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It's healthy for the body to go to the sea-side - but it's also healthy for the body politic. I told the delegates you sent to this year's AAD in Scarborough that they were, for the next week, the executive and leadership of ASLEF. It was not a casual remark. It was a fact.

For 51 weeks of the year I am the senior officer of your union, a position that gives me some influence in its direction. I am its foremost spokesman. The major difference during conference week is that my major task is not to speak, but to listen.

It is a humbling experience and I confess I'm not used to it! But it is healthy and I welcome it. It is a reminder to us all that ASLEF isn't its general secretary or its regional officials. ASLEF is its members.

We had a few sharp debates, but they were mainly about strategy - that is, how to achieve our objectives, rather than about what those objectives should be. It is heartening and encouraging that our activists, and our union, are of a single mind on so many of the issues we discussed - like pensions, cab conditions, the importance of freight, free passes and the future of our profession.

Much of this unity comes from being part of a small and specialist union, and I was delighted to see your representatives stress the importance of this continuing by planning a secure financial base for our future. In some ways we are bucking the trend of union mergers and the formation of huge general unions - but I believe we are right to remain as an independent voice for train drivers.

I can see why mega-unions are being formed. In part it is the result of the de-skilling of the UK workforce. Specialist occupations like our own are becoming rare: which is what gives us our particular influence and status. We are not general workers, and those unions who cater for them are, I suspect, less interested in our particular concerns than in our industrial strength. We are rightly suspicious of being courted only to end up as tools to be used for other ends.

We are successful as a union because of, and not despite, our size. We are more than just a union. We are a genuine fraternity of men and women who depend on each other as we work, who mix together socially, and who share a pride in our job and our union. Thanks to the decisions of last month's AAD, that is how we will remain.
and conditions, without staff in our own industry: we need for trade unions in today's society. 'It's not only East Europeans in the building industry who are being exploited,' he declared. 'That is how it should be.'

But a central theme of his address was that the union needed to get its finances in order if it was to continue with these high standards.

Before moving on to discuss money, Alan spoke about the elections being held for the leadership of the Labour Party, insisting that they needed to be 'about policies, not personalities'. 'We are fed up with personalities - because personalities only bring spin. It is policies that matter,' he declared.

He also spoke of the vital need for trade unions in today's society. 'It's not only East Europeans in the building industry who are being exploited,' he declared. 'Look at what is happening with agency staff in our own industry: we see people with terrible wages and conditions, without pensions or security. This must never happen to our grades - but only unions will ensure that is a fact and not a wish.'

Alan spoke of his pride in ASLEF's campaigning abilities and the efforts that had been put into the Squash campaign on cab conditions and Freight on Rail. 'First Capital Connect have put £2.4 million into addressing their cabs,' he said. 'That is the way forward. That is now the benchmark. The Specially Monitored Drivers issue also needs to be sorted out once and for all. Management have been abusing this system.' Alan also stressed the need to act on 'moonlighting' - working for other companies on a rest day. 'I want to know when I am going south that the guy coming north hasn't just moved off from another company four hours early,' he said. Another issue requiring attention was undoubtedly travel facilities.

Alan said that the pensions issue for members was continuing through the Rail Pensions Commission and explained that decisions about the staff fund had been tough but necessary. 'The simple fact is that at the time we could not afford the pension scheme which we provided.'

Turning to union finances, Alan reminded delegates that there had been no increase in subscriptions for five years. 'We need financial stability to avoid losing our independence,' he said, adding that in this same period our members had received pay increases ranging from £7,000 to £14,000. Union finances were now treated more professionally: 'We no longer sign up to policies without considering the financial consequences to this union. We budget and plan. We have to. The alternative is to be taken over by a huge union like Unite, which would want our industrial muscle. We have been offered engagement rings before, along with promises that we can be an independent section. But those promises are quickly forgotten and then they would try to take our teeth.

'Are we not ready to go to the dentist yet.'

ASLEF: INDEPENDENT AND PROUD, SAYS PRESIDENT

Alan Donnelly, the President of the Executive Committee, said that through its 127 year history ASLEF's strength had always been its independence and its internal democracy. 'The lay members run this union,' he declared. 'That is how it should be.'

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In 2006 the Financial Statements show expenditure greater than income in the amount of £489,000. This follows a deficit in 2005 of £1,386,000, a deficit in 2004 of £1,354,000 and a deficit in 2003 of £455,000.

Admittedly there are some exceptional costs in these years including the Southall and Cullen enquiries, the Brady barbeque incident, staff pension costs and legal fees but the underlying deficit of the Society over this period before exceptional items has been over £300,000 with a fall in 2006 to £220,000.

‘The result of all this is that we have had to sell our liquid investments. In 1999 we had over £2,500,000 held in Government Stocks and equity investments. We are now down to just over £1,000,000. If the Society is to survive, this situation cannot be allowed to continue. One could argue that if the current deficit trend continues we have thirty months left before we have to consider selling 9 Arkwright Road.

‘Cuts have been made to expenditure over the last couple of years – six members of staff have left without being replaced. However, there becomes a limit to how much further costs can be cut back without affecting the service given to members and we must, therefore, look to increasing income.

‘We need to build up our reserves again. Unless we do we will not be in a position to fund another ‘Southall’ enquiry or cushion the effect on members of an industrial dispute.’

The union has adopted a new formula for determining the level of subscriptions. In future subs will be raised by the rate of inflation in February each year. If the executive committee want a different - higher - rate, it will need to come to the Annual Assembly of delegates for the necessary authority.

‘The reason for the change is that the union now has a regular stream of income at an established level, and it will prevent seeking large increases in subs if rates are not revised for longer periods. If higher amounts are proposed, they will need to be justified to delegates at conference.

The executive committee is pledged to seek ways of reducing its expenditure at the same time as it seeks higher subscription rates. For example, it has agreed to cut down on meetings of Regional Committees.

‘I understand that our ambition is to be as open and democratic as possible,’ Keith Norman says. ‘But there are limits and as various delegates pointed out - if anything needs to go, the Regional meetings are the most logical to remove. To some extent their role has been overtaken by time.

‘The union also agreed to increase subscriptions by £2 a month in the near future after hearing its auditor, Nigel Gooch, say that the alternative is to ‘eat away at our assets’. In the past he said he had reported surplus of £7 million – but now assets were closer to one million. ‘The pensions crisis has eclipsed money saved by staff reductions at head office,’ he said. The warning was echoed by the general secretary who said he cannot make more headquarters cuts without affecting benefits to members - and neither could we continue to ‘sell the silver’.

‘I don’t want to be the last general secretary of ASLEF,” Keith declared. ‘My ambition when it is time for me to go is to hand over a union that is economically viable and financially healthy. I don’t want us to get by by hiring out our headquarters at weekends.’

The difficulties of linking subs to inflation were discussed, with one delegate pointing out that sometimes drivers don’t get backdated pay for months after a settlement but Leeds’ secretary Pauline Cawood said it was time to ‘just do it’.

There was general agreement on two issues: one, that an increase was not unreasonable as members’ pay had gone up by between £7,000 and £14,000 – but that if the members were to be asked for increases, the union machinery must also be seen to play its full part in spending cut-backs.

The new rates are:
Scale 1 £23.45 (salary £30K and above)
Scale 2 £21.45 (salary between £25K and £29,999)
Scale 3 £14.95 (salary between £16K and £29,999)
Scale 4 £9.32 (salary under £16,000)

Ian Smith is one of the union’s three member Trustees, along with Martin Barter and Bill Goode. ‘It is our role to oversee the union’s finances,’ Ian explains.

‘We examine the union’s investments and keep track of its assets. To do this, we meet on a monthly basis with the union’s General Secretary, President and Head of Finance. We meet the union’s accountants on a quarterly basis.

‘Our job is exactly what it says on the label. We are elected by the membership from its own number to ensure the union’s finances are being dealt with in a way in which ASLEF members would approve.

‘This includes making sure our investments - your money - gets a good return, but also that it is invested ethically. We keep away from some areas where we could make money, like armaments or tobacco, in keeping with the union’s policies and aspirations.’
JOHN REID DEFENDS 10 YEARS OF NEW LABOUR

JOHN REID told ASLEF’s annual conference (AAD) that the Labour government should not be judged by Iraq as he stressed ‘the burdens of leadership’. ‘It is easy in Opposition,’ he said. ‘Nye Bevan once told someone who was leaving the Labour Party, “If it is impotence and purity you want, go to a convent”. Government is about doing what you believe will be right in the long term.

‘History will make the final judgement,’ he declared as he reminded delegates that Labour voted against Churchill four times over the Second World War.

He repeated that he felt the war in Iraq was just, that he had believed Saddam Hussein had weapons of mass destruction - and that he was proud to have removed a fascist dictator.

John defended the record of the Labour government over the past ten years, in which he has served as a minister for nine of the previous ten years. ‘There is always a tension between ideals and practice,’ he said, quoting Lenin as he argued that the history of the left has always been one of compromise between principles and power.

‘I have always believed that what divides us is nothing compared with the huge chasm between Labour and the Tories,’ he declared, as he conceded that the Labour government ‘hadn’t done everything as well or as quickly as some would want’. But he said Labour had radically improved the position of working people in the UK.

He insisted that Labour had made a huge difference over the last decade. He praised its actions in Bosnia and Kosovo and felt the public service reforms should be seen in the context of shortened hospital waiting lists, increased jobs, lower crime levels, and increased investment in schools and transport, especially rail.

John concluded by reminding delegates that in the 1880’s Kier Hardie’s manifesto had included setting a minimum wage, Home Rule for the nationalities and reform of the House of Lords. All these had finally been delivered he said - but even John seemed to accept that Labour could not be accused of unseemly hastiness of their implementation!

John responded to questions from the floor on pension levels, his comparison of Iraq and the Second World War, the effect of intervention in Afghanistan and plans to change membership of the House of Lords.

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MOVE TO 2 YEAR CONFERENCE THWARTED

Aslef's Delegates: All lines lead to Scarborough

The executive proposal to cease having annual conferences – and have an assembly of delegates once every two years instead – was soundly defeated. Both the President and the general secretary argued that the money saved justified such a move – but delegates insisted that anything that cut back democracy and limited accountability would be detrimental to the union.

‘This is where you get your future leaders, it’s where you feel the passion and the pride,’ declared Tony Howarth, a first time delegate from Bishops Stortford. It was also argued that because we are a small union we can afford to meet regularly, but opponents said that the membership were fragmented because of the number of employers and that this made it more important than ever to have a regular and annual forum for discussion and debate.

NO CHANGE FOR GS RULES

West Brompton delegate Tony Cashman argued for a number of changes concerning the election of the general secretary. He said his branch wanted to exclude district officers from standing so that only people without experience of headquarters would be eligible. Tony said that the objective was to ensure that the union’s senior representative would be guaranteed to ‘come from the grassroots’. He also wanted the existing rule removed which says that if the general secretary’s term of office took them to over age 60, they remain in office, with no further election, until age 65.

West Brompton branch insisted that the GS should be forced to stand again if the five-year term of office ended while the incumbent was between sixty and 65.

Conference said the proposed changes would exclude many of the people most qualified to do the job and rejected both proposals.

JOHN MCDONNELL: THEY WON’T STOP ME!

John McDonnell - the MP for Hayes and Harlington whose campaign to challenge Gordon Brown for the leadership of the Labour Party had just hit the rails – told ASLEF AAD (conference) delegates that it had been a ‘dramatic mistake’ by the Brown camp to prevent a leadership challenge. He said the Brown camp had made enormous efforts to prevent his Leadership challenge.

‘Stopping democracy weakens the party,’ he said. ‘I find it incredible that New Labour can’t tolerate debate.’

John said that his campaign had centred on Labour Party policies – ‘not New Labour or Old Labour, but Labour’. ‘Our party has recently polled 30% in all the opinion polls. Why is that? I believe it is because we have lost touch with the very people who supported us in 1997.

‘Ten years ago, health workers marched with us. Now they are marching against us, opposing privatisation and cuts in services. Trade unionists who worked with us are now alienated – having seen that instead of repealing of Tory union laws, the government watched the events of Gate Gourment from the sidelines, just as they have tolerated arbitrary wage cuts and summary dismissals.’

But he gave one definite promise: ‘I won’t stop me!’

FIRST IMPRESSIONS ....

Andy Kelly from the union’s Banbury branch was a first time delegate to the AAD. So what were his first impressions? ‘I was quite daunted at the start,’ he says, ‘but once people knew you’re new to it all, they’re very helpful and supportive.

‘The way conference operates is initially quite complicated, but then you realise it is basically the same as we do in the branch, but more formal and professional. ‘Once I’d spoken at the rostrum for the first time, it was very much easier. I’ve enjoyed it, and hope I played my part in the union’s conference.’

Smooth as silk...

This was the first time Nick Silk from Colchester had been a conference delegate – and he says it made him realise the full range of the union’s activities. ‘We deal with the basic industrial issues at branch level,’ he says, ‘but at AAD we consider broader issues like government attitudes, franchise changes and legal matters. It was helpful that we had a mix of new and seasoned delegates - it made for a good atmosphere and interesting debate.’

CORRECTION

On page 7 of the July 2006 edition of the Journal it was incorrectly reported that the Certification Officer had ruled that Mr Brady had been excluded from ASLEF membership for bringing the union into disrepute.

In fact, the reason given by the Certification Officer was that Mr Brady’s complaint was out of time.

We apologise for the reporting error and regret any distress this may have caused, and thank Mr Brady’s solicitors for bringing this matter to our attention in a letter of 18 July 2007.
ALL CHANGE @ RAIL UNION LEARNING IN SCOTLAND

Motherwell driver Jim Baxter has taken over from Glasgow Central’s Graeme McCabe as Rail Union Learning’s project worker in Scotland. Graeme’s secondment from First Scotrail ended last month.

Jim began as a secondman in 1987 at the old Motherwell shed before qualifying in 1991 as a driver working freight, local passenger services and freightliner traffic.

In the Motherwell branch he has served as a health & safety and local rep and is currently the vice chair. He also served as the union learning representative.

The RUL project in Scotland is run out of The Rail Union Learning Centre on the third floor of Stow College in Glasgow. The centre – with its fully equipped computer facilities – is used as a hub for the project as Scotland’s geography makes it impossible for all rail staff to use the facility. ‘We hope to run more courses at stations, as has already happened at locations like Motherwell and Dundee,’ Jim says.

To contact Rail Union Learning Scotland, phone Jim on 07872164213 or email jim@rul.org.uk

Jim will fix your learning needs!

PENSIONS POLICY REITERATED

The union is to continue to campaign on linking pensions to wages. Gordon Brown has said it is something he intends to introduce in 2012, but ASLEF activists pointed out that ‘now’ is a better time – especially as there is no guarantee that he will be in a position to deliver the promise in five years time.

BEWARE OF MOONLIGHTERS AND BANK ROBBERS!

The union is increasingly concerned at information that some members with full-time jobs are also being employed to work as drivers for other companies. Largely this concerns drivers using their rest days to work for heritage companies, sometimes for rates of £85 a day.

One of the companies offering steam train travel in Whitby has a bank manager employed on its footplate – who told a local paper recently that he’d ‘do it for nothing’ – which raises the question of how he would feel if our members volunteered for his job on the cheap!

It also means that companies like EWS, where the union has negotiating rights and agreements on conditions, lose contracts to firms who are prepared, and able, to employ drivers for a pittance. The problem is made worse with passenger companies that want to increase the number of trips they run for the summer season. They aim to get over the peak of work by employing our members on their rest days. ASLEF’s position is that it should be a discipline matter if any of our members’ actions threaten the livelihood of other drivers.

The charter companies were roundly condemned for their failure to put anything back into the industry and for putting drivers in the position of driving on routes they don’t know. In some instances, route learning is picked up from a passenger seat! The union has reports of people turning up to work for one firm only six hours after booking off from another company.

Grant Murchie from Perth says that, ‘People undercut their friends and colleagues when they work for cheap companies that take contracts from EWS.’

Other AAD delegates insisted that open access companies can be ‘industrial poison’ and that many of their industrial relations policies, like the trains, belong in museums.

CONFERENCE RAISES £700 FOR BENEFIT FUND

After hearing a speech from David Allen, the Chairman of the Railways Benefit Fund, delegates to the union’s AAD put their hands deep into their pockets and donated £700 to the charity. ‘I am overwhelmed by such kindness,’ David said as Keith Norman handed over the collection.

David spoke about the history of the fund – Charles Dickens was a former President – but he stressed that there was still a need for it today. ‘We’re funded by railway people for railway people,’ he said.

‘We help needy cases in many different ways. Basically our role is to provide a safety net when all other avenues have disappeared.

‘Recently, for example, we’ve donated money to a station supervisor on long-term sick, helped out with optical and dental costs, we’ve financed funeral arrangements and assisted with education and medical difficulties. We also offer advice and practical assistance where necessary.’

Alan made a special plea for payroll giving to support the Fund’s other fund raisers like raffles, dinners and memorabilia they’ve been selling on eBay.

‘We’re a very open organisation,’ he said. ‘So long as you are, were, a rail worker, you can make an application even if you’ve never contributed.’

Nick Silk thanked Alan for his contribution and said that it might be regrettable, but it was certainly true, that the Fund still had a vital role to play.

CUT BACKS AT REGIONS

As part of its pledge to reduce union expenditure as it seeks higher subscription rates, there will be reductions in the number of meetings of Regional Committees. ‘I understand that our ambition is to be as open and democratic as possible,’ Keith Norman says. ‘But there are limits and as various delegates pointed out - if anything needs to go, the Regional meetings are the most logical to remove. To some extend their role has been overtaken by time.’
CAMPAIGN FOR EXCLUSION FROM CONGESTION CHARGE
ASLEF’s annual assembly of delegates has charged the executive with mounting a campaign to exclude the drivers of train, tube and light railway vehicles who work in depots within the congestion zone from paying the charge.

The union accepted that the congestion charge in London has been a real success, reducing traffic and improving the environment. But it has caused problems for drivers. It was estimated that if drivers pay the charge, they could end up paying £200 a month in order to provide an essential public service!

Many drivers have no alternative but to use their cars in order to provide the capital with the transport it needs. ‘We should be assisted as vital workers – not penalised for it!’ said Waterloo delegate Mars Colombini.

The congestion charge will, other delegates pointed out, soon be ‘coming to a town near you’. There were proposals for the reinstatement of staff trains and suggestions for more services that could limit the need for car travel.

‘We have a right to enable London to be a greener place without ASLEF members having to pay for it.’

PENSIONS: NOT ALL DOOM AND GLOOM SAYS TRUSTEE
Dave Tyson a former president of the EC now a Trustee Director of Railway Pensions Scheme says that despite the hype, the pension situation is not all doom and gloom. ‘I remain positive and upbeat,’ he declared.

He said that pensions were now protected as never before, adding that he was proud that Labour had established the Pension Protection Fund, even if it was funded by placing a levy on all pension schemes – including the rail ones – even though we know we will never need to use it as the government will run the section until a new employer is found.

He was not so sanguine, however, about the Chancellor’s stopping tax relief on the dividends of UK shares when the markets were doing well. ‘Although Mr Brown said this helped to stimulate the economy, its effect was to wipe off £80 million from the Rail Pension Scheme,’ said Dave.

In his submission to the Rail Pension Review, Dave had called for the creation of a TOC section, compulsory membership, protection of the final salary arrangement, protection of benefits and tackling the future funding of the scheme.

‘In my view that will be a major thrust of the Commission’s review and they have indicated that is what they intend to do.’

Employers, Dave said, had different views – such as retirement at 65 and CARE schemes – Career Average Revalued Earnings – basically a link with average earnings rather than final salary. He accepted that these ideas were not currently acceptable to ASLEF.

He congratulated the union on having schemes reopened – like in Anglia, where 200 new people had joined. Dave added that it was a fact that pension funds have the fund, and therefore the power, to influence change in other areas such as excessive management bonuses and even issues like climate change.

On a further positive note he reported that the value of the scheme is up considerably since the evaluation in December 2004. At that time its value stood at just under £13.7 billion: now it is just over £19 billion. The next formal valuation is due at the end of this year.

THE DEBATE ARRANGER ...
Kevin Beresford in addition to being the delegate for Doncaster, was also a member of the Conference Arrangements Committee. So what does that mean? ‘We’re responsible for the smooth running of conference,’ Kevin says. ‘We meet for a couple of days about three weeks before conference and try to marry up the motions to conference with the executive’s report.

‘This year we decided to put the finance items at the start of the agenda, because this was, we decided, one of the most important items to debate this year.

“We have another quick meeting before conference begins, and on the first day our proposals are put to conference.”

Arrangements committee members are always delegates to conference and the regions rotate who nominate each of the three members.

PETER HAIN : WHAT I STAND FOR
Peter Hain, the Northern Ireland and Welsh Secretary, thanked the union for its backing for his attempts to secure the deputy leadership of the Labour Party.

‘I considered it a badge of honour when I was denounced in the “Sun” as a dangerous leftie in the same article where your union was called “the most hated in Britain”,’ he declared.

Peter spoke about the progress that had been made in securing a political settlement in Northern Ireland while he had been minister, but paid tribute to Mo Mowlam and to the new maturity that meant the two sides now sat together in the devolved assembly.

“It’s a standing joke that Ian Paisley barks, ‘Get me McGuinness!’ – a strange phrase for a teetotaler!’

He also spoke of the need for greater integration in our industry - ‘It is something we must discuss together,’ he said. ‘If I become deputy leader, that will happen. We need a real debate about public services and the limits of private capital.’

He saw the change of leadership as an opportunity to prepare the Party to win the next election. ‘To do that we need to re-connect with the grass roots, with policies that will inspire them to come home to Labour. The secret is to listen and not to lecture.’

‘I know you want more - and you’re entitled to demand it. I respect you for that.’

His contribution also covered climate change, supported the current trade union influence within the Labour Party and argued that the provision of housing was now a major priority.

‘The only way it can be achieved is by persuading people to come home to Labour.’
The Squash campaign – ASLEF’s drive for safe, comfortable and healthy cabs – moves into a new stage next month as things literally begin to warm up.

Union negotiators at company council level have spent the last 12 months seeking improvements and commitments from rail companies and now feel the need to step up the pressure in two areas:

- The union is advising members to seriously consider refusing to work unmodified Class 66 locos, and
- Has offered its unequivocal backing to any member in any class of train who refuses to remain in a cab he or she feels makes work unsafe.

The union says no driver should have to tolerate temperatures over 27 degrees. ‘After all,’ says general secretary Keith Norman, ‘Network Rail introduces temporary speed restrictions in hot weather to protect its rails and overhead wires. Well, on the same logic, we need to protect drivers. The union will, without reservation, support any member who refuses to work because heat conditions make him or her consider it unsafe to do so.’

The discussions around the campaign at Scarborough last month were uncompromising. ‘If you can’t Squash the cabs – put them in the crusher’ was one summary – while the horror stories continued.

Pete Dodgson said he had found himself in the ‘unreal’ position of sitting in a traction sub-group discussing how to improve heat conditions for too long – giving management the impression that we would continue to accept them.

Dave Plumb reported one discussion with his boss last winter where he had demanded to know what had been done to make cabs warmer and more comfortable. His managers told Dave they’d given it an extra coat of paint!

The Class 66s might be under the spotlight at the moment – but looking at these pictures, Chiltern managers seem intent on making a case for the 168!

Many thanks to the driver who sent these pictures – and who told us that one of the locos has been booked three times since March for the cab to be cleaned – and to date this still hasn’t happened!

**CHILTERN RAILWAYS MAKES CASE FOR SUPPORTING THE SQUASH CAMPAIGN!**

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**SQUASH: ASLEF TURNS UP THE HEAT**

The Squash campaign – ASLEF’s drive for safe, comfortable and healthy cabs – moves into a new stage next month as things literally begin to warm up.

Union negotiators at company council level have spent the last 12 months seeking improvements and commitments from rail companies and now feel the need to step up the pressure in two areas:

- The union is advising members to seriously consider refusing to work unmodified Class 66 locos, and
- Has offered its unequivocal backing to any member in any class of train who refuses to remain in a cab he or she feels makes work unsafe.

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SAVE TREES! SCRAP THE RULE BOOKS!
The union is to propose to Network Rail, ATOC and employing companies that drivers are issued with personal computers or personal digital assistants (handheld computers). If these were used to store Rule Books, Sectional Apendices, Traction and Training Manuals, WONs and PONs, ‘several forests a year’ could be saved – as well as making long-term financial savings for the employers.

Updates could be sent out easily and regularly and the information could equally be installed into on-board computer systems on modern traction units.

‘At the moment drivers have to carry round a sack full of paper – and many depots don’t even have recycling facilities,’ said one delegate.

CLEAR RULES ON MOBILE PHONES
There is a lack of consistancy with rules concerning the use of mobile phones by drivers, and the union is seeking an industry-wide code of conduct.

A PRESSING ENGAGEMENT...!
John McCauley played a full part in the conference, but he could be forgiven for having some of his mind on other matters: he was getting married the day after conference ended!

‘We’ve been together for nine years and engaged for six years,’ he said. ‘It’s better not to rush into anything!’ John claims a mixture of New Year’s Eve celebrations and Jack Daniels led to a popping of the question. ‘We’re off to Turkey next week after getting hitched at Warrington Town Hall. It should be almost as exciting as Scarborough!’

We wish John and Paula all the best for the future.

Some companies take the view that mobile devices can be used in aircraft, so it seems reasonable to allow them in trains especially with hands-free developments. Others define particular circumstances in which it is legitimate to use them – suggesting there are times it could be an aid to safe driving - while others have a general ban.

Union delegates last month called for clear rules on the use of mobiles in order to prevent managers making arbitrary decisions which could lead to discipline. In some cases companies provide phones but insist they are switched off in the cab.

The union is to press for an industry-wide decision on the issue which is clear for all members. The union favours a statement that mobiles are not used while driving except for emergency calls.

WHAT SPEED AT SENSORS?
Drivers are increasingly annoyed at the fact that Network Rail refuses to publish the relevant speeds that apply before overspeed sensors kick in.

When these speeds are not revealed, a driver may be tempted to reset and go to avoid being placed into SMD. The speeds exist - so why don’t they tell us what they are?

LIGHTS - NOT BLINDERS
ASLEF is to approach employers to ensure that quality headlights are provided and maintained. The aim should be to have lighting that points forward and down the track, enabling the driver to see trackside signage or workers but which does not dazzle other drivers. Pauline Cawood said she had a reputation for being very friendly ‘but in fact I’m not waving to other drivers – I’m trying to see!’ she explained.

CUBA: AN EXAMPLE
Bernard Regan, National Secretary of the Cuba Solidarity Campaign, spoke to ASLEF AAD delegates about the disastrous and illegal US trade blockade of the island. ‘It is appalling that the richest country in the world has a blockade against a developing country that cost it four billion dollars last year,’ he declared. ‘Cuba is an independent country - not an appendage to the US continent!’

He thanked the union for making representations to Hilton hotels when they refused to allow Cubans to book rooms because they could fall foul of US laws. ‘What about the laws of other countries?’ Bernard wanted to know.

He asked why Cuba was the US continent!'

It shows that equality issues aren’t ‘side issues’ - they are central to everything the union does. Discrimination affects us all, and the unions have always been at the forefront of pushing for equality regardless of gender, race, religion, age or sexual orientation.

‘We’ll all really pleased to see that ASLEF takes its equality agenda seriously. Having us at conference underlines this.’

Ray Jackson reported to the AAD that the retired members’ section was now at an all-time high of over 1,600 members.

THE EQUAL OPPERS
‘It’s a really positive move to have the Equality Committees here at the AAD,’ said Pat Blake. ‘Obviously it lets put forward to other delegates the concerns and opinions of the minority groups within the union - but it does more.

It shows that equality issues aren’t ‘side issues’ - they are central to everything the union does. Discrimination affects us all, and the unions have always been at the forefront of pushing for equality regardless of gender, race, religion, age or sexual orientation.

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BROWN LETTER DAY
The general secretary is to write to Gordon Brown when he takes over as Prime Minister in order to remind him about decisions at the 1995 and 2004 Labour Party conferences which called for the return of our industry to public ownership and accountability.

District 7 Kidnap Conference Chair Peter Dodgson for a photo!
TRAVEL FACILITIES : WE SHOULD ALL BE ‘SAFEGUARDED’

One of the union’s priorities for the coming year is to attempt to secure equal and improved free travel facilities for all our members, irrespective of service. We believe this should include residential and leisure concessionary travel – which was only granted to active ‘safeguarded’ staff who were employed prior to April 1, 1996.

It is ASLEF’s belief that these concessions should be made available to all employees and their nominated partners, including same sex partners, regardless of length of service - and that the facility should be retained into retirement.

CURRENT POSITION

There are different agreements in each TOC and FOC, but in general terms they are as follows:

● All members who were employed before privatisation retained their full, protected, travel concessions - (the cut off date was 31.03.1996)

● All other members have different arrangements depending on which company they work for - but normally these include unlimited travel on the trains of the employing TOC

● Members who retire retain the entitlement they had while they were working

● Some companies that were formed after privatisation - like Freightliner Intermodal and Freightliner Heavy Haul - have no Travel Facilities at all

● GB Railfreight is a company owned by First Group. It offers unprotected members free travel on trains owned by the parent company, which includes all First Group franchises.

● Protected staff are allowed to travel at reduced rates on London Underground and Docklands Light Railway services.

A number of retired members have pointed out a further difficulty with the existing system. There is a tendency for people to retire to places other than where they used to work, so they end up with a pass for another part of the country - which can make their retirement travel concession virtually irrelevant.

FOREIGN TRAVEL CONCESSIONS

Staff who were employed by BR prior to privatisation enjoyed varying foreign travel concessions depending on when they entered service. However, they included free or reduced travel for drivers and their families, which differed from country to country but covered most of the world. The old ‘Purple Book’ has a large section at the back which defines the concessions granted by each country. Most of
PROGRESS ON SMD - ASSISTANCE AND TRAINING, NOT THREATS AND DISCIPLINE

For some time now ASLEF has recognised the problems faced by our members who have been involved in an incident whilst carrying out their duties as a driver. It has proved to be one of the issues our members have raised most frequently at branch and other union meetings. There has been a genuine perception that there was something unfair, arbitrary and distorted about the whole Specially Monitored Driver (SMD) procedure.

That is what the executive committee set out to rectify 12 months ago. Hopefully this report will satisfy members that real progress has been achieved and that the SMD system as we know it is soon coming to an unalmented end.

THE PROBLEM OUTLINED

All too often following an incident drivers are advised - through a non-consultative system - that "points" would be added to their “Specially Monitored Drivers” record. The effect of this is potentially to increase the member’s ‘categorisation’. It also leads to an ‘action plan’ that concentrates on additional monitoring - but it often has no clearly defined direction and seldom offers any genuine initiatives to assist the driver. It is an entirely negative procedure.

In fact members have told the union that often this additional monitoring has the utterly undesirable effect of adding pressure to the individual’s work-life – which inevitably makes the driver prone to making further mistakes. This would be made more apparent with the increased frequency of data downloads.

When our members fall foul of this process a ‘panel’ sits to determine the individual’s future. In many cases there is no representation independent of the ‘panel’ - and no opportunity to appeal against their decision. Yet this is the moment when ASLEF members can lose their competency - and effectively their livelihood.

The fact is that any driver who joins the industry at a young age would need to be super-human to work through their entire career without falling foul of SMD at some stage. This is why the executive committee set up a specialist sub-committee to consider all our options to resolve the matter.

We are now pleased to report that, following discussions with a whole range of industry stakeholders, managers, members and other experts, we are convinced that real progress has now been made. There is now a recognition that SMD in its current form has gone past its ‘sell-by’ date and of benefit neither to the industry - nor to our members.

THE NEGOTIATIONS

ASLEF’s national negotiations have been led in the National Express Group by the national organiser Andy Reed, EC member Nigel Gibson, Neil Cooper who works for Silverlink and Andy Botham who is the Company Council rep for Midland Mainline. There have also been discussions with Virgin West Coast through the Company Council - and other companies are now entering discussions with the union. We await full reports from the other companies - but clearly opinion is changing. The tide is turning in our favour and reform is on the agenda.

The negotiators have centred their efforts on arguing for a clean, open and fair system which delivers for its members while recognising the need for systems which provide a safe railway operation. The union is in favour of a system that helps its members to improve their professionalism. What we object to is arbitrary and closed disguised discipline.

THE UNION OBJECTIVES

Throughout the talks with each company, the union has concentrated on ten major points. These have been to:

- Ensure a fair process of transition from one system to another.
- Ensure that management is accountable for actions - or inactions.
- Provide the right to representation and appeal at various stages.
- Deliver training needs to assist drivers to regain full competence through development plans which should be agreed with the driver.
- Give recognition of improved performance and provide drivers with the opportunity to conclude the development plan early.
- Operate independently of 'Cars & Support systems'.
- Ensure that management is accountable for actions - or inactions.
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- Give recognition of improved performance and provide drivers with the opportunity to conclude the development plan early.
- Operate independently of 'Cars & Support systems'.

A NEW TEMPLATE

The executive committee is confident that it has made sufficient progress to issue a template agreement based on the outcome of the positive discussions that have taken place with Virgin West Coast and the National Express Group.

This offers us the opportunity to go forward and make significant improvements to every company and workplace in the country. The template we have established provides for the complete removal of ‘points’ and ‘categories’ and effectively consigns the old SMD process to the rubbish bin. We now see a system emerging that is based on assisting improvement rather than removal.

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We have worked with everyone in the industry to air your views on SMD and to do something positive about them. We now believe we have provided the whole industry - and the operators within it - the opportunity to go forward. We will be satisfied with nothing less from those companies where we do not currently have an agreement.

This report was produced by the executive committee’s SMD sub group, which is composed of Andy Reed, Nigel Gibson, Dave Calfe and Tosh McDonald.

THE WAY FORWARD

The executive committee will be considering how to take the claim forward over the coming weeks in both political and industrial forums.

One approach may be to seek the assistance of the ASLEF group of MPs, asking them to put down an Early Day Motion (EDM) and seeking the support of other Parliamentarians. However, the most likely road to success would seem to be industrially.

The union will argue:

- that having different concessions for different workers effectively leaves non-protected drivers on lower wages than their colleagues.
- that there would be almost no cost to the employers to meet our claim in full - and could be beneficial to the environment because drivers who would make use of the free travel would in all probability otherwise be using personal transport.

Updates on the union’s efforts to achieve this policy will be reported both in the Journal and on the union’s website – www.aslef.org.uk
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The ladies add glamour to Hither reunion

On 4 May 2007, branch members past and present gathered at Hither Green Railway Club. It was nice to see how many working members came along to support the event, and once again retired members helped to swell the ranks.

The branch invited Retired Members Secretary (RMS) Tony West and Committee Member P. J. Smith who had an affiliation with Hither Green whilst working freight traffic there from Freme Park. Dave Weddle, another RMS Committee man, came along. Although Dave’s a Tonbridge man he spent time during his career at Hither Green Depot.

Tony West represented head office and made a few presentations. These were awarded to Stan Parsons (50-year medallion), ex-LLR rep Ray Cooper (Retirement Certificate and 45-year badge) and Brian Rickard (Retirement Certificate). Brian has also served at Bricklayer Arms. Clive Wallace who served on the LLR in the 1980’s and holds the title of Hither Green’s youngest fireman, received a Retirement Certificate. Paul Pearce, who served as a Health & Safety rep was given his Retirement Certificate, while John White and David Hogben both received 40-year badges. It was also good to see John Davies, now retired but once a long-standing EC member.

As we grouped for a photo, ‘Westy’, feeling we lacked glamour – invited the wives to join in!

Once the formalities were over we settled down to some serious socialising! Thanks to the committee for their efforts in organising the re-union, to the caterers for the excellent food and to the club staff who ensured a good time was had by all.

John Staggs – Secretary – Hither Green Branch

Northam Branch mark the end of an era

On Sunday 29 April the Northam branch witnessed the end of an era as our branch chair, and one of the last remaining steam drivers on south West Trains - Allen Taylor - retired after 46 years service to the railway industry and ASLEF.

Allen started as an engine cleaner at Eastleigh on the Southern Region in 1962 at the age of 16. He progressed to fireman and Passed Driver before gaining his position in the Driver’s Link in 1986. Allen was made redundant in January 1995 on the closure of Eastleigh as a passenger operating depot. He then completed 8 years at Bournemouth depot before the opening of a new depot at Northam in Southampton.

Allen took the position of Branch Chair on the opening of the branch in July 2003.

I would like to thank his colleagues who travelled from Weymouth, Salisbury, Bournemouth and Basingstoke to celebrate his retirement and also the special effort made by our District Organiser Graham Morris who travelled down from London to present Allen with his Appreciation Certificate and his 45 year service badge.

‘Fast Al’ will be greatly missed by all his colleagues on the railway, but especially the drivers at Northam. Many of us have known him for many a year and could always rely on him for his advice.

Allen has joined the ASLEF retired members section and will still be active within our branch. We wish him and his wife Maureen a long and happy retirement.

ALAN LOUGHLIN Secretary - Northam branch

BANBURY UPDATE

The Banbury branch was delighted to have EC member Bryan Davies speaking at the end of the usual branch reports, during which we agreed to send best wishes to Iain Black, the driver involved in the Grayrigg derailment.

Brian began his contribution talking about Level Crossings – which had been the subject of a recent seminar at Arkwright Road. He then went on to discuss the Squash campaign, concentrating on the increase in SPADs during last year’s hot weather. Finally he spoke about pensions, pay talks in general, SMDs and the Labour leadership.

Brian gave a special thanks to Brother Chris Farmer for his work on the Chiltern Railways Company Council before moving on to thank the branch for his EC nomination and joining in a lively question and answer session.

Jim Browne – Reporter - Banbury Branch

TON UP RAMSGATE!

May I on behalf of the Retired Members Section & Kings Cross Branch send fraternal greeting and congratulations to Ramsgate Branch on its reaching its 100th Anniversary,

Peter (P J) Smith Reporter - RMS

BARNHAM BID TERRY FARWELL

Train crew gathered at Bongor Regis on 23 February to say farewell to Terry Whiffen who opted to retire early after 36 years railway service. We wish him well.

Terry joined the railway in 1971, gaining promotion through grade to driver at Victoria Eastern, Bognor Regis and finally Barnham.

After giving an update on Greyrigg and the Bob Morgan case, Andy Reed presented Terry with gift vouchers and his ASLEF retirement certificate.
Wolves veterans invade the pitch

On Good Friday the Wolverhampton Branch held another successful retired reunion at Molineux with guests Andy Reed, his partner Maxine, Mick Whelan, Dave Barraclough and Hugh Dunilson.

After the meal a 5 year badge presentation was made by Andy to Sis Nicky Foster. Andy then gave an update on Society issues and paid tribute to retiring Branch Chairman Roy Goodhead who has worked nearly 50 years in the industry. Although a Baggies fan, Andy spoke on Wolverhampton Football Club’s history. The club has long connections with Stafford Road. In fact, in the trophy cabinet there is an ASLEF 125 Year Badge by the Wolverhampton Branch plus other railway memorabilia.

After much banter from the Wolves lads we managed to get Andy onto the Molineux pitch for photographs. To finish off the evening, guests did not need much persuading in venturing down to the local watering hole ‘The Great Western’ for more banter.

Nick Harkness
Branch Secretary

Good turn out at West Brompton

The May Branch meeting was well attended, with drivers from Earls Court and Acton Town District and also members from Acton Town Piccadilly. This has been helped because our new venue at Earls Court is only a 2 minute walk from the station. It was also good to see more female train drivers involved in the branch. The candidates for National Organiser were invited along but only two of the four - Simon Weller and Peter Cashman - could attend. There was also a report back from the AAD.

Simon talked about the union’s communication, problems and the importance of well trained reps. He stressed the need to take the union forwards on all fronts, including lobbying Members of Parliament. He believes our excellent reps are not good at taking the credit for their achievements.

Peter Cashman also spoke about communication problems before moving on to recruitment, explaining that most new drivers now come from the stations and are already normally in a trade union. He spoke about health and safety issues and said his member in Birkenhead had refused to work on the grounds of health & safety as this seemed to be the only thing the companies understood. He was aware of the branch’s connect radio difficulties and talked about the need to work with reps and to create specialised recruitment packages specific to differing companies. Both candidates would continue to support and fight for recognition for our brothers and sisters on Croydon Tramlink.

The discussion after these two very adequate representatives has spoken was intense and informative. We all agreed that change was needed and I am sure either of these reps would make a good National Organiser. It will be a hard choice for everyone.

Tony Cashman reported on the AAD before the branch admitted several new members to the union. Our female colleagues raised the issue of late night detrainments at certain locations where the current procedure is inadequate. It was also pointed out that other areas such as Barking Wimbledon and triangle sidings had problems. The Local depot reps on the District Line are arranging a meeting to resolve these issues.

Dave Bacon
Reporter - West Brompton Branch

GREAT DAY AT KINGS CROSS

On 11 May Kings Cross’ retirees invited friends, relations and work mates from all over the country to come and celebrate the transition to retirement of some of our colleagues. The retiring Members are:

IAN TWELLS FCC 1960 – 2007 who started in 1960, moved to the footplate at Frodingham in 1962 and Horsey Loco before coming to Kings Cross in 1968. He worked for WAGN then FCC as a minder driver.


PAUL BEGLEY FCC 1960- 2007 Started at KX Top Shed in 1960 moved to KX station, under privatisation worked for WAGN then FCC.

PETER HOLMES GNER 1958 - 2007 started at Frodingham in 1958, re-joined the railway at Immingham in 1960, came to Kings Cross in 1967, spent 12 years in Ilford hostel and was the last to leave. Later worked for GNER,

TONY DENT 1959- 2007 GNER started at Horsey, moved to Kings Cross 1968 as a passed Fireman. Under privatisation worked for GNER. On retirement was the Branch Chairman and Local Level Rep.

LAWRIE MANSON 1957-2007 GNER Started at Perth in 1957, came to Kings Cross in 1968 a good branch member who in 2004 took up the reins as Company Council Rep for K X.

ANDY COTOGNO 1966-2007 ASLEF HO Started at Kings Cross in 1966 and became an active branch member, eventually serving as LDC Secretary, LDC Chairman, Branch Secretary, Branch Chairman, Company Councillor WAGN and District 5 Organiser.

50 year membership medallions were presented by Tony West to Alan (Tank) Adams, Ralph Bosworth, Ted Dooling, Henry Newbury and Mick Moran while Andy Reed made presentations to John Goulding (45 years) and Ian Harvey (40 years).
In this month’s look at the pages of the Locomotive Journal from 100 and 50 years ago, we discover the joys of recruitment in 1907 - and the argument that management expect our members to be superhuman from 1957 ....

JULY 1907

The Organising Secretary, H. Parfitt, reported on the unruly - but ultimately successful - opening of the Bricklayer’s Arms branch ...

“The Redhill meeting brought a six weeks’ campaign to a close and I got home for Whitsuntide, but returned to the South-Eastern line again on May 2nd, to that district of London known as Bricklayers’ Arms, where the mere mention of the name of the Associated was formerly considered a sufficient justification for a black look, or even a period in Coventry.

When the eventful night arrived it brought with it friends from Battersea, New Cross, Orpington, Slades Green and Paddington. Mr Bliss presided. The first sign of disorder came from a person at the back of the hall, who interrupted a speaker by trying to make a megaphone of his hands, between which he bawled unmelodious sounds, with disastrous results to his reputation - vocal or otherwise - for, like Mr Pape, if he hadn’t got a tear in his eye he certainly had “a catch in his voice”; the resultant sound, therefore, developed into something between the bleating of a sheep and the braying of an ass. A snapshot of him would have afforded endless amusement to his nearest relatives, but the sounds would have settled all the “postulants” at the Dogs’ Home, without recourse to the lethal chamber.

I then read a list of names for membership, which appeared to astonish the would-be obstructors. More names were added, and Bricklayers’ Arms Branch was declared open with 24 members.”

JULY 1957

D.K. Pullen in his ‘Page for Motormen’ confined himself to the rigours of the Guard’s Brake Test ...

“Without getting ourselves bogged down in technicalities, let’s have a word this month on the subject of the Guard’s Brake Test. No need here to waste valuable space on the importance of always making an adequate test - the punishment meted out to our men when something goes wrong in this connection indicates quite clearly that nothing will soften the hearts of those people who sit in judgement if it is alleged that the Motorman failed to carry out, to the letter, his instructions on Testing the Brake before starting.

Quite often, particularly at points where attachments are made on the main line, the late running of one portion will cause a bit of a flap among the staff concerned. In their natural anxiety to get the train away on time some seemingly small duty may be overlooked. Too late, it is discovered that all is not well with the brake and someone’s for the high jump. Don’t be caught. Always remember that a Motorman is not permitted to make mistakes. He is not allowed to err in his judgement. Moments of forgetfulness are strictly taboo. When a man dons his Motorman’s uniform, from that moment on he ceases to be a human being possessed of human faililities; he becomes a robot - just another “Ernie”.......

Extracts selected by Jane Pimlott
JOSEPH NATHANIEL GUNTER – A MAN AMONGST MEN

Joe was a man amongst men. He came to England in 1955 from Jamaica, and, aged 22, started work at Kings Cross, where he worked his way up to become a Driver. Unfortunately a blood pressure problem excluded him from driving. However, he became involved in a BR programme involving staff members going with the emergency services to schools and other venues to educate children on the dangers of trespassing on the railway - and was eventually employed full time in that role.

He was a great success and I only hope he will be replaced and his good work continues. I’m sure there are many children alive due to his efforts.

Joe was a born ‘railway man’ with his dry sense of humour and marvellous way of ‘winding people up’. He also organised a railway football team and even became a qualified referee.

When the need arose he arranged events like the branch ‘Old Boy’s’ Reunion and children’s party. I met Joe as part of the Social & Welfare Committee and it encouraged me to continue to be involved in retirement.

The King’s Cross branch recognised his work by putting him forward for Honorary Membership of the union. Joe became the first black person to receive this honour.

In a full church on 4 May, I had the chance to thank his wife Hazel and the family for allowing us to share Joe with them, and for inviting us to celebrate his life at the service held in his honour. He really was an old softy. At his funeral we heard the story of a young lady asking his advice about her train share Joe with them, and for inviting us to celebrate his life at the service held in his honour.

Some people were unable to the respect in which he was actively involved in the Retired Worksop.

1991 when he moved to Secretary in 1978. He held this promotion.

Tinker was an old softy. At his funeral we heard the story of a young lady asking his advice about her share Joe with them, and for inviting us to celebrate his life at the service held in his honour. He really was an old softy. At his funeral we heard the story of a young lady asking his advice about her train share Joe with them, and for inviting us to celebrate his life at the service held in his honour. Joe really was an old softy. At his funeral we heard the story of a young lady asking his advice about her train share Joe with them, and for inviting us to celebrate his life at the service held in his honour.

If anyone wants to make a donation to charity to express their thanks to Joe, contact our Branch Secretary Les Muir, any local rep or myself and we’ll add it to the money already raised. Rest in peace, Joe.

Peter (PJ) Smith Reporters – Kings Cross Branch

TINK TAYLOR – GREAT RESPECT

It is with great sadness that I have to inform our membership of the passing of Brother Thomas Arthur Taylor who finally lost his long and courageous battle against a brain tumour. ‘Tink’ was held in great respect and was a stalwart of the Society even in retirement and with his illness.

Tom began as a cleaner at Langwith in 1949 and following 2 years National Service in the army and a brief spell at Barrow Bill, he moved to the newly-opened Shirebrook Depot in 1966.

He became active within the Society, becoming a local rep in the early 70s and Branch Secretary in 1978. He held this position throughout the troubled years of the early 80s up to the depot’s closure in 1991 when he moved to Worksop.

On his retirement he became actively involved in the Retired Members Section.

His funeral was a testament to the respect in which he was held. Some people were unable to get into the church for the service.

He was a proud and loyal servant of ASLEF to the last and our thoughts and prayers go out to his wife Audrey and all his family.

K. Gillett Secretary - Worksop branch

JOHN BEAN – FORMER DARLINGTON BRANCH SECRETARY

It is with sadness that I report the sudden death at the age of 52, of former Darlington Branch Secretary, John Bean.

John started on the railway in 1979 and almost immediately transferred to the drivers line of promotion.

An interest in union affairs saw him take over as secretary in 1988, a position in which he continued until leaving the service in 1998.

John had an un lucky time towards the end of his railway career, which makes his early demise all the more saddening.

Our thoughts are with all his family.

J CLARK Secretary - Darlington Branch

PAUL THOMAS – TRAGIC ACCIDENT

With great sadness, I report the loss of Bro. Paul Thomas, aged 46. Paul, a member of the Reading Branch, died as a result of injuries received following a motorcycle accident whilst out riding with colleagues on Sunday 22 April 2007.

Paul began his railway career in 1978, working in various roles at Reading before entering the driver’s grade from a Guard in 1988 and has been an ASLEF member since.

Our thoughts and sympathies go out to his wife Jane, three children and family at this distressing time.

Roger Greene Secretary - Reading Branch

JACK REYNOLDS – HE WAS KING’S LYNN

I am saddened to inform you of the death of former King’s Lynn Branch Secretary Jack Reynolds, aged 85. The word ‘stalwart’ could have been created for Jack; quite simply he was ‘King’s Lynn’. Jack started on the railway in the late 1930’s, in the dark days prior to the Second World War. He also spent time at the depots at March and South Lynn.

However, it was at King’s Lynn that Jack was to serve the membership with distinction for the majority of his railway life.

Involved in LDC affairs from the mid 1950’s, he became its Chairman and later its Secretary from 1964 to 1973, when he took slightly early retirement.

Jack also served as Branch Secretary from 1967 to 1983 and as the Branch Delegate to the District Council and Annual Assembly Delegates.

Somehow Jack also found the time to be a leading member of the Local Railway St John Ambulance First Aid Class and led teams in the Regional Competitions. Gardening was his passion away from work and at one time he was maintaining four allotments around the locality.

On a personal note, I owe a great deal to Jack. He encouraged my interest in local and Branch affairs early in my Railway career – and I haven’t looked back since I succeeded him as Branch Secretary in 1983.

Mark Steele Secretary - King’s Lynn Branch

GEORGE STEVENS – WORKED AT HEAD OFFICE

It is with regret that Southall colleagues learned of the passing of Geoff Stevens. Geoff started his railway career in the footplate grade at Southall as a cleaner, fireman and driver.

He soon became active in the branch and served as secretary of LDC ‘B’ for many years. Geoff was also elected onto the WR Sectional Council ‘B’ London Division. Due to the decline in the numbers of footplate staff in the London Division, it was decided that there would be only one Sectional Council member and the late Alf Press took up this post.

Geoff returned to full time driving duties but due to a serious back pain problem he was unable to sit in the cab for long periods.

Geoff resigned from the rail industry and joined the staff at Head Office. He then became Head of the Movements Department. He was always very approachable to anyone seeking advice on problems they encountered.

Our sincere condolences go to Geoff’s family.

LES SMITH Retired - Southall Branch Secretary 1960 - 86
Should we counsel our own?

I FELT the need to write to you after seeing the letter from my old friend and colleague Alan Grenfell in the May Journ.

Back in 1994, along with 23 other drivers from Stonebridge Park, I volunteered to work for Rail Express System on Royal Mail and Charter Trains. At that time the industry had only just accepted that suicides were an industrial injury.

As the very first TOC, RES was keen to impress, and it sought volunteers for Counselling Training. Andy Matthews and myself were selected from Willesden for training including Post Traumatic Stress Disorder of drivers involved in suicides, along with personal problems like divorce, debt and family problems.

RES only existed for two years, but both Andy and I counselled clients in our own depot and later from other TOCs from companies that were not so forward-looking. The feedback from this ‘Care and Support Chain’ was entirely positive – but the whole exercise came to an end when RES closed. I moved to Silverlink Trains, where I used my counselling skills at Watford as I trained as a Samaritan.

Most TOCs now use an outside company for their counselling needs - a ‘not ideal’ situation as I discovered when I was involved in a suicide back in August 2003. I believe a driver should be given a choice of counselling either from outside agencies or from a driver – and I’m convinced that in many circumstances only another driver will do. It grieves me to see the loss of a good, caring, economically sound, beneficial way of dealing with our own problems.

I hope many drivers reading this will think that looking after each other in such tragic circumstances is not such a bad idea - and that having trained drivers ready to give a hand is a fine thing.

William Hobbs
Willesden Branch

Ta Tom!

I WOULD like to say thanks to Tom Mahoney for all his help and assistance over the last few years. It has been a pleasure and an honour to work alongside such a dedicated H&S rep. He has always been there - no matter what time of day or night. Tom always returned my calls and if he did not know the answer to my question, he always knew somebody who did. Tom always had the best interest of his work colleagues at heart. I would like to wish Tom all the best in his future endeavours, and I hope he keeps up his trade union activities now he has finished working for EWS.

All the best Tom!

Richard Higgins
H&S rep - EWS/I Saltley

Greyrigg Iain says ‘thanks’

MOST of you will realise when you read my name that I appear in the Greyrigg derailment on 23 February this year. I am still recovering from the injuries and this could take up to 18 months. I write today to thank all ASLEF members for their support and messages after the accident. They really did give me a boost. ASLEF have been great in helping myself and my partner. Special thanks to Kevin Lindsay and Collin Smith who have both been great. Can I also say that my company - Virgin - have also been fantastic in the way they have assisted me. Thanks again.

Iain Black
Polmadie branch
Powerline cancer link?

Class 66 cabs are an emotive topic but thankfully EU legislation is pushing for better driving environments - even if railway companies and unions seem loathe to do it! ASLEF should never have let their members drive them.

Class 59s were stamped at 82 to 88 decibels. Why was the same not applied to the 66s?

EU staff are trying to restrict working hours of farm workers for spine reasons. They sit in suspended seats with minimum noise and accessible controls! I'd like to hear their views on our cabs!

One Railtrack website graded 66s as 'borderline for noise levels' but granted them access as the drivers do not spend many hours in the driving cab! Honestly!

Finally overhead power lines have always been linked to cancer and the 66s are poorly shielded around the electric cabinets and generators. Has this been tested? I know from obit columns that many drivers die from cancer each year - frankly it is a bit unnerving.

Phil Garner, ex chair, Knottingley branch

Skull bust proposed

The June Journal had yet another letter on the subject of our wonderful Class 66 locos, from Cameron Tyre in Newcastle. It's not hard to see why these torture machines are any FOC drivers worst nightmare. No driver working on these dreadful locos can believe that in 2007 we are still subjected to their archaic conditions. The companies insist that they meet all the requirements, and that, for example, noise levels are 'acceptable'. So the directors and managers have ridden on them with a full load, at 75mph, and on a hot day then?

Perhaps they should be invited aboard a good 'skull busting deafening' pleasure ride, say from Crewe to London with 25 liner vehicles on a warm day, sit on an oil covered seat that has no give in it, and feel every joint and crossing on the track being directed straight into the spine base of the seat's occupant!

That's if you manage to stay seated at 75mph! Now we see why the extra padding has been fitted to the latest batch of 66s – it's to give you a soft landing when you are being thrown around the cab!

I doubt they'd take up the offer because they probably know deep down that you are being deadly serious about a very big problem. How can the companies keep ordering basic format Class 66s, despite knowing all the problems with these cheap and nasty locos. In years to come, ASLEF members will suffer back problems and deafness because of working on these machines.

Companies are always saying that their biggest assets are their employees, so why don't they put their money where their mouth is, and prove it by sorting these locos out, and bring us into the 21st century?

A. Czemiakiewicz H&S Rep - Freightliner Intermodal, Crewe

More state, less welfare

I've read with interest the debate in the Journal in recent months about the Political Fund. I speak as the third generation of my family to give a lifetime of service to the railway, all of whom were trade union members who contributed to this fund.

My own socialist views have never wavered – but I do

Cold water on hot air

SO IT’S not sensational reporting. Yes it is!

If not, where is the counter argument?

I'm talking about the one-sided report on Climate Change in the June Journal.

First, mankind (power stations, cars, heating) is only responsible for around 1% of all Carbon emissions into the atmosphere.

Sheep and cows cause around 6%, volcanoes 15% and rotting vegetation another 15-20%. The amount of carbon atoms humans release into the atmosphere is a tiny proportion.

When the sun is in a period of heightened activity, as it is now, more solar wind is produced. This stops the cosmic rays hitting the earth.

When they do not hit the oceans, less water is vapourised and less clouds are produced. Therefore, the earth gets warmer. It's been going on for several billion years.

One question: if the temperature rise has been 0.6C in the last 140 years, why should it rise by 1.4 - 5.6C. in the next 90?

It’s sensationalist and unnecessary.

I am just a keen amateur, but even I have realised that the cause is not human activity, it's solar existence. And finally melting ice at the poles is as common as leaves falling on a British autumn day.

Iain Urquhart First Scotrail - Aberdeen
In 2007 he started as he all three of his world records. personal best times and broke grave!

Parliament. I suspect Aneurin time of life. to pay for medical care at our government I would feel the right-wing Conservative thought even under the most private treatment. I never eventually forced us to seek impossibility to break down the bureaucratic barrier – even to find out how long we should expect to wait. Desperation and anxiety eventually forced us to seek private treatment. I never thought even under the most right-wing Conservative government, I would feel the need to draw on our savings to pay for medical care at our time of life. Yes, my ‘thoughts’ were conveyed to my Member of Parliament. I suspect Aneurin Bevan lies uneasy in his grave!

Dennis Herbert Tyseley - Birmingham

News from Craig

I would like to thank ASLEF again for sponsoring Craig in 2006. He had a fantastic year swimming for GB in Hungary, winning 2 gold, 2 silver and 1 bronze at the European championships! Craig also set many new personal best times and broke all three of his world records. In 2007 he started as he finished in 2006, going to Slovakia to swim in the Slovakia Cup, coming home with 7 gold and 1 silver out of 8 races, plus being top male swimmer. At Crystal Palace in the London Regional Championships, Craig only took part in one race. This was the 1500m freestyle long course, the only world record he did not have. Swimming a new personal best time, he broke the 1500m world record by 2 seconds and at the 800m split he broke his own record again. Craig has now been selected for the world championships to be held in Ghent, Belgium in August this year. This would not have been possible if Craig had not received sponsorship from ASLEF, as it enabled him to increase his training and attend the right competitions to get ready for the European Championships. Thanking you once again for supporting Craig.

Doug Moate Barking - Essex

Cab noise a distraction and a danger

I AM pleased to see the ASLEF ‘Squash’ campaign gathering pace, and I would like to raise another issue concerning cab conditions I am extremely concerned at the growing levels of noise distractions from behind driving cabs, which filter through poor or non-existence sound insulation. For example, there are passengers constantly on mobile phones, loudest shouting and behaving in unruly fashion, particularly at night, and noisy children. These are all serious distractions to a driver carrying out his or her duties, and yet it would appear that this is perfectly acceptable - so nothing is done to improve the situation.

Every TOC promotes the use of professional driving standards. So why are they not providing a professional environment to work in? There is no good reason, or any excuse, for British driving cabs not to be brought into the 21st century.

Edward Pearce Marylebone

Skipton scrap

In response to Bro Exley’s letter about my views on the political fund, I did say at the branch that I was unsure about its uses but added that I was prepared to continue if contributing I could be convinced of the benefits.

Bro Exley mentioned a huge investment in track renewal, but if we didn’t have a political fund would it not still have been carried out? After all, the rail unions wanted a publicly owned joined up railway with proper investment. Thankfully we have at least got some of it.

I believe it’s correct for the union to sponsor MPs but does this come from the political fund or general union? Perhaps it would be useful for the Journal to run a feature explaining the fund and its uses, so members like me can decide if it’s worthwhile continuing to contribute.

Peter Flett Skipton

CLASSIFIED ADVERTISEMENTS

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

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

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

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

BOURNEMOUTH LOYALTY BADGE: The Bournemouth branch is offering a limited number of loyalty badges, struck following the 2006 dispute with SWT. For more information on this rare collector’s item please contact Driver ‘Hans’ Kristian Jendesen, Flat 42, Burlington Mansions East, Bournemouth BH5 1AT. First badge donated to head office, others on first come, first served basis. Price £5 including p&p. Cheques made out to Mr. K. Jendesen or 07957403679 or at 19 Pine Close, Rendlesham, Woodbridge, Suffolk, IP12 2GD.

TRAIN DRIVER requires all ASLEF badges, strike, depot closure & centenary. Also interested in other British Railway badges, small signs & small railway items. Prices negotiable. Please call 0208-569-7381 or 07957403679.

ORLANDO VILLA FOR RENT details: www.thehavenvilla-florida.co.uk or TEL: 0208 441 8526.
ASSOCIATED SOCIETY OF LOCOMOTIVE ENGINEERS AND FIREMEN
SUMMARY OF FINANCIAL INFORMATION FOR MEMBERS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2006

Under the provisions of Section 32A of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992 ASLEF is obliged to provide members with a statement summarising its financial affairs.

Income and expenditure

£
Total income 4,079,076
Total expenditure 4,568,561
£3,922,382 of total income comprised payments in respect of membership.

Political Income and Expenditure

The figures above include £102,267 income and £111,792 expenditure in respect of the political fund.

Salaries and Benefits

Salary Pension Benefits Total Employers’ National Insurance Contributions

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INDEPENDENT AUDITORS’ REPORT TO THE MEMBERS OF THE ASSOCIATED SOCIETY OF LOCOMOTIVE ENGINEERS AND FIREMEN

We have audited the financial statements of the Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen for the year ended 31 December 2006 set out on pages 4 to 24 which comprise the Consolidated Income and Expenditure Account, Balance Sheet, Cash Flow Statement and the related notes. These financial statements have been prepared under the historical cost convention as modified by the revaluation of freehold property and the accounting policies set out therein.

This report is made solely to the union’s members, as a body, in accordance with the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992. Our audit work has been undertaken so that we might state to the union’s members those matters we are required to state to them in an auditor’s report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law, we do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the union and the union’s members, as a body for our audit work, for this report, or for the opinions we have formed.

RESPECTIVE RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE AND AUDITORS

The Executive Committee’s responsibilities for preparing the Annual Report and the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and relevant United Kingdom Accounting Standards (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice) are set out in the Statement of the Executive Committee’s Responsibilities.

Our responsibility is to audit the financial statements in accordance with relevant legal and regulatory requirements and International Standards on Auditing (UK and Ireland).

We report to you our opinion as to whether the financial statements give a true and fair view, in accordance with the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992. We also report to you, if in our opinion, the financial paragraph contained in the Annual Report is consistent with the financial statements, if the union has not kept proper accounting records or if we have not received all the information and explanations we require for our audit.

We read the other information contained in the Annual Report and consider the implications for our report if we become aware of any apparent misstatements within it.

BASIS OF AUDIT OPINION

We conducted our audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK and Ireland) issued by the Auditing Practices Board. An audit includes an examination, on a test basis, of evidence relevant to the amounts and disclosures in the financial statements. It also includes an assessment of the significant estimates and judgements made by the Executive Committee in the preparation of the financial statements, and of whether the accounting policies are appropriate to the union’s circumstances, consistently applied and adequately disclosed.

We planned and performed our audit so as to obtain all the information and explanations which we considered necessary in order to provide us with sufficient evidence to give reasonable assurance that the financial statements are free from material misstatement, whether caused by fraud or other irregularity or error.

In forming our opinion we also evaluated the overall adequacy of the presentation of information in the financial statements.

OPINION

In our opinion the financial statements give a true and fair view, in accordance with relevant United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice, of the state of the union’s affairs as at 31 December 2006 and of its results for the year then ended and have been properly prepared in accordance with the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992 and the information given in the financial paragraph contained in the Annual Report is consistent with the financial statements.

HARD DOWDY
Registered Auditors 23/28 Great Russell Street London WC1B 3NG
18 April 2007

IRREGULARITY STATEMENT

Under Section 32A(6a) of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992 we are obliged to publish the following statement. A member who is concerned that some irregularity may be occurring or has occurred in the conduct of the financial affairs of the union may take steps with a view to investigating further, obtaining clarification and if necessary securing regularisation of that conduct.

The member may raise any such concern with such one or more of the following as it seems appropriate to raise it with; the officials of the union, the trustees of the property of the union, the auditor or auditors of the union, the Certification Officer (who is an independent officer appointed by the Secretary of State) and the police.

Where a member believes that the financial affairs of the union have been or are being conducted in breach of the law or in breach of the rules of the union and contemplates bringing civil proceedings against the union or responsible officials or trustees, he should consider obtaining independent legal advice.
ASLEF’S legal services - your rights for their wrongs!

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

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

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

ASLEF more than just a union

Prize Crossword No. 15 set by TLC

Solution to Crossword No 14 in the June edition of the ASLEF Journal. Congratulations to Mr. J. Rogers from London.


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

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Thanks for all your responses to the fourteenth ASLEF crossword in the May edition. If you complete this month’s crossword please send the solution to the Editor, ASLEF Journal, 9 Arkwright Road, London NW3 6AB by the end of the month.
WIN A WIDESCREEN LCD TV
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