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<td>Children’s benefit for 1 child</td>
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Why are politicians so afraid of giving unions the right to run their own affairs? Trade unions are made up of some of the most conscientious, selfless and concerned people in our country. Hundreds of thousands of individuals work for nothing to represent their colleagues in the work-place. It is a fact that wages, safety and conditions are better in work-places that have unions. Recent events in the City have shown that we are far from being the ‘unacceptable face of capitalism’. Yet politicians will go to all kinds of lengths to safeguard the ‘free market’ for speculators. To suggest any restrictions on their behaviour is considered heresy. At the same time the House of Lords thinks it is perfectly reasonable to restrict what unions can do – even to the extent of who we admit as members. I honestly believed that this argument was ended in March 2005 when our union secured an important judgment in the European Court of Human Rights. Existing UK law at the time required us to take back into membership a BNP member we had expelled. We said it was an infringement of our freedom of association not to be able to expel someone in an organisation with views in complete conflict with our own. The European Court agreed, saying that ‘just as a worker should be free to join or not join a union, so is a trade union equally free to choose its members’. It went on express ‘the right of trade unions to draw up their own rules and to administer their own affairs’. I hoped that this ruling might herald a new era where governments accepted that trade unions should be as ‘free’ as the markets, and would desist from interfering in our affairs. My optimism betrayed me. The House of Lords has been discussing – or rather, emasculating - an Employment Bill which the government introduced last year. It soon emerged that their noble lords don’t accept the right of working people to form free and effective trade unions, with the ability to engage in collective bargaining and to withdraw labour. Yet these are basic rights which are accepted as fundamental in international law and are enshrined in treaties which are binding on the UK. Their revised section 18 could make it even more difficult to expel people who work against our interests. This isn’t just about trade union rights. It is about human rights and basic freedoms.

Keith Norman
General Secretary
LABOUR’S PARTY CONFERENCE: A SURPRISINGLY POSITIVE AFFAIR

In his own inimitable style, Alan Griffiths from Shrewsbury Branch reports on the union’s activities at, and his own impression of, last month’s Labour Party conference in Manchester . . .

Obviously security is necessary at a Labour Party conference, but I couldn’t help forming a mental image of the conference – and Labour – being symbolically isolated from the nation. The whole conference area, the redeveloped Manchester Central Station, was completely cordoned off with police snipers on top of all of the buildings surrounding the complex. This ‘island Site’ [state perhaps?] was patrolled by machine-gun-wielding police officers and accessed via body scanners and repeated identity checks.

On the first day of conference, an extremely vocal anti-war demonstration of around 1,500 protesters could be heard throughout the site and a number of delegates went over to witness it first hand. There was an unspoken consensus that perhaps we belonged on the other side of the barricades participating in the demonstration. It was quite weird and somewhat disturbing to feel as though we were part of the establishment responsible for what they were protesting against. It was an impressive and well planned protest and the organisers should be commended for that.

INSIDE THE TENT

It was disappointing to see such a high percentage of trade groups, pundits and reporters within the ‘island site’ but with luck and persistence the astute observer could occasionally identify a bone fide conference delegate amongst this plethora of grey-suited interlopers.

I can’t see what organisations such as the Countryside Alliance have to do with the Labour movement, trade unionism or socialism. Yet they had their stall set up (even though I think a lot of their members are reactionaries who like to torture and butcher animals for fun). I would have declined their application - or placed them next to the League against Cruel Sports stand.

OLD STAGERS

Despite the obvious stage management, Conference itself was a surprisingly positive affair with a lot of common sense spoken and prevailing. For ASLEF, I addressed conference on the contemporary issue of tackling fuel poverty, underlining our union’s support for a windfall tax on the energy and utility companies. In my speech I pointed out that the average household fuel bill is now £1,200 and that this has created real hardship for millions. The energy providers’ profits have meanwhile risen from £557m in 2003 to over £3 billion today - while they spend a paltry 1.6% of their profits combating fuel poverty. Statistics show that between 2.5 - 4 million people in the UK live in fuel poverty. It is time for a moral tax on their immoral profits.

I argued the ASLEF line that receipt from a windfall tax should be ring-fenced to ensure that pensioners, the poor and the vulnerable benefit.

I got a little nervous and feel I ‘could have done better’. Kevin Lindsay showed his kind and compassionate side when he alluded to the stammering I made in my address. He congratulated me for delivering the first speech he had ever heard in Morse code! Simon Weller said he owed me a pint for grasping the nettle and getting up and doing the job. He didn’t buy it.

TAKEN FOR GRANTED

Peter Grant performed significantly better than I did. He spoke about rail electrification, beginning with a very well-received tribute to the late Gwyneth Dunwoody. He said what a great friend she had been not only to ASLEF but to the rail industry as a whole.

Peter said that we could learn from Scottish politics and - as a step towards re-nationalisation of the rail network - all TOCs and FOCs should be run as ‘not for profit’ organisations. He argued that this was a potential election winner as the general public are sick to death of the ‘musical chairs’ that the franchise process has delivered.

Peter put the case for electrification well, and stressed the obvious benefits. In his remarks he referred to the ASLEF leaflet (above) and informed delegates of the ASLEF-led Downing Street petition.

He moved off stage when the indicator changed on the podium panel and got a laugh when he pointed out that train drivers are trained to instantaneously react to signals. When he returned to his seat, we all shook his hand and congratulated him on a thoroughly excellent job.

In fact only the next day Ruth Kelly seemed to give commitments to an electrification programme and ASLEF will be working hard to turn these words into a reality. We were sorry to hear that Ruth was to step down as a minister and indeed as an MP.

Towards the end of conference we circulated some of ASLEF’s flyers about electrification. We were joyfully handing them out within the ‘island site’

Peter Hain sought out ASLEF delegates Alan Griffiths, Peter Grant and Simon Weller to thank them for our union’s support in his unsuccessful deputy leadership bid
until we were approached by an official who, judging from his somewhat despondent countenance, appeared to have recently heard some extremely bad news. We were told to desist.

**BETTER IN THAN OUT**

We are perhaps lucky to belong to an organisation such as ASLEF, a small democratic craft union of great strength, fraternity and industrial might. We are respected by our peers and feared by our adversaries. ASLEF members attend Trade Councils, Labour Party branch meetings and pressure groups and as a member of both the General and Executive Committees of my Local Constituency Labour Party, I’m constantly impressed with trade union activism within the Party. I’m convinced it’s better to be within the Party, where it’s possible to influence and change policy, than to be on the outside.

Thanks to all the branches that voted for Peter and me to attend conference and allowing us the great honour of representing this trade union. Thanks also to head office staff James McGowan and Dave Gould for their hard work. Finally it was an absolute joy listening to Keith Norman and Kevin Lindsay and getting to know Peter Grant a little better as I have always admired his integrity and socialist principles.

**DON’T FORGET THE TORY RAIL PLANS!**

Keith Norman said that the new plans for rail announced at the Conservative Party’s conference are ‘music to the ears’. But he added, ‘We have often seen grand announcements by parties when no election is in sight – but they often alter dramatically nearer - and after - polling day. Rest assured that ASLEF won’t forget today’s announcement – we’ll remind them of these pledges regularly between now and the next General Election!’

The Tories have committed themselves to scrapping a third runway for Heathrow in favour of building a TGV-style high speed rail link between London, Birmingham, Manchester and Leeds at a cost of some £20 billion.

‘This would be a massive step in the right direction,’ Keith says, while he insisted that rail links to Scotland and Wales should also feature in the plans. ‘The current outline can be accused of being the work of ‘Little Englanders’, he warned.

David Cameron says that building the first new rail line north of London in more than a century would cut 66,000 flights a year from Heathrow by tempting passengers onto rail.

Theresa Villiers, the shadow transport secretary, says this ‘seriously green decision’ would have ‘been inconceivable for the leader of the Conservative party’ until recently, as the party tries to present its ‘green credentials’. She says a Conservative government would spend £15.6bn between 2015 and 2027 (£1.3bn a year for 12 years) to build the new high speed rail link from London St Pancras to Birmingham, Manchester and Leeds. A further £4.4bn would be paid by the private sector.

‘A completely new line would allow the existing track to be used for commuter journeys between smaller towns and also hopefully prove a boost to freight traffic,’ Keith says. He concluded, ‘It’s a good plan. Let’s see if this enthusiasm continues over the next couple of years.’
ASLEF’s delegates made a point of attending fringe meetings where they could put the union’s views, especially on electrification of rail and freight issues. This is always a chance to get ‘up close and personal’ with leading political figures.

On Sunday at a ‘Centres for Cities’ meeting on ‘What next for urban transport?’, Simon Weller pointed out that freight trains and passenger trains don’t mix due to the restricted speed of freight trains. He therefore suggested the construction of a dedicated freight route which would not only benefit freight transport, but also relieve congestion on main lines, thus improving passenger transport. He also pointed out the importance of safeguarding railway land and property.

There was general approval for his remarks, notably from the House of Common Select Committee Chair Louise Ellman who pointed out that high speed lines could also free up other lines. Ruth Kelly pointed out that there was an extra £67 million going to freight grants and that feasibility studies were looking into potential new lines. Other top table speakers included Helen Holland (leader of Bristol City Council) and Alan Tomlin (CEO of The Train Line).

Ruth Kelly started to feel ASLEF were stalking her when she found the same Simon Weller questioning her at another fringe meeting the following lunch-time! This time he wanted to know about the level of investment in rail. Kelly repeated that the government was committed to undertake feasibility studies into new lines, reopening old lines and high speed rail.

At a fringe meeting on Tuesday the Co-operative Party launched its policy document ‘The People’s Rail’. Peter Grant explained the need for greater investment in rail and the need to bring the railways back into public ownership beginning with the use of a not-for-profit TOC model.

Both Lord Barclay and Louise Ellman both made positive comments about this and both suggested that the not-for-profit model used after the collapse of Connex should have been maintained as a comparator. Louise Ellman also spoke of the need for integration of train and track.

Peter Grant outlined the need for greater rail electrification at the transport debate during the ‘Convention of the Left’ – a gathering of the non-Labour left – while Kevin Lindsay and James McGowan attended fringe meetings on London transport (organised by TfL) and a disappointing meeting on Light Rail. Simon Weller raised the need for greater investment in urban transport in a packed meeting on local transport organised by Manchester Passenger Transport Authority attended by Ruth Kelly and Manchester MPs Tony Lloyd and Graham Stringer. By this time the minister felt sure she was being ‘stalked’ by the union!

We also attended transport policy seminars during which the union restated our case for the policies we secured at Labour’s National Policy Forum in Warwick.
News

ASLEF CONDEMNS ‘GRIM REAPER’ ART

ASLEF joined in the condemnation of a grim ‘work of art’ planned for St Pancras.

Paul Day, the sculptor responsible for ‘the Meeting Place’, a 30 ft bronze statue of a couple embracing that has been derided variously by critics as ‘truly horrific’, ‘kitsch’ and ‘dreary and mournful’ has struck again, creating a frieze to adorn the bare plinth on which his earlier work stands.

The frieze features an image of a commuter plunging to certain death beneath the wheels of a train that appears to be driven by the Grim Reaper.

The ‘artwork’ commissioned by London and Continental Railways, owners of St Pancras was roundly condemned as insensitive and sensationalist by the families of rail suicides and by ASLEF, who issued a statement saying that ‘every train driver in the country will be sickened by this image. To see respectable, professional men and women portrayed as the agents of death is insulting, facile and malicious’.

OVERCROWDING ABOLISHED

Overcrowding on trains is set to become a thing of the past following a change in the definition of ‘overcrowding’. Previously a carriage was thought to be overcrowded if just ten per-cent of the passengers were standing. Under new government guidelines up to thirty per-cent of passengers can be on their feet at any one time before a carriage is deemed crowded. Despite inflation busting fare hikes the popularity of train travel has soared faster than extra carriages and longer platforms are being introduced, and according to the National Audit Office commuters can expect another six years of cattle truck conditions before new carriages are delivered. With some fares being increased by up to twenty per-cent a spokesman for the National Audit Office warned of even higher regulated and unregulated fares to come.

CONSULTANCY FEES QUESTIONED

According to the Department for Transport’s own calculations the DfT has spent almost £17m on financial, legal and technical consultancy fees in connection with Crossrail over a five year period since 2003.

The DfT has refused to answer a question from Diane Abbot, MP regarding the number and frequency of trains that transport nuclear flasks from Bradwell and Sizewell nuclear power stations to Sellafield via the Great Eastern Mainline and the North London Line. Speaking on behalf of the government, transport minister Jim Fitzpatrick stated that the number and frequency of future shipments of irradiated nuclear fuel flasks and the routes taken are an operational matter for the organisations concerned and that the Department does not hold the information. However de-fueling operations at Bradwell have been completed and there will no longer be shipments of irradiated nuclear fuel from the site.
UNIONS FOR THE 21ST CENTURY: SMALL CAN BE BEAUTIFUL

argues Gregor Gall, Professor of Industrial Relations at the University of Hertfordshire

WE often hear the argument that as employers have grown bigger, unions must do the same, if they are to match them for power and resources. This has meant that we have witnessed the rise of the super-unions in Britain. Indeed, the new and biggest union in Britain, Unite, was created from two existing super-unions (Amicus and TGWU).

But in the last decade, these super-unions are the very unions that have lost most members more quickly than any others. By contrast, the smaller unions have recorded membership growth.

Some of these are the teaching unions like the NUT and NASUWT. Others are unions which have their membership growth because they are smaller and most sustained membership growth.

But there are also a large number of small unions in the private sector, like ASLEF, which have bucked the trend by growing by than 10% over the last ten years. In this sense, ASLEF and others have shown that ‘small can still be beautiful’.

So if the large unions are not doing so well and the small ones are doing much better, what explains the difference?

UNITED BUT NOT CLOSE

The basic argument for super-unions is that bigger is better because it can bring about economies of scale by getting rid of replication as well as creating strength through unity.

Unfortunately, the history of union mergers in Britain in recent times is that the unions that join together have tended to want to preserve their existing structures and ways of doing things. As a result, real merging has not taken place and so costs have not fallen.

It’s also no surprise to find in this situation that members from different unions making up the new merged union have not integrated together very much. New, joint branches have been slow to form.

Sometimes there are good reasons for this because the different unions that make up the new union represent different grades or skills. Sometimes, it’s because they represent different workers in different companies that bargain separately.

So, overall the new super-unions do not live up to their promise. They may look good from the position of general secretaries - but the members are not really sold on the idea or the practice.

And it’s also true that far from gaining from a merger, a lot can be lost as well.

SPECIALIST UNIONS, STRONG BONDS

One of the key strengths of any union is the bond between its members and the union itself. The super-unions almost inevitably lose this connection because general unions are made up of different types of workers, with varying trades, professions or occupations.

The strength of the smaller unions like ASLEF, the pilots’ union (BALPA), the Prison Officers’ Association (POA), the probation officers’ union (NAPO), the journalists’ union (NUJ) or Chartered Society of Physiotherapists (CSP) is that they all have a clear identity and relationship with their members.

These are specialist unions for clearly identifiable groups of workers based on industry, profession, trade or occupation. So in addition to representing their members on wages and conditions of employment, these unions also play a distinctive role in the promotion and defence of these workers’ professional interests.

In the case of ASLEF, this is to do with standards of rail travel and the state of the railways. ASLEF, with the other rail unions, has campaigned against privatisation and for a return to public ownership as well as on issues of safety, training and service provision. For unions like the NUJ, NAPO and CSP, there are issues of professional standards of conduct from both workers and employers.

It’s obvious from the names of these unions that this is what they are for and what they do. The same cannot be said of the super-unions like Unite, Unison and Unity.

EASIER TO BE INVOLVED

To be fair to the super-unions on one point – they organise in many areas where employment has fallen so their membership loss is not all down to being big. It’s just that trying to regain members through merger is not the solution – it can be like rearranging the deckchairs on the Titanic.

Over and above these ingrained benefits, it is also the case that the smaller unions find it easier to involve a higher proportion of members in the democracy of the union because they are smaller and more personable.

With a clear identity and sense of purpose, the bargaining strength of these small specialist unions is augmented. This, in turn, increases the sense of identity and purpose.

And, where there is need for cooperation between unions such as large and small, specialist and generalist, there is no reason why this cannot happen without there having to be a merger.

Small specialist unions would be unwise to give up what they’ve got.
FULL STEAM AHEAD
The first full size steam locomotive to be built in Britain for nearly 50 years took to the tracks in October. The Tornado took a team of steam enthusiasts eighteen painstaking years to construct at a cost of £3m and is based on the LNER Peppercorn Class A1 series. Their dream became a reality when the Tornado carried its first passengers on a stretch of the great Central railway in Leicestershire. Because the Tornado has been fitted with extra water capacity and twentieth first century safety features it will allowed to transport charter passengers on the mainline railway once it has completed a series of test journeys on Great Central Railway’s ‘heritage’ track.

PRICE OF HIGH-SPEED RAIL CONSTRUCTION
In response to a parliamentary question from shadow Secretary of State for Transport, Teresa Villiers, on the cost of building a new high speed rail track, the junior transport minister Paul Clark quoted from the Strategic Rail Authority’s report (2003) which states the average cost for channel tunnel rail link was £19m per route kilometre.

The report considered that section of the CTRL typical of any high-speed line extending north from London. If costs for CTRL sections one and 2 are included the average cost was £48m per kilometre, including tunnelling.

Precise costs depend on a number of factors including whether construction is along disused lines, on green fields or included tunnelling, but recent work for the DfT suggests a new double track high-speed rail line might cost £12-£16m per route kilometre.

ELECTRIFYING RESPONSE
At the time of going to press almost four hundred signatures had been added to a petition to Downing Street calling for the expansion of the electrification of Britain’s rail network. The petition, submitted by ASLEF, urges the government to act now as oil prices remain volatile and environmental pressures increase. Greater electrification will enhance carrying capacity, increase passenger comfort and reduce carbon emissions by between 20-35%. To sign the petition visit: www.petitions.number10.gov.uk/Electrification.
CUBA has not only suffered a blockade for nearly 50 years but has been subject to terrorist attacks for several decades. In 1976 a Cuban airliner was blown out of the air by terrorists killing 73 people. Those responsible for this remain at liberty in the US today. Nearly 3,500 Cubans have died since 1959 as a result of terrorist actions. Instead of arresting the would-be bombers the US authorities instead turned round and jailed the Cuban trade unionists.

In 1997 in order to defend itself, five Cuban trade unionists were sent to Miami to infiltrate right-wing groups who were plotting further terrorist attacks. The men known as the Miami 5 were; Gerardo Hernández, Ramón Labañino, Antonio Guerrero, Fernando González and René González. The Five passed the information they uncovered on the planned terrorist activities and handed this to the FBI. The US authorities instead of arresting the would-be bombers turned round and jailed the Five Cuban trade unionists. After their arrest the men were kept in solitary confinement for 17 months; treatment normally reserved for violent prisoners.

The US Government decreed most of the evidence against them as secret denying the defence attorneys access to 80% of the material.

The trial of the Five opened on 27 November 2000 in Miami. The defence attorneys applied for the trial to be switched to another location where the five could be guaranteed a fair, impartial hearing away from the politically charged climate of hostility that existed towards Cuba in Miami. The application was denied without explanation.

The Five Cubans have now been in the US prison system for 10 years. The men are not even allowed the company of their compatriots and are kept in different maximum security prisons dotted around the US. Even more cruelly the wives of Rene and Gerardo have consistently been denied visas by the US and have not seen their husbands for over 8 years.

Human rights organisations have condemned the treatment of the families and Amnesty International has described it as ‘contrary both to the standards for the human treatment of prisoners and to a states’ obligation to protect family life.’

The Cuba Solidarity Campaign has launched a major campaign for justice for the Miami 5 and their families. At this year’s Trades Union Congress a motion in support of the campaign was passed unanimously. Full page adverts have been placed in the national press to break the wall of silence which surrounds this case. Hundreds of people attended a vigil outside the US Embassy. Links have been established with US trade unions to publicise the case in the USA and the case for the 5 has been raised at the highest level of the British government.

To break the wall of silence the campaign needs the support of ASLEF members.

• Join the Cuba Solidarity Campaign
• Distribute the Miami 5 action cards in your depot
• Write to the prisoners
  Find out more at www.cuba-solidarity.org.uk/miami5/
  To order action cards and find out more information contact campaigns@cuba-solidarity.org.uk or phone 0208 800 0155.
With seventy percent of all UK train journeys beginning or ending at one of London’s thirteen termini the city is of crucial importance to the country’s rail network. We hope these pages bring some clarity to the myriad political and rail issues in the capital from the role of the Mayor and the Greater London Assembly to the responsibilities of Transport for London and from Crossrail and the 2012 Olympics to air conditioned tube trains and London Overground. ASLEF members in London have always prided themselves on loyalty and commitment and our regional organiser Steve Grant and EC member Terry Wilkinson continue this fine tradition. KEITH NORMAN - GENERAL SECRETARY

SINCE MAY 2000 the strategic administration of London has been the responsibility of the Greater London Assembly, which shares government powers with the councils of London’s 32 boroughs. The GLA is represented by a directly elected Mayor who proposes the GLA’s budget and makes appointments to the capital’s four executive bodies: The Metropolitan Police Authority, the London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority, the London Development Agency and Transport for London. For 14 years, following Margaret Thatcher’s decision to abolish the Greater London Council, many of the strategic functions of the GLC transferred directly to Central government, or to London’s Borough councils. In fact many outer London borough’s believed they could perform the functions of the GLC better at a local level. This belief was fuelled by the very different political agenda’s that existed, and still exist throughout the Metropolitan area. After the Labour party, which had controlled the GLC and opposed its abolition was returned to power nationally in 1997 it resolved to return power to London, if Londoner’s wished for it. When Local borough elections were held in London in May 1998 a referendum was also held on the establishment of the GLA. It was approved by 72 % of voters.

The 25 members of the Assembly are elected at the same time as the Mayor. Fourteen members are elected directly by the constituents they represent and the remaining eleven are chosen from a list to represent the entire city. Currently the largest group are the Conservatives with 11 members, followed by Labour, 8, the Liberal Democrats, 3, the Green Party, 2 and the BNP with 1 member. Although turnout for local elections in London is higher, at 43 per cent of the electorate, than for the rest of the country many more people vote for a Mayor than vote for Assembly members.

There is a clear separation of powers between the Mayor, who has an executive role, and the Assembly which can not itself propose policy. The Assembly’s primary function is instead to hold the Mayor of London to account through scrutiny of his plans and actions. The GLA must also accept or amend the Mayor’s annual budget. The internal organisation of the GLA takes account of this separation. The GLA and the Mayor are supported in their work by a pool of permanent staff, led by the Head of Paid Service whose role it is to ensure that both branches operate effectively and within the rules. The Mayor himself employs a staff of around 30 which works for him directly.

The Assembly has a Secretariat, or support staff responsible for organising Assembly proceedings and delivering its scrutiny and investigation programme. The Secretariat provides a core of experts who either directly, or through commissioning, both research and review matters arising from the Mayor’s activities.

Since its inauguration the Mayor, and the four executive bodies of his office have assumed control of a number of existing government programmes, which are paid for from the Mayor’s budget. Most of the funding for the GLA itself, which costs an annual £50m is met by central government. London council tax payers contribute a relatively meagre amount, about 20p per week on a Band D council Tax bill.

Transport for London’s budget 2008-2009, proposed by former mayor Ken Livingstone, was agreed at £7.8b. From this the Mayor must pay not only for a new generation of buses, and major improvements to cycle and pedestrian routes, but for the extension of the East London Line and major upgrades to the tube in time for London 2012. Spending on transport in London is overseen by the GLA’s transport Committee. On the next page, Chair of the Committee, Valerie Shawcross explains the committee’s work as it affects rail transport. Cary Gee
As Chair of the London Assembly’s Transport Committee I believe we exist to push for improvements in London’s transport system, including Overground Rail. In fact, this Committee is the only democratically elected body charged with holding to account those responsible for the capital’s transport system, Transport for London (TfL) and the Mayor, and scrutinising the rail industry from a Londoner’s perspective. VAL SHAWCROSS

A look at the London Assembly’s Transport Committee

As TfL’s chair, Boris Johnson is charged with making decisions about transport in the Capital. And in turn, we are charged with assessing whether his decisions are right for London and what his priorities should be. We are still in ‘post election limbo’ - with a major revision of the Transport Strategy in draft and not expected to be published until the new year. We are watching developments closely.

THE POWER OF PUBLIC SCRUTINY

The Committee has the power to summon people to appear before us in public, and also summon detailed performance and financial information so we get a true picture of whether things are working well. This month it’s PPP Arbiter Chris Bolt’s turn.

We want to hear how he reached his cost estimate for the Tube maintenance programme. He says that work by Tube Lines between 2010 and 2017 could legitimately cost up to £5.5 billion, £1.4 billion more than London Underground projected for the work. London Underground doesn’t have the extra funding, and without additional help from the Government – which already provides TfL with a £39 billion ten-year settlement, plus an extra £1.7 billion to cover debts resulting from the collapse of Metronet – some planned track and station improvements are at risk.

To complete the PPP picture, we’ll be questioning London Underground Chief Executive Tim O’Toole alongside Terry Morgan from Tube Lines: expect fireworks.

It can be frustrating that the Committee can’t actually force or change policy. However we can make recommendations. Bringing, - sometimes dragging! - key issues into the public arena can apply enough pressure to see improvements made.

ELLX2 NEEDS PHASE 2

The extension of the East London Line is a good example of the Committee using political influence to get things moving. Phase One of the extension is underway, funding for Phase Two, to complete the route from Surrey Quays to Clapham Junction, is unresolved. Completing the orbital route would increase the number of passengers to an estimated 50 million per year, and only £24 million – small change in transport infrastructure terms - is now needed to fund it.

It makes no sense not to push ahead with Phase Two – with around £10 million worth of savings to be had if Phase Two follows seamlessly from Phase One.

A cross-party delegation of Transport Committee members questioned the Mayor about the situation and urged him to do whatever it takes to secure the funding - he’s expected to conclude his discussions with the Department for Transport this month and we hope to see real progress on resolving the funding issue.

CROWDING ON THE RAILS

Another priority this term is something many of you have experienced first hand, from the driver’s seat and the platform edge: Overcrowding on the rail routes into London. Everybody knows many services run well above capacity at peak times. We want to map exactly where the ‘pinch points’ are: The stations where things are really out of hand, where commuters must let several full trains pass before they can board.

We’ll be holding meetings with passenger representatives and train operators. We’re also asking Londoners to get in touch with their experiences of commuting on rail routes by emailing us at overcrowding@london.gov.uk

If we can pinpoint where the problems are we can recommend to the TOC’s, Network Rail, DfT and the Mayor ways to improve things for passengers.

LONDON NEEDS CROSSRAIL

Crossrail. London needs it, but it is a massively expensive undertaking. TfL will jointly fund Crossrail to the tune of £7.7 billion (of the total expected cost of 17 billion) with the DfT, taking on some of the risk associated with the project. The revenue consequences of this borrowing will be met by TfL, so any long-term increase in the cost of borrowing will be significant – a real risk in the current economic climate. Some funding will come from business contributions and an enhanced business rate from major companies in London.

What implications does this have for the Mayor’s transport priorities? What will he do about expensive manifesto commitments like phasing out bendy buses and introducing air-cooling on the Tube? If he’s under financial and political pressure will he make the best choices for passengers or try to find easy ways out? The Committee will have an important role in debating the choices the Mayor makes.
CONGESTION EXEMPTION

The 2007 ASLEF Annual Assembly of Delegates launched a campaign to secure congestion charge exemption for train drivers who enter the payment zone to provide public transport.

Drivers who are early in the morning or finish late at night often have no option other than to drive to their depot. Often journeys are made when local trains are not running and 24 hour bus services are limited. There are also personal safety issues for drivers travelling to work during unsocial hours. In a year the congestion charge can cost a driver up to £1,000.

The issue extends beyond London. Since the implementation of the congestion charge in London, many other cities have considered a similar scheme. Manchester has proposed a peak time congestion charge that could be in place by 2011. Nottingham, Derby and Leicester are also examining schemes.

On 4th February 2008, Tom Harris wrote “The Government believes that the detailed design of local road charging schemes is best decided at local level. As stated in the Transport Innovation Fund guidance, this includes the decision to offer any exemptions or discounts. This is consistent with our desire for local authorities to be able to tailor solutions to local circumstances and to be locally accountable.”

LONDON NEWS

LONDON PAY ASLEF has accepted a final offer from Tubes Lines of 4.9 percent for year one, increasing to 0.75 percent above RPI in January of year two. In addition a guaranteed offer of employment has been extended to all medically redeployed staff.

Extra payments will be made available for point technicians and staff who work on Christmas Day. ASLEF accepted this offer after conducting a referendum of its members in the area.

London Underground has asked for our pay submission for next year. We are in the process of formulating our claim before an initial meeting scheduled for December 16.

LONDON LINKS The fixed link rosters at Earls Court Depot came into being on the 2nd February 2003 as a trial of new working practices. Usual rostering on London Underground has been to have all train operators at a depot on one mixed roster. At the end of a year long trial 89 per-cent of drivers voted by referendum to make the system permanent.

The aim of the rostering system is to enable drivers to choose a ‘link’ (rota) which has similar starting and finishing patterns to suit their preferred working times. This allows drivers to adapt their working life to their life outside work and enables them to achieve a better work/life balance. There is also the additional benefit of more weekends off because there is no longer the need to split Saturday and Sunday as the rota changes from late to early turns. This results in a long weekend off every third week.

Originally, depot seniority was used to allocate drivers to their preferred link at the beginning of the process in 2003. Drivers are now placed on waiting lists for their preferred link based on their date of application. The waiting lists for the links are also very short now because 86 per-cent of the depot is on the link of their choice.

DRIVER NVQ’S ASLEF EC member for District 8 Terry Wilkinson has been leading the Unions campaign to allow LUL drivers to transfer to other train operating companies. (TOC’s)

Historically TOC’s have refused to recognise Underground drivers’ qualifications despite the fact that drivers on the Bakerloo, District and Metropolitan lines are trained to operate under Network Rail rules. This has meant that members were treated as ‘off the street’ applicants by TOC’s, despite having years of driving experience.

This has restricted ASLEF member’s ability to develop their careers by moving between companies. In fact all LUL drivers are covered by a competence management regime similar to that operated on National Rail and are also qualified under the NVQ system which is designed to provide evidence of transferable skills.

Agreement in principle has been reached with London Overground and First Capital Connect to allow Underground drivers to apply for employment in the same way as any other train driver. Detailed discussions will take place on how this will operate in practice.

ASLEF will continue to pursue this issue with other TOC’s and freight companies as we believe that every driver should have the right to have their qualifications recognised, no matter which company they drive for.

LONDON UNDERGROUND PENSIONS

The Transport for London Pension Fund Annual General Meeting was held on 7 October 2008 and was well attended with over 300 current, retired and deferred pensioners in attendance. At the end of September 2008 the value of the fund was £4.2 billion. This reflects some of the recent turmoil in the financial markets. The fund value peaked at just over £5 billion in June 2008. However John Robson, who until June this year was a member of the funds Investment Committee stresses that the decline in value is no reason for concern.

‘Our Pension Fund is one of the most secure in the country and at all meetings we have held at the Pension Working Group with TIL and LUL they have stressed their commitment to the Pension Fund.

Having said that as a Union we must keep a close check at all times into both the running of the fund and any plans that TIL may come up with. We would be foolish if we did not realise that they could be considering alterations to the scheme. It would be extremely difficult for them to get away with anything, but they could try and change the scheme in relation to new entrants to the company. You may think that would not worry you but with fewer contributions coming in, the fund would be weakened’.
TRANSPORT IN LONDON

A vision for London’s transport system

TfL Board member TONY WEST, National Secretary, retired members section explains the function of the Board and recalls some of its recent successes.

I HAVE spent a good deal of my life working on the railways in London and for the last eight years I have also had the privilege of serving the city as a TfL Board member. The Mayor may have changed in that time but the daily challenges for Transport for London remain the same: transporting people around the city safely and reliably. There are well over 20,000 staff dedicated to making this happen across London Underground, London Overground, DLR, London Buses and in TfL Surface transport.

Each day over 10 million journeys are made by Tube and bus alone, 27 million when you include all road journeys. Last year the tube carried a record 1.1 billion passengers and over 2 billion journeys were made by bus, the highest number for forty years. TfL expects passenger numbers to keep growing next year and over the longer term as London’s population increases. By 2025 an extra 800,000 people will live in London and most of those will also work here.

So as well as providing world class transport services every day TfL must also deliver a huge investment programme to increase the capacity and reliability of the transport network and meet this ever growing demand. A £39 billion ten year settlement is in place with the government which will fund this crucial work.

Across the rail network this will deliver the continuing transformation of the Tube, the building of Crossrail and the extensions to the London Overground and DLR networks. There will also be further improvements to the bus network and major investment in schemes and infrastructure to get more people walking and cycling.

So what role does the Board of TfL play? The Mayor appoints the Board and its Chair. The Board members are chosen for their expertise but are also there to represent the views of Londoners. Together the members have experience of how transport impacts on the environment, finance, local government and the trade unions.

Our Job is ultimately to help the Mayor, the Transport Commissioner and his team at TfL, deliver the best possible transport services as well as the Mayor’s longer term vision for transport. It is the duty of the elected members of the greater London Assembly to formally scrutinise the Mayor and TfL.

The collective experience of the board members enables us to oversee the work of all areas of TfL including business planning and ensuring equality of opportunity for all employees on a day to day basis.

The Board usually meets once a month, in public, at City Hall. There are also separate committees which examine in detail everything from London Underground, London Overground and DLR, to Surface transport, Finance and Health and Safety. I have also sat on several of these committees.

I am proud to have been involved with some major achievements over the last 8 years including securing the funding for Crossrail, the introduction of the Overground, the expansion of the bus network and the introduction of the Oyster card. I believe that as the organisation grows it becomes much more representative of all Londoners. These and many other successes provide a firm foundation on which to build as we prepare for the 2012 Olympics and beyond.

Together we all have a vital role to play in ensuring transport continues to support London and the future success of the city.

Photos: Transport for London
GOVERNMENT PLANS DERAILED
Fears that an impending recession could drive down the number of rail passengers has prompted concern that the government might be forced to scale back plans to reduce the subsidies it currently pays to rail franchisees, according to the National Audit Office.

South West Trains, First Great Western and National Express East Coast had each promised to repay the government £1b throughout the lifetime of their franchises but predictions that by 2014 passenger fares will constitute 75 per-cent of revenue will need to be revised in the event of a lengthy recession. Earlier this month former Work and Pensions secretary Peter Hain called for the government to set aside a contingency fund which could be used to rescue insolvent rail companies.

Tim Burr, head of the NAO warned that increases in carrying capacity must be well managed if passengers are to expect less crowded trains and better value for above inflation fare increases.

HSA LAW STRENGTHENED
The Health and Safety Offences Act received Royal Assent last month, and will become law in the New Year. The Act raises maximum fines in the lower courts to £20,000 for most offences under the HSWA, makes a custodial sentence an option for most offences and means that cases can now be heard in the Crown Court as well as Magistrates Courts.

WHAT THE UNION WAS DOING
100 AND 50 YEARS AGO
‘Records from ASLEF’s archive show that the debate about paying the Political Levy is not new, and that rising unemployment figures have always been a good barometer with which to measure the health of the nation’

100 YEARS AGO
Letters page 536 from A.R.S.
Re THE NEED OF MORE LABOUR REPRESENTATION
Sir, - I think your correspondent ‘B.D’. is wrong when he says that the Labour party is not independent of either parties. It has been proved over and over again that they speak and vote for measures put forward by either party which they consider good from a Labour standpoint. The Labour members are composed of both Socialists and non-Socialists, and both work together for the good of Labour. They are very discreet as to spending the Parliamentary levy, as can be seen by refusing to run a candidate for Dundee or Newcastle against the wishes of some of the local unions, which they (the Labour Party Executive) considered would be a losing fight, and preferred to hold their funds for a more convenient opportunity. "B.D." says: “That the compulsory payment of the levy is to make all members Socialists.” What a ridiculous statement to make. He must be a new inhabitant of the planet. A man cannot be made a Socialist until he is intellectually and morally conscious of the evils of the existing system of society - wealth on one hand, poverty on the other. The Labour party recognize that their support comes from men of different shades of opinion and therefore, cannot be a Socialist body more than any other. They represent Labour only. They do not fight for the direct Socialist policy – of abolition of poverty, of the right to work or to live.”

50 YEARS AGO
p.377 Organising Secretaries’ Reports – P. McCubbin – District No.1
“Unemployment figures continue to rise, and as these are largely a barometer indicating the position of the country as a whole, we must all be seriously concerned at the trend. Two important political conferences have been held, but one cannot see any suggested policy developing which is likely to help the existing serious situation. Rather there appears to be the view that the present situation is a transitional one, and that a general improvement can be anticipated in a few months’ time. I only hope such optimism is justified.

‘Just as unemployment figures indicate the industrial health of the country, so does the flow, or perhaps I should say, the lack of flow, of traffic on the railways confirm that the situation is far from a healthy one. It is quite evident that there is a steep reduction in the amount of traffic being moved by the railways, and this setback, coming as it does during the development of the Modernisation Plan, creates cause for much concern. One can certainly appreciate to the full the wisdom of our negotiators in securing, by agreement, protection for the staff who may become redundant.”

Extracts selected and edited by Jane Pimlott
It is something approaching a miracle that the Journal spoke to Iain Black last month. According to all the odds, he should be wearing a white gown, practicing the harp and getting used to his new wings. Eighteen months ago the Virgin Pendolino train he was driving derailed at Grayrigg in Cumbria at 95 mph. Iain Black, who’s now 48, is the only train driver to have survived such a high-speed accident. Last month this remarkably pleasant, sociable and optimistic man talked to the Journal about his experiences since that grim day in February 2007. Chris Proctor reports …

AGAINST ALL THE ODDS:
IAN BLACK’S BACK AT WORK

IT’S A surprise to meet Ian Black. Somewhat I’d expected a rather reduced and retiring figure. Instead I was greeted with a firm handshake and the broad smile of an affable, happy-go-lucky Scot. Inevitably the first thing I asked Iain was how the crash had affected his life.

‘A different person?’ he repeats with some surprise. ‘No. I’m just the same person. I enjoyed life before and I enjoy it now. I’m not bitter if that’s what you mean.

‘I had a very bad day at the office 18 months ago, but I’m still the same person. Physically I can’t move my neck too well. I suppose it’s confirmed my belief that you can’t plan your life too much. – but that’s about it.’

It is an astonishing beginning. And it gets more remarkable as he continues. For a start, as he speaks about the Grayrigg crash he seems to have more sympathy for his partner Jan than for himself.

‘I suppose I do re-live it. It’s obviously not something I’m going to forget. But I don’t do it in a negative way. In fact, I’ve got a picture of the crash framed on the wall at home. It doesn’t worry me. Literally, I don’t lose any sleep over it.’

So what does he remember of that fateful night?

‘It was my first day back at work after Jan and I’d been in Spain on holiday. At eight at night in February it was pitch black and raining. When the train derailed I crashed into the roof of the cab and had no idea where I was. It was so dark I thought I was maybe at home in bed - but something in my head was saying ‘Stop the other trains, stop the other trains.’ It’s how train drivers are taught to think.

‘I couldn’t find the emergency communication equipment in the cab, but I found my own mobile phone. I rang Jan and asked her to contact control and stop the other trains. Fortunately she works for Virgin as well, so she knew what to do.

‘When I came to I was squashed into the nose of the engine, facing back into the cab. The second time I regained consciousness, although I didn’t know it, I was in a field. The pain was terrible. Blood was dripping down my body from my head. I knew my neck was broken.

In fact, apart from other injuries, Iain had broken a number of bones in his neck including the C2. 95% of people who break that die on the spot.

‘Jan kept talking to me for two hours, while she put on the hands-free and drove from our home outside Glasgow to the crash scene. It was a huge strain for her, but it kept me conscious while I was trapped. She was a real hero.’

Eventually the emergency services arrived and Iain was strapped to a stretcher and lifted off to the Royal Preston Hospital by helicopter. During his three-and-a-half weeks in hospital he was fitted with a ‘halo’, a brace designed to ensure his neck and body stayed completely rigid. To do this, four screws had to be drilled into his skull. He wore it for five months.

‘It’s incredible how things can become ‘normal’. Jan had to clean the pin sites and tighten the bolts every couple of weeks. Ian’s face broke into a smile. (Mine whitened). ‘You just adapt. It became ‘normal’ to sleep two hours a night and doze in the day. And as Preston is a teaching hospital it became normal to have a room full of students in the ward every time my ‘halo’ was adjusted.

‘But it’s all a lot better than being dead!’

It is typical of the man that he wants to talk about the ‘wonderful’ people around him. ‘I have to say Virgin were brilliant. They couldn’t have done more. Richard Branson came to the hospital to see me, and I even spent a couple of hours with his mum and dad, who were really good people. He’s a really genuine bloke. He’s rung my 15-year-old daughter Alex a few times to see how she’s getting on. That’s pretty impressive, isn’t it?’

‘Then there were my workmates, who acted exactly as you’d expect from train drivers.
They started the banter the minute they saw me! I was given a mirror from a budgie cage so I could look behind me! It’s the way train drivers show their sympathy – they laugh at you! I have to say every one of the people at my depot was brilliant. The bond between train drivers is amazing, and I’m really grateful for it.

‘And of course there was the union. I’d never stood for any position in ASLEF and didn’t get to every meeting, but I’ve always been in a union. Eighteen months ago I found out how important it can be. They moved into action like a smoothly oiled machine. Of the officers, Colin Smith has become a close mate, Kevin Lindsay was always there for me and even the general secretary turned up at my bedside. They arranged everything, including a really impressive legal team from Thompsons. I couldn’t have asked for more.’

‘Iain’s been back at work for a month now, helping out around the depot. He’d like to think he’ll drive again one day, but he knows it won’t be soon. The restrictions on his neck movement means he can no longer drive a car. He says train driving is ‘a great job’.

The railways are in Iain’s blood. His mother’s family, men and women all worked on the rail, and Iain’s first job, back in 1979, was with the British Transport police. He went from there to signalling and then to the station before qualifying for driving in 2000. Little did he think then that he would be involved in something like Grayrigg.

‘Mind you, it has taken me to places I could never have imagined. I met Sir Alex Ferguson and Alec McLeish at an event organised by the Sunday Mirror. Fergie was great – I couldn’t shut him up when he found out I’m from Dumbarton, where he has family! I told him about how encouraging the people of my home town were after the accident – how they honked their horns and shouted ‘Go on yourself!’ over the road to me! And the BBC did a programme about the crash.’

It was during the making of that report that he was able to thank Graham, the paramedic who was first to attend to him after the crash, and Sean the fireman. Iain says that if they’d made a mistake at that time, he would have been paralysed for life. By a strange coincidence a few months later Iain and Jan were on holiday in a small Spanish village called La Cala and who did they discover on the next table? Yes – Graham the paramedic! It’s another friend thrown up by fate – and recently Iain was able to make a presentation to Graham at an ambulance awards dinner.

It is an astonishing story, and Iain is a remarkable man. Before I went to meet him, Colin Smith told me, ‘Iain is phenomenal. He’s one of those people who you meet and you go away feeling better about the world.’

How right he was.
MEDALLIONS FOR SELHURST PAIR

THE Selhurst branch recently hosted an event to present two of its members – George Moore and John Kinnest - with the union’s coveted 50 year medallions.

George, who was born in 1936, started his railway career in 1952 as an engine cleaner at Farnley Junction, becoming a passed cleaner the following year. Two years later he left to do his National Service in Kenya until 1956.

He returned to Farnley Junction as a cleaner before he was promoted to Fireman at Low Moor, Bradford in 1960.

In 1962 he was transferred to York where he saw the last of the steam trains in passenger service and became a second man on the diesel. In 1967 he became a passed second man and early the next year he transferred to Wembley as passed senior second man.

In September 1969 he transferred to Selhurst as a driver.

He stayed at Selhurst for the next 28 years (brave man!) before retiring early due to ill health. George reached his 50 years as a member of ASLEF back in 2002.

John started his railway career in 1950 aged 15 as an engine cleaner. He spent a year cleaning before becoming a passed cleaner taking on firing duties on steam engines. In 1958 he passed out for driving at Redhill - but it wasn’t until October 1961 that he was appointed to the driving link.

In May 1984 he transferred to Victoria where he stayed until 1987 when ill health brought him to Selhurst to work in the Shunt Link until he retired in 1999.

Like George, John’s 50 year medallion was long overdue and well earned!

Selhurst Branch members were pleased to be able to help celebrate and recognise over 100 years of Aslef membership.

Andrew Cook Secretary – Selhurst Branch

50 YEARS FOR BRIAN - THE LANCASHIRE KENTMAN!

BRIAN MARSDEN came to the union’s head office last month to collect his 50 year badge. Brian began his railway career as a cleaner on 21 April 1957. His father worked in the rail industry for a mere 47 years – so Brian beat the family record! His dad was a wheel tapper, which is not a job you find people doing these days! These people literally tapped loco wheels and listened to assess if they were defective.

Brian went on loan to Saltley in the ’60s. ‘In those days the ASLEF Journal used to give a list of locations where there were shortages. I moved to Saltley because they were short of firemen, and it gave me an opportunity to get some turns in. I was 18 then, so I didn’t mind the rather unluxurious accommodation we were given in Nissan huts!’

After Saltley he moved on to Newton Heath as a passed fireman which involved both firing and driving. ‘I moved to Gillingham on Valentine’s Day in 1972 to take up a driving job. That’s where I met my wife Linda.’ That’s where he’s remained ever since, so that he’s now lived longer in Kent than Lancashire.

Brian says he loved life on the rail. ‘I really miss my mates and especially the special banter we had,’ he says. He says his best times were when he was working steam ‘because you knew you were going to get there!’. He says the old locos were a lot more reliable than diesels which were ‘always breaking down’.

Brian is still active in the union’s retired members’ section and regularly attends their functions.

YORK DRIVERS CELEBRATE 170 YEARS SERVICE!

A RETIREMENT function was held at the York Railway Institute on 29 August to mark the recent retirement of Northern Rail Drivers John O’Connor, Eddie Sibley and Chris Clements and TransPennine’s Iain Beck.

The function was very well attended by friends and colleagues, both past and present, and retirement certificates - along with a collection made at the depot - were presented by district organisers Nick Whitehead (District 4) and Colin Smith (District 3) to the retiring members.

Many thanks go to both the District Organisers for their attendance at this event - and York Branch would like to wish all 4 drivers best wishes for a long, healthy, happy and successful retirement.

GEOFF AKERMAN – Chairman - York Branch
OBITUARIES

CHARLIE THREADGOLD
Charlie Threadgold spent his entire working life at the Frodingham depot. A popular, humorous man, no day in Charlie’s company was ever dull. After sharing a laugh with colleagues on-duty he would always finish off with a trademark, ‘boom-boom’ Basil Brush impression. Charlie would while away off-duty moments in the mess room entertaining his mates with performances on his mouth organ. Another character that will be sadly missed.

D A Doherty
Immingham Branch Reporter

FRED WELSH AND PETE LYNE
Two brothers who came to Immingham depot after the closure of Grimsby in the mid 80’s, who for many years drove railcars between Cleethorpes, Sheffield, and Newark. Although not regular faces at branch meetings both men were popular, likeable men who will be sadly missed.

Both remembered by ..

D A Doherty
Immingham Branch Reporter

MANY MOURN KEN’S SAD PASSING
It is with regret I have to inform you of the death of my uncle, retired Euston and Willesden driver, Ken Humphrys. Ken began his railway career as a 14 old cleaner at Willesden Loco, July 17, 1939.

Promoted to fireman, and then driver at Willesden before moving to Euston in 1966 when Willesden Loco closed. At Euston Ken progressed through the links, his driving included the APT. Ken was a most respected, conscientious and careful driver, one of those who quietly and simply just got on with the job.

After his retirement Ken moved to Grantham where he enjoyed his family and his garden.

With his wife Janet, Ken remained in contact with his former colleagues, attending many social functions. The friendships he maintained were evidenced by the large number of retired drivers who attended his funeral to pay their respects.

Our thoughts are with Ken’s widow Janet, daughters Linda and Wendy and their families.

Mick Humphrys.
Driver Assessor, Euston

‘NO SOCKS’ PETER RIDEHOUGH
Former Biddington driver, Peter Ridehough has died at the age of 77. Pete began his career aged 14 in Bradford’s LNER, City Road goods station as a crane lad, transferring as soon as age allowed to the Loco’ department at Bowling, Bradford. His loco career took Peter to at least four other depots in the Bradford and Leeds area before he settled in Biddington in 1968.

Pete’s aversion to wearing socks, whether in plimsolls or hobnail boots he would remain sockless, together with the seat cushion he always sat on to ease the discomfort of the 14xx series DMU’s always marked him out. As did his kindness to the strangers whom he insisted spend one Christmas day with him and his wife Chris, after learning that they were temporarily housed in a caravan.

Lets hope that for Pete, always busy with woodwork, plumbing, gardening and DIY, his final ‘resting place’ is not too restful.

R Lingham
Retired York Branch

A HERO DEPARTED
With regret we hear of the passing of bro Roy Eccles, who has died unexpectedly aged 65.

Roy began his footplate career in Blackpool in 1962. With Roy, a Bolton lad, you got what you saw, and he always told it the way it was.

From Blackpool, Roy moved to Willesden Steam Shed and then to Broad Street before moving here to Euston.

Roy was a ‘drivers driver’. Always loyal to ASLEF, he had a fantastic sense of humour with a dry pragmatic smile.

His railway life would have mostly fulfilling if uneventful, were it not for one unusual incident.

On June 23, 1999 when working the first morning Scot from Euston, Roy smashed into the rear of a class 142 DMU that had spaded at Winsford in Cheshire. What Roy did next was highly unusual in the circumstances. After picking himself up off the cab floor which was seven feet in the air, checking the sunflower, (fellow drivers will know what I mean) he then carried out the provisions of the rule book to the letter.

Having protected his own train Roy then attended to the driver in the DMU and then his passengers.

For his actions on that day Roy was awarded Industry Railwayman of the year and was subsequently invited to Buckingham Palace for high tea.

From that moment on, following the media coverage Roy received he was affectionately known as ‘Hero’ among his mates at Euston.

The loves of his life, in strict order, were his family, Bolton Wanderers FC and this industry.

A shining example of ‘footplate professional best practice’ all his life, we share his family’s loss at this sad time.

Cliff Holloway
Branch Secretary, Euston

UNTIMELY LOSS AT TYNE YARD
Tyne Yard reports the death of driver David (Davey) Johnson, who has been killed in a Motoring accident, aged 41. The incident took place on the A1 while Davey was returning from work in the early hours.

Davey joined British Rail as a traction trainee at Newcastle in 1986, becoming a Driver’s Assistant in the same year. He was promoted to driver training in 1989 and appointed a driver at Tyne Yard in 1994 where he remained until his untimely death.

Well Liked, popular and willing to help anybody out, Davey possessed a cheerful laid-back disposition. He will be remembered for his sociability, and for enjoying ‘a pint and a fag’. As well as being a highly skilled professional, Davey enjoyed DIY and recently completed a course in tiling. Davey will be missed by his wife Linda, his friends, family and colleagues.

THE Motherwell and York branches recently visited head office, and we’d like to say thanks to all the staff for their warm welcome and detailed description about how each department works. We were grateful also to the General Secretary and the Executive Committee for their kind hospitality. A special ‘thank you’ to Dave Bennett for his most informative tour of the building.

Keep up the good work!

GEORGE ADAMSON - RMS - Motherwell Branch

November 2008
WE DON'T WANT A TORY GOVERNMENT

I read the lead article in the September Journal with interest. I have followed the debate regarding withdraw from the political fund for some time.

I have witnessed first-hand the apathy that exists among trade unionists regarding the Labour party and the Trades Councils.

During my time as Chairman of my local CLP during the 80’s and 90’s we had around 12-15 unions affiliated. Today we have fewer than ten.

I have been a delegate to Trades Councils for 45 years, having been made a life member on my retirement. Today I find myself at 80, the only member representing this organisation on any local bodies.

I serve on Local Planning, the Local Regeneration Scheme, Rural Transport and Health. I recently attended a seminar in Worcester held under the auspices of Liam Byrne, minister for the West midlands. Interested parties were invited to prioritise issues in their area. I listed: improvement to road and rail infrastructure, affordable housing, jobs; in particular high-tech jobs. Sadly I was the lone voice from west of Worcester, even though there are billions of pounds being pumped into regenerating the West Midlands over the next five years.

Even more disappointment followed when I attended Trade Council to report on this important debate, to find only the Chairman and the Secretary present. Sadly after more than 100 years of serving the community Hereford Trades Council is closing its doors due to lack of interest.

It was summed up for me by the Crewe and Nantwich by-election. A Conservative was interviewed on how the election was going. He replied: “Very well. What has heartened me today is the number of railway workers who have told me they want rid of this government and will be voting Conservative!”

All I can say to you brothers is: Good luck. You deserve a Conservative government!

JOHN G DAVIES
Hereford

PRAISE FOR THOMPSONS

I am writing to heartily recommend Thompsons the Solicitors. Last May I broke my ankle in a fall at work and I made a claim through my local ASLEF (East Ham) branch.

This was processed by our Health and Safety rep Mark McMullen who took my statement, photographed my injury and pushed through my claim.

In October I received my compensation.

I’d like to thank all at Thompsons for their efficient handling of the case.

B Gill.
Train Operator. Barking, District Line

FUNDS RAISED FOR ASTHMA

Please extend our gratitude to all the branches of ASLEF who have supported Chris Colley, Simon Ward and Mark Warwicj in their fundraising efforts for the London to Paris Cycle Challenge 2008. They have raised an amazing £4207. in sponsorship for Asthma UK this year and we are extremely proud of them!

The money raised by Challenge participants will help the 5.2m people with asthma, many of whom suffer with symptoms needlessly, to take control of their asthma. If you don’t have asthma, you will know somebody who does – and with your support we will understand more about the causes of asthma and free people with asthma from its effects.

Once again, many thanks for your generous support.

Anna Scalera, Events Officer.
Asthma UK

KEEP UP THE CAMPAIGNING

Sir, I would like to ask what progress has been made by some of ASLEF’s campaigns in recent years?

What has happened to the ‘Drive Down the Hours’ campaign? I cannot see that this campaign has achieved anything significant, as average turn lengths are still on the increase.

What has happened to the ‘Squash’ campaign? Members who are employed by freight TOC’s are still driving Class 66 locos with no air conditioning, very dangerous during the hot summer months. Members employed by passenger TOC’s are still working in filthy cab environments which are not cleaned or maintained properly on a regular basis, some examples include, defective door seals which create excessive cab noise, panels removed during maintenance and not replaced properly, air conditioning filters not changed at regular intervals.

Indeed the list is endless.

Does this mean that the ‘Free Travel for all Drivers’ campaign will be quietly dropped when a new subject comes up, for example the current electrification campaign? Why can't ASLEF actually pursue and get...
LETTERS to the EDITOR

something done about these important issues, rather than just publish articles and letters about them?  

Edward Pearce  
Marylebone

PAY DATES CAN BE INCONVENIENT

Dear Sir,

Here we are again fast approaching Christmas and I notice that yet again, we will get paid on December 5th and then on January 2nd. Is it not time that we changed from this 4 weekly pay cycle to a more constant date in the month – perhaps the 20th?

In this modern age where everything is done by direct debit, a constantly changing pay day makes it very difficult to arrange direct debits and leaves people exposed to lack of money and incurred bank charges.

If this isn’t possible, what was wrong with the weekly bank transfer we used to have under British Rail?

G Young  
Driver EWS. Warrington

SANCTION REST DAY WORKING

As a driver at Northern Rail (west) I would like to make a general enquiry to see if ASLEF is willing to sanction restday working at Northern Rail.

Drivers at Northern Rail have endured a turbulent 3 year period beginning with the 2 year failed harmonization process, no restday working since November of last year and most recently being 48 hours away from strike action.

While understanding the reason for the refusal by ASLEF to sanction restday working the fact that the company apparently has now conceded on almost all of the issues that led us to nearly being on strike a lot of drivers wish to see a period of stability brought back to Northern and if ASLEF is seen to be proactive in bringing this about it can only help to gain further credibility for ASLEF among the ranks of the membership.

Given the fact that ASLEF came under a lot of criticism throughout the harmonization process but has since redeemed itself in the most recent dispute, for ASLEF to be seen dragging its feet on issues such as restday working would be a step back.

I am aware that the company has to ask for restday working to be sanctioned but feel drivers at Northern have endured enough over the last 3 years, unless of course issues remain that dictate ASLEF cannot sanction restday working. If issues do remain then I urge ASLEF to inform the membership of what these issues are, however if ASLEF is in a position to sanction restday working, especially given the time of year, then I urge the union to do so.

Steve Hill, Driver  
Newton Heath Branch.  
Man. Victoria

The ASLEF website...

...all you need at the click of a button

add your views in the members only discussion forum

take part in the monthly poll

get up to date with the latest ASLEF news

find out the current elections taking place

read EC, district council and consultative committee minutes

view the up to date ASLEF rule book

learn about legal, financial and travel offers for members

CLASSIFIED ADVERTISEMENTS

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

PORT TALBOT CENTENARY  
The Port Talbot branch has struck a badge to celebrate its centenary year. A limited number are available for £5, which includes postage and packing. Contact Branch Secretary D. Curtis at 32 Greenwood Road, Baglan, Port Talbot SA12 8PR. Cheques should be made payable to ‘ASLEF Port Talbot Branch Centenary Acct’

LONGSIGHT BRANCH has produced a Commemorative Badge Limited to 500 Numbered Copies. They are available for £5.00 plus £1 p&p from the Branch Secretary Fred Clarke at 80 Brookfield Avenue, Poynton, Stockport, Cheshire, SK12 1JE. Please make cheques payable to F.Clarke.

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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

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

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33056/116 Class 303 Strathclyde & 33070/9. 33056/117 class 318 33056/118 class 318 33056/126 class 318 and 33070/12. 33056/130 & 131, 132, 133, 134 33070/16 class 319. Contact Lee 07919127972 or e-mail ld002d1042@blueyonder.co.uk

CLASSIFIED ADVERTISEMENTS
RAILWAY QUEENS OF PEACE

The name Ella Wooton may not be instantly recognisable but Ella, born on Armistice Day, holds a unique place in the history of Britain’s Railways. In 1925, to celebrate the Railway Centenary, Ella, the daughter of a carriage cleaner on the GWR, was crowned Britain’s inaugural Railway Queen. Her reign lasted for two years.

CROWNED by J H Hayes, first President of the Railway Employees Carnival, in the days when skirts hovered just above the ankle and the idea of a woman train driver was as far fetched as the idea that a female prime minister might one day privatise the railways, the competition to become Railway Queen was much more than a variation of the beauty contest theme.

It was, in fact, a remarkable institution. The task of the chosen young women was to act as an ‘Ambassadress of Peace’. Their objective was to ‘develop Industrial and International Goodwill’ and to foster the idea of World Disarmament. It was perhaps his influence that led to the succeeding Railway Queens, all of whom had to be daughters of currently working railwaymen and be aged between 12 and 16. The lower age limit was later raised to 14.

Choosing the winner of any contest like this is an inexact science and selecting the Railway Queen was no exception. A ‘Committee of Artists’ would announce a winner after endeavouring to judge her character from a photograph.

Ella was succeeded by Mabel Kitson, who, like Ella, looked much older than the permitted age limit in her official ‘coronation’ photograph. Mabel was the first Railway Queen to travel overseas on official railway business. In 1928 this daughter of a signalman with GWR caused a sensation during a trip to Paris, where she addressed a gathering of French railwaymen at the French Trade Union Offices. There she received the second link in the Peace Chain started by her predecessor. Mabel was received by the management and travelled as a guest of the Nord Railway.

INTERNATIONAL LINKS

In 1930 Molly Brown was presented with an altogether more daunting trip when she was tasked with addressing a mass meeting in Hamburg on the anniversary of the day Germany had declared war on England. Molly, whose father was a locomotive fitter on LMSR, returned to England on the anniversary of the day England had reciprocated by declaring war on Germany to be given a civic reception in her home town of Preston. In her pocket she carried a link for the ‘Peace’ Chain of Office.

Subsequent Queens travelled to Belgium, Ireland, Denmark, Norway the United States, even Lapland and all overseas tours followed a similar itinerary. After addressing fellow railway workers and trade union representatives, charming the management and presiding over a ceremonial dinner, the Railway Queen would receive a peace link before returning home, usually to an even grander reception on her homecoming.

CHAIN OF PEACE

Ella, from Kingswear in South Devon, used her reign to begin a Chain of International Peace. She obtained the first silver link from the children of the Liverpool N.U.R. Women’s Guild. The chain was subsequently lengthened by all the succeeding Railway Queens, all of whom had to be daughters of currently working railwaymen and be aged between 12 and 16. The lower age limit was later raised to 14.

While the competitiveness of the Railway Queen was the inevitable consequence of the Women’s Liberation movement, or whether women simply preferred to drive the train rather than decorate its footplate we may never know. Records relating to the Railway Employees Carnival, and the carnival queen are scarce, but according to a handwritten note held in the collection of the National Railway Museum, the honour of being Britain’s last Railway Queen belonged to Brenda Tomkinson, the 42nd queen, who was crowned in 1975.

Still here in the 70s

The competition to become the public face of the railways proved so popular that, despite a break and a slight change in role during the second world war - when it was considered too dangerous to send a civilian woman abroad - it ran until the mid 1970s, by which time it had long since become an annual event. Whether the demise of the Railway Queen was the inevitable consequence of the Women’s Liberation movement, or whether women simply preferred to drive the train rather than decorate its footplate we may never know.

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The pictures and background for this article were supplied by Stephen Ward, a nephew of the late Florence Hancock. Florence was Hon Sec of the Women’s ASLEF Society during the 1960s. A staunch Labour supporter, in the 1920s she organised Labour rallies in her home town of Gloucester. She worked with Ramsey McDonald on his visit to the city. Her husband, Alf Hancock, was a loco engineer who died in 1937 at a young age. Florence, who regularly attended ASLEF conferences, died in her 97th year in 1998.
Prize Crossword No. 31
set by TLC

ACROSS
1 Diesel multiple user trains – they don’t hang about! (9)
8 He may be a guard, a shunter or driver etc. (7,6)
11 Thoroughfare (4)
12 Person competing with another for position etc. (5)
13 — Madrid, football team (4)
16 They usually travel at reduced rates (7)
17 Famous London store (7)
18 Train terminus (7)
20 Fast warship (7)
21 Girl’s name in Russia for example (4)
22 Quick way of sending a message (1-4)
23 Single occurrence (4)
26 Illegal (7,3,3)
27 Place where outdoor clothes and bags can be left (5-4)

DOWN
1 Alert (7)
2 Take notes (7)
4 Argue (7)
5 Rocks (7)
6 Amour (7)
7 East wind (7)
10 London station (3,6)
14 Imitate in order to entertain (5)
15 Fresh water fish (5)
19 Summer bedding plant (7)
20 Town near Great Yarmouth (7)
24 Where the shopkeeper puts the takings (4)
25 Nought (4)

Solution to Crossword No 30 which appeared in the October edition of the ASLEF Journal. Congratulations to Mr W Jones from Birkenhead.

ACROSS 3 Carriage 8 Ulna 9 Kings Cross 10 Free 11 Nile 13 Screw 17 Euston 18 Gammon 19 Erase 22 Rear 24 Iris 25 Sunderland 26 Gust 27 Shelters DOWN 1 Alert 2 Take notes 4 Argue 5 Rocks 6 Amour 7 East wind 12 Line 14 Cambridge 15 Releases 16 Ogre 20 Annie 21 Elect 22 Ruler 23 First

Thanks for all your responses to the 30th ASLEF crossword in the October edition. If you complete this month’s crossword please send the solution to the Editor, ASLEF Journal, 9 Arkwright Road, London NW3 6AB by the 14th of the issue month.

NAME
ADDRESS
POSTCODE

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

Solution to Crossword No 30
ACROSS
3 Carriage
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10 Free
11 Nile
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17 Euston
18 Gammon
19 Erase
22 Rear
24 Iris
25 Sunderland
26 Gust
27 Shelters

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Name............................................................................
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