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- THIS MONTH WE***
- * STUDY THE SUBURBS***
 - * FOLLOW FRUIT OVER EUROPE***
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WE DON'T HAVE TO WISH THEM A MERRY FRANCHISE



DO YOU know how I'd define a waste of breath? It would be wishing the owner of a rail franchise a 'Merry Christmas'. The fact is – he's going to have one. You can't go wrong with a franchise. If it makes money, you keep it. If it doesn't, you walk away.

Franchises are designed to ensure the owners win – no matter what they do. The terms of the contract are so favourable to investors, they can't do wrong. The most blatant example of this is the clause that says they don't need to bother about industrial relations. If they cause a strike by bad treatment of employees or insulting pay offers, they're not too worried – because the tax-payer will compensate them.

This is the clause that reads 'the Secretary of State, in his sole discretion, may decide to reimburse or ameliorate net losses of the Franchise Operator arising from industrial action (howsoever caused and of whatever nature)'. This is really remarkable. It means companies can treat staff as badly as they choose – and get paid for doing it!

Dave Calfe from the executive committee had a two-year battle to prise information about this clause from the Department for Transport, using the Freedom of Information Act. Then Blaydon MP Dave Anderson was told in the Commons last month that money had been paid out under the clause. He's now submitted a formal Parliamentary Question asking for details – like who got the money, and how much?

This really is a scandal. Labour has paid money to private companies to compensate them for the inconvenience of legal industrial action by a union affiliated to the Party. It's the equivalent of the Tories agreeing to fund our members' wages during an industrial dispute. And worse, it actively protects franchises that have bad industrial relations practices.

Franchises make the government position utterly illogical. If we ask them to intervene on an issue, they says it's nothing to do with them. They are independent companies and the Department for Transport has no control over them. This is nonsense. Two companies – First Capital Connect and London Midland – were summoned to the Department last month and told to submit action plans to improve their performance.

This is clear intervention by the government, which leads to two conclusions. First it means it can intervene on issues we want raised with companies, like free staff travel. And second, if it does have to intervene, the logic is for the Department to oversee the whole railway in the public sector.

All they need to do is not renew franchises when they run out. That might spoil the festive season for a few franchise holders. But it would cheer me up no end!

KEITH NORMAN
GENERAL SECRETARY

TUBE INVESTMENT – BUSINESS BACKING, PEOPLE PAYING

A REPORT from business group London First says passengers could be sentenced to 'decades of Underground misery with cattle-class conditions' if investment in the Tube is not maintained. It adds that without modernisation, the number of people commuting in conditions akin to four or more people in a telephone box would double to half a million by 2026.

It claims that without investment passengers will endure temperatures of 32C (90F) - in excess of limits defined in EU regulations for transporting livestock – and that Victoria station would have to

shut two minutes out of every six to maintain safety in the rush-hour.

The group argues that 'with forecast revenues, and taking the cost of maintenance that will be necessary in any case, the upgrade of the Tube more than pays for itself'. Boris Johnson was at the report launch and, quite straight-faced, remarked that the report 'sets out in graphic terms the absolute necessity to keep investing in London's transport infrastructure'.

'This is all well and good,' says ASLEF's Keith Norman. 'But the question is who is to do

the investing? Boris' solution is that working people stump up the cash. The Mayor has announced plans to increase tube fares by almost 4%, which is more than three times the rate of inflation. Bus passengers have to put up with increases of more than 12 times the inflation rate.

'Meanwhile he's decided to scrap the £25 charge on the worst polluting gas guzzlers, like Chelsea tractors – which would have raised £50 million a year, and to drop the western extension of the congestion charge, which means some £60 million in lost revenue.'



Now it's official! Khalid's a top-notch rep!

KHALID RANA, the union's safety rep at Gidea Park, has successfully completed level three of a Diploma in Occupational Health and Safety. He received his certificate by his course tutor Jonaphan Jeffries at the College of North East London (conel).

No one who knows Khalid will be surprised at the award – but we are all delighted for him.

TUBE BALLOT OVER NEASDEN DISPUTE

TRAIN Operators and Instructor Operators at Neasden Depot are balloting for industrial action after London Underground said it intended to open a new depot at Harrow.

The General Secretary told the company that the changes to nights and balance of shifts was 'totally unacceptable' to ASLEF. The result will be declared on 24 November.



Victoria becomes a centre of learning

NEW VICTORIA LEARNING CENTRE

On 23 September 2009, District One held a development day for Learning Representatives at the newly opened Learning Centre at Victoria Station. The day was a mixture of discussions and activities, including very useful talks from Gabby Upton from unionlearn and Zoi Kakouris Lead ULR Southern. Thank you to all those in attendance for their contribution and especially those who travelled the length of the district to get there!

EMMA RAMSAY Project Worker

HUMAN FACTORS LIBRARY ONLINE

RSSBs Human Factors Team (which looks at ergonomics and the interface between men and machines) has announced that the latest edition of its research catalogue is now available online, rather than just as a CD ROM as previously.

The library, which includes a range of key issues relevant to the rail industry, is to be found at <http://www.rssbhumanfactorslibrary.co.uk>

REVISED ACAS RULES ON TIME OFF FOR TRADE UNION ACTIVITIES

A REVISED and updated Code of Practice on time off for trade union duties and activities was passed by Parliament on 20 October. It was drafted by the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service, ACAS. It

- gives more guidance to line managers;
- provides more advice on the ways in which businesses can manage time off;
- addresses the issue of access to workplace facilities for representatives; and
- reflects the move towards electronic-based learning as a means to train union reps

A copy of the draft revised code is available at www.acas.org.uk/index.aspx?articleid=2391

DfT CHANGES FROM SECRETIVE TO MYSTERIOUS

READERS may recall that two years ago EC member Dave Calfe asked the Department for Transport (DfT) whether it had given money to Silverlink to compensate the company when industrial action was taken, and if, as a result of the dispute any changes had been made to Govia's London Midland franchise (which took over part of Silverlink).

For two years the Department refused to tell either Dave or the Information Commissioner.

Then, last month it suddenly said the answer to both questions was 'no'. 'But if that was the case, why did they have to be dragged kicking and screaming before they gave us the answer?' Dave asks.

Dave was trying to discover if the company had used the clause in the Silverlink franchise agreement that says 'the Secretary of State, in his sole discretion, may decide to reimburse or ameliorate net losses of the Franchise Operator

arising from industrial action (howsoever caused and of whatever nature)'. It also exists in, we believe, most other franchise contracts.

Because of the reluctance of the DfT to respond, the union is now convinced it has something to hide. As a result Blaydon MP Dave Anderson has agreed to ask a Parliamentary Question about whether any public funding has been given to a rail franchise to offset the effects of industrial action.

AFFILIATE YOUR BRANCH TO LABOUR – AND PICK YOUR MP!



urges National Organiser
Simon Weller

HERE'S a question for you: 'Is your branch affiliated to the local Constituency Labour Party?'

To which I expect to hear an indignant cry of 'course not!' That, or the sound of tumbleweed gently blowing across the room.

Very few of our ASLEF branches are affiliated to Constituency Labour Parties (CLPs). This is hardly surprising with the general disengagement with the political process and the disappointment at the missed opportunities by the current Labour government.

However, it's very important that we start getting ready for the fight that is coming. Over a hundred Labour MPs are choosing to step down, some before they're pushed, some because they too have become tired of politics.

SAY WHO SPEAKS FOR US

We now have an excellent opportunity to have our say in who replaces them. We want to see prospective candidates with the same values and agenda as us. We want to see candidates with trade union backgrounds and experience; such as Gerry Ryan the prospective candidate for Croydon Central – BT worker, CWU activist and local councillor. ASLEF will be backing Gerry because we need normal people representing us!

We don't want to see the further extension of the professional political class. Those who enter politics as a career, first by taking a degree in PPE (Philosophy, Politics and Economics) then a parliamentary researcher's job, then an adviser, then as an MP. All this without ever having held down a normal job outside the distorted world of Westminster. A case in point, amongst many, is David Cameron MP.

Affiliating to the CLP allows our members to attend the selection meetings and vote on our prospective parliamentary candidates. Let's make sure they are our people not careerists. So get your branch affiliated to have your say. We can affiliate to any CLP in which we have members living.

DON'T GIVE UP!

I have been as frustrated by the antics of the Government as many but be in no doubt that 'change for change's sake' is not an option. I chanced across a fitting description of the reborn, rebranded New-Tory party. They can be seen like the traditional red telephone boxes: familiar, solid, comforting and very British. A constant presence on our landscape - but open the door, look inside and you'll be assailed by the stink of stale urine!

The Tories have made it clear where they stand on the issue of trade union rights and their response to the recent Royal Mail action simply exposes they have unfinished business with the Unions. Their 2005 manifesto promised to make strikes illegal that had a 'disproportionate effect'. A definition that easily encompasses us and our recent success on National Express East Anglia.

There will only be one of two parties the winner at next year's election. It will be either Labour or Conservative. The fight starts now to make sure we don't go backwards with a return to the Tories.

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LONGER FRANCHISES NOT A SOLUTION SAYS RAIL UNION

KEITH NORMAN has dismissed a call by the Association of Train Operating Companies (ATOC) for radically longer rail franchises of up to two decades as 'offering nothing that would help to solve current problems'. ASLEF's general secretary said, 'I can't see that extending the length of franchises would make a jot of difference. It certainly isn't the solution to the bedlam of the current system.'

Keith argued

- that the stated objective of government is to provide competition. Franchising does not do this. It simply created monopolies on particular routes – something it was supposed to stop!

- if franchising doesn't work in seven-year segments, what is the point of extending the period and making the mistake bigger and

longer? Longer franchises would only entrench the obvious limitations of the existing system

- the franchise firms aren't proper railway companies and don't have money to invest
- that one objection to franchises is that they go off the boil in the final years of the franchise. If they are extended, they will have years of complacency at the beginning as well as the end
- railways need long-term centralised planning – not more decentralisation.
- giving train companies more flexibility could allow them to cut services to save money at times of recession

ATOC claimed that longer franchises could attract more private finance as operators would have more time to benefit from investment and allow managers to



focus on improving services rather than concentrating on bidding for the next franchise. It also objects to 'inappropriate micro-management' by civil servants.

'The public doesn't have a great store of trust in the franchising companies, for good reasons,' Keith says. 'So it would be deeply unpopular to extend their control over our industry. Why don't investors get on with investing and leave rail specialist to run the railway?'

MSP OPENS EDINBURGH WAVERLEY LEARNING CENTRE

ON 19 October ASLEF-sponsored Labour MSP Karen Whitefield, convener of the Scottish Parliament's Cross Party Committee for Education, Lifelong Learning and Culture, officially opened the new Rail Union Learning Centre at Edinburgh Waverley Station. The opening took place during ScotRail's annual anniversary tour with ScotRail's managing director Steve Montgomery, District Organiser Kevin Lindsay, company council member Tam McAllen and ASLEF's SULF project worker, Jim Baxter all in attendance.

The new learning centre is the eighth to be opened in ScotRail stations and depots as part of ASLEF's lifelong learning project. In the heart of the station, it will deliver free and shift-friendly tutor-led learning to ASLEF members. The centre has two computers and an array of learning materials including books, CDs and language discs that union members can use whenever they wish to do some self learning as they will be open 24 hours a day 7 days a week.

'The old idea that we leave learning behind when we finish school or college is long gone – lifelong learning is here to stay, bringing real benefits for both workers and their employers,' explains Karen Whitefield MSP. 'I would like to congratulate ScotRail and ASLEF for



Waverley opening (left to right) Tam McAllen, ScotRail company council & local ULR, Kevin Lindsay, District Organiser, Karen Whitefield MSP and Jim Baxter. Photo: Rob McDougall

successfully introducing learning opportunities in the workplace. Access to education and training is crucial in determining an individual's life chances.'

ASLEF's local union learner rep Tam McAllen is in the process of arranging an open day to allow all our members to see the new RULC in all its glory and encourage them to use it. There are also plans to have the first tutor-led course up and running in the centre at the start of the next college term.

Jim Baxter ASLEF project worker said, 'This is yet another great example of trade unions working for the benefit of their members. These centres break down the barriers to lifelong learning by helping us deliver free shift friendly trade union led learning in the workplace.'

ASLEF GIVES EVIDENCE TO HOUSE OF COMMONS TRANSPORT COMMITTEE

NATIONAL Organiser Simon Weller and EC member Hugh Bradley outlined the union's key priorities for future investment in the UK railways when they gave evidence to the House of Commons Transport Select Committee last month.

Simon highlighted the importance of increasing capacity on the network through the construction of high speed lines and drew attention to the environmental advantages of greater electrification as well as pointing to the benefits of a designated freight line which could free-up more space for passenger trains on both the east and west coast mainlines.

Hugh emphasised the need for increased investment in the rail freight infrastructure, lamenting the tentativeness of the Government's strategic freight network and urging greater enhancements to rail and road integration at freight terminals.

The National Organiser criticised Network Rail's maintenance and renewal policy asking how they could conduct the deferred work while sacking 1200 staff.

NATIONAL EXPRESS REJECTS STAGECOACH MERGER

TALKS about merging National Express and Stagecoach ended last month with National Express rejecting the plan and saying there would be no further discussions.

The announcement of the breakdown came as Stagecoach awaited a decision on whether it would be allowed to view the books of the rival company.

FIRST CAPITAL CONNECT STRIKE BALLOT ANNOUNCED



ASLEF's executive committee has set in motion a ballot for strike action of its 550-plus members working in First Capital Connect.

The ballot result will be known on 9 December and industrial action could commence a week after that date.

At the root of the problem is the pay offer made by the company which consists of nothing this year, and 3% (or one percent over inflation if that is more) next year.

'Last year the company was awarded the Evening Standard's 'award' for the company which combined the worst service and the biggest profits,' says union general secretary Keith Norman. 'Our members want to improve the service – but they are also entitled to a reasonable share of any surplus they have created.'

Keith has informed First Capital Connect that 'the company's failure to satisfactorily resolve the 2009 Pay Review and its failure to resolve our concerns relating to a breakdown of industrial relations is totally unacceptable to ASLEF', and given statutory notice of the union's intention to ballot its members in First Capital Connect for strike action.

PARLIAMENTARY MOTION ON NETWORK RAIL MAINTENANCE

Twenty-five MPs have signed an Early Day Motion calling on the Government to intervene 'to ensure that Network Rail directors put safety first' as NR announced the loss of thousands of maintenance jobs this year. The politicians question whether NR 'will be able to ensure the safe and efficient running of the railway, including the adequate inspection and repair of track, signals, overhead lines and other infrastructure'. It also registers its concern that the Office of Rail Regulation (ORR) has asked Network Rail to make efficiency savings of 21% over the next five years.

POLL SHOWS 70% WANT PUBLIC RAIL



An opinion poll last month conducted by the reputable ICM company reveals that 70% of the public back the return of rail to the public sector, fully supporting the union's claim that the policy would be a vote-winner in a future General Election. The poll was commissioned by the RMT.

UNITED STATES 3, UNITED NATIONS 187

A vote in the General Assembly last month condemned the 47-year American trade embargo on Cuba – which includes medical supplies – by the margin of 187 to 3.

The US can only scrape up – or purchase - the support of Israel and the tiny Pacific island nation of Palau.

It was the 19th year in a row that the General Assembly has carried the resolution, and the 19th in succession that the US has ignored it, despite changes in the administration.

BOOKLET HIGHLIGHTS ARGUMENTS FOR HIGHSPEED RAIL



SERA, the environment campaign affiliated to the British Labour Party, has produced a booklet called 'Fast Forwards: Labour's case for high speed rail' which puts the case for building a high speed rail network in the UK.

As well as ASLEF's Keith Norman, contributors include Gordon Brown, Lord Adonis, Ken Livingstone, Louise Ellman and Spanish Transport Minister, Jose Blanco Lopez. It is available to read online at www.sera.org.uk



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KEEP COOL – YOUR FRUIT’S ON A TRAIN CROSSING EUROPE!

Fetching perishable goods like food products across Europe to the UK by train used to seem an impossible dream. No more. Not only can it be done – it has been.

Last summer some special melons trundled into the UK. They'd arrived from Italy – and they'd come by rail, care of the regular Norfolk Line train from Novara (Italy) to Hams Hall. Full 'track and trace' was provided – and the temperature was monitored throughout the journey. They arrived in prime condition – and hardly made a blip on the carbon count.

The meandering melons arrived as a result of Freight Europe, working for Norfolk Line, organising a series of train operators along the route – including Crossrail (Italy and Switzerland), SNCF Frêt (France), Europorte 2 (Channel Tunnel) and Colas Rail (UK).

The Rail Freight Group's Chairman Tony Berkeley was delighted. He said, 'This demonstrates that the movement of fruit and vegetables from Italy, Spain

and other locations through the Channel Tunnel works effectively, and we look forward to these companies and others building on this success.'

The operation was a trial, but one which Henry des Longchamps of Freight Europe, said was 'an important success which demonstrates that a complex rail venture can work with a good operational result when there is a joint partnership, commitment and common interest.'

Last month came further proof that fetching fruit and vegetables across the continent by rail is not a gimmick or a 'one-off'. It is a practical and sensible method of conveying even freight that needs to be kept fresh.

And the proof came from an unexpected source – Eddie Stobart, a name more associated with belching diesel lorries on Europe's motorways than as a trail-



blazer for low-carbon rail freight.

EDDIE'S READY FOR A CHANGE

Last month the Stobart train left Valencia on a two-day trip to the company's railhead in Dagenham, east London. It carried 30 refrigerated containers crammed with tomatoes, lemons, oranges and other fruit and vegetables

on an eco-friendly journey to UK dining rooms. Bar the melon break-through, it's the first time fresh produce has been shipped through the Channel Tunnel.

This single trip took 30 lorries off the roads between southern Spain and England – and brought about a massive reduction in carbon emissions.

The company's chief executive William Stobart told the Observer that the journey represented the longest single rail journey in Europe and would take 30 lorries off the road. He added that, 'Over the course of the year, running the trip once a week would cut the company's emissions by 8,600 tonnes.' He said that the company plans to operate five trains a week between Valencia and London by the end of 2010.

Mr Stobart put the new route down to demand from customers. 'They want to show their customers their green credentials, and so we want to offer greener deliveries,' he said.

'There has been a real change of attitude from the firms we deal with in recent months. Suddenly they all want to know if they can have their goods carried in an environmentally sensitive way – and, in particular, if they can have them moved by train.'

But the logistics firm say that although the end was achieved, it was not an easy administrative ride, having involved extensive negotiations with continental rail operators to ensure that the train didn't face delays.

One thing was securing guarantees from French and Spanish rail networks that the



WELCOME FOR EU FELIXTOWE FREIGHT BACKING

The union has welcomed European Union (EU) funding which could provide relief for the congested A14 by encouraging a rail freight alternative.

The EU is to contribute over £8 million towards upgrading the rail route from the port of Felixstowe to the West Midlands to enhance the rail alternative to the congested A14 as part of its Trans European Transport Network.

This rail route, from Britain's busiest container port, is part of the Government's Strategic Rail Freight Network vision to upgrade crucial parts of the rail freight network.

Philippa Edmunds of Freight on Rail, to which ASLEF is affiliated, said, 'Rail offers a safe freight bypass along the A14 corridor to the West Midlands. Each train to and from Felixstowe can remove 50 long distance HGVs from the route and produce 70% less carbon dioxide emissions than the equivalent road journey.'

She added, 'This funding must augment the UK Government's commitment, rather than be a substitute for it, if we are to build the low carbon economy with green jobs we all need.'



train would not suffer major delays. 'Getting promises that this won't happen has been vital in setting up this operation,' Mr Stobart said.

He added that it is part of his company's wider strategy to significantly increase the amount of material it transports by train.

FRENCH RAIL FREIGHT INVESTMENT DWARFS UK

Meanwhile, the €8 million the UK government has put into the strategic freight network is beginning to look less and less impressive compared with our neighbours over the Channel.

Guillaume Pepy, head of the French SNCF, revealed that his company is investing €1bn (£923m) in eco-friendly freight transport. This follows a decision by the French government to invest €7bn in a rail network dedicated specifically to freight.

M. Pepy stresses that we need to integrate sea and rail systems, creating modern port facilities, putting lorry containers on trains and, above all, developing high-speed freight networks so goods can be transported rapidly and efficiently around the EU. 'Admittedly, this is a long-term vision but we need to start acting now,' he said. 'Over the next five years, we intend to create four rail 'highways', transferring half a million trucks from road to rail in the process. There is also the option of creating a mixed-use rail highway between London and Turin in 2013.'

The Frenchman seems unfazed by the size of what he is proposing. 'SNCF took France from Corail trains to the TGV in less than three decades. It is time to do the same for freight, in France, in the UK and in Europe.'

ASLEF applauds this, but as Keith Norman says, 'My major fear is that continental Europe will get ahead with its freight routes, as it did with its passenger trains – and we will be left behind. This can't be allowed to happen.'

'We need

- future funding for freight to be guaranteed by government
- every effort being made to promote full use of the Channel Tunnel; and
- backing for a seven-day a week UK rail freight service.'

ST ALBANS RAILFREIGHT DEPOT LOOKS ON COURSE

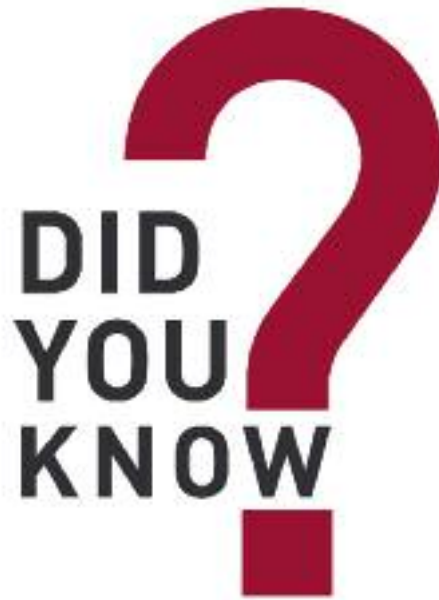
DESPITE protests from local residents, it looks as if the proposed Railfreight depot being built on Green Belt land just outside St Albans will go ahead.

Although local campaigners have objected to the extra lorry traffic that will pass along the busy A414 and other local roads, Hertfordshire County Council's highways experts have decided not to lodge an objection on traffic grounds.

The inspector who heard a public inquiry into developer Helioslough's first planning application to build a freight terminal between Park Street and London Colney ruled it would not cause serious traffic problems and a letter from the county council to the district council says nothing of importance has changed.

It warns that Helioslough's costs could be awarded against the district council if it persists in pursuing the traffic argument in the face of the inspector's conclusion.

The move leaves campaigners and the district council relying on other objections such as noise and the impact on scenery and wildlife at the second public inquiry next month.



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'SACK NR CHIEF' CALL OVER LEVEL CROSSING DEATHS

ASLEF last month called for the dismissal of Network Rail chief Iain Coucher after an enquiry revealed 'gross incompetence' which contributed to three deaths at the Halkirk level crossing in Caithness in October.

The initial enquiry at Inverness revealed that while Network Rail had decided two months previous to the incident that speed restrictions should be applied on the line, it had failed to erect notices advising train drivers of the decision.

An internal Network Rail risk assessment exercise two to three months before the deaths had proposed that trains should approach level crossings at Watten, Delny, Bunchrew and Halkirk at a maximum of 35 mph. However boards pointing this out to drivers were not delivered or erected by the time of the incident. The day after the deaths someone made the effort to courier them to the location.

Evidence shows that the

driver approached the crossing at 47 mph, three mph slower than the line speed.

'That 12 mph could have literally made all the difference in the world to the three people killed on the line that day,' ASLEF's Scotland officer Kevin Lindsay says.

'Iain Coucher picks up a £200,000 bonus on top of his salary of more than £540,000. It is a slap in the face to the families of the dead, and shows total disregard for what the driver of the train has gone through. In view of this incompetence by his company, Mr Coucher should go. Or is no one prepared to take responsibility for this massive failure?'

Mr Lindsay also wants a thorough investigation into whether there are other parts of the railway where temporary speed restrictions should be in place, but there are no boards to advise train drivers of them.

Immediately after the Halkirk incident the union advised its drivers to approach all automatic open crossings at



Network Rail chief Iain Coucher

drastically reduced speeds of around 20 mph to protect the public and its members. According to the union's general secretary Keith Norman the only response ASLEF has received is an intimation that it will be served an injunction to retract the advice.

'It almost beggars belief that Network Rail should find the time, money and energy to take the union to court for offering responsible safety advice while it can't make the effort to inform drivers of important safety decisions,' Keith says.

A full enquiry into the incident will take place later in the year.



WATFORD FLYER TO BECOME TRAM LINE?

The Abbey Flyer railway line, which at one time was considered for a community rail project, is to be converted to a tram system by 2012, according to Transport minister Andrew Adonis. This would double, and run later, the number of services on the line which runs between Watford Junction and St Albans Abbey, and which carries almost half a million passengers a year.

The intention is to transfer ownership from Network Rail to Hertford County Council who will tender for a contractor. A passing loop would be constructed to allow trams to pass on what is currently a single track route.

Funding would come from the Department for Transport by transferring the existing subsidy to the new operator from London Midland which currently operates the Flyer.

Keith Norman says the union will keep a close eye on developments because of ASLEF's belief that light rail will play an increasingly important part in the future of the UK's transport system.

A GRAND OLD TICKET PRICE

For the first time since rail services began in 1825, a train ticket is offered at over £1,000. The cost of a first-class 'walk-on' return ticket from Newquay, Cornwall, to Kyle of Lochalsh, Scotland, is £1,002.

ITF CALLS FOR BACKING FOR THAI RAIL WORKERS

The International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF) is urging support for the State Railway Workers' Union of Thailand (SRUT) following the dismissal of six trade unionists over a dispute about rail safety.

The ITF says, 'The union organised nationwide industrial action on 16 October in protest over managers' failure to implement safety measures after an accident. Management said 'human error' was to blame and that it would speed up restructuring of the sector.

'Because of the industrial action, the company sacked six union activists and is threatening to dismiss a further eight – as well as suing the union for 70 million baht for loss of earnings.'

The ITF says it is an attempt by the company to harass the union, and undermine its safety demands.

LONDON MIDLAND NEEDS REMEDIES



The Department for Transport has instructed London Midland to submit an 'action plan' to improve its performance. 'I don't know how often the franchise system needs to be discredited before the government notices,' says Keith Norman. 'Passengers, workers and tax-payers are convinced franchises are failures. Only the government blindly keeps faith by a strategy of ignoring reality.'

London Midlands 'Remedial Plan' will include

- providing an additional 450,000 low price tickets, with 50,000 available over the Christmas period
- improvements to customer information systems
- improved training, contingency planning, fleet performance and traincrew resources.

'OUR SOCIETY IS MULTICULTURAL' SAY SCOTLAND'S BLACK WORKERS

The theme of last month's STUC's Black Workers conference was 'A future free from racism' – and the threat to this from the BNP loomed large over the whole event **reports Paul Patmore**, the secretary of ASLEF's Black and Ethnic Minority Representative Committee.

THE STUC President, Martin Keenan, called for a strong and united movement that would 'defeat the BNP today as it had defeated the National Front in the '70s'. 'Our society is multicultural,' he declared. 'And so it will remain.'

I spoke on ASLEF's motion to conference, calling on delegates to recognise that the BNP is a fascist, racist organisation that stands for an all-white Britain, the destruction of trade unions and the elimination of basic democratic rights. It seeks to attract votes on the basis of racism, homophobia, Islam phobia, anti-Semitism and the vilifi-

cation of refugees and asylum seekers.

'The BNP has no part in our multicultural society,' I said, arguing that while they say 'no' to us, we say 'no' to them. I urged delegates to keep Scotland BNP free.

On other issues, Helen McGuigan from the STUC Youth Committee spoke about mental health issues that affect the young. Suicide rates in young people in Scotland are frightening. Her committee campaigns for more training, and increased trade union membership of young people.

I was able to ask Tommy Breslin of 'Show Racism the

Red Card' how it is that football clubs say that they will give a life ban to supporters behaving in a racist or sectarian manner inside the ground - but not outside? In short, he said they can - but they don't.

After a legal session led by Rita Kochar of Thompsons solicitors, the STUC General Secretary Grahame Smith paid tribute to his predecessor Bill Speirs before speaking on the turbulent economic climate. He concluded by pointing out that the Scottish Parliament has no

representation by anybody from the minorities.

I seconded a firefighter's union (FBU) motion on 'racial abuse whilst carrying out duties' on behalf of the STUC Black Workers Committee. I called for support on the basis that nobody should suffer racial, physical or verbal abuse while at their workplace or carrying out their work duties

Finally I was pleased to be retained on the STUC Black Workers Committee for another year.



ONE UP FOR THE BENEFITS OF LEGAL TRAINING

AS part of District One's ongoing education programme, our District Organiser Graham Morris held a one-day legal training course last month. The one-day course was open to all representatives within the District One, including all branch officials. The main topics of discussion were

- The recent changes to Disciplinary and Grievance Procedures
- The introduction of new employment legislation and dealing with Physical Injury claims

■ How Thompsons legal services operate

Vince Reynolds, from Thompsons, ASLEF's main contact for work place claims, briefed the meeting on the

main changes to the Criminal Injuries Compensation Authority (CICA). He explained about how to make an application and how it progresses through the CICA machinery, concentrating on time restraints and explaining how the tariffs system is used to calculate the amount of compensation to be awarded. Vince explained certain criteria of applications. For example, while a train driver who is actually involved in a fatality may make a claim, a driver who only witnesses a fatality may not.

The legal benefits which we gain as a result of our ASLEF membership, are also available free to our friends and family via Thompson's personal injury service.

Vicky Phillips from Thompsons briefed the meeting about the quality services provided to members and their families. She explained the superior quality of service they provide compared to on-line, no-win-no-fee lawyers and she emphasised that Thompson not only work for work-related issues but also champion non-industrial cases.

Vicky moved on to brief the meeting on the changes to the ACAS code on Disciplinary and Grievance procedures which was introduced in April 2009. She explained that there is no longer an automatic Unfair Dismissal if the code has not been adhered to, but an increase of compensation against employers failing to comply with the code. She also



Getting to grips with the legal labyrinth. Picture from Shaun Seymour

explained that accompaniment by a representative is permitted at all stages except during an investigatory interview and all grievances must be put in writing to managers as soon as possible. Vicky set out the separate stages of the processes, the time limits involved and recommendations of what should be done.

Finally she handed out a test paper which we answered with some trepidation – but as it turned out we all did very well indeed.

I would like to thank Graham Morris for organising these courses and urge all representatives and Branch officials to attend as many of them as they can, as they enable you to give our members good accurate advice.

Peter MacAuley - Waterloo branch



Legal services under the spotlight (or, in fact, chandelier!) for District 1. Picture from Shaun Seymour

HOW THE RAILWAYS MADE

The London Transport Museum in Covent Garden has launched an exhibition called 'Suburbia' which will run until March next year. It is a fascinating look at the suburbs in general, but especially interesting for our members as it shows how, without the railway, the suburbs would never have existed ...

Suburban living is so commonplace now that it is difficult to conceive of a time when it was not a feature of our lives – today over half of those who describe themselves as 'Londoners' live in the suburbs. It seems so entrenched that we forget that it is a relatively new phenomenon, and was entirely dependent for its growth on the rapid expansion of public transport, and especially of expanding rail networks.

Without rail, there would be no suburbs. For them to be attractive meant they needed quick reliable links to the capital's work, shopping and entertainment. It was no accident that the suburbs grew as rail links grew. The railways didn't just 'serve' the suburbs: they were its parents.

Take Golders Green, for example, one of the first of London's suburbs. Bar the odd mansion and a few rolling green fields, there was nothing much there until the tube (and the railway's depot) arrived in 1907. It remained the furthestmost outreaches of London, the end of the line, until 1923 when the Northern Line extended as far as Hendon. The coming of the railways led to a massive building boom and a huge rise in population. Yet Golders Green is only just over five miles from Charing Cross, which for mapping purposes is the centre

of London.

But before the train, that meant a walk of a couple of hours – something that was not to the taste of the new middle classes. They needed ease and comfort. They needed rail.

WHY DID PEOPLE WANT TO GO TO THE SUBURBS?

This is one of the core themes of the exhibition. Certainly the trains and especially 'Metroland' enabled the suburbs to grow and take their own particular shape – but why and how were people persuaded to go there? It required a whole change of attitude about what was desirable and even acceptable.

City dwellers up to the early 1900s had never aspired to live anywhere other than where they did. Their lives revolved around their communities and even if there was overcrowding and grime, it was shared by all. No one felt badly off because there was no one to compare yourself with.

But as the century progressed, the middle classes expanded hugely. There were jobs as clerks and managers, in banking and insurance, office jobs that led to a new snobbery and an idea that a new life was possible.

The developers and estate agents of the day produced a vision of that dream: the suburbs. Now you could get away from a small terraced house, to one where everyone

had their own bedroom. In place of the back-yard you could have a front garden. Instead of a chatty cockney sparrow as a neighbour, you could have a reserved and refined model of middle class respectability.

Instead of a smoky chimney, you could have a golf course. This was where, instead of the noise of hawkers in street markets you could hear the tweeting of birds.

And then there was the bombardment of marketing from property developers and the railways painting the rosier picture of life outside the city.

SELLING SUBURBIA

One story, which may be true, and should be even if it isn't, concerns the new tube map designed by Harry Beck, an Underground worker who was, incidentally, paid five guineas for his work. The map we use today is clearly distorted: it looks as if the distance from Kings Cross to Cockfosters is not much further than Kings Cross to Paddington. The real distances are 13 miles and three miles. The suggestion is that the map encouraged people to think that even the outer suburbs weren't too far away from the centre, so they were more likely to consider moving.

Property developers and estate agents worked hand-in-hand with the railway companies to sell the idea of the suburbs.



Left: The hiss factor

Posters sold the ideas of a healthy and safe existence in charming houses – typically the iconic suburban semi-detached.

One especially amusing part of the exhibition concerns the naming of the suburbs. If you are building a station in the middle of a field, what do you call it? Some clung to the name when they were an outlying village – like Morden or Surbiton – but in other cases people were invited to make suggestions. A vast sign was erected saying a station would be built, and asking the public to propose a name.

The estate agents, of course, began their own fictions and took to 'improving' areas by associating them with richer locations in the general vicinity. This is splendidly illustrated, with examples of how, in the mind of



Thanks to public transport you could leave your leafy home and enjoy all the entertainment of the West End



Before the Tube was built, there was no suburbia – just fields. The railways made the growth of the city possible



The site for Oakwood Station, c1930. It was no accident that the suburbs grew as rail links grew



This was the idea – you could go to the fashionable shops of Oxford Street and the rush ... 'Shop Between 1

THE SUBURBS



is now a feature of the commuting experience. Above: Pinner station 2009

an estate agent, Hammersmith can become Brackenbury Village, Archway becomes Hampstead Slopes, Acton is designated Poet's Corner and Lewisham becomes Blackheath Borders.

METROLAND BECOMES A REALITY

Central to the development of the suburbs was the idea of 'Metro-land', a name created in 1915 by the publicity department of the Metropolitan Railway. In fact, at its inception the dream of the Met was to run a line from Manchester to Paris, but it gradually got pared down to a network serving north west London, Middlesex, Hertfordshire and Buckinghamshire.

Not content with the formula that 'If you build it, they will come' formula, the company set



live in suburban bliss – but still get Oxford Street so long as you missed 10 and 4' was a popular message

up a subsidiary to develop housing and shops along the Metropolitan line. This it did as far as the 34 miles from London to Amersham, with spectacular success.

Incidentally one of the reasons to justify the expansion was the potential for freight services that could be operated by rail. Goods yards were provided at nearly all the stations north of Harrow to Verney Junction, and freight facilities lasted at Amersham into the 1960s. Perhaps that's an idea that needs to be revived.

COMMUTING BECOMES A WAY OF LIFE

The growth of suburbia brought about a new activity that was to take up hours of people's lives – commuting. The Transport Museum exhibition has a section devoted to this activity and tracing its main features from reading to flirting and the iPod.

The flirting side is shown by a few personal adverts in London papers along the lines of 'You were looking across at me as I waited for the Eastcote train at 6 pm on Tuesday. You were cute blonde with yellow umbrella. Me, tall, dark leather coat.'

But more popular and certainly more invasive, is the headphone. There is an excellent exhibit that

shows a giant iPod, and issuing from it is all the crackle and distortion that drives you mad when you are standing next to someone playing these machines too loud. In the exhibition you can put your hand to a screen that will reveal what is actually being played. If only you could do this on the tube!

All the songs are about suburbia, with numbers like the Clash's 'Lost in the Supermarket' the Kinks 'Dead End Street', the Jam's 'Smith-Jones' and the Descendents' 'Suburban Home'.

It's one of the features of this exhibition that at no stage does it mock or satirise suburbia. It just looks at the changes that were brought about in society by the phenomenon. And in which our members have had such an important part.

GREEN AND PLEASANT LANDS

Central to the idea of the suburbs is the colour green. Gardening became more of an obsession than a hobby, and not just in tidy allotments or pristine lawns – it also touched the transport system. We still have the 'Underground in Bloom' tube gardening competition which 'toasts the handiwork of the Tube's green-fingered staff'.

The gardening fixation even branched out into the concept of a 'garden city', pioneered in Letchworth and carried on in Hampstead and Brentham in the west.

The beauty of this exhibition is that it constantly throws new light on what we gradually come to



The suburbs were presented as an escape from dreary city life, offering clean air, more space and an improved life-style in civilised surrounds

see as 'commonplace'. How many of us look at the buildings we enter every day? Yet there is a wealth of interest in the most expected sights. It points out, for example, that while new stations were originally modelled on the houses that surrounded them, with pitched roofs and tall chimneys, they gradually came to look unique railway buildings, so that they stood out. You realise that the Piccadilly line has very modern looking stations. It's one of those quiet revelations that makes life just that hint more interesting and a little richer.

Which is what the whole Suburbia exhibition does as well. If you get a chance, go and see it. You'll enjoy yourself – no matter where you live.

GO AND SEE SUBURBIA GROW!

Yes, Suburbia gets bigger by the day – the exhibition, that is. As part of the event there are

- a host of talks and special events that will be held until March next year
- late-night Friday cultural events at the venue with a suburbia theme
- opportunities to add your own images of suburban gardens on www.flickr.com

OPENING TIMES

Details of all events can be found at www.ltmuseum.co.uk or by calling the switchboard for general information on 020 7379 6344 or by going to the museum at Covent Garden Piazza. It is open Monday - Thursday, Saturday & Sunday from 10.00 to 18.00 and on Friday from 11.00 - 18.00

AND DON'T FORGET THAT TfL STAFF GO FREE

Entry to the London Transport Museum is free to TfL staff, TfL staff Nominees and retired TfL staff with an Oyster pass. Usually adults are charged £10, senior citizens £8, concessions £6 and under 16s are free.

ERNEST SPRAY – A DAUGHTER’S TRIBUTE

It is with sadness that we report the death of Ernie Spray at the age of 84.

In April he fell and broke four ribs and went steadily downhill thereafter, dying in hospital on 25 July. Ernie worked for 48 years ‘at the front end’, starting on 10 March 1941 as an engine cleaner at St Leonards. For his 48-hour week he earned £1/7-6 – which was 10 shillings a week more than he had been earning as an errand boy!

He progressed to firing and at 21 he started firing to driver Len Griffin on the Schools Class ‘Sherborne’ 906. This was to prove ‘the happiest three years of my life on the railway’. Ernie loved to recount his steam days. One anecdote was about the ‘races’ between the 5.15pm (‘King Arthur’ to Ramsgate) and the 5.18pm (‘Sherborne’ to Hastings) departures from Cannon Street until their ways parted at Chislehurst.

Steam gave way to diesel and there were many redundancies at St Leonards. Ernie opted for electrical work (but it was never as good as his days on the steam) and so worked out of Ore for 24 years reaching the top position of Leading Driver. Ore depot was closed in 1986 and the Ore and St Leonards depots were combined. Ernie then returned to St Leonards where he had started his railway career, to work the last 3½ years before his retirement, working both Central and South Eastern Division routes.

He was derailed once, on a cold and foggy New Year’s Eve in the early 1970’s. A crowbar had been placed on the line. A spell of bronchitis followed, the result of spending three hours out in the cold fog sorting it all out.

A lucky escape occurred on the day following the storm of 1986. He was alerted by the frantic waves of a passenger standing on the platform at Wivelsfield station (where he was not stopping) that a tree had just fallen on the line beyond the station. Thanks to this warning Ernie managed to dodge sideways in time just before the tree came through into the cab. The tree caught his hip – but it could have been so much worse.

Retirement for Ernie did not turn out as the relaxing time one expects. His beloved wife, Pamela, was in the early stages of Alzheimers and she continued to decline. Ernie cared for her devotedly, putting his own health in jeopardy, until she died in 2003 – the tragic end of a very happy 58 year marriage.

Ernie was through and through a Hastings man, born and bred. There wasn’t much about Hastings that he didn’t know. He loved gardening and spent many happy hours tending his garden. He was a life-long keen cyclist, cycling as much as he could to fit in with railway work. He continued to cycle until three hip replacements and muscle wastage in his shoulder caused him to stop – but he still kept in touch with the cycling fraternity. He was a long-serving committee member, helped out with marshalling races whenever he could and met up with the club at coffee stops when they were riding nearby.

I have written this in memory of my Dad of whom his family are very proud. We would like to thank all who ensured there was a good turnout at his funeral – testament to the fact that he was a very special gentleman, loved by all who knew him.

Fraternal Greetings to you all.

Linda Ireland – Ernie’s daughter

DEAN HOPE – AN ENTHUSIAST

I regret to inform you of the recent passing of a retired member of our branch, Dean Hope, at the age of 75.

Dean started his footplate career at Kettering where he was Branch Secretary before moving to Crewe then onto Northampton finally moving to Bedford when the latter - closed.

Always a staunch ASLEF man, Dean was also a fine and conscientious locoman with safety always at the forefront. He was well known amongst the operating fraternity as ‘Hope of Crewe’ whenever he reported an irregularity or Health and Safety issue.

During the 1982 dispute he produced a number of badges which proliferated over the years to include Bedford when we celebrated our 90th anniversary. Great care went into the design, execution and production making them extremely popular to this day - a permanent legacy of the man behind them.

His opinion was highly valued in the run up to Driver Restructuring and as a

Company Council rep at the time I could always rely on Dean for a measured contribution to the debate.

He was also an enthusiast of all things railway and many of us benefited from the ‘Video Club’ he formed which allowed many of us to pursue our general interest in the industry.

Our condolences go to his wife Celia and his family.

Bill Davies - Retired Members Section
– Bedford

LISTON (‘LEN’) RICHARDSON – FROM TRINIDAD TO KINGS CROSS

‘Len’ as we all called him came from Trinidad in the 1960s and started at Hornsey Loco. He gradually moved through the ranks to become a driver. In 1968 when Hornsey closed as a signing-on point, Len moved to Kings Cross Station, where he remained for the rest of his career. Len, who was born on 2 July 1935, died at the age of 74 on 24 August. He retired from GNER in 2000 but unfortunately contracted, and died

of, cancer. May he RIP.

P. J. Smith – Reporter – Kings Cross
Branch

KEITH MARSHALL – A FAMILY AND AN ASLEF MAN

Keith Marshall died on 29 August 2009 aged 77 after being diagnosed with bone cancer earlier this year.

Keith started work on the railway in the 1950s as an Engine Cleaner, and later as a fireman at Wellingborough. Following the demise of steam, Keith moved to Bedford where he was promoted to Driver. This is where he remained until lung cancer forced his early retirement in 1990.

Keith was a lifelong and loyal member of ASLEF and had a keen interest all things railway. His unconditional love for me and our two children, James and Sadie, was obvious to all who knew him.

Keith’s funeral at Wellingborough Salvation Army Citadel was so well attended, it was ‘standing-room only’. I would like to add that the family was comforted by the number of retired and

working railway men who made the effort to attend the thanksgiving service.

Mrs. Marion Marshall

ERIC ANDERSON – BALLOONS BID FAREWELL

It is with sadness that I report the death of retired driver Eric Anderson at the age of 79 following an illness in his retirement.

He began his footplate career as a cleaner in June 1948 at Longsight Shed before moving for promotion to Agecroft and, with the closure of the Salford Shed, on to Newton Heath.

Eric was always a really lively character with a quick wit and a ready smile, which made him a well liked and respected colleague and brother. Following Eric's funeral 100 balloons were released and replies came from the coasts of Scandinavia and north Germany.

Eric would have smiled at that.

S. Black – Reporter – Newton Heath
RMS

REGINALD STANLEY WILKS – WIT MISSED

I have to inform you of the death of Reggie Wilks at the age of 83. He passed away at home on 22 October. Reggie served in Germany in the 4th Company, 1st Regiment of the Footguards.

He started his footplate career at Stewarts Lane Battersea depot as a cleaner in April 1949 and was appointed to Fireman in March 1950.

I first met Reggie in 1969 when he was on the LDC and dealt with the move to Victoria in 1972. He was one of the founder members of the Victoria Train Crew Social Club.

Reggie had a great sense of humour and wit. He liked to give route-learners things to look for. One favourite was asking 'Where along this line is a dove above a cat?' The answer was that 'Dove' was the name of a Jaguar dealership in Croydon – so their name was above a symbol of Jaguar.

Reggie will be missed by everyone who knew him. Our deepest sympathy goes to Reggie's widow, Margaret, at this sad time.

Ken Heydon – for Battersea branch

JAMES ('COSSEY') WALKER – A LINGS MAN

I'm sorry to say that I have only recently discovered that former Kings Cross Driver Jim Walker died in 2006 at the age of 82. Jim was originally from Boston in Lincs.

P. J. Smith – Reporter – Retired
Members Section

WHAT THE UNION WAS DOING 100 AND 50 YEARS AGO

A century ago Journal readers were treated to a marvellous account of a depot outing, and fifty years ago wounds were licked after a Tory win at the polls ...

100 YEARS AGO

The branch secretary of Slades Green branch reported in the December 1909 Loco Journal on the 'chamber of conviviality' that was an ASLEF outing

" On Saturday, October 23rd, at 7 p.m., 140 members and friends sat down together at the Royal Victoria and Bull Hotel, Dartford, Kent, to enjoy a right good "spread" and smoking concert, under the management of Mr Bartrip, the host....Our branch chairman, Brother Young Pringle, assisted by a few working members, designed and constructed the front view of a South Eastern and Chatham Railway express engine emerging from a tunnel, decorated with evergreens and flowers, also well-meaning sign-boards and signals, understood by enginemen quite as clearly as those erected on the railways for our safe travelling. The stage decoration was unique and appropriate for those assembled.....

.....When all were seated in the chamber of conviviality, the chairman was introduced to the company and received a right good welcome. After a few words of thanks for the grand reception, grace was given, and the host and army of waiters set to work to try and satisfy the appetites of 140 engine-drivers, firemen and cleaners, which was done about 8.15pm.

....The toasts were given in right good form by all standing up and giving three hearty cheers, which must have roused the Dartford folk to wonderment. The Editor of the Daily Mirror newspaper kindly sent his photographer. The picture was printed in Monday morning's issue, and although rather small and indistinct it suited our purpose, viz., to inform our brothers of the Kingdom that the Associated boys know how to enjoy themselves quite as well as they know how to guard their position on quite different occasions".

50 YEARS AGO

In December 1959. W. Bevan, the District 5 Organising Secretary, reflected on a Labour defeat at the polls and the 'toff' Tory view that 'workers are unfit to govern' ...

"For very many decades the "Old School Tie" brigade have declared that the "working class" are quite unfit to govern the country, the inference being that the absence of "blue blood" in the common herd automatically denied to it the necessary intellect to carry out the processes of government. For as many years the old Labour stalwarts have forcefully denied that ridiculous declaration, until in 1945 the Labour Movement produced a Government of workers who in six short years banished the fear of unemployment, of famine, and to a large extent of war also. A short study of history will show that these hideous fears were with us continuously right up to the fateful year 1945. Only the feeble-minded would accept that it was merely coincidence that they disappeared with the establishment of the first Labour Government (with power).

The tragic fact is that so many workers did so believe it to be a coincidence in 1951, and underlined that belief again in October 1959. To that extent some 12 millions of workers seem convinced that there is some truth in the "Top People's" declaration that the workers are unfit to govern.

One of the worst consequences of this latest election is that the prospect of a co-ordinated transport system recedes into a five-year period of chaos. The systematic destruction of the railway system will go on apace, and the transfer of rail traffic to roads will result in slaughter at levels usually associated with battlefields. Already, and as I write, the news is made known that there was an increase of 300 dead and some thousands crippled during September, 1959. The opening of the new M1 road was attended with a blaze of publicity that proved to be nothing short of an invitation to suicide. Within a few days several people died of "Speed".

Extracts selected and edited by Jane Pimlott

CURTY'S SWAPPED AN INDIAN OCEAN ISLAND FOR A NORTHERN DRIVER'S CAB!



WHAT'S the most obvious question you can ask a man who grew up in Mauritius? I feel almost embarrassed to ask. 'So why are you living here?'

Curty Gunputrar chuckles. 'Everyone asks me that,' he says.

He came to the UK when he was 22, having just spent three years in the military on his home island. 'It's not the same as the military here,' he explains. Happily we don't do much fighting. Peace and love, you know!

Curty joined up straight from leaving school at 18 and soon found a job where the main duties were musical. 'We did a lot of parades and ceremonies for visiting dignitaries like Presidents or MPs. I spent most of my time practicing and playing the trumpet. Music has always been a big thing in my life. So, to answer your question, the reason I came to the UK was to study composing and arranging music, first in

Manchester and then in Middlesbrough.'

'And so how come you ended up in Workington?'

'A woman, of course!'

Curty's musical tastes are wide – 'big band, jazz, opera, whatever'. There was always music at home. His father and three brothers played pop. But he realised quickly that he wasn't going to be able to earn a living out of music in Workington.

'I picked up work in sales while I looked around to see how I could earn money. That was when I saw a job advert in the local paper looking for trainee drivers for First North Western – that's Northern these days. I didn't know much – well, anything! – about driving trains. So I thought I'd give that a go. I'm pleased I did.'

So there was no rail history in the family? 'It would have been difficult,' he says with a smile. 'There weren't any public trains on Mauritius – just ones for the tourists! The working ones finished in my grandparent's

time.'

This made his first days on the railway quite a challenge. 'I didn't know what they were talking about half the time. You don't realise how much jargon rail people use. Me too, now.'

Curty passed out as a driver five years ago and began work at Workington depot. He says it's a small friendly place with its twenty-odd drivers, 16 when he began.

He still remembers the first time he took a train out by himself. 'That was scary,' he says. 'Until then you do what the instructor tells you to do. Suddenly you're on your own.'

'Workington to Carlisle, it was. A back shift. I was the last one in the shed. But it was a good feeling. I was proud of myself. I'd achieved something.'

It must have felt like a very different world from his home island? 'You're right there,' he agrees. 'I don't want to sound like their tourist board, but Mauritius is a lovely place in so many ways. People are

genuinely friendly and it's a model of how to live together in a multiracial and multicultural society – Indians, Europeans, Chinese, whatever. We live together.'

He says one of the things he noticed immediately about the UK was how often people socialised in racial or cultural groups. 'It quite surprised me,' he says. 'We didn't have that. We just mixed. It was good for us. We learned about each others' customs, beliefs and attitudes. It broadens your life to know about other people, and it trains you to see people for what they are and not what you think they might represent.'

He's proud of the way Mauritians celebrate religious and cultural festivals without discrimination. 'If you've got a day off, you find out what's behind it. So you get to know how Hindus or Buddhists or Muslims think, and why. It eliminates ignorance, which is the basis of prejudice.'

'It's an open society. You get people wandering into other



Five years down the line and Curty's enjoying life as a driver



The public railways is gone from Mauritius, leaving only mementos for the tourists



Mauritius is often called 'a corner of paradise in the Indian Ocean'.

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

Key Worker

people's churches and temples. They don't impose so many boundaries on themselves. If Mauritians find a place they feel content they are happy. They don't worry about it.'

Curty says it's a great place to grow up. 'And you think the whole world's the same before you travel. You think everyone lives somewhere they can see the sea and the blue sky because you see it every day. You see pictures of snow and can't imagine it being cold.'

One of the difficulties of leaving was distancing himself from his family, a tight bond on the island. 'Anything that happens, the whole family turns up!' Curty even had a family band, including his sister who is now a picture restorer in Belgium. His mother worked as a matron in a hospital while his dad was employed at the meteorological station. 'We all keep in touch, of course. And I try to get back at least once a year. I'd like to think I'll end up back on the island sometime. I suppose everyone wants to revisit places where they've been happy.'

'Mind you, once I got there I'm sure I'd miss the mates I've made here. I know I didn't plan any of this, but you never know where you're going to end up. You're here today, and who knows about tomorrow? That's life. If you want to do something, you should go ahead and do it.'

Curty's a friendly laid-back character - but that doesn't stop him fetching his guitar into the messroom now and again. 'I brought my trumpet in once or twice, but it wasn't so well received - especially in the morning!' he chuckles.

He says he took up union rep work because he's a sociable man who believes if you can help someone, why not do it? 'The more things you share, the more we all benefit.' It's involved him becoming his depot's health and safety rep as well as working on various black and ethnic members' committees. 'I'd never been in a union before, and I didn't know anything about health and safety,' he says. 'But I thought I might as well give it a go. Anyway, I like learning



As the notice says, 'Curty's here - stop look and listen!'



A sunny smile from Curty - the driver who came in from the hot!

things and to keep myself busy.'

He even helps out with his local scout group from time to time. 'It's partly because I enjoyed being in the scouts so much when I was young. It was different from here, of course. All our activities were outdoors - camping, cycling, walking through the tropical forests. Also, we'd all go scouting for most of the holidays because few Mauritian people went away on family holidays. But here or there, it's a good way of helping kids to develop. It helps teach them respect, both for others and for themselves.'

So would he encourage his children to go into the scouts?

'No,' he says. 'They're both girls!'

Curty says he enjoys life as a train driver ('apart from the earlies!') for two reasons. 'I like the responsibility and I think it's a really worthwhile job. And I like the bond we all feel. I've met some wonderful people from all kinds of backgrounds.'

'We mix quite a lot at the depot. We play football or go cycling or fishing.'

He adopts an innocent expression as he tells me that sometimes they even go for a drink.

ASLEF TRAVEL CLUB Special Travel Offers



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ARTICLES!

IT'S THE JAVELIN FOR RETIRED RAILWAY MEN!



The Tuesday group at St Pancras

ON 6 October it was early rise to catch the 0700 from Charing Cross to Ashford. Alan Taylor met us at Waterloo East. We had been invited by Ron Ward of Gillingham to join him and 57 other retired members and wives from Ashford, Ramsgate, Tonbridge and Gillingham to sample the new Southeastern Javelin train.

We all assembled on Ashford International Station's platform 5 to await our train from the

depot booked to depart at 0913. Bang on time 395 026 arrived and we all clambered aboard and set off for what was to be a memorable day out.

The first leg was a 35-minute dash along High Speed One (HS1) to St Pancras International for an 0948 arrival. The next leg saw us depart on the 1028 to Ebbsfleet International then round by the normal line to Rochester before returning to St Pancras via

Ebbsfleet. The third and final dash meant leaving on the 1441 back down (HS1) to Ashford arriving at 1516.

During the day Drivers Mark Hills, William Sapsed and Mark Whitmore, Drivers Instructor Mick Harding, Train Manager Joanne Dady and Southeastern managers made sure we were all shown what we wanted to see and they fully explained everything we wanted to know.

Many thanks are due to the

Southeastern management for accommodating us and allowing 60 of us on Monday 5 October and 60 on the 6 October to take part in a 'shake down' trip for the drivers and train managers.

Thanks to Dave Loverington (Gillingham Committee Member), Driver Instructor Mick Harding, HS1 and Shadow Running Manager Ian Denning, for making it all possible, to Joanne Dady who looked after us on board and who during both days took a tally of railway service years of those on board - which amounted to an excess of 4,300 years.

Final thanks to the staff of the Ashford Railway Club who provided a first class buffet and their usual hospitality.

Peter Smith - Reporter - ASLEF Retired Members Section

(P.S. As from December those with travel facilities will be able to use them on this service subject to restrictions on trains that arrive in St Pancras before 1000, and depart St Pancras between 1600 to 1900. These are Monday to Friday only).

DONNY LOSES THREE ASLEF STALWARTS (BUT ONLY TO THE RMS!)

IN THE last year Doncaster Branch has seen three long standing ASLEF activists retire - Dave Court, Mala Haith and Graham Cox.

Dave Court is one of Doncaster's characters, who spent many years as Branch Secretary of both Doncaster Branch and Neville Hill Branch. I have many memories of working with 'Courty' but the one that stands out was the first time we met. Just after I started at Carr Loco in 1979 I worked a tank train to Torksey

with Dave. With three hours to kill while the tanks were emptied Dave showed me some local places of cultural interest around Torksey. I particularly remember 'The Castle' as a local historic landmark. By the time we came out I was culturally educated as a new!

I also have fond memories of two cultural trips taken with Dave in 1988. One was a delegation to the USSR and the second was on one of Dave's legendary Benidorm

trips. Wow!

Mala Haith is Doncaster's own 'Fonze' with his DA haircut and Honda 90 Mala spent many years as an LDC rep at Carr Loco in BR days and also at Doncaster Station in Regional Railways times. He's always been a regular at branch meetings, marches, rallies, weekend schools or any other time the movement called. We've spent many a happy hour putting the world to rights in the Trades and Labour Club over a pint or two.

Mala was the first Driver to let me 'have a drive' on the Woodyard Pilot. I repaid him by crashing into some wagons (whoops!).

Last but not least, there's Graham Cox (that quiet bloke) who has an exceptional talent for engaging people in conversation until they miss their train - or, if they're the Driver, making it late.

Graham has been a regular branch attendee since George Stevenson was a lad and

became a local rep for Regional Railways members at Doncaster Station when BR was 'sectorised'. He kept that position through the various privatised companies until taking over from me as Company Council rep five years ago when I joined the Executive Committee. Graham also retires as Branch Chair.

Between them, these three have had over one hundred and fifteen years of active membership and along with my wife Nikki and Tristram and Kate from Thompson's Sheffield office I had the honour of taking them out for a meal with their wives to say thank you for their loyal ASLEF membership and thank you to their wives Judy, Anne and Doreen for sharing them with us.

Long and Happy retirement to all. I have a suspicion that our loss will be the Retired Members Sections gain.

Tosh McDonald - EC Member - District 4.



We might be celebrating the loss of three retiring members - but Tosh is still first to the grub!

WOLFIE'S DONE A LAZARUS AT LONDON BRIDGE!

London Bridge branch had been inactive for a number of years. At times there were just enough people attending a branch to make up the numbers for a committee meeting. For months on end there were no meetings at all, and at one point it looked as if the branch was going to close and amalgamate with the Charing Cross branch. It was dead in the water.

Then enter our new Branch Secretary - Graeme 'Wolfie' Baxter. Since he took up the reins about a year ago he's taken the branch by the scruff of the neck and turned it around. It's changed from being a lame duck to a fully fledged working branch.

'Wolfie' changed the times of the meetings to 14.30 and attendances and membership are both up, with regular visits from functional council, a few visits from members of the Executive Committee and even a visit from the General Secretary himself at our October meeting. We even have our own branch badge.

It's stalwarts like Graeme and his selfless attitude that make this union great and one I'm proud to be a member of. Along with all my colleagues at London Bridge I'd like to say a big 'thank you' to Graeme for saving the branch and turning round its fortunes with his hard work and commitment.

Mickey West – Health & Safety rep - London Bridge

LATIN AMERICA 2009: 5 DECEMBER

Latin America 2009 brings together trade unionists, NGOs, academics and progressive movements from Latin America and the UK to explore recent developments across the region. It will be held on Saturday 5 December from 0930 – 1700 at the TUC's Congress House in Great Russell Street, London WC1. Book online at www.latinamerica2009.org.uk or call 0208 800 0155

DUNDEE FOOTPLATE CREW REMEMBERED

October 22 in 1979 was a sad day in the history of Dundee depot. It was the day of the Invergowrie crash in which the footplate crew consisting of Driver Robert Duncan and Driver's Assistant William Hume lost their lives. Earlier this year the staff at Dundee decided that the 30th anniversary was an appropriate time to remember both Robert and William and to erect a plaque in their memories. As part of this we wanted to include the men's families. We put a letter into the local paper which produced many replies.

The evening of the 22 October produced a fantastic turnout from families and friends along with members of staff stationed at Dundee. Members of both families unveiled the plaque which is situated in the union learning room. This small but touching ceremony was followed by tea and biscuits and a 'good blether'.

We hope the families feel it a fitting tribute and would like to thank them for making the evening worthwhile.

Graeme Dodds – Chairman – Dundee Branch



Members of both families unveiled a plaque in memory of Driver Robert Duncan and Driver's Assistant William Hume



The Garson lads demonstrate the joys of retirement!

EX-GARSTON DRIVERS REUNITED WITH OLD FRIEND

Former B R employees of Speke 8C MPD went to the Llangollen Railway on Thursday 3 September to be reunited with an old friend - Steam Loco, Black Five No. 44806 – and see it run along the full route of the Llangollen Railway.

Allocated to Speke on 26 June 1967, the loco was turned out with full 8C shed plates. One retired driver, Ray Gosling, turned up with his driver's jacket and sporting an 8C shed badge in his lapel, while former driver and traction inspector Spencer Wissett even volunteered to take a turn on the shove!

Chris Todd – Lime Street driver



The old friend the Garson boys visited

UPCOMING EVENTS

GLOUCESTER'S SOCIAL The third Gloucester Railway Reunion and Social meeting will be held at the Station Hotel on Saturday 17 April 2010 from 1400 onwards. A buffet will be provided, **writes Jerry Matthews.**

All retired and active grades are welcome including those from other depots who worked at Gloucester over the years.

For further details contact either First Great Western driver Brian Jones on 07778458716 or Cross Country driver Jerry Matthews on 07500800195.

STRATFORD REUNION 2010 The Stratford Depot reunion will be held on Saturday 30th January 2010 in the Railway Tavern, Angel Lane, Stratford from 19.00 until late. All are welcome. A buffet will be supplied. If you need any further information please contact Barry Moore on 07900-132192 or on Barry's email Barry.Moore@dbschenker.com

For anyone who wishes to stay at the Railway Tavern please contact Jan or Tom. Contact info: www.railwaytavernhotel.co.uk info@railwaytavernhotel.co.uk or phone 020 8534 3123



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!

PROFESSIONAL ADVICE

I'D like to offer my grateful thanks to the union for the help it gave me in my attempt to reclaim money and pension taken off me after I retired 3 years ago. This resulted through a mistake made by my former employers and pension management.

The last 3 years have been stressful for me but without the help of ASLEF, and in particular Dave Tyson and especially Tony Patterson I would not have been able to put my case so professionally.

I am really proud to still be a member of such a great union. Thanks once again for your help.

David Nicholas – retired driver - Rhymney

THANKS FROM BESCOT

THANK YOU to all who made it possible for DBS Drivers to cover LM Drivers' work on the St Albans Abbey line which we have been doing since February

FASCIST FEARS FOR PROTEST VOTES



IS anyone else in our union worried about the number of times we hear in mess-rooms that someone is going to vote for the BNP as a 'protest' to wake up the mainstream political parties in order to make them consider the wishes of the working men and women who elect them?

I've heard this several times in the last few months at various locations and from different colleagues. Members need reminding that people in Germany in the twenties did the same in protest at the Weimar government. They voted for the NSDAP – some of whom were surprisingly elected and became a minority party who were the controlling power between the fractured mainstream parties.

Under their leader, Adolph Hitler, gradually, by using the pressure of their agreed support for the ruling party, they changed the electoral system so that Germany became a one-party state and a dictatorship. We know where that led.

Now I'm not saying that Mr Griffin is Adolph Hitler – he doesn't have his charisma or artistic gifts. But when you start voting as a protest you have to be aware of where it could lead.

I know that many of us who are Labour Party supporters feel let down by an increasingly right-leaning New Labour Party that doesn't have our interests at heart and that many of us are enraged by the outrageous expenses that some MPs have claimed. But the way to change it is to persuade 'our' MPs that our support is not to be taken for granted; that the Labour movement should remember where it came from; that working people have formed one political party already; and that, if ignored much more, we could do so again.

MICHAEL ROBERTS - Driver – Evesham

despite the distance and the West Coast Mainline. Not many trains were cancelled due to a Driver not turning up.

Thank you as well to the Watford LOROL Drivers for the use of their messroom and the Watford Conductors for working with us.

Malcolm Thorpe –
Chairman - Bescot Branch

APPEAL FOR MEMORIAL

I'M LOOKING for anyone who may have information about the 1986 Lockington disaster for a book I am writing. I am also seeking ideas for a memorial and suggestions about how we could raise funding.

The Lockington disaster on the East Yorkshire railway line has gone largely forgotten for

the past 23 years. On 26 July 1986 there was a tragic derailment at Lockington's unmanned, unbarriered crossing. A van was hit by the 09.33 from Bridlington at around 10am, killing 8 people on the train and the van's passenger. Miraculously the driver survived.

Today there is nothing at the site to remind us of the disaster, honour the victims or recognise the several acts of heroism of that day. I hope to raise £2,000 for a permanent memorial at the village church, hopefully by July 2011, the 25th anniversary of the crash.

Anyone wishing to donate to the cause should contact Lloyds TSB and donate to the Lockington Memorial Fund (sort code 30-11-12, account number 13918060).

I know ASLEF campaigns for

safer crossings, so I thought if anyone could help ASLEF can!

Please contact me by email at shipwreckdata@yahoo.co.uk. Excuse the odd email which I used when writing my last book - about the 1871 East Coast storms.

Rich Jones – Royal Navy
and author

HEAD OFFICE TOP VISIT

ON behalf of the Birkenhead branch of the union, I'd like to express our gratitude for the excellent visit to Arkwright Road on 10 September. Eight of us made the journey down from Birkenhead and we were made to feel very welcome.

We were given an informative tour of the building and shown around the various departments

DOES ANYONE KNOW ABOUT THE SANITORIUM?

I RECENTLY found this picture of my grandfather, John Henry Wood, who was an engine driver with LMS from about 1917 to 1946.

I believe this photo was taken in 1946 (my grandfather is sitting to the right of the matron). Do your readers know anything about the Sanitorium? Specifically, was it an ASLEF establishment, or who else owned it? Do you know where it was and what it was called? Do you think the records still exist?

If you have any information, let the editor know, he has promised to forward it to me.

PATRICIA DUTTON – Warwick



Does this sanatorium ring any bells?

LETTERS to the EDITOR

and the characters that inhabit them. Each one gave us a description of the tasks they carry out. The history of ASLEF was there for all to see, with lots of banners, pictures, badges and documents on display, which left you with a feeling of pride in our great union.

After the visit we were taken to a local hostelry and were treated to food, drink and good company. A good time was had by all.

A special thanks to all concerned at Arkwright Road for making our visit a great day out.

Mark Evans – Birkenhead branch

UNION HELP FOR HEROES

PORTSMOUTH & Isle of Wight branch would like to thank Fratton Driver Bill Francis for bringing this appeal to the attention of the Branch.

We would also like to thank all branches who donated to this worthy appeal to help servicemen and women who have suffered in their line of duty.

The appeal raised £900 which has been donated to Help for Heroes. Many thanks for all your contributions.

John Glazebrook – Secretary - Portsmouth & IOW

THANKFUL THIRD TRUSTEE

FIRST, I would like to thank my branch at Lincoln for nominating and supporting me for the above position, also a very big thank you to all the other branches for your nominations and support. Although I came third, I never

expected as many votes as I got and I can assure you all that this is very much appreciated.

My congratulations to Bro Howard Kaye on his new appointment to the Trustees position and to Shaun Seymour and Gary Wareing - keep up the good work within your branch. It was nice to see a few names in the frame for this important role.

Mark Reynolds - Driver - Lincoln

GOOD WORK ROY!

I WOULD just like to put into writing my many thanks for the work Roy Luxford put in for me in helping me to return to my Driving job, which is still being worked on.

Once again many thanks and keep up the good work that you and the DFC do.

John Ward – Selhurst

THANKS FOR HEART DONATIONS

I WOULD like to thank branches from all over the country who sent generous donations towards brother Stuart Surridge's fund raising ride from Essex to Lincolnshire for the British Heart Foundation.

In all, ASLEF members raised £475 for the charity. Thank you very much.

Terry Laws – Secretary - East Ham Branch

THANKS FROM RE-ELECTED STAN

I'D like to thank everyone in District 7 for supporting me for a final term of office as your District Organiser, and in

particular the Company Councils who I know worked hard for me in the district.

Thanks also to the executive committee for keeping me on my toes throughout the process and for their help and support.

It's always been a pleasure representing ASLEF members and I'm looking forward to working with our district EC member Brian Corbett on the challenges ahead.

Stan Moran – Organiser – District 7

WHY REDUCE CROSSING SPEEDS?

I WAS concerned to see ASLEF's response to a recent incident at a Scottish Level Crossing. Is it the right way to react? What is the aim of reducing speed to 20mph?

Will drivers be less traumatised by hitting a vehicle at 20mph?

On the other hand, if the public hear about this, will they not either think that 'jumping' a level crossing will now be less risky as the trains are going slower – or demand that trains slow down further or even stop completely before crossing?

I understand that in France a closed line with level crossings cannot be re-opened until all level crossings are eliminated. This, of course, makes the viability of re-openings far less likely and so actual re-openings are less likely. Could that happen in the UK?

We should think very carefully before taking macho/hard-line attitudes. We could be hoist by our own petards!

Eric Stuart – by email

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WHY SHOULD WE SUFFER FOR BANKERS' FOLLIES?



asks **Gregor Gall**,
professor of Industrial
Relations at the
University of
Hertfordshire

If you were a top banker or city financier, late last year your world had fallen in on itself. The collapse of Lehman Brothers in the United States led to a house of cards falling down all around the world. Share prices were nose diving, bonuses wiped out and the very existence of the financial system was in peril.

All around politicians and pundits were queuing up to have not just a pop at the bankers but give them a really good kicking. The bankers were public enemy number one. Talk of reform, even revolution, was in the air.

Wind the clock forward a year and look at the agenda that dominates the media now. You'll notice it's not about the banks and their recklessness. Rather, the agenda is about cuts in public expenditure and public services.

This is the one critical question that the mainstream media has never asked: how, in the

space of a year, has the agenda gone from one of blaming the banks for the crisis and discussing what needs to be done to punish them for this to making the public pay through cuts in services for a crisis not of their own making?

THE CRISIS: STEP BY STEP

Before suggesting an answer to the question, let's just ponder the scale of what's happened in almost chronological order.

Firstly, the banks threaten to bring down the entire economic system. Governments around the world step in and give them our taxpayers' – money.

Second, the terms for these bailouts are ones you'd kill for if you were after a loan. They varied from nil percent interest to not having to pay them back at all.

Third, there was little or no interference from government in the affairs of the banks as the price for these bailouts. Government merely issued stern words and banks happily made vague promises. Surely, a wise investor would have demanded a few seats on the board to safeguard their money?

Fourth, and as a consequence, the big bonus culture remains intact and bonuses are again being paid as the banks are back in profit.

Then, to bring us up to present, any talk of a special one-off tax on the banks was replaced by the cuts agenda.

HOW MUCH SHALL WE CUT?

Labour, Liberals and Tories all agree on the need for cuts in public expenditure to pay off the so-called 'national debt'. They merely disagree on when, where and how much.

So in the space of a year, the ordinary Joe and Josephine are now liable to not only have their taxes used to pay off someone else's debt – the national debt – but also suffer cuts to public services to boot and, if they work in the

public sector, experience real pay cuts and redundancies as well.

The answer to this incredible achievement for the bankers is that they have been allowed to get so big that a) they cannot be allowed to fail, and b) we are more dependent upon them more than they are dependent upon us. In other words, the banks are way too powerful.

The emergence of easy credit based on rising property prices and an expanding economy meant that people were encouraged to over extend themselves while millions of businesses saw no point in developing cash reserves of their own.

BACKING THE BANKERS

Both Tory and Labour governments since the 1980s have not just allowed this to happen but encouraged it too. First, the Tories deregulated the financial sector in the 'big bang' of 1986 and instituted a policy of basing the British economy upon the influence of the City. Then Labour continued with both of these policies.

This gets us into a situation where there really was a danger that failing banks could not only bring down the financial system but also the whole economy as well.

So in these terms you can see why it was probably better to save the banks rather than let them fail.

But saving the banks does not presuppose the terms for the bailouts. The range of options varied from nationalisation at rock bottom market prices or no compensation at all to commercial interest rate loans on speedy repayment plans.

GREEDY BANKERS, POORER WORKERS

The bankers are not only greedy. They are also very conscious of their own self-interest and how to go about collectively protecting and advancing this. In other words, they are a powerful opponent. And, they have the ear of the media.

But the banks are not an insuperable opponent. There are divisions amongst them so any government could play divide and rule with them. On top of that, any government could mobilise public opinion against them, especially now, because the banks have no popular support.

So what it really comes down to is that the regulators of the banks – governments, states – do not want to regulate them because all the mainstream parties believe in the superiority (even now) of the free market being the best way of matching supply and demand and of running society.



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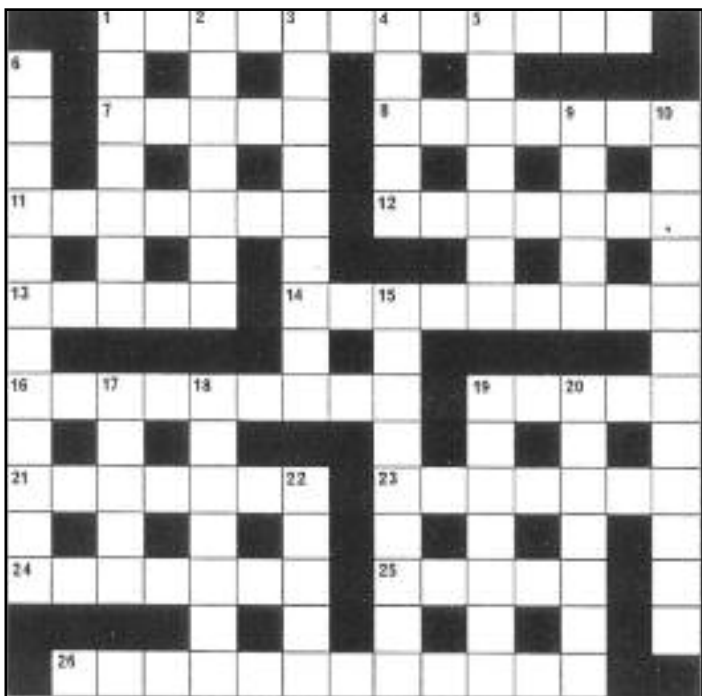
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ASLEF *more than just a union*



Prize Crossword No. 44

set by TLC



Solution to Crossword No 43 which appeared in the November edition of the ASLEF Journal. Congratulations to **John Thorpe** from **Maldon, Essex**

ACROSS 3 Spare rib 8 Mate 9 Thameslink 10 Rear 11 Owls 13 Abhor 17 Office 18 Physio 19 Looks 22 Crow 24 Airy 25 Incitement 26 Elke 27 Hard Hats **DOWN** 1 Fares 2 Metro link 4 Pumas 5 ROSPA 6 Raich 7 Bakerloo 12 LNER 14 Bayswater 15 Woolwich 16 Spur 20 Oscar 21 Sutch 22 Comet 23 Brake

Thanks for all your responses to the 43rd ASLEF crossword in the November 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

- 1 London underground line (12)
- 7 Arthur ----- former expert on the BBC Antiques Road show (5)
- 8 Water point to which a fire hose can be fixed (7)
- 11 Railway worker (7)
- 12 Wartime child sent to a place of safety (7)
- 13 Memos (5)
- 14 An arm of the Mediterranean (6,3)
- 16 Railway employee in a position of authority (9)
- 19 Pleasant surprise (5)
- 21 One's family and relations (7)
- 23 One who expresses pride in his own successes (7)
- 24 Relating to current affairs (7)
- 25 ----- Bellingham, actress (5)
- 26 No charge for posting (4,8)

CLUES DOWN

- 1 Organised police search for a criminal (7)
- 2 Flower related to the marigold (7)
- 3 Paying attention to things around one, eagle-eyed (9)
- 4 Dull yellowish brown colour (5)
- 5 US State (7)
- 6 Railway pass (6,6)
- 9 Touches or leans against another item (5)
- 10 Don't miss this one or you may have to walk! (3,4,5)
- 15 Type of biscuit with currants (9)
- 17 Dawn, sunrise (3-2)
- 18 Pain in the organ of hearing (3-4)
- 19 One being instructed for a new situation (7)
- 20 The tidal mouth of a large river (7)
- 22 Rummage, dig deep (5)

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



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