Johann Lamont: I want to work with ASLEF

Hugh Bradley: Strains on freight remain

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The union lost a valued friend last month. Andy Morrison was a national officer who worked as the Organiser for District 5. His sudden passing leaves a great gap in our lives. In many ways Andy was the perfect model for an ASLEF representative. He was a sharp and intelligent advocate for our members, a concerned activist in his local community and a dignified and honourable man. I will miss Andy's counsel, his humour and his dignity.

Only last week we were at a union function together where he was his usual calm and charming self. Now he is gone and we are all the worse off for his passing.

I know that national officers can seem a little remote to the ordinary member. You don't see us every day, as you do your local representatives. But I think we can be proud of all of our full-time officials. It is not always an easy job, and to do it properly needs hard work, dedication and conviction. Like Andy, they all work long hours with selfless determination for your interests.

That is why I was so outraged at the treatment that the Scottish edition of the Sun dealt out to our Scottish officer Kevin Lindsay last month. This rather foul rag smeared Kevin for going about his union duties, carrying out democratic decisions to defend an ASLEF member. For this he was derided as a ‘union firebrand’ who was ‘off the rails’, a ‘union chief demanding strike action’. The paper even invented anonymous drivers calling for Kevin’s dismissal. It was muck-raking prejudice in a blatant form.

My message to Kevin is that if the Sun hates you, you must be doing a good job. He was carrying out democratic decisions made by ASLEF representatives. And frankly the last people he needs lectures from is the scandal-ridden, spying, immoral Murdoch-owned gutter press.

Mick Whelan
General Secretary
Scots driver’s punishment ‘disproportionate’

MICK WHELAN, the general secretary of ASLEF the train drivers’ union, reacted sharply to ‘a media frenzy’ about union support for a driver disciplined for a day’s unauthorised absence from work.

A driver in Scotland has been discovered to have reported in sick when he was abroad at a football match. As a result his employer, Scotrail, has taken him off the footplate and demoted him – reducing his salary by almost £20,000.

‘This is completely unjust,’ says Mick Whelan. ‘It means that this driver will be fined almost £20,000 each year he remains working for the company. As he is 47, this means over £300,000 – and because it affects him even after his pension it will go on beyond his working life.

‘Compare this to the case in Suffolk where the driver of an uninsured car was fined £265 after killing a 15-year-old girl – or the speeding taxi driver in Manchester fined £250 after killing a 20-year-old student in Manchester.

‘There’s a maximum fine of £2,500 for cycling dangerously, even when that has killed. If he is found guilty, super-rich footballer John Terry’s maximum fine for a racially aggravated public order offence is £2,500.

‘Compared with these cases, this punishment for one unwise ‘sickie’ in 21 years of working on the railway is deeply, deeply unfair. That is why the driver has the full backing of ASLEF.’

‘In the wake of the story, the Scottish edition of the Sun newspaper launched a bitter, vitriolic and totally unjustified attack on the union’s Scottish officer, Kevin Linsday. Kevin, it has to be said, was splendidly unmoved. ‘If the Sun doesn’t like me, I must be doing my job on behalf of the members,’ he said.

Mick Whelan added, ‘The company created the culture that led to this dispute by regularly denying drivers leave they had accrued. If people aren’t allowed to take rightful time off, they inevitably seek alternatives.’

Mick said the union ‘does not seek to condone our colleague’s action, but understands how it came about’ in the culture and climate that Scotrail has created.

‘Drivers in the company have worked over 10,000 additional days over recent years and have been prevented from taking leave they were due.’

Learning needn’t be scary (apart from Jack the Ripper!)

Union learning doesn’t need to take place in a classroom. It can take place almost anywhere, says Nottingham-based Union Learning Representative Andy Wakefield. On a suitably misty dark night in December he arranged an educational evening for a group from East Midlands Trains in the Whitechapel area of London – for a tour of the stomping grounds of Jack the Ripper.

‘We started our tour outside Aldgate station, where we met up with our guide. This was Lindsay Sivatar, who has a very impressive CV that includes TV appearances, books authorship and a credit as an expert on the film ‘From Hell’ which starred Hollywood heart-throb Johnny Depp.

‘The tour took in all the murder sites and other interesting locations like the Ten Bells public house, which was frequented by some of Jack’s victims. Walking in the footsteps of the people involved in the murders, and being party to Lindsay’s wealth of knowledge on the subject, gave a whole new perceptive to what has become the legend of Jack the Ripper.

‘The tour was an enjoyable and interesting experience that I would recommend to everybody.

‘The only down-side was – that we are no closer now to discovering the true identity of one of Britain’s most infamous murderers…’

For more information about the tour Andy arranged check out www.jack-the-ripper-tour.com

RMS 500 CLUB JANUARY DRAW The January winning number in the 500 Club draw was 11. It is held by Mark Prenter and the prize money is £200, reports RMS Committee member Alan Taylor.

WEST COAST 14-YEAR FRANCHISE The Department for Transport has published an ‘invitation to tender’ for the next Intercity West Coast franchise due to start on 9 December 2012. The new franchise will continue through to March 2026, this date being aligned to the introduction of high-speed services along the proposed HS2 route.

RICHARD (DICKY) FISHER IS NEW ASLEF ORGANISER Dicky Fisher has been elected as the new organiser for ASLEF’s District No 6. He has taken over the vacancy caused by the election of his predecessor, Mick Whelan, to the position of General Secretary.

Almost half the eligible members voted in the election, a remarkably high turnout.

Richard said he was ‘pleased and proud in equal degree’ at the result and offered his commiserations to the other candidate, Andy Botham.
Compensation for icy platform slip

A driver who needed two operations on his knee after falling on a slippery platform has received compensation with ASLEF’s help. The 30-year-old First Great Western driver from Oxfordshire fell on snow and ice at five in the morning on the platform at Forne in January 2009. Some of the platform had been gritted, but only on the length covering the two train carriages.

As he fell the driver tore ligaments and tendons in his right knee. He has since needed two operations to mend his knee and three years later is still receiving physiotherapy.

First Great Western admitted liability and settled the claim out of court for £23,000. The ASLEF member said, ‘I knew about ASLEF’s free legal service and I hoped that they would be able to resolve this for me. I have been delighted with the service I have received.’

Mick Whelan added, ‘Our member has needed to take a great deal of time off work as a result of this fall which could have been avoided had a considered approach been taken to keeping the platform clear from ice and snow.’

500 crossings gone since 2009

Network Rail says it closed 500 level crossings between April 2009 and the end of 2010, and plans to cut a further 250 by March 2014. It described the 500th closure as ‘a significant milestone’. A NR spokesperson points out, ‘Closing a level crossing is not an easy business as it often involves getting the support of Land owners, local authorities and users.

Network Rail plan to close more level crossings

Transport Police advised motorists of their obligations to use crossings properly and targeted those who, despite the warnings, continued to misuse them. One specific issue tackled was the habit of motorists to leave gates open to road traffic at user worked crossing where the gates open away from the railway.

Mick Whelan has written to the transport minister to seek clarification about a new concept of ‘rail industry alliance agreements’ that seem to be breaking out like measles.

‘I want to know exactly what is meant by these new regional-level relationships between Network Rail and train operating companies – so we can assess them properly,’ he says. ‘We don’t know enough to have a position at present, but I wanted to involve the minister because the principle of alliances raises important questions.’

The union understands that these regional alliances will have a joint management team covering both operations and infrastructure, likely to be headed by the current managing director of the relevant train operating company (TOC).

‘This raises questions over the health and safety responsibilities of the TOC managing director and could lead to potential conflicts of interest where the managing director of one operator is responsible for infrastructure used by other operators. I’m particularly concerned about freight operators being marginalised by passenger trains under this sort of arrangement.’

Mick is also seeking more information about the government view on accountability for joint management teams as both organisations remain separate entities. ‘There will also be different objectives from TOCs seeking to maximise shareholder dividends and Network Rail that works on a not-for-dividend basis.’

 MPs ‘misled’ over lorry trial

Freight on Rail, to which ASLEF is affiliated, says Parliament was misled about the dangers posed by longer lorries. The government has approved a ten-year trial of 60ft (18.55m).

Philippa Edmunds, Freight on Rail (FoR) Manager, said, ‘The government justified allowing longer HGVs on our roads by misleading MPs and distorting the safety analysis.

‘The Department for Transport research had significant flaws because it did not look at how longer lorries would behave in urban areas and on tight right and left hand turns. By including these very common scenarios and using the government’s own figures, longer lorries could cause an additional six deaths a year and increase overall accident rates between four and eight per cent.’

FoR says that in the

Marsch 2012

Cost of metal theft: over £12m

In response to a question in Parliament, the government has said metal theft from railways cost over £12 million last year. The figures collated by Network Rail on a route basis were as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Route</th>
<th>Number of incidents</th>
<th>Delay minutes</th>
<th>Compensation cost (£)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anglia</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>21,055</td>
<td>1,089,809</td>
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<tr>
<td>CTRL</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>7,251</td>
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<tr>
<td>East Midlands</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>11,234</td>
<td>282,473</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kent</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>12,681</td>
<td>417,950</td>
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<tr>
<td>LNE (London North Eastern)</td>
<td>526</td>
<td>137,801</td>
<td>3,531,416</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LNW (London North Western)</td>
<td>196</td>
<td>105,842</td>
<td>2,795,811</td>
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<tr>
<td>Scotland</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>7,265</td>
<td>254,825</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sussex</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>764</td>
<td>30,081</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wessex</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3,536</td>
<td>140,423</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>65,026</td>
<td>3,587,181</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Office of Rail Regulation (ORR) has published new guidance on good practice in managing fatigue within the rail industry.

The union has welcomed it, and its lead officers will raise its content with individual companies, specifically covering:

- the concept of Fatigue Risk Management Systems.
- setting up Fatigue Safety Action Groups with ASLEF reps.
- health and safety reps collating information from staff fatigue surveys.

This rail industry-specific guidance builds on the more general guidance applicable to all industries. The ORR guidance advocates a proportionate approach to fatigue, with simple controls where risks are low, but a more comprehensive 'fatigue risk management' system (FRMS) approach where risks from fatigue are greater, to help reduce the risk of fatigue-based errors.

The full guidance can be seen at www.rail-reg.gov.uk/upload/pdf/managing_rail_fatigue.pdf

ASLEF welcomes the guidance as it contains some useful information and certain new ideas about managing fatigue. In summary:

- 3.2 Section 4 provides guidance on basic fatigue controls applicable to all employment.
- 3.3 Section 5 covers 'Fatigue Risk Management Systems' relevant to rail employers with staff working shifts or significant overtime, including 'safety critical' work. It outlines the features of a fatigue risk management system.
- 3.4 Section 6 replaces, updates and fleshes out ORR's 2006 guidance on 'Managing fatigue in safety critical work.' It retains the nine stage approach which many companies have adopted or revised. Companies with staff carrying out safety critical duties under ROGS should review their existing fatigue controls against the updated guidance.
- 5.21 The report dwells on the usefulness of Fatigue Safety Action Groups that bring together managers and employee representatives. They can ensure that fatigue controls are sensibly prioritised and co-ordinated and help demonstrate the company's commitment to involving staff. Some organisations may prefer to use an existing joint management / staff group with a wider safety improvement remit. They can involve Operations Managers, ASLEF reps, rostering staff, safety managers and Occupational Health services.
- 8.7 Fatigue management systems should include arrangements for assessing and controlling risks from travel time - with an absolute 'worse case scenario' maximum of 14 hours between leaving home and returning.

5.76 Staff fatigue surveys are a useful supplement to routine monitoring of fatigue both on a regular basis and where there have been reports of particular aspects of work patterns that tire staff.

Simply asking staff which turns or links cause problems is a good case scenario' maximum of 14 hours between leaving hom e and returning.

7.5 Staff should be consulted on proposed working patterns, and their views on fatigue risk aspects considered.

7.7 The general three-part sequence can be summarised as follows, consulting with staff at appropriate stages:

- design the work pattern, maximising good fatigue management practices;
- assess likely fatigue risks from the resulting work pattern, using a fatigue assessment tool;
- ask staff whether the work pattern is in reality controlling fatigue, and any particular features which may need further improvement.

Queens Low Speed Rail
Queen Victoria travelled at 40 mph according to General Grey, her private secretary. When arranging her journey to Scotland in 1854 he informed the secretary of the Great Northern Railway that, 'Her Majesty travels at the rate of 40 miles an hour.'

Her regal wishes were, however, flouted by the driver of the train bringing her coffin back from the Isle of Wight - who apparently achieved speeds in excess of 80 mph between Portsmouth and London.

This invaluable information comes from the website of Paul Salveson, a consultant, writer and lecturer on railways and Northern social history. Rail enthusiasts will enjoy his web at www.paulsalveson.org.uk
Whatever life throws at you
ASLEF will help to protect you.

As a ASLEF member you’re covered for:†

Free legal advice and representation on:
• Personal injury at work (including assaults)
• Personal injury away from work
• Road traffic accident injury
• Industrial disease or illness
• Criminal law representation (for work-related matters)

• Free will writing service
• 30 minutes free telephone advice for any non-work issues such as landlord disputes, neighbourhood disputes, matrimonial and consumer issues
• Employment law accessed through your ASLEF district organiser

ASLEF members and their families are covered for:†

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• Personal injury away from work
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• Special terms for clinical negligence cases
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For more information call ASLEF on 0808 100 8009

† Exclusions apply. Thompsons Solicitors is a trading name of Thompsons Solicitors LLP and is regulated by the Solicitors Regulation Authority.

ASLEF JOURNAL
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Stop tinkering with fares – solve the causes, says GS

News

Fears for CICA as Clarke seeks to change law

ASLEF members who are injured as a result of acts of trespass on railway lines, including suicides, will no longer be able to claim compensation through the Criminal Injuries Compensation Scheme (CICS), if reforms being pushed by justice secretary Ken Clarke become law.

The Ministry of Justice consultation ‘Getting it right for victims and witnesses’ proposes that offences connected with trespass on the railway, including suicide or attempted suicide, be removed from the scheme.

It also removes injuries that most train drivers who witness suicides suffer and claim compensation for. Removing these bands would therefore make most members in this position ineligible to apply to the Criminal Injuries Compensation Authority (CICA) for an award. A full report from Jennie Walsh of Thompsons solicitors will be included in the April edition of the Journal.

The lowest ratings for overall satisfaction were given to National Express East Anglia (77%), First Capital Connect (80%), CrossCountry (82%), Southeastern (83%), Southern (83%), Northern Rail (83%) and First Great Western (83%).

The highest ratings for overall satisfaction were achieved by Grand Central (95%), Heathrow Express (93%), Merseyrail (93%), London Overground (92%) and Heathrow Connect (92%).

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Have we got your number?

asks National Organiser Simon Weller...

National Organiser Simon wants you to make sure the union has your email address and mobile telephone number. ‘It’s part of our new program to improve member information and communications,’ he says. ‘It will enable us to send out targeted and timely information to you, particularly in times of dispute or unrest.

‘To do this using text messaging and email we obviously need your number and email address. Many recent joiners have given us their numbers and emails but some will have changed or your application may pre-date emails and mobiles.’

There are a number of ways to get the information to us:

You can update your details via the ASLEF website www.aslef.org.uk and logging into the member area. If you’ve never logged on it’s a simple process to set up but you’ll need your membership number. Your branch secretary will be able to provide you with it.

You can email your mobile number and email address to info@aslef.org.uk and the head office staff can update our membership records for you. Don’t forget to include your full name, branch, mobile and email address in the body of the email.

You can fill in the cut out form, fill in the details and give it to your branch secretary to post on to head office, or you can post it yourself.

Rest assured that these details will not be used by third parties for marketing, just by us to improve our communications.

There will also be significant postage savings and lessen our environmental impact with a reduction in the duplication of printed materials that go out to reps. Of course, those reps who do not have access to email will continue to get their information in the normal way.

In addition to this, we will continue revising how we utilise our website, prioritising member specific information and new use of social media will allow us to react more quickly and keep members informed. After all, knowledge is power!

Union Learning –football pitch to footplate simulator!

Two former Newcastle United heroes - John Beresford and Joe Allon - tried their hand on a high-tech train driving simulator at Newcastle Central Station to kick off a union education drive.

The simulator was the central attraction at a ‘Celebration of Learning’ event at Newcastle station at the end of last year for staff and their families. ASLEF union learning rep (ULR) Tony Paul set up the event in partnership with East Coast Trains - and invited John and Joe along for all the Newcastle fans at East Coast trains.

John Beresford (left) Joe Allon (right) with ASLEF union learning rep Tony Paul

ASLEF Learning funding bid approved

ASLEF Education has received approval for another two years funding from the Union Learning Fund (ULF). The total amount awarded up until 31 March 2014 is £560,000.

Kevin Lindsay, District Organiser No. 2, who oversees the project, said, ‘This is great news for ASLEF and for the skills agenda in the rail industry. This money will allow the ASLEF Education team to continue supporting ULRs to carry out the good work that they have been doing within their companies and depots.’

The ASLEF Education project has a team of dedicated workers that support Union Learning Representatives to set up learning activity within the workplace providing ASLEF members with learning and development opportunities.

For more information on ASLEF Education or the ULF application please contact Shirley Handsley, Project Coordinator on shirley.handsley@aslef.org.uk or 07825 525 610

Olympic unions

LOROL Olympic deal struck

Mick Whelan (seen here, right, with London Overground Rail Operations Ltd Human Resources Director Darren Hockaday, Wayne Geoghan (TSSA) and the RMT’s Steve Hedley) at St Pancras station welcoming the agreement to work in partnership to deliver gold standard transport facilities for this year’s Olympics.

NO HONOUR FOR HONOURABLE ASLEF GS

Last month for the first time the names of people who turned down Honours like knighthoods and CBES has been published. Among them was J.G. Baty, who was General Secretary of ASLEF from 1948 until 1956.

It seems that J.G. Baty was offered the chance to become a Commander of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (CBE) in the birthdays honours list in 1952 but decided against.

The former GS’ great-nephew Ian Fiddes says, ‘I can recall a faded letter from Downing Street confirming the offer. His great uncle died in 1959, shortly after returning to the North East.'
Scottish Labour leader: ‘I want to work with ASLEF’

We asked Johann Lamont, a former teacher who was elected Leader of the Scottish Labour Party in December last year, how she views the link between unions and the Labour Party north of the border …

I want to thank all the ASLEF members in Scotland for the work they do. Too often, transport is just seen as another business - but it’s not. It is a public service and the work you do is a backbone of the Scottish economy. It is not said enough, so thank you. I get the train three or four times a week from Glasgow, where I live, to the Scottish Parliament in Edinburgh.

As the new Scottish Labour leader, I want to work with ASLEF members on the issues that matter to you. I want to see proper investment in Scotland’s railways, better accountability for the way the ScotRail franchise is awarded, and stronger protection for workers in the front line of public service. I look forward to working with Kevin Lindsay and all the ASLEF team in Scotland in the years ahead.

With all the talk about a referendum, we can’t take our eye off the ball on other matters. With 200 Scots a day losing their job, the top priority has got to be getting Scotland back to work and stopping the economy sliding back into recession.

PARTNERSHIP, NOT SEPARATION

But the referendum is going to happen and there’s only one big decision on the table. Do we separate from the rest of the UK, or not? We’ll hear big arguments one way or another, and I am determined to make sure that Scottish Labour is back on the pitch making the case. There is a big difference between the two parties, because at the end of the day, the SNP’s starting point is always going to be to do what it can to advance the case for independence. My values are different, and under my leadership, Scottish Labour’s starting point is going to be what is in the best interests of working people.

I’ve never believed Scotland is too small to be independent. There are lots of small countries in the world – it is just about whether or not we want Scotland to be part of the UK. I have a different vision for our future, and passionately believe we are big enough, strong enough, and proud enough to stand together in partnership with our friends, colleagues, workmates and neighbours right across the UK.

INDEPENDENCE SOLVES NOTHING

The question is whether it is a good choice for Scotland. What it would do for our economy, for jobs, for pensions and for the chances for the next generation? I have real fears about what it would mean for the economy. Every year in Scotland, we spend more on public services than we raise in taxes, including all the oil, so behind all the wild claims from the SNP, that’s something worth remembering. The big issues Scotland faces – lack of jobs, poverty, ill-health – aren’t caused by being part of the UK and they won’t be solved by leaving.

But one of the things the SNP are desperate not to talk about is - what currency we’d use if Scotland left the UK.

Up until a few months ago, they were all behind the euro and wanted to join as fast as possible. Then they said they wanted Scotland to set up a new currency. Now they say we’d just stick with sterling. The trouble is, the EU rules are pretty clear. New countries have to adopt the euro. And that would be really bad for jobs and the economy.

Right now, the pound in your pocket is our pound. We own it. If Scotland left the UK, but still used their currency, we would have no control over the banknotes, how much we can borrow, and what interest rates would be. It just doesn’t make sense.

But there is another reason why I think most Scots won’t be voting for separation. It’s because we know we are stronger together. If Scotland and England have different business taxes, different health and safety laws, different rules for the big banks, what will they do? They’ll just play each country off against the other. By sticking together we are stronger than we would be by pulling apart. In this world, we need to work in partnership with other countries. And I have no doubt that the best partnership for Scotland is to walk tall as a part of the UK. Being part of the UK doesn’t make me any less Scottish, but it does make our economies stronger.

Johann Lamont was elected as the first overall leader of the Scottish Labour Party in December
Unity is key for rail as well as unions

This is the first time I’ve had the pleasure of writing a few words in a Scottish edition of the Journal as your general secretary – but I’d be feeling a lot happier if it weren’t for the shadow of the McNulty Report.

One of the sensible things Sir Roy perceived was that rail privatisation caused fragmentation and division on the railway – and that drove up costs. He argued that fragmentation is ‘the first barrier to efficiency’.

Yet now we see foolish speculation about breaking up the Scottish network. We will resist any such irrationality, including any attempt to create separate franchises for the Sleeper service or the Glasgow - Edinburgh route and any restrictions on expanding rail freight.

By separating more profitable routes in the franchise from those which are less profitable, you remove all elements of cross subsidy: and that is the basis of our role as a social and public service.

Thanks to all who have contributed to this Scottish edition of the Journal: your concern, dedication and ability are an example to us all.

Mick Whelan, General Secretary

Standing together to face new challenges

Being District Organiser for Scotland has always been interesting, demanding, busy and rewarding. But the last six months has seen ASLEF, our membership and myself facing challenges unprecedented in my previous 10 years in this job. During this period we have been in three disputes with Scotrail over spare ratio, cross cover and excessive discipline. Each time the branches and membership have stood firm. It’s this attitude which has enabled ASLEF to stay strong.

On the spare ratio, the company council and I have agreed to a trial of a new formula which we believe should give more spare capacity in the rosters. The LLC’s have produced new rosters and we will see how they pan out over the coming months and whether this solves the problem of lack of spare contained within the rosters.

Management thought it was appropriate to use cross cover before the demands of the home depot were met. This was something the company council and I would not accept, so we could not recommend rest day working to the Executive Committee (EC).

The EC withdrew the sanction and Scottrail reacted by cancelling all lieu leave, briefs, and hospital appointments and even discipline hearings. When they finally sat round the table with Mick Whelan and myself, they offered an acceptable deal on cross cover and guaranteed lieu leave. In addition they committed to employing at least 38 drivers in 2012. But more importantly they said that rest day working will cease by April 2013.

While they were refusing lieu leave, one member who had applied for leave phoned in sick. The company launched an overzealous investigation and our member admitted he had not been sick but had been abroad watching football. They charged him with gross misconduct and sacked him. On appeal he was re-employed into a station grade.

Whilst I can’t condone our member’s actions the level of punishment was excessive, especially for a driver of 21 years’ experience who had never been disciplined before. That is why I fully supported the eight branches that sent in resolutions demanding action. The EC agreed that the sanction was excessive and decided to ballot Scotrail over excessive discipline punishments.

As Scotrail runs 95% of Scotland’s railways, this became a lead story for the Scottish media.

No one, however, could have forecast the reaction of the Scottish Sun. It attempted to vilify our member and attacked ASLEF in general and myself in particular. It ran stories for four days with a picture of our member on its front page. This caused our member untold stress and disrupted his life to the stage where he could no longer leave his home.

During this period the GS and myself met Scotrail again. The company would not move sufficiently for us, but our member had endured enough. He wanted a settlement to try and get his life back together and accepted an offer. With this in mind, the EC called off the ballot. Part of the settlement with Scotrail included a confidentiality clause, so I can’t inform you of the outcome.

But I will say that without the support and solidarity of the ASLEF membership our member would have been facing a life on the dole alongside three million others in Cameron’s Britain.

Kevin Lindsay, Organiser, District 2 (Scotland)
Nationalists claim union

We asked Christina McKelvie, the Scottish Nationalist MSP who is convenor of her party’s Parliamentary Trade Union Group, about how her party views trade unions. This is what she told us ...

I have been an active trade unionist all of my adult working life and served as a Unison steward during my years as social care training officer for Glasgow City Council. I firmly believe that the Scottish people and workers would be better served if Scotland were an independent nation, with the self-determination enjoyed by other countries across the world. That belief has led me to become an SNP Member of the Scottish Parliament.

Some people might be surprised to find that trade union activism and SNP activism go hand in hand, but they shouldn’t be. Thousands of SNP members and supporters are trade unionists and our active Trade Union Group plays a strong role in policy development.

In the May Scottish elections, many trade union members switched their vote to the SNP and have come to see us as the natural home for their vote. What’s more, increasing numbers of Scottish trade unionists are coming to see an independent Scotland as the best route to imprinting trade union values at the heart of Scottish life.

TACKLING THATCHER’S LEGACY

Why is this? One reason is the attitude of the UK parties when it comes to employment rights, supporting struggling families and protecting the welfare state and the NHS. After Thatcher’s Tories began dismantling these throughout the ’80s and ’90s, many looked to Labour to redress the balance after 1997. That didn’t happen. Now the new Tories and their LibDem allies look set to try and finish off what Thatcher started, and Labour at Westminster have shown they will do little to oppose their economic vandalism.

In contrast, under the SNP, the shared community values which Scots have always strongly supported are at the heart of our governance. The SNP’s social wage is the contract which the Scottish Government has made with the Scottish people to do as much as it can, within its powers, to help ordinary households during difficult times by maintaining universal benefits such as free university education, free prescriptions and free personal care for older people.

And for those who say that the so-called middle classes – who are often the working poor or ordinary families who are just getting by – should have to pay for their prescriptions or their children’s university education, the SNP replies that times of economic hardship are the worst time of all to separate our society into those who deserve help from the state and those who do not. We hold firm to the values of universalism because we believe that is how you build and maintain social cohesion and solidarity.

A PROGRAMME FOR A LIVING WAGE

The Scottish Government currently has very little control over employment rights, but the SNP has used the levers available to us to do what we can. We have implemented the living wage in all of the departments and agencies the government has direct control over and we have encouraged local authorities across Scotland to follow suit. The government’s forthcoming Sustainable Procurement Bill will explore how its considerable buying power can be used to extend the living wage into the private sector, to hold the companies it contracts with to respect national agreements on pay and conditions, and to create employment opportunities for young people through training and apprenticeship programmes.

The SNP Government maintains a strong and valued relationship with the Scottish Trades Union Congress, with whom it meets formally at least twice yearly. From the first day of SNP government back in 2007, Scottish trade union representatives have found SNP Ministers to be approachable, accessible and willing to listen and respond to their concerns.

The Scottish NHS is fully preserved by the SNP as a public service, fully accountable to the public through the Scottish Parliament – we will have no truck with the privatisation agenda being pursued down south. NHS Scotland’s employment relations structure was recently acclaimed as a ‘ground-breaking’ example which should be followed throughout the UK public sector in an independent study by the University of Nottingham.

Of course, with the full powers of independence we could do so much more to build the fairer, more equal Scottish society that trade unionists want to see.

On a final note, some trade unionists have raised concerns that an independent Scotland would see the remainder of the UK consigned to an eternity of Tory governments. The facts don’t bear that out — on only two occasions, most recently 38 years ago, have Scottish MPs given Labour a majority they wouldn’t have had from England/Wales/NI alone. Anyway, it seems odd to impose Tory governments on Scots who didn’t vote for them and deny Scotland the opportunity to pursue a strong social democratic agenda. Instead, as Alex Salmond has suggested, trade unionists should see an independent Scotland as an opportunity – a ‘progressive beacon’ which may even lead to a revitalisation of social democratic and Left voices south of the border.
Strains on freight remain

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H

Hugh

B

Bradley, ASLEF’s Executive Committee member for Scotland ...

The continuing difficult times and challenges persist in the freight industry with a new round of ‘surpluses’ recently announced on DBS in South Wales. There is also the vigorous competition among the FOCs when contracts are up for renewal and indeed the customers are now reducing the money they are prepared to pay for their services.

We’ve also seen GB Railfreight taken over by Eurotunnel which has given it an increased impetus and may make it a bigger player in the freight industry. The McNulty Report will have an impact on the freight industry given the possible introduction of Vertical Integration, with Network Rail currently looking to having ‘Alliances’ with the major train operating companies (TOCs) in certain areas.

This will impact on the freight operating companies (FOCs) who will become secondary users of a fragmented rail network trying to compete with a national road network. In Scotland we may have similar problems under the ‘Transport Scotland Rail 2014 Proposals’.

There are also major concerns that the European Commission review of HGV Weights and Dimensions Directive may undermine the UK Government’s ability to control the size of HGVs on our roads and lead to the introduction of mega trucks of 25 metres and up to 60 tonnes in weight and the implications that will have for our rail freight industry.

These are just some of the difficulties coming our way but given the current policies we have, I’m sure we are in a good position to combat all the above and to oppose initiatives such as:

- Introduction of part time contracts
- Zero hours contracts
- ‘Casualisation’ of the freight sector.

Appreciating these difficulties we should still endeavour to achieve some form of uniformity of conditions to ensure job security and industry wide best practises so we don’t have a ‘race to the bottom’ for our freight members.

CROSSCOUNTRY

With CrossCountry drivers being in the second year of a three-year pay deal, there are no pay negotiations scheduled until 2014.

We are currently reviewing as part of the pay award an electronic communications device (Tablet Computer) which will enable Drivers to have instant access to all their required publications, rosters, annual leave records, diagrams etc. If and when the device is rolled out this should reduce dramatically the amount of equipment that we carry on a daily basis.

A valuation of the CrossCountry pension fund has revealed a £13 million deficit and negotiations to protect the scheme have been necessary. Difficult decisions have been required and although it has been agreed that there will be no changes to contribution levels, a change to benefits has been made for future service. This means that non-protected members of the scheme retiring before their 60th birthday will do so on a cost neutral basis (that is, a deduction will be made to their benefits to take into account the cost to the fund of them leaving early).

The last year also saw our Lead Officer, Mick Whelan, elected as General Secretary. The Council would like to thank Mick for his leadership and wish him well in his new role.

John Hay, Secretary, CrossCountry Drivers Company Council

DB SCHENKER UK

As your new company council representative, putting this report together is a first – so please bear with me. Since taking over my new responsibilities, I have had my eyes opened on many different levels. I now realise the work and commitment shown by your company council, the EC and ASLEF to lessen damage to the freight sector. However, with the solidarity shown by the membership in the past, I know we can handle this tough time. Due to the strength shown, we now have a CDP (Competence Development Plan) which management did not want. There is also a national compendium being put together which hopefully will sort out problems regarding rostering and diagraming (watch this space).

Nonetheless, we still need our members to keep putting the forms in to highlight these issues.

I’m afraid to say there are a few challenges ahead regarding pay, conditions and safety briefs. The council has claimed a substantial pay rise, a reduction in contract hours and a four day week which are under negotiation.

We are also fighting to have safety briefs reinstated across DB Schenker. With your continued support and strength we will come through these challenges stronger and better.

I would just like to reiterate how grateful I am for the support of all of my fellow councillors. We are gearing ourselves up to make ourselves more approachable and our work more open.

We are aware that we can achieve nothing without the help and support of the Scottish representatives and members. I will always endeavour to keep you all informed and up-to-date with all issues.

C. Bolton, DBS Company Council, Scotland
DIRECT RAIL SERVICES

DRS recently bucked the trend by taking on new rail contracts (with Tesco) which will cover the network. Strangely enough, this has led to a recruitment campaign for drivers which has had limited success. There still seems to be a reticence for drivers to transfer to the freight sector as the uncertainty of the past few years has taken its toll.

The company council’s main focus recently has been on the proposals to merge our pensions within a larger pension scheme. This proposal by-passed the ASLEF reps but after legal advice and our intervention we were eventually consulted and received assurances of the security of our present and future contributions. This has taken a lot of time and effort which has meant that other burning issues - like new terms and conditions - have taken a back seat. Rest assured that these issues will now go to the top of the list.

The company council also formed a ‘cab environment working group’ with DRS’s engineering department and has visited Valencia to look at the new Vossloh UK light engines that the company is buying. The reps put forward around 20 modifications for the cab which have been implemented. These new locos are a breath of fresh air and meet the aspirations from the Squash campaign: new locos, ergonomic accessible and comfortable cabs. The likeness to the Pendolino cabs can only improve on the present (ancient) traction used by DRS.

T. McKendrick, Secretary,
Company Council

EAST COAST

The current state of relations between the East Coast Company Council and management at the time of writing is not very promising.

Management have told us that requesting Staffside C/C meetings once a month is too much. We requested C/C release to discuss the issues that we as a Council have placed on the agenda. As these issues affect the working relationship between the company and us drivers, we need to discuss items before we meet.

At our January meeting, long service awards were one of the items discussed. Drivers are, and have been, affected by management’s refusal to recognise them for long service awards. This has been turned down. Management say they issued their policy for awards in 2006: but the Council had never seen this until it was presented to us at the January meeting. We use our agreed PDA - which hasn’t been changed to reflect management’s position.

Under GNER we had a working relationship; under National Express, we never had a working relationship; and under the current ECML, we don’t have a decent working relationship. We can only hope that this improves in the very near future.

Rab Wicksted, Company Council rep

FIRST SCOTRAIL

This has been a trying time for the Company Council with the ‘avoidance of dispute’ still fresh in our minds regarding the definition of all known work and guaranteed lieu day agreement. It was with disappointment that we could not resolve this at our level - or more to the point at LLC level.

The LLC at both Helensburgh and Queen St deserve praise for bringing this through the machinery. The matter may be resolved but now, through our LLCs, we need to ensure that the agreement is adhered to.

There is also for the first time a new formula for complements being trialled. This came to light after Aberdeen and Perth sent resolutions to the EC. The 2.5 equation is by no means an end to this matter. We have recently spoken to 90% of our LLCs regarding this and we certainly haven’t agreed the formula. It is in its early stages and needs monitoring but early responses show that most LLCs find it has generated more spares. It is too early to say whether this will be enough.

The introduction of the class
380s fleet seems, after initial problems, to have settled.

A major re-signalling schedule has (and is still being carried out) at Shield/Paisley corridor phase 11. We worked with health and safety reps from Ayr and Glasgow Central through the SOM107 guidelines.

Presently we are hoping to finalise an agreement which will bring to an end to problems at Ayr yard concerning tank and disposal timings.

The West Highland line is very much in our thoughts although our comrades may think otherwise. The present condition of radio black spots and, more serious, the working over Pass of Brander stone signals is high on our agenda. The sooner this matter is highlighted at a higher level the better.

As you can see - we are at our strongest when we use the machinery and when we stick together. Unified, we can still achieve our aims.

The McNulty Report will soon be dusted down and through this Con/Dem government we will be under attack from all sides. I urge you to go along to our Branch and Open Meetings and have your say. Criticism is never a problem - but let's do it through the proper channels.

Comrades, I will end by welcoming Brother Murray Fraser to the Company Council. Murray will represent his area with vigour.

I also wish the best of luck to Tam McAlllen who had to stand down.

I speak for the whole council when I wish Tam all the best. He always put ASLEF first, and we know that he will be back stronger than ever.

Ian Smith, Chair, FSR Company Council

Still question marks over gay marriage equality for Scots

In September 2011 the Scottish government launched its awaited consultation on Marriage Equality. The proposal was simple: to consider whether to allow ‘religious ceremonies for civil partnerships and the possible introduction of same sex marriage’. Equally, it sought opinions on permitting heterosexual couples to have the same civil partnership rights.

Four months on, after much opposition from many of Scotland’s religious institutions and a great deal of anti-gay rhetoric, the consultation closed with over 50,000 responses submitted. The question we must ask is what end will equality in marriage serve? Clearly, the right to the freedom of religious expression is important. Currently, in Scotland as with the rest of the UK, civil partnerships cannot be overseen by anyone other than a Registrar comprising no religious element to the ceremony regardless of whether a minister would be happy to solemnise the union.

In terms of fundamental rights, most of those offered by civil partnerships are not effective in practice. Couples still face both perceived and actual discrimination. Societal attitudes still see civil partnerships as a lesser union (something the Scottish Government is keen to address) while in practice the Gender Recognition Act results in couples, where one partner is transsexual, having to divorce to gain official gender recognition.

As many religious leaders have been keen to point out, marriage, although different from country to country, is a recognised and enshrined institution with many legal and social safeguards. In comparison, civil partnerships have no such global recognition and also lack some of the protection and benefits that law grants marriage.

To discriminate against any section of society and to deny them the same rights as the wider population should be anathema to any modern nation. The importance of equality is well demonstrated in Scotland by the Social Attitudes Survey which shows a majority of the population are in favour of Equal Marriage, a trend that continues to grow.

By the close of the consultation at least 24,000 responses had been submitted in favour representing a wide range of Scottish organisations from youth and faith groups to unions (including ASLEF) and local authorities.

The next affirmative step will be for the Scottish Parliament through devolved family law to allow a Bill to pass through the legislature thus allowing Scotland to become part of a small but growing group of nations equalising not only marriage but the often overlooked civil arrangements for everyone.

The most likely timetable for this is:

- Spring 2012 Scottish decision on legalisation
- Summer 2012 Draft Bill drawn up
- Autumn 2012 Public consultation on draft bill
- Late 2012/Early 2013 Equal Bill debate at parliament
- Early 2013 MSP debate on Equal marriage
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The more members in the club, the bigger the prize!
The 500 Club is open to individuals, branches and district councils.

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

WANTED
Women members interested in being sponsored to attend conferences as visitors

Get more involved
learn more about the union and see how conferences work

Upcoming conferences include
the unions annual conference, TUC womens conference, labour party and TUC congress

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

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Overcoming LUL’s strike injunction

Victoria Phillips, head of Thompsons’ employment rights unit, considers the implications of the latest employer attempt to stop lawful industrial action...

The High Court’s refusal to grant London Underground an injunction to stop strike action by tube drivers on Boxing Day confirmed the lengths, and expense, some employers are prepared to go to have a trade union’s industrial action ballot declared unlawful.

LUL spent two days in court just before Christmas arguing weak points of law, one of which the judge concluded was “hopeless” and “fatal”. These were days that, as the union pointed out, should have been spent around a negotiating table.

LUL’s legal team ran two key arguments:

- That the union was in breach of s.227 of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992 by balloting members who could not be called on to take industrial action on Boxing Day because they were not rostered to work.
- That the election scrutineer failed in its duties, contrary to the provisions of sections 226B(1) and 231B of the Act; and that ASLEF failed to ensure that the scrutineer carried out the functions properly.

In addition, but crucially, LUL said that the ballot was unlawful because members were balloted for Boxing Day strike action, but the industrial action being considered by the union was not limited to Boxing Day. This was a circular argument because the action was indeed not limited to Boxing Day, the ballot papers had not claimed that it was and LUL had been notified of further days of action. The judge accepted ASLEF’s evidence on this and concluded that this ‘was of itself fatal to the Claimant’s application for injunction under this head’.

NOT BOXING CLEVER

The first key argument could only have proceeded if the premise that ASLEF only ever intended to call members out on Boxing Day was correct. LUL argued that because the union had known well in advance of the ballot who was going to be rostered to work on Boxing Day and which depots would be closed due to maintenance work, just a third of the members who were balloted should have received ballot papers.

LUL also tried to argue that ASLEF had wrongly balloted those on sick and maternity leave, though dropped that line when it was pointed out there were no records of who was on sick leave and only one known member on maternity leave. It is in members’ interests to notify the union if they were off work for these reasons as their union dues would be reduced.

But the issue of which group of members to ballot goes wider than whether it should only be those working on the day of the strike (if indeed it were a one day strike). Quite apart from the fact that LUL drivers’ contracts contain a complete mobility and flexibility clause which means that they can be called on to work on another line even if they are not rostered to work on that day, ASLEF balloted those not rostered to work on Boxing Day because it was calling on them to take part in the action by joining the picket lines and because further strike days were planned.

So by balloting all LUL members, ASLEF was calling on them not to go in and cover for striking colleagues and to participate in the strike, both on Boxing Day – whether or not they were working - and in the future. Having accepted that the ballot was not for Boxing Day alone, the judge agreed that balloting non-rostered members was lawful. He also agreed that it was lawful to ballot those the union was calling on to join picket lines.

HOPELESS ARGUMENTS, POLITICALLY MOTIVATED

As for the alleged failure of the scrutineer Electoral Reform Services (ERS), or of ASLEF to ensure the scrutineer carried out its functions properly, this too was a hopeless argument for LUL. The argument was that the scrutineer has a duty to investigate imperfections in a ballot fully and should not issue its report until it has. However, the law also says that a union is obliged to appoint a scrutineer and not to interfere with them. So ASLEF was hardly in a position to tell ERS when to issue its report.

The judge’s rejection of LUL’s injunction application is helpful because it is likely to have knocked on the head the role of scrutineer argument. But is unlikely that the debate about who a union intended to call out has gone away.

Ultimately though, this attempt by LUL to stop the strike was politically motivated rather than being about higher points of law. With London Mayor Boris Johnson anxious to be seen as getting tough with transport unions, doing nothing was not an option for LUL, no matter how hopeless its case.
**You'll never be forgotten.**

He was never shy to help others. R.I.P Jason.

**railway.**

socialising with his many work mates.

driver and was a real joy to be around.

Branch held a ‘Wombles Reunion’ at the Woodman pub. Over 60 people came along, who between them had a combined railway service of over 1,000 years.

Some were on the point of retirement when I began. They talk to me now, although at the time I was far too lowly!

Towards the end of last year the Wimbledon branch held a ‘Wombles Reunion’ at the Woodman pub. Over 60 people came along, who between them had a combined railway service of over 1,000 years.

Some were on the point of retirement when I began. They talk to me now, although at the time I was far too lowly!

**Wombles reunited**

**A HUNDRED YEARS OF UNION**

To show how nothing changes, ASLEF’s Locomotive Journal carried a story in March 1912 about – the nationalisation of railways. The UK reluctantly thought state ownership was ‘inevitable’, the Prussians viewed it as a ‘complete success’ and the French said it had ‘failed utterly’. This is the report from ‘Nota Bene’ …

“Papers on this vital subject were read some weeks ago before the London School of Economics. Mr. W. M. Acworth, the well-known expert on railway matters, said that competition had resulted in the country being covered by an adequate network of railways, and that it had provided a service not surpassed elsewhere in the world. But competition was dying, where it was not already dead.

Any attempt to establish a non-competitive regime would naturally meet with the most strenuous opposition from the railway companies. Nevertheless, he had reluctantly arrived at the conclusion that there was little hope for the establishment of an adequate system of State control, and that, therefore, State ownership – the only alternative – was inevitable.

‘Professor Hermann Schumacker’s paper on the nationalisation of railways in Prussia expressed the opinion that State ownership of the railways in Prussia must be held to be a complete success. Each year, he said, there was an increasing number of people who agreed with Professor Schmoller that Bismark’s railway policy was, from the point of view of political economy, the greatest achievement of the last century.

“A paper on the relation of railways to the State in France, was read by Professor Leroy Beaulieu, a member of the French Chamber of Deputies, whose conclusion was, that from every point of view, State railway management in France had failed – utterly. At present it showed no signs of improvement from the financial standpoint, but it might get better in time. The great evil, he thought, was the pressure which, in a democratic country, the employees of a State industry were able to exert upon the legislature.”

**ERNEST INGHAM 41 YEARS A MANCHESTER DRIVER**

Widower Ernest Ingham from Manchester, for 41 years a train driver, died peacefully on 8 January at the age of 82. Ernest left two sons, one daughter and five grand-children.

His funeral took place on 18 January at Hollinwood Crematorium.

Alison Ingham. Daughter

**JASON LEA CLARKE ONE OF US**

It is with great sadness that I report that Barnham Driver Jason Clarke passed away on 20 January aged 42 after a short illness.

Jason worked for Southern railway as a driver and was a real joy to be around.

He had many interests which included being a Tottenham supporter, walking and socialising with his many work mates.

He will be sadly missed by all his family, friends and those who knew him on the railway.

Jason was a ‘top bloke’, truly one of us. He was never shy to help others. R.I.P Jason. You’ll never be forgotten.

Jeff Turner, Secretary, Barnham branch

**WILLIAM (‘BILLY’) HADDOCK BEGAN AT BOLTON IN ’55**

Billy’s wife Joan informs me that Billy died suddenly at home on New Year’s Day. Billy was a real family man and will be sadly missed by his wife Joan, daughter Rebecca, son-in-law Roy and grand-children Kieran and Chloe.

Billy started his railway career as a steam engine cleaner in 1955 at Bolton. Like many others, he moved depots as he progressed from fireman to Driver: Billy went from Bolton in turn to Blackburn, Preston, Blackpool, Longsight - and finally to Newton Heath.

He unfortunately retired due to ill health, but he was not a man for hanging about indoors. He became a popular member of the Dobbie Golf Society. I am told that Billy was quite a character and I am sure will be missed by many. May he RIP.

Peter Smith, Reporter, Retired Members’ Section

**SYD WYATT FORMER MORDEN SECRETARY**

Brother Syd Wyatt’s funeral took place on 2 February and was attended by over 80 mourners who came along to show their respect for Syd and his family.

Syd was a long-standing member of ASLEF and a well- respected and liked train driver. He worked on the Northern Line for many years before transferring to the District Line, where he stayed until he retired in 2005.

Syd joined our union in 1981 and became Secretary of Morden Branch around 1989 just as there were ten days of strike action on the Underground to preserve drivers’ conditions.

We will always think of Syd. He will remain in many of our thoughts because he was a kind and gentle man who was always there for everyone he worked with if they needed help.

Our thoughts are with Audrey his wife and the large family that he leaves behind in Carshalton in South London.

Well respected Syd with his wife Audrey

London.

Secretary Greg Tasker, Secretary, West Brompton branch

**Extracts selected and edited by Dave Bennett***
The ASLEF Journal

News

Upcoming events

- **PERTH 4 MARCH:**
  Perth branch will be holding an open branch meeting for all ASLEF members on Sunday 4 March at Perth City Sports & Social Club. For more information contact Perth branch secretary Grant Murchie on 07412453454.

- **WIMBLEDON 9 MARCH:**
  There will be another ‘Wombles’ retirement do on 9 March at 14:00 at the Woodman pub opposite the depot. Contact branch sec Chris Sneddon for more details at chris.sneddon1970@gmail.com

- **EASTLEIGH 10 MARCH:**
  The next Eastleigh reunion will be held in the Old BRSA Club at Eastleigh from noon until 18:00 on 10 March.

- **CRICKLEWOOD 16 MARCH:**
  There will be a reunion on Friday 16 March at the RAFA Club in Ashburnham Road, Bedford from noon onwards.

- **NORWICH REUNION 13 APRIL:**
  The Norwich Retired Members Section will be holding its reunion on Friday 13 April at the Arkwright Club in Hall Road Norwich from 10:00 until 23:00. Free bar and buffet. All retired members who worked at the Norwich depot at any time in their careers are welcome. Selected guests from other depots will also be invited. For further information contact John Pipe.

- **DIDCOT 5 MAY:**
  The Didcot ASLEF reunion will be held on Saturday 5 May from noon at the Rail Staff club in Didcot. Retired, present and associates welcome.

- **BRIGHTON 8 MAY:**
  The Brighton Motive Power and Sussex Motive Power depots will be holding an informal open afternoon for all active and retired ASLEF members who have been connected to Brighton and Sussex Motive Power Depots in the Brighton Railway Club, Belmont (off Dyke Road) from 14:00 on Tuesday 8 May. A buffet will be provided. Any ASLEF member who has had a connection with Brighton or Sussex Motive Power Depots (Ore, Eastbourne, Seaford, Newhaven, Brighton, West Worthing, Littlehampton, Barnham, Bognor Regis, Horsham, Three Bridges and Tunbridge Wells West) is welcome to come along and meet with their old footplate colleagues. For further information phone Ivan Wilson (07949862393) or Paul Edwards (07894602991)

Steve is pictured (centre of nameplate) along with members of Leicester Traincrew Depot. The photo was taken by Ian Farnfield

At the Leicester Branch meeting on 22 January, a presentation was made to Brother Steve Cave who was retiring after 49 years’ service. Steve received a framed print, and two replica nameplates, along with a basket of flowers for his wife Moira.

Driver Matt Fowkes came from Inverness for the event and said, ‘Steve is a proper railwayman, who is very popular and I feel sure he will be missed by all of those who have had the pleasure of his company whilst at work. Steve gave me encouragement and sound words of advice when I was looking to move away and into the driving grade. He’s been an inspiration throughout.’

We all wish Steve a long, healthy and happy retirement.

Ian Farnfield, Chairman, Leicester Branch

GS at Gateshead gala

On the 2 February ASLEF members gathered in Gateshead Railway Club to show their appreciation of nine branch members whose service to ASLEF totalled 444 years.

The Gateshead & Newcastle branch was very honoured that our general secretary Mick Whelan took time out of his busy schedule to make the presentations on our behalf.

During the evening

- 50 year medallions were awarded to:
  - Bro Eltringham 53 years
  - Bro Hall 52 years

- Bro Hockey 52 years
- Bro Graham 52 years
- Bro Stokell 51 years
- Bro Keogan 51 years
- Bro Grenfell 51 years
- A retirement certificate was awarded to Bro Lockey 37 years
- A 45 year Badge was also awarded to Bro S Lamb (who sadly was unable to attend).

I would like to thank every one for attending and contributing to an excellent day.

Rob Porter, Secretary, Gateshead & Newcastle Branch

Gateshead & Newcastle members (left to right) Brothers Keogan, Stokell, Graham and Hall; general secretary Mick Whelan; Brother Eltringham; EC Member Tosh McDonald and Brothers Hockey, Grenfell and Lockey

Wembley driver Jim Gordon last month received his retirement certificate after over 40 years’ service in ASLEF. Doing the honours was (left) new district organiser Dicky Fisher. Thanks to Willesden branch secretary Nick Sandhu for the report.
These are the pages where you talk to us. We welcome your letters, either by mail to the ASLEF Journal at 75-77 St John Street London, EC1M 4NN or by email to journal@aslef.org.uk. Because of our space constraints, please try to keep your contributions as short as you can. This month we continue our STAR LETTER feature. The immensely lucky winner will pocket a rich range of ASLEF regalia!

Survey showed need for attitude change

Arno Brookes of Knottingly branch poses the question ‘are family-friendly shifts fair?’ I would suggest we should instead be asking, ‘Is it fair that many women are not able to enjoy the excellent pay and conditions that train drivers have earned?’ rather that they should be confined to low-paid, low-skilled, part-time work in order to accommodate their other responsibilities. After all, women are 51% of the population - and less than 4% of our membership.

The reality of ‘family-friendly’ shifts for the few women and men that apply for them is that they are very often difficult to achieve, with employers often extremely reluctant. The shifts which often fit in with raising a family are ‘fixed’ shifts – permanent earlies, lates or nights being popular with many drivers, not just primary carers. Other options are working fixed days or shorter hours on a ‘reduced hours’ basis (and therefore reduced pay, leave, pension…) In my years on the railway I have met few drivers who enjoy the day shift, coming to and leaving work in the rush hour and often working for nine hours or more, leaving little time for a family life.

I would love to see a depot such as Knottingly where women work to achieve.

I would like to thank all the members in District 6 who voted for me and gave me support during the recent district organiser election campaign. While disappointed at not winning, the number of members who voted for me is heartening.

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate Dicky Fisher and wish him every success in his new position.

Thanks from Andy …

Fatalities touch families

I am the widow of a train driver who retired at the age of 65 after serving on British Rail as a train driver for 41 years. I felt I must write to the Journal because of Jeremy Clarkson’s wicked remarks about suicide. My late husband had four suicides during his train driving career - but the last one, just before he retired, was really tragic.

I am now 83 but I still remember when my husband came home that day. My dear husband saw a young man standing off the...
edge of the platform and said to his mate, ‘That young man is going to jump in front of us!’ And this he did. My husband never forgot the young man’s eyes staring at him through the windscreen, almost pleading with him to stop. Afterwards my husband had to go onto the platform to identify him. That young man remained with my husband - and me - for the rest of his life.

Mrs Sylvia Jones, Bristol

What would Ed do?

I entirely agree with the article in the February Journal (‘Fare Rises mean Rail for the Rich’). It is a scandal that the UK charges the highest rail fares per mile in western Europe. This is the result of the coalition government’s policy of reducing funding to the railway – something they intend to do into the future.

What I’m not clear about is what Ed Miliband would do if he was in power. Would he have forced the railway companies to reduce 2012 fares? Would he reverse the coalition policy of increasingly pushing rail costs onto the travelling public? Is he for or against the Tory policy of cutting the rail subsidies, linking them with husband-and-wife for the rest of his life.

P. Begley, Retired Member, Bedford

Key points about Israeli Army

Over the years the ‘Key Worker’ section of the Journal has provided an interesting insight into the lives of some of our colleagues, and Sis Davies account in the February issue was no different in this regard. Ayelet is clearly an enthusiastic and motivated member of our union.

However I feel I have to take issue with some of the comments attributed to Sis Davies. I strongly agree that the media coverage of Israel/Palestine in this country leaves a lot to be desired. On the other hand I have to challenge the statement that there is ‘no anti-Arab feeling or inclination in the Israeli Army’.

Other than these few lines Sis Davies comes across favourably in the article and I wish our colleague well. I just hope these remarks weren’t disingenuous.

H Ezzedine, Driver, Millerhill

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SUPPORT MARATHON MAN KEVIN!

I am writing because I’m running this year’s London Marathon to raise funds for Whizz-Kidz and I’d like to ask for support from my ASLEF colleagues. Donations can be made at: www.justgiving.com/Kev-in-Bowen

I chose Whizz-Kidz because, having fit and healthy children myself, I can only imagine how difficult it would be if they had a disability. Whizz-Kidz does fantastic work to help disabled children, who really need freedom to explore the world around them as they grow up. The charity provides them with manual and motorised wheelchairs, skills training and work experience placements to enable them to lead independent lives. I want them to have the same opportunities as my own children.

I’m currently running about 50 miles a week over six days and I have to plan my training around everything else in my life. Fortunately I have an understanding wife!

There are some 70,000 children and young people in the UK currently waiting for a wheelchair. I’d be grateful if you would think of donating something that will help to make this list shorter.

A gift of just £10 could buy equipment for two teams of ‘Whizz-Kidz’ to have fun playing wheelchair football at one of its local clubs.

Thanks for reading this.

Kevin Bowen, Nottingham Depot

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ONE CARDIFF BRANCH BADGE, which are individually numbered priced at £3 each. One ASLEF tie pin, priced at £2 each. One ASLEF tie clip/slide priced at £3 each. The price of P&P is £2 per order up to 5 items. My contact details are, Edwin Cox, 2 Skenfrith Mews, Celtic Horizons, Newport, NP10 8HF, 07811761656.

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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

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A VERY 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 110473.

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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

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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.

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When it’s time for tea - Just Change!

As you sit in the messroom sipping your mug of tea, why not ponder a moment or two on where it came from? The chances are the answer’s India. KATY PROCTOR has spent a year in a remote part of the south where tea producers are building an economic system that is founded upon principles of justice and equity rather than the pursuit of wealth at any cost. By linking farmers and consumers so that trade benefits people in both communities, they are seeking to rebuild a sense of community in the global marketplace. Here she explains how the system works – and what you can do to help...

In 1986, an organisation working with adivasis (indigenous people) in Southern India began a program of planting tea. This served the double purpose of reclaiming ancestral land and providing an income. But just when things were going well, global wholesale tea prices crashed. Tea planters were devastated, but the price of tea in shops never went down. There was something totally unfair about this. Farmers were being cheated, but so were the consumers.

Everyone is a consumer at some level, but do we have to pay unfairly big mark ups on everything? Their response was to establish ‘Just Change’ - an international cooperative working to unite poor producers with poor consumers for mutual benefit.

A group of women weavers visited the adivasis, bringing with them saris they sold to traders for Rs75, but which were then sold in the shops for Rs 250. The adivasis were delighted to pay just Rs 125 for their saris, and the women were delighted to earn twice their usual income. With the surplus cash, they bought tea at half the price it cost them in their local shops.

FIRST STOP GLASGOW

The idea grew and tea was soon being sent to a housing estate outside Glasgow, where people previously paid disproportionately high prices for the tea they bought. Tea is now travelling to different parts of the UK, Germany and India and it is no longer just about tea: Farmers, fishing communities and women’s groups are also connected, as producers and consumers. By linking communities directly and cutting out the middlemen, everyone benefits.

‘Just Change’ has now developed a new concept called ‘participative capital’, which allows ethical investors to link with producers and consumers across the world. This model allows for investments to be made in such a way that ownership, benefit and risk are shared by all. It’s about going a step further by making poor producers and consumers equal partners in the supply chain.

A REAL ECONOMIC COMMUNITY

Usually, when money is in the hands of poor people it flows out of their hands like water, to pay for essentials. But the minute it leaves the hands of the consumer, it becomes capital in the hands of big businesses, enabling them to make more money. An unfair system, where capital keeps ownership over the economic chain and the poor stay poor.

With ‘Just Change’, profit for the sake of profit is not the motive and everyone’s contribution is recognised, not just investors. The producers who grow the food as well as the consumers who buy it, are all part of an economic community.

This goes beyond earlier initiatives like the Fair Trade movement and producer cooperatives, which focus solely on getting better prices for producers. It ensures better prices for producers but also good quality products at lower costs to consumers.

Since the launch of this concept, people have come on board to contribute their time, money, ideas, support and solidarity. Among those who have pledged money are a women’s cooperative from Nicaragua and a co-op in Manchester that has sold Just Change tea for many years.

Just Change tea is shipped to the UK and bagged by Northern Tea Merchants in Chesterfield. From there it is distributed across the north of England and to Marsh Farm Outreach Ltd, a community enterprise based in Luton who deliver tea in the South of England and help to create small businesses and jobs in the UK. They are helped by local volunteer groups and shops across the country.

If you would like to be a part of this initiative either on a branch, company or individual basis, or if you are interested in buying ‘Just Change’ tea, contact proctork@aslef.org.uk

When it’s time for tea - Just Change!

Look, no middle man! A tea tasting at Oxford

Buy direct from the producers and everyone ends up smiling

If you would like to be a part of this initiative either on a branch, company or individual basis, or if you are interested in buying ‘Just Change’ tea, contact proctork@aslef.org.uk
Prize Crossword No. 71 set by Zebedee

Across
1 Popular “egg ear” music originating in the West Indies (6)
2 Sugar daddy taken for a sucker? (8)
3 Rig divers may well discover on sunken treasure ships (anagram) (9)
4 Private teacher (5)
5 Stocking material for female supporter(s)? (5)
6 Small edible nut related to the cashew (9)
7 Ballerina (6)
8 Collection of books (7)
9 A bit of a shock, eyeing this game (6)
10 And, so! (9)
11 A group of warships (5)
12 A place of refreshment in the desert? (5)
13 Sloggy and lacking energy after a night out? (9)
14 The ‘bowler’ in baseball (7)
15 Concerning or affecting a particular person (8)
16 Real estate of quality (8)
17 A green transparent form of beryl; highly valued as a gemstone (7)
18 A sculpture representing a human or animal (6)
19 Not necessarily the whole spacecraft route (5)
20 Not in accordance with the fact or reality (5).

Down
1 Steep narrow valley carved by running water (6)
2 Large, arboreal ape of West Africa (7)
3 Unfamiliar (5)
4 A place of refreshment in the Mediterranean sea (between Morocco and Tunisia) (7)
5 Collection of books (7)
6 Splendid and shining (9)
7 Timelessness (8)
8 Be sarcastic and annoying (6).
9 Be sarcastic and annoying (6).
10 Boring partner who lives with you? (8)
11 Hairstyle to make Cockney act with propriety? (7)
12 A green transparent form of beryl; highly valued as a gemstone (7)
13 Boring partner who lives with you? (8)
14 Harassment, discrimination or bullying? If your local, branch or district representative is unavailable, call the Industrial Relations department at union headquarters (020 7324 2400) or email info@aslef.org.uk

Solution to Crossword No 70 which appeared in the February 2012 edition of the ASLEF Journal. Congratulations to Ken Tarleton from Guilford, Surrey

Across:
7 Ghana, 9 Abbot, 10 Morrissey, 12, Disraeli, 14 Venice, 15 Treason, 20 Berlin, 21 Chequers, 22 Mel Gibson, 24 Finch, 25 Cantonese, 26 & 8 Renée Zellweger

Down:
1 Chablis, 2 Andorra, 3 Reno, 4 Ultraviolet, 5 Retsina, 6 Rebecca, 11 Herringbone, 13 Isaac, 16 Senegal, 17 Blighty, 18 Lucifer, 19 Trachea, 23 Omsk

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

Thanks for all your responses to the 70th ASLEF crossword in the February edition. If you complete this month’s crossword please send the solution to the Editor, ASLEF Journal, 75-77 St John Street, London EC1M 4NN by the 14th of the issue month.
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