BRIDGING LONDON’S FUNDING GAP AND CROSSING SWORDS WITH NXEA - AS PHILOSOPHERS MET THEIR WATERLOO....
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British Rail used to come in for all kinds of criticism, some of it merited, some not. But whatever the occasional failings of the nationalised BR, there’s no doubt that the current privatised, franchised system is a first-class model for ‘How Not to Run a Railway’. Its failures and follies now seem to have seeped past the stations and footplates and depots to infiltrate the entire industry.

You want proof? Last month the union went along to an Occupational Health seminar provided by the Railway Safety and Standards Board (RSSB). It boasted the encouraging title ‘Sharing Best Practice’—undeniably a laudable aim in our modern transparent industry.

Pretty early on the agenda a senior RSSB manager hopped to his feet, an official spokesperson for this body which slaves to ‘work to achieve continuous improvement in the health and safety of the railway industry’. He was due to update us on a fundamentally important RSSB whose function was ‘collecting and analysing railway-related health data’. The spokesperson cleared his throat and made an announcement.

“We’ve stopped doing it,” he said.

I’d better repeat that. He said that the railway industry’s health and safety overseers are not going to collect or analyse health data.

You will not be surprised to hear that the union was bold enough to enquire the reason for this radical move. It appears that any RSSB research needs to be supported by a ‘stakeholder’. Which means, in effect, that the employers – the FOCs and TOCs – need to give their blessing. And they didn’t. So they nobbyed the research.

Why would they do this? Why would they not want to have a clear picture of current trends in occupational health?

Any ideas? Could I suggest shame, embarrassment—or even guilt?

Let’s have a look at what this means in practice.

Suppose a driver develops a shoulder injury. This will be treated as an individual case under the ‘Managing for Attendance’ procedure. But the problem may have been caused by an occupational health issue. Say, for example, that a company introduces new stock with a combined power/brake controller which is too stiff for some drivers and they end up with an RSI-type injury. Because each driver is treated as an individual, it is impossible to show a relationship between MFA non-attendance and the new stock.

The ‘bottom line’ for the employer is that it’s cheaper and easier to deal with individual cases than delving into the root cause of the problem.

If this was an isolated case, I would only be worried instead of astonished. But it’s not. A few days later we asked the Office of Rail Regulation for figures for Drugs and Alcohol failure rates. They didn’t know; hadn’t troubled themselves with it.

Working in this industry, I often think that anyone could be forgiven for taking to the bottle!

KEITH NORMAN
GENERAL SECRETARY
**NEWS**

**NETWORK RAIL – PAY AS YOU FAIL!**

ASLEF general secretary Keith Norman reacted angrily to last month’s news that senior Network Rail bosses are to be paid bonuses of over £1.2 million. Chief executive Ian Coucher pockets an ‘incentive payment’ of over £150,000 while Directors Peter Henderson and Ron Henderson each pick up more than £300,000.

Mr Coucher ploughs his money on the basis of Network Rail’s performance over the last three years.

‘The world’s gone mad,’ declared ASLEF general secretary Keith Norman. ‘It was only last month that Network Rail’s performance – especially over the West Coast main line – was being severely criticised by the rail regulator.

‘If any of our members’ performance sank to these levels, they’d be on a discipline – not a gravy train.’

The Office of Rail Regulation (ORR) had called the West Coast line’s recent performance as ‘volatile, and the problems are increasing’, despite last December’s £9bn upgrade project. It also pointed out that 20% of London-Glasgow trains ran late.

By way of an encore, Network Rail last year reduced its profits and increased its levels of debt. Pre-tax profit fell to £1.52bn from £1.59bn and debt rose from £19.7bn to £22.3bn.

‘These bonuses are an affront at a time when rail workers are facing threats of redundancy,’ said Keith Norman.

**SUCCESSFUL UNIONS’ EDUCATION PROJECT AT SCOTTISH PARLIAMENT**

Karen Whitefield MSP recently hosted a reception in the Scottish Parliament to celebrate the end of what will hopefully be the first stage of the Lowlands and Uplands Trade Union Education Project.

ASLEF, with Unite and Stow College, successfully bid for money from the European Social Fund to deliver a successful project. Although this funding has finished, all efforts will be made to ensure that new funding is found so that unions can continue to offer free courses to their members.

District Organiser Kevin Lindsay thanked ScotRail as well as Unite for helping to ensure that the project was a success. He explained that he was ‘immensely proud’ that by working together, the industry had managed to offer so many opportunities to working people on the railways.

Karen Whitefield expressed her determination that funding will be found to enable the project to continue.

**COMPASS CONFERENCE POINTS IN RIGHT DIRECTION**

More than 1,000 delegates attended the 2009 Compass conference at the Institute of Education in London on 13 June. The increasingly influential centre-left campaigning organisation hosted a range of speakers including trade union leaders, Jeremy Corbyn MP and the Green Party MEP Caroline Lucas.

ASLEF organised a fringe meeting at the event with the title ‘Cut Carbon Emissions not Rail Safety’ which was chaired by EC member Dave Calle with speakers Kelvin Hopkins MP, Richard Hebditch from the Campaign for Better Transport and union vice-President Tosh McDonald.

Members of ASLEF demonstrating in London on 26 June against the denial of democratic rights in Iran were only one part of a series of co-ordinated global protests outside Iranian embassies in Ankara, Bangkok, Brussels, Canberra, Geneva, Jakarta, New Delhi, Madrid, Oslo, Rome, The Hague, Tokyo, Toronto and Wellington.

David Cockroft, the General Secretary of the International Transport Federation, to which ASLEF is affiliated, said, ‘This gave us the chance to show the Iranian government how discredited it has become and how the whole world feels about the repression and violence it created after the recent dubious elections.

‘We hope this worldwide clamour for reform will force the regime to listen and understand that the time for change has come.’

**ASLEF JOINS IRAN PROTESTS**

ASLEF’s Tam McAllen tries out the First Minister’s seat in the futuristic Scottish Parliament building

The Compass top table of Tosh McDonald and Dave Calfe from ASLEF, Richard Hebditch from the Campaign for Better Transport and Kelvin Hopkins MP

David Cockroft, ITF General Secretary and Kate Allen, Director of Amnesty International UK, joined the protests
August 2009

The ASLEF Journal

IF YOU LIVE NEAR LONDON, IT’S OK TO STAND ON THE TRAIN

KEITH LUDEMAN, the chief executive of Go-Ahead which includes Southern, Southeastern and London Midland said in an interview with the Financial Times last month that rail passengers shouldn’t expect a seat in the London area. Rail union leader Keith Ludeman said namesake’s remarks ‘show a remarkably relaxed attitude towards his passengers’ discomfort’.

‘I would have expected the head of a rail franchise to want to offer commuters better than the facilities of a cattle-truck,’ Keith says. ‘Perhaps I just haven’t been won over to the idea of a railway where profits are more important than people. In an interview with the Financial Times this week, Mr Ludeman said, ‘It’s not unreasonable to expect someone to stand’ adding, ‘If you’re coming up from the coast you might expect to get a seat but your chances are reduced closer to London.’ This is undeniably true at the moment – but ASLEF thought Mr Ludeman was supposed to be making attempts to remedy this. ‘His company’s franchise bid included the need to improve capacity standards,’ Keith Norman says. ‘We have been talking to them about longer and more frequent services. I would have hoped that the chief executive of the umbrella group would have shown some enthusiasm for this process.’

Go Ahead announced a rise in revenue of almost 8% in the year ending this month – something it put down to increased passenger numbers. A study last year revealed that Britain has the most expensive commuter system network in Europe.

COMPANY NEWS

REST DAY WORKING

ASLEF is prepared to sanction Rest Day Working in
First Capital Connect until 26 September
London Midland until 26 September
Freightliner Intermodal until 26 September
Northern Rail until 29 August

INDUSTRIAL ACTION

NX EAST ANGLIA

Our Driver Grade members employed by NX East Anglia will be withdrawing their labour on 30/31 July, 6/7 August, 13/14 August and 20/21 August with further dates to be advised.

NORTHERN RAIL (WEST)

Our Driver Grade members employed by Northern Rail (West) will be withdrawing their labour on 6 August with further dates to be advised.

EAST MIDLANDS TRAINS

Our Driver Grade members employed by East Midlands Trains will be withdrawing their labour on 24 July, 27 July, 31 July, 3 August, 7 August and 10 August with further dates to be advised.

NETWORK RAIL FINED £70K FOR DERAILMENT

Network Rail has been fined £70,000 after a train travelling at 90mph derailed in Norfolk because of a poorly maintained level crossing.

Network Rail admitted failing to ensure the health and safety of passengers, road workers and train crew at a hearing at Norwich Crown Court.

The crash took place on 12 September 2006 at Croxtton level crossing, near Thetford. Fortunately, no one was killed or seriously injured in the crash.

INTERNATIONAL BRIGADE REMEMBERED

Marz Colombini from the EC, along with members of his Waterloo and Nine Elms branch including Charley Martin and Steve Richardson (pictured), took the branch banner to the Spanish Civil War’s International Brigade Memorial service in London last month.

‘It is always a moving occasion and does put the ‘sacrifices’ we make for trade unionism into context,’ Marz says. ‘It was even more poignant this year as we recalled the life of Jack Jones, and as we see the last of these great heroes slip away.’

VOTE SHOWS NXEA MANAGERS NEED TO CHANGE ATTITUDE

ASLEF members have voted by a margin of 95.5% to 4.5% to take industrial action in National Express East Anglia (NXEA). Keith Norman says that the ballot shows ‘a massive vote of no confidence’ in managers in the company.

‘They are clearly out of touch with their employees and need to begin treating our members with dignity and respect rather than arrogance and severity,’ he said. ‘The particular issue that led to this crisis was a vote on pay. But the massive ‘yes’ vote indicates difficulties that are far deeper rooted.

Meanwhile Andy Morrison, the lead ASLEF officer in talks with the company, says he is ‘negotiating in the dark’.

‘The company refuses to present us with a clear picture of their finances. In its report to shareholders, it says it will remain profitable – in its talks with us, it says it will not.

The Chief Executive Richard Bowker told shareholders the company had achieved 5% growth and the company would remain profitable with revenue support. In meetings with us, this is all denied in favour of a picture of doom and gloom. So which is true? Is it impossible for us to have a rational discussion on this basis,’ Andy says.

The first strike day is due to be 30 July. ‘The union is always prepared to meet the company on behalf of our 800 members – but it will require a very different attitude if any progress is to be made,’ Andy adds.

INTERNSHIP SPOTLIGHT

ASLEF activists took to the streets of London to register their support for the Pride March.

Photo: Steve Sutton

ASLEF - AND MRS BROWN - BACK LONDON PRIDE!

ASLEF activists joined thousands of people opposing discrimination and backing Gay Pride at last month’s London march – including Sarah Brown, the Prime Minister’s wife who was pictured carrying a red, white and pink version of the Union Jack. Next month we will report on the TUC’s LGBT conference.

ASLEF’s Waterloo Nine Elms branch banner in the shadow of the London Eye at the memorial event. Credit Phil McElhinney

ASLEF activist took to the streets of London to register their support for the Pride March. Photo: Steve Sutton

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NEW FEATURE
YOUCAN NOW LEAVE YOUR COMMENTS ON ASLEF NEWS ARTICLES!
NATIONAL EXPRESS gave up its franchise on the East Coast main line last month and handed the keys back to the government – proving, according to ASLEF general secretary Keith Norman, that the rail franchise system is now thoroughly discredited.

‘Franchising is a pantomime that has moved from farce to folly,’ he declared. ‘A handful of investors benefit and everyone else loses. ‘Today’s events proved the folly of a system where the businessman can’t lose. If business does well, they pocket vast profits. If it goes badly, they throw back the keys and walk away. Meanwhile the public stands, watches, waits – and pays.’

Keith points out that only last week the new rail minister Lord Adonis spoke about the need to plan rail 20 or 30 years in advance. ‘He was quite right – but it can’t be done within a system operated by short-term franchises and motivated only by profit. The planning needs to be dispassionate and designed to provide a public service – which means it must be in public hands.’

Keith was adamant that the union does not justify its position merely by mouthing political slogans. ‘It is quite obvious to any objective observer that this is a flawed business model that needs to be replaced by taking franchises back into public hands.

‘It’s Labour party policy - and a potential vote-winner for the government. National Express should be the first of many.’

FIRST MEETING WITH LORD TRANSPORT

General Secretary Keith Norman led an ASLEF delegation to meet Lord Adonis last month after Andrew’s elevation to Secretary of State for Transport. We raised with the minister some of the more pressing issues facing the union.

EAST COAST
The union welcomed the swift action to take back the franchise and Keith reiterated our view this should be a permanent rather than temporary measure. While Adonis was not convinced, he invited the union to submit its views on how franchises can be better specified.

TRACK MAINTENANCE
We welcomed Network Rail’s attempts to improve its methods of track maintenance and renewals by using high level output equipment and pre-assembled modular sets of points. Despite the minister’s assurances about the phasing of renewal works, Keith repeated our concern that work slated for the first part of the period will have to compete for resources at the same time as work projected for the second part.

Specifically we pointed out that freight companies would be unwilling to sustain unproductive drivers in the short term - and could well face a shortfall of train drivers when commercial traffic increases and planned renewals and additional work get underway.

We also said that there will inevitably be increased disruption – involving speed restrictions - in the latter part of the control period as planned renewals are condensed into a much tighter time frame.

RAIL FREIGHT
Andrew reiterated his commitment to rail freight and the union drew his attention to the detrimental impact of both a sharp decline in commercial traffic and the reduction of core infrastructure work. Keith also stressed the amount of work freight firms get from Network Rail (20% of DB Schenker’s turnover for example) arguing that these firms need the work now to weather the recession.

Lord Adonis said he would do what he could to assist in mitigating rail freight driver losses should that be necessary. We pointed out the union’s activity in alleviating the impact of 160 train driver redundancies at DB Schenker and outlined our apprehensions about drivers leaving freight for passenger rail.

LIGHT DUES AND RAIL FREIGHT
We took the opportunity to outline our concerns about the negative impact that increases in light dues and changes to liabilities for business rates in UK ports have on rail freight. Lord Adonis undertook to look into the matter.

STAFF TRAVEL FACILITIES
We raised with the minister the unsatisfactory issue of staff travel facilities and the anomalous situation whereby an employee who entered railway employment before 1 April 1996 is deemed to be ‘safeguarded’ for travel across the entire UK rail network for themselves and their families while drivers who started after 31 March 1996 are only eligible for travel on the basis of the train operating company for whom they work. Again, Andrew undertook to examine what had happened in the past and come back to us.

OLYMPIC PARK
The minister also undertook to investigate levels of rail freight traffic into the Olympic Park, which we argue are less than were promised.

‘It was a useful meeting and at the very least Lord Adonis brings an open mind to discussions,’ says Keith Norman. ‘He clearly has an enthusiasm for rail electrification, he accepts that we lag well behind Europe in high-speed lines and we welcomed a recent statement from him that improved transport is essential for ‘national prosperity and personal fulfilment’.

‘Meanwhile we reserve the right to disagree fundamentally with Andrew about whether the long-term success of rail can be delivered with a free-market ethos rather than a public service outlook.’

The whole text of Lord Adonis’s first major speech about his view of rail since taking over as Minister of State can be found at www.eegovmonitor.com/node/25871
HSE DEVELOPS LISTENING PROBLEMS

says Vicky Phillips, the union’s legal advisor from Thompsons Solicitors

The Health and Safety Executive may have handed over responsibility for health and safety policy and enforcement on the railways to the Office of Rail Regulation, but the HSE remains the key architect and regulator of workplace health and safety in the UK. And it continues to have an influence on health and safety on the railways, particularly around slipping and tripping accidents, and back conditions. Further, the current TUC campaign on workplace temperatures has resulted in a review by the HSE. The review will consider the reasons for and against a maximum workplace temperature.

The HSE recently invited the readers of national newspapers, through full page adverts, to ‘Be part of the solution’. Thompsons tried to be when we responded to the HSE’s future strategy consultation earlier this year. It is the outcome of that consultation that the adverts, and a subsequent document received in the post, are proclaiming.

But where are our opinions, and the opinions of the unions, reflected in the finalised strategy document? They don’t seem to be there at all.

DRAFTS BLOWN OUT

Thompson’s and a number of trade union representatives attended the HSE’s regional workshops on the draft strategy. We all tried to raise the key issues which were omitted from the document. But the opportunities to do so were limited.

We asked the HSE if we could discuss our concerns with them directly – being part of the solution. The offer wasn’t taken up.

There have been some small tweaks that indicate our submission to the consultation may at least have been read. One strategy ‘goal’ in the consultation was ‘to continue investigating work related accidents and ill health…’.

The fact is that the HSE exists to ‘continue investigating’ – and would be failing in its statutory duty if it didn’t! ‘Continue’ has now been removed: point taken, perhaps.

But most of the other goals remain so general as to hardly add up to a strategic vision.

ALL RATHER WOOLY

The strategy document still lacks concrete proposals as to how they will be achieved. We still fail to see how the HSE can use the goals to drive any significant and measurable improvement in workplace health and safety.

We told the HSE that it was totally inappropriate for them to suggest that complying with health and safety may be a ‘burden’. But it has persisted in using the statement that ‘regulation must be a benefit to those it seeks to protect, not a disproportionate burden on those who have to comply with it.’

This is the language of employers, the insurance industry and politicians who support de-regulation of laws that protect workers from business excesses. If, at its extreme, the risk is death then there cannot be any regulation that is ‘disproportionate’ let alone a ‘burden’.

HOLDING EMPLOYERS TO ACCOUNT

One of the HSE’s stated objectives is ‘to ensure that those who fail in their health and safety duties are held to account’. There has been a beefing up of the HSE’s position on board-level responsibility for health and safety. There is much reference to people at board level being held accountable for the delivery of health and safety and even a commitment to ensuring those that fail in their responsibilities are held to account for their actions.

This is all very welcome, but is it code for the HSE now supporting director duties for health and safety? If it is, then why not expressly say it?

There has been some strengthening of the HSE position on enforcement and the importance of prevention has been emphasised. This again is welcome. No one will be ‘held to account’ until after the event – after a death – unless there is indeed effective enforcement.

But neither can accidents be prevented without effective inspections. How the HSE intends to ensure this remains unclear. It has not answered our concern that the vast majority of reportable accidents are not investigated and that the number that are is falling. No information has been given about the rate at which the HSE is recruiting inspectors and how it intends to increase inspections.

WARM WORDS ARE COLD COMFORT

At a time when employers continue to pay lip service to health and safety and, when the recession may mean that they do so more often, the HSE strategy is, in our view, well meaning, warm words but inadequate.

We’d love to be part of the solution and we have certainly tried to be. But the strategy does not go nearly far enough in acknowledging the need for a change in culture. Health and safety law needs to be treated as seriously as criminal law by employers and enforcers.

The Office of Rail Regulation has just published its own health and safety strategy document. It is to be hoped that the ORR is capable of listening to the trade unions in a way that the HSE clearly is not.

LOOPHOLE FOR STRIKE-BREAKERS

Businesses are exploiting a loophole in the law banning the supply of strike-breakers by employment agencies.

Thompson’s Solicitors are urging the government to make it crystal clear that under Regulation 7 of the Conduct of Employment Agencies and Employment Businesses Regulations 2003, agency staff supplied for other purposes should not be used to perform the duties of strikers.

The firm used the Freedom of Information Act to discover that there have been no prosecutions under regulation 7 since the legislation came into force in April 2004.

The offer wasn’t taken up.
WORKING in the industry as they do, ASLEF members will have a good idea that the sky-high salaries of senior rail managers are in no small part derived from the public subsidies these companies receive.

Members wouldn’t be wrong to conclude that the public is, in effect, providing money to pay for these salaries. In this situation, and because ASLEF members are ‘reasonably’ well-paid professional workers, the only example of state intervention on salaries – through the minimum wage - is pretty much an irrelevance to the regulation of the railways.

Minimum wages create a floor for employers to act off. This means that employers set their lowest pay rates to reflect the law and receive no encouragement or compulsion to pay any more than that for others.

Moreover, when minimum wages exist, they do not end or interfere with the vast dispersion of wages that exists above them.

When one also considers that where collective bargaining does take place in the rail industry, this is over the terms and conditions of various groups of workers (or lower level managers through the TSSA), the wages and conditions of senior management are left to be decided by ... you guessed it ...

senior management themselves.

All this makes a compelling argument for a maximum wage.

NO ONE IS WORTH 50 TIMES YOUR WAGE A maximum wage is based on the idea that no matter what job a person does and no matter how many hours a person works, there is no way possible that any skill, expertise, intelligence or experience they have can honestly justify the payment of 10, 20, 30 or even 50 times the wages of the average paid worker in the organisation at hand. The only way that senior managers’ astronomical salaries can be explained is that those who receive them are part of a small group that benefits from underpaying the rest of the people – the vast majority – that work in that organisation. This means that wage inequality has to be tackled not just from the bottom – through minimum wages – but also from the other end, through maximum wages. So a maximum wage would enforce that the highest wage in a company could not be, say, any more than four or five times higher than the average wage. But if it was just maximum wages, we’d soon find management getting round this by paying perks and benefits to themselves that were not just salary or wages but took the form of bonuses, share options schemes and enhanced pensions. So the principle of maximum wages would need to be applied to all forms of remuneration.

IT’S NOT DOWN TO JEALOUSY Let it not be said that it is only workers’ envy of management salaries and workers’ own greed that lends itself to support for a maximum wage. There are a number of obvious benefits. First, a more solidaristic, cooperative and cohesive environment at work where all people’s contributions are more fairly rewarded. Second, an incentive to management that if they want to raise their own wages then this means raising the wages of all their workers. Third, a previously unforeseen level of transparency and openness about senior managers’ remuneration. Fourth, a step towards some elementary redistribution of wealth in our society.

How could such a wage system come into being?
The obvious way, like with the minimum wage, is through law and supported by union action to ensure enforcement. If we think back to how the minimum wage came about, it was through years of campaigning by unions and then electing to government a party that adopted this policy. The same would be true for a maximum wage.
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- Optional breakdown cover.
- Optional breakdown cover.
- Optional breakdown cover.

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- Best parked.
- Optional breakdown cover.
- Optional breakdown cover.
- Optional breakdown cover.
- Optional breakdown cover.

UK Holiday Home

- Best parked.
- Optional breakdown cover.
- Optional breakdown cover.
- Optional breakdown cover.
- Optional breakdown cover.
WELCOME TO THE CITY!

This is the second Journal to focus on rail in London, and the first since Ken Livingstone was beaten by Boris Johnson to the position of the capital’s mayor. Ken spoke to our conference this year and although when he was in office we inevitably clashed from time to time, no one could ever doubt Ken’s utter commitment to providing Londoners with a regular, reliable and affordable public transport system. It was a mission for Ken that started in the 80s during his time at the Greater London Council, which Thatcher later abolished, and continued unabated throughout his period as mayor.

When you look back at his record from the Fare’s Fair campaign to the congestion charge, you can only admire his single-mindedness. It is a remarkable contrast with Boris, who seems concerned only with updated Routemaster buses and outdated no-strike deals.

Public transport in London has a vital role for all those who live and work here; and a central role in the development of the country as a whole. ASLEF, and especially capital EC member Terry Wilkinson and District Organiser Steve Grant, will do all in its power to develop and improve on the standards that are Ken Livingstone’s legacy.

Keith Norman – General Secretary

SOME FACTS ABOUT LONDON’S RAILS

- 70% of all rail journeys begin and end in London
- Approximately 40% of commuters use rail or the underground as their main form of transport to work.
- The total number of mainline rail passenger journeys to/from/within London has gone up by 69.1% since 1995-96.
- Road congestion is claimed to cost businesses £17 billion per annum.
- Crossrail is the largest civil engineering project in Europe, will generate an estimated £37 - £68 billion (present value) to the UK economy over 60 years, provide £14.8 billion in tax revenue and should add 5,000 Central London area jobs by 2016 and 33,000 by 2026.
- The Cross River Tram is one of the large projects to enhance the capital’s transport system that has been scrapped by Boris Johnson.

‘PLANNED NEGLECT’ NO SOLUTION FOR LONDON FUNDING

A report issued last month by the London Assembly’s Budget and Performance Committee warns that the capital’s transport network could face a funding gap of £1.7 billion. ASLEF’s Keith Norman said that while the report makes depressing reading, ‘planned neglect’ of the system is not an option. ‘Such action would combine economic madness and social lunacy,’ he says.

“There must be no short-term knee-jerk reaction to bad news,” he said. “We are talking about the life-blood of a major city, not the accounts of a Grantham grocer. Clearly public money – our money – is needed to subsidise the network. Public transport dogma cannot apply to the capital city’s public transport.

“We need affordable, accessible and reliable transport in our capital because the alternative is inevitable economic and social decline. It would be planning for a Third World city.’

Keith says that ‘What can we find to cut?’ shows a defeatist and hang-dog attitude. ‘What are we prepared to invest in?’ is, he says, much more pertinent.

“We need to show confidence in our city. We should be getting ready for future growth by improving our transport links - and thereby creating jobs and wealth for Londoners.

“There is a clear divide between the merchants of doom who see no future for the city, and the progressive optimists who see this as a challenge to equip our capital for the growth years to come.

‘If we can find funding to rescue investors in the money-market, we can surely find it for Londoners going about their business.’

The London Assembly blames the recession for the scale of the funding gap. It says that the fall in passenger numbers this year alone will cost the service £112 million even without a freeze on fares in line with the agreed formula. Depending on the length of the recession and the speed of recovery, the Committee estimates the loss of income could spiral to £1.7 billion by 2018.

The Budget and Performance Committee suggest solutions could include

- increasing fares much higher than inflation
- reducing services
- halting planned improvements and expansions
- finding greater efficiency savings - in addition to the £2.5 billion already required in the business plan

It calls for Londoners to be consulted about fares decision, as happens in Paris and New York.

The chair of the Committee, John Biggs AM, said, ‘Finding ways to plug the gap that do not impact on services or place a large financial burden on fare payers will be difficult.’

Keith Norman agrees that there are no easy answers: but, he says, the old formula of cut, cut and cut again, is ‘the thinking of a bygone age’.

“We must plan for the next expansion, not the last recession,” he argues.
FOCUS ON LONDON

WHAT DO LONDON ASSEMBLY MEMBERS DO (FOR US)?

That’s the question we posed to John Biggs, Assembly Member for City and East London. John was happy to explain his role, and to offer some views on future transport in the capital …

MY role as a member of the London Assembly is to do two things. First, to speak up for my constituents – 650,000 people in the East End - and make sure their voice is heard. The East End has changed greatly in my lifetime but still is home to the largest concentration of poverty in the UK and it needs a strong voice. This is particularly true because you find that loud voices tend to come from the richer areas, which always claim they are losing out. Those in need are easily ignored. So that is a busy job, and is never finished.

My second responsibility is to hold Boris Johnson, the new Tory Mayor of London, to account and I have a reputation as his toughest critic. Ken Livingstone was Mayor until May last year, and under Ken we saw major progress in a range of ways including massive investment in London’s transport, a big increase in police numbers, reduced crime, and investment projects like the Olympic Games. There was also recognition that a City in which the less successful get left behind is not a good place, with a focus on matters like skills training and affordable childcare; to help people onto the ladder of work and affordable housing, for which there is massive un-met demand.

BORIS LACKS VISION

It is clear that our new Mayor does not share all those priorities and as Deputy Leader of the Labour opposition my job is to make sure that Londoners know when he is slipping up, and try to persuade him that he is wrong. There is growing evidence that although he is a “happy smile” on television, and remains popular as a media figure, Boris Johnson seriously lacks vision for our City. In his first year he has failed to set out what he wants to achieve in his four-year term and there is drift. Less affordable housing will be built and the same commitment to invest in services is not there.

We have seen cutbacks in transport investment under the new Mayor. Plans to extend the Croydon Tram to Crystal Palace, to build a new ‘Cross River’ Tram between Clapham and Kings Cross, to extend the Docklands Railway into Dagenham and to build a new road bridge across the Thames, were all scrapped. There has now been some backtracking on these last two but the plans for them have been at best delayed by a number of years. And the rest are simply unlikely to happen.

IF THE WORST HAPPENS …

As a General Election approaches we might want to focus on what is currently happening in London, because it is a sign of things to come if the Tories win. Nobody likes paying taxes, and the Tories at City Hall argue that these need to be held down or cut. But the flipside of that is that jobs are being cut, and services are under threat. The reason there has been major investment in transport in London is because of growing demand so the result of cutbacks will be more crowding and more people choosing to get back into their cars. This is where the biggest challenge kicks in – and one that the Conservatives refuse to face – in order for a growing city to keep its quality of life, and be an attractive place to live in, we need investment and we need high quality public services. There will always be room for greater efficiency but the political discussion needs to be about the difference between efficiency, which is good, and cuts. These not only reduce the quality of life in our city but, returning to where I started, tend to affect those who have least, the most.

A City that moves forwards is a City that not only values its citizens but also provides them with the services and support they need to lead productive and better lives. That is in the end, what politics is all about. It is the choice that British voters will face more widely at the General Election and it is the issue that we must fight over at City Hall.

MAKE TRAMS AN ELECTION ISSUE

urges Gerry Ryan, Labour’s Prospective Parliamentary Candidate for Croydon Central

I WAS delighted when ASLEF’s EC invited me to talk about how we can win Croydon Central back for Labour. Last time we lost by 75 votes. With policies that matter to local people, we can turn that round.

I started work in the mid seventies as an apprentice Post Office Telephone Engineer – so I’ve seen a fair amount of technological and social change in my life. One thing of particular importance to me is the reinvention of the tram. I use it most days, as I work in Wimbledon and I think this affordable, reliable, clean and accessible form of transport is vital to Londoners - and to the planet.

I campaign for an additional carriage to be added to the Croydon trams – and for the reversal of Mayor Johnson’s terrible decision to shelve the link between Croydon Central and Crystal Palace. It is nothing less than a betrayal that this short affordable link has been dumped by a man who was elected on the basis that he wanted Trams everywhere!

I have a guarantee from Labour that this is the highest transport priority when we once again have a Labour Mayor and Labour London Assembly.

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Drivers Get Philosophical

London Underground announced last month that drivers would be encouraged to add a dose of philosophy to the daily announcements. The company said it hoped ‘that by encouraging Tube staff to talk directly to customers with appropriate wit and wisdom, they will lift the moods of travellers’. Frankly, we doubt it – and it doesn’t seem to have done much to elevate ASLEF members, who are the vast majority of Tube drivers.

The first members we asked said, ‘A good idea? Don’t make me laugh. It’s bloody ridiculous! Most folk don’t listen to ‘Mind the Gap’ - let alone some inappropriate quote from a great philosopher!’

‘Surely if a train’s being delayed in a tunnel, in this weather too, passengers want information and reassurance of when they’ll get moving. They’re not looking for some stupid quote!’

Another driver suggested that ‘while Chairman Mao had his Little Red Book, now the Piccadilly Line has its Little Blue Book’ – and felt that some of the proposed snippets were highly inappropriate for delayed passengers on an airless train – such as “Most people give off as much heat as a 100 watt bulb, but not as much light”: Unknown

Life is one long process of getting tired: Samuel Butler.

The journey not the arrival: T. S. Eliot.

Heil is other people: Jean-Paul Sartre.

If you can’t stand the heat, get out of the kitchen: Harry S. Truman.

London Underground Pay

EC member Terry Wilkinson reports that at a Company Council meeting last month the London Underground Employee Relations Director presented a ‘final’ pay offer – which the negotiating team was not in a position to recommend.

The offer was made up of a two-year pay offer, which proposed increases of 1.5% from 1 April 2009 and, in the second year, either the February Retail Price Index plus 0.5% or 0.5%, whichever is the greater.

The offer also included a Joint Working Party to examine the effectiveness of the current agreement on Medical Redeployment, and separate discussions on proposals for the requirements to ensure London Underground services contributes to the successful running of the Olympic Games – and the appropriate rewards for staff.

Further meetings will be held as the union attempts to improve the offer.

Safety Questions on Upgrades Are Unresolved

Repos Kevin Croissant of the union’s Trains Health & Safety Council

Safety Questions on Upgrades Are Unresolved

We are undergoing signalling and stock upgrades on the Jubilee and Victoria Lines with others planned on the Northern, Metropolitan, Circle and Piccadilly Lines. The Victoria Line is due to have a new train in service by August, and the Jubilee Line is due to operate the first part of its new signalling system later in the month.

As with all similar projects, placed contracts have resulted in the design and function of driving cabs and signalling equipment being presented to us - offering little opportunity for us to change them. I will outline the three issues that affect one or all of these upgrade projects.

Secondary Driver’s Display

Firstly, the lack of a secondary driver’s display for use by a driving instructor when training new recruits to operate a train on an in-cab signalling system. At the moment, we have line-side, fixed block signalling with traditional colour-light signals adjacent to the track. The upgrade will remove those signals and replace them with a driver display on the main instrument panel. We have asked for a secondary display to be provided for a driving instructor to use for training purposes. We even suggested a portable, plug-in display for issue to driving instructors only as an alternative, cheaper option - but both these have been rejected.

Trackside Signs

Secondly, with most in-cab signalling systems, current controlled signals are replaced by trackside signs. These signs or boards can be largely ignored if the signalling system is operating normally. When the signalling system fails, trains have to be driven at restricted speed and these boards become very important indeed. One sign, known as the ‘RM Hold’ board, is usually located at points and crossings and cannot be passed without authority; in effect, it replaces controlled signals that we are all familiar with. London Underground has refused to consider another design. We suggested cutting the corners of the board as a cheaper alternative to a totally new sign but have met with no change from them.

Practical Experience Needed

Thirdly, we believe that it is essential that drivers have practical experience of train handling prior to the introduction of a new type of signalling. On the Jubilee Line, the upgrade project not only removes trackside signalling and relies upon a driver’s display, it is also a conversion from traditional fixed block signalling to a new moving-block system where a train’s distance from the one in front varies; sometimes getting closer; sometimes moving further apart. Management believe that a limited time in a simulator is enough. We do not agree.

The Victoria Line is a fully automatic (ATO) line which will replace its old system with a similar, but more modern one. We believe that they should receive more practical train handling for a time when the ATO system might fail in some way. London Underground has resisted this.

All the above have repercussions for all future upgrade projects and have been raised by the Executive Committee with London Underground. They remain unresolved.
UNION IMPROVES TRAUMA SUPPORT

A report from ASLEF
Train Council Rep
FINN BRENNAN

Last year ASLEF used the publicity around the launch of the unfunny ‘Three and Out’ movie to highlight our concerns about the trauma suffered by drivers involved in fatalities on the track.

In addition to the support provided by the Occupational Health counselling service we have a long-standing and very successful system of volunteer Trauma Support Groups (TSG’s). These are fellow drivers who give their own time and emotional resources to support colleagues who suffer a ‘one under’ or similar incident. While this system works extremely well in most areas, the ASLEF Trains Council reps want to ensure that best practice is shared across the combine. We are also aware that unfortunately there are some managers with no trains background who have little or no sympathy with drivers and no appreciation of the efforts made by trauma support volunteers.

At our request a TU/Management joint working party was set up to consider what improvements could be made. We spoke to TSG members on different lines and also to drivers who had experienced fatalities about the support they had received. It was clear that drivers saw the role that the TSG volunteers play as invaluable in helping them to cope with the impact of the incident.

We have now agreed a number of recommendations that we hope will help to ensure that the highest standard of support is available to drivers at every depot. They include:

- All level one reps and Toms’ attending awareness seminars so that they understand and can support TSG members in the work they do;
- Changes to incident reporting forms to remind Duty Managers to inform TSG members when an incident happens;
- Updating information on the intranet so people are aware of the role of volunteers and contact details;
- Encouraging volunteers to come forward at depots without a TSG member;
- Regular meetings between TSG volunteers and TOMs to ensure that management are aware of the support needed by TSG members.

We hope this will go some way towards ensuring that every driver is given the assistance and support they need and helping TSG members to be recognised for the vital role they play in helping their workmates in times of emotional need.

LONDON MATTERS

TRAIN OPERATORS TO STATION SUPERVISOR

There are very few opportunities for promotion for Train Operators – so at London Underground Trains Functional Council we’ve been discussing a clear method for becoming Station Supervisors. This was a common thing in the past. Others have put obstacles in place by insisting we have certain licences that we can not obtain in our normal day to day job. It has been agreed that if we pass the Station Supervisor assessments then we can apply for the post. Any licence needed will be obtained in due course.

AMBIENT LISTENING

There have been some concerns among Train Operators about the issue of ambient listening (management being able to listen into the cab). This facility has always been built into the Connect radio system. Management argue that in an emergency where no contact can be obtained from a Train Operator, then it could be used to assess whether the Train Operator is incapacitated or not. Management have finally come up with a protocol on when and how it could be used. This will become an operation notice. Any misuse of the system will be deemed to be Gross Misconduct, which could lead to dismissal.

12 HOURS REST

This old chestnut arose again because Local Management – making up the rules as they go along - were not giving 12 hours rest before going to ‘Valuing Time’, believing ten hours to be reasonable. This clearly breaches our agreements and it even astonished senior managers. The position is that there must be 12 hours rest between duties, something included in Schedule 4 of our Framework of Agreements.

TEAM TALKS

On a number of occasions Team Talks have been conducted by Instructor Operators. Team Talks have always been a management propaganda tool, trying to circumvent your union and used to tell us where we could do better. The point is that as it is a management tool, only management should conduct Team Talks. Delivering them is not included in the instructor operator’s job description, and it means management is getting the job done on the cheap by exploiting Instructor Operators. They don’t get paid DMT’s money for delivering Team Talk. Also while Train Operators don’t mind covering Instructor Operators when they are training, we don’t do it when they are doing a management job. Management has agreed that Team Talks should be delivered by managers.

DUTY SHEETS NOT DISPLAYED BY 12 NOON ON THURSDAYS

Since day one of being on this job, duty sheets were posted by 12 noon on Thursday. Too many times this has not happened. Local Management argue that they try to meet this deadline but sometimes this is not possible. It is difficult enough to plan our social lives, especially being in the pool, without further delays in posting weekly sheets. Again Functional Management agrees with us and will advise local Management to make sure it does happen.

Thanks to Steve Crowley, Andy Viner, Terry Wilkinson and Graham Dean
LEAMINGTON SPA HONOURS ITS LONG-SERVING MEMBERS

Leamington Spa Branch held its latest meeting on 7 June and we managed to draw another excellent attendance, despite the poor weather. Almost half the depot attended!

We were very pleased to be joined at this meeting by both Dave Calfe, EC Member for District 6, and also by Simon Weller, National Organiser, on his first visit to us. For a small branch like Leamington to have two senior ASLEF officers attending was a great honour.

Both Simon and Dave gave very interesting speeches on various ASLEF campaigns and policies, both at national and local level. Dave was then asked to present long-service badges to the following members: Richard Crosbie-Hill (5 years), Paul Goodwin and Jay Kalyan (both 20 years), Ian Farey and Mick Kerry (both 30 years), Ross Cash and Tim Clifford (both 35 years), and then last, but by no means least, Phil Spice, with an astonishing 45 years in ASLEF!

Phil started out at Bletchley in 1964, originally as a cleaner, before moving up to Fireman. He transferred to Carnforth in 1967, staying there for a year until he moved on to Cambridge St., now as a Secondman.

His next move, now as a Driver, was to Marylebone in 1972 and he stayed at the depot for the next 11 years. St. Pancras was next on his list of depots, and he stayed there until 1988. He then finally left the London area, transferring to Birmingham New Street in 1988 until 2001, when he finally landed with us here at Leamington Spa! Phil also became a Driver Instructor in 2001. A long and distinguished career, I am sure you will agree!

The Secretary and Chairman would like to thank both Simon and Dave for visiting us, and look forward to them attending further meetings in the future.

Nick Walker – Reporter – Leamington Spa Branch

National Organiser Simon Weller and EC members Dave Calfe with members of Leamington Spa Branch

Kevin, Howard and Trevor with badges and smiles

THREE GET 30 YEAR BADGES AT KINGS CROSS

AT our June Branch meeting, Kings Cross had the pleasure of presenting Thirty Year ASLEF long service badges to three of its members - Kevin Moir, who is Branch Chairman and Kings Cross First Capital Connect Health and Safety Rep, Howard Kaye, Assistant Branch Secretary and National Express East Coast Company Councillor at Kings Cross, and last but not least Trevor (‘Desperate’) Dann, a Driver with National Express East Coast at Kings Cross.

Peter Smith – Reporter – Kings Cross branch

AS part of Bristol Branches’ 125 year celebrations National Organiser Brother Simon Weller was invited to present nearly 60 Long Service ASLEF Badges - amounting to a remarkable 1,240 years membership of ASLEF!

The normal branch business was dealt with early on and members and their guests were invited to attend this social evening and celebrate both the 125 year existence of Bristol Branch and the presentation of almost 60 Long Service Badges. Two retirement certificates were also presented to Dave Skinner of Arriva Cross Country and Edwin Fox of First Great Western. It was one of the best attended Branch Meetings in recent years with over 70 members and their guests attending.

Brother Simon Weller addressed the branch before the presentations were made. He spoke about the current political climate and the major concerns and fears of the Tories getting into power. ‘Make no mistake’ Simon stated, ‘if the Tories take power they will take on ASLEF and look to enforce No Strike Deals for transport unions.’

The National Organiser then took questions from the floor, which included problems on First Great Western, Rest Day Working and overstaffed TOCs.

Bernard Kennedy – Secretary - Bristol Branch

1,240 years worth of long service at 125-year-old Bristol Branch
PERTH SALUTES 320 YEARS OF SERVICE

PERTH branch recently received long service badges for certain members, who between them had a total in excess of 320 years of service. Some of those who were due the badges were in attendance at the April branch meeting where District Organiser Kevin Lindsay had agreed to present the awards.

Previous Perth functions have gone unrecorded because nobody remembered to bring a camera, or knew how to use one properly - so special thanks must go to Bro Boyce for having the presence of mind to stick a camera in his pocket on this occasion. Pity he didn’t bring a tripod as well or Bro Bissett may well have been available to be in the picture rather than at the other end of the camera!

Undaunted, we retired to the bar downstairs where retired stalwart Chic Oswald joined us for a few drinks, and we partied into the small hours - well those of us who were lucky enough to get lieu days for the following day did!

I would like to take this opportunity to mention retired member Bro Tam Noble who has now been a member for over 62 years. The branch, by way of Kevin Lindsay again, presented Tam with an engraved tankard last year plus he was presented with his medallion and a bottle of whisky, but due to a technical glitch (i.e. the photographer videod the presentation rather than photographing it!) the event went unmentioned in the Journal. Therefore we would like to take this opportunity to pass our congratulations on to Tam and to all those who received long service badges on this occasion.

Grant Murchie – Secretary – Perth Branch

EAST HAM BRANCH SAY GOODBYE TO TWO LONG SERVING MEMBERS

TRAIN Operators Dave Atkinson and Amarjit Sandhu (“Sandy”) had a combined service of 70 years before they recently left the job.

The retirement celebration was held in the Railway Hotel at Hornchurch and there was an excellent turnout, not just from the current T/Op’s from Upminster and Barking, but also a number of our colleagues from days gone by. It was a pleasure to see them enjoying their retirement and looking so well.

Our recently retired Train Operations Manager, Les Calverley and our current TOM, Dave Johnson, also attended and gave presentations. We also say thank you to ASLEF District Organiser Steve Grant and EC member Terry Wilkinson, who were good enough to make presentations of engraved ASLEF tankards. It was a good night for all concerned.

Dave Jones – Depot Rep – East Ham

TALES OF TATTENHAM

THE reunion in May at the Foxley Hatch pub in Purley for drivers, staff, friends and well-wishers associated with Tattenham Corner, Caterham and Purley was such a success that the organisers are thinking of a follow-up.

People turned up who hadn’t seen each other for decades, swapped tales and rekindled friendships. Many thanks to all who came along, especially those who had travelled a long way to be with us.

ASLEF is more than just a union!

Daniel Nash – Tattenham

FORTHCOMING UNION EVENTS ASLEF is holding a fringe meeting at this year’s TUC Congress in Liverpool.

The subject is ‘National Networks: Lessons of Privatisation’ and it will be held at 1600 on Sunday 13 September at the Express Holiday Inn, Britannia Pavilion, Liverpool.

Speakers will include ASLEF General Secretary Keith Norman, Louise Ellman MP, the Chair of the House of Commons’ Transport Select Committee, Billy Hayes, General Secretary CWU and Mark Dowd, Chair of Merseytravel. All members are very welcome.
PHIL MARSHMAN habitually sports a wry smile that indicates his gentle amusement with life. He’s comfortable with his lot, confident about his convictions and always capable of an ironic mockery of everyone he meets - especially Phil Marshman. He constantly chuckles at himself and his various pastimes - especially his film making and his latest project of producing a book of reminiscences of Westbury railway workers.

He seems to do most things in an unconventional way. He first became an ASLEF rep in Bromsgrove when he was 21 (‘My fellow rep, Alan Spencer, was also 21 - I wonder if we were ASLEF’s youngest LDC?’), even though he wouldn’t become a driver for another five years. Phil says the manager they faced in those early days was quite bemused at having a pair of wet-behind-the-ears youths to deal with.

Many years later he became secretary of Westbury’s LDC, modestly suggesting he was elected secretary because he had the best handwriting. ‘I think I did the job longer than anyone. It’s not easy, being a rep and I think you can drift away from the men a bit after a while. You become concerned with issues that they don’t. But I thought it was a worthwhile thing to do, and only gave it up when I became a carer for my old mum. I got a lot of help from Social Services, but I sometimes wonder if I would have been treated the same if I’d been a woman. I doubt it. They’d probably have suggested I give up the job.’

Westbury is where Phil works now, and the place he began his railway career in December 1962 as an engine cleaner. Inevitably this coincided with the worst weather ever seen in the area. P-way men were clearing the lines over the Mendips with shovels for months on end. ‘As the junior man I did all the odd jobs like advice notes and calling out breakdown vans. My first task every day was firing up the boiler so boiler washers or shed staff could have a cup of tea and a wash.’

He says he got the job ‘because I had something the other applicants lacked’ - which was a couple of relations who were already working for British Rail. ‘I dropped the name of the cousin who didn’t get into trouble all the time,’ he recalls.

Although he was ‘a bit of a train spotter as a kid’, Phil wasn’t desperate to work on the rails. ‘In the 60s you could have any job you wanted,’ he says. ‘I just drifted in.’

In those days there was no formal training. You picked up the job from the driver you were assigned to as a fireman. ‘My first driver was ‘Harry the Chop’. He was called that because he was interested in judo. The rail tradition of nick-names has caught up with Phil now - he’s known as ‘Number One’. ‘I hope that is because I’m the senior man at Westbury First Great Western,’ he says dryly.

As the work of depots dropped and redundancies threatened, he worked at various times at Stratford on Avon and, first, Bromsgrove. ‘I didn’t even know where it was, but it was the only vacancy on the Western region. I was 19 and I’d never lived away from home. Because I was underage I was lodged at the YMCA. I lost a lot of weight at that time because if they could beggar up the food, they did it.’

It was at this time he developed his life-long love of film, and ‘Phil The Film’ is Westbury’s Number One! It looks as if Phil’s got the yellow card ready for somebody as he stands at Westbury station, where he first worked in 1962.
fascination with film. ‘Going to Bromsgrove meant I had enough money to buy a Kodak Brownie movie camera and a few of the other YM inmates were also interested,’ he says. He began shooting film, but the reaction of people in those days was hardly encouraging. ‘More often than that you’d get someone asking, ‘What are you silly buggers doing!’ There are so many video camera now that no one takes any notice.’ There are other changes, too. One of Phil’s first ideas was shoot pictures of a girl tied to a railway line. ‘We did it at Stourbridge because the line was shut on a Sunday. We had official permission, but we’d never get away with it today. We’d be flattened with health and safety regulations.’

He says he wasn’t attracted to film so much in an artistic way as a desire to know how things worked. ‘My brother and I were always practical kids, perhaps because we were raised on my dad’s small-holding. I first went to the pictures when I was nine, and with the feature film - ‘The Battle of the River Plate’ - was a short called ‘The Red Balloon’. I wanted to find out how they managed to get the balloon to follow the kid around.’

Oddly enough Westbury has something of a film history. The 1953 Ealing comedy ‘The Titfield Thunderbolt’ was shot around here, and the railway staff in the film are Westbury men. More recently part of ‘Green Street’ was made here.’

Phil’s talent for making interesting short films peaked when he was a runner-up in a BBC 2 series with an eight minute black comedy called ‘Learning the Newspaper Business.’ ‘I was pleased with that,’ he says.

Over the past three years he’s taken on a new project of putting together material for a book about Westbury rail workers. ‘A driver called Tim Comer persuaded me to get involved - and then he left!’ Phil says. ‘It’s coming along steadily and he has amassed a good collection of photos. ‘What I’m really looking for is reminis-cences by drivers and other grades,’ he explains. Hopefully my putting up with this interview will get a response!’

Phil would be delighted if Journal readers would send stories sent to him - either through the depot or by email - frome@philmar.demon.co.uk. ‘I’m not looking for great literature and I’d sooner have short tales. They’re easier to read as well as easier to write. The fact is, every person who has worked there has at least one fascinating story to tell. So - let me have them!’

He believes it is important to have interests away from work. ‘Lots of people think their job is their life, and it’s not. You need something outside. In fact I think people’s hours should be gradually reduced, as a without-loss-of-pay loyalty bonus, as you get towards retirement so that you get used to not working.’

With a trade-mark chuckle, he assures me he’s more than willing to be a guinea pig for the scheme!

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What nuggets we reveal when we look into the pages of back issues of ASLEF’s Locomotive Journal! This month we are swept back to a time when Glasgow was a sad and depressed city, and drivers wore their blazers on their holidays …

100 YEARS AGO

The August 1909 Journal carried Organising Secretary Jno. Drummond’s impressions of a run-down Glasgow with a demoralised workforce. It is a useful reminder of the history of today’s thriving city …

“I have had meetings in Glasgow, Balloch and Thornton, and I have looked after the interests of our members in compensation and criminal affairs, and interviewed a prominent railway official re the reinstatement of one of our members. Scotland is very quiet; Glasgow is passing through a period of depression unpreced- dented in its history as an industrial centre, and the railways and railwaymen are feeling the effects of it, along with the other industries. The men are being used very badly in many respects, and neither soul nor conscience is displayed in many of the actions that are being taken with the men. Every dodge is being tried, and I am sorry to say that the men do not seem to have any backbone to resist the encroachments upon their rights that are being made.”

50 YEARS AGO

In August 1959 C. Brooks spent his holidays in search of ‘something better than slag-heaps’ in Yorkshire – and it didn’t take him long to revise his opinions about the White Rose county …

“For some time past I have been rushing into Yorkshire one day and back to England the next. (England begins just south of the Ouse bridge, so the Bedford “clangers” are not quite English). I had, in my travels, decided that a county as large as Yorkshire must have something better to show than slag-heaps so I decided to spend a long week-end exploring.

Catching the Waverley out of London,….I arrived in Leeds at 1.40 p.m. and looked around for A61 road………..That night I stayed at Bainbridge and had trout for breakfast next morning, caught in the river Ure. Now I was on my way through Yorkshire’s greatest dale, Wharfedale.

There were plenty of hills, but not too difficult, and eventually I arrived at Bolton Abbey.

This meant stopping for photography. I entered the Abbey grounds and found some beautiful countryside, which makes such a fine background to the ruined abbey. Yorkshire is noted for its great abbeys and Bolton is one of the best.

In the village I asked if I could get a lunch; I was told “by appointment only” but if a salad lunch would do I could have one. When it was served, there were lashings of it, plus a huge plate of bread and butter, cakes and a pot of tea. (The bread was bread, not that appalling sponge rubber we have to eat in London).

The owner told me his son was learning diesels at Doncaster and wanted to get to Derby. As I was wearing the “Associated” blazer badge, he recognised that I was a locomot. I may say that this badge gets quite a lot of complimentary remarks for its design.”

Extracts selected and edited by Jane Pimlott
ALBERT GROSE – A DRIVER AND AN AUTHOR

As a lad, Albert lived in Worgley in Hertfordshire and from his earliest years always had an interest in railways. The youngster could be found at various locations watching the trains go by.

He started on the railway at Hertford East on 27 June 1955, moving after redundancy to Hornsey on 28 November 1960. Unfortunately disillusioned at the demise of steam and having a long travelling time to and from work, he decided to leave on the 29 July 1961.

Albert had a good memory and always kept a diary. As a result he was able to put his railway career into print. If you can get hold of his book, it is called, ‘The Ramblings of a Great Eastern Enginemen’ and it’s well worth a read.

Unfortunately the old dreaded C has called him to serve in the Top Link at the age of 68. May we send our condolences to Jenny and their friends and relations.

Peter Smith – Reporter – RMS

TERENCE ROY THOMAS - A MAN OF MANY INTERESTS

We have been informed that ‘TT’ as we affectionately knew him, collapsed at work and died at the age of 61. He was born in 1947.

Terry was a likeable chap who once met was never forgotten. Our paths first crossed when he joined the railway and became my second man. He was the first person I ever met who joined ‘Weight Watchers’. He did very well and took pleasure in enlightening you on the programme he had to follow - but I think like all good plans, stamina was not forthcoming.

Terry was a person of many interest including cars, shooting, fishing and photography, and he was always ready to pass on information about his enthusiasms. He succeeded in progressing to becoming a Driver, but unfortunately he had a medical problem so he was accommodated at Hornsey EMU Depot.

Terry was fortunate in meeting and marrying Breda, and in doing so he inherited a ready-made family. He succeeded in getting them all to accept him as one of the family, and when grandchildren came along he embraced them willingly and earned their affection. At his funeral they stood and read out their praises of him, which to me was praise indeed. Unfortunately they will be one of the biggest losers in his passing.

Wood Green has lost a son - for that is where he was born, went to school, lived and died. I am sure his family would like me to say a big thank you to all those who turned out to support them at TT’s funeral. The chapel was full to standing. We hope this will help his family as it proved to them the extent of the affection and esteem that his friends and work colleagues had for TT. RIP

Peter Smith - Reporter - RMS

PHIL KENNEDY - A REAL GENTLEMAN

Phil was a new starter to the railway on 21 June 1976 as a junior railman at Shortlands station. He wanted to be a driver - just like his dad, Doug - so on 25 April 1977 he moved to Kings Cross as a Traction trainee progressing to driver’s assistant.


Here’s a few memories of Phil: riding his bike to work with his trousers tucked in his white socks; settled in the mess room with his toasted samie and an orange or a coffee when he found out you could get it in tea bag form. He always had time for a chat.

Phil loved walking and in his time he climbed both Snowdonia and Scarfell Pike. He joined the steam rail enthusiast group in Tunbridge Wells and such was his love of trains that he built a train in his garden shed after trailing round numerous train scrap yards for the right bits. If it had rails it would have whisked him up the north Kent.

Phil was a railman through and through. He loved his job and the people he worked with. He joined ASLEF on 22 August 1977 and was always a union man. He held many offices including Branch Secretary and at the time of his death he was our branch chairman.

Phil was a healthy and fit man and when he was diagnosed with Asbestoses nine months ago it devastated him. He hated being ill. Sadly Phil lost his battle with this disease on 21 May 2009.

Some people can’t help making a difference in our lives by simply being who they are. Phil was such a man. He will be sorely missed but never forgotten.

Harvey Bignell - Secretary - Slade Green Branch

FRED SAVILLE – 50 YEARS ON THE RAILS

IT IS my sad duty to inform you of the passing of my elder brother Fred Saville in his 90th year.

Fred started his railway career as a Signal Box Lad at Stratford in 1935 and transferred to the Loco department in 1937. When called up in 1940 he joined the Railway Operating Division of the Royal Engineers. His knowledge of locomotives and the Rule Book were second to none, and he was soon promoted to Sergeant/Driver and Steam and Diesel Instructor.

Posted to North Africa with the Eighth Army, he was driving trains in the Middle East until the end of the war in 1945. When he returned to Stratford, he took up his seniority in a main line goods link, working his way up to driver in the early 1950s. Soon after the electrification of the North East London suburban services Fred transferred to Chingford where he lived and was there until retirement.

Fred leaves behind his widow Yvonne, son David, two granddaughters and a great grandson named Freddy after him. Our thoughts are with them at this time.

Dennis Saville – Retired Stratford member.

ERNEST GARDNER – EX STOURBRIDGE DRIVER

IT IS with deep regret that I have to report the passing of former Stourbridge driver Ernest Gardner. Ernie passed away on 22 March this year aged 84.

He joined the railway at Stourbridge loco depot as a cleaner and then progressed to fireman. Under the G.W.R. P.T.S. he then got his promotion to driver at Tyseley before returning to Stourbridge for the rest of his working life.

Ernie, as well as being a very likeable character, was a strong union member and a very active member of Stourbridge branch until he took early retirement. Also, just before the depot was to close, Ernie helped to run the Mutual Improvement Class at the depot to help younger drivers and secondmen coming through the ranks.

Ernie is survived by his son Andy and daughter Lorraine and will be sorely missed by all.

Martin Bromage-Griffiths - former Stourbridge Secondman
YOU TELL US

These are the pages where you talk to us. We welcome your letters, either by mail to the Journal at 9 Arkwright Road London NW3 6AB or by email to journal@aslef.org.uk

Because of our space constraints, please try to keep your contributions as short as you can.

This month we continue our STAR LETTER feature. The immensely lucky winner will pocket a rich range of ASLEF regalia!

WORK HASN’T STOPPED BEING A PLEASURE FOR ME!

I WOULD like to give an alternative view to Brother Gordon Young’s view about ‘Work Stopped Being a Pleasure’ (June Journal letters).

I’m 47 and I have 31 years service (all freight), so our careers have been very similar – but work has never stopped being a pleasure for me. I still enjoy my job and I’m currently enjoying the challenge of changing my driving technique to the new fuel-efficient driving.

Sure, we do have some long shifts - but we also have some short ones. And we haven’t ‘sold our conditions’ as Gordon suggests. In fact under EWS (now DBS) we are still covered by some very good conditions, envied by some drivers of other freight operators.

In fact I think conditions at my depot have improved – on average we get one week off in four with free time.

I remember when I only got four weeks off a year, and we had to work nights and Sundays regularly to make ends meet.

Life and work can be a pain or a pleasure - but it’s mostly a state of mind.

Don’t get me wrong – I’m not saying DB Schenker are perfect. Far from it. But neither was British Rail – so make the best of what you have.

Mick Yates - Worksop

TOP MARKS FOR REPRESENTATION

IN April 2009 I was removed from the driving grade following a ‘safety of the line’ incident. I am writing to record my sincere thanks to ASLEF for successfully opposing this exceptionally harsh course of action.

I would particularly like to thank Ian Neeve of Marylebone branch who represented me throughout the ordeal and District Organiser Stan Moran who negotiated my reinstatement.

Thank you also to my colleagues at Aylesbury for their unanimous backing and to Simon Stimpson and Tim Braybrooks of Aylesbury LDC and Company Council Representative Mark Prince for their help and support.

Roger Marks – Driver - Aylesbury

BEST OF LUCK KEEPING EVERYBODY HAPPY!

CAN I just thank the SWT Company Council for their excellent work when they recently represented Guildford drivers at appeal hearings. The results saw two members reinstated to Driver status.

With the growing trend of dismissal or ‘removal from grade’ it is reassuring to have talented and professional representatives such as these to call upon. It’s a great advert for ASLEF.

With difficult pay talks on the horizon I wish them the very best in their efforts to keep everyone happy!

John Taylor - Guildford LDC

STARTED ON £3.4s.0p A WEEK!

PLEASE allow me through your columns to thank the union for my 50 year medallion for my loyalty to ASLEF.

I began my footplate career in 1955 at March depot. I was a cleaner for three weeks – and then I was on strike! I spent the next two weeks back at my home in Lowestoft, where I received £2 a week as strike pay. At work I was earning three pounds and four shillings (old money) a week.

Collecting union subscriptions at March was rather haphazard, and it was not long before one began to lag behind and get into debt. On top of which, one of the depot’s officials used a serious amount of union subscriptions for his personal use!

Subsequently my union

PAUL J. FISH - Brighton

WHAT ASLEF REALLY MEANS ★

MY name is Paul Fish and I am currently employed as a driver by FCC at Brighton. Prior to this I was a driver for Cross Country Trains, also based at Brighton (where I was also proud to perform the role of LLC rep for eight years) before being made redundant, and before that I was a driver and trainman at Brighton for BR and Connex SC (ah, such days!) since coming onto the railway in 1992. I am also a single parent with a 14-year-old daughter.

In February this year I was diagnosed as suffering from pancreatic cancer. I am 45 years old and last April I was told that the NHS considers my cancer to be incurable.

Since going off sick in March I have been receiving SSP – as a relatively new employee of FCC who was still on probation, I was not entitled to any company sick pay – but the ‘savings’ provided by my redundancy money from Cross Country meant that I am not entitled to any other mean-tested state benefits – which turns out to be most of them.

On the other hand, I have received a payment from the ASLEF EC’s Hardship Fund and, at the end of last week, a payment resulting from a nation-wide appeal to ASLEF branches for help. It is in connection with this that I write now.

I want to take this opportunity to say how genuinely and deeply moved I have been by the kindness and generosity shown by the membership. The money that has been donated will make a genuine difference in the weeks and months to come, helping to provide (as it will) some measure of security for the loved ones that I must leave behind, and offering me the solace of at least some kind of peace of mind as I enter what are projected to be the last few months of my life. And it’s impossible to overestimate the importance of peace of mind when faced with a situation like the one I find myself in now.

I guess we’ve all been in situations in the past, sitting in a branch meeting, when an appeal has been read out and hands have been raised in support and then we probably don’t think too much (if at all) about what happens after that, as far as the individuals involved in the appeal are concerned. Let me assure you that the help you give means an enormous amount to the individuals concerned, and is hugely appreciated.

And perhaps it’s the least that we could and should expect from one of the last great trade unions. The fact is that ASLEF has been there for me and my family – and for that I cannot thank you all enough.

Keep up the good work!

- Brighton
UNCONVINCED BY THE LORD
Hmm. I really wonder how much Lord Adonis’ silvery-tongued advice to Conference can be accepted at face value (June Journal). He just seems to be saying what we want to hear. But any commitment to actually DO something seems absent.

To take one specific, his comments about not taking TOCs back into public ownership because it would ‘subject the industry into more upheaval’ seems mere political-speak. Why would it be more upheaval than a change of TOC, which happens quite often?

And what about, ‘No franchise would be allowed to renegotiate … because of the political downturn.’ Really?

What if a TOC faces bankruptcy? What choice would any government have?

To take back into public ownership is an option he has just discounted and to give it to another TOC on the same terms (if offered) would seem madness. Negotiate inferior (to the government) terms for the existing or an alternative TOC?

For the government to pay more to bale out the existing TOC to keep going seems the only way out to keep stability!

His Lordship’s statement that it would ‘cost money because the franchise companies were contracted to pay money to the government which would be lost if the keys were taken off them’ is also pie in the sky if the TOC folded. If there’s no money, there’s no money - contract or no contract.

If Lord Adonis feels as positive as he implied, ASLEF should not need to take up the case for ‘investment in a greener, more efficient, high capacity railway for the future’. The government would already be going for it at full speed. I see no evidence of this.

I’m afraid I found most of Lord Adonis’ assurances totally unconvincing and I hope others felt the same way, because I think we are likely to be living in a fool’s paradise if we take it uncritically.

‘Lightly grilled’? Turn up the heat!

Eric Stuart

NO POOR RELATIONS AT NORTHERN
HAVING just attended the June Newton Heath branch meeting (which was opened up to other local Northern Rail (West) branches), I wish to thank Alan Donnelly and Colin Smith for providing members with a detailed insight into why - for the second time in 12 months - drivers at Northern Rail West are being balloted for strike action.

The company continues to attack and attempt to erode our current DRI agreements without offering a credible productivity package to modernise our current DRI agreements - which the company has labelled ‘not fit for purpose’!

A line finally appears to have been drawn in the sand by ASLEF and unless the company produces a package that includes an increase in salary, but does not affect our 4 day week, fixed rest-day pattern and Sundays outside the week, then at sometime after mid July, providing a resounding ‘yes’ vote for action is achieved, we will be on strike.

It was heartening to hear ASLEF is no longer willing to tolerate drivers at Northern Rail (West) being the poorer cousin to drivers at Northern East and most other TOCs.

At times like this I am proud to be union!

Steve Hill - Newton Heath branch.

WHAT A STATE TO END UP IN!
IT does not seem almost ten years since I was shown the door at Birmingham New Street, my train driver career ended. However I did discover that there is life after driving trains. It wasn’t quite what I expected or planned – but my life certainly moved on.

I started to commute between Birmingham and Orange County California where I met and married my wife, and where we now have our second home.

I still reflect on what could have been, but my lifestyle now
is far superior to what I could have achieved by remaining in the UK
I have continued to read the online version of the ASLEF Locomotive Journal but I think the editorial quality has deteriorated over the years as less ASLEF members take the trouble to provide copy to be published
I am now more likely to be found on the pier at Huntington Beach with my wife watching the latest surfing contest than at a drivers’ reunion!
Should any of my former work mates happen by, you’re making on the cross city line.

**Beeching**

**VANDALISM CLOSE TO HOME**

I HAVE just read about ‘Beeching’s Vandalism’ in the July Journal.
Down here in South London it is happening now in 2009, on the South London Line from London Bridge to Victoria via Peckham and Denmark Hill.

**Kevin Christie** – retired driver

**EXPENSES ROW RUMBLING ON**

I STARTED work 55 years ago, working mainly at Bletchley, Watford and Kings Cross depots. I was always a trade unionist and a Labour Party member. It saddens me to even think that we might not want to continue to support Labour.
However, our government knew all along what was going on in the banking service, but all they did was give the bankers free rein and knighthoods. Mr Brown lifted money from our pensions and invented at least 14 new ways of taxing us.
Then came the icing on the cake – expenses. Every one of our MPs knew the rules – after all, they made them! Even if they didn’t take part, they knew other people were stealing from us. If their hands are clean, why don’t they put their expenses in front of the electorate, showing all their expenses and all their income from other jobs? After all, we pick up the bills.
Few union leaders have spoken out against MPs expenses and even fewer have said, ‘As you have missappropriated (and I’d say ‘stolen’) our money, we will no longer support you through trade union donations.’

**H. Connolly** – Retired Member – Kings Cross

**NOT SWEET ON WELSH TORIES**

IN THE July issue of the Journal it was good to see John Boreham is still keeping the ASLEF flag flying in Wales. A recent headline after the European elections said, ‘Wales Turns Blue’.
John and his colleagues on the Wales TUC need to remind ASLEF members and the Welsh people what the Tories are really like. I’d recommend they tune into Welsh Questions where they would see the mockery and derision coming from the Tory benches.
Recently, a leading Conservative, Sir Patrick Cormack, asked the Welsh minister Paul Murphy, ‘By how much has the sale of candy floss increased in Wales during the Government’s lifetime?’
This was greeted by howls of laughter from the Tory benches.
This is what the Tories think of Wales and its people.

**J. G. Davies** – Hereford

**ANYBODY THERE?**

I would just like to know why, in the current climate, ASLEF seems so very quiet? This is at a time when Members of Parliament are exploiting their right to expenses to the furthest point and while our troops in Afghanistan find themselves struggling on with very little equipment.
I say this because we have a lot of ex-military personnel as members and also because we, who helped to form the Labour Party, find that we are now being abused by its members! I feel that as a trade union we are far too slow in criticising those who abuse their powers or are useless in their positions, even though morally we hold the upper hand.
I would also thank those in high office at ASLEF for having close talks with Brian Souter at Stagecoach, and I presume that they are also having similar talks with the owners of all the TOCs.

**Paul Haines** – Bournemouth Branch

**BIGGS SHOULD SERVE SENTENCE**

WHY should Jack Straw show compassion for Ronald Biggs and let him out of prison? What compassion did Biggs show to Jack Mills, the Crewe driver of the mail train?
My father, after almost four years in a POW camp in Germany during World War One, was a locomotive fireman and then driver for the next 47 years. He knew Jack Mills. Footplate men had a hard but honest job in those days. No luxuries such as lighting, canteens, toilets or washing places at work for those men.
What right had Biggs and his gang of thugs to hit Jack Mills on the head with an iron bar and leave him for dead?
Biggs is a thief, thug and coward who lived a life of luxury on the proceeds of this robbery. When his money ran out, he returned to England hoping to live and be nursed by the NHS - to which he contributed absolutely nothing.

**Harry Thompson** – Newcastle

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**LETTERS to the EDITOR**

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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 0800 587 7530.

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. 40 set by TLC

Solution to Crossword No 39 which appeared in the July edition of the ASLEF Journal. Congratulations to Peter Griffiths from Rayleigh.

ACROSS 1 Guards 5 Holidays 9 Victoria 10 Petrol 11 Indolent 12 Fairer 13 Elevated 15 Enid 17 Assas 19 Used Cars 20 Preach 21 Adulated 22 Trivet 23 Extolled 24 Haringey 25 Sedate
DOWN 2 Union Man 3 Rationed 4 Sorcerer 5 Health and Safety 6 Iceland 7 Aircrews 8 Salaries 14 Evacuates 15 EyePatch 16 Inferior 17 Assailed 18 Pavement 19 Unclean

Thanks for all your responses to the 39th ASLEF crossword in the July edition. If you complete this month’s crossword please send the solution to the Editor, ASLEF Journal, 9 Arkwright Road, London NW3 6AB by the 14th of the issue month.

CLUES ACROSS
1 Edgware Road and Baker Street are stations on this underground service (8,4)
7 Hold onto this when it’s standing room only (5)
8 US politician in the Senate (7)
11 Long bladed hand tools, used by joiners (7)
12 Sounds like a train on the Northern line (7)
13 ----- Deayton, former TV presenter of ‘Have I Got News for you’ (5)
14 1969 Film starring Peter Fonda (4,5)
16 Discharged from employment (9)
19 Gracie Fields spent retirement years on this island (5)
21 American singing group ‘The ----- ’ (7)
23 Introduces the acts at a variety show (7)
24 Nuclear plant (7)
25 Not suitable, inappropriate in short (5)
26 Tube station for a vicar on the District Line (7,5)

CLUES DOWN
1 Making music in public to entertain passers-by (7)
2 Softer part of a nut (6)
3 Takes back a property when buyer defaults on payment (9)
4 Commencement (5)
5 Lack of energy, listlessness (7)
6 Method of travel before cars were invented (5,3,4)
9 Not First Class! (5)
10 Welsh actor, who appeared in the film ‘A Matter of Life and Death’ (5,7)
15 Choosing (9)
17 Brazilian dance (5)
18 Lights the bonfire (7)
19 Companion or fellow soldier (7)
20 City in Central Lancashire (7)
22 Piercing sound designed to act as a warning (5)

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

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