ASLEF REVISITED: time for change says President

RAILS IN WALES: are all the lines going West?
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Popular railways need security, not speculation

N last month’s Journal, the first of 2010, we celebrated the fact that rail hasn’t been so popular for decades. In this General Election year, Labour and the Tories are vying with each other to say how important it is to expand and improve our network. The climate lobby has nothing but good to say about rail - and even Eddie Stobart’s been convinced of the importance of freight on rail. There are even positive plans - rather than weasel words - about electrification.

The good news just keeps rolling in. Last month Chiltern announced plans for a £250 million investment to open the first new rail route in a century between London and a UK city – in this case, Marylebone to Oxford.

The plans also – wonder of wonders! – involve building new track and renovating the Bicester Town to Oxford line.

There are also proposals to improve Chiltern’s main line that will cut the London to Birmingham journey time to an hour and a half.

All these measures emphasise that rail is popular, essential and important for passengers, the economy and the climate. So why is the government not prepared to take the next logical step - and ensure that it controls the industry? That can only be done by taking it back into public ownership. We can encourage franchises to meet targets, but in the end you only control what you own.

ASLEF – and we believe the public – don’t want speculation in rail. Passengers don’t want to have to speculate when the next train is likely to arrive – and neither do they want a service that they rely on to be subject to the whims of speculators.

The only way to guarantee that rail can live up to public expectations is to bite the bullet – and take back the track.

Keith Norman
General Secretary
Dyslexics of the world unite

Up to 10% of the population are affected by Dyslexia in one way or another. A study by Yale University suggests it could be double that number.

Having Dyslexia doesn’t mean you’re ‘slow’ or a ‘little dim’—dyslexics are of average or above average intelligence.

John Lennon, Agatha Christie, Thomas Edison, Tom Cruise and Leonardo De Vinci all suffered from Dyslexia.

For more information about Dyslexia speak to your union learning rep or visit the British Dyslexia Association’s website at www.bdadyslexia.org.uk

ASLEF ACTIVE AT SCOTTISH UNION LEARNING CONFERENCE – EVENTUALLY!

AS fate would have it, and to the amusement of many in the hall, the ASLEF delegation to the Scottish Union Learning Conference turned up late due to late running trains, reports Jim Baxter.

‘The track was flooded. Well it was held in Dundee in November after all.’

‘We missed the opening address by SUL Board chair Ann Douglas and arrived halfway through the speech of Keith Brown MSP, Minister for Schools and Skills. To be honest, we could have been even later for all the minister had to say!’

Next up was John Park MSP, the co-convenor of the Scottish Parliament’s Cross Party Group on Skills. John was as passionate as ever as he spoke of the need to up-skill in Scotland and about his personal crusade, the Modern Apprenticeship Bill. He was followed by STUC General Secretary Graeme Smith who outlined how the STUC and SUL are working with government organisations and learning providers to ensure that workplace learning is high on all their agendas.

After the speeches delegates broke into five workshops discussing how trade unions, and in particular union learning reps, can best continue their work in the current economic crisis.

‘All in all it was a worthwhile day—even if it was a bit wet,’ Jim says. Also representing ASLEF at the conference were Andrew Gardner, Tom Burns, Colin McAteer, Ian Stewart and Paul Ramsay.
Injuries can cost a lot more than accident victims initially realise. Costs can include lost overtime, lost promotion, travel to and from medical treatments, special care needs and more.

The emotional costs can be just as heavy in their own way too.

Ruth Hart (above) suffered excruciating pain after accidental knee damage.

Says Ruth: “I have never fully recovered. I became very angry about what had happened to me.

So I contacted a firm of solicitors I had seen advertising about personal injury claims on TV. At first, they advised me that I might get £5,000. But later said they didn’t think I had a case”

Then Ruth was introduced to Thompsons Solicitors.

“The whole experience was completely different to the other solicitors. I’m over the moon with the settlement and I didn’t have to go to court.”

Thompson’s personal injury service is FREE and you will always keep 100% of the compensation.

You can claim for any accident* – at work, on the road or on holiday. Your family is also covered for accident injuries outside of work.

*limited exclusions apply

Injured?
An apology won’t pay the bills, but compensation will.
**UNION URGES INVESTMENT IN CAPITAL TRANSPORT**

ASLEF has responded to the Mayor of London’s Transport Strategy Consultation expressing its concern that many transport proposals in the capital have been cancelled including the Cross River and Oxford Street trams, the Thames Gateway Bridge and the extension of the Docklands Light Railway to Dagenham Dock. We also stressed the need for infrastructure works to help improve rail freight movement.

**CROSSING ‘GO SLOW’ SAVES LIVES: THE PROOF**

ASLEF’s call for its drivers to drive slowly – no more than 20 mph – over open level crossings has been praised as it was shown to have saved at least one life in a further incident at a crossing in the Highlands.

Last month a van driver had to be cut from the wreckage of another crash in Caithness, close to the scene of the accident in which three people died near Halkirk last year.

Local councillor David Flear said, ‘There would have been another fatality at the weekend if it had not been for train drivers’ union ASLEF’s ‘go-slow’

ASLEF’s Keith Norman said, ‘This incident fully vindicates the union’s position. Others may talk about level crossing safety, but our union actually does something about it.’

Un gated crossings account for 2% of all level crossings in the UK but a third of accidents take place at them.

**ASLEF LOBBIES ON EAST COAST TIMETABLE**

The union has played a significant part in lobbying against cuts in East Midland’s Glasgow-London timetables. The government-owned train company has dropped the timetable changes it had wanted to introduce last month – including axing direct trains between London and Glasgow.

East Coast has now promised a ‘major consultation’.

**QUOTES OF THE MONTH**

A train driver made an announcement as his train slid into Liverpool Street station during the 2010 Ice Age last month. ‘Sorry for the slow service this morning,’ he said. ‘This has nothing to do with the weather. The train is naff.’

On a more serious note Lord Andrew Adonis gave the undertaking that, ‘2010 will be the year for high speed rail in the UK.’

**ASK YOUR MP TO BACK PARLIAMENT MOTION**

The union is asking members to seek the support of their local MP for an Early Day Motion laid before Parliament in the name of Colin Challen MP. It reads ‘That this House notes with concern the timetable the Government has set for the franchising of East Coast main line services; and calls on the Government to maintain the East Coast main line in public ownership so that the quality, effectiveness and competitiveness of public ownership can be fully demonstrated.’

**TRAIN ENTERS HOTEL**

A Finnish passenger train crashed into a hotel in Helsinki at the start of the year. It involved a near-empty train at the city’s main railway station which adjoins the Holiday Inn.
ROM the early 1990s until 2004, our union went from having a multi million pound surplus to facing a £1.9 million operating deficit, causing fears that ASLEF could implode. Since then we have made a steady surplus. This was not achieved by luck. It was the result of some tough decision-making by our leadership and our Parliament, the Annual Assembly of Delegates (our conference), but most of all it was done with the support of the membership.

Many changes have taken place since the Kelly report, with a number centring around the organisation of union finances. We acknowledged that the handling of our members’ funds is best served with the guidance of a professionally trained Finance Manager who reports to the ASLEF trustees and executive committee every month, as well as to the AAD. This has proved to be the most beneficial and major decision taken by ASLEF. It would be wrong, and it would also do ASLEF a disservice, if we were to rest on our laurels and decide that it was job done. That is why it is crucial that the structure of our union is regularly reviewed with the involvement of the whole membership at as many levels as possible.

A STRONGER UNION
We have a duty to ensure that ASLEF is financially and structurally ready for the challenges that lie ahead, if we are to carry on being at the forefront of delivering better terms and conditions for workers within the trade union movement. A trade union cannot operate correctly if its structure is weak. That is the reason the Executive Committee decided to look in depth at the structure of ASLEF. This would not be a cost cutting exercise or an attack on any link in the ASLEF structure. Its aim would be to maintain ASLEF’s independence and financial stability to allow the union to be more focused on the issues that matter most to the membership - such as protecting our terms and conditions.

At the 2009 AAD your Executive Committee placed a report to all the delegates on the proposed way forward on the structure of ASLEF. This report was adopted and the review’s findings will be reported to the 2010 ASLEF conference. It involved input from various levels of ASLEF representatives and a series of workshops were set up to look at the structure of our union. The aims are:
- to enable ASLEF to sustain our independence
- to improve on the way we communicate with the membership
- to enhance the service provided by ASLEF and
- to improve the education and training of our train driver representatives.

The Executive Committee felt this was the right time to review the union, due to our current financial position being a position of strength. We are determined not to dilute the union’s first priority of looking after its members.

While some may feel uncomfortable with some of the policies adopted by our conference, I can assure members that the executive committee totally support the decisions made that hold the interests of ASLEF first. In today’s climate where trade unions and their values are being attacked we can lead on revitalising true trade unionism and show that unity benefits workers.

The image of trade unionism where people believe unions only benefit those with their snouts in the trough does not and will not exist in ASLEF.

Delegates adopted the proposed way forward on the structure of ASLEF in 2009
HE executive committee has agreed to make a donation towards the work of the Modern Records Centre (MRC) at the University of Warwick which should open to the public at the end of next year.

The MRC is ‘an archive of international significance’ containing over 2,000 different collections documenting the world of work. It is one of the largest archives in the UK – and, thanks to donations like ours, is about to change dramatically. It’s going to be able to invite people in to see the records and make them much more accessible.

It already holds collections for over 80% of the trades unions past and present. Interestingly, it doesn’t just include high-profile unions like ASLEF, Unison or the TUC – it holds records of regional and specialist interest bodies such as the Birmingham Small Arms Company and the Coastal Tramp Shipowners’ Mutual Association.

We will be able to find papers on flashpoints in industrial relations history – like correspondence on the Wapping and Grunwick disputes - and the papers of notable union leaders.

Until now the Centre hasn’t been open to the public but it is being redeveloped to ensure the collections of labour history will be available and accessible for generations to come.

If you would like to hear more about using the space for workshops, seminars or exhibitions or would like further details, contact Gareth Owen at Gareth.owen@warwick.ac.uk

THE union is implementing a targeted and structured training programme for our reps, activists and members across the country, says National Organiser Simon Weller.

Training for activists will be separate from ASLEF’s ‘Proud to Educate’ programme.

‘The aim is to give our representatives and activists the tools to do the job – combining practical skills, theoretical understanding or simply by encouraging the self confidence to stand up and be counted; he says.

Courses at the end of last year were useful experiments and included:

- Public speaking
- Group presentation skills
- Risk assessment training
- Changes in Employment Legislation
- Political and economic liberalisation

The training for 2010 courses is already planned for:

- Legal rights and organisation seminar for Freightliner Heavyhaul reps
- Branch Secretaries Course (2 – 4 March)
- AAD Delegates course

Simon has arranged that the TUC’s education department will provide local representative courses that will be rolled out across the length of the country.

‘These specifically ASLEF courses will cover the role of the representative, understanding and using the machinery of negotiation, legal rights as a rep and the equality agenda (using social justice as a means to progress an agenda for all).

‘They will improve negotiation skills, advocacy skills and how to communicate with both members and management.

‘They’re not aimed at turning out bureaucrats - but effective organisers and active representatives who have the confidence and tools to be able to act independently.’

‘He says the work of our Company Council representatives is comparable to the full time officials of some general unions, covering pay, conditions, summary disciplines and other far reaching negotiations. This is why we will be taking the current TUC training syllabus for full time officers and modifying it to meet the needs of our company councils. This programme will begin in the coming few months.

‘We will also emphasise using modern technology in communication and organisation, such as the effective use of email, social networking, desktop publishing, spreadsheets and databases. ’We need to do more than get a message out,’ Simon says. ‘We have to build effective and working organisations within ASLEF.’

‘There are also plans to provide a modern organising handbook for all activists and reps that will be improved and refined during the training sessions.

‘Clearly targeted and professionally resourced training for all ASLEF activists are going to be vital, especially if the Tories form the next Government,’ Simon says.
OMEN and men across the world will be celebrating International Women’s Day on 8 March. Within the UK, unions and women’s groups will be organising events to celebrate women’s achievements. ASLEF’s Women’s Representative Committee will be holding a drinks reception to celebrate the day at union head office. A speaker from the charity, Plan, will be talking about its ‘Because I am a Girl’ campaign which aims to improve the lives of girls in developing countries. The event is open to all members and if you can make it, please contact the union’s Policy and Communications Department to reserve your tickets. The phone number is 020 7317 8600 or you can email ljamess@aslef.org.uk

International Women’s Day is the story of ordinary women as makers of history, and it is rooted in the centuries-old struggle of women to participate in society on an equal footing to men. Both men and women will take the opportunity to mark the struggles that women have faced and to rejoice at successes like securing the freedom to vote, hold public office, gain the right to work, receive vocational training and recognise the progress that has been made in ending sexual discrimination in the workplace.

In 1910 the Socialist International meeting in Copenhagen established a Women’s Day to honour the movement for women’s rights and to assist in universal suffrage for women. As a result of this decision, the first International Women’s day was held in Europe on 19 March 1911.

Less than a week later, on 25 March, the tragic Triangle Shirtwaist Company Fire in New York City took the lives of 145 female garment workers, an event that led to significant changes to labour legislation in the United States. The women whose lives were lost in the Triangle Fire were remembered at subsequent International Women’s Days around the world.

In 1914 Russian women observed the last Sunday in February as their first International Women’s Day and used it to protest against the First World War. Because of the difference between the Julian calendar used in Russia and the Gregorian calendar used in the rest of Europe, the day became 8 March and was widely used by women across Europe to protest against war and campaign for peace.

In Britain the practise of celebrating International Women’s Day was revived by the women’s liberation movement in the 1970s.

Scottish women target drink and urge childcare

ATTENDED this year’s STUC women’s conference in the home town of the Chair Pauline Rourke, and Martin Keenan STUC President, who both welcomed us to Dundee and conference by telling us about the history of the strong women of the city. The theme of conference was ‘Women and the Economy’ and this was reflected in the motions and the speeches we heard.

Over the two days, conference was addressed by the STUC Youth Committee, STUC Disabled Workers Committee, STUC Black Workers Committee, Johann Lamont MSP, Nicola Sturgeon MSP and Ann McKechin MP. Conference was also joined by some local school children and Palestinian fire-fighters who were in Scotland doing training.

ASLEF’s motion was on ‘Scottish Women and Alcohol’. I told conference some alarming statistics – including the fact that 3% of breast cancer cases can be linked to alcohol abuse. I then went on to remind delegates how many units they were actually consuming when they drink, pointing out that the belief that one drink equates to one unit is not the case at all. The EIS seconded the motion talking about the effects of Foetal Alcohol Syndrome which occurs when a woman drinks during pregnancy leaving her child with learning difficulties, sometimes severe.

I also seconded a motion on childcare for shift workers. The mover had already highlighted that childcare is generally only available from 6am-6pm and recalled that when she asked the people ‘in power’ at previous conferences what was available for people who worked shifts the only answer she was given was – ‘Breakfast clubs!’ I then went on to explain to conference that the previous week I had been on nightshift, the following morning I started work at 4.40am and the week after I would be finishing around midnight. ‘Does anyone know where I can find childcare for that schedule?’ I asked.

Both our union’s motions were carried, and all-in-all, a productive and enjoyable time was had.

Gillian McVittie, District 2
SLEF took it in the neck in early November last year when John Humphries interviewed Mick Whelan on Radio 4’s flagship TODAY programme. Humphries is like a bulldog when he gets something between his teeth. That’s fine when he’s aiming at the right target for the right reasons – but the interview with Mick Whelan was not one of the occasions.

The issue was that First Capital Connect (FCC) had cancelled a large number of trains because it did not have enough drivers to drive them. The drivers - as is their right both contractually and morally – had decided not to work their rest days.

The interview went something like this:
Humphries: Why are ASLEF members preventing the trains from running?
[Ignoring answer from Whelan]
Humphries: Don’t you know that thousands of commuters are being badly inconvenienced?
[Ignoring answer from Whelan]
Humphries: As ASLEF members have been offered a pay rise in a recession, they should count themselves lucky!

I was having my breakfast as I listened to this. If I’d been eating cornflakes, I’d have spluttered them out in disgust - because at no time did Humphries even consider that the blame for the disruption lay at the door of the company.

The cancellations resulted from the deliberate FCC policy of employing fewer drivers than it should – and relying on voluntary overtime. The reason for this cunning plan? It’s cheaper to use existing drivers than pay for additional drivers training, national insurance, pensions and the like. And, the reason for this? Well, a relentless drive for profits to benefit shareholders would be my humble guess.

This got me thinking, ‘Why is it that unions are always blamed for strikes which are almost inevitably the result of something management has done?’

Gregor Gall, professor of Industrial Relations at the University of Hertfordshire, investigates...

**DISTORTED THOUGHTS AND MEMORIES**
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This got me thinking, ‘Why is it that unions are always the fall guys here? Why can’t the media see the wood for the trees?’

Workers only take industrial action when employer and management do certain things. Industrial action is the effect, the symptom and the reaction - not the cause. Management’s actions are the cause, the stimulus and the originating reason.

And I believe the ‘Winter of Discontent’ is the reason our beloved media relentlessly makes the unions the fall-guys.

The enduring image in the public mind of this ‘78-79 strike of low paid public sector workers is uncollected litter spoiling the streets, unwashed linen piling up in hospital laundries and the dead left unburied.

Every clutch of strikes that happen in close proximity to each other are then fitted into the straightjacket of a ‘winter,’ ‘autumn,’ ‘summer’ or ‘spring of discontent.’ There is really no other framework used.

**KEEP PEDDLING NONSENSE**

So the story is established. It is one of workers in the wrong inconveniencing the public. It hardly ever asks, ‘What has management done to provoke this reaction - given that striking involves loss of pay and is a breach of contract?’

This is despite the fact that many journalists were on strike in the original ‘winter of discontent,’ most members of the National Union of Journalists who saw employers derecognising their union from John O’Groats to Land’s End. How can they continue to peddle such patent nonsense?

So as trade unionists, the next time the mail doesn’t turn up, the ferries don’t run or the planes don’t fly because of strikes, I hope you’ll remember there are at least two sides to every story.

If – despite your best intentions - you’ve been conditioned by the media and society at large to have the knee-jerk reaction of ‘Bloody Union!’ - at least remember the words ‘Ruddy Management,’ too!
Welsh rail for the 21st century

Of all the UK, Wales is the least best served for rail services. This is despite growth in passengers numbers and an increased demand for our services, both freight and passenger. ASLEF has been pushing for improvements across Wales. These are some of the main points we have been making to Parliament’s Welsh Affairs Committee and the Welsh Labour Party.

Keith Norman, General Secretary

PASSENGERS AND DEMAND
ASLEF wants to see bold planning to create an expansion of the Welsh rail network. The demand from passengers and freight carriers backs up our argument. In terms of passengers, the increases are self-evident. Between 2006/07 and 2007/08 passenger journeys went up 9.3% on Arriva Trains Wales and passenger kilometres went up 12.7%. Since 1995/96 passenger journeys either beginning or ending in Wales are up by 51%.

ELECTRIFICATION
The union has long campaigned for more electrification of the Welsh rail network so we applauded the Government’s July 2009 decision to announce a programme of electrification of the Great Western Line, a major step forward for both passengers and staff. The eight year upgrade to the London-Swansea line demonstrates the need for long term planning in rail.

We also want to see the electrification of all or part of the ‘Borderlands Line’ between Bidston and Wrexham which would provide a more frequent and efficient service, potentially leading to more passengers using the connection to commute to London – as well as increasing passenger service capacity on the Wrexham and Shropshire railway.

RAILS ACROSS WALES
ASLEF calls for more frequent services across Wales. A Passenger Focus survey showed that just 41% of passengers on the line between Aberystwyth and Shrewsbury are satisfied with the service. It also showed that passengers want hourly services as well as better punctuality improvements which require enhanced infrastructure and signalling. While we welcome the investment of £13 million into the Cambrian Line to improve reliability and punctuality the union firmly believes that ensuring a higher frequency service is equally important.

CUTS MUST BE FOUGHT
We remain concerned that some services may be cut as a result of the economic downturn. This would have a counter productive effect on targets to reduce carbon emissions and promote rail use. There are currently two services an hour between Cardiff and Swansea and there are concerns that this could be halved - a real step back for rail transport and the Welsh economy.

TRACK UPGRADES
ASLEF argues for greater investment in track - highlighting the many services which should be extended which would allow trains between London and Swansea to run at 125mph and thereby cutting journey time to two hours. This would benefit all South West Wales. As evidence that more frequent services are required, we pointed out that passenger journeys from Swansea station have increased 34% since 1995-96. We’ve also highlighted passenger journeys at Bridgend increasing by 81% since 1995-96 and argued that the evening service from London should be re-established.

BOOST FOR FREIGHT
We insist on a progressive Welsh rail freight policy. Transferring freight from road to rail has enormous environmental and road capacity benefits with the average freight train able to remove 50 HGV journeys from roads. Benefits include improved road safety, quality of air and relief from road congestion which costs businesses nationally £17 billion per annum. It’s particularly important that freight is supported given the impact of the economic downturn in steel and other industries on the sector in south Wales.

OPEN THE LINES
We must open new lines or re-open closed lines. We have pointed to the success of the Cardiff-Ebbw Valley line which has doubled its passenger numbers. This shows that estimates for new lines are often vastly underestimated. With oil prices increasing and more awareness of global warming, many people are seeking alternatives to the car. We need to see a new confidence in rail patronage.
Could Welsh voting system help reinvigorate politics?

Is the voting system in the UK a reasons for people being turned off by politics – and could the Welsh model help to involve them again? We asked Andrew Davies, Welsh Assembly Member for Swansea West and Finance Minister in the Welsh Assembly Government, for his views …

The turn out inelectionsinthe U K is dwindling. Last year’s Euro pean Election turnout slumped to 23%, a historic low. Labour returned just 28% of the vote, lower than the 28.3% it got in the 1983 General Election under Michael Foot. Wales fared no better. Whereas nationally the fall was around 13%, in Wales it was 15%. Many constituencies in Wales - such as Islwyn, Neath, Swansea East and Rhondda - saw drops of more than 30%.

In the General and Local Council elections we use the First Past the Post (FPTP) system, where the candidate who gets the largest number of votes wins, even if they don’t get an overall majority. The party that gets the largest number of MPs forms the government, again if it fails to win an overall majority of the votes.

FPTP favours systems where two parties dominate – like the UK and USA. The era of tribal class politics represented by Labour and the Conservatives is not over - a mistake too many make - but I believe it is in irreversible decline. For example in 1951 Labour and the Conservatives captured 96.5% of votes cast in Scotland. By 1983 that grip had been loosened to 64%, and it declines election by election.

REFLECTING THE VOTERS

However many elections in the UK and continental Europe use different voting systems where the number of seats which a political party wins is based on the share or proportion of the votes that party gets - better known as Proportional Representation (PR).

For example, the European elections in 2009 were based on a form of PR. Wales was 'one constituency' and the number of seats won by each party reflected the share of the votes it won. So in Wales, Labour, the Tories, Plaid Cymru and UKIP now have one MEP each.

In the elections for the Welsh Assembly and Scottish Parliament another form of PR has been used since they were set up in 1999. As a result, the elected bodies they create represent more accurately the voting intentions of the whole electorate.

The Welsh Assembly is made up of 60 Assembly Members (AMs) elected via a form of PR called the Additional Member System (AMS). Of these, 40 Assembly Members are elected via the FPTP system and the remaining 20 AMs are elected via a PR system based on a second ballot where you are asked to vote for the party – rather than candidate - of your choice.

In Wales this has resulted in coalitions with either the Liberal Democrats or Plaid Cymru to establish a Labour-led Government in Wales.

SHOT IN FOOT?

So why would Labour favour PR if it makes it more difficult for Labour to form a government in Wales? In 1997 Labour committed to giving the people of Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland the chance to have their own devolved government. There were real fears that if the FPTP voting system was used then the Welsh Assembly would be dominated by one Party and would not reflect the variety of views of modern Wales, and therefore lack legitimacy – so it was decided to use the ‘fairer’ and more proportional voting system. Furthermore PR tends to produce more consensual politics and hence more widely agreed policies, which many prefer to the more adversarial approach of Westminster.

PR also has its draw backs of course. It can give undue influence to smaller parties and the PR system helped the BNP to gain a foothold in the UK through the 2009 European elections.

The FPTP system is historically embedded in British politics, and advocates claim that while the system may be simple and crude it has given the UK a stable government. Critics claim that the FPTP system does not reflect the views of their communities. If they vote for a minority party such as the Greens or an Independent then under FPTP they are unlikely to ever win enough votes to return an MP let alone form a Government. Under these rules many people say, why vote at all if my voice will never be represented?

Proportional Representation accurately represents the voting intentions of the electorate
HEN Gwynfor Evans became Plaid Cymru’s first elected Member of Parliament in 1966, few people would have predicted that his party would be partners in a devolved Welsh Assembly coalition government just over forty years later. Fewer still would have believed that Plaid would be governing in Wales alongside its long-standing political adversaries, the Labour Party. But when Labour failed to secure an overall majority following the 2007 Assembly elections, it was forced to turn to Plaid Cymru for support, and party leaders Rhodri Morgan and Ieuan Wyn Jones eventually signed the ‘One Wales’ agreement which forms the basis of the current coalition government in Cardiff Bay.

Plaid’s transition from small political party with a few Westminster representatives to members of a coalition government in Wales has been steady and unspectacular. For decades it was closely associated by large sections of the electorate with Welsh language and cultural issues, and often found it difficult to gain support outside of its traditional Welsh-speaking strongholds in the north and west.

In many ways, all of that changed following the establishment of the Welsh Assembly in 1997. For the first time ever, Plaid would be competing in a general election in an exclusively Welsh context, and this fact, coupled with an electoral system containing an element of proportional representation, led to the party winning 17 seats in the first ever Welsh Assembly elections in 1999. That number fell to 12 in 2003, but rose to 15 after the 2007 election, although it recently fell to 14 following Mohammad Asghar’s decision to leave Plaid for the Conservatives. Plaid currently has three Westminster MPs and one Member of the European Parliament.

Considering its lack of government experience, Plaid appears to have coped reasonably well with its new role in the Assembly. It did, however, disappoint some of its own supporters by its failure to ensure the launch of a proposed Welsh language daily newspaper, ‘Y Byd’ (‘The World’) in 2008, even though the One Wales coalition agreement appeared to suggest that such a newspaper would be established. Many Welsh speakers had eagerly awaited the arrival of a daily newspaper in their own language and viewed this as a missed opportunity.

The next few years promise to be a fascinating period for Plaid Cymru, the Welsh Assembly and for Welsh politics in general. At present the Assembly only has limited law-making powers, but under the terms of the ‘One Wales’ agreement, a referendum on primary law-making powers may be held before May 2011. This might lead to further constitutional change and devolved powers from Westminster to Cardiff Bay.

In some respects, Plaid’s political progress can be likened to a slow train gradually gathering momentum. Unlike its sister party in Scotland, the SNP, it has rarely grabbed the national political headlines or enjoyed electoral success on a similar scale. It has, however, helped to create a situation which may lead to the granting of primary law-making powers for the Welsh Assembly. Not so long ago such a political change in Wales would have seemed unthinkable.

In many ways, all of that changed following the establishment of the Welsh Assembly in 1997. For the first time ever, Plaid would be competing in a general election in an exclusively Welsh context, and this fact, coupled with an electoral system containing an element of proportional representation, led to the party winning 17 seats in the first ever Welsh Assembly elections in 1999. That number fell to 12 in 2003, but rose to 15 after the 2007 election, although it recently fell to 14 following Mohammad Asghar’s decision to leave Plaid for the Conservatives. Plaid currently has three Westminster MPs and one Member of the European Parliament.

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Pinching problems at ERTMS

HE European Rail Traffic Management System (ERTMS) trial on the Cambrian Line is costing tens of millions of pounds to introduce. Yet the UK trial – proposed for the Cambrian line in mid-Wales, has not yet begun partly because of a penny-pinching attitude. The union naturally seeks some allowance for undertaking these vital trials, which management refuse to concede.

It is the latest in a series of difficulties to beset the project, which was announced in October 2006, and was supposed to be up and running last year, and to begin a roll-out across the UK next year. The trial consists of installing ERTMS In-Cab ETCS (European Train Control System) level 2 into cabs on the line. It would involve removing existing signals and RETB boards as the system does not require conventional fixed signals.

The union nationally has been concerned to stress that ERTMS will not be a threat to the driver’s job. ASLEF is confident that it will enable drivers to be more secure in driving abilities and that it could secure the driving job for the long-term. The technical specifications spell out that there must be a driver as the system is not compatible with automatic train operation.

In principle the union welcomes ERTMS. It is a signalling and train protection system which is designed to replace the often incompatible safety systems currently used by European railways. Because they grew separately there is little more in common than standard gauge. There are differences in voltages, loading gauges, coupling systems, signalling and control systems.

Specifications and regs are being discussed at national level, but first the problems in the proposed trial area need to be ironed out. Until then, the ERTMS trial looks as if it will remain a simulator in Machynlleth.

ERTMS: out go the signals, in come the screens

W. J. R. SQUANCE REMEMBERED

A period of ASLEF’s long history was recalled recently when the General Secretary received a letter from Carole Davies in Swansea. She is the great-grand-daughter of W. J. R. Squance, an outspoken and crusading anti-fascist who was General Secretary of the union between 1936 and 39. Keith invited her to come along and meet delegates at our 2010 AAD (annual conference) which will be held in Swansea.

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DAWSON STOBART A FULL LIFE
DAWSON was born in 1922 in Easington, County Durham to Ada and Fred Stobbart and grew up in the austerity of the First World War. He made his way to Barnet in north London, where he found work, set up home and sent for Ada and his seven siblings. Dawson completed his education locally, earning money as a delivery boy for the Home and Colonial Store.

I was with him at a local watering hole when he met Joan Mattoc, the woman he would marry in September 1947. She was fiery and forthright in contrast to Dawson's calm and firm nature.

A life-long supporter of Sunderland, and active in the Boy's Brigade, he started on the footplate grade with his brother Bill at Hornsey Loco. Bill sadly suffered a heart attack and died on his way to work in 1974.

Driver Dawson moved to Kings Cross when Hornsey closed in 1968. He told endless tales of his work experience and colleagues such as 'Side Rod Sid' and enjoyed playing dominoes and crib.

Dawson had many artistic talents and played the piano by ear as well as being a keen gardener and a talented bricklayer. Unfortunately Dawson suffered a stroke in retirement from which he never completely recovered. Although he ended up in a nursing home, his family ensured he came to his ex work colleagues' reunions. Sadly a bout of pneumonia at the end of last year meant he went to join his beloved wife Joan and daughter Marion. We sent our condolences to his remaining daughter Tina and to all his family. May he RIP.

PAUL FISH A VERY BRAVE MAN
IT IS with deep regret that I have to announce the passing of Brighton Driver Paul Fish after losing his battle against cancer. Paul was 45.

Paul started his railway career as a Trainman at Brighton in 1992 before becoming a Driver working for Connex South Central.

When Virgin Cross Country opened a Brighton depot in 2000, Paul transferred and was elected as Local Level Rep - a position he held until the depot closed in 2008.

Paul then started working for First Capital Connect. He was just starting to get his road learning underway when he was diagnosed with his illness.

Paul leaves behind a daughter Molly, 15 and son Amos, 10.

At a very moving and well-attended funeral on 9 October a poem was read out that he had written himself for the occasion, praising his life. Paul's former colleagues from Cross Country came from as far as Bristol and Bournemouth to join ASLEF officers from District 1 to pay their respects to a dedicated, hard-hearted John Bull thinks today that by having a lot of railway companies, they compete with each other, and so he gets himself and his goods carried cheaper, but this is a mistake. The railway companies today have their association, and it would be difficult to find any real competition.

DAVE GEORGE JUST 51
IT IS with sadness that I announce the untimely passing of Driver Dave George at the age of 51. We thought he was making progress with the illness he'd suffered for eight months and hoped he would soon be out of hospital. His death has hit everyone very hard.

He started on the railway in 1977 as a booking office clerk at Stourbridge Junction before venturing onto the footplate at Wolverhampton as a secondman in 1978. Dave had spells at Stourbridge, Birmingham New Street (where he got his drivers job) and Worcester before returning to Wolverhampton in 1989.

Davewas a devoted soul mate to Sarah, loving dad to Adele, Emma and Sasha and had a passion for motorbikes and Welsh rugby.

He was a true footplate man - always smiling and chuckling even in the months before he went off sick.

Over 200 people attended Dave’s funeral, showing the esteem in which Dave was held by all rail workers, working and retired. God bless you, mate. We miss you.

Nigel Harkness, Secretary, Wolverhampton Branch

ERNEST GROOM KINGS CROSS MAN
WE have been informed that Ernie Groom passed away on the 7 November 2009.

Ernie started his railway career at KX Top shed moving to Kings Cross Station when the Top Shed closed. He was always a pleasant, smiling, chatty chap.

On retiring Ernie and his wife moved to live on Hailing Island, to be near their daughters Brenda and Dawn. Ernie busied himself in his garden and potting shed and was always ready to do odd jobs for people.

He’s now gone to join his wife who died twelve years ago. Our condolences go to Brenda, Dawn and all family and friends.

P. J. Smith, Reporter, Kings Cross branch

KEEPING TRACK

The February 1910 Journal complained about the class system on trains while 100 years ago there were calls for extended education…

100 YEAR AGO
A letter from ‘Conference’ wanted the end of the ‘ridiculous social system’ of different classes on trains …

“… many passenger trains are run to-day unnecessarily, with a large percentage of the seats empty, and that most companies lose on the first-class passengers, and so the poor, who use the third, have got to put up with inferior accommodation, and help to pay for the elaborate provision made for the rich. How often do we see a coach with two great roomsy first – class compartments, upholstered in the best style, having a double gas jet and a lavatory for each, with no one in them? The waste of power in this country, caused by running about empty and partly empty stock, is something alarming, and is caused chiefly by pandering to a ridiculous social system, together with so-called competition. Hard-headed John Bull thinks today that by having a lot of railway companies, they compete with each other, and so he gets himself and his goods carried cheaper, but this is a mistake. The railway companies today have their association, and it would be difficult to find any real competition”. The February 1960 edition of the Journal there was a call for a ‘New Charter for Teenagers’ …

“Fix a date for raising the school-leaving age to 16 and announce it now. And make plans to introduce in the 1970s compulsory part-time education for all boys and girls of 16 and 17 who are not still at school. These two firm proposals have gone to the Government from an advisory council that has been investigating the educational future of teenagers. The TUC was one of the public bodies to submit evidence.

The report declares that the demand for better-educated workers is growing in almost all branches of industry. The extra year should be spent on courses designed to challenge and bring out the resources of the individual - and not simply be a continuation of what has gone before.”

Extracts selected and edited by Jane Pimlott
John Evans: rails of the unexpected!

LISTENING TO 91-YEAR-OLD JOHN EVANS’ STORIES IS LIKE READING CHAPTERS FROM ‘BOY’S OWN’ ADVENTURES. HIS TALES RANGE FROM PERSIA TO BLAYDON AND FROM FARCE TO TRAGEDY. CHRIS PROCTOR WENT TO MEET THIS REMARKABLE MAN ...

It is incredible that this vibrant and enthusiastic story-teller has been retired longer than most of our members have been driving. Now 91, John is a born raconteur whose theatrical presentation and recall of detail enhances his incredible tales. How many other retired drivers do you know who can toss in a casual, ‘Did I tell you about the time I flattened the Pope?’

As you would expect of a man who swapped his white chemist-shop coat for black cleaners’ overalls to begin work on the railways on 1 May 1937, he paints pictures of a different era: a time when drivers, lacking money for lodgings, would camp in tents at Tweedmouth, cooking on messroom fires and collecting potatoes from the fields and herring from the docks: an epoch when ‘Buttons’ Roberts would go to the cinema all ready to be called out to put in a shift: when John would stop his train at remote stations on now-closed lines around Gateshead to fill tin baths with hot water from the loco for the weekly wash. Where lumps of coal would be exchanged for vegetables or the odd rabbit.

RAILWAY CLEANER TO MILITARY INSTRUCTOR
From this north-eastern world emerged a youngster of 20, headed for the Longmoor military camp, home to the 79 Railways Squadron and other elements of the Royal Engineers. John struck up a friendship with a driver who tutored him about locomotives so well that railway cleaner John soon became military instructor Evans. It is a mark of his success that he was offered promotion, which he turned down because he wanted to be in an operating company. He wanted adventure. It came in spades.

Within months he was driving trains through the desert from Basra in Persia (a term Churchill preferred to Iraq) up through Andimeshk and over the mountains past Tehran as far as the Russian border. The journeys were often 900 miles each way, with saboteurs to cope with as well as temperatures that ranged from 150 degrees in the cab in the desert to minus 30 in the mountains.

Add to these hardships the time one of his superior officers held a gun to his temple to explain ‘army discipline’ to a reluctant John, a 28-day dose of ‘field punishment’ and the fact that he had no leave for three years and you get an idea of his experiences of these war years.

MINES AND MUSSOLINI
But trekking over deserts and mountains wasn’t enough excitement for Brother Evans, who volunteered for mine disposal duties, and duly moved south of the Mediterranean to Egypt and Libya. After enduring this stress-filled job for six months, he joined the invasion of Italy at Salerno. It was now 1944 and John was offered the choice between a medal and a week’s leave. He opted for the leave and was told he could go ‘anywhere except Rome’. He hitched a lift from a US lorry and two days later woke up in the Coliseum.

He found lodgings with a lawyer whose brother-in-law supervised admissions to audiences with the Pope. ‘I was a Presbyterian – but I said OK,’ John recounts. The Pontiff was carried in by Polish military and put down in front of him. Moments later one of the Poles fainted, falling forward and pushing John onto the Pope!

A year further on – in which John had driven Mussolini’s train and even slept in his bed – he was back in the north-east as a cleaner at Gateshead. ‘That’s how seniority worked,’ he says, with a slight wrinkle to his nose. But there were other challenges apart from promotion on the railways. He and his new wife had saved the cash to buy a house which her mother passed over to the agent. Incredibly this man left without giving a receipt, and dropped dead on his way back to his office. That was the end of both the cash...
and the house for the newlyweds.

CRASH COURSE FOR CHANGE
Eventually they found a railway cottage to rent nine miles away from the depot at Blaydon where John, aged 30, finally got his train driving job. ‘I had some wonderful experiences visiting the old coal towns of Northumberland,’ he says. But his career had one more shocking adventure just around the corner. At the end of July 1967 John was driving the London-Edinburgh prototype English Electric DP2 loco at over 60 mph when he saw a cloud of dust in front of him. He braked, but not quickly enough to prevent a collision with a freight train that had derailed from another track and hung over the line John was using. The derailed cement wagons tore off the side of the express, leaving 45 people injured and seven dead. John, uninjured, used his St John’s ambulance skills to do what he could for the survivors.

By the time he reached 60, John felt it was time for a change. He’d done most of what he’d wanted on the railway, including driving the Flying Scotsman. He felt sorely the loss of his wife and his children were away at universities. The links were a very mixed bag. That was when life took another adventurous turn – at ten in the evening at Newcastle’s platform 9. That was where he met Phyllis, who has been his partner for the last 30 years. She was working as a representative on the train run by Saga – the specialist firm for retired people.

John left the rail and worked with Phyllis all over the UK coast and later doing cross-Channel coach trips, Rhine cruises and holidays across Europe. John was 72 when ‘his hips began to bother him’ and he gave the work up.

Remarkable stories? Yes indeed – and I know this article only scratches the surface. I haven’t mentioned John’s visit to Buckingham Palace for his St John’s work (where happily he refrained from flattening the monarch!); his being made a freeman of Berwick on Tweed at age 21 (because one of his forefathers had been hospitable to James 1) or his successful audition to be a TV singer.

He had plenty of energy to continue – but I was exhausted!
Exec report and ASLEF honours at New Street

THE November meeting of the Birmingham New Street branch said farewell to two of our members and welcomed our executive committee member Dave Calfe.

The meeting followed the established pattern of branch business, dealing first with correspondence and a succession of reports from representatives. This was followed by a ‘state of the nation’ speech delivered by Dave Calfe from the echelons of the EC.

Formal business over, we went on to make presentations to two of our members based at Birmingham New St on their retirement.

The first was Dave Cartwright who retired on health grounds after 35 years’ service. Dave started at Stourbridge depot in August 1974 as a second man. After being made redundant he went to Bescot before returning to Stourbridge as things picked up on the rails.

Dave got his driver’s job at New Street in 1979 when just 21. He did about 6 years on the mainline then unfortunately suffered ill health and moved into the restricted link based at Curzon St, Duddeston, Tyseley and finally Soho D.E.D. – all of which come under the umbrella that is Birmingham New Street!

Dave also became a health and safety rep for the Soho drivers and also a branch trustee. After retirement he is continuing his hobby of being a self-taught mechanic - so if anyone wants their car serviced, Dave’s your man!

The second member to retire was Brian Sumner. Brian started as a cleaner at the Saltley depot, Birmingham in January 1970. He moved through the ranks and his final move was to Birmingham New Street via a stint at Leamington Spa where he eventually resided in the local link and the great city line.

Brian finally retired in June 2009 and said ‘I enjoyed every minute on the railway, the railway family are a great bunch and I love the way drivers look after their own’. Brian is also very proud of his time in ASLEF – ‘a wonderful union’, he said.

Martin Bromage-Griffiths, Reporter, Birmingham New Street

Fond farewells from branch chair Bill Goode (left) and EC member Dave Calfe (right) to Dave Cartwright (in the white shirt) and Brian Sumner

Thanks to safety first Eamonn

THE December meeting of the Arriva Cross Country / ASLEF Safety Advisory Committee concluded with a presentation from North West Regional Organiser Colin Smith to Eamonn Tague (Derby) upon his retirement as Secretary of the SAC.

Eamonn has been a stalwart Health and Safety Representative for over 10 years, being instrumental in helping to form a Safety Advisory Committee at Cross Country Trains - under two separate TOCs.

Colin Smith spoke glowingly of Eamonn’s achievements, initiatives and abilities and those sentiments were strongly echoed by guest speaker Alan Moss (ASLEF H&S Representative Manchester, Virgin West Coast) who went on to praise Eamonn for his comradeship and guidance.

Brian Holmes (Plymouth), the newly elected SAC Secretary, added his thanks and wished Eamonn continued success as an ASLEF activist.

Eamonn’s contribution to safety has been greatly appreciated. From left to right: Gareth Williams (Longsight), Steve James (Birmingham), Steve Leverett (Cambridge), Brian Holmes (Plymouth), Ian Westwater (Edinburgh), Eamonn Tague (Derby), Colin Smith (Fulltime Officer), Alistair Dyson (Leeds), Gary Wilson (Newcastle), Alan Moss (Piccadilly), Andy Gregg (Bristol)

Eamonn is expected to maintain a high profile and strong presence within ASLEF through his role as Branch Secretary at Derby.

Gareth Williams, Longsight branch
Regal do at King’s Cross

OUR photo shows - from left to right - the King’s Cross ASLEF Branch Chairman Kevin Moir taking the opportunity at Bandy’s Do on 4 December to present five-year ASLEF membership badges to Drivers Ian Daveney (East Coast), Ester Guerra (East Coast) and Steve Daveney (First Capital Connect).

I am informed that there was a good turn out from both working and retired members, so ‘come on down and chill out’ with us at our next meetings which all begin at twelve noon and will be on:
- 5 March at the Lucas Arms, Grays Inn Road, King’s Cross
- 4 June at the Lucas Arms, Grays Inn Road, King’s Cross
- 27 August at the Hatfield Social Club
- 3 December at the Lucas Arms, Grays Inn Road, King’s Cross

Peter Smith, Reporter, King’s Cross branch

December branch at Tilbury

TILBURY held their Christmas Branch meeting on 13 December at the LT club at Hornchurch. It was a particularly well attended meeting as there was a possible strike looming with Freightliner Intermodal/FLHH. In the event, the action was called off days later.

There was general concern from the membership that there was a general lack of information at grass roots level and that the circulars that were issued were a bit sketchy. Despite this, guest speakers Andy Morrison, Simon Weller and Heavy Haul business council rep Tony Venson brought us up to speed and gave the background to the problems with the companies.

Once the business was concluded Andy Morrison presented Peter Cross (Branch Chairman) with a tankard for the sterling work he had done over the last 12 years, allegedly not missing a single meeting. Peter said he was standing down to let some new blood take over the mantle.

Andy also thanked Steve Wilson - the outgoing Intermodal business council rep - for the work he had done over the years and hoped that Steve’s replacement would keep up the good standard of work. The meeting did overrun a tad and for those who remained, a rather enjoyable buffet was laid on.

I suspect that others, like myself, had a hard job eating the wife’s Sunday Roast when they got home!

Cliff Blackwell, Reporter – Tilbury Branch

Upcoming events

- **EDGE HILL REUNION**
  The next reunion at Edge Hill will be held on 12 February at Our Lady’s Chestnut Grove Wavertree beginning at 19.30. All ex-staff from Edge Hill Shed and Lime Street North Western and West Coast are invited - young and old! For further information contact Bro Osborne on 0151 289 8964.

- **KING’S CROSS REUNION**
  There will be a reunion of the King’s Cross branch on 5 March at the Lucas Arms, Grays Inn Road, King’s Cross.

50 year badge at Thornaby reunion

THE retired railway members who attended our reunion on 21 October in the Princess Helena pub were in real good form in quenching thirst and showing good humour.

We had a reasonable number of people attend, which was very satisfactory.

I have never been so surprised and astonished as when branch secretary Geoff Burton asked me to sit on a chair in the centre of our colleagues. I did, and it was quite emotional when Bro Burton made a short speech and presented me with our prestige 50-year badge, a unique medallion and a certificate.

I was deeply moved that our colleagues at Head Office and in the branch had thought about giving me this lovely accolade. I must reiterate my sincere thanks to Bro Burton for making the arrangements. It was fantastic. The period I had working at Hartlepool depot as a member of ASLEF was the highlight of my footplate career. Keep up the good work!

M.W. Daley, RMS, Hartlepool

Branch in good health at the Spa!

Over the past 12 months, we at Leamington Spa Branch have been very pleased to welcome the following ASLEF Officers to our meetings: Alan Griffiths - Company Council Secretary, Dave Calfe - EC member for District 6, Mick Whelan - District Organiser and Simon Weller - National Organiser.

We are only a small Branch, and to have regular, informative visits from senior ASLEF Officers means a great deal to us. Many thanks to all concerned.

At our December meeting, we were joined by Dave Calfe, and also had along both Vic Waite and Roy Woodward from the Retired Members section who reported on their various activities and outings over the previous year.

The Branch Officers at Leamington Spa want to publicly thank all the above for their support and visits to us, and we hope to see them all at future meetings of our branch.

Nick Walker, Reporter, Leamington Spa Branch
These are the pages where you talk to us. We welcome your letters, either by mail to the ASLEF 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!

I READ the report of progress on our Squash campaign in the January Journal – but I believe the 66 cabs have got so bad with age that they’re at the point of being a health hazard.

The brake dust ingress is getting worse – you’ve only to look at the gauges for proof. In the 21st century we shouldn’t be inhaling this stuff and letting it build up in our lungs. After all, asbestos was harmless once. Remember? It also shows how bad the cabs are for draughts.

I understand that cab cleaning used to be a fitters job but it was removed to reduce their workload. So whose job is it now, if anybody’s? I requested cleaning stuff at Knottingly weeks ago but none’s been forthcoming, so at least the shed man could do something.

Noise levels? I’ve put forward suggestions to DB which I’ve had to take almost to the top of the company to get them tested, along with other measures.

If I can find them why has nobody else in EWS/DB or ASLEF bothered? The rattling side windows on several locos could be cured cheaply and we all know noise causes tiredness. It is deplorable that we have to endure conditions like this in a safety critical industry.

The window tinting has mostly gone now – leaving a sticky mess we can’t see through. When 66s were fitted with mirrors it was praised as a great safety feature. The tinting makes them even worse. OK, it may have been drivers who removed it, but surely something should have been done by now?

I’ve pushed to get scratched windscreen changed and think the union should insist on better standards of wiper/washer efficiency as a matter of urgency. And I don’t think we should take disgusting cabs off shed. We’ve all endured very unpleasant items on cab floors.

Also the No 2 cab door locks are of a poor design and often crack. ASLEF should push for locos to be taken out of service when this happens. After all, it is a guard against noise as well as being a door.

The new seats were great but are now ageing. The swivel locks no longer hold the seat firmly and the vibration is excessive. Hopefully the water suspension ones mentioned in last month’s Journal will cure this.

Also some of Network Rail staff giving emergency broadcasts need to speak louder. On several occasions I’ve been unable to hear them over the noise of a 66 loco. I’ve reported all these things to management but it still goes on.

So let’s hope 2010 sees the country out of recession, our members back on full pay with increased job security, a railway network fit for the 21st century – and much improved, or scrapped, 66s!

Phil Garner, Knottingly

MORE THAN JUST A UNION

FOLLOWING the terrible floods in our area late in 2009, I was very happy to have an email from my brothers at Banbury branch of ASLEF offering financial support to any of our members who may be suffering some hardship after the event.

I would like to say a big thanks to Banbury Branch Secretary Andrew Kelly and all the members of his branch for the very generous donation they made.

This just reinforces the slogan I see all the time - ASLEF is more than just a union.

David Hardie, Secretary, Workington branch

ANY OTHER RSI EVIDENCE?

AFTER joining the railway in 2000 working for Connex, I had three enjoyable years driving the slam-door 400 series. Then the 375 Electrostar units were foisted on us. After 18 months driving them I began to have problems in my left arm which was, in 2005, diagnosed as ‘golfer’s elbow’, a repetitive strain injury.

I’ve had three years off-track under Southern and two operations. Now I’ve been sacked on the grounds of incapability.

If any other driver has had a similar experience please contact me on my email which is steadamas@yahoo.co.uk

Paul Steadman, former Barnham Driver

WE’LL MISS OUR GRANT

I WOULD like to take this opportunity to thank Brother Peter Grant for all the hard work he has put in over the last six years, as company council chairman. It saddens me to think we can lose such a good representative, but after speaking to Peter and hearing why he’s resigning his position, I have to say I fully understand and totally agree with him.

He believed by continuing it would seem he agreed with the EC decision to resolve our recent dispute, so he felt he had no option. I’m sure many people will agree with me that Peter has done the honourable thing.

I know there will always be the cynics pointing out that he was up for re-election in April, but knowing Peter as I do I know he is always prepared for the fight.

I’d also like to wish Peter’s successor on the company council Gary Boyle all the best for the future – and to reiterate my thanks to Peter and to wish him every success in his new role as branch secretary.

J. Moorhouse, Driver, Manchester Piccadilly

WHERE’S THE ROTA LINK PAGES?

I AM disappointed, to say the least, that the Rota Link No. pages have been omitted from
the 2010 Diary.
These two pages, at a glance, allow a Driver
to see the entire year’s R/D’s and work rota.
Now you have to trawl through 52 weeks /
104 pages to do the same.
Would the diary administrator please
ensure that these important pages are not
omitted in the future.
C. Martin, Waterloo Nine Elms

PETE WILL BE MISSED
MEMBERS at Peterborough would like to place
on record our thanks to P. Baines who has
recently retired from the First Capital Connect
Company council owing to ill health.
Pete has served on the Company Council
for many years and was a great help to me in
my early days as a local rep at Peterborough.
His professional advice was always welcome
and his good humour always enjoyed.
We at Peterborough wish Pete a long and
happy retirement - no doubt most of it spent
in a warmer climate!
G Kerwin, Peterborough

PUT ME BACK IN THE
POLITICAL FUND
SOMETIMES ago I decided to opt out of paying
into the political fund as a protest against the
direction the union was taking under the
leadership of Mick Rix. However, I think the
change in leadership has put the union in a
much better position, so I would like to start
paying contributions into the political fund
once again.
I feel it will be especially important that
ASLEF has a strong political fund over the
coming years, as it seems that the
Conservatives will probably win the next
general election, making our influence in
government all the more difficult.
Please make the necessary arrangements to
restart my contributions to the political fund.
Stuart Marlow, Birmingham

THANKS ...
THANKS to all the branches and members
who voted for me in my recent re-election as
District Organiser for District 8.
The loyalty, support and friendship shown
by officials and representatives throughout the
process were re-invigorating for me on a
personal level.
I wish also to commend the other
candidate, Finn Brennan, for running an
election that though hard-fought never
became over personalised.
Of course we disagreed about some issues
and I will be doing my best to mutually
address them so that we can continue
together to serve and defend our members’
interests and conditions in the years ahead.
Steve Grant, District Organiser

… AND THANKS AGAIN!
I WOULD like to put into writing my thanks
and gratitude to the members of Paddington
and Bristol Branches for their support and
votes that saw me recently elected as FGW
HSS Company Council Representative.
Special thanks to Neil G, Mike G, Andy C,
Kevin B and Neil L for all their backing and
hard work. I look forward to representing all
ASLEF members in our district, and to working
with the other Company Council Reps and our
recently re-elected District Organiser Stan
Moran. Thanks again.
Steve Austin, Paddington Branch

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

KENT AREA NUM-MARYLEBONE ASLEF 25TH ANNIVERSARY
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Price £5 plus £1 p&p. All profits to City of
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Unions and the quest for peace

Frank Jackson, the co-Chair of the World Disarmament Campaign, says unions have a vital role in the efforts to secure world peace – and he argues that we don’t do enough...

GLOBAL military spending for 2008 was $1.464 trillion. That's $2.78 million every minute, and the US accounts for almost half of this figure according to last year’s Stockholm International Peace Research Institute Yearbook.

At its launch, General Sir David Richards, Chief of the General Staff, claimed that we were in Afghanistan only to help the Afghan people to become responsible for their own security, and to protect that country from international terrorism. My response was a mixture of sadness, anger and despair. The idea that we can solve the problem of terrorism by yet more killing is misconceived, counter-productive, and a contradiction of all civilised values. 'Thou shalt not kill' is a foundation stone of all civilised society.

REVENGE NOT AID
9/11 was a heinous crime, but it was not an act of war. The US response was a knee-jerk reaction of people looking for revenge, combined with geo-political considerations. It was never designed to help the ordinary Afghan people. While the actual perpetrators were dead, international law could and should have been engaged in tracking down those behind them. The International Court of Justice, the International Criminal Court, Interpol and the Montreal Convention on Sabotage, to which both the US and Afghanistan belong, could all have played a role, and still could, although it is more difficult after subsequent events.

The human race needs to learn to solve its differences without periodic slaughter. It can be done, despite the common belief that war is the inevitable result of 'human nature'. As the late Harry Patch, the last surviving soldier from the First World War, said, 'War is organised murder'. The organisers, the world's leaders, have to make a deliberate decision to go to war, having the means to do so and believing that they can 'win'. But in modern war there are no winners, except the merchants of death, the military/industrial complex identified by former US President Eisenhower.

PREPARE FOR PEACE
The world is awash with more weapons of all kinds than ever in history. If the hoary old adage, 'if you want peace, prepare for war' had any validity, we would be in the most peaceful period ever. President Obama has not taken note of his predecessor's words. Receiving the Nobel Peace Prize he claimed, 'The instruments of war do have a role to play in preserving the peace'. He is wrong. The Taliban may be backward and obscurantist, but they, and even 'insurgents', are first and foremost people, and do not deserve to be arbitrarily killed. Not to mention the (literally) countless civilian casualties.

The Peace Society was founded in the early 20th century. Today, Housman's World Peace Directory lists several hundred organisations in the UK, and thousands worldwide, that are engaged in the quest for peace. There have been some victories, but the ultimate aim, the abolition of war, still seems a long way off. Only when the ordinary people of the world say to their leaders 'Enough is enough' will it finally be achieved. And that is where trade unions come in.

UNION FOR PEACE
Trade unions are the most powerful democratically controlled organisations representing workers at the heart of the economic system. Their rallying cry is the Brotherhood of Man and our common humanity. In general they support progressive causes – but they could do more.

They could demand the implementation of the Final Document of the 1978 UN General Assembly Special Session on Disarmament. Signed by all members of the UN, it outlined a programme for progressive general disarmament. Had the signatories fulfilled their obligations, the world would have been saved many of the horrors of the decades since. For example, there would be many fewer small arms, which kill at least 300,000 people every year. And resources saved could have helped reduce poverty which often is at the root of conflict.

The World Disarmament Campaign (WDC) was founded in 1979 by Fenner Brockway and Philip Noel-Baker to campaign for the implementation of the Final Document. When a second Special Session was held in 1982, the WDC presented a petition with 2.3 million signatures from the UK, and over 100 million worldwide, calling for just this. Sadly, although the document was again rubber stamped, no action was taken to put it into practice. This is what the WDC struggles for.

In its heyday WDC had many trade unions and trade union branches affiliated, including ASLEF. It also had a Trade Union Liaison Committee, and a TU representative on its Executive Committee. To again be in a position to make a significant contribution to achieving a peaceful world, it needs to rebuild those relationships. ASLEF’s renewed support would be a good start.

For more information about the WDC, visit http://www.world-disarm.org.uk/

Left to right: President Eisenhower concerned about military/industrial complex: Harry Patch, the last surviving soldier from the First World War, said, 'War is organised murder: 9/11 was a heinous crime, but it was not an act of war
Prize Crossword No. 46 set by TLC

Solution to Crossword No 45 which appeared in the January edition of the ASLEF Journal. Congratulations to Herbie White from Gidea Park

ACROSS
1 Train fare
8 Booking Office
11 Ring
12 Abate
13 Gobi
16 Intrude
17 Runalp
18 Special
20 Inshore
21 Eels
22 Scrap
23 Dial
26 Across the Road
27 Bobsleigh

DOWN
2 Rake
3 Ignoble
4 Floater
5 Rife
6 Round the Clock
7 School Holiday
9 Train Shed
10 High Heels
14 Audio
15 Gnash
19 Locusts
20 Ivanhoe
24 Solo
25 Brag

CLUES ACROSS
3 Fast train on a short run (8)
8 Food fish (4)
9 English County (10)
10 Operatic song (4)
11 Not warm (4)
13 Artists drawing frame (5)
17 Refund to someone who paid too much (6)
18 Capital city (6)
19 Brainwaves (5)
22 Light fawn colour (4)
24 Fluorescent lighting and signs using bright colours (4)
25 Place in the London Borough of Wandsworth (7,3)
26 Way out (4)
27 Found on the railway track (8)

DOWN
1 He has his own van at the rear of the train (5)
3 Men’s warm woolly headgear (9)
4 Marched up and down restlessly (5)
5 Single copy of a newspaper (5)
6 Short journeys (5)
7 Sparkling wine from the Rhine region of Germany (8)
12 London and North Eastern Railway, in short (4)
14 Gives information over the loud speaker (9)
15 Professional entertainers (8)
16 ---- Bedser, former cricketer (4)
20 Run away to get married (5)
21 ---- and save, economise (5)
22 Keen (5)
23 Wheeled vehicle found on the railway (5)

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

Thanks for all your responses to the 45th ASLEF crossword in the January 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.

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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

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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

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