HOPE: A united stance can resist LUL attacks

HATE: An account of a convert from the far right

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George Osborne has sharpened the Tory axe on public services, and public spending, in Britain. The trouble is that the Chancellor’s medicine isn’t working. It’s killing, rather than curing, the patient. The influential economist John Maynard Keynes explained how a government should spend, rather than cut, its way out of recession.

That was a lesson understood by Franklin D Roosevelt when, in the United States, he introduced the New Deal – and big public infrastructure projects such as the Tennessee Valley Authority – to drag America out of the Great Depression. FDR knew the value of “pump priming” – federal spending – to get the economy moving again.

Because a worker on a public project with a pound in his pocket will spend it in a shop which will order more goods – which gets the manufacturing and retailing cycle revolving again. It’s good economics, as well as good politics, but the Chancellor is stuck with his single-minded, and simple-minded, policy of cuts and a flatlining economy that refuses to grow.

HS2 is a start but it will run only from London to Birmingham. I regret the government’s lack of vision, and lack of imagination, because the longer the journey, the greater the benefits a high speed train brings. A high speed line from the south of England all the way up to Glasgow and Edinburgh and the central belt of Scotland would make domestic air travel, with all its detrimental environmental effects, a less attractive option.

Major public projects such as HS2, Crossrail, and electrification are good not just for the railways but for Britain, too, because they will help get the economy moving again. It’s not so much spending as an investment – in our future. Not just for the railways, in which we have a special interest, but for the greater good. The Conservative-led coalition, with its savage cuts in public spending, is putting that future at risk.

Mick Whelan, General Secretary
Taxpayers last year made contributions of £4 billion to privately owned Train Operating Companies (TOCs).

‘You would think this was a significant amount to contribute to the companies’ begging bowls,’ says Mick Whelan, ASLEF’s general secretary. ‘But it’s only the start. If these people actually want to go on a train, they are obliged to make more charitable contributions’ to the franchises – amounts that increase all the time.’

Mick was speaking as the Office of Rail Regulation released figures showing the increases in the amount of rail costs paid by passengers, rather than central government. ORR said:

- Fares accounted for 55.8% of TOCs in 2010/11. Now they amount to 57.6%.
- Last year passengers paid out £7.2 billion of fares. This was a rise of 8.7%.
- ‘The economics of the railways are a mystery to behold,’ Mick says. ‘Rail is growing. It is more popular than it has ever been. So shouldn’t passengers expect to benefit from using a service that is increasingly used? Isn’t that how it works?’
- And the ORR also records that rail costs fell by 2.1% last year. Surely this should be reflected in lower passenger charges?
- ‘Private companies don’t hesitate for a moment to raise prices if their costs go up. But it also seems that they also raise their prices if costs go down.
- ’Is it any surprise that ASLEF wants a complete review of rail financing?’
- Mick points out that politicians jostle with each other to talk about ‘eliminating transport poverty’, the opportunity of ordinary people to access affordable travel. ‘Charging them more, twice, for the same service is a very bizarre way of seeking to achieve this!’ he says.

Meanwhile, as he points out, the private investors in TOCs make money hand-over-fist for no risk whatever.

‘These ORR figures show that we need to revisit financing. Our view is that the case for change is self-evident. But if free-market bigots need more evidence, part of the exercise must be to keep the East Coast Main Line in public hands so there is a not-for-profit comparator.’

It is often said that the British care more about their dogs than their fellow humans. Well, the law seems to...

Last year the RSPCA secured 4,168 convictions against 1,552 people, with a conviction rate of 98%.

‘This is a great achievement from a body that employs less than 1,700 people, and good luck to them.

But what about the figures for people who kill and injure workers? It’s a rather different story according to Hugh Robertson, the TUC’s Senior Health and Safety Officer.

In the same time-scale he reports that 680 cases were prosecuted for health and safety breaches. These cases led to 630 convictions, with a conviction rate of 93%.

‘It terms of imprisonment for killing workers the figures are even starker. Following an RSPCA prosecution, 86 people were sent to prison last year for breaching animal protection laws. The HSE record is five people imprisoned for health and safety offences since January 1996.

Jack Houlsby, a member of the Retired Members’ Section committee who hails from Doncaster, has donated two splendid oil paintings to the union. One in this picture is a fine portrait of a mess-room scene of days gone by (when there was much smoke in the mess-room as came out of the steam trains!). The other is a portrait from a photograph of Billy Ronksley, Arthur Scargill and Ray Buckton.

‘I am delighted to accept this gift from Jack,’ says general secretary Mick Whelan. ‘These paintings are a valuable addition to the union’s memorabilia. Pride in our history is an important part of ASLEF’s culture.’

Mick Whelan moved the union’s motion on the Action for Rail campaign, urging STUC affiliates to fight cuts to Scottish rail services. In the wider transport debate he emphasized the inefficiencies of the franchising system.

Jim Baxter moved ASLEF’s motion on Palestine, highlighting the many injustices in the region, and also moved the union’s motion on cuts to further education in which Jim lamented the consequences for youth unemployment.

During the debate on austerity Chris Barrie called for a clampdown on tax evasion. He also endorsed an RMT motion opposing the re-privatisation of the East Coast Main Line.

Kevin Lindsay supported a NUM motion calling for an inquiry into police and state handling of the miners’ strike and also spoke at a fringe meeting organised by Better Together in which he outlined ASLEF’s opposition to next year’s independence referendum.

Craig Cameron moved a motion on international equality issues and also seconded a motion on the subject of corrective rape.

The delegation additionally held a number of informal meetings with MPs and trade unionists.
Mick Ward assault conviction quashed

RAIN driver Mick Ward, 42, from Harrogate, was ‘delighted’ when York Crown Court last month quashed a conviction for common assault wrongly handed down last year. Mick has been suspended from work since July when charges were made against him.

More than 40 ASLEF members and other rail workers were in the court to show their support for Mick - and their disgust at the original Harrogate Magistrates Court decision from last December.

Mick always vehemently denied that he took a young passenger by the throat and pushed him against a wall at Knaresborough railway station last April. Last month, with the support of ASLEF and Thompsons Solicitors, he was cleared of all charges.

It has now emerged that a series of failings and miscommunication between the British Transport Police (BTP) and the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) led to Mick being wrongly convicted. They did not inform the Harrogate magistrates that the young passenger (who as a minor cannot be named for legal reasons) had already been issued with a Youth Reprimand order following unruly behaviour at Harrogate Train Station, en route to Knaresborough, on the day the alleged assault took place.

In court the young man denied he had behaved in a disruptive manner and the magistrates ignored Mick Ward when he said that, after being verbally abused by the passenger, he used reasonable force to move him away from the train for his own safety.

They also paid no heed of the testimony of three railway workers who said they had trouble with a group of teenagers behaving ‘appallingly’ around the train Mr Ward was driving.

After the conviction was overturned, Mick, who has worked for Northern for more than a decade, spoke about the strain the whole episode had put on himself and his family. ‘I’m disgusted that the British Transport Police stood by and let my reputation be dragged through the mud. I’m grateful to the union, my colleagues and my solicitors. They’ve all stood shoulder to shoulder with me.’

Mick Whelan said he urged the BTP and the CPS to learn from their mistakes and ‘take urgent measures to work closer in the future to ensure the rights and reputations of Britain’s railway workers are not threatened in this way again.’

Marching on May Day

ASLEF members from around the country joined general secretary Mick Whelan on the traditional May Day march and rally in London. May Day has been celebrated by the labour movement in the capital since the nineteenth century and become an opportunity for campaigners for progressive causes to join together in a show of solidarity with workers around the world.

Members met at midday at Clerkenwell Green, an area with strong radical roots – Wat Tyler camped there during the Peasants’ Revolt of 1381 and George Loveless, the first of the Tolpuddle Martyrs to return to Britain after transportation to Australia, was welcomed back with a mass meeting on the green in 1838 – and moved off at 1pm, marching behind a brass band with activists from many other trade unions as well as workers from other countries, pensioners, students, and anti-globalisation campaigners through central London to a rally in Trafalgar Square.

There they heard Paul Nowak, assistant general secretary of the TUC, praise the work of Britain’s ‘strong, vibrant and democratic’ trade union movement and call for the Conservative-led coalition to be replaced by ‘a government that will deliver for working-class communities’.

WORLD’S OLDEST TUNNEL

Archaeologists in Derbyshire have found what they believe is the world’s oldest railway tunnel. It lies on the route of the Butterley Gangroad, a horse-operated railway built by 1793 to link the Cromford Canal with limestone quarries at Crich. The line closed in 1933 and the tunnel was sealed up in the 1980s.

Previously the world’s oldest train tunnel was thought to be on the Peak Forest Tramway which was built in 1795.

Butterley is two years older than Peak Forest tunnel

CHINESE PUZZLE: P. J. Smith sent this picture of Beijing station pointing out the remarkable strides being taken by the Chinese ‘while we are whingeing about HS2’. He asks two questions: How do they do it? And how come we can’t?
Scottish Labour Party 2013

Alan Moir, speaking in the debate on Scottish independence, drew attention to the flaws in the SNP’s economic arguments. Rab Wickstead moved the union’s emergency motion calling for the Scottish Party to reaffirm support for retention of the East Coast mainline in the public sector, pointing out that the publicly-owned line had received the least amount of public subsidy of any train operator in the UK.

Scottish Labour announced the establishment of a consultation into the future of the Scotrail franchise and Kevin Lindsay took to the stage alongside Shadow Finance Minister Ken McIntosh and Jim Lee from the Co-operative Party to discuss the issue. Kevin highlighted the need for the franchise to be run on a not-for-profit basis.

The delegation were an active presence on the fringe circuit and held a series of high level meetings with senior political and trade union figures.

French invasion of Farringdon!

Reg French, who retired from driving trains in 1956 because of his asthma, made a long-delayed visit to ASLEF’s head office last month.

‘I had an invitation from Mick Rix but nothing was ever arranged; he says. ‘That was in 1998! So I’m fifteen years late, which is bad even for a railway man!’

Along with Reg came his sons Peter, an East Coast driver based in Leeds, and Terry, who is membership secretary of the Selby and District Rail Users’ Group – and ‘mystery guest’ Rodney Bickerstaffe! Reg explains how he knows Rodney: ‘I was the Assistant Secretary and LDC member at Selby Loco before my health forced a move out of the industry,’ Reg says. ‘I then became a full time officer for NUPE, the public health union that’s now part of UNISON.’

Rodney was general secretary of NUPE and UNISON from 1982 – 2000.

Top training for branch secretaries

A report from Eddie Brown

When I became secretary of the Orpington branch in January my first thought was – I need some help! Happily it was on hand - in the form of a union course for exactly people like me.

Last month Stoke Rochford Hall in a picturesque village near Grantham, became my home for three days, along with 19 other new branch officials from all over the country.

After welcomes from the highly professional Marz Colombini and knowledgeable Simon Weller we began an arduous few days training. It was fortunate that I’d brought two pens with me!

We were joined for a day by our sociable and approachable general secretary Mick Whelan, who proved to be much more than ‘that face in the Journal!’ We also had Chris Proctor from the Journal and Nigel Gooch, the finance officer, who explained the mysteries of our end-of-year returns.

The course stressed that organisation and communication are the keys to a successful branch, and it is our role to encourage members’ involvement and participation. We also learnt about district meetings which involve all branch secretaries within the

Andy Morrison’s council seat won by wife Pam

The late Andy Morrison, as well as being an ASLEF officer, was a councillor in, and twice Mayor of, Harwich before his tragic death last year.

At a by-election held last month, Andy’s wife Pam stood for Labour in the Harwich West seat formerly held by Andy – and won handsomely.

Nigel Gibson, who took over Andy’s District Organiser job, said, ‘If he’s up there keeping an eye on us, I’m sure Andy Morrison will be smiling today.’
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  neighbourhood disputes, matrimonial and consumer
  issues
- Employment law accessed through your ASLEF district
  organiser

We offer a range of services to ASLEF members and their families,
including legal advice and representation on:*  

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* Exclusions apply. Thompsons Solicitors is a trading name of Thompsons Solicitors LLP
and is regulated by the Solicitors Regulation Authority.
Finally facing my Waterloo

A passenger train has used an international platform at Waterloo station for the first time since the last Eurostar service left five-and-a-half years ago.

The sweeping platforms of the state-of-the-art terminal under the geometric glass roof were designed specifically to accommodate Eurostar trains and intercontinental passengers but were only used for 12 years before the service moved to St Pancras.

The platforms – performances of a critically-acclaimed production of The Railway Children notwithstanding – were mothballed at a cost of £1.5 million a year and have been deserted ever since.

The last Labour government spent nearly £3 million in 2008 connecting platform 20 in the international terminal with platform 19 on the domestic side, but no trains have used the new facilities until now.

A special service from Woking pulled into platform 20 on 29 April and rail bosses have promised to bring it back into regular use by this time next year.

Tim Shoveller, managing director of the Network Rail and south West trains alliance, said: ‘Bringing the Waterloo international terminal into permanent use has been made possible by working with many organisations, including the Department for Transport, and is vital for the much-needed development of the railway across the south and south west of England. It has been talked about for many years, we have shown it is possible and we remain committed to bringing platform 20 into permanent use by April 2014’.

There is no firm timetable for reopening platforms 21, 22, 23, and 24 at Waterloo, where passenger numbers are predicted to rise by 51% over the next decade.

Train owners ship millions offshore

Sheffield rail boost - by 2020

The good news for Sheffield is that its rail links with London and Manchester are to improve radically. The bad is that it won’t happen for seven years.

Fast, cleaner electric trains between Sheffield and London will be running by 2020 which will reduce journey times between Sheffield and London from just over two hours to around one hour 45 minutes. Extra tracks between Sheffield and Manchester allowing more trains to run are to be completed by 2018.

A further electrification project between Sheffield and Doncaster is being discussed for the 2020s.

Meanwhile, trans Pennine improvements, which include dualling the track and providing a second platform at Dore and Totley station plus passing loops for slow passenger and freight trains in the Hope Valley, should be completed by 2018.

Rolling stock companies sent millions of pounds in dividends offshore last year – money which, says ASLEF general secretary Mick Whelan, “should have been reinvested in Britain’s railways, not shipped offshore and out of the country”.

Angel Trains paid £44.8 million to its five owners through a holding company in Jersey called Willow Bidco. Eversholt Rail, whose ultimate parent company is based in Luxembourg, paid £40 million to its three backers, 3i Infrastructure, Star Capital and the infrastructure arm of Morgan Stanley. Porterbrook has not yet published its accounts but it is owned by a company based in Jersey and is expected to send a similar sum abroad.

The three companies have delivered more than £700 million in dividends through offshore holding companies since 2008.

The three rolling stock companies, which were set up in 1994 ahead of the Conservative government’s break-up of British Rail, lease passenger trains, to operators such as First Group and Stagecoach, as well as freight trains. They have had the market to themselves since Britain’s railways were privatised, an arrangement criticised by the Competition Commission which concluded in 2009 that it could have cost the taxpayer as much as £100 million a year by overcharging operators to lease trains.

The railways cost the public purse about £1 billion a year under British Rail. That figure has soared to £4 billion a year since privatisation.
Why would anyone want to make the workplace more dangerous?

‘If a builder constructs a house for a man but does not make his work strong, with the result that this house collapses, and so causes the death of the owner, the builder shall be put to death.’ That was Hamorabi, Emperor of Babylon, in 1750BC. ‘Health and safety’ has come in for a bit of a battering in some quarters but, at its heart, health and safety is about preventing injuries and saving people’s lives.

In Safe at Work (Spokesman Books, £15) Dave Putson, health and safety representative for the public services union PCS in the London Courts, traces the history of legislation in Britain since 1700 when there were no safety provisions or Acts of Parliament in place. As Mark Serwotka, general secretary of the PCS, says in his introduction, this book could hardly be more timely. It is a history of the struggles for rights; the right to form a trade union; the right to vote; the right for dignity in the workplace and fair pay; the right for education, welfare and health care. All fought for in the face of fierce resistance from those who felt their profits might be affected or their political power constrained.

Today, many bosses want to reverse these hard-won gains. ‘Our Prime Minister echoes the worst of the 19th century’s irresponsible industrialists when he says health and safety is an “albatross round the neck of British businesses” and he wants to “kill off the health and safety culture for good”.’

‘Workers only got these rights and protections because they organised and fought for them. It is a depressing but familiar tale of history that, today, we need to fight those same battles again.’

Union calls for protection for train drivers

ASLEF general secretary Mick Whelan has called for greater protection for train drivers from vandals and trespassers on the railways as two more trains were attacked. ‘This is becoming an everyday occurrence,’ says Mick. ‘Our members have the right to go about their occupation without worrying about their safety – and if the driver is under attack, so too are the passengers.’

Sooner or later, he says, these attacks will lead to a major incident. That’s why he is calling for better education in schools, on stations and in communities to warn potential vandals of the seriousness of this dangerous anti-social behaviour.

The chair of the union’s Motherwell branch was injured when a stone was thrown through his window as he drove between Blantyre and Newton stations just after 10pm, and a Preston to London Pendolino train was delayed for three hours at Crewe after it was attacked by youths who caused £6,000 worth of damage.

‘Tossing objects at trains is not a bit of fun,’ says Mick. ‘It is dangerous vandalism that could lead to a loss of life.’ Mick called for a continual process of education, rather than just ‘an outbreak of activity’ after an incident.

Ton up to raise money

Dean Anderson, a driver at Caterham depot, is riding in the London road race on Sunday 4 August – a 100 mile course following the Olympic route – to raise funds for St Catherine’s Hospice in Crawley.

‘I lost my father-in-law on 25 December,’ explains Dean. ‘He died of heart failure at the age of 67. In the last seven weeks of his life he was cared for by St Catherine’s; I cannot tell you what a difference this made to my family at an extremely difficult time.

Dean is getting on his bike for a good cause

‘The hospice is funded, almost all, by charitable donations. It would mean so much to me and my family if you could sponsor me, pennies or pounds, anything to help this wonderful cause.’ You can sponsor Dean by visiting www.justgiving.com/Dean-Anderson

René González home at last

After more than 14 years in a US jail and supervised release in Florida, René González, the Cuban anti-terrorist fighter, is home at last with his family following the decision of an American court to grant him permission to stay in Cuba. René was in the country for two weeks humanitarian leave to attend the memorial service for his recently deceased father. The court granted him permission to stay on condition that he renounce his US citizenship.

Although this is a cause for celebration for René, his family and all those who have campaigned for the freedom of the Cuban Five, his four compatriots – Ramón Labañino, Gerardo Hernández, Antonio Guerrero and Fernando González – are still in prison in the United States – and campaigners say the fight for their freedom continues until they, too, are back home with their families.

Level Crossings: The death toll rises

Nine people have been killed on level crossings in the past year and 453 drivers and pedestrians barely escaped with their lives in what Network Rail describes as ‘near misses’. Trains smashed into 10 vehicles and 33 vehicles hit and damaged barriers. Critics say level crossings are a ‘19th century solution in an era of high-speed rail’ and want traffic to be re-routed over or under the railway tracks. The cost would be ‘a small price to pay for public and staff safety’.

Triumph in Sarum

ASLEF’s Tom Corbin was elected as a Labour Party candidate for Salisbury, where he has lived and worked for 35 years. His wife Caroline Corbin was elected, too, and with another Labour candidate, Michael Osment, also elected, it meant Labour took all three seats from Bemerton ward on the city council, beating the Conservative, UKIP and Green candidates.

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Injury compensation gets tougher to claim

The Conservative-led coalition has ripped up the rule book for people trying to get justice for an accident or injury or work-related disease.

VICTORIA PHILLIPS, Head of Employment Rights at Thompsons Solicitors, explains the implications of the new law – and what ASLEF is doing to help...

The government's devastating attack on access to justice for injured people means that, from 1 April, if you're injured in an accident (at work or otherwise) or develop a work-related disease in England or Wales, only trade union members and their families will continue to benefit from a free, independent and specialist legal service that guarantees them 100% of their compensation.

The Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act became law last year, in spite of massive opposition from trade unions, victim support groups and civil rights organisations. The Act ripped up the current arrangements that enable genuinely injured people to get legal representation without the risk of having to pay out of their own pocket if their claim is unsuccessful.

This is because the guilty party, usually the employer or their liability insurer, will no longer have to pay the insurance premium that the injured person takes out to cover the cost of things such as medical reports and court fees should they lose. Such costs-called disbursements in legal jargon - are usually vital in order to pursue a case and to prove who or what caused the accident that led to the injury, the exact nature of the injury and the short- and long-term prognosis. But they can cost thousands of pounds.

NO RISK OR NO TAKE
Although many lawyers may continue after 1 April to promise no deductions from compensation, they are likely to refuse to take on risky cases which they cannot be sure will succeed.

As well as removal of the losing defendant's obligation to pay the insurance premium, the successful claimant lawyer will no longer be able to claim what is known as a 'success fee' from the losing side. This fee, usually paid by the employer or their liability insurer, recognised the risk that the claimant's lawyer would not get paid anything for their work should the claim fail.

AsLEf has always said that members and their families who are injured because of the negligence of someone else, and who successfully claims compensation, should receive it in full.

An injured person doesn't have to accept being referred to a law firm provided by an insurance company just because they may have legal expenses insurance added on to their household or motor policies. They have a right to genuinely independent legal advice, not to be told what their claim is worth by a lawyer who has been given the case by an insurance company.

That is why ASLEF has been working closely with Thompsons since the Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act became law, in order to work out ways in which claims can still be supported.

As a result we have negotiated an agreement which will continue to guarantee members of the union and their family members in England and Wales 100% of their damages and the ability to instruct lawyers directly. To benefit from this service, members and their families with personal injury claims should call 0808 100 8009.
I was a fascist but now I believe in hope not hate

Matthew Collins saw, first hand, how the far-right rose from a few hundred skinheads meeting on football terraces and in the back rooms of pubs to men in suits with seats on local councils and the European Parliament. As a member of the National Front, BNP, and Combat 18, he witnessed the rise of the extreme right via alcohol-fuelled violence and the ballot box. Then he switched sides...
Threats, blackmail and driverless trains

Finn Brennan reports on how London Underground, spurred on by the Mayor, seeks to undermine its employees and our union with a threat that is really more propaganda than practicality …

The capital’s transport system is seldom out of the news. The issues just keep coming, ranging from Crossrail development, industrial relations problems, driverless trains, busy-body Boris, safety issues … it never stops.

We asked our reps to update us on some of its activities in the capital, and on these pages they outline the main concerns at the moment. It is a snapshot of an industry in constant flux as transport is employed as a political publicity tool rather than a vital public service. But it is also a picture of a union that is active, involved and informed; and a membership that constantly shows its determination to secure a top class service for Londoners and a decent return for its own labour.

I’m sure that you, like me, salute their solidarity, applaud their aims and support their actions.

Mick Whelan, General Secretary

WE’RE NOT FOOLED BY MESSAGES OF DOOM

Management’s strategy is very clear and transparent, use the threat of driverless trains to blackmail drivers into accepting ‘flexibility’ while avoiding negotiations with trade unions and continually drip feeding information to staff in the hope that they can create a sense of inevitability about the changes they want. It’s a strategy that has already led them into a series of localised disputes, each of which has ended with resolutions favourable to us, and now risks drawing them in to a combine wide confrontation. Because we are simply not going to allow them to get away with it.

We know that they want to push through changes to agreements at local and line level so that they can play off depot against depot and line against line. But combine wide agreements are our only guarantee of job security and protecting salary and conditions.

CHANGE BY NEGOTIATION, NOT IMPOSITION

ASLEF has now listed in the negotiating machinery upgrade related items from each line on the Underground, from the testing of obstacle detection equipment on the Waterloo and City to the future of train crew depots at Barking, Earls Court and Arnos Grove on Sub-surface lines and Upgrade 2 on the Jubilee and Northern. We want to know about their plans for new stock on the Bakerloo and Piccadilly lines and later running at weekends. Drivers deserve to be told the truth about issues that affect our future. We are insisting that now is the time for management to start talking. We will not accept being fobbed off with phoney promises of ‘engagement’ so that management can try to impose things on us at a time of their choosing.

We are not afraid of change, we all understand that new technology may have an impact on the job we do. But we are utterly determined that any changes will only come through negotiated agreements and on terms that are acceptable to our members. We know that we will have huge challenges in the years ahead, but with the support of our members we have the experience, the ability and if necessary, the industrial muscle to deal with them.

Management have a choice; start talking to us openly and honestly now about the future or face the consequences of an inevitable combine wide dispute. Let’s hope they realise that it is better to discuss issues around a table than on a picket line.
BOXING DAY: STILL SLUGGING IT OUT
At LU we’re not sure what the longest industrial dispute is – but our Boxing Day dispute looks like heading for the record. The basis of the 26 December dispute is that ASLEF believes drivers who don’t volunteer for duty should be allowed quality time off with their families on this day. We’ve proposed a dozen ways to resolve the dispute and LU have rejected them all.

Last year (the third involving strike action on Boxing Day) LU’s managing director Mike Brown, with his vast expertise and host of Human Resource specialists, reverted to the lowest tactic available: he decided to threaten ASLEF drivers with their livelihood. In fact, he wrote to our members even as the general secretary was discussing solutions with senior LU management - including Mike Brown!

His tactic ensured a backlash that led to a solid strike. Given LU’s record of violating agreements, the fact that they have come up with no initiatives and have offered no meetings, next year looks like round four of the Boxing Day dispute.

BAKERLOO: SOLID MEMBERS BRING SUCCESS
Over a decade ago an ‘over-carried’ passenger was crushed to death. As a result detrainment staff were introduced to ensure passengers weren’t carried into terminating sidings. Although not fool-proof, the number of over-carries was minimalized.

Then, two years ago, following consultation, LU unilaterally removed the detrainment staff. Drivers initially welcomed this as the system didn’t work but since then the number of passengers being over carried increased. LU failed to see that whereas ten years ago passengers read newspapers, they are increasingly ‘plugged in’ to all sorts of media devices: so they are oblivious to announcements like, ‘All change please, this train terminates here.’

Over-carries literally increased a hundred-fold, passengers forced their way out of carriages and staff faced increasing abusive and aggression.

Despite union attempts, LU did nothing to remedy the situation and ASLEF members decided to physically detrain their own trains. The result on the Bakerloo line was chaos. One in six trains was cancelled on a daily basis with the knock-on effect of packed trains. After two months of this solidly backed action, the company bowed to pressure and introduced a new procedure that has, to date, proved successful.

All of which goes to prove that if drivers stick together and show discipline, we can achieve anything. We would like to commend all the drivers on the Bakerloo line who made this dispute a 100% success.

Jubilee Line. The traditional ‘colour light’ signals that stand beside the railway will be replaced by an ‘in-cab’ signalling system that is monitored by the driver via the TOD (Train Operator Display) unit.

We fought for a training package to fully equip our members to deal with this major change.

A pilot course was developed by September last year and seen by management and health and safety reps. The union insisted on changes that management were reluctant to conceded but after a threat of a ballot most of our outstanding issues were resolved.

The first of the newly appointed signalling areas covering High Barnet to West Finchley opened in February of 2013. So what lessons were learned?

Simulators need to be aircraft standard before it can teach driving skills. They will be increasingly important for training and we need to define our needs clearly.

Pressure from reps needs to be constant if we are to achieve well-trained safe driving standards.

Communications with members is vital, even, as we had to, it involves standing on platforms handing out notices.

We had support from everyone from local reps to executive members Terry Wilkinson and general secretary Mick Whelan during this exercise. It was vital we got it right – and thanks to you all, we have!

Thanks for compiling this report go to Terry Wilkinson, Finn Brennan, Richard Baxter, Jason Wyatt, Dean Forsyth, Gary Comfort, and Steve Crowley.
Up the Junction

VIC RASKIN, a railwayman for fifty years, and a stalwart of our Battersea branch, tells KEITH RICHMOND of his brushes with the glitz and glamour of the British film industry...

It's not every day you go into work and, instead of taking commuters into the capital, or moving freight around the country, find yourself working with a big star on a big film. But that's what happened to Vic Raskin when, in June 1967, he found himself driving a train into Clapham Junction – again and again – until, at last, director Peter Collinson shouted 'cut!'

Up the Junction, starring Dennis Waterman, Suzy Kendall, Adrienne Posta, Maureen Lipman, Liz Fraser and Susan George, was one of the most popular films of the year when it was released in 1968. It was based on a book by Nell Dunn, published in 1963, which had already been turned by Ken Loach into an acclaimed Wednesday Play for the BBC, and was a gritty, realistic, ‘kitchen sink’ depiction of working-class life in the area of Battersea, south London, around Clapham Junction.

Vic, a member for many years of Battersea Branch, recalls how he had just run three cars into Clapham Junction when ‘a rather lovely boy, green velvet suit, pink shirt and yellow tie, asked me to come in again and went and chalk marked the platform where they wanted me to stop.’

The panoply of a film crew at work, even for a couple of minutes’ screen time for Polly, ‘a posh middle-class blonde from Chelsea slumming it in Battersea,’ played by Suzy Kendall, to look out of the carriage window and alight from the train, was a wonder for Vic to behold.

‘There were dozens of people hanging around, including all these extras on £4 a day when I was getting £7 a week as a driver, and they waved to me from the side, and said “do it again” and again.

‘And then, as I got ready to take the train down the sidings while everyone had a break, Suzy Kendall came up and said, “Can I have a ride in your cab?” So I took her down the sidings, changed ends, and got out my cheese and onion sandwiches – she had half my sandwiches and half my coffee – and then she asked me, “How do you drive these things?” And I had her driving up and down the sidings while we were on our break.’

Then it was back to work and take after take. ‘Eight times till we got it right,’ says Vic, adding ruefully, ‘I saw the film, but they cut me out.’

That wasn’t his only brush with the magic of the silver screen. When Richard Attenborough made a film of the musical Oh! What a Lovely War, Vic was in it. ‘They got an old steam engine, the boiler had had it, parked it in Brighton, and I sat on it as a driver from those days, dancing up and down, with a smoke bomb inside the fire box, so smoke was pouring out the chimney.

‘Then, later, I was near the catering vans on the concourse, walking past Richard Attenborough’s Rolls Royce, when he stuck his head out the window and said, “Driver, come in here,” so I got in with Richard Attenborough, and he opens this hamper, cold roast chicken and God knows what, champagne, although I wasn’t allowed to drink it, and he was telling me all about his model railway set. He had, he said, six attic rooms, at the top of his house, as somewhere to run his model railways. Another world…’

Vic’s a Cockney; he was born at Bow, in East London, within the sound of the bells of St Mary-le-Bow, in 1931. He was, like a lot of children, evacuated from the capital to the country at the start of the Second World War. He and the girl next door found themselves living, with a retired miner and his wife, in a cottage in mid-Wales with no gas, no electricity and no running water; the toilet was a bucket in the shed.

‘We lasted three months. We slept on an old brass bedstead in the attic under potato sacks sewn together for blankets. She was a Shirley Temple type, blonde, her ringlets got pulled at the local school, and I got beaten up for looking out for her. The headmaster didn’t like Londoners,
The June 1913 ASLEF Locomotive Journal reflected a growing union movement while a particular manager is credited with boosting recruitment ...!

HALF A MILLION NEW TRADE UNIONISTS!
Not a Bene related the progress made by the trade union movement during 1911. “I find that the membership of registered trade unions increased in 1911 by virtually half a million and the funds by £454,872. The total membership of the unions rose to nearly two and a half millions, while the funds increased to a total of £6,326,712. I notice the Associated Society is among the wealthier unions, and in 1911 ranked eighth on a money basis, the funds being given as £185,815, equivalent to £7 18s 9d per member.”

MANAGERS RECRUITMENT EFFORT!
Meanwhile, Organising Secretary Mr W Warwick reported about a depot where “the men have been asleep for some time, or perhaps it would be more correct to say they have no time for anything but work and sleep, and this has blinded them to the fact that they are among the worst paid in the country. I have visited them on more than one occasion, but they seem to have no time or inclination to attend meetings. However a change of foreman has had the desired effect and there is almost a rush to join our Society.”

SPEEDY INQUEST
Organising Secretary Mr H Parfitt reported going to “Pontardulais, making enquiries concerning a fatal accident to a London and Western Railway fireman, who was killed when on duty at that station on the previous Wednesday at about 10.0 a.m., the inquest being held the same day at 3.0 p.m.”

Extracts selected and edited by Mick Holder
ASSOCIATED SOCIETY OF LOCOMOTIVE ENGINEERS AND FIREMEN
SUMMARY OF FINANCIAL INFORMATION FOR MEMBERS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2012

Under the provisions of Section 32A of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992 ASLEF is obliged to provide members with a statement summarising its financial affairs.

Income and expenditure

<table>
<thead>
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<tr>
<td>Total income</td>
<td>5,102,390</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total expenditure</td>
<td>5,284,921</td>
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<tr>
<td>£4,983,309 of total income comprised payments in respect of membership.</td>
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Political Income and Expenditure

The figures above include £123,438 income and £148,173 expenditure in respect of the political fund.

Salaries and Benefits

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<th>Salary</th>
<th>Employer's National Insurance contributions</th>
<th>Pension contributions</th>
<th>Benefits</th>
<th>Total</th>
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<td>M Whelan, General Secretary</td>
<td>84,460</td>
<td>9,439</td>
<td>22,550</td>
<td>116,449</td>
<td>17,486</td>
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<tr>
<td>A Donnelly, President</td>
<td>16,813</td>
<td>673</td>
<td></td>
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Executive Committee

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<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Salary</th>
<th>National Insurance contributions</th>
<th>Total</th>
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<tr>
<td>H Bradley</td>
<td>30,791</td>
<td>3,079</td>
<td>33,870</td>
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<tr>
<td>D Calfe</td>
<td>10,344</td>
<td>193</td>
<td>10,537</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M Colombini</td>
<td>36,509</td>
<td>3,783</td>
<td>40,292</td>
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<tr>
<td>B Corbett</td>
<td>29,703</td>
<td>2,823</td>
<td>32,526</td>
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<tr>
<td>H Kaye</td>
<td>8,485</td>
<td>804</td>
<td>9,289</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N Gibson</td>
<td>25,213</td>
<td>2,653</td>
<td>27,866</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T McDonald</td>
<td>29,061</td>
<td>2,397</td>
<td>31,458</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T Wilkinson</td>
<td>29,643</td>
<td>1,407</td>
<td>31,050</td>
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INDEPENDENT AUDITORS’ REPORT TO THE MEMBERS OF ASLEF

We have audited the financial statements of the Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen (ASLEF) for the year ended 31 December 2012 which comprise the Income and Expenditure Account, the Balance Sheet and the related notes. The financial reporting framework that has been applied in their preparation is applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

This report is made solely to the union’s members, as a body, in accordance with Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992. Our audit work has been undertaken so that we state to the union's members those matters we are required to state to them in an auditors’ report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law, we do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the union and the union’s members as a body, for our audit work, for this report, or for the opinions we have formed.

RESPECTIVE RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE AND AUDITORS

As explained more fully in the Statement of ASLEF Executive Committee’s Responsibilities, the ASLEF’s Executive Committee are responsible for the preparation of the financial statements and for being satisfied that they give a true and fair view. Our responsibility is to audit and express an opinion on the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and International Standards on Auditing (UK and Ireland). Those standards require us to comply with the Auditing Practices Board’s Ethical Standards for Auditors.

SCOPE OF THE AUDIT OF THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

An audit involves obtaining evidence about the amounts and disclosures in the financial statements sufficient to give reasonable assurance that the financial statements are free from material misstatement, whether caused by fraud or error. This includes an assessment of:- whether the accounting policies are appropriate to the union’s circumstances and have been consistently applied and adequately disclosed; the reasonableness of significant accounting estimates made by the ASLEF Executive Committee; and the overall presentation of the financial statements. In addition, we read all the financial and non-financial information in the General Secretary’s Report to identify material inconsistencies with the audited financial statements. If we become aware of any apparent material misstatements or inconsistencies we consider the implications for our report.

OPINION ON FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

In our opinion the financial statements:
• give a true and fair view of the state of ASLEF’s affairs as at 31 December 2012 and of its deficit for the year then ended;
• have been properly prepared in accordance with United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice; and
• have been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992.

MATTERS ON WHICH WE ARE REQUIRED TO REPORT BY EXCEPTION

We have nothing to report in respect of the following matters where the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992 requires us to report to you if, in our opinion:
• adequate accounting records have not been kept, or returns adequate for our audit have not been received from branches not visited by us; or
• the union has not maintained a satisfactory system of control over its transactions in accordance with the requirements of that section; or
• the financial statements are not in agreement with the accounting records and returns; or
• certain disclosures within the form AR21 of Officers’ remuneration specified by law are not made; or
• we have not received all the information and explanations we require for our audit.

Chantrey Vellacott DFK LLP
Chartered Accountants
Statutory Auditor
LONDON
11 March 2012

IRREGULARITY STATEMENT

Under Section 32A(6a) of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992 we are obliged to publish the following statement. A member who is concerned that some irregularity may be occurring or has occurred in the conduct of the financial affairs of the union may take steps with a view to investigating further, obtaining clarification and if necessary securing regularisation of that conduct.

The member may raise any such concern with such one or more of the following as it seems appropriate to raise it with; the officials of the union, the trustees of the property of the union, the auditor or auditors of the union, the Certification Officer (who is an independent officer appointed by the Secretary of State) and the police.

Where a member believes that the financial affairs of the union have been or are being conducted in breach of the law or in breach of the rules of the union and contemplates bringing civil proceedings against the union or responsible officials or trustees, he should consider obtaining independent legal advice.
General Secretary Mick Whelan was presented with a piece of engraved crystal by the Saltley branch last month, in recognition of his time as their District Organiser.

‘I have fond memories of my days working with the branch as District 6 Organiser over the years,’ Mick says. ‘I hope they think I am doing an equally good job as their general secretary.’

Saltley branch secretary Adrian Harnett thanked Mick, his successor Dicky Fisher and executive committee member Dave Calfe for attending.

Cheerio to Charlie

On Sunday 24 March around 40 friends and colleagues gathered in the Hog’s Head in Wolverhampton to give a farewell send-off to Charlie Morgan who was retiring.

Charlie started in 1971 as a secondman at Bescot before leaving the industry in 1978. He returned to the railway in 1984 as a guard at Bescot and then moved back into the footplate grade as a driver at Saltley in 1989.

The partial closure in 1993 saw him move to New Street and finally to Wolverhampton in 2004.

The branch would like to thank District 6 Organiser Dicky Fisher for coming along to the meeting and for presenting Charlie with his certificate. Knowing him to be an avid railway mug collector, his colleagues also presented Charlie with several mugs in a presentation box as a gift.

The merriment went well on into the evening and all the members of the Wolverhampton Branch wish Charlie the best of health in his retirement.

Nigel Harkness, Secretary, Wolverhampton Branch

Eastleigh welcomes GS

Eastleigh branch was delighted to welcome the general secretary Mick Whelan, national organiser Simon Weller, executive committee member Marz Colombini and DBS Rep Bernard Kennedy to our April meeting.

The general secretary presented a 50-year medallion to former DBS driver Mike Hunt, who was one of the last of the drivers at Eastleigh to start on the steam. Mike was both a cleaner and fireman at Eastleigh.

Mick gave an overview of the union’s various activities both within freight and in the wider railway community. He was followed by Nigel and Simon who updated the branch on the progress of pay negotiations with DBS.

Mick also spoke about changes to railway pensions prior to a question and answer session.

Mick also presented long service awards to Freightliner driver Paul Watson (40 years) and DBS driver Andy Marks (35 years) before we enjoyed a buffet, liquid refreshment and chat that continued well into the afternoon.

The Andy Viner/Mick Turrell memorial cup will be contested on 24 July at Market Street Islington (nearest tube Caledonian Road). Six-a-side teams will compete. To spectate, enter a team or make a donation, contact Deborah Reay@sky.com

Upcoming events

- **OLD OAK COMMON – 11 JUNE**
  The Paddington (Old Oak Common) Old Boys reunion is to be held at the Acton Garden Village club (‘Ponderosa’) on 11 June. Please inform any of ‘the old boys’ with whom you are in contact. The traditional invites will not be sent out, but for further information contact robertmorse@hotmail.co.uk.

- **CRICKLEWOOD – 28 JUNE**
  The 30th Anniversary Reunion of ex-Cricklewood staff will take place on Friday 28 June, meeting at Kidderminster for a 12:20 departure to Bridgnorth. For further information contact Grahame Nash (Bristol) or Bob Hudson (Wolverhampton).

- **EX-WEST ANGLIA BR REUNION – 13 JULY**
  There will be a reunion of ex-West Anglia British Rail on 13 July at the Crown pub in Broxbourne at 18:00. Come along and remember days when ‘the job got done and it was fun’! For further information contact Les Bennett at Bishop’s Stortford.

- **ASLEF FOOTBALL – 24 JULY**
  The Andy Viner/Mick Turrell memorial cup will be contested on 24 July at Market Street Islington (nearest tube Caledonian Road). Six-a-side teams will compete. To spectate, enter a team or make a donation, contact Deborah Reay@sky.com
Have we got your number?

Do we have your up-to-date contact details?

- Mobile phone number
- Current email address

Providing this information will allow us to send you targeted and timely information, particularly in times of dispute or unrest.

There are a number of ways to get this information to us:
- Update your details via the ASLEF website www.aslef.org.uk and log into the member area.
- Email info@aslef.org.uk include your full name, branch, mobile number and email address in the body of the email.
- Give your name, mobile number and email address to your branch secretary, to post on to head office. Your details will not be handed on to third parties.
COLIN CHARLES FORSE DRIVER, SOLDIER, INSPECTOR AND GENT

Another piece of Bath Road depot history disappeared on 25 April at Bristol South Cemetery as a large gathering of train crew grades and management said their farewells to Colin Forse, who passed away at Weston General Hospital on 15 April after a short illness.

Born on 2 November 1933, Colin followed in his father’s footsteps on to the railway in 1949 as a booking boy at Yatton West signal box. Later he became an engine cleaner at Yatton shed, progressing to fireman and then a Bath Road depot fireman. Although he lived at Yatton he continued to work the Clevedon and Blagdon branches.

He enlisted as a soldier at Aldershot in 1952, serving at Longmoor (ROD) and then in Egypt. He returned in 1954, became a driver in 1964 and covered a lot of turns at Bristol Barrow Road shed.

In 1975 Colin served on the ASLEF LDC at Bath Road and later became a traction inspector in 1985, carrying out a lot of work on steam specials. He retired in March 1996, and wrote a book, A Life on the Railway, in 2009.

On a personal note, Colin was my first regular driver after my transfer back from Old Oak. I was privileged to work on many of the steam specials where he was the inspector. Like his father, he was always a gentleman. Our thoughts are with Colin’s family.

Graham Bellamy, Bristol

TREVOR (BLUE EYES) GARGAN POPULAR PAY DAY SHOP KEEPER

It is with great sadness that I have to report the passing away of our friend and colleague, former driver Trevor Gargan, who was always known as Blue Eyes.

He passed away on the 24 March after a short spell in hospital. He was 77 years old and had been unwell for a long while. His service was held on the 8 April at St Charles Roman Catholic church in Algburth, Liverpool.

Blue Eyes started on the railway in the early 1950s as an engine cleaner at Brunswick loco on the old Cheshire Lines railway. He spent two years doing national service in the Royal Engineers before returning to Brunswick until it closed in September 1961 and all the staff transferred to Garston depot.

At Garston he was our pay day shop keeper, selling bacon, eggs, sausages, tea bags and shoes, ‘all sizes available’. He will be greatly missed, especially by fellow members of the club who meet on Thursday afternoons.

He was a member of the welfare committee at Garston and, on finishing work, made a great job of organising our bi-

‘Blue Eyes’ was well liked, both on and off the job annual days out. He is now alongside ‘my Anne’ as he always referred to his late wife.

Condolences to all his family. RIP Blue Eyes from all of us at the Thursday Club.

Spen Wissett, former driver

GEORGE (TED) POOLEY A LOVELY MAN

Ted Pooley passed away very peacefully on 10 December at the age of 92. He started at Neasden in 1937 and began as a cleaner, progressing first to fireman and then to driver and ending up as an instructor. He retired in 1983 after 45 years service.

Whenever I mentioned his name to other drivers, they invariably remembered him and everyone said the same thing: ‘What a lovely man, he was very kind and patient.’ For his 92nd birthday in July, I presented him with a card signed by some of the drivers he had trained, and it made his day.

In 1998 Ted and his wife Alisha moved to Shepperton to be nearer their family. Widowed in 2002, he was cared for by his niece Linda, who thought of as the daughter he never had. Ted was a lucky man, well thought of by the men he trained and much loved by family and friends. He will be sadly missed.

Paul De Cogan, driver, Euston

MICK SWANNELL WELL RESPECTED BEDFORD MAN

I am sorry to report that on 4 March Bedford driver Mick Swannell lost his battle with cancer at the age of 49. Mick was one of Bedford’s most well respected and well liked drivers at the depot.

He joined the railway in October 2007 and always commented on how proud he was to have made the driving grade. Although he only had a short career on the railway, Mick was proud to have had the opportunity to work as a driver, and expressed this to his final days.

Mick’s funeral was very well attended, with standing room only at the church, with all his friends and colleagues who turned out to support his family at this very sad time.

Gary Honey, driver, Bedford

J.C. (TED) BROWN ACTIVIST AND JP

It is with regret that I report the passing of Brother JC Brown, who was born in Swansea on 12 November 1920. He moved to Didcot with his parents in 1932. Five years later he started work at the loco depot where he progressed from fireman to driver.

He was soon elected to the LCD and became a very strong branch secretary, local councillor and Justice of the Peace. On retirement he moved back to Swansea where he died on 25 February this year.

J. Lyford, retired member

PETER NEWBURY 50 YEARS ON THE FOOTPLATE

It is with great sadness that I must report the passing of Brother Peter Newbury of Hitchin branch. Pete was a branch stalwart and dedicated local representative who carried out his reps’ duties with good humour and patience. One of the last steam men, Pete served for 50 years on the footplate and was proud to be presented with his 50 year medallion by the ASLEF general secretary.

Now Pete has been moved up to the top link he will be greatly missed by all who had the privilege to know him.

Peter Dunlop, retired member, Hitchin branch

CHRIS FARMER POPULAR LONDON BRIDGE DRIVER

It was with great sadness that I learned of the passing of my former colleague at London Bridge, Chris Farmer. Although I left the railway industry in 2002 I remained in regular contact with Chris in the last few years via social media.

Chris came to London Bridge in the early 1990s and was immensely popular at the depot, fitting in well with all the other ‘Essex Men’ at the ‘Bridge’. Chris was a loyal member of ASLEF and always supported the trade union and the local reps.

RIP Chris.

Nigel Blennerhassett, former Branch Secretary, London Bridge
Help when it was needed – ‘the union is there for you’
I would like to express my sincere thanks and gratitude to Nigel Gibson, District 5 Organiser, for all his help and support during what can only be described as a horrendous 10 month issue at work, which not only affected me, but my family, too. During this time, there have been some very testing moments, but Nigel was always there to give sound advice, reassurance and, at times he provided the voice I didn’t have.

He was always available to ring or meet me at any time of the day, and travelled from London to Leeds on numerous occasions which invariably involved some very early starts and late finishes; this was in addition to his duties in his district and companies.

As a rep and branch secretary I am the first to tell members that ASLEF is there for them when they need it. Nigel has more than proved this.

It would be remiss of me not to thank the general secretary for his support, too, and he clearly demonstrated that ASLEF will not sit back and allow wrongful or malicious attacks on reps and members to go unchallenged. Thankfully, the issue is now concluded to our satisfaction.

Many thanks for all the support I received from friends and colleagues at work and within ASLEF; you will probably never know how much that meant to me.

Nigel has more than proved this.

I am an avid reader of the Journal on the internet. I am currently working as a Driver (Instructor) for Danish State Railways and would like to add my comments concerning dAs.

Getting up to Greenspeed on the continent
As a former ASLEF member (1972-82) I am an avid reader of the Journal on the internet. I am currently working as a Driver (Instructor) for Danish State Railways and would like to add my comments concerning DAS.

We have recently had installed a system called Greenspeed in our locomotives/multiple units and, in my opinion, it makes life a lot easier. Instead of having paper versions of both WTT and temporary speed restrictions on the driving desk, everything is shown on the screen, which also includes permanent speed restrictions, which track the train is signalled on and the exact position of the train. It co-acts with our ATC and radio systems and works out the most economic speed required to adhere to the timetable.

We enter the train’s maximum allowed speed, actual length and brake force. The screen can, of course, be adjusted for driving at night. We have also all been issued with a laptop computer so we do not have to carry a lot of heavy books around with us any more.

I’m sure it is easier to follow the screen than to look down at various bits of paper on the desk.

Maggie may
History will, in the end, be the judge of Margaret Thatcher. Perhaps she will be remembered as a great politician who
forced this country into the modern world; who shook us by the scruff of the neck and changed our lives for the better, in spite of our wishes.

Perhaps she will be remembered as a domestic terrorist whose abuse of power and our political system destroyed countless families and forced this country into the grip of foreign business. She may even be remembered as the person who did more damage to the people of Great Britain than any foreign aggressor ever did.

According to Facebook and Twitter, many of our younger citizens don’t know who she was or what she did. Surely that is the most fitting remembrance for her. That she will for ever be just another nondescript politician among all the other nondescript politicians.

Chris Dodd, retired driver

Time to fly-by-wire?

At the risk of suffering the usual castigation, but giving a balanced outlook, may I add some points to the discussion about Driver Advisory Systems? I have no connection with any supplier of the equipment. My company council and employer are not progressing the system at the time of writing and retaining driver professionalism and distraction have been mentioned.

My employer, running mainly fixed formation trains, has had two trials; I was involved with the first which gave some good outcomes; I understand the second was less conclusive. The system was not overly expensive and would rapidly have shown savings which, yes, would benefit the operator but make funds available for other improvements. I agree that experienced drivers will know their best coasting opportunities but the system was able to compute best options when abnormal running was taking place.

I agree that it would be completely unacceptable for the system to be used to supplanted driver training and knowledge, or be used to discipline drivers or introduce competition between individuals; this was the starting point with our representatives when the trials began.

Environmental concerns and sustainability are paramount and drivers have under their charge some 90% of the energy consumption of a train working, but I concluded that the strong points of a DAS were the driver enhancements. For example, it offered an optimum speed and power choice in a tight timetable where there is very little recovery time. Station approach warnings, currently part of our hazard alarm system, could have been incorporated. Correct side door opening could have been indicated. Temporary and emergency speed restrictions were to be included and updated in real time. Our trains are fitted with TASS which is not matched with TPWS loop speeds, currently unmarked: DAS would alert drivers to these features, surely a good feature as AAD debates the effect TPWS interventions are having on our fraternity. It offered opportunities to drive in a more relaxed manner and produce less wear and tear on the train systems, so reducing breakdowns which cause us problems and special working. There are even possibilities that a DAS could help in warning of approaching red signals.

Many train drivers use aircraft which are fitted with auto pilot and fly-by-wire systems; are we seriously suggesting that these systems be switched off in the name of pilot professionalism? DAS is an independent system, not linked to the controls, and can be switched off if required; on these points it should be kept under review.

Robert McMillan, Wolverhampton branch

Thank you, brothers

I would like to thank all branches in District 8 for their continued support in the recent

A chance to dance

On Monday 8 April I was just getting ready to head into town for our branch meeting when I heard the news that made me, as a trade unionist, “Rejoice, just rejoice”. A quick change of attire was required and then I slipped into town to meet my comrades.

Alan Moss, Longsight branch

CLASSIFIED ADVERTISEMENTS

To advertise in the ASLEF Journal please phone 020 7324 2400 or send an email to journal@aslef.org.uk

FAVERSHAM branch is selling mugs and Tee-shirts “devoted” to Ms Thatcher! Both are £10 and illustrate the branch view of the ex-PM’s vicious right-wing policies. They can be obtained from the branch website www.aslef-favershambranch.co.uk or from Andy Cooke at (email) andycooke69@hotmail.com or (mobile) 07771923831.

MOTHERWELL 100 REGALA: To celebrate its centenary, Motherwell Branch has produced commemorative badges (£5), ties (£7 for blue, blue clip-on or maroon) and brochures (£2.50). Cheques to “ASLEF Motherwell Branch Centenary Fund” and further information from Andy Jones on 0776077907 or motherwellbs@aslef.org.uk

CD WITH OVER 700 STORIES ABOUT LONDON UNDERGROUND between 1968 and 2008 written by Dennis Bostock available for £15 from the author. To order, text details to 07599 018 271.

INTERCITY DRIVER LANYARDS: Black with safety clip, features the BR logo and original Intercity font. £4.99 each including p&p. Please call, text or email Greg Burton for payment details. 07930-419850. intercityexpress125@hotmail.co.uk

ENGRAVING: ASLEF driver based in Sunderland branch offers professional engraving at reasonable prices. I can engrave anything you wish, such as the ASLEF logo on a pint tankard which is pictured. For further details contact Paul Potts by email at ppotts1969@hotmail.co.uk
The driver’s daughter accused of trying to murder the Prime Minister

There are not many rail workers’ daughters who have been charged with plotting to kill a Prime Minister, but Alice Wheeldon is one, writes CHRIS NUTTY, CHLOE and DEIRDRE MASON. Although I’ve lived in Derby for 50 years I’d never heard of Alice. She came to my attention through a Radical History course as part of my work as a ASLEF Union Learning Rep. The course was delivered by Bill Whitehead, a lecturer at Derby University, and looked at working-class people who fought against the system and for what they believed. I told Keith Venables, the local NUT branch secretary, about the course and since then a campaign has been launched to clear Alice’s name, someone’s written a folk song about her, and a plaque has been erected by the civic society and city council. KEITH VENABLES tells her story...

E should be proud of those individuals and groups who fight to make life better for ordinary people. Alice Wheeldon was one of those people. She was the daughter of William Marshall, a locomotive driver, and was born in the railway town of Derby in 1866 where she died in 1919. She was a strong, independent woman who, with her four children - Neil, Hettie, Will, and Winnie - was active in the Co-operative movement and a determined campaigner on the big social issues of the day, particularly women’s rights, conscription and opposition to the First World War.

The Wheeldons were opposed to the pointless carnage on the fields of Flanders and this opposition worried the government, especially as Derby was at the heart of Britain’s manufacturing and agricultural production.

Alice, a kind and caring woman, shared the desperate concern of many mothers for working-class people who fought against the system and for what they believed. I told Keith Venables, the local NUT branch secretary, about the course and since then a campaign has been launched to clear Alice’s name, someone’s written a folk song about her, and a plaque has been erected by the civic society and city council. KEITH VENABLES tells her story...

Alice and her family were targeted in an attempt to deter others from political activism. An MI5 agent provocateur, posing as a conscientious objector, sought refuge in their home and proposed a scheme to release imprisoned conscientious objectors. As two men she loved faced conscription, Alice was open to his idea to poison a prison’s guard dogs to facilitate an escape. Correspondence about obtaining poison for the scheme and the conversations reported by the agent were used in a dodgy dossier to make up evidence of a plot to kill the Prime Minister (Lloyd George), the leader of the Labour Party (Arthur Henderson) and ‘unnamed others’. Alice and her family were arrested as a result of this entrapment.

Alice’s trial - along with Hettie, Win, and Alf Mason - was moved from Derby to the Old Bailey; partly for the purpose of getting national rather than local publicity, and partly to head off the possibility of acquittal. The Attorney General, F.E. Smith, and recent manager of the government’s press bureau, led the prosecution.

The government cynically used the trial to trash the reputations of opponents of the Great War. National newspapers carried lurid reports and pictures on their front pages. Alice received the maximum prison sentence. Her daughter, Hettie, was acquitted but Win and Alf Mason were also jailed. All three were refused leave to appeal. Alice was released in December 1917, because she was gravely ill, but the Masons weren’t released until 1919, after the war ended with the Armistice.

RESPECTING A PIONEER

Alice’s direct descendants from around the world have now got together with Derby Peoples’ History to clear the family name and demonstrate that Alice and her family were innocent of all the charges, and only guilty of believing that women’s rights should be on the political agenda and the stand taken by conscientious objectors should be respected.

On International Workers’ Day – 1 May – a blue plaque was erected in her memory at 12 Peartree Road, Normanton.

It reads: ‘Alice Wheeldon – Anti-War Activist, Socialist and Suffragist’. We think the plaque is an important milestone in restoring her reputation and giving her proper recognition. And we continue the fight on 14 September with a major festival - Peace and Justice 1913/2013 – in Derby.

○ For more information visit the website alice wheeldon.org or listen to the song “Alice Annie Wheeldon” on TheRobbJohnson site on YouTube.

○ Derby Peoples History invite you to join their Festival of Peace and Justice on 14th September. Have a look at http://www.derbypeopleshistory.co.uk/
Prize Crossword No. 86 set by Zebedee

Across
1 Bus-to-city-centre scheme (4,3,4)
7 Examination bed (5)
8 Swaggering courage (7)
10 Wave up and down (8)
11 Sound of geese; unhappy audience (4)
13 Symbolic object (6)
15 A fruitcake eaten at Easter or Christmas (6)
17 Wharf (4)
18 Imagines, theorises (8)
21 A wearing away (7)
22 Train of followers (5)
23 Undergo conversion (3,3,5)

Down
1 Vividly pretty (e.g. view) (11)
2 Circular; delivery route (5)
3 Sulky Trojan War hero (8)
4 Formal discussion (6)
5 Terrible czar (4)
6 Dishonest avoidance (7)
9 Becoming out of date (11)
12 Getting rid of; right to use (8)
14 Signal fires; Brecon has some (7)
16 Slake (thirst) (6)
19 Child’s toy; be hanged (5)
20 Rub clean (4)

Solution to prize crossword No 85 which appeared in the May 2013 edition of the ASLEF Journal

Congratulations to Mark Benson from Loughton in Essex


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

Name.....................................................................................................................................
Address..................................................................................................................................
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Thanks for all your responses to the 85th ASLEF crossword in the May edition. If you complete this month’s crossword please send the solution to the Editor, ASLEF Journal, 77 St John Street, London EC1M 4NN by the 14th of the issue month.

ASLEF’s legal services – your rights for their wrongs!

FREE LEGAL ADVICE ASLEF also provides first class free legal advice – both for members and for their dependents. In the last year, ASLEF has recovered £6,769,848 in damages for all types of cases.

EMERGENCIES If you are an ASLEF member who is arrested or being interviewed by the police and need legal assistance – day or night – you can call the members’ Emergency Hotline on 0800 587 7530.

SACKINGS OR OTHER PROBLEMS AT WORK Harassment, discrimination or bullying? If your local, branch or district representative is unavailable, call the Industrial Relations department at union headquarters (020 7324 2400) or email info@aslef.org.uk

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