destroying the railways, which they embarked on some 10 years ago?

When all this is achieved do not sit on your laurels; they will come for our travel facilities next.

R W McMillan

Wolverhampton Branch

Thompsons are tops

MAY I record my thanks to Tracey Walthall at Thompsons for all her assistance in dealing

with my claim for Criminal Injuries Compensation after a 'one under' at East Ham.

Paul Gardner East Ham

Thanks for your support

THANK YOU so much for your letter of July 20 and the cheque. What a wonderful surprise! Robert and I would like you all to know how much

we appreciate your kindness at this time. The money will be most useful. I am hoping to purchase a leg/arm exercise machine (motorized) to help him improve his circulation and muscle power. All disability equipment seems to be rather expensive so as you can imagine your gift is wonderful for us. Thank you again.

June Attwood

(for Bob Attwood)

CLASSIFIED ADVERTISEMENTS

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



COLLECTOR requires ASLEF-Coalville NUM 1984/5 strike badges. Will pay £125. Also selling chrome and gilt badges for Wath and Mexborough at £10 the pair. Contact Barry Jones on 01709 588648 or 25 Windermere Close, Mexborough, South Yorkshire S64 0PT.

GLOUCESTER BRANCH 2007 BADGE: A few of these 100 limited edition badges are still available at £5 each (post included). All proceeds go to the Children's Ward of the Gloucester Royal Hospital. Orders to Alan Hooper, 4 Stanley Cottages, Gloucester, GL1 4EZ. Please make cheques to 'ASLEF Gloucester'.



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.



FAVERSHAM CENTENARY BADGE: the Faversham branch was 100 years old on 23 June and will be holding a celebration/presentation evening in September. The branch has struck a limited number of badges (numbered on the back) available at £10 each and plain ones at £5 each – plus £1 p&p. Badges are available from branch secretary Steve Gurdler (steve.gurdler@aslefonline.co.uk).

Change of address form

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Camden locks with the depot and horse stables on the right. Inset: Camden market today, in the old stables



A 1837 drawing of boats delivering materials for the construction of the railway

CAMDEN'S RICH RAIL HISTORY

WHEN built, in 1837, London's first main line railway cut a swathe through the then countryside of Camden Town and Primrose Hill from its starting point in Euston. Chief Engineer Robert Stephenson walked the 112 mile length of the line 12 times during the four years of construction.

This was to be Victorian engineering at its best. The son of George Stephenson, not yet thirty at the time, led an army of 20,000 men in a race to completion, so edgy investors could begin recouping the then colossal investment of £5m as soon as possible. The unskilled labourers received the equivalent of between 17p and 25p a day (good wages at the time), as British industrial history took a significant step forward.

Today we're barely aware of the layers of urban history upon which we tread. And it is left to men such as Peter Darley of the Camden Railway Heritage Trust to remind us that preservation of our industrial history is vital, if we are to fully understand or own rich and monumental urban past.

With the confluence of the Regent Canal and the London & Birmingham Railway at Camden Town and Primrose Hill in North London, Peter has a 33 acre site replete with nineteenth century industrial history. The Primrose Hill Tunnel, built as part of the railway, was at the time the largest civil



The method of excavating deep cuttings like at Primrose Hill



A representation of Primrose Hill portal and tunnel in Victorian times

engineering project yet attempted in the country. Now part of a two mile 'Heritage Trail', Peter starts his trail at the extravagant tunnel portals which are his passion and remain largely unknown today. "I first got interested in heritage rail in Camden when I saw the original Primrose Hill East portal, which led me to think: 'why is this so hidden? Why can't the public get a view?'"

Primrose Hill had long been a favourite resort for London's citizens, who came for a day out to view the London skyline or for

entertainment at Chalk Farm Tavern. Crowds gathered to watch the construction of the railway and the area around the tunnel portals became a highly desirable area to live. As Peter Darley says: "leisure and elegance surrounded the railways at that time. In the way that people on a sunny day nowadays go and sit in the park, the people back in the 1800s would have spent their summer days relaxing by the tunnel portals."

The railway was sited to dovetail into the thriving Camden lock depot which handled goods from the Regents Canal and from the Thames docks. Now, the surviving horse stables, tunnels and vaulted chambers around Camden lock make up what is the world famous Camden Market. But in the second half of the 19th century the area was alive with commerce. Over 400 shire horses hauled delivery carts to and from the railway and canal, and shunted railway wagons around the Camden Goods Depot. A complex web of rail sidings and turntables supplied the warehouses and bottling plants that occupied much of the site.

The vast array of subterranean passages and chambers include a horse tunnel, built under the new rail embankment so that horses could move to and from their stables safely, without crossing the tracks. It also included the now famous Roundhouse building which was originally designed and used as a turntable repair shed for rolling stock.

The land for the railway was originally purchased from Eton College which insisted that "the mouth of the tunnel at the Eastern end shall be made good and finished with a substantial and ornamental facing or brickwork or masonry to the satisfaction of the Provost and College". A second tunnel, south of the original, came into service in 1879. Its portal faithfully replicates the design of the original down to the smallest decorative detail such as some lion masks. Over time, housing and other developments have almost totally obscured the view of the tunnel portals.

In the 1930s nearly 600 trains daily ran in and out of Euston are estimated to have blown more than a hundredweight of soot from their chimneys before they reached Primrose Hill tunnel. The smoke reduced the desirability of the houses and many of the well-known inhabitants such as Mary Webb, Cecil Sharp and Stanley Spencer moved out. The houses were rapidly subdivided to provide as many lodging rooms as possible for engine drivers, stokers, guards and unskilled railway workers. The presence of a male work force living in cheap lodging houses away from home resulted in the proliferation of pubs and brothels. The now hugely chic residential enclave of Primrose Hill is a million miles away from the working class district which once thrived there, while being only yards from a secret Victorian history that gave birth to modern rail travel.

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

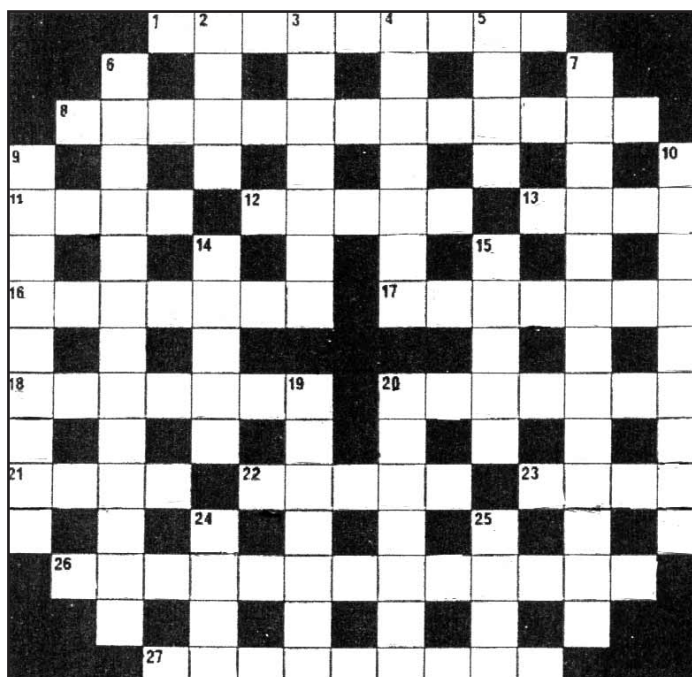
EMERGENCIES If you are an ASLEF member who is arrested or being interviewed by the police and need legal assistance – day or night – you can call the members' Emergency Hotline on 07980 996159.

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

ASLEF *more than just a union*



Prize Crossword No. 18 set by TLC



Clues Across

- 1 early name for a steam engine (4,5)
- 8 place to wait for the train (2,3,8)
- 11 scottish city (4)
- 12 not true (5)
- 13 finished (4)
- 16 result (7)
- 17 austere, frugal conditions (7)
- 18 more spotless (7)
- 20 very well-liked (7)
- 21 as well as (4)
- 22 worship (5)
- 23 continent (4)
- 26 brand new coin (4,9)
- 27 they show the date (9)

4 greek shipping magnate

- (7)
- 5 free from harm (4)
- 6 working with another (2,11)
- 7 could help with your exam (7,6)
- 9 large amount of solid fuel (3,2,4)
- 10 main route (5,4)
- 14 they help to clear the credit card debts (5)
- 15 in high spirits! (5)
- 19 Labour party flower (3,4)
- 20 marched in procession (7)
- 24 volcano (4)
- 25 mix (4)

Clues Down

- 2 german industrial region (4)
- 3 there's.....like home (2,5)



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

MARKS & SPENCER

Solution to Crossword No 17 which appeared in the September edition of the ASLEF Journal. Congratulations to **A. Roberts** from **Mirfield, West Yorkshire**.

ACROSS 3 Northern 8 Home 9 Paddington 10 Lisp 11 Ewer 13 Eerie 17 Errors 18 Depots 19 Tonic 22 Also 24 Year 25 Locomotive 26 Easy 27 Shelters **DOWN** 1 Bogie 2 Pepperoni 4 Order 5 Tense 6 Enter 7 Nonsense 12 Ensa 14 Employees 15 Reptiles 16 Idol 20 Niche 21 Comet 22 Actor 23 Raise

Thanks for all your responses to the seventeenth ASLEF crossword in the September 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 14th of the issue month.

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