

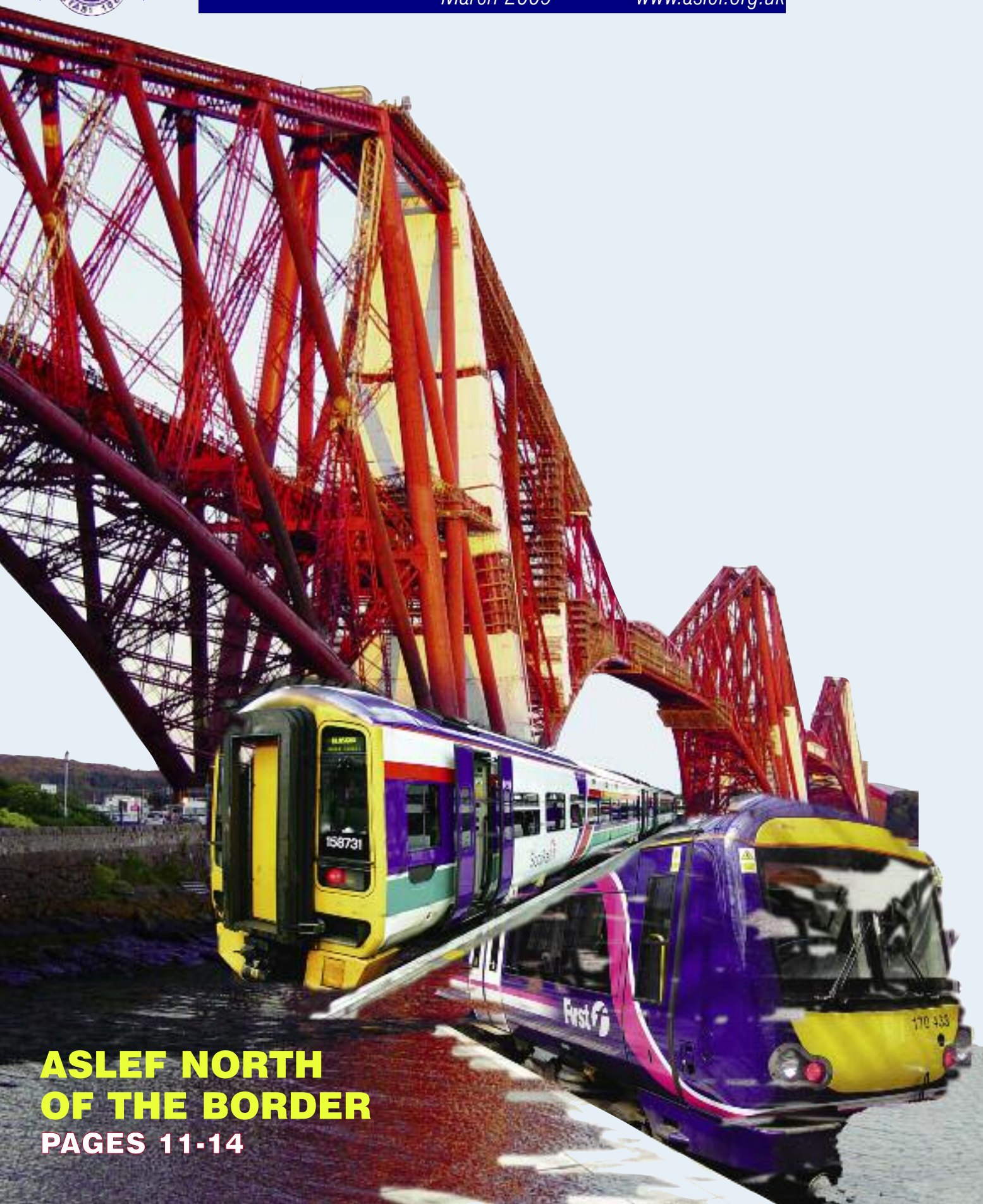
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OF THE BORDER**
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THE MYSTERY OF RAILWAY FINANCES



BEFORE privatisation, you could always understand railway finances, even if you didn't like what was going on. You could look at a balance sheet that listed income, expenditure and subsidies. It wasn't difficult. Since the 1993 Railways Act, however, railway finances look as if they're run by the Masons. They are obscure, mystifying and impenetrable.

For example, are the railways profitable or not? That should be an easy one – but it's not. Some evidence points to them making a mint. Last year the five biggest transport groups - Arriva, First Group, National Express, Go-ahead and Stagecoach - increased dividend payments between 10% and 33%. Then they increased fares by between 6% and 11%.

So, profits and prices are both up. Clearly, they are coining it.

But are they?

At this same time a civil servant was busy telling a Parliamentary committee that five franchises were being closely monitored by the Department for Transport because they are potentially in difficulty. Although the firms were not named (and why not?) the fingers are all pointing at the 'big five' public transport groups - Arriva, First Group, National Express, Go-ahead and Stagecoach.

The same five who were doing very nicely, thank you, only a paragraph ago!

But if the facts are impossible to penetrate, you can imagine what predictions are like. Sometimes I think these are produced by the same people who brought us 'Blue Peter'.

The government 'expected', for example, that the eight franchises awarded most recently would turn a state subsidy of £811 million into a state profit of £326 million by 2012.

Exactly why they expected this, or how the public was to gain from private firms making vast profits, has never been explained.

But in any case the forecasters turned out to be as reliable as a second-hand Lada. Last month the TOCs turned up at Geoff Hoon's office with their begging bowls. They thought they might run shorter trains, cut back on expansion and even suggested that the government might start helping out with the staff wage bill. Basically, they wanted to re-write their contracts.

Geoff Hoon apparently sent them off with fleas in ears, but I'd have been happier if he'd said, 'That's OK. If you can't run the railways, the Department for Transport will.'

The fact is that every depot in the land has in its management team a number of rail professionals who understand and have a genuine sympathy for running efficient and popular transport services. The tragedy for our industry is that they are way down the pecking order after accountants, money-men and business graduates. Until these relationships are reversed, we will never have the integrated rail system that the country needs - and the voters crave.

KEITH NORMAN
GENERAL SECRETARY

UNION SECURES COMPENSATION FOR RUNAWAY TRAIN INCIDENT

ASLEF member Francis Dolan has been awarded £41,000 compensation in an 'out of court' settlement after suffering post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) after having to leap out of the way of a runaway train. Union general secretary Keith Norman described the incident as 'a disaster waiting to happen' and stressed that, 'Train operators owe it to the drivers and to members of the public to ensure their engines are safe. Mr Dolan and his colleagues were lucky to have escaped this incident with their lives.'

Mr Dolan, 63, from Carlisle received the damages after the union instructed Thompsons Solicitors to pursue the compensation claim. He is now on long-term sick leave after working for EWS for 45 years before the incident in 2004.

Driver Dolan had been driving an engine to assist a broken down train carrying 2,000 tonnes of coal on a line 150 miles south of Carlisle. However when he arrived the brakes on the broken down train's brakes failed on a slope – leaving it hurtling towards Mr Dolan's engine at 30 mph.

He managed to warn his colleagues on the engine before jumping off. As he did so, he hurt his back and ribs and still suffers from nightmares from the incident. The out of control train was halted by crashing into Mr Dolan's engine and fortunately did not derail.

He said the incident could have been much worse. 'If we hadn't been there to stop it, the other train could have crashed into a passenger train or derailed in a station.'

The level of compensation reflects the fact that Mr Dolan will never drive again.

NETWORK RAIL UNDER FIRE OVER MAINTENANCE

NETWORK RAIL – inevitably claiming the need for 'efficiency savings' – is cutting the frequency of track inspections and routine signals maintenance. 'This is an appalling situation,' Keith Norman says. 'There are some things money can't buy – and rail safety is one of them. I don't know how these cuts can even be considered after the avoidable tragedies of Hatfield, Potters Bar and Grayrigg.'

The news came at the same time as Network Rail's 2009 -10 business plan confirmed a 'huge reduction in track renewals expenditure' which it admits will 'have a major impact on the supply chain' with '20% - 30% less heavy materials' resulting in 'supply chain redundancies'.

The union is concerned at a possible knock-on effect on rail freight as well as other industries such as quarrying and steel.

It is a particularly bizarre decision at a time that the government says it is committed to infrastructure projects aimed at boosting employment. The effect of Network Rail's proposals would clearly be the very opposite.



SKIPTON'S EDDIE REMEMBERS

BEFORE Eddie Atkinson joined the railway and became a train driver (and a loyal ASLEF member), he was a member of the Green Howards regiment of the British Army. As a veteran, he was extremely proud to have been chosen to lay a wreath at the Cenotaph during last year's Remembrance Day parade in Whitehall.

I thought this would be of interest to readers of the Journal, especially as we now have a number of ex-servicemen in the ASLEF ranks. Report from MARTIN EXLEY, secretary of our Skipton branch.

ACTION ON MAKING COUNCILS MORE DIVERSE

THE TUC and the government's Equalities Office held an event last month to encourage women trade unionists to stand as local councillors. Baroness Uddin, Chair of the Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) Women Councillors Taskforce said that without their contribution 'our democracy is less credible'. Currently there are only around 149 BAME councillors out of a total of 19,617. The London figures show only 82 BAME councillors out of a total of 1,861.

BACKING FOR COUNCIL HOUSING

TUC general secretary Brendan Barber has welcomed the Prime Minister 'ditching old prejudices against council housing'. He said, 'The severity of the housing crisis calls for new thinking and decisive action.' Gordon Brown said that the government intends to allow local authorities to build more council houses.

WERE YOU AT PADDINGTON IN '58?

WERE you working around Old Oak Common and Paddington between 1958 and 1961 or do you know anyone who was? If so, author Brian Macdermott is writing a book about train operations at that time and would like to speak to you. He's especially interested in empty stock workings. He says he'll refund normal out-of-pocket expenses and can be contacted by phone on 01908 311383, by email on brianmacdermott@hotmail.com or at 24 Maynard Close, Bradwell Village, Milton Keynes MK13 9HS.



SHEFFIELD TRAMS USED TO BACK CHARITY

ON 26 January commuters using Sheffield's tram system were surprised to find the inside of their carriages looking like the inside of a padded cell and adorned with slogans like, 'One in four will have a mental health problem in their life; that's 50 on this tram – but they don't need to spend their days in a padded cell.'

Travelling on the trams were several people who have experienced mental health problems, including a former police officer and a qualified nurse.

The charity behind the publicity stunt was 'Time To Change'. Its director, Sue Baker, said, 'Time and time again, people with mental health problems say that other people's prejudice, fear and discrimination can have a worse impact than the problem itself.'

TRANSPORT FOR LONDON THREAT TO DOCK 'SNOW DAY' PAY

THE union responded sharply to a threat by Transport for London (TfL) to dock the pay of members who didn't get to work on the first Monday in February – the day which began with a total shutdown of transport in the capital!

A company spokesman said, 'If staff are not able to provide a good reason for why they were not at work, they will be expected to take annual or unpaid leave.' Union members want to know what better excuse there could be than a deluge of snow and a shutdown of public transport!

ASLEF general secretary Keith Norman says Transport for London is being 'senselessly provocative' in suggesting that it will dock pay from tube drivers who were unable to get to work through the snow. 'Our members who could get in, got in,' he says.

'A bright forward-thinking company would be talking

about recognition for those who managed to report for work rather than seeking to punish those who couldn't make it.

'I hope this is not a reflection of a new attitude because of the change of Mayor.

'I am sure most Londoners will agree that being penalised for failing to arrive at work last week would be both vindictive and mean. This was a day when TfL itself had shut the bus service and the whole network was disrupted! The management claim that 80% of the tube was running that day is utter fantasy.

'If TfL presses ahead with this threat, the union will defend its members vigorously.'

Later in the week, a spokesperson for Boris Johnson appeared to take a step backwards when he said, 'The Mayor has absolutely no intention of penalising anyone



that failed to get to work due to last week's exceptional weather. More than 95% of London Underground's operational staff made it to work last Monday and the Mayor is grateful for their efforts to get as much of the Tube running as was possible in the circumstances. Around 100 employees were unable to make it to work that day and their managers are simply following normal procedure by making sure that all absences were due to the weather.'



THREE YEARS FOR CABLE THIEF

A man who stole live cable from the railway has been sentenced to three years in prison at Southwark Crown Court. On three occasions last year the inappropriately named William Wiseman went onto railway property and cut cable which caused damage to critical railway signalling. One of his thefts, 50 metres of cable from Chiswick, affected 59 trains and caused 21 cancellations. The judge said that the theft of cable and metal from railway tracks is increasing and he wanted to 'send a strong message' to those minded to steal cable and metal that they would receive lengthy prison sentences.

ASLEF HOSTS AIDS CHARITY

THE union last month lent the ballroom at head office to the International Community of Women living with HIV/AIDS (ICW) for its global meeting. The charity met representatives of the government's development agency DfID during the session.

Keith said that HIV/AIDS is not just a problem for Africa or China – it is a global problem which needs concerted international action. He pointed out that we had established direct links with our sister rail union in Uganda and said that while ASLEF's main role is to improve the conditions of UK train drivers, we were proud of our international vision and involvement.

The charity thanked the union for its generosity in providing facilities which they said were 'quite stunning' and had been a great assistance in their holding a successful and fruitful conference.

'MORE MUST BE DONE ON CROSSINGS'

WHILE he welcomes any effort to make level crossings safer, ASLEF general secretary Keith Norman feels that Network Rail could do more to address a problem he says is 'fast becoming an epidemic'. NR has called on judges and magistrates to 'stamp down' on motorists who jump lights and dodge barriers as it revealed that last year there were more than 3,400 recorded incidents of misuse at level crossings.

Keith Norman says it is about time Network Rail realised that 'ticking off' the public about being careless at level crossings is not enough. 'Urgent steps need to be taken to tackle what is becoming an epidemic,' he says.

Keith says that we need to phase out 'half gate' crossings and erect an obvious barrier across the



entire road when a train is expected, and called again for CCTV to be used to beam pictures of the track ahead directly into the cab.

'This system has been used in Hong Kong for over a decade, with equipment manufactured in Wales,' Keith says.

He also wants more education in schools and homes about the dangers inherent on railway property and called for more understanding and sympathy

for train drivers involved in these regular – but avoidable – incidents.

NR reported today that trains have hit 20 vehicles that had tried to drive around the barriers after the crossing lights had come on, leading to 15 fatalities. On average, more than three motorists a week are involved in a 'near-miss'. The company says this has caused over 55 days of delays to trains and passengers, costing Network Rail around £1.8m.



ELECTRIFICATION – DECISIONS ‘LATER THIS YEAR’

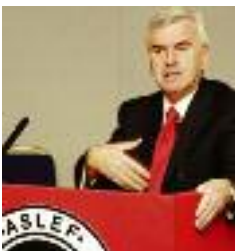
IN reply to a question in Parliament from Wellingborough MP Peter Bone, transport minister Geoff Hoon said, ‘Electrification is advantageous on heavily used parts of the rail network. Electric trains are lighter, quieter and produce less carbon dioxide. In my statement to the House on 15 January, I announced that, commensurate with the timetable for procuring the new inter-city express fleet, I intended to make a decision on electrification of the midland main line north of Bedford later this year.’

Meanwhile Richard Eccles, Network Rail’s Head of Route Planning, has told the union that a ‘particular announcement on electrification would be made in late March or early April’. Currently 40% of the existing network is currently electrified and carries 63% of passengers.

Eccles says NR is developing ‘a business case’ for the electrification of the Midland Main Line and Great Western lines and shared with the union graphics demonstrating the capabilities of a ‘mobile electrification factory’, a construction train which could undertake the necessary work. Such a ‘factory’ would be able to electrify 1.5km of track in 8 hours and could, for example, electrify the Great Western line in 12 to 18 months. He says that there is a ‘working assumption that we are going to have this.’

He added that the business case would underscore the higher performance benefits of electrification and raised the question of from where the energy would be sourced. He mentioned that following the slowdown in work at Corus, Network Rail is likely to become the single largest purchaser of electricity in the UK.

FREEZE DIVIDENDS INSTEAD OF RAISING FARES



JOHN MCDONNELL, a leading member of the ASLEF group of MPs, has tabled an Early Day Motion calling on the government to ensure that shareholders in rail companies should have their dividends frozen and the money saved should be used to maintain services and prevent redundancies. He says, ‘The big five transport groups - Arriva, First Group, National Express, Go-ahead and Stagecoach - posted increases in dividend payments of between 10% and 33% in 2008. Yet despite these profits, the same companies increased regulated fares by 6% and up to 11% on unregulated fares at the beginning of 2009.’

John believes that if these companies are not prepared to freeze their dividends and protect services and jobs they should relinquish their franchises and return rail services to the public sector.

FIVE FRANCHISES IN DIFFICULTY SAYS DFT

A civil servant last month revealed to MPs at a public accounts committee that the Department for Transport (DfT) has put five rail franchises onto the ‘red light’ list of train operators in difficulty – but it has not named the companies because it says this could affect share prices. This in turn suggests that their owners are among the ‘big five’ public transport groups: National Express, Stagecoach, FirstGroup, Go-Ahead Group and Arriva.

The DfT has a ‘traffic light’ system which monitors the financial health of rail companies, but rather mysteriously the Department will not expand on what a ‘red light’ means because it says the monitoring system is ‘commercially and market sensitive’.

However, it is clear that the government feels that a quarter of the network is under a cloud. Also it has the power to strip a company of all its contracts if it defaults on one franchise.

Prior to a meeting with Geoff Hoon, the TOCs drew up a memo which was later leaked, arguing that the recession could have ‘potentially devastating’ consequences for the finances of some companies and suggested cost cutting measures such as shortening off-peak trains; easing borrowing restrictions; having the government taking a greater share of losses on underperforming franchises; state subsidy of cost-saving initiatives such as energy metering; and deferral of Network Rail work in order to cut track access charges.

‘This would amount to a total renegotiation of the franchise terms,’ said ASLEF’s Keith Norman. ‘The logic would be to remove the franchise and run it as a publicly-owned company – which is actually Labour Party conference policy.’

THE bailout of the banks and financial support for other companies means that state intervention, using public and taxpayers’ money, is back on the cards.

People are asking, ‘If the government can do this for the banks and so on – then why can’t they also do it for public services and the like?’

In this sense, the door is now wide open to ASLEF and the other rail unions to lead the campaign saying, ‘If state ownership is good enough for some of these private companies, then it is more than good enough for the railways.’

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY PUBLIC OWNERSHIP?

We all know that basic arguments about why public ownership of the railways is important. The arguments range from getting value for our money, stopping subsidies to the profiteers, reducing road traffic and protecting the environment - to improving the standards of service and making new investment in the infrastructure.

Less well known are the equally important arguments about the democratic case for public ownership.

The more the case for public ownership advances, the more we must turn our attention to fine tuning the details of our proposals for how a publicly owned railway would work and what it would look like.

If we don’t, we risk doing harm to our case - and wasting an historic opportunity.

NOT NAT

First of all, there are those of – dare I say – an older generation who will remember what nationalisation meant last time round.

It was a case of industries run by unaccountable civil servants. They will remember as well the awful catering facilities like the dried out, crust curling sandwiches on British Rail and the chronic lack of investment which led to some pretty awful levels of rail services.

People of this generation need to be convinced we are not talking about going back in

PUBLIC OWNERSHIP CAN BRING DEMOCRACY BACK ON TRACK



Massive government intervention in the economy because of the recession is creating a new political opportunity for the case for public ownership of the railways argues **Gregor Gall**, Professor of Industrial Relations at the University of Hertfordshire.

time to those 'bad, old days' as a result of mere ideological convictions. They need to know that public ownership is the one and only means to deliver a better service.

But then there are also people of a younger generation – the Thatcher and Blair generations - who have never been educated about the benefits of public ownership. They also need to be made aware of the relevant arguments.

BUT WHAT?

This brings me to the crux of the matter. If we are to convince people that 'public ownership is good, private ownership is bad', what form should public ownership take?

The form of public ownership will be crucial to determining whether we can deliver on what we say are the benefits of public ownership.

This means that we must have public ownership in more than just name only. Public ownership must necessarily involve public participation and control.

We don't have to start from scratch here. For example, in Scotland the health boards –

that run the health authorities - will soon be comprised of directly elected members. So, direct election of members that would be in charge of the railways would be feasible.

This would be better than saying that local authorities should run the railways in their areas because that would be a form of indirect democracy – electing councillors who would then choose themselves and from amongst themselves who sat on the boards of the bodies that would run the railways.

INVOLVING THE PUBLIC

Because the railways are a national, integrated system of transportation, the form of public control would have to comprise not just a local or regional body for each locality or region but also a national body to coordinate the activities of the many local bodies.

If this is not the case, it would be hard to maintain an integrated national railway system. Equally, we can't just

have a national body to run the railways as this will reduce the degree of popular participation.

Through regular elections – maybe ever two years – to the bodies that run the railways, as well as regular public consultation exercises, we will be able to massively boost the level of public involvement.

I have no fear that people will want to become involved as all the evidence so far shows how important ordinary citizens regard the railways for themselves, a healthy economy and a decent, civilised society.

An important safeguard to ensure the desired outcome would be that the articles of association or constitution of the bodies running the railways state they are not-for-profit and exist only to provide high levels of service.

THREE-WAY CONTROL SPLIT

So the remaining issue seems to me to concern how the elections should work and what



the constituencies of electors should be.

If all the seats on the bodies that run the railways were directly elected by the public, it is possible that business – because it has more resources – could get many of its candidates elected. We'd end up with something not much better than what we already have.

Therefore, it seems vital to have a proportion of the seats set aside for election from the workforce – say a third – and a third of seats elected by the travelling public and citizens with maybe another third from other interested parties like local authorities and business.

● Gregor raises an important point in this article. If we're going to say, 'Rail should be in public hands,' we need to be able to define exactly what we mean by the phrase. Gregor's article is a fruitful start to the debate – we'd also like to hear your views about how our railways should be run. Either write to the Editor, Keith Norman, or email journal@aslef.org.uk



CHANGES TO CICA CAN PUNISH MOST DESERVING CASES



says **Victoria Phillips**, ASLEF's legal advisor from Thompsons Solicitors ...

THE traumatic and tragic accounts of drivers' experiences of fatalities which have been published in recent editions of the Journal, sit in stark contrast to the clinically harsh new rules introduced to the Criminal Injuries Compensation (CICA) Scheme. CICA is the government organisation that can pay compensation to people who have been physically or mentally injured because they were the innocent victim of a violent crime.

With the majority of ASLEF members' claims to the CICA being due to the profound psychological injuries suffered as a result of suicides, it is important that they and their union reps are aware of the new rules so as not to lose out on compensation.

The changes follow draconian proposals in 2006 which, though watered down, amount to a further erosion of victims' rights.

While it is welcome that the bid to remove workers injured at work from the scheme has not been followed through, the new CICA scheme retains the £500,000 cap on awards – which punishes the most injured, the most vulnerable and their families.

There has been no inflation increases in the tariffs, so every victim, in real terms year on year, receives less compensation under the scheme as



inflation erodes the tariff values for each injury type.

However, the proposal to remove the lower tariffs, which would have excluded from compensation the majority of ASLEF suicide-related claims, has also been dropped. This is welcome.

RIGID APPROACH TO TIME LIMITS

Among the harshest of the new rules is the removal of the right to have the two year time limit on submitting claims waived "in the interests of justice".

Whereas it had been possible to submit a late claim if it could be shown that, for example, a genuine mistake had been made and it was in the interests of justice to allow the claim, now the CICA can only consider a late claim if it is "practical" to do so and if it was not "reasonable to expect the applicant to have made an application within the two year period".

This is disappointing. It should be the CICA's priority to

achieve fair and correct results, not to judge whether deadlines have been missed. But it is now even more important that members submit their claims within two years of the incident.

The time limit to lodge a first appeal has also been tightened in that only exceptional circumstances will now justify granting an extension where it is lodged out of time.

It is not clear what constitutes an exceptional circumstance or what will stop CICA claims officers being rigid in their decisions or making arbitrary decisions.

AWARDS SQUEEZED

An inexplicably draconian new rule about accepting awards has been introduced. The applicant must now accept an award in writing within 90 days of receiving it, or risk losing it (unless they ask for more time to consider it, in which case the CICA will only consider whether there are exceptional circumstances for granting the extension).

An award should not be a negotiable offer which an applicant has to respond to in writing within a time limit or risk losing. The CICA assesses a claim at a tariff level and the current position should continue where the award belongs to and will be paid to the applicant unless they lodge an appeal against an award.

Recipients of state benefits such as incapacity benefit do not have to formally accept an award in order to receive it so it is not clear why CICA awards should be treated any differently.

WHY EARNINGS CAP?

ASLEF and Thompsons oppose the retention of the cap on loss of earnings claims under the CICA to one and a half gross "average earnings". This bears no relation to compensation available in the civil courts for members injured due to negligence.

Why should a member who is the innocent victim of violent crime receive less than one

who is the victim of, say, careless driving?

The new scheme continues with this rule, but also changes the measure of average earnings from "gross average industrial earnings" to "median gross weekly earnings".

While the impact of this is unlikely to be felt by anyone other than high earners, applying an upper limit serves to save the government money to the detriment of an injured person and cannot be fair.

Applicants who have been seriously injured and need help with day to day living and with such things as shopping, housework and gardening will no longer be able to claim the costs of anything beyond bodily function help and meal preparation.

Trade unions have been campaigning for years for a review of the CICA tariffs – the amounts of money which the scheme says each injury, or combination of injuries, is worth.

While this new scheme brings in some welcome increases, other injury types have been cold-heartedly reduced.

For example, the award for the loss of a kidney has been reduced from £22,000 to just £11,000. A recent parliamentary question as to why revealed that the reduction was because someone can function perfectly well on one kidney.

Awards for loss of limbs have also changed so that while £55,000 is awarded for the loss of a dominant arm or hand, just £33,000 is awarded for a non-dominant limb. Presumably for the same reason. Who needs two arms anyway, one might cynically wonder?

The lowest amount likely to be awarded by a civil court for the loss of a limb is £61,500.

However, a particularly welcome increase is that for dental injuries which has gone up by about 60 per cent. As is the increase in the award for the loss of a remaining limb with useful function and awards for brain injuries.

● For more information about the new CICA and the 2008 scheme go to <https://www.cica.gov.uk/>



James, the DRS Grangemouth train

DRS ANNOUNCES NEW GRANGEMOUTH - INVERNESS LINK

IN contrast to the outbreak of depressing rail freight stories, Direct Rail Services (DRS) has announced the launch of a new rail service linking Grangemouth with Inverness. Providing a six days a week service on behalf of Tesco, it will remove up to 13,000 lorry journeys a year, equivalent to 1.67 million lorry miles.

This will significantly reduce pressure on the busy A9 route to Inverness as well as an environmental saving of 827,000 litres of fuel per year. The service is supported by a new intermodal rail terminal in Needlefield Depot in Inverness which DRS operates in partnership with road haulier John G Russell.

200 NEAR MISSES AT ONE NW CROSSING IN A WEEK

THE results of a week-long monitoring at a level crossing in the north-west showed 133 vehicles and 83 pedestrians were involved in 'near misses'.

The monitoring took place last November at Birkdale station near Southport, and the incidents involved the signaller having to stop the barriers coming down midway through the sequence to avoid an accident.

Colin Smith, the union's district organiser in the north-west, says the safety risk is huge on a stretch of track that has trains coming through in each direction every quarter of an hour.

'The worse thing is that in my experience the Birkdale crossing is by no means untypical,' Colin says.

● **Colin Smith has been returned unanimously as Organiser for District 3 and says, 'I would like to thank all those branches that nominated me and all those individuals who offered me their support. It is an honour to feel I have the trust and backing of ASLEF members in the north-west.'**



Join the unions LGBT confidential mailing list for free and get information on LGBT issues posted to you throughout the year

To join the list contact the ASLEF Head Office and speak to the Equalities Administrator on 0207 317 8600

Short Rails



SQUASH UPDATE - NEEACC

The National Express East Anglia Company Council has told us that trials of air conditioning are taking place in 15x series units. A Class 156 is currently fitted with air conditioning and updated heating. Feedback forms are available in a receptacle in the driving cab encouraging drivers to record any concerns, both positive and negative.

Following the trial they expect the rest of the fleet to be fitted, and the Company Council will be pressing for this to be before the summer.

OPPOSED TO THE BNP? THEN LOOK IN THE MIRROR ...

The anti-fascist campaign group Hope Not Hate (HNH) is working closely with the Daily Mirror over the next few months to combat the threat of the BNP, especially in the 4 June European elections.

They are organising a series of events including 'Union Friday' on 15 May (the last day of ASLEF's annual conference, the AAD) in which they will encourage trade unionists to get out for a few hours to campaign against the BNP.

WE WON'T HAVE LHV's, SAY TORIES



At a meeting last month organised by the Campaign for Better Transport, Theresa Villiers pledged that the Conservatives will continue to oppose the introduction of LHV's and said her party would oppose any attempt by the EU to force LHV's onto the UK.

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Keeping Track

WHAT THE UNION WAS DOING 100 AND 50 YEARS AGO

A century ago the ASLEF Locomotive Journal included an eye-witness report of Liverpool's desperate poverty, while the magazine from 50 years ago explains the truth about the expression 'once a train driver, always a train driver'

100 YEARS AGO

The March 1909 report from Organising Secretary H. Parfitt included this account of the plight of Merseyside's working class

"In connection with my short stay in Liverpool, the poverty in the place came very much to the front. Outside and around St George's Hall I found a long procession of men, of all ages and in all stages of degree, some shabby and some respectably dressed, but all looking cold and hungry. I wondered what they were there for and why they were moving forward so slowly in the gutter. Turning the corner to the front of the hall, I found a red, stationary van, with a notice on it, in big letters, as follows:-

SOCIALIST VAN, Hot Soup and Bread given away every day at 3 pm."

"Then I found that each of these poor fellows was given a plate of hot soup and a spoon, that he retired as far as possible from the edge of the pavement, devoured the meal, and that a number of young people were collecting the empties and returning them to the van to be refilled as quickly as possible for others. "My God", said a man close to me, "we have come to something now, with one set of people who don't know what to do with their money - they have so much - and other poor devils have to be fed in the streets." Hundreds were being fed from the Socialists' Van!"

50 YEARS AGO

The March 1958 Journal carried an article by E.S. Waterhouse under the heading 'As the passenger sees it' which described the kindly advice - or unwelcome interference! - offered by a retired driver ...

"I had a letter from Bro. R. Scott, who is now in his eightieth year, the other day. Once an engineman always an engineman, they say. Bro. Scott, travelling up from Derby to St Pancras, addressed the engine crew on arrival by saying, "I'll report you to the gaffer for making the wheels twiddle so fast and not smoking! I've been watching your chimney all the way. There was a slight cloud going up to Finedon, and no more till you were near Ampt Hill". The driver glanced at the fireman and said you could do it with a lad like him. I expect he was surprised at the attention his elderly passenger had given to the firing.

"On another occasion at Derby he noticed the engine had a very dirty fire, and learning that it had come from Bristol and would not be unhooked to Sheffield, he said, "You've had it, Brother". With 400 tons behind and the Dronfield bank of 1 in 100 ahead, he'd certainly not yet had it all, but he did it in spite of everything. That's the British engineman's way."

*Extracts selected and edited
by Jane Pimlott*

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ASLEF

NORTH OF THE BORDER



IF WE CAN NATIONALISE THE BANKS – WHY NOT THE RAILWAYS?

MUCH debate is taking place over Scotland's railways. The rail unions and the STUC affiliates have been campaigning hard for a publicly owned publicly accountable railway. This was Society policy prior to privatisation.

We have made progress with the Scottish Labour party agreeing to examine the case for the return to public ownership in the 2007 Scottish Parliamentary election manifesto. Sadly, this policy was never tested as the SNP gained minority control at Holyrood.

Since then we have had the Scottish railway franchise extended by a further 3 years to 2014. This move was

announced by Stewart Stevenson, MSP, Minister for Transport whilst the Scottish parliament was in recess. The public and political backlash was unprecedented and Mr Stevenson was forced to come to Holyrood to give an emergency statement on his decision. Mr Stevenson gave an undertaking to meet with the trade unions and other stakeholders over this decision and the franchise going forward.

The meeting took place around two months ago when Mr Stevenson told the assembled trade unions that he was happy to have a publicly accountable railway in Scotland. However when giving evidence in parliament

he announced he would look to have a 'not for profit' model for the future franchise - and even laughably suggested the unions would bid and run the franchise.

The quandary for ASLEF is that we remain committed to returning all of Britain's railways back to public ownership whilst there is no great political support for this - so must engage and examine what is meant by 'not for profit'. As a union we do not have a policy on what not for profit model we could support. Do we want a Network Rail style model? Do we want Network Rail to run it? Or here in Scotland do we want Transport Scotland to run it? It has even been suggested that



we have a workers co-operative. There is also the possibility that a private operator could run it for a management fee and not make a profit. It seems the only sensible solution would be the return to publicly accountable run railways run by the Scottish government for the people to use. But we must not get ourselves weighed down with the semantics of this debate. We must engage with the government over any model they choose.

We must ensure the fat cats who have creamed the profit from our labours must not be allowed to continue to enjoy vast profits from the tax payers through subsidies. The first steps have begun in reclaiming our industry. We must now be prepared to win the arguments and prove that a railway run for the travelling public is better than one run for the shareholders. When the argument is won over the Scottish franchise we move on and win the argument on all franchises even if it means one by one they become not for profit before eventually the railway is returned into public hands.

After all - if we can nationalise the banks surely the railway is not too much to ask for?

Kevin Lindsay – ASLEF's national officer in Scotland



RAIL CAN LEARN FROM ASLEF



OUR annual Journal looking at ASLEF north of the border is timed to be published a few days before the Scottish Labour Party. We hope to use the 4-page supplement to draw wider attention to a few of the union's campaigns.

I also think it is useful for ASLEF members across the UK to be able to see what lessons we can learn from how issues are progressed in other regions, so we can take up the best initiatives.

On the negative side, every time we focus on a particular region it emphasises the folly of having such splits and divisions within a national transport system. A successful and integrated railway requires the broadest planning and vision. The fragmented franchise method of privatisation in this country is a real barrier to achieving a genuinely first class public service.

The way our industry is going is in stark contrast to ASLEF's unity, based on a specialist craft membership, mutual respect and an inherent sense of solidarity.

Keith Norman – General Secretary





ASLEF AND THE SCOTTISH LEARNING FUND

AS part of our Scottish Union Learning Fund (SULF) project ASLEF has been able to deliver free and shift-friendly learning for our members. This is delivered through European Social Funding (ESF) which we secured through our partnership with

Stow College Trade Union Education Department.

Much of the learning is done in the workplace using our network of eight Rail Union Learning Centres which are spread throughout Scotland. We have our learning base in Stow College

and one each in Ayr, Dundee, Dumfries, Inverness, Shields, Stirling and Yoker. This ensures that ASLEF is leading the way in workplace learning in Scotland. As well as the Learning Centres we have also delivered classes in Motherwell and Edinburgh

using already-existing facilities such as briefing rooms.

If you have any learning inquiries contact ASLEF's SULF Project Worker, Jim Baxter on 0787 216 4213 or email Jim at jim.baxter@aslef.org.uk

THE STATE SHOULD SECURE FUNDS FOR LEARNING



argues **Karen Whitefield**
MSP

AS THE convener of the Scottish Parliament's Education, Culture and Lifelong Learning Committee, I am constantly reminded of the importance of looking at education as something that happens throughout life, rather than just during our time in formal education establishments.

The trade union movement has a proud tradition of workers education. The role of trade unions has been not just to protect and advance the working conditions of workers, but to facilitate the education and advancement of individuals. Often this education happened in a political context and there are many trade unionists who undertook education through the support of their trade unions and went on to represent workers and local people at Westminster.

The relevance of learning for the trade union movement is no less today. At a time where jobs are becoming scarcer and competition for them takes place on a global scale, it is

vital that our workforce is skilled and educated.

I am pleased that the trade union movement continues to play a vital part in this process. Through the Scottish Union Learning Fund, trade union learning officers are given the training and support they require to begin the process of engaging with their colleagues and identifying education and training opportunities. In this respect, the learning Fund has been a success.

It has been a challenge to find the resources needed to take the next step and provide the education and training that workers require at a time and in a venue which suits them. This is where the partnership between ASLEF, Unite the Union, Stow College and employers has been a tremendous success. Through genuine partnership working between all of the aforementioned groups, Scottish workers have been provided with educational opportunities which are both shift friendly and provided at work.

Employers are playing their part, by providing facilities in which the education can take part. As an example, First Scotrail has now established seven Rail Union Learning Centres. With Stow College as

the provider, workers are offered courses including, basic literacy and numeracy, modern languages and computing. These courses are provided free to trade union members at a time that is convenient for them.

Of course, funding, as ever, is a problem. The current partnership is funded largely through the European Social Fund. This funding will cease in the middle of this year and although a further funding bid has been made, it is becoming ever more difficult to access European funding.

This is why I believe that core funding for this type of approach must be provided by the Scottish Government. There is a need for stability and a longer term security and this is something that the Government

can provide.

I believe that the partnership model set out above is the right way to progress. I hope that the current Government in Edinburgh will join the partnership and provide the funding that we require to ensure that trade union members can continue to benefit from educational opportunities that meet their real needs.

● Karen has been Airdrie and Shotts' MSP since 1999. A great believer in local involvement, she was brought up in Shotts and lives in Airdrie. She is a member of Labour's National Policy Forum and, apart from education, Karen has been most active in Holyrood in health, social inclusion, housing and voluntary sector issues.





WE NEED TO EXTEND LAWS ON VIOLENCE AGAINST STAFF



says **Hugh Henry** MSP

VIOLENCE is never acceptable. That's why we have laws to protect the public. Regrettably, despite these laws, violent attacks still happen and it's right that the perpetrators are punished.

What is even worse is when violent attacks are made on those who serve the public. Not only can it leave the individual worker badly injured or maimed, it can also lead to a loss of service for the wider public. Why should those who serve us be left vulnerable simply for doing their job? Why should they and their families have to worry about going home safely at the end of a shift?

It was right that some years ago we introduced legislation to give emergency workers added protection. It was right to send the message that those who are vulnerable when helping us should have increased protection from the thuggish minority who have no respect for anyone or anything. Now I don't pretend that this change in the law stops violence attacks completely. But it does send a powerful message that we are willing to stand up for those who serve us.

But we also need to recognise that there are many

more workers in our society who are also vulnerable when serving the public. In recent years we have read too many stories about transport workers on trains and buses being assaulted. These workers are often vulnerable and isolated.

I was shocked to hear some of the stories told to me about attacks on rail staff and bus drivers. It's hard to understand

'I have had it said to me that despite changes in Scottish law to defend emergency services workers, they still continue – so it is not worth pursuing it. This is nonsense. If we accepted this logic, we would have no sanctions against murderers!' Hugh at the ASLEF and UNITE meeting in Glasgow last December'

just why some people think it's acceptable to attack these workers. And of course when train or bus services are withdrawn because of violent attacks we know just how disruptive and inconvenient this is. We have read of shopworkers facing violence sometimes just for doing their job and refusing to illegally sell alcohol or tobacco. And we know that local government and health workers can be abused by irate 'customers'.

I lobbied ministers to argue that the

Emergency Workers legislation should be extended to cover transport workers and others who served the public. Unfortunately this legislation could not be easily amended and so a new law is needed to give other workers the same level of protection as emergency workers. I announced my intention to bring forward a Bill to change the law at a meeting with ASLEF and UNITE members in December at the Central Station in Glasgow.

I know that USDAW and CWU also want the law to give better protection to their members. And I know from discussions



with the STUC that other unions are also concerned about violent attacks on their members.

I look forward to campaigning with ASLEF in coming months to persuade MSP's that we need to change the law so that those who serve the public know that the law will back them if they are attacked. And the message needs to go out loud and clear to the violent minority that there will be extra penalties if they attack a worker who serves the public.

RECESSION SPELLS TOUGH TIME FOR SCOTS FREIGHT



says **Hugh Bradley**, ASLEF's Executive Committee member for District 2

PRESENTLY we are in the midst of a crisis in the freight industry both UK wide and in Scotland. Our members are feeling the impact with job losses announced at EWS, now known as DB Schenker Rail, and which ironically is owned by the German State railways. This is the first time since the privatisation of the railways that we have found ourselves in such a situation and as a trade union we are doing everything possible to assist our members. The situation has been exacerbated by Network Rail's further announcement that there is to be a "huge reduction in track renewals expenditure".

If I had been writing this article six months ago it would have been somewhat different. I would be emphasising the positive impacts and involvement we, as a trade union, are having with the Scottish Parliament, the STUC, the Freight on Rail organisation and the work we are doing in promoting Grangemouth as a key rail hub for Scotland (see previous report in January 09 Journal). Wherever we go we take our message of promoting freight on rail and arguing our corner.

There have been successes and reasons for optimism which must be built upon. Look at the new coal flows from Ayrshire and Hunterston in conjunction with the opening, last year, of the Stirling – Kincardine line which was built primarily to transport coal to the Longannet power station, the success of the supermarket traffic flows and the general positive approach to freight in Scotland.

This recession is impacting on all the FOCS. We as a trade union have to do everything possible to safeguard our members and to ensure that when we come through this downturn we are in a position to pick up the pieces and move forward.



SCOTTISH RAIL COMPANY ROUND-UP



EWS We are currently going through difficult times in DB Schenker (formerly EWS). Most worrying is a management document identifying 159 drivers jobs at risk. Since then we have also heard that the Network Rail contract will be cut. Talks continue but it is feared there could be an increase in jobs at risk. It is only natural at times like now that you look for someone to blame, but every newspaper and news report is full of reports of cuts and losses. I'm sure though that hard work and unity will see us through this depression. Already the management figure of 159 jobs at risk has been reduced to 79, of those 21 are in Scotland which threatens the future of the Aberdeen depot. Again talks continue with the PT&R council sub group, where ASLEF fights to ensure there will be no compulsory job losses. We saw ASLEF at its best when the Scotrail Council and Kevin Lindsey helped to encourage Scotrail to make vacancies available to our drivers for possible alternative employment.

John Gahagan – Chairman - Company Council (DB Schenker)



NATIONAL EXPRESS One of the most challenging and difficult processes we need to put in place on NXEC is ill health severance conditions.

The ill health severance pay needs to be addressed as soon as possible on National Express East Coast. We need to ensure that we have a process in place to cover all drivers in the company, as the concern seemed to reflect the position that older drivers may encounter, and does not - or did not - reflect the younger generation of drivers who may fall by the wayside with their health.

We as a council need to ensure that we deliver for the membership an acceptable package to suit all needs for all of our drivers.

Robert Wicksted – NXEC Company Council – Edinburgh Waverley



VIRGIN In 2008 the membership voted to accept a four-year pay deal which included two extra annual leave days (taking us to 37 days per annum) and 12 month's sick pay. We are making steady progress on working parties on work life balance and preparation for retirement.

It also included reciprocal travel with all TOCs that touched with Virgin Trains West Coast. I would ask all Company Council reps to pursue reciprocal travel for work and leisure with their respective TOCs.

We are now half way through the deal and RPI plus half a percent may not look good to some members, but in the present economic climate I see the glass being half full rather than half empty. We've not yet held productivity talks, but branches will be notified when we do.

The Company Council has agreed that rules will now be computer-based at depots and an agreement was also reached on Personal Data Assistants, removing the need to carry heavy bags. We've also ended split billing with 350 free minutes' phone time and 100 free texts. I think this is the way forward for all drivers.

J. Doyle - Virgin Company Council



CROSSCOUNTRY Harmonisation was the Council's priority in 2008, not only because there was a £7,000 salary gap but also differences in the terms and conditions would make it difficult to organise industrially as a single unit in the future.

We eventually achieved harmonisation after a cessation of Rest Day Working, two ballots for industrial action and finally a resounding endorsement of the package. This will enable harmonisation to be achieved in 2010.

After that the Council will apply itself to the agenda for the future. We still have aspirations for improvements to the terms and conditions of the CrossCountry Drivers – but none of it is, or would have been, possible without the magnificent support of the ASLEF membership.

John Hay – Secretary - CrossCountry Company Council



GBRF Last month company, local and health and safety reps met EC members Hugh Bradley and Simon

Weller to discuss how best to represent our GBRF members. We are stretched because our 210 complement (including train managers, assistant train managers and train operators) is spread over a large geographical area which is covered by one company, two local and two health and safety

reps.

One idea is to distribute a newsletter, with company news and items from the EC's freight sub-committee, via the company fax system. It would also have information about contacts and how to contribute and participate in the union.

An alternative is to distribute a newsletter by email, especially as Company Council websites are to be set-up over the next 12 months which will be accessible via the ASLEF website, www.aslef.org.uk

Jim Clark - Secretary - GBRF Company Council.



FREIGHTLINER INTERMODAL Last year the Bahrainian investment firm Arcapita acquired the Freightliner parent company. Although totally coincidental there has been a marked economic downturn which has impacted on both sides of the company.

Intermodal in Scotland, based at Coatbridge Terminal and Mossend depot, has over the years seen a reduction in services given the increased usage of 'Feeder Boats' to move containers to/from Scottish ports to the major English ports and then forwarded around the world. Given the downturn in the economy and the impact on reduced imports and exports we must consolidate the traffic we have and look to building on this.

Hugh Bradley – ASLEF executive committee



SCOTRAIL Fatigue... is it that important? We think so.

Like most ASLEF reps, the company

council has dealt with operational incidents – not a pleasant thing especially in the current climate of our rail industry

Are we preparing ourselves correctly for coming into work? I believe so.

Are we sensible enough to get a good night's kip? I believe so.

After all we are professionals.

We know fatigue isn't the main problem when it comes to incidents, but how big a part does it play? Just looking through the internet you can see other industries have recognised it as a major problem – from airlines to truck driving, from emergency call operators to managers.

So what can ASLEF do to make sure that fatigue doesn't become a bigger problem? For a start we could sort out our bothys. Our break areas should have proper seating, adequate heating and functioning ovens.

Yes we have made improvements like providing water bottles, energy bars and organic fruit at most depots – but we've still some way to go.

Scotrail Company Council





EAST LONDON EXTENSION GETS GO-AHEAD

AN extension of the East London rail line which will link Surrey Quays to Peckham and Clapham Junction has finally been approved. The Department for Transport is providing £64 million for the East London line extension and other transport improvements while the London Mayor and TfL will contribute £15 million.

ASLEF's London officer Steve Grant welcomed the announcement, saying it is a major boost for people living in South London which will also provide employment opportunities for our members.

However, all the news from the capital is not good. London Underground Limited has said it plans to make 1,000 redundancies as part of its aim to cut costs by £2.4 billion.



ARRIVA TRAINS WALES PAY

The EC accepted a two-year pay offer on ATW, consisting of 5.1% in 2008 and 3% or RPI plus 0.25% (whichever is the greater) in 2009

REST DAY WORKING

ASLEF is prepared to sanction Rest Day Working on Scotrail until 27th February 2010

ASLEF is prepared to sanction Rest Day Working on Arriva Trains Wales until 28th March 2009

ASLEF is prepared to sanction Rest Day Working on East Midlands Trains until 26th September 2009

ASLEF is prepared to sanction Rest Day Working on Northern Rail (West) until 28th March 2009

ASLEF is prepared to sanction Rest Day Working on Northern Rail (East) until 28th March 2009

HEATHROW EXPRESS

The EC have accepted a 35 Hour Week Agreement on Heathrow Express.

OBITUARIES

NEIL WESTON - A YOUNG MAN

THE Blackpool branch has been shocked at the sudden death of one of its members, Neil Weston. Neil was only 36 years old, a very young age at which to lose a friend and colleague. We offer his wife and children our most sincere condolences.

John Aplin – Secretary – Blackpool Branch

KENNY CLARKE - A DEPOT CHARACTER

ONCE again it is sad to report the passing of yet another Ripple Lane stalwart Brother Kenny ('Dodgy') Clarke aged 74. Ken was a depot character and in his own words was 'a little man that made a lot of noise'. After doing his National Service Ken started his railway career at Southend Victoria as a cleaner, moving on to Stratford (30 A) to gain his fireman's position, then a final move to Ripple Lane as a passed fireman, then a Driver where he remained until the depot closed in July 1993. Ken became green carded (light duties) and under today's modern railway, with the new breed of management, Ken would have been welcomed with open arms, as he was already a multi tasked Driver, even before the word was invented. He would do anything from a cleaning technician, to depot DIY man, time keeper, the depot Chauffeur ferrying the train crews around to exotic locations in the company limo (the obligatory BR yellow Leyland Sherpa Crew bus). Ken did not mind what he did and it is alleged his favourite number was 12. Speculation was that it had something to do with the hours he worked per day (make it fit).

Ken's funeral service was held at Basildon/Pitsea Crematorium and was well attended, with everybody being invited back to the Laindon community centre to celebrate his life and enjoy a few stories being told over a glass of beer. Ken was family orientated and in his retirement he enjoyed his model railway and his gardening, amongst other things. I am sure he will be sadly missed by all, and our condolences go out to his wife Maureen, son Mark, and his very large extended family.

Cliff Blackwell – Reporter – Tilbury Branch

IMMINGHAM LOSES DRIVERS NORMAN BROADLEY AND FRED HALLAM

IT IS with sadness that I have to report the passing of two retired Frodingham drivers.

Brother Norman Broadley passed away at the age of 81 after a long illness. He transferred to Frodingham in the mid-60s from one of the three Hull depots that existed at that time – before the Beeching axe fell back in BR days. Norman retired on the closure of the depot in the late 80's.

I remember him telling me, with a big grin on his face, that when he left school and the war broke out he enlisted in the Royal Navy behind his dad's back. He started his basic training but was called back because – at 14 – he was too young to enlist. The story sums up the sort of guy Norman was. He did eventually serve in the Navy before joining the railway and joining the footplate fraternity in the early '50s.

Brother Fred Hallam was 83 when he passed away after a second stay in hospital. He started his railway career in the early '50s after a spell in the RAF just after the Second World War. Fred was a colourful character in those days when I knew him as a second man. Besides being a keen gardener, Fred was in a choir. He had quite a good voice and would often while away the time giving a rendition as we went along our journey ('good practice', he would say!)

Both these characters will be sadly missed and our heartfelt condolences go out to their families and loved ones.

D.A. Doherty – Reporter – Immingham

STRONG TIES, MAGISTRATES AND TRAIN DRIVERS ...

WHEN he's not driving trains from Newcastle to London or Glasgow, John Scott is the chairman of the City of Sunderland bench of the Judiciary of England and Wales. That makes him the public face and voice of his city's magistrates, involving him in dealing with the media, recruitment, court organisation, youth offending and probation services at a senior level, even having words in the ears of various Lord Chancellors and Lord Chief Justices. Last year John hosted a Royal visit from the Duke of Kent.

John is good company because he obviously enjoys where he is and what he does. He is fiercely proud being a Northumbrian, where he has always lived apart from an 18-month stint at Manchester Piccadilly - which he really enjoyed. 'The old kingdom stretched up north as far as Fife,' he tells me. 'Edinburgh got its name because it was the 'burg' or town of Edwin, one of our Northumberland kings. I enjoy telling Scottish drivers that! It adds something to a journey that is already wonderful.'

He loves the north-east, even if he doesn't care for the sometimes harsh rivalry between Sunderland, his home town, and Newcastle which he

says is a 'beautiful city' that has cared for its heritage much more carefully than his own. But he feels the region as a whole doesn't enjoy the respect and appreciation it deserves. To prove the point he leads me onto a train heading to Wylam, a village eight miles outside Newcastle.

Opposite the station stands the CAMRA-winning 'Boathouse', wherein several other ASLEF luminaries are taking refreshment. But before joining them, we cross the lines and head down a track to the right. 'This used to be another line when the village was a colliery,' he tells me. Now it's the perfect place for a country ramble. After twenty minutes or so we come to a halt outside a small neat white traditional country cottage.

'Four families lived here in June 1781,' John tells me. 'That was when one of them, the Stephenson's, had a son called George.' Here it was: the birthplace of Britain's most famous engineer.

'Two years previously William Hedley was born just down the road. He helped develop one of the most famous locos of all - the Puffing Billy.'

John's enthusiasm and quietly expressed pride could make him a fortune as a Northumberland tour rep. But

actually he has enough on his plate with train driving and serving on the bench.

'I love history and I feel my magistrate work carries on a long-established tradition of train drivers playing a prominent part in public service,' he says. 'Besides which, I enjoy it!'

It's a measure of the respect he's earned among his fellow Sunderland magistrates that they have elected him Chairman of their voluntary calling for the past two years. But how did this journey begin?

'I started on the railway at Gateshead Sheds in '78 after taking my A levels. Obviously I joined ASLEF and I'm grateful to the union for giving me the confidence to apply to become a magistrate - especially at the very tender age of 28,' he says. 'I was very active in the union for a number of years. It gave me the self-belief you need to put yourself forward to represent people, and the assurance to speak out about what I believe. I'm grateful to the union for giving me that opportunity.'

I wonder if there was any snobbery from others on the bench, but John says the opposite was true. 'It's true to say that I got more respect from magistrates for being the driver of a high speed train than I got from rail managers for being a magistrate.'

John is less active in ASLEF now because of his civic duties, but he was, he says, 'the busy little whippersnapper' who acted as secretary of the hardship committee during the 1982 strike. As a result of this he found himself at the union's training school in Bishop Stortford two years later, and two years after that he was part of a union delegation behind the Iron Curtain to East Germany. 'It was fascinating,' he says, 'but I always had the feeling that the happy façade



The newly appointed magistrate, 21 years ago



John on the bench today - an offender's eye view

was concealing some other reality.'

John is now a seasoned traveller, a passion that began with a trip to Hong Kong in 1982. In 1986 he took his seat on the first direct flight from Newcastle to Moscow.

'I love travel,' he says. 'I've been round the world four times, helped I suppose by the independence I have from never having married.' One remarkable trip was to the Commonwealth Magistrates and Judges Conference at Victoria Falls in Zimbabwe in 1984. 'It was addressed by Mugabe, who was at that time seen as a great liberator. How times change!'

John's favourite form of transport - and he's not ashamed to admit it - is the train. 'You can get to know



John at the entrance to George Stephenson's birthplace, now owned by the National Trust



Stephenson is honoured at Newcastle station - positioned just above his monarch!

people on trains in a way you can't on an aeroplane. I always make a point of saying hello to the driver – and, by way of a calling card, I always carry a supply of ASLEF ties to distribute!

It's true. John's given ASLEF ties to train drivers in America, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa. He's presented them to the Zimbabwean Minister of Justice and to Gidion Shoka from that country's rail union. He's even passed one to the magistrate of St Helena, the world's most remote inhabited island!

And when he's not passing out union ties, he's taken to collecting full-sized flags from the countries and provinces he's visited. He says he doesn't



Examples of John's overseas calling-cards!

want to sound obsessive, but he's got about 180 stored away somewhere!

Another constant theme running through John's life is the conviction that people should be recognised for their achievements. 'When I started on the railway, people retiring were given a glass of cooking sherry and shown the door,' he says. 'I thought that was terrible, so in '83 I became the first secretary of the North Eastern Railway Staff Welfare Association. Thanks to subscriptions - and the efforts of our 'one armed bandit'! - we were soon laying on proper farewell dinners and branching out to Christmas and other events.'

Almost inevitably, he's now started the same initiative with his fellow city magistrates.

It's interesting that when I ask him the first case he dealt with as a magistrate, he thinks for a moment and says no, he can't remember. But the first train he drove alone he recalls instantly.



Retired ASLEF member Arthur Gills's talents as a painter are demonstrated in this fine image of the station at Wylam

'A class 47 to Edinburgh'. And, he adds, that they were similar in that in both cases he asked himself, 'What the (heck) are you doing here!!'. He says he finds other similarities between the two jobs. 'There's the same sense of pride in doing an important job well, and I'd say it takes the same level of sustained concentration to drive a high speed train well as to act as a proficient

magistrate.'

The reputation both of the 'Boathouse' and of Northumberland hospitality have by now exceeded all expectations - and the train back to London seems less attractive by the pint. But when it is unquestionably time to leave, this endlessly polite and thoughtful man accompanies me to the train and wishes me well. It's been a treat.

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

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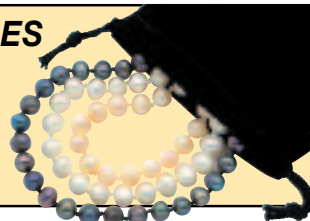
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ROYAL TURN OUT AT KING'S LYNN

THE first meeting of 2009 for the King's Lynn Branch attracted a good turn out with a third of the depot's drivers in attendance. Branch Chairman Tony Watson also welcomed Executive Committee members Nigel Gibson and Simon Weller.

The Branch correspondence included two appeals, from Yoker Branch on behalf of Stephen Anderson and Ayr Branch on behalf of Alex McQue. We made donations to both.

Nigel Gibson gave a detailed report covering a wide range of national issues including pensions, finance, First Group Competency Management Systems, TOC's that have allowed Drivers to work beyond 65 and Andy Reed's leaving the union's employment for personal reasons.

Simon Weller had studied at a local college many years ago and members at his (Brighton) branch work for the same TOC as our members in First Capital Connect. He looked forward to the opening of the 'link' between the Great Northern and Thameslink which could see King's Lynn and Brighton drivers working 'East coast to South coast'.

Simon explained the ASLEF position on rail pensions, making it clear that any TOC/FOC deciding to move away from the 'Final Salary' scheme will find itself in dispute with ASLEF.

After a question and answer session, branch secretary Mark Steele offered Simon the opportunity to address the branch about his being a candidate for the National Organiser vacancy. Simon did this to great effect, and received the branch's unanimous nomination.

Mark Steele – Secretary – King's Lynn



Kevin and Simon receive gifts from Branch Chairman Keith Goode

NOT ALL HARMONY AT NEW STREET

THE January branch meeting at Birmingham New Street started with branch chairman Bill Goode giving way to the two prospective candidates for the position of National Organiser - Simon Weller and Kevin Lindsay.

Communication was the theme of the day as both spoke passionately about their perceived roles if they were to secure the post. Things started well until Bro Bromage-Griffiths's question about the departure of Andy Reed upset the apple cart! After the candidates left the room we had a vote nominating Kevin Lindsay.

We discussed pensions and harmonisation with our district secretary Mick Whelan and other questions were raised by our members from Snow Hill and Coventry before Bro Goode thanked all who attended and we retired to the bar for more refreshments and discussion!

Martin Bromage-Griffiths – Reporter – Birmingham New Street

OLYMPICS TAKE OVER STRATFORD!

AT Stratford (205) Branch's recent AGM, Branch Secretary Peter Dodgson gave an informative report into the Branch's financial position before conducting the election for the branch officials for the forthcoming year.

At the conclusion of branch business, Peter presented one of our retiring branch members, Martin Cargill, with a framed certificate from ASLEF in recognition for his long and loyal service to both the industry and the union. Martin recently retired under ill health following a long career spanning over 40 years, mostly at Stratford before he moved to GBRF in more recent times.

On 31 January the Stratford Branch hosted their annual reunion at the Railway Tavern Hotel, where we are always made welcome and provided with a tasty buffet. It is a great testament to the organisational skills of Peter Dodgson and Barry Moore.

Tony West, RMS Secretary and a former AGS and Stratford member, addressed the reunion with a speech marking the history of Stratford and noting how much things have changed both within the industry and the surrounding area – especially with the building of the Olympic Village on the former depot! The event was a very enjoyable evening, and seemed to be enjoyed by all ...

No doubt Barry will put an article in the Journal in time for next year's event!

John Thorpe – Reporter – Stratford



Skipton retiring members (left to right) Stuart Fuller, Ron Parkinson and Dave Hargate with branch secretary Martin Exley.

SKIPTON MARKS LONG SERVICE FOUR

ABOUT 35 members of the branch turned up to the 'Railway' public house in Skipton recently to pay tribute to four of its retiring members. The function took place after the branch's usual monthly Sunday meeting. Those who have earned their well-deserved retirement were John Seward, Ron Parkinson, Stuart Fuller and Dave Hargate. Each was presented with a retirement certificate and a gift by District 4 Organiser Nick Whitehead. Mrs Fuller was presented with a bouquet of flowers.

Ray Jackson, the Chairman of the RMS, gave a talk on what to expect when they retired. After Ray's sobering speech the members present tried to drink the bar dry! In short, a good afternoon was had by all.

Martin Exley – Secretary - Skipton Branch.

250 YEARS OF ASLEF MEMBERSHIP CELEBRATED AT NOTTINGHAM

A well-attended Nottingham branch ended last year with an AGM and a number of presentations to long-serving members.

Order was kept by our chairman Brother David Vernon while Brother Peter Coles read out the correspondence and various reports.

After a short recess, four of our retired members – Brothers Benji Brookes, Brian Swift, Jack Smith and Ken Wright - were invited to join the proceedings to be presented with their 50-year badges and framed certificates.

Our chairman and secretary both stood down at the AGM and Brother Andy Jones was elected to both posts. I was honoured to be elected assistant branch secretary and branch reporter. Danny Barnett is the new assistant health and safety rep while all other officers retained their posts.

Nicholas J. Smith – Reporter – Nottingham Branch

CRICKLEWOOD REUNION The next Cricklewood reunion will be at the GWRSA Temple Meads Incline Bristol on Friday 27 March from noon onwards. Contact Grahame Nash (Bristol) or Bob Hodson (Wolverhampton) for further details.

DIDCOT REUNION 3 MAY The annual ASLEF Didcot Reunion will take place on Saturday 3 May from noon at the Staff Club in Didcot. All past, present and associate members are welcome. If you are able to attend, please let us know on 01235 211 238 so we can make suitable catering arrangements.



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!

LOW ADHESION – STICKY SUBJECT ★

NOW that we have come through another low adhesion season (rather unsuccessfully from a driver's point of view), it begs the question - is the driving policy imposed on us working?

The Southeastern policy for low adhesion driving is for Mandatory step two braking. This simply activates WSP, which in turn applies sand to the running rail to try and regain some grip between the running rail and wheel to assist with stopping the unit.

It was interesting to read how Scotrail (Red Alert November 2008) has identified that low adhesion was not just an 'autumn' problem. (Something Southeastern has known since profile 8



wheels were introduced).

Yet Southeastern Drivers are expected to use the skills taught them throughout the year, with the exception of the leaf fall season, when the driving policy becomes Mandatory.

Are we 'autumn' driving to the wheel manufacturing recommendations to save

the wheel sets? Or is it really best practice?

I fully understand that each company needs a driving policy, but have difficulty comprehending why it has become so restrictive towards the driver.

Bill Williams - Faversham

WHY IS A KIT A TRAP?

I WONDERED if any Journal reader can help sort out a discussion we've been having in the Longsight depot mess room?

We were wondering where the term 'traps' for our kit bag comes from? I've asked old hands and managers, but no one can give an answer!

I wonder if you could publish this in the next Journal as I'm sure it would be of interest to others. Many thanks.

Andrew Bailey - Longsight driver

COMPANIES HAVE NO RIGHT TO REST DAY WORKING

I HAVE over the past few years, and more recently in the last few Journals, listened to many arguments and debates about rest day working and overtime within all TOCs and FOCs. In the past I've worked both, saying it's up to each individual to choose whether they wish to

do so.

But times have changed drastically over the last 12 months or so, and I feel the time has come for the hierarchy of this proud union to say 'enough is enough', and withdraw all rest day / overtime working in all companies. It is necessary when people are losing their jobs in all walks of life – including our own members.

Companies have always come up with one reason or another for wanting rest day and overtime working. They will continue to do so purely and simply because it is more cost-efficient to do so than employ more staff.

It really irritates me that our members are losing their livelihoods and yet we carry on as if nothing is happening, burying our heads in the sand. When I discuss the problem with my colleagues I get the response, 'If I don't do it, somebody else will.' It would be different if our union instructed us – one and all - to cease.

I can vouch for the fact that there's no such thing as a job

for life. That is what we believed when I was employed in the mining industry. Don't think for a moment that we can say, 'I'm all right, Jack'.

ASLEF must tell the TOCs and FOCs that we have surplus drivers who can fill the voids they claim to have in their companies. We should say, 'Unless you employ these drivers then you will not be granted the rest day / overtime working that you seem to think is your god-given right.'

One of our old, now retired, drivers once told me, 'There but for the grace of God, go I.' It's worth thinking about.

Daren Morgan - Knottingley

GENEROUS AND SUPPORTIVE ASLEF

I HAVE recently been off work due to a skull fracture, and have spent some time waiting on a corrective operation. It has now been done and I'm in recovery. I would like to extend my thanks to all ASLEF members and

colleagues who have shown me tremendous generosity and support through this time. As I moved from EWS to Scotrail Since less than 6 months ago, I was only entitled to SSP, which is a pittance. Without the help of ASLEF and its members I would have been in extreme financial difficulty.

Huge thanks also to all EWS and Scotrail staff for their help and a big thank you to Tony Kahler and Kevin Lindsay from ASLEF for their constant help and advice.

Myself and my family are truly grateful.

Alex McQue Driver - Scotrail.

THANKS TO ASLEF I RETIRE WITH DIGNITY

I AM writing to express my thanks and gratitude to ASLEF for the Society's assistance and support which was offered to me during my recent unwarranted disciplinary action by EWS.

Far be it from me to allude to any apparent pattern of

unfair actions by EWS in recent editions of the Journal, but suffice it to say that I am more than happy with the compensation I have received. I can now retire with dignity, thanks to the work done by ASLEF's lead officer for EWS, Nick Whitehead, and especially company council rep, Nick Sandhu.

I would also like to express my thanks to my colleagues at Dollands Moor for their active and moral support.

I wish them all well in an uncertain future for the depot, and I sincerely hope that the situation might not be as bleak as it has been portrayed.

John Brooks EWS Driver – now retired

YOKER OVERWHELMED AT APPEAL REACTION

AFTER making an appeal for one of our driver colleagues, Brother S. Anderson, I - along with all my branch - have been totally overwhelmed by the response. To all who made donations, may Brother Anderson and Yoker 259 branch thank you all very kindly. It's not until we have to ask for financial assistance that we realise just how close the ASLEF family can be. Brother Anderson is awaiting word from his specialist about further treatments but he is making good progress. Once again a big thanks to you all.

A. Reed – Secretary – Yoker branch

GENEROUS ASLEF

I WOULD like to offer my sincere thanks to all the branches who kindly donated funds to myself for running the Great North Run this year with Barry Coles, on behalf of my daughter, Bryony.

The charity helping her with her condition (Congenital Myasthenia), the Myasthenia Gravis Association, has sent me a letter thanking me for the donation (totalling well over £3,000) and I would like

to pass this on.

Many thanks again

Tim Reeves - St Pancras International Branch.

TOP REPRESENTATION FROM ASLEF HELPED WITH FAMILY DIFFICULTIES

I WOULD like to thank the Northern Railway East Drivers Company Council for the excellent work and representation I recently received.

I was experiencing severe family issues which could have resulted in me not seeing my children. I asked my management for considerate turns of duty so I would be able to see them. This was ruthlessly declined. I continued my request through the normal procedures and was declined at every turn by management. I then sought help from the company council who undertook the problem with the determination and professionalism that only ASLEF can provide.

It took several months of meetings with various managers and at one point even entered into an 'avoidance of disputes' meeting with the director of the company. Management tried to alter agreements which would have had serious effects to all our DRI and that would affect every other driver in the East.

The Company Council would not allow this to happen. It is due to the tenacity of our reps that I was finally granted the request and all drivers were protected. I now see my beloved children on a regular basis and this is something that I can never thank them enough for.

Mark Wright – Driver - Doncaster

HELP WITH AN UNCERTAIN FUTURE

THIS letter is to thank the members for their generous donations. My family and I are truly grateful for this. The money will definitely help us

in the uncertain future we face.

I would also like to thank John Rossiter and Steve Williams from Swansea Drivers LDC for their help and support. Also Stan Moran, Brian Jones and all at ASLEF.

I cannot say how grateful I am.

Arthur Griffiths – Driver – Swansea

BACK IN THE CAB THANKS TO THE UNION

IN October 2008 I had an incident and informed the ASLEF Company Council representatives of the situation.

John Doyle took my case up and was very supportive throughout the process. After representing me at the hearing where I was summarily dismissed, John assisted me with my appeal against the decision. He kept me up to date with the proceedings and protested when we were told that the appeal was to be heard by another local level manager - and not by a senior manager, which is supposed to happen.

John represented me again at the appeal hearing. It was heard by an impartial senior manager who viewed the facts of the case from a fresh and unbiased perspective. This hearing resulted in my being reinstated to my driving job with no loss of pay, for which I'm very grateful.

I'm writing this to say a big

'thank you' to John and the Company Council and all of my fellow colleagues who supported me with their phone calls of encouragement, conversations and prayers. I couldn't have done it without you.

Thank you all.

Francis Kwofie - Southern Railway

I'LL MISS YOU ALL – IT'S A GREAT JOB

DUE to continued ill health, and with regret, I have recently left South Eastern Hastings. I have only been a driver since 2000 and was overjoyed when I became qualified following training with Driver Instructors mainly Mr S. Brentnall and later Mr P.Stevens. My thanks go to Steve and Paul - truly professional railwaymen - who gave me the skills and confidence I used throughout my career at Hastings.

As well as missing the job above all I will miss all my friends at Hastings, West Marina Depot, Tonbridge and those who know me at Ashford and Eastbourne Driver Depots. Thank you for all the good times we had together - I admire your professionalism and I'm honoured to have worked alongside you.

Thanks also to ASLEF reps Perry Calvert, Peter Rowland and local Hastings reps Simon Jenner, Dave Strachan and Ron Davenport. Thank you gentlemen, your assistance has been much

Change of address form

Name.....

Address.....

.....Postcode.....

Phone.....

Branch.....

Membership No.....

Employer.....

appreciated and without the support of ASLEF I would have found it very difficult to deal with the end of my employment. My many hospital visits and treatments already take up most of my energy.

Finally I should thank Thompsons solicitors for their assistance on revising my will - they offer ASLEF members such excellent service.

It has been very sad to leave the best job I have ever had, and also to leave all my friends at Hastings. You have been the best work-mates I ever had. I wish you all well.

Robert Hardingham –
Driver – retired

WHOSE MAIL WILL IT BE?

I SEE the Labour government plans to sell part of Royal Mail to TNT, which is part owned by the Dutch Post Office. It reminds me of John Major's attempts to privatise the service – proposals which

were opposed by Labour, Liberal Democrats and even Conservative rebels.

At the time, a postman told me it was called Royal Mail because it was owned by the Queen. So if it is sold off will it become the property of the Dutch Royal family?

P. Begley – Retired member
– Bedford

KEEP UP THE PENSION FIGHT

IT WAS excellent to read in the February Journal about the progress being made towards maintaining our pensions.

It is one of those contentious issues simply because we have to think not just of our future, but the future for Train Drivers after us. We cannot allow the TOC/FOCs to take from us now on this, because, if we do, it will be the start of a constant erosion of our benefits from then on.

Also, do we campaign



enough about the issue of the robbing of Pension Funds by the current government for the last twelve years? Surely, now is the time for that robbery to end and to allow pension funds to accumulate large surpluses again (if that is possible anymore), so we can safeguard the future of the remaining schemes.

Keep up the good work,
Chris George - London
Midland Driver – Coventry

DATED DIARIES AND JADED MEMORIES

I AM sure I am not alone in looking forward to receiving my new ASLEF diary each year.

I am also sure that 99% of us hate the fact that we need 3 rest days and 2 cover turns undisturbed to transfer all our contacts and other information into our new one.

Has the union considered offering members a small pocket filofax so that we need only take out one year's dates - and insert a new one each year? Cost-wise, I don't believe there would be much, if any, difference.

The other alternative is to make the contact pages peelable so you can transfer from one year to the next. It would make life so much simpler for us all. (Or am I being petty?)

I would also suggest that branch secretaries ask local members if they would like a reminder 24-48 hours before meetings as a reminder - either in the form of a text message to their mobiles or by email.

I am always forgetting union meetings and would like to give support to my hard-working local colleagues but am too forgetful. This could be a

good way to increase attendance at meetings.

Kevin Campbell –
Ramsgate

BENN BOOST

HOW pleasant it was to read the article about Tony Benn in the February Journal. Of the very few politicians who I believe actually mean what they say, Mr Benn ranks amongst the finest!

Far too many politicians cannot claim any respect. Lying, cheating, feathering their own nest and generally being untrustworthy seems to be a requirement of the job. (I've known a few managers of the same breed!)

The present government does not seem to do anything that I think is the right thing - and it's been like that for quite a while. My dilemma and, I don't think I am alone, is do I continue to pay my political fund donation to support these people? Or do I continue to pay it merely because it helps to finance an alternative?

I would rather pay my bit to individual politicians. Perhaps our General Secretary could interview them personally - if he could stand it! Self aggrandising, boring, faceless nonentities could be thrown out into the street by their ear 'oles leaving more funds to assist people of Tony Benn's calibre.

Can you imagine most politicians getting on a bus to talk and listen to the people? Whatever next? If they all did it there would be no room on the bus for all the old folk to keep warm! Still not much fear of that eh?

Chris Dodd - Retired
Member (still)

CLASSIFIED ADVERTISEMENTS

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



SALISBURY BADGES A special numbered production limited to 500 badges celebrating Salisbury Depot featuring five locos fanning out in front of Salisbury Cathedral. The badges are available for £5 each plus a fixed £2 postage and packaging for up to every four badges purchased. Please make cheques payable to 'ASLEF Salisbury Branch Funds' and send to c/o Mr Jonathan Morris, 26 Winding Way, Salisbury, Wiltshire SP2 9EA.



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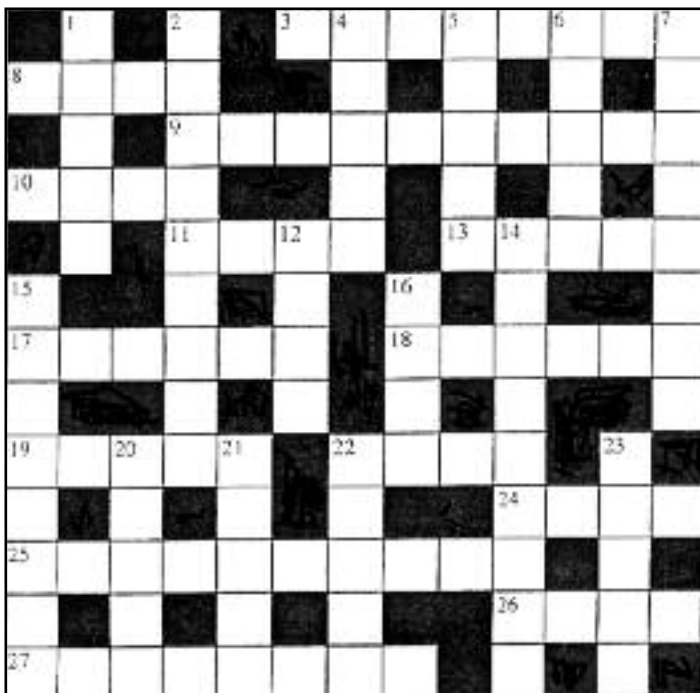
FREE LEGAL ADVICE ASLEF also provides first class free legal advice – both for members and for their dependents. In the first six months of this year we have secured £1,442,369 in compensation claims! Call the helpline on 0808 100 8009

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 0800 587 7530.

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. 35 set by TLC



Solution to Crossword No 33 which appeared in the February edition of the ASLEF Journal. Congratulations to **Martin Calvert** from Leeds.

ACROSS 1 Tube Stations 7 Mufti 8 Besides 11 Porters 12 Martini 13 Rents 14 Airbrakes 16 Ministers 19 Metro 21 Netball 23 Bedpost 24 Sceptic 25 Rails 26 Chancery Lane
DOWN 1 Tamarin 2 Buffets 3 Shipshape 4 Album 5 Insurer 6 Compartments 9 Drink 10 Swiss Cottage 15 Raspberry 17 Notre 18 Spartan 19 Madeira 20 Tootsie 22 Lucre

Thanks for all your responses to the 34th ASLEF crossword in the January 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.

ACROSS

- 3 Pulling power (8)
- 8 Three of a kind (4)
- 9 London district (10)
- 10 Confidence trick, fraud (4)
- 11 Kingston ---- Thames (4)
- 13 Artist's painting frame (5)
- 17 Spiritual beings, said to look after us (6)
- 18 Healthy meals of lettuce, tomatoes etc.(6)
- 19 The body, briefly (5)
- 22 You can watch this from the train window (4)
- 24 Hailing from Dubai perhaps (4)
- 25 Football team with the second name 'Stanley' (10)
- 26 Not too hot! (4)
- 27 Fast train on a short run (8)

DOWN

- 1 Trains run on this (5)
- 2 Rail passengers (9)
- 4 Type of fabric (5)
- 5 North-West railway station (5)
- 6 Used to smooth out creases (5)
- 7 Unnecessary (8)
- 12 Yorkshire river (4)
- 14 Additional pay for out-of-pocket expenses (9)
- 15 Have they landed on earth yet? (8)
- 16 ---- Spumante, wine (4)
- 20 Happen again (5)
- 21 Vegetable used in stews (5)
- 22 Not precise or certain (5)
- 23 Railway vehicle (5)



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

Name.....

Address.....

.....

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