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ON another page of this Journal I have written an obituary for Gwyneth Dunwoody, a woman who was as honest and fearless as the day is long. As I say in the obituary, Jack Straw said that when a person becomes a politician, ‘If you can be bought, someone will buy you. If you can be bullied, someone will bully you. If you spurn both these you will be respected.’

Those words touched me, and have kept going round my head for three reasons. Firstly, I think they contain a great deal of truth. Secondly because I believe the only way the government can win the next election is by applying these ideas to the letter. And thirdly because if they did, it would be a fitting and lasting tribute to Gwyneth.

I have known many Labour politicians over the years and I am not so cynical that I think any of them have deliberately chosen the path of dishonesty. For the most part they set out with a genuine sense of mission, a desire to serve the electorate and improve the quality of life of working people. Yet over the years, much of the original idealism slips away.

In part it is their new life-style. They earn far more than the people who elected them. Their concerns gradually become detached from working people – they are concerned with Early Day Motions, the attitude of the Whips and the make-up of Select Committees – things that matter not a jot to most of us. They become inhabitants of the Westminster village.

I remember a few years ago a government minister accused some trade unions of ‘being on planet Zog’. The reality is that for many ordinary working people, their MP is much further away from planet Earth than the relatively neighbourly ‘Zog’.

Politicians, and especially ministers, are not consciously ‘bought’. But the effect is the same. People who used to be ‘the bosses’ or ‘City slickers’ become ‘donors’. They find that their life-style is much more closely mirrored by the rich and privileged rather than the rough and ready. Gradually they slip away from the people who elected them.

Gordon Brown said he intends to begin listening to Labour’s traditional supporters again in the wake of last month’s electoral disaster. That is laudable in a way. But how much better it would have been for us all, and how much stronger Labour would be today, if ministers had done that throughout the last decade.

KEITH NORMAN
GENERAL SECRETARY
Network Rail fined – but rail loses out

Network Rail (NR has been ordered by the Office of Rail Regulation (ORR) to pay a record £14m fine for overrunning engineering work. NR had asked the ORR if, rather than pay the fine to the Treasury, it could be allowed to spend the money on track improvements instead.

The ORR refused, saying that because NR was guilty of a ‘serious and continuing breach of its licence’, it deserved a ‘financial penalty’.

‘I can’t see why the regulator is being so dogmatic,’ says ASLEF general secretary Keith Norman. ‘This decision means that £14 million that could have been used to improve the UK’s railway system is being taken out of the industry. Effectively it means that the taxpayer has to pay the fine and the railway loses money it needs. Let’s not forget that NR is effectively a public organisation. ‘It’s a rather silly money-go-round.’

The fine results from the over-running engineering work last New Year on the West Coast Main Line at Rugby in the West Midlands and work not completed at Liverpool Street station in London.

Customer watchdog Passenger Focus, as well as train operators, had supported NR’s alternative to a fine.

Passenger Focus complained that £14m of extra investment had been lost to passengers. Its spokesperson said, ‘Instead of a sensible discussion, the posturing by the Office of Rail Regulation and Network Rail has resulted in the Treasury benefiting, not passengers.’

New Zealand takes rail back into public hands

‘THE news that the New Zealand government is to repurchase its national rail and ferry operations is not only good news for passengers in that country – it is also clear proof that the same could – and can – be done in this country,’ says ASLEF’s Keith Norman.

‘All it needs is the political will – and for the UK government to begin seeking solutions rather than excuses.’

The New Zealand transport union RMTU is delighted at the news, which was announced on 5 May.

‘Railway workers are celebrating the news of the government’s repurchase of the national rail and ferry operations,’ said its leader Wayne Butson. ‘The RMTU campaigned long and hard to get the Labour-led Government to buy back the rail tracks but we always knew that in order to have the rail industry deliver what this country needs that they couldn’t stop there. We have all been urging the government to go the final step to renationalise the network.’

Wayne says that from the day that the National government sold the industry to a US-led consortium, its direction has been ‘all down hill’. He accuses the private owners of ‘extracting the cash, replacing it with debt and doing just enough to keep it going’.

He added, ‘The RMTU is keen to be a part of the rejuvenation of the NZ rail industry so that it can deliver the safe sustainable transport option demanded by global warming and escalating fuel prices, and we call upon the Government to make strong early statements of investment in new locomotives and wagons.

‘We know that there will be those who will condemn the Government buy back as a return to the ‘bad old days’. To them we say, ‘Look at the record of the public industry from 1987 to 1993, which turned it into a profitable enterprise.’ Hopefully this is the closing chapter of the rail saga that goes back to the right-wing political cabal who stripped New Zealand’s assets and sold them to their mates during the 1980s and 1990s.’

Finance Minister Michael Cullen pointed out that, ‘The government’s buy back of the rail system is a long-term investment in our economy.

‘A modern rail system will contribute to a more sustainable transport network. And if we can get more freight off roads and onto rail, we can expect significant savings on road maintenance as well.’

‘It is music to my ears,’ says ASLEF’s Keith Norman. ‘If only the UK government was not deaf to sensible argument on the issue.’

Now Mugabe arrests union leaders

UNIONS around the world condemned last month’s arrests of Lovemore Motombo and Wellington Chibebe – the President and General Secretary of the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU). The two trade union leaders were charged with ‘inciting people to rise against the government and reporting falsehoods about people being killed’ in speeches given on May Day.

Guy Ryder, General Secretary of the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) said, ‘The detention of the ZCTU leadership is extremely worrying given the brutal beatings they suffered during their detention in September 2006 and the widespread use of violence and torture against detainees in Zimbabwe.’

Last month, affiliates of the International Transport Workers’ Federation (ITF) took action to prevent an arms shipment destined for Zimbabwe from being unloaded.
ASLEF calls on minister to form industry-wide rail forum

ASLEF met Secretary of State for Transport Ruth Kelly last month to discuss a wide range of issues of concern to the union. Keith Norman welcomed the ongoing union/government consultation over best practice in cab design, but called on the Minister to establish a broad, industry wide rail forum to discuss issues ranging from skills and training to health and safety. He pointed out that a similar consultative body existed in the bus and maritime industries. Ruth Kelly agreed with Keith that there was a need for ‘common standards’ throughout the industry.

EC President Alan Donnelly urged the Minister to pressurise the Train Operating Companies (TOCs) to adopt a simpler and more transparent ticketing structure in the interests of making the railways more socially inclusive. Ruth replied that tickets should ‘do what they say on the tin’ in order to give people the ‘confidence to travel by rail’. She also revealed that she’d asked Passenger Focus to research how UK rail fares compare with those in Europe and asserted that she was on the ‘same wavelength’ as trade unions on this issue.

ASLEF representatives also raised the issue of High Speed Rail (HSR) including the recent Atkins study of the potential economic benefits of such a system. They wanted HSR included in the forthcoming Green Paper on Sustainable Transport and suggested there was a need for an HSR Development Forum. The minister said she had ‘sympathy’ with HSR and that it was worth ‘starting to think now’ although said the consultation document was ‘not the place for it (HSR)’ that it was ‘too technical’. She added that she had asked Network Rail to ‘take the lead’ on the rail policy options within the White Paper.

LONGTON AWAITSBob Fiello is clearly getting to the end of his tether about the state of Longton railway bridge! The Stoke MP told rail minister Tom Harris, ‘The boiler suits are lined up, the paintbrushes are ready, the paint pots are waiting. Will my hon. Friend join me at Longton railway bridge to do Network Rail’s job for it, or does he have some good news for me at last?’

The minister said that ‘following the next reshuffle, I may have some spare time on my hands, in which case I would be more than happy to take up your hon. Friend’s offer!’

He said he would write to ask Network Rail to prioritise the job – but pointed out that ‘as a Minister’ he could only write and ask if it had any plans to do so.

Didn’t rail ministers used to have other powers than writing begging letters?

ASLEF joins hundreds of trade unionists, political activists, faith leaders and employees of the Greater London Authority (GLA) at the end of April in a SERTUC-organised ‘Ring of Democracy’ around City Hall in advance of the London elections to highlight the importance of keeping the far-right out of London’s government.

ASLEF warns, ‘The far-right, with its politics of hatred and bigotry, wants to destroy the very diversity that makes London such a fantastic place to live and work.’

● BNP London Leader Richard Barnbrook was elected to the GLA as a London-wide Assembly member on 1 May.

Boris booze blitz ‘barmy’!

LONDON mayor Boris Johnson has announced that he intends to ban all alcohol from the capital’s Tube system next month. ASLEF general secretary Keith Norman said this was ‘policies without planning’. ‘It just hasn’t been thought through,’ Keith said.

‘Isn’t it ludicrous, for example, that passengers travelling through London from the north to the south coast are merrily sold drink on the train going to London, then it’s banned completely from Euston to Victoria, and then it’s being marketed again south of the city!

‘And has no one realised that the real problem is not drinking on the tube – it is people who have already been drinking coming onto the tube.’

ASLEF’s London officer Steve Grant said that the move should be halted until a number of questions have been answered.

He cites in particular:

• Has there been any assessment of the change in risk of staff assaults from telling people to stop drinking?
• Will LUL want a train to remain stationary until the police have arrived to deal with a Tube drinker?
• Are there resources to implement this policy?
• Will the authorities turn a blind eye for events like the Notting Hill Carnival or New Year’s Eve celebrations?

The union will seek to have responses to these questions before 1 June when (nominally if not in practice) drinking from, and carrying, open containers of alcohol will be banned.

‘There is no point having a regulation if you’ve no intention of implementing it,’ Steve says. ‘This is headline grabbing, not policy making.’
New Corporate Manslaughter laws must be enforced

IAIN BLACK’S BACK! Iain Black – the driver who suffered massive injuries including a broken neck in last February’s Grayrigg rail crash – is back at work. 47-year-old Iain, of Dumbarton, was not expected to return for another two months, but he feels he’s already fit for an office-based job and says he eventually wants to drive trains again.

He said at the time that he felt like he was on a “buckin’ bronco” rather than a Pendolino. Now he says, ‘The moment it all went wrong is still very clear. Suddenly the train just jumped through the air, and I knew I was in serious bother.’

‘It is very welcome news,’ says Keith Norman. ‘I am sure we all extend our best wishes to him, just as we did last February. Well done, Iain!’

PROJECT GENESIS BOOSTS SQUASH CAMPAIGN As a result of our SQUASH campaign, Freightliner Group (FL) has approached ASLEF to have an involvement with them and General Electric (GE) in the design process of 30 new locomotives. EC member Hugh Bradley says, ‘We all know the arguments we have had with the FOCs and the Class 66 locos. We have always maintained that the problems should be dealt with at source in the initial build process.

‘At last we have a FOC that has listened.’

DISCARDED RUBBISH LEADS TO £6K COMPENSATION A train driver from Yorkshire has secured nearly £6,000 compensation from Northern Rail following a serious back injury caused by him stepping onto discarded rubbish. Peter Kelly from Selby was represented by ASLEF and our personal injury specialists Thompsons.

Peter Kelly was working on the Leeds to Ilkley route when he stepped onto the train and slipped onto rubbish that had been thrown onto the train but not cleaned up. He fell backwards onto the platform and badly injured his lower back.

The incident ruined a planned holiday to the US and caused him to take time off work. He still needs to take painkillers and can only walk short distances.

BLACKLISTS BACK IN OPERATION Workers accused of theft or damage could soon find themselves blacklisted on a register to be shared among employers. The National Staff Dismissal Register, an online database of workers accused of theft and dishonesty - regardless of whether they have been convicted of any crime, is expected to go live this month. Bosses will use it to vet potential employees.

FARES TO BE SIMPLIFIED With a bit of luck, passengers won’t need a degree in advanced maths and the patience of a saint to buy rail tickets by the autumn.

In line with the government’s White Paper ‘Delivering a Sustainable Railway’, ATOC has announced a new structure with three main ticket types for single and return journeys, to be introduced in May and September.

THE imprisonment of Roy Clarke, the employer whose negligence caused the death of 17 year-old Daniel Dennis in his first week of work points up the need for the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) and judges to use the new Corporate Manslaughter and Corporate Homicide Act (CMCH) effectively.

It took five years for the Dennis family, Thompsons and the GMB union to get justice for Daniel. Only after we forced a Judicial Review of the decision not to prosecute did the CPS finally bring charges.

Clarke, who admitted manslaughter before the trial started, was sent to prison on 6 May. He knew Daniel had no experience or training in working at heights, but directed him to go onto the roof of a super store in South Wales. Daniel fell to his death.

The sentence should be a warning to all employers that trade unions will not allow employers who kill workers through their negligence to evade their responsibilities. But it is one of the weaknesses of the new law that it would not have applied to Clarke because he was a sole trader.

Specific legal duties must be imposed on directors of companies so that directors, including sole traders like Clarke, can be held to account for the way they run their companies.

NEW PROACTIVE APPROACH The CMCH provides courts with virtually unfettered powers to order an organisation to take steps to remedy a breach – but we fear it will be under-used.

These powers are provided by ‘remedial orders’ – which unions have described as ‘corporate probation’. Courts can order an organisation to remedy anything which they consider led to a breach in the law and resulted in the death of a worker.

This represents a new proactive approach to health and safety. A judge now doesn’t just look at the cause of an accident, but also examines a firm’s structure, system of management, roles of its directors and senior managers, contracts it awards, accounts, culture, approach to safety, training and systems of operation.

These powers offer the chance to produce real cultural change in a company, going to the heart of the way in which a business operates and how it trains its staff.

A court can order an offending company to place adverts in newspapers stating that it has been found guilty under the CMCH, what its offences were and what steps it has been ordered to take.

But unless the government issues clear guidance on the use of remedial orders, and both judges and the CPS are given training in their use, they will be a power that will be interpreted in the narrowest way.

NEW POWERS MUST BE USED TO THE FULL An inherently conservative judiciary, significant inconsistency in sentencing from court to court and a CPS that apparently does not understand (the High Court’s comment in the Daniel Dennis case) could lead to a power that offers a chance of real cultural change in a company going unnoticed and unused.

When the CPS told Daniel Dennis’ distraught parents that it was unable to bring charges of gross negligence manslaughter, Roy Clarke probably thought he had got away with it. The family’s courage and tenacity meant he didn’t. But many organisations who kill their workers will – unless the CMCH is used to maximum effect.
UK Eurostar drivers are demanding an apology from SNCF chief Guillaume Pepy who wrongly accused a British driver of being to blame for a 10-hour delay on the 2000 Eurostar from London to Paris on 18 April.

M. Pepy told French reporters that the driver did not follow the correct procedures in the repair manual, and that this caused the delay for some 640 passengers. This has now been shown to be incorrect, but the French rail boss has not retracted his remarks. ASLEF members have demanded a full apology and are incensed that the Frenchman named the driver wrongly accused of causing the problem.

‘Our people feel very strongly about this,’ says ASLEF official Graham Morris. ‘They feel they deserve an individual and collective apology. Investigations have shown that the driver did exactly what he should have done. Managers at Eurostar UK have a great deal of sympathy for the union position.

‘The French say that the delay was caused by ‘a diagnostic error by the driver of the faulty Eurostar’ . The important words are ‘faulty Eurostar’ – not ‘train driver’.

ASLEF’s delegation played a prominent role in the 111th STUC Congress in Inverness last month reports ASLEF political advisor James McGowan. In a meeting with Finance Minister John Swinney to discuss the sudden and unexpected three year extension to the Scotrail franchise, District Organiser Kevin Lindsay lambasted the Minister for an ‘insultingly inadequate’ consultation which ‘made a mockery’ of the Memorandum of Understanding signed with unions last year. Swinney conceded that discussions had been ‘in no way sufficient’ but that the decision had been necessary to ‘stabilise’ First Group’s share price and not to have done so would have been a ‘perverse disincentive’ to the company.

Earlier the Congress heard from Gordon Brown who described unions as ‘a rock for social justice’, emphasising the importance of apprenticeships and outlining his commitment to tackling ‘pleural plaques.’ Alex Salmond became the inaugural SNP First Minister to address the STUC and touted delegates with promises of more council housing, new hospitals built with public finance and a reassertion of his party’s opposition to the renewal of Trident and the war in Iraq.

Elsewhere Edinburgh No 2’s Chris Barrie took to the podium both in defence of pensions and in support of an FBU motion on the absurdity of the postcode lottery in fire safety standards while Motherwell’s Jim Baxter delivering a searing denunciation of ‘megalomaniac’ Robert Mugabe in an impassioned debate on the Zimbabwean crisis. The transport debate saw an uncompromising speech from Kevin Lindsay on the Scotrail situation while EC member Hugh Bradley, in moving the motion, called for an integrated transport system with a nationalised railway at the heart of it.

16 ASLEF union learning reps and three Company Council Reps met in Loughborough for a one day conference in March 2008. The conference was to give delegates an introduction to the new ASLEF Union Learning Fund project ‘Proud to Educate’. There were workshops on National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs), Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) and Skills for Life, which are the main themes of the new project. The day was just a small taster of what ASLEF is working on around education and lifelong learning. All attendees were encouraged to set up learning for their work colleagues with the support of the project.

French railway buys British baguettes!

IN A world where UK industry so often loses out to its European counterparts on the question of procurement for rail infrastructure projects - we prevail at last! A Yorkshire bakery has started exporting lorry-loads of baguettes across the Channel.

Fosters of Barnsley has used a legal loophole to beat local boulangeries to a contract supplying the narrow loaves to the whole of the French railway system.

BRANCH SECS IN BARNSLEY Ian Davison, Secretary of the Sheffield No1 Branch, says the branch secretary’s course held at Wentworth Castle, Barnsley was ‘very useful’. ‘All eight of us on this well-organised course have learnt a lot about our role and how to carry it out effectively. I’d like to thank ASLEF Finance Officer Tony Yates-Watson (pictured above) and Andy Reed for their valuable input.'
The ASLEF Journal

ASLEF MAKES A PREMIER POINT

ASLEF isn’t noted for its attendance at film premieres – but the union made an exception for ‘Three and Out’ – the so-called ‘comic caper’ whose plot concerns suicides on the Tube. LUL drivers handed out leaflets at the Odeon in Leicester Square – and the reaction of the public was overwhelmingly sympathetic. ‘I don’t think I’ve ever seen trade unionists so popular!’ joked Finn Brennan of the union’s LUL train functional committee.

Over 30 tube drivers passed out letters pointing out that, ‘You’ll have to excuse us for not seeing the funny side of people being killed on the railway.’ The reasoned and dignified message concluded, ‘So as you’re munching your popcorn, please take a moment to think about those people for whom railways deaths are a tragedy, not a comedy.’

Following complaints that London Underground had assisted in the making of the film, its managing director Tim O’Toole conceded in a staff bulletin that ‘in hindsight it may have been better to refuse cooperation’. The union is pressing for higher standards of post-traumatic counselling for its members.

General Secretary Keith Norman said that last year 249 train drivers had to get down from their cabs to see a corpse under their wheels. ‘I can’t find anything amusing about people so distressed that they are driven to suicide, and these incidents can mean ‘life-changing traumas’ for drivers who have been involved,’ he said.

There was massive media coverage for the union’s views, with union spokesmen featuring on every TV, radio station and national newspaper in the country.

In sharp contrast to the union’s protests, the film has been just about universally panned by the critics, leading Keith Norman to tell the Guardian that we were considering picketing DVD remainder bins as the next step in the campaign!

Southern, National Express East Anglia, South Eastern and London Midland have all taken the decision to remove advertising for the film from their stations. The General Secretary has written to each of them welcoming their decision.
A YEAR after joining the Labour Party in 2005 I was asked if I’d like to stand as a ‘paper candidate’ in the 2006 local elections. A ‘paper candidate’ is someone who stands in an election with little or no chance of being elected. Nevertheless, I had to go through the process of being interviewed by the selection panel – an experience much like a job interview. My entire ‘campaign’ consisted of my family and myself delivering 1,000 leaflets in Eastlands ward – but as only one person refused to take a leaflet, I thought campaigning wasn’t so bad. I was soon to learn differently!

At the annual general meeting of the Rugby Constituency Labour Party I was nominated to stand for the safest Labour seat in the borough. Not being a ‘paper’ candidate meant facing up to an arduous selection process.

**BECOMING THE CANDIDATE**

Labour candidates for local elections are selected by party members in the ward – in my case, Newbold. As I was not the only person nominated, I had to be interviewed by the ward members. All the nominees were asked three set questions, needing thoughtful and detailed responses. After waiting outside the room during the vote, I discovered I’d won by one vote. I was able to ‘cut my teeth’ on the doorsteps in a bye-election for the Rugby county council in March. I soon found out that it is one thing to lobby in support of a candidate - and quite another when you are the candidate.

Our local election campaign began early in March. We were concerned that the BNP would put up a candidate, as they had in the bye-election. As it turned out they did put up a candidate, but not in our target or core wards. I must thank ASLEF for the assistance they gave me at this time.

In contrast to the bye-election, the heavens threw every thing at us during the local elections - snow, hail, rain and high winds. We also had a lot more work. Because we had three seats to defend, the candidates joined forces – but supporting each other meant we were out every night. There were two tasks – delivering two sets of direct mail as well as leaflets, and identifying potential Labour supporters. For the first time I was seeking support from, and having to defend my views to, total strangers. You have to get used to rejection when you’re on people’s doorsteps.

**DECISION DAY**

After a book-full of experiences, the hectic election day arrived. We had people on phones making sure that our supporters went out to vote while, along with some colleagues, I kept knocking on doors until an hour before the polls closed.

To attend the following morning’s count you needed a ticket from the Town Hall. Usually they’re only available to candidates, friends, family and election agents. The ballot boxes were emptied by ward in front of the counters. The voting papers were manually unfolded and laid flat before being counted by machine. Then the votes were returned to the counters to be separated into piles for each candidate. The candidates and their supporters watched to ensure that the votes went into the correct coloured basket, worriedly assessing all the time how well or badly they were doing. Then the machine counted the votes for each candidate.

**THE RESULT**

After an interminable wait, the candidates for each ward were in turn called to the front of the hall. We were shown rejected votes and then privately told the result before the official announcement. The realisation that I had won, and that 694 people had made the effort to vote for me made me feel very humble. I also felt a great sense of responsibility, and pride in the team who had worked so hard to get me elected – especially when all around the country Labour councillors were losing their seats. We lost none in Rugby. The lesson, I believe, is that although Labour has an enormous job to retain its traditional supporters, it can do it if it campaigns effectively.

I’ve been a councillor for four days as I write this and I’ve already written my first newsletter, sent out my first press release and done my first live radio interview. Is it worth all the hard work, being out in all weathers, and facing rejection on the doorstep to become a councillor? Ask me again in four years, but my first impression is a resounding ‘Yes’.

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**ASLEF’S TOM – STILL STANDING!**

There weren’t many Labour candidates with a smile on their face after the May council elections – but one was Tom Mahoney, who until recently was one of the union’s most conscientious and active safety specialists. Tom stood for the council in Rugby, and we asked him what it involved to stand in a local election. This is what he told us:...
TO MARK the 60th anniversary of Israel’s existence, the UK’s Trade Union Friends of Israel (TUFI) invited Ofer Eini, (left) the Chair of the Histadrut, to the UK to meet British counterparts and discuss his ideas and hopes for the future at this critical time.

The Israeli trade union movement has an explicit long-term commitment to supporting the peace process and delivering a ‘two-state’ solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. This is seen as very important because the trade union movement could be vital if the peace process is to succeed.

Israel was founded on the building blocks of organised labour and the Histadrut and its affiliated unions play a key role in the fabric of Israeli life; organising and representing workers across all sectors and communities throughout Israel and the West Bank.

Ofer Eini and other senior Israeli and Palestinian trade unionists have repeatedly insisted that the resolution to the conflict will be an ‘economic as much as a political’ settlement. Ofer says that Israeli trade unions can help at a grassroots level by encouraging joint Israeli-Palestinian economic projects, and by working closely with the Palestine General Federation of Trade Unions (PGFTU).

ACROSS THE DIVIDE

Since the second Intifada and the ensuing violence and tougher Israeli security measures, the number of Palestinians working in Israel has significantly reduced and the Palestinian economy has seriously deteriorated. This has naturally put a strain on the long standing relationship between the Histadrut and the PGFTU. Nevertheless, the leadership of both federations are very eager to maintain contact and are still involved in many mutually supportive activities.

The PGFTU was officially represented at the Histadrut’s 2007 Annual Congress. Its representatives affirmed its commitment to maintain and extend constructive relations. They also declared that they wished to cooperate in campaigns to improve the economic and social well-being of both Israeli and Palestinian working people.

TRANSPORT UNION AGREEMENTS

In one major joint programme, over 20 Israeli and Palestinian transport union representatives signed a number of collaborative agreements at a bilateral meeting organised by the International Transport Workers’ Federation (ITF) in June 2007. These agreements have so far managed to improve the passage of professional drivers at checkpoints and road blocks in the West Bank. The two federations aim to make further agreements of this nature and as they continue to meet under the auspices of the ITF, to which, of course, ASLEF is affiliated.

This is just one of a number of positive efforts being made on the ground. We appeal to British trade unionists to help, support and encourage both sides to work together even more closely. Our organisation – TUFI – works not only with Histadrut and the PGFTU, but also with a range of peace organisations in the region such as Givat Haviva, OneVoice, Peace Now, The Abraham Fund Initiatives, The Geneva Initiative, and Hand in Hand.

We also encourage trade unionists in the UK to take part in delegations to the region which we organise where there is the opportunity to discuss the issues first-hand with both Palestinian and Israeli trade unionists.

60 years on: being a trade unionist in Israel

The state of Israel is 60 years old this year. It came into existence on 14 May 1948 when the British Mandate over Palestine expired. It declared the state would be based on ‘freedom, justice and peace’, ‘ensure complete equality of social and political rights to all its inhabitants irrespective of religion, race or sex’ and extended its ‘hand to all neighbouring states and their peoples in an offer of peace and good neighbourliness’. Much has changed in the six decades since the state was formed, but its trade union movement still strives for these basic principles. In this article the UK Trade Union Friends of Israel explain some of the work and attitudes of the Israeli TUC, Histadrut . . .

RAIL IN ISRAEL

• Israeli Railways (Rakévet Yisra’él) carried 21.6 million passengers last year – a six-fold increase on passenger figures ten years earlier. It expects to increase this to 60 million by 2010.

• Israeli trains carried about 8 million tonnes of freight in the same period.

• The state-owned network, which traces its roots to the railway lines built by the Ottomans and British, is centered in Israel’s densely populated coastal plain.

• In 2003 the Israeli government began a £3.3 billion investment programme to revive abandoned railroads, upgrade existing lines, build major new lines, electrify much of the system and purchase new rolling stock.

• Talks between the Palestinian Authority and the Israeli government have raised the possibility of reviving a line between Gaza and the West Bank.

• Two light rail systems are in advanced planning stages or under construction in Israel - one in Tel Aviv and one in Jerusalem. One already exists in Haifa.
Compensation to lead a different kind of life...

“In 2001, when I was 17, I was a passenger in a terrible car accident. I’m lucky to be alive.

I was told I would be paralysed from the chest downwards and wouldn’t walk again. I was determined not to break.

I drive using only my hands and passed my driving test two years ago.

I was a very keen footballer and rugby player and have now started playing wheelchair rugby.

Today I’m getting on with moving forward in my life and I’m grateful for how Thompsons has helped with it all.

My mam describes Thompsons as being ‘Absolutely great - they can’t do enough to help you!’ And I know she’s recommended Thompsons to other people.”

Your ASLEF membership entitles you to free legal cover for any personal injury

We have thousands of testimonials from union members more than satisfied with their experience and the settlements they received. And not one of them had to pay us anything – because their claims were all supported by their union legal scheme.

If we can ever help you or your family, whether in relation to a road traffic accident or any personal injury, please contact us on:

0808 100 8009
The union is always concerned to know that our members are equipped for the future, and that our profession continues to be well-respected and our skills recognised. We therefore want to be sure that members have access to all the training and development they want. It is especially important today, when discussions are taking place at the European level about minimum standards for driving duties. That is why it was important that the union secured the £650,000 government funding over two years for our new ASLEF Learning initiative. It enables us to be prepared to match any demand for formal qualifications that we could see in the future. We’re also aware that (‘green card’) shunt jobs are diminishing. In an ever-changing world of work we want to ensure that our members have transferable skills. This could mean language skills to accommodate continental work, or other qualifications that enable a change of career within the industry. And the good news – as you’ll gather from these pages – is that it can be fun as well as useful …

Andy Reed, National Organiser

UNION LEARNING REPS - A CASE IN POINT
Project Worker Julie Freeston explains that union learning reps (ULRs) work with employees and employers to plan learning opportunities and promote the value of learning and skills. They represent the interests of members by influencing the learning and development strategy within the workplace, and make learning and skills an important part of wider union activity.

Julie went to meet Aaron Clapp, the ULR at London Midland Trains. She found him in deep conversation with some of his work colleagues, answering questions around learning opportunities such as DIY, IT, Maths, English, languages, fitness and British sign language to name a few …

JULIE: Aaron, why did you become a ULR?
AARON: I wanted to learn, and I was interested in being involved in the learning process. I have problems with reading and writing – I attend the English course we’ve set up in the workplace - and I thought becoming a ULR would help me to improve the areas where I have problems. Also, after attending an ‘Education for ASLEF’ course, I wanted to become more involved. It’s a great opportunity to help other people gain confidence and skills.

JULIE: What sort of things do you do?
AARON: I work with the other ULR’s at London Midland to plan and organise learning opportunities in the workplace and at the local college. After carrying out surveys about learning needs and talking to individuals to find out what they’re interested in, we meet the local college to discuss what we need and what they can provide. We produce our own posters and leaflets to promote courses and activities.

Sometimes people just want information or advice about opportunities. Other people want to be signposted to a relevant outside agency.

Our Learning Steering Group meets the Resource and Development Manager to talk about our plans and negotiate facilities like a learning centre and equipment, release for learners and support from the company with funding.

Julie says that if you’re interested in becoming a Union Learning Rep you should first discuss it with your local ULR (if you have one) or with any ASLEF representative.

‘If necessary there’s an election and the successful person’s details are sent to head office. There it is added to the database and the necessary letters, forms and information are sent to the employer, the newly-elected ULR and a dedicated Project Worker.

‘Within six months the Project Workers will arrange a five-day training course, with additional training when necessary.’

All ULR courses are free and delivered through regional TUC/Unionlearn departments.

LIFE LONG LEARNING:
ASLEF LEARNING IN SCOTLAND

ASLEF in Scotland has been involved in the Scottish Union Learning Fund (SULF) since 2000. This year the union submitted a ‘single union’ bid, although we hope the project will still benefit all rail union members. The Scottish Executive has accepted our three-year proposal unamended – and we’ve successfully bid for European Social Funding (ESF) in both the Lowlands and Highlands. These bids are in partnership with Scotrail and Stow College Trade Union Department in Glasgow.

So what does this mean for ASLEF members in Scotland?

● Free courses for members and their families in subjects such as everyday skills (literacy and numeracy), computing, sign language, Spanish, Italian, German, French and digital photography.

● Courses at more depots and stations as well as at our Rail Union Learning Centre at Stow College.

● Free everyday skills courses taking place in smaller depots and remote locations using our ESF funding.

● ASLEF members will also be given the opportunity to go into further education through Open University at discounted prices.

● Vocational Qualifications (SVQs) are also on offer. At long last it’s now recognised that train drivers are highly trained professionals, but we are one of the few professions that don’t have a qualification to prove our educational worth. We will be working with employers, government organisations and outside organisations to set the agenda for this.

‘ASLEF in Scotland giving all its members educational opportunities from everyday skills to a doctorate via vocational qualifications,’ Jim says. ’There’s definitely something for everyone!"

● For more information on learning in Scotland please contact Jim Baxter at jim.baxter@asl ef.org.uk or 07872 164213.

**JIM BAXTER – SULF PROJECT WORKER**

CONTACT POINTS FOR ‘EDUCATION FOR ASLEF’ IF YOU DON’T HAVE A LOCAL ULR:

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DECLAN MACINTYRE – Project Worker, Mobile: 07768 257090
Email: declan.macintyre@asl ef.org.uk

SARAH LAURIE – Project Support Worker, Office: 020 7317 8600
Email: sarah.laurie@asl ef.org.uk

I didn’t know much about Iceland before going there on a Transversal Study Visit apart from the 1970s Cod War, a summit involving Mikhail Gorbachev and Ronald Reagan – and (for what it’s worth) - Björk. I now know that Iceland puts a high priority on life long learning (LLL). It spends an additional 2 million euros on adult education on its 313,000 population – a quarter of whom engage in education. Its education system has clear routes of progression, from kindergarten to university. Those who chose to drop out of education after leaving school can easily re-engage through Iceland’s nine colleges and vocational learning centres, owned jointly by the Icelandic Federation of Labour and the Confederation of Icelandic Employees, and part funded by the government.

Overall their LLL system is better than ours, but we are in front of them in two areas. They have no provision for adult Skills for Life (English and Maths to those of us of a certain age) so adults must sit a full course just like a school leaver. Secondly there are no Union Learning Reps.

These visits involve a lot of work – visiting educational establishments, exchanging experiences, analysing information, defining best practice and writing reports – but they broaden everyone’s horizons as to what can be achieved. I’m grateful to Transversal and the University of Iceland for putting on the study visit, and to ASLEF and East Midland Trains for supporting my application. For more information about Educational study visits, see the Transversal website at www.transversal.org.uk.

**EMT LEAD LEARNING REP CHRIS NUTTY**

A SIGNIFICANT DEGREE OF SUCCESS!

A train driver with East Midlands Trains has been so inspired by the courses offered to him at his workplace that he says he’s become ‘addicted to learning’ – he’s now studying towards a degree with the Open University.

Colin Berry, from Derby, has developed a passion for learning since he was encouraged by his ULR to attend a short taster course in German back in 2006. He hadn’t participated in formal learning for over 20 years, so he was understandably nervous about going back into the classroom. ‘I was so impressed by the union learning rep’s efforts that I didn’t feel I could let him down,’ Colin says. ‘I’d wanted to get back into learning – but I needed some motivation and support to get me started. I really enjoyed the course and when it finished it left a gap - so I just thought, what next?’

‘Next’ turned out to be a series of courses in advanced German, literacy, numeracy, and radical history, all organised by the ULRs and delivered in the East Midlands Trains Academy.

Colin says he wouldn’t have come as far without the support of his ULR. All employees are encouraged to take part in the ‘Skills for Life’ courses and are either released from work or paid to attend. ‘My work-mates have helped when necessary by swapping shiftsto work or paid to attend.’

‘My work-mates have helped when necessary by swapping shifts to help me fit in my study around my work,’ he says. ‘I’d wanted to get back into learning – but I needed some motivation and support to get me started. I really enjoyed the course and when it finished it left a gap - so I just thought, what next?’

Colin admits that the course is hard work, but says that it is easily worth it for the sense of satisfaction he gets when he receives his marked assignments back. ‘The courses I’ve done have given me so much more confidence. I feel able to tackle subjects I’d never imagined possible.’

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**EMT LEAD LEARNING REP CHRIS NUTTY**
GREENPEACE URGES ‘TAKE THE TRAIN’

Since its formation in 1971, Greenpeace has unquestionably been the world’s most visible environmental campaigning organisation. We asked them to expand on their attitude towards rail – and find it is very much in tune with our own views. Anna Jones, Greenpeace UK’s Climate Campaigner, explains …

In April, a YouGov poll found that more than half of UK people are concerned about the environmental impact of journeys of 300-400 miles. 37% agree that in a few years’ time, environmental concerns will have made short-haul flying socially unacceptable if there is the alternative of going by train. We already know that to and from Manchester went was redoing, the proportion of people flying to taking the train and from Manchester went from 60:40 to 40:60. The train is clearly over-taking the plane in the mind and actions of a more environmentally conscious public.

AVIATION EXPANSION

But not it seems, in the mind of the government, which is still pushing for massive expansion of aviation across the UK, despite the frightening warnings on climate change. The World Health Organisation calculates that 160,000 people are already dying every year from climate change. Last month scientists found another massive ice shelf in Antarctica that was already starting to collapse, something they had not anticipated happening for possibly another 30 years. Leading NASA climate scientist Jim Hansen said recently that the EU target of containing CO2 levels at 550 parts per million, already the most stringent in the world, should be cut to 350ppm if “humanity wishes to preserve a planet similar to that on which civilisation developed”.

With stakes this high, the changes needed are profound, fundamental and cross all facets of human existence - from our energy and transport systems to, dare I say it, our social and economic systems.

POLICIES UP IN THE AIR

Yet while the Government pays lip service to climate change, it seems unable to break out of business-as-usual.

Nowhere is this more starkly obvious than the Government’s blind pursuit of its 2003 aviation policy, now completely out of date given what we know about climate change. Supporting new runways and increased levels of flights at airports all over the country, the government is leading us up a garden path that would see emissions from aviation rise by up to five times current levels. This expansion will make it impossible for the UK to play its part in tackling climate change. Gordon Brown recently suggested that he may commit the UK to an 80% cut in Co2 emissions by 2050.

Research from the Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research shows that if the industry is allowed to expand as predicted, aviation alone would destroy any hope of hitting this target.

Earlier this year, Greenpeace chose to demonstrate on top of a plane that had flown from Manchester to illustrate that the Government’s expansion proposals are out of control. Planes shouldn’t be flying between destinations that are reachable more quickly and in greater comfort by train - which is over ten times less polluting. But the government's aviation policy follows no logic. It follows the profit-led whims of BAA.

HELLISH HEATHROW

This was made no more apparent than in the recent ‘consultation’ on plans to expand Heathrow airport. Documents obtained under the Freedom of Information Act revealed that the government literally fixed the figures in order to claim that the plans wouldn’t increase local air and noise pollution levels. One disillusioned DfT official involved in the consultation project said, ‘It’s a classic case of reverse engineering. They knew exactly what results they wanted and fixed the inputs to get there.’ The government’s own watchdog, the Environment Agency, concluded that the DfT document was not ‘sufficiently robust’ to support the construction of a third runway.

These revelations about the depths of BAA/government collusion in writing the Heathrow consultation show not only an incredible arrogance from both parties, but a shocking level of irresponsibility. Both blindly assume that what’s good for BAA is good for UK plc (against the evidence, as it turns out) - never mind Britain’s emissions reduction targets, climate change, the political process or public opinion.

VESTED INTERESTS

The government’s failure to act is clearly in part down to vested interests dictating its policy. It’s also down to a dogmatic school of government thought that thinks free market ‘solutions’ such the European Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS) will deliver the massive transformations we need to protect the environment. At the same time however, huge political energy is going into major infrastructure projects – airports and the road network – that are locking us into a system that’s carbon intensity will overwhelm any finely balanced market scheme that’s open to the whims and dishonesty of the stock market.

What we need is serious political will to radically rethink our energy and transport systems. Green and White papers on ‘sustainable transport’ are expected soon. Perhaps they will finally bring a breath of fresh air to the rank odour of DfT thinking. Let’s certainly hope so.

For further information about Greenpeace, visit http://www.greenpeace.org.uk/
COMMISSIONS UNDERTAKEN FOR ORIGINAL OIL PAINTINGS AT COMPETITIVE PRICES

ARTIST
Frederick James Taylor
Guild of Railway Artists (Assoc. Member)
Guild of Wiltshire Artists

These pictures of my work show samples of oil paintings produced from black/white and colour photos. If you have a favourite photo or locomotive that you would like painted specifically for you, then please contact me to discuss your requirements.

Although I specialize in painting trains, I also undertake a wide variety of other subjects including aircraft, portraits, animals, landscapes etc. To find out more about my work, please log on to my website.

CONTACT DETAILS:
Tel. 01793 871004  Mob. 07740 516238
Email. reikifred@aol.com  Web. darknesstolight.co.uk
Meeting Anne Johnson is rather like discovering yourself in the middle of a hurricane! I felt I’d run a marathon when I left her. She is a wonderfully lucid person, bursting with full-on enthusiasm, energy and fluency.

These days she works as a driver for Lorol – but before this she’d already had a mixed and rich life. Anne married Bob when she was just 18 years old – but ‘settling down’ doesn’t describe what happened next. Because Bob was in the army, the week after the wedding found her bound for Germany and the town of Wildenrath, where they found somewhere to live over a bar. She knew nothing of the country, the language or her surrounds – but with typical Anne vigour she’d remedied these small difficulties in a couple of months!

The pair soon had two boys – Craig and James – who had to adapt to their parent’s nomadic existence. ‘I got really good at packing and unpacking!’ Anne says.

Rather perversely, it was the threat of promotion that drove Bob out of the army. ‘It was a choice between up and out,’ Anne says. ‘It was leave – and redundancy was on offer – or be promoted to being an officer.

‘The army was still in a very snobbish hierarchical era, and being an ‘officer’s wife’ would have cut me off from all the women I knew. You were supposed to be a pillar of respectability and weren’t allowed to mix with the ‘lower orders’!

So they left their last – and Anne’s favourite - posting in Edinburgh and moved back to Watford, where they both had roots. While Bob found work lecturing, Ann began to work as a nurse, something she’d trained for during Bob’s army days. She cared for the elderly in a nursing hospital in Eastcote.

‘I know that no one goes into nursing to get rich,’ Anne says. ‘But the wages were worse than bad and because we were a Trust hospital I even missed out on the 3% increase. I didn’t want to – but I decided to leave the profession.’

Anne’s next move was into the railway, as a guard. After three years, in 2000, she moved onto the footplate. ‘I was on the first ASLEF education school at Wortley Hall,’ she says. ‘I’d been an RMT rep when I worked as a guard and – well, I can’t help getting involved! Almost by accident I found I was secretary of the local ASLEF branch. The whole family is like that. We’d sooner have too much to do than too little.’

Anne likes railway people. ‘There are a lot of good people out there and they all rally round to support each other. When the daughter of one of our drivers got cerebral palsy and needed money for an operation in China, everyone chipped in. It’s the good side of the job.’

And the bad side?

‘It’s sad that the industry is becoming more and more hectic and specialised. I don’t mind the hours and shifts – I got used to that in my nursing days - but the variation in routes and duties is less all the time. It’s bad for people. Variety keeps everyone on their toes.’

And how did she adapt to being a woman on the footplate?

‘I think you have to be a strong person, because it is a male-dominated industry. There were reasons for that in the era of steam, but not any more. But it is getting better all the time. I think the job appeals to strong-willed women who are prepared to adapt. The old attitudes are all gradually changing. It’s not as intimidating as when I joined.’

Anne isn’t, I discover, just a bundle of energy at work. She used to do rock-climbing and now she’s just taken up scuba-diving. She creases into laughter as she says the problem with these activities for her husband was that he didn’t like heights and couldn’t swim. ‘People thought I was trying to see him off!’ she smiles.

It’s exactly the sort of ‘can do’ attitude that Anne has carried with her through life. That, with her natural enthusiasm and optimism makes her very entertaining as well as forceful company. ‘I’ve been lucky in my life,’ she says. ‘It’s been fun.’

It’s exactly the same meeting Anne. Even if I do have to sit quietly on the train home, recovering from the onslaught …!!!
AYLESBURY AWARDS
GREETINGS from the Aylesbury Branch!
We had the pleasure of welcoming our District Organiser Stan Moran to our branch meeting on Wednesday 23 April. During the meeting two of our members received their service award badges from the District Organiser. These were Bro Phil Morrell, our branch chair, who received his 10 year badge and Bro Jim Waycott who received his 15 year badge. Congratulations to both of them!

Charles Gillard
Secretary – Aylesbury Branch

PLENTY AT PADDINGTON BRANCH
A good turnout by members of the Paddington Branch greeted National Organiser Andy Reed’s recent visit to the April Branch Meeting. In what seems to have become an annual visit, Andy reported to the Branch on Pensions, Education, Finances and Communications as well as National and International items.

The highlight of the meeting was the presentation of ASLEF Long Service Badges by Bro Reed totalling 360 years. These included five 35 year badges, and 45 year badges to Bros Musgrove and Walker. To celebrate the presentations a buffet was provided. It is also rumoured that Andy Reed bought a round, but as yet this has not been confirmed.

Stephen Austin
Secretary - Paddington Branch

LOSSES FOR LONGSIGHT
LONGSIGHT Branch recently saw two of its most esteemed drivers tread the well-earned path of early retirement. Billy Gaskin and Dave Rimmer were both Virgin West Coast Drivers. It is something of an understatement to say that these two unique personalities will be missed at Manchester.
Brother Rimmer was an Instructor and was an expert at passing on his knowledge. He was always on hand to assist drivers to enhance their own knowledge.

Brother Gaskin was one of the most best-liked and revered drivers on the Network and will truly go down as a true gentleman and a well respected colleague. Both brothers were presented with mounted and framed prints which drivers took time to sign and dedicate. They were extremely well received by Billy and Dave.

I must thank ASLEF stalwart Brother John Young for taking the time to procure the prints and having them mounted and framed also to our train crew welfare fund for furnishing us with the funding. Finally a week after the presentations there was a rather large gathering of friends and colleagues where rather a copious amount of water was taken on board. Well - it would be rude not to, would it not?!

I wish you all the very best for the future, brothers!

Alan Moss National Secretary - ASLEF / Virgin Trains Safety Advisory Committee

DATE FOR ‘DIRTY DICKS’ – 21 JUNE
THE Liverpool Street Welfare and Social Club are hosting a retirement function for Dave Pizzie, who is retiring after 43 years and 7 months service. Anyone wishing to come along to wish Dave luck is more than welcome to join us on Saturday 21 June, at ‘Dirty Dicks’ Public House, near Liverpool Street Station. (Take the Bishopsgate Stairs from the concourse, cross the road and bear left. Dirty Dicks can be found on the corner, about 2 minutes walk from the station). We have reserved the downstairs function room from 13:00 hours. Any queries, please contact me on (01621) 851110 or jw.thorpe@btinternet.com

We look forward to seeing you there.

John Thorpe - Secretary LSW&S

25TH CRICKLEWOOD REUNION – 27 JUNE
A reunion to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the closure of Cricklewood is to take place on the Severn Valley Railway on Friday 27 June. Meet in the ‘King and Castle’, Kidderminster Station at noon for a 1245 departure to Bridgnorth.

Grahaeme Nash (Bristol) and Bob Hodson (Wolverhampton)

MARCH IN KING’S CROSS
A busy March day at King’s Cross Branch began with a long session of the District 5 company council meeting to which I was invited as a RMS representative.

I was pleased to have the chance to explain what we are trying to achieve for retired people both in and outside ASLEF, and to enlighten them on what they may (or may not) expect to find should they be fortunate enough to reach retirement age.

At the end of the subsequent Branch meeting ASLEF long-service badges were awarded to Kevin Moir (25 years) Howard Kay (Company Councillor) Tony Atkins (NXEC) Paul Flint (H&S) and Mick Roads (40 years).

Peter Smith – Reporter - King’s Cross / RMS
**B RANCH N EWS**

**The ASLEF Journal**

You think ASLEF reunions are fun? Read this and you’ll realise how demure we are compared with 100 years ago! 50 years ago we heard comments on the ‘Glamour Boy’ general secretary!

**100 YEARS AGO**

In June 1908 Organising Secretary H. Parfitt reported on a dinner in Bedlam – or, in fact, Neath …

“On Good Friday I was an invited guest at the annual dinner of our Neath Branch ...brevity is always the order of the day at Neath dinner, and “turns” follow each other in rapid succession; probably no other branch has such a collection of native talent. Solo, duet, trio, quartette, stump speech, every variety of entertainment is provided and thoroughly enjoyed by old and young. “Old Valians” who read this report in far-off places will rejoice to hear that their old retired comrades – Messrs.C.Haines and J.Field – attended and smiled their loudest at the songs and jokes of their lively entertainers. The ever-green Mr Venable (still known as the “schoolmaster”), who “tanned hides” in Neath for about 40 years, was also present, enjoying himself with his “boys” immensely; we also had our medical friend, Dr. Thomas, with us, ready to administer a black draught if required, and Inspector Read, of the locomotive department, to see that no one slipped off to work before his time or out of his turn! Of course Mrs.Church catered in her usual style, and everyone appeared to be having a happy evening at the Glamorgan Hotel.

**50 YEARS AGO**


“In these days of high-powered press, radio and television coverage of trade union activities at top level, it is only natural that the figureheads of the unions steal the limelight. The General Secretaries are the prime spokesmen and thus become the “Glamour Boys” of the piece. We do not complain. The recent public performances of our own G.S. have been exemplary and, so it happens, a tonic to our membership. But let’s get away from the Front Line for a while and turn the spotlight on the less publicised yet equally important work performed by our rank-and –filers; the men who-year in, year out - get on with the job at the end of the line.

“It is unnecessary here to catalogue the many duties faithfully and enthusiastically carried out by Branch Secretaries and their small bands of workers up and down the country. Sufficient to say that when the opportunity presents itself these sterling services are properly acknowledged by the membership. The very highest recognition of this sort is the work made by no less a body than the Trades Union Congress and is, of course, the award of the T.U.C. Gold Badge.”

Extracts selected and edited by Jane Pimlott

**G LOUCESTER REUNION ON 14 JUNE**

On Saturday 14 June there will be a get together for present, retired and former employees who were, or are, based in the Gloucester area, particularly the former Horton Road Depot or those now working out of the present depot at Gloucester railway station. The event commences at 1400 at ‘The Station’, Bruton Way, Gloucester. A buffet will be laid on.

Enquiries to Jerry Matthews on 07500 80195 or Brian Jones on 07778 458716.

**D URHAM MINERS – 12 JULY**

Last year the 123rd Durham Miners’ Gala attracted over 70,000 people and was reportedly the largest Trade Union and Political Rally in Europe. The 124th Gala is to be held on Saturday 12 July this year. As well as offering excellent family entertainment, the Gala will be addressed by progressive speakers from the Labour and Trade Union Movement. If possible take along with you your Trade Union and Labour Movement banners.

Bill Ronksley Secretary - Sheffield TUC

**REUN ION IN RAMSGATE:** Our picture shows RMS National Secretary Tony West enjoying a day by the seaside - and Dave Weddle got the ‘Ramsgate Boys’ out for a bit of sunshine. Once again we were pleased to see Southern, and ex-Southern lads come out for a bit of socialising. Our thanks go to Ron and his team for the hospitality they provided on 3 April. I can safety say everyone went home fed and lubricated! We were all pleased to see Ramsgate branch secretary Dave Bull in attendance.

Peter Smith Reporter – RMS

**KEEPING TRACK WHAT THE UNION WAS DOING 100 AND 50 YEARS AGO**

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LETTERS to the EDITOR

ASLEF LISTENS ON HEARING PROBLEMS

I AM a 39 year old driver based in Cardiff on the Suburban network. I have been driving for six years and had a routine medical February of last year which high-lighted a problem with my hearing. I was put on a 12-month review for another hearing test which I failed. This led to a very uncertain period for me in many ways.

Firstly, I knew there was nothing in place for drivers with hearing problems. I could have been taken off safety critical duties and placed on 80% of driver’s salary. Many TOCs don’t let drivers wear hearing aids - so I was potentially looking at being put on the scrap heap at 39.

I was off work for two months and during this time I spoke to our district organiser Stan Moran. He told me of ASLEF’s resolve to have hearing aid trials brought in with Arriva Trains Wales (ATW).

My ear infection cleared up and I am now back in work. I’m delighted to hear that ATW has now agreed with the union to trial digital hearing aids for drivers with hearing difficulties.

I’d like to thank Stan both for the help and support he gave me personally and for achieving trials of hearing aids for all drivers on our network. It’s a weight off my mind and I’m sure a comfort for other drivers with hearing problems.

It also shows the value of train drivers being in ASLEF – and the worth of our union representatives.

VINCE BARNETT Driver - Cardiff

SNP TAX PLANS BAD NEWS FOR SCOTS

I AM writing in response to Bro Andy Ross’s letter in the May Journal about the new proposed tax plans in Scotland. I am as patriotic Scot as anyone and have travelled the world with the famous Tartan Army following the Scottish national football team. But I take exception to some of my fellow Scots who think that supporting independence makes them more Scottish than me.

The £30 billion Scotland receives from the UK government is raised by all the citizens of the four nations and distributed under the Barnet formula. Scotland does not raise all this money by taxing its citizens, so other areas of UK help to raise the money. This is what ‘the Union’ is about.

Bro Ross’s claim that he is an average train driver and pays £2,228 (band G) in council tax is way off the mark. I don’t know many colleagues here in Edinburgh who could afford to buy a band G house. Bro Ross is only taking his own circumstances into account when he claims that the unwaged or disabled are somehow living off this ‘honest, law abiding tax paying citizen’. This doesn’t sound like a trade unionist.

The average train driver whose partner works will be much worse off under these ridiculous plans. As Bro Ross points out - the rich will get richer but ordinary worker will lose out.

Chris Barrie Edinburgh

SQUASH INTO EIRE!

CONGRATULATIONS on your quest for better cab conditions from the Irish Republic! The driver seems to be low on the list for cab safety even though it is a safety critical job. Regarding air suspension seats, you should look up the EU Directive on Whole Body Vibration (2002). Loco drivers are subject to this due to bad riding locomotives and it refers to things like air suspension seats. Companies are obliged to reduce or eliminate risks to workers – like us – who are exposed to excessive vibrations.

We Irish drivers have been exposed to this for years on GM locos with bogies not fit for passenger speeds with little or no damping. Lower back problems are most common. The EU act also refers to noise. Our 201 class locos with standard GM flexicoil bogies must be one of the most rough riding locos you can get – and they’re like ovens in the summer.

We are also trying to improve cab conditions over here – so good luck!

Tom Ryan
loco driver – Cork, Ireland

MINEWORKER BADGES

ON behalf of myself and the Justice For Mineworkers Campaign, I’d like to thank everyone, not only drivers, who purchased one of the ASLEF- NUM badges that were struck in support of the campaign. The campaign was set up to help and assist miners and their families who were sacked or blacklisted during the 1984-85 miners strike and it’s still going strong and still fundraising. Thanks again for your support – I’m pleased to say that all the badges have now been sold. Yours in solidarity.

Ray Cooper RMS – Hither Green

SUICIDE IS TRAGEDY, NOT COMEDY

AFTER reading your article in the May journal I would like to leave this comment. I was unfortunate on 2 April this year to have a lady jump in front of my train and kill herself. I am sure all drivers know that is one of the down-sides of the job but is also a fact of life. It happens, and I was unfortunate enough to experience it.

‘Three and Out’ is just another film produced simply to make money – like ones about murder and rape.

Yes it is in bad taste, and maybe they should have thought about this a bit more. Perhaps if they’d been aware of what drivers and their families have to go through after an incident like this, they might have thought twice before going ahead.

I am still off work and having counselling. The image of that lady throwing herself off the platform will live with me for the rest of my life.

The bottom line here is that we all have a choice either to watch something or not. So make up your own mind.

Scott Robertson First Capital Connect - Bedford

ASLEF – WE’RE WORTH IT!

HAVING read the grumblings of some members re the recent rise in membership fees I can only say that when it comes to representation it is more than worth the extra. I recently had ‘a bit of a do’ at work it was solely down to the represen-
tation I had from ASLEF that I kept my job.

I would like to thank (through the Journal) my reps at Peterborough, Simon and Richard, also special thanks to Nick Whitehead for all his work to keep me employed, and thus continuing as an ASLEF member.

Bryan Dawes Driver – Peterborough

EXCESSIVE RESPONSIBILITIES

I’m concerned about the higher level of responsibilities placed on EWS drivers due to module 25a duties.

From 1 April 2006 EWS drivers were awarded a pay rise with an increase of productivity being driver only train run rounds/brake tests/train preparation (module 25a) to be done on your own train and when no staff are available.

I think the EWS company council has let us down by not interpreting ‘when no other council has let us down by not imposing detrimental wages and conditions on us.

We have to remember that it was the Tories that set us on the route of these over Finance Initiative (PFI) and the Partnership (PPP) and Private Finance Imitative (PFI) and the reverse. To secure your set please send £15 payable to ‘M. Scott’ to

Labour party are now paying in electoral terms for not reversing these policies. The cost to us the tax payer is more, while big business gains huge profits. If they collapse like Metronet, we end up footing the bill. It’s worth remembering in Metronet’s case over £2 billion pounds.

Boris is also committed to dropping Ken Livingstone’s target of 50% of all new homes in London to be affordable and let the Market decide the price.

The coming years with a Tory Mayor are not going to be peaceful. Those old Tory policies of the 1980’s and 90’s will be back on the agenda again. The Tories wanted to wholesale privatise London Underground.

There may have been a tendency for members to leave issues up to the union representatives to resolve. Now is a good time for the whole membership to get involved in union activities and be more politically aware of the consequences of the election of a Tory Mayor.

Andy Viner London

GET SMART! GET ORGANISED!

In reference to the article ‘Hold on to your hat, here come the public!’ in the May journal, I agree that fellow workers should get themselves organised into unions rather than squabble jealously and attack those who stand together to improve their working conditions.

I take issue with the ‘gent’ from the Royal Navy who invited us ‘to be ashamed of ourselves’ for voting to take industrial action.

I agree that the pay and conditions of the brave men and women serving our country are appalling. But that doesn’t take away the fact that those serving in the ranks will someday leave the forces and

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**LETTERS to the EDITOR**

**SILVER SPOON BORIS**

THE election of Boris Johnson as London Mayor in May should be met with foreboding. This is not good for Train Operators or working people in London. Boris appears to be born not only with a silver spoon in his mouth (having been educated in Eton), but also a foot. We should not be taken in by the approach of barmy Boris.

Boris is no friend of the trade union movement. One of his election campaign policies was to ban strikes on London Underground. The right to strike is a fundamental right that we can not allow to be taken away or sold. If this was to happen, the upper hand would be given to management. Nobody wants to strike, but the fact that we can, means management can not just impose detrimental wages and conditions on us.

We have to remember that it was the Tories that set us on the route of these expensive Private Public Partnership (PPP) and Private Finance Imitative (PFI) and the

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**CLASSIFIED ADVERTISEMENTS**

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

EURO 2008 BADGES A limited (100) edition box set of badges. Each box contains 4 high quality badges individually numbered on the reverse. To secure your set please send £15 payable to ‘M. Scott’ to Martin Scott, 1 Tamerton Square, Woking, Surrey, GU22 7SZ. Price includes recorded delivery postage. Email: scottfootball@hotmail.com

ROLL UP! ROLL UP! The ASLEF Retired Members Section (RMS) have launched their Grand Prize Draw. Top prize is £1,000 with 2nd and 3rd prizes of £500 and £200. There are also prizes of books including Pelling, Robert Tayor and Joes

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**ASLEF TRAIN DRIVER** collects ASLEF/railway badges, signs, shed plates, signalling items, etc. Phone Mark on 01562 746537 or (mobile) 07789301551

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**DIESEL HYDRAULIC ITEMS** wanted by collector. Anything considered, especially speedos, power handles etc. Rob 01822 834 150

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**ORLANDO** – fantastic Villa for rent. For details go to: www.thehavenvilla-florida.co.uk or tel : 0208 441 8526.

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**DOVER CENTENARY BADGE** A limited edition of numbered badges were produced to mark our 100 years. Price is £5 each Plus P+P. The badges are available from Branch Secretary Steve Deen (dover.aslef@virgin.net)

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**TRAIN DRIVER COLLECTS BR 33056 SERIES DRIVERS MANUALS**, particularly for Southern Region EMUs DEMUs and Diesel locos. Contact Lee 07919127972 or e-mail ld002d1042@blueyonder.co.uk Also offering (for postage costs only) five labour movement books including Pelling, Robert Taylor and Joes

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**N. Goodall Eastleigh**
incredibly offensive. I've had two "near fatalities" myself, so I know first-hand (and second-hand from colleagues who have had fatalities themselves) how distressing this experience can be. It's no laughing matter from branches nationwide - so once again GETTING KIDS GOING

I AM writing to thank all the branches who sent messages of support and made donations to the appeal made by two members of our Gloucester Branch, Tony Kyte and Paul Sergeant. They recently completed the Paris Marathon in aid of the charity 'Get Kids Going'.

The charity gives children with disabilities the opportunity to take part in sporting activities of all kinds that may not normally be available to them. Both Tony and Paul have been overwhelmed by the amount of donations from branches nationwide - so once again on behalf of them and the Gloucester Branch - thank you.

S. Price
Secretary – Gloucester Branch

I feel a personal as well as professional sorrow and regret at Gwyneth's death. She was a great friend of the union, a first-class representative for her constituents and someone with a genuine commitment to public transport. Gwyneth was the longest serving female MP in the House of Commons, and she was a larger-than-life figure – a massive presence. If Gwyneth was in the room, you knew it!

We were proud to have Gwyneth as a member of ASLEF's parliamentary group. She was a marvellous spokesperson not only for ASLEF, but for everyone in the rail industry. As the chair of the House of Commons Transport Committee she never shied away from holding the government to account if she thought they were wrong. She was ferociously independent.

Gwyneth was 'born in the Labour Party'. Her father Morgan Phillips was General Secretary of the Labour Party and her mother, Norah Phillips, was a life peer. Both her grandmothers were suffragettes.

In July 2001 the Chief Whip told her she was going to be replaced as chair of the Transport Committee because of her critical reports on the government's performance. It took a rebellion in the Commons to ensure that she kept her position. The incident demonstrated how well respected she was by the House.

At her funeral which I attended on behalf of the union, Jack Straw said that when a person becomes a politician, 'If you can be bought, someone will buy you. If you can be bullied, someone will bully you. If you spurn both these you will be respected.' That is why Gwyneth was respected.

The House of Commons has lost one of its finest Parliamentarians and the rail unions one of our closest allies. She was always ready to fight ASLEF's corner and to represent the voice of train drivers. We offer our sincere condolences to Gwyneth's family. She will be sorely missed.

KEITH NORMAN

I was devastated to hear of the death of Gwyneth Dunwoody. This union owes a great deal to this remarkable woman for her support and commitment to an efficient and integrated public transport system. Her views didn't change a jot when they failed to coincide with ministers who considered themselves her political superiors.

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KEITH NORMAN

I was sorry to have to report the passing of five members of the Worksop branch. Retired driver Derek Kirkland died at the age of 74. Derek worked at both Barrow Hill and Worksop.

We have also lost former Barrow Hill driver Eric Unwin at the age of 79, and Charlie Keep who was the Chair of the Worksop branch in the 60s and early 70s. Jack Hartshorn, ex Stavley and Barrow Hill, has died at age 80. Jack was a former LDC member at Barrow Hill. Finally we mourn the passing of 78-year-old ‘Non-stick’ Dick Hankinson, a former Worksop rep and a real character who retired in 1992.

BRO K. GILLET
Secretary – Worksop branch

We were saddened to hear, from his son Trevor, that Earnest Eames died on 20 April after suffering a four-year battle with prostate cancer. He was fortunately active and independent until the last few weeks of his life.

Earnest was an enthusiastic railway man starting with Great Western and with five years war service driving trains in the Middle East and Italy. He completed 50 years of service, retiring as a main line driver on the New Street to Euston route.

Earnest was an active ASLEF member when based at Tyseley and Trevor says he remembers him pouring over this subs records late into the evening, and taking a keen interest in the union well into his retirement. Until last autumn he regularly spent a day out most weeks, riding the rails around the country.

Trevor says, ‘Dad’s funeral services at Robin Hood last week saw a surprisingly large number of his old colleagues in attendance, which indicated he was well thought of. It was much appreciated by his family.’

When he went into hospital a few days before he died, Earnest had left out a letter intending to renew his membership of ASLEF.

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KEITH NORMAN
THE TRAIN THAT BRINGS HEALTH CARE TO SOUTH AFRICA

IT IS just 15 years since a train on a special mission first set out to travel around South Africa. At that time it was made up of three clinic coaches and specialised in offering treatment for eyes.

The following year, 1994, as the country took its first steps to democracy, the project had grown out of all recognition. By now, with the continuing backing of Transnet, it had become a fully fledged primary health care train which involved all manner of new partnerships, allies and supporters: it was renamed the ‘Phelophepa’ which means ‘good clean health’.

By now it had grown to 13 coaches providing not just eye-care but also edu-care (basic health education), medicine and health care to rural communities of Southern Africa. The following year a further two coaches were added to offer a dental and x-ray clinic. At the end of 1996 a 16th coach was added as a dental clinic while the existing dental clinic was changed into counselling cubicles. The beginning of 1998 saw another change to the train as the X-ray clinic was converted into a further dental cubicle.

COMPLEX CONVERSION
Converting the train so that it could deliver everything on which it has set its sights was a major and complex technological project. For a start it needed its own power generator. A normal trains generates enough electricity for lights and hot water as it goes along – but this one provides its services while it’s stationary. So a former parcels coach was converted into a power car with two diesel engines and tanks. It’s also got a state-of-the-art kitchen that can prepare around 400 meals per day and a satellite communications network with telephones, fax machines and satellite and cellular phones.

The communication room contains all the decoders used for TV stations as well as a telephone exchange. Computers and printers in each of the clinic manager’s offices are equipped with e-mail and internet access. There is air-conditioning throughout. Each of the 16 coaches has two geysers supplying hot water for showers and basins.

Then there was the problem of a waiting area for patients outside the train. This was overcome by designing special mountings to run along the whole 22 metre length of a coach which slide into the canvas mounting. Then special tent poles had to be made because the area around the train varied from a normal platform to no platform at all.

ORGANISING THE CARE STATION
But it’s not just the provision and adapting of the train that threw up all kinds of challenges. How can they ensure that local people know about the train and arrange to visit during its one-week stay in each location?

Three months before its arrival a marketing team helps to set up a Community Steering Committee. This committee takes increasing responsibility for advertising the arrival, organizing volunteers to participate in the Basic Health Care Programme and appointing local people to assist in a range of necessary jobs such as cleaning, interpreting, constructing tents and carrying out laundry and kitchen work. In a way, the train can become owned by the local community during its stay.

The train itself has 19 resident staff members hired on annual contracts – but some have been on board for eight years. They are backed up by four Johannesburg-based members of the Transnet Foundation team who oversee planning, logistics, communication, financial management and information about the health sector. Each year 12,000 final year medical students work for two weeks on the Phelophepa project. To call it challenging is something of an understatement!

REACHING OUT
The project, which is backed by the government and a host of corporate organisations and individuals from Colgate to Desmond Tutu, and has support groups in America and Switzerland, reckons to treat over 43,000 people on the train each year, to offer school ‘outreach’ programmes to almost 116,000 children and to provide 6,500 community counselling workshops for adults over four provinces of South Africa.

Estimated to cost around R2 million (£130,000) a month to run, by April of next year it is hoped to provide a second healthcare train to cover eight provinces.

In a land where rural communities are riddled with unemployment, poverty, violence and HIV/AIDS, the Phelophepa project is a beaming light of hope for many. And it is just one more example of how that marvellous invention – the train – can be used to improve lives, communities and the environment.

Further information about the Phelophepa can be found on the internet at http://www.mhc.org.za
FREE LEGAL ADVICE ASLEF also provides first class free legal advice – both for members and for their dependents. In the first six months of this year we have secured £1,442,369 in compensation claims! Call the helpline on 0808 100 8009

EMERGENCIES If you are an ASLEF member who is arrested or being interviewed by the police and need legal assistance – day or night – you can call the members' Emergency Hotline on 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. 26
set by TLC


DOWN 1 Bogie 2 Legislative 4 Adder 5 Notes 6 Irate 7 Einstein 12 Alec 14 Press gang 15 Commuter 16 Emma 20 Names 21 Safer 22 Barge 23 Level ACROSS 3 Main line 8 Hose 9 Goods train 10 Mini 11 Star 13 Spent 17 Ormate 18 Muesli 19 Mines 22 Bats 24 Glen 25 Time for tea 26 Noel 27 Reserved

CLUES ACROSS
3 The place to wait for the train (8)
8 It keeps the vehicle running (4)
9 Steep slope (10)
10 …. Sykes, actor and comedian (4)
11 Almost an adult (4)
13 Step (5)
17 Geometric shape (6)
18 …. Christie, crime writer (6)
19 Companions at work (5)
22 Part of the leg (4)
24 Small amphibian, found in ponds (4)
25 Brownish-red colour (10)
26 Method of transport (4)
27 Booked a seat in advance (8)

CLUES DOWN
1 They’re at the rear of the train (5)
2 Electrical conductor (9)
4 Attend classes for instruction (5)
5 Yorkshire-men, commonly (5)
6 Musical play (5)
7 Fabric (8)
12 Have them boiled, fried or poached (4)
14 The price of a ticket (5,4)
15 Regular traveller (8)
16 Money (4)
20 There are four plus a spare on a car (5)
21 Freddie, controversial comedian (5)
22 Currant bun (5)
23 Acid that benefits expectant mums (5)

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

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