NEIL FINDLAY votes for a better vision for his nation
PAUL SALVESON calls for a new model railway in Scotland
GLENIS WILLMOTT reveals what UKIP really want
railway enginemen’s **tax free saver** plans

tax free savings plans for **anyone** who works on the railways…
that’s not just train drivers!

**products**

- saver plan
- children’s saver plan
- saver and disability plan
OLEAGUDES, this is a time of year when we traditionally look forward with a great deal of hope and expectation; but a number of meetings or contributions I have had the privilege to listen to have caused a degree of reflection on the past.

Recently it was the 20th anniversary of the privatisation process that fragmented our railway, and initially made our industry far less safe, and failed to deliver the competition, cheaper fares and innovation it promised. We’re still waiting. Despite the concerns of the public, very little coverage was given to this milestone in the press.

We heard Ricky Tomlinson, decades after the event, make a passionate plea for justice – and state transparency – for the outrageous injustice to the Shrewsbury 24. We offer our support and best wishes for success in the struggle for truth – hopefully this year.

The calm dignity of the Durham miners naturally brought to mind that this year is the 30th anniversary of when, in 1983, a Conservative government declared war on its own people. We played a pivotal role in supporting the miners and we will be recognising our joint history over the next twelve months.

I was immensely moved at both the turnout, and the dignified ceremony, that marked the 25th anniversary of the Clapham tragedy where 35 people died, including three of our own. It could be time to revisit the report to see how much has actually been implemented.

This trade union has a long history of social justice and campaigning and, whilst our own strength and unity allows us to continue to successfully defend and represent our members, we must not forget the lessons of the past or what could yet happen to us.

Therefore we shall go into the New Year with renewed vigour and hope, ready with a strong executive committee, powerful officers, and dedicated representatives and branch secretaries for all challenges.

On behalf of all those who represent ASLEF I wish you a prosperous and, more importantly, safe New Year.

Mick Whelan, General Secretary
Justice – my arse

ICK WHELAN, ASLEF’s general secretary, talked of the ‘dignity and humanity’ of Nelson Mandela, whose death in South Africa had just been announced, as he addressed members of District 4 just before Christmas. Drivers, retired drivers, eight Labour MPs and a table of Durham miners, stood to remember a man whose passionate fight against apartheid was, Mick reminded us, thwarted at every turn by big business and right-wing politicians in Europe and North America.

Nigel Roebuck, district council chair and DB Schenker company council rep, handled proceedings with his usual aplomb, except for the moment when he referred – some cynical souls wondered if the apparently accidental slip was in fact deliberate – to Ricky Tomlinson as ‘Jim,’ the character he played in *The Royle Family*.

The actor and activist is probably best known now for his roles as Bobby Grant in *Brookside*, DCI Charlie Wise in *Cracker*, Eddie in *Nice Guy Eddie*, and, of course, Jim. But he used to work as a plasterer on building sites and, after the first national building workers’ strike in 1972, was sentenced to two years in prison for conspiracy.

And after cheekily announcing ‘I’m the youngest one here!’ that was what Ricky spoke about in a barnstorming speech which earned him a standing ovation at the District 4 annual dinner at the Trades and Labour Club, Doncaster, on December 6.

He explained that there was no conspiracy – and could not have been a conspiracy – but ‘it was a political trial designed by the Conservative government, and the big construction companies, to break the building workers and their trade union.

It was serious – and vicious – stuff but Ricky, in a sometimes funny and always moving speech, turned his personal experience into a public, political, statement, and dredged often black humour from the depths of a tale of persecution.

Forty-two years later, Ricky is still in the heart of the battle – ‘justice, my arse’ – for the Shrewsbury 24, the building workers unjustly prosecuted after the bitter strike back in 1972.

James Stribley, the GMB rep at Remploy who got a standing ovation at the TUC in September, spoke about the fight – which goes on – against a government – red in tooth and claw – which believes in the law of the jungle and enjoys picking off those least able to defend themselves.

Tosh McDonald, on home turf as ASLEF vice-president and EC member for District 4, told how one man who had worked at Remploy in Sheffield for 35 years was told he’d been made redundant – and told to leave the premises – with ten minutes’ notice. ‘That, comrades, is how this government treats the workers and how this government rewards loyalty.

Mary Creagh, Labour MP for Wakefield and the new Shadow Secretary of State for Transport, said she was thrilled to be invited but, ‘just eight weeks into this job, I am here in listening mode.’ Nevertheless, she pressed the right buttons by talking about the success of DOR, the importance of keeping East Coast in the public sector, and the failure of the fragmented franchise system to deliver an integrated railway for the 21st century.

She got a round of applause when she noted the part that ASLEF, a great and historic trade union, founded in 1880 had played in Labour Party history, and much laughter when she said that Rosie Winterton, Labour MP for Doncaster Central and Opposition Chief Whip, sitting at one of the tables, ‘has a whip in her office but now only uses it if you’re very, very good!’

Ian Lavery, Labour MP for Wansbeck, and president of the NUM, underlined the importance of the party’s union link when he said: ‘The history of ASLEF is phenomenal. It was established in 1880, twenty years before the Labour Party. Labour and the trade union movement, together, can achieve everything we want.’

Colin Smith re-elected

Colin Smith (left) has been re-elected as District Organiser for District 3. He polled 738 votes (75.3%) while Alan Donnelly received 242 (24.7%), turnout was 50.7%.

Colin said: ‘A massive thank you to all members who voted for me and to the branches that found it fit to nominate me. I have served the membership as District Organiser for 15 years, never taking for granted the support that one finds during terms of office. For those branches that did not nominate me I will, as always, show 100% support for the membership throughout ASLEF on all matters of concern.

‘In essence, it is business as usual. I will try to visit as many branches as possible during the coming months to answer any questions or address any matters that have arisen during the election.

‘Finally, I have to thank the many quality activists, reps and members who have shown fantastic solidarity and discipline throughout the due process, always willing to challenge specific issues that could have been somewhat misleading, not necessarily deliberately. The future of ASLEF in the north-west of England and North Wales is in safe hands.’

What is franchising for?

Christopher Jackson, editor-in-chief of *Railway Gazette*, wonders in a leading article in the latest edition ‘What is franchising for?’ He acknowledges that the West Coast ‘debacle has done irreparable damage to the image of the industry,’ ‘privatisation has not worked when it comes to getting real private equity into the rail network,’ and concludes that the current, discredited, franchise model has led to fragmentation and ‘thinly-capitalised businesses largely run by bus companies or subsidiaries of state-owned railways in other countries.’
A new way to run our railway

Lilian Greenwood, Labour MP for Nottingham South, and Shadow Rail Minister, has promised that the next Labour government will look for a better way of running Britain’s railways.

Speaking at a packed District 1 council meeting at the Waterloo Action Centre, in the shadow of the main line station, in December, she said that the current business model – the privatised train and freight operating companies – simply isn’t working.

‘A botched privatisation has left us with a fragmented network which needs serious structural reform. We need to look at alternatives to franchising and it is exciting that the East Coast main line, run in the public sector by Directly Operated Railways, is going from strength to strength.’

Lilian, who worked for NUPE and Unison, paid tribute to the work of the trade unions and said Labour was keen to listen to what ASLEF and the other rail unions have to say about building a better railway in this country.

A safer network

ASLEF has welcomed news that the Office of Rail Regulation has taken heed of the union’s call for more money to be ring-fenced to improve – and close – dangerous level crossings.

‘More needs to be done but we are glad to see that the ORR is taking this issue seriously and has responded positively to our call for more money to be spent on improving what remains the most dangerous element of our network,’ said Mick Whelan.

The ORR’s final draft for rail funding from 2014-2019 increases the amount to be spent on level crossings by £32m to £109m.

While we were pleased to hear that 500 crossings will be closed, and many hundreds more modified, to improve safety, we will continue to campaign for the 8,000 crossings in our network to be reduced or made as safe as possible.

The increased funding from the ORR came on the back of a Law Commission report which called for a quicker and easier process for closing dangerous crossings.

‘ASLEF will continue to work with all stakeholders to ensure a safer rail network,’ added Mick.

BADGE OF PRIDE

Trevor Southgate, LLC rep, Ipswich, made a four figure sum from the sale of last year’s Poppy Appeal badge. He said: ‘I am pleased to say the 2013 poppy badge was a great seller and the total amount raised was £1,320. I would like to thank everyone who bought one and also those members of other branches who did their bit and sold them on my behalf. It’s a great charity to donate to and gives a little back to those who fought for our freedom in the past and will continue to do so in the future.’

500 CLUB: Northern Line North branch, with number 173, won the December draw, scooping the RMS prize money jackpot of £352.

Off the rails

ANDREW DUFF, the aptly-named Liberal Democrat MEP for the East of England, is either woefully under-briefed or living on Fantasy Island. When Mick Whelan wrote to him recently urging him to vote against the Fourth Railway Package, which will take a wrecking ball to railways in Europe, his caseworker Kilian Bourke responded: ‘Andrew believes the Fourth Railway Package is needed to deliver a more competitive rail industry, thereby reducing costs and gaining market share. It can only do this through increased competition in services and a single market in rail infrastructure and rolling stock.’

RAY COLLINS, the Labour peer charged with sorting out the mini mess (or Mili mess) of the Labour Party-trade union link, which in his interim report he rather grandly described as Building a One Nation Labour Party, is fond of saying: ‘We are where we are’ as a way of squashing further discussion about the merits of having this particular debate. As Richard Leonard, GMB organiser and political officer in Scotland, dryly said to much laughter at ASLEF’s District 2 political forum at Holyrood last month: ‘Well, who got us where we are?’

PRETTY IN PINK? Boots are busy reinforcing gender stereotypes with their new range of £7.99 baby reins. Boys, in blue, get to be a Train Driver while girls, in stereotypical and stunningly unimaginative pink, get to be called a Little Cupcake. Tell that to our female train drivers…

PHILIPPA EDMUNDS, manager of Freight on Rail, was popular with readers of the Daily Telegraph after this letter was published just before Christmas. ‘On motorways, more than half of fatal accidents involve Heavy Goods Vehicles, despite them making up only 10% of the traffic, and on minor roads HGVs are five times more likely than cars to be involved in fatal collisions,’ she wrote. ‘The road haulage industry is pushing for double articulated mega trucks to be allowed on British roads. These will only worsen road safety, congestion, and pollution.’

The Torygraph readers would much prefer freight to be sent by rail, not mega truck, across this green and pleasant land of ours.

THE CONSERVATIVE-LED COALITION has presided over the biggest fall in living standards since Queen Victoria was on the throne at the high water mark of the British Empire. More than five million people are now officially classified as low paid according to a new report by the New Economics Foundation think tank.

ADITYA CHAKRABORTY used his column in The Guardian to describe rail privatisation as ‘legalised larceny.’ Train operators, he said, invest little cash but make and take massive profits.

THE OFFICE FOR NATIONAL STATISTICS is considering whether Network Rail’s debt should be brought back on to the government’s balance sheet. A bitter pill which will, it’s said, have to be swallowed at some point. Possibly later this year…
Baby, you can drive my car

ASLEF education project worker CHRIS NUTTY reports from Donington Park on a course for members from EMT and LMT to learn more about understeer and oversteer

HOW many times over the years have you been caught out by snow or ice on the road? Because such conditions happen rarely, in the UK, we are poorly prepared to deal with them. Although ASLEF education’s core courses are academic we are always open to meeting the needs of the membership – hence the skid car course at Donington Park.

After a short demonstration from our instructor we were straight into the driving seat, doing a figure of eight around cones to learn the difference between understeer and oversteer. The car we were driving was fitted into a rig with four wheels that can be lifted to bring the car’s own wheels off the ground, front or rear or both, to simulate understeer, oversteer, aquaplaning, or driving on ice. We also practiced stopping, with and without ABS engaged. The rig we were using was Swedish, made 20 years ago, yet it gave a very real feedback in all situations.

The tuition of the instructors, Mark Cowell and Andy Hicklin, was excellent. Every question we asked was answered in depth; the knowledge these guys have of the subject is impressive. Just a few of the things we learnt – a modern fuel injection car will pull away at tick over; moving the steering left to right will help a car get forward motion on ice; and even with ABS a modern car takes a distance to stop, what you gain with it is the ability to steer.

Our training session took place on the original Melbourne loop of the historic 1938 grand prix circuit, so we had plenty of room to play. Which is good when you are pirouetting round and round at 15mph! The session was really fun because we could do things that would properly get you killed, or at least seriously injured, out on public roads. But that is the purpose of the course, to get the feel of when a car is losing grip, and know what to do to regain control, to learn that the worst thing to do is panic and try to put the brake pedal through the floor to stop!

EMT train driver Wayne Barnett said: ‘It’s amazing how much you can learn while having so much fun.’ Paul Williams, another EMT driver, said: ‘I’ve learned a lot and I think all drivers, whether they’ve driven for a year or 30 years, should have a go at this. You really get a feel for when the car is starting to lose grip, which allows you to regain control quicker. What I learned may save my life one day’.

We were able to negotiate a reduced rate for a group booking and are hoping to run more courses this year. For more information contact Chris Nutty at chris.nutty@aslef.org.uk, Arron Clap at applause1327@mac.com, or Paul Sinclair at ulr_wolves@hotmail.com

HS2 essential for UK’s future

The House of Commons Select Committee on Transport says the HS2 high speed rail project is ‘essential’ for the UK’s future and that potential gains from the project ‘significantly outweigh’ any risks. MPs said estimated costs of up to £50 billion had been exaggerated by opponents of the scheme and that the real cost will be about £28 billion.

Top marks

Mark Daniels, of Barking branch, was featured extensively in a Radio 5 Live programme about suicides broadcast at the end of November.

Mark talked honestly, sensitively, and informatively about fatalities on the railways – a subject which is notoriously difficult to do well.

I’ve been a miner for a heart of gold

David Douglas, a colmining for 40 years, a branch official of the NUM for 25 and, more recently, a critically-acclaimed historian of Britain’s battered coalmining communities, spoke to the executive committee last month ahead of plans to mark the 30th anniversary of the miners’ strike later this year.

He was introduced by Tosh McDonald who reminded him that our members, although some of them were on benefits at the time, never moved a shovel full of coal during the miners’ strike.’

David painstakingly knocked back many of the myths put out about the strike, reminded the EC of the chronology of the industrial dispute, and thanked ASLEF and its members for your total commitment during the strike.’

He also wistfully reflected, at the end of his talk, on the vast amounts of precious – and easily extractable – coal that still lies underground in this green and pleasant land; coal in pits the Tories claimed were ‘exhausted’ as they set about destroying a British industry, a venerable trade union, and entire communities around the coalfields of this country.

Mick Whelan thanks David Douglass in the EC room at head office
Time for London Mayor to act

Boris Johnson has been told to ‘get a grip’ on the spiralling pay gap between Transport for London’s top bosses and the men and women who work for them. TfL Commissioner Sir Peter Hendy took home £652,452 last year, including bonuses, which is 33 times more than the bottom TfL salary of £20,000.

The Metropolitan Police, London Fire Brigade, and City Hall, by contrast, have all managed to narrow the gap between their highest and lowest paid earners over the past five years.

Baroness Maggie Jones, a campaigner for pay equality, said: ‘It’s appalling that TfL still pay so many people such very high salaries. City Hall, the police and the fire brigade have made their pay slightly more equal. It’s time the Mayor of London got a grip on TfL because fairer pay leads to healthier, happier societies.’

Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe, commissioner of the Metropolitan Police, earned £281,273, 17 times more than a Scotland Yard employee who took home £16,380, and less than half what Sir Peter pocketed last year. Fire Commissioner Ron Dobson was paid £162,257, eight times more than the lowest-paid staff member at the Fire Brigade on £19,444. And Jeff Jacobs, the most senior civil servant at City Hall, got £165,000, seven times more than a security worker on £22,574.

Sir Peter is not the only rail boss in the capital doing well. Andrew Wolstenholme, chief executive of Crossrail, picked up £577,000; Andy Mitchell, Crossrail programme director, £552,000; Mike Brown, TfL managing director, rail and Underground, £476,000; Steve Allen, TfL managing director, finance

No dark sarcasm in the classroom

ALAN REID, education project worker in Scotland, reveals his strategy this year

ASLEF union learning representatives, from Dumfries to Dundee, gathered at the Scottish TUC in Glasgow on 6 December for an education strategy day, with our district organiser and company council chair to discuss our membership’s needs in workplace learning.

ULRs from ScotRail and DB Schenker brought plenty of ideas for the Scottish project going forward with Scottish Union Learn. We also had Julie McComasky, HR director of First ScotRail in attendance.

The object of the day was to show how education and learning could support our members in the workplace, in their home life and in the wider community. Just as important, we looked at how the education project could contribute to and complement the other work of ASLEF. With this in mind Kevin Lindsay outlined the political and industrial strategy of the union.

The ULRs’ input will help shape our response to our members’ needs, and their particular learning requirements, and how we can meet them. We’re looking at a busy 2014.

EAST OF EDEN An ASLEF delegation led by District 5 Organiser Nigel Gibson (left) attended the East of England Labour Party conference in Luton. ‘We had a really successful weekend,’ said Nigel. ‘We met Ed Miliband at the Friday night dinner and, having had a chat with Wendy Hurst about women and train driving, he name checked her, and ASLEF, in his speech. Les Bennett and Wendy were both re-elected to the EoE board and Les was chair of conference for a session on Sunday morning.’

SUPPLY CHAIN Patrick McLoughlin, the Secretary of State for Transport, and Vince Cable, the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills, announced a new forum, the Rail Industry Supply Chain, to strengthen the industry in Britain, on a visit to Hitachi’s new £82 million train factory at Newton Aycliffe in County Durham.

TUNNEL VISION Stephen Hammond, the Transport Minister, has ruled out reopening the Woodhead Tunnels on the old Manchester-Sheffield railway line. The Woodhead route was closed to passenger traffic in 1970 and to freight in 1981 and Mr Hammond says the tunnels will be sealed this year.

Freight train, freight train, goin’ so fast

New figures from the Office of Rail Regulation reveal that rail freight traffic grew by 9% between July and September last year compared with the same period in 2012.

Philippa Edmunds, manager of Freight on Rail, said: ‘Freight activity is a bellwether for the British economy. Rail freight traffic has continued to grow year on year since the recession with the past two quarters showing increases of 5% and 9% respectively compared to the previous year.

‘Our economy relies on rail freight; it literally keeps the lights on, as 50% of our electricity comes from coal and biomass transported by rail. A third of all consumer products imported into the south of England container ports are then moved by rail.’

BADGE OF HONOUR: Peter Mee, of our Retired Members’ Section, is after a blue March 1982 strike badge. He’s willing to pay what he describes as a ‘reasonable fee’ plus postage. You can call him on 0115 932 3566.
FINN BRENNAN reveals what the first three months in his new job have been like

The three months since I took over as District 8 Organiser have certainly been busy. While the big news may have been plans for booking office closures and all night running on London Underground, we have also had an industrial dispute on Tube Lines and now on Croydon Tramlink.

The strike ballot on Tube Lines came after a long period of industrial relations getting worse and worse. Issues that should have been simple to sort out – like driver getting the correct rate of pay, members getting annual leave they were owed and even receiving long service awards dragged on endlessly; with a recalcitrant and provocative management seemingly set on causing – rather than solving – problems.

As is, sadly, so often the case, it took a ballot for action to make senior managers take notice. A series of meetings led to an agreement that company council secretary Alan Puncheon, EC member Terry Wilkinson and I hope will resolve many longstanding problems. A recruitment plan will mean additional engineering train operator and instructor operator positions and a much tighter rein will be kept on local managers to ensure they keep to the agreed machinery.

The dispute on Croydon Tramlink, the first since ASLEF won recognition there, is because of a harsh and inflexible approach to disciplinary issues by management. A series of dismissals for incidents that, in the past, were treated much more leniently, and the refusal by management to take heed of the complaints of our reps forced the branch to a strike vote. It’s never an easy decision to make; and our members have no illusions about how hard a fight they face. But they are determined that First Group, who operate the Tramlink franchise, must not be allowed to take away the livelihood of members who have given years of excellent service for simply making one mistake.

When a politician signs a pledge and then breaks his promise you would expect an apology or, at least, some embarrassment. Not if the politician is Boris Johnson and the pledge was to oppose the closure of booking offices. With a clever piece of spin and the help of his good friends at the Evening Standard, the Mayor of London got headlines for re-announcing – for the third time – that he wants Tube services to run through the night on Fridays and Saturdays rather than the real story of broken promises and cutting almost 1,000 jobs from Underground stations.

ASLEF, unlike those who are cutting jobs, genuinely believes in a better Tube service for the capital. But the truth is the system is far from ready for all night running. With a huge amount of upgrade work and a backlog of maintenance to do, reducing engineering hours will mean more delays. Late night passengers who find themselves unable to finish their journeys on a partially closed network are unlikely to be very grateful.

One promise that will be kept is this: ASLEF will not tolerate unilateral changes to our agreements and working arrangements. We are not against change, but if the Mayor and his minions want changes they need to sit down and negotiate them. As we proved during the Olympics and Boxing Day disputes, we will only agree changes when our members believe it is sensible and worthwhile to do so.

This time it is station grades, instead of our members, who are directly in the firing line. But it won’t be long before we are the target for cost cutting and efficiency savings. My job, and that of the rest of us in ASLEF, is to make sure we are ready when that day comes.

Congratulations are due to Maeve Hanley who has taken up my old position on trains functional council. Chris Pirrie of Upminster impressed many at branches across the combine and I know he will continue to play an active role. Maeve is an excellent rep who brings to the council experience, determination and the thoroughness and attention to detail you would expect from someone who was mentored by the late Andy Viner. Maeve is the first woman to represent drivers on LU at such a senior level. It’s great to see our union take another step towards reflecting, as well as representing, our membership.

Darlington to Oslo

William Graham, from Darlington, was the first locomotive driver in Norway. He is buried at one of Oslo’s oldest graveyards and Norsk Lokomotivmannsforbund, the Norwegian train drivers’ union, recently financed the renovation of his tombstone. Pictured during a memorial speech at William Graham’s grave are Rita Jørgensen, Øystein Aslaksen, and a representative from the authorities in Oslo.
Whatever life throws at you ASLEF will help to protect you.

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- 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

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Zero hours contracts a blight on Britain

VICTORIA PHILLIPS says it’s time to get tough with bosses who keep staff in a state of permanent insecurity, earning far less than they need to get by

HOW many workers are trying to earn a living in this country on a zero hours contract? 250,000? One million? Five million? Take your pick. The lowest figure is the original government estimate; the highest from a union survey. But the truth is no one knows for sure the numbers employed on contracts that give no guarantee of working hours from one week to the next.

Vince Cable, the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills in the Conservative-led coalition cabinet, finally admitted this in October last year when he wrote to the Office for National Statistics asking them to find a way of calculating a reliable figure.

NATIONAL SCANDAL
And, while it would be good to know exactly how bad this problem is, we have enough evidence already to know it’s a national scandal affecting most sectors of the British economy.

Ninety per cent of staff at McDonalds and Sports Direct are on zero hours. In the NHS, there are now almost 100,000 zero hours employees. Skills for Care estimates 307,000 adult social workers in England are on these contracts, three in every five people working in domiciliary care.

The cancer has even spread to the railways in this country. As highlighted by ASLEF, the case of a senior manager at Devon & Cornwall Railways on a zero hours contract who was involved in a SPAD at Stafford shows how zero hours contracts can also mean zero commitment to passenger safety and public responsibility.

Ed Miliband, at the TUC in Bournemouth last September, promised that a Labour government would tackle this problem. He said: ‘We’ll ban zero hours contracts which require workers to work exclusively for one business. We’ll stop zero hours contracts which require workers to be on call all day without any guarantee of work. And we’ll end zero hours contracts where workers are working regular hours but are denied a regular contract.’

Vince Cable has announced a consultation on zero hours contracts and claimed Labour is only ‘asking me to do what I am already doing.’

OPENLY UNENTHUSIASTIC
But many others in the coalition government are openly unenthusiastic about doing anything at all. Michael Fallon, the Minister for Business and Enterprise, urged the House of Commons not to ‘act in haste’ on the issue.

He said: ‘A flexible and dynamic labour market is essential to facilitate growth in our economy, and to give businesses that want to expand the opportunity to do so.’

How this ‘growth’ argument justifies having 82,000 McDonalds workers on zero hours is a mystery to me. Is he saying the fast food chain would sell fewer burgers if it had the decency to give its staff some commitment on the number of hours they will be working from one week to the next? Are sales so unpredictable?

It’s nonsense, obviously. And action could swiftly be taken to tackle the worst zero hours’ abuses using existing law.

First, exclusivity clauses requiring a worker to be available for work and prohibiting them from working for another employer are, in effect, a restrictive covenant restraining the person from pursuing his or her trade. They could be strictly interpreted against the employer and rendered unenforceable if they are found to be unreasonable and not justified.

Second, Section 1 of the Employment Rights Act (1996) requires employers to provide employment particulars, including ‘any conditions relating to work and other terms relating to normal working hours’. This could be used to require employers to state a minimum – and maximum – number of hours of work and number of hours when additionally required to be available for work.

MINIMUM WAGE
Finally, the definition of work in the National Minimum Wage Regulations could be modified to include time when each worker is required to be available for work and is prohibited from working for another employer, even if he or she is at home rather than the existing rule that they have to be ‘at or near a place of work’. This would mean the employer would have to pay the minimum wage for this time.

PLIGHT OF BARRISTERS
That the Tories have no grasp of the circumstances of most people on zero hours contracts was revealed, unintentionally, by one of their number in the Commons. Guy Opperman, Conservative MP for Hexham, and a barrister, told MPs in October that he understands the plight of zero hours staff because barristers are not guaranteed work.

Mr Opperman was earning £250 an hour as a barrister before he was elected to Parliament in 2010. A recent study found workers on zero hours contracts earn on average of £236 a week.

Victoria Phillips is head of employment rights at Thompsons solicitors

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10 Legal
We’re making plans for Nigel

Labour’s leader in the European Parliament

**GLENIS WILLMOTT** reveals how Nigel Farage and his fellow UKIP MEPs vote on a range of issues affecting British workers

**WITH** most UK Independence Party councillors elected only eight months ago, and no UKIP MPs in the House of Commons, it is difficult to assess the party’s record in office. But one place where UKIP has had elected politicians for some time is the European Parliament, although it currently has just nine MEPs compared with the 13 elected in 2009.

UKIP won its highest number of council seats (around 150) at the local elections in England and Wales in May last year and party leader Nigel Farage says he is aiming for first place at the elections to the European Parliament in May this year.

**TYRANNY OF BRUSSELS**

UKIP likes to portray the image of a party battling against a political elite and the tyranny of Brussels on behalf of ordinary, hardworking British people, with its key messages of getting out of Europe, cutting taxes and the welfare bill and being tough on crime and immigration.

But while the party says it wants to cut welfare benefits, its policies would put more

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**PRICE TO BE PAID FOR JOB SECURITY**

While it claims to want to defend hardworking British people, UKIP consistently attacks and tries to undermine our rights at work. UKIP’s small business policy sets out that it believes the Working Time Regulations, which limit the length of time we can be obliged to work, and provide a guaranteed right to four weeks’ paid holiday each year, are among the top five ‘most damaging or costly regulations’.

It sees little or no need for the regulations and says ‘working hours should be agreed between employers and employees; wages and salaries will tend to adjust to provide adequate compensation.’

UKIP also believes that permanent workers should be paid less than their temporary colleagues, arguing ‘as a general rule, there is a price to be paid for better job security and holiday entitlement, and that is to accept lower wages or salary than offered to those on short term contracts.’ UKIP says it would ‘put an end to most legislation concerning weekly working hours, holidays, overtime, redundancy, and sick pay.

And it says it should be up to each employer to decide whether to offer parental leave. Under UKIP’s proposals Statutory Maternity Pay would be a basic £64 a week payment. A woman working full time on the national minimum wage currently gets £198 a week SMP.

The party would also water down rules outlawing race discrimination and discrimination on the grounds of religion, belief or sexual orientation. And on health and safety, it wants to see only ‘occasional site inspections’ and fines and closures for unsafe workplaces limited to ‘cases that can be considered criminal’.

**ASBESTOS IS HARMLESS**

UKIP has consistently voted in the European Parliament against measures to improve health and safety in the European Union. For example, asbestos-related illness is the single largest cause of work-related deaths in the UK; some 4,000 people die every year as a result of asbestos-related diseases in this country. But UKIP MEPs argue that white asbestos is ‘harmless’ despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary. In March 2013, they voted against a Labour-initiated European Parliament report calling for the removal of asbestos from all public buildings by 2028. Their Eastern region MEP Stuart Agnew even took out full page ads in local papers making the claim.

We cannot allow key decisions, affecting the everyday life of British workers, in the European Parliament to be dominated by the views of UKIP and other right-wing parties. From fighting for jobs, to defending workers’ rights and campaigning for high levels of health and safety protection at work, having a strong Labour team acting at European level on these issues really matters.

At present, just 13 out of 73 UK representatives in the European Parliament are Labour MEPs; partly as a result of protest votes at the European elections in 2009 which saw 13 UKIP and two BNP MEPs elected. That’s why it’s crucial that ASLEF members get behind our campaign to elect more Labour MEPs who will invest in jobs and growth and stand up for workers’ rights in May 2014.

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**Glenis Willmott has been an MEP for the East Midlands since 2006 and leader of the European Parliamentary Labour Party since 2009. She’s also a member of the party’s National Executive Committee and attends Shadow Cabinet meetings**
WHITE PAPER FANTASY v RED PAPER REALITY

**NEIL FINDLAY says the Red Paper Collective has a better vision for Scotland**

COTLAND’s First Minister, Alex Salmond, launched his 650 page white paper – “your guide to an independent Scotland” – at the end of last year. This was meant to show how the golden goose would lay the golden egg on 18 September this year – the day of the referendum on Scottish independence. But, like all fairy tales, we were soon returned to reality when the glossy cover started peeling off.

What is not a proposal for government but an SNP wish list based on a fantasy island vision of the future – a million miles from the real world and the struggles of working people today.

**LIFE KEEPS GETTING BETTER**

The white paper promotes a Scotland that will retain the monarchy, remain part of the European Union, join NATO, keep the pound within a currency union with the rest of the United Kingdom, remain part of the UK energy market, have UK-wide financial regulation, continue within university research councils, continue with cross border health arrangements – in effect, everything will remain the same but everything will be different – it’s just that we will have no MPs at Westminster to influence these UK-wide issues! Doesn’t sound too much like independence to me!

Salmond’s white paper promotes a vision of a country where everything that is bad miraculously disappears and everything that is good in life just keeps on getting better – and all with a little cross on a ballot paper in September.

It paints a picture of a place with its economy based on oil that will never run out. Where everything is green but we scrap air passenger duty and build dual carriageways. Where the bank of a foreign country controls the currency but, at the same time, we have independence.

**WHERE BUSINESS COMPETITION IS PROMOTED BUT SO IS THE MINIMUM WAGE**

Where business competition is promoted but so is the minimum wage. Where child care is expanded – but just not now. Where the Royal Mail is renationalised but someone else pays for it. Where we will become a progressive beacon but where bankers and big businesses get a corporation tax cut of £350 million per year. Where an oil fund will suddenly appear from the magic oil fund tree.

It’s a mirage, this charade, a fantasy that the people of Scotland are expected to swallow. If we apply this principle to our own lives, to our own families and to our own communities, it’s like saying your family income will rise, your life will be better, you can have free child care, a better pension, increased benefits and pay less tax into the bargain.

**TARTAN TAX HAVEN**

Meanwhile, back in the real world, people want to hear a credible alternative to what we have at present. I would like to see a different Scotland – one that fully finances public services and redistributes our wealth through a progressive taxation system. One that tackles the extreme wealth and health inequalities and poverty in Scotland. That lifts living standards, redemocratises local government and puts jobs at the centre of a national crusade.

This requires real political change and a challenge to the neo-liberal orthodoxy which, incredibly, even after its utter and abject failure, still lies at the core of the SNP’s white paper proposal.

**LOVE OF MY COUNTRY**

I believe we are better able to challenge that orthodoxy if we work with trade unions and progressive movements across the United Kingdom. Progressive reforms occur not by accident, not by creating a neo-liberal tartan tax haven but through unity, solidarity and the action and campaigning of ordinary working people. I want to see enhanced devolution – a position, if polls are to be believed, that is favoured by the majority of Scots – that would see us retain our links with our friends and relatives across the UK while maintaining the ability to move money around the country to areas of most need. That is a good thing!

I give way to no one in my love of my country but I love my community, its people and my friends, relatives and comrades across the UK, too. It is because of this, because of where I come from, and the values that my family and community has instilled in me – values of solidarity, co-operation and justice – that I am a trade unionist and a socialist, not a nationalist. It is for these reasons I will be voting ‘No’ but that will be a ‘No’ for change.

Salmond’s white paper is an isolationist. His is a negative vision based on a fantasy island vision of the future – a million miles from the real world and the struggles of working people today.

**RAILWAYS BRING US TOGETHER**

**TOM BURNS, an activist in ASLEF’s Perth branch**

Railways are designed to bring people together – business meetings, tourism, to name just three. You can buy a ticket from Perth to London or online, and enjoy your visit without worry over currency conversions, or passport controls. An independent Scotland puts this kind of everyday activity in serious doubt.

He doesn’t know what currency we would use. He doesn’t know where our neighbours would apply border controls. He doesn’t know where we would have to pay import duty on the whisky gift.

If Scotland is not in the UK or the EU – and for sure whether we will be or not – all these problems...
A PEOPLE’S RAILWAY FOR THE PEOPLE OF SCOTLAND

Rail expert PAUL SALVESON calls for a new model railway in Scotland, suitable for the 21st century, moving the debate beyond the old template of ‘private good, public bad’

VEN accepting that the post-2015 ScotRail franchise will be let on the conventional basis (effectively excluding all but established major players) there is still an opportunity to influence bidders’ approaches towards wider social and economic benefits.

There is still time to incorporate some imaginative – but not over-prescriptive – framework requirements in the invitation to tender for pre-qualified bidders.

Much more could be got from the new ScotRail franchise, even under the current rules. The Department for Transport in its prospectus for the East Coast franchise has included some innovative measures in its ‘expectations from bidders’ which include demonstrable commitment to social responsibility and environmental sustainability; investment in the workforce; investment in new technologies; and putting passengers at the centre of all aspects of planning and operations.

PUBLIC INVESTMENT

While this may be viewed as an attempt to ‘sugar the pill’ of re-privatising a successful publicly-run operation, the DfT’s expectations are a welcome approach and should form the basis for future franchises. It would not be unreasonable for Transport Scotland to expect, as a minimum, similar outcomes from bidders for the 2015 ScotRail franchise.

For the longer term, if our vision of an arm’s length, not for dividend, company is seen by the Scottish government as the appropriate way forward to run rail services in Scotland in the future, it will require public investment by the Scottish government, including legal advice and a wide range of assistance on aspects of building the company over the next five years.

There should be a debate within Scotland about what ScotRail should be, its functions and powers and funding to the Scottish government as the appropriate way forward to run rail services in Scotland in the future, it will require public investment by the Scottish government, including legal advice and a wide range of assistance on aspects of building the company over the next five years.

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POLITICALLY RADICAL

If Scotland does vote for independence, clearly there will be an opportunity to introduce new legislation that would allow Scotland to pursue its own course in many areas, transport being one of them. Amending the 1993 Railways Act might be easier than new primary legislation. The proposed new train company may or may not be seen as a publicly-owned company; the simplest approach in legal terms would be to remove s.25 of the Railways Act altogether so UK-based publicly-owned (or part-owned) companies can operate commercial rail services.

There is no doubt that a People’s ScotRail would be a politically radical move, but one that would command strong support within Scotland and beyond. It would most certainly offer insights and opportunities to other parts of the UK – most obviously Scotland but also to the north of England.

Scotland’s politicians, with their partners in the trade unions, and community organisations, now have an opportunity to put themselves at the forefront of a debate which stretches far beyond Scotland, and even the UK.

A People’s Railway for Scotland by Professor Paul Salveson is published by the Co-operative Party, ASLEF and the Socialist Environment Resources Association
Ride this train across a strange wonderful land

KEITH RICHMOND reports on a feisty political forum at the Scottish Parliament

Kevin Lindsay, ASLEF’s organiser in Scotland, crossed swords with John Mason, SNP MSP for Glasgow Shettleston, at a lively District 2 political forum at Holyrood.

The former MP for Glasgow East told delegates from all over Scotland: ‘I would like to see the railway in public hands; but it is not possible at the moment. You cannot have competition and integration in transport, you have to choose, and we want integration. The Scottish Parliament is more left of centre, and more committed to public ownership, than down south. Political borders and barriers are not a problem for the rail industry.’

Kevin, who had just had a meeting with Keith Brown, SNP MSP for Clackmannahine and Dunblane, and ‘my sixth Transport Minister,’ accused John of being disingenuous. He said: ‘The SNP says it will renationalise Royal Mail but gives no time or cost. It has not said it will nationalise Scotland’s railways. The reason is there is no appetite in the SNP for that. And in January, John, you are hosting a reception for one of the bidders for the franchise from 2015; I hope you’re not taking sides…’

Delegates thanked John Mason for coming – ‘like Daniel to the lion’s den’ – especially as a Lib Dem cancelled the day before, but gave a much warmer welcome to James Kelly, Labour MSP for Rutherglen, and Richard Leonard, GMB organiser and political officer in Scotland.

Speaking about trade unions, Richard said: ‘We need to say what we’re for, not just what we’re against. We’re a social movement, not just a protest movement – though we do protest! – and ASLEF is a socialist society and the GMB still talks about industrial democracy and collective ownership. We’re at our best not just when we are trying to extract the best deal for our members under the current economic system, but when we are trying to change the economic system.’

Talking about plans to loosen the link between Labour and the unions, Richard said, to much laughter, ‘Ed Miliband thinks three million people will join the Labour Party. We know, around this table, that the problem is not to get people to join the Labour Party but to get people to vote for the Labour Party! We need to tell Ed Miliband that he is sawing off the branch on which he sits…’

This year ASLEF is holding a ballot on our political fund. Hugh Bradley, EC member for Scotland, said 15 members in Motherwell who opted out aren’t Tartan Tories or, necessarily, SNP voters. They want socialism and think they can get it if they get out of the union and get an independent Scotland.’

Mick Whelan reminded delegates: ‘Only 1p per person per week goes to the Labour Party. The rest we use for our own campaigns.’ The GS, setting out some of the meetings he’s had in another busy year, added: ‘That’s politics. That’s what we do.’

Radical look at rail

JAMES McGOWAN on the launch of a new report which has ignited the debate about the the railway in Scotland

A People’s Railway for Scotland was launched near the Scottish Parliament last month by ASLEF and our co-sponsors, the Co-operative Party and the Socialist Environment and Resources Association, in response to the Scottish Labour Party’s current consultation on the future of its rail policy.

The report builds on work already done in relation to the Welsh franchise and calls for a not for profit rail company to be created like Directly Operated Railways whose primary commitment would be to the people of Scotland and not to shareholders and would be underpinned by the principles of social responsibility, democracy and equity.

The report’s author, rail expert Professor Paul Salveson, outlined the need for a fresh and radical look at the way passenger services are delivered in Scotland to provide better value for money for both passengers and taxpayers. He also highlighted the failures of the franchising model across the UK.

Labour transport spokesman James Kelly MSP welcomed the report as an important contribution to the debate and underlined the need for a progressive rail policy from Labour in Scotland while Joe Fortune from the Co-operative Party emphasised how mutuality could offer genuine benefits to both employees and passengers.

District 2 Organiser Kevin Lindsay drew attention to the historic links between the trade union and co-operative movements and said he believed a not for profit operator was the best option for the future of the ScotRail franchise and he urged the Scottish Labour Party to embrace the principles of the report.

Homage to Caledonia

Britain, from the Latin Britannia, and Britannicus, was what became, after the Roman legions left, England and Wales; Great Britain means England, Scotland, and Wales. The crowns of England and Scotland were united in 1603 when James VI of Scotland became James I of England but, politically, the two countries were not united until the Act of Union of 1707 created the United Kingdom of Great Britain. The Act of Union of 1801 created the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland which, in 1922, became the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.
HE Learning Partnership Programme is now in its fourth year – or the first year of its second three year project – concluding in March 2016. The project is led by ASLEF for all the rail unions in Wales within Arriva Trains Wales, First Great Western and DB Schenker.

Over the past twelve months, the focus has been on awareness raising at Arriva Trains Wales and First Great Western. Programmes of promotional learning days are held at work locations in Cardiff, Carmarthen, Canton, Crewe, Machynlleth, Shrewsbury and Swansea.

All the events are supported by Union Learning Representatives and learning providers able to advise on course availability and content. As a result of the ULRs’ hard work, we have been able to help and support more than 200 men and women since April 2013.

A big barrier to learning is shift work. Part of the ULR’s role is to work with learning providers – colleges, etc – to make courses accessible. We are trying to make them available at times and locations that suit the people who want to learn, rather than fitting people into a rigid college structure.

The project has also been working to provide opportunities within the workplace. Communications skills courses have been running at St David’s House in Cardiff for the past year, IT skills with literacy at Machynlleth station and Maths classes at Carmarthen station. Sign language is very popular and courses have run in Cardiff, Chester, Crewe and Swansea. The project is in the process of setting up a Welsh language course in Holyhead and hopes to have a communications skills course in Chester in the coming months.

In the last project we were able to introduce five learning hubs (online PCs for members to use) across the ATW network in Canton, Carmarthen, Chester, Holyhead and Machynlleth. A laptop library is also available as a mobile classroom resource. We now have mobile internet connections for these laptops and have recently uploaded Microsoft 2013.

The Learning Partnership Programme works with steering committees within the TOCs and is currently working with Arriva and First Great Western to enhance the current learning agreements, seeking better buy-in from the company and facility time for our ULRs to carry out duties.

Further awareness building activities will continue in the Valleys, Mid Wales and North Wales in the coming months, and we expect to generate more interest and wider participation.

Initial talks have been held with DB Schenker regarding the introduction of a learning agreement. These talks went well and we start negotiations this month. Once agreement has been reached circulars will go out to branches to elect ULRs and promotional activities will then take place.

If you are interested in taking part in any programme, money is available to all members for help towards the cost of courses in the form of a learning bursary. They will be looked at on an individual basis. Please contact your ULR for details.

In September a union learning day was held at Carmarthen in West Wales with the intention of promoting learning to Arriva Trains Wales staff at the depot. In attendance were Emma Penman, ASLEF’s education project worker, Cynthia Davies, RMT ULR, as well as representatives from the Wales TUC, ACT Training, and Shelter Cymru.

Learning surveys were handed out and staff, a mixture of train crew, catering staff and station staff, were encouraged to talk about their learning needs face to face. This resulted in enrolments for sign language and Welsh language courses. Two members of staff are waiting to enrol on an Excel course to help them with roster spreadsheets.

Lila from ACT met with colleagues who were interested in improving their numeracy, communication and IT skills. She also met with their manager who was very supportive and agreed to be flexible with their shifts, so they could attend a weekly classroom based course which started in October in the classroom at Carmarthen station. The staff are now able to alternate their learning, one week in release time and the next in their own time. The course has proved to be very successful, with staff and tutor alike thoroughly enjoying it.

The day was a great success.
Mary Berry eat your art out

A group of drivers got together on Wednesday 4 December to have a charity cake sale in the mess room at Bedford depot to raise funds, and awareness, for the CLIC Sargent charity for children with cancer.

This was the choice of the family of Mick Swannell who was cruelly taken from us last year after developing cancer. Mick was well loved and we felt we’d like to do something to honour his memory. At the end of a very long day £565 was raised with more to come after the volunteers had gone home but left the remaining cakes for the late shifts to enjoy. A huge thank you to all those who made financial donations and an even huger thank you to those who gave up their time to create the wonderful fayre on display: Paula Wharton, Mick Frizzell, John and Linda Glover, Peter Cheshier, Dan Howitt, Michael Cronin, Andrew Jeffs, Lindsey Baker, Helen Biggs, Mark Tripp (Hitchin depot), Vicke Humphrey, Lisa Carwell-Cooke, Chris Greenaway, Jimmy Shaw and Phil Cherry of Bletchley depot who kindly donated a couple of copies of his books. And, yes, it all tasted as good as it looks!

Rob Reddan, Bedford branch

730 years service

The October meeting of Bristol branch was indeed a special occasion as a number of members were presented with their long service badges and retirement certificates. Normal branch business was dealt with on the previous day so the presentations could take place without delay. General secretary Mick Whelan, District 5 organiser Nigel Gibson and EC member Brian Corbett were all in attendance.

The GS gave a state of the nation speech which went down very well. Mick talked about the dispute on AXC, mobile phone policy and the report covering DCR inquiry following the SPAD at Stafford. He then made a number of long service badge presentations: Gareth Jenkins, Richard Hawkins, Kerry Cassidy (5 years); Stuart Barnes, Rachel Belton, Steve Priday (10); Dave Hewett (15); and a 40 year badge for Brian Corbett. A retirement certificate was presented to Bruce Parkin who finished a long and distinguished railway career earlier in the year. Another 40 members due long service badges chose to have a less formal presentation at their depot.

I would like to thank everyone who attended. You all contributed to a brilliant and memorable night! About 35 members were present to make this one of the best attended Bristol branch meetings in recent times.

Bernard Kennedy, Bristol branch secretary

36 years marked at Selhurst branch

Geoff Hagan recently retired after 36 years on the railway in District 1. His career started at Folkestone central in 1977; he moved to Ashford as a freight guard the same year. He then changed ends to the front as a trainee driver at Norwood Junction in 1988 and obtained his key in 1998 before transferring to London Bridge in 2000. After an unfortunate fall in 2007, Geoff took a short hop to Selhurst where he has worked for the past 3 years as a cleaner, retiring in July 2013. He was presented with a retirement certificate by national organiser Simon Weller. Geoff thanked Roy Luxford and ASLEF’s company council for making his last few years possible.

Andrew Cook, Selhurst branch secretary

Les Muir presents Dudley Wood with his 50 year medallion and a framed picture of a Deltic (Dud’s choice!) Peter Smith, Kings Cross branch

Upcoming events

- **ASHFORD – THURSDAY 9 JANUARY**
  Southeastern retired members’ reunion at 11.00 at the Ashford Railway Club, Beaver Lane, Ashford, Kent, TN23 7RR.

- **RAMSGATE – THURSDAY 3 APRIL**
  Southeastern retired members’ reunion at 11.00 at the Red Arrow Club, Newington Road, Ramsgate, CT11 0QX.

- **BRIGHTON & SUSSEX REUNION – TUESDAY 6 MAY**
  An informal open afternoon for all retired and working members with a connection to Brighton and Sussex Motive Power Depots from 14:00 at the Brighton Railway Club, Belmont (off Dyke Road). Further details from Paul Edwards (07402 478278) or Paul Horan (07868 757492).

- **TONBRIDGE – THURSDAY 3 JULY**
  Southeastern retired members’ reunion at 11.00 at the Royal British Legion, 26 Priory Road, Tonbridge, TN9 2AS.

Please send all your branch news and photos to journal@aslef.org.uk
Quality time

After completing 48 years’ service to the railway industry, and more than 40 years’ loyal membership to ASLEF, Alan Hill retired at the end of September. Alan started at 15 in 1965 and worked his way up to driver, spending most of his career at Stratford depot, and then latterly at Liverpool Street driving Intercity trains between Liverpool Street and Norwich after the partial closure of Stratford in 1994. On 2 November we held a retirement function for Alan at the Railway Tavern Hotel in Stratford where we were able to present him with some gifts from his colleagues which included some champagne and champagne flutes for him and his family to enjoy, a book about Stratford and East End Railways (so Alan doesn’t forget his driving experiences to on his wealth of Portsmouth & Isle of Wight experience). Ken always turned up with a smile on his face and was always keen to pass on his wealth of driving experiences to those less experienced. He was a gentleman and a professional and held in high regard in the workplace. Ken always appeared amonst the ASLEF fraternity in the past, now and in the future.

All the assembled expressed reservations about the recent rest day working agreement and both the GS and Tosh undertook to review the matter with our negotiators and the employer. A resolution thanking Bro Porter from Newcastle for all his work on our behalf was passed unanimously.

On a happier note, it was an opportunity to present lifelong ASLEF stalwart and former Darlington branch secretary Joe Kidd with his 50 year membership badge; retiring member John Lindsell with his retirement badge; and to welcome ASLEF’s newest member, for one night only, John Fletcher. Overall, a meeting where the level of debate and forthright opinion was nothing less than we would expect, and made it all the more memorable.

WIDOW WITH SEVEN CHILDREN

Bangor branch reports: ‘It is with deep regret that we have to record the death of Brother Phineas Griffiths after an operation for an internal disease. He was a thorough trade unionist, a faithful member of this branch and a regular attendant at every branch meeting. He was of quiet disposition but, whenever financial assistance was required, his name always appeared amongst the subscribers. He leaves a widow, with seven little children, to mourn the loss of a kind husband and loving father.’

THANKS TO BENEFICIENT FUND

Mrs E Moore writes to the Journal: ‘Allow me to tender my sincere thanks to the Benevolent Fund subscribers for the sum of £38 paid to me by the branch secretary, Mr Treharn, on the sudden death of my late husband, E W Moore. I am indeed grateful to all concerned for the prompt way in which payment was made.’

Challenges facing fraternity

The November meeting of Darlington branch was the best attended for more than two decades to meet general secretary Mick Whelan and vice-president Tosh McDonald. Accompanied by new members, retired members, and active members from both Carlisle and Newcastle branches, we were given an insight by Mick into the many and varied challenges facing the ASLEF fraternity in the past, now and in the future.

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If you think this could be you, tell us why by contacting Peter Davids - REPTA General Secretary at 24htyover@easius.net
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Please send to: REPTA, 4 Brackmills Close, Forest Town, Mansfield, Notts NG19 0PB. Tel: 01623 646789

You can also see us on Facebook:
**MICK SHERIDAN CAN’T GET YOU OUT OF MY HEAD**

Waterloo driver Mick Sheridan was admitted to hospital in August and diagnosed with terminal cancer. Just a week later, he passed away.

Mick was a highly intelligent man and liked learning new things – Latin was one of his recent subjects – but he never boasted. Before he joined the railway in 1990, he worked in the City as a broker. One of the few stories he told from back then involved a junior co-worker revealing his salary just before jumping ship. Discussing your salary was, apparently, taboo. It turned out Mick was on far less money so, out of interest, he revealed what he himself earned to his seniors. There then followed a mass revealing of salaries and all hell broke loose when it was discovered that the pay scale was upside down! Most folk would think how bad it was to treat senior workers less favourably but Mick had a chuckle as, only five minutes earlier, his seniors had been quite happy with their salaries.

There was not much Mick didn’t know about music. He was fond of girl groups, and devoted to Kylie Minogue, but no era or genre was exempt from his ears. He spent time looking in second hand vinyl shops for artists of all eras. He was continuously recycling his collection (excluding Kylie!) Mick was a popular, well respected character. He always had time for his colleagues, and enjoyed adding to the current discussion with an original comment or idea. His cheerful demeanour, modesty and wit is sadly missed, but not forgotten.

Nor will his banter, his views on current affairs and his insight into the pop industry. Mick, it was a pleasure to have known you. Our deepest sympathy to his family, and long-term partner Mac.

Waterloo Nine Elms branch

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**BRIAN LAMBERT MOTORMAN**

Brian Lambert joined London Transport in 1970 as a guard on the Northern line and progressed to motorman during interesting times of change for the Underground. He had spells on the Bakerloo and Hammersmith & City lines before returning to Neasden on the Metropolitan line. He spent many years as both a depot shunter and motorman before retiring in 2001 at the age of 60.

Brian was extremely active in the union in the 1970s and ‘80s and held a branch rota scrutineers position, his interest in trade unionism no doubt fired by his experiences working in a variety of jobs, including a spell in the Merchant Navy and the print industry (even including a stint as a docker in New Zealand).

As well as being old school in the sense that he regarded himself and his colleagues as motormen while LUL deemed them train drivers, he was also great company socially and those who got to know him will have discovered his career as a semi-professional footballer playing regularly at centre half in the Bedford Counties League, a passion for football he continued with his love of Luton Town where he was a season ticket holder.

Sadly Brian passed away on the 23 November from pneumonia. Our thoughts are with Brian’s family.

Mick Kearney, motorman Harrow

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**BRIAN GREIG SORELY MISSED**

Brian Greig (1956-2013) who was with the railway from August 1976 to March 2013 died from a heart attack on 5 March last year. A collection, organised by Steve Muir and Ian Kerr, platform staff at Dundee, was taken from Brian’s friends and colleagues and a plaque to his memory was unveiled at Dundee station on 24 November. Money came in from Perth and Aberdeen as well as Dundee and we were able to make a donation of £750 to the British Heart Foundation.

Graham Dodds

Standing in front of the plaque to Brian Greig (from left) Tracy Perrie, assistant manager BHF, Brian’s widow Marlene, and Anne Hayes, manager BHF

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**JOHN H DAY HAPPY GO LUCKY**

John H Day passed away in hospital on 23 October 2013 after battling illness for a long time. When John left school he worked for Berks Chemicals in West Ham and, when he left, decided to apply for a job on the railway in the footplate grade at Stratford motive power department. Being successful he started his career on 7 July 1949. He followed the progression from cleaner to driver and drove steam, diesel and electrics. In the late 1960s John had a health problem that made him unable to continue driving diesels and he was placed into the electric link. He then moved to the newly formed Liverpool Street depot, driving the Norwich express, and then in 1993, after 44 years service, John, a Stratford man throughout, decided to take early retirement.

John was a family man, liked gardening and also had a passion for snooker which he often played at Stratford with his mates. I don’t think I or anyone else ever saw John being miserable; even when I used to visit him during his illness and talk about the good old days he was the same happy go lucky John.

John leaves behind his wife Lilian whom he married in October 1953; they celebrated their 60 years’ anniversary this year. Also his two daughters Janet and Linda, two grandchildren, and four great grandchildren. To whom we offer our sincere condolences.

John was much loved by his family and respected by his friends and colleagues and will be sadly missed. May he RIP.

Bill Dale, RMS, Chingford branch
Letters

How to square the circle
I’d like to take up the point raised by Steve Taylor (Aylesbury) in the November issue of the Journal. I believe political campaigning is an essential part of trade unionism in the past, in the present, and in the future.

It is particularly pertinent now, with increasingly strained industrial relations, ongoing Tory-led attacks on workers, and the most vulnerable in society, and the shifting sands of how the Labour leadership sees the trade union link.

How, though, do we square the circle for members, like me, who want to maintain support for political campaigning by ASLEF but not support the Labour Party? There are examples from other unions which could be followed. Perhaps the least controversial would be to follow the lead of Unison which has two political funds. Members can choose to contribute to none, one, or both funds; these are an affiliated (Labour Party) fund and a general fund which contributes to Unison’s campaigns. This would give flexibility around members’ personal political preferences.

The other, more controversial, example would be that of our sister union, the RMT, who allow each level of the union from branch through regional to national level to decide which political party or organisation best meets the aims of the union and to affiliate appropriately.

As a democrat, I believe a marrying of both examples would be the most progressive, modern, and democratic answer to the question of our political fund.

Steven Nimmo, Edinburgh No 2

INEOS IS NAME IN FRAME TO/blame and shame

Like most people, when I heard the announcement to close the Grangemouth petrochemical plant, I was shocked that a trade union had been blamed. The decision was announced at the end of October, but I suspect was planned long ago. Private profiteers making millions for shareholders, but claiming they are losing money, may just be bad management by Ineos, but the attack on the trade union and its members had all the hallmarks of a union-busting multinational company, hell bent on wreaking havoc not just in Grangemouth, but Scotland, and the UK as a whole.

To attack workers’ T&Cs, with the ending of final salary pensions, is unacceptable when shareholders reap the rewards of privatisation. The government tells us private investment is good for the economy yet sits back and watches our industries being plundered and destroyed. It’s a throwback to Britain in the 1980s, under Thatcher and Major, and all that was bad for the ordinary working people of this country.

This was a fight for our brothers and sisters in Unite but let’s not be complacent and think it won’t affect our members. The anti-union laws introduced by the Tories are alive and kicking and company directors could be heading to a workplace near you sooner than we think. I hope Grangemouth, and many other privately-owned companies, are taken back into public hands, though I won’t hold my breath.

Alan Reid, Yoker branch

Money well spent
It was with a great deal of pride that I witnessed our ex-branch secretary, and my predecessor, Tom Corbin, beat the two other shortlisted candidates at Salisbury Constituency Labour Party hustings to become our Prospective Parliamentary Candidate for the general election in 2015.

Tom stood down as Salisbury branch secretary two years ago to devote himself to local politics and, at the local elections in May last year, both he and his wife Caroline stood for and won council seats. It was on the ASLEF political course last year that he became convinced he should aim higher and stand as a parliamentary candidate. Seeing the assurance with which he made his address, and answered questions from local Labour Party members, there is no doubt in my mind that the ASLEF political course is worth every penny.

Annie Rutter, Salisbury branch

Blardy good time by hall
I attended the Retired Members’ Section annual forum at Low Hall, Scalby, in November; the staff, food and accommodation were excellent. EC president Alan Donnelly, vice-president Tosh McDonald, Ian Laverty MP, and Lee James, ASLEF’s equalities adviser, all gave generously of their time, travelling long distances to attend as speakers, giving us much to discuss. Subjects included ASLEF, other trade unions, the political scene, with a great Q&A session.

The forum was not just a meeting of SOFs (silly old farts) but a gathering of ASLEF people with so many individual interests, like Jerry, 82, just returned from a motorbike trip to Germany, Ron involved in local government, Peter campaigning on pensioners’ issues, Bill on a trades council, Jim on the North Yorkshire Moors Railway, and golfers, gardeners and gamblers.

Whether in conversation over a coffee in the lounge or a beer in the bar, everyone had a tale to tell, struggling up the bank with a poor steamer, recalling old mates and colleagues. This memorable weekend only happened because Ray Jackson and Tony West and the committee have worked blardy hard to build up the RMS from nothing to more than 2,000 members.

Norman Henstock, Kirkby-in-Ashfield

Thanks from Michael...
A very big thank you to all the ASLEF members for all the money we received which helped me and my family in our time of need. It was greatly appreciated and I...
can’t thank everyone enough.
Michael Cubitt, Frinton

...and from Dave
I would like to thank all branches who contributed to the Michael Cubitt appeal.
Dave Rigby, Clacton branch

Breaking terms of service
I have noticed over the past few years that TOCs are, increasingly, not fully complying with employees’ terms and conditions of employment and service. I have recently sought legal advice regarding several issues, and found out that if an employer does not fully comply with an employee’s T&Cs, then he is failing in his obligations to the employee; in short, breaking the contract of employment.

Two perfect examples of this I have recently come across are the persistent non-issue of uniform cleaning tokens, when it states quite clearly in the terms and conditions of service that an annual supply is to be issued.

Also, the issue of Sunday working, while outside the working week, the employer, having requested Sunday leave, is still required to work his or her rostered Sunday turn of duty if no suitable alternative cover is available, and the company has made every available effort to cover the turn. In practice, this rarely happens, the company not making every available effort, and employees are regularly forced to work their respective Sunday turns, which amounts to enforced overtime.

I do not believe that ASLEF is firm enough with employers to make sure that T&Cs are being properly adhered to. Yet if an employee fails to comply with his or her T&Cs, the employer is extremely rapid to take action.

Edward Pearce, Marylebone

Trust the Tories
Trust the Tories to instigate draconian state pension changes requiring hard working train drivers to work until 70. Looking on the bright side, our colleagues at West Coast Trains, Carnforth, might consider this as early retirement.

Rob McMillan, Wolverhampton branch

Questions? Answers!
My letters (Journal, September and November) were greeted by a very vociferous response from Bro Dean Forsyth (Journal, October) and Bro Graham Dean (Journal, November) which didn’t really answer my question. So I will reiterate. Why am I not allowed to do overtime when every other grade in my company can? This is the question I have asked. Responses full of rhetoric are what I expect from politicians not wanting to answer a question and not what I expect from my colleagues.

It was good, though, to see some positive comments, especially from others on the main line (Journal, December) but disheartening to see the personal attacks. This was not what I expected. I’m also a little confused about the people who are so vociferous about not wanting to do overtime! No one is asking you to. At all times I have pointed out it’s voluntary, not compulsory, overtime I’m after.

Financial circumstances are not my problem but I know of many whose finances, because of circumstances, mean other than moonlighting overtime is the only way of earning a little extra to pay for the basics. One of my colleagues today was saying he didn’t have his heating on unless his children were visiting! Why? Because most of his earnings go to his ex-wife and leaves him with very little of his 48k salary!

Now I’m not suggesting everyone’s like this but, unfortunately, there are a lot more people in financial difficulties than some people realize.

John Hardesty, Earls Court

Denying others the chance
I’ve known plenty of drivers vehemently opposed to rest day working who have left the grade to become managers and – guess what? – they grab the overtime in their new grade, so spare me the hypocrisy. Boxing Day is the least likely day for anyone to want to work overtime but the reality is that too many drivers applied to work it. If you don’t want to work overtime, should you have the God given right to deny others the chance?

Terry Baxter, Metropolitan line driver

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Motherwell 100 regalia: 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 07767 077907 or motherwells@aslef.org.uk

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Dennis Potts 1969@hotmail.co.uk

Faversham branch is selling mugs and t-shirts ‘devoted’ to Mrs Thatcher! Both are £10 and illustrate the branch view of her vicious right-wing policies. They can be obtained from the branch website www.aslef-favershambranch.co.uk or from Andy Cooke at andycooke69@hotmail.com or (mobile) 07771 923831.
FRANK MCKENNA

Gritty, honest reflections in a social history masterpiece

N reading Stephen McKenna’s touching obituary for his father Frank (December Journal) I would like to think that had he not moved into academia then he would probably have ended up finishing his footplate career here at Euston. However, had he remained on the footplate he probably would not have penned such a remarkable book as The Railway Workers 1840-1970. I vaguely remember it being reviewed by Dreadnought (Don Pullen, our former AGS) when it was published, in this Journal.

As all train drivers know, there is a mountain of railway books, magazines, DVDs, photos and models that reflect and pay homage to this industry. When photographers and trainspotters are drooling over traction and rolling stock little regard is ever taken of the person operating it or who prepared it for its journey. Likewise, there is a romantic notion that for railway people it’s a vocation, that to work in this industry negates the notion of a normal life.

Frank’s book sets out to put the record straight. This social history is a gritty, honest reflection of the day to day labours of people not seen or often thought about who made this industry tick, and the regimented structure and discipline they graft under until the end of steam.

Three books – Engines and Men by JR Raynes, The Lighted Flame by Norman McKillop and Driven by Ideas by Robert Griffiths – set out ASLEF’s history, our struggles, our achievements and the reasons we did what we did to get where we are today. Frank McKenna’s book sets out why.

This man was a footplatem an, a rep, and an insider, so he was able to write an unbiased even-handed account of the lives of people in this industry and explain how necessary organisations like ours came into existence.

Every self-respecting rep or aspiring rep, should have this book on their shelf alongside those histories. Because it’s as relevant now as it was when it first published. Try and get a reprint. It’s a social history masterpiece that should be close to all our hearts; read it and weep, then thank your God you were born in this generation and not the last.

Cliff Holloway, Euston branch

MARK PALMER

Honey monster

Mark Palmer, a big man in every sense, leaves a hole in the hearts and memories of Selhurst train crew after his sudden passing in August.

Mark came to the railway at the age of 18 in 1983 to work at East Croydon (the buffet serving the breakfasts. Marky, Honey Monster or Mr Jerk Chicken Man, as he was affectionately known, used to be a shy and quiet stick insect, believe it or not! As the old boys know only too well, drivers used to like a drink at work (‘Really? do I hear you say) and when, one day, he refused to serve one in uniform that really upset the driver and didn’t bode well for Mark’s future.

But that changed when he got a job as a guard in 1986 and started to come out of his shell. Though some pranksters at Selhurst he was well known and liked across the whole company and there will be a lot of slimmer staff now as they’re missing his patties and jerk chicken.

With Mark’s passing it feels something is missing; he was one of the real characters on the railway and still, to this day, brings a smile to your face when you are reminded of his daily banter and joking around. A collection was held and a memorial bench has now been installed at Selhurst; so if you’re ever visiting us, please take a while to sit and smile and to remember Mark Palmer – a friend to all.

Andrew Cook, secretary, Selhurst branch

Norwood thought it would be a good laugh to climb to the top of the old water tower before it was demolished. Mark got six feet up before vertigo set in, asking for a parachute and having to be helped back down!

He was the last of the second men at Norwood to come to Selhurst for his driving job in ‘88. That was when we started to see the real Mark we knew and loved. He was much more confident, relaxed and very sociable and always enjoyed the supper club, going to different restaurants and trying different food along the way – not so much of the stick insect any more.

He was on the social committee and kept the peace among some of the more rowdy members. He was a loyal and keen ASLEF member and took great pride in supporting the local staff reps as a co-opted rep at meetings and was also in charge of the lottery syndicate – so, if you have any influence upstairs, Mark, please sort out those numbers for us!

One of Mark’s downfalls was early turns which he hated with a passion as he loved his bed. The managers knew to look out of the window for him as he always left it to the last possible minute to get into work – even though he only lived up the road. In recent years he worked a permanent late shift but the managers still had to look out of the window for him.

Because Mark has worked both shifts over his many years at Selhurst he was well known and liked across the whole company and there will be a lot of slimmer staff now as they’re missing his patties and jerk chicken.

With Mark’s passing it feels something is missing; he was one of the real characters on the railway and still, to this day, brings a smile to your face when you are reminded of his daily banter and joking around. A collection was held and a memorial bench has now been installed at Selhurst; so if you’re ever visiting us, please take a while to sit and smile and to remember Mark Palmer – a friend to all.

Andrew Cook, secretary, Selhurst branch

The ASLEF JOURNAL
Prize Crossword No. 93 set by Zebedee

Across
1 Martial art form (4)
4 Greek who wrote fables (5)
7 Describing a straight line (6)
8 Beach covering (4)
9 Way (5)
10 Mutter (6)
11 American space agency (4)
12 Water burn (5)
13 Interpose (6)
16 Legal document (4)
18 Instruct someone to go somewhere (4)
19 Short sleep (6)
21 Eye-cover (5)
22 Constellation, _ _ _ Minor (4)
24 Ancient potion (6)
25 Outline (5)
26 Paralysed (4)
27 Quell (6)
28 Heading (5)
29 Tax (4)

Down
1 Singer, _ _ _ Donovan (5)
2 Children’s card game (3, 4)
3 Blondie singer, _ _ _ Harry (6)
4 Apprehend (6)
5 Frankfurter (7)
6 Begged (7)
14 Mineral spring (3)
15 Fled (3)
16 Down-payment (7)
17 Short passage (7)
18 Snubbed (7)
19 Dairy product (6)
20 Novel by George du Mariner (6)
23 Monastic building (5)

Solution to prize crossword No 92 which appeared in the December 2013 edition of the ASLEF Journal

Across
1 Scissors 5 Tear 7 Vice 8 Horrible 9 Riddle 12 Menthol 15 Collect 19 Female 21 Upheaval 22 Dome 23 Hold 24 Thousand
Down 1 Severn 2 Spend 3 Ochre 4 Shrine 5 Trivet 6 Rueful 10 Dual 11 Luge 12 MOT 13 Nude 14 Ha-ha 15 Crouch 16 Legend 17 Cravat 18 Defend 19 Faldo 20 Midas

Congratulations to Shirley Ward of Stafford who was last month’s winner.

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

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MARKS & SPENCER

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

Thanks for all your responses to the 92nd ASLEF crossword in the December edition. If you successfully complete this month’s crossword please send the solution to the Editor, ASLEF Journal, 77 St John Street, London, EC1M 4NN by 14 January

More than just a union

MORRIS BULGREN

THOMPSONS SOLICITORS

MORE THAN JUST A UNION

More than just a union

JANUARY 2014

CROSSWORD 23

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MARRIAGE

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