Chris Grayling: Does he ride a red nose reindeer?
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Look to the future
it's only just begun

T'S THE time of year when, traditionally, we take stock; when we reflect on where we've been, where we are and where we want to go. I had hoped to be rather more upbeat about the future for our families, our industry, and our country, but recent international events, and the dogmatic approach of Maggie's grandchildren, do not encourage this! If Donald Trump, as President of the United States, carries out half the pledges he made whilst campaigning, the world is going to be a more dangerous place. Using Britain's future as a political tool, and not preparing for all possible outcomes, as David Cameron did with Brexit, was the ultimate in political callousness; and then Theresa May appointing Liam Fox, David Davis and our old friend Boris Johnson to negotiate the terms of leaving seems like a very bad dream.

Six and a half years of Conservative-led coalition, and Tory government, have created a country where one in four of our children are living below the poverty line and homelessness is growing, as are zero hours contracts. Shameful in a so-called civilised society, and the sixth richest nation in the world.

We don't want to live in that sort of society; we want to live and work in a world where education and the NHS are available to all, at no cost, and where the next generation has a secure future in safe and properly regulated industries. That's why, as trade unionists, we are fighting every day to retain our hard-won rights and I know our officers and reps have worked exceptionally hard on your behalf this year.

For our freight colleagues, under threat of live redundancies, and uncertain futures, our thoughts are with you at this very difficult time; and for those taking up the cudgels against DOO, for a safer, and properly staffed railway, thank you.

The future should always be one of hope and aspiration so my thanks go to the executive committee, officers, representatives and branch officials who have this year, as in the past, striven to ensure that we always look forwards and deliver for the union. Thank you for your solidarity and support and I want to wish you and your family a Happy Christmas and a safe and prosperous New Year.

Yours fraternally
Mick Whelan, general secretary
HE Association of British Commuters has called on the Department for Transport to step in and prevent a tragedy on Southern Rail. ‘We have been inundated with reports of health and safety risks related to overcrowding on the Southern Rail network,’ said a spokesperson. ‘Problems we witnessed for many months, and reached their peak during the strike action. Our lawyers have written to the DfT seeking clarity on whether they conducted any risk analysis in advance of the RMT strikes, and at what point the DfT will consider these risks sufficiently serious to warrant termination of the franchise. ‘We want to know what instructions, if any, the DfT has given to GTR to minimise the effect on rail users, and whether GTR’s implementation of these instructions is being properly monitored. Witness reports include violence at Brighton station, dangerous overcrowding, mass panic, mass rushes along overcrowded platforms to board trains after last minute announcements, and a child abandoned on a platform due to overcrowding. ‘The DfT has failed to enforce the GTR franchise agreement and is evading responsibility to provide proper transparency. We have no confidence in GTR’s management of the network, or the DfT’s oversight; extra

**ASLEF looks outward as some nations look inward.** Kevin Lindsay, ASLEF’s organiser in Scotland, presents a cheque for £5,000 to Saheliya, a charity which promotes positive mental health and wellbeing among minority black, ethnic, refugee and migrant women in Glasgow and Edinburgh.

**DOO illegal says Dot**

The National Pensioners’ Convention, Britain’s biggest organisation for senior citizens, says driver only operation is illegal under the Equality Act. ‘Our concern is that if a driver only train runs to an unstaffed station, with a passenger who is unable to exit the train unassisted, an offence will be committed under the Equality Act 2010 by putting that person at a substantial disadvantage,’ said Dot Gibson, general secretary of the NPC. ‘This needs to be understood and acted upon by the Office of Rail and Road, the Department for Transport and the train operating companies. After 30 years of commitment, effort and public expenditure, to ensure disabled people can travel by train with confidence, we risk taking a retrograde step that will effectively deny people these hard-won rights and freedoms.’

**QUOTE...**

‘No one should think we have any intention of eroding the rights we enjoy in this country through our process of leaving the European Union. We will be using the legislation before this House to entrench all existing workers’ rights in British law, whatever future relationship the UK has with the EU.’ – Greg Clark, Secretary of State for Business

**UNQUOTE**

**WELSH GOVERNMENT LOOKS ABROAD**

The Welsh government has offered its biggest procurement to the German, French or Dutch state railways, or to a company from Hong Kong. Arriva, KeolisAmey, Abellio and mTR are all bidding for the Wales & Borders franchise in 2018. Critics wonder why a Labour-led government in Wales is making the same mistake the SNP government is making in Scotland.

**ANDROUSSOS'S PLAN**

Grand Southern, a new open access operator, has revealed plans to compete with South West Trains on the London Waterloo to Southampton line, and with Great Western on the route from Paddington to Penzance. Grand Southern is a sister company of Grand Central, and a subsidiary of Arriva, which is wholly owned by the German state railway Deutsche Bahn.

**AIDEZ L’ESPAGNE**

Stan Hilton, the last surviving Briton who fought with the International Brigades against Franco’s fascists in Spain, has died at the age of 98. ‘The Spanish people needed help. It was the right thing to do,’ said Stan, who fought in the fierce battle for Teruel, and later served in the Merchant Navy during the Second World War.

**ARE YOUR DETAILS UP TO DATE?**

The Railways Pension Scheme wants to ensure you have given up to date details in case you die before you start claiming. ‘Your retirement benefits belong to you,’ says John Chilman of the RPS. ‘But what happens if you die before you start claiming these benefits? Your beneficiaries – your family, friends, or favourite charity – may get a cash lump sum worth up to four times your annual salary.’ Just log onto railwayspensions.co.uk, fill in or update your nominations form at myRPS and submit the form online. ‘It’s as quick and easy as that,’ says John.
People all over the world join hands start a love train

Here has always been the whiff of romance about trains – Brief Encounter, anyone? – and now Channel 4 is going all the way with a new dating show set on the railway.

Travel Crush, presented by Radio 1 DJ Alice Levine, aims to explore the concept of the rush hour crush, according to a spokesperson for production company Ten66 TV. Our aim is to play Cupid on daily commuter train journeys, in the hope of orchestrating some romance on the rails.

The programme, which begins filming on services into the capital this month, will give single people a chance to be introduced to the ‘super hot’ person they have only admired from afar. ‘I’m looking for someone who is not in the history of British Rail,’ said Alice. ‘It sounds really scary, but it’s going to be fun.’ Particularly, one imagines, for viewers.

People rarely look at other people, let alone talk to them on the train, or bus. I want to end the awkward, and get people talking to each other, and I’m confident sparks will soon begin to fly.

QUOTE...
‘Politics here (in the US) is visceral. It’s about not only policies and ideology, but instinct. The personal is now completely political, which makes the divide in the nation even deeper.’ – Phil Jones, editor of the Jeremy Vine show on Radio 2

…UNQUOTE

SJP’s mom pulls cord

Sarah Jessica Parker, who played Carrie in Sex and the City, in London to promote her fragrance Stash, recalls the time, in 1979, when ‘My mother and I were taking the train to the airport and somebody told us we had missed our stop. My mom pulled the emergency cord, the train came to a screeching halt, and she jumped off. A police officer told my mother that “not in the history of British Rail” had this ever happened.’

CONFERENCE & RALLIES

The Scottish Labour Party conference is at the Concert Hall in Perth from Friday 24 to Sunday 26 February. The Welsh Labour Party conference is at the Venue Cymru in Llandudno from Friday 24 to Sunday 26 March. The Scottish Trades Union Congress is at the Macdonald Highlands hotel, Aviemore, from Monday 24 to Wednesday 26 April. ASLEF’s annual assembly of delegates is at the Marriott Royal Hotel, Bristol, from Monday 22 to Thursday 25 May. The Durham Miners’ Gala is on Saturday 8 July. The Tolpuddle Martyrs’ festival, near Dorchester, is from Friday 14 to Sunday 16 July. The Trades Union Congress is at the Brighton Centre from Sunday 10 to Wednesday 13 September. The Labour Party conference is at the Brighton Centre from Sunday 24 to Wednesday 27 September.

500 CLUB: C Pratt, with number 167, won the November draw, scooping the RMS prize money jackpot of £384.

Off the rails

KEN LOACH, whose films include Cathy Come Home, Kes, The Price of Coal, and Land and Freedom, and whose new movie I, Daniel Blake, a moving parable of heartless welfare bureaucracy, won the Palme d’Or at Cannes, still has his old Labour Party membership card. ‘A historic document,’ Ken laughs, reading out clause four, purged by Tony Blair and Peter Mandelson from the party’s constitution, like so many members, for ‘calling for industry to be publicly-owned under workers’ control. I’ve stuck by that. The Labour Party has shifted.’

THERESA MAY, accepting the Spectator’s Politician of the Year award, delivered a withering put down of David Cameron’s spinmeister Craig Oliver. ‘I’m particularly pleased to see Craig is here tonight. Sorry, Sir Craig… In his book on the referendum campaign, Craig says that when he heard the result he walked out of the office, into Whitehall, and startedretching violently. I have to say I think we all know that feeling. Most of us experienced it, too, when we saw his name on the resignation honours’ list. Ouch…

DAVID CAMERON sent Boris Johnson a gloating text message after his leadership bid was holed beneath the waterline by Michael Gove. Tim Shipman, political editor of the Sunday Times, reveals in his new book All Out War (Collins, £25) that on the day the blond bombshell’s long-held ambition to become Conservative Party leader, and Prime Minister, was thwarted, DC texted Bojo, ‘You should have stuck with me, mate.’

KEN CLARKE, in his political memoir Kind of Blue (Macmillan, £25), calls the former Prime Minister’s decision to hold a referendum ‘reckless and irresponsible’. He writes: ‘David’s chancer-like gamble, taken for tactical internal party management reasons, turned out to be the worst political mistake made by any British Prime Minister in my lifetime.’

ROBERT PESTON, ITV’s political editor, sporting cuts and bruises after falling off his bike, ended his Sunday morning show by saying, ‘I was perfectly sober when I fell off my drunk.’ Flustered and realising his gaffe, he quickly corrected himself, ‘I mean, I was perfectly sober when I fell off my bike!’

COLLETTE GIBSON, just selected to stand in Bocking for Essex county council, was surprised when we reported last month that after the journalist, activist and author Owen Smith came over to the ASLEF train crew in Pizza Express during the Labour Party conference she had muttered wishfully, ‘If only I were twenty years younger…and a different sex.’ It was, of course, Owen Jones, not Owen Smith. Sorry, Collette! And sorry, Owen…
Safe to say I’ve had enough

**MICK HOLDER**, of ASLEF’s health & safety department, reports on the TUC’s latest h&s survey

While the total number of health and safety representatives from all unions replying to the TUC’s biennial safety rep survey has fallen, the number of ASLEF reps replying increased considerably this year, giving us a very good opportunity to review the issues affecting our members. In all 86 ASLEF safety reps completed the survey, 9% of the total, and fifth largest of all unions contributing.

The main concerns include stress – with 77% of reps citing stress as a problem – followed by back strain (66%); slips, trips, and falls on the level (62%); long hours (62%); noise (58%); working alone (53%); bullying and harassment (49%); RSI (46%); violence and threats (46%); overwork (42%); high temperatures (38%); cramped working conditions (33%); dust (33%); and workplace transport accidents (33%).

Fatigue, among other issues raised by reps, was mentioned several times, as was over reliance on overtime working; shortage of staff; shift work; DOO; and poor facilities.

Reps reported that almost all employers now have a safety policy and record risk assessments as required by law. But only 68% said the assessments were adequate, with 32% of reps not involved at all and 48% saying they were involved, but not enough.

Almost all reps have been on a stage 1 TUC health & safety course (95%); more than half on a stage 2 course; and 18% on the follow-on certificate course. But, worryingly, 63% said management had refused time off for training, with 23% saying they were too busy at work, and 20% prevented by family responsibilities. On average, reps said they spent between one and five hours on h&s matters every week.

One in eight reps said their employer has been served with a notice by the ORR and half said the employer only did the minimum required to comply. One in five said their employer had been visited by an ORR inspector in the last 12 months; a quarter were made aware of the visit beforehand and the inspector spoke to a safety rep. Worryingly, nearly half – 44% – said the visiting inspector did not talk to a safety rep on the visit.

**¡No pasarán!**

Rodney Bickerstaffe, former GS of the National Union of Public Employees and then Unison, and EC president Tosh McDonald join the cast of Townsend Productions’ touring version of Dare Devil Rides to Jarama, Neil Gore’s sparkling new play about speedway star Clem Beckett, and the poet and critic Christopher Caudwell, who fought Fascism with the International Brigades in Spain.

**Recruitment drive**

More than 15,000 men and women have applied to drive VTEC’s new Hitachi Azuma trains in the biggest – and long overdue – recruitment drive on the east coast main line since the 1980s. The company, which wants to recruit 78 drivers to start their trains in the biggest – and long overdue – recruitment drive on the east coast main line since the 1980s. The company, which wants to recruit 78 drivers to start their trains in the biggest – and long overdue – recruitment drive on the east coast main line since the 1980s. The company, which wants to recruit 78 drivers to start their trains in the biggest – and long overdue – recruitment drive on the east coast main line since the 1980s. The company, which wants to recruit 78 drivers to start their trains in the biggest – and long overdue – recruitment drive on the east coast main line since the 1980s. 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**ALRIGHT ON THE NIGHT**

The Piccadilly line Night Tube is set to start on Friday 16 December. It joins the all night service on fridays and saturdays on the central and victoria lines (which began in August); Jubilee (october) and northern (november).

‘While we welcome the additional services, and the benefits they bring, a number of recent incidents cause us concern,’ said DO8 finn Brennan. ‘in particular the lack of management support to a driver on the Central line after a violent incident has raised serious questions about staffing levels throughout the night. Senior reps are meeting management to discuss these issues and the continued lack of facilities for Night Tube drivers at many locations.’

**QUOTE…**

‘A capitalism shaped by the few and unaccountable to the many is a threat to all.’ – **Barack Obama**

…**UNQUOTE**

**Borderline fail**

The new Borders Railway service has serious problems with cancellations, delays and unreliable trains, according to a new report. The Borders Rail Monitor says the line, run by Abellio ScotRail, which reopened in September last year, has been blighted by delays caused, in part, by poor infrastructure choices imposed by Transport Scotland.

The report, which condemns the ‘serious under performance’ of the service, says, ‘Transport Scotland determined the constrained infrastructure specification and the decision to deploy Class 158 units – the least reliable diesel units in Scotland – for a route with steep gradients and multiple stops on every train service’. A ScotRail spokesperson claimed, ‘Borders Railway has been an extraordinary success’ but added, ‘There have been some challenges and we’re determined to find the solutions.’

**WASTE OF MONEY**

Tosh McDonald, EC president, said: ‘It’s a sad indictment of Britain’s segregated, privatised railways that while DB Cargo announces mass redundancies Stagecoach – VTEC is 10% owned by Virgin, 90% by Stagecoach – is recruiting and training new drivers. What a waste of money, and training, squandering the fantastic resource that is a professional, qualified and experienced train driver.’

**MONUMENTAL VICTORY FOR DRIVERS**

Uber drivers have won the right to be treated as employees – to be paid the minimum wage and get holiday pay – in a landmark employment tribunal ruling, brought by the GMB, which could turn back the tide of the low pay, zero hours contracts, gig economy loved by bosses and loathed by vulnerable workers.

**Marz Colombini models ASLEF’s Kes tee-shirt – with a Harvey Smith to the Tories’ anti-Trade Union Act – based on the iconic image from the famous Ken Loach film. £10 (inc p&p); email info@aslef.org.uk or visit our online shop at www.aslef.org.uk**

**FOR Drivers**

UBER drivers have won the right to be treated as employees – to be paid the minimum wage and get holiday pay – in a landmark employment tribunal ruling, brought by the GMB, which could turn back the tide of the low pay, zero hours contracts, gig economy loved by bosses and loathed by vulnerable workers.
DOO not fit for purpose

Mick Whelan has told MPs why ASLEF is opposed to the introduction and/or extension of driver only operated routes, why the union is balloting members on Southern for industrial action, and why DOO is inherently unsafe.

‘It’s been our policy for over 15 years to seek to eradicate DOO,’ said Mick. ‘DOO was designed for three-car 317s on the Bed-Pan line in the late ‘80s early ‘90s. But increased footfall in our industry means that, unfortunately, when you have 1,100 passengers on 12 cars and you get two seconds to check 24 sets of doors, well, we don’t feel that’s adequate time to deal properly with the safety of the public.’

Mick was giving evidence about the industrial dispute with GTR on Southern, and the failure of franchising, to the House of Commons Transport Select Committee in the Grimond Room at Portcullis House on 24 October.

‘We were aware [of plans for DOO on Southern] and did consult with the DfT but they go through a token exercise and ignore the input. We did warn of the possible outcome of changing terms and conditions and methods of working through the invitation to tender. But the company is saying the government has told them to do this; so the people trying to resolve this situation don’t have the power to resolve it.

‘The difference between us, and the DfT and some of the companies we have to deal with, is that we’re honourable. Where we have agreements we seek to change them because we think they’re inherently unsafe. And the industry is now catching up. DOO is not fit for purpose. There are blind spots all over the place.’

Finn’s top of the CLASS

Finn Brennan, ASLEF’s organiser on London Underground, spoke at the annual CLASS conference – organised by the Centre for Labour and Social Studies – at Congress House on 5 November. Finn, who shared a platform with Andrew Cumbes of Glasgow University, Cat Hobbs of We Own It, and Andrew Towers of the CWU, in a debate about public ownership, used what’s happening in the rail freight industry as an example of the chaos caused by privatisation. ‘Strategic decisions about the future of the industry are vital to carbon reduction and economic growth in Britain but will be made in a boardroom in Berlin.’

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QUOTE...
‘The problem with Europe is the euro.’ – Joseph Stiglitz, Professor of Economics, Columbia University, and Nobel Prize winner

...UNQUOTE

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10 days that shook the world

A year of events to mark the centenary of the Russian revolution – which will culminate in a conference at Congress House on 4 November 2017 – was launched at the Marx Memorial Library last month, in the building on Clerkenwell Green where Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov, better known by his nom de guerre, Lenin, published the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party’s newspaper Iskra (‘spark’) at the start of the last century.

OFF TRACK

Philippa Edmunds, manager of Freight on Rail, took the commentator Simon Jenkins to task in The Guardian:

‘Simon fails to recognise the socio-economic benefit of using rail transport as part of an integrated approach so the different transport modes can play to their strengths. Rail is well placed to offer long distance trunk haul for consumer as well as bulk cargoes because each freight train can remove up to 130 HGVs from our congested road network, reducing congestion, collisions and pollution. Then low emissions vehicles, instead of HGVs, can be used for urban deliveries.’

Finn addresses the Transport Select Committee at Westminster
Making plans for Nigel – we only want what’s best for him

The tradition of naming trains is as old as the railway – think of Stephenson’s Rocket in 1829 – and followed the convention of naming ships. It’s an honour accorded to very few. EC1 MARZ COLOMBINI reports on company council rep Nigel Cummins who now has his name on the side of a loco

SLEF reps from across South West Trains gathered on the down bay platform at Woking to witness the company’s managing director, Christian Roth, unveil a newly painted MPV named in honour of long standing company council representative Nigel Cummins.

Nigel has been central to ASLEF negotiations at company level since his election nearly two decades ago. Nigel has been modest in his acceptance of this well-deserved recognition, suggesting that credit for what we achieve should be directed at the collective rather than the individual. While a noble sentiment, it is beyond doubt that, over the years, Nigel has brought more than his fair share to the table.

QUOTE...
‘Bitter experience has taught me that Virgin trains are unreliable and that one should never, under any circumstances, use their toilets. It’s best to go before or, at a pinch, soil oneself. After all, using one more or less amounts to the same thing.’ – Nicholas Lezard, New Statesman

Refuse to be afraid

After a security alert on London Underground – when the bomb squad was called to deal with a suspicious package discovered on a Jubilee line train at North Greenwich station, near the O2 arena – DO8 Finn Brennan issued this statement: ‘We live at a time when the threat of a terrorist attack is all too real; many of us have vivid memories of what happened in July 2005. Terrorists thrive on creating fear and division. They want us to be frightened; to be afraid to go out, to travel, to go to work, and fear our neighbours. The best response is to refuse to be afraid. ‘Of course we should take the precautions we know are sensible and always follow safety procedures. But we must never give in to the fear that terrorists try to create. We should never give them the easy victories they want.’

‘Staff across the transport network always put the safety of their passengers first. They will continue to do so, whatever the circumstances, and will be even more alert than usual. But they will not give in to fear. They will continue, calmly and professionally, to do their job of keeping our city moving.’

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Nigel next to the MPV, and his name plate (left), and with the ASLEF train crew (above)

has delivered a string of successful clause nine hearings and appeals. He has played a pivotal role in delivering our policies and aspirations, most notably the introduction of the 35 hour four day week now enjoyed by our members employed by SWT.

Nigel was modest in his acceptance of this well-deserved recognition, suggesting that credit for what we achieve should be directed

Eurotunnel is selling GBRf

Eurotunnel is selling GB Railfreight, Britain’s third biggest rail freight operator, to EQT Infrastructure II, a Swedish private equity firm which says the acquisition is an integral part of its plan to create a pan-European rail freight operator. GBRf, formed in 1999, became part of FirstGroup in 2003. Seven years later First sold the company to Eurotunnel’s subsidiary

GBRf: from Europorte to EQT

GBRf has 15% of the rail freight market, employs 650 staff, operates 130 locomotives and 1,000 wagons and moves more than 1,000 loads each week. The company was

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QUOTE...
‘Bitter experience has taught me that Virgin trains are unreliable and that one should never, under any circumstances, use their toilets. It’s best to go before or, at a pinch, soil oneself. After all, using one more or less amounts to the same thing.’ – Nicholas Lezard, New Statesman

…UNQUOTE
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Now PM wants to put workers on the board

Theresa May says she wants to put workers in the company boardroom.

GREGOR GALL, Professor of Industrial Relations at the University of Bradford, examines what this might mean in practice

Politically, we live in extraordinary times. Look no further than Theresa May making the most radical proposal – for the extension of workplace democracy – in a generation. Two days before she was installed as Prime Minister, back in July, she pledged to ‘have not just consumers represented on company boards, but employees as well’. In her first speech to the Conservative Party conference in October she repeated her pledge, almost word for word, saying ‘later this year we will publish our plans to have not just consumers represented on company boards, but workers as well’.

Devil in the detail

Any right-minded trade unionist should welcome the proposal to put workers on the boards of public limited companies. But we will be wary of what form the worker directors might take – because the devil will be in the detail.

There are a number of reasons for this wariness. First, the reaction from business and corporate leaders has been lukewarm, to say the least. Consequently, they can be expected to seek to water down anything which they see as too radical. Second, May has appointed Matthew Taylor, a former adviser to Tony Blair, to draft proposals for fair employment, saying ‘later this year we will publish our plans to have not just consumers represented on company boards, but employees as well’.

But it is the longer historical record that sheds more illuminating light on May’s proposal. Back in 1975 the then Labour government commissioned a Committee of Inquiry on Industrial Democracy. It terms were: ‘Accepting the need for a radical extension of industrial democracy in the control of companies by means of representation on boards of directors, and accepting the essential role of trade union organizations in this process, to consider how such an extension can best be achieved.’

Chatham House rules

Led by an Oxford academic, Sir Alan Bullock, the committee published majority and minority reports. The majority report recommended that companies with more than 2,000 employees establish worker directors on the basis of a ’2x+y’ formula where one ’x’ stood for the representatives of capital (employers and their managers) and the other ’x’ for the representatives of labour (workers and their unions). Both were to be equal in number while ’y’ stood for independent, third party representatives like lawyers or academics, present to cast a deciding vote and break any deadlock.

The proposal was never implemented on account of the Labour government imploding; opposition from unions fearing interference in their much-valued free collective bargaining; and because the new PM, Margaret Thatcher, was determined to reduce workers’ rights, and trade union rights, after moving into Downing Street in May 1979.

But the majority report did at least flag up that if workers are to be genuinely influential on a company board, they need to be more than token representatives. Equal representation with capital must therefore be a foundation stone, as must be sitting on the main board of the company and not auxiliary or secondary ones. But it is difficult to see May coming up with anything other than having just a single worker director, easily outmanoeuvred, and outvoted, on each board.

But there are other requirements, too, for effective worker representation, such as: the uninhibited freedom for workers to choose their own representatives as worker directors; worker directors not being subject to Chatham House rules which prevent them from sharing information from the company board with their own members; worker directors being given full and unfettered access to company information so they can engage properly in the decision making process (with the rationale of commercial sensitivity not giving the usual blanket immunity); worker directors being under no obligation other than to serve their members’ interests; and collective bargaining not being restricted by the operation of company boards with worker directors on them.

Influencing elections

There should be no company size thresholds so that all public companies are covered. Nor should there be any requirement to trigger a request for worker directors with a certain level of employee support as there currently is for European works councils. Companies should not be able to appoint worker directors – as Sports Direct seems intent on doing – and employers should be barred from playing any role in influencing elections for worker directors.

So any right-minded trade unionist will want to see more meat put on the sparse bones of Theresa May’s proposal before making a definite judgment. They will be able to use the historical record to guide that evaluation. And, for ASLEF, the experience of FirstGroup’s employee director being an ASLEF member will also play a part in helping to evaluate her proposal.
 Collapse of DBC

DB Cargo, Britain’s biggest rail freight operator, shocked the railway industry when it announced in October that it planned to make 893 redundancies – including 391 drivers – out of a workforce of 2,974. ASLEF’s assistant general secretary SIMON WELLER reports on the union’s negotiations with the company.

A S MANY of you are aware, some more acutely than others, the freight operator DB Cargo (the renamed DB Schenker) is in serious financial difficulties. The collapse in coal and steel traffic, coupled with reductions in engineering, international and intermodal trains has resulted in the company claiming an 85% fall in revenues over the last two years.

SELF-INFLICTED PROBLEMS

Some of this comes as no surprise – and we had been advising them not to recruit at coal depots because we knew there would be a drop in traffic. As well as the quite appalling, and obvious, self-inflicted problems the company had in managing certain contracts, their litany of failed contract renewals had been there for all to see. The fact that we were becoming quite expert at TUPE was a significant clue to the problems that were piling up.

Make no doubt about it, the skies have darkened with the chickens coming home to roost, and DBC is in serious trouble, running unsustainable losses of £1.5m a week. Flogging off land may have kept the books balanced for a short time – but that time is now past.

German appointments have replaced the vacant, and formerly British, chief executive officer and human resources director posts. The new CEO has now set upon a significant restructuring of the business.

For us, this restructuring is twofold. One is the redundancy of 391 drivers and D/Ops out of 1,116, a seemingly arbitrary 35% reduction in the head count. The second part is the 725 remaining will have new terms & conditions imposed. These t&cs are vastly different to what is in place now and only fill three and a half pages of A4. They consist of, amongst other things, open-ended ‘white’ rosters, mandatory lodging, IT based route learning, remote booking on, removal of restrictions around PNsBs, the closure of all depots and the creation of 19 new hubs. Drivers are to be expected to report for duty at specified locations within these hubs, which are just a defined geographic zone, all within a half hour of a central point (which is simply a pin in a map rather than a physical location).

The company claims that, without these changes, it will go bankrupt and lose all 1,116 drivers’ jobs.

There is some truth in that – they need to make some changes to survive – and the freight sector is vastly different to the traditional TOCs.

Because, in this context, the TOCs are not privatised at all; they are simply carrying out government contracts, and the staff are paid through the medium of a bus company. If the franchise changes hands or the bus company running it throws in the towel then the franchise returns to the government until they re-let it. However, in the fully privatised freight sector, drivers are not passed from franchise holder to franchise holder and their fortunes are intrinsically linked to the freight company itself. If it fails, the drivers become unemployed.

NAKED LAND GRAB

We have significant challenges in dealing with the 391 redundancies, the scale of which we have not seen since the demise of steam, but what they are proposing is, in part, a naked land grab and, in other parts, so ill-thought out that it has the potential to do more harm.

Whilst voluntary redundancies are an option for some, we are also working with many other employers, including those within the DB-owned Arriva group, to secure jobs for our comrades employed by DBC in an attempt to ensure their valuable skills are not lost to the industry and they remain in worthwhile employment.

The balancing act for us is to achieve changes to the proposed t&cs without putting any more drivers’ jobs at risk or acquiescing in a turbo-charged race to the bottom.

Negotiations are slow and painful and, to be perfectly frank, I do not hold out much hope of a successful outcome.

BONFIRE OF THE SALARIES

Some depots labouring under the threat of redundancies are still crying out for rest day working, barely able to resource lucrative government contracts – the company’s default position is to blame the drivers and their t&cs – yet these are the same t&cs they gladly signed up to but chose not to implement properly. Neither have they trained their drivers, their key staff, to the necessary levels to give them the flexible workforce and capability to effectively resource their customers’ trains; despite our repeated efforts.

My experience of working with other unions is that no company in trouble was saved by a wholesale bonfire of salaries and t&cs and I feel that DBC’s problems are so fundamental, and so far gone, that the proposed changes are a smoke screen for the years of incompetence for which our members are now paying the price.

Whatever happens we will not be going down without a fight – and we will continue to defend our members’ jobs and livelihoods, just as we always have done.
T'S A seven hour journey by train between Pennsylvania's two big cities, Philadelphia and Pittsburgh. The train itself is enormous, a hulking, shining example of the grandeur and splendour of American manufacturing and comfort. Today there is formidable air conditioning, and lightly attired passengers sink and cower near-frozen in armchair sized seats.

Taking the train is considerably cheaper than taking the plane and the advertising actively promises that passengers will marvel at rivers converging, sun dried distant mountains, and the Pennsylvania Dutch who will be riding horses and knocking up houses before going to church in the 18th century countryside.

Eventually, though, it just becomes grotesquely slow and gruelling, crawling through the 349 miles of Pennsylvania's Keystone Corridor.

Harrisburg, the state capital, is strategically placed like an umpire between the two big cities. We arrive there after being warned, twice, that today's journey may take a little longer than planned. From Harrisburg the train negotiates, slowly, onto track owned by the great American freight companies. Frankly, the track of the great American railroad looks old and knackered. We're continually side-lined to make way for slow, and mile-long, freight trains. Passenger rail is not the track owners' concern. It's little wonder that Michael Portillo chose to make the shorter trip to Gettysburg.

**HOMES IN THE HOOD**

His white hair and beard were matted with the dirt and grime of living at the mercy of Bible Way. He, too, was peddling bottled water, out on the pavement for just one dollar. Peckham Spring – remember that episode of Only Fools and Horses? – was my immediate thought, but could I loan him a dollar and also buy his water? The Korean woman barked in Korean until bottled water appeared – as did a packet of Marlboro I hadn't ordered. She barked at me, again in Korean, and a homeless man in overalls appeared at my side.

**NEW DEAL FOR AMERICA**

‘While they’re building here, people gets jobs. People get jobs, they move out of poverty. People move out of poverty, new opportunities arise.’ It all seems pretty straightforward. Reinvestment in infrastructure is a recurring theme in modern America – think back to FDR, the New Deal, and Hoover Dam. The unions argue that investing in infrastructure creates jobs, which in turn creates wealth. ‘There wasn’t a shop for miles,’ one woman tells me with a toothless grin. ‘People would not come to the neighbourhood. They would not invest in us. So I went and sat with the big men in suits and told them, ‘Build us a supermarket and we’ll shop there. Offer us jobs and we’ll work there.’ They came and they’re still coming around.’

There’s a potentially extraordinary success story in the making here. And local people are the key to change. My toothless new friend, apparently aimlessly on porches in front of black neighbourhoods, with people sitting and talking. In places where history, racism, budget cuts and austerity historically hit hardest, he has always championed affordable social housing.

One brother is raising his children as Presbyterian, the other as antagonised Catholics. One has a fridge full of beer, the other a safe where he keeps his guns. One apparently plans to drink any intruder to death, the other will discharge his weapon of choice should the opportunity present itself.
hating. No burglary, no graffiti, no stabblings, shootings or theft. The new streets are clean streets.

In the new and old churches along Bible Way, they were telling often disillusioned people to get out and vote for Hillary Clinton in November. These are not natural Trump supporters. ‘Let’s just say,’ smiles Hughes, with masterful understatement, ‘at least Trump has been honest about how he thinks.’

Why the train to Pittsburgh stops where it stops, and not at some of the other empty stations, is still a mystery to me. I jot down some of their names and we slide into Steel City only one hour late.

STOSH IN THE DEER HUNTER

My taxi driver thinks I’m Australian and asks if there is much crime in Australia. ‘There’s lots of crime here,’ he offers, ‘gun crime. It’s mainly the blacks, the negroes…’ He looks in the rear-view mirror to see how I respond. I’m torn between bemusement and how quaint that term now is. He reminds me of Stanley (Stosh), the John Cazale character in The Deer Hunter.

Steel City’s tall glass buildings look almost satanic. Pittsburgh’s workforce made their mark on the city in the early 19th century when workers organised, agitated and rioted whenever they felt the pace of industrial change was too exploitative. They provided the industrial muscle for America’s contribution to World War Two. Pittsburgh and the surrounding satellite mill towns produced most of the steel used in American manufacturing and famously provided the setting for The Deer Hunter about the effect of steel workers, and friends, being sent to Vietnam. The film was set in Clairton, just outside Pittsburgh, in the Monongahela River Valley. In 1988 Clairton was designated a distressed municipality after the steel industry collapsed. More than 48,000 American steel workers have lost their jobs since the turn of the century.

Leo Gerard, president of the United Steel Workers union, is strolling across the highly polished floor of the Philadelphia Museum of Art to shake my hand. (Rocky Bilbao ran up the steps of this museum in another iconic film).

OVERTHE LINE AHEAD OF SANDERS

Today the Alliance for American Manufacturing, a coalition of manufacturers and trade unions campaigning to protect manufacturing, and jobs, in the United States, throws its weight behind Hillary Clinton. It’s the week of the Democratic national convention and Clinton is just getting over the line ahead of Bernie Sanders.

Clinton’s advisers rub shoulders and talk with journalists, labour organisers, and steelworkers. The USW and AAM back her campaign and, in return, she’s definitely backing American manufacturing, particularly today.

The American labour unions have around 18 million members and, traditionally, deliver 65-70% of their vote to the Democrats. Not just stalling deindustrialisation but reversing it is where Gerard wants Clinton’s manufacturing policy. The AAM champions the German model where 23% of jobs are either in, or related to, manufacturing.

Anecdotally, Sanders and Trump – the two outsiders, one on and one off the ticket – were far more popular than Clinton on the shop and factory floor. The offices, the ‘locals’ as they call them, of the USW I visited in both Philadelphia and Pittsburgh still had their Bernie Sanders bunting up.

COMMITMENT TO FREE TRADE

If Gerard’s demand for more investment in American infrastructures – with American companies using American materials and unionised workers – is met, that demand will be the biggest challenge yet to the country’s commitment to free trade.

My friend in the USW office in Pittsburgh denies that ‘steel work is in decline’. It’s best described, he says, as ‘stagnant’ – despite 12,000 steel jobs being lost between 2014 and 2015. Steel is under attack, and has been since the 1970s America opened up competition to the Japanese. Shortly after Robert De Niro and Christopher Walken headed off to Nam, Japanese steel, clean and competitive, was being delivered by the great American railroad for American steel workers to marvel at. The industry came under attack from a source that was in recession for 40 years’ says Gerard bitterly.

After the Japanese, the Chinese entered the fray. Experienced steel workers I spoke to lay the blame at the feet of Bill Clinton, and Barack Obama, for making trade agreements with the Chinese that disadvantaged American manufacturing. China’s government-owned and state-supported steel industry now makes almost half the world’s steel. A problem we understand only too well in Britain, too.

In the steel valleys around Pittsburgh, the massive mills are operating well below capacity. In one case, 40 men and women work furnaces once attended by thousands. Workers talk of having to sign long-term contracts, that are non-negotiable, solely so the steel companies can compete in the open market. It would be easier too for companies to move interstate where the ‘right to work’ in Republican states as good as guarantees non-unionised, unorganised, workers. But for now, in the main, the steel industry wants to work with the likes of Leo Gerard, who can bring presidential candidates to the table.

SHE WENT TO WAR INSTEAD

Many men and women now make the short journey from the valleys to Pittsburgh to try and pick up work. One worker, hand on hips, described the choice as a ‘toss-up between that or death’. The AAM’s proposals and Clinton’s policies are met with cynicism by some. ‘It’s the same, every election. They run to blue collar workers with all kinds of promises.’ One ex-steel worker told us how Obama went to her steel plant during his first term to announce a major new initiative only days before the mill was closed and hundreds made redundant. The beginnings of President Obama’s (literal) pipe dream to build a gas pipe the length of the country, still lies in the railway sidings in town. She told me she joined the air force, and went to war instead.
Talking about the options and talking about sweet time

Four out of five managers get no training on how to support people with cancer. JIM PETERS of the Retired Members’ Section reminds them of their responsibilities under the law

ALF of us will get cancer at some point in our lives, according to the most recent data from Cancer Research UK. Considering how likely it is that we will get, or be affected by, the Big C the findings from a YouGov survey earlier this year become even more concerning. In that survey, of 1,010 line managers, commissioned by Macmillan Cancer Support, four out of five managers admitted that they are not given any training on how to support people with cancer or other long-term conditions.

The survey also revealed a misconception among line managers, with one in four thinking that making reasonable adjustments to allow someone with cancer to keep working would be difficult, even though more than two-thirds of those who have had to make reasonable adjustments said it was, in fact, easy to do.

There is no evidence to show that this skills gap among line managers is any different in the rail industry so, as things stand, you are unlikely to get much help if you are diagnosed with cancer although, as one in five managers said they did get some training, there will always be honourable exceptions.

Employers have a duty to ensure that every one of our members affected by cancer is properly supported to stay at work, so this gap in knowledge amongst line managers is unacceptable and needs to be challenged. With massive improvements in survival rates, managers must be trained to support and understand that someone with cancer can, in more and more cases, continue to work for many years – with a little bit of help.

As some reps might have discovered, there are managers who, possibly due to entrenched ideas, view employees with cancer as a drain on their budgets and can be inclined to neglect their legal responsibilities and ease drivers out of the door instead of supporting them to stay in work. Until employers plug the knowledge gap that permits this, it’s essential we all know what our rights are, if we get cancer, or if we are caring for someone with cancer, because carers have similar rights to those with the disease.

The Equality Act automatically classifies cancer, HIV and multiple sclerosis as disabilities from the moment of diagnosis and, in so doing, confers certain rights on both you and the person caring for you. As soon as you disclose your diagnosis to your employer they should support you but, before you say anything, you’d do well to ask one of your ASLEF reps for advice about what local agreements exist that could help you. You might find your local agreements don’t state anything but, if that is the case, you are still protected by the Equality Act and any other laws. Outdated agreements are overridden by legislation.

It can cost employers a lot more if they do not support staff to remain at work by making reasonable adjustments, as the law says they should. It’s not just legal costs that they might incur – retaining staff who have valuable knowledge and experience costs much less than recruiting and training new ones and, in any case, even new staff can get ill.

All managers need to feel comfortable talking about cancer with employees who are undergoing, or have been through, treatment. Even when treatment is finished people who have had cancer are still protected by the law, and with good reason, as the psychological effects can last much longer than the disease itself. Managers need to listen and understand what an employee’s needs are, including individual adjustments which could enable him or her to stay in, or return to, work.

As Macmillan Cancer Support says, ‘Cancer isn’t fair – but your boss has to be.’ You can find more information by visiting the Macmillan website at www.macmillan.org.uk/work

What rights do carers have?
If you are looking after someone who is elderly or disabled, the law – the Equality Act of 2010 – protects you against direct discrimination or harassment because of your caring responsibilities. This is because you are counted as being ‘associated’ with someone who is protected by the law because of age or disability. For more detailed information about your rights as a carer, go to www.carersuk.org/help-and-advice/work-and-career/discrimination-under-the-equality-act-2010

What are reasonable adjustments?
Both the Equality Act (and the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 in Northern Ireland) require your employer to make reasonable adjustments to your workplace and their working practices. They are required to do this when the place or practice put you at a substantial disadvantage, because of your cancer, compared with those who don’t have the disease. For more information, go to www.macmillan.org.uk/documents/cancerinfo/reasonableadjustmentsguide.pdf

CANCER IN THE WORKPLACE
A workbook developed jointly by Macmillan Cancer Support and TUC Education called Cancer in the Workplace is aimed at union reps, union learning reps, project workers, union professionals, organisers and activists to help them deal with the increasingly common situation of employees diagnosed with cancer. The workbook can be downloaded from the Unionlearn website www.unionlearn.org.uk/publications/cancer-workplace-workbook-union-representatives
Holly came from Miami, FLA

HAZEL CARTER tells what happened when she met, and fell in love with, train driver Denzil Morgan. Who, on occasion, likes to dress up as Danielle...

I

N 2014, as a newly-divorced lady of 50-something, I began to believe there were probably no more adventures to be had. My two grown up daughters were making their own way in the world and, despite not having an overly mature attitude to life, the world of internet dating was proving to be a bit of a challenge. That was until I met the man who is now my partner, Denzil Morgan, a London Midland driver with more than 35 years on the permanent way.

Denzil has the railway in his blood. He left school at 16 with one objective – to live, breathe and drive trains. He began working at King’s Lynn as a junior railman, was promoted in the first seven years to railman and then senior railman, and in 1988 returned to Coventry, where he was born, to work at Birmingham New Street, demoting himself to leading railman to pursue his dream. A year later he was promoted to trainman and, after another seven, passed out as another seven, passed out as senior railman, and in 1988 seven years to railman and then working at King’s Lynn as a junior railman, was promoted in the first seven years to railman and then senior railman, and in 1988 returned to Coventry, where he was born, to work at Birmingham New Street, demoting himself to leading railman to pursue his dream. A year later he was promoted to trainman and, after another seven, passed out as senior railman, and in 1988 returned to Coventry, where he was born, to work at Birmingham New Street, demoting himself to leading railman to pursue his dream. A year later he was promoted to trainman and, after another seven, passed out as senior railman, and in 1988 returned to Coventry, where he was born, to work at Birmingham New Street, demoting himself to leading railman to pursue his dream. A year later he was promoted to trainman and, after another seven, passed out as

REAL RAIL ENTHUSIAST

Based at New Street he now drives 350s, 323s, 153s and 170s working various routes between Northampton and Liverpool as well as all the electric routes in and around Birmingham. At 51, Denzil still loves the railway and everything it stands for. He’s a real rail enthusiast who travels the world in pursuit of that all-elusive engine. He’s had long-term relationships but didn’t marry, or have children, and now, with me, he has the freedom to be himself.

Because, to add to the mix, Denzil is a man who, from the age of 14, wanted to be able to pass as a woman, without gender reassignment. And neither of us could have imagined where our first date would lead…

When life throws you a curve ball the best way to handle it is, I think, to rise to the challenge. Each day is a gift and life is what you choose to make it. For me, the most important thing was his honesty. Denzil was open about Danielle, his other side, from day one, and prepared for rejection, because he had become accustomed to it with previous partners. I could have walked away but, frankly, I didn’t see why I needed to.

Of course, I had questions, lots of them, and I needed to understand how she would impact on us. I researched living with transvestites and was surprised, and disappointed, to see the negativity. How easily women turn away from long-term relationships when partners reveal their inner needs. This rejection is widespread.

WHAT LOVE IS ALL ABOUT

Denzil simply has a need to dress as a woman, not all the time, just whenever he feels like it. This need doesn’t change the person he is inside and, in general, there are no restrictions, as long as he looks good. I’m not saying it was easy to accept that Denzil likes to dress up as Danielle, not initially, but what we have is a very good, and very strong, relationship. We can talk to each other and accept each other for how we are. Surely, that’s what being in love with someone is all about?

Neither of us knew where she was going to take us but watching his anguish turn to happiness inspired me to help Danielle become what she has always wanted to be. As we settled into our relationship I realised how little helpful material there is on this subject. I could read about the psychology, but there was nothing that showed sensitivity or respect for the individual or their partners and families. I set out to put this right, feeling our story could promote better acceptance and answer some of the questions many feel unable to ask. I Just Want To Be Her is not simply a personal account of what happens when ‘boy meets girl’ takes on a whole new meaning, it involves other key relationships, such as family, friends and colleagues at work. The book shows individuals’ reactions to Danielle and the way I have supported her development. It covers some of the heartaches we faced together, telling his parents, and what happens when you turn up at work with your nails painted.

It examines the strong emotions between two individuals, who meet wanting what every other heterosexual couple desires, with the added distraction of integrating the needs of a man who dresses as a woman. The book explores my relationship with both Denzil and Danielle as we try to integrate the ‘three of us’ into our lives. The story of Denzil’s journey to Danielle is touching, bitter sweet and funny; I cover shopping, feminine etiquette, and the art of high heels whilst highlighting the pain and the pathos experienced by many trans people, often because of others’ lack of understanding.

Transvestites often have no idea why they have a need to dress, but equally no control over their desires. The book recognises the seriousness of this somewhat taboo subject, and focuses on helping Danielle to become what she always wanted to be, whilst retaining his dignity.

AMAZING JOURNEY

There have been many challenges but our journey has been, and still is, an amazing one. We have experienced prejudice, and seen people confuse sexuality and gender. Some friends have quizzed me about my relationship; why would I want to be with him? What can he give me? Surely I would be better off with a real man? The truth is I have all I want; a caring partner who, in the short time I’ve known him, has proved to me that there is always more to life than you could possibly imagine.

Our journey, and my decision to tell our story, has meant we have both had to be brave but he is the one who walks out of the house dressed and having the strength to be her is amazing.
**Good luck, Kev**

outhampton held its regular summer function at the South Western Arms on 4 September. Brother Kev Ely retired after 42 years’ loyal service to ASLEF and the railway industry. Kev started as a second man at Eastleigh in 1974, gained his driver’s position at Windsor before returning to Eastleigh and then, in 1995, to Fratton. Kev moved to the brand new Siemens

Happy days at the South Western Arms

Northam train care facility in 2003. It was a fantastic turn out with DO1 Graham Morris, EC1 Marz Colombini and company council Nigel Cummins making the presentations. We had retired members, Eastleigh freight depot branch members, colleagues from Fratton,

Basingstoke, Bournemouth branches and three Southhampton driver managers in attendance. Dave Eagle (who managed to make it with cracked ribs) and Andy White cooked a tasty bbq which went down well with the real ale. See you all next year! Alan Loughlin, branch secretary

**Mick, JC and Attila**

There were record crowds at the Burston strike school rally with a strong ASLEF contingent including the GS, DOS Nigel Gibson, ECS Howard Kaye and Les Muri from the RMT. The rally celebrates the longest strike in British history, which began in 1914 when Tom and Annie Higdon, teachers at the village Church of England school, were sacked after a dispute with the right-wing rector and management committee. Disputes with management? Never! Guest speakers

ASLEF in action at Burston rally included our GS Mick Whelan and Labour leader, Jeremy Corbyn, who both spoke passionately about Tory attacks on the working-classes and trade unions, dangers facing the NHS and education, and the need for affordable housing and transport. We marched around the village with our banners then it was back to the green for the entertainment which included a superb and witty contribution from the punk poet Attila the Stockbroker.

Steve Wright, Abellio Greater Anglia company council

**Loyalty is the key**

Battersea branch was proud to welcome our GS Mick Whelan and EC member Marz Colombini to our annual beer & badges evening which recognises and rewards the loyalty and dedication shown by members. Long service badges were presented to Nelio Reis (5 years), Ian Brett and Felix Ezekwuka (10), Bill Gandy, Ola West and Wally Odesanya (15), Paul Masters (20), Pas Luongo and John Colville (25), Keith Pier (35) and Pierre Kullar (40). A 40 year badge was also presented to Graham Hoy, recognising not only his long and loyal commitment to ASLEF but his dedicated service to our members here. Graham’s stewardship has been key to Battersea branch and Victoria depot for as long as most of us can remember; he’s been branch secretary, his rep and a long standing LDC rep. ASLEF’s success, whether at national or local level, has always been based on the loyalty of our members. As we approach particularly difficult times on Southern, that loyalty remains as important ever.

Pas Luongo, branch secretary

**Upcoming events**

- **RIPPLE LANE – FRIDAY 2 DECEMBER**
  Our Christmas gathering will take place at the LT Club, Hornchurch (District line) station, from 13.00 hrs. Everybody welcome for a reminiscence and quaff of ale.

- **NORWOOD JUNCTION – SUNDAY 4 DECEMBER**
  Annual branch retired members’ buffet at Selhurst railway club. Our agm takes place at 12.30 with the buffet starting about 14.00. Details from Daniel Bound.

- **HITHER GREEN – WEDNESDAY 7 DECEMBER**
  Annual reunion from 12.0 at the Greyhound (a Wetherspoon pub) 205 High Street, Bromley, Kent, BR1 1NY.

- **ASHFORD – THURSDAY 5 JANUARY**
  Southeastern retired and working members’ reunion from 11.0 at Ashford railway club, Beaver Lane, Ashford, Kent. Had to be this date – only one available – and don’t forget to dig deep when the raffle comes round as that’s what pays the bill! Remember this is your reunion; use it or lose it.

- **BRIGHTON & SUSSEX – TUESDAY 2 MAY**
  Informal open afternoon for all retired and working members of Brighton or any of the Sussex motive power depots from 14.00 at Brighton railway club, Belmont, off Dyke Road. Details from Paul Edwards (07402 478278) or Paul Horan (07868 757492).

- Please send your all branch news, reports, features and photographs to journal@aslef.org.uk

The Portsmouth and Fratton reunion on 30 September was well supported. So nice to see everyone again! Gary White, Fratton train crew

The ASLEF Journal | December 2016
Out of the box

S Mick Whelan, EC vice-president Dave Calfe, DO7 Brian Corbett and EC7 Andrew Hudd were warmly welcomed at Stourbridge where, unusually, our branch meeting took place in two parts at separate venues to give more people the chance to attend, a number of members being tied up with the inevitable task of driving trains!

The first part was held in the old Stourbridge junction middle signal box, now the Chiltern Railways train crew booking on point. Branch business was discharged quickly to allow as much time for our visitors as possible, although we did find time to elect Graham Dibbins as our first branch equality rep. The GS gave a short talk and presented badges to Graham Dibbins and Andy Hopkins (25 years), Darryl Tebbs (20), Andy Roser (15), and Chris Teuwen (5). We also welcomed new members employed by Pre-Metro Operations Ltd on behalf of London Midland, who work at national level, including important political and media relationships.

Our meeting was adjourned to reconvene in Stourbridge town, giving the head office contingent a chance to meet some of our new members. Andrew Hudd covered topical areas of interest such as the impact of technology on our jobs and Brian Corbett looked at the relationship and issues with companies across the district, and how this relates to our own employers. Finally, Mick Dibbins receives his 25 year badge from the GS the line between Stourbridge junction and Stourbridge town. Nine new members have increased our small branch from 26 to 35 and we look forward to working with them to ensure their proper representation going forward.

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Great turnout at Marylebone (above); Brian Corbett presents Les French with his 50 year medallion (right); and Les with Nigel Adkins after finishing his final drive (below)

Standing room only

A fantastic time was had by all at Marylebone’s full and standing October meeting. After branch business we heard from DO7 Brian Corbett and EC7 Andrew Hudd. They updated us on the current position of ASLEF, our district, and where we stand as a trade union. At this point we were joined by members of Aylesbury and Banbury branches and held a joint long service badge presentation before we adjourned to the pub to celebrate the retirements of four Marylebone drivers: Nigel Adkins, John Attridge, Les French and Tony Kelly.

Mick Holder turns back time to December 1916

The world at war, and free medical aid for mums and children, were all topics in the Journal 100 years ago

AND SO THIS IS CHRISTMAS

‘Christmas is rapidly approaching,’ writes the editor. ‘But, sad to say, it is the third Christmas to see this country involved in a war, and such a war as this old world has never before witnessed. The homes of very many readers must, we know, be affected, either by the loss of some loved one or by their absence in the fighting, by land and sea, and all homes are seriously affected by the ever-increasing cost of living. We note the call for more men. The railway companies are to make a further attempt to release staff, and we may yet come to the position of Germany, where women are now being employed as guards on both goods and passenger trains. We think the British railways have nearly come to the end of their tether, at least as far as footplatemen are concerned, for with long hours, old men employed beyond the age limit, and young boys on footplates, danger is very near. Colonel Pringle, in his report on the accident to two trains at Wallneuk junction, draws attention to the employment of a boy of 15 as a fireman on a goods train, and calls for consideration.

We agree with Colonel Pringle.’

FOR WEAK AND FOR STRONG

‘There is a town in southern France, called Villiers-le-Duc, where no baby under a year old has died in ten years, and where, in the same period, no mother has died giving birth to a baby. It has been made possible by a series of ordinances issued by the mayor which provide for proper food and rest for the prospective mother and free medical aid for mother and child, both at birth and afterwards.’

LET’S STOP ALL THE FIGHT

Driver H Warren writes: ‘Many thanks for the prompt manner in which we received the sum of £20 from our branch secretary, Mr Norman, on the death of our dear son, WM Warren, fireman, killed in action at the Battle of Hooge.’

Don’t let it cost you your job!
Trade Unionists Against the European Union proudly presents... 

No to TTIP - a 12-song CD celebrating the lives of Bob Crow and Tony Benn. As you might expect it is also a call to arms against the proposed Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership between the EU and the United States which is designed to abolish national democracy in the interests of corporate profit.

This limited edition CD features contributions from...

TONY BENN, ROY BAILEY, DAVE SWARBRICK, CALLUM BAIRD, BRIAN DENNY

This is only available in CD format. All proceeds go to TUAEU.

DARE DEVIL RIDES TO JARAMA

A new play by Neil Gore

‘To you we speak, you numberless Englishmen, 
To remind you of the greatness still among you
Created by these men who go from our towns
To fight for peace, for liberty, and for you.’

Clem Beckett and Christopher Caudwell were two such men. Moved by most Spaniards’ determination to defend themselves against Franco, Hitler and Mussolini, they crossed the Pyrenees to fight for democracy and against Fascism in Spain. Clem ‘Dare Devil’ Beckett, the rugged speedway star, and Christopher Caudwell, poet and literary critic, were unlikely friends; but a common cause brought them together and they fought and died at a machinegun post covering their battalion’s retreat at the Battle of Jarama in 1937.

Commissioned by the International Brigades Memorial Trust, Dare Devil Rides to Jarama tells the story of the British and Irish volunteers in the brutal Civil War in Spain, capturing the idealistic hopes and dreams, raw passions, fear and anger in a powerful new drama which features stirring songs, poetry and flamenco dance.
ALAN SHAW
THE RAILWAY RUNNING THROUGH HIS VEINS

Our mate Alan Shaw passed away on 10 October aged 78. I knew him for 50 years; we’d been friends since I came to King’s Cross in 1964. But there are people reading this who were friends with him for more than 60 years, that was the magnitude of the man.

Alan had the railway running through his veins. He was so well-informed about railway matters I never bothered to Google anything, I’d phone Alan, it was an excuse for a chat and he always knew the right answer, anyway.

I respected him among the greats of King’s Cross like Ivor Brooks, Ivor Gibson, Wal Blazey, Blondy Aldrich, and John Swaby, to name but a few. I had respect for all the drivers I worked with but there are a few who stick out. These men did it all – steam, diesel, electric, passenger and freight, for little money in the early days. I remember Alan doing car repairs for his mates; he made a few bob, they saved a few bob, everyone was happy.

A couple of years ago Alan and I went on a couple of trips to York, Mallard 75 and the Great Gathering, and he was in his element. I tried to get him to come to the North Yorkshire Moors Railway last year but he didn’t want to be a burden – his words, not mine – although he would never have been that, what are mates for?

He will be missed, as reflected in his final trip on 24 October. Full and standing. God bless you, Alan. Paul Nash, RMS

REG ANDREWS
FONDLY REMEMBERED

Reg Andrews, formerly of Rugby branch, passed away on 13 July aged 95. He joined ASLEF in 1939 and was a member until he retired in 1984. Reg was fondly remembered for his pastoral approach to dealing with most union matters.

He was always willing to start or engage in a debate and was also the depot mathematician, with a keen ability to calculate rates of allowances in the purple book to a tee, and enjoyed sports, playing bowls and golf.

Tony Venson, Rugby

J ohn Goring
GENTLE GIANT

It is with great regret that I have to inform you of the passing of John Goring, a well-liked guy, many described as a gentle giant. John was of 1950s seniority, went through all the footplate grades as far as driver, then decided to go on to pastures new.

He went into the supervisory side as a TCS, and apart from Stratford will be fondly remembered by the guys at Ripple Lane and Shoeburyness. John did do a bit of mickey taking and wind ups but it was his character, the sort that made me stay on the railway. A true loco man in every sense of the word.

Dave Pizzie, RMS

GENE ARLow
ONE OF THE FIRST HST DRIVERS

John (Gene) Arlow (1920-2016) has died at the age of 96. Some of the lads gathered at the parish church in Eye in Cambridgeshire to support the family and celebrate the life of John, nicknamed Gene after the American film star. He was a real character, born in Warrington, Cheshire, migrated to Peterborough loco for work, and during his time there met and married his late wife and settled in Eye where he raised a son and daughter. Later John transferred to King’s Cross, and while there saw the introduction of HST and was one of the first drivers to run at 125mph. After the service we were all invited back to the Parkway club where we had spent many a hour with John reminiscing over a pint or two. May he RIP.

Peter Smith, RMS

CAN YOU HELP?

Do you remember the West Croydon-Sutton line? In the 1920s, a branch off the main railway line was built to serve the National Aircraft Factory adjacent to Croydon aerodrome. I have a drawing showing a single track line crossing Stafford Road, presumably at a level crossing, then dividing into three sidings. But I have no photos. I guess a loco was permanently based on this branch line, which pulled goods trains into the factory complex, and was probably kept in an engine shed when not in use. The only other thing I know is that on 5 February 1923 the line was used to bring a passenger train up to the edge of the airfield so VIPs could alight and view a special display of aircraft organised as part of the International Air Conference. Can anyone provide information about this branch line? Details such as dates of opening and closure, exact track layout, signalling arrangements, locomotives used, frequency of workings, etc, would be particularly helpful.

Colin Ockendon, colin.ockendon@aol.co.uk

I am researching the working conditions of British Rail staff in the 1960s, with particular reference to footplate staff. The ‘60s represent the last days of steam traction. To this end, I am trying to obtain copies of booklets issued by ASLEF and the NUR in the mid-1960s, setting out conditions of service for the various sectional council staff employed by BR. Much to my regret, I disposed of my own copies many years ago. Do any readers of the Journal have such booklets, which they are prepared to part with? I am happy to pay for them.

Cedric Lodge, janced@sky.com

This is page 19 of 1266.

Flash! Bang! Wallop! What a Picture...

A photograph has recently come into my possession that may interest you or one of your members with associations with ASLEF in Liverpool. It features a group of railway drivers, all in civilian clothes, proudly displaying an ASLEF union banner that says Liverpool district branch. The photograph is not dated nor is there any indication as to where it is. The only identifying feature is the name of the photographer – Clement Gwynne – of March and Soham. Now that’s a long way from Liverpool and why an East Anglian tradesman was photographing Liverpool union members I have no idea. Clement Gwynne was practicing photography in the early years of the last century. The downside of this is that it is in a woeful condition. It is on its original card mount but, unfortunately, this has been broken in two right through the middle. However, modern computer technology can do wonders for old photographs. The image may well be in your archives, or a Liverpool museum, but if it is not known, I would not like it to be destroyed. My father was a railwayman at March from 1926 to 1967 and I would be delighted if it should find a new home where it will be treasured.

Peter Wright, director, B17 Steam Locomotive Trust

Time to change our branch based union

I have attended all but one of this year’s Bristol branch meetings and, in the main, have found them to be useful and informative in regard to the many issues facing all GWR drivers in the near future. I have also recently tried to encourage as many as possible of my colleagues to attend but, unfortunately, this has been difficult, to say the least. I totally understand and respect their reluctance and scepticism to attend branch; many seeing it as a waste of time, and also, as we are all well aware, the shift patterns our jobs entail can make 17.00 on a Tuesday in central Bristol a potentially awkward time slot.

I believe that the current method of submitting and voting on individual notices of motion at branch meetings is far from ideal. It simply doesn’t involve enough members in the voting process and can lead to very important issues being influenced by the few who are there at the time. I therefore believe that the idea of the branch based union is long overdue for a change of focus.

We are well aware of the massive changes electrification is going to bring upon us and, as it stands, the majority of drivers, including myself, have little or no clue what we will be doing in five years’ time. Mess room gossip and rumours are increasingly fuelling the fire of uncertainty which doesn’t benefit anyone. It is, therefore, surely time to look at the possibility of opening up new lines of communication with those who represent us, to look at the possibility of varying the times of branch meetings, and to try to engage with more drivers in a constructive way. Recent events in Bristol have really highlighted the shortcomings of the current situation. Put simply, we need lots more drivers involved at a local level, and it is plainly obvious to me that this isn’t going to happen anytime soon unless innovative changes are forthcoming. The Western region is being brought into the modern era; surely the union should be, too.

Colin Lawton, HSS driver, Bristol

Mick Whelan says: ‘We ran a consultation exercise a couple of years ago to look at the best way of organizing our union and it was clear that, given our size, the current branch structure is the best way to do it. I also believe that the branch is the best place to talk, and listen, to members in a secure environment.’

Ten say yes to Robin’s tax

Many of you may have felt the Financial Transactions Tax (Journal, October) was never going to happen. However, I am delighted to inform you that, for ten European countries, the end of the road is well and truly in sight. Because the finance ministers of Germany, France, Italy, Spain, Belgium, Austria, Portugal, Greece, Slovakia and Slovenia have finally agreed that a range of financial assets will be taxed, and how the revenue will be captured. As we approached this decision point, three countries – Belgium, Slovakia and Slovenia – were blocking progress, but a combination of high level advocacy and grassroots pressure worked to shift their positions. An official close to the negotiations described the importance in these terms: ‘This means you win the game, now it is a question of by how much.’

In the world of campaigning, we over use the word breakthrough but this really is a significant breakthrough. The finance ministers went further, seizing the opportunity to instruct officials to complete all outstanding items by December so the FTT legislation can be finally signed off. It will then be passed into law by the participating states in 2017 with revenue expected from 2018. Current estimates suggest that between the ten
countries this will be €22-25 billion every year.
Our work on a European FIT is not over.

The items to be agreed over the coming weeks include winning strong rates of tax, ensuring no loopholes and, not least, intensifying our activities on where revenues will be spent for the benefit of the people and the planet. However, it seems clear that there is a strong political will to get the job done, and to ensure the best possible final deal in December. So please keep up your support for our work. But I wanted to share this really good news!

David Hillman, Robin Hood Tax campaign

50 year service badges

After around 53 years of being a member of ASLEF, I was surprised to learn that I had to write to head office to obtain my 50 year badge. This I received at my front door from a local ASLEF member. If I had not applied for my badge, I wonder if I would have ever received it? I wonder how many other members may have missed out on receiving theirs. Surely this should be done automatically, from head office, and not have to be applied for.

Bob Waghorne, Hastings branch

Risk assessment for DOO

I introduced the very first DOO passenger train service on the Bedford to St Pancras route in the early 1980s when Ray Buckton was ASLEF’s general secretary. There is no doubt in my mind since that time that additional train starting duties, and the responsibilities associated with those, add to the risk of a SPAD of the platform starter signal, unless the signalling system provides additional protection against such a circumstance. In my view there is a need for a detailed risk assessment to be undertaken at each station platform where DOO trains will operate to identify the risks and measures necessary to mitigate those risks. Unless these actions are put in place I personally would have grave doubts regarding the introduction of a DOO passenger service. My old mates from the days at Hartlepool – Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, who, sadly, have passed on to their rich footplate, still working full-time, with many others in a similar position, I hope he merely chose his words incorrectly; or does he possess an arrogance that is thankfully missing from the ‘modern railway’?

Karl Maguire, Birmingham New Street

15 years on the shovel

Re D Blair (Journal, November) a member of ASLEF since 1965. I started as an engine cleaner in 1950, a few years younger than you. If, like me, and many others, you had spent 10 or 15 years on the shovel you would have been only too pleased to retire at 65. If drivers in 1965 had behaved like you there’s a possibility that you would not have got a job on the footplate. Just my opinion. But it takes all sorts.

Ron Kettle, RMS

A roaring success

Sincere thanks to those who made our week’s political course in rural Lincolnshire such a roaring success. Simon, Marz, Tosh, Ian, James, Councillor Moir, Councillor Botham, Kelvin Hopkins MP, the great orator Paul Routledge, Ed and Mark. The staff at Stoke Rochford for their outstanding hospitality, but, most importantly, my fellow deputies whose comradeship, warmth, willingness to help each other, and conduct, made the week one which ranks amongst the best trade union education I have ever received.

Alan Moss, Longsight

In times like these

For the first time in over 30 years’ service as a train driver I was unfortunate enough to injure myself at work during the course of my duties which resulted in a serious permanent injury. Now, after three long years, it has finally been satisfactorily resolved. I was lucky enough to be a member of a trade union with good legal back up to support me so I would like to express my thanks to ASLEF, my Thompson’s legal team, Northam h&c rep D Eagles, reps A White, ED Bell, A Loughlin and Fratton driver K Symes. It is in times like these that you fully appreciate the support of your union and your fellow driver colleagues. Lee Turner, Northam, SWT

In Flanders fields, the poppies blow

I note that ASLEF has offered an official poppy badge which appears to be in support of the Royal British Legion poppy appeal. However, there is no indication on the ASLEF shop website or in the Journal that a donation to the poppy appeal will be made from the sale of each badge. Please clarify the situation because at the moment it looks like you are selling poppy merchandise for the benefit of ASLEF, not the benefit of the poppy appeal.

Ken Hall, Horsham

All profits go to the RBL, Ken.
New world in the fields of Flanders

KEITH RICHMOND visits a new Paul Nash exhibition at the Tate which celebrates his English landscapes and experiments in surrealism as well as his profoundly moving pictures of a world at war.

NEW WORD

One of the nine rooms in this new exhibition is devoted to his powerful pictures of the Great War, such as The Menin Road, with two tiny figures picking their way across an eerie, artillery-blasted wilderness on the Ypres salient, and We Are Making a New World, a bitterly ironic title, for a picture of sunrise over a muddy, barren landscape utterly deformed by shell holes, hell holes and the husks of splintered trees. Nash didn’t like drawing people – take a close look at Wounded Passchendaele – so avoided figures as much as possible. ‘I tried to paint trees as though they were human beings,’ he admitted.

The drawings I have made may give you some idea of its horror, but only being in it and of it can ever make you sensible of its dreadful nature and of what our men in France have to face.’

Twenty-one years after the armistice the world was again at war and Nash was at work on Encounter in the Afternoon (1940), showing a quintessential English landscape pocked by an enemy plane, and Totes Meer (Dead Sea, 1941) which shows, by moonlight, a geometrical composition of the wings and fuselages of downed German planes, as if they are the waves on the sea shore, while a seagull flies off like the departing spirit of one of the Luftwaffe pilots. This unforgettable aeronautical ocean graveyard was based on photos – displayed here – that Nash took of enemy aircraft at Cowley dump, just outside Oxford.

As well as the paintings from two world wars, there are some exquisite illustrations – especially 12 woodcuts for a Nonesuch Press edition of Genesis in 1924 – and a room devoted to his friends in Unit One, a group formed to promote modern art, architecture and design, which includes sculptures by Hepworth and Moore and paintings by artists such as the surrealist John Armstrong, including On the Balustrade.

‘I am no longer an artist interested and curious, I am a messenger who will bring back word from the men who are fighting to those who want the war to go on for ever. Feeble, inarticulate, will be my message, but it will have a bitter truth, and may it burn their lousy souls.’

The purpose of this major exhibition, the first devoted to Nash for 40 years, is, according to curator Emma Chambers, ‘not simply to move consideration of his art beyond the war work, but also to show aspects of his work beyond landscape.’ Admirable though it is to point up the painter’s explorations of surrealism, still life, and found objects, the reason Nash is one of the best British artists of the 20th century is because of those evocative English landscapes and his iconic images of war.

P

AUL NASH, one of the pioneers, along with Barbara Hepworth and Henry Moore, of modern art in Britain, is best known for his moving, and magnificent, paintings of war. He joined the Artists’ Rifles, a volunteer infantry unit made up of poets, painters and musicians, and his experiences as a soldier on the Western front provided the vivid, visceral material for the work which makes him, arguably, the greatest war artist this country has produced.

‘I have seen the most frightful nightmare of a country more conceived by Dante or Poe than by nature, unspeakable, utterly indescribable.’

One of the nine rooms in this new exhibition is devoted to his powerful pictures of the Great War, such as The Menin Road, with two tiny figures picking their way across an eerie, artillery-blasted wilderness on the Ypres salient, and We Are Making a New World, a bitterly ironic title, for a picture of sunrise over a muddy, barren landscape utterly deformed by shell holes, hell holes and the husks of splintered trees. Nash didn’t like drawing people – take a close look at Wounded Passchendaele – so avoided figures as much as possible. ‘I tried to paint trees as though they were human beings,’ he admitted.

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O Paul Nash is at Tate Britain in London until 5 March. Admission £15; concessions £13.10; children under 12 free. Then the Sainsbury Centre, Norwich, in April and the Laing Gallery, Newcastle, in September.
On Track

TRUCK ON TYKE

Entries from Alan Bennett’s diaries, Keeping On Keeping On (Profile, £25)

25 April 2005
Mr Straw claims to have lost sleep over his decision. Some of the tortured will have lost sleep, too, but that’s because they will have lost fingernails first. I suppose I despise Straw more than Blair, thinking, perhaps wrongly, that he is capable of better.

18 October 2005
Robert Hanks, the radio critic of The Independent, remarks that, personally, he can have too much of Alan Bennett. I wonder how he thinks I feel.

14 September 2009
I tell John Bird the story of Dudley Moore and me seeing Stravinsky and his wife Vera in the Hotel Pierre in New York in 1963, saying how the name Vera has always seemed to me to humanise Stravinsky. ‘Not so much as Stockhausen,’ says John. ‘His wife’s name was Doris.’

28 January 2015
Thoughts about Wolf Hall on television. Hilary Mantel, Niall Ferguson, Alan Taylor: history is a playground. The facts are Lego. Make of them what you will. It’s a sentiment I would happily have put into the mouth of Irwin in The History Boys.

8 May 2015
A feeling of bereavement in the streets. I shop for supper and, unprompted, a grey-haired woman in the fish shop bursts out, ‘It means I shall have a Tory government for the rest of my life.’ In the library they say, ‘Good morning... though we’ve just been trying to think what’s good about it.’ I wanted a Labour government so that I could stop thinking about politics, knowing that the nation’s affairs were in the hands of a party which, even if often foolish, was at least well-intentioned. Now we have another decade of the self-interested and the self-seeking, ready to sell off what’s left of our liberal institutions and loot the rest to their own advantage. It’s not a government of the nation but a government of half the nation, a true legacy of Mrs Thatcher.’

Prize Crossword 128 by Tom Williams

Across
1. Tory
7. Additional
8. American coin
10. Piece of wood
11. Physical game or competition
13. An addictive drug
15. Possibility of something happening
17. Aromatic herb or man’s name
18. Brownish tone on old photographs
19. Be paid money for work
21. Baked joint of meat
22. World sightseer

Down
1. Rich biscuit-based tart
2. Countrywide
3. Stretchy tape
4. Disappear
5. Short broad-headed nail
6. Vehicle for household removals
9. Interpreter of language
12. Unchanging
14. Temporary ban on trade
16. To sell goods abroad
18. Social climber
20. Pointed hand tool to pierce wood

Solution to Crossword 127
Across: 1 Oxford 7 Tooth 8 Treasure 9 Rifle 10 Rich 12 Hole 13 Acid 14 Cape 15 Punt 17 Tint 19 Molar 20 Audience 21 Dusts 22 Energy
Down: 1 Otter 2 French polish 3 Double 4 Stem 5 Confectioner 6 Thread 11 Hoe 13 Ant 14 Comedy 15 Paddle 16 Grass 18 Teeny

Congratulations to David Seville, Blackpool, who was last month’s winner. The winner of this month’s Prize Crossword will receive Marks & Spencer vouchers to the value of £25

You can see more of Tom Williams’s crosswords, word games and puzzles at wordgames.co.uk

Thanks for all your responses to the 127th prize crossword in the November edition of the ASLEF Journal. If you successfully complete this month’s crossword please send the solution to the Editor, ASLEF Journal, 77 St John Street, Clerkenwell, London, EC1M 4NN by 14 December

ASLEF’s legal services

If you are being harassed at work, bullied or discriminated against, and if your local, branch or district rep is unavailable, call the industrial relations department at union headquarters (020 7324 2400) or email info@aslef.org.uk. If you are arrested or interviewed by police and need legal assistance – day or night – call the members’ emergency hotline on 0800 587 7530. ASLEF also provides first class legal advice free for members and dependents.

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