

tssa JOURNAL

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December 2011/January 2012

New Transport Secretary new thinking?

To do list:

- Respond to McNulty
- HS2. Yes? No?
- Award new franchises
- Bombardier...umm?

Decision time
for Justine Greening



in this issue



Transport Salaried Staffs' Association

General Secretary: **Manuel Cortes**

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Gerry Doherty gave his last major speech as TSSA General Secretary at the packed 'Save Our Railways' rally. You can watch it at www.youtube.com/tssaunion.

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TSSA members, together with fellow rail unions, TUC leaders and passenger groups joined a rally at Parliament on 25 October, warning the Government against cutting rail jobs, increasing fares and closing ticket offices.

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Joint campaigning between four rail and transport unions plus the TUC

As we reach the end of 2011 and look towards the start of a new year, there's no shortage of changes that will have a huge impact on our union and our industries.



We have a new General Secretary in Manuel Cortes – who lays out his priorities on page 9 and is interviewed on pages 10–11. 'We' also have a new Transport Secretary. Justine Greening has a number of momentous decisions to take in the coming months – choices examined by Christian Wolmar on pages 14–15.

The new year will also bring a less welcome change for millions of passengers – higher fares. Whilst the Chancellor backed away from the previously announced rise of 8 per cent, even the use of the 'inflation plus 1 per cent' formula will make transport significantly less affordable for many. With average pay settlements such a long way short of inflation, most people are enduring significant real terms pay cuts. We look at the campaign against the fare rises on 12 and 13 – do get involved, whether as an individual, workplace or branch.

The financial difficulties faced by Thomas Cook are a real cause for concern, with TSSA reps and officers meeting the company to ensure staff are kept informed and are in the strongest possible position however the company and its creditors respond.

On a more positive note, we've seen several quick victories due to highly energetic campaigns by reps over recent weeks – most starkly at Transport for London. Over 100 jobs were due to be outsourced and, quite literally, sent to Coventry, but with just 12 hours before the plan was due to be agreed, TfL u-turned. The strategy employed? Building an alliance of service users (in this case, taxi drivers), staff and other campaigners into an unstoppable force. Let's hope for many such victories in 2012.

All that remains to be said is that I hope you enjoy this edition of the Journal, and to wish all readers and their families a happy and healthy New Year.

Ben Soffa, editor

organising

New General Secretary elected

MANUEL CORTES HAS been chosen as TSSA's next General Secretary, taking over from



Gerry Doherty in mid November. Manuel was nominated by almost thirty branches and was the only candidate to meet the requirement to have gained at least five nominations from multiple Divisional Council areas.

After being elected Manuel said, 'I am so grateful to the many branches and activists who backed me for this post. I hope to build on all the good

work that Gerry has put in over the last seven years.

'We have a real fight on our hands because the McNulty Report will lead to the biggest attack on our members jobs, wages and conditions in a generation. Boris is also recklessly destroying jobs within our tube and TfL and long as our high streets remain depressed, our members within the travel trade are feeling the pinch.

'We need to take the public with us as we make the argument for a publicly funded and publicly owned railway which we see operating so successfully in every other country in Europe.'

Manuel is currently working as 'General Secretary Elect', with his five year term of office to begin formally at the start of January. Full details of all valid nominations are available on tssa.org.uk. ◀

Minister refuses to 'face the music' over Bombardier decision

FIFTY CAMPAIGNERS BRAVED the Derby cold on 3 November to protest outside a conference of the Derby Railway Forum.

The protest, called by the Bombardier Community Support Group, set out to demonstrate the continuing local opposition to government plans to award the Thameslink contract to German firm Siemens – a decision which will cost thousands of jobs at Bombardier and throughout its supply chain.

Speakers at the event included Sir Roy McNulty, whose report on the future of the rail industry has been met with dismay by TSSA, other rail unions and campaigners for sustainable transport.

Teresa Villiers, the Minister of State for Rail, had been scheduled to attend the conference but pulled out the day before, citing 'constituency business'. Then-TSSA General Secretary Gerry Doherty slammed the u-turn, saying that Villiers was backing out of facing up to the music. Since the protest, further pressure has mounted on the beleaguered rail minister and new Transport Secretary Justine Greening, calling on them to reverse the decision.

Protesters waved placards with slogans including 'A future for British rail manufacturing', 'Save jobs at Bombardier' and 'Stand Up for Derby'.

Alison Martin, one of the campaigners at the protest, said, 'We are here to show



the government that they can't wash their hands of this disastrous decision. If the government were serious about supporting industry and defending jobs, they would do the decent thing and award the contract to Bombardier, which they have the legal powers to do.'

Alison added: 'The people of Derby are fully behind the Bombardier workers and I encourage everyone who agrees with us to get involved and show their support for the campaign.' ◀



Members of the Belfast branch with EC member Gerry Kennedy, Manuel Cortes and Senior Regional Organiser Patrick McCusker



TSSA members join Pensions Day of Action

TSSA MEMBERS ACROSS

Northern Ireland came out on strike on November 30 as part of the day of action on public sector pensions. The level of support for the strike was huge, with an estimated 80 per cent of members in Northern Ireland joining a picket line, rally or demonstration. Events were held in multiple locations in Belfast and in Derry/Londonderry, Newry, Coleraine and Ballymena.

Workers at Translink – which is publicly owned – are members of the same public sector pension schemes to which changes are being proposed by the UK government.

The Tory government's raid on pensions would leave workers paying more, working longer and receiving a smaller pension upon retirement. They would see the uplift in annual payments linked to the lower CPI inflation measure, which

ignores the impacts of housing costs and council tax – core costs for many people, and ones that often go up faster than other prices. Payment contributions would also jump by 3.2 per cent of pay by 2015 – in effect a 3 per cent wage cut and the pensionable age would increase to 67 for those retiring in more than 17 years time. Negotiations continue – for more information see www.pensionsjustice.org.uk. ◀◀



Tube Lines bail out on negotiations: legal papers being prepared

TSSA AND RMT met briefly with Tube Lines on 18 November to discuss recognition to negotiate on pay for staff on Performance Related Pay (PRP) contracts. Unlike all other staff at Tube Lines and staff on equivalent grades in TfL – the organisation that wholly owns Tube Lines – they do not have the right to collectively bargain their pay. As a result, staff on PRP have not received a pay rise in two of the last three years, and their pay rates are increasingly falling behind those in TfL and London Underground.

Tube Lines had agreed to talk with the unions only after more than 600 Tube Lines staff had shown their support for recognition by joining the union or signing a pledge card and petition. However, the talks were short-lived and on

Wednesday, 23 November Tube Lines wrote to its managers to tell them that it was not prepared to negotiate further.

Tube Lines intransigence, and complete disregard for the expressed wishes of more than two-thirds of the PRP workforce, leaves TSSA with no choice but to use the law to gain a formal recognition agreement with Tube Lines. We have prepared a robust application to the Central Arbitration Committee who can impose such an agreement, and will be meeting with local reps and activists this week to plan our campaign. Staff on PRP at Tube Lines are determined to win justice and recognition for pay bargaining – whether their employer wants it or not! ◀◀

news

Gerry Doherty's retirement marked



ASLEF's Simon Weller, TUC Deputy General Secretary Frances O'Grady and Gerry

The retirement of outgoing General Secretary Gerry Doherty was marked by a reception at the St Pancras Renaissance Hotel – a building in which, in its former life as a BR office, Gerry had worked. The reception, provided by Morrish solicitors, included representatives from across the labour movement and Labour Party. Ken Livingstone, the TUC's Frances O'Grady and Bob Crow were amongst those who paid tribute to the work of Gerry and the TSSA.



London taxi jobs saved with hours to go

JUST BEFORE 9 O'CLOCK at night on 22 November, over 100 staff working in the London Taxi & Private Hire Office (LTPH) received an email containing the news that their jobs had been saved. This u-turn followed a surprise announcement by TfL just three weeks earlier that the licensing and compliance functions of LTPH were to be outsourced to a commercial company. This would have meant a cut in jobs and relocation of staff to either Coventry or Northampton.

The dramatic u-turn was announced just hours before the TfL Finance Board was due to discuss the proposal at a 9.30am meeting the following morning. TfL and Boris Johnson's last-minute change of heart was down to a lively campaign organised by TSSA members and reps working in conjunction with London cab drivers, who gave their full backing to the staff of the LTPH.

'We're behind you 100 per cent' said Grant Davies of the London Cab Drivers' Club (LCDC), 'If it affects you, then it affects us'. Overwhelming support was also received from other cab drivers' unions and



groups, including RMT, Unite and the United Cabbies Group (UCG), who all carried the story in their newspapers and blogs and joined TSSA members in protesting outside TfL's head office.

The Taxi and Private Hire Office is responsible for licensing approximately 22,000 black cabs and 50,000 private hire vehicles in London. This involves checking the safety and security of both drivers and their vehicles. The office also deals with on-street compliance, including policing of unlicensed taxis (or 'touts' as they're known by cabbies), and following up on any complaints about drivers or cab operators from members of the public.

TfL's own website claims that 6,000 unlicensed cab drivers have been arrested

since their Safer Travel at Night (STaN) scheme began in 2003, and that there were 143 cab-related sexual offences reported in 2009/10. It therefore beggars belief that they should seek to save money on such a key service, and is a shocking and cynical pursuit of political ideology by the Mayor of London to privatise and save money with no regard for the consequences.

With our concern for public safety as well as preserving London jobs, TSSA is now working with the London cab drivers and campaigning organisations, such as the Suzy Lamplugh Trust, to launch a community-wide campaign in support of comprehensive licensing and regulation of taxis and private hire vehicles in London. During our campaign against the

outsourcing we became aware that, following a 're-organisation' of the LTPH office during the last year, there are only 24 day-time and 6 night-time compliance officers employed by TfL to regulate over 70,000 licensed vehicles (and who knows how many unlicensed cabs). Together for Transport will be seeking to highlight this shortfall and will campaign for a better resourced service.

Keeping the LTPH office and jobs in London is a real achievement, both for TSSA and the cab drivers. Nevertheless, we cannot afford to be complacent because TfL is currently involved in a major cost-cutting exercise – badged 'Project Horizon' – and has already stated their intention to outsource their Travel Information lines following the Olympics. We know that this would mean job cuts and a drop in services but, following our victory at LTPH, we know that we can fight them and win. ◀

Mel Taylor, TSSA Organiser

i For more information on TSSA's work on Project Horizon see www.tssa.org.uk/tfl.

Huge payout after 'no notice' redundancies

WITH THE TSSA'S help 20 London-based employees of Cyprus Turkish Airlines have won a £240,000 settlement after they were laid off with no notice when the airline went bust last year.

The workers are Cypriot nationals but had been long-standing members of the TSSA.

Anna Power at Morrish Solicitors, acting for the TSSA's members, today said 'When Cyprus Turkish Airlines' parent company went into substantial financial difficulty in August 2010, these UK-based employees could not get any information about



Andrew W Sieber CC BY-NC2

what was going on. The only information they could get was through the press. TSSA took their employer to the Employment Tribunal on the grounds of unfair dismissal, unpaid wages, notice pay, outstanding holiday pay and a Protective Award. The cheque has been received by the TSSA

members and they will divide the total amount between them.'

Kemal Kenan, who was one of the workers, told the Journal 'On behalf of the 20 of us, I can safely say that if it weren't for TSSA and Morrish Solicitors we could never have hoped to make this claim. Their

perseverance and hard work finally paid off with a very satisfactory deal, but only after more than a year of struggle and heartbreak. The final resolution has been very pleasing to us all – we owe it all to our union and those at Morrish.'

Tony Wheeler of the TSSA said 'I want to congratulate our solicitors for winning a pay off for our members who were left totally high and dry with the closure of Cyprus Turkish Airlines. It is never easy dealing with overseas companies but in this case our members have rightly been compensated.' ◀◀

Information management failure to consult case

ALL TOO OFTEN employers neglect their legal responsibilities to consult over redundancies. These requirements are there to ensure that employees and their union reps can engage with re-organisation proposals and do their best to avoid job losses. Network Rail are one of the worst offenders when it comes to flouting the law.

In 2009 a group of members had had enough. Network Rail forced through a re-organisation leading to the loss of over 40 jobs within the Information Management department. During the process they failed to identify the numbers of staff that needed to be made redundant and constantly changed the selection process for those who might have to leave. They failed to properly engage with TSSA reps and the detailed alternative proposals they put forward on behalf of the staff. Because of this, many more staff lost their jobs than was necessary.

Disillusioned with Network Rail's approach and determined to stop similar breaches in the future, TSSA reps compiled a strong case which was submitted to an Employment Tribunal with the support of TSSA Head

Office and Morrish Solicitors.

The evidence showed that Network Rail:

- Failed to engage reps before the final decision to cut jobs, making it impossible to have meaningful consultation
- Failed to provide information required for consultation, including the numbers and method of selection.
- Failed to continue to consult with reps, instead believing that holding a fixed number of meetings was enough, regardless of whether they took any notice of submissions by the reps in those meetings!

For some months Network Rail refused to acknowledge the strength of the case, but as the tribunal day grew closer they began to negotiate. The outcome was a total settlement of nearly £350,000 between 42 staff, close to half the maximum that a Tribunal could have awarded.

Of course, not all redundancy consultations have such massive failing and are so well documented by reps. But it shows that in the right circumstances and the support and activity of our members we can show employers that they must listen to our voice in consultation. ◀◀

Elly Baker, Senior Regional Organiser



The European Transport Workers Federation held an action day across 13 European countries in protest against an EU package that seeks to enforce a compulsory separation of the ownership railways and the services that run on them.

news



'Union Learning Works' booklet launched

'UNION LEARNING WORKS' is a case study booklet that seeks to highlight the significant involvement of unions in developing workers' learning opportunities in Northern Ireland. Produced by the Northern Ireland Union Learning Fund, the booklet describes how TSSA has been able to offer Translink staff (and their friends and family) the opportunity to develop new skills which can boost their self confidence, self-belief and can lead to a higher level of motivation.

TSSA has two people representing its case studies; Jennifer Kissick and Naomi Orr. Jennifer readily took the opportunity to learn Sign Language and having seen the benefits of union learning went on to become a Union Learning Rep (ULR) in order to help others to gain the chance of learning new skills. Jennifer has helped to recruit and support Translink staff to learn not only Sign Language but also to develop essential IT skills. Naomi wanted to learn Spanish not simply because she wanted to learn a foreign language, but also to help her on her regular trips to Translink train manufacturer, based in Spain. Gaining new skills can deliver real economic benefits to individuals as well as their employer quite apart from the social side of learning new skills. ◀◀

i To find out more about learning opportunities in Northern Ireland, contact Mark Wilkinson on wilkinsonm@tssa.org.uk.

Threat of 'mega trucks' coming to UK roads

MEGA TRUCKS – 25 metres long (82ft) and up to 60 tonnes – will come to UK roads by default if European Commission proposals, currently out for consultation, go ahead. The plan would allow the cross border flow of mega trucks from countries where they are licensed. Mega trucks, which would be 50 per cent longer and a third heavier than existing HGVs will result in more road fatalities, greater road damage, a build up of congestion and higher levels of pollution. The European Commission's own research states that mega trucks are individually more dangerous than standard HGVs.

A revision to the directive 96/53, which controls the maximum



Allianx Pro Schiene

weight and dimensions of HGVs, would let consenting member states to allow cross-border mega trucks traffic. The road haulage industry has argued that they would be put at a trading disadvantage if mega trucks are not allowed on UK roads.

Currently, one in four HGVs are driving around empty, with Department for Transport research showing that almost 50 per cent of lorries are not filled to either their maximum volume or

weight, ie partially loaded. With this in mind, the justification for ever-larger lorries seems especially weak. Freight on Rail – the partnership between rail unions and the rail freight operators – is calling on people to lobby your MP and MEP to oppose this amendment, using the model text on their website. ◀◀

i For more details see www.freightonrail.org.uk.

Railway Employees Privilege Ticket Association

2011 REPTA membership is available now for all transport industry staff and families, active and retired. Many free, discounted and special rates are available to members as described in our information packed Yearbook. **£3.75 per year including p&p. Additional cards for family members £2.50. Send cheques/postal orders payable to 'REPTA' to: Colin Rolle, 4 Brackmills Close, Forest Town, Mansfield, NG19 0PB or join on line. See: www.repta.co.uk.**



Order your 'Staff Our Stations' campaign pack

TOGETHER FOR TRANSPORT, the TSSA-backed campaign to mobilise communities in defence of public transport, has launched a 'Staff Our Stations' campaign pack. It's designed to help budding campaigners launch local coalitions to head off government plans to axe ticket office staff, and contains tips, resources and data to get you started. To order your pack, email george@togetherfortransport.org.

Tell your colleagues:

You can now join TSSA online www.tssa.org.uk/join





Manuel
Cortes

general secretary

The challenges we will face together

I am deeply honoured and feel immensely proud to have been elected your new General Secretary. I pledge that during my term of office our union will:

- Listen to you and act on your priorities
- Give you a strong voice in your workplace, the media and politically
- Fight the McNulty proposals and attacks on your jobs and conditions
- Work tirelessly to ensure you enjoy dignity in retirement
- Prioritise efforts to bring the British railways back into public ownership
- Deliver a distinctive voice for our members working in the travel trade and in Ireland
- Fully embrace the diversity of our union and your workplaces
- Invest in training for our excellent Reps
- Continue to grow into the campaigning organisation that you need;
- Further develop our community organising work, building the alliances we need to defend members
- Stabilise the union's finances
- Campaign with you to secure the return in Britain of a Labour Government.

Over the next few years, we face huge challenges. In the UK, a faltering economy and a Government committed to massive cuts will put many of your livelihoods at risk. In the Republic of Ireland, the economy remains in the doldrums. If you work in the UK rail industry, the proposals contained in the McNulty report will lead to thousands of job losses and will attack hard fought and won terms and conditions. Public expenditure cuts are also having a very adverse effect on many of our members. Those of you who work within TfL, LUL, BTP or Ireland will easily testify to this. The reality is that as long as our High Streets remain depressed, those of you within the travel industry will also

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Jobs losses are significantly denting our membership income. This means that our finances – like those of many other unions – have been very stretched since the 2008 recession. In addition, a depressed rental market means that we no longer get as much as we once did from leasing parts of Walkden House. Our investment income – and capital wealth – has severely suffered as stock markets across the globe have collapsed. We are fortunate that we still have a relatively strong financial base even though cash flow remains a concern. However, it has become clear that in the medium-term, we can no longer remain as we are. It is vital that we take early action, well before, our assets have been exhausted.

Our vision is to help create a new strong specialised transport and travel union to replace those that already exist within these industries. Our talks with RMT are the potential first step towards achieving this. There is strong industrial and financial logic behind this move. However, if it is going to work, we need to create a brand new union that builds on the best of both traditions. It cannot be either a 'TSSA Mark 2' or a 'RMT Mark 2'. It will need to provide a fresh start and a strong voice for you or it will not happen.

Finally, can I end my first piece as your General Secretary by thanking you for the support that you have given me over the past seven years. I know that I can count on it going forward for the next five. I very much look forward to working with you over this period. May I also take this opportunity to wish you and your loved ones all the best for 2012. ◀◀

comment

Manuel Cortes



Just a couple of days after becoming the TSSA's 21st General Secretary, the Journal met up with a still beaming Manuel Cortes in his new office opposite Euston Station. It hadn't been a massive change of view for its new occupant – Manuel having spent the previous seven years as Assistant General Secretary in the office next door, but he was clearly relishing the opportunity to help lead the organisation which he's been intimately involved in for 13 years.

As well as hearing more about his plans for TSSA, his answers hopefully provide a broader picture of our union's new top official – where he comes from and how he approaches his work, life more generally and the struggle for justice for working people.

Manuel Cortes: our new General Secretary

So, Manuel, you've not exactly come from a traditional background for a trade union leader. Thinking back to your childhood in Gibraltar, would anyone have thought you might ever be elected to a role like this?

Well trade unions had always been a big part of the community where I grew up. In Gibraltar of the 70s and 80s it was almost as though there was just one employer – the MoD – but because of that, the focus of the unions was very clear. That doesn't mean there weren't big problems though: when I was growing up, there was a real struggle going on for wage parity. If you were British from Britain, you got paid one rate, if you were Gibraltar-British you got paid less and if you were a so-called 'alien' you received even less again. I remember how the unions united the

entire community against this whilst I was growing up. We had huge strikes – with the electricity being cut off every other day, demonstrations and people being jailed for joining the protest. The unions at the time had something that's all too rare now: a base in every community. Everyone knew a shop steward, a union rep. I was brought up in that moment of struggle, where it was clearly possible to change things. And I think it's important if you're going to be part of something, you want to be part of the winning side! And we won that campaign – everyone got paid the fair, equal rate for the job. What we need to recreate is that kind of trade unionism, where unions are an integral part of the communities in which we live.

And how did you come to be involved in the movement yourself?

I left school at 15 with no qualifications. I got a job as an apprentice and the first thing I did was join the union. Soon afterwards I became a shop steward for my fellow apprentices and ever since then I've been an active member of a trade union – either as an activist, a lay official, or in a paid role.

I started off as an engineer. I gained various technical qualifications which led me to study at university in the UK. And that was really eye opening to me – how a lot of people there – through no fault of their own – had such a narrow view of society and no idea of the poverty that existed just a few minutes away from where they were living. I decided to do

something about that – one of the things I was most proud of from my time as a full-time elected student representative was to organise an ‘alternative tour’ of Edinburgh, that took students to some of the local housing estates.

So after studying, where did you go next?

My first job after leaving university was as a recruitment officer for BIFU – a bank workers union. That really cemented my belief that the trade union movement was where I wanted to devote my energies. I did a year there and then returned to university for a business economics degree as I felt I needed to have a better understanding of how people theorised that the world works, to put me in a better position to challenge some of the things around me that it should have been obvious to anyone that they weren’t working for ordinary people in the slightest.

After that I went back to engineering – I began work for Motorola – an American company that didn’t have a union. Naively, I tried to organise one but I must have overstepped the mark – all that won me was the sack! I won a case against them, but they never gave me my job back. That really taught me a lot of lessons – so I have the utmost respect for people who are fighting against the odds in workplaces. And ever since, the one thing I always remember is how bad I felt when I got the bullet – and I would never want to put anyone in that position ever again.

And how did you end up joining the TSSA?

After getting sacked from Motorola it seems I was quite possibly blacklisted – I couldn’t get back into the electronics industry. Having worked for Amnesty International for a year as a fundraiser, I knew I had skills I could offer and TSSA were advertising for a recruiter – this was in March 1998. When I first came into TSSA I knew nothing of the railway or the other industries we organise in – that definitely changed quite quickly!

Soon after I became an Organiser, then a Senior Organiser, leading our team working on ‘greefield sites’, both building the union where we had no presence and in restoring recognition for management grades – something that had often been

done away with during privatisation. I became TSSA’s Negotiations Officer and from there I was appointed the Assistant General Secretary in December 2004.

Workers are under attack from both companies intent on maximising profits despite the recession and from a government ideologically opposed to workers organising themselves. This is a very difficult time for the union movement, isn’t it?

You’re right. And unions will not survive if all we do is to continue to talk to an ever decreasing audience. We aren’t going to turn round total union membership by going back and just doing what we’ve always done. In my view there is a once in a lifetime chance that trade unions could recapture their relevance to a much larger number of people: because the government’s cuts agenda is going to hit every person in society. We need to be at the forefront of the struggles against the cuts, we need to team up with the communities that our members serve to ensure that the next time the word ‘union’ is mentioned, it’s not something that’s alien to most people, but that everyone knows we are bodies that have been standing shoulder to shoulder with them – either in defence of their local library or hospital, or closer to our own hearts – in defence of their local booking office or train service. And I think if we achieve that, we’ve got a chance to start reversing decades of decline.

So you see the potential for a new wave of trade unionists being brought in through this?

Yes. If we don’t make a much greater effort to connect with young people there will be a serious question as to whether unions will be around in 50 years time. Trade unions lost my generation almost entirely, we’ve lost the one after that – we cannot afford to lose the next one. I’m an optimist – I’m confident that we’ve got a message that’s increasingly getting through to people that without trade unions, you’ve got no rights, without trade unions, the employers can do as they wish, and that actually trade unions are a key vehicle to build a better society.

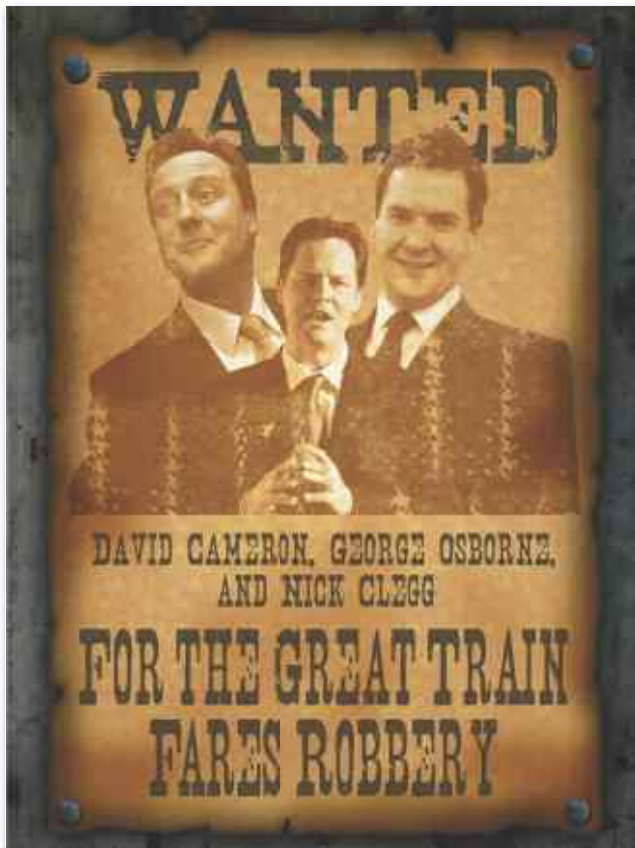
You’ve been elected to serve until 2017. How do you see things changing in TSSA over that time?

We have some huge challenges coming up. We are organising in industries that are contracting, however on the periphery of these – where railways stations are becoming shopping malls - there’s a huge number of workers that no one is organising. Someone should be getting out there, trying to bring this predominantly young workforce – mainly women - into the trade union fold. So there are opportunities out there, but members have to be at the forefront of that. We can provide resources, we can hopefully try and inspire people to do things, but at the end of the day it has to be members in their workplace who are the shop window for trade unions, and who have to help us to build the kind of organisation that will allow us to survive in the future.

Let’s be honest, TSSA has been around for well over 100 years. We have a very proud history, but history is history. We need to look forward to the future. The simple truth is there are too many transport unions - all of them very small – and several smaller than ourselves. It’s not the best use of members resources to have triplication in many areas. We should be looking at ways of maximising what we do to ensure we can liberate resources to put on the front line. We’ve got a vision that says we want to see the creation of one specialised transport union and, whatever shape that might end up taking, I will work tirelessly to try and achieve that during my term of office. ◀



Fares rises



Together for Transport community organiser **Sam Tarry** reports on the big new campaign uniting rail workers and passengers against the rise in rail fares.

The great train fares robbery

The Together for Transport community organising team has kicked off a major campaign to highlight the daylight robbery that is taking place on fare increases. The government had planned for massive fare rises of RPI plus 3 per cent, meaning fares up by an average 8 per cent, but have since been pushed back to increases of 'only' 6 per cent. These increases come at a time of great hardship for many passengers, effectively imposing a pay cut on them before they even get to work. But the decision also gives a massive opportunity to unite railway staff with the passengers they serve, plus environmental and passenger groups in a coalition that can mount effective pressure on the Government; to reverse these increases and make affordable fares a priority in helping boost the struggling economy.

The task of community-facing campaigning is to build coalitions of interest – and angry commuter-belt passengers could prove a key ally in the battle against the Government's drive to force all workers to pay above inflation costs just to get to work. These same

passengers can also be targeted to support our campaigns to save staff posts at stations up and down the country as well as any number of issues where TSSA members, and the public they serve, have more to gain by working together.

Working closely with the TSSA Organising Team the campaign kicked off on 22 November with reps and community activists across the country delivering a hard hitting 'Wanted poster' style postcard at key stations across the country. Aiming to tap into target audiences who were already motivated and angry, we especially targeted TOCs where a high degree of passenger concern over costs already exists, including South Eastern, Southern and First Capital Connect.

The powerful 'Wanted' image highlighted the idea of a Government backed robbery – and was picked up by local and national media across the country, generating positive and hard hitting local and regional press stories, from the *Evening Standard* to the *Daily Express*. The postcard has information for passengers highlighting some of the more outrageous fares increases on

annual season tickets, with estimates for the 2015 sums to increase the shock factor as passengers realise just how much of their salary they pay just to get to work.

'Paying for through the nose'

Over 20,000 postcards were distributed on the 22 November by TSSA members, reps, community activists, and Climate Rush – one of the campaign partners we are working with on a number of activities. The response was highly positive from passengers, with many asking for more postcards to take into their workplaces.

In the first 48 hours following the campaign action over 200 campaign postcards were sent back via the freepost





Ken's Fare Deal

KEN LIVINGSTONE, THE TSSA-backed Labour Mayoral hopeful in London, is making his opposition to the massive fares increases a core issue in next year's Mayoral elections.

TSSA activists have been out campaigning with Ken on his 'Fare Deal' campaign. Demonstrating he is more in touch with the electorate than Boris Johnson (who referred to his £250,000 salary for his 'second job' with the *Daily Telegraph* as 'chicken feed'), Ken has made some radical promises on London fares:

- An overall cut in fares for Londoners of 5 per cent in the autumn of 2012
- No further fare rises at all in 2013.
- From January 2014 and in subsequent years no fare rises above RPI inflation.
- Bring back the Zones 2-6 Travelcard.

Boris Johnson has raised fares by 21.1 per cent between 2009 and 2011, yet RPI

inflation was just 8 per cent over that period. Boris Johnson's fare increases have meant the cost of a single bus fare using Oyster has risen by a staggering 56 per cent since 2008, costing Londoners £260 a year more. A zones 1-6 Travelcard is up 22 per cent costing £509 a year more than when he came to power.

The zone 2-6 Travelcard had cost £8.60 a day, but following its abolition in January 2011, passengers in outer London who wanted to use a Travelcard were forced to buy a Zone 1-6 card instead costing £15. The difference between these being £6.40 a day, £32 a week, £128 a month giving a shocking £1408 a year.

The TSSA will be campaigning hard for Ken – not only is having him elected Mayor a 'Fare Deal' for Londoners but will also ensure a fairer deal for our members across TfL. ◀◀



TSSA's Sam Tarry, Ralph Mirams and Ricky Jones with Ken Livingstone

Get involved in Ken's campaign

Ken's campaign are already running campaigning events several times a week. To find out how you can get involved call 020 7783 1054, visit yourken.org or email ken@kenlivingstone.com.

return address. As many supporters across the country also got in touch to order batches of the campaign cards to distribute in their own time, with more likely to keep flowing in over the next few weeks.

A number of localised campaign actions will be taking place over the next few weeks in key target areas up and down target TOCs. Expect a flurry of activity as campaign materials highlighting the 'Unfair-Fares' are handed out in the first week of January as passengers go back to work – culminating in a campaign day on Thursday 5 January. ◀◀

Get involved: take action

Any member wishing to get involved in any of the upcoming activities across the country, or wanting some campaign postcards to be sent out to deliver yourself, please contact Sam at tarrys@tssa.org.uk or call 07850793971.

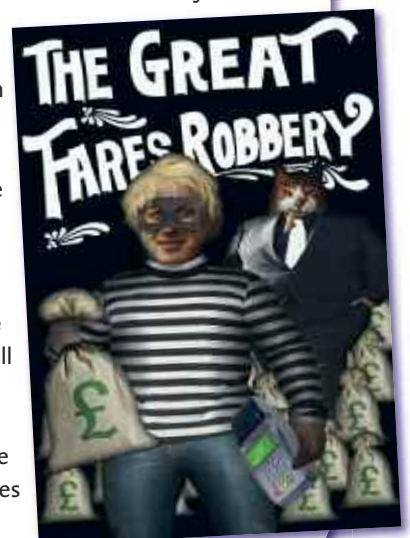
For those members on Twitter, report and follow the actions in January via the hash-tag #FareFail.

Stopping Boris and his Great Fares Robbery

THE FARES RISES being implemented by Train Operating Companies at the behest of the Government becomes a double whammy rise for Londoners and those who travel into the capital to work. So a separate prong of the campaign will be launched in the Transport for London area where Tory Mayor Boris Johnson is hiking fares by 6 per cent. For commuters coming into London on National Rail this means they will be hit with a double whammy fares rise if they also have to travel on the TfL system.

Under the Tory Mayor's tenure bus fares have now risen 56% since 2008, and in January the annual cost of a Zones 1-4 travel-card will have increased by £400! The average fare rises of RPI plus 2 per cent have themselves been dwarfed by the scale of increase to some specific products, with the cost of a weekly bus and tram pass up a whopping 47 per cent since 2008. The Together for Transport campaign in London will seek to exploit the anger over these rises to build a coalition of activists across the capital to mount maximum pressure on the Mayor to reverse this decision and make life easier for ordinary hard pressed Londoners.

Together for Transport Campaign activities are planned at over 100 tube and train stations across the capital as part of our campaign activities. The TSSA will be mobilising its members alongside the public to highlight the injustice of the fares increases, and indeed the disproportionate impact the increases have on low paid workers who rely on buses more than tubes and trains. ◀◀



Christian Wolmar



Department for Transport

With a new Transport Secretary in post, [Christian Wolmar](#) looks ahead to the many decisions that Justine Greening will be faced with in the coming months.



Justine Greening's in tray

Justine Greening has kept a very low profile since being thrust unexpectedly into the Transport Secretary's job in October. That's hardly surprising given the complexity of the role and the breadth of the agenda left by her predecessor, Philip Hammond, who, despite his reputation as a 'safe pair of hands', ducked making many key decisions and made others for which she will not thank him.

Rail tends to occupy much of the time of Transport Secretaries even if, in terms of share of journeys, it ranks lower than other modes. That's because it features high in the public consciousness,

especially among the affluent commuters in the south east who represent a disproportionately high percentage of key decision makers. It's also because Transport Secretaries these days have a much more direct role to play in the railways than ever before in their history, despite the fact the industry is supposedly privatised.

Therefore, it is hardly surprising that it is in rail that Mr Hammond has left her with a very full inbox. In no particular order, there is HS2, IEP (Intercity Express Programme), franchising reform, the fall-out from the McNulty report, franchise letting, a paper on the industry structure,

continuing flak from the Thameslink train order, Network Rail's next five year plan and fares.

Already, deferred decisions seem to have become the norm in the Department for Transport. The promised 'command paper' – which will be something between a white paper and a consultation paper – on the structure of the industry promised for this autumn has been delayed until early next year, with no clear explanation. One presumes that digesting the implications of the McNulty report is proving a tough task for the civil servants in the Department for Transport.

The very full franchise programme is

slipping too. All three major Intercity franchises – East and West Coasts, and Great Western – are due for renewal over the next 18 months but now Virgin has been given an extension on its franchise because Hammond did not like the original specification drawn up by his department. Their original franchise was only 15 years long, so clearly there was no time to sort out the new one! Rather than rush through a deal, Virgin has now been given a 9 month extension under a deal which involves payment of a premium of £103m. While that may sound a good deal for the government, it is very difficult to assess whether it is value for money because of the rapid growth on the line due to the £9bn upgrade. It is based on an 11 per cent level of growth, but Virgin is protected by the usual cap and collar arrangements if there is more than a 20 per cent shortfall on expected income.

The only recent solid decision to emerge has been the granting of the short East Anglia franchise to Abellio, the subsidiary of the Dutch state owned railway company, but that was a decision which could not wait since National Express, the incumbent, had been ruled out of the final stage of bidding and therefore an extension would have been too embarrassing.

Train procurement was another fine mess left by her predecessor. The decision to source the Thameslink trains from Siemens rather than the Derby-based Bombardier was controversial but probably cannot be revisited. Nevertheless, it risks leaving the UK without a home-based train manufacturer, and there will be pressure on Ms Greening to cobble together some kind of deal to ensure that Bombardier's

There are plenty of elephant traps for an unwary Transport Secretary to fall into and her predecessor has done her no favours by leaving her with so many key decisions to make in the New Year.

Derby factory remains in business once its current order for London Underground trains runs out in 2014.

The Intercity Express Project, the replacement for HST, is showing all the signs of being a procurement nightmare that will grace the pages of *Private Eye* for many years to come. Both Thameslink and IEP are private finance initiative schemes which therefore must be put into doubt by George Osborne's recent announcement that the government is reviewing funding arrangements for such projects. IEP in particular is a crazy idea which bundles up finance and manufacturing, with payments to the consortium based on the provision of sufficient trains to run the service. This supposedly puts the risk on the private sector but in truth makes the whole project fiendishly complicated and very unlikely to represent a good deal for taxpayers. Will Ms Greening, as a financially-savvy former accountant, be clever enough to simply ditch the whole thing and buy off the peg trains that would be far cheaper and pose much less risk, as suggested in the Foster review of the plan?

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Ms Greening will not be able to remain in the shadows for much longer. First, she will have to fend off growing opposition to HS2 when the results of the consultation process are published – due before Christmas – and then, the nightmare for all Transport Secretaries, deal with the outrage over the above inflation fares rises introduced by Mr Hammond when they come into force in the first week of January.

Network Rail's plans, and how to squeeze money out of the Treasury to pay for them is a medium term issue but again poses difficult issues for an inexperienced minister. This huge agenda facing the new Transport Secretary highlights the dysfunctional way that the railways are run. In the old days, most of these decisions would be made not by a novice Transport Secretary with the 'help' of civil servants with their own agenda, but by an experienced group of managers at British Rail. Now, since the abolition of the Strategic Rail Authority, the Department has effectively become the Ministry of Railways under the control of a politician.

If Ms Greening's decision to stay out of the limelight is the result of her efforts to avoid making any gaffes by reading herself thoroughly into the subject, it will have been time well spent. Leaving decisions to civil servants, as witnessed by the IEP saga, is never a good idea, but it is only by understanding the issues that she will be able to make decisions that are not just simply rubberstamping their recommendations. There are plenty of elephant traps for an unwary Transport Secretary to fall into and her predecessor has done her no favours by leaving her with so many key decisions to make in the New Year. ◀◀

TSSA's history

Paul Salveson examines how the rail unions were instrumental in establishing the Labour Party and looks with renewed hope at what might come of the relationship in the near future.



Labour's railway roots Time to refresh them!

The origins of today's Labour Party lie in the mills, mines and railway depots of industrial Britain. Many members of TSSA's predecessor, the Railway Clerks Association, were active in the Labour Party from its earliest days. As Labour re-assesses its policies on rail privatisation it's worth looking back on why rail union activists saw 'politics' as being of fundamental importance in achieving their aim of a better life for railway workers and their families. The need for political involvement is probably greater now than it has ever been and I hope more TSSA members will be tempted to 'get involved' in their local Labour Party.

The Labour Party as we know it today was formed in 1900, initially called 'The Labour Representation Committee'. At first it didn't have individual membership, and the bulk of its members were the trades unions – including the

Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants, which became today's RMT. The Railway Clerks Association had only been formed three years earlier and was still 'finding its feet'. Political affiliation came several years later, after considerable debate.

Socialist organisations had existed well before the LRC was formed and railway workers were particularly active in the Independent Labour Party (ILP) which was founded in Bradford in 1893. Its leader was the famous Scots miner, Keir Hardie. The ILP put down deep roots in the industrial areas of Lancashire and Yorkshire, central Scotland and South Wales. Unlike the Social Democratic Federation (SDF), formed a few years earlier, it was not a Marxist organisation and promoted a strongly 'ethical' approach to socialism, influenced by Christianity.

Railway workers found the combination of an 'ethical' socialism

coupled with hard-headed policies on railway nationalisation an attractive mix. It was a Doncaster signalman, Thomas Steels who moved the key motion from his branch to the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants (ASRS) Executive calling for the formation of an 'independent party of Labour'. This was accepted by the ASRS executive and James Holmes, a full-time organiser for the ASRS, moved the decisive motion at the 1899 TUC Congress which led to the formation of the Labour Representation Committee. Steels was a member of the ILP and a leading activist in the Yorkshire ASRS. When I'm attending my Divisional Council meetings, held in Doncaster Trades Club, I always salute the plaque to Steels' memory on Doncaster station!

Socialists who were members of our forerunner union – the RCA – had to tread a very careful path. Any kind of

TSSA's history

union involvement, let alone socialist activity, amongst clerical or supervisory grades would be treated with suspicion and could easily lead to victimisation. In 1892, Stationmaster Hood of Ellesmere, Shropshire, was sacked for the temerity of speaking to a select committee of MPs on railway safety issues. Railway workers had plenty to feel aggrieved about. Hours of work were long and the railway companies' safety records were appalling. Whilst the companies refused to invest in safer equipment, they gave their shareholders lavish dividends. They refused, point blank, to recognise trades unions. It was clear that the way forward for railway workers was to bring their industry into public ownership and the way to achieve that was by political action. Yet the two main parties, Conservative and Liberal, were largely unsympathetic; many MPs of both parties were railway shareholders and very often had directorships on the railway company boards. An independent party representing working class interests was the only way to ensure success.

Many socialist activists within the RCA wanted to follow the ASRS's lead and affiliate to the Labour Representation Committee after its formation in 1900. However, it wasn't until 1910 that the decision was formally taken to affiliate to what was by then 'The Labour Party'. In the same year, the RCA committed itself to the nationalisation of the railway industry.

Once the key decision had been taken to affiliate to the Labour Party, the RCA's involvement grew substantially. Union members became officers of party organisations and stood as local councillors. The General Secretary – Alexander (A G) Walkden, immortalised in our 'Walkden House' – was selected to fight Wolverhampton West constituency for Labour in 1912. He spoke passionately about the need for railway nationalisation, but also in support of votes for women and 'home rule' for Ireland. However, the anticipated General Election didn't happen and the country was plunged into war. The RCA's political capacity had been bolstered by a ballot of members in 1913 to establish a political fund. A sizeable number of members

voted – nearly 66 per cent of the total – and of those 91.3 per cent were in favour of keeping a political fund to support local and national contests.

After the war ended in 1918 the RCA had well and truly put its political hesitations aside and agreed a parliamentary panel of 17, including Walkden. The General Election was held in November and despite fielding the largest number of candidates in its history, Labour didn't do well, with only 57 MPs returned. None of the RCA sponsored candidates were elected, though Walkden gained a respectable 10,158 votes against his Conservative opponent's 13,329.

Labour's breakthrough came in December 1923 when the party formed a short-lived minority government. Hebert Romeril, sponsored by the RCA, won a narrow victory in the 'railway' seat of St Pancras. A few years later, in 1929, Labour won a much bigger victory and a total of seven RCA-sponsored MPs were elected. However, the party did not win an overall majority and the economic slump following the Wall Street Crash of 1929 left it seriously weakened. The Chancellor of the Exchequer, Philip Snowden, pursued a policy of financial stringency which would have made even George Osborne blush. The Government fell in 1931, with Snowden and Prime Minister Ramsay Macdonald leaving the party to join a 'National Government' with Tories and Liberals. The hopes of Labour taking the railways into public ownership vanished.

The dreams of the early RCA pioneers were finally realised in 1945 when a Labour Government was elected with a huge majority. Fifteen RCA-supported Labour MPs took their seats in the new parliament, forming part of a Government committed to a unified, publicly-owned, transport system. 'British Railways' became a reality on 1 January 1948, together with the coal mines.

The RCA became 'Transport Salaried Staffs Association' in 1951 reflecting the breadth of its membership not only in rail but also other transport sectors. The union continued to punch above its weight within the Labour Party, providing successive generations of men and women to play distinguished roles in parliament and the council chamber, as well as in Party branches.



Alexander G Walkden JP MP,
General Secretary, RCA, 1906-1936

With a new progressive leadership under Ed Miliband and a serious review underway of Labour's transport policies and priorities, the opportunities for TSSA members to engage with the Labour Party has never been greater. We need more union members to become councillors, as well as take part in branch and constituency activities. There's considerable scope for TSSA nationally to encourage more political engagement through its educational activities; I suspect many members are put off from getting involved because it all seems too complicated. It isn't! And maybe we should develop a network of TSSA Labour councillors and candidates to share ideas and experience. It would be great to get the views of colleagues on this, and just 'do it' if there's enough interest. I often hear railway workers complain that the Labour Party has become 'middle class'. I don't think that's the case, but if we don't make the effort to participate, the voice of Britain's railway workers won't be heard – and we've plenty to say! ◀

i *Malcolm Wallace's 'Single or return? The History of the TSSA', was an invaluable source in writing this article*

Paul is a member of TSSA's Yorkshire Ridings Branch, vice-chair (campaigns) of Colne Valley Constituency Labour Party and prospective local election candidate for Golcar ward in Kirklees.

TSSA people

In the battle to save Bombardier's Derby works – and with it, train manufacturing in Britain, the very personal commitment that many of its workers have shown to the rail industry is sometimes forgotten. Ant Barrable talks to one of TSSA's longest serving members, Bombardier staff rep **Ken Cook**, who will soon be leaving the industry after 47 years service.



Ken Cook's railway life

I WAS BORN in Derby in 1947 and spent my childhood living across the road from the Derby Carriage Works. Little did I realise that 64 years later I would finish my working career within 100 yards of my family home!

I started working for British Railways in 1964 at the Derby Midland Booking Office. My main task was issuing privilege tickets to railway staff and their families – something which at the time warranted a two shift ticket window such were the number of employees in Derby! A Cheap Day Return to London was just 12 shillings and sixpence – 62½p. On my first day I was handed a TSSA membership form and I've been a member of the Association all my working life – 47 years all told.

When in 1966 redundancies were mooted the decision had to be made between leaving the railway and following a professional musical career. I really wanted to be a rock musician but the thought of keeping free travel

for life against going into an industry of which the experts said 'Pop music will be dead in two years' made up my mind. I transferred to the Derby Loco Works and carried on my music as a semi-pro. This I have continued right through my career, albeit hard work combining the two.

Across the railways and associated workshops it felt like one massive family working for British Railways. Nearly everyone had one simple goal: to run a state owned system that they could be proud of.

For 20 years I was the clerk controlling the wagons that used to bring almost all supplies into the works, then I looked after the lorries that were brought in to replace them. As this work declined I did various purchasing and inventory jobs until I was made redundant in 1993 by ABB – the first private owner of what had been British Rail Engineering Ltd. I then managed to secure an admin assistant's role actually based

in my old infants school at Cotton Lane Gate. Finally I transferred back to one of my old roles as a Time and Attendance Clerk and this is where my career ends 47 years on, facing redundancy, due to the loss of the Thameslink contract. I made it simple and volunteered for redundancy, through which I'll benefit from the enhanced redundancy terms TSSA and the other unions have negotiated.

So after all these years of being a semi-pro musician I can now turn to that side of my life full time, rocking on with two bands and progressing my song writing skills.

Being a TSSA member for 47 years and a local council rep for 25 years I'll of course retain my membership of the union and stay involved at arms length.

Having enjoyed such a fulfilling career in the railways, my biggest wish would be for the young apprentices still being trained at Bombardier – and all those others joining the firm – to have a future in

the industry. To give them the chances that I enjoyed I'm active in the campaigns to keep train building in Britain and to save the Derby works and encourage union members to join in, whether local or not. ◀◀

i *Ken was due to leave the company this November but due to ongoing issues surrounding redundancies has agreed to stay on until the end of the year. This is typical of Ken's commitment to the TSSA in seeing this latest redundancy process through. The A, B & C grades, in which TSSA have sole recognition rights, will need someone to step into Ken's shoes when he leaves the company. To find out more speak to Ant Barrable via barrablet@tssa.org.uk / 07894390481.*

For Ken's music visit www.strangedaysderby.com or for more on the campaign to save Bombardier see <http://togetherfortransport.org/save-bombardier>.

Philippa Edmunds from Freight on Rail reports on how relatively small-scale investment in line upgrades can boost the economy and shift freight away from environmentally damaging road transport.

Rail freight's role in the green economic future

IN SPITE OF the reductions in spending across the public sector, the role that transport infrastructure can play in regenerating the economy has been recognised by the Government. Ministers have restated their commitment to funding schemes which can be demonstrated to stimulate economic growth. And rail freight upgrades can tick all the key boxes in terms of reducing road congestion, green jobs, reduction in greenhouse gas emissions and road accident reduction.

So the rail freight industry as a whole – unions and employers – have prioritised lobbying in support of four main schemes in the next round of public funding. If given the go ahead for the 2014-2019 spending round, these schemes – illustrated on the map – would significantly expand Britain's Strategic Rail Freight Network.

So why should the Government fund these four projects at a combined cost of £350 million? In a nutshell, because rail freight offers a crucial low carbon, energy-efficient safer alternative to road and can deliver huge returns for every pound invested in it. The Freight

Transport Association have used government figures to show that road congestion is now costing the UK around £24 billion a year. Rail acts as a freight bypass with each freight train of consumer goods able to remove 60 HGVs from our roads. Meanwhile a single aggregates train can replace a staggering 160 HGVs. Added to that, rail freight creates 70 per cent less carbon dioxide than the equivalent road journey, with a gallon of diesel carrying a tonne of freight 246 miles by rail as opposed to 88 miles by road.

Rail freight is breaking out of its traditional markets

Last year for the first time, consumer rail freight traffic was greater than coal traffic. Despite the recession, consumer rail freight has now been growing for eight consecutive years, expanding by 29 per cent over the past five years. The industry predicts that rail freight overall will have doubled by 2030, with consumer rail freight growing 7.6 per cent a year during this period.

One of the key problems suppressing growth from reaching even higher levels

are the limitations of the rail network. Allowing access to trains carrying the larger shipping containers which are increasingly becoming the industry standard, on standard height wagons, can make a huge difference. The impact of the loading gauge upgrade to lines out of Southampton has been that rail's market share has increased from 30 per cent to 39 per cent since the upgrade was completed in February this year. Currently, rail has around 25 per cent of the market out of Felixstowe, the UK largest container port, with 29 trains going in and out of the port daily. If the proposed upgrades are implemented that share could rise to around 40 per cent, removing 40 million lorry miles from the A14 corridor each year.

A new trans-European high-volume freight service between Wroclaw, in Poland, and Barking starts in November. This is the first freight service running on High Speed 1, the only UK railway built to a European loading gauge. Automotive, retail and food sector products are being imported and exported by rail through

the Channel Tunnel, taking advantage of the significantly larger haulage capacity available on HS1, where two standard containers can be transported stacked on top of each other.

The funding situation is very difficult now but the government still states that it supports capital infrastructure projects to stimulate the economy. Please lobby your MPs to support schemes that will get more freight off the roads onto the railways: for a safer, cleaner, less congested society, creating green jobs and growing sustainably. The Government will make its decision on what projects receive funding next summer, so the plan is to lobby hard for these key works to enhance the Strategic Rail Freight Network from now until that date. ◀◀



For more details see www.freightonrail.org.uk

Freight on Rail members include DB Schenker, Freightliner, ASLEF, RMT, TSSA, UNITE, Rail Freight Group and Campaign for Better Transport.



Scottish Labour leadership



TSSA members in Scotland who contribute to the union's political fund have the chance to elect the new positions of Leader and Deputy Leader of the Scottish Labour Party (replacing the previous system which only led the group in the Scottish Parliament).

Strong support for public ownership within Scottish Labour

After hearing each of the candidates speak at a hustings event, the General Secretary recommended that TSSA give its supporting nominations to Johann Lamont for Leader and Ian Davidson for Deputy Leader.

The ballot closes on Wednesday 14 December. For more details see www.scottishlabour.org.uk/leadership.

TSSA Journal asked all candidates their views on the question: 'What role would you like the Scottish Government to take in the provision of rail services in Scotland?'

Johann Lamont
Labour MSP for Glasgow Pollok



Scotland's rail passengers are no longer getting a good deal from the Scottish Government when it comes to our rail services and I believe intervention is overdue.

It is clear that privatisation that does not create competition for the benefit of passengers is not healthy and I am keen to explore other models, such as public and not-for-profit, which could provide a better deal.

We have a right to expect a well-connected service, that makes the links between our cities and airports, and the high-speed connections with the rest of the United Kingdom, that is affordable and efficient – the role of the Scottish Government is to deliver it.

Ken Macintosh
Labour MSP for Eastwood

The privatisation of our rail system is widely accepted now as one of the most ill-conceived, ineffective and impractical decisions of the Conservatives. The decision to create a fragmented series of operating companies was supposedly taken to promote competition but has simply produced a frustratingly complex and expensive rail system across the UK completely lacking in transparency and accountability.

At the next opportunity this franchise should be taken back into public ownership to be run by a mutual or other not-for-profit operation. Not only will that improve accountability and our ability as a country to plan public transport strategically, it would save millions either



for the tax payer, the commuter or most probably both.

We need to do more to ensure Scottish public transport operates in the interests of the Scottish public. Let us have a national transport strategy that recognises and fully supports our air, sea, road and rail links.

Tom Harris
Labour MP for Glasgow South



Earlier this year, I spoke in the Commons and voted in favour of an amendment to the Scotland Bill that would have devolved authority to the Scottish Government to bring the Scotrail franchise into public ownership if it so wished. The amendment was defeated by the government, which means that public ownership of the franchise is not on the table. However, I believe there is an opportunity for the next Labour-led administration at Holyrood to use the existing franchise system to introduce a not-for-profit operator when the current franchise expires, providing a template against which the efficiency and value-for-money of other UK franchises could be measured.

Scottish Labour leadership

Deputy Leadership candidates

Ian Davidson

Labour MP for Glasgow South West

The expansion of rail travel has a vital part to play in establishing a fast, modern and affordable public transport network.

We need safe and efficient rail links to all parts of Scotland and the South if enterprises throughout our country are to access the markets necessary for economic growth.

The Scottish Government therefore has a strategic responsibility to ensure that rail is given primacy in the development of an integrated transport strategy that encourages economic and social development in an environmentally friendly way.

They should also draw up a strategy for taking the industry (tracks, trains and stations) into public ownership as soon as practical. Prospects for establishing a mutual should be thoroughly and positively explored.

The railways should seek to become a first class employer, unleashing the potential of staff to help build a first class public service.



Anas Sarwar

Labour MP for Glasgow Central

I firmly believe that the Scottish Government should be a champion of Scotland's Railways.

If we are to have first-class public services in Scotland then we need to provide the necessary investment to make this a reality, ensuring that community links and the public are put before profit.

I would like to see the Scottish Government reverse their decision to cancel the Glasgow Airport rail link and make sure that Scotland is a central part of any plans to introduce High Speed Rail.

Rail services must be a key priority of our environmental strategy and it is the role of Government to lead the way, investing in better infrastructure for freight trains and prioritising Crossrail to make the railway the best option for commuters.

I would like to see a Labour Scottish Government investing in our railways to create a greener, sustainable and better infrastructure for the people of Scotland.



Lewis Macdonald

Labour MSP for North East Scotland

As Labour's Transport spokesperson at Holyrood, I have been highly critical of the Scottish Government's Rail 2014 consultation.

These SNP plans suggest breaking up the ScotRail franchise, allowing the operator to increase journey times and make passengers change trains more often, higher fares at peak times, leaving passengers on the platform when trains are busy, hiving off the Sleeper, and ending East Coast Main Line services at Edinburgh. The SNP want to make life easier for the next private-sector operator of ScotRail, not for passengers.

I am against all those plans. Instead of breaking up franchises, we should integrate tracks and trains, exploring public sector and not-for-profit models to get the best possible public benefit. Instead of slower, more crowded, more expensive trains, we should invest in shorter journey times, longer trains and competitive prices, to win over travellers who will otherwise go by car. Instead of cutting cross-border services, we should encourage rail to compete with air travel.

A Scottish Labour Government should put the passenger first, and deliver a service to be proud of. ◀◀



Labour Party Transport Group led by former TSSA activist

THE LABOUR TRANSPORT group – set up three years ago – aims to include Labour members throughout the country with an interest in transport issues. The group looks to develop proposals and contribute ideas in the transport field and act as a conduit between Labour members with an interest in transport and the NEC and the front bench team under Maria Eagle.

This autumn the group arranged a well-attended fringe meeting at Labour's annual conference and will shortly host an event in Westminster.

Former TSSA member Mike Parker, who chaired both the London Transport Divisional Council and London Political committee, is the current chair of the Labour Transport Group.

Mike told the Journal 'Transport has been moving up the political agenda in recent years as its importance in reducing social exclusion, in contributing to economic development and in meeting our climate change obligations is becoming more widely recognised. However it still needs to get a much higher profile within the Labour Party and trade union movement. The Labour Transport Group aims to do this as well as being a useful and confidential sounding board for the shadow Secretary of State.'

TSSA members can join by sending their email address, Labour party membership number and a cheque for £5 made payable to 'The Labour Transport Group' to Mike Parker, 7 Loughbrow Close, Hexham, NE46 2QD.

The LTG will host a meeting in Committee Room N in Portcullis House at 6pm on 13 December looking at transport and social exclusion and also the transport elements of Ken Livingstone's London manifesto. ◀◀



TSSA personal injury service

TSSA worker compensated after office accident



By jaydedman CC BY-NC-SA2

"I could not believe that something that seemed so insignificant at first – a cut to my finger – could turn into such a major problem."

Mark had been preparing for a presentation at work, adjusting the height of a projector screen. As he pressed the button to adjust the height, he felt a sharp pain. Releasing the equipment, he discovered a side of the button had been sheared and presented a sharp edge which had pierced his index finger.

"It kept bleeding and I did not want any blood on my shirt before the presentation, so I got our First Aid officer to quickly dress it and finished setting up."

Initially the injury

appeared a minor index finger cut.

"Normally, after a day, I would have been right as rain. Somehow, the cut got infected. Personally I think there must have been some kind of lubricant on the shaft of the supports for the screen, but whatever it was, something got into the cut and infected it."

The cut did not respond to antibiotics, and Mark had to undergo an operation to the sheath tendon of his index finger.

"I was getting a bit of flack from the guys at work, and I would joke along with it pretending I was only doing it to get attention from the wife, but actually it really was awkward. This is the digital age – you use your index finger all the time.

Working on computer, phone calls, even watching telly at home, you need your index finger."

After the first operation failed to stem the effects of the infection, Mark had to undergo a second operation to his sheath tendon.

"By this time I was getting fed up. When our local TSSA branch rep saw the accident book, he asked about my injury. My arm was in this sling which I hated but the doctors insisted I had to wear. When the rep advised I could claim for compensation, I felt relieved because by that time I was fed up with the whole thing. I would never have tried any of those TV legal offers, but you know

you can trust your union." Wearing the sling after both operations brought further complications when Mark began to experience problems in his right shoulder.

TSSA put Mark in touch with Fiona at Morrish Solicitors who contacted his employer, alleging the employer had failed to maintain their equipment in good repair and had breached regulations. Mark's employer admitted liability for the accident and resulting injuries. Following negotiations, Mark accepted a settlement for £13,000 for his injuries. "I was really pleased with the support from TSSA. It came at the right time for me. I would rather not have had the cut in the first place, but this

compensation means I have been able to get proper rehabilitation. I'm not quite back to what I was, but I'm getting there, thanks to TSSA and Fiona at Morrish."

● Based on a real life case. Certain details have been altered to protect the victim's identity. Morrish Solicitors offers free personal injury legal advice for TSSA members and their family members. Whether the injury occurred at work or completely unrelated to work, Morrish Solicitors provides expert legal advice you can trust. Call 0800 093 0353. Morrish Solicitors is a Limited Liability Partnership and regulated by the Solicitors Regulation Authority.

Accidents do not happen - they are caused!



As a member of the TSSA, should either you or your immediate family suffer injury through someone else's negligence, you will be entitled to **FREE** legal advice and representation from our specialist personal injury lawyers Morrish Solicitors LLP.

No money will be deducted from any compensation recovered and no charge will be made to you or your family for the advice and representation you receive.

If you'd like to find out more, call us today and we will look after you.

TSSA Personal Injury Services
Free to Members & their families

0800 093 0353



ACCIDENTS AT WORK ACCIDENTS OUTSIDE WORK ASSAULTS ROAD TRAFFIC ACCIDENTS SLIPS OR TRIPS OCCUPATIONAL DISEASE

Days of Action:

Are general protest strikes against government cuts actually legal?



Top legal experts **Professor Keith Ewing** and **John Hendy QC** challenge the widely held view that the UK's anti-union laws rule out protest strikes that aren't called on the basis of a specific industrial dispute.

ACROSS THE GLOBE unions are organising resistance to what is an almost uniform governmental response to the current crisis of capitalism. States have drained their coffers to bail out the financial gamblers and are now taking the opportunity to slash public services and cut the wages, pensions and job security of their employees.

Working people in both the private and public sectors are suffering and are increasingly angry. In Britain too, unions have responded. 500,000 joined the TUC march through London on 26 March. On 30 July public sector unions organised a widely supported strike over changes to their pensions, with 30 November being the largest, coordinated day of action since the 1926 general strike.

What is noticeable is that whilst unions in other countries have called strikes over the whole package of austerity measures inflicted by their governments, in Britain the strikes have been limited to the terms and conditions of employment of public employees. This is because it is generally considered that it would be unlawful to call a protest

strike against government policy more generally.

In a paper published by the Institute of Employment Rights we argue that this legal analysis is mistaken. True enough the limitations on industrial action – ballots, notices, limitation to disputes between workers and their own employer and only about terms and conditions – are clear under the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992.

But, because of the Human Rights Act 1998, the courts must now give effect to rulings of the European Court of Human Rights which supervises the European Convention on Human Rights. Article 11 of the Convention guarantees freedom of assembly and association and specifies the right to be a member of a trade union for the protection of one's interests.

The European Court has held in a number of cases that States must allow peaceful protests and strikes protesting against government policy, except where it is 'necessary in a democratic society' to restrict or prevent them.

In the light of the European Court's judgments on what is

and is not necessary in a democratic society to warrant the restriction of these fundamental rights, we argue that it would be impossible to show that it is necessary in a democratic society to grant an injunction to ban a national Day of Action called by the TUC against the government's austerity package. Other governments have run that argument in the European Court and failed. And many cases decided by the International Labour Organisation (to which the European Court pays considerable attention) have come to the same conclusion.

We put forward a number of legal arguments which the British courts could adopt in order to make British law conform to international treaty law. The courts could hold that such a strike does not breach but merely suspends contracts of employment so that it is not unlawful to call the strike; or they could hold that exercising Convention rights is a justification for any such unlawfulness; or they could re-interpret the 1992 Act to permit such a strike.

Even if all those arguments failed it would be open to the

court to make a declaration that UK law is incompatible with Convention law which would mean that Parliament would have to change the law. If nothing worked, then the unions could take the case to the European Court.

Of course all this legal argument would take time (and money) and could not be finally decided before the Day of Action took place. And as lawyers we are, of course, not advocating this course of action (which would involve many non-legal considerations, some of which might point against it). But given the extent of the demand at TUC Congress in September for a further strong response to the government's onslaught on the working class, we think it important that the possibility of a Day of Action on a working day is retained in the TUC arsenal as another option to follow up on the TUC's triumph of 26 March. ◀◀

① *The pamphlet 'Days of Action: The legality of protest strikes against government cuts' by KD Ewing and John Hendy QC can be ordered from the Institute of Employment Rights for £8. 0151 207 5265 or www.ier.org.uk.*

Pass this form onto a colleague who isn't yet a member

Make TSSA your union now

To join, fill in the form including the Direct Debit Instruction which you must sign. For other ways to pay your subscription, and for special retired rates, call 020 7529 8032. Send to (you don't need a stamp in the UK): TSSA FREEPOST, (NW2409), London NW1 1YA. For Republic of Ireland membership contact TSSA Irish Office, Nerney's Court, off Temple Street, Dublin 1, or email enquiries@tssa.ie

SUBSCRIPTION RATES

UK: Full-time workers £3.70 per week
Part-time workers (under 26 hours per week) £1.85 per week

Republic of Ireland: Full-time workers €4.60 per week
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PLEASE USE CAPITAL LETTERS

ABOUT YOU

National Insurance number

Gender: Male ☐ Female ☐

Title: Ms ☐ Mr ☐ Mrs ☐ Miss ☐ Other

Forenames

Surname

Full home address

Postcode

Home telephone Mobile

Email

Date of birth

Have you ever been a member of a trade union?

No ☐ TSSA ☐ Other union ☐ Which one?

Do you pay subscriptions still? Yes ☐ No ☐ When did you leave?

I apply to join the Transport Salaried Staffs' Association at the appropriate subscription and will observe the rules of the Association.

Signed Date

ABOUT YOUR WORK

FOR TSSA USE ONLY

Your company

Your work address

Your job title

Your job grade

Work telephone/mobile

Full-time ☐ or part-time (less than 26 hours a week) ☐

Are you on an Apprentice course? Yes ☐ No ☐

If so, when do you finish your course? Month Year

When did you join current employer? Month Year

Where do you want any mail sent? Home ☐ Work ☐

How do you want to pay? (tick one box)

Four-weekly ☐ Monthly ☐ Quarterly ☐ Twice a year ☐ Annually ☐

If you don't have a bank account, call TSSA on 020 7529 8032. If you are an existing member moving over to Direct Debit, DON'T cancel your payroll deduction arrangements until you hear from TSSA Head Office.

For Republic of Ireland Direct Debit/payments contact TSSA Irish Office.

Who recruited you to TSSA?

TSSA staff ☐ TSSA staff rep ☐ TSSA branch officer ☐

Work colleague ☐ Made contact myself ☐ Other ☐



Instruction to your Bank or Building Society to pay by Direct Debit

Please fill in the whole form and send it to TSSA (you don't need a stamp in the UK): TSSA FREEPOST, (NW2409), London NW1 1YA. Your bank cannot process the form unless you have signed it. Direct Debit Instruction for UK ONLY, for Republic of Ireland see above.



9 7 4 0 0 6

To: The Manager

Bank or building society

Address

Post code

2. Name(s) of account holder(s) (if joint account fill in both names)

3. Branch sort code

4. Bank/Building Society account number

5. TSSA reference number (we will fill this box in)

6. Instruction to your bank or building society

Please pay TSSA direct debits from the account detailed on this instruction subject to the safeguards assured by The Direct Debit Guarantee. I understand that this Instruction may remain with TSSA and if so, details will be passed electronically to my Bank/Building Society. If from a joint account that needs two signatures, make sure you both sign.

Signature

Date

Signature

Date

The Direct Debit Guarantee



- This Guarantee is offered by all Banks and Building Societies that take part in the Direct Debit Scheme. The efficiency and security of the Scheme is monitored and protected by your own Bank or Building Society.
- If the amount to be paid or the payment dates change, TSSA will notify you 14 days working days in advance of your account being debited or as otherwise agreed.
- If an error is made by TSSA or your Bank or Building Society, you are guaranteed a full and immediate refund from your branch of the amount paid.
- You can cancel a Direct Debit at any time by writing to your Bank or Building Society. Please also send a copy of your letter to TSSA.

If you have a question about your workplace rights, call our employment law specialists on 0800 3282673 in the UK or 1800 805272 in the Republic of Ireland or email helpdesk@tssa.org.uk
Hours: Monday to Thursday 8am–6pm Friday 8am–5pm

Q. I am about to turn 65 and I would like to remain working. My employer has told me I have to retire as my contract says so.

A. While there is no statutory retirement age in the Republic of Ireland, employers are allowed to set a contractual retirement age (Employment Equality Acts, 1998-2008). You will need to check your contract to see if it contains such a clause. It may not, as older contracts which predate age equality legislation would probably have been drawn up by employers who didn't think it necessary to include one. If it does have such a clause then you have no option but to retire. However, it may be worth checking to see if they have allowed others to stay beyond retirement age. If they have, then this would reduce their ability to rely on the retirement provision in your contract.

Our British readers should note that their employers may also try to slip such a clause into employment contracts, but under UK law this must be 'objectively justified'. That means the employer will have to show that it is a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim. Failure to demonstrate this will result in an unfair and discriminatory dismissal. As there is no government guidance on what is objectively justifiable it will eventually be up to the courts to decide.

Q. The company I work for is moving four more people into our office, which means we will be really crammed together and I don't think it is safe. We'll be tripping over each other just to get out of the door. Is there anything we can do?

A. The first thing is to get out your tape measure and work out the cubic volume of the room – length

times width times height, ignoring height over 2.5 metres. Divided this by the number of workers and if the answer is less than 11 cubic metres each you have a breach of Regulation 10, Workplace (Health, Safety & Welfare) Regs 1992. The company has a duty to comply with the Regulations and to provide a safe working environment, especially for any disabled workers, so get on to your Health & Safety rep to ensure a proper risk assessment is done and any shortcomings resolved.

Q. I am under notice of redundancy. I have asked for time off to look for another job. My manager says that's OK, but I will have to use up my outstanding leave. Is this right?

A. Of course not. Any employee under notice of redundancy has a statutory right to reasonable paid time off to look for other work. What's reasonable should be a matter of agreement between you and your employer, but note that however long they give you, or how long the period of notice, they do not need to pay you more than two-fifths of a week's pay for the time you have off.



Q. I am a TSSA local rep. A member complained to me that a couple of people in her office have been making homophobic remarks both directly to her and also about her. She and I have asked them to stop which they seem to have done, though it took the threat of a grievance. I told them they could have ended up in a tribunal alongside the company but they just said it was the employer that would be liable. Was I right?

A. Spot on. Everybody needs to be aware that employees who behave as they have (in this specific case harassment related to a protected characteristic) can be deemed 'jointly and severally liable' with employers. This means that they could find themselves alongside the employer at a tribunal and personally having to cough up for part or even all of the award. Don't forget discrimination awards can be unlimited, and the claimant can seek to recover the sum from either the employer, the employee or both.

As a rep you should also speak to the company to make sure their equal opportunities and harassment policies are up to date and disseminated to all staff.

UK

Republic of Ireland

0800 3282673/1800 805272

letters

This is your chance to share your views with thousands of other TSSA members. The deadline for the next issue is 3 February. Letters may be edited for length or clarity. Email journal@tssa.org.uk or write to TSSA Journal, Walkden House, 10 Melton Street, London, NW1 2EJ.

Letters

The strong views expressed in the last issue of the Journal have elicited a number of equally strong reactions. The following letters and others are published in full online, but to print all submissions in their entirety would have taken up a quarter of the Journal.

Looking forward, we now have a new General Secretary and a chance to move on. Letters reflecting this, rather than repeating the points made would seem an appropriate way to move forward.

Criticism rings true

It was with some disappointment and great sadness that I learnt of Gerry's decision to take 'early retirement' – a misnomer if ever there was one for someone who will no doubt continue to give of his time and efforts to the wider trade union and labour movement if not to the TSSA.

Unfortunately, having just concluded a six-year term on the Executive Committee representing what I considered to be the interests of workers in the London Transport Divisional Council and more generally of TSSA members, much of what our former General Secretary had to say in the most recent edition of the Journal had a very familiar ring to it.

The generally accepted view is that the tensions between the General Secretary and the Executive Committee had their roots in Torquay and the fiasco that was Conference 2009. This is simply mistaken. Most of the problems in the TSSA stem from the disconnection between TSSA's democratic structures and TSSA representatives and

members in the workplace. This allows a very small number of unelected and unaccountable members of the Association, widely referred to as 'the slate' to wield a disproportionate degree of influence and ultimately leads to individuals voting in the interests of their friends and political allies rather than the wider interests of the Association.

These problems go back beyond 2009, in fact well beyond Gerry's election in 2004. I have witnessed this for myself at various Annual Conferences and latterly discovering that a number of TSSA branches only one, two or three people, decide the way nominations for elections are determined. Gerry says in his comment that, despite the undertakings freely given by both the Executive Committee and General Secretary to effect the necessary changes to protect the Association's future, not one thing has changed.

Members will find their own answers as to why nothing changed, for me the reason was that change was not in the interests of the minority who have for so long now manipulated our

organisation. Attempts to empower members and workplace reps were always bound to fail when they were reliant upon the agreement of so many who are not active in a TSSA organised workplace, and that includes a number of our Executive Committee.

Anyone who doubts this might ask why Executive Committee members who have been repeatedly elected unopposed would want to change a system that allows this to happen and replace it with something that could ultimately cost them their seat and influence. TSSA therefore risk the Executive Committee emanating the impression of a self-serving type of junta held in place by an unrepresentative minority, rather than a democratic depiction of the members and their workplaces TSSA proudly represents.

Doug Blundell
Chair, London Met 454

A soap opera?

Despite being somewhat mystified to hear of Gerry's decision to seek early retirement our branch were nevertheless happy to wish Gerry all the best, as there is no doubt he has, amongst

other achievements, raised the TSSA's profile in the media and amongst opinion formers in recent years.

Then the November journal and its statement plopped through the letterbox and our collective jaws dropped with astonishment at the apparent scurrilous attacks on virtually everyone in the TSSA hierarchy. If we were on the receiving end of these comments, quite frankly, we would seek redress through the union.

There are several accusations about several EC members who are collectively accused of being inexperienced, 'mouthpieces', political and so on. We regard the EC as those experienced activists who volunteer to be nominated from their own divisions. They volunteer, we are sure, to look after our affairs in accordance with Rule 6(f). Rule 5a(3) also states that the 'General Secretary should act generally under the orders of the EC, may speak, but not vote on any business at Conference and EC Meetings.' So why are there a number of rants about why the EC are in essence, not doing what Gerry tells them or how

they should behave? Although we do hope that good governance does prevail, it is still a democratic forum of the highest TSSA echelons.

Is this the real reason that Gerry resigned, the loss of support over TUC election, instead of what he said on 16 August? That the EC abided by Rule 5a(3) – see above? Yet we note on the opposite page in the journal, it is reported that at the TUC, held a few weeks later, Gerry was awarded the Gold Badge for his hard work. So that's alright, then.

Like a depressing storyline from EastEnders, we are surrounded by cries of 'Woz goin' on, and 'It'll all be round the (Euston?) Square now', waiting for the final dramatic drumbeats as the main character walks away from the soap opera forever.

Stephen Floyd
on behalf of the Chair
and Officers of London
Bus Operators 467

Who rules who?
Having read every TSSA Journal since it was first published I think I can say, with some authority, that personal criticisms of colleagues in its columns have been rare. Certainly, the way in which the General Secretary used our paper to attack the President is unprecedented. It would seem that despite changes to the EC's membership since the troubles of 2009 nothing has changed. Could it be that the General Secretary is at fault,

rather than the EC? That was certainly the view of the 2009 Conference.

I wish our new editor well in his future career but his 'independent' decision to publish the General Secretary's attack against some of the hardest working members of the Association without printing a response was, in my view, a mistake.

Our rules say that the EC has the duty to 'manage and supervise the affairs of the TSSA' and that it is the duty of the General Secretary to 'act generally under the orders of the EC'. The tone of his resignation suggests otherwise. There are criticisms that can be made of the EC including, in my view, that they accepted too many of the General Secretary's strategic policies. Fortunately, the membership recognised that some of these did nothing for the TSSA, and rejected them. I would like to hear from the EC exactly what policies it rejected that would have boosted membership and resolved our financial problems. That is the real debate.

Malcolm Wallace
Anglia 1

Time to move on
I would like to first of all to acknowledge the good work done by Gerry over the years, he has raised the profile of our union to new heights and made important and positive changes. It is therefore with great sadness then that I am writing this

letter and the way and manor in which Gerry has decided to take early retirement.

As a General Secretary Gerry should be more professional and above writing and publishing such matters, this will cause tremendous damage to our association and its' image and to me seems a very immature thing to do. To criticise individuals in such a way is unforgiveable. As he says this was the President's first meeting, so a great shame then he didn't allow more time and give some flexibility and support.

He talks about the recommendations for TUC, blames the EC for not supporting him, even though it clearly states in the rule book that the EC is not there to rubber stamp the GS' wishes. He states it made no difference but then infers that this cost us our seat on the General Council, when in fact it probably made no difference whatsoever.

Gerry has forgotten that we live and work in a democratic structure and you don't always get what you want, he clearly wants things his way or no way!

Gerry also accuses some members of the EC of a political agenda not supported by the vast majority of the members!? Has Gerry done a political survey of our entire membership then? If so he certainly hasn't asked me of my political views. Does he have any actual proof of this? This is a matter of

opinion not a matter of fact and should not have been published.

This is such a crucial time for us so it is an even greater shame that this has happened and I can only hope that the rest of us, all of us, put all this behind us and work together to stop this in fighting and fight against the real enemies, McNulty and the greedy companies that are looking to attack our members and our railway.

Stephen Leggett
Treasurer, South East
Metro 640

Tired of waiting
What a splendid idea – Bring back British Rail and – presumably – to be owned by the British people and to be accountable to the British people. Hold on though – have we not heard that somewhere before?

Did not that Labour stalwart and champion of the working class John Prescott not – in so many words – promise just that in 1997 prior to the election when he said we would have a publicly owned – publicly accountable railway? But what did we actually get?...you guessed it – continued privatised ownership and franchises that should have reverted to public ownership at no cost were re-let to the private sector.

I echo the sentiments expressed by the campaigners outside Waterloo station – that we should 'bring back BR' – but in reality hell will freeze over first.

Richard J Sharp

letters

equalities



Shahbaz Majeed

A stunning photograph of the Tay Bridge at dusk has scooped Network Rail's 'Lines in the Landscape' award as part of this year's Landscape Photographer of the Year Awards.

The photograph, from Shahbaz Majeed of Dundee, was deemed the very best image of the national rail network from around 500 entries. It will be showcased alongside over 100 of the very best images from the wider competition during a free exhibition at The National Theatre on London's Southbank, running from Monday 5 December.

E-Mix Weekend School the largest yet

IN EARLY NOVEMBER TSSA E-Mix – the self-organised group of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic members – held a very successful two day event in Eastbourne, reports Manjit Gill.

The first day focused on a range of problems members encountered in the workplace including discrimination, the need to book time off for religious holidays, recruitment, institutional racism, victimisation, bullying, harassment, child care issues and flexible working.

We looked at the reasons

why people join unions as well as the role of Black and Minority Ethnic members within our union. We also discussed compiling a mapping database within our own workplaces to identify and recruit new members.

Speakers included Denis Fernando from One Society Many Cultures who spoke about the growing threat posed by the EDL and the rise of far right groups in Europe. He also spoke about how the Government and press can cause divisions between communities as they pursue

their agendas. The key message is to bring together all communities and work together to defeat fascism.

On Sunday Wilf Sullivan, the TUC's Race Relations Officer spoke about how race and diversity issues can be addressed in the workplace rather than taking cases to Employment Tribunals. There was a discussion of the Stephen Lawrence trial and the concerns over slavery, which still exists in one form or another in many countries.

The weekend school reinvigorated attendees and

showed that racism is still of huge concern and a barrier to many in the workplace. Everyone pledged to take action upon returning home, whether to recruit, examine discrimination policies, be alert to bullying or map their workplaces. Each of us left with more energy, knowledge and a sense of empowerment to tackle these issues. Our aim is to eliminate racism, to achieve race equality at work and for all to be treated with the dignity and respect they deserve. ◀



Translink staff show off signing skills

STAFF IN TRANSLINK have had their Sign Language skills highlighted in a short film displayed as part of the 'WOW-World of Work' art exhibition at Belfast's Golden Thread gallery. Union Learning Rep Jennifer Kissick took part in the film, demonstrating her Sign Language skills and explaining the value of being able to communicate with passengers from the deaf community.

The significance of Translink staff learning to Sign and actively increase their understanding of issues facing deaf passengers shows how TSSA's learning opportunities programme can not only assist members in their personal

development, but can also boost the confidence of public transport users who may now be able to find a staff member they can easily communicate with. TSSA is leading the way by providing learning opportunities which have a positive impact on people's everyday lives. ◀



i You can watch the film at www.youtube.com/tssaunion and find out more about TSSA Learning via www.tssa.org.uk/learning.