

NOR4NOR

NORFOLK FOR THE NATIONALISATION OF RAIL

Bringing the railways back to the community

Newsletter No.3 Summer 2019, FREE

NATIONALISE! DEMOCRATISE! CLIMATISE!

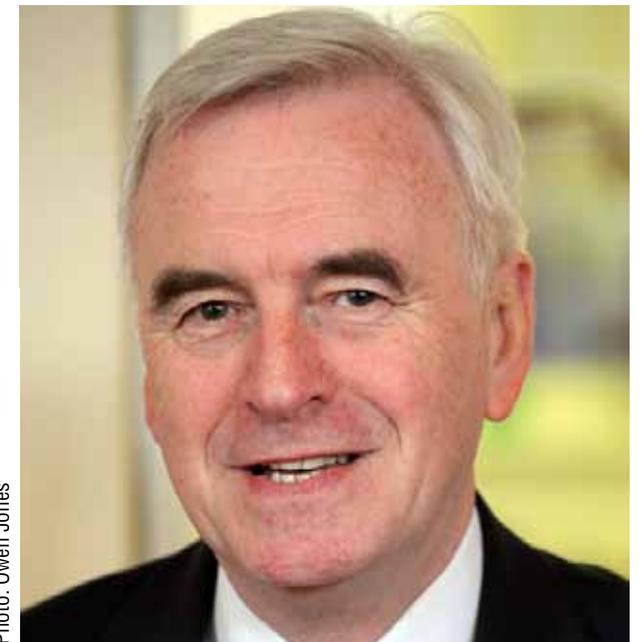


Photo: Owen Jones

WE NEED A BOLD and radical vision to shape the future of our railway, one fit for the 21st century, which can serve people, not private profit.

It's a vision that animates trade union and passenger campaigns today as we demand a move away from the fragmented privatised railway, through nationalisation towards democratic control – a decentralised co-ordinated railway with decision-making distributed widely and democratic control irreversibly located in regional bodies that return power to those who work on and those who use public transport.

And this need not be in isolation: demands for nationalisation have reverberated throughout Europe as a reform that would secure railway workers jobs and conditions as well as offering passengers a transport system geared to social need rather than private profit. Whilst nationalisation in Europe has often been a half-way house, it has had and still has massive popular support.

From France to the former USSR rail nationalisation has always contained the seeds of a movement for wider and deeper social ownership, management and control. This is the legacy for those attempting to build a new society in which public transport is an essential component.

And now, more than ever, planned public transport is a big part of the solution to the climate crisis and the railways can be in the forefront of the kinds of change needed to prevent catastrophic climate change.

John McDonnell MP, Shadow Chancellor

OUR RAILWAYS are in a state of disarray. We've seen steep hikes in fares. Passengers faced timetabling chaos in 2018. And years of under-investment have left large parts of the country with failing rail infrastructure, as money has been diverted to dividend payouts and eye-watering salaries for rail bosses.

In case all that's not bad enough, British rail passengers have to put up with the unstinting ineptitude of Transport Secretary Chris Grayling. Grayling announced last year that Keith Williams would lead a year-long independent review of the rail industry to come up with "ambitious recommendations for reform".

Our position in the Labour Party has been clear. The only ambitious reform that would truly meet the needs of passengers, and address the root causes of the failings of our railways, is bringing rail franchises back into public ownership.

Public ownership of rail can do at least three things.

First, it brings much needed coherence to a fragmented train network. Public ownership can provide a 'guiding mind' to plan and oversee the network. Incremental efforts at greater coordination within the privatised system won't be enough.

Second, public ownership improves accountability. The current system, with multiple train companies as well as other actors, encourages buck-passing – as happened last year with the timetabling fiasco. Public ownership will keep the rail network responsive to government, and answerable to passengers and the general public.

Third, public ownership of the railways is simply more efficient. The next Labour government will ensure that the railway has longer time horizons for planning, and can secure economies of scale. Investment in expertise can build back public capacity. It can also help to provide the innovation that the private sector has so rarely delivered, despite all its promises.

This is not about going back to the public ownership of the past. Instead, we're developing creative plans for participation, regional coordination, and public ownership for the twenty-first century.

We're continuing to develop and deepen our policy on public ownership of the rail. Shadow Transport Secretary Andy McDonald and his team are developing detailed plans for how the railway will work as an integrated whole under public ownership. We've also said we'll set up a Public Ownership Unit in the Treasury with specialised legal and financial knowledge to support the transition to public ownership in mail, rail, energy, and water.

We're ready to answer the public's call for public ownership. We know, from 2017 polls, that 76% of the British public want the trains back in public hands. And we're prepared to turn that support for nationalisation into workable, pragmatic policy.

Norfolk for the Nationalisation of Rail, NOR4NOR, is doing valuable work as we move forward. NOR4NOR is helping to expand the coalition of support for public ownership, and feeding into ongoing public debate about how to democratise public ownership.

241,934 train cancellations in the UK in 2018 – that's more than 660 trains cancelled every day.

NOR4NOR SAYS

NOR4NOR has been campaigning for 3 years.

In that time, we have highlighted the failings of the privatised system and ensured that the case for public ownership is made at rail stations, on picket lines and at public meetings throughout East Anglia.

Now we think that it's time to plan for a new railway, one that requires the widest possible discussion and debate.

So that why we held a summit in Norwich in April 2019. A summit which has outlined many ideas of a peoples' plan. But the summit, which brought together railway workers, passengers, experts and campaigners, also explored educational programmes and the history of nationalisation/workers' control.

Go to pages 4 and 5 for a full report and to our website for more information: www.NOR4NOR.org



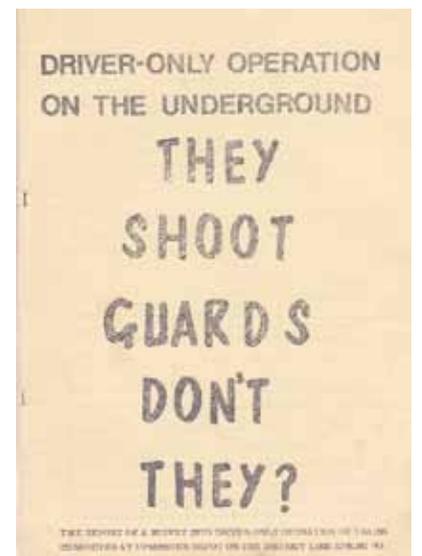
They Shoot Guards Don't They? Not any more they don't!

35 years ago, in 1984, guards began to be removed from trains.

On British Rail's Bedford-St Pancras (Bed-Pan) line and then on the London Underground, the employers' strategy was to destroy a grade that had hitherto been deemed essential to the safe running of the railways. Working on the underground, I was part of a last-ditch attempt to save 2,000 guard's jobs with East Ham ASLEF and NUR branches organising a campaign involving deputations to other branches, a public meeting and the publication of a pamphlet called *They Shoot Guards Don't They?* At the Greater London Council's Popular Planning Unit, where I subsequently worked, we tried to prevent DOO in London through support for rank and file trade unionists and by making a 30-minute video called *One Man: 2,000 jobs*. But in a climate of

industrial retreat and Thatcherite assaults on unions, DOO was gradually pushed through until all underground lines had lost their guards. In the following decade, freight guards and some 30% of passenger guards were also removed from trains.

You might think that this is the end of the story. It's not. In a turnaround equalled only by Liverpool FC's victory over Barcelona in the Champions League, guards have successfully halted a fresh attempt to use technology to replace them across 5 rail companies. It's taken 3 years of strike action and negotiation to remind the companies that cost-cutting endangers the safety of passengers and staff on trains. And that the rail unions, notably the RMT, are the foremost defenders of rail safety. This is by no means the end of the story but it does mean that even if you lose the first round, you can come back and



win the game 35 years later. And that makes an ex-railway worker deeply proud of the guards who fought back then and those who have kept that tradition alive in the 21st century.

PERSONAL EXPERIENCE OF A NATIONALISED BRITISH RAIL

At a politically exciting time for those of us who have worked for a return to a nationalised rail network we expect attacks from the right over the record of British Rail.

There is a popular image of the British nationalized industries as huge monolithic bureaucracies that were hugely unpopular but I would argue that this is largely right wing created myth. It is, however, disappointing that some on the left seem unwilling to defend our past and merely claim "that it will be different this time". As a son of a railwayman and with the first years of my working life as the same my experience is anecdotal but also backed up by longer experience in the nationalized gas industry and whose experience of privatisation has been a mixture of despair and disbelief at its wastefulness of our country's resources.

British Rail, albeit with failings, managed to preserve vital national infrastructure, deserted by private owners at the end of the Second World War, with little capital investment and with aged infrastructure. Where there was capital investment it was with a far greater long term vision than has been able to be mustered by the privatized industries currently leaving us with a chaotic railway system and overpriced and poorly planned transport policy. Alongside this strategic view of delivery and investment industrial relations

BY DAVE BERRY



and training and consumer participation were far more in tune with the democratic framework of the country than the current privatized regime. Not only did the nationalized industry provide a better economic result but also delivered a social return in terms of employment, a national training agency and long term planning, much nearer the German industrial model than typical Anglo-Saxon laissez-faire.

The main criticism of the industry was its centralisation but strategic planning also led to an integrated international passenger and freight network. It also allowed huge transfers in technology, very often the key failing of private firms, with changes from steam to diesel and then to electrification on limited resources but with the help of a hugely experienced, well trained and dedicated workforce. But alongside the national structure

was a thriving Regional Board structure with distinct autonomy giving rise to different engines, rolling stock and local practices being able to cater for local needs.

The industry's industrial relations mirrored the Joint Industrial Council structure of the time at National, Regional and Local level. Most issues on terms and conditions were settled through bureaucratic but effective procedures and the greatest antagonism was left to wage bargaining at a national level but mainly to satisfy the posturing of "free collective bargaining". The day to day work still could not entirely rid itself of the "alienation" that Marx identified but it did allow disputes to be resolved and a greater degree of worker involvement than today. Perhaps the greatest achievement of the industrial relations pattern was to create direct and stable permanent employment for many of thousands of workers with an effective training structure enabling skills and safety to be at the heart of the industry. The consumer side was represented by Passenger Groups mirroring the industry structure.

Some may describe my description as "misty eyed" nostalgia but alongside the chaos of today's industry it is a history worth defending but also may provide us with the structure of "wartime planning" against our political enemies who will not allow us to progress without challenge.

HOW DO THEY DO IT IN THE REST OF EUROPE?

BY TREVOR GARROD, FORMER CHAIR OF THE EUROPEAN PASSENGERS' FEDERATION

Can we learn from the rail systems in comparable European countries?

No- one has privatised all of its passenger services. Some have brought in the private sector, either to run regional services under contract or to run long-distance trains on an "open access" agreement on lines already used by the state operator - something allowed under EU rules. In no other country is the public sector forbidden to run services (other than London Underground) whereas in Britain it can only do so if, as on the East Coast Main Line, a private operator gets into difficulties.

FRANCE

At present only the national operator SNCF runs long-distance and local passenger trains, but regionalisation started in the late 1990s. This meant that regional councils (initially Alsace, as an experiment) could determine service levels on local lines and contract with SNCF to provide these. Heavy investment in high speed lines helped increase long-distance market share, but there was less money for other services, on classic routes. There is a danger of fragmentation if one region treats rail as less important than another - as at Chateaubriant, on the border between Pays de Loire and Brittany, with a good modern service southwards and a poorly co-ordinated service northwards and no through trains on what was once a through route. Following a Parliamentary decision in summer 2018, some open access and market opening is likely in the coming years.

GERMANY

The rail reform of 1994 meant that regional lines were put out to tender, but publicly-owned DB Regio was allowed to bid for them and won some of the bids. Companies such as Abellio and National Express run some regional lines or networks under contract and overall usage of regional services has increased. The national long-distance DB network has suffered somewhat from bus deregulation, and this may also happen in France. A small number of open access trains are operated by HKX and Flixtrain. This arrangement has also enabled Austrian Railways to take over some night services which DB had withdrawn.

NETHERLANDS

The core network is served by the public sector operator NS, which runs intensive services. At least six private companies have franchises to operate a total of 14 regional lines, with through ticketing. Thus a journey from Amsterdam to the tourist resort of Valkenburg in the southeast involves



EuroCity expresses link Frankfurt-am-Main main station with Milan Central via Switzerland with an ETR610/RABe503 unit. In this picture the ECE52 from Milan arrives at the main station in Mannheim. Photo: Pro Bahn



In Welkenraedt station, Belgium, passengers coming from Liege by regional train change here, sometimes because they can take a bicycle on board or in order to avoid the expensive high speed trains. Photo: Pro Bahn

an NS InterCity train to Maastricht, and then a private operator for the last ten miles. Most Dutch people now use an OV Chipcard (a stored value card rather like the London Oyster card), which all operators are required to accept. You have to check in and check out when changing operator, which some Dutch people find a nuisance, but the network benefits are retained. In neighbouring Belgium, however, all domestic train services are operated by the publicly-owned SNCB.

CZECH REPUBLIC

The publicly owned CD runs the core network, but there is open access on the main east/west line from Prague to Ostrava. Competition from two private operators, LEO Rail and Regiojet, has led to greater train frequency and usage, and some new cross-border services into Poland, Slovakia and Austria. Tickets are not interchangeable between operators - so, for example, the station as Ostrava, the third largest Czech city, has three separate ticket offices. DB Regio has won the contract to operate the service

from Decin to Rumburk which crosses into Germany and then back into Czech territory. Certain small regional lines are also franchised to private operators, at least one of which does not accept Inter-rail. Competition between public and private operators on the Prague - Vienna via Brno route has led to lower fares. However, it is difficult to find any places on the Continent where a public sector and an open access operator compete on a regional line - such as the majority in Norfolk.

SWEDEN

Competition on the tracks has been established for several years - for example on the Stockholm - Gothenburg main line, where private operator MTR competes with state operator SJ. This includes Danish-based companies operating from Copenhagen via Malmo to Gothenburg and Karlskrona.

ITALY

There has been some regionalisation, with side effects similar to those in

France. Open access on the core north/south route from Turin to Salerno means that private operator NTV competes with publicly-owned Trenitalia. This has increased rail market share between a series of major cities and led to the withdrawal of at least one internal air service.

SWITZERLAND

SBB remains the state-owned core operator, but there are many smaller operators, generally owned by the cantons. Integration is very good and an annual conference of all operators helps ensure easy ticketing.

In conclusion, all of these countries recognise the role of the public sector in providing train services. Competition between operators invariably occurs only on certain main lines. Private companies are sometimes awarded franchises to deliver stopping services on main lines or all services on branch lines. From the passengers' point of view, it is vital that services and ticketing are integrated, whoever provides them.

NOR4NOR SUMMIT 2019

AN INSPIRATIONAL DAY

The NOR4NOR summit in April 2019 was a landmark attempt to put railway workers and passengers at the heart of a strategy for a Peoples' Railway.

It was, we hope, the first in a series of regional conferences designed to develop local plans, campaigns and other initiatives that can be fed into a national plan for public transport. In what has been described as 'an inspirational day' plenary and workshop speakers outlined policies, described the scope of the changes needed and offered expertise on rail issues. In other words, both practical approaches and the vision that is needed to achieve a new public-owned railway. The centrepiece of the summit was the 6 workshops in which people were able to voice their opinions, ideas and blueprints for a new railway system. This was a rare opportunity for railway workers, passengers, and local group and party members to discuss public transport and a huge torrent of ideas emerged. Democratic popular planning at its best.



(left to right) Rachael Maskell MP, Nadine Rae, Clive Lewis MP, and Kam Gill

RACHAEL MASKELL MP, explained Labour's policy direction with a strategy based on government intervention over a 40 year, not a 5 year cycle. This would include a new ticketing model, an electrification programme, investment and freight onto rail. She stressed that this had to be part of a broader plan to tackle climate change involving a fully accessible system, an emphasis on walking and cycling and free municipal travel for pensioners and under-25s. Rachael also focused on the involvement of trade unions, passenger co-ops and local authorities in this process.

NADINE RAE, the director of Equal Opps at the TSSA argued that there was an urgent need to develop skills on the railways with an average workforce age of 57 years old. Changing technology also meant that unions had to be more prepared and quality/diversity agenda was key with the TSSA launching an LGTB+ initiative in 2018.

DAVID RABY, Norwich Green party councillor, called for an accessible and sustainable railway with future funding based on the 'polluters paying' principle. The local was key in creating integrated transport in cities like Norwich which had had a tram system until 1935 and which needed to be part of future transport policy in the city, particularly as the Green party had been arguing for a more forthright response to climate change for decades.

CLIVE LEWIS MP, who is championing sustainable economics, put railways at the heart of the climate change challenge and the need to reduce emissions by 80% in the next 10 years. He commented on the Green New Deal and reiterated the need for urgent action.

KAM GILL, TUC Transport officer, underlined the complete failure of rail privatisation to deliver its promises- instead there had been higher fares, chronic staff shortages, a chaotic ticketing system, only 42% of rail electrified and from 1995-2018 a massive £320m wasted on franchising.

A NETWORK RAIL WORKER & RMT MEMBER commented on the fact that workers were under constant attack and that the companies were trying to make cuts in ticket office staff, in rolling stock maintenance and by the removal of guards- resulting in some cases in 40 days of strike action – with Southern still in dispute. Guards had had success on Abellio Scotrail, South West Trains, Northern Rail and Abellio Greater Anglia. He noted that the Williams Review had ruled out renationalisation despite acknowledging its flaws. He also recalled Bob Crow's call for a Peoples' Railway.

WORKSHOPS:**Group 1: Making a co-operative and sustainable railway with Paul Salvesson**

Chair: Glen Springett

- We need a vision.
- A need for long term planning based on a Not for Profit philosophy and investment.
- A national skills strategy.
- Infrastructure is key to building a future railway.
- Single ownership but regional with vertical integration "wheels of steel". Regional system is key but with 'light touch' central guiding mind.
- Socially responsible to employees, communities, the environment and passengers.
- Better integration with other local transport and a co-ordinated ticketing system.

Group 2: How to build a democratic alternative model of ownership with Hilary Wainwright

Chair: Keith Venbles

- Everyone's voice needs to be heard.
- Disabled people are best at saying what is accessible.
- Empower workers and users to determine strategy.
- Models- Lucas and the work of the GLC Popular Planning Unit, a danger of self- appointed groups: nationally applied standards but carried out with democracy.
- Trade unions are not just instrumental in the process.

Group 3: The value of nationalisation and listening to workers with Dave Berry

Chair: Rob Fraser

- Public ownership of entire transport network and linked bus, train, tram, walking and cycling.

- Activity in unions: political education, reps are often not part of labour movement, unions often seen as an insurance policy only.
- Climate change is a driver now- private higher carbon/public lower carbon.
- How to ensure a constitutional element in public ownership / ideological consensus/ the need for the media to be on our side.
- Beyond negotiation: workers boards, non-confrontational, pluralist control.
- Transition to control- through a pluralist stage? The structure must be there, at right pace but minimum terms & conditions must be enforced in the industry.
- The need for a new public service ethos- unions' role needs to change; industry- based unions/ no divide and rule.
- Training and education are key.

Group 4: Learning from the past: Planning & implementing workplace democracy and workers' control with Dave Welsh

Chair: Rob Fraser

- Recreating a public service ethos is important.
- Changing management training and rewards.
- Social audit required.
- Environmental audit required.
- Workplace education must be improved.
- Long-term rewards for working under democratic control?
- Action now: NOR4NOR consultations are part of 'blue sky' peoples' railway.
- Workers must be involved in new technology decisions.
- Transitional arrangements are needed.
- Planning & implementing workplace democracy & workers control requires workers to be involved as fully as possible.

- Time off to be trained plus to be involved in organisational development.
- Work would be different but would every worker see changes as positive for their working lives?
- Workers power raises the question of popular power, or dangers of populist power?
- Local councils and passenger groups involvement must also be present.
- Community involvement: how to redesign Norwich station to be a model future station eg crèche, gardens, shops?
- Local municipal ownership: what kind of role for local authorities?
- The need to move back to a public service ethos.

Group 5: Moving Beyond Top-down management: John Porter. Chair: Christine Venbles

Chair: Christine Venbles

IMPERATIVES:

- Climate 2040 targets
- National Standards
- Health, Safety and Welfare
- Equalities

LOCAL DEMOCRATIC DECISION-MAKING BOARDS TO INCLUDE:-

- Workers – unions
- Passengers (existing and potential)
- Local Authorities including planning
- Rail management
- Local businesses/Chambers of Commerce
- Relevant single issue pressure groups
- Innovators – universities
- Key Civic organisations e.g. Police

TO CREATE A COHERENT INTEGRATED TRAVEL PLAN

- Buses, walking, cycles, trams, canals

RELATIONSHIPS:

- It is ESSENTIAL to create projects with a common focus (to avoid sectarianism) e.g. Free Travel one day per week

- Investment in training to update skills of workers
- Essential to invest in high quality training for MANAGEMENT.
- A coherent, effective, efficient, high-quality transport system FOR ALL.

FUNDING AND INVESTMENT:

- Central funding
- Local Investment banks – local investors create a finance cycle – in everyone's interests to make it work.

Group 6: Education/Training Workshop with Keith Venbles

Chair: Keith Venbles

- **AIMS** – To develop and roll out a package of materials which engages a wide variety of people in sharing information and discussions about rail ownership and democratic control, economics, Euro issues and railway/union history. Learn to be an advocate for rail nationalisation. Long Term Aim: encourage regional Groups like NOR4NOR
- **METHODS** – workshops, oral history, learning from retired workers, distance learning, Social Media, Video, short snappy publications, need time off from work to be part of this. State funding for Learning Reps etc. Accessible.
- **BACKERS** – all rail and transport-related unions, passenger groups, campaigning groups, Labour and Green Front Bench, activists and members, environmental campaigns, e.g. We Own It, Bring Back British Rail.
- **TARGET GROUPS** – rail workers, both union reps. and members, passengers, councillors, all backers.
- **TEAM** – set up a Team to write training packages.

**With special thanks to plenary chairs
Jess Barnard and Owen Bushell**



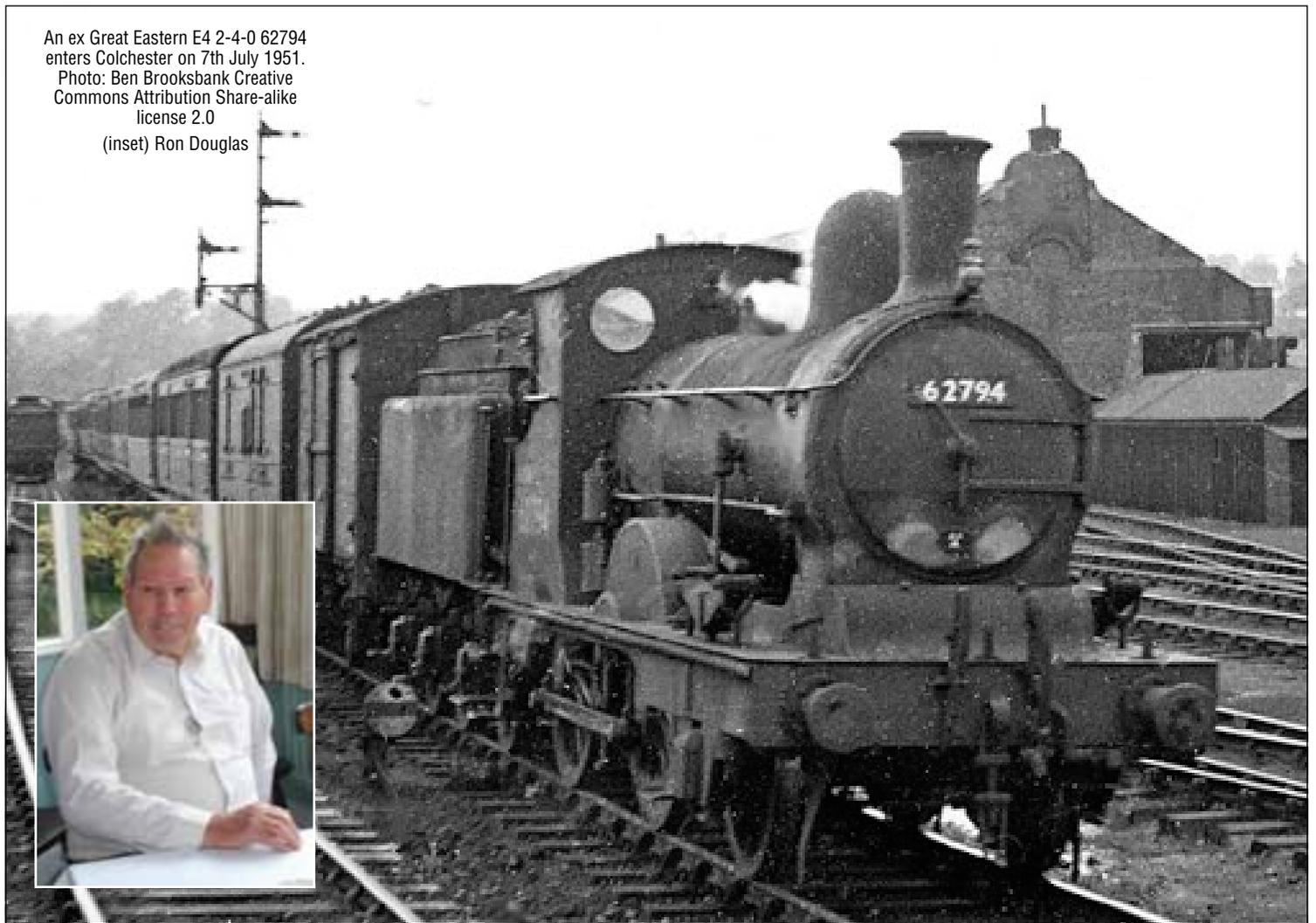
Talking about the Railways

I left school in 1949 at the age of 15. At that time, joining the railway, you had to have the two references: one from a vicar, or somebody that knew you for some considerable time – a schoolteacher – or somebody that was involved with the railways.

Either would have helped, and I had both of that. I had very good friends on the railway. In fact, when I was still at school, I used to go to a little cobbler's shop off North Station Road [in Colchester], and he used to repair all the shoes of the railway people. He used to file the engines and the rest of it. Some of the shoes they used to wear used to come in with the soles all dried up because of the heat of the ash that they were standing on. Obviously I was taken to the station where I was interviewed by the then Station Master, which was always the case. They interviewed you about why you wanted to join the railway. The fact was that I'd always been interested in the railways. I said to him it was a passion that I wanted to carry on with, whether as a fireman on the engine, or whatever was available in the signal boxes. I said to him that I was happy to take either. He offered me the job of the train recorder boy in Colchester Junction Box. At that time there were two signal boxes in Colchester: Colchester Junction and Colchester station. Both had signal boxes in. I was put in the signal box at 15 years old. It was mind-boggling at that time, to think you were in there with a signaller, and he was controlling such a large area of the track at that time. It was an absolute block [an absolute block is where a train is controlled between two signal boxes] at that time. We've moved on now onto a track circuit block. But an absolute block at the signalling school was the method of signalling that they taught you. , the two jobs they offered me were as a signaller at Blunts Hall, which was a Grade 5 at that time, or a porter-signalman job at **Thorpe-le-Soken**; I thought to myself, 'I don't really want to do platforms.' I said that I wanted to be a signaller. So the signaller's job at Blunts Hall: 3 up, 3 down, and crossover. You were working next to Hatfield Peveral one side of you, and Witham Station was the other; and we had signal boxes right along the line. You name it, there was a signal box about every 5 or 6 miles, I suppose: might have been less. Even here at Colchester, we had two – one at this end of the station, one at the other; and, just around the corner, we had three: **Hythe** Junction, Eastgate, St Botolphs; just a triangle of signalling, really. But, anyway, I went to Blunts Hall. I thought, 'Blunts Hall? How the hell am I going to get there?' We never had cars in those days.

Well, it was to me, because I've always lived in Colchester. I was born there, lived here, and I've never moved, because I've been settled in my job. As I move through my career, you'll learn why I stayed in Colchester. So I went to Blunts Hall. I went up there on a Monday morning on the train. I said to the bloke at Witham station, "Where's this signal box, mate, Blunts Hall?" He said, "Christ, that's about 2 miles up the line." I said, "Well, I can't walk up the line, can I?"

An ex Great Eastern E4 2-4-0 62794 enters Colchester on 7th July 1951. Photo: Ben Brooksbank Creative Commons Attribution Share-alike license 2.0 (inset) Ron Douglas



RON DOUGLAS TALKS ABOUT HIS 50 YEARS AT COLCHESTER

He said, "No, you'll have to go out on the road." That was a three shift job, which was quite a good job at that time, because a lot of the signal boxes were two shifts; certainly when you were on intermediate signal boxes. That was quite a good earner then, in a sense. When I first started [in 1949], the wages were 39 shillings and sixpence. I gave my mother the 39 shillings, and I had the sixpence. Of course, I used to do a paper round and bits and pieces.

No, it was all in the signal box. I never got trained at any training school; it was all in the signal box. The signaller up there were first class, because they knew that I was interested in being a signaller, and we used to concentrate on a rule a day. They'd talk to you about one particular rule. All the rules I could tell you now as if they were yesterday, in a controlled signal box. The area inspector would also call different people in – a guard or signaller or a driver – and they'd mutual improvement classes about rules and regulations. We used to have that about once a month. That was the way you learnt. Of course, you'd do that and talk to the signaller about what they'd been talking about in the class. They thought, 'We'll do that tomorrow, and perhaps we'll elaborate about the rules we'll be talking about in the school.'

Well, it was a family. The people in the job treated you with respect and, if you were ill, or they were sick, we used to have our club. If you were off sick for 3 or 4 weeks, you'd get so much money at the

club. They'd give you six or seven quid. That was quite a lot of money. It would tide people over. Money was tight: most the money I earned at that time, before I got married, was handed over to my mother. There were 4 boys, two of them younger than me, and one older; none of them on the railway. It was difficult. The old man was in the army, in the forces; serving in India, places like that, so he wouldn't have done much. So us boys really had to look after our mother. I joined the railway with a group of people I went to school with. Some went driving; some went signalling, but they all came on the rail. That was the family atmosphere. If you were in trouble, there was always someone to look after you.

[Privatisation] destroyed it; destroyed the family atmosphere and the working relationships. People go up there now, 50 years old, and dread the day they've got to go to work. We'd go there because we were going to work with friends, and to run a service for the public. Today, they're just another number and, if they could get rid of you, they would; and that's what's made the structure of the railway today so brittle. There's also the lack of co-operation with the trade unions, because they want to break the trade unions, whilst the trade unions want to look after the interests of the workers.

Well, *Railtrack* was just going to come 'on stream', as the saying was. They said that we had to, as managers, buy so many shares, did *Railtrack*; well, we didn't

have to, but they said if you didn't buy shares, you didn't show any interest in the company. I went to the consultation that was held just before *Railtrack* took over. Some of the senior managers used to come to Section Council meetings, to see how we used to operate between managers and the staff side, dealing with the classification of signal boxes, or whatever the issue was. They'd come along there. They weren't railway people. They were business people brought in to run it.

Well, then, it was a closed shop. Obviously, you couldn't join [the NUR] when you were on probation, so I couldn't join initially. I joined on the 19th October 1949, and at that time of day they used to meet you at the pay desk. A chap named Robertson was the Branch Secretary here at Colchester. He'd always stand at the window and, as you came away from the window, he got your subs from you; and they joined you up there. The managers here encouraged you to join. It was for your benefit. If you got into trouble, the union looked after you. So, I got involved with the trade union aspect as much as I did signalling. In fact, I was **Auditor** of the branch here about 3 years after joining the railway. The chap who was Branch Secretary at the time encouraged me to get involved, and to learn about the rules of the union. Colchester [NUR] branch. It's Colchester district now, but it was Colchester branch then. It covered all the area that I was covering as a signaller. 50 years of work; and I'm still working for the union. I still run a retired members' branch of the RMT.

● *Interview by Loco Focus (Britain at Work London Project)*

The Struggle for Workers' Control

BY STAN NEWENS, FORMER LABOUR MP AND MEP

The term "socialist" first appeared in the 1827 issue of the *Co-operative Magazine*, the organ of the first London Co-operative Society (1824-30).

It was meant to describe the ideal of Robert Owen, the pioneer of socialist ideas in Britain, who envisaged a co-operative community the members of which would hold their capital in common and would share decision-making processes between them.

In 1844, 28 of his followers, the Rochdale Pioneers, stripped away the communitarian aspects of his ideal and formed the successful model of a trading co-operative society that was adopted throughout Britain in the following century as the Rochdale model. In the mid-Victorian period virtually all who thought of creating a caring sharing community thought in terms of a co-operative society.

James Bronterre O'Brien, a leading Chartist, spoke out in favour of national ownership of railways, canals, docks, fisheries, mines, gas and water, but believed this should be achieved through co-operation. "I have been early in life a co-operator. The more I have reflected on human nature and the means of human happiness, the more firmly are my feelings and judgement riveted in favour of the system", he wrote.

The notion of public ownership was at a low ebb

in the mid-19th century, but O'Brien was one who maintained such ideas. When socialist ideas were revived in the 1880s with the foundation of the Social Democratic Federation, the Fabian Society, the Socialist League and, in 1893, the Independent Labour Party, the concept of public ownership was brought forward anew. William Morris projected the idea of a free society in which all were comrades, sharing in control of the state and its properties. However, the trade unions were largely committed to Liberal ideas. Even as late as 1907 James Keir Hardie stood out in the Labour Party against any attempt to commit it to socialism, for fear this would deter trade unionists from affiliating.

In Europe at this time a strong syndicalist movement developed, based on the idea of workers taking over their industries entirely. Curiously, the Labour leader Tom Mann picked this up in years spent in Australia. In Britain, Guild Socialism projected workers' control at this time.

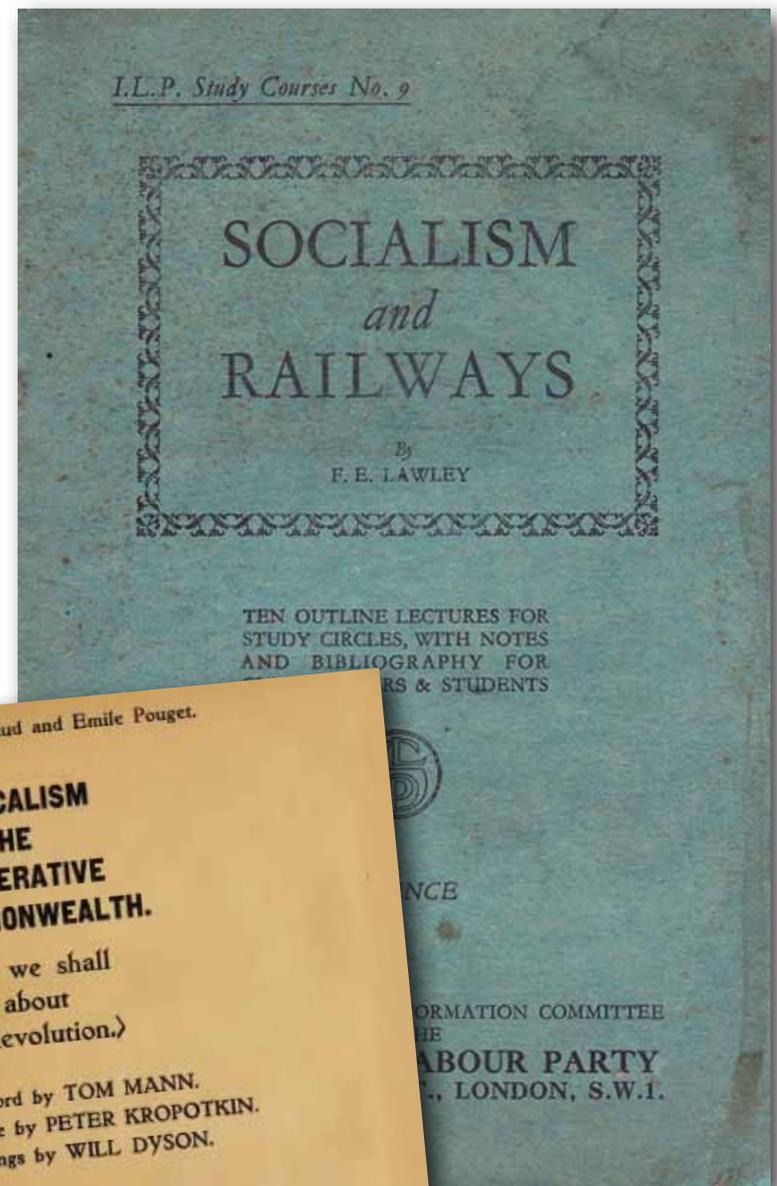
Guild Socialism grew out of the publication of *The Restoration of the Guild System* by Arthur J. Penty in 1906. He looked back to the Middle Ages for a system in which workers would regulate and govern themselves. A. R. Orage and Holbrook Jackson bought a weekly publication *The New Age* in which they propagated the idea of Guild Socialism. G.D.H. Cole, later well known as an outstanding

Labour historian, was a leading advocate and published *The World of Labour*, *Self-Government in Industry*, and *Guild Socialism Restated* as an effective campaign which won over many on the left. However, strong as the movement was among thoughtful rank and filers, many trade union backers were unimpressed. Railwaymen, for example, were keen on Guild Socialism, but the NUR leader J. H. Thomas had little sympathy with it.

Nonetheless, the impact of the Guild Socialist movement and demands for industrial democracy made an impact. When Arthur Henderson and Sydney Webb drafted a new constitution for the Labour Party in 1918 many of the old Lib-Lab stalwarts had departed from the scene and postal workers, miners and railwaymen included rank and filers who supported Guild Socialism. As a result, despite the fact that Sydney Webb was opposed to Guild Socialism, he and Arthur Henderson drafted the famous Clause IV Section 4 in Labour's objectives: "To secure for the workers by hand and by brain the full fruits of their industry and the most equitable distribution thereof that may be possible upon the basis of the common ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange and the best obtainable system of popular administration and control of each industry or service."

In the 1920s the Sankey Report recommended nationalisation of the mines, and the railwaymen called a national strike in defence of their interests. The Triple Alliance of miners, railwaymen and transport workers embodied the idea of working together to secure their objectives. This all led to the 1926 General Strike which ended in a severe defeat for the Labour Movement following the collapse of the Guild Socialism movement.

Political action followed, and the second Labour Government led by Ramsay MacDonald was elected in 1929. This was, however, a big disappointment as it shunned left-wing policies and came to an end when MacDonald sacked his cabinet and formed a coalition with Liberals and Tories. In the 1931 General Election, Labour representation in the House of Commons fell from 289 seats to 46, obliterating any hope of public ownership of industry



considerable retreat from the ideas of industrial democracy. However, this was totally discarded when Herbert Morrison's views achieved a majority.

As a result, industrial nationalisation carried out by the 1945-

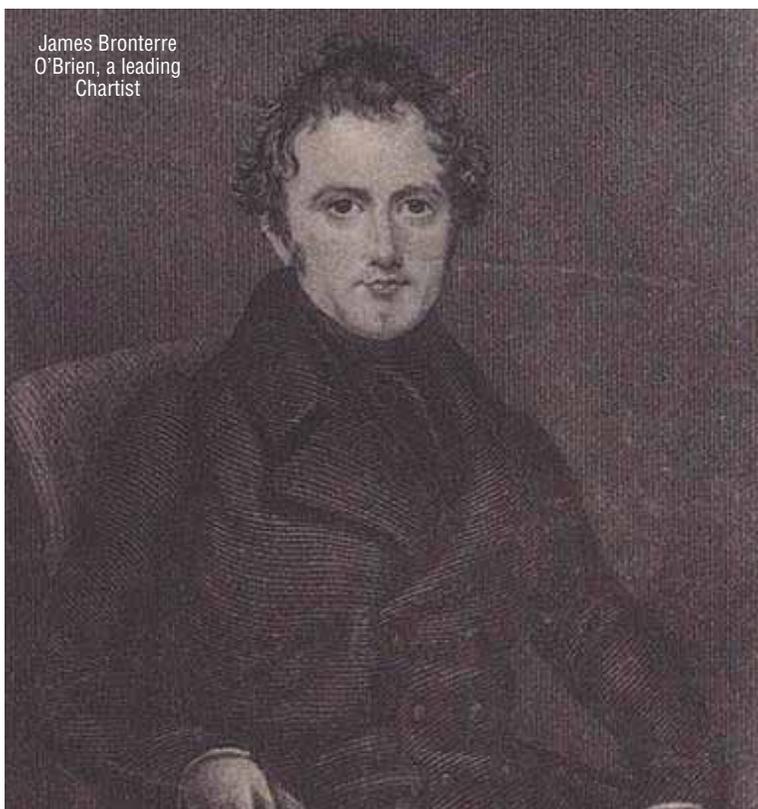
50 Labour Government ignored any idea of industrial democracy – and employees in those industries and consumers of their products had little or no commitment to them. Ultimately, this made denationalisation much easier when the Thatcher and subsequent Tory governments were elected.

If a future Labour government renationalises industries it is vital, as John McDonnell has argued, that workers' and consumers' control is made a feature of public ownership. Despite its absence from previous Labour programmes, industrial democracy has continued to be campaigned for by the former Institute for Workers' Control and other organisations. It must be firmly established in the programme of any future Labour government and on this the Movement must continue to campaign.

and workers' control.

When Labour recovered 14 years later and swept the board in the 1945 General Election, nationalisation was a major feature of the new government's programme, but ideas of industrial democracy had been edged out. Herbert Morrison, now a major figure in the Party, successfully anchored Labour policy to the model of the public corporation which he had used for the London Transport Passenger Board. Nationalised industries were to be put under corporations the members of which were selected solely on their personal qualities.

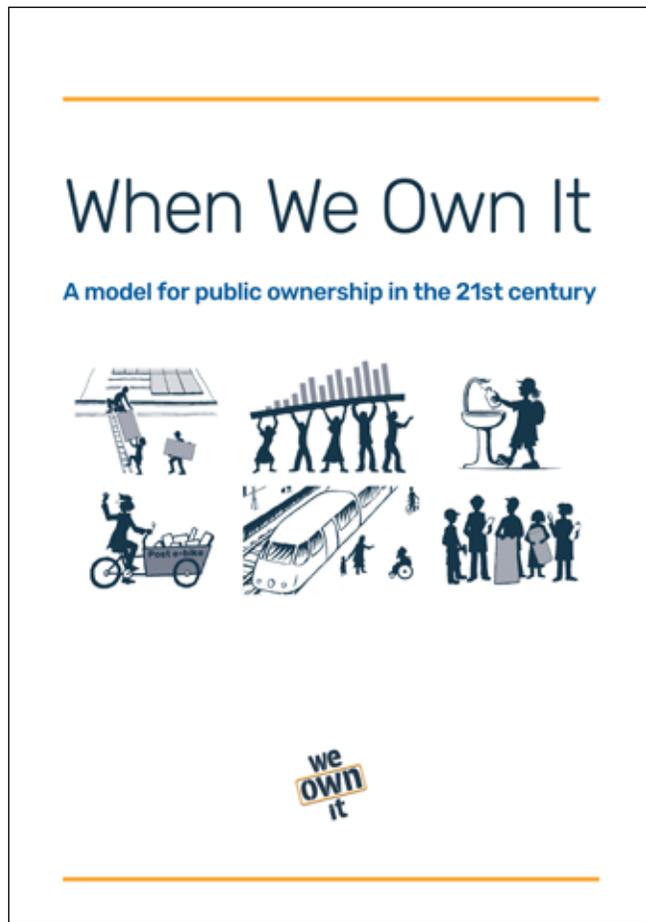
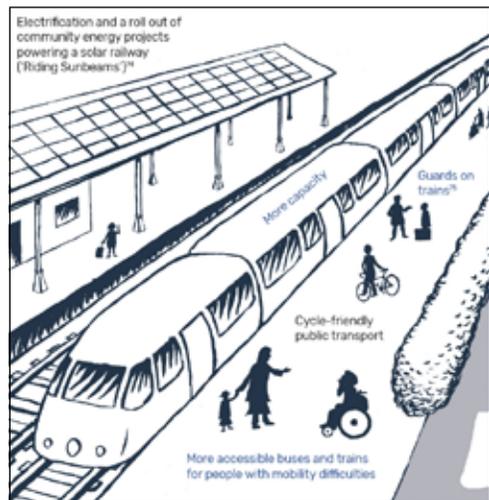
At the 1932 and 1933 Labour Party Conferences Harold Clay, a Transport & General Workers' official, put forward the view that nationalised board members should be appointed only after consultation with the trade unions – in itself a



James Bronterre O'Brien, a leading Chartist

New report: When We Own It: A model for public ownership in the 21st century

THIS 59- PAGE report outlines the options for future public ownership. In an accessible and readable format, it explains why public ownership is important, why privatisation has failed and offers arguments for new types of public ownership in energy, water, public transport, and Royal Mail. It also gives lots of European examples of local action, ranging from oil in Norway to public transport in Lothian and water in Italy. It's covering much the same ground as NOR4NOR in its recent summit. Highly recommended. Contact We Own It: www.weownit.org.uk or info@weownit.org.uk



NOR4NOR statement

1. We support the building of a national network/campaign involving rail workers and passengers.
2. We believe that a unified public-owned railway would contribute to the task of stopping climate change.
3. We call on a Labour government to learn from local/regional campaigns and forums.
4. We call for a national rail commission drawn from trade unions, passengers and local authorities to draft plans for both national and regional rail systems on a variety of forms of ownership. This to act as an advisory body in the planning of railways.
5. We support the setting up of training packages and training schools and the new post of 'Railway Education Rep' who will obtain time off to arrange state-funded training for railway workers and railway managers in the running of a publicly-owned railway.

NOR4NOR would like to thank the following for their generous funding: Norwich RMT branch, TSSA, Norfolk Unite Retired branch, Norwich & District Trades Council, Bring Back British Rail, TSSA Anglia South branch, IWGEN. Why not become a NOR4NOR supporter? Or get your branch or organisation to affiliate? NOR4NOR is supported by Clive Lewis MP Norwich south, Norwich Green party, Norwich RMT, GMB N24, Norwich Trades Council, BBBR, Norfolk Unite Community, TSSA, CATP, We Own It Norfolk Unite Retired branch, IWGEN, TSSA Anglia south branch.

Contact NOR4NOR – phone 07946 284089 or email: davidwelsh83@btinternet.com or write to: 15 Wellington Road, Norwich NR2 3HT



LOCO-FOCUS is a new railway oral history project. If you worked on the railways in the south-eastern region (LESE) between 1945 and 1995, please contact the Britain at Work London Project. Why? Many of today's railway workers have no experience of British Rail and have never worked in a publicly-owned system- they need the 'inside story'. Please contact Rima Joebear: info@britainatworklondon.com or visit website www.britainatworklondon.com

Every Guard Can Govern

THE DOO dispute has been the most significant on the railways since privatisation. For nearly 3 years RMT guards have taken strike action to force the rail companies to guarantee the continued presence of safety critical staff on board trains. In doing so, the guards have shown solidarity and unity in the course of this dispute but more than that, they have effectively challenged management's 'right to manage'. How?

The guards have challenged the decision of railway operating companies to remove them from trains. And they have pre-empted any moves to do so. This is a rare intrusion into a managerial decision-making process based on the market, profit-making and attempts to destroy trade unions on the railways. In the past, new technology has been used as a battering ram to achieve redundancies and slim down the workforce and this was particularly evident in the 1980s when freight guards were removed and some passenger services went DOO (only 30%). The most single glaring example was the loss

of 2,000 guards' jobs on the London Underground. Today, the situation is very different. In rejecting management's diktat, the guards have set in motion a potential change in the way the railways could be run in the future in so far as they can be in the lead of 'governing' the railways under public ownership. We should not unlearn this lesson when the railways are re-nationalised under a Labour government.

Secondly, as many rail workers will tell you, when management makes silly decisions which will not work in practise and the unions tell them this, the unions have no power to reverse those decisions (except in the last instance using industrial action). What the guards have proved is that you don't have to merely protest and wait for the inevitable management cock-up. You can stop it. This is intervening and supervising the actual day to day running of the railway base on the fact, as John McDonnell pointed out, that those who work on the frontline have the skills and knowledge to make a real difference to how everyone experiences the system. Rail

workers reps only require further training in transport economics, rail financing, transport planning, European systems, publicly-controlled technology and systems design, geared to the skills of labour and to social needs etc which could be built into a new collective bargaining structure.

Thirdly, the guards have developed a new model of how the railways could be run by taking up the issue of passenger safety and making it central to their campaign. This is by no means a new approach as the GLC and other passenger authorities in the 1980s encouraged passenger forums and campaigns as well as redefining the role of the state as a supporter of campaigns and struggles and more recently the rail union (RMT) has worked closely with passenger campaigns Transport for All, CATP in London and NOR4NOR in Norfolk. But today this foreshadows a new way of building railway public ownership with the maximum possible participation of passengers alongside the rail unions and other relevant parties. And this suggests that the rail unions could embark on closer work with passenger groups.