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# ASLEF *Journal*

November 2009

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## SPEED UP



## SLOW DOWN

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## ASLEF IS MORE THAN JUST A BUILDING



WHEN I went to the Ladbroke Road memorial ceremony last month it brought home to me once again what a tight and close family the railways makes us.

Richard Westlake's article in this edition talks about receiving 256 cards of support after his accident at Royal Oak. We remember the whole union concern for Iain Black after Grayrigg. But these are only the tip of an iceberg of fraternal concern. There is evidence of it every day. I know there are regular contributions from branches to appeals for drivers down on their luck that never get a mention.

We have so many things in common that bring us together. Certainly being members of a single union helps; but there is the common language we use, the jargon of our profession that we all understand. There's the fact that we all instantly know and sympathise with incidents on the line. We understand as no one else can the challenges and the joys of driving trains.

The idea of what makes our union has been on my mind since last year's conference gave the executive committee the authority to sell our head office building at Arkwright Road. Would we be losing some of our ASLEF traditions and heritage?

I remember coming up that hill many years ago to my first meeting in Hampstead. I'd just become Cardiff's branch secretary after Gwyn Hyde died suddenly. I met Ray Buckton in the general secretary's office and he gave me all the advice and help I needed at that time.

Now I walk in those doors every day, and I have to say I still feel a sense of pride and pleasure in the old place.

But ASLEF is not a three story building in a leafy north London suburb. Our heritage is not in a stately home on the hill. Arkwright Road has served us well over the years and many of us will retain fond memories of debates, education sessions or executive sessions in its rooms.

But it is not ASLEF. Our real heritage and traditions are on the track and in the cab. That is what bonds us: a single profession, a common understanding.

Our current head office is a tool that has served us well. I believe it is time now to upgrade that tool, and while we might, as with steam, feel a continuing affection, our union has never been one to deny or resist progress and change.

**KEITH NORMAN**  
**GENERAL SECRETARY**

# SLOW DOWN AT OPEN CROSSINGS, UNION URGES, AFTER SCOTLAND INCIDENT

THE union last month advised its drivers to drastically reduce the speed that trains travel over Automatic Open Crossings. The union has become increasingly frustrated by what it sees as a lack of action by Network Rail as regards open crossings and the final straw came after an horrific accident took place at Halkirk A.O.C.L. last month. Angus MacKay, his wife Margaret and his brother Donald all died when their car was hit by a train at a gate-free level crossing in Halkirk. The incident naturally caused significant shock and trauma to the driver of the train.

ASLEF's Scottish organiser Kevin Lindsay said, 'Drivers who are involved in these horrific incidents have to live with the consequences for the rest of their days.'

'There should be no more deaths on Scotland's railways at these level crossings.'

Kevin's report was considered by the executive who as a result called upon members to reduce speeds to a maximum of 20 mph until Network Rail announces



plans to introduce appropriate obstacle detection technology and barriers on these crossings. ASLEF general secretary Keith Norman said the decision was taken 'in the interests of both train drivers and members of the travelling public'.

He added, 'Network Rail's unwillingness to invest in vital obstacle detection measures at level crossings has led to this decision today. By calling on our members to reduce speeds to 20mph over crossing ASLEF members can safeguard the health and safety of both train drivers and the travelling public.'

## UNION BACKING FOR HIGH SPEED RAIL UK



ASLEF has decided to lend its support to the High Speed Rail UK (HSP UK) campaign. This is an umbrella body of leaders of 11 major UK cities - Birmingham, Bristol, Cardiff, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Leeds, Liverpool, Manchester, Newcastle, Nottingham and Sheffield - lobbying for the development of a high speed rail network.

They argue that not only will such a network link centres of economic development in the UK, but that it will also connect to Europe's high-speed network.

Chair of the new campaign, Manchester City Council Leader Sir Richard Leese, says, 'A high speed rail link in the UK would mean shorter journey times, improved reliability, accessibility and greater capacity and all this, most importantly, would have a dramatic effect on the nation's economic output.'

'There are 3,480 miles of high speed railway lines in mainland Europe with a further 2,160 miles under construction and 5,280 miles planned for the future. In Britain, despite inventing the world's first passenger railway we only have 68 miles in operation.'

● When the new Highspeed services commence formally on Southeastern on 13 December 2009, staff travel facilities will be accepted except at peak times, specifically as follows:

- Not on trains scheduled to arrive at St Pancras before 0959 hrs, Mon-Fri
- Not on trains scheduled to depart from St Pancras between 1600 hrs and 1859 hrs, Mon-Fri
- Not on contra peak services between Stratford and St Pancras during these hours

Services are only barred for the portion of the journey on High Speed 1 - that is, between Gravesend, Ebbsfleet, Ashford International, Stratford and St Pancras.

Holders of active Gold Status Passes are reminded that although they are exempt from restrictions, they must surrender their seats in favour of fare-paying passengers.

## COMPANY NEWS

### REST DAY WORKING

ASLEF is prepared to sanction Rest Day Working

- on Merseyrail until 25 December 2010
- on First Transpennine Express until 28 November 2009
- on London Midland until 14 November 2009
- on East Midlands Trains until 31 January 2010

### COMPANY COUNCIL ELECTIONS

The following members have been elected:

#### LONDON MIDLAND COMPANY COUNCIL

Bro W Goode, Birmingham New Street Branch  
Bro A Griffiths, Shrewsbury Branch, Bro R Fisher, Bletchley Branch

#### MERSEYRAIL COMPANY COUNCIL

Bro P Cashman, Birkenhead Branch, Bro W P Hart, Kirkdale Branch  
Bro W Baxter, Southport Branch

#### FIRST SCOTRAIL COMPANY COUNCIL

Bro A Foster, Edinburgh No.2 Branch, Bro A McCallum, Ayr Branch  
Bro I Smith, Glasgow Branch

#### LONDON OVERGROUND COMPANY COUNCIL

Bro D Murphy, Watford Branch, Bro E Chick, St Pancras Branch

#### DRS WORKS COUNCIL

Bro T McKendrick, Grangemouth Branch, Bro R Smith, Crewe Branch

#### VIRGIN WEST COAST COMPANY COUNCIL

Bro L Stevenson, Longsight Branch, Bro R Hodson, Wolverhampton Branch  
Bro G Fazackerly, Preston Branch

#### EAST MIDLANDS TRAINS COMPANY COUNCIL

Sis R Peterson, St Pancras Branch, Bro A Botham, Derby Branch, Bro P Coles, Nottingham Branch

#### DB SCHENKER INTERNATIONAL COMPANY COUNCIL

Bro M Finn, Saltley Branch, Bro N Sandhu, Willesden Branch

#### FIRST CAPITAL CONNECT COMPANY COUNCIL

Bro D Hulian, Bedford Branch  
GATWICK EXPRESS COMPANY COUNCIL

Bro S Peters, Battersea Branch

### PAY

#### FREIGHTLINER HEAVY HAUL 2009 PAY

ASLEF has accepted a 2 year pay offer of no compulsory redundancies for year 1 - Oct 1 2009 - 30 September 2010, a pay freeze from 1 October 2009, 1 October 2010 and an increase in salary of 1% from 1 October 2010, or RPI minus 1%



Keith recalls with relatives and officials his months representing the union at the Ladbroke Grove enquiry: 'The most traumatic period of my working life.'



GS Keith Norman and Transport Minister Lord Adonis discuss the tragedy with senior police officer Andy Trotter.

### TENTH ANNIVERSARY OF LADBROKE GROVE

About a hundred relatives, friends, officials and well-wishers last month gathered at the memorial garden to the victims of the Ladbroke Road disaster at the top of the bank where the crash occurred.

Heads down, they stood in silence ten years on from the exact date and time – 0811 on 5 October 1999 – that the two trains collided leaving a death toll of 31.



At the top of the bank overlooking the site of the crash scene the memorial to the dead will always remain as a place of quiet reflection.

### ELECTRIFICATION SUPPORT GROWING

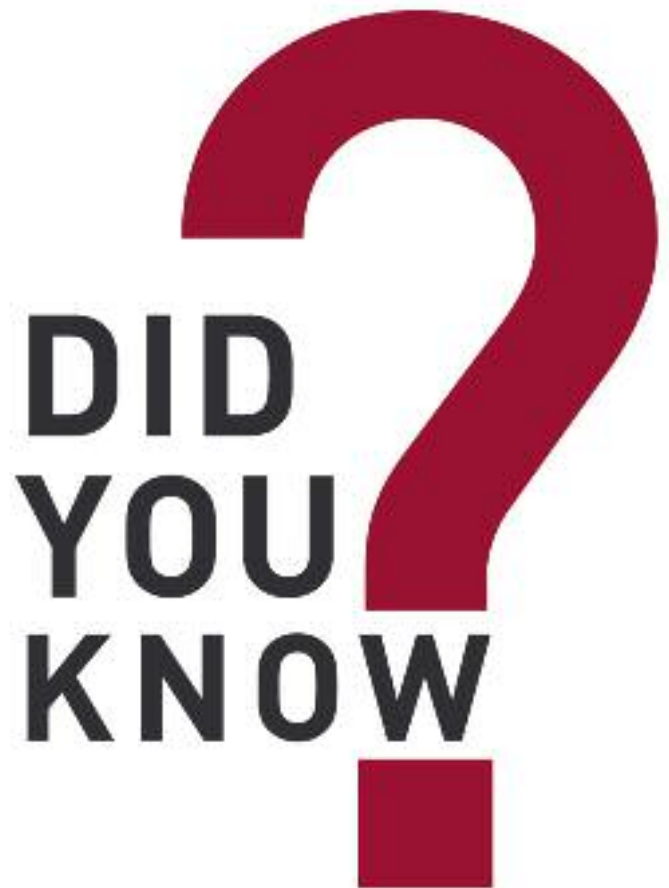
The rail pressure group Railfuture is the latest organization to come out in favour of continuing electrification, urging Lord Adonis to continue electrification beyond the Great Western Main line.

Railfuture doesn't want passengers in the East Midlands to have to wait for improvements to their rail service and is urging the government to commit to electrifying the Midland Main line.

'We welcome the Government's decision to electrify a substantial portion of the UK's railway system,' says the group in a letter to the rail minister. 'However we hope that this really is just the first stage of a rolling electrification programme.'

'We are disappointed that a decision has not been made now for Midland Main line electrification, rather than just considering it later.'

Keith Norman says when the union launched its campaign to get electrification under way last year, he could only hope for the amount of unqualified backing it had received. 'If the government is genuinely concerned about public opinion this is clearly the path it needs to tread,' Keith says. 'If they can find public money for banks, they can find it for rail.'



# ASLEF SLAMS DROPPING OF GLASGOW AIRPORT RAIL LINK

Train drivers' union ASLEF today condemned as an act of 'folly and betrayal' the SNP government decision to scrap the planned Glasgow airport rail link. 'It is folly because it is so desperately short-sighted – Scotland's businesses and travellers needed a speedy link to its airport,' said the union's general secretary Keith Norman. 'And it is a

betrayal because Scotland's transport minister is also the climate minister. Today he has shown his party to be pro-car, anti-train and couldn't care less about climate change.

'This means that there will be no rail link to any major Scottish airport. It is hardly a progressive image for overseas visitors or potential investors.'

It emerged that Scotrail was kept in the dark as much as the union about the shock announcement. ASLEF believes the company has already recruited drivers for the new project.

Inevitably for the SNP the bogey-man is the British government. 'It is a continual whine which the Scottish people increasingly find grates



on the ears,' says the union's office in Scotland, Kevin Lindsay. 'It now amounts to an excuse to do nothing.'

## DAVE – STILL SEEKING INFORMATION

LAST month we reported on EC member Dave Calfe's efforts to get information from the Department for Transport (DfT) by using the Freedom of Information Act. Dave wanted to know if the government had supported Silverlink financially when the union was taking industrial action, and if the new franchise had been altered as a result of the dispute.

Last month the Information Commissioner found in Dave's favour and ruled that the information the DfT had withheld should be given to him within 35 days. Dave said he would be happy to share this with ASLEF members in the current issue.

Just one problem. He still hasn't got it.

He's now written to the Commissioner to tell him the DfT has not provided him with any of the information he'd requested within the 35 days stipulated and as far as Dave knows they had not appealed against the decision.

Dave says, 'The longer it goes on, the more you ask yourself, "What are they trying to hide?"'

## HIGH HEELS

GIVEN the media's obsession with trivia, it is hardly surprising that one of the most reported TUC conference debates was a call by the Society of Chiropractors and Podiatrists for high heeled shoes not to be part of any employer's dress code and to stop the need for women workers to wear them because of their detrimental effects on feet.

One podiatrist came out with the excellent line that, 'Making women wear high heels is aimed at bringing them down to size.'



## SHOCKING ARRIVAL FOR EUROSTAR PASSENGERS

A LIVE 25,000 volt overhead cable snapped inches away from passengers disembarking from a late-afternoon Eurostar train at St Pancras last month. It snaked wildly across the platform, showering sparks and smoke just missing the terrified travellers.

Passenger Michael Stirling said, 'People were screaming and throwing themselves out of the way. It was obviously live because there was a continuous vibration and every time it touched the ground it was like a firework display.'

Fire crews attended, but rail engineers managed to make the short-circuiting high-voltage cable safe before they arrived. No one was hurt.

An investigation has been launched into how the cable, which provides the energy for the train, became dislodged.

## HEALTH COMMISSION – NO AGREEMENT ON MAXIMUM TEMPERATURE

THE Health and Safety Commission has failed to agree that there is a need for limits on maximum temperatures at work.

The organisation's September board meeting considered a paper that had been produced at the request of the Secretary of State. This was in response to the TUC call for a maximum temperature at work, which ASLEF supports.

The document included a research paper from an academic who outlined the various options – and its conclusions were not in favour of introducing a specific legal maximum temperature.

The TUC board members made the case for the inclusion of a maximum temperature in the Approved Code of Practice (ACoP) but the board called for more research into the issue, including defining which sectors were most effected and listing the effect of the various options.

There was however at least a consensus that something should be done to address the issue.



*There's mortar life than work!*

## BID WIN LEADS TO SIGNING, SPANISH AND BRICKLAYING

A SUCCESSFUL funding bid has led to a number of new courses being offered at East Midlands Trains – including sign language, Spanish, bricklaying and plastering. It's good news in these 'credit crunch' days reports ASLEF lead learning rep **CHRIS NUTTY**.

When unionlearn accepted our bid to become part of the East Midlands Collective Learning Fund Project (CLF) we were able to look at new and exciting learning opportunities at East Midlands Trains (EMT). The rationale behind the CLF is the need for innovative arrangements to lever in more funding for learning from employers, greater support from unions and enhanced member commitment to educational and personal development in the workplace.

EMT supplemented the £4,000 from the CLF with a further £2,000 and ASLEF chipped in a further £1,000 – enabling us to run well-attended courses in British Sign Language (BSL), Spanish, Bricklaying and Plastering. The BSL course was delivered by Burleigh Community College of Loughborough, the Bricklaying and Plastering course by Stephenson College of Coalville while the Spanish course was delivered by Derby College.

### HANDS ON REPORTS



*Surely that house they've built needs to be taller?*

Derby driver Pete Waldock went on the BSL course, saying he did so because, 'I like to learn different forms of communication and it is always good to learn something new. Although the course was relatively easy, you need plenty of practice to become fluent in signing. I feel I've gained the confidence to sign in public – but it's pretty nerve-wracking at

first.' And would he recommend the course? 'Yes, whole heartedly! I think it's a skill that everyone should learn.'

Another Derby driver, Chris Wells, took the Bricklaying and Plastering taster course. 'The day was very informative and both the facilities and the instructors were excellent. The time flew by.' Over half the people on this course are thinking of following it up with a diploma in house maintenance – which covers tiling, joinery, plumbing, bricklaying and plastering. The follow-on units of the BSL and Spanish begin this month, along with another BSL beginner's course.

### EXPANDING THE CLF

One of the main themes of the CLF is to support continual learning in the workplace via the collective approach. Our bid will be continually evaluated by Leeds University to ensure we're spending the funds correctly and meeting our targets.

While the CLF is currently only being trialled in the North West and the East Midlands, it is hoped that it will be available right across England in the near future.



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# TEN POINTS FOR FREIGHT



As the freight industry struggles through the economic recession we asked **Philippa Edmunds** from Freight on Rail to draw up a list of information and action points that our members can use to lobby opinion in favour of rail freight. This is 'Philippa's List' ...

## 1 WHY SUPPORT RAIL FREIGHT?

- Rail freight provides a low carbon, energy efficient, safer alternative to road distribution which can help the government achieve its carbon reductions targets.
- Rail freight produces 3.4 times less CO<sub>2</sub> per tonne-km than road transport so switching to rail freight gives a 70% reduction in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions compared to the equivalent road journey.
- Rail is safer - HGVs are still three times as likely as cars to be involved in fatal accidents
- Rail freight reduces road congestion as an average container train can remove 50 long distance HGVs and the heaviest bulk cargo trains are equal to 160 lorries. The DfT estimates that congestion costs up to £1 per lorry mile on congested roads.
- Rail freight has removed 6.7m lorry journeys from UK roads (1.4 billion lorry kilometres) since 2007/08 but still has only 11.5% of the surface transport market (rail and HGV). This would increase if it were not for the limitations of the rail network

## 2 RAIL FREIGHT NEEDS POLITICAL SUPPORT

We need to back the DfT's June 2009 'Strategic Freight Network - The Longer Term' which argues what's needed to increase rail freight volumes. Investment of £220m has been committed between 2009-14 towards the strategy - but this is modest compared to the costs of upgrading motorways. Road widening costs nearly £58 million per mile!

## 3 INVESTMENT NEEDED AFTER 2014

We need commitment to funding after 2014 to enable more gauge clearance and capacity enhancements of key SFN routes. Capacity upgrades on Felixstowe-Nuneaton, for example, could remove 40 million lorry miles a year.

## 4 RETENTION OF CURRENT ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS SCHEMES

In the areas of revenue grants, Mode Shift Revenue Support (MSRS) will replace the Rail Environmental Benefit Procurement Scheme (REPS) next year - but has no

confirmed budget beyond March 2011. We need a confirmed post-2011 budget. (Rail currently gets around £17m a year in revenue support)

## 5 REVISE FREIGHT FACILITY GRANTS (FFGS)

As regards capital grants, uptake of the existing budget has been poor. With an annual budget of £7m, only £1.8m was awarded in 2008. Reasons include

- the risk of having to repay grants if environmental benefits are not delivered
- 50% contribution ceiling
- poor promotion by DfT
- slow down in growth in bulk sector

FFGs needs to be reworked in line with rail freight forecasts to cater for growth in domestic inter modal, international and deep sea traffic - and to be aligned with government SFN policy.

## 6 RAIL FREIGHT NEEDS TERMINALS

Rail freight needs national, regional and local spatial planning policies which

- protect key rail transport corridors/key sites for interchanges and
- enable planning permission to be gained for terminals/interchanges.

National Policy Statements need to cater for rail freight and insist that regional depots should be capable of being served by rail.

The Independent Planning Commission (IPC) should make it easier to get planning permissions for large Strategic Rail Freight Interchanges (SRFIs) - but anything under 60 hectares is reliant on regional and local spatial plans supporting rail freight so that local planning authorities can give terminals planning permission.

Unless there is the policy of support for

rail freight terminals, it is difficult for councillors to vote in favour of terminals which have wider regional and national social and environmental benefits but have local disbenefits, such as more HGV movements.

We need to press for regional spatial planning to be preserved

## 7 STABLE TRACK ACCESS CHARGES

We need stable track access charges to enable freight operators and customers to plan long-term and thus agree long-term contracts.

## 8 ELECTRIFICATION

We need to argue for the reinstatement of Gospel Oak to Barking electrification. The benefits include

- stopping some North Thameside freight services crossing the Great Eastern Main Line between Forest Gate and Stratford (which would improve infrastructure capacity and performance on both Great Eastern Main line and Crossrail)
- providing a diversionary route across North London for electrically hauled freight

## 9 SEVEN DAY RAILWAY

If rail freight is to grow its supermarket trade for example, these customers want 24/7 access to the railway.

## 10 NO TO MEGA TRUCKS

Although the UK Government rejected trials of mega trucks in June 2008, the European Commission has not ruled them out.

- while road and rail complement each other, long distance trunk movements of freight can be more safely and more sustainably carried by rail than in even larger lorries.
- previous increases in lorry dimensions have resulted in more lorries driving around less full, causing more road congestion and more pollution,
- mega trucks would destroy the majority of rail freight which has a much better environmental and safety record than road - and force trainloads of freight back onto our congested roads



# CONTROLLING THE RISK OF NR'S DEFERMENT PLANS

HM Railway Inspectorate (HMRI) has asked the union to advise its safety reps what it is doing to control risk as a result of Network Rail's decision to defer a significant number of track renewals.

Five specific recommendations have been put to NR

- NRIL should produce a fully auditable trail of the decision making that took place throughout the recent track renewal deferral exercise.
- If NRIL intends to repeat this or similar exercises, the process should be formalised and that formal procedure should include a requirement to produce an auditable record of the decision making.
- NRIL should either ensure the current definition of deferred in NR/L2/AMG/02201 is applied, or amend the definition and ensure the change is managed.
- NRIL should establish and record trigger points for reassessment of deferred track renewal sites, using RADR forms (Risk Assessments for Deferred Renewals), in accordance with the requirements of NR/L2/AMG/02201.
- NRIL should inform safety representatives (of their employees) about each deferred track relay site, including such information as location, significant findings of the assessment, risk mitigation, etc. and whether the mitigation measures will be in place before the particular site passes its due date (as defined by NR/L2/AMG/02201). NRIL plans to have all risk mitigation measures in place before the track renewal proposals become overdue.

Under part two of this assignment, ORR inspectors will be validating delivery of the proposed risk mitigation measures.

## SPEAKING UP WITH ASLEF

In October I attended an ASLEF Head Office training session on Public Speaking, reports Alan Moss. The course was provided by National Organiser Simon Weller and facilitated by Paul Richards.

It covered writing and deliver an effective speech, guidance on presentation, body language and how to respond to questions and answers. Looking at speeches from the likes of Barrack Obama, Martin Luther King, Arthur Scargill and Neil Kinnock, it became apparent that all the speeches had the elements of what we were being shown.

Our preparation and attention to detail resulted in some excellent debate when the speeches were delivered – proving that the tuition had been a resounding success. I strongly recommend the course for all reps at every level of the union.

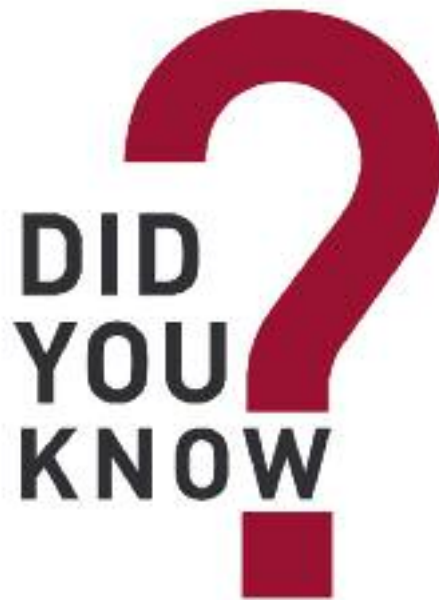
## UNION BACKS HART FOR WALES LABOUR



The union is backing Edwina Hart's bid for the Welsh Labour party leadership. Edwina has a trade union background as a former President of the Banking Union BIFU and chair of the Wales TUC and has experience of activity at every level of the Labour Party.

Keith Norman says, 'As First Minister Edwina would have the experience and the confidence to get the best possible deal for Wales in transport and other areas. She

provided funding for the re-opening of the Ebbw Vale line and believes that rail will play a key role in the Welsh Assembly Government's sustainable transport programme in the years to come.'



## ASLEF MEMBERS' FAMILIES ALSO RECEIVE FREE LEGAL COVER:

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# COMPENSATION CLAIMS UNDER THREAT



**Victoria Phillips** of the union's solicitors, Thompsons, says unions are facing a potentially devastating attack on their legal services under proposals being considered by one of Britain's top judges. One option being considered by Sir Rupert Jackson would deter thousands of union members from making claims against employers and their insurers ...

AS part of his review of civil litigation costs, Sir Rupert is considering whether to increase the "small claims" limit from £1,000 to either £2,500 or even £5,000.

What may seem a minor technicality could have huge consequences for ASLEF members and anyone else making a "small claim".

Anyone making a claim in the small claims court has to pay legal costs out of their own pockets, even if they win – so many of them do not have legal representation.

Where compensation is above the small claims limit, courts can award costs to the winning side. This is the so-called 'loser pays' principle which – because union lawyers usually win the cases they run – makes it much easier for unions to fund litigation.

## INCREASE IN SMALL CLAIMS

If the proposal is implemented, there would be a huge increase in the number of potential claims regarded as 'small'. That would mean far fewer claimants taking their cases to court for fear of incurring legal costs.

We estimate that an increase to £2,500 would free insurers from paying costs in around 50% of union-backed personal injury cases.

Just because an injury claim is valued at less than £5,000 or £2,500, it doesn't mean that it requires less work to prove that someone such as an employer was liable for an injury.

And who says £1,000 is a 'small' amount, let alone £2,500 or £5,000? The answer is well-paid Judges and insurers!

Lower value claims are as hotly contested by defendants as high value ones. Even now in the small claims court defendant insurers routinely engage lawyers. They take the risk of having to pay the costs themselves out of their own deep pockets if they lose.

The claimant is unlikely to be able to afford to do the same. To deny the injured party legal representation in this way would be a denial of access to justice and means there would be no equality between the parties.

Sir Rupert, a judge in the Court of Appeal, is carrying out the review because of what he says are 'mounting concerns' that legal costs are too high.

## BLOCKING TACTICS

But claimants' legal costs are often made much higher by the blocking tactics used by insurance companies' lawyers. Too often they delay the process, or even fight cases where they are clearly in the wrong.

And if the court believes that costs are too high in any particular case, it can demand an explanation – and if necessary a reduction. So why the fuss?

The review follows the media myth that there is a compen-

sation culture in the UK. In fact, insurance companies, which helped to whip up the myth, are trying anything to stop accident victims and those made ill through their work from receiving compensation. Fewer cases means bigger profits for insurance companies.

Sir Rupert acknowledges that unions have said that they would not have the resources to deal with the huge increase in the number of claims their members would bring in the small claims court should the upper limit be increased. We believe that any significant rise in the small claims limit would be a gift to employers and their insurers – and a disaster for both union legal services and access to justice.

Sir Rupert's preliminary report also appears to have accepted insurance companies' arguments that there should be more take-up of before-the-event (BTE) insurance.

This is the legal expenses insurance that is added to motor and domestic insurance policies and which trade union members don't need.

The document suggests that it could become compulsory, like motor insurance.

## BEFORE THE EVENT INSURANCE

BTE enables insurers to gain control of cases brought against them because the claimant who uses BTE to fund their legal claim is referred to a solicitor on an insurer's approved list. This means injured people will be herded off to lawyers who are reliant on insurers for their work.

Any extension of BTE will undermine independent legal services and be bad news for unions.

Union members already have a legal service dedicated to fighting for the maximum compensation. Why should they be made to pay for a service that is beholden to the insurance industry? They shouldn't be forced to use BTE.

The report is also enthusiastic about electronic (software based) assessment of damages. These computer programmes have been developed by insurers for insurers – and the only data on which they are based comes from insurance companies.

## SUBSTANTIALLY LOWER

Defendant insurers are inevitably reluctant to admit when they have used such a programme, but it is often possible for Thompsons to spot when they have. The compensation offer is almost always substantially lower than our calculation and any increased offers appear to follow low and formulaic amounts.

There is a big business agenda at play here and Sir Rupert will need to show he has genuinely listened to all sides.

One thing is for sure, if some of the ideas and proposals in Sir Rupert's preliminary report are repeated in his final report (due at the end of the year) then there will have to be a serious fight to mitigate the impact on trade union legal services specifically and access to justice generally.



# UK FOREIGN POLICY LACKS ETHICS AND MORALS



argues **Jeremy Dear**, the general secretary of the journalist's union, the NUJ, and the chair of the Justice for Columbia campaign.

**HYPOCRISY** has been a feature of successive government's foreign policies. We're against dictators - unless they serve our interests. We're against selling arms to corrupt regimes - unless they happen to be using them against our enemies.

But then came Labour's victory in 1997 and the launch of its 'ethical foreign policy'. At last, things were going to be different. We were going to intervene on the side of the poor, side with the oppressed and be a beacon for democracy.

Sadly it didn't take long before the fine words appeared to be just that - words - as UK forces took part in the 'shock and awe' bombing raids over Baghdad, details of Britain's complicity in unlawfully transferring prisoners to Guantanamo Bay and other secret locations leaked out, business dealings with China became more important than human rights abuses and we continued to provide deadly military hardware to nasty regimes around the world.

I'd like to examine our 'ethical foreign policies' using UK government relations with two countries - Cuba and Colombia - as examples.

## GAINS IN CUBA

The UK government sends military aid to Colombia. At the same time its Foreign Minister refuses to visit Cuba because, he says, human rights are not being respected on the island.

This fails to take into account any of Cuba's achievements - which are considerable. For example

- Cubans have a higher life expectancy than US citizens
- Infant mortality is just one-fifth of the Latin American average
- The island has four times as many doctors per 100,000 inhabitants compared with the rest of Latin America
- Its literacy rates are higher than the US
- Cuba has one teacher for every 43 inhabitants - compared to a Latin American average of 98.

And all this is even more remarkable when we consider that it has been achieved while the island has endured an inhuman and internationally-condemned blockade aimed at destroying the Cuban economy - and making it more difficult for Cuba to develop its own alternative to neo-liberalism.

## HORROR IN COLOMBIA

Cuba's achievements stand in stark contrast to the horrors unfolding in Colombia - where a vicious civil war, charac-

terised by widespread and systematic abuses of human rights - the vast majority of which are perpetrated by the State - claims the lives of more trade unionists each year than the rest of the world put together. But it's not only trade unionists. Equally on the state hit-list are peace campaigners, indigenous leaders, human rights campaigners, independent journalists and all those who raise their voice in opposition.

In Colombia four million people have been displaced in recent years, thousands have been killed by the Colombian Army and many more have been subjected to torture, arbitrary detention and arrest.

Poverty stalks Colombia - but it is not a poor country. One per cent of the population own over 50% of the land - whilst one in three Colombians has no access to education. Almost half have no access to health care.

## RICH LAND, POOR PEOPLE

Colombia, a country with which the UK government has close ties, has natural resources that make it amongst the richest lands in Latin America. It is a terrible indictment of its government that millions of its citizens are unemployed, illiterate and living below the poverty line - and that those who fight privatization are targeted by paramilitaries. The Colombian government is waging war against its own citizens.

It is not a war on drugs or a war on terror. It is a war designed to protect the privileges of the minority at the expense of the majority. And it is a war supported and funded by our government.

UK government ministers praise the work of Colombian President Alvaro Uribe and provide training to battalions of the army that are implicated in human rights abuses. How much money exactly we pump into Colombia we do not know. It is a secret that is even kept from Parliament.

## QUESTIONABLE STANDARDS

Let me pose a couple of questions as I conclude this article:

- Why does our government accuse Cuba of being a dictatorship, while it refers to Colombia as 'one of South America's oldest democracies'?
- Why is a country like Cuba ostracised whilst a regime that uses death squads to silence its opponents - and has overseen a huge increase in poverty and inequality - is hailed as our ally?

If an ethical foreign policy is to mean more than a cheap slogan then it must include the ending of military aid to Colombia and the beginning of vociferous UK opposition to the illegal blockade and diplomatic isolation of Cuba. In fact, an ethical foreign policy actually needs a few ethics.



# CALL FOR A NATIONAL CONSENSUS ON HIGH SPEED RAIL

Lord Adonis, the Secretary of State for Transport, called on the rail unions affiliated to Labour to do all in their power to make the idea of high-speed rail popular with the public. He is, he admits, almost evangelical about the idea, as he explained at a fringe meeting organised by ASLEF and the TSSA at Labour's annual conference.

LORD ADONIS said it was a national shame that rail had been neglected so drastically for decades. 'There has been no electrification for a decade,' he declared. 'That is why it is vital that we get public opinion behind us now for investment in the railway.'

He called on ASLEF members to raise the benefits of high-speed rail where they could. 'It must be seen as beneficial for the UK,' he said. 'There are still people who think it is beneficial for France, say, because its population is widely dispersed; or attractive to the Japanese because of their fascination with technology.'

'In fact, railway development is a global trend – as I know from visits to Korea, China, and the

United States. The UK cannot afford to lag behind with an innovation – the railway – that was born in this country.'

He said transport between conurbations was vital – and if the choice came down to rail or road, there was no real debate in terms of pollution and cost. 'That means developing high speed,' he said. Other alternative technologies, like maglev, did not bear comparison, especially because they use huge amounts of energy to power.

## THE DEAD HAND OF PRIVATISATION

Asked why the UK lagged behind in high speed and electrification, Lord Adonis blamed privatisation. 'Most of Europe developed rail through state planning in the



Chair Simon Weller makes a point, flanked by Lord Adonis on his left and TSSA's Gerry Doherty on his right. TSSA's Gerry Doherty is to the left of the picture and the TSSA's Gerry Doherty is to the right of the picture.

1990s,' he said. 'We missed the opportunity because we were wasting our time seeking models of privatisation. We systematically destroyed British Rail which could have taken rail forward.'

The only exception was the Channel Tunnel Rail link – and the UK had been shamed into producing this by the French.

'This government is committed to high speed rail, but we need to convince all people and all parties so that it will not be affected if there is a change of administration. I urge all the unions here today – ASLEF, TSSA and Unite – to lobby parties and local people, ensuring that all candidates will back it. We want cross-party national support, a national consensus.' He promised that it would be a central part of the Labour manifesto.

In questions and comments later there was overwhelming support for Lord Adonis' enthusiasm for high speed rail and electrification – but on some points the meeting had to differ with the baron. Two points in particular recurred

- If privatisation was to blame for holding back rail development in the 1990s, why did Labour want to persist with it now?
- How could he talk about the need for competition where it didn't exist? 'No one waits on the platform for a particular company's train.'

## ONLY LABOUR WILL DELIVER

ASLEF's vice-president Tosh McDonald stressed the importance of an integrated railway that would also improve freight routes. 'High speed and electrification must be part of a joined-up strategy that will make rail central to freight as well as

passenger rail,' he said. Tosh added that the lack of a cohesive policy was demonstrated by the fact that Labour had appointed a succession of 34 rail ministers since 1997.

'And I make no apologies for saying that ASLEF has a parallel task of representing those who work in the industry. We need to defend jobs.'

He was also convinced that only a Labour government would deliver what was needed. 'The Tories would split Network Rail, drop Crossrail – despite Lord Adonis' assurance that he would put contracts into place to ensure this could not happen – and stop high speed at Leeds, making us effectively two Englands.'

'The Liberals promise anybody anything, and we have seen what the nationalists in Scotland are doing, never mind what they are saying. They have already cancelled two rail projects – lines from airports to both Edinburgh and Glasgow.'

## NEW AGE OF THE TRAIN

TSSA general secretary Gerry Doherty called for a new 'Age of the Train'. 'Low carbon is on



A slightly Quentin Tarantino look for ASLEF's 2009 Labour Conference delegates Tosh McDonald (union Vice-President), Simon Weller (National Organiser), Ian Neeve (District 7) and Chris Sneddon (District 1)



It was tricky to get past this fourso...



and Bob Rixham on his right. Tosh Doherty is on the right.



Chris Sneddon took his stick along to attract the sympathy vote! (Useful tip: don't play football with people thirty years younger than you!

scandal' of rail ticket pricing. 'Last year the TOCs were told to simplify ticketing. Today there are still over 30 different fares you can get between London and Glasgow!'

Bob Rixham from Unite offered his union's backing for any campaign to popularise high speed and electrification, but his major concern was that there would be engineering skills to meet the new challenges in the UK. He was encouraged that a new National Skills Academy for Railways Skills was being set up. 'That needs to be a matter of priority,' he insisted. Bob also wanted UK firms to be given the opportunity to build new rolling stock. 'We need a UK train building industry,' he said.

Simon Weller, the union's National Organiser who chaired the event, said that the

unexpectedly high number of people who had come to the meeting demonstrated the enthusiasm that existed for electrification and high speed lines. 'Now we have to convince all those people who are not in this hall,' he said. 'We need to challenge every candidate at the next election to commit themselves to supporting our aims. We must make it one of the central election issues.'



Gerry Doherty makes a point

## LABOUR CONFERENCE BACKS ASLEF EAST COAST MOTION



The delegation, with ASLEF political advisor James McGowan, discuss the terms of the emergency motion

THE union achieved the heroic feat of getting an emergency motion debated at Labour's conference, an enormous mountain to climb at an event famed for its aversion to dissenting voices. It was actually ruled out of order at one stage.

But when it was debated, the conference voted unanimously in favour of a call for the East Coast main line to be retained in the public sector – and not re-let to a private sector organisation – following National Express abandoning its franchise.

Labour's executive committee did not take a position on the ASLEF demand, and transport minister Chris Mole pointed out that the franchise would be in public hands for two years while 'the position was monitored' – but conference delegates had no time for fudges or reservations. Not a single hand went up opposing the ASLEF proposal, which was seconded by the TSSA.

National Organiser Simon Weller spoke compellingly as he put the case in a warmly-received speech on the final morning of Labour's 2009 conference.

The full text of the emergency motion is in the news section of the union's website [www.aslef.org.uk](http://www.aslef.org.uk)



me without taking an ASLEF leaflet!

## QUOTES FROM THE FRINGES

### TRANSPORT WILL BE KEY TO ELECTION

People around the Labour conference this year were convinced that commitments to transport will be key to who wins the next election. Jack Dromey of Unite said this was inevitable as it encapsulated the three major concerns of voters: the economy, climate change and care for public services.

### WRIGHT AGAIN

One speaker at conference said that when the Wright brothers first took off in an aeroplane, there were 1.5 billion people living on our planet. This was the same figure for the number of people who travelled by plane last year.

### LABOUR LEFT

At a 'left Labour' fringe meeting one veteran remarked that, 'A few years ago, the Party machine used to treat us as if we were outsiders. Now things have changed. We are outsiders! But come next May things will be different ...'

### FREIGHT GROWTH

Transport minister Chris Mole told the Labour Transport Group that the increase in rail freight had been 'phenomenal' under Labour. We have a number of members who might not share such a rosy picture today ...

### TRANSPORT UNION SUPPORTS RAIL FREIGHT

Graham Stevenson from the transport section of the Unite union said his union supports our rail freight campaign. 'We argue that there are too many ports competing with each other, and the solution is less ports with efficient rail links. We cannot sustain armies of lorries returning to ports empty.'

### NEED TO MARRY TRANSPORT AND PLANNING ACTS

Lord Berkely of the Rail Freight Group pointed out that there needed to be closer cooperation between Planning Acts and Transport policy so that terminals were built where they were needed. 'A freight industry without efficient terminals is like a passenger service with no stations,' he pointed out.



Participants listening carefully in the Arkwright Road meeting room

## EQUALITIES COMMITTEES PLAN TO EXPAND AND INVOLVE

Reports **Debbie Reay**, District 8's representative on ASLEF's Women's Committee

ON 5 August ASLEF's Head Office hosted a meeting which brought together members of the union's three Equality committees - the BEM (Black, Ethnic & Minority), LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bi-Sexual & Transgender) and WRC (Women's Representative Committee). District Council secretaries also attended the event, aimed at defining the direction the Committees would take in the future and considering how to encourage more members to become active in the union.

We had two Simons on the top table - ASLEF's National Organiser Simon Weller who chaired the meeting and Simon Woolley from Operation Black Vote. OBV exists to encourage black people to register to vote, to lobby politicians on black issues and to help overcoming stereotypical attitudes and institutional racism. Simon Woolley spoke

### SUBSIDISING PENSIONS FOR THE RICH

According to research by the TUC, tax relief is heavily skewed towards the better off. Treasury figures reveal that 60 per cent of tax relief goes to higher rate taxpayers, including 25 per cent - nearly £10 billion a year - going to the top one per cent of earners, on more than £150,000 a year. The campaign pamphlet 'Decent Pensions for All' also reveals that taxpayers are paying £2.50 each to subsidise the pensions of the richest one per cent of the population for every pound spent on paying pensions to retired public servants such as nurses, teachers and civil servants.

The TUC says the real pension problem in the UK is not the affordable cost of public sector pensions, but the growth in the number of private sector employees with no pension.

about the OBV call for an investigation into the lack of diversity at Radio 4, where there are no regular African or Caribbean presenters and only two Asian - compared to over 100 white presenters. OBV have offered their assistance in encouraging more people from minority groups into the rail industry.

### GETTING KNOWN AND ACTIVE

The main part of the meeting began with a discussion on minority members and representatives. It was noted that the industry is not attracting minorities and is particularly bereft of Asians and Muslim women. It was suggested that union reps should try to get involved in company selection committees - something that already happens at Northern.

It was felt that the Equalities Committees have not used the ASLEF Journal enough as a promotional tool. One proposal was that a page each edition could be allocated to Equalities, with a section on each committee. Others felt it might make more impact to have one-off articles about good news or achievements as a regular column may get over looked. The Journal could also be used to attract new members and encourage existing members to become more involved in the union.

It was also argued that rather than just putting the details of the secretaries of Representative Committees on publicity fliers, contact details for all committee members, with their photos, should be issued to each Branch Secretary in the respective district. These could then be posted in notice cases, as members identify more closely with their own district's committee members.

### RECRUITMENT MATTERS

The topic of recruitment dominated the afternoon session. It was important that union representatives are allowed into all companies' training schools so they can put the right message across to trainees. Some reps at the meeting hadn't been happy with the way the union had been

## NEW RIGHTS FOR FAMILIES

Families are set to benefit from new leave rights that will give more choice and flexibility to parents as to how they use maternity and paternity leave.

The Government is to consult on new regulations that will give families greater flexibility in how they choose to look after their children. This new provision will be available during the second six months of the child's life and would be an option if the mother has maternity leave outstanding.

presented to them when they were training and they thought it imperative that the reps delivering the presentation should sell the union as well as possible. There was a worry that when new reps are elected, they are 'dropped in at the deep end' and the Forum thought it would be a good idea to have a mentoring system, where more experienced reps took them 'under their wing'.

Education was a hot topic of discussion, with the TUC courses getting a resounding 'thumbs down' for their non-industry-specific content. More beneficial, it was argued, would be ASLEF-run courses which would be company-specific.

Other proposals included the production of an 'Equalities handbook', the inclusion of an equalities section on all ASLEF courses and a legislation course. The idea of creating 'recruitment champions' was also aired.

I found this first Equalities Forum both constructive and motivating. Hopefully it will be the first of many.



Simon Woolley is looking for more black voter involvement



The Forum top table: equalities officer Lee James, chair Simon Weller and guest Simon Woolley

### **WILLIAM ('BILL') EARNEST JAMES RODD - A WELL-LIKED DRIVER**

Bill Rodd who was born on 16 Feb 1937, died on 16 September this year. Bill spent his last decade on the railway at Rugby, where he was a well-liked driver with a keen sense of humour. He started his career as a cleaner and fireman at Bristol but had to interrupt it for two years' National Service, serving in the Royal Army Medical Core.

When he returned to the industry Bill decided to move to Worcester in order to gain a position as fireman/driver.

However in order to secure a permanent driver's position another move was made to Cricklewood. After a stint at St Pancras he finally moved to Rugby.

For the past 12 months Bill had been battling cancer which he never accepted would beat him.

He is survived by his wife Maureen, his sons, Mark and Paul, and daughter Cheryl.

Our deepest sympathies go to his family at this sad time.

Bill's funeral took place at Canley Crematorium in Coventry on Friday 2 October with a reception later at the A1 Club in Rigby's Market Street.

**Alexander Lakic** – Secretary – Rugby branch

### **JAMES WALTER PAGE - COLOUR BLIND HORNSEY MAN**



'Jim' as we referred to him, was born in 1933 and started at Hornsey and worked through the ranks to become a driver.

Unfortunately, with the introduction of the Ashara book for eye tests, he was diagnosed with colour blindness in one shade of green. This unfortunately removed him from the mainline, but he was able to continue his service as movements driver on the depot.

When Hornsey was converted to a EMU depot, Jim remained there, soon securing a post as movements shift supervisor. He remained in this position until he retired. Back in the 50s, Jim was part of the Branch Team that would camp outside the pay office on pay day and run a raffle to raise funds so that once a year we could hold a dinner dance at which the ladies put on their best dresses to be wined, dined and entertained. The funds also allowed us to run a children's party.

Jim was 76 when he died earlier this year. At the funeral to celebrate his life, I was proud to hear his children and grand children speak their heartfelt memories, helping us to share and hopefully assist with their grief. I was able to say that although Jim the person has gone, he will never die while the love you expressed for him remains.

May he RIP.

**Peter Smith** - Reporter - RMS

# WHAT THE UNION WAS DOING 100 AND 50 YEARS AGO

**ASLEF's Locomotive Journal of November 1909 carried a report from H. Mitchelson of the Sheffield Locomotive Ambulance Class Outing to Liverpool, while fifty years on we ran a touching story from Westbury's past ...**

## 100 YEARS AGO

**What did Yorkshire drivers get up to on their jaunts a century ago? A trip to the Mersey, no less – and a fine time in the city of Liverpool ...**

"The members met at Sheffield Victoria in a jubilant mood on the morning of the 11th September, to take the first annual trip to Liverpool. A saloon was chartered and the train was drawn by Engine 697, Driver Bull and Fireman Douse being in charge. On leaving Sheffield the atmospheric conditions were none too pleasing, overcoats being in evidence, but after passing Godley, Father Sol came out radiantly and poured his beams upon the happy party. Liverpool was reached a few minutes late (not the driver's fault for he ran splendidly, and this we duly acknowledged)....

....After dinner a start was made for the docks, where we were the guests of the Cunard Steamship Company in respect of making a tour of the "Caronia." Travelling by the Overhead Railway we arrived at Clarence Dock, where we saw the "Lucania", which had recently been on fire, damage being done to the extent of thousands of pounds.....

....We then made our way back to the pier and took a boat back again, passing the "Carmania" on her way out to America. Arriving at Liverpool we took a tramcar and paid a visit to Lewis's, where purchases were made of Teddy Bears and such like; one member purchasing a wooden doll, which caused no end of amusement not only to us but to the employees, he in one instance asking for a teething powder for it."

## 50 YEARS AGO

**R.E. Williams, Secretary of the Westbury branch, wrote this account of innocent and warm relations between rail staff and passengers in the November Journal of 1959 under the title 'The Margaret Robertson Story'...**

"Some nine years ago, Mrs. Robertson and her husband came to Forrest Farm at Easterton, Wilts, bringing with them their two daughters who were at the time schoolgirls.

The farm is in a lonely spot near the main line between Patney and Lavington and, apart from the farm workers, the only people to be seen were the train crews passing up and down.

The young girls used to wave to the trains, and very soon practically all the crews using this part of the line were whistling and waving back until the girls, and Miss Margaret in particular, began to look on them as their own personal friends.

Recently the young lady married and, as a farewell gesture, she wrote a letter saying that as she was leaving the farm she would be unable to wave to her friends, but that she had left instructions to her parents and farm workers to wave for her.

She also made a special wedding-cake that she hoped would be distributed among her railway friends. This, together with the letter, she took to the station at Lavington and handed to Bro. P. C. Davis of Westbury Branch, who was working the 8.40 a.m. Passenger train from Westbury to Paddington.

The Westbury branch did their best to carry out her wishes, but you can imagine the task of distributing the cake among some 400 crew members!

In appreciation of Miss Robertson's gesture a copy of The Lighted Flame, a set of table mats with a picture of a Heath Robinson type of engine, and an electric toaster were sent from Westbury as wedding presents."

● Extracts selected and edited by Jane Pimlott



*A scene from the Railway Children*

## FROM OKEHAMPTON CLEANER TO THE CHAIR OF DEVON'S COUNCIL

**R**ICHARD WESTLAKE started work on the railways as a cleaner on 27 January in 1964. Last year he retired after a career that saw him occupy senior positions not only in the union but also in local and regional government. It also included working traction from steam to express and included one major crash. 'I owe a lot to the railways,' he says.

Richard is from a railway family and his father, a driver, ASLEF branch secretary and later a shed foreman, took him along to his first union branch meeting at Okehampton.

He began work on the 'quite wonderful' North Cornwall line as a fireman to one Jack Jennings. 'I think I'm the last local man to work that line. Well, until a Journal reader tells us I'm wrong!'

But Richard could sense change in the air. The rationalisation of the North Cornwall line and the disappearance of steam in February 1965 meant all but two firemen were made redundant. 'I moved to Yeovil, where my uncle was a signalman.

'I was working on diesel as well as steam by now, but I could see time was running out for the job. I held on until October but then went to work in Swindon where my uncle was a guard. Yes, it is a bit of a railway family.'

He says it was a wonderful depot at the time with work colleagues moving there from all over the country, mainly South Wales and London. As well as the varied work it also introduced the young Richard to a rich variety of different trains. Swindon was the centre for refurbishing and developing diesels.

Richard didn't mourn the passing of steam as much as some drivers. 'The change was more difficult for established drivers. They were handed a huge book and told to learn it. Many were intimidated and resentful.

'I think firemen were more ambivalent.'

But even at Swindon the writing was on the wall as it became an intermediate depot and freight began to shrink. 'I found out through the sectional council rep, Roy Smith, that if a clerk at Yeovil hadn't made a mistake the previous year, I could have transferred back to Exeter. He sorted it out for me and I transferred in October 1973.'

But the shadow of Beeching still hung over the railway. 'Exeter was full of 'put-back' drivers, men who had reverted to firemen to keep a job. It meant that staff like me were stuck in a log-jam.' Richard became down-hearted at the stagnation and thought of joining those who moved to London to pick up a driving job,



Richard at his seat in the impressive debating chamber of Devon's County Council at Exeter

but, loving Devon as he does, he found it difficult to make the decision.

'As it turned out, it was lucky I didn't move. I remember the day I was told I'd got a driver's job. I found out using the telephone in the signal box at Yeovil where my uncle had worked – the very same place I learned I'd been turned down two years previously. It was a great relief – and a very strange coincidence.'

It was at this time, with the railway in the process of massive upheaval, that Richard first took a position in the union, becoming Exeter's assistant and then branch secretary and then joining the sectional council.

'It was an exciting time for me. Everything was up for grabs as the industry was reorganised and restructured as a preparation for selling British Rail. It was all complex stuff, and quite demanding.'

But Richard moved from challenge to challenge as he then made up part of the divisional council as representative for regional railways. 'There were arguments in the union between members as depots were split and jobs divided. There was a fair share of acrimony. It wasn't an easy time.'

Meanwhile politics was taking up an increasing part of Richard's life. Although he stayed as an LDC rep at Exeter he was finding less time for union work since his election onto the Devon county council in May 1985.

With the reorganisation of local government, Richard was put forward as Labour's candidate for Devon's County Council and won the seat he still holds. This is how he explains the differences of the roles: 'City or district councils are mainly concerned with housing, waste disposal and some economic planning. The county council tends to be a bit broader and involves education, children and adult (formerly social) services and the environment, including transport. The budgets are different too. Devon's County Council spends nearly a billion pounds a year compared with the Exeter council's 60 million. But,' he hastens to add, 'they both have important – but different – roles to play.'

Richard regrets that employers today don't encourage people to take



Richard received a long-service recognition award from Keith Norman under the watchful eye of Stan Moran



British Rail presented the council with this 'Glorious Devon' nameplate to mark Richard's Chairmanship of the DCC



ASLEF's Richard in the grounds of Devon County Council's impressive head office



Richard looks at the portrait of the Council's youngest-ever Chair – Richard!



Richard at home – Exeter rail station!

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](mailto:journal@aslef.org.uk)

up public service in the way BR used to do. 'Being active in ASLEF is a first-class training ground for council or political work,' he says.

Richard was only in his forties when he was approached about becoming Chair of Devon County Council. 'It was a wonderful and quite unique experience.' He remains the youngest person to hold the position.

Highlights of the year included opening two new railway stations at Ivybridge and Digby Parkway; accompanying the Queen around the Devon Country Show; and representing Devon at the commemoration events for the fiftieth anniversary of the D-Day landings.

But it hasn't all been an easy ride for Richard. Back in 1995 a young driver had a SPAD at Westbourne Park and Richard, although he managed to radically reduce his speed, could do nothing to avoid running into the side of the other train. 'Luckily the Royal Oak crash injured only one person seriously. Unluckily – it was me,' he says. Richard suffered a broken hip and pelvis and was hospitalised for a month and a half.

'The generosity and concern of so many people from all walks of life – many of whom were ASLEF brothers – was astonishing. I received 256 cards.

'It also led to me, and my Exeter branch, being at the forefront of making sure drivers can easily get support and counselling after an incident like this. Others later claimed it had been their initiative,' Richard says. 'But the Exeter branch knows better. I'm proud of that.'

One of the difficulties of representing Devon is the seasonal holiday market. 'There is a huge influx of visitors from May to September which causes infrastructure and accommodation problems. We're trying to balance it out by encouraging people to come here for 'all-year-round activities' like bird-watching, walking, painting and photography.

'I want rail to play a bigger part than it does. Most of our visitors tend to come in their cars. That's a problem – like the 'second home' issue.'

All in all Richard says he's enjoyed a rich life. 'I've always liked driving trains and it has been very fulfilling to represent both ASLEF members and my community.'

But Richard's remit has extended far beyond local boundaries as he's been involved for many years in cross-European discussions. He has played a leading role in the Conference of Peripheral and Maritime Regions, a lobby group for fishing, safety, fishing routes, small ports, coastal erosion and trans-national transport links.

Richard tells one final story that says a lot about both him and the profession of train driver before we part.

'When I was chair of the County Council, BR offered me a year off. But I didn't take it. I wanted to keep driving for two reasons. I wanted to keep my hand in, and I wanted to keep my feet on the ground. When you get a position like that you get treated like somebody you're not – always at the front and sitting on the top table.

'I didn't want any of that to go to my head. And I can tell you – there is no better place in the world for keeping your feet on the ground than a train drivers' mess-room!'



Richard in the garden of ASLEF's headquarters with the General Secretary and his security personnel (!) Alan Chase, Andy Matthews, Chris Purvis, Giles Bowerman, Ian Jonas, Jon Morton and Rod French – along with District 7 EC member Brian Corbett.



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*The Gillingham Class of 2009*

ON 1 October Tony West, Alan Taylor and myself attended the Gillingham Annual reunion at Rainham. Once again a good crowd made us welcome.

We were glad to see the secretaries of both the Faversham and Ramsgate branches in attendance along with working Gillingham members. Sister groups from

Ashford, Ramsgate and Tonbridge also came along. Thanks from the RMS to all who purchased our Prize Draw tickets.

Everyone who attended

was grateful to the Committee and the Ladies who ensured we were well fed and to the club for its hospitality and ensuring we did not go dry.

Peter Smith RMS Reporter

### REUNIONS AROUND KENT

Please note the following dates for 2010:

Ashford 14 January,  
Ramsgate 1 April, Tonbridge  
1 July, Rainham 7 October

### REFRESHING MEETING AT ST PANCRAS

The St Pancras branch held its annual badge presentation meeting and social evening on 11 September. We were pleased to welcome our EC member Dave Calfe, who stood in for Keith Norman who was unfortunately prevented from attending. Dave addressed the meeting and presented long services badges recognising 30 years each of ASLEF membership to two of our colleagues, Dave Dhaliwal and Roy Fairbrass.

The well-attended meeting was lively and entertaining, and suitably refreshed by beverages provided by the branch. Our thanks also go to the District 6 Organiser Mick Whelan for his contribution.

**Rebekah Peterson** –  
Secretary - St Pancras Branch



*Somewhere in the fog is a line-up of St Pancras stalwarts!*

## MICK ROADS – 40 YEARS DOWN THE TRACK

At the September meeting of the Kings Cross branch, Chairman Kevin Moir had the pleasure of presenting a 40 Year ASLEF Service Badge to NXEC Driver and LLR Mick Roads. Kevin had been trying to do this all year but Mick has thwarted his attempts by leaving before the end of business or working! Kevin also presented a 30 year badge to NXEC Driver Ray 'The Russian' Bayliss. Ray has the almost unique distinction of being a die hard supporter of Barnet FC!

**PETER SMITH** – Reporter -  
Kings Cross branch



*They've got the blues! Ray and Mick at the presentation*

Mick Whelan, District Organiser and Dave Calfe, EC Member, presenting J.S. Wragg and M.H.B. Ayre with their 50- year medallions at the Willesden 1A Reunion. This is held every first Thursday of each month at Harrow and Wealdstone WMC.

I should also offer a special mention to H. Whitlock on his retirement as Secretary of the 1A.

**NICK SANDHU** – Secretary –  
Willesden branch



# BETTER LATE THAN NEVER AT STRATFORD



Certificates and celebrations at smiling Stratford

AT THE September meeting of the Stratford Branch, we were honoured to have two guests in attendance who were the recipients of presentations from the Branch.

After the usual branch business, Branch Secretary Peter Dodgson handed over to Jeff Colpous, Branch Chair, to make the presentations.

Firstly Mick Foulds received a retirement certificate from ASLEF in recognition of his service to the union. Mick was unfortunately involved in a tragic accident in August 2007 whilst shunting a train at Harlow Mill, and regrettably was retired in May of this year. It was a privilege to have his attendance at the branch, and a true testament to his spirit to hear how well he continues with his activities such as diving, horse riding and holidays. Mick is hugely supported by his wife Sue who was also a guest at the branch meeting. Following the union's presentation, the Stratford Welfare & Social Club presented Mick with a gift and gave flowers to Sue. Jeff added that although Mick is now retired, he will, of course,

always be welcome to catch up with his colleagues at future branch meetings.

A second presentation was then made to retired driver and colleague John Tattersall. It was rather overdue to say the least - as John retired in February 2004! John had started in 1957 at Preston, before heading south and spending most of his time at Stratford before finishing his career after 47 years at Ilford depot for Great Eastern.

Although John retired from Ilford some while ago, Stratford branch felt that his long and loyal service to the union could not go unmarked and presented him with an ASLEF retirement certificate. It is a shame that it had 'slipped through the net' and that it took our union so long to offer John the recognition he deserves.

The branch extends its best wishes to both Mick and John for a happy and healthy retirement. Of course they are both welcome to visit us any time at our functions and branch meetings.

**John Thorpe** - Reporter - Stratford Branch

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### KINGS CROSS BRANCH - OPEN MEETING - SATURDAY 7 NOVEMBER

The Kings Cross branch is holding an Open Meeting on 7 November where speakers will include Frank Dobson MP, Ken Livingstone and an ASLEF representative.

The meeting will be held at the Chancellor's Room, Hughes Parry Hall, 19-26 Cartwright Gardens, WC1H 9EF between 1400 and 1600. The location is over the road from King's Cross station, opposite the British Library.

## SIGNALS POINTLESS UNLESS YOU CAN STOP

I READ with interest Keith Norman's column in the October edition of the Journal about how important the signalling system is to running a safe railway. This is very true. But there is another important thing - and that is being able to stop at the red ones.

Every train driver knows how hard it is to stop a train at this time of year but the vegetation growth in the North East area, over the last few years, has been left to its own devices.

There are now very few places where the vegetation isn't intruding on the railway. In some places the trees are even taking the shape of a train, they are that over grown.

Despite numerous and detailed reports going in to those concerned, no action is taken. We are encouraged to report low rail head adhesion (LRHA) problems so action can be taken and new LRHA areas can be identified. However, no new areas have been identified - despite our reports pointing them out.

The sandite train only goes on the routes that were originally pointed out more than twenty years ago. Yes, it does take that long doesn't it? But action is needed now because it won't be long before there is a serious incident with a train and a contaminated rail. Does there have to be another serious accident and loss of life before any one does anything? It looks that way. Some one needs to pull their finger out - and fast. Otherwise it doesn't matter how good the signalling system is if the trains can't stop.

**Dave Hardy** - Northern Driver - Gateshead & Newcastle Branch

## UFTON SURVIVOR BACKS UNION ACTION ON CROSSINGS

I NOTICED in my regional newspaper Keith Norman's call for train drivers to approach level crossings at 20mph until

Obstacle detectors are introduced.

As I was involved in the Ufton Nerve train crash in which my daughter died, I campaigned actively for obstacle detectors making this a key point of the inquest into this accident.

I wholeheartedly endorse ASLEF's action which in my experience is the only way that this danger will be reduced. If I can be of any help in supporting you in your efforts either internally or with the media or wider public, I would like to do so.

**Peter Webster**

## THE UNION FOR DRIVERS

I AM writing to explain why, when I became a driver, I quit the RMT to join ASLEF.

I drive trains for Northern Rail East but I joined the rail industry as a railman in 1980. I progressed to assistant technician on the S&T (signalling and telecommunications), then to leading railman at Crossgates station before moving to Garforth as a signaller.

In 1984, I became a freight guard and moved to Knottingley. This was the time of the miners strike. ASLEF staunchly supported the NUM and moved no trains during that dispute, so I didn't do any work for about 5/6 months.

When I came to Leeds as a freight guard in 1986 I was elected to the LDC as an NUR representative, but with the introduction of the Train Crew concept in 1988 I applied for a driver's position at Leeds and in 1990 I was appointed to driver.

When the NUR and NUS merged in 1991 I decided to join ASLEF. I wanted to be part of a union that could represent me as a driver and have reps who understood drivers' issues. I became an LDC rep in Leeds in 2006, and I'm proud to be active in our union.

I would encourage any member to become active within our union. There's a lot of scope, from attending branch meetings, attending the annual conference (AAD) as a visitor or going along to weekend schools and forums.



## WE SHOULD ALL USE THE DIARY MAPS ★

I HAVE just received my copy of the 2010 ASLEF diary. I am delighted to see after two years of irrelevant motorway maps at the back, we have now realised that we are a rail trade union and that railway maps are more useful to our members.

Now all we need to do is pressure the TOCs into giving priv and free travel to all staff – and not just the safeguarded minority - so that all our members can travel on all the lines shown on the maps.

**Martin Scott** (safeguarded) - Driver - Woking

## 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](mailto: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!

## WESTBURY CORRECTION

I HAVE just read the letter I sent to you for publication in the last, October, edition of the ASLEF Journal.

With disbelief I see you have incorrectly mentioned thanks to Steve Williams - and not to Steve Davies who was so helpful, and professional throughout the investigation into an incident of the line.

Please could you correct this in the next issue?

**Mark Elvey** - Driver - FGW, Gloucester

## NO HIGH SPEED ELITE

AS AN ASLEF member and a Southeastern driver for 19 years I was annoyed to see a recent 'Railnews' talk about High Speed 1 having recruited '112 elite drivers'. It is both inaccurate and derogatory to drivers remaining on Southeastern Classic and Metro trains, especially those highly experienced drivers who were turned down in favour of drivers

who are relatively unknown to the company.

Whilst a lot of the chosen drivers are experienced at what they do, they were not selected as the 'elite'. I know a lot of the drivers chosen. Some have had SPADS and others have had multiple TPWS activations and other operating incidents. If not actually corrupt, I believe the selection process was unfair. It was not designed to find an 'elite'. It was intended to allow the selectors to pick and choose exactly the people they wanted - and eliminate drivers they thought unsuitable, not on ability grounds, but for personal reasons.

It concerns me that the interviewing panel consisted solely of driver managers who had known many of the interviewees for some time. It is impossible to be completely impartial in an interview in these circumstances. It is to eliminate such prejudice that the legal system has selection criteria for jury members.

Every driver declined an HS1 position, including class 1 drivers, was given the same reason – that they 'did not sell themselves at the interview'. This is the only reason that cannot be questioned, because it is only the interviewers' opinion.

I will have served 25 years on the railway in April next year and my reward is to be refused

a position on HS1, not because of my record, my ability to drive trains or my attendance - but because 'I did not sell myself at the interview'.

I cannot find any reason to believe this was a fair selection process designed to find an 'elite'.

**Paul Bunyan** – Driver – Ramsgate

## CUT THOSE DATES

WOULD it be possible to produce a half size 'pocket' version of the ASLEF diary, and thereby offer a choice to members?

It would save me from having to give away my diary every year.

If this is viable, you could include a notification slip in next year's diary for those members who would prefer the 'pocket' version, and the new size could be introduced in 2012.

**Keith James**

Driver – Victoria – Battersea branch

## MORE THAN JUST A DIARY!

ABOUT three years ago I contacted the union about refusing to work in an environment I deemed as dangerous to my health.

ASLEF was very efficient in taking up my case and forwarding it to Thompsons

solicitors. They could not have been more helpful with taking on board my grievance and bringing it to a very successful conclusion. I retained the personal attention of a Mr Vincent Reynolds throughout the case and at all times was kept up to date at every stage of the proceedings.

I have heard it mentioned at times that the ASLEF diary is the most expensive one in the world. All I can say is that at a time like I have recently been through, you realise the great value of being a union member. The legal backing is second to none.

And even if you are lucky enough not to need legal help, it's worth remembering that the conditions we enjoy as drivers in regards to wages and conditions have never been willingly given to us by the kind-heartedness of management.

My sincere thanks to ASLEF and to Thompsons. I have no hesitation in recommending both!

**Glenn Roofthoof** –

Construction Driver – East London Line Project

## DAVE WAS RIGHT ABOUT UNION SOLICITORS

HAVING read Brother Dave Vaughan's report in the October edition, 'Solicitors - The Good News', I'd like to heartily

## UNUSUAL STATION AT DARTMOUTH

I THOUGHT some readers might be interested in this picture of a rail station with a difference. It is the ex-GWR station at Dartmouth

What's different about it? Well, it never had trains or lines, and still hasn't! You have to get the ferry to Kingswear Station Steam Railway.

Not a lot of people know that. Good luck to you all.

**Frank Battersby** – retired member



Like a pub with no beer!

# LETTERS to the EDITOR

endorse what he said in his last paragraph. The Thompsons pages in our diary make it worth its weight in gold.

I got a £6k bill for soil drainpipe replacement, but I was most unhappy with the quality of work, progress, timescales and lack of communication. Complaining to the company got me nowhere.

To cut a long story short, telephone advice from Thompsons gave me the confidence to get a more professional contractor to rectify the faults – and then deduct the cost of his bill, adding a further substantial sum as compensation. Despite initially being threatened with court action to recover the entire bill, the company settled for my first reduced offer when I told them I was being guided by union funded legal advice.

If anyone from Thompsons reads this please give Nathan from the telephone helpline a pat on the back for a job well done!

Meanwhile at our next Branch Meeting, I'll be proposing that we request our District No.6 Organiser Mick Whelan to follow Colin Smith's lead and organise a training day with Thompsons to raise awareness of the great range of legal assistance available to ASLEF members.

**John Greene** - Driver - Derby EMT

## THANKS FOR ROY

I would just like to take this opportunity to thank Roy

Luxford for pursuing my claim for Sunday payment when off track. I had an incident in June 2008 and was off track but with a Driver Instructor (DI) on a coaching plan, and was told that I could not work my rostered Sunday.

This resulted in 16 months of Roy pursuing my claim, with the help of once-a-month emails from myself, before it was paid out - despite the fact that it was provisionally agreed in November 2008. Only the sheer determination and perseverance of Roy made it happen.

This is a good example of the type of hard work that the union does on a day-to-day basis that members often don't see or hear about. The union does great work representing people every day.

Thanks again to Roy Luxford and the time and effort he has given this claim.

S. Cresswell – Norwood Junction

## A FINAL WORD ON THE TUC

MAY I, through the Journal, take the opportunity to thank my colleagues in District 2 for their nomination to attend the TUC in Liverpool in September. It was an enjoyable week and an interesting insight into how our trade union operates at these events.

Special mention goes to my fellow delegates Simon Weller, Alan Donnelly and Tony Cashman for informed debate on a variety of topics, and also

the ASLEF's political advisor James McGowan.

The transport debate on the Wednesday had us on our toes – clear heads were required! Two things caught my attention whilst representing our union. First people realise we have industrial strength and are envious of our position politically. And also, people listen when ASLEF are mentioned.

Thanks also to Mick Whelan and Colin Smith for the part they played at our fringe meeting, which went well. Oh,

and thanks to the Chester branch for looking after us on the Sunday.

I don't like to finish with a criticism, but it was very poor of the Morning Star to fail to mention our transport debate on the Thursday morning. It even had the audacity to apportion ASLEF's speech to a sister union. It's perhaps something we can consider when we're asked to donate to the Star at our annual conference (AAD).

**Alan Reid** – Secretary – Yoker branch

## CLASSIFIED ADVERTISEMENTS

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# PUTTING RAIL BACK ON TRACK



We asked **Nigel Keohane**, Senior Researcher at the New Local Government Network, for his views on improving rail services after seeing the NLGN publication 'On the Right Track: new models for integrated transport' which he wrote earlier this year. This is a summary of some of his themes ...

**T**HE issue that has dominated debate on transport in the national media over the last few months has been that of rail franchises. First, we had the East Coast mainline being brought back under state management after the franchise owners National Express ran into trouble. Just a few weeks later, a group of MPs castigated the rail franchise system as a 'muddle' that does not fairly reflect passenger views or needs.

Understanding methods for fairly representing the views of communities and passengers into the decision-making process therefore should be at the forefront of the Government's minds with the economic climate likely to mean further pressure on other franchises.

The issue raises wider questions of just how disconnected our current transport systems and infrastructure are from the citizens who use them.

## LINKING THE NETWORK AND THE PASSENGERS

Compared to its European comparators, transport in England remains fractured and disjointed – provision of information is less comprehensible, infrastructure is linked less coherently, fares and ticketing are less convenient or consistent. A myriad number of agencies, operators and franchises oversee public transport in a complex web of responsibilities and powers.

Specifically, the problems have been most severe in England's regions and sub-regions outside the capital. London has, through its structures, infrastructure, connections and 'Oyster' card facility, built on its regulated bus service and developed deeper integration between car, bus, underground and train. Meanwhile, citizens outside the capital continue to encounter a less coherent and effective structure.

## PUBLIC COSTS UP, PRIVATE DOWN

But other less transparent challenges underpin these disconnections. In the first place, despite the Government's fuel duty,

there remains a significant disjuncture between public and private transport – with the costs of travelling by car decreasing whilst public transport costs increase. Financially, this creates false choices for citizens on how to get from 'A' to 'B'.

Equally importantly, transport's role in society is becoming more complex and interrelated. How we design and run our transport systems relate to how we can ensure we have a functioning economy, how far we can ensure social inclusion in our communities and how as a society we can generate effective responses to the challenges of climate change.

Bringing these policy levers together and presenting clear and comprehensible choices before citizens therefore is a clear challenge for government, whether it is national, regional, sub-regional or local.

## RAILWAYS THAT SUIT COMMUNITIES

Achieving against these challenges is, in part, reliant on appropriate and responsive governance structures that can relate policy and action in one sphere to another. Recent research from the New Local Government Network has set out new models for how our cities and sub-regions can collect together to make effective decisions on transport that link with their economic, social and environmental strategies and design public transport systems that tally with the needs of their communities.

With these new structures and democratic links to the local population, the question should also be asked of whether we have in place the right input from our local populations into other transport decisions. Should decisions on rail franchises be left, as they are currently, in the hands of the Department for Transport?

How to facilitate an appropriate input for passengers remains a challenge. However, a number of key facts about the nature of rail usage should be recognised. In the first place, the majority of commuter journeys are sub-regional in nature. Of the UK's 61

billion annual journeys, 69 percent of business journeys and almost 84 percent of commuter journeys are shorter than fifteen miles. Providing opportunities therefore for passengers who travel within their local communities and sub-regions rather than simply inter-city should be explored.

## A LOCAL VOICE

NLGN has suggested a number of mechanisms and triggers to give local communities and sub-regions a greater say in their rail services. This should include giving groups of councils and Integrated Transport Authorities a more engrained input into franchise agreements at the outset by making them co-signatories on the contracts. But, we should go further.

Ongoing needs, expectations and trends of passengers must be fully incorporated into rail provision. NLGN recommends that groups of sub-regional local authorities should be able to trigger a contract refresh or reconsideration if certain local targets or levels of satisfaction with trains' services are not achieved. This would give a greater voice to local people in areas that suffer delays, poor services, overcrowding or unreasonable fares policies.

Finally, NLGN suggests that other city regions should follow the cue of London's Oyster card and introduce integrated ticketing and fares for rail, bus, trams and other public transport provision. Not only would this introduce a much more convenient and logical system for passengers, but it could also provide crucial additional capital investment for rail infrastructure and other transport services. For instance, it could provide a cash injection of £50 million for the Leeds City Region.

Together these reforms would ensure that rail services are rooted and centred on the needs and expectations of the passengers that use these services. They would also give a sounder base for ensuring that franchises respond to passenger trends and, provide a firmer and fairer footing for rail services across the country.

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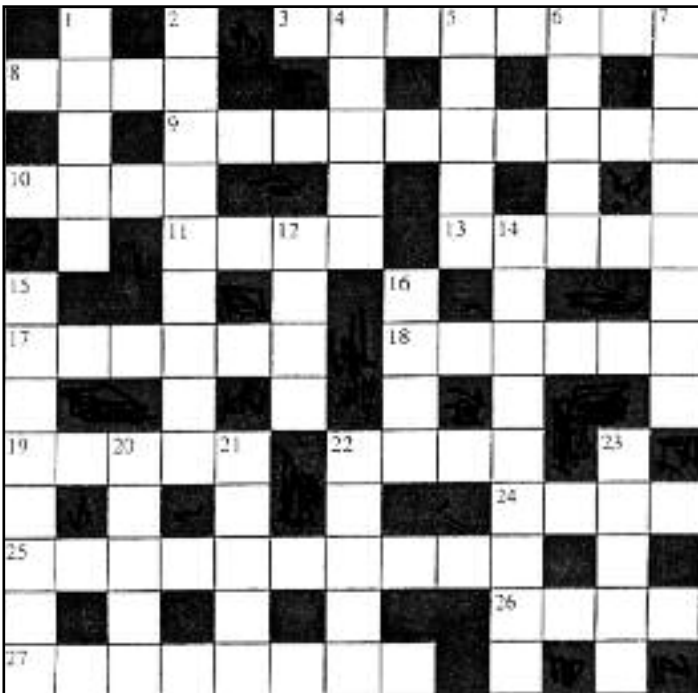
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**ASLEF** *more than just a union*



## Prize Crossword No. 43

set by TLC



Solution to Crossword No 42 which appeared in the October edition of the ASLEF Journal. Congratulations to **Alastair McIntyre** from **Fife**.

**ACROSS** 1 Hampstead 8 Tilting trains 11 Open 12 Chant 13 Visa 16 Toffees 17 Cue-ball 18 Needles 20 Cashier 21 Army 22 E-mail 23 Flee 24 Sleep Like A Log 27 Cloakroom **DOWN** 2 Ants 3 Punches 4 Titanic 5 Alan 6 Mile after Mile 7 One In a Million 9 Tottenham 10 Mail Order 14 Meals 15 Feast 19 Somalia 20 Clinker 24 Bell

Thanks for all your responses to the 42nd ASLEF crossword in the October 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.

### CLUES ACROSS

- 3 Tasty piece of pork (5,3)
- 8 Work partner (4)
- 9 A fifty-station route in the British railway system (10)
- 10 At the back (4)
- 11 Nocturnal birds (4)
- 13 Hate, detest (5)
- 17 Room where clerical work takes place (6)
- 18 He is called onto the field when a player is injured (6)
- 19 Good ones can often enable an actor to be given a plum role (5)
- 22 Large black bird (4)
- 24 Well ventilated (4)
- 25 Encouragement to commit an illegal act (10)
- 26 ---- Sommer, actress in 'A Shot in the Dark' (4)
- 27 Safety headgear (4-4)

### CLUES DOWN

- 1 Paid by passengers (5)
- 2 A light-rail (tram) system operated in Manchester (5-4)
- 4 American wild cats (5)
- 5 Abbreviation for the Royal Society for the Prevention of

Accidents (5)

- 6 ----- Carter, famous pre-war footballer and one-time Manager of Hull City (5)
- 7 ----- Line, London Underground service (8)
- 12 Second of the 'Big Four' railway companies (initials) (4)
- 14 An area of West London in the Borough of Westminster (9)
- 15 Place where the Royal Artillery Barracks is situated (8)
- 16 Worn by a horse rider to urge the horse on (4)
- 20 Gold statuette presented to an outstanding actor or actress (5)
- 21 Screaming Lord -----, former aspiring politician (5)
- 22 Heavenly body which encircles the sun (5)
- 23 Use it to slow down the train (5)

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



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