HALF A MILLION SAY: THERE IS AN ALTERNATIVE TO PUBLIC SERVICE CUTS!

May Elections: ASLEF goes local

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URING our recent industrial action in Arriva Trains Wales, an online news agency tried to set up a system to enable commuters to get around the effects of the strike. Various journalists invited me to be incensed by this, but, perhaps surprisingly, I didn’t feel that way. The fact is that we never set out to alienate passengers, because our dispute isn’t with them. For the most part, our passengers are working people like us. Our dispute is with a stubborn employer.

We always get a mass of emails when we take industrial action. Most are just the malcontents who have a rant, often in the most offensive way. It’s at times like this that it’s a blessing to have that ‘delete’ button!

Others are rather sadder. These are the people who say we should ‘get back to work’ because they haven’t had a rise for years and they are suffering from the recession. I feel sorry for them. They have a peculiar mind-set that comes up with the logic that, ‘I am suffering, so everyone should be suffering.’

It comes from jealousy and a sense of impotence. ‘I can’t do anything about my own situation, so I hate anyone else having the ability to demand respect and a fair return for their labour.’

We send these people a message suggesting that they begin to organise unions in their own workplaces. It would be a much better use of their time than moaning at workers who are successfully organised.

I know it is sometimes difficult for commuters to think rationally when they’re waiting at a station and there’s no train in sight. But in calmer moments, I am sure most passengers realise we are on the same side. And when they are in dispute, ASLEF members will rally to their aid. It is part of our proud tradition.

Keith Norman
General Secretary
N 30 March the Department for Transport (DfT) said it is – again - considering allowing the length of lorries to increase by up to 7 feet (2.05 metres) on UK roads. It has begun an ‘open consultation’ which will close on 21 June. ‘Every time we kick longer lorries into the long grass, the haulage industry sneaks them out again like snakes,’ says ASLEF’s general secretary Keith Norman. ‘Every time they lose the arguments we have put on the grounds on safety, congestion and economics, they drag out their old discredited points again.’

The union is asking members to contact MPs to ask them to oppose the latest proposal. The consultation is ‘into the potential impacts of permitting an increase in the permitted length of articulated lorries to 18.75 metres while maintaining all other regulations, including the 44 tonne gross vehicle weight limit’.

The DfT’s own research estimates that with longer trailers, rail freight growth would be 262% by 2025, instead of 732% without them.

Meanwhile a survey in Germany carried out by the opinion research institute FORSA shows that over 75% of Germans are opposed to allowing longer and heavier trucks (LHVs) on public roads, with only 18% in favour. The main reasons given for rejecting LHVs were increased risk of accidents and the necessary modifications to the highway infrastructure at the taxpayers’ expense.

The consultation document, including details of how to respond, can be found on the DfT website: www.dft.gov.uk/consultations/open/2011-06/

London’s Mayor is under pressure to rethink the likely design of a £1 billion new fleet of Crossrail trains after admitting none will have lavatories.

Boris Johnson has revealed that none of the fleet of 60 new trains required for the 73-mile service when it opens in 2018 will have loos. The excuse is that it will be a ‘high- frequency metro-style service’ – rather ignoring the fact that many journeys will exceed an hour.

There are also currently no plans to build toilet facilities at 6 central London stations included on the route.

Tenders are out to provide wireless internet services at up to 120 underground stations after a trial at Charing Cross. Access should be available, we are told, in time for the Olympics. The plan is that basic news, like travel updates, would be free, but anything else will be charged, with the company splitting revenue with Transport for London.

At this stage it is only intended to have internet access in stations and not along tunnels.

Campaigners from Playfair 2012 – a coalition of unions and other campaigning groups – gathered outside the Westminster hotel where the International Olympic Committee (IOC) was meeting last month.

The campaigners want the IOC to include in the Olympic Charter and its code of ethics the need to respect workers’ rights in the manufacture of sportswear and other branded products to ensure that all goods made under the Olympic banner have been produced in workplaces free from exploitation and abuse.

The minimum wage has been increased in line with the recommendations of the Low Pay Commission. From 1 October
- The adult rate will increase by 15p to £6.08 an hour;
- The rate for 18-20 year olds will increase by 6p to £4.98 an hour;
- The rate for 16-17 year olds will increase by 4p to £3.68 an hour; and
- The rate for apprentices will increase by 10p to £2.60 an hour.

‘Naturally I am pleased to see an increase in the minimum wage,’ said Keith Norman. ‘But how you are supposed to live on it is utterly beyond me. We will continue to argue for a living wage, not a minimum.’
ASLEF joins rally against cuts in public spending

HE TUC ‘March for the Alternative’ to government public spending cuts attracted up to half a million protestors to the capital on 26 March. ASLEF members with 21 branch banners from all over the country were highly visible as our union took the message to the streets.

The central argument was – and remains – that deep spending cuts are not the solution to the UK’s economic problems. Instead, we need policies that produce growth and jobs. To do this means rebalancing the economy, reforming the financial system, boosting manufacturing - and raising wages for ordinary workers.

Instead, the government wants to cut £81 billion from public spending over the next four years – which will have a devastating impact on services like the NHS, schools and the police – and this is against the background of unemployment already rising towards three million.

Marchers argued for a different approach, with jobs and growth the top priority - keeping people in work, keeping tax revenues flowing and limiting the huge social costs of unemployment. And instead of cuts we need progressive taxes - not least on the bankers who caused this mess in the first place.

It was a marvellous day of protest, and heartening to know that it was not just ASLEF on the march, but the whole country. The union thanks and salutes all those members who came to London to back the event.
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.

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Making friends in Westminster

The HE union held a reception in the House of Commons last month to make contact with politicians, explain the union’s aims and immediate objectives and hopefully win a few new friends. The event was organised by Luton MP Kelvin Hopkins who chairs the union’s Parliamentary group. Among the guests were Shadow Cabinet ministers Maria Eagle (transport) and Peter Hain (Wales) as well as other MPs including Jeremy Corbyn (Islington) and Louise Ellman, chair of the transport select committee.

TU C leaders were also invited. As well as national officers, ASLEF representatives from all over the UK attended the event.

Keith and EC President Alan Donnelly with TUC leader Brendan Barber and his deputy Francis O’Grady

General Secretary Keith Norman makes his point as Kelvin Hopkins looks on

Shadow transport minister Maria Eagle outlined Labour’s approach to transport

Union’s learning project: a longstanding commitment

O PENING the third Unionlearn seminar in Sheffield in March, District Organiser Kevin Lindsay pointed out that ASLEF has a longstanding commitment to education and training - which has seen upwards of 3,000 members undertake courses in recent years. He emphasised the importance of education in ‘a holistic organising strategy’.

More than 50 delegates from across the UK took part in the seminar, and heard General Secretary Keith Norman pay tribute to the work of Kevin and the project team. It is testimony to Unionlearn’s importance that five full time union officers and two EC members attended. He also highlighted plans for a fully equipped learning centre in the new union head office on St John Street and welcomed the additional 12 months funding for the project.

Delegates attended workshops on apprenticeships and on ‘how to set up a course and work with providers’ before Judith Swift from Unionlearn gave a thorough overview of the organisation’s current work. District 4 secretary Nick Whitehead presented a fascinating history of ASLEF in Sheffield and gave an account of his own personal experience of trade union education.

Elsewhere the inaugural ASLEF Learner of the Year award was presented to Colin Berry (Derby) by General Secretary Keith Norman for an irrepresible commitment to education and training from the German language to numeracy and then on to the Open University.

Tolpuddle Martyrs’ Festival – 15 – 17 July

The programme for this year’s Tolpuddle Martyrs’ Festival and Rally on July 15-17 has been launched, with its trademark vibrant mix of politics and poetry, theatre and music, activism and fun. As well as its left-inclined events and speeches, the rally will feature a huge range of music from such names as Robb Johnson, Billy Bragg, global musicians Warsaw Village Band, Paddy Nash and the Happy Enchilados, Polkaholix, Grace Petrie, Thomas and the Mock Ups, Maddy Carty, Sean Taylor, Bernis and many more.

MEETING WITH COALITION MINISTER

General Secretary Keith Norman and EC President Alan Donnelly met Secretary of State for Transport Philip Hammond for the first time last month. Discussions covered the need for a cross industry forum to examine the strategic issues facing the industry as well as the union’s concerns about Sir Roy McNulty’s rail review. Keith voiced his fears about the impact of Network Rail’s regionalisation plans on the rail freight sector to which Hammond cryptically replied that a debate had to be had about the responsibility for marginal and fixed costs in the sector.

LEVEL CROSSINGS

The RSSB has given the union details of the Network Rail/ BTP Joint Police Camera Enforcement Vehicle which has been launched in partnership with the BTP to catch users misusing public road crossings by running red lights. The vehicle is fitted with technology able to prosecute drivers and issue on the spot fines from within the vehicle itself. Drivers caught by the vehicle are given the choice of 3 points on their driving license and a fine or attending a driver training course. The vehicle will be used in various locations around the country and a second ANPR enforcement vehicle is to be delivered to Anglia Route in April.

MAY DAY MARCH

On Sunday 1 May there will be a march and rally in London. Demonstrators are asked to meet at noon at Clerkenwell Green, near Farringdon tube station, before marching to Trafalgar Square, setting off an hour later. Further details are available at www.londonmayday.org
Get involved – and go home buzzing!

says Paula Brown reporting on last month’s Women’s TUC Conference ...

I advise anyone who is given an opportunity to attend a conference either as a delegate or an observer – to grab it with both hands! You’ll enjoy it and you’ll come home buzzing!

I was a delegate to the Women’s TUC conference last month where 60 delegates representing 31 unions discussed 43 motions covering government spending cuts, the Equality Act, pensions, women’s health and safety, discrimination, women and the trade unions - to name just a few.

ASLEF’s Deborah Reay called for ‘Help for Haiti’s Women’ while Wendy Hurst spoke on ‘Outsourcing in the Workplace and How it Affects Women’. Deborah gave a chilling account of conditions in the temporary camps that sprung up after the devastating earthquake in Haiti while Wendy Hurst detailed how outsourcing work to sub-contractors has a particularly detrimental effect on employees working conditions. Rebekah Peterson spoke in opposition to ‘Austerity Cuts’ while I spoke on human rights in Colombia and breast screening.

Guest speakers included Yvette Cooper MP, TUC President Michael Leavy and TUC General Secretary Brendan Barber. Brendan (encouraged by Debbie Reay!) praised ASLEF’s court victory against London Midland as ‘a turning point for industrial relations for trade unions’.

Many thanks to District 4 for nominating me, and to all my fellow delegates and head office staff for a rich and interesting experience.

ASLEF was represented by Deborah Reay, Wendy Hurst, Paula Brown and Rebekah Peterson with support from Lee James (Equalities Administrator) and Simon Weller (National Organiser).

ASLEF RESPONSE TO LONDON ROUTE UTILISATION STRATEGY

ASLEF submitted a response to Network Rail’s London Route Utilisation Strategy in April, emphasising the importance of ensuring infrastructure enhancements continue to meet the growing demand for rail travel in the capital.

The union put a great deal of emphasis on the electrification of the Gospel Oak – Barking route following a response to ASLEF’s request for ideas from south-east branches which St Pancras responded to.
‘Big Society’ offers chance to expand Union ideals

argues Karl Davis ...

BELIEVED the Liberal Democrats during the last General Election campaign. I admit that I was taken in by their empty promises and progressive facade. I felt that the Labour Party had lost its impetus, impact, and in too many areas of policy and conviction, its way.

That said, I offer no excuses. I have gunpowder on my hands as bullet after divisive bullet is fired at the working classes and the vulnerable by this ‘coalition’ government.

It’s obvious to me now that the only people who can realistically put the brakes on the excesses of the ConDems are the trade unions. I can’t help feeling though, that we’re missing a trick.

AN OPPORTUNITY TO REACH OUT

David Cameron called on citizens to join his ‘Big Society’ by becoming involved in their local communities and improving them. We all know only too well that this is a cynical Tory attempt to provide neighbourhoo services (for which we pay ever more extortionate council tax) on the cheap.

However, Cameron and Co have unwittingly provided unions with a massive opportunity to trigger a resurgence in union membership. And, by organising community events, unions can put their agenda across to people who have never held a union card.

And what’s more, the Tories created the very void that they’re now calling on us to fill!

The advent of the ‘right to buy’ housing scheme caused a seismic shift in many people’s thinking. It ended many people’s identification with the ‘working class’ and made some much more unwilling to withdraw their labour. This was because of a quite understandable commitment to servicing their mortgages – which had never previously been an issue.

This, combined with the systematic demonisation of the unions by the British press, the face-off between Thatcher and the NUM, and the inception of the anti-trade union legislation (instigated by the Tories, and sustained by Labour) ushered in an era of decline for organised labour within the United Kingdom.

IT’S OUR BIG SOCIETY, NOT THEIRS!

Fast forward to today. I believe we are taking precisely the wrong decisions when it comes to fighting the ConDems. Instead of shunning and ridiculing the ‘Big Society’, we should engage with it.

If we are to prosper, and harness our ability to educate workers to effectively resist exploitation, low wages, and the worst ravages of the globalised market we have to hold our nose and step into this void. We need to move on from the climate where low paid workers see themselves as helpless victims with no recourse to justice and fair conditions. We can achieve this by keeping our eyes on the prize, and by looking beyond the fact that we are having to rub along with those who have either betrayed their promises to the poor and vulnerable, or simply failed to register their presence in the first place.

We must be strategic, locally minded, and relevant to people in these poor communities. We have to work at restoring local pride, improving community services and reducing the feeling of disenfranchisement that often leads to anti-social behaviour.

With effort, we can provide a new link between the huge numbers of unorganised workers and a trade union movement that can once again be a true vehicle for change.

WORDS ARE NOT ENOUGH

We cannot inspire by rhetoric alone. We must work smarter as well as harder, and build community links. Working alongside the TUC we can sponsor and co-ordinate community projects such as credit unions and job programs. We can take the opportunity to educate the young and the disenfranchised in a way that will inspire them to join unions. We can encourage them to join and progress through the ranks of the Labour Party, and thus re-establish Labour’s identity as a political voice for the vulnerable and the exploited, the natural ally of ordinary, hard-working men, women and children.

Most importantly, we need to wake up to the facts. We have a Tory government. It may have a pale yellow fig leaf covering its intimate areas, but it is Tory. We can continue with our traditional tactics of protests, slogans, and strikes – or we can change and adapt to the modern world.

We must realise that things do not always get done in the best way because they have been done the same way since 1880. We must adapt, advance, be strategic, and change in a way that allows progressive politics to set the political agenda in Britain – rather than spend generations protesting about it.

Opposition creates fantastic folk songs, but it doesn’t make for a fantastic country. We need to stop writing lyrics, and start writing a more vibrant, democratic, open, inclusive and progressive future both for the labour movement and for the nation as a whole.

Karla Davis has held a number of local and district level positions within ASLEF and the TUC. He’s worked from a number of depots across the network and currently lives in Bedfordshire with wife Stacey and young son Harry.
High speed and green gauge

The creation of a national High-Speed Rail network has made an important step forward. On 28 February formal consultation started on the details of the route between London (Euston) and Birmingham (Curzon Street) and Lichfield – where the new line will connect into the West Coast Main Line (WCML). This is HS2, and it will come complete with a connection to HS1 (the Channel Tunnel Rail Link) if the consultation process goes well.

Much will depend on how the debate goes over the next few months (the consultation runs to the end of July). It is especially tough for the Conservative Party who have embraced high-speed rail and progressed it at the smart pace that Lord Adonis had started in the last government. Several Cabinet members have their constituencies along the planned line of route. It is therefore vital that the rail industry, its staff and management, speaks with one supportive voice. This is a fantastic opportunity to expand the railway and create a national transport system of which we can all be proud. Make sure your MP knows what you think!

**WHY I LAUNCHED GREENGUAGE**

I launched 'Greenguage 21' five years ago because, having been responsible for strategic planning at the short-lived Strategic Rail Authority, I knew that there was a better case for high-speed rail as a solution to the coming transport capacity crunch than anything else.

Objectors to high-speed rail of course have a right to get their views known and the Secretary of State is bound to take them into account. But some of the hostility to HS2 is simply unfounded. Its impact on the landscape of the Chilterns will really be quite small, and nothing like the effect that the M40 or the A41 dual carriageway has had.

One of the objections has been that while HS2 may benefit the cities at either end of the route – and don’t forget, these include Glasgow, Liverpool and Manchester as well as Birmingham and London – it ‘does nothing for anywhere in between: they get the pain and no gain. Well this is untrue as well.

With the fast services currently provided by the Pendolino fleet replaced by even better services running over HS2, there is the great gift of spare capacity made available on the WCML. As a recent Greenguage 21 report has pointed out, the opportunities created for more freight services, more commuter services and new connections is huge.

**DEVELOPING SERVICE AND CITIES**

In effect, HS2 creates the means to develop services for places such as Watford Junction, Milton Keynes, Northampton, Rugby, Nuneaton, Tamworth and Lichfield that lose out to the big city destinations in the current timetable.

Take a place like Coventry, where local MPs have taken clear positions either in favour or against HS2 which passes to the south of the City. The new Birmingham Interchange station on HS2, next to the Airport, NEC and the existing Birmingham International station will offer a super-fast connection to London – and this will benefit many in the Coventry area. But what about the remaining service on the WCML?

Our work on the subject shows that as soon as the 20-minute interval Pendolino service is removed, the options are really quite exciting and can benefit Coventry hugely. The London Euston service over the WCML would become half hourly which allows other trains in the crowded Coventry Corridor to be fitted in. The local service could have its frequency doubled. Both of the hourly Cross Country services could be routed via Coventry and Birmingham International (giving Coventry a direct service to Derby Sheffield and York that it currently lacks). True, this will drive a need for double tracking of the Coventry – Leamington line. But then that will help support the re-opening of Kenilworth station (on which a planning consent is awaited). And why then shouldn’t Chiltern Railways offer a service directly from Coventry and Kenilworth via Leamington and the Chiltern route to London Marylebone?

HS2 liberates network capacity. In some cases, it will give rise to the need for local complementary investment in the existing network. But these local projects bring their own set of local benefits; it’s just that they make no sense unless there’s capacity on the main line.

**Jim Steer is the Director of ‘Greenguage 21’ which is ‘an umbrella under which all those with an interest in high speed rail network can come together and openly and publicly debate the merits of alternative routes, priorities and technologies, alternative implementation strategies and the economic and environmental benefits for Britain’. Its web address is www.greenguage21.net**
The Department for Transport is engaged in a major review of rail. Central to this is the ‘Value for Money’ study being carried out by Sir Roy McNulty, which will lead to a White Paper in November 2011. Here Philippa says why McNulty must encourage the movement of freight to rail ...

AIL FREIGHT has a key role to play in aiding economic regeneration and re-balancing the economy with green jobs. It can do this by reducing long distance road congestion, carbon emissions and exposure to road accidents – all of which are Coalition policy. So it is important that any ‘restructuring’ maintains and enhances rail freight capacity and competitiveness with road. It is important in both economic and environment terms to give business a choice in freight transport.

Rail freight volumes can double in the next 20 years, especially in the consumer sector, as long as Government continues to support rail freight through spatial planning and transport policy. If on the other hand rail does not grow there will be increases in long-distance road congestion.

Therefore, it is crucial that any restructuring of Network Rail, as part of the ‘Value for Money’ Study, helps, rather than hinders, the continued growth of rail freight.

A NATIONAL NETWORK IS CRUCIAL

The nature of freight distribution means that rail freight often flows across several regional boundaries. This makes a national rail network a crucial element in providing a robust, reliable flexible service to customers.

Any rail restructuring which introduced regional sectorisation and vertical integration would be a massive threat to rail freight. This is because rail freight needs a national rail network if it is to compete with a national road network.

The rail freight industry therefore needs to insist that the national network is retained in any structural changes to the industry. It is also vital to support continued growth in rail freight so that the following key attributes are protected and enhanced:

- National charging that keeps rail freight competitive with road
- Timetabling of cross-route trains
- Strategic reservation of capacity to enable rail freight growth
- Co-ordination of engineering work over core and diversionary routes (which typically traverse an alternative region) and subsequent timetabling
- Incentives to react quickly to develop new business
- Day to day performance management of trains over border
- Insufficient incentives for everyday operational improvements
- Lack of delivery of new rolling stock
- Inadequate and patchy enforcement of drivers’ hours, vehicle overloading and differing foreign operating standards
- Inadequate infrastructure

Rail freight industry has invested over £1.5bn since 1995. Then there are the often-rehearsed, but always significant economic, environmental and social benefits of rail freight.

- It can make great contributions to the alleviation of road congestion, which is claimed to cost businesses £17 billion a year.
- An average freight train can remove 50 long distance HGVs and an aggregates train can remove up to 160 long distance HGVs.
- Road congestion is claimed to cost businesses.
- DfT estimates the cost of congestion being £1 per lorry miles on the most congested roads.

The climate change arguments remain self-evident. Rail produces 70% less CO2 per tonne-km than road transport. Rail freight can play a major part in helping the UK meet its 80% carbon reduction target.

Finally but by no means of least significance is the question of safety. Existing heavy goods vehicles (HGVs) are over three times more likely to be involved in fatal accidents than cars on major roads. This is due to a combination of size, lack of proper enforcement of drivers’ hours, vehicle overloading and differing foreign operating standards.

For all these reasons, we’re urging Sir Roy McNulty to make his review more than a cuts agenda. We hope he will have the vision to make it a rallying call for freight on rail.

Rail review needs to recognise importance of rail freight

argues Philippa Edmunds, Manager of the Freight on Rail campaign to which ASLEF is affiliated ...
Local action by ASLEF members can bring national change ....

National Organiser Simon Weller wants more ASLEF members to be active in local politics. Local involvement, he argues, can be the key to the national change we so badly need ...

OME years ago the ASLEF branch and contacts directory had a lengthy list of our members serving their communities as councillors, JPs, Tribunal panel members and school governors. Sadly, although we still have many hard working and respected members in public service, the list is not as long as it once was.

ASLEF is by its nature a political organisation. Our core activity is representing members and their communities – driven by a desire to protect our interests and bring about change and improvements. So why have we seen a decline in participation in local politics?

Is it because we now view ‘politics’ as a distant and unrepresentative world? A world populated by a cadre of Oxbridge educated career politicians; who have never had to get up to go work at four in the morning, or been on the receiving end of a passenger’s frustrations?

Even our local politicians now seem removed from the communities they purport to represent.

I believe that while ASLEF’s priority will always be industrial representation we also have a wider responsibility to help shape and change our communities for the better.

ASLEF’s political work has always been tightly woven with members taking up local civic roles. The experience and wealth of knowledge gained from a trade union background is a huge asset in any of these positions.

These pages put the spotlight on three members who are standing for election to local councils on 5 May. They show the many reasons that encourage people to stand for the council - from wanting to improve and/or represent the views of their local area to pursuing individual political beliefs.

But what does a councillor actually do?

A ROLE WORTH TAKING ON
Elected by local people to serve them and represent their views, needs and aspirations, a councillor takes on many roles as local leader, advocate, champion, representative and campaigner - a role not dissimilar from that as an ASLEF representative.

We’ve all complained about council decisions in the past – and especially, with our special interest, about transport policies that appeared short sighted. So let’s do something about it.

Having ASLEF members serving as Labour councillors on local authorities is a very positive development. As a union we have a particular interest in rail as well as employment rights and having members active in local politics means they are well placed to speak for these issues.

However, the last ten years have seen a shift in the profile of councillors. The Councillors Commission put it plainly when it said, ‘Today’s average age for a councillor is 58.3 - a significant increase since 10 years ago when it was 55.4 - and the overwhelming majority are retired or self-employed. Younger councillors are becoming a rarity with just 3.5% under 30 and fewer than one in three are women. Only 4.1% of local representatives come from ethnic minority backgrounds.’

Many areas are caving out for dedicated people who want to plan and build something better. ASLEF wants to encourage all members, especially women and those from ethnic minority backgrounds, to come forward and run for election as Labour councillors. We’ll give you all the support we can.

And of course, we hope today’s ASLEF councillors will be tomorrow’s parliamentary candidates: the future ASLEF MPs who can safeguard the union’s political engagement in the years ahead - and begin the shift away from the ‘career politician’ to normal working people who want to bring about change and deliver a better future for our towns, communities and ultimately our country.

May 5 Local Elections: ASLEF members on the campaign trail

A RO LE WO RTH TAK IN G O N

RICHARD D ORAN
(Gainsborough East, Lincolnshire):

FOCUSING ON LOCAL ISSUES
Richard Doran, ‘Richy’ to his train-driving colleagues, is standing for the second time in the West Lindsey ward in Gainsborough, Lincolnshire.

Last time out, Richy finished second, behind the sitting Dem councillor, relegating his Tory opponent into third place.

After becoming politicised through his union, Richy joined the Labour Party just three years ago, in order to win ASLEF affiliation and join the CLP - and has not looked back (or sat down!) since.

‘I jumped in with both feet,’ he says. In addition to his duties as a local councillor, Richy is also vice-chair of his local Labour Party. Luckily his
USING YOUR VOTE IN THE MAY ELECTIONS

members on the campaign trail got on this month's local elections. Here we speak to three of our who have put themselves forward for council positions in.

We will be looking out for our ASLEF brothers and sisters. Collette and other Labour activists say education is always a lively topic, locally or nationally.

To be honest I only put my name forward to fight an unwinnable seat. And then this seat came up. The party thought I had a good chance of defeating the Tory councillor and here we are.

Collette’s campaign, for which she has great support from her in-laws, is centred on opposing a local development which she says, would further devastate the town centre and destroy a much-used local community centre.

Member | District | Sitting/ non-sitting | Ward | Council
--- | --- | --- | --- | ---
David Bull | 1 | NS | Westgate on Sea | Thanet
Mark Dowd | 3 | S | St Oswald | Selton
Rob Smith | 3 | NS | Priory | Telford and Wrekin
Neil Castle | 4 | S | Central | Immingham
Dave Doherty | 4 | S | Humber | Immingham
Dave Watson | 4 | S | Humber | Immingham
Mick Lyons | 4 | S | Temple Newsam | Leeds
Gary Warne | 4 | NS | Draypool | Hull
Mark Reynolds | 5 | NS | North Hykeham | Scunthorpe
Nigel Gibson | 5 | NS | Brantey | Brantey
Richard Doran | 5 | NS | Gainsborough East | Gainsborough
Andy Morrison | 5 | S | West Ward | Harwich
Andy Botham | 6 | NS | Matlock | Derbyshire
Cliff Holloway | 6 | NS | Averley and Uplands | Thirsk
Collette Gibson | 7 | NS | Brantey Central | Brantey

party. Luckily his wife and candidate Richy is also vice-duties as a local election he says. In addition to his ASLEF affiliation with his local years ago, in order to secure through his union, Richy joined the Labour Party just three third place.

Last time out, Richy finished Dem councillor, relegating his to party politics. ‘I joined the says she’s a relative newcomer to party politics. ‘I joined the Labour Party two years ago after a conversation with Simon Weller when we were both at an International Transport Federation conference;’ she says. ‘Until then I had only been active in the union. Now she’s optimistic about her chances of becoming a councillor – but it almost never happened.

‘To be honest I only put my name forward to fight an unwinnable seat. And then this seat came up. The party thought I had a good chance of defeating the Tory councillor and here we are.

Collette’s campaign, for which she has great support from her in-laws, is centred on opposing a local development which she says, would further devastate the town centre and destroy a much-used local community centre.

MICK LYONS (Temple Newsam, Leeds):

FOURTH TURN AT THE TEMPLE?
An ASLEF member for almost 60 years, Mick Lyons was first elected to Leeds Council in 1980. For the past six years great-grandfather Mick has represented the ward of Temple Newsam, which is made up of one-third social housing and two-thirds owner occupied private housing.

Until Mick won his seat the ward was represented by three Tory councillors. Mick defeated one and now holds a majority of over 1,000. But Mick realises the dangers of complacency.

Leeds council, second only to Greater London and Birmingham in size, has been forced to slash £90m from its budget, and local Tories have been busy blaming the previous Labour government. ‘No one mentions the bankers’ says Mick, ‘People need to be told the truth about what happened.’

Mick hopes his experience will inspire fellow ASLEF members to become more politically involved. ‘When I joined ASLEF we were all in the Party. We need to organise, talk to branches - because no-one else is going to fight for our jobs, pensions and kids’ education.’

At home in Leeds Mick is fighting to save vital services, drop-in centres for the elderly and crisis centres for the mentally ill from savage Tory cost cutting. And then it’s off to his first meeting of the day, to secure a local leisure centre. Despite an average day which lasts from seven in the morning until 11 at night, Mick shows no sign of slowing down just yet.
Jamal swops Tangier for Twickers!

Jamal Ajjane says that when he was living in his hometown of Tangier in Morocco in his early twenties, he never thought of living anywhere else. But then he met an English girl, the first step on a journey that would take him to the footplate at Strawberry Hill. Chris Proctor spoke to him ...

Jamal is always a man with a platform …

plane. It just seems further because it’s not in Europe.‘

Jamal says he’s noticed a lot of change in his hometown over the years. People have become more materialistic and don’t have the same bonds, he says: they are more insular, something he puts down to technology and television.’

Jamal was at university in Fez, where he studied English Language and Literature. The university was a hotbed of student politics and protest at the time. ‘It wasn’t Islamic at the time. All the discussions were about Marx and Lenin. It was a formative time for me. There were demonstrations all the time, at the drop of a hat. They were exciting times that left a real impression.’

It all seems a long way from the life of a train driver with two sons in suburban London. ‘That path started when I met my wife, who was an English girl living in Tangier working in the tourist industry. After we met, she stayed working in Morocco for a year and then we moved to England together.

‘I wasn’t sure what I wanted to do, and actually there wasn’t much choice as there was a recession on and jobs were hard to come by. At first I thought of studying, but I needed to be earning money. Eventually I applied to be a guard at Strawberry Hill. I knew nothing about the railways at the time – except that it
wouldn’t be the type of straight nine-to-five existence which I just couldn’t stand. I know this might sound strange, but I enjoy working shifts. I like variety, and enjoy being idle when everyone else is at work.’

Although he hadn’t really thought of it as a career, he ‘sort of got addicted.’ ‘I liked the family feel, especially under BR. So I applied for an assessment after a couple of years and I was on my way to the footplate. Funny, isn’t it? I never planned anything and now I find I’m a leading driver now.’

Given the active politics of his student days, and his continuing interest in current affairs and politics, it is no surprise that Jamal was soon involved in the union. He’s now secretary of his branch.

‘That was the only down-side of moving from guard to driver,’ he jokes. ‘I had much more time for reading the papers when I was a guard!’

We spoke as unrest was beginning to spread in north Africa, and Jamal obviously has strong and informed views on the events ‘I have no sympathy with Gaddafi, but plenty with the Libyan people. Where did all the oil wealth of that country go?’ he asks. ‘It certainly didn’t benefit ordinary Libyans. But nothing is simple, because I worry too about the human cost of a civil war, and think we need to find out more about the rebels we are supporting. It seems to me we know nothing about them except that they don’t like Gaddafi. That’s not enough.’

He maintains a constant interest and concern in international affairs, being deeply interested in Colombia and a passionate supporter of the Palestinian people. ‘I often try to talk about Palestine to my colleagues. I remember one asking if I was Palestinian. I had

A HUNDRED YEARS OF UNION

The May 1911 edition of ASLEF’s Locomotive Journal carried stories about how to end railway collisions from an American, and Australian and an Englishmen …

NO MORE RAILWAY COLLISIONS

We give below particulars of the inventions which claim to be a cure for railway collisions, and we feel they will interest our readers.

The first is an American invention, the second one is Australian and the third emanates from England. According to the Railroad Telegrapher, U.S.A., the tests are said to have been so successful and conclusive in their result that the State Commissioner will probably make the device the basis of new legislation relative to railway safety equipment in Michigan. It is claimed that the system; which is operated by electricity, makes it impossible for a train to enter a block occupied by another.

The Australian trials were carried through without a hitch and proved the possibility of providing each train with an electrical brain.

The test was made with one engine managed by the driver on the line, while the other engine, fitted with the invention approached it. The engine blew its warning whistle, the driver took no notice of it, and then of its own accord it shut off steam and absolutely refused to collide with the other engine. It is stated that the company controlling the invention is backing it to the amount of £250,000, and it is intended to bring the invention to England at an early date, where it will be demonstrated. The English suggestion is as follows, as suggested by Mr. Henry Jeffreys: SIR. – It has occurred to me that railway ‘collisions might be prevented, or, at all events, their evil effects minimized, if the engine-driver had the means at his disposal to uncouple his engine. This might be accomplished by pulling over a lever in the cab. It could be easily arranged that the act of uncoupling would apply the air brake automatically, thus bringing the train behind to a standstill. Under these circumstances, if, owing to the forgetfulness of a signalman, two express trains were to meet on the same line, the engines alone would come into collision and the damage be confined to them.'

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, 9 Arkwright Road, London NW3 6AB or journal@aslef.org.uk

Jamal the Barcelona fan – brave enough to sport their colours in the ground of Madrid club Getafe

Extracts selected and edited by Dave Bennett
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BARRY MACKETT ‘EVERYONE LIKED BARRY’

I’m truly sorry to have to report the passing of Barry Mackett in January. He was truly well-liked and respected not just in our Wimbledon depot, but by everyone who knew him on the southern and south-east routes he drove. I never met anyone who had a word to say against him. His bushy beard and singular appearance earned him the affectionate nick-name ‘Claude’ after Claude Greengrass, the loveable rogue from ‘Heatbeat’.

Born in 1941, Barry started on the railways in 1956 at Nine Elms, joining ASLEF the following year. From there he moved to Feltham, Strawberry Hill and finally to Wimbledon where he finished his career.

Barry, who never had a single day off work in all his long career, had the strange gift of a mind like a human calculator. You could go to him with a wage query and he’d ponder for a moment before calculating your entitlement to a penny. He always had time for you, no matter who you were or what you wanted. He’d always go out of his way for you.

Mind you, he had his quirks! He was a great pigeon-fancier, and there are many tales of him taking a large box into the cab with him as he set off on a Portsmouth run. This would contain a few of his prize birds, which he’d release and race home!

I also remember when we told him we wanted to present him with his 50-year badge. ‘All right,’ he said. ‘You can come to my pub.’ We explained that a branch meeting might be more appropriate, but he was having none of it. And, as you’ll see from the picture, Barry got his way!

His funeral was well attended and a good number of the mourners were old railway colleagues. We extend our sincere sympathy to his two daughters and all other members of his family.

I’ve never met a better person.

ST JOHN ROSSLYN GOFF

OBE, BEM, JP

I write on behalf of the Newport Branch to pay tribute to Ross Goff, one of our retired members who recently passed away. He was born in 1926, the year of the General Strike, so he was perhaps destined to be a union leader.

In his younger days he played rugby and was a part-time firefighter. As a ‘tunnel man’ he was a fireman, driver, ASLEF EC member, Secretary of District 7 and Assistant General Secretary. Away from the railway, he made an outstanding contribution to the community as a Councillor and JP and in retirement was an ASLEF delegate to the Newport East Constituency Labour Party.

The funeral service in St Mary’s church, Caldicot, South Wales was packed with mourners including family, friends and politicians. It was well attended by ASLEF activists past and present, with some having the honour of acting as bearers. In their speeches, church leaders and close friends described him as ‘an extraordinary man’.

His many achievements were even recognised by the Crown, as Ross was awarded both a BEM and an OBE for his meritorious service.

I remember when British Rail closed the Seven Tunnel depot in 1987, Ross gave valuable advice to those who would be making life-changing decisions. He was professional and well respected by management and politicians alike which gave a positive view of ASLEF throughout the railway industry and corridors of power.

Ross was an outstanding example of a trade union officer, as his words of encouragement and guidance seemed to exceed his responsibilities which inspired many to become active in the union. Ross will live on in our memories and our thoughts are with his family at this sad time.

Bryan Davies, former EC member, District 7

THEE EX-SHIREBROOK DRIVERS MOURNED

It is my sad duty to report the passing of three ex-Shirebrook drivers – Jack Griffiths, Ken Caunt and Victor Swain

Jack ‘Flying Jack’ Griffiths moved to Shirebrook West when his original depot, Langwith Junction Shed, closed in 1967. Jack retired in 1982 after serving numerous guards and secondment witness! You know you wouldn’t have a late finish when Jack was driving! He used to insist that a 20 mph restriction meant that you deducted that speed from the actual speed you were doing at the time! Jack was 90 years old when he died.

Worksop branch would like to pass on its condolences and best wishes to Jack’s son David, a railway employee with DB Shenker, to his daughter and other family members.

Brothers Ken Caunt and Victor Swain have also passed away. Both started at Kirkby Steam Worksop branch would like to pass on its condolences and best wishes to Jack’s son Depot and worked on various Nottinghamshire depots such as Annesley and Westhouses before coming to Shirebrook in the late 1960s.

Ken had a passion for football, first as a player and then as a referee in the Mansfield Sunday League. 74-year old Ken was always eager to tell a story of either a booking or a sending off and the fact that he ended up wearing ‘jam-jar bottom’ specs became quite appropriate given how often he heard the phrase ‘You need glasses, reff!’

Ken and Victor both retired from the railway at Shirebrook. Everyone at Worksop branch sends their condolences to their families.

Keith Gillett, Secretary, Worksop Branch
Stratford’s pride in our union

At the recent Stratford Branch Meeting and AGM, we had the pleasure of being able to make a presentation to brother Raf Thomas who has been off work for some considerable time.

Following the usual branch business, and conclusion of the AGM where the existing branch officials were re-elected, our branch secretary Peter Dodgson announced the recipients of long service badges, marks of their loyal membership of ASLEF.

Included among the names Peter read out was Raf Thomas, who was presented with a 35-year badge. This was accompanied by the presentation of a cheque from the national branch appeal for donations, which aimed to assist Raf during his difficult time.

The Branch Appeal showed absolutely astounding support from ASLEF branches from the length and breadth of the UK. In total it amounted to the superb sum of over £2,500! This will greatly assist Raf as his long term absence has now exhausted all his sick pay from DB Schenker. It demonstrates what magnificent support and solidarity exists within the driving fraternity, and the unity shown by the brothers and sisters of this union during a colleague’s ‘hour of need’.

On behalf of the Stratford Branch, I would like to thank every member of each branch who donated to this appeal. Your incredible generosity means so much to Raf and his family. This was very evident when the presentation was made, as Raf’s reaction was one of bewilderment and surprise.

I am sure he expresses his gratitude to you all, but when he received the cheque at the Branch meeting, he was totally speechless!

Thank you once again; it makes us proud to be part of ASLEF!

John Thorpe, Branch Reporter, Stratford Branch

All presentation and correct at Nottingham!

The March meeting at Nottingham was ‘presentation night’ where we said farewell to six of our finest who between them have over 270 years of railway experience and over 240 years of ASLEF membership.

The presentations were made by our visiting ‘dignitaries’ - EC member Dave Calf, District Organiser Mick Whelan and union president Alan Donnelly. The recipients were brothers D. Atkinson, J. W aym an, I. W iddison, G. Crowder and T. Ireland. Unfortunately brother M. Blain was unable to attend.

J. W aym an was thanked for his ‘long and distinguished service at Nottingham’.

Everyone in the branch wishes each of the six a long and fruitful retirement. Andy Jones, Secretary, Nottingham Branch

Don’t let it cost you your job!

PAUL ROBERTSON WORKSOP STALWART

IT IS with great sadness that I have to report that Brother Paul Robertson passed away on 28 February after a short illness at the age of 65.

Paul was the LDC rep and Worksop Branch Chairman for nearly 20 years, holding various other positions for over 40 years.

Paul started at Retford Steam Shed, cycling from Ollerton every day. He moved to Worksop when Retford closed in the mid-sixties. Luckily he had progressed to driving a van by then! He stuck with variants of the Transit types for the rest of his life.

Paul’s funeral was attended by over 250 people including many former workmates. He will be sorely missed. All our best wishes go out to Paul’s mum, Connie, sister Marjorie and the rest of the family.

Keith Gillett, Secretary, Worksop Branch

FERGUS KENNEDY JUST 44

IT IS with great sadness that I have to inform you of the passing of Fergus Kennedy. Fergus had been on the railway for over 25 years, starting as a booking clerk at Port Glasgow before transferring to Norwich and then to Cambridge.

Fergus joined the Driving Grade in 1998 at Bishop’s Stortford before transferring to Cambridge with National express East Anglia.

Fergus transferred to First Capital Connect shortly before being diagnosed with cancer. He sadly passed away in March at the age of just 44. He leaves a wife and three children and will be missed by all those who knew him.

Andrew Dawson, Secretary, Cambridge branch
LONGSIGHT REUNIONS IN OCTOBER
The 2011 Longsight Reunion Pot has two legs this year.
- The ‘away leg’ is on Tuesday 18 October. Book on at 1000 at Keighley Station. All ticket.
- The ‘home leg’ is on Thursday 20 October. Book on at 1300 at the Navigation Road Club, Altringham. Pay on the door. All welcome.
For more information contact Reunion Organiser Mel Thorley on 07764 168 570 or 0161 292 3003

CRICKLEWOOD REUNION – 24 JUNE
A day out as been arranged for Friday 24 June on The Severn Valley Railway, departing from Kidderminster at 11.40. For details contact Grahame Nash in Bristol or Bob Hodson in Wolverhampton

OLD OAK MEET UP – 11 JUNE
If you were at Old Oak Common 81A around 1972 and wish to meet old colleagues, drivers, secondmen or cleaners, why not come along to an informal reunion on Saturday 11 June. We’re meeting in the pub outside the station Down Main Side at Reading General Station from noon onwards. It’s been 39 years, so why not come along and reminisce Warships, Westerns, Hymeks, Blue Pullmans – and who remembers the arrival of the 50s Zzzzz?

Pete Crayon has retired due to ill health after driving trains for over 45 years. We are all grateful to Pete who carried out the job of secretary of the Saltley branch role for over 13 years. I’ve now taken over the role from him and I know that he will be a hard act to follow. Pete worked long and hard for ASLEF members here, with enthusiasm and persistence. He did a lot for the branch and he’ll be missed by all his colleagues. All Saltley members wish Pete and his wife a happy retirement and the very best of luck.

Driver Roger Stanbridge retired in August 2010 last year and Saltley branch finally presented him with his well-earned ASLEF certificate. Ian Clarke was happy to ‘do the honours’.
Roger has been driving for over 40 years so it’s about time he started to take things easy. We’re sure that his skills as a top dancer will keep him on his toes in retirement! We all wish him an active and healthy retirement.

Finally I’d like to pay tribute to driver John Sutton from DBS Saltley who retired in 2009. We finally managed to pin him down and present him with a thoroughly deserved 50-year medallion, a tremendous achievement. John says he had a fantastic life on the railway and it was a sad day for him when he retired. He’ll be missed by all at Saltley branch, and we all wish him a happy retirement. Hopefully he’ll have plenty of time for his plane spotting!

Adrian Harnett, Secretary, Saltley Branch
Racing to the bottom
I am responding to Brother Donnelly’s article in the January Journal arguing that a deal put forward by DB Shenker is ‘not a race to the bottom’.

I wonder if he realises the effect that remote booking-on would have on London depots? As well as having to make our own way across London in busy traffic to book on at up to three other depots within a 20 mile radius, we would also be extending our working day by two to three hours. We would be out of pocket by having to pay the congestion charge and face a hike in motor insurance premiums due to having multiple places of work. Alternatively we could shell out for our own rail tickets, not covered by duty passes or privs.

There would be no need for depots as the company would make full use of remote booking on for cross-cover purposes, saving a fortune on taxis into the bargain.

I don’t blame the company for trying it on, but I am incensed that our company council recommended the deal to the executive committee who thankfully threw it out.

A race to the bottom? Most definitely.

A. Eggleden, LC rep, Hither Green

Splendid letter!
Thanks for a great quality magazine which keeps our members well informed of ASLEF activities at grass roots level in our first class socialist union. ASLEF serves its footplate grades as well today as it did when I was a fireman on the Western region of BR in Birmingham.

Our retired members’ section is well catered for and I only wish it was more convenient for me to get to London especially as I don’t have access to free passes or privs.

I’m also a retired member of the transport workers union from my days working for the Ministry of Defence, and although I pay more for this than ASLEF, contact is very meagre by comparison.

Gordon Allen, Dyfed

Those mechanical tests
THANKS to Brother McMillan for replying to my letter about losing mechanical tests for trainee drivers. But if Brother McMillan wants to ‘keep the flame lighted’ then it’s no good complaining when a TOC won’t allow their drivers to fart.’ In any case, under EU directives smoking is not permitted in driving cabs.

Joking aside, what is the official line on mechanical aptitude tests?

I believe a similar proportion of women to men would pass these aptitude tests but would not apply to become train drivers in the same numbers because the shifts aren’t compatible with family life. I cannot believe that ASLEF would allow ‘creative’ and ‘social’ abilities to be given greater priority over practical abilities in the selection process. To what end other than quotas? And are we saying quotas are now more important than safety?

A rudimentary scientific knowledge is of great help, even to drivers working under direction. Identification of unlabelled cocks, shafts, fuses and drive belts is greatly assisted by understanding how things work together. Frankly I don’t think enough is done to keep this knowledge up.

As for the impact on our wages, we’ll see.

The more people who are able to step into our jobs then the less our employers will need to pay. It is ruthless supply and demand economics, not the largesse of our employers, which determine our earnings. TOCs would pay us bus driver wages if they could get away with it.

Kevin Peat, Driver, Exeter

Passengers in the cab
Many years ago, although it was never allowed by management or condoned by the union, some drivers used to let passengers travel in the cab if the train was overcrowded. In fact when I stopped at overcrowded stations I often got black looks because even on overcrowded trains I wouldn’t let passengers into the driving cab.

Sometimes I would be told, ‘The driver let us in yesterday!’ If anybody had tried to force their way into my cab I would have made a swift exit – and they really would have gone nowhere.

P. Begley, Bedford

CHANCELLOR, NOT UNION, STAGNATES

AFTER reading a small article in the March 2011 journal (‘Tories Get Into Swing Over Unions’), I thought that, as a gesture of goodwill to our esteemed Chancellor, this union could present Mr Osborne with a dictionary. Perhaps then he would see that the ‘forces of stagnation’ are not the unions, but rather a government without opposition.

Our Chancellor says, ‘We have got to be as bold in promoting growth and removing barriers to business expansion, and fighting the forces of stagnation, as we have been in dealing with the deficit.’ But his ‘business expansion’ is nothing more than the promotion and expansion of the ruling elite at the expense of the workers. And the government’s attack on the opposition of the unions is nothing more than a veiled attack on the very principles of democracy. The strength of any democracy lies in the strength of the opposition. If opposition is attacked, then the foundations are laid for tyranny and absolute rule, where the workers are nothing more than mindless statistics filling the pockets of those at the top.

As this government increases its attacks on the unions – and thereby the workers themselves – we need to stand up for our basic rights. We need to stop sitting in our mess rooms asking why the union isn’t doing anything, and realise that WE are the union. A union is only as strong as its members, and we, the members, need to stand up and give our union the power to fight for us. Governments inevitably come and go. But, ‘The people united will never be defeated!’

Craig Marshall, Gidea Park
Thanks from Reg, 90

I WOULD like to express my very sincere thanks, in particular to Peter Smith of the retired members section, for the great pleasure of receiving recognition of my 50-year ASLEF membership. It was a reminder of many years of activity with the London District Council of ASLEF and the Paddington and Southall branches. It brought special pleasure in this, my 90th year.

Reg Preston, retired member

Fantastic march

Along with hundreds of other ASLEF colleagues from all over the country, I went on the TUC March for the Alternative on 26 March in London. We had a fantastic day.

Families of all ages gave the event a carnival-like atmosphere – but it was still obvious how strongly people felt about the vicious cuts being unnecessarily inflicted on our country.

Every union was represented on the march, as you would expect on a TUC organised protest, but it was much more than that. I saw a wide ranging cross section of ordinary working people. One policeman at Hyde Park Corner said he reckoned he had seen at least 500,000 pass by in the 5 hours he had been there - and they were still stretching back along Piccadilly as we spoke.

It is clear that many thousands of people value even public services they don’t personally use. Even if we have never been

in hospital, we know we need them. The same goes for libraries, Citizen’s Advice Bureaux, education services, services for the elderly and services for people with terminal illnesses: yet all these are under threat. All society suffers, not just those who will lose their jobs.

All these things that this government are destroying were not richly handed to us on a plate. Our parents and grandparents fought for them. We enjoy the lifestyles we have today because they knew there was an alternative, despite being told there was not.

It is no more true now than it was then.

Jim Peters, King’s Cross Branch

Upbeat down under

G’day!

Firstly, an update for the guys who applied for the jobs here in Oz. The South Africans are arriving next month if they pass their English exam. Then the company have to find work for the guys in grain who’ve lost their jobs. We’ve had five transfers already, from Haven to Kalgoorlie and one or two have gone to Geraldton. The Karrara project should be running by the end of the year for those hoping to go to Geraldton which will create more work so hopefully things might progress in our winter (your summer).

Secondly, can I make a comment about the changing voting system? The Aussies generally think its quite fair as it gives the minor parties a say. I’m in favour of introducing compulsory voting in the UK. No one has an excuse in this
day of email and postal-voting. I even vote in UK elections from Western Australia!

N Clarke, Kalgoorlie, Western Australia

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FOVERSBRANCH (077) has finally launched its 25th Anniversary ASLEF/NUM badge. They cost £10 each including P&P. A few Faversham Branch Centenary badges remain available at £5 each including P&P. To order please contact the Branch Secretary, Steve Gurdler, 18 Hunters Way West, Chatham, Kent ME5 7HL. steve.gurdler@aslefonline.com or 07941 110473

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CITY OF LONDON BADGES, one 10-year and one depot badge. Depot badges are numbered 1-150. There are only 150 of each. Price £5 plus £1 p&p. All profits to City of London branch funds to acquire a branch banner. Further information or orders to Colin Dawson 01689 849 543 or 22 Hutchison Road, New Addington, Croydon, Surrey CR0 0BD

NXEA 2009 STRIKE BADGE commemorating solidarity of ASLEF members. Purchase (£3 plus p&p) from NXEA Branch Secretary or District Council 5 Secretary. Contact M Steele on 07788 153954, 1 Rosecroft, South Wootton, Kings Lynn Norfolk PE30 3WX. Proceeds to District Council 5 Education Fund and ASLEF Fighting Fund.

Thanks for HQ visit

The Saltley branch made its final visit to the Arkwright Road head office building in January. We’d like to thank David Calfe for being our host for the day, the team at HQ for the warm welcome we all received and GS Keith Norman for the social side at the end of our visit.

The Saltley branch people who came along were (left to right, above) Mick Geary, Alan Prisman, Andy Bullock, Ian Mandlely, Greig Thompson, Tony Whitehead, Phil Kirk, Paul Robertson, Gary Beeley, Colin Hector, Andy Harrieman, Paul Bridges and Mike Clatworthy with David Calfe on the right. You’ll find me kneeling at the front of the picture!

Adrian Harnett, Secretary, Saltley Branch
A piece of railway history going...

... and lost to those who will never see it

October date for Train of Hope

We'd just like to remind you about the 'Train of Hope' initiative we featured in the December edition of the Journal. The charity event, organised by ASLEF members to benefit children's cancer charity CLIC Sargent, has its head-line event, a special steam-hauled excursion, on 1 October.

The special train will run over the Cumberland fells and along the Settle and Carlisle line, formed of luxurious, 1950 designed first class coaches, and hauled by a steam locomotive built in 1927, named Scots Guardsman. Passengers will be able to indulge in a full breakfast on the outward journey and a five course dinner on the return.

The organising team are also running a raffle and auctioning items on eBay. Full details of the rail tour, the painting, the auction items and the raffle can be found at www.trainofhope.co.uk. For further information please contact John Young at johnyoung877@btinternet.com
Prize Crossword No. 61 set by TLC

Solution to Crossword No 60 which appeared in the April edition of the ASLEF Journal. Congratulations to Steve Huggett from Dyfed

ACROSS
1 Home Office
2 More Money
3 Over The Rainbow
4 Fashion
5 Charges
6 Sent to Coventry
7 Laden
8 Gascoigne
9 Exhausted
10 Targets
11 Agendas
12 Hamstring
13 Tango
14 E RNIE
15 No Smoking
16 In America
17 Haymarket
18 Kenneth
19 Tripper
20 In the vicinity
21 An establishment where a hairdresser (eg) conducts their trade
22 Rough hard-wearing material
23 Seen emitting from chimneys

DOWN
1 Looks for
2 Direct, administer
3 Hutch
4 Fashion
5 Cash containers
6 Francesca ---- actress
7 Lacking energy
8 --- Edmonds, 'Deal or No Deal' compeer
9 Driving slowly
10 How much
11 Eggy-shaped
12 Rulers of the Fleet
13 Seen emitting from chimneys
14 In the vicinity
15 Rulers of the Fleet
16 Egg-shaped
17 Fervent wish
18 Devices for controlling the passage of fluids through pipes
19 Moves aimlessly
20 Moving at an unhurried pace
21 An establishment where a hairdresser (eg) conducts their trade
22 Rough hard-wearing material
23 Seen emitting from chimneys

Name....................................................................................................................................
Address.................................................................................................................................
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Thanks for all your responses to the 60th ASLEF crossword in the April 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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