

RMTnews



Essential reading for today's transport worker

Issue No 10, Volume 5

www.rmt.org.uk

December/January 2004/5



Royle visitor

**Sue Johnston
drops in on RMT**

**Your RMT DVD
coming soon!
see inside**



INSIDE ● LUL station staff back 35-hour week ● Rail Against Privatisation
● Members back Political Fund ● MSPs vote down CalMac hive off
● Railways Bill ● Road Transport directive ● Beware hand vibration injuries
● Your rights on the road ● Unshackle the unions ● Wightlink deal ● Midland
Mainline ballot ● Tackling global warming ● Christmas quiz and crossword

Your new year's resolution – join the RMT Credit Union!

"I joined the Credit Union because it is such a great idea to build our very own non-profit making bank. When you have to fight hard to win better conditions at work, you never know when you might need the support"

RMT president Tony Donaghey



"Being a member means I can take out a loan if and when I need one, and I don't have to pay extortionate interest payments charged by high street banks. My daughter is just going to university, so I've got a feeling I might be needing it!"

RMT member Denise Craig



"It is a great asset for RMT to have its very own savings and loans co-operative. It is not only a great service but it is a great recruitment tool and makes RMT a friendly society in the true sense of the word"

RMT branch secretary Arthur Richardson



You are now able to access your Credit Union account – using the RMT web site

To enter the RMT web site:
www.rmt.org.uk

Once you have accessed the RMT web site scroll down to the Members Area and click on the box.

In the members area you will have to supply the following:

User Name: _____ (RMT Trade Union membership number)
Password: _____ Surname in capitals

Once you have entered your details you will be logged onto the member's site and in the left hand side of the screen you will see Credit Union, click on the box.

First time you enter the RMT Credit Union site you will have to supply:

- Your National Insurance Number
 - Your Credit Union account number (include all the zeros – must be nine figures)
 - Your password (new)
 - Your password again (this is unique to you)
- Enter a hint in case you forget your password.

Second time you enter the RMT Credit Union site you will only have to supply:

- Your Account number (include all the zeros – must be nine figures)
- Password (unique to you)

Do not forget to log out as otherwise you will stay on line!

You will have access to your share balance (mini-statement) and have access to a loan application form.

If you wish to apply for a loan please fill out all the paperwork and remember you are only entitled to apply for a loan after three months and for 1.5 times the amount you have in savings. After one year you can apply for a loan for three times the amount you have saved.

- For details on how to join the Credit Union turn to the back page of this magazine. The Credit Union will be shut from December 24 to January 4.

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RMT News is compiled and originated by the National Union of Rail, Maritime & Transport Workers, Unity House, 39 Chalton Street, London NW1 1JD. Tel: 020 7387 4771. Fax: 020 7529 8808. email bdenny@rmt.org.uk. The information contained in this publication is believed to be correct but cannot be guaranteed. All rights reserved. RMT News is designed by Michael Cronin and printed by Leycol Printers. General Editor: General Secretary Bob Crow. Managing Editor: Brian Denny. No part of this document may be reproduced without prior written approval of RMT. No liability is accepted for any errors or omissions. © Copyright RMT 2003.

Your union



IN JANUARY every member will receive a copy of a short film RMT has made to explain how your union works, what it can do for you and how you can get involved.

It was very interesting and a lot of fun to make. As a fan of the TV series *The Royle Family*, I was delighted to meet actor and committed trade unionist Sue Johnston, who narrated the film and seemed to enjoy the experience as much as we did.

The film really shows the services your growing union provided to members in 2004 and gives you an idea of what can be achieved in the coming year. I hope you enjoy it and decide to get involved in some way in building the union. This could range from asking a colleague to join or getting along to a branch meeting.

All these little things add up to strengthening your voice at work. This growing strength has led to some major victories over the last year, ranging from reopening the Network Rail final salary pension scheme to winning a groundbreaking 35-hour week for station staff on the Tube.

A strong union can also wield political influence which, judging by the nearly ninety per cent yes vote for the retention of a political fund, is something that you the members clearly want.

Working with the Scottish TUC, RMT played a fundamental role in the Scottish parliament rejecting plans to privatise Caledonian MacBrayne ferry services. It is truly shocking that it took a coalition of Tories, nationalists and socialists against the Labour-dominated Scottish Executive to get such a result. Nevertheless, it was a clear expression of the democratic will of the Scottish people and it should be heeded.

P&O's decision to pull out of some routes without even talking to the union is outrageous. It has been made worse by the government's decision to refer the proposed transfer of Le Havre routes to Brittany Ferries to the Competition Commission. Our members are caught between P&O and the Office of Fair Trading. The government must intervene positively to save these jobs.

I also recently gave evidence to the House of Commons' Transport Select Committee inquiry into the privatisation of maintenance on London Underground. I pointed out that the introduction of PPP, as the privatisation was called, was one of the most unpopular and most widely condemned policies introduced in London in living memory.

RMT has called for a fundamental re-think and a commitment to re-creating a unified Tube network fit for the needs of the 21st century.

On the mainline railways, Network Rail has successfully brought maintenance contracts back in-house, and delays caused by infrastructure problems have tumbled in some areas by as much as 50 per cent. It is time the same medicine was taken on the Tube.

In the new year we will be launching a major new campaign, Rail Against Privatisation, to bring to the public's attention the fact that there is a saner way to run our railways rather than letting privateers suck billions out of the system. In order to deal with the problems of congestion, pollution and global warming, Britain needs a democratically run, publicly owned rail network as part of an integrated transport system.

RM T has made a submission to the government outlining our criticisms of new draft rules for road transport workers. It clearly fails to give the necessary protection and could lead to longer working hours and loss of holiday entitlement. As it stands it is unacceptable and we will be working with other unions to force a rethink.

Remember, your union exists to defend and improve your rights at work. In a society that allows more than 100,000 families to be homeless this Christmas, you never know when you will need protection. So enjoy yourself this festive season and when you get back to work think about how you can strengthen your union.

Bob Crow

Union tell companies to act on staff assaults

RMT TOLD train operating companies that pledges to take positive action to stem the rising tide of attacks on rail staff must be backed up with action.

Attacks on staff have soared in the wake of cuts in station staff and train guards as a result of the break up of the industry into a host of private operators.

Following a massive 18 per cent rise last year in verbal and physical attacks on staff, companies announced a new campaign of "zero tolerance" of assaults.

The 'Hands off our staff' poster publicity campaign was launched by the Association of Train Operating Companies (ATOC) chairman Keith Ludeman who claimed: "We will not tolerate verbal or physical attacks against rail staff."

RMT assistant general secretary Mick Cash welcomed the initiative by the employers on behalf of the rail unions.

"It is an important first step,

towards delivering a safer working environment. However, our plea is equally simple, back this initiative with deeds as well as words," he said.

Over 3,500 verbal or physical attacks on rail staff were reported last year and an average of six rail workers were assaulted every day. RMT reiterated the need for adequate uniformed staff on every station all the time they are open, guards on all trains and a properly resourced and responsive transport police.

Mick also said that the initiative must be the start of a commitment by the industry to zero tolerance of violence.

"Too often, staff are unable to work because of the injuries they suffer or are too traumatised through assaults, threats or abuses," Mick said.

He said that all staff have the right to undertake their work without having to suffer at the hands of the people they are trying to assist.

LUL signal and line control staff balloted

RMT IS balloting more than 330 signallers and line controllers for strike action after six months of negotiations failed to resolve a four-year dispute over pay rates, pay structures, hours and conditions.

A year after RMT won a £2,000 interim payment for signalling and service-control grades, and six months after a working party began detailed talks, LUL has demanded a 14 per cent reduction in jobs, lengthening of shifts, a reduction in minimum rest-periods and other "unacceptable" strings.

RMT general secretary Bob Crow said that the talks were supposed to be about improving conditions, not worsening them.

Signalling and control staff have now been waiting for

four years to see pay parity with drivers restored, a 35-hour week and other long-standing problems resolved.

"After six months of talks we were told that the price of restructuring is 76 jobs, the lengthening of shifts and a host of other strings that are frankly unacceptable," Bob said.

RMT assistant general secretary Pat Sikorski said company demands for 12-hour shifts were simply too long for anyone to be in charge of a signal box or control panel.

"Safety critical staff need sufficient guaranteed rest time between shifts, but LUL also wants to cut minimum rest time from 12 to 11 hours and to vary shift start times by up to four hours at short notice," he said.



REMEMBRANCE: National shipping secretary Steve Todd lays a wreath on behalf of the union last month in memory of the over 30,000 merchant seamen who lost their lives during World War Two while serving on the convoys that brought essential supplies to Britain and to the Soviet Union in the fight against Nazism. "I was extremely honoured and deeply moved to represent the union in paying tribute to so many of our fallen comrades who made the ultimate sacrifice in defence of their country," Steve said.

Northern line radio chaos

CHAOS reigned on London Underground's Northern Line earlier this month due to a defective radio system, cutting train services by 40 per cent.

In the event of a radio failure a second person is needed in the cab to act as the driver's emergency means of communication. In desperate attempts to keep the trains running, management asked untrained, sick and heavily pregnant staff to ride in the cab with the driver in case emergencies should arise.

Against all LUL procedures, management attempted to put office staff on the front of trains without any operational experience or track certification, putting drivers and passengers at risk. A heavily pregnant member of office staff was also asked to act in this capacity, even though all medical advice and risk assessments prohibit pregnant women from riding in train cabs because of the vibration.

RMT regional organiser Bobby Law said that members should be aware of their right to refuse to work on the grounds of health and safety if they believe themselves to be in serious or imminent danger.

RMT wins recognition deal at ICE

RMT HAS won recognition for workers employed by International Currency Exchange located at Waterloo International, Waterloo BR and Ashford.

RMT was awarded recognition having followed legislation that was introduced in 2000.

The campaign started last year after ICE workers approached Mick Lynch, branch Secretary at EPS branch. Other unions had tried to recruit ICE workers at Waterloo but the workers decided they would be better off if they were in RMT.

Mick started to help organise these workers who work in Bureaux de Change, cash office and the London visitors centre.

Management were not happy at all about recognising RMT even after the union had recruited over 50 per cent of the workforce, and they tried to resist up until the CAC ruled in RMT's favour.

Mick Lynch said that it was a landmark victory for the union.

"The hard work and determination shown by both our branch and the ICE workers ensured that this campaign was a success.

"Our activists did not allow frustrating delays to dampen their spirit and they made a superb effort to recruit and organise their workmates into RMT," he said.

The union's organising unit was happy to help Mick and other activists steer RMT's claim through the torturous legislative procedures and eventually all the hard work paid off.

National Organising Co-ordinator Alan Pottage said that members should be proud that workers chose RMT.

"EPS branch members were exemplary in the way they responded.

"If workers are employed on railway premises then they should all be organised by the RMT," he said.

RMT gives evidence on PPP

RMT GENERAL secretary Bob Crow told a Commons Transport Select Committee inquiry that the privatisation of Tube maintenance was one of the most unpopular policies introduced in London in living memory.

As the committee sat the news broke that private companies were buying equipment on internet site eBay and chaos reined on the Northern Line due to radio failure.

"Even before the sell-off last year the policy was opposed by unions, the Mayor, TfL, Tube users and your own committee," Bob told MPs.

"Unfortunately, the government pressed ahead and we are now locked into a process where the private sector has a licence to print money," he said.

The union also provided evidence to the inquiry over maintenance privatisation, known as Public Private Partnership

(PPP). Under privatisation, the engineering, renewal and maintenance functions are now the responsibility of three private Infracos; Metronet BCV, Metronet SSL and Tube Lines, made up of a number of private companies that have had their maintenance contracts on the national network terminated.

The union slammed the PPP's huge start-up costs, including £109 million spent on external advisors and £275 million paid by taxpayers to reimburse private sector bidder costs.

On safety, RMT pointed out that safety critical recommendations made following several derailments were not being implemented due to the additional interfaces and accountability lines created by PPP. RMT members employed in re-setting incorrectly aligned rails noted that the work they are expected to do was also being de-skilled.

RMT experience of privatisation on the national network is that over time performance suffers as work becomes de-skilled and interfaces mushroom, leading to the blurring of lines of accountability and responsibility.

The union agreed with concerns expressed by TfL that the planning capability displayed in the first financial year of the PPP will be inadequate to deliver the upgrade the system requires once the volume of work accelerates.

Bob told the committee that Network Rail had successfully brought maintenance contracts back in-house, and delays caused by infrastructure problems had fallen – in some areas by as much as 50 per cent.

"There is clearly a need to create a unified, streamlined, publicly owned and accountable underground network bringing benefits to both tube passengers and the workforce," he said.

London Underground left begging to privateers

LONDON Underground bosses are begging Tube privateers Metronet and Tube Lines for a "dramatic increase" in resources to maintain the network's crumbling infrastructure.

The infrastructure privateers (known as infracos) that were handed 30-year contracts to make money out of the network raked in nearly £100 million in profits during the first full year since the PPP began in 2003.

However, LU managing director Tim O'Toole has slammed the contractors for the poor levels of maintenance performance.

"You are the ones who issue these press releases about profits, London will not put up with it," he told them.

The infracos have dismissed all criticism and Tube Lines chief executive Terry Morgan, who "earns" over half a million pounds, claimed: "we are in the business to make profit by good performance".

However, the consortium, made up of Amey, Bechtel and financial dead duck Jarvis, has failed to meet most of the targets set under PPP and is desperately seeking to shed a one-third stake of the infraco.

ELECTION RESULTS

Position	Region	Elected Candidate
Council of Executives, General Grades Reps	6, Midlands	Peter Trend
Regional Organiser	11, London Transport	John Leach
	1, Scotland	Phil McGarry (unopposed)
	2&3, Manchester, North Wales & North West	2 positions, to be announced*
	4, North East	Stan Herschel (unopposed)
	5, Yorkshire & Lincolnshire	Allen Heath (unopposed)
	6, Midlands	Ken Usher (unopposed)
	7, South Wales & West	Brian Curtis (unopposed)
	8, South West	Phil Bialyk (unopposed)
	9, South East	Jim Stevenson
	10, London & Anglia	Bob Rayner (unopposed)
	11, London Transport	Bobby Law (unopposed)
Relief Regional Organiser	South	Brian Whitehead
	North	John MacDonald

*The announcement of the result of this election is delayed pending the outcome of an investigation into a complaint made about its conduct at the nomination stage.



Tube station staff backs 35-hour week deal

THE groundbreaking deal negotiated by RMT that gives all full-time station and revenue control staff 52 days' leave has won overwhelming support.

Nearly 100 per cent of members voting accepted the deal in a referendum.

The offer also means a further hour off the working week, giving station and revenue control staff the best 35-hour agreement of any grade of staff on LUL, or on any other UK train-operating company.

Under the deal, the current average of 38.5 hours per week will be reduced by one hour to 37.5 hours. Of these 37.5 hours,

2.5 hours will be 'banked' and added to annual leave entitlement.

That means an extra 15 days' leave a year, bringing the total, including bank holidays, to 52 days' leave each year – real quality time away from work, and a true 35-hour week agreement.

Part-time staff will gain a substantial increase in their hourly rates of pay, and for the first time having the opportunity to apply for part-time station supervisor positions.

RMT London regional organiser Bobby Law said that the latest offer had only come about as a direct result of the

unity shown by RMT members.

He pointed out that previous management proposals would have meant the axing of more than 800 station staff positions and PPP contractors carrying out booking on duties and opening and closing stations.

"It was only after industrial action by RMT that management agreed to drop these demands and other unacceptable productivity strings – and we have the documents to prove it," he said.

The new agreement means that the threat to 500 jobs has been removed, and although 200 SAMF posts will be withdrawn, any member of staff

displaced will be covered by normal redeployment protection arrangements. It was also agreed for staff to work all night on up to three occasions every year, similar to the agreement already in place for train staff.

Discussions will also take place with Transport for London and the London mayor on extending Friday and Saturday night services by one hour and starting later the next day.

The deal infuriated Tory Greater London Assembly member Roger Evans so much that he made hysterical demands in the media for a blanket ban on industrial action on the Tube (see page 33).

RMT catering for staff



UNITED: In the RMT family from left to right Sue Curtis, Cheryl Bendle, Dee Poroga, Solomon Agyeman and Abisoye Olaniyan all from Kings Cross branch.

LONDON and Anglia region's lead recruiter Derrick Marr, who started his railway career as a catering worker 21 years ago, met the GNER catering team featured en-route to the RMT branch and regional secretaries conference in Fort William earlier this year. He furnished them all with badges, pens and key rings.

Derrick was especially pleased as he had only recently been involved in his region's recruitment and organising week where he came across a non-RMT organised Anglia Railways on-train catering crew.

As he questioned the reasons why they were not in a union, Derrick pointed out that for catering workers in general, working in a kitchen was dangerous enough what with all the sharp utensils and boiling hot foods and drinks. But then to put that kitchen in a narrow train carriage, on a railway track and then travelling at speeds of 100 mph, the propensity for accidents and injuries was obvious.

Fortunately, due to some fine recruitment work by RMT activists in the Norwich branch, the situation for catering workers within Anglia Railways, now part of the 'One' Train Operating Company, is much improved as the majority are now members of RMT.

Young members in Monaco



Nick Quirk reports on a recent European youth conference attended by RMT young members

RMT YOUTH award winner Yvonne McMurtrie, Steve Graham and Nick Quirk were the three rail workers from the RMT young members' organisation to take part in the 2004 European youth conference in Monaco.

The conference was designed to teach German, Croatian and British young trade unionists how each of their countries rail systems worked as well as teaching how each others trade unions are structured.

What surprised me was the diversity between how each of the rail systems work. In Croatia staff attend a four-year training course without the guarantee of a job at the end it, no matter how much they excel in training.

The German rail company DB has a much more structured training scheme but the threat of privatisation looms over them, something which the British delegates have some experience of and warned about the dangers involved. Recently there have been conflicts over the possible flotation of the DB on the stock exchange which thankfully was quashed after much union involvement.

British delegates discussed how privatisation has not worked in Britain and hoped that the German and Croatian delegates would take this on board and stand and resist it. We were very proud to be part of RMT as we realised how organised and active this union is, something which I believe some of the European delegates were quite envious of.

Although we were one of the last major transport unions to set up a young members' delegation, it would appear that we are the leading light in setting up a European young members' movement as part of the European Transport Workers Federation where we can develop young trade unionists in other European countries as well as here. It can also assist in the cause of resisting privatisation elsewhere and to educate young trade unionists in the fight against racism and fascism. It was an overall educational and union 'bridge building' experience which needs to continue to develop our ever increasing good relationship with other European trade unions.

Members give thumbs up to political fund

RMT members voted overwhelmingly in a high turnout to keep their political fund with one of the highest majorities in the trade union movement.

Nearly 90 per cent of those taking part in the ballot voted to keep the political fund which allows the union to campaign in the political arena and have a say on changes in the law.

RMT general secretary Bob Crow said it was a

magnificent result following all the political turmoil that had taken place, including the expulsion of the union from the Labour Party.

"This massive endorsement for having such a fund also highlights the need to change the anti-union law, brought in by the Tories, which forces trade unions to hold such ballots simply to have their say on crucial matters that concern their members," he said.

The result is an improvement on the 1994 ballot which was 83 per cent in favour on a 28 per cent turnout.

The result of the RMT political fund ballot is as follows: The number voting Yes was 21,131 (88.2 per cent of the valid vote). The number voting No was 2,840 (11.8 per cent of the valid vote).

The turnout was 36.9 per cent (see p23).



Organising at Lynx Express

RMT HAS organised workers in Lynx Express for many years and has embarked on a new campaign to redouble organisation and recruitment within the company.

The history of the union's recognition with the company precedes the current privatised world of parcel delivery and railways. It has its roots in the nationalisation of the railways in 1948. Lynx is a descendant of the goods and cartage division of British Railways and today Lynx members are central to the union's concerns.

That is why RMT has mounted an extensive campaign to ensure we have an elected representative in every depot. A co-ordinating meeting has already been held in London and the union has established a system of area stewards who are responsible for mapping levels of activity in depots and maintaining contacts with members.

RMT has sole recognition rights for Lynx workers in England and Wales. The TGWU has recognition in Scotland only. It is unfortunate that the TGWU has recently sought to recruit our members in England.

RMT assistant general secretary Mick Cash said that it has been made clear that RMT will not countenance any poaching in this way.

"Our main priority is to work to constantly improve the term and conditions of our Lynx members," he said.

RMT South Hants branch secretary Arthur Richardson (above left) said that the union had started to make inroads, but there was still a lot of work to do.

"By constantly ensuring that we have a solid membership base, we are in a good position to win the gains our members so richly deserve," he said.

RMT's traditions in Lynx Express are rich and strong. This new campaign will ensure they remain so.



Wightlink improves offer

FERRY company Wightlink agreed to implement an agreed 35-hour week after members overwhelmingly backed strike action in a ballot earlier this month.

Management also withdrew unacceptable restrictions on this year's pay increase in order to pay for the reduction in hours, which was agreed back in 2002.

The 35-hour week was agreed on the basis that the decrease in hours would be at no loss of pay or introduction of productivity. However, employers had insisted that the reduction in hours should be paid for through a paltry pay increase and an increase in productivity. The ferry company also claimed that night services would have to be cut.

However, RMT regional organiser Phil Bialyk said that the company had now agreed to reduce hours and increase pay rates and allowances by 3.2 per cent.

"We had already agreed to phase in this reduction of hours as part of the pay deal

two years ago to assist the company and now we have waited for it, they were trying to double count it," he said.

The company also made pledges not to consider any alterations to services and night services will continue. As a result, plans to restructure staffing arrangements on the Portsmouth to Fishbourne route, with the loss of 15 posts will not be implemented.

The agreement will go out to a ballot of members in the new year with a recommendation from the union to accept.



What is in the Railways Bill?



RMT parliamentary group convenor John MacDonnell MP looks at the contents of the Railways Bill and explains the union's campaigning strategy for amendments to be made

Abolition of SRA: The Bill confirms the abolition of the SRA, with its strategic and financial responsibilities passing to the Department for Transport, as well as powers to award franchises. The Secretary of State will assume responsibility for capacity and performance. The SRA's role in monitoring the performance of the railway and setting timetables will be taken over by Network Rail.

Indemnification of TOCs: The SRA currently has the power to waive penalty payments incurred during industrial disputes if it believes that the TOC has "demonstrated it has done all it reasonably can to resolve the dispute". RMT has requested that the government use the introduction of the Railways Bill to ensure that these powers are removed.

Bustitution: Whilst the government has stated that it has no plans for discontinuing passenger services or closing parts of the network, the Bill increases the power to cut railway services. The Bill makes it easier for bus quality contracts to be introduced if this is part of a wider strategy which includes reductions in rail services. Passenger Transport Authorities (PTAs) will be given powers to make a bus quality contract scheme if they are satisfied that the scheme is "securing the transport needs of the potential users of a relevant railway service that has been or is to be reduced or discontinued are met".

This threat of "bustitution" is compounded by other proposals in the Bill which will make it easier for funding authorities (ie PTAs, Welsh Assembly, Scottish Executive and TfL) to close railway

lines. The Bill also weakens safeguards against line closures. Whereas previously the criterion was whether closure would increase passenger hardship, the new guidelines will also cover economical, financial, environmental and social factors. In addition, the closure assessment will no longer be made by the regional rail passenger committees, which are to be abolished, but by the funding authority.

No promotion of rail: Fears that the Bill could lead to a contraction in the railways are heightened by the fact that there will no longer be a responsibility to promote the railways. The SRA is currently required to "promote the use of the rail network", "secure the development of the rail network" and "to contribute to the development of an integrated system of

passengers and transport.” As the Bill stands this responsibility will be removed and not passed to the government.

In addition, there will be changes to the powers of the Office of the Rail Regulator (ORR). At present the government is obliged to pay what the ORR decides is necessary to maintain the network. Now if the government feels that the regulator has made excessive requests it will be able to revise the decision, and the Treasury decides to reduce subsidies services or lines may have to close.

These provisions also need to be set alongside government proposals for a "Community Rail Development Strategy" in which the government assessing whether community rail lines can be introduced on 56 routes across England and Wales (see page 11).

Rail safety: The Bill transfers all aspects of health and safety regulation from the Health and Safety Commission to the ORR, including London Underground, other metro systems and light rail. This will subordinate railway safety to economic regulation in direct contradiction to the recommendations of Lord Cullen following the Ladbroke Grove rail crash. The transfer of responsibility will take place after a memorandum of understanding has been agreed between the Health and Safety Commission and the ORR to establish how



new responsibilities will be administered.

Reduced PTE powers: The Bill removes the powers of Passenger Transport Executives to specify rail services that are needed to meet public transport needs within their areas and to specify quality and fares in franchise agreements. It also removes the requirement of PTEs to be future signatories to rail franchise agreements and their right to change services or fare requirements and monitor service quality. These powers may now only be exercised if they are agreed by the Secretary of State, although the Secretary of State will be obliged to consult with the relevant PTE before issuing an invitation to tender or entering into a franchise agreement.

Scotland: The Bill increases the powers of the Scottish Executive over the railways in Scotland in order to specify, let, manage and finance the contract for Scottish passenger services. The Executive can specify and fund rail infrastructure in Scotland and be consulted on cross border passenger services.

Wales: In conjunction with the Transport (Wales) Bill which has already been passed, the Railways Bill will increase the powers of the Welsh Assembly over local railway services. Specifically the Bill gives the Assembly the power to be co-signatories to the Wales and Border franchise as well as determining the priorities for local and regional services and setting fares. The budget for the Wales and Border franchise will also be transferred to the Assembly.

London: The Bill clarifies and increases the powers of the London Mayor over rail services in London as a consequence of the abolition of the SRA. The Secretary of State will be required to consult TfL on proposals to let franchises that directly impact on Greater London.

Subject to the Secretary of State's approval, the Mayor can enter into direct agreements with agreed franchises. The extent of these agreements will be set out in future non-legislative arrangements but will be designed to extend the Mayor's powers over London Rail. Possible powers will

include rationalising fare structures and ticketing technology, buying additional rail services funded by TfL, specify services directly and taking revenue risk from Train Operating Companies.

In addition, the TfL Board will be expanded as the mayor will be required to appoint two members to represent those living outside Greater London but covered by passenger services within the TfL area.

Rail Passenger Council: The Rail Passenger Council and its Regional bodies will be abolished and a new, unspecified body will be established.

RMT response: There are a number of areas in which RMT will be campaigning, alongside the TUC and other unions, for amendments to the Bill before it gets Royal Assent next March:

- Establish a commitment to re-nationalisation to create an integrated, publicly owned and publicly accountable railway.
- Maintain public ownership of South Eastern Trains
- Give the Secretary of State powers to take franchises back into public ownership
- Remove incentives for PTEs to replace rail services with buses and remove provisions that would make it easier for funding authorities to close railway lines altogether
- Ensure that the Strategic Rail Authority's statutory duty to promote the railways and implement a rail-development and growth plan is maintained when the SRA's functions are transferred to the Transport Department
- Require all rail industry employers to provide mutually recognised concessionary travel facilities for all rail workers, ending the two-tier workforce created when the industry was privatised
- Remove the power to indemnify or waive penalty payments from train-operating companies involved in industrial disputes
- Halt the transfer of the HSE's rail-safety functions to the Office of Rail Regulation
- Establish an industry-wide forum, including unions, passenger groups, employers, government and local authorities
- Protect the democratic powers and input of the metropolitan PTEs

TUC support: TUC Deputy General Secretary Frances O'Grady backed the measures and the campaign to renationalise of Britain's rail network.

"We believe that the changes we are seeking would make all the government's aims easier to achieve and bring us closer to ending the fragmented nightmare of privatisation," she says.

RMT will be telling the government that tinkering with the fragmented network is not enough and it is time the government implemented Labour Party conference policy to renationalise rail.

RMT slams plans to break up Network Rail

RMT slammed plans by transport secretary Alistair Darling to take signalling work out of the hands of Network Rail and passing control to Mersey Rail.

RMT general secretary Bob Crow described a pilot scheme to hive off 67 signalling workers to Mersey Rail as the "thin end of the wedge" to handing responsibility for signalling operations and maintenance back to the private sector.

He warned that such private sector vertical integration would lead to horizontal fragmentation.

"RMT supports national vertical integration and if the government is seriously converted to the benefits of vertical integration they should apply this to the whole of the network by allowing Network Rail to assume control of rail operations.

"We cannot rule out industrial action to prevent our members' terms and conditions being undermined by this transfer," he said.

Bob said that taking signaling operations and rail maintenance under the control of Network Rail had been one of the industry's recent success stories and transferring responsibility to private operators could reverse these achievements.

"This unnecessary and damaging fragmentation is exactly what the private operators have been lobbying for.

"The move represents a serious threat to national unified railway maintenance and operations and could represent the first stage splitting up national railway maintenance and operations with private train operators taking control of railway infrastructure," he said.

Midland Mainline ballot for action

MIDLAND Mainline RMT members are being balloted for industrial action short of a strike following a breakdown of negotiations over the need for guards on the new 170 and 222 Meridian train units.

The union has made clear that where these trains operate in multiple unit formation with no through passageway between units, then a guard should be working each separate unit.

RMT general secretary Bob Crow said that it was regrettable that management had attempted bully and intimidate members into working the new units while ignoring genuine concerns expressed by union reps.

Management has continually asserted that a risk assessment had been carried out. However, that risk assessment was conducted prior to the current Meridian stock being delivered and that it was nothing more than a paper exercise in an office.

The union also pointed out that the Train Manager did not have a dedicated local door from which they would be able to signal to the driver for dispatch purposes in the event of a communication failure to the buzzer system.

RMT argued that any meaningful risk assessment must be a live with a real time exercise undertaken in operation. However, irrespective of the outcome of any further risk assessments, the policy of the union is an agreement to be reached on multiple unit working – and, so far, management has shown no desire to come to such an agreement.

As a result company council representatives unanimously requested a ballot for industrial action short of a strike, a course of action backed by the General Grades Committee.



Role of the guard under threat – again

GUARDS' jobs are once more under threat from attempts to introduce driver-only operations, from the provisions of the Railways Bill and from plans to introduce "Community Rail" lines.

The introduction of new rolling stock has been used as the excuse to undermine agreements on the role of the guard. The Railways Bill also contains provisions to allow cuts in rail services.

The Bill puts in place arrangements making it easier for bus replacement services to be introduced if this is part of a wider strategy which includes reductions in rail services.

These provisions need to be set alongside government proposals for a "Community Rail Development

Strategy" in which the government plans to introduce community rail lines on fifty six routes across England and Wales. Such a policy could mean an attack on jobs and the introduction of driver-only operations on many services.

RMT general secretary Bob Crow said that with the massive stock replacement already underway across many train operating companies, the role of the guards could be under threat.

"All these development amount to the thin edge of the wedge and should be viewed with great concern by guards at every TOC," he said.

The Association of Community Rail Partnerships recently published a document, 'Novel Solutions for

No extension of driver-only operations on One

NEW East Anglia franchise operator One has agreed not to extend driver-only operations in line with the agreement that RMT had with the previous operator First Great Eastern.

One plans to extend services beyond Ipswich by linking the former FGE service to the town with local services to new destinations including Lowerstoft and Peterborough via Bury St Edmunds. Since these new routes are not

completely electrified and will be operated by diesel stock, services will be guarded north of Ipswich in both directions.

SOUTHERN: The South London-based franchise Southern intends to introduce 377 stock on routes and confirmed that these services will not be driver-only operations on any part of the line between East Croydon and East Grinstead.



Regional Railways', which clearly outlined how train staffing could be reduced on such services. ACORP have suggested the possibility of introducing mirrors and CCTV in the cab to allow drivers to operate the doors. It goes on to claim that "there are options to remove the safety requirement for a conductor".

It also suggests the introduction of enhanced radio services to locate stranded trains and the need to relax rules on the basis of risk assessment.

"There is also the option of fitting trains with tracking devices common on secure delivery vans and other road vehicles, which would alert a control centre on actuation of a driver vigilance system or passenger alarm," it suggests.

Assistant general secretary Pat Sikorski said that such plans, combined with other attacks, put fresh pressure on role of the guards agreements made in 2001.

He said that the importance of the guard's safety role was again tragically underlined by the terrible crash in November, in which seven people – including the driver – lost their lives.

"Like Ladbroke Grove five years ago, the surviving train crew played a crucial role in the aftermath of the crash.

"We should never forget that these disputes are not just about jobs, but about the safety of everyone that uses the railways," he said.

Pat said that members should study the list of proposed Community Rail lines by region (opposite) and be vigilant to any plans to de-staff and run down the lines and to tell the union.

The unions believes that these private companies cannot be allowed to alter the role and responsibilities of the guard by stealth in the pursuit of profit.

Pay deal for Wessex Trains conductors

RMT has negotiated a basic increase of 3.35 per cent backdated to April 2004. This rise incorporates a commitment to undertake training and other duties for Avantix, including chip and pin payments plus other associated functions.

The company will discuss any on-going productivity issues as part of agreed timetabled productivity talks that will conclude by March 15, 2005. Negotiations on restructuring are to begin at the next sectional council meeting.

List of proposed Community Rail lines by region

*Services already supported by a Community Rail Partnership

*Junctions that are not stations are shown in *italics*

South West

Passenger service Route designated Notes

St Erth to St Ives*
St Erth to St Ives Pilot project
Truro to Falmouth*

Penwithers Junction to Falmouth TERFN route†
Par to Newquay* Par to Newquay Served by through Virgin and First Great Western trains Liskeard to Looe*
Liskeard to Looe Pilot project
Plymouth to Gunnislake*
St Budeaux Junction to Pilot project

Gunnislake
Exmouth/Paignton/Exeter
Cowley Bridge Junction to Linked to Dartmoor Railway to Barnstaple*
Barnstaple at Crediton
Bristol Temple Meads to Severn

Narrowways Hill Junction to Diversionary route
Beach*

Severn Beach
Bristol to Weymouth*
Castle Cary to Yeovil Junction/
Diversionary route Castle Cary to Yeovil Junction

South East

Passenger service Route designated Notes

Ryde Pier Head to Shanklin
Brockenhurst to Lymington
Twyford to Henley-on-Thames
Maidenhead to Marlow
Slough to Windsor
Oxford to Bicester Town
Oxford North Junction
Possible link with Bedford to Bicester Town Bletchley line in single CRP

Sittingbourne to Sheerness*
Eastern Junction to Sheerness TERFN route†; Significant freight flows
Paddock Wood to Strood*
Paddock Wood to Strood
London Bridge to Uckfield*
Hurst Green Junction to Uckfield

Eastern England

Passenger service Route designated Notes

Marks Tey to Sudbury*

Marks Tey to Sudbury
Wickford to Southminster*
Wickford to Southminster
Norwich to Sheringham*
Whitlingham Junction to Sheringham
Norwich to Lowestoft*
Brundall to Lowestoft
Norwich to Yarmouth via Reedham to Breydon Junction
Reedham*
Ipswich/Liverpool Street to Westerfield to Oulton Broad
Lowestoft*
North Junction
Bedford to Bletchley
Bedford to Bletchley
Possible link with Oxford to Bicester line in single CRP
Watford Junction to St Albans
Pilot project

East Midlands

Passenger service Route designated Notes

Derby to Matlock*
Ambergate Junction to Matlock
Crewe/Nottingham to Skegness
Allington Junction to Skegness Pilot project

Yorkshire and Humberside

Passenger service Route designated Notes

Middlesbrough to Whitby*
Guisborough Junction to Whitby Pilot project
Sheffield to Huddersfield*
Barnsley to Huddersfield Pilot project
Cleethorpes to Barton on Humber
Ulceby to Barton on Humber
Hull to Scarborough*
Springbank North Junction to Seamer
Leeds to Goole
Hensall Junction to *Potters Grange Junction*
Leeds to Morecambe*
Settle Junction to Carnforth
† Trans European Rail Freight Network route

North East

Passenger service Route designated Notes

Saltburn to Bishop Auckland*
Darlington to Bishop Auckland
Middlesbrough to Whitby*
Guisborough Junction to Whitby Pilot project; also appears in Yorkshire and Humberside region

North West

Passenger service Route designated Notes

Chester to Manchester
Piccadilly*

Mickle Trafford Junction to *Edgeley Junction*
Chester to Manchester via Chester to *Acton Grange*
Significant freight flows
Warrington Junction
Helsby to Ellesmere Port
Manchester Piccadilly to Buxton*
Hazel Grove to Buxton
Bolton to Blackburn
Preston to Ormskirk*
Farrington Curve Junction to Ormskirk
Manchester Airport and Wigan
Wallgate to Southport
Rochdale to Southport*
Rochdale to Kirkby Wigan
Wallgate to Kirkby
Blackpool South to Colne
Blackpool South to Kirkham and *Gannow Junction* to Colne
Leeds/Lancaster to Heysham
Hest Bank South Junction to Heysham
Manchester Vic to Clitheroe
Daisyfield Junction to Hellifield
Diversionary route and Hellifield (seasonal)*
Barrow to Carlisle
Significant freight flows
Manchester Airport/Oxenholme to Windermere

Wales

Passenger service Route designated Notes

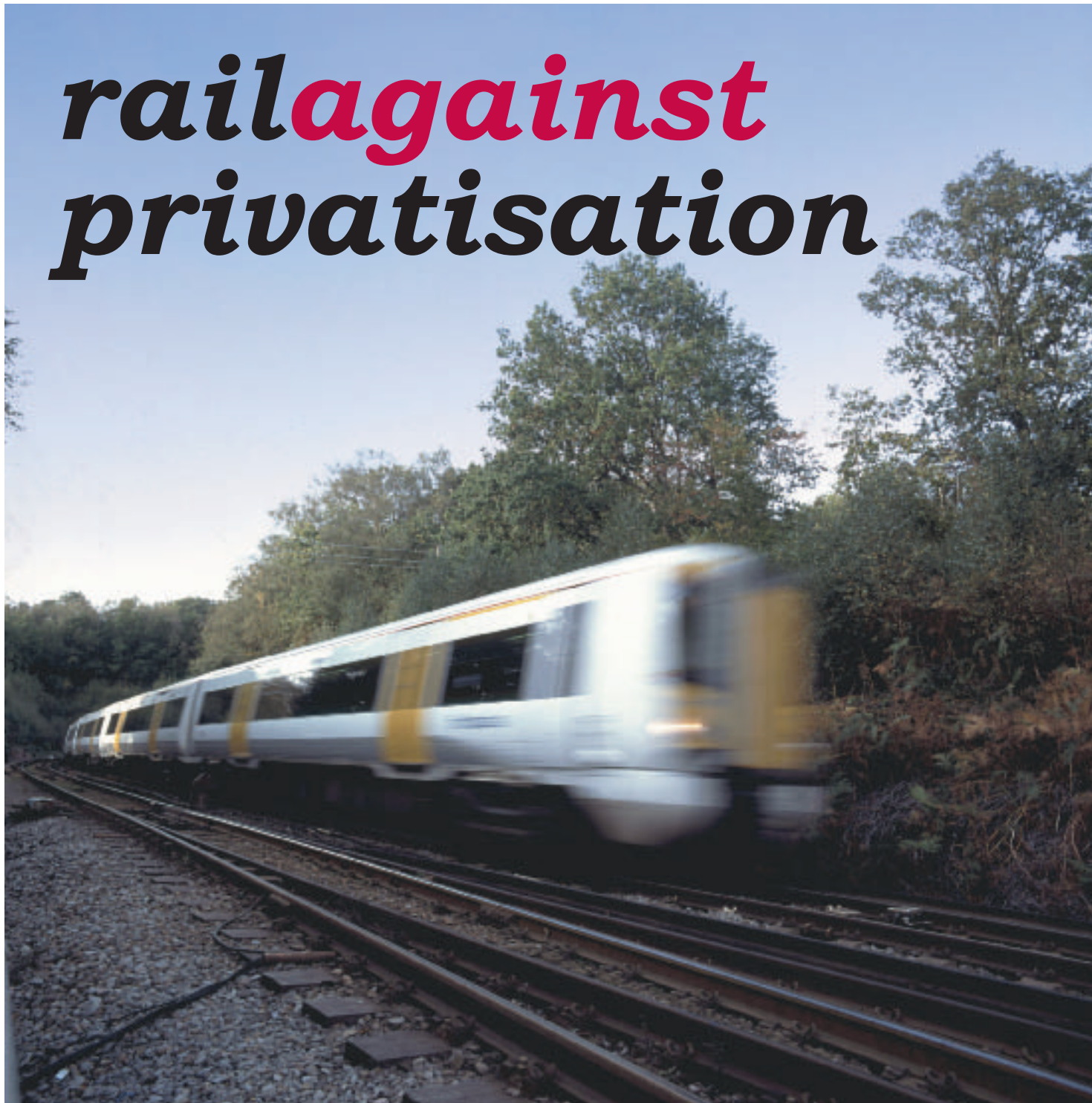
Cardiff to Maesteg
Llynvi Junction to Maesteg
Machynlleth to Barmouth/Pwllheli*
Dovey Junction to Pwllheli
Shrewsbury to Swansea*
Craven Arms to *Morlais Junction* Occasional diversionary route (Heart of Wales Line)
Wrexham Central to Bidston*
Wrexham Central to Bidston
Significant freight flows
Birmingham to Chester*
Shrewsbury to *Saltney Junction* Significant freight flows
Llandudno to Blaenau Ffestiniog*
Llandudno Junction to Blaenau Ffestiniog
† Trans European Rail Freight Network route

West Midlands

Passenger service Route designated Notes

Stourbridge Junction to Stourbridge Town
Coventry to Nuneaton
Diversionary and TERFN route†; significant freight flows
Crewe to Nottingham/Skegness*
Stoke on Trent to *North Stafford Junction*

*rail***against** *privatisation*



RMT will embark on a major campaign next year to raise public consciousness and apply political pressure in support of public ownership of the railways and an end to PPP on London Underground.

In this election year the union is organising a national march and regional organisers, in consultation with regional councils and branches, have been asked to seek volunteers for the march from each regional council area.

Arrangements are being made to deal with the various organisational issues including clothing, accommodation, banners, police permission and meetings and events.

Regional councils will be encouraged to campaign in their own areas, including writing to MPs and prospective parliamentary candidates, leafleting, writing to local newspapers and working with trades councils and passenger groups.

Below is the route and the towns which will be visited.

Route for March

- April 15 marchers arrive Glasgow.
- April 16 leaves Glasgow for Edinburgh
- April 17 day off
- April 18 leaves Edinburgh for Newcastle

- April 19 leaves Newcastle for Durham
- April 20 leaves Durham for Darlington
- April 21 leaves Darlington for York
- April 22 leaves York for Leeds
- April 23 leaves Leeds for Manchester
- April 24 leaves Manchester for Sheffield
- April 25 leaves Sheffield for Derby
- April 26 leaves Derby for Birmingham
- April 27 leaves Birmingham for Milton Keynes
- April 28 leaves Milton Keynes for Watford
- April 30 arrives in London for rally

SUPPORT: RMT's parliamentary group and head office will be supporting activities in a number of ways, including the production of parliamentary motions, parliamentary debates, a national postcard campaign, model letters and speakers notes and through the *RMT news* and the website.

For further information contact Larry Cotton on larcot@blueyonder.co.uk 07793052138, or James Croy at head office 020 7529 8822, j.croy@rmt.org.uk

EARLY DAY MOTIONS ENDORSED BY RMT

Members should write seeking support for Early Day Motions. Model letters can be obtained from the RMT Website or info@rmt.org.uk

Public Ownership of the Railways EDM 382

“That this House notes that since November 2003, passenger services have been operated in the public sector on South Eastern Trains; also notes that since that time punctuality figures have improved in every quarter; further notes that in the Network Rail areas where maintenance contracts were first brought ‘in-house’ delays caused by infrastructure failures have fallen between 36 per cent. and 50 per cent; welcomes these developments alongside the growing support for public ownership of the rail network and supports the principle of a integrated, publicly owned, publicly accountable railway.”

South Eastern Trains franchise EDM 95

“That this House recognises the improvement in reliability and punctuality of south east train services since the decision of the Strategic Rail Authority in November 2003 to return the service to public ownership and place the franchise under the management of South Eastern Trains; congratulates South Eastern Trains for its role in improving the performance in reliability and punctuality of both mainline and metro services to October; notes that in comparison with figures for 2003 mainline services were better in 10 of the 12 four week periods and metro services were better in seven and the same in a further two; further notes that several factors have contributed to the improvements in these services including the decision of Network Rail to remove rail repairs from the private sector and the decision of the Government to begin to upgrade the power supply on the southeast network; notes that these improvements are long overdue and that failure to deliver

further improvements in the future under the new Integrated Kent Franchise will not be acceptable; further notes that these improvements represent value for money and a much improved service to passengers and calls on the government to recognise the performance of South Eastern Trains and consider a publicly owned operator as an option for the new franchise to ensure continued improvement and value for money on the UK rail network.”

London Underground PPP EDM 383

“That this House welcomes the decision of Network Rail to bring all maintenance back in-house on the national network. Notes that in the Network Rail areas where maintenance contracts were first brought ‘in-house’ delays caused by infrastructure failures have fallen between 36 per cent. and 50 per cent. Notes that Network Rail has stated that the decision will bring the benefits of a single integrated rail maintenance operation and management structure, which will improve track safety and standards of rail maintenance; believes it is now untenable to have fragmented maintenance on the Underground or to allow the same companies, such as Jarvis, that have been removed from maintenance contracts on the national railway to continue to profit from declining standards on the Tube; and calls on the government urgently to authorise the renegotiation of the PPP contracts with a view to bringing all maintenance and renewals under the direct control of London Underground.”

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Bad vibrations

RMT solicitors Drummond Miller explain the symptoms of the painful condition known as Hand-Arm Vibration Syndrome and how to deal with it



HAND-ARM Vibration Syndrome (HAVS) is a condition that affects the blood vessels in the fingers and hands. Formerly known as Vibration White Finger, it is a progressive condition that can develop over a number of years.

The main cause is the continuous use of hand-held vibrating tools such as pneumatic drills, jack hammers, sanders, rivet guns, grinders, chainsaws, hedge cutters and grass trimmers.

The vibrations from such tools interrupt blood flow, resulting in constriction of the blood vessels in the fingers and hands. In extreme cases, gangrene may develop and may require amputation. However, in most cases victims will suffer loss of sensation and painful swelling in their fingers. HAVS is irreversible and therefore the sooner you spot the symptoms, seek medical advice and inform your employer, the less damage will be done. The damage will stop when the exposure stops.

What are the symptoms of Hand-Arm Vibration Syndrome?

There are many symptoms related to HAVS. These can include:

- Numbness and tingling in the fingers.
- Loss of sensation in fingers.
- Sensitivity to cold in fingers and hands.
- Painful swelling of fingers.
- Blanching in the fingers in cold temperatures (fingers go white).

You may also notice that you begin to have difficulty performing tasks such as:

- Fastening buttons or handling small items such as coins and pins. This is due to loss of manual dexterity.

What should I do if I think I have HAVS?

If you recognise any of the symptoms mentioned above you should speak to your GP or doctor as soon as possible. You should also speak to your employer. Your employer has a duty to provide a safe system of work and this includes the prevention of conditions such as HAVS.

If you are a smoker, this may exacerbate the symptoms of HAVS as the chemicals in cigarettes also affect the blood flow in the fingers.

Your rights

Under the Personal Protective Equipment at Work Regulations 1992 your employer has a duty to provide you with protective equipment if you are exposed to risks to your health and safety in your employment. This is particularly important if you work outside in the cold or rain.

If you are involved in the continuous use of hand-held vibrating equipment, your employer has a duty to:

- Provide you with protective gloves.
- Instruct you to take regular breaks.
- Ensure that you do not work for periods of time which may increase the risk of you developing HAVS.
- Ensure that you do not work for extended periods in the rain or cold weather.
- Inform you to the risks of vibrating tools and the nature of symptoms of HAVS.
- Advise you to seek medical attention if you have any of the related symptoms.

Remember HAVS is irreversible. It is very important that you seek advice as soon as you notice the symptoms. If you don't, your symptoms will get worse and become more painful.

How do I get compensation?

If your employer has exposed you to the risk of developing Hand-Arm Vibration Syndrome you may be entitled to compensation. If you believe that your employer has failed in their duties, you may be entitled to compensation and should contact us immediately.

What can I claim for?

Pain and suffering: Minor cases where symptoms are limited may attract awards up to £5,000. However, in cases where the symptoms are severe and the condition is more developed, awards can be up to £20,000.

Loss of earnings and employability: In addition to this sum, you may be entitled to an award for loss of earnings or employability. This award depends on a number of factors such as your age, how long you

could have continued to work had you not developed HAVS, how much money you earned in that job, and how much money you would earn in alternative employment.

RMT and Drummond Miller have been at the forefront of Hand-Arm Vibration cases for the last ten years and obtained hundreds of thousands of pounds for members who have suffered from HAVS. For example, in a case heard in the Court of Session in 2003, an RMT member, who was 38 when he retired from his job due to HAVS, was awarded over £212,000.

Time limit

In order to raise a claim against your employer for developing Hand-Arm Vibration Syndrome, you must do so within three years of when it was reasonably practicable for you to have been aware of your condition or when the negligent exposure

stopped. If you do not, your case will be time barred.

This may mean that you have three years from when the symptoms arose. So, if you have the symptoms you must take immediate action.

It is very important that you contact your GP and Drummond Miller if you think you may be suffering from Hand-Arm Vibration Syndrome in order to gain advice for your claim. If you put off raising your claim, you may miss the deadline and be unable to claim compensation for the injury you have sustained and any losses you will suffer in the future.

● *Contact us on our Freephone Number: 0800 328 1014*

● *Contact: David Wilson, 65 Bath Street Glasgow G2 2DD
dwilson@drummond-miller.co.uk
www.drummondmiller.co.uk*



Legal services helpline for Scottish & North East England members - freephone 0800 328 1014

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Scottish parliament vote down CalMac privatisation

MSPs reject Scottish Executive's request to back the sell-off

FOLLOWING a vigorous campaign by RMT and the Scottish TUC Scottish members of parliament earlier this month rejected plans by the Scottish Executive to privatise Caledonian MacBrayne's lifeline ferry services.

Minister for Transport Nicol Stephens had linked additional funding for ferry services in Scotland to the endorsement of the Executive's view that the only option was to put the services out to tender.

This proved to be a step too far, the Tories, the SNP, the SSP and the Green Party all united to oppose the Executive. Once you add to that the unexpectedly large number of Labour abstentions, the Executive suffered a rare defeat.

Last month RMT made a number of visits to the Scottish Parliament in Edinburgh, along with the

other unions representing the workers employed on Caledonian MacBrayne, to meet with Members of the Scottish Parliament (MSPs) and with the Transport Minister. With the full backing of the STUC, the RMT told the Scottish Executive that the tendering of CalMac and the fragmentation of this publicly-owned service was completely unnecessary and a threat to lifeline services, its workforce and the communities they serve.

Opposition

Despite widespread opposition, the Scottish Executive had announced in June their intention to go ahead with the tendering process. Since 1999, the Scottish Executive has claimed that they are being forced into the tendering process by European Union rules.



RMT general secretary Bob Crow warned that all the evidence and experience indicated that the tendering process will burden a good-value service with unnecessary cost and fragmentation, as well as diverting taxpayers money into private operators' pockets.

"Tendering also threatens the jobs of CalMac workers – half of whom live in the very communities that these services are supposed to serve – and that would undermine the fragile island economies," he said.

The efforts of RMT, including the local shipping grade members, and the work

of the STUC are making a difference. All other options must be explored for these lifeline services. The Transport Minister headed straight to Brussels for further discussions with the European Commissioner, and whilst the result of that meeting is not known yet, there is still much work to be done in the joint union campaign.

Altmark

The Executive has chosen to ignore the Altmark judgement, which has cast a major doubt on the need to proceed with tendering of these essential lifeline services.

The European Court of

Irish ferry workers strike to stop redundancies



Irish ferries closed its routes to Britain after members of the SIPTU union called for action to prevent jobs being outsourced.

IRISH Ferries closed its routes to Britain and began laying off around 1,000 workers earlier this month after Services, Industrial, Professional and Technical Union (SIPTU) launched indefinite strike action.

OVER 1,000 Irish Ferries workers had already taken 24-hour strike action in early December and marched on parliament against company plans to sack 150 workers on its French routes and outsource the jobs to cheap, non-unionised foreign agency labour.

SIPTU demanded that the company reverse plans and SIPTU branch secretary Paul Smyth slammed Irish Ferries for refusing to negotiate with the union and seeking to exploit foreign workers on short-term contracts.

Parent company Irish Continental Group claimed that the stoppage was illegal because it had been called before any mediation by the government-appointed Labour Relations Commission, created under the government's "social partnership" agenda.



RMT shipping secretary Steve Todd

Justice recently considered the case of Altmark Trans, a German Bus Company, and decided that it was not unlawful for the German city of Stendal to renew 18 licenses for the company without a tendering process. The Court stated that it was not unlawful for payments to be made to companies providing essential services and they should not always be seen as state aid, as long as the services being provided were clearly defined. Whilst the Scottish Executive is now arguing that it is the maritime cabotage regulations that require a tendering process, the RMT disputes this. A strong argument must be put for state support for our lifeline ferry services. What is wrong with the Scottish Executive putting the island communities and workers first, and testing that out at a European level?

RMT shipping secretary

Steve Todd pointed out that Ministers had made no convincing case why CalMac should be split up and prepared for privatisation.

“Rather than rushing to embrace this process, the Executive should be looking to find ways protecting CalMac from it, and if necessary mounting a legal challenge to it,” Steve said.

Campaigning

The STUC continues to work alongside RMT to co-ordinate a number of activities in the ongoing campaign. RMT parliamentary co-ordinator in Scotland Ann Henderson is also securing support from Scottish politicians in conjunction with the STUC.

Contacts are also being made with the European Parliament and the union is writing to the European Commission and Scottish MEPs.

The final consultation document on the service was published on the day that the Executive lost the vote and there is a job to do in ensuring maximum input to that consultation. A lobby of the Scottish Parliament is planned for February to keep up the pressure.

All members will be encouraged to write to their MSPs personally on the matter.

P&O step back over job cuts

FOLLOWING votes for strike action in ballots at P&O Hull and Portsmouth, the threat of compulsory redundancies has been lifted.

However, in Dover, where members voted for action short of strike action, over 600 jobs still remain under threat but the RMT port committee are in discussions to agree new terms and conditions.

In Hull there will now be no compulsory job losses and the savage planned cuts to pay and conditions have now been substantially reduced following intense negotiations over the past few weeks.

In Portsmouth the situation has been complicated by the fact that the Office of Fair Trading has decided to investigate the transfer of ferries on the Le Havre route to Brittany Ferries.

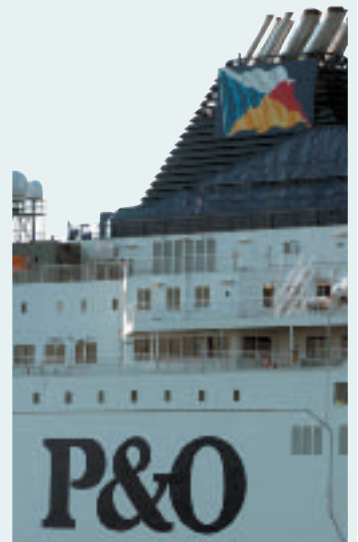
National shipping secretary Steve Todd described the move as an “absolute disgrace” that will hold up any transfer for months as the OFT is not expected to report until next May.

“The transfer would have saved 350 jobs but now members are caught in the crossfire between P&O and the OFT.

“The government must intervene to save these jobs,” he said.

Over 1,000 RMT members at P&O Ferries in Dover, Hull and Portsmouth voted for some form industrial action against job losses and attacks on pay and working conditions.

RMT has written to the union’s parliamentary group to hold a meeting to brief MPs about situation.



RFA tanker Grey Rover returns after epic voyage

ROYAL Fleet Auxiliary tanker RFA Grey Rover returned home last month following an eight-month deployment that has taken her all around the Far East, with port visits in China, Russia, the Philippines, Japan, Brunei, South Korea, Malaysia and Singapore. The RFA tanker has been accompanying the destroyer HMS Exeter on two major international exercises, and a programme of diplomatic visits. When she returned she had sailed around 32,600 miles on deployment, carried out 32 replenishment-at-sea (RAS) exercises, and provided ships at sea with almost 7,000 cubic metres of fuel.

The ship visited three Chinese ports: Hong Kong, Shanghai, involving a trip up the crowded River Yangtze, and Qindao, home base of the People’s Liberation Army (Navy). It was also a stepping-off point for the ship’s company to visit Beijing and visit the Forbidden City and the Great Wall.

The Russian visit was to Vladivostok, home to Russia’s Eastern Pacific Fleet, and the terminus of the Trans-Siberian Railway, which originates in Moscow, 6,000 miles to the west.



REFUELING: RFA Grey Rover refuelling Singapore Navy corvette Victory off the Malaysian island of Palau Tioman.

NEW draft regulations for road transport workers fail to give the protection that the directive claims to provide and could lead to longer working hours and loss of holiday entitlement.

The government's new draft regulations and guidance will implement into UK law the EC Road Transport Directive designed to improve health and safety at work for mobile workers.

However, the government's peculiar interpretation of the directive will allow employers to discount what should be regarded as working time and will help perpetuate the low-pay, long hours culture in road transport.

RMT outlined its objections in a submission to the government's consultation exercise prior to the regulations being introduced into UK law next March.

Who is covered?: Regulations will apply to mobile workers who are covered by the EU Drivers' Hours Rules which cover vehicles fitted with a tachograph, ie goods vehicles over 3.5 tons, coaches and long distance inter-urban buses. These regulations do not apply to stage carriage drivers. The March 23 deadline for implementation means that changes will need to be made quickly in order to avoid confusion and conflict.

The regulations provide that drivers work no more than an average 48 hour week over a four month reference period. There is no individual opt-out. Work no more than 60 hours work in any single week provided the average 48 hour week is not exceeded in each reference period.

There is also a limit of 10 hours in any 24 hour period if working at night. The 10 hour limit can be extended by collective agreement.

Periods of Availability (PoA): The definition of what constitutes a PoA will lead to confusion and cause industrial relations problems as employers are encouraged to count all delays as a PoA thereby rendering the concept meaningless.

RMT argues that all time spent at distribution centre and depots waiting to load

Devil in the detail

RMT has made a submission on the inadequacies of the government's new draft rules for road transport workers

or unload should be considered to be working time. RMT is concerned that government is seeking to 'gold-plate' definitions set out in the EC Directive which refer to PoAs as including "periods during which the mobile worker is accompanying a vehicle being transferred by ferryboat or by train as well periods waiting at frontiers and those due to traffic prohibitions". RMT will firmly oppose plans set out in the draft guidelines to count time spent by a worker remaining with the vehicle whilst waiting to load/unload for reasons of security and/or safety as a period of availability.

Occasional drivers: The decision to exclude occasional drivers from the provisions was made extremely late in the process and is at variance with the terms of directive. It will not encourage employers to reduce the large number of

agency and temporary workers throughout the industry.

Annual leave: The draft regulations allows employers to offset, or build back into rotas, annual leave days which are over and above the 20-day statutory minimum and could be exploited by unscrupulous employers to pressurise workers to use their non-statutory leave to reduce average working hours. The regulations and guidance should be changed so that it is not possible for leave to be used in this way.

Relevant Agreements: Experience has shown when it comes to Working Time Regulations employers bring pressure to bear on workers to opt out of protections offered. The draft regulations should make explicit that derogations on night time working and reference period length can not be exercised individually but have to be reached through collective or workplace agreement.

Vehicle and Operator Service Authority (VOSA): The 'light touch' enforcement regime will be inadequate in ensuring that the provisions are fully implemented. VOSA should take a more proactive approach than envisaged in the draft guidelines and check working time records during investigations into serious incidents and accidents.

Full coverage: The union is calling on the government to take steps to bring all mobile workers, occasional or permanent, in line with the provisions of the directive.

Assistant general secretary Mick Cash said that next year's pay and conditions negotiations will take place in the context of the changes that the new regulations will introduce.

"One thing is clear, RMT will not allow employers who have a legal obligation under the regulations to reduce drivers' hours to exploit loopholes in the legislation to cut the living standard of our members," he said.

● A full version of the submission is available on the RMT website



Royle celebrity drops in on RMT

Sue Johnston talks to RMT news about her life and narrating RMT's new DVD

KNOWN to millions as the lovable put-upon mum Barbara in *The Royle Family*, Sue Johnston has become a national treasure since she made her name as Sheila Grant in *Brookside*.

However, 'she-queen', as she was known by Brookside husband Bobby, is far too modest to admit it. In fact, Sue remains refreshingly down-to-earth, proudly displaying her working-class roots.

Sue jumped at the chance to narrate RMT's new promotional DVD, which highlights the work of the union and what it can do for members.

"I think it's a great project which can promote what trade unions are really all about," says.

For Sue that means giving working people a sense that someone is looking out for them and their interests.

"Now more than ever, people need to know that if something happens to them, there is an organisation that is on your side and there to help," she says.

This is a deeply held belief for Sue and she has been a trade unionist all her working life.

"When I was growing up my parents taught me the importance of working class

representation and those that fought for the vote and that has never left me," she says.

Sue recently appeared on TV exploring her heritage on *Who Do You Think You Are?*

She was always aware that generations of her forebears were railway workers.

She discovered her great-great-grandfather James Cowan once lived in an infamous labyrinth of lanes in Carlisle.

"It really was a fascinating insight into the appalling living conditions of Carlisle's slums 150 years ago.

"And it made me realise why I am a socialist today," she says.

Sue has come a long way since growing up in post-war Warrington. Her early career was with the Pilkington glass factory, where she got a job in the pensions department specifically so she could join their amateur dramatics group. She then went on to attend drama school in London.

Her versatility today is clear, with credits including such varied programmes as acclaimed drama *Goodbye Cruel World*; the 50s feel-good nostalgia series *Sex, Chips and Rock 'n' Roll*; cult comedy *The Royle Family* and, most recently, the psychological thriller *Waking the Dead*.

She became a household name and was recognised as "Sheila Grant" wherever she went.

"I still get called Sheila in the street sometimes, like that was really me," she laughs.



FAN: Royle Family fan Bob meets Sue

When Sue is not working she loves going to see her beloved Liverpool football club and is a season ticket holder. This fact was not lost on fellow scouser shipping secretary Steve Todd who proudly showed Sue his framed picture of legendary Liverpool manager Bill Shankley when she visited head office.

Sue also had a chance to catch up with general secretary Bob Crow, who declared himself an avid fan of her work, particularly her portrayal of *The Royle Family* matriarch.

Are there any downsides to fame for 'she-queen'?

"I never have any problems, people are always very friendly and I lead a normal life," she says.

However, one thing did bother her. Playing the part of Barbara Royle required Sue to smoke. She had to inhale low tar cigarettes, although she's now fervently anti-smoking. Now that's suffering for your art.



REDS: Steve Todd meets fellow Liverpool fan Sue



AT WORK: Sue rehearses her script

RMT – YOUR



Chris Reeves of Platform Films talks about making the RMT DVD which members will receive in January

When we first heard that RMT were interested in Platform Films producing a promotional video for them explaining the union's history, how it works and the benefits of being a member, there was a bit of a buzz around the office.

We had worked with unions before, but this was different. The chance to make a high profile campaign and recruitment film for a dynamic and growing union was a first for us, a tremendous opportunity and an exciting challenge.

We made films about union successes in the pre-Thatcher era, but our more recent trade union videos address either internal structural union issues, injustices inflicted on labour or single issue campaigns.

Forward-looking

However, *RMT - Your Union* is not an inward-looking or defensive film, or one about long-past struggles or victories. It is positive and forward looking, and in a small way demonstrates an emerging new confidence in



the trade union movement, spearheaded by RMT.

In making the DVD, we had to achieve a balance between covering all aspects of what is a complex organisation and making a film which is dynamic and interesting. Our film had to capture the spirit of an industrial union and be relevant to members in different industries and grades that RMT represents. This required a lot of material - about 45 hours of material in all - shot in London, Edinburgh, Portsmouth, Tolpudden, and on the P&O ferry to Cherbourg with an RMT recruitment team.

Most filming was done with members' prior agreement, but in some instances we had to wing it and hang around stations and offices of various kinds getting suspicious security personnel as we looked for filming opportunities.

In making the film our main point was to show the union were the communication department and organising unit, k



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received enthusiastic help and ideas from many RMT office workers, officers, reps and individual RMT members. Thanks to everybody who helped.

We think the end product was worth the effort. It shows how your union functions as a whole and also highlights specific cases of injustice where the union fought and won on behalf of its members. None of the people talking in the film were scripted and none of the scenes are staged. We found a widespread and genuine pride in the union from members. The film also show the RMT in action and tackles ways in which the union can improve.

We hope it will not only be informative, but also will inspire more members to get involved in the union. The fact that RMT has made such a film shows it to be a modern outfit, embracing media technology in order to inform and further the interests of its members.

We enjoyed making it and hope you enjoy watching it too, happy viewing.

PLATFORM FILMS is an independent company which specialises in making films and DVDs for the trade union and labour movement. Some Platform members cut their film-making teeth with Cinema Action, a London-based film group which produced trade union campaign films in the 1970s, including films in support of dockers imprisoned under Tory anti-union laws, the occupation of the Upper Clyde shipyards and the 1974 miners' strike.

Platform productions include a five-part series on labour history **The People's Flag**, screened on Channel Four in 1988, the

Miners' Campaign Tapes which won the Grierson award for innovative documentary, and **Old Hands**, a film funded by UNISON about unemployed labour camps in Britain in the 1930s.

We have also made films for the peace movement and for BBC2's Disability Programmes Unit including **Who Killed Mark Faulkner**, a three part series on disability and homelessness which was transmitted in 2000.

Platform recently produced a DVD for the Transport & General Workers Union, and are currently developing a film project on international labour standards with the Institute of Employment Rights.

We are keen to offer our services and facilities to produce any dvd/video material that

labour and progressive organizations may require, whether

of an educational, promotional or campaigning nature. We can also simply record one-off events.

To find out more, or discuss a project you would like to get off the ground, please contact Platform Films at:

Unit 14, Pennybank Chambers, 33-35 St John's Square, London EC1M 4DS.
e-mail: platform.films@virgin.net. Tel: 020 72788394, mob: 07973 278 956.

A leaflet listing films for sale on VHS video is available on request.

the miners' film

DV/Beta SP/VHS/16mm film
49 minutes 1974/75

the miners' film documents the industrial action by miners in the winter of 1974-5 which helped to bring down Edward Heath's Tory government. The strike is seen as part of the successful campaign against Phase 3 of the government's income policy. The film charts the crisis from inside the labour movement, but also reflects the miners' historical and political understanding of its relevance to the 1926 General Strike and analyses of the failures of nationalisation and more recent energy and employment policies.

Produced by **cinema action**, a London-based collective which produced 'socialist campaign films' between 1968 and 1981.

Other films in this series:

Fighting the Bill
The UCS struggle
Fire ye workers: the dockers' fight
Class struggle: Film from the Clyde
So that you can live

distributed by
Platform Films & Video
Unit 14, Pennybank Chambers,
33-35 St John's Square,
London EC1M 4DS
tel/fax: 020 7278 8394
mobile: 07973 278 956
e-mail: platform.films@virgin.net

arise ye workers

DV/Beta SP/VHS/16mm film
25 minutes 1974/75

arise ye workers is a campaign film supporting the dockers' fight against redundancy, layoffs and wage cuts caused by containerisation. The film charts the struggle against ruthless speculation, profiteering and land reclamation, police harassment and finally the enforcement of the Industrial Relations Act by the arrest and jailing of the Pentonville 5. A series of massive solidarity demonstrations followed which freed the pickets and effectively destroyed the Act. The film includes footage of police harassment, dockers successfully calling on Fleet Street printers to strike in solidarity and the release of the five jailed dockers.

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Your rights on the road

Roy Parfitt of RMT solicitors Kaim Todner explains why you should contact your solicitor if you are being investigated over a road accident

THE importance of contacting your solicitor as soon as you are notified that police are investigating a matter cannot be overstressed. If we are contacted at an early stage there is always the chance that we can prevent a prosecution taking place.

On February 20 2003 a bus driver from Northumbria was involved in a road traffic accident. Tragically the occupants of the car that collided with the bus, an elderly couple who were retired professors, both died. The accident was investigated by Northumbria Police.

Nearly four months later, the member received a letter from the police. This letter stated: 'After careful consideration of all the available evidence the Crown Prosecution Service have decided that no further action will be taken in this matter.'

However, the relief felt by the member was short-lived because in July 2003 he received another letter from the police that

stated, 'I have been notified that following representation by the deceased's family to the Crown Prosecution Service, the case has been reviewed further and it has been decided to prosecute you for the offence of careless driving.'

Representation

Fortunately, the union representative was on the ball and we were notified and sent copies of the two letters almost immediately. The majority of police officers, and members of the Crown Prosecution Service, appear to believe that we live in a 'police state' which allows them to make the rules up as they go along.

This however is not the case. The police, and the Crown Prosecution Service, in exactly the same way as other members of the public, have rules and regulations with which they must comply. A police officer has no more power than any ordinary citizen

unless, or until, parliament passes a law granting them more power than is held by an ordinary citizen.

Neither the police, nor the Crown Prosecution Service, can inform people that they intend to carry out a course of action and then go back on that 'promise' without good and sufficient reason.

No evidence

In this case it was difficult to see how, when all the evidence had been considered by June 12 2003 and there was no evidence of any offence being committed, that this position could have changed by July simply as a result of representations made by members of the family who did not themselves witness the accident.

Whilst it could be understood that the family were suffering anguish as a result of the loss of their parents they could not give any evidence with regard to how the accident happened.

What appears to be lost by police when they are investigating accidents that involve a loss of life is that everybody is a 'victim'. Whilst the accident was no fault of the member he still lives with the memory that he was involved in an accident in which two people died.

Kaim Todner was informed by RMT of difficulties within days of his receiving the second letter. As a result we were able to approach the court and argue that it would be 'vexatious and improper' to issue the member with a summons for careless driving as a result of the original letter.

We were also, thanks to RMT, able to attend the Coroners Court and represent the member thus ensuring that he was not put in a position where anything he said at the Coroners Court would not affect his position with regard to the criminal allegations being made.

Legal wrangle

In the event our argument was accepted by the magistrates' court and the court held that it would be wrong in all the circumstances to summons him for the offence of careless driving. This, as can be imagined, was a very good result as he would not have to appear at court and relive the nightmare of the accident in public.

However, for reasons that are still not clear, although it was abundantly clear that the family of the elderly couple were still putting pressure on the Crown Prosecution Service to prosecute, the CPS decided to appeal the decision of the magistrates' court to the Royal Courts of Justice in London.

As a result the member had to wait until June this year, nearly 16 months after the accident, before he knew for certain



whether he would be prosecuted as a result of the accident.

It was with enormous pleasure that we were able to inform the member that the High Court agreed with our arguments, that at long last the legal wrangle was over and we could assure him that he would not be prosecuted following the accident.

Whilst there were possibly other legal arguments that could have been in this case after the summons had been issued there was no doubt that the best way of dealing with the case was to prevent the summons being issued in the first place.

This was only possible because RMT informed us of the difficulties faced at a very early stage of the proceedings.

Contact your solicitor

It cannot be overstressed how important it is that if any criminal allegations are made against RMT members, their family or friends then they should contact us at the earliest possible opportunity. We can assure individuals that they will not be charged for the initial telephone call although dealing with the matter at the earliest opportunity can save an awful lot of heartache.

NOTIFICATION OF RESULT OF RMT POLITICAL FUND REVIEW BALLOT

The union will also, on request, supply a member with a copy of the report either:

The Independent Scrutineer's report (Electoral Reform Services) have declared the following result for the ballot, which closed at 5pm on Friday 26th November 2004, is as follows:-

Number of voting papers distributed for the purposes of the ballot	64,951
Number of voting papers distributed under rule 21 of the Political Fund Review Ballot Rules	26
Number of voting papers distributed after the date when counting began	0
Number of voting papers returned as undelivered	365
Number of voting papers not used	1,175
Total number of voting papers returned	23,989
Turnout	36.9%
Number of spoiled voting papers returned	18
Thus, number of valid voting papers counted	23,971

QUESTION:

THE RESOLUTION is that the political objects set out in section 72 of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992 be approved as an object of the Union. Do you vote in favour of the Resolution?

RESULT

Number voting YES	21,131	(88.2% of valid vote)
Number voting NO	2,840	(11.8% of valid vote)
TOTAL	23,971	(100% of valid vote)

The union will on request and free of charge, supply a member with a copy of this report.

NOTIFICATION OF ENTITLEMENT FOR EXEMPTION FROM THE RMT POLITICAL FUND

In accordance with rule 5A each member has a right to be exempted from contributing to the union's political fund; a form of exemption notice can be obtained by or on behalf of a member either by application at or by post from – (i) the head office or any branch office of the union; or (ii) the office of the Certification Officer.




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Unshackle the unions

FIVE general secretaries and leading members of three other major unions vowed to “fight and win” a new charter of rights for Britain’s workers at a key campaign conference last month in London



THE United Campaign for the Repeal of the Anti-Trade Union Laws organised the event to highlight its demands for employment protection for all from day one and legal recognition of the right to strike, including taking solidarity action.

Chairing the summit, RMT general secretary Bob Crow called for “direct action to win back our rights”.

Urging support for action by workers, he recalled that Britain’s trade unions had been “born out of illegality” and that the best way to beat bosses was to “hit them on the quick”

Mr Crow called on delegates to win the widest possible support for the campaign



Paula Mason

and its aims.

“It’s not only union leaders,” he said, “the bricks and mortar of trade unionism are the workplace branches and shop stewards committees. We need to link them up right across the country.”

Rights

QC John Hendy insisted that the campaign should call for collective, trade union rights rather than just individual, employment rights.



QC John Hendy

He quoted Prime Minister Tony Blair’s statement before the 1997 general election that “the changes that we do propose would leave British law the most restrictive on trade unions in the western world”.

Mr Hendy reminded delegates that the proposed constitution for the European Union would not provide a framework for overturning Britain’s anti-union laws. He pointed out that the Charter of Fundamental Rights contained within the constitution did not ensure the right to strike as some had claimed. He said that the explanations of Article II-28 of the constitution says that the “limits for the exercise of collective action, including strike action, come under national laws and practices”. In other words, Britain’s anti-union laws would remain enforceable unless they are removed from the statute books here.

Strike

Civil servants union PCS leader Mark Serwotka detailed the difficulties that his union had encountered in organising a national one-day strike against job cuts on November 5.

“We had to hold 160 separate ballots across the civil service,” he recalled, “and we still had to defend a legal action by the Learning and Skills Council, who claimed that there was ‘no trade dispute’.”

Mr Serwotka pledged to use “all in our armoury” in the fight to restore workers’ rights, predicting an upsurge in unofficial strikes across Britain.

“We’ve seen it in the civil service, on the railways, the Post Office, at the airports and on the building sites,” he noted.

FBU president Ruth Winters slated the new Fire Services Act, which gives employers the right to impose changes on their workforce.

“The Act offends several international



Workers march for trade union rights

treaties and breaches ILO conventions," she said, adding that it had been brought in to attack the FBU, which had taken lawful action with a nine to one majority vote on an 84 per cent turnout.

Ms Winters insisted that "now is the time, in the run up to the election, to put the pressure on to get the changes we need".

Strong trade unionism

Journalists union NUJ general secretary Jeremy Dear stressed that "strong unions remain the best protection for workers," adding that unionised workplaces pay, on average, 17 per cent higher wages than non-unionised firms.

Urging a stepping up of the campaign, Mr Dear said: "We must organise the unorganised and show that our collective strength can deliver.

NUM leader Steve Kemp reminded the conference that, in Britain, only 24 per cent of workers belong to a union.

"We need to inspire people to join, by fighting and winning," he insisted.

Speaking for communications union CWU, NEC member Maria Exall explained that the "new Labour neo-cons" had retained the anti-union laws because trade unions were "an obstacle to their agenda of privatisation".

Urging full support for the recently formed Labour Representation Committee (LRC), she insisted that "the LRC does give that political voice to the trade unions and the CWU, RMT and FBU are all affiliated to it."

Prison officers' union general secretary Brian Caton reminded delegates that his union had had its rights taken away by the Tories back in 1993, but that legislation to restore them had been promised.

"We could not have got this far without the support of this campaign," he said.

Mr Caton stressed that his union had throughout its history led attempts to improve prison conditions, both for officers and inmates.

End Tory laws

The campaign's legal adviser Steve Cottingham highlighted the ease with which workers taking legal strike action can be legally dismissed.

"Normal contracts of employment should be suspended during strikes," he argued, as happens in France.

Honorary presidents the 'Pentonville Five' ex-dockers' leader Vic Turner and veteran left-winger former minister Tony Benn brought the campaign their fraternal greetings.

Mr Turner said that the campaign was "vital for the emancipation of the working-class," and Mr Benn insisted that "this campaign is about re-establishing the Labour Party as well as the trade union movement."



Twelve months of unity

AS WE come to the end of 2004 I would like to thank all our members for their support over the past twelve months. It has been a busy year with many issues confronting transport workers and our union.

The biggest challenge and one of our biggest victories this year was the attempt by Network Rail to close the final salary pension scheme. The determined pressure of this great union forced Network Rail to rethink their rash and grossly unfair decision and to reverse it. Our campaigning strategy was widely admired but it was a very simple one – we will stand together and withdraw our labour if you attempt to rob our members' pension.

Robbing is a strong word to use but that is what it would have amounted to. Pensions are deferred wages. Imposing an inferior purchase scheme would have left members out of pocket in retirement and exposed to the vagaries of the casino known as the stock market.

This simple fact is not lost on other workers whose pensions rights are coming under attack. The lesson learnt at Network Rail should never be forgotten.

Another significant breakthrough was on travel facilities at Network Rail. We have started the balling rolling by winning a 25 per cent discount for those members that were previously not in receipt of them. We will continue to press for ongoing improves in the years ahead.

Following the return of track maintenance back in-house, your union has has been in continuing negotiations to standardise and improve procedure agreements with Network Rail.

The privatisation of most modes of transport has meant continual and increasingly dangerous fragmentation. However, RMT has continued to fight for the best possible pay, working conditions and working hours possible. At the same time we are putting forward arguments wherever possible to renationalise the rail network and begin to put together a fully integrated transport network that utilises all modes of transport.

In the new year RMT is organising a nationwide march to demand an end to rail privatisation in the run up to the next general election expected sometime in 2005.

The effective renationalisation of South Eastern Trains has shown better value all round since it was taken out of the hands of the privateers. It is shocking that the government appears to be embarrassed by SET's very real successes in the public sector, where it belongs.

Bus members have also had some successes throughout the year on pay and conditions.

There was also a significant victory for our seafarer members earlier this month when Scottish members of parliament to back the privatisation of Caledonian MacBrayne ferry services. It just shows what can be achieved with the will and determination not to put up with injustice. The democratic process can be used to defend our members' interests and it would be unbelievable if the Scottish Executive chose to ignore the depth of feeling in Scotland over the issue.

Despite this victory P&O has shown contempt for its workers by withdrawing sea routes and imposing cuts at Dover, Portsmouth and Hull and that struggle to protect seafaring jobs is ongoing. The fight at rail freight company EWS to protect working conditions is also developing. We have achieved much this year but we still have a lot to do in 2005.

RMT president Tony Donaghey

*RMT sends season's greetings
to all our members*

Tackling global warming

Philip Bagwell argues that the renationalisation of the rail network must be a priority in tackling global warming

ACCORDING to Sir John Houghton, a leading authority on climate change and for many years Chairman of the Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution, global warming occurs when the heat radiated from the sun is out of balance with the thermal heat emitted from the earth. The greater volume of carbon dioxide CO₂ emissions and other greenhouse gasses from the eight leading industrial nations is causing the average global temperature to increase, significantly affecting the climate.

Many people may consider that somewhat warmer 0.9 centigrade is a blessing. Although this seems a small rise it is having devastating effects on some parts of the globe. Glaciers in the Himalayas and the Andes are rapidly melting and large areas of the Bengal plain and Venezuela and Peru will suffer drought. Both the food imports and the manufactured goods exports of the UK will be seriously depleted. Millions of pounds worth of damage has also been caused to houses in the Humber estuary and the Wash.

Meeting in Kyoto in 1997, the representatives of 122 nations agreed to cut their

CO₂ emissions by an average of five per cent by 2000. The United States was the most important exception, claiming that its trade balance would be adversely affected if it signed up. On the other hand Britain had been too optimistic, promising at times that it would reduce emissions by 20 per cent by 2004, and it was falling far behind that target. Recently the media were stressing how wind power and solar power could be harnessed for reducing dependence on carbon fuel, mostly oil and kerosene. In June Margaret Beckett, Secretary of State for the Environment, told *The Guardian* that Tony Blair is a world leader and everyone is looking for a lead on this to be given by him in the 2005 General Election.

A few days later the same paper showed

a photograph of him looking at some solar silicon panels and saying that, indeed, it would be a priority for the next Labour government. But the scale of the thinking that was needed on this proposal was revealed a few days later when a telephoto lens photograph taken in Germany, showed what was claimed to be the largest solar energy assembly panel in Europe; but it only generated energy for 2,000 households, or approximately 1/1,550 of the amount required.

Wind turbines have also been erected in large numbers in areas such as the Humber estuary and the Wash, but environmentalists say that the number of wild birds killed by the turbines each year is too high a price to pay for that installation. What is amazing in



TRAFFIC: Britain is failing to meet the Kyoto target of CO₂ and other poisonous emissions Photo: Paul Mattsson/reportdigital.co.uk

all this upsurge of interest in this subject is the complete absence of any suggestions for reforms to the transport industry, whether privately or publicly owned.

Privatisation of transport

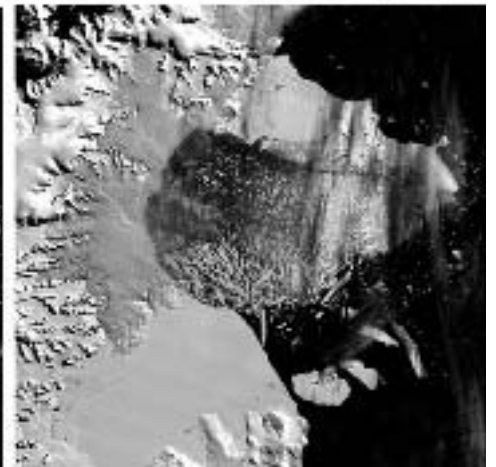
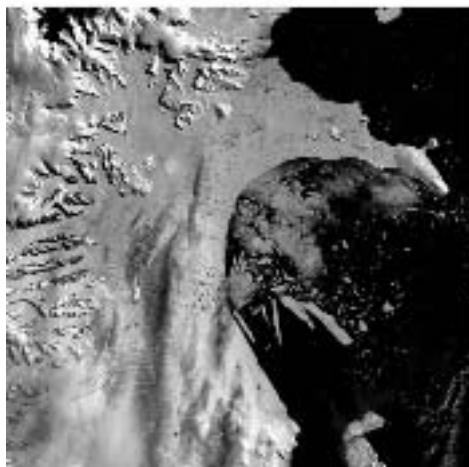
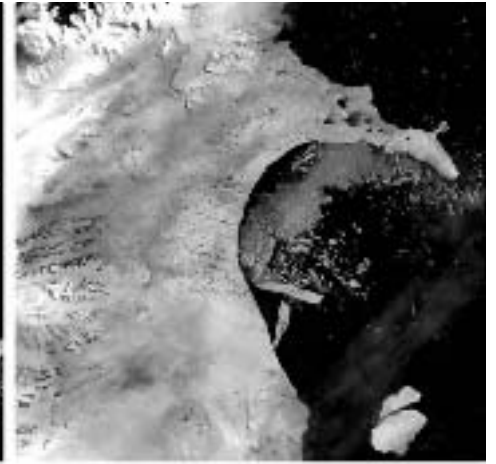
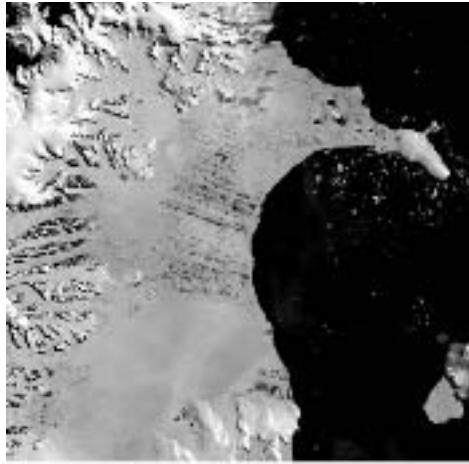
The impact of legislation passed by the conservative government of Margaret Thatcher and John Major is part of the explanation as to why Britain is failing to meet the Kyoto target of CO₂ and other poisonous emissions in the last quarter century. The Bus Act of 1985 introduced a large element of laissez-faire policy into the provision of the bus services. As one example, before 1985 buses in Doncaster were owned and run by the municipality. After 1985 a private company succeeded in driving the municipal fleet off the road by charging (for a time) lower fares and making timetable adjustments. When the municipal service was bankrupted and withdrawn from service, the newcomer company greatly reduced the services it delivered 'off peak'.

In the Aberystwyth area, north west Wales, similarly, there was a virtual absence of 'off peak' services. These were circumstances that persuaded many inhabitants of surrounding villages that the case for purchasing a second hand car looked more attractive than it had been.

ROSCO rip-off

The Tory government's Railways Act of 1993 included provisions for the creation of three Rolling Stock companies, or ROSCOs, which were sold to BR at a low price and then resold to Angel Trains, Eversholt and HSBC, at very handsome profits. The three, all owned by banks, have been accused of running a cartel. They were virtually given British Rail's entire fleet of trains when the railway was privatised, and they've been charging the earth for them ever since. The price paid by TOCs to the ROSCO; for hiring rolling stock is not generally available, for commercial reasons.

However, the train company that runs rail services on the Isle of Wight has paid out a staggering £1.2 million over the last eight years to lease 66-year old trains that don't even have scrap value. Island Line, one of 26 passenger franchises created by rail privatisation, receives just over £2 million a year in public subsidy. It runs the tiny rail franchise that operates an eight and a half mile service between Ryde and Shanklin, pays £140,000 a year to rolling stock leasing company HSBC Rail (part of the HSBC banking group) for six pre-Second World War ex-London Underground trains. When I travelled on them last month I had one of the bumpiest and most wobbly journeys I had ever experienced.

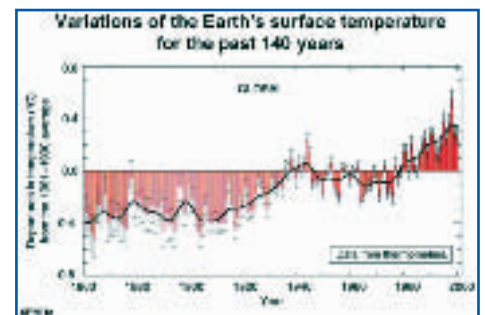


ANTARCTICA BREAKING APART: Satellite images reveal the break up of 1,300 square miles of the Larsen B ice shelf, a large floating ice mass on the eastern side of the Antarctic, which has separated from the continent over a 35-day period. It has been described as the biggest event of its kind in 30 years in a new alarm over global warming.

If the other ROSCOs are like this one then it is high time they were transferred to the public sector. The establishment of 25 Train Operating Companies TOCs was also a recipe for delayed services at the interchange points on the network. The rail network, stations and signalling was entrusted to the non-elected Board of Directors the executive members of which had experience in financial management, but knew very little about railway engineering.

Cheap flights

In the decade from 1992 to 2002 domestic and internalised flights from UK airports rose by more than a third from 794,000 to 1,114,000. This impressive increase was primarily due to British citizens flying abroad for their holidays rather than by using ferry or Eurostar. *The Observer's* transport correspondent, Joanne Walters, braving the air lobby's criticism, headed her article in May 12 2002, *Save the Planet: Stay on the ground*. Through government policies of not charging VAT or aircraft fuel and giving grants to air travel firms starting businesses, air fares had fallen by forty per cent in the previous quarter century and Friends of the Earth reported that, over short distances of



less than 350 miles, air travel produces around three times more carbon dioxide per passenger kilometre than does rail.

These statements support the findings of the Commission for Integrated Transport which reported that 'domestic aircraft have CO₂ emissions per passenger kilometre many times higher than that of high speed rail'.

Renationalise

The three rail unions have been on record as advocating renationalisation. They should now have a united, patriotic, campaign to ensure that the resolution for such a move, overwhelmingly carried at Labour Party Conference, becomes the law when the new government is formed after next year's election.



Slope off this Christmas!

It's that time of year again to start talking turkey! But why not get away from it all this year and head off for the slopes. To help make it easier Equity Ski are delighted to announce a fantastic 5% off our standard European ski brochure prices for RMT members and their direct families (when travelling with a RMT member).

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Brighton's new union learning centre open for business

THE RMT-backed Brighton Learning Centre opened its doors last month. The learning centre, which is based at Brighton station, is open to all rail workers as well as family and friends, **writes Scarlet Harris.**

Computer courses will be on offer, alongside sign language, Spanish, French, Maths, literacy, and ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages). All courses will be free to the learner. Tutors will be on hand to discuss other courses or qualifications that are not already on offer at the centre.

The first two open days in November saw 70 workers, from cleaners and caterers, pass through the centre's doors to have a look at the facilities, discuss courses with tutors from local colleges and to enter the free prize draw.

What makes the Brighton Learning Centre different from other learning centres is that it is run by the rail unions. Most learning centres such as those in South West Trains and Virgin are financed and managed by the companies. The Brighton Learning Centre is funded primarily by government money via Brighton and Hove City Council as well as the Union Learning Fund. It is managed by Scarlet Harris, who is based at Unity House and is a project worker on the Rail Union Learning Project and Emily King (see *article below*) who is based in the centre itself and is employed by the Rail Union Learning Project.

One of the main advantages of the rail unions running the centre is that it is open to more people. Southern, Thameslink, Network Rail, Amec Spie and a host of cleaning and catering contractors are all based at Brighton Station and Virgin and South West Trains also have trains on this route. Employees from any of these companies are welcome to use the learning centre, whether it is to gain qualifications, learn new skills, or brush up on old skills.

Flexible

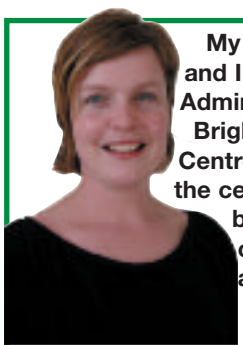
The Brighton Learning Centre is also unique in that it aims to cater for the specific requirements of the rail industry. Although the centre is only open from 9am to 5pm at present, in the long term the centre aims to run early morning and late night classes to accommodate shift patterns. Local colleges involved in the scheme are also aware of the problems posed by rosters and ULF is looking to make the courses as flexible as possible to allow rail workers to fit them in around their shifts.

The centre has been newly refurbished, and what was once a dingy conference room is now a bright and airy room equipped with the latest technology. A wireless broadband network has been installed which means that internet access is fast and easy and laptops can be moved around the room easily without the need for lots of cables and wiring.

● If you live or work in the Brighton area and you want to use the centre, please contact Emily King on 01273 723066 or emilyking@rul.org.uk.

● If you are interested in the learning centre project in general and would like to find out more, please contact Scarlet Harris on 0207 529 8820 or s.harris@rmt.org.uk

● Or you could just drop in and see the centre for yourself. It is located on the top floor of the South Side building at Brighton station. The entrance is by the taxi rank at the front of the station. The centre is currently open 9am-5pm Monday to Friday.



My name is Emily King and I am the Administrator at the Brighton Learning Centre. I will be based at the centre full time so will be the first point of call for all visitors and learners. I am very excited

to be a part of this new project and hope to help make it a huge success. There has already been a lot of interest in the Brighton Learning Centre so it looks like I am going to be very busy!

We plan to have a full timetable of courses running in the New Year so if you would like to register an interest in a particular subject, or just find out about the sort of courses we will be

offering please contact me and I will be able to give you more details.

The Brighton Learning Centre is currently open from 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday so feel free to pop in to get more information on learning opportunities available to all railworkers, your friends and family.

I look forward to seeing you at Brighton Learning Centre soon!

Open letter to London major Ken Livingstone from RMT

Dear Ken,

I wrote to you in September and again in November asking that we meet as a matter of urgency to discuss Transport for London's Equality and Inclusion Agenda. You have not responded or acknowledged these requests. Hence my open letter to you now in the hope that this will elicit a response.

Equality is an issue that I am proud to have worked in partnership on with London Underground. Equality targets, the accredited managers programme, harassment policy and procedure are just a few of the issues we tackled jointly with London Underground and our sister unions.

These policies gave our black and ethnic minority and women members hope that their everyday working lives would improve. Managers and others were at last listening to them and taking issues adversely impacting upon them seriously. We are talking here about race and sex discrimination.

One of the important lessons I thought we had all learnt was that attitudes will not change overnight nor within a couple of years. I thought we had all committed ourselves to long-term partnership to drive through change for the better.

However, the dedicated Equality Unit at London Underground has been wound up and we do not know what it will be replaced with - no one is talking to us.

Talks at ACAS prevented me attending the 'thank you' event to celebrate the changes achieved over the past five years by the LU Equality Team. Only a couple of senior managers were present. Moreover, the winding up of the dedicated Equality Unit was not something we would wish to celebrate. We in RMT would like to put on record our thanks to those in the Unit, especially Terry Day, who at times worked against the odds striving for change.

However, who is to deliver equality now? I firmly believe, that we need to talk about what sort of structure should be part of TfL's Equality and Inclusion Agenda. Equality cannot be imposed from the top, it simply does not work. Equality issues need to be part of a dialogue with all concerned, whether management, Unions and importantly those most affected. We have consulted our members and have constructive proposals to put. We are ready to talk and hope that you are too.

Sincerely,

Bob Crow

Out and about

RMT's LESBIAN, Gay & Bisexual Members' Advisory Committee is keen for more members to become active within the union. There are still vacancies on the National Committee and the union wants to encourage our LGB members to participate at a regional and branch level through regional/branch advisory committees. If you would like more information, please contact your branch secretary or email p.wilkinson@rmt.org.uk for further details.

At the last meeting the question monitoring for sexual orientation on the union's membership system was talked about. Obviously if we did this, it would enable direct mailing to take place but RMT is aware of the sensitivity of asking this question on the membership application form. As a first step, in the forthcoming LGB Newsletter, RMT will conduct a survey to test opinion amongst LGB members.

From the meeting, it was clear that there are issues that directly concern LGB members, from same-sex pension rights to what its like being gay working in the transport industry.

Committee members spoke of their feeling of isolation, especially in regard to the same tired homophobic jokes being bandied about in the workplace. The advisory committee meeting are an opportunity to talk about these issues with others. The opportunity is there for you too – why don't you take it?



PRIDE: RMT members at Brighton's gay pride event earlier this year



RMT's Lesbian, Gay & Bisexual Members' Advisory Committee

Equality Conferences in 2005

ALL three equality conferences provide the opportunity for ordinary members to share their experiences either in relation to work or in the union. All are welcoming – no-one is left isolated. Members may be nervous about putting themselves forward if they have not participated in union events before. However, it would be great to see you there. Remember, childcare facilities are provided. If you want to be nominated, contact your branch secretary now!

The details are as follows:-

RMT National Women's Conference, Poole - 2 March 2005

● RMT National Black & Ethnic Minority Members' Conference, Birmingham - 16 March 2005

● RMT National Lesbian, Gay & Bisexual Members' Conference, Birmingham - 22 April 2005

Regional Women's Advisory Committees

The inaugural meeting of the women's advisory committee of South Wales and South West regional council is to take place on Saturday February 5 2005 at 12 noon. The venue is the RMT regional office in Bristol, Transport House, Victoria Street, Bristol, BS1 6AY. Branches have been asked to elect two delegates. Thanks are given to sister Glen Burrows who has worked hard to set this committee up. The union wishes Glen and all those concerned the best of luck.

Who next?

Which regional council will be the next to set up a committee? Remember, all regional councils are encouraged to establish advisory committees, not just for women but for our black and ethnic minority members and our lesbian, gay and bisexual members too. If your regional council thinks it would be helpful if someone from the national committee should come along and talk about the purpose of such committees, then that can be arranged. Just drop a line to Unity House.

UNIONS FOR CUBA

Greg Hewitt reports on the recent trade union conference in London against US aggression towards Cuba

THE message from our Cuban comrades at the recent TUC-backed Unions for Cuba conference was loud and clear. Political pressure on the British government was required if Cuba is to survive any onslaught from the United States.

Washington has already made clear that it will continue its dangerous policy of aggression against Cuba. Unions agreed to prioritise a political campaign to ensure that the British government will actively oppose any interference or aggression against Cuba.

Attending the conference were 27 - 17 of them women - Cuban trade union leaders from a myriad of industries, including health, railways, seafaring workers, mining, energy, education, and communication, public sector, science and sports, journalists, metal workers and tobacco.

US aggression

We heard from various speakers how Cuba's position in world politics is made difficult by President Bush's campaign to alienate the country. In the run up to the presidential elections in Florida bumper stickers proudly proclaimed "Iraq

today Cuba tomorrow". US secretary for Western Hemisphere and Latin America Roger Noriega has stated that the US government is moving "swiftly and inexorably to removing Fidel Castro and the apparatus that has kept him in power".

The US has dedicated \$59 million towards activities to hasten 'regime change'. Including funding anti-Cuba campaigns to undermine the Cuban tourist industry and further devastate the economy.

Our own General Secretary Bob Crow spoke with great passion about the problems in Cuba and called upon the

British government publicly to distance itself from the Bush policy on Cuba and to foster better relations with Havana.

"Only a couple of months ago, my union sent a container to Cuba and held a garden party to raise money for medical supplies and we sponsored a plaque to the comrades from the NUR and NUS who had fought and fallen in 1936 fighting fascism.

"These men were proud members of the International brigades of Spain and that spirit lives on in RMT," he said to applause.

Rodney Bickerstaff entertained us with the vision of Tony Blair visiting Fidel Castro in Cuba for his holidays rather than Italian far-right leader Berlusconi in Italy. He might learn something to his advantage, Rodney said.

"It was important that we always keep Cuba to the forefront of our minds and at every opportunity talk about what is happening over there.

"If we do nothing else when we leave here we must always after every conversation say 'and then there's Cuba'," he said.

Blockade

General Secretaries of the National Union of Merchant, Marine, Ports and Fishing Workers, and the Secretary of the Provincial Union of transport workers, Alberto Fuentes and Victor Alvarez, told how the US blockade affected them. They explained the Torricelli law which established that all ships that touch Cuban ports cannot go to the US for six months. No



VIVA CUBA: CTC Deputy General secretary Francisco Duran Harvey addresses conference



RMT general secretary Bob Crow called upon the British Government to foster better relations with Havana

ships may even call in for repairs or emergencies. No Cuban worker on board can touch land. No one can contract Cuban workers on ships.

Because of the blockade the one and three-quarter million small boats that are registered in the US cannot visit. This represents over \$52 million in potential income.

Victor Alvarez told us that many countries including Japan, its biggest importer, can not buy fish from Cuba due to the blockade. The blockade also prevents them from getting parts for trains.

I came away from the conference reinvigorated. My hope is that we do more than pass resolutions and we can make the government listen. An overwhelming majority of MPs who were asked: "Would you support military action against Cuba by the United States?" have responded in writing that they would not support it. I am not very good on quotes but on this occasion one comes to mind. "All it needs for evil to rise, is for good men to stand idly by." We cannot afford to stand idly by.

● for more information on solidarity and Cuba go to www.cuba-solidarity.org.uk



UNITED: Cuban delegate Alberto Fuentes with retired RMT shipping secretary Tony Santamera

MEPs back controversial new EU transport commissioner

MEMBERS of the EU parliament endorsed the new EU transport commissioner Jacques Barrot last month despite his failure to disclose a fraud conviction in connection with a French political party funding scandal.

Mr Barrot also won backing from EU president Jose Manuel Barroso, who had already been forced to remove far right Italian anti-gay campaigner Rocco Buttiglione from his original 24-strong commission.

Mr Barroso made plain that he "would have preferred" the French politician to have made public his conviction before he was appointed to the regional policy post in the previous commission on April 1.

The new transport commissioner, who will be charged with imposing EU directives demanding the wholesale privatisation of rail industries across the bloc, was convicted in 2000 for "abuse of confidence" in a party funding case involving the 'Centre des démocrates sociaux' (CDS), an organisation he headed.

The CDS was a precursor to Jacques Chirac's 'Union pour un Mouvement Populaire' (UMP) – and Mr Barrot is a close political ally of the right wing French president.

However, the eight month suspended jail sentence he received was automatically wiped clean by a 1995 presidential amnesty – introduced by the incoming French President Chirac.



FRAUD: EU Transport Commissioner-designate Jacques Barrot backed by MEPs for the job despite concealing a conviction for fraud.

French unions defeat "minimum service" requirement

ACTION by eight French rail unions has defeated a government plan to impose a "minimum service" requirement on French Rail [SNCF] before entering into a dispute. Tens of thousands of railway employees also demonstrated in Paris against SNCF's free market policies, attacks on the railways as a public service and possible job losses.

The unions signed a draft conflict prevention agreement establishing improved negotiation procedures to be followed before industrial disputes. However, the accord does not include the conservative government's aim to curb the right to strike to ensure minimum transport requirements during a dispute.

The accord protects workers' rights and conditions for the travelling public and includes fast track access to top management for urgent talks in case of a looming dispute. Two of the unions, which together represent 20 per cent of rail workers, declined to initial the agreement, though one of them

is considering signing the final text.

Transeuropa Ferries upgrades sea route

SLOVENIAN-OWNED Transeuropa Ferries has put another freighter between Ramsgate and Ostend and is now taking passengers on its mixed ferries as long as they are travelling in a car. The ferries runs four return voyages daily between the two ports. Transeuropa Ferries operates a low-price policy using Slovenian crews on old tonnage which it acquires and then refurbishes. Slovenia became a member of the European Union last May.

Spanish maintain rail competition plan

SPANISH rail unions are concerned that the new Socialist Party government is to maintain its conservative predecessor's policy of opening RENFE, the publicly owned rail network, to competition in line with EU directives.

The previous right-wing government, defeated in elections

following the terrorist attacks on Madrid trains, had earmarked the progressive liberalisation of the network for May. Rail unions welcomed the new government's decision to suspend the plan.

However, it has now taken the first step to privatising its rail network by separating passenger and freight operations. From 2005, RENFE will no longer be responsible for management and 16,000 of its 31,000 workforce will be transferred to ADIF, a new company established to maintain the infrastructure.

Germany's Deutsche Bahn freeze orders

DEUTSCHE Bahn [DB], Germany's rail operator, has frozen a huge order for new rolling stock. It intended to spend £700 million for 466 new locomotives but has suspended the orders as long as the network remains in deficit. In a surprise move, the government has also refused to transpose a European Union directive which demands rail privatisation into German law.

Parliament has suspended a law that would have sold a first tranche

of DB shares in spring 2006. Therefore, while Berlin is demanding that EU member states sell off rail industries along EU guidelines it is refusing to do so itself.

Seafarers protest over job losses

MORE than 100 seafarers demonstrated in Brest against the reflagging of a third of France Telecom Marine's cable layers from the full French flag to its Kergulen second register with the result that Madagascar nationals replace 160 French ratings.

Brest branch CGT seafarers' union spokesman Jean-Paul Hellequin said the Madagascar seafarers are paid France's minimum monthly wage with six weeks' leave for six months at sea compared to eight weeks on, eight weeks off for French seafarers under the collective agreement.

About half the 160 French ratings have either been granted early retirement provisions or been reclassified to land-based jobs at France Telecom. The remaining 80 will be paid until jobs have been found for them.

Show respect for transport workers

Activists' corner

An open letter to Tory GLA member Roger Evans after he called for a strike ban on the Tube

Dear Mr Evans,

I work for Transport for London in the capacity of trainer. I have witnessed the extremely hard, unique and amazing job that all Tube operating staff perform on a daily basis. We perform so many specialised and diverse tasks, at all hours of every day I will not begin to explain them all.

The daily abuse we receive from a public entirely unaware of our role only adds to my feeling of solidarity and respect for my colleagues. We bear the brunt of frustration from a travelling public exposed to endless delays, disruption and confusion; unable to rely on a

regular, comfortable service for which they pay considerable sums.

I do not imagine that their compassion for our difficult task should extend to the moment of their frustration on any given morning's delay. I also do not expect a member of the London Assembly to use such ill-placed words to describe a jointly welcomed and needed agreement on pay and conditions.

It is precisely this type of publicity that fuels such ill feeling toward Tube staff.

You are in a position that demands a certain level of responsibility. Have you any idea the impact of a comment like yours, spread across the front page of the Metro newspaper can have on workplace violence incidents

on our staff? I am sure you don't, but I feel your position, as Deputy Chair of the Transport Committee demands that you do.

To address your concern regarding the impact that strike action has on Londoners, I can only concur. However, it is an action taken consciously by Tube workers with a great deal of thought. And one that will have an impact on how we put food on the table, pay our bills, rent, mortgage. A decision that every Tube employee wished they did not have to make.

I do not wish to comment on the way negotiations actually take place, but I am resolute that the union does not ask workers to make this decision on a whim. In fact, within your role, there is an opportunity to have real impact on how future decisions are made. This decision has been made and can only show a healthy partnership in the future.

Tube workers ARE Londoners, very hard working Londoners, more hard working than you care to imagine. For this reason, an agreement has been made to facilitate a 35-hour week by allowing more 'real time' away from the work place. This hourly amount has been recommended for Tube workers from various sources for some time now. There has been support for its implementation from both sides and now we see the fruits of that commitment.

It's been a long and hard road, but one with a destination that allows Tube staff to enjoy employment conditions that reflect their role. Before you next pass comment, may I suggest you try to comprehend the hell that it can be to carry out such work.

**Cc Bob Kiley,
Yours sincerely,
Linda Wiles**

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A well-deserved retirement



BRITAIN'S longest serving RMT branch secretary John Pegg retired in October after serving the Grantham branch since 1977. John started on the Railway in 1959 and after working his way up the ladder was a signalman in the old Grantham panel box until it closed. John stayed at Grantham on retention rate for 27 years. John was a regular AGM delegate and delegate to signal grades and branch secretaries conference, as well as being the local staff rep at Grantham since Adam was a boy, and delegate to the regional council for even longer. An exemplary trade unionist and socialist, his input will not end here as he will take an active role in the retired members section after a well earned holiday to see his daughter in Australia.

Letter

Dear editor,
ON November 7 1805 Thomas Brassey was born in the parish of Aldford near Chester. He was to become the renowned and energetic railway builder who built, with his teams of navvies and skilled craftsmen, countless miles of railways and stations. One of these stations was at Chester in 1848.

As a keen amateur local historian interested in railways and canals and how they were built and developed it amazes me how the government neglects our national heritage.

This brings me back to Chester station – the gateway for many visitors to the city and north Wales. I have written and spoken to Chester's Labour MP Christine Russell on several occasions but not a lot of improvements have taken place. In fact I definitely think since the situation at the station has got worse, ask any member of staff.

The station is in dire need of improvement for passengers, staff and the city alike. When you compare the improvements made at Leeds, Manchester Piccadilly and other stations the situation is ridiculous.

Yours sincerely
John Wittingham

Farewell to Eddie



Retired Warrington branch chairman Eddie O'Kane receives a gift from regional organiser Andy Warnock-Smith

Review

Why the left should reject the EU Constitution

IN THIS pamphlet The Centre for a Social Europe sets out why the Left and trade unions should campaign for a 'no' vote in the referendum on the Constitution which will be held in Spring 2006 – just 18 months away.

The pamphlet argues that the EU is becoming more focused on neo-liberal solutions to Europe's problems with unemployment and public services. The Constitution misses the chance to tackle many of the failing policies of the EU like

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the Common Agricultural Policy, and it gives away more power in areas like economics, trade, foreign policy and civil liberties to Brussels.

With the vast majority of the twenty-five new EU Commissioners coming from the right, it hardly makes sense to put power over the NHS and WTO negotiations in their hands – especially when Peter Mandelson is supposedly one of the six socialists!

By campaigning for a 'no', the left can make the fight for reform of the EU a progressive cause. As Swedish Social Democratic MP Soren Wibe says in the foreword: "we strongly believe in internationalism, be we oppose giving up control".

● The pamphlet is available from the Centre

for a Social Europe, and is free to people who register as a supporter. Call 020 7222 9100 or email info@social-europe.org.uk for more details.





The best is yet to come

By **TOMMY SHERIDAN MSP**

THE great American writer, Mark Twain, once wrote: "rumours of my death are greatly exaggerated", I know what he meant. The last few weeks have been a roller coaster for me. At a time which should be joyful for my wife and me, we have had to endure waves of lies and smears in relation to my political and personal life.

Let me state clearly from the outset that the Scottish Socialist Party remains united and determined to wage war on poverty and obscene inequality in Scotland and throughout our world. We will continue to campaign against the brutal, illegal and unnecessary wars which have so scarred our planet in Afghanistan, Palestine and Iraq over the last three years.

Those in the anti-trade union press who hoped to witness the funeral of the SSP have been forced to mourn elsewhere.

My socialist colleague in Parliament, Colin Fox, recently announced his intention to seek election to the post I have vacated. He said, "The best days of the SSP are ahead of us, not behind us". He is absolutely right.

I have resigned as SSP national convenor. I remain a proud member of the party and its parliamentary team. A combination of private and family circumstances makes the decision of our party's Executive Committee to accept my letter of resignation absolutely correct.

I wish to pursue disgraceful lies against me pedalled in the Murdoch press in my own way. That means court action

which is not always the best response but in my opinion is for me. The weight of the establishment definitely sides with the rich and powerful in court cases. Other smears may even be thrown at me. But I demand the right to deal with them in my own way.

I am also about to enter uncharted territory for me – fatherhood. The opportunity now exists for the SSP to prove once and for all that we are no one-man band. As socialists we recognise the primacy of concentrating on politicians' political activities, not their private lives. What happens in the country's boardrooms is much more important to the working class than what happens in bedrooms. It's the boardroom wheeling and dealing that affects our class above all else.

How ironic that my bill to abolish the hated council tax and replace it with the radical and redistributive Scottish Service Tax was ignored by every single newspaper and media outlet in Scotland, but comments on my private life

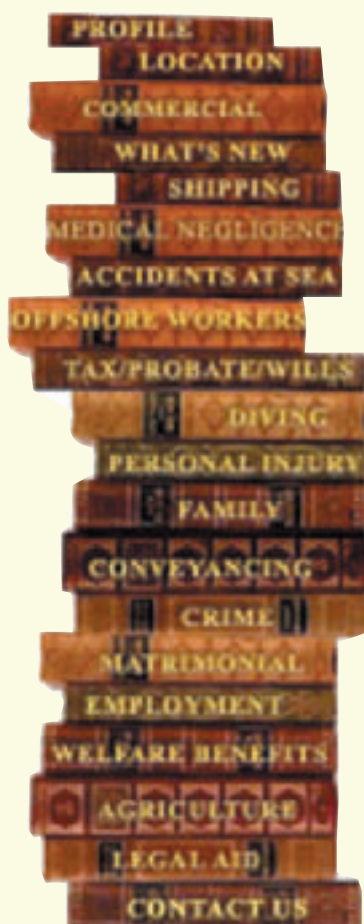
were given acres of space and time.

The replacement of the Tory Council Tax with a progressive personal income alternative will improve millions of lives across Scotland. Tittle tattle inspired by the anti-trade union Murdoch rag matters not a jot.

Only the bosses and the ruling class benefit when socialists fight amongst themselves. It has been said before and should be repeated now. It is not the singer who is vital to the socialist movement; it is the song which is paramount. Our song is our vision, our principles and our common ideals. That song remains the same and is at the heart of the SSP.

However, I will have more than enough "noise" to occupy me in the months ahead and a child I can look forward to.

The SSP is united, determined and poised to grow. I will be part of that process alongside my parliamentary colleagues and party comrades.



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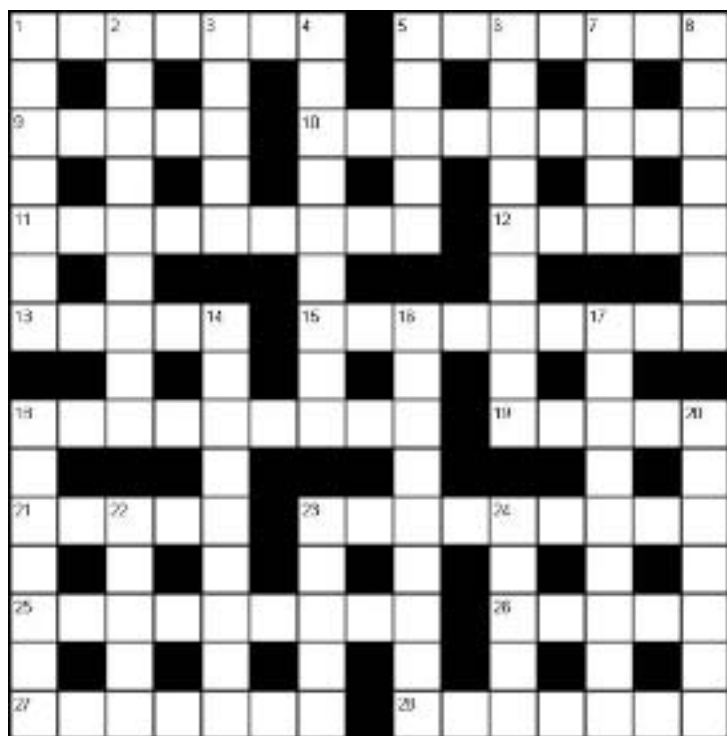
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Lincolnshire DN31 1JE

Tel. 01472 311711
www.bridgemcfarland.co.uk
e-mail jrb@bmcf.co.uk

£50 Prize Crossword No. 11

set by Elk



Send entries to Prize crossword, RMT, Unity House, 39 Chalton Street, London NW1 1JD by January 14 with your name and address. Winner and solution in next issue.

ACROSS

1. Lakeland county (7)
5. Placed in the middle or focused on mid-point (7)

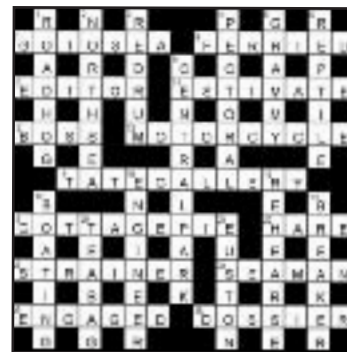
- 9, 10. Seasonal greeting (5,9)
11. Track and field sports (9)
12. Effective firing distance, or line (of mountains, say) (5)

13. Non-standard language (5)
15. One who serves or waits (9)
18. Queen or London palace (9)
19. Sweep the strings of a guitar to play chords (5)
21, 28. Seasonal greeting, follows 9, 10 (5,3,4)
23. Constellation – Ursa Major (5,4)
25. OK – that should be easy! (2,7)
26. Red-breasted bird, often seen on 10 cards (5)
27. Momentum, incentive, impulse (7)
28. See 21

DOWN

1. Instrument for finding direction (7)
2. Alice's mad companion (5,4)
3. Similarity in sound of two or more words – as in poetry (5)
4. Man's first name – or former Spurs star Steve (9)
5. Pop these to start celebrating (5)
6. A guitar like this would be difficult to 19 (2,7)
7. Citizen of ancient empire or modern capital (5)

Last month's solution



Winner of prize crossword No. 10 is Mike Rose from Exmouth

8. Plum duff is the traditional one at 10 (7)
14. Contains the sauce for main course (5, 4)
16. Skilled (male?) worker or seller of wares (9)
17. Pleasant, enjoyable (9)
18. Ancient West African civilisation - and golden stool - found here (7)
20. seafarer - Coleridge's was very old (7)
22. Your toast will do this, when done (3, 2)
23. High winds (5)
24. Do this to a fit, or a snowball (5)

A LAW FIRM WITH A HEART? BAH, HUMBUG!

Seasons Greetings

Although many of you will be working to ensure families are re-united for Christmas, everyone at Thompsons hopes you too get a rest

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Unlike other law firms, we are uniquely committed to the trade union movement and deliver a first-class legal service to injured members

PROTECTING AND PROMOTING OUR MEMBERS' INTERESTS



The RMT Christmas quiz

The year in review

1. What was thrown at Manchester United boss Alex Ferguson by Arsenal players during the infamous "battle of the buffet" Old Trafford foodfight?

- a) Beer
- b) Pizza
- c) Peanuts
- d) All of the above



2. Viz Magazine celebrated which anniversary during 2004?

- a) 21 years
- b) 25 years
- c) 30 years

3. Runner Kelly Holmes twice struck gold for Britain over which distances at the Athens 2004 Olympics?

4. How many new member states joined the European Union this year?



5. Which British politician described allegations over his private life during 2004 as "an inverted pyramid of piffle"?

6. RMT unveiled a plaque this year dedicated to British rail workers and seafarers who sacrificed their lives during which war?

7. From which British newspaper did George Galloway win £150,000 libel damages this year?

8. Which African country celebrated its 10th anniversary of democracy during 2004?

9. Over which national team did Greece triumph in the final of football's Euro 2004?

10. Mark Thatcher was arrested during 2004 over alleged links with a planned coup in which country?

11. Which 2004 British film comedy saw zombies rising in suburban London?

12. What is the name of the Cornish village hit by a freak flash flood on August 16, 2004?

13. Which cricket team beat England in the 2004 ICC Championship final?

14. Which country hands over the European Union presidency on December 31?

15. From which Caribbean nation was Jean-Bertrand Aristide deposed as President in a Washington-backed coup this year?

16. In the 2004 American Presidential election, which candidate won the state of California: Bush or Kerry?

17. Which head of state appeared in an episode of The Simpsons during 2004?

18. Which veteran New York punk guitarist, famed for songs such as Blitzkrieg Bop and Teenage Lobotomy, died in 2004?

19. Who won the Wimbledon 2004 Ladies title?

20. Which author won this year's Booker Prize?

21. Which country was awarded the wooden spoon in the 2004 Rugby Union Six-Nations?

22. For which country did Ruslana win the 2004 Eurovision Song Contest?

23. Which horse won the 2004 Grand National?

24. Who sang the line: "Well, tonight thank God it's them instead of you" on Band Aid 2004?

- a) Bono
- b) Justin Hawkins (The Darkness)
- c) Shane Macgowan

25. Who replaced Mark Hughes as Wales football coach during 2004?

General knowledge

26. What does the White represent in the Irish tricolour?

27. In the Peanuts cartoon strip, whose team always beats Charlie Brown's at baseball?

28. How many miles of track are there on the British rail network?

- a) 23,000 miles
- b) 33,000 miles
- c) 43,000 miles



29. Harland & Wolff shipbuilders are based at which seaport?

30. Which UK shipping forecast area is situated furthest West?

- a) Hebrides
- b) Bailey
- c) Dogger

31. Who had a Christmas Number 1 hit with Ernie (The Fastest Milkman in the West) in 1971?

32. Who is the village chief in the French cartoon strip Asterix the Gaul?

- a) Getafix
- b) Vitalstatistix
- c) Dogmatix



33. Which year did British women win the right to vote?

34. Which UK rail service is nicknamed the Clockwork Orange?

35. By what name is the 12th Day of Christmas (January 6) also known?

36. The year 2005 marks the centenary of which of the following?

- a) Entente Cordiale signed between Britain and France
- b) Labour Representation Committee becomes the Labour Party
- c) Albert Einstein states that $E=mc^2$

37. Which is the only London Underground station specifically named after a football team?

38. What year was the National Union of Railwaymen (forerunner of

RMT) founded?

- a) 1886
- b) 1899
- c) 1913

39. Which voluminous opera singer haunts cartoon hero Tintin throughout Herge's Adventures of Tintin?

- a) Calculus
- b) Haddock
- c) Castiflore

40. Jim Connell reputedly wrote the words to which famous song inspired by the 1889 dock strike, on a train journey from Charing Cross to New Cross, London?

41. Which famous actor died on Christmas Day, 1977?

- a) Charlie Chaplin
- b) James Stewart
- c) Elvis Presley

42. Which of the following is not a character in the board game Cluedo?

- a) Professor Plumb
- b) Baron von Beanz
- c) Colonel Mustard

43. Which country has the longest rail tunnel in the world?

44. By what name is Boxing Day better known in Ireland?

45. What is another name for a ship's load mark?

46. At which Olympic Games did five-time champion rower Steve Redgrave win his first gold medal?

47. Which singer was born on Christmas Day, 1971?

- a) Dido
- b) Kylie Minogue
- c) Posh Spice

48. If you were positioned at 0° latitude and 0° longitude then where in the world would you be?

- a) Greenwich
- b) Atlantic Ocean
- c) Ghana



49. What is the name of a notorious sea current off Norway which has entered the English language as a word meaning a violent or turbulent situation?

50. If you collected all the presents given by "my true love" in the song, the 12 Days of Christmas, how many would you have?

- a) 78
- b) 12
- c) 256
- d) 364

Questions set by Chris Kasrils



Answers:
1. (b) Pizza; 2. (c) 25 years; 3. 800
4. (b) 25 years; 5. 10
6. (b) 25 years; 7. (b) 25 years; 8. 10
9. (b) 25 years; 10. (b) 25 years; 11. (b) 25 years
12. (b) 25 years; 13. (b) 25 years; 14. (b) 25 years
15. (b) 25 years; 16. (b) 25 years; 17. (b) 25 years
18. (b) 25 years; 19. (b) 25 years; 20. (b) 25 years
21. (b) 25 years; 22. (b) 25 years; 23. (b) 25 years
24. (b) 25 years; 25. (b) 25 years; 26. (b) 25 years
27. (b) 25 years; 28. (b) 25 years; 29. (b) 25 years
30. (b) 25 years; 31. (b) 25 years; 32. (b) 25 years
33. (b) 25 years; 34. (b) 25 years; 35. (b) 25 years
36. (b) 25 years; 37. (b) 25 years; 38. (b) 25 years
39. (b) 25 years; 40. (b) 25 years; 41. (b) 25 years
42. (b) 25 years; 43. (b) 25 years; 44. (b) 25 years
45. (b) 25 years; 46. (b) 25 years; 47. (b) 25 years
48. (b) 25 years; 49. (b) 25 years; 50. (b) 25 years



How do I join the Credit Union?



To join the RMT Credit Union you need to fill in an application form and supply us with proof of **your identity** and **address**. Being an existing RMT member, you may wonder why we need proof of who you are and where you live. It is because the Financial Services Authority, in an attempt to combat Money Laundering, has imposed strict identification rules on anyone wishing to open a Bank or Building Society account. Unfortunately, it has applied the same rules and regulations to Credit Unions.

There are two methods of supplying us with the documentation:-

METHOD 1 Send or take your **original** documents, **1 from List A & 1 from List B**, direct to RMT Credit, Unity House, FREEPOST, 39 Chalton Street, London NW1 1JD. If sending valuable documents such as your passport or current full UK Driving Licence we strongly advise sending them by recorded delivery. We will photocopy the originals and return them to you.

METHOD 2 Take one original document from **list A** and one from **list B** to your Branch Secretary or any of the approved persons listed below:-

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| ● Delegated Officer of the Branch | ■ Person with honours / peerage |
| ● Divisional Organiser | ■ Full Time Trade Union Official |
| ● Executive Committee Member | ■ Member of Parliament |
| ● Credit Union Officer | ■ Justice of the Peace |
| ● Post Master / Sub Post Master | ■ Lawyer |
| ● Authorised Financial Intermediary | ■ Teacher |
| ● Councillor (local or county) | ■ Accountant |
| ● Minister of Religion | ■ Dentist |
| ● Commissioner for oaths | |
| ● Banker | |
| ● Doctor | |
| ● Police Officer | |

The Branch Secretary or other approved person will check the original documentation; will take a photocopy, sign, and Branch stamp. All proof of identity / address must bear your name, and not be solely in the name of partner etc; but can be in addition to their name.

Satisfactory proof of **identity** will include, but not be limited to the following:

LIST (A)

- Current** signed Passport.
- Current** Full UK old style Driving Licence (not old style Provisional Licence) [if not used as evidence of address].
- Original** Inland Revenue tax notification e.g. tax assessment, statement of account, notice of coding – valid for current year.
- Pension** Book or Benefits Book or original notification letter from the Benefits Agency confirming your right to benefits (if not used as evidence of address).
- Shotgun** or firearms certificate.
- ID** pass and safety cards for the following companies: Network Rail, Trans Pennine Express, Central Trains, GNER
- Discharge** Book (shippers only - current).

Satisfactory proof of **address** will include, but not be limited to the following:

LIST (B)

- Original** Local Authority Council Tax bill valid for the current year.
- Current** UK photo card Driving Licence.
- Current** Full UK old style Driving Licence (not old style Provisional Licence).
- A** Utility Bill e.g. Electricity, Gas, Water or Telephone bills. **These must be originals and less than 3 months old.** Mobile 'phone bills are NOT acceptable.
- Bank**, building society or credit union statement – within last 3 months.
- Mortgage** statement from a recognised lender – within last 12 months.
- Pension** Book or Benefits Book or original notification letter from the Benefits Agency confirming your right to benefits (if not used as evidence of address).
- Original** Inland Revenue tax notification, letter, notice of coding, P60 or P45.
- Original** housing association or letting agency tenancy agreement.
- Local** council rent card or tenancy agreement
- Original** Solicitor's letter confirming recent house purchase or Land Registry confirmation.
- Household** and motor Insurance certificates - current

Credit Union accounts may only be opened and transactions accepted when verification of identity and address has been completed and cross-referenced against RMT membership. We are using the method of Direct Debit only and money will be deducted from your bank account on the 28th of each month. Please return completed forms and ID documentation, as we need to make sure you comply with the money laundering regulations. Failing to complete all forms and ID documentation will delay us from setting up your savings account.

RMT CREDIT UNION LTD.

Finance Department, Unity House, 39 Charlton Street, London NW1 1JD
RMT CREDIT UNION APPLICATION FORM – please complete your
application along with the attached Direct Debit.



MEMBERSHIP NUMBER

Please use **BLOCK CAPITALS** and **black ink**.

1 PERSONAL DETAILS.

Surname		Address	
Forename(s)			
Home phone			
Mobile phone		Postcode	
Email address			
Date of Birth		National Insurance Number	

2 Your Employment.

Employer		RMT Branch	
Job Description			

3 Mr ☐ Mrs ☐ Ms ☐ Miss ☐

4 Membership Status

RMT TU Member ☐ Retired RMT TU Member ☐

5 How much do you wish to save £ This is the amount you wish to save in 'shareholdings' monthly by
Direct Debit (you must complete form below)

6 Normally your payments are made once a month (28th) to RMT Credit Union Ltd.

7 Next of Kin

Address

8 I undertake to abide by the rules now in force or those that are adopted.

Your signature

Date



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



Please fill in the whole form including official use box using a ball point pen and
Send to: RMT Credit Union Ltd., 39 Charlton Street, London NW1 1JD

Name and full postal address of your Bank or Building Society

To: The Manager	Bank/Building Society
Address	
	Postcode

Name(s) of Account Holder(s)

Bank/Building Society account number

Branch Sort Code

Originator's Identification Number

Reference Number

FOR RMT CREDIT UNION LTD OFFICIAL USE ONLY
This is not part of the the instruction to your Bank or Building Society.

Instructions to your Bank or Building Society.

Please pay RMT Credit Union Ltd Direct Debits for the account detailed in this instruction subject to the safeguards
assured by the Direct Debit Guarantee. I understand that this instruction may remain with RMT Credit Union Ltd, if
so, details will be passed electronically to my Bank/Building Society.

Signature(s)

Date

Banks and Building Societies may not accept Direct Debit Instructions from some types of account

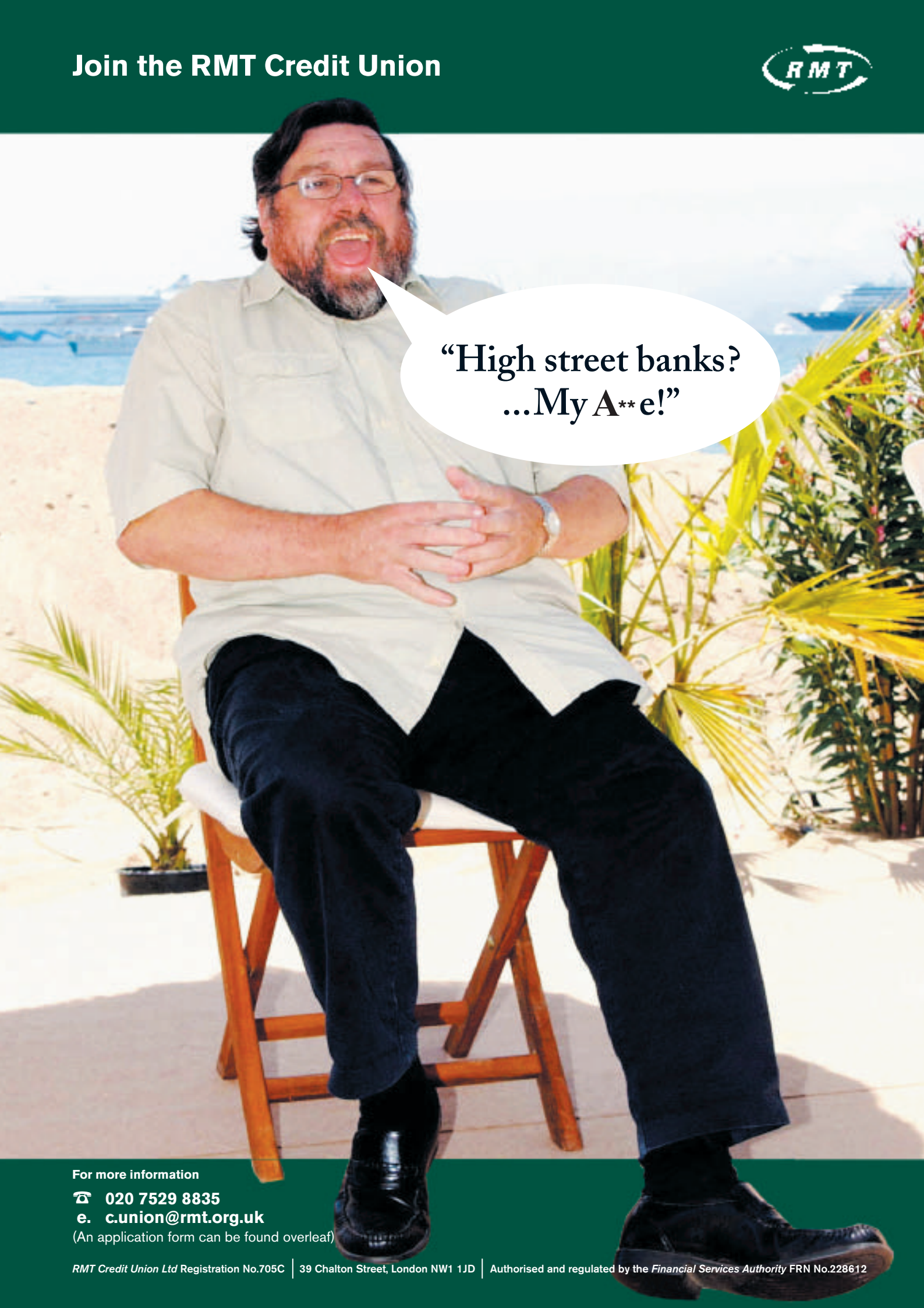
This guarantee should be detached and retained by the Payer.

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 amounts to be paid or the payment date changes, RMT Credit Union Ltd will notify you 10 working days in advance of your account being debited or as otherwise agreed
- If an error is made by RMT Credit Union Ltd 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 us.



Join the RMT Credit Union

A man with a beard and glasses, wearing a light-colored short-sleeved shirt and dark trousers, is sitting on a wooden chair outdoors. He has a surprised expression with his mouth open. A speech bubble points to his mouth.

“High street banks?
...My A**e!”

For more information

☎ 020 7529 8835

e. c.union@rmt.org.uk

(An application form can be found overleaf)

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