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Devalued Pensions

Driverless Trains

McNulty Proposals

Fiction: Fantasy land of cableless Tubes

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Give me strength! The challenges ahead...

This is the first column I write as your general secretary. My first thoughts are for my predecessor, Keith Norman. It is due to his commitment and dedication that I now head a union that is stable in terms of membership and finances. And to be quite honest, we are going to need to be well equipped to resist the attacks on our conditions and our jobs that look inevitable over the coming years.

I took over the general secretary’s chair on the last day of November, the day of the biggest trade union demonstration for decades. Britain’s public servants came out in force in the face of their employers demanding that they pay more for worse pension conditions. We back public sector workers in that fight not only because it is morally just, but because our employers are watching the outcome as carefully as we are. But with far less benevolent motives.

We have also seen ignorant Tory politicians and their backers in the press enthusiastically backing wild talk about driverless trains that defies logic, but indicates a hostility to our grades we will need to overcome. Driverless trains are unsafe trains. The public knows that and the industry knows that. The problem is that many in our political class are unsullied by contact with either the public or with industry.

And then we will have to deal with the legacy of the McNulty Report. The government is to issue an ominously named ‘Command Paper’ early next year on the issue. Undoubtedly it will simply parrot Mr McNulty’s thoughts. Not that I dismiss all he had to say: when he blamed ‘fragmentation’ for the railways ills, I applauded him. But then he went on to propose more fragmentation. It sums up what being a ‘consultant’ means to me. Pay enough and you get the answer you want.

We will, as ever, have challenges to face in the coming years. But I know the union can count on you. And I promise you that you can count on me.

Mick Whelan
General Secretary
Fantasy world of no-driver Tubes

ASLEF general secretary Keith Norman has dismissed Transport for London’s Board as ‘living in a fantasy world’ as it discussed having driverless Tube trains in the next eight years. ‘They say that trains will be able to do without drivers because of the technological advances in signalling. Have they never been on a Tube station in their lives?’ he asked angrily. ‘Every time you go to catch a train there are announcements of delays somewhere on the network because of signalling failures. To put the safety of millions of passengers a year in the tender hands of a system that doesn’t work would be folly of Titanic proportions.’

Keith was reacting to reports that the Transport for London board has been looking at ‘broath themes’ including passenger trains ‘without conventional drivers’ cabs’. One suggestion is that Tube train drivers could be replaced by something they call ‘train captains’. ‘More like Titanic captains,’ snapped Keith.

‘The whole premise of this discussion centred around ‘the technology available now’. If the technology is so good, why are there daily delays because of signalling?’

‘I’d like to invite the Board back to planet Earth. I’d like to see them talking about present day problems that affect millions of London passengers today – and not waste time considering an implausible future with make-believe signalling systems.’

Keith said passengers would ‘simply not accept’ a transport system where their safety was reliant on signals that fail every day, without the fail-safe of a human being at the front of the cab ready to react to emergencies.

‘Our Tube drivers are often the difference between a safe journey and a disaster. On their return to this planet, I hope Transport for London’s Board will remember that.’

OTHER ATTACKS ON THE WAY FOR TUBE DRIVERS

Although most of the publicity around the London Transport strategy document concerned trains without drivers, other major changes that affect drivers are planned to happen much sooner, says EC member Terry Wilkinson.

‘It is useful to know management’s wish-list, so that we can begin to organise against it,’ Terry says. ‘The decisions of members and the strength of the union will be vital in the coming months and years.

‘We believe it is immoral and illogical to try to beat staff down when passenger numbers and productivity are both increasing. They will not get away with it.’

Some of management’s plans for London Underground train staff include:

PHASE ONE (2011-2016)

While seeking between 30% - 50% automation, management also aims to

- Remove 4.15 and 5.15 parameters and 8.30 max time on duty,
- Introduce ‘Reserve Automatic Train Operator’ grade in support functions
- Introduce Special Requirements Team drivers
- Refocus the role towards ‘customer service’.

PHASE TWO (2016 to 2018)

While seeking between 50% - 80% automation, management also aims to

- Introduce a new job description on all lines except Bakerloo and Piccadilly of Automatic Train Supervisor,
- Reduce spare coverage, by ending minimum pool numbers,
- Book on via connect radio,
- Deploy drivers across SSR to wherever needed.

PHASE THREE (from 2018)

- Introduce new ‘Train Attendants’ on all lines, a cross functional grade covering revenue and stations as well as trains
- Gradually move to unstaffed trains

Throughout the period of this plan, their intention would be to continue to recruit around 100 drivers a year to replace natural wastage.

In terms of train management, in the short term they would like to have DTSMs ‘cross cover’ across depots and lines, have SSR operated as one line from Hammersmith. In the medium term they would like to remove the DTSM grade and replace it with remote booking-on by connect radio and using I/ops for performance management. In the three years up to 2016, they would also like to abolish the Station Supervisor and DSM grades and replace them with lower-paid Team Leader’s covering up to 5 stations. They also plan to close all booking offices and retain just 20 ‘information centres’.

‘It is a recipe for running down, demoralising and ultimately destroying what is the most vital passenger transport system in the country,’ says Terry Wilkinson. ‘We will resist any plans to downgrade our work or safety on the line for both our benefit and for that of the capital’s tube passengers.’

Anglia franchise ‘pointless’ says ASLEF

The main Dutch rail company NV Nederlandse Spoorwegen, through its subsidiary Abellio, is to run the Greater Anglia franchise from February 2012 until July 2014. It will replace National Express East Anglia in Essex, Suffolk, Norfolk and Cambridgeshire. It already runs Merseyrail and Northern.

Keith Norman said the whole exercise has been a pointless and expensive exercise. ‘The franchise bidding process cost millions of pounds that could have been used to improve rail instead of seeping out to consultants and accountants. Yet this franchise will only last 30 months!’

‘Instead of lecturing working people about ‘austerity’, the government could have saved us all money by taking the franchise back into public hands.’
Union bans Scotrail overtime

ASLEF has announced that it is advising members in Scotland employed by First Scotrail not to work their rest days. The union says the company employs 50 drivers less than it needs and General Secretary Keith Norman insists that to cover this up by institutionalising overtime working is ‘practically and morally wrong at a time of massive unemployment’.

‘Last year Scotrail train drivers worked an additional 10,500 shifts,’ Keith says. ‘This is more than ten extra shifts per driver. So to keep the service going our members are working institutional overtime while unemployment in Scotland increases unabated. This is clearly wrong.’

‘I call on the Scottish government to ensure that Scotrail honours its agreements with its employees and the public by not allowing them to cut any service where the problem has been caused by the clear failure of the company to recruit enough drivers to run that service. ’Scotrail shareholders are creaming off vast profits from a company whose management is failing to provide enough drivers to maintain the agreed services. This reward for failure has to stop,’ Keith said.

Virgin West Coast franchise extended

Theresa Villiers, the Minister of State for Transport, has announced that the next InterCity West Coast franchise will begin on 9 December next year, and so it has extended the franchise of West Coast Trains and Virgin Rail Group from the due expiry date of 1 April 2012 until the start of the new franchise.

The government statement says that three new 600-seat Pendolino trains will be added to the line over the course of the (eight month) extension, a statement ASLEF considers bizarre. Why would you get three new trains if your franchise was due to expire a few months later? Equally odd is the government claim that lengthening 31 of the existing Pendolinos from nine to 11 carriages ‘will increase the number of standard class seats on each train by almost 50%, from 320 to 470’.

‘The government statement is shrouded in mystery,’ says ASLEF general secretary. ‘But so is the whole franchising system, so we should hardly expect more. It really is time to look again at this strange, convoluted and expensive arrangement.’

News

Tube drivers to vote on Boxing Day strike

The 2,200 tube drivers who are members of ASLEF are being balloted to seek their support for industrial action on Boxing Day. ASLEF is the majority union for the grade.

The union’s executive was told that negotiators with the company had failed to reach an agreement on the terms of Boxing Day working and it informed the company that it intended to ballot its members employed by LUL for strike action.

The result of the ballot will be announced on 14 December.

The union wants all Boxing Day working to be voluntary. ’That is what we are seeking from the company,’ says union executive committee member Terry Wilkinson.

However, it is unlikely that this would attract many volunteers unless there was an incentive. ’Something like triple time and a day in lieu would, I am sure, ensure there were takers,’ Terry says.

- TAX SERVICE AVERAGE REFUND OVER £200

Latest figures show that the tax code review service we offer in regular editions of the ASLEF Journal now recovers an average refund of £210.64.

A total of 14,288 ASLEF members have used the service, and the amount of refunds now amounts to £439,608.

To find out if you are due a refund, telephone The Tax Refund Company on 0844 332 0004 .

- RING RAY

Ray Jackson, Chair of the union’s Retired Members Section, tells us that his mobile phone number in next year’s union diary is wrong. It should be 07722842758.

- RMS 500 CLUB

Recent winning numbers from the Retired Members Section’s 500 Club draw are

September: Number 13, Peter Cribb
October: Number 54, Brian Tagg

Don’t let it cost you your job!
Unions take McNulty objections to Parliament

At the end of October the rail unions went to Westminster to continue their protests against the proposals for the future of UK railways drawn up by Sir Roy McNulty.

‘We are here to make our objections to the McNulty proposals as loudly and forcibly as we can,’ said general secretary-elect Mick Whelan. ‘If we don’t, the government will steam ahead and introduce every one of them without any further consideration. That would mean our service industry - which is dependent on unified standards, routes and systems - becoming increasingly fragmented and more profit motivated than ever.’

ASLEF has huge concerns about McNulty’s recommendations to vertically integrate operations and infrastructure, plans to downgrade rural lines and calls for pay restraint.

The union says that if the McNulty proposals are implemented, the railways will become the ‘rich man’s toy’ that former transport minister Philip Hammond predicted.

Speaking at the rally, TUC deputy general secretary Frances O’Grady said the government had a clear choice. ‘It can follow Europe with more efficient and cheaper rail systems under public ownership. Or it can follow the McNulty report, cutting jobs and services, increasing the break-up of our rail network, and giving more power to private train operating companies.’

Speakers pointed out that with over 70% of franchises up for renewal in the next five years, bringing rail services back into public ownership would be ‘a painless process’ – and would end a privatised rail market where the only winners are shareholders, consultants, executives and lawyers.

To coincide with the rally, MPs John McDonnell (Labour) and Bob Russell (Lib Dem) put down the following EDM (2299):

**IMPACT OF THE MCNUPTY REVIEW ON RAIL PASSENGERS AND WORKERS**

That this House is concerned that the proposals of the Government-commissioned McNulty review of the railways will worsen passenger services through the loss of thousands of frontline workers from trains, stations, ticket offices and safety-critical infrastructure and operational roles; is further concerned that the review proposals for greater commercial freedom for train operating companies will result in higher fares, cuts in services and more crowded trains; believes that proposals to break up Network Rail will increase the complexity and inefficiency of the railways, and ignores lessons from railways in European countries which have generally achieved lower costs and fares through a more unified structure; and urges the Government to use its forthcoming rail White Paper to deliver an expanding railway system, with affordable fares and proper staffing levels, operated as a public service which puts the needs of passengers, the economy, manufacturing and the environment before commercial considerations.

**SCOTTS TRAINS UNDER WRAPS FOR WINTER!**

Scotrail trains will be treated to power showers and be wrapped in 82-yard polythene bags this winter as part of a £2 million resilience plan to ensure the network keeps going even if the weather gets extreme.

The company also promised better information for passengers affected by cancellations and delays.

‘That’s the trains and the passengers happy,’ says district secretary Kevin Lindsay. ‘So now there’s just the staff!’

**FOX LEADS TO GREENING**

When Liam Fox resigned as Defence Secretary in October, he was replaced by Philip Hammond, who had been Secretary of State for Transport. Although the No 2 in the Department, Theresa Villiers, was expected to take over, the top transport job has gone to the Rt Hon Justine Greening, MP for Putney, Roehampton and Southfields (left).

Born in Rotherham, Ms Greening studied economics at Southampton University, has a Business Masters from the London Business School and was a Finance Manager at Centrica before being elected as an MP in May 2005.

A former member of the Work and Pensions Select Committee, she became a Shadow Treasury Minister in 2007 and Shadow Minister for London in 2009. She was Economic Secretary to the Treasury from May 2010 to October 2011.

Mick Whelan is to have a first meeting with the new minister later this month.

**HORNS IN PARLIAMENT**

East Hampshire Tory MP Damian Hinds last month asked in Parliament whether ‘limits on the volume of train horns apply to train operating companies’. Transport minister Theresa Villiers assured him they did. She even went on to say, ‘These are defined by European Technical Standards for Interoperability (TSI) and UK Rail Group Standards.’

So now you know.
UNION MEETS WELSH TRANSPORT MINISTER

JOHN BOREHAM, along with district organiser Stan Moran and Company Council member Gary Heath met Carl Sargeant, AM, the Wales government transport minister at his Wales Assembly Office last month. Carl was accompanied by his advisors, who have previous railway experience having worked for a number of franchises.

John says they discussed in some detail
- the Wales government’s plans for future rail services
- the proposed refranchising of Great Western
- the possible ramifications of the McNulty Report
- the introduction of the New Fishguard services
- the condition of Arriva Trains Wales rolling stock and
- the additional engine and coaches on the Holyhead/Cardiff train.

‘The minister was also keen to express to us the benefits of freight on rail and the environmental benefit of trains, which prevent lorries clogging up the Wales road system. ‘He was more than willing to set up a series of working parties in the future to best develop our aims and was particularly interested in ASLEF’s experiences of refranchising. We left the meeting on a positive note after this first valuable contact. Carl told us he expects the review into future transport in Wales which he commissioned will be published later this month.’

John says this type of meeting with Wales government ministers shows the benefit of ASLEF’s continued involvement within the Labour Party in Wales ‘It offers us the important opportunity of influencing transport policy at the heart of Wales Government,’ he says.

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Suspended sentence and community work for crossing infringement

WELSH farmer who parked his trailer on a rail line while he fed his horses has been sentenced to a 36-week suspended jail sentence and ordered to carry out 200 hours community work.

The judge in charge of the case at Swansea Crown Court told farmer John Watkyn-James, 51, from Kidwelly in Carmarthenshire, that he was ‘incredibly stupid’ and that his actions had put the train, staff and passengers at risk. He had parked his tractor next to the track on 31 January – leaving the trailer he was towing on the line.

The incident caused £82,000 worth of damage to the Manchester to Milford Haven train and cost the company the same again for having it out of service, and it was only by good fortune that no-one was injured.

The penalty was imposed after the accused had pleaded guilty to endangering safety on a railway – and the union hopes the sentence points to a firmer policy for people who act in an irresponsible way at level crossings. ASLEF has often considered the courts excessively lenient for actions that could have left train staff and passengers dead. The only times there have been severe penalties have been when accidents have been fatal. The union argues that this is a question of good or bad fortune, but the crime is, in essence, the same.

The driver of the train, which was travelling at 75 mph when it hit the trailer, managed to slam on the emergency brakes when he saw the obstruction as he came around a bend. A police spokesperson said it was astounding that no-one was seriously injured or killed.

CARDIFF TO PADDINGTON IN 96 MINUTES!

A record-breaking First Great Western train journey took place on 28 October. The special non-stop train from Cardiff to Paddington took just over 96 minutes compared to a usual journey time – which takes in stops at Newport, Bristol, Swindon and Reading – of just over two hours.

It is one of the legacies of Brunel’s Great Western Main Line that its straightness allows for high speeds.

ASLEF win ATW Company Council

ASLEF’s Gareth James has been elected to the Company Council for Arriva Trains Wales, reports John Boreham, secretary of the council. This now makes the council once again 100% ASLEF.

‘This is due in no small part to the hard work put in by Gary, Ian and all our members at Cardiff, Rhyymney and Treherbert,’ John says. ‘We are all delighted at the result and thank all those involved in the election.’

FEARS OF EFFECTS OF HIGH SPEED ON WALES

While the House of Commons transport select committee backed high speed rail last month, fears were expressed that falls in journey times between London and a host of English cities will make it harder to persuade major companies to base their headquarters in Wales.

High-Speed 2 service (HS2) will take travellers from London to Birmingham in 49 minutes instead of 1hr 24mins and journey times to Manchester could be reduced from 2hr 8 mins to 1hr 13mins. London to Leeds could be reached in 1hr 10mins as opposed to 2hrs 8mins.

However the electrification of the Paddington to Cardiff line could shave 20mins off the current journey time, reducing it to 1hr 42 mins.
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• 30 minutes free telephone advice for any non-work issues such as landlord disputes, neighbourhood disputes, matrimonial and consumer issues
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Free legal advice and representation on:
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† Exclusions apply. Thompsons Solicitors is a trading name of Thompsons Solicitors LLP and is regulated by the Solicitors Regulation Authority.
The end-of-day adjournment debate in the Commons is normally a calm half hour in an empty Chamber, confined to the MP who raises his or her chosen topic and the Minister who responds.

One day last month it was different. More than two dozen 2010 Tories bayed behind MP Aidan Burley (the Parliamentary Private Secretary to transport minister Justice Greening) as he led an all-out attack on trade unions.

This wasn't an attack on the regular Tory targets like party funding, the freedom to strike or even employment rights. It was an attack on the most basic and benign feature of trade union work – the day-to-day support for staff at work by their colleagues who volunteer to act as union representatives.

There are around 200,000 people who are prepared to help their work colleagues by giving advice, formally representing them in grievances and disciplinary hearings and negotiating with managers. Many also have more specialist recognised roles like improving workplace health and safety, training, equality and even environmental standards. It is often demanding and difficult work.

**TIME OFF FOR UNION DUTIES**

Most union reps in both public and private sectors rightly receive paid time off to carry out these duties. But many devote a large amount of their own time too. A recent government survey found reps in the public sector contribute up to 100,000 unpaid hours of their own time each week - and TUC data shows 1 in 6 union reps say less than a quarter of the time they spend on union duties is paid by their employer.

These are the unsung heroes of Britain's volunteering tradition: the workplace wing of the Prime Minister's Big Society. They support their work colleagues and they save millions for employers and the Exchequer because they reduce working days lost to injury and illness, reduce employment tribunal cases, improve take-up of training and improve productivity. Even the CBI says, 'Union reps constitute a major resource. We believe that modern representatives have a lot to give to their fellow employees and to the organisations that employ them.'

**WOEFUL IGNORANCE FROM THE RIGHT**

The ignorance on display in this debate from Tory MPs was both woeful and wilful. Detailing the work of union learning reps, Burley asked, 'Is not all that the job of the human resources department?' before asserting that government support for learning reps means 'a huge amount of money is freed up … that unions can use on political campaigns!'

But union reps were not just misunderstood, they were grotesquely misrepresented by Burley. He said, 'In simple terms, the taxpayer is directly funding those organising strikes and chaos, and also indirectly funding the Labour Party.'

When they were in Opposition the Tories used other organisations as out-riders to create public rows, and they used extreme examples to define a general problem. Some are still using these tactics in government.

This attack was based on data from the Tax Payers' Alliance, and the work of thousands of public sector union reps was condemned by the one case of a union rep paid by the NHS who ran a private health consultancy on the side.

The past master of these tactics in opposition was Eric Pickles. He's the present master in Government too. He has described the work of the union rep as a 'non-job'. And during the debate he slipped into the Chamber, standing at the side of the Speaker's chair.

**NEW TORIES, OLD BELIEFS**

These new Tory MPs are anti-Europe and anti-unions, still playing old '80s political tunes. There's a common view that such throw-back politics on Europe may cause Cameron problems within the Conservative party - but real change is unlikely this side of the Election.

The attack on unions is different. Tory MPs are demanding an end to full-time union work in the public sector, an end to any employer costs for reps and an end to the modest funds supporting union learning and modernisation. Cameron can't – yet – concede much on Europe - but he can on unions. That's why Tory ministers are set to consult on cutting back paid time off for union work and ending the role of full time union rep – legal rights that have been in place for nearly 40 years.

The Tories aim to throttle trade unions at their roots in the workplace. Unions rely on a sense of solidarity and service for volunteer reps to help their work colleagues, especially with the trends towards individual representation and smaller workplaces. No union can survive if all support and services for members must be provided by full time union paid officials.

At this time of intensifying insecurity on jobs, pensions, reorganisation and workplace protections, employees and employers alike need more reps not fewer; and those reps need more support not less.

This atypical adjournment debate was a wake-up call – workplace reps need wider public recognition, not political condemnation.
The Ladbroke Grove (or Paddington) rail crash on 5 October 1999 killed 31 people and injured over 500. It led to an enquiry which contained 163 recommendations to bring about a safer railway.

The chair of the enquiry to which he gave his name was Lord Cullen, a former Lord Justice General, Lord President of the Court of Session and a Lord of Appeal. He worked on the Ladbroke Grove Public Inquiry throughout 2000, publishing his conclusions in 2001.

To some extent, it seems he wasted a year. Because his major recommendations concerning signalling and safety have been quietly ignored for over a decade. No one doubted for a moment that they were advisable, or even necessary. They have not been implemented for the simple reason that they would be expensive.

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

When the Cullen Report emerged, the then Transport Secretary Stephen Byers pledged that the government would 'ensure that all recommendations would be acted on'. The minister said, 'We have already pledged to bring within the 10 Year Plan the measures arising from Lord Cullen’s inquiry into Ladbroke Grove and the joint inquiry with Professor Uff into train protection systems. I repeat that pledge today.'

So how far have we got as we near the end of 2011, a decade after that pledge that was welcomed by every political party?

There was a Written Statement to Parliament made on 5 February 2003 by the Transport Secretary. The key points of the letter were that:

- The Health and Safety Commission's (HSC) review had identified a clear public expectation that automatic train protection should be provided
- The HSC endorsed the industry's preference for ERTMS Level 2, although it accepted that the fitment timetable recommended by the Cullen Inquiry was not viable
- It felt that at the time the, further use of regulations to mandate ERTMS fitment was not appropriate because of the current state of the technology – but said that the position would be kept under review
- The government said that it was essential that the industry must press ahead with ERTMS development and implementation. It confirmed its view that there was a need for continued sponsorship of a single national programme for ERTMS development, with the Strategic Rail Authority (SRA) providing direction and support
- It repeated the HSC position that investment in ERTMS is not only - or even mainly - about safety.

ERTMS NATIONAL IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

The most recent implementation plan for ERTMS produced by the Department for Transport is certainly more inclined towards planning than implementing. The time-frame for seeing real progress on recommendations that stretch back a decade stretches another 30 years into the future as the table below illustrates:

WHAT ASLEF WANTS TODAY

Basically, ASLEF is still looking for the implementation of the recommendations proposed by the Cullen Report over a decade ago. In the aftermath of each tragedy on the lines, there is an outbreak of activity and good intentions – but once the dust has settled, all impetus disappears.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Route Type</th>
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<tr>
<td>High Speed</td>
<td>Great Western Main Line</td>
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<td>East Coast Main Line</td>
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<td>West Coast Main Line</td>
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<td>Channel Tunnel Rail Link</td>
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<td>Conventional</td>
<td>Brighton Main Line</td>
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<td>South West Main Line</td>
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<td>Midland Main Line</td>
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<td>Great Eastern</td>
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We continue to argue now, as we did then, that

- there should be a clear commitment by the industry to meet a specific timetable for the implementation of all the proposed reforms to rail signalling and safety measures. Specifically we believe that there needs to be a commitment to fit ERTMS within a defined period. Without this, it is impossible for passengers or staff to have any confidence in the industry’s ability and desire to introduce vital change.
- ASLEF supports the approach of permitting non-fitted trains which operate on both fitted and non-fitted routes providing an alternative system such as TPWS (or TPWS + for higher speed routes) is in place for a limited (and, again, defined) time period. However, suitable training and route knowledge is vital for any drivers operating on mixed routes.
- A firm date must be fixed when such trains will no longer be permitted to run without ERTMS. TPWS and TPWS + should not be seen as the end of improvements to Train Protection Systems – it remains a stop gap measure until ERTMS Level 2 without signals can be fitted.
- ASLEF believes for ETCS train fitment, TOCS/FOCS must be set timetables as part of their franchise agreement, following consultation with stakeholders.
- It remains ASLEF’s view that ERTMS Level 2, with no line-side signals should be implemented on the main lines as soon as possible, with the remainder of the lines fitted in a second tranche. And most of all, we need solid time-scales guaranteed to achieve progress.

**SIMBIDS**

The union also has concerns about the proposed Shrewsbury – Crewe re-signaling scheme. This appears to us to be a further ‘make-do’ solution.

- The new signaling system will be Simplified Bi-Directional Signaling (SIMBIDS) – and will not be fitted with AWS in both directions.
- ASLEF opposes this because it does not give the same level of protection as having AWS working in both directions.
- We are due to meet Arriva Trains Wales and Network Rail this month to discuss this further.

**GLOSSARY OF TERMS**

**ATP AUTOMATIC TRAIN PROTECTION**

This uses a target speed indication and audible warnings to train drivers if they are likely to exceed a speed profile that will cause the train to pass a red (danger) signal or exceed a speed restriction. The system applies the brakes if the driver fails to respond.

**ERTMS EUROPEAN RAIL TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT SYSTEM**

This initiative was backed by the European Union to enhance cross-border interoperability and signaling procurement by creating a single Europe-wide standard for train control and command systems. The two main components of ERTMS are (a) the European Train Control System (ETCS), a standard for in-cab train control, and (b) GSM-R, the GSM mobile communications standard for railway operations.

**ERTMS LEVEL 2**

A fixed block system and as with Level 1, provides full Automatic Train Protection. The difference is the use of radio to connect the on-train computer with signalling centres. A continuous stream of data informs the driver of traffic and signals status on the route ahead, allowing the train to reach its maximum speed within its block while maintaining safe braking distance. Track based detection systems are maintained but lineside signals are optional, though may be retained for ‘fallback operation’.

**ETCS EUROPEAN TRAIN CONTROL SYSTEM**

This signaling and train protection system was designed to replace the many incompatible safety systems used by European railways, especially on high-speed lines.

**TPWS TRAIN PROTECTION & WARNING SYSTEM**

The Train Protection & Warning System (TPWS) is a train protection system deployed across the UK passenger network which automatically activates brakes on any train that has passed a signal at danger or is speeding. It is fitted at selected sites, including lines where ATP is installed, but unlike ATP, it does not aim to stop trains at or before a single at danger. Rather, it aims to stop the train before the point at which a collision with another train could occur.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Rolling Stock Fitment</th>
<th>Infrastructure Fitment</th>
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<tr>
<td>From 2013 to 2018</td>
<td>From 2017 to 2035 (majority complete by 2025)</td>
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These are very testing times for rail freight on all fronts, writes Philippa Edmunds of the Freight on Rail (FoR) campaign. We await the Government’s response to the McNulty Report, which is now being called the Command Paper, in the New year, and we continue to lobby for the infrastructure to be managed on a national basis. With your support, Freight on Rail is working to make the case for rail freight in the following key areas ...

PLANNING POLICY TO GET MORE TERMINALS
Let me start, at least, on a positive note. Extensive lobbying of the government departments that are writing the new planning policies has resulted in the mention of the need for rail freight terminals to get freight off the roads - which will help secure planning permissions for medium sized and small schemes.

We also await the Logistics Growth Review which is supposed to have supporting statements about the case for larger Strategic Rail Freight Interchanges.

ENHANCING THE STRATEGIC RAIL FREIGHT NETWORK
In recognition of the role that transport infrastructure plays in regenerating the economy, the government has restated its commitment to fund schemes which can be demonstrated to stimulate the economy. So the industry as a whole has prioritized four main schemes to lobby for in the next round of government funding to expand the Strategic Rail Freight Network for the period 2014-2019, (using the industry jargon, ‘bids in the Network Rail Initial Industry Plan for the control period 5’). See the map on these pages for details.

So why should the Government fund the following four key projects?

In a nutshell, because rail freight offers a crucial low carbon, energy-efficient safer alternative to road and can deliver impressive cost benefit ratios. Road congestion is now costing around £24 billion per annum according to the Freight Transport Association based on government figures. Rail acts as a freight bypass with each consumer freight train being capable of removing 60 HGVs from our roads; a single aggregates train can remove a staggering 160 HGVs from our roads.

A14 CORRIDOR STUDY
The government scrapped the £1.2 billion road upgrade on the A14 on grounds of ‘lack of affordability’ and after a year’s delay it has provided the funding for further research to evaluate the corridor - including rail - after our extensive lobbying that the parallel rail route upgrade must be incorporated into all the analysis.

So it is especially important that anyone who lives on or near the A14 corridor lobbies their MPs and councillors on the potential of the rail option to ameliorate the road congestion, attend to accident blackspots and lower the carbon emissions.

Freight on Rail hopes to do a joint tour of the Felixstowe port with Hutchison and the two Local Enterprise Partnerships which cover the route to make the case for the rail freight capacity upgrades which will cost around £200m, along the corridor as part of the solution.

RAIL FREIGHT IS BREAKING OUT OF ITS TRADITIONAL MARKETS
Last year for the first time, consumer rail freight traffic was greater than coal traffic; it grew 29% in the past 5 years, despite the recession, its eighth consecutive year of growth. The industry predicts that rail freight overall will have doubled by 2030 with consumer rail freight growing 7.6% per annum during the same period.

There is considerable suppressed demand for rail because of the limitations of the rail network. The gauge upgrade out of Southampton which now allows the larger containers (which are increasingly becoming the industry standard) to be carried on standard rail wagons is a clear demonstration of this. Rail’s share of the market out of Southampton has increased from 30-39% since the upgrade was completed in February this year. Currently, rail has around 25% of the market out of Felixstowe, the UK’s largest container port, with 29 trains going in and out of the port daily. If the proposed upgrades are implemented that share could rise to around 40% and 40 million lorry miles could be removed from the A14 corridor each year.

FREIGHT ON HS1
A new trans-European high volume freight service between Wroclaw, in Poland, and Barking started in November. This is the first freight service running on High Speed One, the only European gauge UK railway. Automotive, retail and food sector products are being imported and exported by rail through the Channel Tunnel, taking advantage of the significantly larger haulage capacity available on HS1, where two standard pallets can be transported stacked on top of each other.

Let’s not forget that together we managed to safeguard the only affordable rail freight access from HS1 into London Riverside last December by persuading Boris Johnson to force Tesco to allow space for a single line rail corridor through its proposed road-based distribution centre on the grounds that this is the only place where there are exchange sidings between HS1 and conventional rails and suitable land for...
The Government will make its decision on what is funded next summer so please lobby your MPs and with your parliamentary contacts for these key projects to enhance the Strategic Rail Freight Network for a safer cleaner, less congested society and green jobs.

**THREAT OF MEGA TRUCKS COMING TO UK ROADS FROM EUROPE - AGAIN**

Mega trucks of 25 metres and up to 60 tonnes will come to UK roads by default over time if European Commission proposals to allow cross border mega trucks traffic are allowed. Mega trucks, which would be fifty per cent longer and a third heavier than existing HGVs, will result in more road fatalities, more road damage, more congestion and more pollution. The European Commission’s own research stated that mega trucks are ‘individually more dangerous’ than standard HGVs.

Mega trucks would not only undermine traditional bulk rail freight but would decimate consumer rail freight which has grown for the 8th consecutive year despite the recession and increased market share. This emerging market has seen 29% growth in the past five years and is forecast to grow 8% per annum for the next 20 years under current market conditions. However, if mega trucks get the go-head and a lorry can carry a 20ft and a 40 ft trailer, rail freight will lose its market advantage of being able to carry 2 containers on a rail wagon. Rail freight produces 70% less carbon dioxide emissions than the equivalent road journey and is therefore also more energy efficient; a gallon of diesel will carry a tonne of freight 246 miles by rail as opposed to 88 miles.

Road congestion is now costing around £24 billion per annum according to the Freight

Transport Association based on Government figures - so it would be mad to introduce mega trucks which will not only be slower to negotiate junctions (and thus increasing road congestion) but will also force trainloads of freight back onto the roads.

The promoters will claim that these vehicles will be restricted to motorways, dual carriageways and major roads - but trying to restrict mega trucks to dual-carriageways and motorways will not work. The reality is that the road haulage industry consistently opposes HGV access restrictions and there is no mechanism to control these vehicles which will need local road access to distribution hubs which are not on motorways/dual carriageways.

Mega trucks have dangers of their own due to their size and lack of manouevrability

Rail freight is safer than long-distance road freight using motorway and A roads, as HGVs are over 3 times more likely to be involved in fatal accidents than cars due to a combination of size, lack of proper enforcement of drivers hours, vehicle overloading and differing foreign operating standards.

The cost to adapt road infrastructure to cater for mega trucks network would be prohibitive. HGVs are up to 160,000 times more damaging to road surfaces than the average car; some of the heaviest road repair costs are therefore almost exclusively attributable to the heaviest vehicles. Austria, which is a small country, estimated adaption costs of 5 billion euros.

A proposed revision to the directive 96/53, which controls the maximum weight and dimensions of HGVs, to let consenting member states allow cross border mega trucks traffic could undermine the single market as the road haulage industry will claim that it was being disadvantaged if mega trucks are not allowed on UK roads.

The case for longer lorries relies on the same questionable presumption used in the past to justify each increase in lorry dimensions. That is, there would be fewer but bigger trucks on the roads. In practice however, since the previous increases in dimensions, there is no direct evidence of larger or heavier lorries leading to improvements in average payloads or a reduction in empty running. Currently, one in four HGVs are driving around empty and DfT research shows that almost 50% of lorries are neither constrained by volume or weight, ie partially loaded. So where is the justification for bigger lorries?

The danger is that mega trucks could become travelling warehouses with the same amount of freight being carried further, resulting in more carbon emissions, more congestion and more exposure to road accidents as well as undermining the low carbon safe alternatives.

Please lobby your MP and MEP to oppose allowing cross border mega trucks traffic.

*For more information on these campaigns, visit www.freightonn Rail.org.uk* Freight on Rail members are ASLEF, DB Schenker, Freightliner, RMT, TSSA, UNITE, Rail Freight Group and the Campaign for Better Transport
imon Davies is still buzzing when we meet at Manchester’s Piccadilly station, a fortnight after his return from South America. This story started last summer when the BBC told the union it was planning a programme called ‘The Toughest Place to be a… Train Driver’, one of a series taking British workers to do their jobs in the most difficult circumstances in the world.

Could we help to seek volunteers?

We rolled out the message to district organisers and a few months later the film-makers selected Simon to take part in the documentary that will be shown on BBC 2 early next year.

‘I didn’t expect to be picked, so I didn’t get excited about it,’ Simon says. ‘In fact, I didn’t even answer my phone the first few times they rang me. I was mad busy, fixing a car, putting stuff on eBay… just living my normal life of utter chaos!’

But eventually the BBC arranged to film him at home to see how he sounded and looked on camera. ‘I said to my wife, Joanna, that I didn’t think it had gone well. But then another producer turned up and said they wanted me to do it.

‘It was only after I’d agreed that I remembered I didn’t know what it was!’

He soon found out. They wanted to film him driving freight trains in Peru.

‘Peru! I had a vague idea where it was on a map, but Greece was the furthest I’d ever been. ‘So, when will this be?’ I asked.

‘Two weeks’ time.’

On the Plane and on the Move

Simon hardly had time to think: the union and Virgin trains combined to arrange time off while Simon found himself in a London branch of Berghaus being fitted with hard weather clothing, ferried around to pick up visas and visiting the BBC clinic for jabs.

Then last month he flew from Manchester to Amsterdam for the 12-hour flight to Lima.

He was dreading it. ‘I can’t sleep on a plane. I watched about six films while we flew over water, then looked down on green rain forests that seemed to go on forever and then the snowy tops of the Andes mountains.’

In a Lima hotel Simon met the filming team: a producer and his assistant, a cameraman, a driver and a local ‘fixer’. After a few hours’ sleep Simon was on his way to Chosica at the foot of the mountains.

‘The plan was to spend a couple of days ‘roughing it’ as I drove the freight train that brought minerals from the mountains to Lima’s port. Then we would recuperate for a day or so in a pleasant hotel.

‘But someone had miscalculated the distances – and the days of luxury didn’t happen.

Places Beyond Belief

‘Chosica was the last nice place we stayed in. After that it was grim mountain towns, poverty-stricken polluted places surrounded by grey shanty-town mining villages. Some places looked like the moon: others like hell.

‘And yet in the middle of all this terrible poverty and devastation, I met some unforgottably kind, welcoming and wonderful people.’

He soon discovered that ‘organisation’ has a different meaning in South America! There were all kinds of unspecified problems with the driver Simon was supposed to stay with and he ended up in different places, usually a farm or a miners’ hostel. ‘I was usually so tired that any bed in these remote Wild West towns was welcome.’ Besides, Simon had other things to worry about: like the train and the track.

He was driving a big American GEC diesel with anything up to 30 wagons from the summit of the Andean mountains to the port of Callao. Its cargo was the product of the mines.

‘The gradients are astonishing. I’m quite practical – I used to be a mechanic – but every driver told me a different way of putting on the four brakes. And if you look away for a second with all that weight behind you, the speed races away.

‘The conditions were beyond belief. The shifts were usually about eleven hours and the drivers had no flasks or food with them. And
that soup we were given! Pataska. It was like sea water with intestines dropped into it.

‘And as we crawled up routes with massive thousand-foot sheer drops inches away from a track that looked like it had come from a badly maintained siding yard, they’d casually point out bits of metal that showed where a loco had gone off the mountain. Was I frightened? Of course I was! You should see the state of some of the bridges we crossed!’

THE DARK SIDE OF THE MOUNTAIN

The altitude brought its own special form of sickness. ‘I got it really badly at one stage. I’d hardly slept and the lack of oxygen means it’s difficult to digest food. I slept with an oxygen bottle next to me a few nights, as ill as I’ve ever been. Then after four hours I was taken down a mine to be filmed there.

‘I kept remembering the producer telling me this wasn’t an endurance test. I thought I’d never trust the BBC again!’

In La Oroya, one of the most polluted places on the planet, Simon met a driver called Eloy. La Oroya is in a massive valley, 11,000 feet above sea level, surrounded by mountains and mines with a huge smelter bang in the middle. It’s polluted with lead, copper, zinc and sulphur dioxide. Eloy had moved his family to a farm five hours away after his son collapsed with breathing problems. The lead levels in La Oroya are three times the World Health Organisation’s limits. To keep his job Eloy lives in railway accommodation, visiting his family when he can.

‘But in the middle of this hell, you find the most wonderful humanity. Eloy invited us all to his farm and it was an amazing experience. I felt so ill that day I was almost helped into the car, but when we arrived I could hardly believe my eyes! We were met by a brass band that led us through the village with everyone coming out to greet us. We had an astonishing party, an incredible experience. It was the first time I’d eaten guinea pig!’

And what did Simon give them in return? ASLEF regalia!

‘I WISH THERE WAS SOMETHING WE COULD DO’

‘I’d taken ASLEF plaques and badges and caps to give to their union reps. It all seems very naïve now. Most drivers thought the union was employed by the company to smooth things over.

‘So I gave the ASLEF plaque to Eloy’s mother. It’s funny to think of it up there, so far away. She was really pleased.’

Simon, normally in the cab of a Pendolino, drove minerals from open cast and deep mines in Galera, 15,681 feet up the mountains, down to the port at Callao. The shifts could be over 15 hours, but the trains kept going. ‘There was a reason for that. If they didn’t get the aggregates to the port in the allocated time, they lost their job, or at least their money. And if they derailed, they lost their jobs, and maybe their lives. It was another world.’

Simon shakes his head. ‘I wish there was something we could do;’ he says, utterly serious for the first time since the interview began.

‘Coming back was like stepping into another world again;’ he says. ‘It all felt unreal, helped by the fact that I was desperately tired. I thought I couldn’t sleep on planes: I disproved that on my way home!’

‘It wasn’t an easy few weeks. I’d been sick and tired and cross and angry. I’d been horrified by some of the scenes I’d witnessed and the conditions these drivers endured.

‘But it was an experience like no other. I saw people I never imagined, and each of them welcomed me like a brother. They were fantastic people, all of them. I’d do it again tomorrow.’

Then Simon’s face cracks into a wide smile. ‘Well,’ he says. ‘In a couple of months ...!’

Would you be prepared to be featured in future editions of this column, or know someone who would be a good subject? If you do, please let us know at the ASLEF Journal, 75-77 St John Street, London EC1M 4NN or journal@aslef.org.uk
The 500 Club

Join the RMS’s new and exciting fundraising scheme

Pay a £4 stake each month and be entered into a monthly draw to be in with a chance of winning a cash prize!

Of the total monies collected 50% will help fund RMS activities and half will go back to club members as prizes.

The more members in the club, the bigger the prize!

The 500 Club is open to individuals, branches and district councils.

If you would like to join the club please contact Lee James at Head Office at ljames@aslef.org.uk or on 020 7324 2400.

WANTED

WOMEN MEMBERS

interested in being sponsored to attend conferences as visitors

GET MORE INVOLVED

learn more about the union and see how conferences work

UPCOMING CONFERENCES INCLUDE

the unions annual conference, TUC womens conference, labour party and TUC congress

CONTACT

Wendy Hurst, Secretary of ASLEF’s women’s committee
Tel: 07788 153 932 or email wendy.hurst3@ntlworld.com

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THERESA SKLEY (VAUGHAN)  
A SLADE GREEN DIAMOND

IT IS with sadness and regret that I report the very sudden and totally unexpected death of Slade Green driver Theresa Skley (Vaughan).

Her funeral on 14 October was very well attended by family friends and drivers. Theresa was 49, a wife, mother and grandmother and her passing has left a big hole in the family who thought the world of her, just as she did them.

Theresa became a driver at Slade Green in 2004. You didn’t have to mind your P’s and Q’s in her company. She enjoyed a bit of banter - but she’d let you know if you overstepped the mark! She was a pleasure to work with Theresa.

I know that I speak for all Slade Green drivers when I say the depot will be a sadder place without her.

Harvey Bignell, Secretary, Slade Green branch

STEPHEN MARKS SUDDEN AND SHOCKING DEATH

It is with great sadness that I report the sudden and shocking death of Worksop driver Stephen (‘Skid’) Marks. Aged just 57, his untimely passing was marked at the packed crematorium at Bramcote near Nottingham.

Stephen passed away on 28 August at East Midland Airport enjoying one of his many passions, plane spotting. But his main love was trains. A dedicated basher, Steve travelled on as many lines and behind as many locos as possible. His love of trains, planes and lorries also took him frequently into Europe with Switzerland and Germany favourite destinations.

Steve started his career at Totton in January 1974 before moving to Coalville. On its closure he moved to Shirebrook until it closed in 1991. Then he made his final move to Worksop.

Our thoughts are with Steve’s brother Chris and all his family and friends at this sad time.

K. Gillett, Secretary, Worksop branch

JOHN GLYNN ONE OF NEWTON HEATH’S ‘40 – ‘44 INTAKE

No less than 85 men started their footplate career at the Dean Lane Depot between 1940 and 1944. One was John (‘Paddy’) Glynn.

Mancunian John joined in July 1943 and stayed until the depot closed in July 1985. John lived life to the full. For many years he helped to organise depot function and trips, and he was always a great help to men who passed through on PTR.

A solid supporter of his ASLEF branch, John was also well known in his community. Our thoughts go out to his family at this sad time. Rip, old friend.

S. Black, Retired Members’ Section, Newton Heath

ALBERT BROWN A DERBYSHIRE MAN

Albert (‘Talcy’) Brown has passed away at the age of 85. Albert started his railway career in the days of steam and worked at various Derbyshire depots including Staveley and Barrow Hill, Shirebrook and Langwith Junction.

Albert was also a part-time fireman at Mansfield Fire Station, something that no doubt helped him maintain the remarkably high level of fitness he enjoyed throughout his career: and which benefitted his love of dancing and gardening.

Our thoughts go out to all his family and friends.

K. Gillett, Secretary, Worksop branch

A HUNDRED YEARS OF UNION

The November 1911 ASLEF Locomotive Journal included a report from W. B. Paley on taking the train from England to Paris, while Organizing Secretary J. Drummond was at a meeting at Polmadie, where he regretted the attitude of some rail workers …

BEFORE THE EUROSTAR

W. B Paley crossed from Newhaven to Dieppe by the Brighton Company’s new steamer, “Newhaven”, which has turbine engines driving the screws. Under three hours was taken for the passage of 64 miles. Reaching Dieppe at 2.40 p.m and passing through the Custom House for a not very searching examination of luggage, the passengers entered the train on the other side. As it was not due out until 3.37, there was plenty of time to inspect it.

“After getting a comfortable tea in the restaurant car before starting at a cost of 1/2, the train started punctually and proceeded at a walking pace through the quays and streets to the Town station.

“Paris was reached at 6.55.”

COME ON YOU CALEDONIANS!

“I would not admit to any locomotive friends that I worked as a locomotive-man on the Caledonian Railway. I feel very strongly upon the miserable conditions of service the drivers and fireman have, men driving at 4d an hour, firemen at 19/- a week on a 12 hours’ day – and this in the 20th century.

“Yet there men will not organise or turn out to meetings, when others who sympathize with them in their deplorable conditions are trying to assist them. Wake up, Caledonian Railway men – organize!”

JOURNAL ADVERTISEMENT FROM 1911

*Have you got a reliable VALVE CLIP, if not I have just the thing you need, 1/1 post paid.

Secures a valve perfectly and can easily be carried in the Vest Pocket.*

*Extracts selected and edited by Dave Bennett*
Good Hitchin turn out welcomes union guests

The October meeting of the Hitchin branch was pleased to welcome the executive committee members for our district, Nigel Gibson, the general secretary elect, Mick Whelan and three members of our company council. Each gave us a thorough report of the union’s activities and was in turn made welcome by a good turnout from the members of the branch.

Nigel spoke about the difficulties facing LLR reps, the union’s opposition to many aspects of the McNulty report, pensions and especially ASLEF’s approach to keeping the retirement age at 65, trauma support training, the union’s backing for High Speed 2 and the political situation. He was pleased to report that there have been several train drivers in district S elected to local office this year. He concluded by saying that ASLEF is now operating at a £381,000 surplus and acknowledged the work of Keith Norman during his period in office – a sentiment echoed by the branch.

Mick apologised for not having visited the branch previously and thanked us for nominating him for the General Secretary election. He began by speaking about ASLEF and the TUC going to the High Court and ultimately changing the law about minor discrepancies in ballots after the union was served an injunction by a TOC for petty administrative problems with a ballot. He discussed the retirement age staying at 65 and the impact on unemployment, updated us on ASLEF’s campaign to get free travel for all members and considered the effects of unemployment on train travel. He concluded with the point that there is less debt per head of population now than at any time since the end of WW2.

The company council then gave us a specifically First Capital Connect related report. At the end of the meeting the branch thanked its guests for their attendance and reports and wished Mick a long and successful future as general secretary of our trade union.

G. Baines, Secretary, Hitchin Branch

Edinburgh concentrates on freight

The October meeting of Edinburgh No1 Branch saw a first visit from Bro Nigel Roebuck since he took up the position of Chair of the DB Schenker Company Council. Attending with Bro Charles Bolton, the TCCC rep for Scotland, Nigel started by paying tribute to his predecessor Bro John Gahagan, who led the Council through such a difficult time and is much missed by all.

Nigel then gave a detailed report and took questions on the present situation within DBS. Focusing on the outlook for both Millerhill depot and the company as a whole, the recent dispute, pension deficit, productivity talks, and difficulties with central resources, it was widely felt that the well-attended meeting had been a very worthwhile exercise.

As ever there will no doubt be testing times ahead for all of us employed by DBS but it is to be hoped that the worst is behind us. The sentiment expressed by the branch was very much that a priority during the on-going productivity talks should be the pursuit of improvements in conditions.

Following the meeting Bro Roebuck assisted with the presentation of long service badges to Andy Klein, Tam Allan, Ian Forrest and Alex Neilson. Between them they have a century of ASLEF membership.

Hussein Ezzedine, Secretary, Edinburgh No1 Branch and LLC Chair

Wolverhampton Marks End Of An Era

On Sunday 16 October, the Wolverhampton branch celebrated the passing of an era. Two London Midland drivers, Les Yewer and Harry Rowe, celebrated their retirements with family, friends and colleagues from the past and present. The Great Western public house witnessed a terrific turnout honouring 90 years of combined service. Les amassed 49 years – while Harry only worked 41! Les and Harry were overwhelmed with the amount of people who turned up, including the London Midland Company Council, retired members and our recently-elected General Secretary Mick Whelan.

After giving everyone chance to bore each other with old railway tales and charge their glasses, the presentations began. Mick Whelan thanked them both for their long and loyal service as he passed over their retirement certificates. They were then left speechless when we gave them gifts from the Wolverhampton depot, both London Midland and Virgin.

A fantastic day was had by all – and the same could be said about the evening! We would like to thank Les and Harry’s families for their support as well as everyone who came along and contributed to a momentous occasion.

The Wolverhampton branch would also like to thank Mick Whelan for making the presentations and to congratulate him on his election to General Secretary.

Bob Earlam, Rich Whiley and Stuart Longdon - Wolverhampton L.L.C.
685 years service celebrated at Bristol

The October Meeting of Bristol Branch was a very special occasion that saw recognition of no less than 685 years of ASLEF membership and railway service. The normal branch business was dealt with earlier in the day before the presentations were made.

The EC President, Alan Donnelly, our own EC member Brian Corbett, the EC member for District 5, Nigel Gibson and national ASLEF Trustee Ian Smith of Glasgow Branch were all in attendance. Before the presentations took place the EC President gave a ‘state of the nation speech’ which went down very well. He then made a number of long service badge presentations, beginning with the very special 50-year Medallion for Ted Flowers. This was followed by presentations for Steve Heery (30 years), Mike Lang (25 years), Jerry Matthews (25 years), Gareth Lloyd (20 years), Richard Heath (10 years), Nick Johnson (10 years) and Pete Knight (10 years). In the branch there were another 33 members due various long service badges but they opted for less formal presentation at their various depots.

On a personal note, I would like to thank everyone who attended, especially our guests. You all contributed to a brilliant and memorable night!

Bernard Kennedy
Secretary, Bristol Branch

A special presentation to a driver who had to go off to work and skip the celebrations. There’s dedication for you!

District Organiser Graham Morris organised a very useful and informative union training course at Lewisham College in Deptford in October. Most of us were taking part in our own time but it was well attended and we all agreed it proved well worth the effort.

We covered a range of union rep topics, beginning with the various stages of grievance procedures, starting with how to resolve issues before they get to the formal machinery.

Course tutor Dawn Livingston gave us a free hand to recreate situations from our own experiences, recount how they had come about and how they were resolved. It was useful to observe how another person might have addressed the various problems.

During the day we also covered the changes in Disability Discrimination and had a fruitful discussion about whether items raised by us were individual or collective grievances, finally conceding that there is a narrow line between the two. On behalf of all those who attended I’d like to offer sincere thanks to a brilliant tutor and to Graham for making the time to organise the course. It was union money well spent.

Graeme Baxter
London Bridge

Training at the Bridge
20

Letters

These are the pages where you talk to us. We welcome your letters, either by mail to the ASLEF Journal at 75-77 St John Street London, EC1M 4NN 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!

No end in sight for fatality driver

I FELT compelled to email you this after I read one of the Letters to the October Journal. It was from a Driver who had been involved in a fatality and talked about the compensation and the support he received.

I’m pleased his claim was dealt with quickly, but I must bring it to the attention of others that this does not happen in all cases.

I removed myself from main line driving after my fifth fatality, and naturally I sought compensation due to these circumstances. My last fatality was on 14 April 2008 and I am still no further forward with my claim. My nightmare continues with no end in sight and no closure to the horrors which are now an everyday problem for drivers.

Andy Bentley, Depot Driver, Corkerhill

Desmond Owens – thanks from mother

IT IS now over six months since my son Des’ untimely death, on 23 April. I enclose a cheque for your union’s benevolent fund because I could never repay the kindness shown to his family by the union, the staff at the Peterborough depot and indeed everyone at First Capital Connect.

We will always remember you all warmly. You visited the hospice at different times of day and always showed a great depth of understanding and concern to the family in these times of anxiety and stress. It seems as if you all went far out of your way to ease our worries. It is such a comfort to me to know that Des had such good friends.

Des’ sons Joshua and Ryan join me in this expression of our gratitude.

Carmel Owens, Mother

Uniform uniforms

THE November issue of the Journal included an article about women in the union and published the results of a survey about issues that women feel need to be addressed. I have a question about the survey and its results.

It was mentioned twice in the article that women have concerns about their uniforms. I would like to know exactly what these concerns are.

My reason for asking this is that it is a stated objective of the union (clause 8)

‘To promote, and develop and enact positive policies in regard to equality of opportunity of employment and treatment in our industries and ASLEF regardless of sex, sexual orientation, marital status, religion, creed, colour, race or ethnic origin’ (my emphasis)

Yet we allow companies to issue uniforms on a sexual basis. Surely, if an item of uniform is offered to one person in the grade, it should be offered to every person in the grade? After all, I don’t think that anyone would accept allowing any company to have a separate uniform issue for black and white employees - so why do we accept this discrimination based on sex?

Graham Martin-Royle, Driver

Hastings Branch

Exit for ATCU

A letter in the October Journal talked about ‘malicious comments’ from the so-called ‘union’ ATCU. I’ve also had the odd run-in with these people. They have some weird ideas, like why they cannot vote in our pay ballots. One told me if we went out on strike for three days we could get everything we wanted – but of course he could not join us!

The aim of that organisation was to supersede ASLEF. They live in a fantasy world. One told me they nearly had enough members to seek recognition in my company. When I gave him the figures that proved they were miles away, he gave me a distinctly blank look. And no reply.

Having failed with ASLEF, they started to try...
I've never felt like ‘throwing myself overboard’, have been actively involved in ASLEF over weren't given a say on various issues. Well I ACTU join them. now here. It is only a matter of time before our industry over the years that have got to recruit from RMT and TSSA grades. There have been other so-called 'unions’ in our industry over the years that have got nowhere. It is only a matter of time before ACTU join them.

They say they were set up because they weren't given a say on various issues. Well I have been actively involved in ASLEF over many years, and never been afraid to offer criticism at branch meetings or in the Journal. I've never felt like 'throwing myself overboard'; mainly because I want to belong to a trade union that is recognised by the employer. ATCU members are wasting their money: I urge them to think again.

J. E. Rimington, retired member

**Freightliner dozy on fatigue**

WE all know the dangers of fatigue, so I was pleased to see the union would be running a course for LLC reps on how to build links with the 'fatigue index' in mind.

Then I was astonished, to say the least, when Freightliner management would not release any of its reps to attend the course! Doesn't it sound like empty sentiments when they keep telling us that they have the drivers' welfare at heart? Andy Bullock, LLC Secretary, Birmingham Intermodal
Resting place of Tay Bridge driver marked - after 132 years

Driver David Mitchell, along with 74 others, died when the bridge over the River Tay collapsed just before Christmas in 1879. His train fell into the icy waters, killing all those aboard. The driver’s grave remained unmarked for over 130 years until a stone was raised earlier this year. Graeme Dodds, chair of the union’s Dundee branch, laid a wreath at the ceremony. Here he gives us an account of the Tay Bridge ...

A gale of force 10/11 was blowing in the Firth of Tay at Dundee on the stormy night of 28 December 1879. Around quarter past seven a train edged onto the bridge, pulling six carriages and carrying some 70 passengers. Despite the conditions, and the fact that the gale was blowing directly at right-angles to the bridge, the driver, David Mitchell, can’t have been too worried. After all, the bridge had been opened for just 19 months and had the approval of the Board of Trade.

It had been completed in February 1878 – and the man responsible for its design, construction and maintenance, Thomas Bouch, had been awarded a knighthood. At nearly two miles long, the Tay bridge was a remarkable construction. At that time it was, with its 85 spans, the longest bridge in the world. It carried a single rail track and the design was such that it ran through a tunnel of girders. As they moved along it, Driver Mitchell and his charges were 88 feet above the high water mark.

A SHIFT THAT NEVER ENDED
Still, he must have thought, not long to go now. His shift was almost finished as he drove the final couple of miles of the Burntisland to Dundee route. But it was a shift he would never complete.

He must have heard the sound of metal moving and twisting, and the roar of the wind in his ears. Then the entire section of the bridge that was carrying the locomotive and carriages fell. The train and all its 74 passengers crashed into the icy waters of the Tay. None survived.

A Court of Inquiry concluded that, ‘The fall of the bridge was occasioned by the insufficiency of the cross bracing and its fastenings to sustain the force of the gale.’ If the wind bracing had been properly constructed and maintained, it said, the bridge could have withstood the storm that night. But there is still speculation about the cause of the tragedy and whether or not the designer was to blame.

A MARKED GRAVE OVER A CENTURY LATER
Now, over 130 years after the tragedy, the final resting place of David Mitchell, the train driver who perished that night, has finally been marked, thanks mainly to the efforts of his descendants in Edinburgh and local people in the Fife town of Leslie.

One of Driver Mitchell’s descendants is 66-year old David Leighton who is a great-grandson. He was traced by the Tay Rail Bridge Disaster Memorial Trust as they needed his permission to erect the stone because of the laws governing grave site ownership. He said that David Mitchell’s driver’s watch, lifted from the river after all that time, is still in the family, and was still going last time he saw it. At the time of the accident, he added, ‘there wasn’t the money around to put up a gravestone’.

It was nine weeks after the disaster before David’s body was washed up and soon afterwards his family returned to their native village of Leslie. That is where he was laid to rest in an unmarked grave. In later years his wife and three of his five children were buried there too.

This year enough money was raised to give David’s grave the marker it deserves. There was no question of any blame attached to the driver in any of the enquiries. Even in those far-off days there was a clockwork black box that documented the driver’s movements.

When the stone was dedicated in April, it was in the presence of some of his descendants, local councillors, members of the Memorial Trust and other members of the Leslie community. Along with fellow train driver Ian Selbie, I was present to lay a wreath on behalf of ASLEF.

It has been over 130 years, but finally Driver Mitchell has the memorial he deserves.
 Prize Crossword No. 68 set by Zebedee

Across
1 Prison officer’s salary (5)
4 Contact point to make improvements (3,6)
9 Venetian taxi? (7)
10 Smoking pot (7)
11 Glowing prize of English sport (5)
13 First appearance of French however (5)
15 Diamonds set in classic eardrops (3)
16 “Miniver,” 1942 film (3)
17 What a Union speaker does (5)
19 One tapping vein not leading to the ear (5)
21 Anonymous informers (5)
23 Condition under which a horse races (5)
24 Short title for the European railroad network (3)
25 A-to-do to eliminate to-do (3)
26 A criminal spills the beans (5)
28 Badge left on the third man (5)
29 Not in a job settlement (7)
31 The diplomat in the case (7)
33 Railway roundabout? (9)
34 Jokes that seem extremely funny? (5).

Down
1 Remarkable person who changes lights for drivers (9)
2 Stock properties in America (7)
3 Identity requested (3)
4 Train person to defend (5)
5 Unions’ AGM gathering is not finished (3)
6 Order used in the dictionary (5)
7 Strain felt by a number going to Jerusalem (7)
8 What cooks do with books (5)
12 Spots where the train pauses (5)
14 Drain of liquid or steam by mechanism (5)
18 An expert now starting on the domestic front (5)
19 Finalise (5)
20 Rotating arms? (9)
22 Domestic cockerel (7)
24 Plant explorer brought back to start business (7)
25 Having to do with a flight? (5)
26 Cry when shut up for nothing (5)
27 Tremble, vibrate (5)
30 Place to unwind (3)
32 Brown leaves Scots design for Jack (3).

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

Name.....................................................................................................................................
Address..................................................................................................................................
Postcode.....................................................................................................................................

Solution to Crossword No. 67 which appeared in the November 2011 edition of the ASLEF Journal.
Congratulations to Vernon Nye from Romford

Thanks for all your responses to the 67th ASLEF crossword in the November edition. If you complete this month’s crossword please send the solution to the Editor, ASLEF Journal, 75-77 St John Street, London EC1M 4HN by the 14th of the issue month.

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