



ASLEF

MAY 2006

Locomotive Journal

PENSION TALKS: Have we reached the end of the line?

Photo: Els Dekker

- Dedicated UK freight line proposed
- Court win on hearing safety
- Should taxpayers pay for political parties?
- Prize crossword

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THE VOICE OF BRITAIN'S TRAIN CREWS



Only involvement will end apathy

I USED to worry that government ministers seem to have different interests than the rest of us. Then I began meeting them – and that’s when I became really disturbed.

I say this although I don’t think it’s helpful to be over-cynical about politicians. They are an easy target and often deserve to be criticised. But as soon as we distrust them completely, we are led down the road of apathy and the protest vote: which is exactly where the BNP and its supporters thrive. I believe most of the misguided souls who put their cross next to this vicious party in the local elections did so, not because they are fascists or racists, but because they feel powerless and ignored.

At the same time, politicians can’t complain about cynicism

as if it was nothing to do with them. It is. They need to make real efforts to relate to, and learn from, working people, rather than lecture them.

People get used to having a ministerial car and a posse of underlings. They get used to people hanging onto their every word: and they come to believe that they deserve respect by right. No one does: we all have to earn respect: and in a democracy we have to earn it every day.

The key is for politicians to remember who elected them, the people who gave them their opportunity – and that is the working people of this country.

If only ministers had asked themselves, ‘What would the people who voted for me think about slipping honours to

businessmen who offer the party loans? What would my constituents

make of my saying it is cheaper to sack a French worker than a British one? What would patients waiting in my local hospital think if I claimed this was the best year the NHS has ever had?’

It all comes down to a little humility and a recognition that ministers are in their position because of the Labour Party and the ordinary voter. These are the people to impress, to work for and to whom they should be grateful. Sometimes politicians could even admit they had been wrong.

We’re not looking for supermen and women in government. We don’t want them to pretend they know all the answers to all the questions. All we want is honesty and integrity. That is the solution to stopping cynicism in politics – and in the long term it is the solution to putting an end to the BNP and the extreme right.

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the ASLEF Journal

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Cover Photo: Els Dekker

ASLEF Journal makes the nationals!

OUR series of features on 'Key Workers' hit the national papers over the Easter period. *The Times*, *Mail* and *Guardian* all carried articles based on the articles in the Journal since the start of the year.

The story was based on the fact that the job of train driver is attracting an increasing number of applicants from professions including teaching, banking, journalism and even football.

General Secretary Keith Norman was quoted as saying, 'Train drivers used to emerge from a set pattern – they were technically rather than academically gifted men, often from 'railway families', who came to the job after working in other capacities in the industry. Training was more an on-the-job apprenticeship than formal training.

'In recent years we have seen drivers come from a variety of backgrounds, both



men and women, often from professions like teaching, banking or journalism – all with a suitcase full of qualifications.

'It is an interesting new development and we began the series in the Journal because we wanted to find what attracted them to train driving.

'I find it fascinating that people who 10 years ago wouldn't have considered train driving are drawn to our profession.'

The national newspapers quoted the examples of former



professional footballer Tony Hadley; Maddy Corper who worked as a research chemist for ICI and ex-journalist Patrick McGowan.



Second-hand solidarity will aid Iraqi trade unionists

THE TUC has launched an appeal for unions and their members to pass on their used mobile phones to the Iraqi trade union movement as an act of 'second-hand solidarity'.

Unions representing workers in Iraq and Iraqi Kurdistan face incredible challenges in defending working people and rebuilding democracy. One of their requests for solidarity from British trade unionists is the provision of mobile phones - crucial for any union organiser these days, but especially in Iraq where travel can be dangerous and landlines aren't sufficiently reliable or widespread.

But mobile phones can be expensive to buy in Iraq (and UK phone systems don't work there yet), so buying new ones could eat up scarce union resources. Instead, the Iraqi trade union movement has identified a way of easily converting old European mobile phones for use in Iraq. So now the TUC Iraq Solidarity Committee has opened an appeal for used mobile phones.

TUC General Councillor Sue Rogers, Chair of the TUC Iraq Solidarity Committee, said, 'Rather than throwing your old mobile phone out, put it to good use rebuilding trade unionism in Iraq and Iraqi Kurdistan. Their need is great, and this would be such a small effort, but a big contribution.'

● Old mobile phones (and their chargers, of course) should be sent to the TUC Aid for Iraq appeal at Congress House, Great Russell Street, London WC1B 3LS.



ASLEF's treasure trove

IT MAY sound like an extravagant claim to say that ASLEF's headquarters is full of treasures – but we certainly have some on the walls of one of the meeting rooms!

They are a series of political cartoons ranging over a century which Bill Hagerty has kindly offered to the union on a permanent loan basis. Bill, who edits the *British Journalism Review* and has previously edited 'The People' and worked as Deputy Editor of the 'Mirror', has collected original cartoons throughout his career.

'I wanted people to see them rather than have them on the walls of my home,' Bill says. 'I hope ASLEF members will enjoy them as much as I do.'

Bill is seen here looking over the newly-hung pictures with General Secretary Keith Norman.

Twigg speaks out on rail pensions: says nothing

DEREK TWIGG, the Under Secretary at the Department for Transport, has responded to TUC General Secretary Brendan Barber who wrote expressing his concerns about pensions in the rail industry. Unfortunately it is difficult to translate the document from 'Civil Service' into English.

Mr Twigg says it is 'for the designated employers of the section for the Railways Pension Scheme to agree - in consultation with employees and their representatives - appropriate steps to recover any deficits with the Trustees'. He says the government 'encourages this dialogue'.

Mr Twigg also 'welcomes' the formation of 'a strategy subgroup to examine the options available to ensure the continued good operation of the Scheme'. He even goes as far as to 'warmly encourage the use of this forum'.

He says that the government is 'similarly encouraging the TOC employers to make full use of this strategy group'. Finally he says he is 'keen to see that progress is being made'.

A further meeting of the unions and the minister is being arranged and will take place early this month. The basic difficulty, however, seems to be that the government is unwilling or unable to direct anything in an industry which it has sold.

Rail union leaders unite to protect members' pensions

THE general secretaries of the three main rail unions – ASLEF, RMT and TSSA – concluded a series of nine meetings addressing the rail pensions crisis with a rally in north London. This was the ninth meeting of a mini-tour taking in venues as remote as Bristol and Perth.

One of the major themes of the night was the responsibilities trade unionists have to the next generation when we talk about defending pensions.

'This is not only a campaign for our existing members to retain fair pensions at a reasonable cost,' said Keith Norman. 'We also want to pass on to our children at least the same pension provision we have enjoyed. The trade union movement is about improving conditions for the future - not pulling up the ladder on the next generation.'

Gerry Doherty said his parents had inherited better standards of living from their parents, and that our conditions had improved compared with the previous generation. 'I want to be able to offer the same to my children,' he said.

Bob Crow spoke about the confusion that self-appointed experts introduce into pensions debates. 'You hear them going



The general secretaries of the three main rail unions have been addressing the rail pensions crisis. Photo: Andrew Wiard

on about actuarial variations, trustees, shortfalls and holidays.

'Well, I'll tell you what a holiday is: that is lying on a beach. And I'll tell you what a pension is - it is part of your salary. And that's why I am delighted to see the rail unions acting together to defend it.'

The unity of purpose from members of each union was almost tangible at the Camden Town meeting. 'This campaign is about 80,000 rail workers saying they are not in the business of paying increased

contributions for less benefits,' Keith declared. 'It is about us insisting that pension schemes stay open for new entrants and it is about securing one pension scheme for rail workers.'

'Privatisation bequeathed us 103 different pension schemes. You don't need an expert to conclude that this is wasteful and pointless folly.'

Each union leader in turn urged members to go along to the lobby of Parliament on 9 May. 'Government does not have a choice of whether to

become involved,' says Keith Norman. 'It is involved.'

'A single pension scheme will not be re-established without the government taking the initiative. If it does so, we can make progress. If the government try to stand on the side-lines, it will be the signal for train companies to do nothing.'

'At the series of meetings that have ended tonight, rail workers all over the country have made it plain that this is not an option.'

COMPANY NEWS



ACTON TOWN - REMOTE BOOKING ON AND OFF DISPUTE Agreement has been reached resolving the issues of the long running remote booking on and off dispute at Acton Town. The Executive Committee were of the view that the agreement

should be endorsed and the full negotiating team and membership should be congratulated and thanked for their work and solidarity in bringing this matter to a satisfactory conclusion.

CENTRAL TRAINS - REST DAY WORKING ASLEF is prepared to sanction Rest Day Working on Central Trains until 29th July 2006 subject to continued monitoring by our representatives.

FIRST CAPITAL CONNECT - REST DAY WORKING ASLEF is prepared to sanction Rest Day Working until 24th June 2006 subject

to continued monitoring by our representatives.

MIDLAND MAINLINE - REST DAY WORKING

ASLEF is prepared to sanction Rest Day Working until 24th June 2006 subject to continued monitoring by our representatives.

SILVERLINK - REST DAY WORKING ASLEF is prepared to sanction Rest Day Working until 27th May 2006 subject to continued monitoring by our representatives.

FREIGHTLINER HEAVY HAUL 2005/6 PAY OFFER Driving grade members in

Heavy Haul voted to accept the Heavy Haul 2005/2006 Pay Offer by 75.5%. The offer is for a two year deal with 3.9% increase on basic pay in both the first and second years.

C2C - REST DAY WORKING ASLEF is prepared to sanction Rest Day Working until 31st December 2006 subject to continued monitoring by our representatives.

EUROSTAR 2005 PAY OFFER Members in Eurostar voted in favour of the 2005 pay offer and improvements to terms & conditions by 6.5%.

£435,000 for haulage firm to support rail freight switch

THE Scottish Executive is to pay road haulage company Eddie Stobart £200,000 and the Department for Transport will offer £235,000 as part of a scheme to move more freight to rail.

The grants will go towards buying 90 containers that can be transferred from train to lorries. They will transport Tesco products between terminals at Daventry in the Midlands and Coatbridge in Lanarkshire.

Scottish Transport Minister

Tavish Scott says the initiative will remove 260 lorry journeys a week from Scotland's busiest roads, while Philippa Edmunds, speaking for the ASLEF-backed Freight on Rail campaign, said, 'This is excellent news for the economy and society. One of these container trains alone can remove 80 HGVs from our roads and tonne-for-tonne carried rail produces 90 per cent less carbon dioxide, the principal greenhouse gas, than road transport.'



Tavish Scott says that the grants are small compared with the benefits to be reaped. He claims that the project will generate £3 million worth of environmental benefits over three years and says, 'A joint project such as this rightly has the backing of Governments

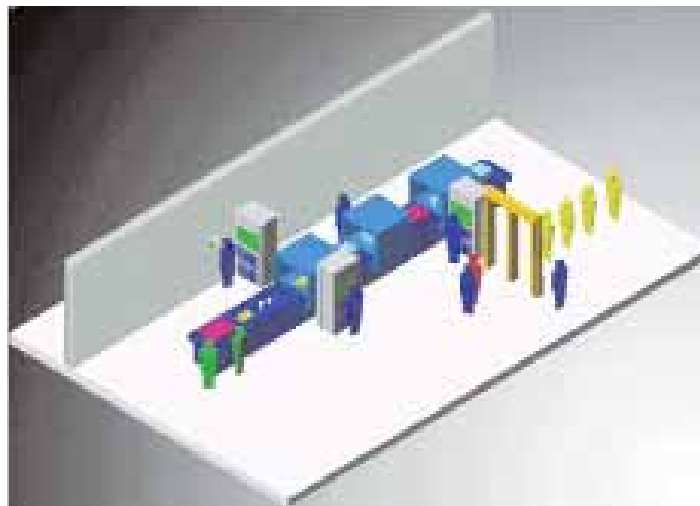
both north and south of the border.' It is estimated that traffic congestion costs business around £20 billion a year in delays and transport costs. Add rising oil prices to the equation, and the scheme looks like a sure-fire financial as well as environmental success.

Body scanners move out of London

BODY scanners are to be set up across the UK's rail network following a trial in the capital known as 'Operation Shield'. This experiment ran for two months in London, during which period almost 10,000 people have been scanned, 100 have been arrested and 68 knives seized.

British Transport Police officers with stop-and-search powers and sniffer dogs used mobile airport-style scanners to check passengers.

Transport Secretary Alistair Darling announced last month that the technology would be employed at stations in other cities including Manchester, Leeds, Edinburgh, Glasgow and



Cardiff.

'It won't be there all the time,' he said. 'Obviously local police have to use their judgment as to when they deploy officers on the scanning equipment.'

'We want to make travelling by train as safe as we can.'

ACCORDING to research carried out for

Travelodge, Britons lose more than seven years of sleep in a lifetime. The top of the sleep-deprived professions are doctors, company directors - and then train drivers.

TWENTY years ago the typical chief executive of a FTSE 100 company earned 25 times the pay of the average worker; today it is close to 120 times.

The richest 1% of the population has been taking an increasingly disproportionate share of the nation's wealth: 23% today compared with 17% at the end of the 1980s. In contrast, the share going to the bottom half of the population has fallen from 10% to 6%.

Move to rail freight can save millions

MOVING freight from road to rail could save councils millions of pounds in road repairs, according to research carried out by MTRU on behalf of Freight on Rail.

The research examined freight flows in a typical county based on specific freight flows; it did not include costs which fall to the Highways Authority and therefore only looked at

costs which have to be met by councils.

Results showed that moving from road to rail could save as much as £770,700 per year in the cost of maintaining, repairing and renewing the road infrastructure.

Heavy Goods Vehicles are up to 160,000 times more damaging to road surfaces than the average car.

New guidance on staff assaults

THE Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) has agreed that rail staff are 'persons serving the public'. This means that if train drivers, crew, or other staff, are assaulted, then the CPS will consider this as a further aggravating factor in prosecution decisions. Talks are on-going in Scotland to ensure that the Advocate General's guidelines are similar.

Work starts on 107-year-old line

LONDON'S 107-year-old Waterloo and City underground line has been closed for five months from the start of April.

The five trains that operate on the line are being refurbished in Doncaster and painted in the Underground's red, white and blue livery.

Sunderland Grand Central

THE UK rail regulator has ruled that Grand Central, a newly created company, will be able to operate services between Sunderland and London. The Office of Rail Regulation (ORR) has approved track access rights for three new daily direct services each way.

DRIVER SACKED FOR DEAFNESS WINS RECORD COMPENSATION

A FORMER train driver from North Yorkshire who lost his job after excessive noise levels made him deaf is set to be awarded a six figure sum.

Robert Harris from Richmond was exposed to unsafe levels of engine, generator and boiler noise during the 26 years he worked as a driver for English, Welsh and Scottish Railways (formerly British Railways).

Robert's claim for compensation was backed by ASLEF and the union lawyers Thompsons Solicitors.

A court will decide next month on the level of damages that EWS must pay Mr Harris, but it is likely to be one of the biggest awards for industrial deafness ever made.

New 'Noise at Work' regulations, issued by the Health and Safety Executive on 6 April, now require employers to take increased measures to protect workers from dangerous noise levels.

Mr Harris, 51, lost his job in 2000 after failing a hearing test. During his career he frequently worked on Class 52 and 47 locomotives and Diesel Electric Multiple Units (DEMUs), which were very noisy especially when taking power, pulling away or going up hill. He was never given or advised to wear

hearing protectors.

As a result Mr Harris developed industrial deafness. He now has difficulty hearing everyday conversations and the television.

Mr Harris' case was unsuccessful at the first court hearing because EWS advised the court that it was not reasonably practical for Mr Harris's former employer, British Rail, to provide hearing protectors to train drivers - but this was overturned at an appeal. This court ruled that British Rail had been aware of the dangers of noise to its engine drivers, but chose to do nothing to protect the hearing of its employees against the noisy working environment.

When Mr Harris failed a hearing test at work, EWS dismissed him on health grounds. They had effectively caused his deafness and then, when he was too deaf to work as a train driver, dismissed him.

Robert Harris explains, 'The locomotive footplate and the engine room compartments on many locomotives were extremely noisy. British Rail could have provided hearing protection that would have saved my hearing.'

'I loved my job as an International Train Driver and I



was at the top of my profession. I had a good salary and a decent pension to look forward to. When I was told that I was too deaf to work, I was devastated. I lost my job and I had to sell my house as I couldn't pay my mortgage. I was eventually lucky enough to find a new job as a signaller but this job was at a far lower rate of pay than I earned as a train driver.'

ASLEF General Secretary Keith Norman said, 'About 170,000 people in the UK suffer from deafness or other ear problems due to excessive noise at work. We're very pleased that we've been able to

help our member achieve this important legal victory. Our priority now is to ensure that we eliminate the possibility of any recurrence.'

'Our satisfaction at this success is tempered by the fact that but we would sooner have safe and healthy working environments than compensation pay-outs.'

Judith Gledhill for Thompsons Solicitors says, 'Employers can't expect to expose employees to unacceptable noise levels at work and then dismiss those same employees when they fail hearing tests after years of exposure.'

Railbriefs

MORE WORK, SAME STAFF SHOWS RAIL PRODUCTIVITY

The number of railway jobs has changed little since privatisation in spite of a 60% growth in rail freight and a 40% growth in passenger traffic. An investigation by the Rail Freight Group requested by the European Commission shows a remarkable similarity in the total numbers, of between 110,000 and 120,000.

Over the ten year period

when employment numbers have remained constant, freight traffic grew 60%, passenger traffic 40% and Government expenditure on the railways increased from £1,400 m in 1994/5 to £5,400 m in 2003/4. Much of this increase went towards reducing the backlog of expenditure on the rail infrastructure.

NETWORK RAIL SAYS 40 DIE EACH YEAR ON CROSSINGS The importance of ASLEF's level crossing

campaign was underlined last month when Network Rail conceded that 40 people die each year on UK level crossings.

The Health and Safety Executive says crossings have 'the greatest potential for catastrophic risk on the railways'.

Now government ministers have now accepted an amendment to the Road Safety Bill that will allow Network Rail to recommend road improvements to make crossings safer.

Currently local authorities choose whether to make recommended road improvements near crossings - and Network Rail claims that most refuse.

The union fully supports any safety measures - such as bollards, anti-skid surfaces and raised strips on approach roads to level crossings - but still believes that our solution of beaming images of the track ahead into the cab is a vital tool in cutting down the appalling number of deaths on level crossings.

LET

FREIGHT

GO STRAIGHT



Kelvin Hopkins, the MP for Luton North, has always been a keen advocate of using rail to transport freight in the UK, and argued that there are sufficient under-utilised routes and old trackbed to provide a network that could be used exclusively for the use of freight trains. He also argues in this article specifically written for the ASLEF Journal that we need to prioritise access to the continent if rail is to have the success it deserves

Freight – lines of attack

After years of under investment – following on from the Beeching cuts – it is now obvious that Britain’s railways are the transport system of the future and set to make a massive comeback. The roads cannot cope with traffic growth and the expansion of air travel will increasingly be constrained because of concerns about high carbon emissions and global warming.

For commuting and travel between cities, rail travel beats motoring hands down,

and if costs and fares are brought down by re-nationalisation, millions more will travel by train and leave the car at home.

But it is rail freight which must now be given the green light after too long as the Cinderella of our railway services. With the right investment – and it should be public investment – rail freight will pay for itself financially, as well as bringing enormous economic and environmental benefits to the country. Rail freight has grown in the last decade, but it still represents too small a proportion of total freight

movements. What is needed is investment in new dedicated freight capacity, and especially international freight links through the Channel Tunnel.

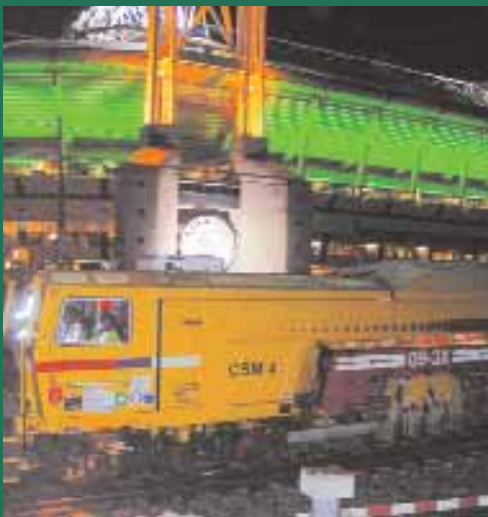
Freight should go underground!

The Channel Tunnel is teetering on the brink of bankruptcy and is massively under used. There will never be enough passengers to make the Channel Tunnel financially viable even with the new Channel Tunnel Rail Link (CTRL). Only by pouring millions of tons of freight

through the Tunnel will it prove its economic worth. There are many thousands of vacant train paths through the tunnel every year and they must be occupied by freight trains carrying containers and lorries on trains. All that is missing is a dedicated rail freight delivery network on the British side of the Tunnel.

On the continent of Europe a large gauge freight network is being built at a pace, with the Betuweroute scheme across Holland and Germany, and a new freight tunnel being bored through the Alps from France to Italy. A freight

Betuweroute scheme – A freight line built for a continent



ON THE continent of Europe, the Betuweroute freight scheme will cross Holland and Germany and link up with Italy. The freight line terminates at the French side of the Channel Tunnel

route all the way from Sicily to Berlin is being pieced together including a planned new 54 Km freight tunnel through the Brenner Pass between Italy and Austria. This new network of dedicated freight lines will be easily linked to the French end of the Channel Tunnel so it is now a matter of urgency to build a similar freight route to the Tunnel on the British side linking all the major industrial areas of Britain northwards to Glasgow.

A UK freight-line

Just such a scheme is now being promoted and a precise route and locations for freight terminals have been determined. The plan is to use under-utilised rail lines and old trackbed to develop a new UK freight railway line initially starting north of the Thames and linked to CTRL. A new terminal can be quickly established with freight trains ready to roll when CTRL opens. The new route would then be extended around the eastern and northern sides of London to a terminal to the north-west, close to the M25, M4, M3 and M41. Beyond that, the line would pass northwards along a route to the East Midlands originally designated by Central Railway in their own proposals but which were sadly rejected by government.

There would be a link to the West Midlands and the line would travel further north to South Yorkshire, then through the Woodhead Tunnel under the Pennines to South Lancashire and northwards again across the Settle-Carlisle route eventually to Glasgow. Further links to the North East and the South West would be constructed later.

The key to the route's success will be constructing it to a large gauge, capable of taking lorries on trains and double-stacked 9ft 6ins

containers. 9ft 6ins containers are steadily becoming the standard for all container traffic but much of Britain's existing rail network is not capable of taking single 9ft 6ins containers let alone double-stacked. For this to become reality, a new dedicated large gauge route is vital.

It is commonplace to see road trailers on trains on the Continent of Europe and in North America, so that hauliers can deliver their trailers to terminals and have

them transported quickly by train to terminals hundreds or even thousands of miles away and then going by road to their final destinations close to the delivery terminals.

With restrictions on road drivers' hours, increasing road and port congestion, and concerns about the environment and exhaust emissions, such a service would be very attractive to freight operators, subject of course to appropriate rail freight charges.

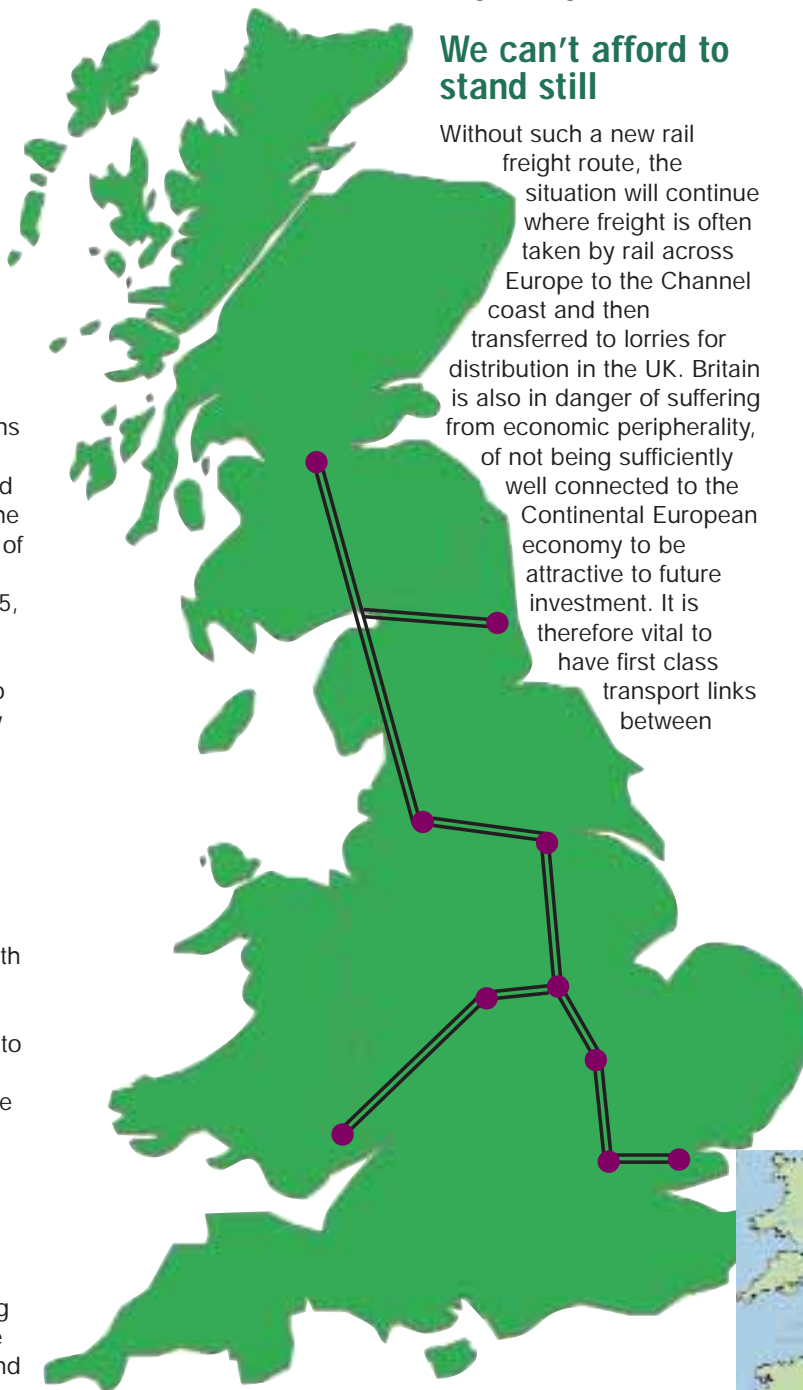
We can't afford to stand still

Without such a new rail freight route, the situation will continue where freight is often taken by rail across Europe to the Channel coast and then transferred to lorries for distribution in the UK. Britain is also in danger of suffering from economic peripherality, of not being sufficiently well connected to the Continental European economy to be attractive to future investment. It is therefore vital to have first class transport links between

Continental Europe and Central Scotland, the North and Midlands of England, the South West and South Wales and indeed, London and the South-east. A dedicated large gauge rail freight route up the back bone of Britain is essential to the country's economic future.

Finally, there is of course the question of costs. By using old trackbed and existing under-utilised rail routes, the proposed new route could be built very economically, at least from the North Thames. In time, a new tunnel under the Thames and route across Kent would be needed, but for its immediate future, linking the freight line to the CTRL north of the Thames would be sufficient. The only new construction required would be one tunnel and a short viaduct in North London, and a four mile linking stretch of line in northern England. The rest would be built on existing and old railway routes.

The scheme would need government backing and government involvement but would be so economically beneficial that it should be very attractive to the Treasury. The support of scores of Labour MPs in the industrial areas of Britain will be a key factor in persuading government to give the go ahead. A substantial shift of freight on to rail is the future, and we must all work to make sure it happens.



Chris Dodd certainly started something with his article 'The union matters, not the grade' in the March edition of the magazine. Chris argued that it was illogical to suggest that Driver Team Managers like himself should not be part of ASLEF. He could see no conflict and called for solidarity rather than caricature prejudice. But there are other sides to the argument, as we show below. The bigger piece, in fairness, goes to the 'No' camp this month

The case for management in ASLEF



I WOULD like to congratulate Chris Dodd, the Driver Team Manager who wrote an excellent letter in the February ASLEF Journal.

I have heard it said that ASLEF is only for train drivers – and sadly this has been

repeated by some union officials, district secretaries and by many train drivers. But Chris Dodd is right when he says how important it is to be in a trade union, especially since privatisation.

Let me remind those who seek to exclude Driver Managers that many of these ASLEF members have been

demoted for fighting for their fellow trade unionists. Others have been on strike supporting our union. Others were once union officials themselves - and negotiated the conditions that we have today.

The Journal letter was quite right when it asked what has happened to the basic trade

union values on which our movement was established - solidarity and unity.

Many ASLEF members have left and/or joined other unions. They are only encouraged in this by people who say that ASLEF is only for train drivers. It means that people who are not train drivers, but have been faithful to our union, feel unwelcome.

It's about time ASLEF tried to help those members who have been demoted or otherwise unfairly treated. We should give them hope by showing them that their union still has the same sense of unity and solidarity that was so evident in the past.

Douglas Oxer Bolton - Lancs

The case against inclusion in the union



THE debate currently ongoing in the Journal regarding DSMs and other managers remaining ASLEF members is interesting. Driver Team Manager Chris Dodd ('Opinion' March 2006 issue) makes a passionate case, but however much he professes to be ethical or virtuous in his grade, he is still wrong. Managers should leave the union upon gaining their management post.

Mr Dodd has an impressive union background, and I am sure that he is, despite his post, an ardent and principled union member. However, he is in a very small minority who thinks that way. Many of this grade are exactly what he says that he is not. The days of the helpful, fair-minded DSM of British Rail has been, in the main, replaced by the self-serving, calculating and careerist element.

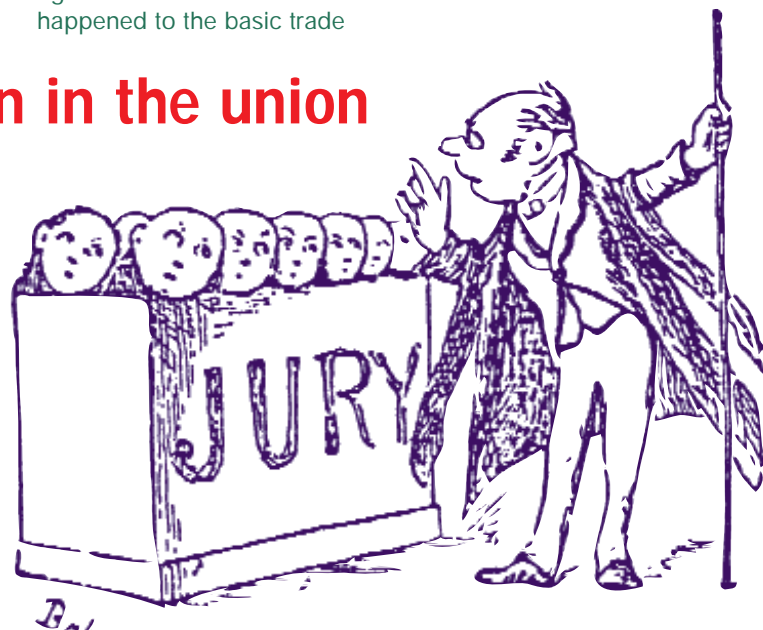
DSMs/Driver Team Managers have the best of both worlds in remaining in ASLEF. Being a manager and an ASLEF member is a

contradiction.

ASLEF is a drivers' union. Not managers. Indeed, DSMs within ASLEF have additional advantages conferred upon them. They have a vote on pay, restructuring, industrial action or regional and national officers. Please don't tell me they have no vested interests.

It is an aberration that a DSM – who holds deciding factors concerning the discipline and authority over drivers – is entitled to the same amount of legal protection as the driver who is being punished. Not all DSMs are altruistic and understanding when it comes to discipline. The job has changed from one that worked with, and supported, drivers to one who all too often finds fault.

No one is forced to become a manager. There is no gun put to the head. They do it voluntarily for their own furtherance or gain. The good, the bad and the indifferent secure these positions – and not all share Mr Dodd's utopian ideals of fairness and justice for the drivers they manage.



Bob

I don't believe many ordinary drivers in the mess-room support managers remaining in ASLEF.

Drivers have an excellent union – ASLEF. Managers have TSSA and other grades have RMT. All do good jobs representing their grades and everyone should be encouraged to join the appropriate union. Mr Dodd bemoans the fact that he considers RMT and TSSA to be weak. Perhaps if he, and others like him, joined the correct union for their grade with his ideals, they would be as equally strong as ASLEF?

Managers like Mr Dodd who wish to retain ASLEF membership should have their right to vote rescinded and perhaps membership benefits reduced. By all means, pay your subs, but as a person in a position of control, you should not expect the same level of representation as those whom you govern.

You can't have it all ways. Mr Dodd is correct in one respect. ASLEF is not a private members' club. It is a Society for the betterment, furtherance and protection of drivers. Not managers.

Driver N. Leach Bristol

In France, Germany and Italy, managers are obliged to explain and justify their decisions to the unions. In the UK they are required to inform the workforce of their plans.

UK workers need European rights

says Vicky Phillips, head of employment rights at Thompsons Solicitors



THE planned closure of Peugeot's Coventry plant, with the loss of 2,300 jobs, confirms that Britain's labour laws offer limited protection for workers.

The difficult task of consultation on the redundancies at Ryton now begins for the unions – Amicus and TGWU. But that process begins against a background of the plant's closure apparently having been set in stone.

The consultation appears only to be on means of avoiding redundancies and re-deployment opportunities.

The real issue highlighted by Peugeot's decision is whether a plant that is profitable should be closed in the first place.

It is common for companies considering large-scale plant closure to reach agreements with government about timescale. Yet the closure of Ryton – the fundamental issue that needs to be consulted on – has been imposed on the workforce and unions as a 'fait accompli'.

FLEXIBLE MEANS CHEAPER

UK employment law is intended to be flexible, to encourage investment in the economy. But flexibility

works both ways. It's certainly working against Peugeot's British workers, just as it did to Rover's before them.

There have been some wildly differing estimates by City and legal pundits of exactly how much cheaper it is to lay off a British worker than a French one. There's certainly no dispute over the fact that French workers have longer notice periods, can challenge redundancy decisions in court, and that companies that make French workers redundant must pay for retraining, make payments to regenerate the area and even pay subsidies to workers who take on less well-paid work.

WAGES ARE NOT REGULATED

But Peugeot's plans to increase investment in workplaces in Slovakia have avoided close analysis. The Slovakian Charge d'Affaires comments about the low cost of labour there, which must be the driving force for the Ryton closure.

But isn't it always going to be possible to identify lower wage costs in developing economies? And isn't it always going to be attractive to companies looking at their

balance sheets to cut their costs and re-locate to those economies?

We choose in the UK and Western Europe to regulate the labour market in areas such as information and consultation, discrimination, business transfers and insolvency.

But we don't regulate across borders on the single largest economic factor driving the business decision as to where to locate – wage bills. We appear to be powerless to stop trans-national companies pulling out of the UK to go somewhere that the workforce comes cheaper.

Sitting centre stage in all this are the Information and Consultation of Employees Regulations 2004, implementing the EU Directive on Informing and Consulting Employees.

NO JUSTIFICATION NEEDED IN UK

The European Directive gives workers' representatives the right to be informed and consulted on, amongst other things, business decisions likely to lead to mass redundancies. But the TGWU and Amicus are unable to take advantage of this right because of the

complicated access and enforcement mechanisms which apply in the UK.

In France, and indeed in Germany and Italy too, managers are obliged to explain and justify their decisions to the unions. The unions are closely involved in working with management to try to find a solution to a factory's problems, and an alternative to closure.

UK managers are required to do little more than inform the workforce of their plans.

There is a big difference between contemplating closure, proposing it and intending it. There have been rumours for years that Peugeot was contemplating the future of Ryton. But there was no compulsion on them to discuss this with the unions or to work with them on an alternative strategy.

So the system in the UK encourages employers towards consulting only at the 'intending' end of the spectrum, leaving trade unions always three steps behind the employers by comparison with their French opposite numbers.

The 'level playing field' of the European labour market needs some new pitch markings – and possibly a new stadium.

WHO WANTS STATE F



asks John Cryer, as he argues that such an unpopular measure would only lead to more political apathy and cynicism

THE media would have us believe that all politicians are venal, corrupt and greedy. In my experience the reverse is usually the case – but then a headline which says ‘MP does very conscientious job’ is not likely to sell as many newspapers as one leading with ‘My drugs and bestiality hell, by gangster MP’.

On top of that, for the Right-wing media there is a political advantage in encouraging cynicism because the Labour vote is traditionally more volatile than the Conservative’s support – so increasing mistrust of the political class is far more likely to benefit the Tories.

Scandal has always attached itself to politics, usually of a financial or sexual nature and the latest round of controversy over loans (which has touched all three of the biggest British political parties) is simply the latest of such controversies.

I must say, however, that it seems that there has been comparatively little wrongdoing compared to previous generations. I’m not saying that MPs now are purer than the driven snow or that Tony Blair’s promise on his first day as prime minister – ‘It will be a government that seeks to restore trust in politics’ – has not come back to haunt him repeatedly, starting with the first Mandelson resignation.

Nevertheless, the ‘loans scandal’ has to be put in context. In the 1980s, during the Thatcherite era of big bang, casino economics, frenetic privatisations, mergers and takeovers, there was at Westminster a culture of grabbing everything you can with both hands.

BEST CASE WORSE

Take the largely forgotten career of Keith Best, the former MP for Anglesey. Best was a

rising star of the Conservative government but he came unstuck during the privatisation of British Telecom in 1984.

Labour Research found Best had used three variations of his name plus four addresses to buy six times the number of BT shares to which he was entitled. He had also used four bank accounts.

He was sentenced to four months in jail and when this was later quashed the appeal judge told Best he had only avoided prison ‘by the skin of his teeth’. Tellingly, when another Conservative MP was asked by a journalist if the Anglesey MP’s activities represented a one-off example, he replied that such activities were common but that ‘Best had been unfortunate enough to get caught’.

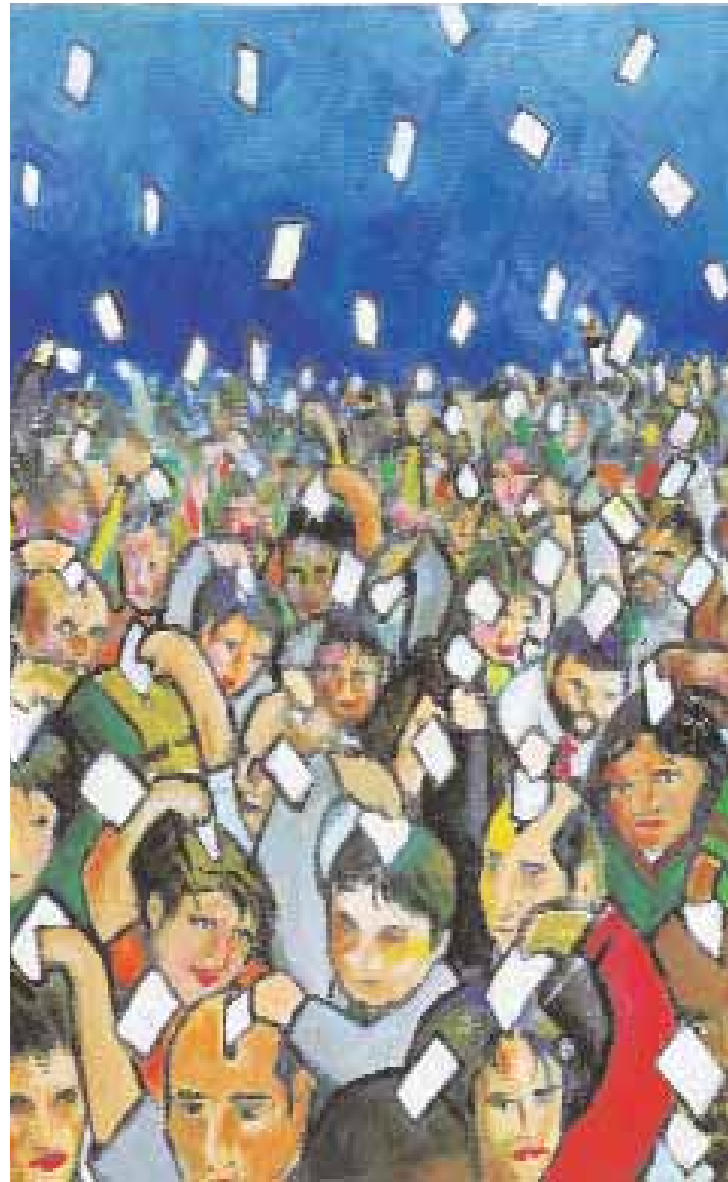
The most serious accusation alleged of the present government is that it has sold honours for donations to the Labour Party. It is worth reminding ourselves of the roots of the 1925 Sale of Honours (Prevention of Abuses) Act which made this activity a criminal offence.

WHAT PRICE HONOUR?

David Lloyd George, the prime minister from 1916 to 1922, actually set up an office for the sale of honours. It was run by Maundy Gregory, a particularly sleazy conman and fraudster who was effectively a broker; the price list included peerages at around £50,000, which made a knighthood for £10,000 look like a snip.

Whatever the present administration may or may not have done, it has not engaged in anything like the activities of Lloyd George, Gregory and a number of Liberal and Coalition ministers in the years after the first world war.

Naturally, a number of politicians have used the



present controversy to further their own opportunistic goals. David Cameron lost no time. He hurried along to Sky TV not to denounce patronage or secret loans – but to attack the link between Labour and the unions in the most vicious terms. The real Cameron, as opposed to the media model, retains Mrs Thatcher’s mission to smash the Labour movement by any means necessary.

TRANSPARENT SYSTEM CALL

Any donations or loans to political parties, whether at commercial rates or otherwise, should be open so that the voters know precisely who is

paying what to whom. The Labour leadership was entirely wrong to accept secret loans.

However, the fact that this story appeared in the press is some evidence that the system is working to some extent. Three peerages were rejected by the Lords Appointments Commission, a body set up by the Labour government. Before 1997, all three would have gone through with no questions asked – and none of us would have been any the wiser.

The likelihood is that Blair’s Downing Street has done nothing that has not been done in the name of any previous incumbent. The difference is that an element of accountability brought it into the open.

However, none of this

FUNDING?

addresses the central issue of the public's faith, or lack of it, in the democratic process, a cynicism which has been growing for 20 years. The loans controversy is fuelling the notion of a small political and corporate elite at the apex of society. Regardless of the justification or otherwise of this view, it has to be tackled if the prime minister's oft-quoted desire to restore trust is ever to be realised.

STATE FUNDING NO ANSWER

The proposal that political parties should be funded by the state does not provide the answer and will, in all probability, exacerbate the problem. In a recent edition of *Tribune* the Labour MP for Rotherham, Denis MacShane, argued that there is 'widespread public support' for such a measure.

Yet over many years of knocking on thousands of doors and speaking at hundreds of public meetings, I have never heard a member of the public suggest that what Britain really needs is to hand over ever larger amounts of taxpayers' cash to politicians. If Robin Cook and Gordon Brown rejected the proposal, as Denis claims, they were both correct and in line with public opinion.

Moreover, I pay money to the Labour Party in the form of an annual membership subscription because I choose to do so; I have no wish to pay my taxes to Tories or Lib Dems. There is also the question of threshold: how is a party to be judged worthy to receive state funding? If the barrier is set too high smaller parties will be excluded, if too low then all sorts of head-bangers and extremists will be queueing up for the lucre.

The reality for all those politicians who tire of the often hard work attached to raising money is that they cannot just sit back and wait for the Chancellor to cough up. They will have to continue to work at persuading people to support

their cause.

Even if the government decided to opt for state funding, which itself is a moot point, could they get it through Parliament? The Lib Dems would support it, of course, but there would be, I suspect, a sizeable rebellion on the Labour benches not just because of the reasons above but because it may well spell the end of the Labour movement. Cameron would probably want to support it, since the Tories have a record on funding far more dodgy than any other party, but large numbers of Tory backbenchers, especially those of a libertarian persuasion, would vote against.

Of course, there should be national limits on expenditure – not on donations. A simple measure such as banning billboard advertising during the short campaign would cut millions off the election bill alone.

But there needs to be more. It is illegal to bribe a councillor or a police officer but it is not illegal to bribe an MP although the House of Commons passed a resolution 300 years ago condemning the bribing of MPs. This would make it far more difficult, although not

impossible, for MPs to have outside financial interests.

REAL DEMOCRACY IS THE SOLUTION

An elected upper House would also help. As would outright abolition of the Lords but only with greatly expanded powers for the select committees along the lines of, say, the US senate committees. If the Lords decided to hold up such legislation, as they can do almost indefinitely, the elected government would be well within its rights to flood the red benches with a few hundred Labour peers to hammer it through.

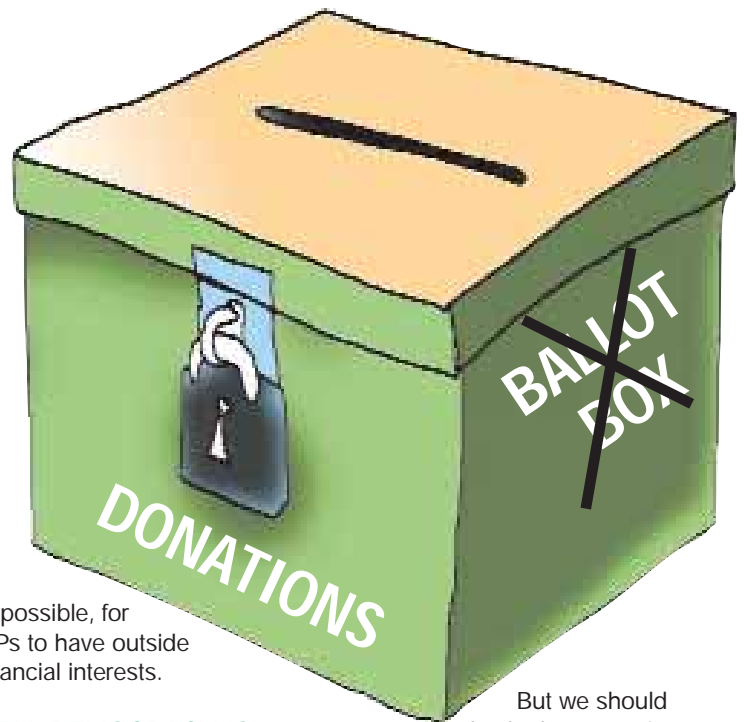
This would at least start to restore some faith in democracy as well as limiting

the power of patronage.

But we should also look at returning some power to local government, well beyond some of the mealy-mouthed reforms currently being discussed in Whitehall. The restrictions on councils have become absurd in their extent and complexity whereas there should in principle be only two: the police station in the event of corruption and the polling station in the event of incompetence.

Current levels of voter participation are getting so low there is a real threat to democracy. While ministers discuss technocratic, obscure solutions which nobody in the real world knows anything about, our democracy

slips further toward the edge. The government will have to face up to the need for real, radical shifts if we are to tackle the crisis.



Political favours and generous donations appear to be the asking price for a seat in the House of Lords



Edinburgh presentation to Nobby Clark

AS Assistant Secretary of the Edinburgh No 2 branch, I would like to take this opportunity to thank all branches and individuals who helped to make the appeal for Bro Norman 'Nobby' Clark such a success.

A presentation took place at our last branch meeting. We were pleased to welcome along EC member Hugh Bradley and District Organiser Kevin Lindsay, who presented Nobby with his cheque.

The support that has been shown to Bro Clark has been absolutely incredible. Nobby said he has been very touched by your generosity and expressed an emotional 'thank you' to everyone who contributed.

I would like to take this opportunity on behalf of all at Edinburgh Waverley to wish Nobby all the best, and lots of luck in the future.

Thomas McAllen Assistant Branch Sec - Edinburgh No 2

Swindon reunion on 20 May

THE next Swindon Depot Closure reunion will be held on Saturday 20 May from 19.30hrs onwards at the Queenstown Club in Dudmore Road Swindon.

Anyone associated with Swindon Depot, ie Footplate men, Guards, Shunters Signalmen, Station staff, etc. who would like to come along will be welcome

Anyone requiring further information can contact me on 01973 770114 or e-mail mannerdj@msn.com

Dave Manners

Making history at Bristol

PRESENTATIONS were made at the January meeting of the Bristol Branch to retired members who between them had 133 years worth of ASLEF membership. This was an historic occasion as both George Brown and George Purver will be the last members to receive medallions celebrating 50 years ASLEF membership whilst still in railway service. George Brown became an ASLEF member in 1953 and George Purver in 1954.

EC member Bro. Bryan Davies made the presentations of retirement certificates, an appreciation certificate and two 50 year medallions.

Bro Steve Truman was also honoured with an appreciation certificate. Steve became an ASLEF member in 1973, and, unusually, served on the LDC at Bath Road Diesel Depot before he got his drivers job. Steve

remained an active member of the Bath Road LDC up to and beyond the depot splits, in 1995/1996, ending up on the Local Level Council for Virgin Cross-Country. Steve also kept order at Bristol Branch for many years as Branch Chairman. He has been sorely missed since he retired in June 2005

EC member Bro Bryan Davies gave the branch a 'state of the union' address covering the Brady appeal, FGW cab cooling, the Hatfield Verdict and SN 109 brought back on line without consultation with ASLEF. He also reported on pay claims, the Greater Western Franchise and the Head Office Pension Fund and spoke about the revised daily rate and new EC members.

A buffet was provided - and the celebrations continued after the meeting finished!

Bernard Kennedy
Bristol Branch Secretary



Left to right Bernard Kennedy - Branch Secretary, George Brown - Retired Member, George Purver - Retired Member, Steve Truman - Retired Member, and Bryan Davies - E.C. Member



EC member Bryan Davies makes the presentations to Drivers P. Day, J. Stokes and T. Preece

News from Newport

A VERY well attended branch meeting was held on 3 February in the Mill Street Social Club in Newport.

It was a pleasure to welcome Bro B. Davies, the District 7 EC representative who is a member of this branch. He gave us all the latest information on the new pay and productivity deal on offer from EWS as well as a comprehensive report. Many questions were raised about the new 'smart pensions scheme' which is being proposed by EWS.

The highlight was the presentation of certificates and medallions to Brothers P. Day, J. Stokes and T. Preece who had recently retired.

This was followed by a social where past and present members mixed and exchanged tales. Bro T.C.W. Jones was pleased to answer questions on EWS business.

I am pleased to say that many members are asking when the next branch meeting will be held.

A.G. Honeyball Secretary -
Newport Branch

Branching out in Leamington

LEAMINGTON SPA Branch held their monthly meeting on Sunday the 2nd of April in the BRSA club.

This was a well attended meeting for a Branch with twenty four active Drivers. The National Organiser Andy Reed was our guest and presented long service awards to the Drivers that were able to attend the meeting. Thirteen badges were sent from Head Office with a total of two hundred and thirty years service.

Harry Checketts was



National Organiser Andy Reed does the honours at Leamington Spa

awarded with his forty five year badge. Harry has just retired under ill health. He is a well known character in the Birmingham area. We wish him all the best.

Another retired member

Brian Whitehead was visiting us from Spain. Thanks to all that attended. We wish we could have this attendance every month.

Richard Hopkins
Branch Reporter

Hitchin honours 'two real characters'

AT THE February meeting of the Hitchin Branch, Paul Smith and Steven Comins (affectionately known as Puffer and 'Cosmo and mate!') were presented with their ASLEF retirement certificates.

Both unfortunately are retiring through ill health. They are both characters in their own right.

Paul, who is perhaps better known to me, isn't just a work colleague; he is also a good friend. He started at Hitchin in June 1976. Paul is a generous person who, with his very first wage packet, took several of us to the local hostelry where we managed to show him how to invest wisely! (He's never allowed us to forget it since!). Except for a brief period at Kings Cross he spent most of his years at Hitchin. While at work he was never one to be quiet. We

always knew when Puffer was around, putting the word about to see what would come back. He loved to keep the LDC on their toes, bless him!

Steve, famous for thinking out loud (hence the name 'Cosmo and mate!') started his career at Kings Cross, moving to Caterham for his driving job. His stay there was brief before moving to London Bridge where he remained until the early 'nineties, when he moved to Hitchin. He has been here until ill health took its toll. Steve is a likeable character, who loved to tell jokes - but unfortunately often never got



Puffer and 'Cosmo and Mate' demonstrate train drivers' love of nicknames!

them out, through laughing.

Both were good loyal ASLEF members and will be a great loss to us. We wish them good luck and improved health in their retirements.

Pete Newbury LLR rep
Hitchin Branch

5 July date for Manchester 105 Club

ALL guards, trainmen and drivers – past and present – are invited to the 105 Club Annual Reunion on Wednesday 5 July from 1300 until late. There will be a buffet, raffle and social at the Millgate public house in Failsworth, Manchester.

Paddington at Victoria

A well-attended meeting of the Paddington Branch at the 'Victoria' had the pleasure of the General Secretary attending.

Keith Norman gave a full report of items both at national level and also items that were outstanding at Branch level. Of particular interest were his reports on the pension campaign and also an honest update of the situation at Arkwright Road.

Branch members were also given the chance to put questions to Keith and he was also called upon to present long service badges to Bro Des Kelly (25 years) and Bro Paul Mason (15 years). The branch would like to thank Keith again for attending and hope to welcome him back again in the not-too-distant future.

Stephen Austin Secretary -
Paddington Branch

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 (Prize open to all members of the ASLEF Association who are currently working in the railway industry)

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Photos: Els Dekker

Normally we use this column to look at a driver who has a story to tell – either what he or she did before coming to the footplate, or some other tale that will interest ASLEF members. This month we've stretched the idea to include a remarkable lady who has never driven a train in her life: but **Barbara Buckton** was married to one of ASLEF's major figures, Ray, for over four decades. Chris Proctor went to visit her in her North London home ...

RAY BUCKTON was ASLEF's General Secretary during some of its most turbulent years – the 70s and 80s. The union – and he – seemed under constant attack from employers, the media or government. He drew much of the strength that saw him through those days from his companion of over forty years, Barbara Buckton.

Ray knew Barbara well before she'd ever clapped eyes on him. This was because her father was a train driver – and young Ray was his fireman. During the many hours her father and

Ray worked together, it was inevitable that Barbara was a regular topic of conversation.

When they did first meet, however, it was under tragic circumstances. Barbara's father died young and Ray helped organise his funeral. Their paths crossed over the following months and years, but there was no instant attraction – partly because Barbara had very firm ideas about men and marriage. 'I remember telling my mother that I'd never marry a train driver!' she laughs. 'So of course, I did.'

Barbara had made up her

mind to be a singer or to join the navy and travel the world. Her father didn't want her on the stage, although everyone recognised her musical talents. Neither did he want her in uniform: but his daughter was too spirited to be denied twice.

She left her home in York to join the Wrens and see the world. 'I ended up in Wetherby – twenty miles down the road!' she says.

While she was making her way in the world, Ray Buckton was emerging as an important local politician as well as a union activist. It was

at a party to celebrate his election to the York council that Barbara accepted his offer to go out dancing the following weekend. He would later become an Alderman and was widely tipped for a career in Parliament. Instead, however, Ray chose to represent his fellow workers in ASLEF.

He wasn't on the executive long before he became the union's Irish Officer. It seems strange now, but in those days the union had members across the length and breadth of that island. The Buckton family – which by now included three small boys – crossed the Irish Sea and set up home in Dun Laoghaire outside Dublin. 'I loved every minute of it,' Barbara says. 'It was a wonderful experience,

even if it took a little while to be accepted.'

When Ray wasn't travelling to Belfast or Cork or points in between, he worked from home – and Barbara soon found herself acting as ASLEF's unpaid secretary, typist, message taker, tea maker and office organiser.

After three and a half years, and with some sadness, they moved back to England when Ray became ASLEF's officer in the North-East. Nine months later Barbara was packing again – this time heading for London. Ray had become number two in the union, and, after the sudden death of Albert Griffiths, he was appointed General Secretary.

'I'd only passed through London before,' she says. 'I didn't know where I was!' After weeks of hectic searching the family found, and moved into, a pleasant semi-detached house in a quiet north London suburb.

But it wasn't quiet for long.

While Barbara was, despite some reluctance from her husband, finding herself a succession of jobs, Ray was on his way to becoming what one newspaper called 'The Most Hated Man In Britain'. The union was flexing its industrial muscles after years of low pay, long hours and bad treatment set the scene for the most militant period in its history. Ray Buckton was the focal point for the establishment's anger and vitriol.

'We'd have journalists and cameras at the house at three in the morning, so they could get their story for the morning

papers,' Barbara says. 'The publicity meant that I'd see neighbours crossing the road to avoid me. I think our children suffered at school – and one of the worse times was when I got letters threatening to kidnap the boys. All the hate mail – and you would not believe some of it – was addressed to me, not Ray. One Christmas we were sent cards with used toilet paper inside.'

There were bomb threats and once Barbara had to scrape a spy hole through the red paint someone had thrown over their car so she could see to drive it to the garage to be repaired.

'One day I was working at the ASTMS union when a news item flashed up saying 'Buckton Death Threat'. My boss sent me home, and I called into Arkwright Road to see Ray on my way back. He was there with a police sergeant. Ray told me he'd been assigned a bodyguard.

'Have they really threatened your life?' Barbara asked, shocked.

'Well, no. They've actually threatened yours!' Ray told her.

Barbara is so full of tales and observations that it is a wrench to drag yourself away from her company. Let's hear just one more story before we leave this vivacious and bright woman whose spirit belies her seventy-seven years.

The Bucktons were in Stockholm at an International Transport Federation meeting and had been invited to the British Embassy for a short reception. The Ambassador's wife was making small talk when she suddenly stopped and pointed across the room in horror.

'Isn't that the horrid man who is causing so much trouble in London?' she demanded. 'What a dreadful person to have in the embassy!'

'Yes, that's the man,' Barbara told her. 'He's my husband.'

The hostess' face froze and her eyes widened. Her mouth moved silently.

Brightly and politely, Barbara Buckton observed, 'It must be difficult to be a diplomat's wife!'



Memorial to Ray Buckton

KEEPING TRACK

What the union was doing 50 and 100 years ago

MAY 1906 LOCOMOTIVE JOURNAL

THE SOUTH LEEDS CRISIS BY ESPERANTO

ALBERT FOX was the ASLEF General Secretary in 1906. He stood as the Labour party candidate in the General Election for South Leeds and lost.

Sir Lawson Walton, the Attorney General, won the South Leeds seat after promising to support the trade unions interest when promoting the Trades Disputes Bill.

We waited with bated breath to read the issue of the Trades Disputes Bill from the mighty Sir Lawson Walton, who promised so much for the trades unions and has done so little. He who said that he could toe the trades union line so well, behold, when the eventful day came for him to voice our cause was found wanting, and he left us just in the same position as we were before he took his mighty stand for trade unions.....

Who says our General Secretary stands for half measures? No, he is an all-hogger in the Labour movement, no one can doubt his sincerity. He is not only our General Secretary but our General in the cause of Labour, and if we will only be true soldiers he will lead us on to a brighter future.....

....had he been returned by you of South Leeds; he would have given no opposition to the Trade Disputes Bill, but would have worked for it might and main. Who then have we to look to as a true friend? Albert Fox stands for the poor – Sir Lawson Walton stands for the rich.

...50 years ago

MAY 1956 LOCOMOTIVE JOURNAL

FRESH FIELDS BY C.BROOKS

NUTS to the B.B.C.: I've a good mind not to pay my licence. On my last long week-end I intended to have another trip to Wales, but the weather forecast by the B.B.C. was rain here, there and everywhere. I didn't fancy that, so decided against the trip.

Saturday went by without a spot of rain; one day wasted-too bad!

This would not do, so I made up my mind to explore new ground, starting on Sunday, and the new ground was to be East Anglia. Starting early on Sunday morning, I was soon through Barnet and riding along the Great North Road.....

....at Cavendish I noticed the Tudor Guest House and I promptly got myself fixed up for the night. The Tudor Guest House was one of those ancient houses where one has to step up or down to get into various rooms. I was shown my room and the bathroom so that I could have a wash. The lady warned me to duck my head going into the bathroom.

By the time I'd had a wash, I'd forgotten the warning, and when I walked out my head hit the top of the doorway with an awful crash!

I didn't use the Tudor words such as Ods bodikins, but what I did say, under my breath, was just as good!

After tea I strolled round Cavendish and then early to bed.

....When I got back on to the Great North Road it was vastly different from the previous day, the traffic roaring by all the time – but as it all ran round me and not over, I arrived home safely. All told, I had ridden about 161 miles, without any train assistance.

ASLEF PLAYS ITS PART AT PERTH SCOTTISH TUC (10-13 April)



Cathy Jamieson MSP



First Minister: Jack McConnell

ASLEF made five visits to the podium over the three days of the STUC Conference, speaking on a wide range of issues. It was good to see the rail unions working together with ASLEF and the RMT speaking in support of each other's motions.

Chris Barrie (Edinburgh No 2) set a high standard when he spoke on 'The Campaign for a Union Freedom Bill' and he was followed by District Secretary Kevin Lindsay supporting a motion on 'Corporate Culpable Homicide'. I had been involved in the STUC's new video on 'Skills and Lifelong Learning' and when it was shown at conference, the ASLEF badge was very prominent.

The conference again proved that the big unions may out-vote us but they certainly can't 'out-shout' us!

EC member Hugh Bradley was the first ASLEF speaker on Wednesday. He delivered a very good speech on HIV infection awareness and prejudice in the work place. After lunch I addressed Congress and delivered an amendment about Venezuela. It was the most nerve racking thing I have ever done – but I enjoyed every minute.

Before the conference closed ASLEF had

one more composite to move on 'Rail and Ferry Transport'. This again was successfully carried by congress.

Speakers at Conference included Frank Doran MP, Cathy Jamieson MSP Minister for Justice and Jack McConnell, First Minister for Scotland. From the wider trade union movement there were salutations from Patricia McKeown of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions, a delegation from the Palestinian Trades Unions, David Lewis of the Welsh TUC and TUC President Gloria Mills. But the warmest welcome went to Thabitha Khumalo from the Zimbabwean Congress of Trade Unions who gave an emotional speech about the plight of women under the Mugabe regime.

ASLEF has come a long way in Scotland in the last few years. For a union of our size we punch way above our weight, and much of this is due to the work that Kevin and Hugh are doing in Scotland on behalf of the ASLEF membership.

All in all it was a good conference and I'm pleased to have had the opportunity to attend and represent my union. It was my first time as a delegate – so thanks to my branch for nominating me and allowing me this remarkable experience.

JIM BAXTER Motherwell Branch

OBITUARIES

TYSELEY MAN DIES IN U.S.

I AM sorry to have to report the death of a former brother, Harvey Edward Fisher at the age of 72. Harvey was a Fireman at Tyseley from 1948 to 1960, and was the son of Harvey Snr, who worked as a Driver at Tyseley. Harvey passed away on 8 April in Boston, Massachusetts, USA after a long and painful illness. He was a Great Western man to the end.

Terry Bird RMS
Brimscombe, Glos.

NEWTON HEATH MISSES ITS TWO RONS

TWO Rons from the Newton Heath branch have sadly passed away.

R.T. (Ron) Henry died in February in the 'Christie' in Manchester, following his fight

with cancer. He started his career at Belle Vue in July 1942, transferring to Newton Heath. He remained here until he opted for early retirement at the closure in 1985. Gardening was Ron's pastime with flower growing a speciality. He was a member of the RMS who will be missed at retired drivers' functions.

It is with sadness too that I inform you of the death of A.R. (Ronnie) Giles following a short illness. Ronnie, at 88 years, was the oldest member of the branch. He started at Speke Depot in 1936 served in the armed forces and was evacuated from Dunkirk beaches. On his return to the Merseyside depot he was transferred to Oldham Lees where he remained until the closure in 1983. He was a tireless worker for his local Labour Party. He

was well known locally for his love of gardening and dancing. He was a family man, well liked and respected by all his railway colleagues and a supporter of the RMS.

J.M. Black Newton Heath

ROYAL TRAIN DRIVER FROM RAIL FAMILY

DAVID RODERICK JONES
(12 June 1929 - 4 April 2006):

David Jones was born in Brithdir in the Rhymney Valley, South Wales. His father was a Police Sergeant and they lived in a police house opposite Brithdir Railway Station. He started work as a glass blower in a glass factory in Treforest, South Wales.

In December 1946 he moved with the family to Tysley, Birmingham. He started working for Great Western Railways in April 1947 as a fireman on steam locomotives. Within 3 months of moving to Birmingham he was called up

to do his National Service. He joined the Royal Artillery in March 1947. His mother cried and there were scenes of great emotion as he left for the army. However he was based in Budbrook in Warwickshire and came home the day after on leave to see his mother and family.

In 1948 Great Western Railways became the well known 'British Railways'. On completing his two years National Service he returned to work as a fireman.

He married Betty on 5 January 1952. They married at Aston Parish Church and with Aston Villa playing Arsenal, David said it was a difficult choice whether to marry Betty or watch the Villa play. He always said that although Aston Villa lost 2-1 on that day, he was the only winner in marrying Betty.

He became the father to Alison (1955), David (1958) and

WALES LABOUR CONFERENCE SPLITS – BUT ONLY INTO FORUMS!



First Minister: Rhodri Morgan



Gordon Brown: powerful speech



Secretary of State: Peter Hain

I HAD the pleasure of attending the Wales Labour Party conference in Swansea on 23 – 25 March, along with the union's political advisor.

The format of the conference was somewhat different this year with most of the business being conducted in policy forums. These covered 14 key areas including Energy, Welfare Reform, Child Poverty and 'Building A Modern Integrated Transport Network'.

One of the justifications for the forums was that it allowed delegates to contribute their views in a less formal setting than the conference floor. A number of delegates did acknowledge this point, but many also expressed reservations about the usefulness of these forums. While they allow a wide range of views to be expressed they also remove the ability of delegates and affiliated organisations to change policies by the medium of debate and casting votes.

The conference floor was used for set-piece speeches – the main speaker being the Chancellor, Gordon Brown. He delivered a powerful speech that was mainly devoted to the issues of world poverty. In it, he outlined his own experience of seeing poverty at first hand when he visited Africa. He stressed the importance of reforming trade laws because, he said, they hold back the developing world.

Brown highlighted the importance of providing free primary education to every child in Africa and the developing world. This, he said, was the best cost-effective investment the world could make. He concluded his speech by referring to a comment his father had made regarding how he would want to be remembered. Would it be for status, wealth and power – or for helping those in difficulty, raising spirits and

helping to realise dreams? Gordon Brown obviously wants to be remembered as someone in the latter camp when he does eventually succeed Blair as Leader of the Party.

One issue that concerns me is this: Can we look forward to Gordon Brown helping to realise the dreams of members of trade unions in this country who are restricted in their ability to function effectively because of anti trade union laws brought in by the Tories – and not repealed by this government?

There were also speeches by the First Minister, Rhodri Morgan, and Secretary of State for Wales, Peter Hain and time was allocated for a question and answer session.

Outside the main conference were the usual fringe meetings. We attended a meeting on a campaign for a Museum of People's History for Wales, which ASLEF supports. John Cryer spoke along with Huw Lewis AM who is leading the campaign to get it in the Labour manifesto for next year's Welsh Assembly election. John also spoke at a well-attended Welsh Labour Grassroots meeting. This organisation campaigns for democratic and socialist policies in Welsh politics.

One of the features of the conference in general as well as the fringe meeting was to emphasise the different policies being pursued in Wales and in England – especially in the areas of education and health.

I would like to conclude this report by thanking ASLEF members in Wales for electing me to attend the Wales Labour Conference. While there may have been a lack of debate on the conference floor, delegates and visitors certainly made up for it outside the formal setting.

MIKE MCCARTHY Rhymney Branch

Darryl (1959).

In 1960 David was promoted to a Locomotive Driver and attended Southall in Essex for 9 months to be appointed. He worked with his brother, Howard from 1949 until 18 April 1992 (over 43 years). On the 4 August 1957 David's brother John joined British Rail and the 3 brothers (Howard, David & John) worked together until 23 March 1968 when John left to become a publican.

In 1971 Tysley Locomotive Depot closed and all the drivers moved to Sattley.

He was a committed dedicated worker for Great Western and British Railways for over 45 years. In that time he was honoured to be asked to drive the Flying Scotsman twice, on 27 October 1973 and 9 June 1974. On Monday 4 October 1971, David was asked to drive the 'King George V' locomotive in a trip called 'Return to Steam' from Moor Street Station to Kensington, London. A pinnacle in David's career was when he was asked to drive the Royal Train on Thursday 13 November 1986.

After retiring on 28

November 1992, David along with brother Howard and ex-colleagues used to visit other railways on day and overnight excursions to places such as Ireland and Paris. Trains were in his blood and were his life until he passed away. David enjoyed meeting up with his friends at Tysley LMRCA Club to chat about old times and play snooker.

David developed cancer 5 and half years ago. Following the removal of his bladder, he coped admirably with the use of a 'storma' bag and his CT scan results for the last 4 years

had been clear of any cancer cells. David fell ill at the end of January 2006, but continued to live his life to the full. On Tuesday 4 April 2006 he was admitted to Heartlands Hospital in Birmingham where he passed away peacefully and painlessly.

David passed away with Betty and his children at his side.

He was a loving husband for over 50 years to Betty and to his children and grand children he was a friend, a confidant, and the perfect role model.

Darryl Jones Solihull



You change nothing if you're not in power



YOU TELL US

These are the pages where you talk to us. We welcome your letters, either by mail to the Journal at 9 Arkwright Road London NW3 6AB or by email to journal@aslef.org.uk

Because of our space constraints, please try to keep your contributions as short as you can.

This month we continue our STAR LETTER feature. The immensely lucky winner will pocket a rich range of ASLEF regalia!

Central Trains, steaming drivers

I WRITE in response to letters from D.Plumb, February Journal, and P.Taylor, March Journal.

To label the management of Central Trains as 'Yes Men' or 'Puppets' would give them a credibility that they ill deserve. These single-cell organisms cannot think for themselves and belittle the title of 'manager'.

The vast majority are very poor appointments, made because no one else wanted the job. The role demands people with compassion, understanding and discretion – and instead they appoint shirkers, ego trippers and of people who lacked the ability to be a half-decent driver.

In the past we have had half-decent Driver Managers who supported drivers, but these individuals have been forced out of the company. Now we are asked to negotiate with people who hardly know what 'negotiation' means.

They have had their scripts pre-written and need several adjournments in the course of any talks to seek advice. Real managers can make a decision based on what is

I read with interest the article by John Cryer '100 Years of Labour' in the March edition. I have been an active Labour Party member for over half that time, and I've witnessed many changes.

Everything today moves at such a pace that we have to adjust our thinking to keep up with events. I don't buy into this 'Old Labour' nonsense – the policies we pursued for many years kept us in Opposition - and you don't bring about change if you're not in power.

The last two paragraphs of the article summed it up for me. You don't win struggles by running away. You need to fight from within.

One of the finest achievements of this government is, for me, the introduction of the Minimum Wage. It was a godsend for people in

put in front of them. Even when an agreement is made it is often ignored, or mis-interpreted.

It's wrong to tar all Driver Managers with the same brush, because on Central Trains there are a few bearing the necessary credentials – but they are few and far between or unfortunately deceased.

Worse, the actions of the new 'pseudo managers' are compounded by this Society's inability to support the membership when we cry foul. Time after time, the membership on Central Trains have said 'enough is enough' but threat of industrial action ballots has been withdrawn without the problems being resolved. The Hampstead hierarchy needs to listen to us: we have had enough attacks on our reps and our membership.

We even have the nonsense of an 'Avoidance of Disputes' procedure. Why? How many chances do you give a mug?

This Society has a fighting crew who are willing to give their all for the cause – but we can only take so many direct hits on our listing ship before it sinks. Let's fire a few shots back, because unless the leadership discovers the will to fight the management and not each other our cause is lost and this trade union that was born out of struggle will surely die.

We are being attacked on all fronts and we want to fight back. We ask our leaders to lead by example. We are ready to follow.

R. Campbell Driver's LLC
Secretary, Central Trains –
Crewe

Thanks to EC member

ON BEHALF of everyone from my branch I would like to thank our new EC member Simon Weller for speaking at our branch meeting on 13 February.

Simon came across as very enthusiastic and informative.

We all look forward to a return visit in the not too distant future.

Howard Robert Hoare
Folkestone International

Dickensian working conditions

I HAVE just read Driver Webb's letter in the April edition of the *Journal*, and I couldn't agree more with his views on our working conditions on what is supposed to be a '21st century railway'.

I speak for many of my fellow drivers who have the 'pleasure' of working on the dreadful Class 66 locos with the various freight companies. A number of years ago I worked on the Class 150 series, and I fully agree with Driver Webb's comments. What progress has been made? Nil!

Class 66 locos are now the basic (and I mean very basic!) traction with the FOCs. The same issues have been reported over and over, with little being done about the very poor ride quality or

the unbearable noise when under power. Whoever passed these locos for noise levels?

We get literature on safety and fatigue – but if you've run on full power from Crewe to London you will know what fatigue, tiredness, backache, headache and ringing in your ears is really like!

We have had a lengthy spell of cold weather recently, and as usual, the cab heating is 'all or nothing'. Summer is almost upon us, so we've got the 'greenhouse effect' to look forward to. Were drivers consulted over the design of the cab? After all we are the people who spend most of our working lives on these locos.

No doubt they are reliable – but I can't help but think that when the company directors ordered them, drivers were (as usual) bottom of the priority list.

Class 66's have been around since 1998, so I can see problems like severe back-ache rocketing. Even more seriously, many drivers will fail medicals due to hearing problems caused by exposure to excessive noise in the cab.

I hope that management will start to take this seriously – but I wouldn't hold your breath, colleagues!

Andy Czerniakiewicz
Freightliner Intermodal – Crewe

Look after the (cab) environment!

I WOULD like to take this opportunity to state that I wholly agree with the issues that Driver Perry

Webb brought up in the April Journal. Why indeed are we subjected to these disgraceful conditions such as filthy cabs, seat bases that are never cleaned, and dirty and smelly conditions?.

Why indeed? Especially as these issues are raised all the time – and they are ignored just as often. I am fed up with constantly reporting issues such as dirty seat bases, and finding that time and time again no one pays any attention.

We are indeed professional people, and it is appalling that we are subjected to these deplorable conditions, which are both totally unnecessary, and a serious compromise on safety.

I would like to request that ASLEF look into the matters raised by Perry Webb. We are after all professional people and as such deserve to work in a clean and professional environment.

Edward C. Pearce
Marylebone

Brother Tom, one of the family

I WOULD like to thank you all for the support I have received from the ASLEF 'family' during my recent long suspension.

I would like to especially thank my District Organiser, Mick Whelan without who I would now be looking for new employment. Mick is the embodiment of what a union rep should be. He was always at the end of a phone when I needed him; he worked tirelessly to find a resolution to the problem of my suspension and the disciplinary action taken against me, and was quick to give me a kick up the rear end when I thought of quitting. Mick: your advice and support will always be remembered by me and my family.

EC member Dave Calf also gave me valuable support and advice when I needed it, for which I and my family are most grateful.

I would like to thank the EC, officers and staff at ASLEF Head Office, not forgetting, of course, the members of Rugby Branch, both EWS and FLHH members, who ensured that I never felt isolated or forgotten.

I would also like to thank all my friends in District 6, who ral-

lied round and whose telephone calls of support meant so much. I would like point out Bedford, Watford, Bletchley, Saltley and Wembley for special mention.

I started this letter by referring to the ASLEF 'family' because that is how I see our union. Like any family we may bicker and fight amongst ourselves, but when the chips are down, we all come together and show our strength.

Thank you all.

Tom Mahoney Secretary –
Rugby Branch

No protection against children

I WAS involved in an incident at work on 26 May 2005 whilst driving an empty unit from Darlington to Newcastle. On the outskirts of Durham, a 12 year old girl bowled a large stone at my train from a bridge. I was travelling at 75 mph and the train was not strong enough to withstand the impact.

The stone entered the cab through the destination blind cupboard, narrowly missing hitting me directly. It struck the bulkhead wall, above and to the right of my head. Rebounding off the back wall, it struck me on the neck and right shoulder. I found myself bleeding and unable to leave the train at the Signal Post Telephone (SPT) due to the extensive damage caused to the unit. I was unable to use the National Radio Network (NRN) due to excessive noise caused by the loss of Main Air and the inrush of air caused by the damage. When I got out at the SPT to report the incident I was asked if I was able to continue forward. I agreed to drive to Newcastle but said I need to go to hospital on arrival.

The parents of two younger children who had witnessed the incident came forward and reported it to the BT police. The young girl was arrested. She admitted throwing the stone (which collaborated the evidence taken from the two other children) and she was duly charged with the crime of Endanger Safety Neglect Without Intent. That's straightforward, you think?

The case had gone on for almost eleven months. I had had several visits from the BT police and had gone with the Scene of

Corporate manslaughter is not the answer

FOR ALL my support for our union I regret that Corporate Manslaughter Laws are not the answer to improved railway safety; they are merely an attempt to reek vengeance on corporate heads who tend not to be culpable. The result is nobody to blame and affected parties feeling even more frustrated.

The way forward is for a Railway Safety Act which places statutory responsibility on appointed persons. Much of industry runs in this manner and those in charge who look in on our industry are bewildered that we function under what is effectively a set of 'club rules'. Alistair Darling made the situation even worse when he transferred responsibility from the Health & Safety Executive to the Rail Safety and Standards Board.

I have been arguing for fifteen years for this change to take place and would like ASLEF to come on board. I fear that corporate manslaughter laws are going to lead to utter disappointment if (perish the thought) they are ever tested. My principles will not allow me to campaign on this one but I remain a loyal ASLEF member.

R W McMillan Vice Chairman - Wolverhampton Branch

Crime Officer to take photos of the bridge. The case had been adjourned and I was waiting for a new trial date. I called in at the BT police on the off chance that they had any information. I was shocked and disgusted to hear that the Crown Prosecution services had instructed the BT police to just give the girl a 'Verbal Warning' and that is the end of the case.

It has now become obvious to me that the damage to the train and the near fatal consequences to myself mean nothing to the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS). It also sends out the wrong message to young children. You do not need to respect other people's property and it doesn't

matter how much suffering or distress you cause, there are no consequences for your action, just a good talking to. Other drivers should be made aware of the situation: the law does not necessarily protect adults against children.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Rob Porter, our Health and Safety rep, for collating all the information regarding the incident whilst I was off work, and our Local Level Council reps, particularly Dave Hardy, who was my 'minder' for two months after I returned to work, and without whom I may never have got back to driving.

Brian Sherrington
Newcastle and Gateshead
branch

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To advertise in the ASLEF Journal contact Sarah Francis on 020 7317 8600 or sfrancis@aslef.org.uk

WORLD CUP 2006 BADGE SETS. Now on sale: a limited edition top quality boxed badge set for the World Cup.

Each box contains 8 individually numbered, enamel badges (1 per group). Price for the set is £20 for ASLEF members including recorded delivery postage. Please send cheques / postal orders M. Scott at 1 Tamerton Square, Woking, Surrey, GU22 7SZ. Badges will be sent out by return of post. Email: scottfootball@hotmail.com

COLLECTOR requires 1982 ASLEF strike badges, centenary badges and closure badges as well as NUR badges. Good prices paid. Contact Barry Jones either on 01709 588 648 or at 25 Windemere Close, Mexborough, South Yorkshire S64 0PT

WANTED by a Train Driver. ASLEF 1982 strike, depot closure and strike badges. Also depot closure and centenary badges. Prices negotiable. Call 07930 419 850

General Strike inspires art exhibition

DAVE SULLIVAN, an artist living in north London, put together an exhibition last month to commemorate the 80th Anniversary of the 1926 General Strike.

'I didn't want to just use images from 1926,' he says. 'I wanted modern artists to draw on the events of the General Strike to create something contemporary.'

So he persuaded his local Waltham Forest council and trades council, the TUC, the People's History Museum and the National Union of Journalists, PCS and the NUM to fund an exhibition in the grounds of William Morris' family home in Walthamstow.

'This is an interesting work,' he says, pointing to what appears to be a cape hung up on the wall. 'It's by an artist called Steven Claydon.'

Steven's grandfather, he explains, joined the Special Constabulary during the strike and as a result was 'sent to Coventry' by his wife's family for decades. The cape is similar to the one the 'Specials' would have worn eighty years ago. 'Putting modern badges onto the cape is a simple but quiet contradiction,' Dave says. 'It makes the piece into an act of atonement and perhaps even forgiveness.'

Dave had just one of his own works in the exhibition, the painting 'Branigan's Jazz Band', based upon a fading black and white photograph of this striking miners' band from Clay Cross in Derbyshire. 'While the miners continued on strike for months afterwards, to raise money and keep up spirits they organised football matches and band nights... dressing up in police and army uniforms, and as clowns,' Dave says. 'Personally I feel this to be quite a sad painting – almost like the despair of the carnival.'

The most recognisable work is probably Michael



Dave Sullivan with his painting of Branigan's Jazz Band: the special coat and A State of Anxiety. Photos: Els Dekker

Peel's image of the distorted and televised Thatcher overlaid with arms and hands, which intends to recall the dark and fearful years of her government's later attack on Britain's miners. 'Although the General Strike was the theme we all started with, some artists also used images from more recent struggles to bring out historical understanding,' Dave explains as he quotes Mark Twain saying, 'History does not repeat itself, but sometimes it rhymes.'

Also included in the exhibition were some reports from the days of the General Strike taken from local newspapers and publications. 'It is all much more powerful when it's local,' he says. 'People who might not be involved in the idea of the General Strike are still fascinated by what their family was doing eighty years ago. It makes people aware of their history – which,



as a left-wing artist, I think is really important.'

The show also featured work by the artists Conrad Atkinson, Ken Sprague,

Steve Mumberson, and Terry Atkinson, as well as the film 'Days of Hope' by Ken Loach.

The exhibition in Aveling

Park attracted scores of people who might never go to a gallery. Dave thinks that's important, too. 'We have to get rid of the idea that 'Art' isn't for working people. It is something that should enrich all our lives.'

● Dave Sullivan, a former Lift Fitters mate and a trade unionist begins a Master's degree in Painting at the Royal College of Art later this year. Email: dave@avelingpark.com.

Diesel Decade - the 1980s by Roger Siviter

144 pages. £19.99. Sutton Publishing

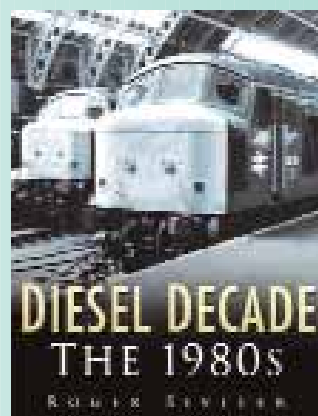
THIS book, richly illustrated with black-and-white photographs, is a visual feast of a trip down memory lane for all those who remember the 'Golden Age' of diesel. The author says it almost mirrors the 1950s when steam traction reigned supreme.

The book speeds along on the enthusiasm of the writer/photographer for his subject. He speaks of Class 45s and 46s, about Class 25s and 27s and Type 4

Class 50s with the type of tenderness you would usually associate with an aging relative!

Its different chapters show these trains at work across the country from Peaks to sea-side; and at all times of day and year. But it is more than just an enthusiast's work: it also contains a mass of highly-researched tiny detail.

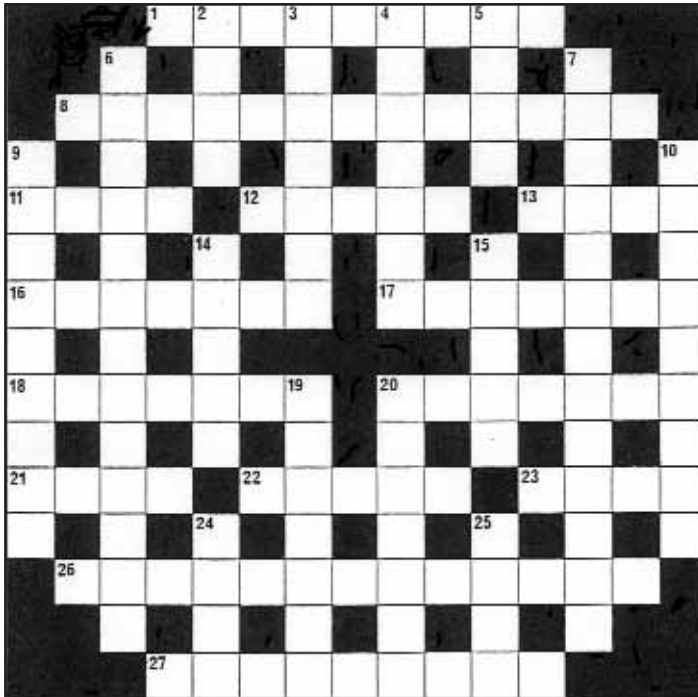
The aim of the book was to 'show this historic period through a series of



photographic essays'. That is exactly what it undoubtedly does – with unquestionable style.

Prize Crossword No. 1

set by TLC



This month we are starting a crossword that is designed exclusively for the ASLEF Journal. It's a new idea and we'd be happy to have your comments. Let us know at journal@aslef.org.uk if you find it interesting, irrelevant or whatever. As always, we welcome your feedback on any part of the magazine.

I hope you find it an interesting diversion.

If you complete the crossword and send it to the Editor, **ALSEF Loco Journal, 9 Arkwright Road, London NW3 6AB** you stand the chance of winning a hardback copy of the union's history signed by the General Secretary. For the rest of us – the solution will appear in the next issue!

CLUES ACROSS

1. Fruity prescription (5,1,3)
8. Headquarters here - are they open all hours? (9,4)
11. Some houseboats found on this English river (4)
12. A majestic liner, perhaps?
13. Breakfast meal (4)
16. Ready for a break (3,4)
17. Rest Lee from the studio where 'Star Wars' was shot (7)
18. Vast region of Northern Europe largely within the Artic Circle (7)
20. Loop line (7)
21. Road fee for the ayatollah? (4)
22. Nothing false about this union (5)
23. Scottish seaport (4)
26. Result of too much over-time? (5,3,5)
27. Danger - it's rather steep on this run (9)

CLUES DOWN

2. Take the chess-piece to Uncle for evaluation (4)
3. Rile Sue for requesting more free time (7)
4. Sprinter, unfit, has to scramble for the late finish (7)
5. Unusually, the wary become lopsided (4)
6. London station (7,6)
7. Concealed hazard round the corner (9,4)
9. No need to audition to appear on this platform (9)
10. Agreeing (9)
14. Marks the end of the soccer season (5)
15. Red stars on the blink (5)
19. Send Sid back to collect his litter (7)
20. Cheshire market town (7)
24. Devon signposts an invitation to go down to the sea in sips (4)
25. Minor stopping place on the line (4)

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