

RMT

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TO DEFEND YOUR RAIL PENSION!

news

Essential reading for today's transport worker

NORTHERN RAIL VICTORY!

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Free 'Taff Vale Dispute' pamphlet inside!



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MARCH FOR WORKPLACE JUSTICE



FOR A TRADE UNION FREEDOM BILL • FOR WORKPLACE SOLIDARITY

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MAY 1**

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MORE INFO AND TRANSPORT DETAILS AT WWW.TUC.ORG.UK/MAYDAY

**JOIN THE RMT CONTINGENT ON THE MARCH AND
COLLECT YOUR WHISTLES, TABBARDS AND FLAGS**

The mass sacking at Gate Gourmet shows the law still fails minimum international standards. Join the campaign for fair rights and for a Trade Union Freedom Bill.

Speakers include: Bob Crow RMT General Secretary • Tony Benn
Gloria Mills TUC President • Tony Woodley TGWU General Secretary
Maria Helena Andre European TUC • Randall Howard South African Transport and
AWU General Secretary • Greg Combet Australian Council of Trade Unions
Dave Prentis UNISON • Derek Simpson Amicus • Paul Kenny GMB

Plus representatives from the international communities, pensioner organisations, Gate Gourmet, other speakers from the TUC and many more.

Organised jointly by the TUC and the London Mayday Organising Committee www.londonmayday.org

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EDITORIAL

HARD WON VICTORIES



The victory in defence of Northern Rail services shows what can be achieved through concerted campaigning.

This RMT-led and very public campaign included a postcard which passengers and staff could send to the ministry and their MP to outline how strongly they felt about the need to defend and extend Northern Rail services.

It is this kind of commitment that will stop rail bosses attacking our pension scheme this summer.

When there is a ballot for industrial action in defence of your pension - which are really deferred wages - it is important that you vote yes.

Pensions were not given to us but won by those that came before us and it is down to us to defend this fund for those that came after us.

This may be the last opportunity to save a decent final salary pension scheme. So, don't let them turn back the clocks to the Victorian age and get to the lobby of parliament on May 9 to tell your MP how you feel.

Now is also the time to fight for trade union rights at the workplace, where it matters.

On May 1 this year, this union will be mobilising as part of the TUC march for the Trade Union Freedom Bill.

RMT members will know that anti-trade union legislation has been successively used by employers to challenge ballots and disputes in defence of our conditions.

The Trade Union Freedom Bill will include the right to take solidarity action, provide protection whilst on strike and simplify balloting procedures.

The campaign for the Bill marks the centenary of the passing of the 1906 Trades Disputes Act which secured for unions the legal freedom to take industrial action, and indeed greater legal freedom of action than they enjoy today.

It was the preceding Taff Vale Railway Strike judgment against our

forebears, the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants, which caused the outcry that led to the 1906 Trades Disputes Act.

There is a free pamphlet of the historic Taff Vale dispute enclosed with this magazine so take the time to read it to learn about what our forerunners did for us. It can also be an inspiration for what we can do for those that come after us.

The grades conference season is upon us. It is a chance for members to get together to agree priorities and make plans for the coming year. Each grade has an important contribution to make, but that task would be much harder to achieve if we were not united into one specialist transport union.

Last month, I spoke at the union learning fund conference in London about how our union works.

We have also started a series of articles, starting this month, explaining exactly how your all-grades union works in order to assist more members to become activists.

We have made the call for an integrated transport network in our submission to the government's transport review. Such a strategy demands the integrated use of bus, rail and sea transport modes to service the interests of the public.

RMT has also kept up the campaign to demand the retention of essential fire regulations introduced after the 1987 King's Cross fire.

The government intends to scrap the regs and replace them with the far less specific Fire Safety Order. We are gathering huge support inside and outside parliament to ensure that does not happen.

Best wishes

Bob Crow

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TRADE UNION SOLIDARITY WITH CUBA AND LATIN AMERICA



An RMT delegation was among 250 delegates representing 60 trade unions from 22 countries at a London conference on trade union solidarity with Cuba and Latin America.

The conference, organised by the Cuba Solidarity Campaign and supported by more than twenty British trade unions, gave an opportunity for unions across Europe to share experiences of solidarity work, and stand united in condemning the 45 year-old US blockade of the island, and support for the defence of Cuba's independence.

The presence of delegations from Cuba and Venezuela gave trade unionists an opportunity

to hear first-hand of the threats and challenges facing their counterparts in Latin America.

Cuban Trade Union Federation general secretary Pedro Ross warned that the Bush administration was intensifying its threat to Cuba and lobbying European governments to follow their hostile policies.

British government officials recently held meetings with US officials to discuss 'regime change' in Cuba and installing a new government that would privatise the country's world renowned public services. ■

For more information www.cuba-solidarity.org.uk/conference or to join CSC contact campaignsteam@cubasolidarity.org.uk or 0207 263 6452

Aid for Cuba Garden Party

Wednesday 7th June
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Maritime House
Clapham Old Town
London SW4

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CAMPAIGN**

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RMT welcomes reprieve for Northern Rail services

Following a huge campaign, RMT welcomes the announcement that the government's review of rail services in the north of England will not result in service cuts or job losses

Since the review was announced, RMT has waged a consistent campaign to defend Northern Rail services and to win support for a growing role for rail in the region.

And, after thousands of RMT postcards were sent to MPs and ministers, public opinion appears to have prevailed as no cuts are to be made to services.

Local RMT activists forcefully put the case that the north of England needs more rail capacity, not less, and there could no room for the chipping away at services to the point that no-one could use them any more and then killing them off altogether.

RMT rep Craig Johnston said it was a pity that over £500,000



VICTORY: Local reps Craig Johnson and Mike Thompson with Bob Crow

was spent on a review when capacity had increased by more than 10 million passenger miles last year.

"If anything wants cutting, it is the shameful amount of money that continues to be drained out of the railway industry by the private sector.

"It would have been nothing short of criminal to have wielded the axe on services while the privateers are still shovelling record amounts of public subsidy into their shareholders' bank accounts," he said.

Local rep Mike Thompson pointed out that revenue growth

had also increased by over 13 per cent and punctuality had grown to 89 per cent.

"Without the support of local RMT members this campaign to defend services could not have been mounted," he said.

When the Strategic Rail Authority brought in the consultants last year its intention was clearly to justify axing services, closing stations and lines, raising fares and cutting jobs.

The shadow of the review has remained hanging over huge swathes of northern England that have already had enough of unnecessary rail cuts.

"Rail workers and train users alike will breathe a sigh of relief that the shadow of the axe has been lifted from vital rail services and jobs in the north of England," RMT general secretary Bob Crow said.

The union had consistently argued that the environment and the local economy were crying out for a strategy that puts a massive expansion of rail at the centre of efforts to get even more people out of their cars and onto public transport. That included a critical role for every part of the network, including rural rail. ■



RMT TELLS GOVERNMENT 'KEEP FIRE-SAFETY REGS'

Tube workers who assisted in rescue operations after the July 7 bombings joined a lobby of the Deputy Prime Minister's office last month to demand the retention of essential fire regulations introduced after the 1987 King's Cross fire.

Train operator John Boyle MBE, who assisted injured passengers at Aldgate station, delivered a letter to minister Jim Fitzpatrick arguing that the 'Section 12' regulations, which stipulate minimum fire-safety standards in sub-surface stations nationwide, are needed more than ever after the July bombings.

The government intends to scrap the regs and replace them with the far less specific Fire Safety Order after running them in parallel for six months from October.

London Underground has already downgraded its own fire-safety regime, despite fierce opposition from its own principal fire engineer and union safety reps.

Changes imposed by LUL have relegated fire-safety to

become an adjunct of general health and safety policy, done away with the existing fire inspection programme and even abolished the post of specialist fire-safety advisor.

The union urged the Railways Inspectorate to intervene to get LUL to suspend the changes, and renewed its call to ministers not to scrap regulations that impose minimum fire-safety standards on sub-surface railway stations throughout Britain.

In an internal email outlining his opposition to changes to LUL's fire-safety management regime, which were imposed at the end of February despite union protests, LUL fire engineer Martin Weller concluded that he could not support the proposals.

He said it would be "inadvisable in the extreme to reduce the breadth of specialist Fire Safety Management expertise within COO".

"I know of no organisation in the UK of a similar size to us and even approaching our fire risk profile which does not retain this type of management

expertise," he wrote.

AGS Pat Sikorski said that the appalling events of July 7 showed that strict minimum fire-safety standards were needed more than ever.

"The existing regulations lay down fire-safety measures that are simply not specified in the new Fire Safety Order, and we have been campaigning hard alongside the Fire Brigades Union and RMT's parliamentary group to keep them in place," he said.

He said that the views of front-line workers and emergency services deserve to be taken seriously, as fire-safety was too important to be left to the discretion of employers.

RMT also expressed amazement that the government does not even know where such fire safety regulations are in place and called for a full public enquiry into Underground Fire safety.

During parliamentary questions in which the government admitted that it does not keep statistics on whether the regulations apply at



PROTEST: Train operator John Boyle MBE hands in letter of protest to minister Jim Fitzpatrick with assistant general secretary Pat Sikorski to demand the retention of fire-safety regs

either national rail or metro rail stations.

Questions put by RMT's parliamentary group convenor John McDonnell to minister Jim Fitzpatrick also revealed that the government does not hold records of where rail bosses had applied for exemptions to the regulations.

The government needs to explain how they have come to the view that the regulations are too prescriptive if they do not even hold information on where there have been requests for exemptions. ■



ADDRESS: Jim Fitzpatrick addresses the lobby

YVONNE TO RUN FIFTH MARATHON



RMT member Yvonne Scarrott will be running her fifth London marathon this year for charity.

Last year she finished the course in three hours 18mins and Yvonne is hoping this year to achieve her ambition with a time below three hours 15mins. This is the qualifying time for an elite place, and a chance to be on the start line with Paula Radcliffe.

"With my training at the moment I am on target, so it is fingers crossed for the right conditions on 23rd April," said Yvonne, who is a clerical officer on

South West Trains.

Yvonne, who always runs for a charity, has chosen to raise money for 'Friends of St Anns' a charity in Morden, London that runs a school for children and young adults with disabilities and special needs.

She would be grateful for any sponsorship and can be contacted via my e-mail yscarrott@aol.com or on 07976 645022.

Yvonne also gave a big thank you to all those at the clerical and supervisory grades conference in Lille this year for their sponsorship donation of just over £220. ■

RMT calls on Virgin bosses to trade fair with staff

RMT has called on Virgin bosses to trade fairly with its own workforce, as more than 300 Virgin Cross Country guards stepped up strike action in a long-running dispute over the erosion of Sunday pay rates.

RMT guards have taken 12 days of strike action since the company reneged on a deal to reduce working hours with no loss of pay and refused the union's offer of talks without preconditions at conciliation service Acas.

RMT general secretary Bob Crow said that Virgin had trumpeted their decision to sell Fairtrade drinks on their trains, but when it comes to their own staff they renege on deals and refuse to enter talks without unacceptable strings.

"The Virgin board has shown contempt for their passengers as well as their workforce by vetoing the deal we had already hammered out, and choosing confrontation instead of talks," he said.

The company has thrown huge sums of money at this dispute that would cost them just £6 per Sunday shift to settle.

Around 30 MPs have signed early day motion 1574 calling on Virgin to return to the negotiating table and settle the dispute.

"We remain ready for talks, with or without the assistance of Acas, and Virgin know they can avoid further strike action by joining us at the talks table to hammer out a sensible deal," Bob Crow said.

Early Day Motion 1574

That this House is deeply concerned at the ongoing dispute between Virgin Cross Country and RMT; is further concerned at reports that Virgin may be compromising the safety of passengers by the use of untrained and medically restricted personnel on strike days; regrets that Virgin has refused to return to the negotiating table; and therefore calls on Richard Branson to urge his company immediately to re-open negotiations with RMT.



PERFORMANCE ABOVE TRACK SAFETY?

AGS Mick Cash looks
at proposals for
significant changes to
rail track safety rules

Proposals for significant changes to track safety rules on the main line railway are shortly to be issued for industry wide consultation. The union fears will only increase the risk to the safety of workers undertaking day to day track maintenance.

The changes are being presented under the guise of a 'rules simplification', but they also include a proposal to expand the activities that can be undertaken with minimal safeguard for the workers in order to improve productivity.

Rule Book Module T12 provides for a form of track worker protection which basically involves the signaller holding the controlling signal at danger. When first introduced many years ago, this form of protection was limited to activities such as walking to site, setting up protection systems, track inspections or placing/removing equipment associated with a temporary or emergency speed restriction. Neither was it allowed to involve more than six people.

However, some two years ago a change was introduced to Module T12 which widened the number of activities that could be undertaken using this form of protection provided they did not affect the safety of trains, involve more than six people, take longer than 30 minutes,

and no other form of protection was suitable. Now they want to extend its use even more by stripping away most of these restrictions, even though the risks involved are all too plain to see.

To provide protection, T12 requires the COSS to know the details of where the activity is to take place and, therefore, the protecting signal to be held at danger, and to effectively communicate this information to the signaller.

It also requires the signaller to then ensure a train has not already been signalled to approach the worksite, and after granting the T12 continue to hold the signal at danger until given up by the COSS. But as the industry's own briefing document admits, there have been a number of near misses since T12 activities were extended.

This extension of T12 will also override the need for a separate T2X procedure and should be withdrawn. T2X is only used when the signaller requires staff to be called out to attend to a fault that is affecting the passage of trains, and again involves protecting the staff by placing signals to danger.

However, the difference between this and a T12 is the fact that the signaller would normally know the site of the failure, and this has provides an

additional safeguard against two of the major risk factors.

With a more mobile workforce and a large influx of contractors, poor geographical knowledge is a significant issue. Even the requirement for pre-planning of work (RIMINI) does not overcome this failing in all cases, as it also depends on the correct information and the competence of the planner in using it. To further compound these shortcomings, the rule change proposals include withdrawing the requirement of a site diagram where more than two running lines or points are involved.

New research shows that communication error concerning the site of work has played a major role in about 38 per cent of trackwork incidents in recent years.

Communicating wrong or incomplete information is the most common type of error (35 per cent), and underlying problems frequently involve making incorrect assumptions about other people's situation, intentions or knowledge.

Another error that can lead to a lack of protection involves the signaller failing to check if there is a train already in section before granting the T12, or having granted it simply forgetting to apply a reminder device and then signals a train into the protected area where

staff are working. Since the use of the T12 procedure was extended there have been four such recorded instances, any one of which could have caused a multiple fatality.

Ironically, the one restriction on the use of T12 to remain is where the work may endanger the safety of trains, such as where work with a crane or other mechanical equipment will foul the line.

In these circumstances, one of the T2 forms of protection must be used instead. These still involve the signal being held at danger, but with additional safeguards provided as well. For example, in the case of a T2H it also requires a possession limit board and detonators to be placed at the protecting signal.

It would seem employers are happy to propose a simplified form of protection where only the lives of workers are at risk, but demand additional safeguards where it might involve death or injury to passengers, or even damage to trains.

Network Rail did not want to talk to the union about the changes until we challenged them.

Now they have offered to consult the union once the proposals are formally published, so if members have any views about the changes please let me have them. ■

Tebay sub-contractors found guilty

RMT renewed its call for an end to the lethal fragmentation of rail privatisation after a Newcastle jury found sub-contractor Mark Connolly guilty of the manslaughter of four rail workers at Tebay, Cumbria, two years ago.

Chris Waters, Gary Tindall, Colin Buckley and Darren Burgess were killed on the morning of February 15, 2004 when a runaway three-ton flatbed trailer laden with 16 tons of scrap rail struck them after careering downhill for three miles. Nine other workers were injured.

The vehicle, owned by Connolly, had been secured only by a length of two-inch fence-post. The trial heard evidence that the hydraulic brakes had been disconnected deliberately and doctored to avoid their faulty condition being discovered if tested.

The victims all worked for main contractor Carillion, which quickly accepted its civil liability for the deaths and injuries caused by defective equipment.

"We should remember those who were killed and injured at Tebay, but we should also pledge to end the ludicrous set-up that caused the disaster," RMT general secretary Bob Crow said.

"Tebay was not an accident. It was the direct result of the privatisation and fragmentation of our railways, and the time has come to stop safety taking second place to profit.

"Two years after Tebay, we still have a confusion of contractors, subcontractors, one-man-and-a-dog owner-operator plant-hire outfits, and a host of labour-only agencies.

"That means there is no consistent application of safety standards and no central line of command and communication," he said.

Network Rail brought rail maintenance back in-house for safety and efficiency reasons and the union declared that it should finish that job and bring renewals work back in-house too.

RMT also pointed out that that Connolly was charged as an individual, not with corporate manslaughter.

"We are still seeing too many corporate killers let off the hook, and we still need the government to keep its promise to change the law so that profit-hungry bosses responsible for workers' deaths end up behind bars where they belong," Bob Crow said. ■

Parliamentary column

A WELCOME NORTHERN RAIL VICTORY



It's a pleasure to be able to write my first column as a new member of the RMT parliamentary group when the combined efforts of the union and MPs have helped save Northern Rail services.

It was astonishing that the now defunct Strategic Rail Authority had even commissioned a review which considered widespread services cuts.

This review sparked a concerted campaign from the unions and sympathetic MPs who raised the issue in parliamentary debates, through questions, parliamentary motions and meetings with the Ministers.

The government should be congratulated for concluding that Northern Rail services should be protected and I know this will be welcome news for rail workers.

The announcement came shortly after Alistair Darling announced that the government was planning a major expansion of the railway capacity to meet Britain's social economic and environmental needs.

It is in this context that RMT is on the ball with its decision to hold a parliamentary seminar on the sustainable case for rail in June that will be addressed by Rail Minister Derek Twigg and Environment Minister Elliot Morley.

However, there are causes for concern and I know that a number of my parliamentary colleagues in the South West are worried about the future of Great Western Services and I am sure they will be working with RMT to protect them.

It is clear that if the government does wish to save money on the railways then they could start by carrying out Labour Party policy and bring the railways back into public ownership.

That is why it is even more disappointing that the government has chosen to re-privatise South Eastern Trains when all the evidence showed a service that had made massive improvements whilst in the public sector.

It is welcome that about 1.3 million workers will be guaranteed higher pay when the minimum wage rises in October.

The adult rate of the minimum wage will rise from £5.05 to £5.35 an hour and the youth rate for workers aged 18 to 21 will be increased from £4.25 to £4.45.

The government has also accepted recommendations from the Low Pay Commission that the rate for workers aged 16-17 years should increase from £3.00 to £3.30.

However, seafarers are presently only covered by the minimum wage while employed on a UK-registered vessel serving in UK 'internal waters', which effectively excludes most ratings from minimum-wage protection.

It is entirely wrong that even UK-registered vessels, whose owners benefit from Tonnage Tax relief, can pay wages below the UK national minimum wage.

We should be working for equal pay regardless of nationality as cheap migrant labour should not be used to drive down wages.

The only people to benefit from such disparities would be the far-right and the likes of the BNP who want to stir up hatred for their own ends. Our message should be hope not hate and prosperity not poverty.

Linda Riordan
MP for Halifax

MOBILISING FOR TRADE UNION FREEDOM

Come to
London on
Monday May 1
to march in
support of the
Trade Union
Freedom Bill

Nine years of Labour government and trade unions are still shackled by restrictions which prevent them from defending their members.

While the government has made progress, including the statutory recognition procedures, it has not repealed most of the Tory anti-union laws.

Tony Blair wrote in advance of the Labour law reforms of his government, that he "would leave British law the most restrictive on trade unions in the western world".

HE WAS NOT WRONG

The United Campaign for the Repeal of Anti-Union Laws has been pressing for a Trade Union Freedom Bill supported by both TUC and Labour Party conferences last year. Around 130 MP have now signed the Early Day Motion 1170 in support of the Bill.

The bill seeks to prevent employers sacking workers who take lawful industrial action. It says that those on strike cannot be replaced by agency labour, and it requires employers seeking urgent injunctions against trade unions who call members out on strike to show that they have a stronger case than the union.

At the moment, the employer only has to show that there is "a serious issue to be tried", which there is in almost every case.

SOLIDARITY

The Trade Union Freedom Bill will also allow unions to organise solidarity action, after a ballot, in support of members in workplaces which are closely connected.

For RMT members, where privatisation has resulted in members working side by side but for different employers, this would be an important right. It would prevent another Gate Gourmet situation, where the TGWU was unable legally to support airport

baggage handlers who wanted to take solidarity action in support of vulnerable catering workers.

The bill also seeks to simplify the requirements in issuing industrial action notices, and remove some of the most onerous balloting requirements which can lead to ballots being declared void just because of an accidental error by the union.

The United Campaign does not claim that the Trade Union Freedom Bill addresses all the injustices and breaches of international law by UK law in relation to workers and trade unions.

The Bill seeks modern rights for the 21st century. It goes a little way towards restoration of the freedoms of trade unions as they were established 100 years ago by the Trade Disputes Act 1906.

Unions should expect nothing less than freedom to carry out their fundamental purpose, defined by statute as "the regulation of relations between workers and employers" a purpose protected by the European Convention on Human Rights which requires that trade unions are free to protect the interests of their members.

We expect the Bill to be drafted and out for consultation by the spring. Efforts will be made to raise its profile as a Ten Minute and Private Members Bill. John McDonnell, chair of the RMT parliamentary group, is a key supporter of the Bill.

Speaking about the recent Early Day Motion 1170, tabled by Tony Lloyd MP, John McDonnell said that stark lessons learnt in the Gate Gourmet dispute have prompted a campaign for trade union rights with wide-ranging support demonstrated across the Labour Party and the trade unions.

"This campaign is gaining an unstoppable momentum for legislation to restore trade union rights which I believe no Labour leader will be able to resist," he said.

This May Day will see a TUC-backed national march and rally in support of the bill, in central London. It is imperative that Britain's trade unionists march to unshackle the unions and a Trade Union Freedom Bill on May Day. ■

More information is available at www.tuc.org.uk/mayday

SO WHAT CAN RMT MEMBERS DO?

- As an individual, through your union, or other organisation, support and attend the march and rally – to coincide with May Day
- Invite speakers for meetings,
- Support the lobby of parliament in Autumn 2006
- Send your MP a message to sign up to the Early Day Motion 1170 or congratulate those that have. A model letter can be found in the campaigns section of the RMT website
- Join the lobby of Parliament being planned for December on the centenary of the Trades Disputes Act 1906

To contact the United Campaign for Trade Union Rights email: info@unitedcampaign.org.uk or post to the United Campaign, PO Box 17556, London EC2Y 8PA
And join the campaign at <http://www.unitedcampaign.org.uk/join.html>

PACKED MEETINGS DEMANDS ACTION ON RAIL PENSIONS

The government and rail employers must respond to the growing momentum being gathered by the rail unions' joint campaign for a solution to the industry's pension crisis, rail workers declared at a series of packed meetings around the country.

The meetings, organised by RMT, ASLEF, TSSA and CSEU, called for action to maintain pension benefits, keep the final-salary scheme open to new members, cap contributions to a reasonable level and streamline the proliferation of over 100 Railways Pension Scheme sections created by the fragmentation of privatisation.

Unions warn that failure to resolve the dispute before new pension-fund rules trigger massive contribution hikes from July 1 will result in co-ordinated ballots for industrial action across the industry.

"The united response underlines the determination among members to take action taken to protect their pensions," RMT general secretary Bob Crow said.

"The magnificent turnouts at these meetings should leave no-one in any doubt that we mean business," he said.

Meetings are scheduled for Manchester April 19, London April 20 and Newcastle April 25. ■

JOIN THE LOBBY OF PARLIAMENT ON MAY 9 TO DEFEND YOUR RAIL PENSION

Rail unions ASLEF, RMT, TSSA and CSEU/Amicus will be holding a lobby of parliament in defence of railway workers pensions

Assemble outside Parliament at 1pm Nearest Tube Westminster.

Speakers include:

RMT general secretary Bob Crow

ASLEF general secretary Keith Norman

TSSA general secretary Gerry Doherty

Please write to your MP in advance to tell them you wish to meet them at the lobby and to ask them to sign Early Day Motion 1681 in support of rail workers pensions. Please visit www.rmt.org.uk to download lobby material or email j.croy@rmt.org.uk

Let your MP how you feel!

The joint lobby will demand that employee contributions are capped at an affordable rate, the fund is kept open to new entrants, that benefits are maintained at least at current levels and that the scheme is streamlined.

NEW KENT FRANCHISE THREATENS SAFETY AND JOBS



WARNING: RMT has long-warned that the re-privatisation of South Eastern Trains would lead to service cuts and job losses

The new Integrated Kent Franchise which begins this month could result in the removal of staff from stations and guards from trains

After a detailed study of the Invitation to Tender document which RMT requested from the Department for Transport under the Freedom of Information Act, the union has discovered that bidders were asked not to exclude any extension of Driver Only Operated Trains and to have a industrial relations plan for removing guards from trains.

"The document reveals information that will be of great concern to passengers and workers alike," RMT general secretary Bob Crow said.

The union also found that the Invitation to Tender required bidders to consider changes to

station staffing policy, when only at the end of last year the government had overruled previous efforts by South Eastern Trains to scrap 100 station staff jobs.

"At the height of public concerns for passenger safety and security on trains it is unbelievable that these sorts of cuts are being considered," said Bob.

The winner of the Franchise, Govia, will receive over half a billion pounds in public subsidy and the union demanded the company comes clean on what their intentions are for staffing stations and trains. ■

Legal services helpline for Scottish members - freephone 0800 328 1014

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SHIPPING

RMT DEMANDS INCLUSION OF SEAFARERS IN MINIMUM WAGE

RMT called on the government to close legal loopholes that deprive most seafarers working on vessels in UK waters of the protection of the minimum wage.

Merchant seafarers are presently only covered by the minimum wage while employed on a UK-registered vessel serving in UK 'internal waters', which effectively excludes most ratings from minimum-wage protection.

Internal waters' are interpreted by the government only as river estuaries and the straits between the mainland and islands just off the coast, although the UK has jurisdiction over 'territorial waters' 12 miles offshore.

"It is an absolute disgrace that even UK-registered vessels, benefiting from the millions handed out in Tonnage Tax relief, can pay wages below the UK national minimum wage while in UK waters," national secretary Steve Todd said.

"Even with the welcome increase, the minimum wage is far too low, yet UK employers are sticking two fingers up even at that sum and routinely paying seafarers as little as £2 an hour.

He said that foreign nationals on UK ships are already discriminated against through an outrageous exemption from the 1976 Race Relations Act which allows bosses to pay super-exploitative wages – a loophole the government has promised, yet so far failed, to fix.

"Allowing ship-owners to duck the minimum wage as well amounts to a blank cheque for exploitation.

"At the very least the government should change its interpretation of 'internal waters' to include all UK territorial waters, so that at least seafarers working on UK-registered vessels qualify for the minimum wage.

"Far better that all vessels, regardless of the flag they fly, should be bound by UK employment law while they are in UK waters," Steve said.

The union has called on governments to work together to find ways of ensuring that maritime employers can no longer avoid observing minimum employment standards just because their workplaces happen to float on water. ■

RMT WELCOMES DECISION TO GIVE CALMAC ORKNEY AND SHETLAND ROUTES



RMT welcomed the news last month that Caledonian MacBrayne has been named as preferred bidder for ferry services to Orkney and Shetland currently run by NorthLink.

However, the union also renewed its call to the Scottish Executive to abandon its "expensive, wasteful and completely unnecessary" policy of putting Scotland's lifeline ferry routes out to tender.

"It is good news that the Orkney and Shetland routes will be taken over by a publicly owned company with which we have constructive industrial relations," said national secretary Steve Todd.

"The tendering process being followed by the Scottish Executive is wasteful,

expensive and wholly unnecessary, and RMT will continue to campaign for CalMac to be allowed to run Scotland's lifeline ferry services as a publicly owned and publicly accountable company," he said.

He said that NorthLink members had been through the cruel and unnecessary process of tendering twice in the last five years, not knowing who their employer will be or even if they will emerge from the process with jobs at all.

"Now that this latest period of uncertainty is over our priority will be to work to ensure that their jobs, terms and conditions are protected," Steve Todd said. ■

Your Union



RMT constitution officer Lucy Douch kicks off a series of articles explaining how your union works

For most members, the branch is the main point of contact with the union's formal structures.

Each new member is sent details of the branch they have been allocated to, including the date and venue of meetings, with their membership card.

A distinction is made between 'General Grades' and 'Shipping Grades' branches. This is a reflection of the history of the union, specifically the merging of the National Union of Railwaymen (General Grades) and the National Union of Seamen (Shipping Grades) to form RMT.

MEETINGS

Most branches meet monthly on a weekday evening, usually in a social environment. A typical branch agenda includes reports from the workplaces covered by the branch, on recruitment and on individual cases being pursued on behalf of branch members. There is also correspondence to be dealt with such as circulars from Head Office, appeals for support from other labour movement organisations and motions.

If branch motions are agreed by the majority of people at the meeting, they are submitted to the Council of Executives for

consideration. For example, Glasgow Shipping Branch recently discussed how the 1966 seamen's strike should be commemorated during its fortieth anniversary year and, as a result, a motion was sent to the Council of Executives proposing ways in which this event could be celebrated.

Attendance at branch meetings enables members not only to keep themselves informed of what is happening in the union at local, regional and national level but also to keep the branch informed of what is happening in workplaces.

Well-run Branch meetings are where the nitty gritty of union organisation takes place such as allocating recruitment tasks, organising picketing or leafleting duties. They also provide a base for local representatives - the union presence in the workplace - supporting them and, if necessary, calling them to account.

Branches are fundamental to the decision-making processes of the union, as they not only nominate delegates to attend conferences but also send in resolutions to be discussed at those conferences.

In recent years, the union's

debates on the use of the Political Fund and our relationship with the Labour Party were very much led and shaped by resolutions on these subjects from branches across the country.

CONFERENCES

For Annual General Meeting (AGM) elections, branches are grouped together into areas (general grades) and regions (shipping grades) and the number of delegates per area/region depends on the number of members they have. Each delegate attends the AGM as a representative of the group of branches in their area/region, and the AGM is, in the words of the rule book, "the supreme government of the union".

There are other conferences to which branches may send delegates, such as grades conferences. These are conferences that address issues of specific interest to particular areas of work such as road freight, buses, train crew, catering or engineering.

These conference are entitled to submit two AGM resolutions. In addition, the RMT runs the following national advisory conferences: health & safety, retired members; young members, women, black and

ethnic minority members and lesbian, gay and bisexual members.

The only way to get to these conferences is through your branch. Branches are also where nominations are made for all the nationally elected positions in the union (such as the president, general secretary, assistant general secretaries and members of the council of executives) and delegates to TUC conferences.

Branches can make appeals to the Council of Executives against decisions that the general secretary or the council of executives has made and on behalf of members who have been refused a benefit or legal representation. Branch Secretaries are responsible for making applications for benefits such as accident benefit and for legal representation and, should these applications be turned down for whatever reason, the branch can appeal against that decision if it wishes to.

The Branch is the cornerstone of the union and the interface between the member and the union, helping members to find their way through the structures, providing assistance and advice and the opportunity to participate in the union at all levels.

YOUR NEW COUNCIL OF EXECUTIVE MEMBERS

The new members elected this year to serve for three years



JACK JONES: Jack is Holyhead branch secretary and has worked as a fitter for Sealink and as a signaller since 1992. He has held a number of posts in the union and has an interest in health and safety issues. He said that low pay, the rights of union reps and building the union are the most important issues for him during his three years on the executive committee.



PETER ROWLAND: Peter is a member of Manchester South branch and works as a train guard. He has held a number of union posts including branch chair. He began on the railways as a carriage cleaner in 1978 and is an example of career progression which has been undermined by privatisation. He says this is one more reason why the railway must be re-nationalised to halt the fragmentation of the industry.



FRANK COCHRANE: Frank is a member of Glasgow engineering branch and has served as a branch secretary. He has safety concerns over the fragmentation of the rail industry and the use of sub-contractors on the network. Pensions are also a big issue for Frank and he believes it will require unity of the workforce across the industry, regardless of sectional interests, to defend the scheme.



PAUL BURTON: This is Paul's second term on the Council of Executives and he has also been president of the clerical and supervisory grades conference. He said that he learnt a lot about the union the first time on the executive and intends to use that experience in the interests of the members. He says he enjoys getting out and about meeting members and outlining what the union can do for them. He feels that low pay is a key issue particularly in the catering and cleaning grades.



DERRICK MARR: Derrick is a train driver who has also served on the Council of Executives before. He began his career as a catering assistant and strongly believes in an all-grades union that does not indulge in elitism and sectionalism. He says his experience of re-structuring has not had a positive impact on the workforce and believes it is necessary to win back what many members have lost in terms and conditions.

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PROTECTING AND PROMOTING OUR MEMBERS' INTERESTS.



CLERICAL MEMBERS READY TO FIGHT FOR PENSIONS

Supervisory and clerical grades conference delegates converged on the French city of Lille to plan the fight for pension rights



It is time to stand up and fight defend the final salary Railways Pension Scheme, conference agreed.

Chris Smart, Cardiff delegate said it was clear that the employers wanted to shut down the scheme.

"Employers see pensions as not being part of the new business model.

"If Network Rail is allowed to stop new entrants into the scheme, other companies will follow suit," he said.

RMT general secretary Bob Crow said that it was a huge issue for all rail workers.

"Bosses are saying that pensions are no longer required and they are scheming to remove pension rights," he said.

He said there were now attempts to increase contributions in some cases to over 20 per cent of wages, making it too expensive so people drop out. Plans to close the scheme to new members also diminishes the long term viability of the pension fund.

Rail unions have united to

defend the scheme and have proposed an action plan to tackle the funding gap, streamline the scheme and keep it open to new members.

"Pension were not given to us but won by those that came before us and it is down to us to defend this fund for those that came after us," he told delegates.

The union has resolved to begin a ballot for industrial action in defence of the pension fund after ATOC, Network Rail and the government failed to respond to requests from rail unions for talks on the issue.

35-HOUR WEEK AT NETWORK RAIL

Conference unanimously backed calls for the introduction of a 35-hour week for supervisory grades at Network Rail.

Chris Smart, said it was disappointing that the company was seeking to delay the measure as members in these grades regarded the matter a 'done deal'.

Paul Burton, reporting for

the Council of Executives, said that the union had met with the company to implement the 35-hour week.

"They offered a three year deal to pay for the cut in hours, which we rejected as pay was a separate matter," he said.

Conference called for a substantial one year pay increase for Network Rail staff.

Chris Smart said such a deal should have no strings and travel facilities should be reintroduced for all staff.

Bill Laing, North Mersey delegate said that all supervisory grades should be involved in all discussions on harmonisation within Network Rail.

DEFENDING CONDITIONS

Conference called for a campaign to inform supervisory and clerical grade members of their rights to be represented and accompanied at disciplinary hearings.

Gary Hassell, Brighton joint delegate said that information should also be made available

on health and safety at work, lone working, collective bargaining and conditions of service.

"Issues surrounding the office working environment including bullying and dealing with the public should also be dealt with by the union," he said.

END LONE WORKING

Conference called for a clear policy for ending lone working on barrier and gate lines.

Paul Little, Feltham delegate said that double manning at all barriers needed to be maintained by fully trained staff.

Gary Hassell, said that generic risk assessments for gatelines was unclear and required local union input.

"These assessments are inadequate and the company has a duty of care to protect employees," he said.

Such a policy should include union guidelines for members to advise them of their rights under health and safety laws.

He also called on the union

to resist the use of untrained agency staff.

"Agency staff are used as cheap labour so it is a threat to jobs and a danger for the public," he said.

Conference backed a call by Jim Levy, Watford delegate for a reversal of the trend of pressing ticket office staff into carrying out other duties such as winterisation and security patrols.

"These duties mean that ticket offices must be closed and puts staff at risk," he said.

Paul Levy, Wimbledon delegate said that guidelines were required from the union over the issues of ticket office security.

Assistant general secretary Pat Sikorski warned that employers were seeking to cut staff and bring in agency workers in order to casualise the workforce.

"Train operating companies make hundreds of millions of pounds in profits and can well afford proper, trained staff as outlined in the union's stations charter," he said.

He also warned that the government was planning more cuts in the rail budget which could result in more closures.

"They are slowly dividing rail services into those that make money and those that don't.

"Less profitable lines are earmarked for closure by cuts services and staff so nobody wants to use them," he said.

DEFEND COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

Paul McDonald, Wimbledon delegate said there was a need to prevent the introduction of individual contracts which undermined collective bargaining and the strength of the union.

Chris Smart said the introduction of such contracts under 'role clarity' was being used to drive down wages and introduce different rates of pay.

"Often members are bullied into signing these contract under threat of redundancy," he said.

TICKET OFFICE GRADING

Conference called on the union to work towards a minimum grade of Clerical Officer grade two, or equivalent in restructured grades, for all staff working in ticket offices.

Brian Woods, Feltham delegate pointed out that the introduction of new equipment and technology meant that it was no longer appropriate employ rail operators in ticket offices.

"There are anomalies all over the network and that needs to end as it divides staff," he said.

Robin White, Bristol Rail delegate called for guidelines from the union over new technology.

"We should calculate savings made by employers as a result and negotiate payments for members on that basis," he said.

BTP

Conference called on the union to write to the British Transport Police to express concerns over the lack of support for staff.

Robin White said that rail staff were seen as 'soft targets' and often would arrest them rather than members of the public.

"The rail industry pays millions to the BTP in order for them to attack staff rather than defend them," he said.

Rossane Fong, Waterloo delegate said that the BTP are bullying staff into accepting cautions.

"This is unnecessary and unacceptable and it is time they went out and targeted those that break the law," she said.

ORGANISING

Carolyn Sidall of the organising unit outlined the union's strategy to recruit and retain members. This includes a one-day induction course to familiarise new members to union facilities and organising weeks in all the regions.

The organising weeks in which volunteers and reps analysis different workplaces to find out the density of membership.

Local organising committees have also been established which has already proved successful in a campaign around Paddington station in London, where around two hundred people joined.



Carolyn reported a 15 per cent increase in union income and a huge increase in membership.

"However, there is still work to do and a need to identify weak areas in order to win 100 per cent membership," she said.

She said that the union had a high calibre of union clerical grade reps, who are key to building the union at the workplace.

Robin White said that organising and recruiting revealed the need for a single rail union.

"We need to tell staff that RMT recruits all grades," he said.

Conference made a call for specific recruitment materials for clerical grades and training courses. Mike Sargeant said a campaign to promote what RMT can do for clerical grades would also assist with recruitment. ■



PROTECTING YOUR FUTURE

Nick Quirk reports from this year's young members' conference in Glasgow, which proved to be another step forward in generating new young activists

A key issue that kept cropping up at this year's young members conference was the future of pensions.

It is increasingly worrying for all, but it was felt that this generation of the working class will suffer in the future with a 'work 'til you drop' attitude which is rapidly developing.

Ross Marshall, Central Line West delegate warned that young people were going to be seriously effected and action must be taken now to stop this government taking away any chance to retire with respect and dignity.

Assistant general secretary Pat Sikorski also expressed his deep concerns to delegates.

"In the past, although the rail industry had poor working conditions and low pay, they recruited and kept staff by two major positives, free travel and a good pension.

"Since privatisation, our travel privileges have been severely cut and now it seems our pensions are now at threat and we cannot afford to let that happen," he said.

Dave Collins, Council of Executives spoke about the need for branch secretaries to encourage young members to meetings to help develop union involvement as well as becoming more confident within

their workplace and knowing their rights.

"It is clear that the people present here at this conference have good supportive branches but we must support this growth and encourage other branch secretaries to become more aware of young members in their branch and we need to look into ways of doing this," he said.

Dave Giles, Jubilee South and East London Line delegate said:

"If each branch secretary

were to write to each young branch member, they would find, as my branch secretary did, a few new members turning up to the branch meetings".

SOLIDARITY

As Plymouth No. 1 delegate I said that developing solidarity amongst young workers in the UK and across Europe was important.

"Although everyone knows that rail privatisation has not worked, European governments are still plotting to get rid of the public ownership of their railways," I said.

I said the union should unite with others all other Europe to help campaign against privatisation, the exploitation of workers and help develop emerging unions.

It was agreed that a

European Young Members Council would be the perfect solution in this fight.

Conference thanked Jamie Lines who stepped in at the last minute to be acting chair due to unforeseen circumstances and led the conference exceedingly well.

Next year's conference is to be held in London and Brian Bancroft was voted in to be chair, so the conference will be in safe hands. If you wish to know more about the activities young members contact your branch secretary or get in touch with the Ray Spry-Shute at head office.

This is your union so I would urge all young members to get involved to fight together to protect your future in the workplace. ■



THE FAILURES OF THE OCCUPATION OF IRAQ

Houzan Mahmoud of Organisation of Women's Freedom in Iraq recently addressed RMT women's conference

The occupation of Iraq – which is now been in place for three years – were undertaken allegedly to bring “democracy”, end terrorism, and “liberate” the people from the torture chamber Saddam had made of the whole country.

Judged by these war aims, the whole adventure has been an unmitigated failure. But there is more. Iraq today is a war zone, constantly convulsed by violence and reactionary terrorism.

The regime in Iraq is tailor-made to serve the interests of the occupiers. As such it lacks all mass legitimacy and its institutions are perceived as abject failures.

After three years, even the basic requirements for security and basic amenities have not been restored.

OPPRESSION OF WOMEN IN IRAQ

The position of women is the starkest example of the general societal failure. They are being

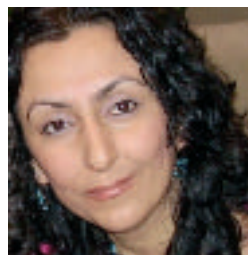
murdered to satisfy backward concepts of “honour”, they are kidnapped for ransom or as a result of political disputes and they are being beheaded by Islamists for not wearing the veil.

The vile oppression of women is not simply occurring through these ‘informal’ channels, however. In the regime’s prisons, the abuse and torture of female inmates is endemic.

The Organisation of Women's Freedom in Iraq (OWFI) has exposed the existence of a women's prison in the district of Alkazemiah where many women have been raped, tortured and continuously abused by the prison guards.

Unemployment is widespread and in the city of Nassreyah recently the Iraqi police opened fire on a protest of the out-of-work that was demanding the simple right of work or benefits.

Three years after of the overthrow of Saddam the



dictator, the ordinary people of this beleaguered county are living in fear and instability.

The occupation and the rise in Islamism it has provoked is leading our society into black hole of terrorism, Islamic fascism and the prospect, for women in particular, of a new dark ages.

Groups such as Al-Qaeda, Zarqawi, Moqteda Alsadr and others use the fact of the occupation to uphold their “legitimate right” to kill, kidnap, take hostages, attack civilians and bolster the most backward and misogynist norms in Iraqi society.

Their struggle has nothing to do with the genuine liberation of Iraq. The only forces that been struggling to both end the occupation and defeat the Islamists in Iraq are the secular and progressive women's and workers' movement. On a daily basis, these movements confront

both these reactionary, anti-democratic forces.

The occupation of Iraq is not a local issue. The form it takes is a struggle between two reactionary forces – US imperialism and a resurgent political Islam that defines itself against the west. This is what makes this confrontation an international question.

But this clash does not tell the whole story about Iraq. The existence of many progressive and secular mass organisations, with a clear vision to end the occupation and combat Islamism, is a historical fact.

Civilized humanity must understand that an end to the occupation of Iraq must be won by progressive forces. This struggle needs the support and solidarity from people across the world.

The Iraq occupation, the puppet regime it has imposed and the Islamists will do nothing for people in Iraq, whether they are in power or in opposition. The key to freedom and progress lies with the struggles of the working class and women. With international solidarity, they alone can lift the darkness that now threatens to engulf Iraqi society. ■

MY YEAR REPRESENTING WOMEN

RMT member Janet Cassidy looks back over a year as chair of the STUC women's committee

What a year. It started with meeting Scottish Ministers to promote women's issues such as violence against women and their families, asylum seekers and the Women and Work Commission.

I tried to impress on the Commission that child care was a prime issue concerning whether women worked part-time or full-time and that not everyone worked nine to five. Child care does not facilitate shift workers. Whether this was taken on board remains to be seen when the final report is published this year.

I addressed the Scottish Trade Union Congress, which was certainly different from moving

motions. I also chaired a seminar at the Scottish Executive on women's safety at work.

It was disturbing that the representative from the Crown Office described how assaults etc had to be corroborated. This can be difficult for the rail industry as lone working is common and the public are not always forthcoming in being witnesses.

My geography has also improved as I travelled to places from Dundee to Swansea. I also attended the TUC Women's in Scarborough, Welsh TUC Women's in Swansea and the Scottish TUC Women's in Glasgow, which this year I chaired.

This was a great honour as it is the first time it was chaired by a member of a rail union.

RMT motions at the Welsh and Scottish Women's Conferences were both on Parental Leave. These were delivered by Mandy Evans and Carol Houston, respectively. Both were first time speakers and had no problem moving these motions.

International Women's Day was a focal point in my diary and included speaking at an event in the Royston Learning Centre on the east side of Glasgow. The theme was women in traditional male industries.

Also on my list of duties was a joint meeting with the women's committees within the national and international trade union movement in London.

At the STUC Women's conference, 28 motions were

tabled for debate. These ranged from domestic abuse, homelessness, equal pay and family friendly policies. My term of office is now over but as I was re-elected onto the committee the work still continues.

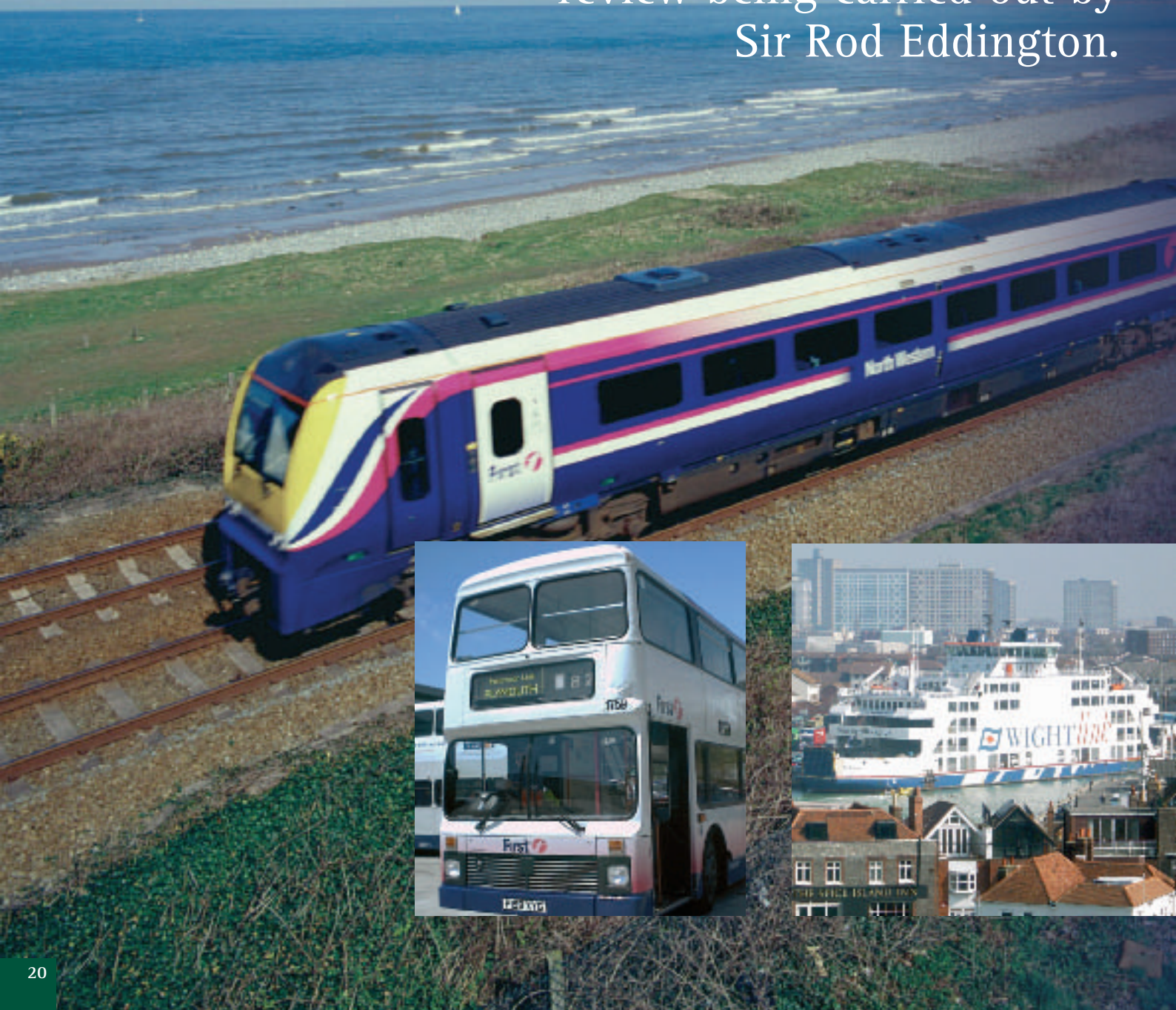
I would like to thank RMT members for their support, especially this past year. I will continue to make sure that women's issues are kept on the agenda.



Janet Cassidy

RMT LAYS OUT TRANSPORT POLICY

RMT submits policy to the
government transport
review being carried out by
Sir Rod Eddington.



The Department for Transport and the Treasury are currently conducting a review examining the long term links between transport and economic productivity, growth and stability.

In its submission to the review, RMT argued for an expansion in rail capacity and support for the vital role played by the ports and shipping sector within the transport chain. RMT also called for effective regulation of the bus network outside London.

RAIL

Previously, the government had set out a strategy for expansion of rail in the ten year plan but this has since been abandoned following the use of all available funds to maintain the existing network, under a structure similar to that set up by privatisation.

The demand for rail and other public transport will increase due to the anticipated demand management measures likely to be introduced by Government due to traffic congestion. At the current time the rail network will be unable to meet the increased demand that will follow.

The government has abandoned its ten year transport plan. However, the union said that demand for rail will inevitably increase.

Forecasts indicate increases in road traffic also run completely counter to government objectives to reduce carbon emissions by 20 per cent on 1990 levels by 2020, and by 60 per cent by 2050.

A study by Professor Phil Goodwin for the All Party Rail Group stated that more people than previously envisaged will make choices between road and rail based on the choices on offer.

He argued that public transport currently has a five per cent share of transport journeys, while private transport accounts for 95 per cent. If private transport journeys were reduced to 90 per cent this five per cent reduction could lead to at least a 50 per cent increase in

demand for public transport use.

Normally significant increases in rail capacity can only be delivered years after decisions are taken to begin preliminary work due to the length of time before the investment delivers increased capacity. There are concerns over the network's ability to accommodate these rising levels of demand.

There are already indications that the East Coast Main Line has significant capacity constraints and the southern sections of the other key north south routes, the Midland Main Line and the West Coast Main Line, are at 90 per cent capacity.

Therefore, investment funds for the rail enhancements, for example Thameslink 2000, must be brought forward to increase capacity. RMT has also requested that This includes the modernisation of the Great Western routes into Paddington and for the electrification of a greater share of the network be given priority.

The implementation of ERTMS Level 2 should also move forward on the grounds of safety and increased capacity.

The ten year plan promised better stations yet the poor image of rail, personified by stations with no staff presence, is a deterrent for more people travelling by rail, especially women.

RMT supported the Transport 2000 document, "Growing the Railway", which set out the economic and environmental case for rail.

The case for a new high speed line put by the Commission for Integrated Transport and the Institute of Civil Engineers are compelling.

The government should investigate the viability of a high speed rail link between London and Scotland with connections to cities on route, transforming rail travel with estimated journey times to Manchester from London cut to 90 minutes and even greater benefits on longer distances to Newcastle to Glasgow.

Upgrading the existing network to accommodate high

speed rail does not provide a long term capacity solution, is difficult due to the physical and design limitations of the existing network and consequently runs a greater risk of losing control over the timescale and cost of such a project.

Past experience in Europe has demonstrated that high speed rail can spread economic growth to the regions. It also helps contain the increasing demand for air travel with its negative environmental implications.

Long term rail enhancements are best promoted by an integrated publicly owned railway. The Catalyst report showed that the increased income for rail companies since privatisation has been funded by taxpayer subsidies and fares.

In fact, the cost is greater than if it had been funded by British Rail due to the lower cost of public borrowing, and the lower cost and greater efficiency of operating in an integrated industry.

Research by Roger Ford has estimated that rail enhancements under private ownership cost two to three times more than the equivalent undertaken by British Rail. The cost overrun on the West Coast Main Line is the most graphic example.

The most important project to increase capacity in London is Crossrail, which would link east and west London between Liverpool Street and Paddington and beyond. The union has suggested a Land Value Tax to assist with funding.

The role of freight on rail also needs to be safeguarded for the economic and environmental benefit this provides. An expansion of the rail network, including a new high speed line, will protect freight paths.

PORTS AND SHIPPING

Rail links to UK ports are an essential part of the UK transport chain. UK ports handle 96 per cent of all imports and exports and a strategic view is needed by government to ensure

that the UK remains competitive.

Shipping is often the forgotten industry that actually sustains an island nation. Environmentally, it has clear advantages over road transport t due to the capacity available to absorb the transportation of an increasing amount of freight which is anticipated in future years.

RMT promotes the increased use of short sea and coastal shipping, and inland waterways. It warned of the consequences of relying entirely on seafarers of other nations to deliver goods.

The UK shipping industry is a major contributor to the UK balance of payments with the sector contributing £7.15 billion to service exports. However, following the sale of P&O to DP World, there will be no UK-owned maritime enterprises with significant worldwide shipping interests.

RMT contrasted the position of China, which is acquiring additional sea routes to develop their maritime interests in order that economic development can be promoted through increased trading capacity.

BUSES

RMT recommended that the bus industry should be regulated effectively to harness the increased demand for public transport use in cities and towns.

The Mayor of London has been able to utilise the regulatory framework in London to deliver substantial increases in usage.

Bus use in the capital is now at its highest since 1969. Yet elsewhere bus use actually fell from 5.6 million trips in 1985/86 to 4.6 million in 2004/05.

RMT urged the government to review the operating regime for buses to promote regulation and far greater integration between bus and rail.

**A full copy of the RMT submission has been circulated to branches and is also available on the RMT website.*

RAIL UNION LEARNING REPS GATHER IN LONDON



RMT union learning rep, Mike Sargeant addresses conference



RMT rep Wendy Dale reports from the second Union Learning Conference last month.

The Rail Union Learning Conference at the TUC Congress House in London brought together rail union learning reps, project workers and organisers from four different unions RMT, ASLEF, AMICUS and TSSA.

Over 100 people from the rail industry gathered with a mutual goal - to make the Union Learning Initiative a success by making learning at work accepted as a 'normal' activity.

I arrived just before the speakers started and it wasn't long before a familiar face sat next to me. It was Didier, a rep from Tonbridge.

His speciality subject is French, his native tongue. We chatted for a few minutes about progress and problems in our workplaces until RMT Education Officer Ray Spry-Shute opened conference and made everyone feel welcome. The first speaker was the Rail Union Learning Programme Manager Steve Hayes, who stressed the value of union learning reps, making us feel a very important part of the whole movement.

Following a break, we filtered off into various unions to learn 'How your union works'.

Before the meeting started, I met Caroline from Orpington who has been studying sign language for some time with the aim to teach others in the workplace when she has qualified.

The RMT workshop was presented by our very own Mike Sargeant, who gave a cracking, informative power point presentation about the history of the union.

This left the charismatic Bob Crow to remind us about how the union works and of our individual parts to play to make a union successful as a whole, telling us that we, the members, control the decisions to make RMT what it is.

After lunch the afternoon workshops began and I sat in on one about setting up the learning agreement.

This was presented by Teresa Williams, a Regional Development Worker. Southern Railways was used as a good example of how an agreement is reached. Southern Railways Company Council Rep, Kevin Eade was on the panel.

The last workshop was about partnerships, which promised to be fun. At first, I thought I'd gone to the wrong workshop as lecturer, Professor Colin Armistead grabbed our attention and said 'let's play a game'.

We formed into pairs and I teamed up with Elizabeth, who shared my competitive spirit. We were each given two cards, colour coded so that only the individual can see.

The object was to score as many points as possible, not against, but with my partner, without using any form of communication.

I beat Elizabeth in the first hurdle, then she overtook me in the second, but our cumulative total was quite appalling and we both learnt a little about understanding the overall objective first and the importance of having a strategy. We all had great fun and learnt a lot about forming partnerships.

The final plenary in the main hall was addressed by Tessa Van Gelderen, a Regional Development Worker.

She thanked us for our commitment and hard work and asked us to return conference evaluation forms.

'You will all return yours from today, won't you?' She pleaded. So just remember fellow reps, if you haven't done so already, get it in the post because Tessa knows where you live! ■

RMT attends World Social Forum in Venezuela

Scarlet Harris reports from the sixth World Social Forum in Caracas

The World Social Forum is a meeting of organisations and individuals to discuss alternatives to privatisation and corporate globalisation.

It was created to discuss alternatives to the model of globalisation pushed forward by multinational companies and governments at the World Economic Forum held each January in Davos.

This latest gathering included over 52,000 participants from all over the world meeting and exchanging ideas.

As well as the many anti-globalisation groups, women's organisations, campaign groups and NGOs, there was

representation from a wide range of trade unions and worker's associations from across Latin America, the US and Europe.

Venezuelan transport unions, including the metro workers union, were a visible presence at the many demonstrations and seminars.

I had the opportunity to meet with government ministers and Alicia Castro, vice-president of the International Transport Federation (ITF).

The ITF also ran two seminars, one on transport and terrorism and one on the challenges of organising facing unions trying to organise

workers in a globalised logistics sector.

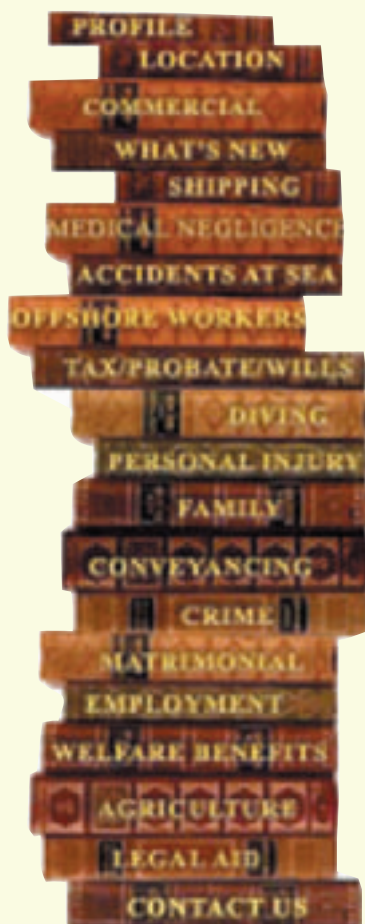
The seminar on transport and terrorism was led by Alicia and focused on recent events such as the London transport bombings of last year, the Madrid Atocha train bombs of 2004, and the events of September 11, 2001.

Thousands gathered in Poliedro sports stadium to hear Venezuela's president Hugo Chavez speak.

He congratulated new left wing Bolivian president Evo Morales on his recent election and said it was another sign of the changing tide in Latin American politics.

"It is time for an end to US interference in the affairs of this region and for an end the global neo-liberal experiment," he said.

RMT representatives will be attending the European Social Forum in Athens in May. ■



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INTERNATIONAL FOCUS

FRENCH TRANSPORT WORKERS IN FOREFRONT OF JOBS BATTLE

From Jeff Apter in Paris

Rail and urban transport workers were at the forefront of the most powerful and united trade union action France has seen for over 10 years.

National rail and city transport services were severely disrupted as millions of private

and public sector workers and students took to the streets to protest against the right-wing government's unpopular and controversial youth employment law.

Conservative Prime minister Dominique de Villepin's "First

Job Contract" law (CPE) aims to allow employers to dismiss workers under 26 without reason during the first two years of employment.

But unions say the CPE is tantamount to treating workers as slaves.

France has a 9.6 per cent unemployment and one of

Europe's most shameful youth unemployment records.

The official jobless rate for under-26s is 23 per cent and this rises to 50 per cent in underprivileged suburbs of major cities.

There have been five days of protest since the law was passed in late January.

Numbers rose to well over three million in 135 towns and cities on March 28 - including 700,000 workers and students demonstrating in Paris. Meanwhile, students remain on strike at 60 universities.

The number of French people supporting the action has risen to 63 per cent - and to 73 per cent of the under-30s. One quarter of conservative electors also oppose the CPE and many MPs of the ruling UMP Party criticise the prime-minister for not consulting the unions before the bill became law, as he promised he would.

The Prime minister offered late talks on possible minor changes to the CPE but the unions want the measure withdrawn and the adoption of a new law that genuinely tackles unemployment, especially among young people.

Unions and students' organisations have called a fifth day of strikes and demonstrations for this month, supported by the Socialist, Communist and Green opposition parties.

Meanwhile, a decision of France's Constitutional Court is awaited to see if the law is in conformity with the constitution.

The Court can empower the French president to ask parliament to review a law, even if it already has been passed, thus giving the government a way out of the crisis. ■



IRISH PROTEST AGAINST PRIVATISATION



SIPTU branch officials at the Siptu protest outside Leinster House, Dublin last month to protest against the sale of national airline Aer Lingus. ■

GREEK PROTESTS



Delivery personnel and couriers protest in Athens last month against planned anti-union laws by Greece's right wing government. A 24-hour nationwide strike disrupted transport and closed banks, schools and hospitals. ■

SOUTH AFRICAN TRANSPORT WORKERS DEMONSTRATE



Transnet workers marched to parliament in Cape Town, South Africa, last month as part of a national strike by the South Africa Transport and Allied Workers Union, United Transport and Allied Trade Workers Union and South Africa Railway and Harbour Workers Union. The countrywide strike was launched after negotiations with Transnet on the restructuring of the giant parastatal failed. ■

The changing face of exploitation



President's column

It's a strange world we workers live in as the nature of exploitation changes from time to time.

Around forty-six years ago when I joined the railway, I was told by the boss – who in those days was the station master – “boy, if you keep your nose clean and do what your told by me you'll have a good job on British Railways for life”.

He also pointed out that the pay was not the best around but secure and there was a good pension scheme for your retirement.

He also said that as a railway porter you can also get promotion.

“So it's all up to you the job and the “security” is here for you,” he said.

So I believed him and took him at his word and became “a railwayman” and, whilst I enjoyed the job, I soon realised that I needed protection.

So, first, I joined the union and shortly afterwards I joined the pension scheme. It was not long before the Beeching axe came down and much of our rural and some main line railways disappeared and many jobs were lost.

I then worked on the Great Central Line, which was on the hit list; so I lost my job as a Guard under the last in, first out arrangements (so much for the boss's promises).

I was allocated another job at another depot but this would not have been so easy had I not been in the union.

This taught me a good lesson in how vital it is for all workers to be in a union. My treatment also encouraged me to become active and my local representatives fought hard for their members and used to always say “if we stick together we can protect all”.

That was in the 1960's and here I am in 2006 still looking for the boss's promises to be delivered. Of course, I know that these promises are only promises and I still need the protection of RMT more than ever.

Now I hear bosses claim that a ‘job for life’ is a thing of the past and workers should not be “protectionist” and must move jobs when they are no longer required.

Now they claim unions do not fit the “modern” image and refer the railway as a business. Passengers are now customers as if that makes them feel better when the privatised trains run late.

That great friend of the road lobby, Beeching is dead and gone but the most recent Transport Act seems intent on bringing him back to raise his axe on rail services once more.

Then, there are the various EU rail packages and directives to contend with, which enforce the privatisation and fragmentation of transport sectors across Europe.

Our “secure” pensions are no longer so, due to the long ‘pension fund holidays’ taken by employers who took the opportunity to halt paying into the scheme in order to line their own pockets with taxpayers money.

Due to the changes made on pension funding, coupled with a downturn in the stock market, our pension contributions are going through the roof, often making them too expensive for many.

This government is now telling us that security in old age is our own problem, and we need to save through expensive schemes that make fortunes for capitalists in the process. It is imperative that we have a unified fight with the other rail unions to defend the right to a decent pension scheme.

All in all, I am glad that we have the protective arm of our union and I urge all transport workers to join in and support the campaigns that we are engaged in now and in the future.

Tony Donaghey

SSP BACKS RMT POLICIES

Scottish Socialist Party delegates from all over Scotland backed key RMT policies at the party's annual conference in Dundee last month.

The union gained support campaigns for rail passenger services to be taken under public control, opposition to the privatisation of Cal-Mac ferry services on the Clyde and to the Western Isles and a condemnation of unfair practice which allow private rail

operators to obtain public money as compensation for losses incurred in disputes.

RMT call for the expansion of rail to counter the effect of road transport carbon emissions was made in a debate on climate change.

The union's campaign against the removal of Fire Precautions (sub-surface railway stations) Regulations 1989 was also raised in the debate on fire service cuts.

The union's call to oppose

the replacement of Trident and the decommissioning of the existing Trident weapons system was also supported.

In the debate on pensions and workers' pension rights, RMT expressed best wishes to those public sector unions who plan to take industrial action and highlighted the campaign to defend our members' rail pensions.

The delegation welcomed the refreshing, open and forthright debates on all matters before the

Conference ranging across internal party procedures, domestic and international affairs.

The value of the RMT's affiliation to the Scottish Socialist Party was reflected in not only the warm words expressed for the RMT by the National Convener, Colin Fox, but also in the practical support for our union's aims and policies.

John Milligan



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FRENCH CLERICAL RAIL STAFF UNDER ATTACK

Emmanuelle Bigot from French rail union
SUD outlines the attacks on clerical rail
staff in an industry which is rapidly being
prepared for full-scale privatisation



SUD: Emmanuelle Bigot from French rail union SUD recently addressed the clerical and supervisory grades conference in Lille, France, hosted by the RMT European Passengers Services branch.

French retail, clerical and supervisory staff employed by the French national railways (SNCF) still work in the public sector.

However, the company is being run as a private sector business in every way and station and clerical staff are not sheltered from these new methods of organisation.

In 2001, SNCF began to fragment itself in a similar process started by British Rail to prepare the way for privatisation. Management is organising the railway into two parts, trains you can make money out of and trains you can't make money from.

The non-profitable trains are going to be part of the Public Transport Division.

The profitable trains, mainly mainline ones, are in a business division: Voyages-France-Europe.

However, SUD-rail and other rail unions succeeded in stopping this reorganisation for a while through strike action. Unfortunately, by the end of this year, SNCF will be completely restructured into sectors from top to bottom.

Around 15,000 clerical and supervisory staff are directly employed by SNCF under two kinds of contracts. Most are employed under a national rail contract, while around 2,000 have less protection and are required to work until 60 before being able to retire. SNCF is also using 4,000 to 5,000 short-term contract workers, almost exclusively students.

National rail contracts will give you better pensions, including retirement at 55, more protection, an easier career path and medical protection.

SNCF also has 500 subsidiary companies but few of them deal directly with station matters.

These international subsidiaries include Lyria between France and Switzerland, Elipsos International (France and Spain), Thalys (France, Belgium, Germany) and

Eurostar Group (France, Belgium and UK).

SNCF is using subsidiary companies to introduce new technology such as an internet travel agency, on-line ticket booking or to employ low paid customer-care staff.

By using the subsidiary company EFFIA, SNCF is able to employ staff for all kinds of services in stations.

At SNCF, retail/information staff are still one grade, which gives you the right to work in any station job anywhere on French railways. However, differences between these sectors are growing.

For the suburban Paris network, SNCF is reducing the number of ticket offices by introducing a new generation of yearly tickets. Ticket office staff will then be used as ground station staff, conductors or for some hours as ticket-sellers.

Rail workers have just rejected this proposal and organised a fight back, including a petition signed by commuters and by taking strike action on the first day of every month.

Rail workers' have forced management to discuss retail job developments, yet SNCF has maintained that it wants to reorganise stations and ticket distribution using new technology without human beings.

Yet commuters will not receive a better service or a more efficient rail network as a result.

Outside the suburban network, SNCF's public transport branch deals with regional train services. Central government is losing powers to regional administrations, which are to decide how stations are organised and how they are funded. These regional councils want staff on stations but they may not be rail workers.

Regional councils also have the right to choose another company to provide travel information. And that is going to be the next struggle. ■

FAREWELL TO GORDON COLES, A RHONDDA STALWART

A large crowd gathered at Llwycoed Crematorium in Wales recently to bid farewell to Gordon Coles who died of cancer at the age of 82.

Gordon was train driver who joined the National Union of Railwaymen in 1941.

In a long and distinguished career Gordon had been a branch secretary, secretary of South Wales and Mon district council and served on the NUR executive committee.

An activist from the moment of joining the union, Gordon was deeply involved in opposing the Beeching closures in the 1960's.

He took a leading role in trying to prevent the closure of the Rhondda to Swansea Bay line. Despite gathering many thousands of signatures and huge meetings, including one addressed by assistant general secretary George Brassington, the line finally closed in 1962.

On his retirement from the NUR executive, Gordon became involved in the Transport 2000 campaign. He was South Wales secretary of the campaign long after his retirement from the industry.

In his early life Gordon was introduced to socialist ideas through the Communist Party and became a member during Harry Pollitt's to win the Rhondda constituency in the election of 1945.

An able speaker, he later joined the Labour Party and became an active and forceful member. Many old friends and comrades paid their final farewell to Gordon. At Gordon's request, a former colleague from Transport 2000 read the poem Man's Dearest Possession is Life and the service ended with the singing of Cwm Rhondda. ■

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PHILIP BAGWELL



Philip Bagwell died aged 92 recently. He was a prolific writer, concentrating on transport and labour history. His first book, *The Railwaymen* (1963), was a history of the NUR, with a sequel published nearly 20 years later.

Philip wrote widely on what he regarded as shortsighted transport policies and produced several works explaining why. *The Transport Revolution* (1974) being the best known; a new edition appeared in 1988. His book, *The Transport Crisis in Britain* (1996), was widely praised and reviewed in RMT News but largely ignored by politicians.

Philip regularly contributed articles for the union journal and was writing on the need for public transport in order to combat global warming when he passed away.

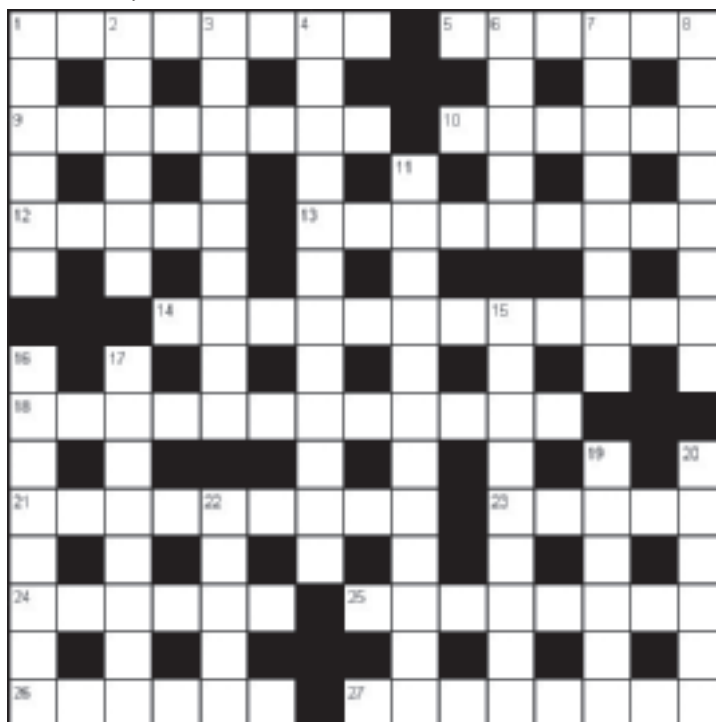
He also wrote a biography of his father, also named Philip, with his sister Joan Lawley. Philip Bagwell senior was a conscientious objector imprisoned from 1916 to 1919 and an active Christian.

Starting as a schoolteacher, Philip was appointed to the Regent Street Polytechnic in 1951, remaining on the staff until 1977 and continuing part time for another decade. He also wrote a history of the West London Methodist mission, *Outcast London*. His last book, co-authored with Peter Lyth, was published in 2002.

Philip was happily married for more than 50 years to Rosemary Olney. They had three children, two of whom, with their mother, survive him. ■

RMT £25 prize crossword

No. 24. Set by Elk



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The winner of prize crossword no. 23 is Mrs S M Robinson of Dagenham, Essex.

Send entries to Prize Crossword, RMT, Unity House, 39 Chalton Street, London NW1 1JD by May 2nd with your name and address. Winner and solution in next issue.

ACROSS

- 1 24, 7 (8)
- 5 This little piggy went to market! (3,3)
- 9 Santa's hoofed helper (8)
- 10 Royal cake-burner? (6)
- 12 Brightly burning big cat? (5)
- 13 Citizen of north African country (9)
- 14 Academic who already has a degree (4-8)
- 18 State of looking good (12)
- 21 Physically or emotionally wounding (9)
- 23 Not asleep (5)
- 24 Capital (6)
- 25 Sound place to stick your boot (8)
- 26 On the Mersey, southwest of Warrington (6)
- 27 One who judges or decides how much tax you pay (8)

DOWN

- 1 Degree of (moderate) heat; affection (6)
- 2 Model nicknamed for her stick-like appearance (6)
- 3 Military air display team (3,6)
- 4 To (mis-)judge too highly (12)
- 6 Home built of ice and snow (5)
- 7 Fatal - end of the line? (8)
- 8 Put in harm's way (8)
- 11 24, 7 (7,5)
- 15 Take apart (9)
- 16 Thatcher's Willie (8)
- 17 Capitalist's income (8)
- 19 well-known (6)
- 20 Drinking spree; DIY tent (6)
- 22 American elk (5)

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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 above approved persons listed below:-

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

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- 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.
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 - 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.
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 - Original Inland Revenue tax notification, letter, notice of coding, P60 or P45.
 - Original housing association or letting agency tenancy agreement.
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 - Original Solicitor's letter confirming recent house purchase or Land Registry confirmation.
 - Household and motor Insurance certificates - current

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Branch Sort Code

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Originator's Identification Number

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TICKET TYPE	PUBLIC RATES	YOUR SPECIAL RATES
ADULT (16-59)	£29.00	£16
CHILD (3-15)	£23.00	£15
SENIOR (60+)	£23.00	£15

**Park Open: 25 March -
29 October 2006**