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We should pay for services - not Bankers’ greed

EW S that Barclays, and other banks, have been caught red-handed, attempting to fix the financial markets for their own enrichment, should come as no surprise to the rest of us who are still paying for the banking industry's previous catastrophic greed. For, plainly and simply, greed is what got us where we are today.

As Bob Diamond, CEO, walks away from Barclays with a £2m pay off, (he very generously declined a £20m bonus) the rest of us are left to cope with a National Health Service that is going into administration, public sector cuts that will inevitably hit the poorest hardest and a generation of young people without hope of finding work.

Their prospects could not be more different to Bob Diamond’s, who described attempts by his staff to rig interest rates as ‘wholly inappropriate’. No. Wearing a tie to a football match is ‘inappropriate’. What Barclay’s did is a crime. And criminals should face the full force of the law. Even rich criminals.

More than one thousand people were jailed for their part in last summer’s riots - one man was sentenced to 6 months in jail for stealing water valued at £3.50 - yet not a single banker has faced criminal charges of any kind for creating the mess we all continue to pay through the nose for. It’s hypocrisy of the very worst kind.

Aslef members should remember that the government has the rail industry in its sights as well. We must resist any attempts by the government to make rail pay for the crimes of greedy bankers. I would urge members to join the Action for Rail campaign. Get involved at actionforall.org and find out how you can help protect your own local services.

Mick Whelan, General Secretary
Overcrowding report is ‘ominous for Olympics’

ASLEF has warned that overcrowding on trains within and into London threatens the ability of the infrastructure to cope with the Olympic Games. ‘I want passengers in London to enjoy relaxed and seamless journeys during the Olympics,’ says union general secretary Mick Whelan. ‘But you would need a joint degree in optimism and Ignorance to feel confident that will happen.’

Department for Transport (DfT) statistics show that even without the influx of several million sports enthusiasts, trains in the capital and the south-east are seriously overcrowded. ‘The havoc at the end of the Queen’s Jubilee celebrations was a warning,’ Mick says. ‘We have to be prepared for some very difficult weeks. My two-point plan for commuters is ‘Keep calm – and don’t blame the staff.’ The DfT figures reveal

- Normal passenger capacity on peak-time trains is exceeded by 3.2%
- During the morning peak, trains operate at 4% over capacity
- Evening peak trains are 2.3% over capacity

‘I don’t think the public realises the incredible part the railways play in the capital’s life,’ Mick says. ‘Every weekday well over half a million people arrive into London by train.’

GS meeting with Transport Minister

General Secretary Mick Whelan and National Organiser Simon Weller met Secretary of State for Transport Justine Greening at the Department for Transport last month and discussed a range of rail industry issues. Mick welcomed the Secretary of State’s positive comments about the union’s recently published diversity report and urged her to press train operating companies to broaden the communities from which they recruit.

Mick also expressed his concerns about planned alliances between operators and Network Rail in certain regions and the conflicts which may arise from them although he did concede there could be ‘potential strategic benefits.

Simon also criticised aspects of proposed alliances and highlighted the flaws in the Government’s approach to fares. The Minister listened to the points made but her responses did little to reassure ASLEF’s representatives.

Union rejects cut corners for Olympics

Management have told union representatives that they want ‘temporary working arrangements’ for the duration of the London Olympics. ASLEF, along with the other rail unions, rejected this, insisting that there must be no ‘cut corners’ to safety procedures at any time if a train breaks down. ‘We have agreed procedures that are safe,’ says ASLEF general secretary Mick Whelan. ‘It is ludicrous to suggest that we should adopt lower standards even for a limited period. We work to high safety standards. Full stop.’

‘We will advise our members to continue to work to the rules, regulations and standards we and management have agreed regardless of the Olympic Games or anything else. To do otherwise would be irresponsible.’

The proposal is to abandon the use of detonator protection to protect the failed train, or to have the driver’s duties carried out by another unnamed ‘competent person.’

The idea seems to have originated because of fears that the additional journeys will increase the possibility of train failure. The unions have written to Network Rail and the Office of Rail Regulation to protest this attempt to lower safety standards.

More than 150 Stratford drivers turned out to watch Dick Hardy and former ASLEF General Secretary Lew Adams unveil a commemorative plaque on the original site of the east London depot. Among those attending were Michael Ashworth, who joined Stratford in 1968, and his father Newman Ashworth who worked there before him, as did his grandfather Frederick Dixon! The plaque commemorates the fastest ever building of a steam engine. Hardy, a former locomotive commander praised the ‘men and women who contributed to Stratford’s proud history.’

NIGEL GIBSON ELECTED DISTRICT ORGANISER

Nigel Gibson has been elected District Organiser for ASLEF’s District Five, gaining more than 50% of the vote in the first ballot.

Nigel said he is ‘proud and honoured’ to take up the post. ‘But it is also a time of sadness as the election was the result of the passing of a true friend, Andy Morrison. I hope I will be able to live up to Andy’s high standards of integrity and dedication.’

Nigel also thanked the other three candidates for the part they played in a well-conducted and dignified campaign.
Free app shows real time train location

A FREE iPhone app that shows the real time location of your train has been developed by Ryan Forsyth, an ASLEF member who works for London underground. This app is FREE to all drivers. To access it, search the AppStore for ‘iTrackernet’ or ‘RyanTCB’

New in brief

- **‘LIVES PUT AT RISK’ AS BRICK HITS SPEEDING TRAIN**
  Police patrols have been stepped-up at Shipley station after a brick was thrown at the window of a moving train in a ‘potentially life-threatening’ incident. Officers described the incident as a ‘foolish and dangerous act’. The brick caused £150 worth of damage as it struck the outer skin of the Leeds to Skipton service. ‘Fortunately no one was injured but a passenger or member of rail staff could easily have been hit’ said the police, adding ‘throwing a brick at a fast-moving train is an incredibly irresponsible thing to do’.

- **NETWORK RAIL FINED FOR LEVEL CROSSING DEATH**
  Network Rail has been fined £356,250 after a woman was killed at a level crossing while out walking her dogs. Julia Canning was struck by the First great Western Service 17.11 travelling from Newbury to Bedwyn in May 2009. Investigators from the Office of Rail Regulation found Network Rail had failed to act on substantial evidence that pedestrians using the crossing had insufficient sight of approaching trains at the Fairfield footpath crossing near Little Bedwyn, Wiltshire. Network Rail must also pay costs of £19,485. ORR’s investigation found extensive evidence showing that Network Rail knew the crossing was unsafe for pedestrians. In a separate incident a man died after a train struck his car on a level crossing between Littleport and Downham Market in Norfolk. Residents living near the crossing described the tragedy as ‘an accident waiting to happen’.

Andy Viner Memorial 5-a-side Tournament

14 five-a-side footie teams from across London Underground, plus a team representing ASLEF’s EC came together last month to play a tournament in memory of ASLEF’s Andy Viner who was tragically killed in a road accident last year.

Andy Viner Memorial Cup final. District Line 1 v Harrow Boys. (DL1 won on penalties).


Prizes were presented by Andy Viner’s daughter Alex, and Sean Gillard (GG IR rep).

Despite a few injuries everyone enjoyed themselves in a fitting tribute to a great man. Proceeds from the day were given to Andy’s chosen charities.

Mick meets Ed Miliband

General Secretary Mick Whelan and National Organiser Simon Weller met Labour leader Ed Miliband last month for an informal meeting in Westminster. Mick urged the Leader of the Opposition to pursue an economic policy which embraced investment in infrastructure such as housing and transport while Simon emphasised the need for a progressive rail policy to reconnect with the commuter vote. Labour has lost in East Anglia and the South. Miliband said Labour was keen to work closely with ASLEF in developing new policies and that the Party would be examining all options for the future structure of the railway.

PASSENGER GROUP WELCOMES INVESTMENT IN RAILWAYS

Passenger Focus has welcomed the government’s announcement of new investment in rail. However, Chief Executive Anthony Smith added that ‘value for money remains a concern. Passengers will want to see government avoid above-inflation fare increases. These investments must be delivered in a cost-effective way. Also the work to deliver new trains, track and equipment must be done in a way that minimises the effect on today’s passengers.’
A ‘lucky’ first time delegate to the TUC LGBT Conference, London 5-6 July, I was a little daunted by the prospect. The paperwork for the conference arrived a few weeks earlier. On inspection it seemed to be a reasonable task at hand, 21 agenda items in 2 days.

I met up with the LGBT Representative Committee Chair and Secretary along with a fellow delegate from Liverpool and the ASLEF member who sat on the TUC LGBT Committee during 2011-12. After meeting on Wednesday evening and receiving some reassurance and advice on what to expect the following day it was good to know that it was like our AAD but not so formal. ASLEF had one motion on the agenda, regarding violence against the transgender community in Latin America.

After a leisurely breakfast we met Lee James, ASLEF’s Equality Advisor to go over the agenda one last time.

The morning started with an address from outgoing TUC General Secretary, Brendan Barber, about how the conference has evolved in the many years he has been General Secretary and how he hoped the work of the conference would continue. The predominant theme for this conference was Against Austerity, For Solidarity. We had 3 Emergency Motions to consider in addition to the 21 agenda items, these covered All Out for equality on 20th October calling on the TUC and affiliates to redouble the campaign in defying the Tory-led government’s sustained attack on public services, workers rights and trade union rights. The government’s attack on the Equality Act and EHRC and finally the drastic curtailment of events planned as London prepared to host World Pride 2012. By the end of the day we had dealt with 9 items including the 3 Emergency Motions. Drinks and nibbles were enjoyed at Congress House before a relaxing evening.

Day 2 began with an informal plenary discussion session with speakers from South Africa, India & St Lucia addressing the subject “Decriminalise homosexuality”. Interesting and informative. I for one had forgotten that much of the legislation still in existence in some of these countries dates from the days of Empire!

After lunch, Michael Cashman, MEP spoke about the work being done in the European Parliament. Time for the ASLEF Motion and an excellent speech by the LGBT Representative Committee Secretary. After a short debate the motion was carried.

It was great to see diversity in action and so many issues debated - from austerity measures to LGBT rights, homophobia and hate crime. One conference delegate whose father was an ASLEF member for 48 years recalled the harassment his father was subjected to just for having a gay son. He added that his father would have been very proud to witness the support ASLEF now gives to its LGBT members.

Alan Martin, Island Line, Portsmouth & Isle of Wight Branch

TUC LGBT Conference July 2012

Justice for the Shrewsbury Pickets

Forty years after a group of trade unionists were tried in Shrewsbury, many receiving lengthy prison sentences, in an overtly anti-trade unions prosecution brought by a Tory government, the Justice for the Shrewsbury Pickets campaign has launched an e-petition demanding justice.

For more information on this remarkable chapter in trade union history visit www.shrewsburypicketscampaign.org.uk and to sign the petition go to http://www.avaaiz.org/en/petition/Justice_for_Shrewsbury_Pickets_40_years_on/?efsicbb

Railway man honoured

Lifelong and dedicated railway man Stuart Mason will be remembered with a train named in his honour. Merseyrail operations inspector Stuart was just 57 when he lost a short battle with cancer. Stuart joins illustrious names such as former Liverpool FC manager Bob Paisley and Everton legend Dixie Dean in having a train named after him. Stuart joined the railways as a booking boy when he left school, before becoming a signalman. He then joined the footplate, accepting a Secondman’s position in Dover before being promoted to driver and then Driver Instructor.
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† Exclusions apply. Thompsons Solicitors is a trading name of Thompsons Solicitors LLP and is regulated by the Solicitors Regulation Authority.

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ASLEF: A long and proud tradition

ASLEF has a long and proud tradition of working in support of sister unions across the globe. For example, where trade union representatives risk being executed by government and industry funded militia, in front of colleagues, and in some cases their children, simply for having the bravery and guts to stand up for their industries, their right to fair pay and safe conditions, and their way of life.

While these tragic events do not influence directly the settlement of pay deals, they do influence our ability to function as a free and democratic trade union within a globalised marketplace. Many household brands operate, sometimes in partnership under different names, and via subsidiaries, in countries all over the world where the very worst abuses of trade unionists are routine.

The workers at subsidiaries of Coca Cola in Mexico, India and elsewhere have suffered numerous attacks and incidents, and they are not alone in suffering from virulently anti-union stances. The Virgin group in the US has aggressively circumvented collective bargaining by derecognising trade unions representing flight crew. Richard Branson actively lobbied employees to vote against union recognition, instead promoting a system where employees essentially represent themselves in negotiations over pay and conditions.

Poor industrial practices are like hurricanes; they occur far more regularly than the press would have us believe. They strike unprepared communities, and they travel the globe, bouncing from coast to coast. The stark difference is that, unlike hurricanes, these practices and aggressive managerial strategies do not peter out by natural process. They have their own practitioners challenged and defeated by their objectives exposed, their own time-off for your union reps, and to dilute the power of every union to stand up for members.

The public sector, welfare state, education and social care are being recklessly hacked away by zealous government ministers basking in the afterglow of praise from the Murdoch press and its right wing bedfellows. Communities are being destroyed, and the aspirations of generations callously shredded.

If ever there was a time for free, viable, robust and democratic trade unions to stand up for the workers, the economy, and to lead the Labour party by example in spelling out the true alternatives to blind austerity, it is now.

We are at our most free, most viable, most robust and most democratic when we are strong partners in a global movement.

On PNB I hear talk of “Who cares about Palestine?” and “ASLEF should concentrate on its own backyard” Yes, it is vital ASLEF safeguards its primary industrial role in defending our grade, but the struggles of the Palestinian people, those within Israel campaigning for lasting peace, the Colombian, Mexican and Indian trade unionists fearing execution are our struggles. They impinge explicitly on our ability to stand up for workers in a globalised commercial world, within that much vaunted backyard of ours.

Let us apply the same principle to the dispute between ASLEF and East Midlands Trains. I fully support my EMT colleagues, and their elected representatives in efforts to prevent Stagecoach from plundering the company pension pot for the benefit of the share price. I feel the same solidarity for the Coca Cola workers in Mexico and India, trade unionists in Colombia, and the US flight crews being bullied into surrendering human rights for profit.

Most of us work for multi-national bus companies who would de-recognise unions, slash wages and scrap working safeguards in a heartbeat were it not for our strength in industrial power, conviction, and organisation. In the modern age, our backyard stretches as far as our employers’ interests, spanning cultures, oceans and time zones. We cannot afford to look inwards and ignore the struggles and issues of other workers, whether working in other industries, or hailing from foreign shores. We all want a strong, vibrant and effective union movement. Our nation needs it.

Our movement is fuelled by solidarity. Solidarity does not respect borders or sovereignty. It is the most powerful weapon we have, one we should treasure. The day global unity requires a passport is the day that we have all failed in our duty - a failure we will surely pay dearly for.

Karl Davis, Peterborough branch
YOU’D THINK THE GOVERNMENT HAD BETTER THINGS TO DO THAN ATTACK YOUR RIGHTS AT WORK.

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Transport and Poverty was the topic for a recent debate which explored the role of transport systems in addressing social exclusion and helping those on low incomes. This event, organised by Campaign for Better Transport, drew attention to the impact of rising fares and cuts in services on people who rely on public transport to access jobs, services and amenities.

The speakers at this event were Richard Hebditch - Campaign for Better Transport, Sue Edwards - Citizens Advice and Joan Walley MP, Chair of The House of Commons Environmental Audit Committee. The main findings of three newly published pieces of research by Campaign for Better Transport were presented, followed by a discussion around the social role of transport systems and the importance of affordable and accessible transport services.

Clearly government, local authorities and public transport operators are facing difficult decisions because of cuts to their budgets. However, the research findings presented and subsequent discussion both confirmed that spending cuts which impact on transport services and drive fares up are predominantly affecting low income families.

The paucity of services often poses a barrier to people accessing work and education, and has knock-on financial implications: One example was given of students who were not granted their allowances because transport connections didn’t get them to college on time. Where public services are being reorganised, it was suggested that accessibility planning should be carried out to assess how those without cars can access services, amenities and jobs.

Another example was given of benefits agencies that regularly request to see unemployed individuals without taking travel-times and costs into consideration. In this case, financial support for concessionary fares schemes would also need protecting.

Rural areas are particularly affected by cuts to services because bus services are already infrequent. Many train services link metropolitan areas but don’t stop at the small towns they pass. One of the main issues raised here was that transport companies do not consult local communities about their needs when they make decisions about services, and should undertake more research into what people actually need.

Transport links also play a crucial role in enabling people to overcome social isolation. Walking and cycling long distances is not an option for many people, particularly the elderly, and cars are expensive to run. Cuts to weekend and evening services could mean that the safety of young and vulnerable people is jeopardised and socialising becomes difficult.

Thoughts or recommendations on this subject can be submitted to the Environmental Audit Committee inquiry on transport and the accessibility of public services.

For more information visit www.bettertransport.org.uk

Katy Proctor
Boost for Welsh railways as £9.4b investment is announced

The long-awaited electrification of the Great Western railway from Cardiff to Swansea and the Valleys lines network has been announced by the government as part of a £9.4b rail investment package.

As expected the Great Western Main Line will be electrified as far west as Swansea, while the whole of the Valley Lines network will be electrified along with the Vale of Glamorgan Line. In an additional boost for Welsh railways the outer core of the Valleys network will also be electrified to reach both Maesteg and Ebbw Vale.

Work is already underway to electrify the great Western line between Paddington and Cardiff. The plan, which covers the period 2014-2019 also includes the completion of electrification of the Midland Main Line and funding to complete existing schemes such as Thameslink and Crossrail. Rail campaigners have welcomed the new investment but have warned train operators against imposing huge fare increases to pay for it.

Van driver jailed after Wales crossing crash

Following a collision between a train and a van on a level crossing near Carno on the Shrewsbury to Machynlleth line in Powys on 16 February, a van driver has been jailed for five months while the train driver’s actions have been praised by the judge at Mold Crown Court.

The van driver, Daniel Bellis who is 35 and from Oswestry, admitted endangering the safety of people on the railway. He failed to call ahead to check if the line was clear.

Mick Whelan says that it is heartening that the legal system appears to be clamping down on irresponsible actions by car drivers at crossings and hopes this case will be a warning to others, but he added, ‘While it is encouraging to hear Driver Gareth Owen praised for his professionalism in bringing the train to a stop without a derailment, the incident should never have happened.

‘Our members should never have to be faced with this sort of incident. The irresponsibility of people taking risks at crossings, despite all the evidence and warnings, is utterly unbelievable. As the judge says, Driver Owen was ‘stoic’ but he should never have been put in the position where he needed to be.

‘Mr Bellis was familiar with the crossing, had used other similar ones and knew the regulations. He simply decided to ignore them. The worse thing is that this happens somewhere on the network every day.

‘Hopefully prison sentences will knock a bit of sense into car and van drivers.’

Cows on the line derails Gloucester to Fishguard train

A train carrying 30 passengers derailed in Pembrokeshire after hitting cows on the line, says Arriva Trains Wales. Nobody was injured on the train, which was travelling from Gloucester to Fishguard Harbour. The train derailed at Welsh Hook near WolfsCastle said Mid and West Wales Fire Service.

It is understood only the first car of the two car train derailed after it hit the cows. Police, fire crews and a vet attended the scene.

One passenger, Tony Evans, told BBC Wales: “We were coming through WolfsCastle on our way back to Fishguard Harbour and, three or four minutes after passing through WolfsCastle, I heard the horn on the train going about three or four times, then the brakes were being jammed on.”

“You could feel the train sliding on the track. ’I believe there were cows on the rail line and, unfortunately, the cows received fatal injuries but nobody at all was hurt on the train. The driver did exceptionally well in what could have been a very nasty accident. On the left hand side of the train there must have been about a 60 or 70ft drop and we were very fortunate.”
The union’s district seven council met at the National Assembly for Wales building in Cardiff last month to take a broad look at rail in the principality. We examined possibilities for the future with the assistance of politicians, social campaigners and rail specialists. This is what they had to say ...

**Electrification is the Key, Says Minister**

Carl Sargeant AM is Minister for Transport in the Welsh government, which makes him the only Labour politician in such a post in the UK. He has a sense of mission about transport, insisting that it has a role in protecting the most vulnerable people in our society. ‘I’m proud that there is a great story to tell in Wales;’ he says. ‘Punctuality is increasing, the valleys network is growing and we have the most frequently used rail network outside London.

‘But that’s not enough. Despite Westminster cutting our budget, we want to make a difference and radically improve public transport. So how can we make a difference?’

Electrification is one of Carl’s hobby-horses. ‘Electrification of the main line and the valleys is happening – but I want it to stretch throughout the principality – and that includes the coastal line. Without this, Wales is at a disadvantage,’ he says.

He insists that station improvements are a necessity and not a luxury, as ‘currently over half our stations are not accessible to disabled people. As a former Equalities Minister, I know that is not acceptable.’ He is equally determined to take full advantage of the new franchise that is ear-marked for 2018. ‘My vision is a rail network owned by the people and run for the people’s benefit.

‘That means taking a different approach to the UK government. We don’t believe in the quick fix. That is why we want to hear from the people inside the industry – like you – people who know how a railway works. Simply listening to investors will not bring Wales the service we need and deserve.’

He said while he could give no guarantees that brand-new rolling stock would be purchased, it would be improved and made fit for purpose. ‘There is a business as well as social case for this and as a devolved government we own more of the stock than anyone. It is vital that profits made from running rail are reinvested into the industry. That is our aim for the coming franchise.’

He was also positive about the role of rail freight. ‘We want to see more in the principality and we will use all the funding we have at our disposal to build freight hubs across Wales,’ he declared.

**South Wales Metro is Route to Better Business**

Transport Consultant Mark Berry believes there is a ‘water-tight business case’ for a linked Metro system across South Wales, insisting that ‘Transport is a key component of any economy.

‘It doesn’t guarantee success – but business cannot do without it,’ he says. And he asks why, if billions can be found for projects like HS2 and Crossrail, capital cannot be found for the Great Western route. ‘The last major project in Wales was the Severn Tunnel – and that was in 1886’

He says if Wales is to attract international businesses, like Admiral Insurance, it will need rapid and reliable links to Heathrow and other international gateways. But he went on to say, ‘There are 1.4 million people living within 20 miles of Cardiff –

we are essentially a conurbation with hills. We need a metro system to create an operating urban conurbation. Current trends suggest there could be another 60,000 jobs here by 2030. We can’t have all those people coming to work in cars.’

He said we needed to think about what we can do, rather than what exists. ‘People now don’t cross valleys. A metro system can change perceptions so that everyone can get everywhere in the region.’

Mark argues that a regional approach is vital and it can only be achieved with integrated public transport links. ‘We need to pool together: a parochial approach is outdated. We need to think more like Greater Manchester, for example. Without that concept, there would be no trams in their city.’

Mark also takes a rather disconcerting view about privatisation. ‘Look how much we – the public – put into rail and how much private investors do. It is still massively publicly owned. If it wasn’t - it couldn’t operate.’
TAKE A LEAD FROM BEVAN

Victoria Winkler, Director of the Bevan Foundation explained that her organisation is concerned with social justice – ‘which rail has a major part in delivering’.

Although the Foundation takes its name from Aneurin, a prime motivator of the National Health Service, council housing and the rest of the welfare state, it is a charity independent of any political party.

‘Our mission is a Wales where fairness is the key-word,’ she says, ‘where all are equal, poverty is a thing of the past and young people have an equal chance to shape their future’.

The Foundation tries to find solutions to problems and promote them with government, health boards and anyone else – but it also has a wider agenda. ‘We want to inform and educate the public about what holds us back and show that the world doesn’t have to be as it is. In a society as rich as ours, there is no need for deprivation or disadvantaged people. There is an alternative.’

Victoria was angry about the government constantly blaming working people for claiming benefits. ‘There is nothing wrong with the people,’ she declared. ‘It is the lack of jobs, and low pay and conditions. Most benefit claimants go to work but need supplements to live. In fact, two-thirds of the welfare bill goes on pensions. It’s difficult to get that over.’

‘Similarly, when housing benefits go up, that is not a benefits problem. It is a housing problem. Welfare is claimed because the minimum wage is too low to live on. A low minimum wage is a sticky floor – it’s very difficult to get off it!’

The Foundation is working hard on ‘Cuts Watch Cymru’ to show the effect on equality of lower government spending and continues to organise events to share ideas, from meeting ASLEF representatives to pop concerts. ‘We don’t care how we get our message across,’ she says.

The Foundation encourages all members to visit their website, add to their blog or comment on its activities at www.bevanfoundation.org.

Victoria says it would especially welcome comments from our members about transport as a social issue.

VIEW FROM LABOUR

David Hagendyk, who has been General Secretary of the Welsh Labour Party since the end of 2010, says rail policy debates should be informed not by consultants or aspiring politicians but by the people who work in the industry.

‘They are the people who really know how to deliver efficiencies – and what cuts not to make.’

He says after ‘encouraging’ results in the Wales referendum election – that gave the green light for more devolution – and the Assembly elections – which left Labour only one seat short of an overall majority – he should be looking forward to the 2015 General Election. ‘The reason I’m not is because the government is changing constituencies boundaries partly to ensure it will be virtually impossible for Labour to win an overall majority in Westminster,’ he says.

To increase participation in politics, Labour is working to produce a network of non-paying ‘registered supporters’ as well as official members that it can keep in touch with – and hoping to take the party to workers to have a ‘direct conversation’ about what voters really want. ‘We want your ideas, not your cash!’ David says.

PENARTH AND COOPERATION

Vaughan Gething, AM for Cardiff South and Penarth, is a former lawyer with Thompsons, the union’s solicitors, so it is unsurprising that he saw a major challenge in the Tory proposals which, while pretending to be ‘industrial relations reform’ are in fact ‘ways of making it easier and cheaper to sack someone.’

He was concerned to stress his commitment to education and his determination to make every state school a good school. ‘We will not have academy schools here,’ he declared. ‘It is wrong that children of the rich have advantages from the age of three.’

Karen Wilkie, acting General Secretary of the Cooperative Party, says ‘mutual and cooperative solutions’ are more important than ever with the banking crisis. ‘It is encouraging that people aren’t saying Jimmy Carr is innocent because he didn’t strictly break the law. They are saying rather, “He may be legally innocent – but he is morally guilty.’

The Co-op Party favours a mutual model for Network Rail and Karen condemned a system whereby UK citizens did not get the benefit of our railways – but the German economy did! ‘It is folly to farm out dividends to private shareholders and foreign governments,’ she insisted.
The industrial dispute at Friction Dynamics Ltd and the tribunal victory

This October marks the tenth anniversary of the strikers’ Employment Tribunal victory writes Bryan Davies ...

THE HISTORY OF THE DISPUTE
The Friction Dynamics Ltd trade dispute was one of the longest running industrial conflicts in British history. The dispute became official in December 2000 and the strikers spent over two and a half years on a picket line. It is vital the trade union movement learns from the dispute in order to pursue changes in the UK's oppressive employment laws.

In the late 1990’s American businessman Craig Smith took control of the factory and ignored bargaining machinery by imposing a productivity package on the workforce. This included a fifteen percent pay cut. Following this he unleashed union busting tactics; He made union officials redundant, removed union facilities, ended the deductions of union subscriptions through the paybills and failed to pay wages owed to workers.

Members of the T&GWU vented their feelings by voting for strike action- by a massive majority of over 91 per cent- and 98 per cent voted for an overtime ban. The employer locked employees out by imposing holidays and employed casual temporary workers to break the strike. However, on 1st May 2001 after the first day of strike action the workers were accused of repudiating their contracts.

The strikers received tremendous support and donations from the local community and international trade union movement. Senior labour politicians visited the picket line including the First Minister of the Welsh Government and the Secretary of State for Wales. Market traders from London distributed food and on the 7th July a march and rally of more than 1500 people took place in Caernarfon. Incredibly, the picket line was manned from 30th April 2001 until 19th December 2003, probably the longest picket in British industrial history.

The T&GWU called in ACAS to help find a solution. However, the first meeting was cancelled by the company which constituted a 'failure to take reasonable procedural steps to resolve the dispute.' Without a compromise from the employer the T&GWU notified ACAS that the members had voted unanimously not to return to work. Consequently, FDL issued individual dismissal notices effective from 28th June 2001.

HOW THE LAW FAILED TO PROTECT STRIKERS
In October 2002 Davis v Friction Dynamics Ltd was heard at the Employment Tribunal in Liverpool. This was the first case to test the idea of 'protected industrial action'. Hendy and Ford QCs represented the claimants and the legal arguments turned on two key questions; First, when were the strikers dismissed? And second, did the dismissal breach the limited protection offered under UK laws? Under the Employment Relations Act 1999 strikers were protected from dismissal for the first eight weeks of a dispute. Barristers argued that the Company's letter of the 1st May amounted to a dismissal during the protected period. The Tribunal agreed and found that the applicant and 85 other strikers were 'automatically unfairly dismissed'.

Having won the case, the only satisfactory remedy would have been re-instatement or re-engagement. However, the Tribunal decision on a 'remedy' was delayed as Mr Smith launched an appeal to the Employment Appeals Tribunal. Due to insolvency the appeal did not take place. The remedy hearing was convened on 23rd April 2004, but due to the company going into administration the Director avoided paying any money to those he sacked. Therefore, the government took on the liability and only paid a basic award of around 5k per person. Such low payments are unlikely to act as a deterrent to other law-breaking employers.

REQUIRED CHANGES TO EMPLOYMENT LAW
Bill Morris the T&GWU General Secretary said: "These dismissals demonstrate the inadequacies of the current law to protect workers." Nevertheless, the UK government made only minor changes to the Employment Relations Act 2004 which lengthened the standard protected period from eight to twelve weeks and provided a further extension for 'locked out' days.

This inadequate change meant that an employer could sit-out a dispute by attending meetings, only to dismiss strikers after twelve weeks. Secondly, in the last week the union will be under pressure to compromise. In order to prevent dismissals the protection period could last for the duration of the official dispute. If strikers are sacked, a Tribunal remedy of automatic re-instatement, re-engagement on the same pay and conditions or unlimited financial compensation needs to be enforced.

The permanent collective dismissal of an entire workforce in the heat of a temporary dispute does not make economic sense for the employer, worker or state. The most important reform to the law would be to 'suspend the contract of employment' during strike action. Already established in other EU countries, this law would be a positive step towards the UK fulfilling its international obligations on human rights. Let's hope the next Labour government will make the necessary changes.
SCOTT LORIMER A LIFE CUT SHORT
It is with great sadness that I have to report the untimely death of Scott Lorimer. Scott passed away suddenly at the age of 37 whilst on holiday with his girlfriend in Egypt on the 12th May.
Scott joined Ilford depot in January 2007 having previously worked in the print industry.
He started at Ilford as a depot driver where many of us enjoyed fun days and nights shunting with Scott. After serving his time shunting he later became a mainline driver in November 2008.
Scott was one of the friendliest people you could meet, his mischievous and fun personality shining throughout his time on the railway, making friends easily, not just with his colleagues but with platform staff, cleaners and everyone he came into contact with.
Always cheerful and enthusiastic, Scott loved his time as a driver, glad to be doing the job he enjoyed so much. He had time for everyone, always ready to bend your ear or listen to your problems, although it wasn’t always easy to get a word in edgeways with Scott.
Scott was a regular attendee at Ilford Branch meetings and was always on the picket line during the 2009 NXEA dispute.
Outside of work Scott enjoyed keeping fit at the gym, took many trips to Scotland to pursue his passion for mountain biking and was an avid watcher of Formula 1, but what many of us will remember was his famous intolerance for alcohol while at work gatherings.
Despite spending just five years on the railway Scott’s cheery smile and double thumbs up are going to be sadly missed by so many, not only by his friends at Ilford, but also at Gidea Park, Southend and Liverpool Street and I for one- and I know many more- lament the premature passing of a truly great friend.
Scott’s funeral service took place at the City of London Crematorium on 31st May. There was a huge turnout. I know his family and friends were amazed to see such a large number of his colleagues both active and retired, attend to pay their final respects to such a lovely man.

STEVE BRADDICK AGED JUST 52
It is with a sad heart that Birmingham New Street branch announce the death after a short illness of Brother Steve Braddock, aka Grim aged just 52.
Steve had a strong passion for golf and was very involved in the New Street golf society. He also enjoyed fishing, and taking his beloved dog ‘Alfie’ for walks in the woodlands. His demeanour was always dry which earned him the nickname ‘Grim’!
Steve started his railway career as a Railman at Taunton station in the 1970s. He then got a job as a guard at Exeter before moving to Birmingham New Street in 1988 after securing a job as Driver.
Steve was also a very respected and active member of the union. He was for a time the District Council chairman for District 6 while representing Birmingham New St branch. He had also held the position of Branch Assistant Sec. At a local level he was a co-opted member of the LLC for a while before being voted into the full time position of the LLC shortly before his untimely death.
More than 200 members from many depots attended his funeral at Streetly Crematorium including general secretary Mick Whelan, EC member Dave Calfe and the full company council. This large turnout just went to show the measure of our Brother Grim. He will be sorely missed by everybody who had the pleasure of knowing him and I for one- and I know many, not only by his friends at our sister depot at Kirkdale.
Outside of work Scott enjoyed keeping fit at the gym, took many trips to Scotland to pursue his passion for mountain biking and was an avid watcher of Formula 1, but what many of us will remember was his famous intolerance for alcohol while at work gatherings.
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ERNEST BRODDLE ASLEF MEMBER FOR MANY YEARS
My father was a member of ASLEF for many years and served on the ASLEF committee for the sick and bereaved for the area of Grimsby / Immingham. His certificate of retirement from ASLEF is hanging in his bedroom and he was very proud of the way he and his friends were able to help people in need. He himself had cancer but fought on for many years. He had larynxseomy in 1974 and has helped many people with the same problem overcome the problems of being able to speak again. Sadly he passed away on 1st July at the young age of 91! His wife Edith (my mother), also 91, survives him.
His son, David Broddle

WILLIAM MCLAGAN BEM DRIVER AT POLMADIE
It is my sad duty to report the recent loss of retired member William McLagan, who was awarded a British Empire Medal. William was a driver at Polmadie, and was well known in the railway family, well into his retirement. Willie wrote on technical matters in the ASLEF journal and authored books about the railways and steam engines. William was well known and respected in his local community. He was appreciated for giving his time to others, and particularly for playing in concerts in sheltered housing. We convey our deepest sympathies to Willie’s family.
Alan Moir, Secretary, Polmadie branch

MALCOLM DEANE SAD LOSS OF TALENTED DRIVER
Malcolm Deane, a driver with 46 years’ service, tragically died in service last September aged 62 after a long battle against cancer. He started in 1965 at the same depot he finished at – Birkenhead. It was then a steam motive power depot that worked iron-ore trains from Birkenhead to the steelworks on Deeside and oil trains from Stanlow.
In the early 1970s he spent several years at Kings Cross, and much later spent a number of years at our sister depot at Kirkdale.
Malcolm was a self-taught engineer who built working steel locos and model ships. He was also a superb photographer with an eye for colour and composition.
A quiet and friendly man, Malcolm always had kind words and useful advice to offer, so that many guards said it was a pleasure to work with him.
His funeral was attended by almost everyone who could make it – including the Chairman of Merseyrail, managers and traction inspectors. But most importantly for Malcolm would have been the presence of so many of his workmates - ASLEF and RMT members from all over the Merseyside area, including our District Organiser Colin Smith.
Malcolm was one of the last four ‘steam heads’ at Birkenhead, along with myself, Bob Jones and James (’Jock’) Orr.
Malcolm’s presence in the messroom and on the front of the train will be sorely missed. Our thoughts go out to his wife Christine and his family.
Dennis Cook, Retired member, Birkenhead
Jack at one of his final reunions

He attended all the reunions, his final one the October 2011 Worth Valley Railway outing. Many of his former colleagues attended his funeral to bid farewell to a true friend.

Although he drove the ‘Flying Scotsman’ and ‘Oliver Cromwell’ out of Stockport and back on ‘Farewell to Steam’ specials in the spring of 1968, he was still a regular on Friday nights last summer to see the Scarborough-Crewe return specials set down where he would have a word with the current footplate men.

Farewell, R. J. You were like 71000 – a real one-off, Jack!

Mel Thorley. Longsight branch

AST October Geraint Llewelyn smashed the record, set in 1998, for the fastest ever train journey from Cardiff to London, clocking in at 1 hour, 37 minutes. It is unsurprising that Geraint, or Ted as he likes to be called, doesn’t like to hang round, given how much he has already managed to squeeze into his 33 years.

After joining the railways as a rail design engineer, a job that took him as far as Kuala Lumpur where he designed and laid down track, Geraint joined EWS, passing as a driver in March 2001. Two days later he joined ASLEF, and describes himself as being a proud union man ever since. He is both assistant branch secretary and a recently appointed Unionlearn rep.

Given that his father was a driver and ASLEF member for 47 years, his brother in law also drives out of Swansea and his nephew is about to begin shunting for ARRIVA in Wales, Geraint’s choice of career seems almost inevitable, yet originally he wanted to be a vet. A father of four boys it’s a safe bet that Geraint won’t be the last Llewelyn to drive trains in this part of Wales.

Yet just nine weeks ago Geraint found himself in a situation that is every train driver’s worst nightmare. While travelling around an ‘S’ bend at 90 mph Geraint saw two young boys, aged seven and six years old playing on the track. He did what every driver is trained to do when faced with an emergency. Braked hard, and sounded his horn. While the older boy fled the younger of the two froze in fear, before disappearing from Geraint’s line of sight.

Geraint spent two terrible hours convinced he had hit and killed the youngster. ‘Travelling at that speed I wouldn’t have felt anything’ he said. You can only imagine his relief when the transport police informed him that they had found both boys and escorted them safely home. Despite this Geraint spent a sleepless night thinking about his own children. ‘Even though I’m a driver my boys don’t really know anything about rail safety.’

The next day he approached his driver manager, who was himself an ASLEF member for 28 years, and told him that ‘something had to be done’. Geraint put together a package, containing information about rail safety and a

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Obituaries

**JACK MOORES A REAL ‘ONE-OFF’**

It is my sad duty to report the recent passing of R. J. (‘Jack’) Moores at the age of 85. Jack was born in April 1927.

He started as a ‘bar lad’ at 9A Longsight on 12 January 1942 before his fifteenth birthday. Rail was still in the LMS era of Cloughton, Streamlined Coronations and the Turbomotive – all of which he fired. Ambitious young R. J. was soon looking for promotion and obtained transfers first to 8C Garston, then to 8B Dallam (Warrington).

However it was in 1955 that Jack ‘came home’ to his favourite shed, 9B Stockport (Edgeley). As a Driver and later Deputy Foreman, Jack knew the ‘ins’ and ‘outs’ of Booth Street Motive Power Depot like no-one else. Ask him about crewing the Edgeley-Broad Street and Jack would tell you the return journeys last summer to see the Scarborough-Crewe return specials set down where he would have a word with the current footplate men.

Farewell, R. J. You were like 71000 – a real one-off, Jack!

Mel Thorley. Longsight branch

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**YORK BRANCH MOURNS THREE COLLEAGUES**

Past and present members of York Branch will be glad to see the back of June 2012, during which we lost three valued colleagues.

**BILL WOODALL**

Bill passed away on June 11th aged 83. Bill devoted much of his working life to York Branch, serving as both LDC member and Branch Secretary for many years. When Bill retired I took over as Branch Secretary and I will always be grateful for the advice that Bill gave me. Bill also served on the ASLEF Appeals Committee for a while, as well as being our representative at District Council No 4. A lovely man who thrived on helping people, Bill will always be a legend in our Branch.

**DOUGLAS SMITH**

Douglas Smith also passed away on June 11th, aged 83 years of age. Dougie came to York from Aberdeen in the late 1960s, and quickly settled into our depot. A great socialiser Dougie was soon one of the lads. Dougie battled against cancer, but he bravely managed to attend our Annual Reunion in May, although by then he was desperately ill. A lovely guy who will be missed by all who knew him.

**PAT WEST**

Pat was the youngest of our three colleagues, aged just 70, when he passed away on June 16th. Pat started his railway career at York as an Engine Cleaner in 1961. He progressed through the ranks to eventually become a Driver. He spent his entire railway career at York Depot, until taking early retirement in 1997. Like both Bill and Dougie, Pat always attended our Annual Reunion, and he used to really enjoy sharing his memories with us. While we all mourn the passing of our three valued friends, our thoughts are with their families that they have left behind.

**A.B. Penn, Retired Former Branch Secretary York**

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**JACK EVANS LOVED THE AGE OF STEAM ENGINES**

Retired train driver Jack Evans who worked at Reading depot all of his life passed away on June 12 from the effects of cancer at the age of 86. Jack joined the railway in 1941 as a fireman and remained in this position for 16 years. Jack was promoted to a driver and worked steam trains for 8 years and then diesels for the next 23 years until retiring on his 64th birthday. Jack always loved to drive King class steam engines and right up to when he passed away he would tell you a story about how these were the best steam engines ever made, especially the Evening Star and Castle class. Jack leaves two daughters and four grandchildren and our thoughts go out to them.

W Morley, Bournemouth depot
Record-breaking Geraint has a passion for learning

Geraint Llewelyn set the time for the fastest ever train journey from Cardiff to London. Cary Gee interviewed the Welsh record breaker ...

As a learning rep Geraint encourages his colleagues, many of whom went straight from school to the railways, to sign-up for courses in basic skills; Maths, English and IT. ‘Whatever they want to learn’. Geraint himself left school at sixteen to take-up a four year apprenticeship with British Steel. He completed it in three years and has no plans to stop learning. ‘I don’t want my brain to go numb’. There seems little chance of that.

While Geraint would like to study for a degree in the future he is occupied in the present with a 34 week long course in employment law, provided by the TUC.

The days when Geraint was briefly employed as a bodyguard to protect celebrities such as Jim Davidson and Denise Van Outen must seem a very long time ago, although he can count Hollywood ‘A’ listers Tom Cruise and Wesley Snipes among his former passengers. So does he ever wish that he had followed his original dream of becoming a vet? ‘Not at all. I can think of no other job that is as satisfying as driving a train. Everyday I get to drive at 125 mph! I’ll never give up my key’.

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Basingstoke bids farewell with cheers and whistles

Basingstoke Branch Retirement Function 5th May 2012

Bro. Nigel Cummins, South West Trains Company Council member, expressed his pleasure at being present and thanked the Branch and its Social Committee for all their hard work in organising the event. He praised members for their loyalty and continued support for the Society in general and the Company Council in particular. He closed by wishing everyone a fantastic evening, then handed over to me to make the presentations, in his words, the “senior hand”!

There were five retirees in total: Ian Crombie, John Abbott, Mick Bonsey, Jim Hudson with Bro. Allan Hill being presented by former Guards Inspector, Alan Baker.

I have had the pleasure of working with all of them over the years, fellow firemen, and drivers and as my guards. It gave me a sense of pride to be invited to make the presentations to such an illustrious group of railwaymen.

The Social Committee organised a fantastic evening and on behalf of the General Secretary and Executive Committee, the retiring members were each presented with their ASLEF retirement certificate, and vouchers for local shops. Wives were presented with a bouquet of flowers. A special mention was made for Mick Bonsey, the last remaining original steam man at the depot. This was greeted with cheers and whistles!

I then presented ASLEF long service badges to: Bros. Phillip Warren, Brian Rodbard, and Ian Stevens, all 35 years.

It was a splendid evening with over 50 retired members in attendance. Good food, beer and plenty of chat about old times, which went on until quite late!

Jim Rowe, Retired member

Bakerloo Line drivers make a stop in the halls of Westminster

N May 23rd we had the pleasure of attending the House of Commons for a guided tour arranged by Head Office and hosted by Labour MP and Chief Whip Rosie Winterton and EC Vice President Tosh McDonald. This was a package bought at a fund raising meal for Ken Livingstone.

After making our way to the ‘Lobby’, where you go to ‘summon your MP’ - an awe-inspiring place - to be met by the Right Hon Rosie Winterton’s assistant, we were escorted through the ‘corridors of power’ to have afternoon tea with the Right Honourable Ed Balls (Shadow Chancellor) but also the Labour Party Leader Ed Miliband!

Both Ed’s expressed interest in us as Train Drivers on London Underground and were interested in everything from how long we had been drivers to how it was when the weather was hot. It was a very relaxed and pleasant atmosphere, made even better when David Cameron was forced to apologise to Ed Balls for a previous insult, at Prime Minister’s Questions.

After tea we enjoyed bumping into various MPs while having a drink on the riverside terrace. Diane Abbot was very pleasant.

A true sense of what the building is for, as well as what those working there strive for, was underlined by a ‘Justice for Columbia’ meeting. It is too harrowing to list all the atrocities that take place in Columbia against Trade Union people - simply as a result of being a spokesperson for a union you could lose your life, as well as have other family members tortured, something we struggle to understand here in the UK. We urge every member to take time to attend their branch and listen to debates about this terrible situation, and urge branches to affiliate to the ‘Justice For Columbia’ campaign, which can be done simply via a leaflet available from head office, and which can be paid for via the Political Fund.

We wish to thank all those who arranged this wonderful day and would encourage anyone interested to ask their MP for a tour. We especially wish to thank Tosh.

Brothers Hanson, Jones and Wyatt, Bakerloo Line branch

Buxton honours Mike

At a well-attended June branch meeting, retired member Mike Peebles was presented with his 50 years membership medallion by Chairman Dave Evans. Mike started as a cleaner in 1962, progressing to fireman and then passed fireman. He moved to Buxton to driver in 1975, before retiring in ’08. Mike held various union posts from 1979 onwards reaching the pinnacle of Company Council Rep. Many thanks from us all Mike for your years of dedication and hard work on our behalf. May you have a long and happy retirement.

Paul Costello, Secretary Buxton and Peak Forest

Mike Peebles was presented with his 50 years medallion by Dave Evans
Long service at Leamington Spa

Leamington Spa Branch was pleased to be joined in June by Dave Calfe, EC Member District 6, and also by our District Organiser Richard Fisher.

Both Dave and Dicky were invited to speak on National and more local issues including disputes on EM Trains and Tyne-Wear Metro, the government’s reply to the McNulty report and performance and safety issues.

Dave and Dicky then presented some Long-Service badges to Matt King (5 yrs), Nick Walker (10 yrs), Bob Reynolds (15 yrs), Clive Harrison (20 yrs).

After the Meeting we said a fond Farewell to our good friend and colleague Phil Spice, who is retiring after almost 50 years on the Railway!

The Retirement party for him was very well attended, showing the great friendships Phil has made over his many years. However, nobody travelled as far to be here as our good friend and ex-Leamington man Phil Richmond, who travelled all the way down from his new home in Inverness!

An excellent Buffet was provided by the staff of Leamington’s BRSA club, with a wonderful retirement cake provided by the Conductors LLC.

Phil with his beloved “Princess Elizabeth” nameplate, and all the Leamington Traincrew, past and present, who attended on the day. All the very best for the future to Phil and his wife Jan. Nick Walker, Leamington Spa Branch.

On the 5th of April Tony West the national secretary of the ASLEF RMS, Alan Taylor RMS Treasurer and I attended the annual Ramsgate reunion. It’s always a pleasure to see those who managed to make it there. On this occasion we were given permission to make presentations on behalf of ASLEF to a couple of retired members. First to Ray (the badge) Cooper. Ray, a Hither Green man and staunch ASLEF supporter, is an avid ASLEF badge collector, and has possibly one of the biggest collection of badges in the country which he has bought, traded or along with a couple of friends commissioned on behalf of branches including the RMS. On this occasion, Tony West presented him with a 50 year medallion on behalf of ASLEF. Well done Ray.

Peter Smith, RMS reporter

Kevin Moir, on behalf of ASLEF, had the pleasure of presenting Mark (Trix) Trundle with a badge to celebrate his 40 year membership of ASLEF at a recent Kings Cross Branch meeting. Mark, a hard working branch officer, vice Chair and FCC LLR rep, only has ten years to go for his medallion.

Peter Smith, Kings Cross Branch Reporter

A HUNDRED YEARS OF UNION

Temperance, vandalism, humour and serious issues rubbed shoulders in the August 1912 edition of The Locomotive Journal. Nota Bene reports ...

“In his rectorial address to the students of Aberdeen University, Mr. Andrew Carnegie advised them to remain teetotallers until they became millionaires. They should never smoke. Smoking, he said, was silly, and showed a lack of good taste – certainly of good sense. My own comment on such advice is, that if a man can do without stimulants until he becomes a millionaire, it is clear he can dispense with them for all time. As a matter of fact, drink and high-living, the attraction for which is largely accentuated by the possession of riches, often combine in causing premature death. Many a millionaire has died at a comparatively early age (no evidence if offered for this – Mick). Possibly what Mr. Carnegie meant to say was: “Do not drink until you are a wealthy man and can afford to do so.” But that is when a man requires to be most circumspect. Besides, if smoking is silly, drinking is still more so. Altogether, Mr. Carnegie’s advice was not suited to the Scottish students whom he was addressing. Anyway, they seem to have taken little heed of it, for they were very unruly, and smashed some 120 chairs.”

There is no mention of whether any of the students had partaken in either smoking or drinking at the event, or even whether they were already millionaires and therefore not in need of Mr. Carnegie’s advice.

Nota Bene also reports on an American child called Winifred Sackville Storer who at two years old could speak French and read English, at three could type, at four addressed assemblies in favour of Esperanto, at seven published her first book and became a chess player. “At eight she was able to speak in eight languages, and demonstrated remarkable knowledge of history, Latin, literature, geography, physiology and rhetoric. At nine she published her third book. Her parents declared this is not a prodigy but a product of home education. If Miss Storer had only lived in London, she could, if she wished, have added to her accomplishments by acquiring a little “Billingsgate”.

Extracts selected and edited by Mick Holder
Letters

These are the pages where you talk to us. We welcome your letters, either by mail to the ASLEF Journal at 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!

ASLEF should be proud to stand for peace, justice and equality

The General Secretary was entirely correct when he stated (July, Journal) that we should seek to educate and convince, and not be dissuaded from doing so when this leads to heated comment. Even comment such as that seen in The Journal (and other forums) since the article by Hugh Lanning regarding the Jerusalem Light Rail system which links illegal Israeli settlements in Occupied East Jerusalem with West Jerusalem. Note my use of the word illegal is not an expression of a point of view, but of fact. Israel’s annexation of East Jerusalem has not been recognised by any other country, and even the reflex US veto wasn’t used to prevent the UN Security Council declaring the annexation of Jerusalem ‘null and void’ and requiring it to be rescinded. It’s even claimed that Israel’s occupation of the West Bank is perfectly legal! So far-fetched is this argument that even the Israeli High Court has referred to The West Bank being under what it called ‘belligerent occupation’. As for the happy vision of well-fed Gazans living in a land of milk and honey under benevolent Israeli tutelage, the less said the better.

No doubt some reading this are saying ‘who cares about what happens thousands of miles away, what possible concern could this be to drivers in my depot? Shouldn’t we concentrate on the bread and butter issues and challenges we face as drivers?’ Of course the everyday business is the first priority at all times but it doesn’t require neglect of these issues in order to see beyond the depot messroom. As Mick stated, ASLEF reps should never be afraid or ashamed of anything we do in the name of the members. And I believe we should be proud to take a stand for peace, justice and equality. Of course there are voices of dissent but the International position taken by ASLEF has been consistent, and this year was again endorsed by the AAD.

Trade Unions and the Labour movement have been the greatest force for the good of working people. Solidarity is the very essence of what we do, and benefits us all. Expressing solidarity with those who are suffering, wherever they may be, is the least we can do as Trade Unionists. The idea that Solidarity ends at international borders is entirely illogical. I was at the AAD in Liverpool this year; there will be a referendum on Scottish independence in 2014, maybe if I get a chance to return in the future I’ll be crossing an international border. Should I suddenly have no concern for drivers in England & Wales? The only rationale for that way of thinking is to see others as lesser people and therefore of less concern. That is not what Trade Unionism is about. Without coming together in the Labour Movement the great achievements of working people would never have happened.

We should occasionally remind ourselves of these advances, how they were achieved, who it was that brought them about, and who defends them in the face of constant attack. Even those who don’t see beyond their own depot, company, and grade must recognise that it is working together which gives us strength.

H. Ezzedine, Driver, Edinburgh No 1 Branch

More to union than pay deals

I am writing in response to Chris Dodd’s letter in the May Journal. He raised an interesting point in saying that “a trade union is about using it’s collectivism to make a better and fairer society.” An admirable statement, and undoubtedly a traditional socialist objective, but I would question whether the majority of our membership believe that ASLEF’s concerns should go much beyond securing the best possible pay and conditions for its members. I can recall a colleague’s reaction a while back, when the plight of Cuban people was being reported in the journal. I believe a supply boat was being sent with contributions being sought. “Blow that! What about our pay deal?” was his response.

A phrase used by the presenter of the recent television documentary “The 70s” seems to sum up this outlook; “Not so much socialism as self-interest.”

But there’s nothing really surprising here, it’s just a case of accepting the perhaps unpalatable fact that self-interest is a hard-wired human condition, which transcends class, occupation and any other category.

People as individuals possess varying degrees of empathy for the plight of others. Unfortunately dwelling on the injustices of the world can result in on-going despair.

I notice Gregor Gall used an example of a biscuit factory workers’ strike not being effective, but a railway strike has an immediate impact. Unions in a powerful position have inevitably won the best pay and conditions. Isn’t this a type of inequality?

It has been highlighted that Coca Cola has treated many of its worldwide workers appallingly, and is accused of many human rights and environmental abuses. (Visit www.killercoke.org). If this is on-going I feel a boycott of the stuff may be in order. Everyone on board for this one?

Barry Dence, Ashford Driver

Well done Nigel

Colleagues in District No 5, I would like to congratulate Nigel Gibson on his successful election to the position of District Organiser. I am sure that all the members in District No 5 will give Nigel their total support for the future. As one of the candidates in the District Organisers election could I please place on record my
thanks to all the Branches and members in District No 5 for all the positive comments and support for me during the election. Finally, thanks must go to Peter and Steve for their impeccable conduct during the election which made the experience such a positive one. Regards, Howard Kaye

Thank you ASLEF

I was diagnosed with bowel cancer last year and went onto half pay in January 2012. In April Bishop’s Stortford branch launched an appeal on my behalf. I have been amazed by the response and support from all my colleagues in ASLEF. Their generosity is of immense help at this difficult time and I cannot say ‘thank you’ enough. Fraternally, Ian Taylor, Bishop’s Stortford

Disappointment at low election turn-out

I would like to congratulate Nigel Gibson on his election to the post of District 5 Organiser. Nigel will be an outstanding officer and I wish him all the best in what will be a very difficult period with the continued meddling and re-franchising in the coming years. None of the candidates wanted the election in the sad circumstances that preceded it and we continue in memory of our late colleague, Andy Morrison.

I would like to thank the branches that nominated me and the members who supported me. I’d also like to thank both Howard Kaye and Peter Dodgson for the professional way they went about their campaigns. I know that like me they will continue to represent their members in their current roles as company council reps. While I was disappointed (the wife isn’t!) I will continue to support all the union’s officers and representatives as I continue to serve as Secretary of the Greater Anglia Company Council.

I was disappointed at the voter turn-out, and while I’m told it was about average for such an election, it does beg the question of why members decide not to use their vote. Those of us who stand for election do so because we care deeply about the driving grade fraternity. Obviously we are not reaching out to a large majority of our members for one reason or another.

During the election, I touched on a number of issues and attended as many branches as possible and found that we all shared similar views on forthcoming challenges. I will continue to pursue the aspirations of the members I represent.

Steve Wright, Secretary, Greater Anglia Drivers Company Council

Letters

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WOKING HOMES BADGE to raise money for this excellent charity and home for retired rail staff. Badges are £3 each plus £1 for postage on any order. Please make cheques payable to Woking Homes and send cheques to Woking Homes, Oriental Road, Woking, Surrey, GU22 7BE

FAVERSHAM BRANCH (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.co.uk or 07941 110473

AVERY LIMITED NUMBER (25) OF THE KING’S LYNN ASLEF BRANCH CENTENARY BADGE (2006) have been reproduced and are available at £10 inc. P & P from M Steele, 1 Rosecroft, South Wootton King’s Lynn Norfolk PE30 3WX or Telephone 07788 153954.

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.
Devon Centre offers first class convalescing for rail workers

RIDGE HOUSE in Dawlish, Devon, is home to one of the ten Railway Convalescent Centres established in 1918 by a group of nine railwaymen, with funding from the philanthropist J. Passmore Edwards. Sadly, Bridge House is the last of these Convalescent Centres remaining.

All the Bridge House trustees have a background on the railway and one of their number, Tony Sugden, contacted us to spread the word. He says that in BR times, all railway workers knew about the Railway Convalescent Centres but today very few are aware that the charity welcomes working and retired BR and London Transport staff and offers concessions to retired railway personnel. Other guests include members of various unions, friendly societies, and some private guests.

When Bridge House was acquired by Mr Passmore Edwards, the working conditions and general health of railwaymen were poor. Injuries and work-related health conditions such as TB were common. Nowadays guests come to the convalescent centre with a wide range of complaints, but all in need of rest and relaxation. Some come with physical ailments (terminal illness, recuperation from cancer therapy, post-op respite for hips / knees) while others just need a break (depression, stress-related conditions, bereavement, etc…).

‘People come to our beautiful house and gardens to switch off and they leave looking and feeling like a different person. That’s what it’s about,’ say the staff.

The staff are aware of guests’ health conditions and special requirements but don’t share this information with other guests. They say it is touching to hear guests confiding in each other and offering support, particularly when they are there because of very different complaints. Many guests make good friends during their stay. Even romance is not unheard of! And visitors often return to Bridge House, some several times a year.

While Bridge House does not provide hands-on nursing care, nurses and therapists are available every day for advice and guidance and carers are welcome to accompany guests if required.

The Centre was strictly men-only until the 1980s, when the house was refurbished and the dorms – which could accommodate 84 people – were converted into en-suite rooms for 47 guests. Previously if a wife accompanied her husband she had to stay in lodgings in Dawlish but since the refurbishment guests can have their partners stay with them.

Evening entertainment includes quizzes and musical performances and the Centre’s mini bus takes guests to the moors and Dartmouth, for cream teas and visits to the local castle. There is a quiet room for reading and peaceful places in the garden to sit and listen to the stream. For wildlife enthusiasts there are birds in the aviary and grounds, fish in the pond, and trout and eels can be spotted in the stream. Guests are invited to do as much – or as little - as they want in this centre which boasts a Gold Award for its catering and meets 4 star hotel standards.

Most guests stay for a week or two but one wing is being refurbished into self-contained apartments for longer term stays. In fact, many of the guests have enjoyed the place so much that they have made donations towards renovations and improvements. One guest, Mr Ashton, recently donated a grand piano for the lounge area.

Mr Ashton, a retired train driver, first came to Bridge House four years ago and has visited five or six times a year ever since. He has problems relating to his sight and hearing – caused by the noise of diesel engines – and finds a rest at Bridge House does him good. ‘At home there’s always work to do, so it’s nice to get away and have a break,’ he says. He worked on the railway between 1940 and 1986, shovelling coal for 24 years before moving up to drive trains. Based in East Anglia, he remembers lodging in Doncaster, York and Stratford. For him, the best things about Bridge House are the marvellous staff, very good food, and the gardens. ‘It’s a sociable place, but you can also enjoy a lot of peace and quiet.’

The Centre is very reasonably priced and includes all costs – even drinks and packed lunches for guests who go on day trips. So spread the word to any train drivers you know who might benefit from a bit of rest and relaxation in beautiful surroundings.

For more information about Bridge House and its facilities contact Bridge House, 2 Church Street, Dawlish, Devon EX7 9AU, phone on 01626 866850 or visit http://www.rch.org.uk/

Report and pictures: Katy Proctor
Prize Crossword No. 76 set by Zebedee

Across
1 Tidiness, order (12)
7 Political ban (4)
8 Insecure, risky (8)
9 War engagement (6)
10 Earthenware maker (6)
11 Common deer (3)
12 Adhere (5)
14 Shelf (5)
16 Burger roll (3)
18 Catlike (6)
20 Repeat showing (6)
22 Section of league (8)
23 Naked, bare (4)
24 Listened sneakily (12)

Down
1 Be melodramatic (7)
2 Apparition, spectre (5)
3 Count, enumerate (6)
4 Chevron on uniform (6)
5 Scottish symbol (7)
6 Make a speech (5)
13 Style of cooking (7)
15 Father’s father (7)
16 Backside (6)

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

Solution to Crossword No 75 which appeared in the July 2012 edition of the ASLEF Journal. Congratulations to Martin Twigg from Yatton in Somerset

Across: 1 Major-general, 7 Glum, 8 Berating, 9 Decode, 10 Please, 11 Rat, 12 Tempo, 14 Leapt, 16 ERA, 18 Equals, 20 Magnet, 22 Nicotine, 23 Mead, 24 Go into battle.

Down: 1 Maltese, 2 Jumbo, 3 Rubber, 4 Enrapt, 5 Extreme, 6 Annas, 13 Platoon, 15 Peerage, 16 Eskimo, 17 Amoeba, 19 Quito, 21 Gamut.

FREE LEGAL ADVICE ASLEF also provides first class free legal advice – both for members and for their dependents. Over the past three years ASLEF recovered £7,969,622.96 in damages for all types of cases.

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