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Passenger News

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First Manchester breaks the 0% barrier!

ESSEX BALLOTS, LEEDS STRIKES

The 2009 pay review in Manchester has been finally settled after nine days of strike and a near-compromise being rejected by a three to one vote. Lengthy negotiations with ACAS resulted in a further revised offer. Members only then agreed a unanimous recommendation to accept by the negotiating committee of Unite.

The settlement covers a 2 year 9 month period until April 2012 and is a major improvement on the previous offer. A very complicated agreement sees 0.6% backdated to July 5th 2009.

Then, in April 2010, three months early, another increase of 3.6% applies. There's a clause allowing renegotiations in 2011 if RPI goes above 2%.

The main pot of money goes to progress members on lower rates to the top rate of pay. The existing four rates of pay will end in March 2012, when everyone will be on the same rate off pay.

[cont'd oversee p2 for W. Yorks and p3 for Essex reports]

New starters will be exempt but will progress to the full rate in a reasonable time. Decent conditions are now made achievable for all staff - paid meal breaks, shorter working days, and more holidays.

Some 'Top Rate Progressors' can get 7 days more holidays when they start to move up from April 2010, and the rest rise in batches every year after that to paid meal breaks and a 8.06 max working day; then they can progress to the extra holidays.

West Manchester members "*stuck together like glue,*" said a shop steward. "*They supported us on the picket lines come rain or shine. Only one scab crossed the picket line out of 833 drivers. I hope this is a lesson to you all. We aimed to break the 0% pay freeze and in the end, even though it was only a bit, we did it.*"

Manchester also obtained a commitment to no redundancies before July 2010. A local rep commented: "*If they do come for that at a later stage then we will just have 9 more strikes. It does not bother us. We thank Unite - the union for paying the members their dispute money every week, which did help us stay solid and strong. Some drivers were only losing £15 at the end of the day so 'Thank You' again Unite!*"



NOW EAST LONDON STRIKES OVER 0% PAY

2,500 Unite members have taken their second period of action in a dispute over the company's imposition of a zero percent pay deal. Members at Barking, Bow, Leyton, Romford, Upton Park and West Ham garages took their second wave of strike action starting 3am on Friday 20th November, concluding at 3am on Sunday 22nd. More strike days are imminent.

First West Yorkshire Strikes!



Some one and a half thousand Unite members recorded a 91% vote for strike action in an ERS ballot in Leeds.

Unite regional officer Phil Bown said: "We feel it is only fair that the people who contribute to those profits get a share." The MD in Leeds responded with: "This is not the time... to be asking for a pay rise."

First members in Bradford, Halifax, Huddersfield and York have already had a 3% rise as part of a multi-year deal, negotiated before the group merged to include the Leeds operation.

An offer was rejected by membership ballot by a vote of five to one, no less! It's now been taken off the table but that's OK, as one member put it: 'we don't want it! Here's a flavour of bits of the last two offers:

- £150 cash now (improved from an earlier rejected ASDA gift voucher of £105.
- A reduction from a 37 hour week to a 36.5 without loss of pay in January.
- 22p an hour (2.5%) from April 4th (normal anniversary date is May 1st)
- Unpaid time on meal breaks to be extended from 1hr to 1hr 6minutes.
- A voluntary split rota; no late turns and no Sunday working.

The first strike day, on Saturday 12th was solid. 6 non-union scabs predictably went in to help management get 24 buses out but Leeds was otherwise deserted of buses. Two more strike days – 23rd and 24th December are scheduled.



NX Dundee

Bob McKelvie, the convenor for Dundee Travel National Express, reports that an offer of 1.6% increase for 2009 along with a reduction in the probationary period to 1 year has been agreed by a ballot of his members. This brings the established drivers to a rate of £9.56 per hour.

STOP-PRESS;STOP-PRESS;STOP-PRESS;STOP-PRESS; STOP-PRESS;

- ❖ 2,500 staff at First Capital East and First Centre West in London have voted in favour of industrial action.
- ❖ Some 800 drivers, engineers and staff at several locations of Abellio Bus & Ferry in Greater London and Surrey (formerly Travel London National Express) are balloting for industrial action.
- ❖ ASLEF, the train drivers' union, has accepted FirstGroup's Capital Connect pay offer. Drivers have been declining overtime and rest day working for more than a month. They had been angry at a pay freeze offer for 2009. FCC has now offered 1.5% from April 2009, and the total increase over two years will be 5%.



First Southampton settles

After a strong vote for strikes, members ballot voted 173 to 24 to accept an offer of:

- £50 tax and NI free Tesco/Asda voucher
- one days extra holiday
- 2.6% on all grades from April 2010
- no loss to any terms and conditions.



Mediator settlement for South Essex – ballot pending

South Essex (Hadleigh and Basildon) had three days of solid action when this was suspended to consider an offer of a £100 voucher for 2009

(subject to tax and NI), 3% for 2010, and between 2.5% to 3.5% (depending on RPI) for 2011.

The negotiating committee rejected this outright, prompting the manager to proclaim that they simply "HAD to take this offer to ballot". The stewards pointed out that they had an overwhelming mandate to bring back a pay increase for 2009, "not insulting Christmas bonuses". Unite vainly offered a solution to the deadlock, with a commitment to take it back to members with a recommendation but the company declined. A whole week's strike was called from December 17th, with a request for double strike pay to help members through Xmas. Then a report from a Professor Karl Mackie was commissioned by ACAS to provide a neutral recommendation. Dr Mackie, considered that the £100 bonus was "a fairly limited gesture" and said he could "understand the Union's reluctance to consider this an adequate response to their members' concerns and was anyway "unlikely to achieve support given previous ballot results". He felt that First should "be able to accommodate some flexibility re the principle of a 2009 deal, but have equally given a gesture in their direction by allowing an extra month before an increase start date". Thus, he said there should be:

- an increase in rates starting on February 1st 2010, of 2.8%.
- a Christmas bonus payment of £125 cash.
- the pay round should move to January 1st from 2011.
- a settlement then should be based on RPI of between 2.5% and 3.5%.

Members were balloting as we went to press.



First South Yorkshire

FSY's wages dispute was finally settled following acceptance in a workplace ballot by the margin of 584 votes to 345. The settlement for 2009 was a £100 voucher (subject to tax and N.I.), a child pass for one child aged 11-15 years; for 2010 - 3% on all rates from 1st April; two Bank Holiday Tuesdays moved to Christmas period, accrued holidays to be paid to those eligible to receive it at 2009 rates of pay, whilst those who were paid holidays at 2003 rates of pay on leaving employment from 17th May will receive back pay on current rates. These payments will be paid before Christmas 2009.

Mirror, mirror, who's the most idiotic of them all???



An insulting email by a First Devon and Cornwall manager, questioning some RMT members' intelligence in a 'disrespectful' manner, over problems in the Goosewell area of Plymstock, was leaked to drivers who forced an apology. Drivers have been subject to investigations and even suspensions after complaints from residents in the area about buses 'idling' - parked with engines on and lights on - at unsociable hours. In the public letter to drivers, the manager said: "... sometimes I do some very silly things; this email is probably the most idiotic of them all!"



MY-OH-MY CA...WHAT?

A paper on 'Myocardial infarction' is the first in a series of research papers on health and safety issues affecting bus workers, which are to be posted on the Unite Sectors' pages in the Passenger tab. ["Myocardial infarction among male bus, taxi, and lorry drivers in middle Sweden" Occupational and Environmental Medicine, 1996;53:235-240] This is a respected and classic 1996 study of heart disease, among bus and taxi drivers in Stockholm, the surrounding four counties, and relates to a similar survey in Gothenburg, also in Sweden. Essentially, the risk of heart disease compared to the rest of the population is tripled among bus

and tram drivers, even with individual adjustment for smokers, poor blood pressure and lipids, physical activity, and body weight. Taxi drivers had a doubled risk, although no excess risk was found among lorry drivers. The cause was classed as "uncertain". BUT IT WAS NOT EXPLAINED BY SMOKING, OR BEING OVERWEIGHT. The fact that bus and taxi drivers more often report "psycho-social job strain" - that's stress to you and me - was the key issue. The T&G has been aware of this ever since we produced a resume of 17 such international studies a decade ago, when we called for more research on the effects of stress. We even sought support from government and industry and offered match funding but all such appeals fell on stony ground. Wonder why?

First's US union scores pay every time...

Here's a list of Teamsters branches throughout USA that settled pay during May to September on decent rises. *There's no sign of a ZERO per cent anywhere. Everyone gained new money to go on rates of pay in the current year, plus additional conditions such as extra holiday and sick leave.*

Cincinnati, Ohio; Jefferson Parish, LA, Albany, NY; Newark, DE; West Frankfort, CT; Abington, PA; Plymouth, PA; Neptune, NJ; Boise, ID; House Springs, MO; Bartonville, IL; Bloomfield, CT; Somers, CT; Burlington/Berlin, NJ; Willingboro, NJ; Harrisburg, PA; Desoto, KS; Los Angeles; Mission Viejo, CA; Santa Ana, CA; Edmonton, AB

DRIVER DELIVERS BABY – BUT LONDON'S CT PLUS WON'T DELIVER ON PAY



A Unite union member helped deliver a baby

boy on the 394 bus route in Hackney Downs. But her employer, CT Plus, won't deliver on pay for some of the lowest paid drivers in London. Unite gave notice of strike ballot on the same day that Pauline Jacobs helped deliver a healthy baby boy before an ambulance arrived.

Peter Kavanagh, Unite's regional officer observed that: *"This driver went above and beyond the call of duty, she was amazing. It just goes to show that anything can happen on a bus from a birth to a violent attack. It's time bus drivers were truly recognised and valued in the way this mother will never forget Pauline."*

CT drivers are some of the lowest paid in London. They get no overtime payments, no evening working payments and no weekend payments. An offer of 2.25% percent was the final straw for the 150 workers. It leaves CT Plus busworkers lagging far behind the wages paid by

competitor companies in one of the most expensive cities in the world.

A 24-hour strike by drivers, engineers and administration staff followed and more strikes are due before Xmas. Come on, you CT Plus Unite members, deliverance is in your hands!



LABOUR PARTY TOLD:
'Last stop before terminus - act now for bus workers!'

Pic: Graham Stevenson, in Brighton, expresses busworkers' distaste at New Labour's sluggish delivery on regulation and Domestic Hours' Rules.

One of the biggest fringe meetings on the circuit at the recent Labour Party conference saw our National Organiser outline the dissatisfaction that busworkers have after waiting 12 years for action from New Labour.

Graham shared the platform amongst, others, with the Transport Minister, Sadiq Khan, MP for Tooting.

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What's up, Doc?

Dr Roger Sealey (OK, 'The Doc' – the big daddy of all the researchers in the world), pictured, is leaving the employ of Unite. Guess it's time for him to spend more time with his books! But we'll all miss him... well, we'll miss the massive sprawl of untidy papers, books, notes, etc, that is a mark of a true genius and hides him from those high-ups whom he does not wish to know, whenever they try to find him.

Roger has been with the central office transport team for the whole of the Noughties, through thick and thin. But he's been with the T&G for most of his life! And he's not leaving that history for anything. No doubt Roger will pop up somewhere along the line in Unite – watch out Oxford!

It's not often realised but the reason we all found him the most grounded of intellectuals is because he's not one ... well, ok, a working class intellectual then. Roger had long been a shop steward on the shop floor in the car industry at Cowley before he took advantage of union support in adult education to gain a degree and, guess what?

He then won his PhD by a masterful analysis of bus deregulation; both qualities meant that he and Passenger stewards by the bus-fleet-full always knew where to find the complex answers to the queries they had. Just hope he's not writing a book on life inside central office in his 'retirement'; maybe he'll call it: "Unite – the union, what a good idea".

Just joking, folks! Have a good 'un, Roger!

Stagecoach Bus: national report

MAX. 4.5 Hour driving pieces

A re-write of all of the Stagecoach Manchester Hyde Road garage duties has taken place following a campaign by the Stagecoach NLC and a meeting will take place very shortly to discuss the outcome. These duties will be agreed by the local schedules reps and then placed in the rosters. At that point we will be able to access what if any extra costs will be incurred and whether they are acceptable to the Hyde Road members.

All of the duties contain driving pieces of no more than 4.5 hours and if there are three-part duties then the second break will be fully paid. A further trial is to take place at the Ayr garage in Scotland very shortly also.

Cab Seat Weight Limits.

Meetings should now have taken place in all of the Stagecoach companies with local reps to resolve a local approach to the issue. We believe that we are dealing with a number of about 180 out of a workforce of 14,000. It was a very difficult issue to deal with and the union tried to everything that they could to protect the dignity of our members.

There are now 400 seats with a 30 stone cab seat weight limit being delivered and fitted right now. Manchester have ordered and fitted 15 and they go into service next week. Our national Cab Design Committee has visited Alexander's at Falkirk and viewed a number of new cab seats, leading to a proposal (CONT'D)

for the Chapman Nova Urban MK250 seat. This seat has a scissor system for raising and lowering the seat. It is very well padded for driver comfort and is covered in ECO Leather.

We are also requesting that the seat be fitted with Outlast Adaptive Technology, which was first developed for NASA to protect astronauts from the temperature fluctuations in space. It is lined between the cover and the seat and it helps to stop driver's sweating in summer. It has a 30 stone weight limit and because it is raised and lowered by turning a handle there is no mechanisms that cannot connect properly and cause the seat to slip.

Drivers Handbook

We have been reviewing the new proposed Company Drivers' Handbook with the company. A number of changes were requested by us, mainly arising from our view that this is an advisory book to help drivers. Another Handbook is being worked on that will contain all of the mutually agreed national policies and agreements.

National Shop Stewards' Course.

24 of our stewards attended a Stagecoach course at Eastbourne Centre and all who attended felt that it was a great success.

There were presentations by VOSA on the on the Spot Fine Regs, on training by

Go Skills, the Stagecoach Pension (given by our former chair, Doug Bailey MBE).

The Company gave a series of presentations and Roger Sealey and John Neal from the Unite Research Dept. brought the stewards up to date on the campaigns regarding Drivers Hours and Quality Contracts. It has been agreed that another one will be held next year.

Dyslexia

One in five people in the UK are dyslexic and Caren Taylor (the Stagecoach National Women's Rep.) has identified a number of things that could be done to help them.

Our NLC is now using specific font and recommending printing on brightly coloured paper, since this makes it easier to read. Caren has asked that we seek a company policy and this will be discussed at our next JNCF Meeting.

Frank Llewellyn Stagecoach NLC Secretary

PN adds: congratulations are due to Frank for being elected the national chair of the whole Passenger Sector of Unite in November; quite an achievement!

'The past is another country, they do things differently there'



A snippet wings its way to PN that may be of interest. It comes from an old book from 1937, called "Road Passenger Transport - a manager's guide". Of course, life is so different now from way back when. They used to send children up chimneys then, didn't they? The duties of a bus manager are well defined:

The power of a Manager is usually dependent upon his personality. If he has a strong personality it will show in the course of time throughout the undertaking of which he is the head. A strong Manager is one who can show strength when it is necessary, and equally on other occasions show leniency, consideration, and kindness. He will plan his own duties. He should never be too busy to see anybody. He should avoid an accumulation of work. His desk will always be clear and it should not be necessary for either him or his staff to work overtime.

As well as pleasing his Board, the good bus manager should also be a fair bloke and look after all his people:

The Manager should also, in the author's view, please the employees. If a Manager is always being criticized, it is not good for the undertaking. He will please the employees if he is fair and just. They should not be harassed and should have the right

World Book Day 4th March 2010



Unite is supporting World Book Day. Authors' book signings, read-athons, quizzes, book fairs including book swaps, exhibitions and displays will be jointly organised by Unite reps and by the Lifelong Learning Organising teams with employers. Details: www.quickreads.org.uk. ann.field@unitetheunion.com



Want a branch website?

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See: <http://www.leftspace.co.uk/>

And finally.....



ABOVE: Now we can all laugh at ourselves, can't we? PN has no wish to disturb the peace, or defame, or anything, or anyone. It is to be hoped that no personal offence is taken - for none is intended, and the scene is entirely fictional in a Dickensian manner - at our reproduction here of an original work by the celebrated amateur, Paul Gogan of South Essex, who relaxes on his monthly day off by wearing only a South Sea Island bubble pinafore, whatever that is, around his house, Anyway that's what he told me to say and that's my defence, your honour...

We add this example of the naïve expressionist art form of the sardonic school merely to ask if any more members feel that their underlying creative impulse is bursting beneath. PN is happy to provide Kartoon Korner for future such outings. Rush your original art work by any means but snail mail. The posties at Mount Unpleasant near to our offices are forever on strike. I blame the unions, I do. By the way, **MERRY XMAS TO ONE AND ALL FROM EVERYONE AT HOLBORN!**