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DIVERS NET 44.7% DEAL

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PROTECTING AND PROMOTING OUR MEMBERS' INTERESTS



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ACTION BRINGS RESULTS



After ten days of continuous strike action our North Sea diving members have netted themselves a pay deal worth over 44 per cent over the next two years.

This really shows what can be achieved if members stand together.

Other members are also taking a stand against the imposition of pay and conditions without proper consultation or negotiation.

Signallers in the Midlands and Eurostar cleaners have indicated that they are prepared to defend their interests and take strike action.

Meanwhile, the private sector continues to prove itself inefficient and incapable of delivering the huge increase in transport capacity our environment demands.

A National Audit Office report has revealed that the West Coast Mainline upgrade is "vastly overbudget" and the line will be incapable of coping with passenger growth.

Virgin, the private train operator on the line, has also taken nearly £600 million more in public subsidy than originally expected under its franchise agreement.

Meanwhile, the bankrupt company Sea Containers will be allowed to continue running the GNER contract on a management basis for a further two years despite government claims that it does not renegotiate rail franchises.

The stark warnings in the Stern report underline the need for a fundamental rethink about transport and a shift from road and air travel to trains, trams and buses.

To achieve this we need a growing, joined-up and affordable railway in an integrated transport network, and a new high-speed north-south railway is clearly essential.

Yet it is clear that it cannot be delivered by the current fragmented and privatised set-up.

The recent appalling performance of Metronet shows that the privatisation of Tube infrastructure, known as PPP, is incapable of delivering expected maintenance and renewal work on time.

Yet that does not prevent the privateers from racking in a million pounds from the taxpayer each week.

It is no good London Transport Commissioner Peter Hendy repeating complaints about Metronet's performance and for an "end to the excuses".

The fundamental problem lies with the very nature of the complex PPP contracts and the solution is to bring the lot back in-house before disaster

strikes.

This inability by private companies, once described by London mayor Ken Livingstone as "thieving scum", is also the reason that the labour movement does not want the East London Line taken out of the public sector.

There is an alternative, and bringing rail maintenance back-in-house has played a major role in Network Rail's improved performance. The same medicine should be administered to track renewals.

It is good news that NR's operating profits will be ploughed back into the industry rather than disappear into shareholders' pockets – it's a pity that can't also be said of train operations.

This relentless drive to introduce competition is causing more problems than it solves, often creating instability and uncertainty in what are supposed to be essential services.

This chaos is exactly what is facing the Gourock-Dunoon life-line ferry route following the imposition of EU diktats demanding that the service go out to tender without subsidies.

This tendering process was carried out at a huge public cost, yet no private companies want to operate the route without guaranteed profit from the public purse.

This has left local communities that rely on these services facing an uncertain future and the taxpayer has been forced to pick up the bill for the whole pointless exercise.

Finally, congratulations to our newly-elected executive members and I look forward to working with them and our new president John Leach. I am sure you will all join me in thanking our outgoing president Tony Donaghey for all his hard work over the last three years.

The next issue of RMT News will have details of our new education centre in Doncaster, but you can enjoy a 'virtual tour' on the RMT website now to see for yourself what excellent facilities are available.

I would like to wish you all a happy Christmas and a peaceful and prosperous new year, and hope you enjoy a well-earned break.

Best wishes

Bob Crow

EWS MEMBERS REJECT RESTRUCTURING PROPOSALS

EWS groundstaff members overwhelmingly rejected management's restructuring proposals in a recent referendum with only nine members voting yes against a total of 419 voting no.

Management are on record as saying that the whole idea of their proposal document was to "stimulate debate" on pay and conditions.

The union has requested a meeting on this basis, however, at the time of writing EWS has not responded.

The company has been very hostile to the union and

effectively derecognising RMT reps by excluding them from the negotiating machinery. This has meant that the most trivial matters have to be dealt with by senior RMT officials and led to a lot of frustration.

RMT general secretary Bob Crow said that the restructuring proposals would have spelt disaster for EWS staff.

"We sincerely hope that the company will be responsive to requests for talks as there is no reason why they shouldn't," he said.

In a direct mailing from the company, Gerry Skelton, Human



Resources Director explained the reasoning behind the restructuring proposal document.

"We are confident that when RMT responds with their views on our draft document and further discussions take place,

we can agree a mutually satisfactory package of terms and conditions," he wrote.

The union has responded and is actively seeking to take management up on the further discussions allegedly on offer. ■

WEST MIDLANDS SIGNALLERS VOTE TO STRIKE

Signallers throughout Network Rail's West Midlands area have backed strike action after the company failed to step back from the imposition of rosters at Madeley Junction box.

RMT renewed its call on Network Rail to negotiate a settlement after signallers at Madeley Junction took three days of 24-hour strike action over the imposition of single staffing rosters.

The dispute began when Network Rail refused to negotiate over new rosters for Madeley Junction as it took on the responsibility for work previously covered by the now closed Lightmoor, Cosford and Codsall boxes.

Local reps made every effort

to resolve the dispute by talking, but the company has insisted on going ahead with single staffing and simply refused to consider an alternative that would have provided essential relief.

RMT general secretary Bob Crow said that Network Rail had ignored the need for operators to get adequate time away from their VDU workstations and that is completely unacceptable, not least on safety grounds.

"If Network Rail can impose rosters in one box they will try to do it elsewhere and that holds serious implications for our operations members throughout the West Midlands," he said. ■

JOHN LEACH ELECTED RMT PRESIDENT

Lifelong London underground worker John Leach has been elected president of RMT for the next three years after beating four other candidates for the post in a postal ballot.

John, at 39 the union's youngest president for many years, will succeed Tony Donaghey when his three-year term as president ends at the turn of the year.

John Leach is currently a member of the RMT executive, representing members in the London region, and worked for London Underground most recently as a station supervisor.

The final result, after the redistribution of the votes cast for the three eliminated candidates, was: John Leach

6,865 Ray Knight 5,141.

"John has served twice on the RMT executive and is an experienced and respected trade unionist and I am sure he will make an excellent president," RMT general secretary Bob Crow said.

In other executive elections, Alex Gordon was elected unopposed to represent South Wales and West, Peter Gale was elected to represent the South West, Dave Gott was elected to represent Yorkshire and Lincolnshire, and Robert Potts was elected to represent the North East.

In addition, Peter Trend was elected to serve as the union's full-time second northern relief organiser. ■

DON'T REWARD FAILURE AT GNER

RMT has argued that Sea Containers should not be rewarded with public money for effectively defaulting on its GNER contract.

The government has agreed to tear up its £1.3 billion franchise agreement and re-let it to the company for two years on a new, fixed management basis.

RMT general secretary Bob Crow said that Sea Containers' disastrous tenure has destabilised a key part of Britain's railway network, and it should now be run in the public sector to safeguard jobs and rail services.

"Our members deserve some guarantees that GNER's plans to slash staff across the franchise will not be allowed to proceed," he said.

The union said that it made no sense to allow Sea Containers to continue draining what amount to guaranteed, risk-free profits out of GNER on a management-fee contract when the franchise could be run more efficiently and for everyone's benefit in the public sector.

The government had previously adamant that it would not renegotiate the GNER franchise, but that is what they have now done.

"How much better it would be simply to bring GNER operations back in-house and harness the revenue for the benefit of the whole industry.

"Refranchising will cost millions for the paperwork alone, and the end result will be another privateer given a licence to drain public money out of the railway industry," Bob said.

The problem now is that other privateers looking at the GNER mess will be happy in the knowledge that if they get into financial difficulties they too will be bailed out with public money and rewarded with a cushy cost-plus management contract.

Three of the country's main intercity franchises are now being run on cost-plus contracts.

"These contracts just shovel public money into private bank accounts for no good reason, and makes a complete nonsense of the entire franchising policy," Bob Crow said. ■

STOP ASSAULTS

Northern Rail staff have told bosses that they must act to stop the growing problem of violence on trains and stations.

More station and on-train staff, more visible police presence, a ban on alcohol on some services and a zero-tolerance approach to infringement of railway bylaws are at the heart of a programme demanded by Northern workers angered by the failure to deal with the problem.

A petition, already signed by the vast majority of Northern Rail conductors and station staff, also calls for managers to be on hand late at night and at weekends to provide support and co-ordinate resources, and for stations to remain open until

the departure of the last train.

The RMT campaign is supported by MPs, who have tabled a commons motion calling on Northern Rail and the British Transport Police to respond positively.

RMT organiser Stan Herschel said that there had already been 109 physical assaults and 230 cases of threats and verbal abuse on Northern Rail staff this year, but many more go unreported, and the worst period of the year is yet to come.

"We also know that a quarter of accidents to Northern passengers aren't accidents at all but assaults and we know that the vast majority of law-abiding passengers will support us," he said. (see page 21) ■

CREDIT UNION OFFER!

The next 100 members to join the RMT Credit Union will receive a free double press-up calculator and calendar.



The Credit Union is there to provide financial help and support to members for all their savings and credit needs.

Don't forget your Credit Union Annual General Meeting at Unity House on December 13 at 2pm.



LABOUR MOVEMENT JOINS EAST LONDON LINE BATTLE

Campaigners against the East London Line sell-off urged line users to send postcards addressed to London mayor Ken Livingstone and MPs against plans to hand the East London Line over to the private sector.

RMT general secretary Bob Crow said that three quarters of people in London and the southeast want the East London Line kept in public hands.

"They have all had a bellyful of the disaster of rail privatisation and we don't want the same mistake made on the Tube," he said.

TSSA assistant general secretary Manuel Cortes said that it was a tough finding anyone who thinks that

privatising the line was a good idea after the fortunes already being made out of the Tube by contractors.

"As recently as March, London Underground were still in the frame to run the extended East London Line, but suddenly, without explanation or consultation, we've been told that it will be run by one of four private bidders, and that is just not right," he said.

Around 25 MPs have signed Early-Day Motion 2398 calling for the service to remain in the public sector.

"Bob Crow explains why Ken Livingstone has got it wrong on the East London Line on page 22."



SOLIDARITY: Rail workers, RMT general secretary Bob Crow, TSSA assistant general secretary Manuel Cortes and TUC southeast regional secretary Megan Dobney leaflet commuters at Canada Water station urging East London Line users to tell Mayor Ken Livingstone to scrap privatisation plans.

Balfour Beatty took 'massive and unacceptable' Tube blast risk

Metronet consortium member Balfour Beatty took a "massive and unacceptable gamble with people's lives" by taking two 54-kilo containers of highly flammable and unstable acetylene gas into the Victoria Line.

An LUL investigation is under way into how and why the contractor – one of the firms contracted to build the East London Line extension – took what amounted to two massive potential bombs to track-replacement works on August 12.

"Balfour Beatty appear to have broken just about every safety rule in the book by taking these potentially explosive cylinders onto the Victoria Line for 48 hours," RMT general secretary Bob Crow said.

Acetylene is extremely flammable, unstable and

explosive, and is only allowed onto the Underground in half-litre containers under strict rules.

It is understood that the company had no hot-works licence, no permission to take the cylinders underground and no method statement on transporting them – and it was not the first time they had done it.

The incident underlines the case RMT has been making against plans to remove the Section 12 sub-surface fire-safety regulations that lay down strict rules.

"The idea of giving employers the initiative on fire-safety sends a shiver up my spine, because where there's a profit to be made the privateers can't be trusted, and the sooner all Tube infrastructure work is brought back in-house, the better," Bob said. ■

SOUTH WEST TRAINS GUARDS UNDER THREAT

Since Stagecoach won the right to run the new South West Trains franchise from February 2007 it has announced a number of money-saving measures including downgrading the role of the guard.

The company is already reducing the number of seats by 20 per cent to raise passenger numbers to pay £1.2 billion it is expected to pay the government over the ten-year period of the franchise.

After ripping out thousands of seats, the company is now proposing that drivers release train doors on the basis of "performance and safety".

However, it goes on to say that guards "may get caught up in ticket sales", suggesting that they want the guard to sell tickets and the driver to take over guard operations.

RMT has already raised concerns about the removal of guards at SWT following a report in *The Times* January 9 2006 that stated "hundreds of guards at South

West Trains also face dismissal as bidders for Britain's largest rail franchise draw up plans to cut costs".

The Department of Transport has formally rejected Driver-Only Operation for the franchise (*Rail Business Intelligence* Oct 5 2006) due to a policy of improving the personal safety of passengers. However, under the new 'cap-and-collar' regime excessive profits must be repaid to the government over the ten-year life of the franchise.

Profits in the early years of the franchise will range from between £15 million and £20 million but guaranteed annual income will drop to around £3 million in later years.

As a result, pressure is mounting to cut costs now to harvest greater profit later.

RMT regional organiser Phil Biayck made clear that "this union will not accept any dilution of the role and responsibility of the guard".

THE BOATMAN'S CALL

RMT Thames boatmen demonstrated last month against plans to drastically reduce boatmaster training standards on the river

Survivors and relatives of those killed in the Marchioness tragedy joined an RMT protest to urge MPs to retain stringent safety standards for the training of licenced watermen and lightermen on the Thames.

The safety rules were introduced after the 1989 Marchioness tragedy and are threatened by a generic boatmaster's licence being introduced by an EU directive which would harmonise lower standards across Europe.

Margaret Lockwood-Croft – whose son Shaun was among the 51 who died when the Marchioness was hit by the

dredger Bowbelle – said that lowering standards for training boatmasters on the dangerous tidal waters of the Thames should not be even considered.

“With even more traffic and bigger vessels it would be courting an even bigger disaster than the Marchioness if these changes are allowed to happen.

“The motto of the Marchioness Action group is Cicero's words, ‘the safety of the people shall be the highest law’, and the government has the chance to show that it agrees by at least maintaining the existing standards,” she said.

RMT general secretary Bob

Crow warned that if the proposals become law the qualifying service time to gain a Thames boatmaster licence will be slashed from five years to two.

“That is bad enough on its own, but it is also proposed to cut the length of service required to pick up local Thames knowledge by three-quarters, from two years to just six months, and to eliminate the requirement for any local knowledge above Putney or below Woolwich.

“It is even proposed to do away with the current mandatory college-based training and to reduce the qualifying age for a licence from 21 to 18 for cargo vessels up to 40 metres long.

“Our experienced members believe that is a recipe for disaster and that the current standards and qualifying service

required for a Thames licence should be retained,” Bob said.

“MPs of all parties are calling on the government to step back from this foolhardy proposal which could undermine the advances that we've made in recent years to improve safety on the Thames,” RMT parliamentary convenor John McDonnell MP said.

Around 55 MPs have already Early Day Motion 2266 which urges the government to ensure that competency standards and qualifying service time for boatmasters operating on the Thames are no less than the current standards for time-served watermen and lightermen.

A number of London MPs have also written collectively to the transport minister Stephen Ladyman MP to outline their concerns over safety on the River Thames.

RMT national secretary Steve Todd said that currently watermen and Lightermen undertake mandatory college based courses at Denton Sea School.

“Under these rules there will be no mandatory college-based training,” he said. ■

To read RMT's submission to the Marine and Coastguard Agency on the subject, visit <http://www.rmt.org.uk/Templates/Internal.asp?NodeId=98424>



EUROSTAR CLEANERS VOTE TO STRIKE AGAINST LOW PAY

Cleaners working for OCS on its Eurostar contract voted for industrial action recently following the company's refusal to improve a pay offer that fails to eradicate poverty pay rates. Members voted to strike and for action short of strike to back their campaign for a minimum pay rate that matches London mayor Ken Livingstone's recommendation of a living wage

of at least £7.05 an hour.

“OCS is paying cleaners as little as £5.50 an hour, even for nights, Sundays and bank-holiday work, and that is simply not good enough,” RMT general secretary Bob Crow said.

“The paltry increase they are offering includes consolidation of a £10 weekly attendance bonus and boils down to an insult of 20p an hour and would still leave

pay rates around £1 an hour below a living wage.

“I am sure that Eurostar passengers will be horrified to learn that the people who clean their trains and stations are paid at such miserable rates,” he said.

The union argued that if OCS can pay their top director £175,000 a year and sponsor a stand at the Oval they can afford

to pay a decent wage to the people who actually make their money.

“Poverty wages are being paid to cleaners working on their railway, and Eurostar have a responsibility to stop it.

“If OCS want to avoid industrial action it is up to them to come back to the talks table and negotiate decent pay rates,” Bob said.

DIVERS NET 44.7% PAY DEAL

After ten days of continuous strike action, members vote overwhelmingly to accept a 44.7 per cent cumulative pay increase over two years.

After ten days of continuous strike action, members vote overwhelmingly to accept a 44.7 per cent cumulative pay increase over two years

More than 900 striking North Sea divers and support staff voted by over 80 per cent to accept a 44.7 per cent two-year pay deal, on an 80 per cent turnout.

The union launched strike action on November 1 after offshore personnel rejected a 37 per cent pay offer and not one diving support vessel was operational throughout the stoppage.

Members on vessels as far a field as Singapore, the Canaries and Egypt joined the strike and members walked also out of training courses in Norway.

The final settlement gives an

immediate increase of 25 per cent on all rates, with a further five per cent on the new rates next April, and increases in November 2007 and 2008 of RPI plus 1.5 per cent or five per cent, whichever is greater.

The seven employer signatories to the deal will also now pay eight bank holidays, up from four previously, and each has undertaken to agree proper bargaining structures with the union, although pay will continue to be negotiated collectively.

"By any standard this is a tremendous victory for a group of workers who have displayed grit, determination and complete solidarity in their campaign to win a fair pay increase," RMT general secretary Bob Crow said.

National secretary Steve Todd

pointed out that divers and their support crews do difficult and hazardous work in an industry that makes enormous profits, and the settlement was a stride towards reversing the two decades of pay erosion.

"Nonetheless, there remain issues to be addressed, and the establishment of proper negotiating procedures provides the framework within which that can now be done," he said.

"Our members came out as one, stood together through ten days of solid strike action, and can return to work proud that their unity has won a significant advance," regional organiser Stan Herschel said.

Messages of support flooded into the strike office from diving maritime unions around the world.

Norwegian colleagues offered practical support and attended a mass meeting during the dispute in Aberdeen. Messages also came from as far a field as the Indonesian Seafarers' Union, the Argentinean divers' union and from the Maritime Union of Australia. ■

RATES OF PAY AND CONDITIONS FOR OFFSHORE DIVING PERSONNEL

- A 25 per cent increase in all rates of pay with effect from November 1 2006
- A further increase of five per cent on the new pay rates with effect from April 1 2007
- An increase of five per cent or RPI (Currently 3.6 per cent) + 1.5 per cent, whichever is the greater, with effect from November 1 2007
- An increase of five per cent or RPI + 1.5 per cent, whichever is the greater, with effect from November 1 2008

The RPI figure to be used will be the September figure as published in October and this works out as a 44.7 per cent increase to pay rates by November 2008.

In addition, employers have agreed to pay all eight Bank Holidays at 100 per cent of the day rate. There was also an agreement to draw up formal recognition and Procedural Agreements with each individual company to be in place by March 31 2007. Pay talks will remain a collective matter between all companies and RMT under the current arrangements.



Steve Todd

Stan Herschel

Tony Donaghey

ORGANISING IN SCOTLAND

Eleven RMT members in Scotland were recently trained in Edinburgh to take on the role of local union representatives.

Participants came from all parts of the transport industry including rail, bus and parcels.

The course covered how to recruit new members, represent members at disciplinary hearings and conduct local level negotiations.

RMT's lay tutor Graham Buchanan (below) delivered the training along with the organising unit's Donald Graham.

Graham Buchanan, who has been a tutor for over 20 years, said that he was delighted to see huge improvements undertaken in the last few years.



Alan Pottage of the union's organising unit said that the aim was to put all reps through RMT's new education centre at Doncaster so that new reps will get eight days training within a year.

"That is going to make a huge difference," he said. ■

RMT DISAFFILIATES FROM SSP

RMT has disaffiliated from the Scottish Socialist Party after consulting the Scottish regional council and branches.

The union has also decided not to affiliate to the new Solidarity movement set up by former SSP leader Tommy Sheridan.

RMT general secretary Bob Crow said that it was clear that the SSP had been destabilised and that it was no longer in the interests of the union to remain affiliated. ■

Parliamentary column

ACTION ON STATIONS



Dundee West MP Jim McGovern argues that a good railway station is crucial for the future of the local economy, the employees who work in them and the future of the railway network

Railways are increasingly being seen by many as one solution to the increasing threat of climate change and global warming.

This is another boost to a rail industry that has increased passenger numbers consistently over the past nine years. It is a credit to all RMT members who work so hard to keep the trains running and ensure that travelling by train is a pleasant experience.

My contention is that for rail transport to continue to increase traveller numbers, the railway has to not just be the cheapest and lowest carbon transport option but also the most appealing. It is this belief that feeds into my contention that Dundee rail station needs a massive overhaul.

Dundee is quickly becoming a great Scottish city. There are a number of thriving industries, two great universities and in general a good feeling around the city. However, if you were to look at the station this would not be immediately apparent.

In my opinion, a railway station is the first impression many people see of a city and also the last memory they have before they leave. Having a poor railway station simply gives people a bad impression of a good city.

In addition, having a bad railway station discourages people from rail travel in the first place. How can we expect people to see the real benefits of travelling by train when the railway station is in such a state of disrepair? Quite simply, the railway station has to reflect the trains that run in and out of it.

Another issue to consider is the working environment of those who work in the station. I have argued for most of my adult life that employees should be provided with good quality working environments.

A good workplace encourages staff to take pride in their work, demonstrates an employer's respect for those who work for them and doubtlessly increases productivity. With a poor workplace the opposite is the case.

To my mind, Dundee station is a prime example of one which simply isn't up to scratch. A substantial improvement to Dundee station is vitally important to the local economy. It is the right thing to do for those who work there, it is the crucial as we try and encourage people to leave their cars behind and take the train and it is central in any attempt to make Dundee a city ready for the 21st century.

PLANET BEFORE PROFITS

RMT calls for a change in transport policy to deal with global warming

The recent publication of the Stern report into climate change has brought home the serious threat that global warming represents to the planet.

As the report says: "The scientific evidence is now overwhelming: climate change presents very serious global risks, and it demands an urgent global response".

Stern explains that without a fundamental shift in environmental practice we face the risk of "major disruptions to economic social activity later in this century and in the next, on a scale similar to those associated with the great wars and the economic depression of the first half of the 20th century".

The report warns that, without urgent action, floods could displace 100 million people worldwide, melting glaciers could lead to water shortages for one in six people and droughts could create millions of "climate refugees".

TRANSPORT

In 2005, transport's share of carbon emissions in the UK was around 25 per cent, with the vast majority of coming from the private car.

Moreover, the 189 million passengers that used UK airports in 2002 is projected to increase to between 350 million and 460 million by 2020.

Given Stern's warnings, it is self-evident the government must take steps to control the free market in transport that is threatening to ruin the environment.

RMT argues that expansion of environmentally sustainable forms of public transport – principally rail, bus and shipping – and extra investment

is required.

Yet, judging by Environment minister David Miliband's recent performance at TUC Congress this year, the message is yet to get through.

RMT delegate Priscilla Dada told the minister that the union had commissioned an opinion poll which shows that two-thirds of people believe that more money should be invested in public transport for the sake of the environment.

"If we are serious about greening Britain and reducing harmful emissions, then railways must be a key part of the solution.

"So is it not time that we took some serious steps towards making rail travel attractive, affordable and available to all?" she asked the minister.

His answer was illuminating to say the least.

"I was absolutely dreading a question about transport because I do not know anything about transport. Do we need to make the railways affordable and attractive? Yes. How do we do it? I do not know," he said rather sheepishly.

INFORMING THE DEBATE

Rail currently accounts for around six per cent of all transport journeys. However, the mooted introduction of road-user charging schemes is likely to see an increase in demand for rail services.

Transport specialist Professor Phil Goodwin argues that, because public transport use is so low, even small increases in usage have a large impact on the need for public transport.

For instance, if road-user charging was to lead to an increase of only three per cent in rail use this would mean a 50

per cent increase in the demand for rail services for an extra 500 million passengers.

Currently, Britain does not have sufficient rail capacity to absorb the effects of a road pricing policy designed to reduce carbon emissions.

BILL

As a result, the government's forthcoming Climate Change Bill should provide a real change in the economics and priorities in current transport policies.

In order to reduce carbon emissions by 60 per cent by 2050, airport expansion and motorway widening should be ditched and replaced with investment in trains, trams, buses, cycle lanes, shipping and canal use. Regular carbon reduction targets should also be set in the transport sector.

It is widely accepted that air travel does more harm to the environment than other modes

of transport.

For instance, recent research by Eurostar has revealed that passengers who fly between London, Paris and Brussels generate ten times more emissions of the greenhouse gas carbon dioxide than travellers who go by rail.

Preferable modes of transport can also be made more environmentally friendly. For instance, in the rail sector, the use of regenerative braking could be developed and new rolling stock should be more energy efficient.

The Eddington Review should also support the development of the North-South high speed rail link in order to reduce the number of environmentally damaging domestic short-haul flights.

The key, of course, will be to develop the political will for these crucial changes in the way we travel to become a reality. ■

Facts for thought...

Road transport contributes over 21 per cent of UK carbon emissions

Road transport emissions are predicted to rise by 30 per cent from 1990 to 2020

Traffic is predicted to grow 40 per cent from 1990 to 2025

Traffic growth will massively outstrip CO2 cuts from 'greener fuels' and more efficient engines



RAIL FRANCHISING HAS FAILED

RMT calls for moratorium on 'failed' rail-franchising system following damning parliamentary report

RMT has called on the government to impose an immediate moratorium on rail franchising after MPs condemned the failure of a fundamentally flawed system that delivers only fragmentation.

The House of Commons transport select committee report into 'Passenger Rail Franchising', damned the system introduced under privatisation as "a complex, fragmented and costly muddle".

On behalf of the select committee, Gwyneth Dunwoody MP said that franchising had delivered only fragmentation and short-term thinking and that no amount of tinkering can resolve the fundamental flaws in the system.

"In the current system, the government tries to entice bidders into promising ever greater premiums, but in return, it has to underwrite virtually all the risks to which operators are exposed.

"At the end of the day, passengers will pay the price when operators cut service levels or hike fares to pay the premiums, and taxpayers will foot the bill when operators default or walk away from their contracts," she said.

SUBMISSION

In its submission to the committee, RMT had also argued that the current franchising arrangements had failed to provide value for money for the tax-payer and the fare-payer. The union said

that the franchise awards are shrouded in commercial confidentiality and the franchising process has cost the public purse over £60 million since 1998.

It went on to argue that the commercial risk was not borne appropriately by the train operators, who made operating profits of £306million in 2004/05.

Following the report, the union called for the tendering for the East and West Midlands and new Cross-Country franchises to be shelved.

It also called for the failing franchise GNER to be brought back in-house while ministers chart how to bring all the franchises back under proper public control.

RMT general secretary Bob Crow said that the report highlighted the nonsense of a set-up in which private operators keep siphoning profits with little financial risk.

"The current system has handed guaranteed, risk-free profits to private operators who are demonstrably less efficient than British Rail and incapable of delivering the growing railway that Britain needs and our environment craves," he said.

PUBLIC OWNERSHIP

John McDonnell MP, Chair of the RMT parliamentary group, welcomed the report and said that only public ownership of the railways could ensure the necessary long-term planning and efficient running of the rail

network.

"The railways have an important role to play in the UK meeting its environmental obligations and in reducing social exclusion - it cannot be left to the market, which has only led to massive profits for a few and fare rises for the many," he said.

Labour Party conference has already voted to bring the railways back into public ownership - in line with public opinion.

John said that the government must listen to party members, rail unions, the travelling public and the transport select committee and end this failed Tory experiment with privatisation.

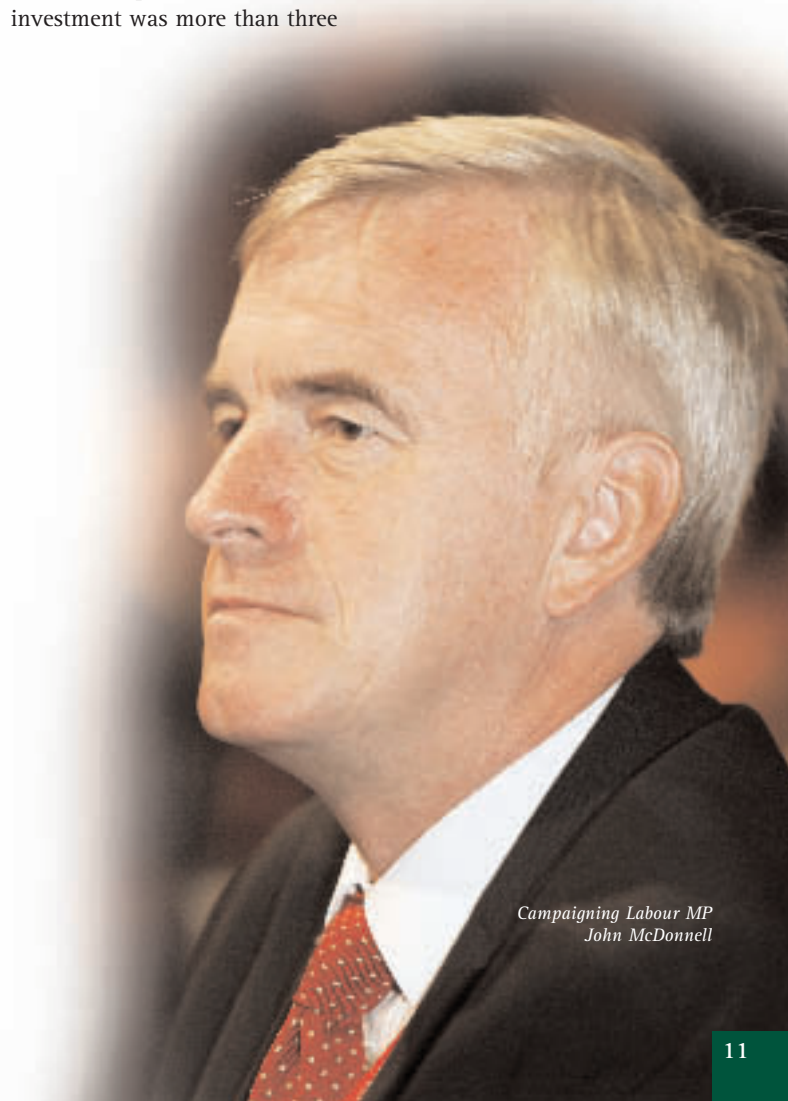
Bob also pointed out that rail investment was more than three

times more expensive than it was in BR days, while train services are less reliable and more expensive than anywhere else in Europe.

"Ministers rightly responded to the stark warnings in the Stern report by talking about setting statutory targets to carbon emissions.

"If the railways are to play their role in helping us to meet them we must have a growing, joined-up railway with affordable fares and attractive services that encourage people out of their cars and onto trains," he said.

The report should serve as a warning to the mayor of London of the folly of going ahead with the privatisation of the East London Line. ■



Campaigning Labour MP
John McDonnell

SHIPPING

RMT BATTLES FOR RIGHTS OF FERRY WORKERS

RMT played a leading role in calling for action to stem the tide of job losses for European seafaring ratings at a recent conference in Brussels.

As a result of the Irish Ferries dispute, when foreign ratings replaced Irish seafarers on much lower rates of pay, RMT joined forces with the Irish union, SIPTU, NUMAST and the French union CfdT to call on the International Transport Workers Federation (ITF) to convene an urgent conference to discuss the decline in seafaring jobs in European affiliate countries.

The continued 'social dumping' by employers in the European ferry sector was highlighted most graphically by the Irish Ferries dispute which saw Irish seafarers resisting the forced introduction of low-cost Latvian seafarers.

The campaign received widespread media coverage and over 150,000 people took to the streets in support of the campaign against exploitation of seafarers.

The union was represented at the conference by national secretary Steve Todd and two members of the Council of Executives, with further assistance provided by ITF UK co-ordinator Norrie McVicar.

Discussions among delegates centred on the extent of the problem with calls for the European Transport Workers Federation (ETF) to lead the fight back.

There was a consensus from all affiliates, including those from Eastern Europe, of the need to oppose discrimination in all its forms and the campaign

against Irish Ferries was used as an example of what could be achieved.

It was felt that the momentum generated by the Irish Ferries dispute, including the calling of the conference, should not be lost.

DECLINE

European seafarers are vital to the continued functioning of the shipping industry and the ferry sector is a last bastion of employment in commercial sectors for many seafarers.

In 1996 a special conference entitled "Seafarers an Endangered Species" was held in Dublin to highlight the serious concerns regarding the future survival of European seafarers.

European Commissioner Neil Kinnock was instrumental in the publication of a revised set of EU Maritime State Aid Guidelines and the EU Crewing Directive for regular passenger and ferry services operating within the European Union.

Unfortunately, the Crewing Directive failed to gain the support of all member states and, ten years on, the position for EU seafarers, especially ratings from north western European states, has deteriorated further.

ETF Legal representatives advised conference that EU social policy was meant to have equal importance to the EU internal market.

However, they stated that there was a dilemma at the heart of EU policy-making as single market integration was clearly not going to guarantee social conditions for seafarers. There was a widespread feeling amongst delegates that EU shipowners are intent on a 'race to the bottom' by employing seafarers on the lowest rates of pay possible.

The judgement by the European Court of Justice on the Viking Line will also be important in determining the ability of trade unions to defend members against social dumping, (see separate box).

ATHENS POLICY

Affiliates felt that the ITF already had the 'Athens policy' which was the appropriate tool to be used to enforce acceptable social standards on board ships trading within the EU.

The Athens policy states that for ferries operating between ports of the European Union the pay and conditions of the seafarers shall be equivalent or superior to those of the appropriate collective agreements of the affiliates in the countries concerned.

If the conditions in the two countries are different, then the affiliated unions shall establish the superior conditions or together establish the applicable conditions. If no mutual understanding is reached an ITF arbitration procedure shall apply.

DISCRIMINATION

Round-table debates at the conference looked at the recent disputes in the ferry sector, how to preserve jobs in this sector and how to establish decent working conditions.

RMT national secretary Steve Todd spoke on the decline of working conditions and told delegates and European politicians of the decline in conditions of employment on the UK flag.

He outlined how shipowners arguments regarding residence were just an excuse to discriminate through lower pay and conditions.

He used the example of Filipino seafarers working for P&O North Sea Ferries for a continuous three months on board the vessel before receiving one months break.

Their pay was only half that of UK seafarers undertaking the same work.

Steve advised the audience how the ITF were recently



SHIPPING

forced to intervene in the case of the BUE Rona, a British flag vessel where the Romanian crew had been forced to pay \$1,000 for getting their employment and air fares to the vessel.

ABs were working on the vessel for a fully consolidated rate of \$900. On the basis of their working hours of 12 hours per day, seven days a week, their earnings were around \$2 per hour.

CAMPAIGNING

RMT led calls for the establishment of a small steering committee which would oversee a renewed campaign.

The union would have preferred to see this up and running immediately but such a decision will have to gain the approval of the ETF Maritime Transport Committee.

However, due to lobbying work by the RMT delegation, the committee is likely to be formally approved at its next meeting before the end of the year.

Conference also discussed the European Crewing Directive which failed to gain approval from all the member states.

The ETF has called upon affiliates to lobby individual state governments regarding the decline of European maritime skills and to proactively lobby the European Commission so that a new proposal is tabled as soon as possible.

RMT will play its full part in this campaign and action has already taken place around UK ports, under the co-ordination of the ITF, following the targeting of problem vessels with support from other affiliates.

RMT also recently reminded the government of its previous support for a Crewing Directive and the union will continue to lobby hard on this matter.

However, more support will be needed from other states if the directive is to be resurrected by the European Commission. ■

THE VIKING LINE CASE

The important Viking Line case began when the Finnish company wished to re-flag the vessel Rosella under the Estonian flag and replace Finnish seafarers with Estonian nationals on lower pay and conditions.

The ITF and the Finnish Seamen's Union (FSU) sought to defend its members threatened with dismissal by taking strike action, as allowed under the Finnish constitution.

Trade unions in Scandinavian countries have far greater freedom to take action in their own country than UK workers.

However, Viking Line responded by taking an application to a London Court (where the headquarters of the ITF are based) to defend its right to flag out to any third party within the European Union, based on EU rules which grant EU businesses the freedom to relocate within the EU.

The ITF and the FSU appealed to the Court of Appeal and successfully argued that the right to relocate business operations within the EU must be weighed against the rights of unions under national legislation to take collective action.

The two legal judgements contradict each other so the matter is presently before the European Court of Justice and the result will become part of EU legislation.

Its outcome will be very important for the future ability of seafaring unions and the ITF to take collective action to defend social standards on board ships.

The ITF and the FSU has no problem with other EU nationals working on board vessels trading from their country but maintain that the normal collective agreement and Finnish law applies. ■



P&O strikers end campaign

Dear editor,

After lengthy discussions with our members it has sadly been decided that the 'Ex-P&O strikers 88/89' campaign for justice must be brought to a close.

The campaign has been fought with conviction that the case was right. Our members stood shoulder-to-shoulder with total solidarity since the start of the strike in 1988.

They must be saluted and admired for their convictions and our thanks must go to them.

For the rest of their lives they will know they were right and have been badly let down. Yet, after all they have been through they will never be forgotten.

During this momentous campaign, the ex-seafarers gained support from the Labour Party conference, RMT, the European parliament and an early day motion put down by Gwynn Prosser MP secured the support of 102 MPs.

During the strike, John Prescott was an NUS-sponsored MP and he urged the strikers to keep up the struggle and that they had the backing of the entire labour movement and would not be forgotten.

Yet, for 16 years we have invited him to attend our memorial rally in memory of the Herald of Free Enterprise disaster and he has never replied to our requests and his secretary always said he was "too busy".

This is the man who stands up at Labour Party conference and says "I used to be a steward on-board ship, I'm proud of it and I will never forget my roots".

He has declined to meet our delegation for even 15 minutes. He has certainly forgotten the seafarers that he urged to carry on the struggle in 1988.

We feel disgusted and betrayed and wonder what Mr Prescott's roots ever were. At last we now know why he was "too busy".

The flame will burn in our hearts and we will never forget how our members were treated. Thank you to all our many comrades for the way in which you have supported us. Perhaps our 18 years of struggle will be recorded and someone's conscience will be disturbed.

Steve Stevenson
Secretary



CROSSING THE LINE: A Dover picket during the 1988 P&O dispute.

Battling flags of convenience

Dear editor,

A "Flag of Convenience" is defined as the flag of any country allowing the registration of foreign-owned and foreign-controlled vessels under conditions which are convenient and opportune for the persons who are registering the vessel.

Modern shipping now offers their services to everywhere in the world, regardless of the ship registration and the ship-owner base of business, which has created fierce competition in the industry.

Seafarers who are working on flag of convenience ships are often denied basic human and trade union rights.

The nature of the seafarer's employment and the way their contracts are administered also makes it difficult to deal with seafarer's complaints.

The home country of a seafarer can do little to safeguard the seafarers' rights on such ships as they are not obliged to observe their national legislation, but to comply with the rules and regulations of the state whose flag they are entitled to fly.

Most FoC seafarers are not members of a union and if some of them are, they are powerless to fight for their rights.

A report published by the International Transport Workers Federation (ITF) characterised open registry as having very poor wages, poor onboard conditions, inadequate food and clean drinking water and long periods of work without proper rest, leading to stress and fatigue.

The International Labour Organisation (ILO) and other trade union federations take all possible measures to reduce and eliminate such violations but they are long way away from achieving their goals.

Shipping needs global policing, which needs high manpower with plenty resources and some power for strict penalties to be imposed.

Recently, I carried out a research on seafarers' welfare on board merchant ships which revealed that some national flag ships are as bad as the flag of convenience ships or even worse, driving some even to attempted suicide.

The findings also gave the impression that human rights come second in the maritime industry.

However, the good news for seafarers are that the new ILO Convention, which took almost six years to consolidate and could take another three to four years to come into force, could considerably improve the conditions of seafarer on board merchant ships.

Asad Ulah

RMT ACTIVIST PAULINE HOWE PASSES AWAY

Pauline Howe, the chair of RMT's Women's Advisory Committee and leading shipping sector activist, has died after a long battle with cancer.

"Pauline was a fearless and tireless RMT activist who gave her all for the trade-union movement, right to the end," general secretary Bob Crow said.

He said that although diagnosed with cancer many months ago, she continued to organise as

usual for Dover branch, chairing women's committee meetings with her usual humour and playing a full role in the recent maritime grades' conference.

"Pauline was not a woman to be messed around, particularly by an employer, and she could more than hold her own in a male-dominated industry.

"She was a massive asset to the union, and to say that she will be missed is an understatement," Bob said.

BRING BUSES BACK UNDER PUBLIC CONTROL

Following a damning report charting two decades of failure by the privatised bus industry, RMT calls for a return to public ownership

A hard-hitting House of Commons' transport select committee report has found that 20 years of bus de-regulation has led to huge falls in both passenger levels and the quality of services.

The MPs' report said that the current anarchic arrangements "cannot be made to work" and recommended greater use of regulated contracts.

"The only people to gain from the deregulation and sell-off of the nation's bus networks are the privateers who have removed huge sums of public money from the industry as profits," RMT general secretary Bob Crow says.

RMT warned that if the government wanted to see the bus industry play its full economic and environmental role it must take steps to bring the industry back under public control.

"If the private sector is allowed to continue operating buses, it must be under rigid regulation, but ultimately the only way to ensure that buses play their proper role in an

integrated transport network is to bring the industry back into public ownership," says Bob.

The union points out in its submission to the transport select committee that private operators aided by public subsidy had become very rich, without any thought of social responsibilities to the communities they are meant to serve.

Last year the big five operators alone pocketed nearly £275 million in profits between them - one of them with a profit margin of nearly 13 per cent - despite the continued fall in passenger numbers outside London.

Bus users, often with no other means of transport, have also seen fares increase and lifeline routes cut by private operators whose only motive is profit.

In contrast, bus workers have seen their incomes steadily eroded, with the average pay for a driver now just £7.71 an hour, only 57 per cent of the all-occupations average of £12.12.

There is also little sign of

any real competition as, in 2004, more than 25 per cent of tenders attracted only one bidder, thus increasing the leverage of that operator over the local authority.

As a result, privateers routinely use their monopoly position to blackmail local authorities into parting with more public money under the perpetual threat of the axe falling on more routes.

"The lie that deregulation and privatisation would bring healthy competition and with it cheaper and better bus services has been well and truly nailed by this report," said Bob.

REGULATION

The example of the regulated services in London shows that only public bodies, unencumbered by shareholders and dividend payments, are prepared to make the necessary investment to encourage bus usage over the car.

Transport for London was able to commit substantial money to fund extra buses, in advance of the extra people

using them, in an effort to get people out of their cars. It is inconceivable that a private operator would take a similar decision.

Passenger Transport Executive Group chairman Roy Wicks says that since bus services had become a "free-for-all" 20 years ago passenger numbers had halved and fares had shot up by 86 per cent.

A PTEG report revealed that passenger numbers had only increased in London, by over 50 per cent, due to the fact that services in the capital were never deregulated.

That means TfL can specify every detail of routes, frequency, fares and even the distinctive colour of the buses.

Private firms then bid to run these routes, many of which receive public subsidy.

Report author John Dodgson says that outside London companies can run whatever routes they like and often refuse to offer tickets that work on other forms of transport or to co-ordinate services with the rail network.

If the government is serious about reducing levels of road transport, which contributes over 21 per cent of UK carbon emissions, it must recognise that the privatised, unregulated bus sector cannot contribute towards that goal.

The London experience shows that bus regulation is preferable to the present chaotic and costly free-for-all.

Ultimately, taking the industry back into public ownership would remove the need for the taxpayer to subsidise huge private sector profits and contribute towards a fully-integrated public transport sector. ■

Euston Kings Cross Islington
Newington Green

73

REGULATION: In London local authorities can control the routes, regularity and fares for bus contracts

Picture copyright: Jessherd/reportdigital

SIGNALS FROM STIRLING

Signalling members call for
action over breaches of
promotion, transfer and
redundancy agreements by
Network Rail



Meeting in Stirling, Scotland the signalling grades conference unanimously backed a call for a full ballot for industrial action if breaches of promotion, transfer and redundancy conditions continue to be breached by Network Rail.

Tim Breed, North Staff said that Network Rail is claiming that PT&R arrangements have services there purposes and they don't want it any more.

"Increasingly, each case has ended up as a grievance but this is no longer a question of individuals but a collective problem which needs sorting out collectively," he said.

Kelvin Eastham, Three Bridges said that nothing had changed and that the old conditions applied.

"The problem we have got is that some new management seems to believe we come under new conditions for clerical grades.

"This is obviously the next item under attack from management," he said.

Kelvin outlined how the company had attempted to do away with PT&R arrangements during talks on the implementation of the 35-hour week.

"They tried and failed that time but we will have to fight collectively over this issue," he said.

Dali Jabbar, Ipswich outlined a case where Network Rail management was in clear breach of PT&R which led to a member with four children to lose over £6,000.

"That sort of loss of earning is not acceptable," he said.

Peter Pinkney for the general grades committee said that new RMT reps needed to be educated in the value of PT&R agreements.

"One of the benefits of the union having a new education centre in Doncaster will be that all reps will be tutored to fully understand PT&R agreements," he said.

DEFENDING ANNUAL LEAVE

Conference was warned that the right to carry over days of annual leave to the next year was being scrapped and resolved to resist any such moves.

Ian Waggot, Worcester No 1 said that in his area there was a set amount of days signallers can be on annual leave at any one time, thus some requests for annual leave may be refused.

"We need an agreement with our employers so that we can carry our some annual leave days, which should then be incorporated into our conditions of service book," he said.

Jack Jones, Holyhead said that the conditions of service says that days could be carried over by agreement until March 31 and outlined previous disputes which had been resolved by the union.

Chris Instone, South West Midlands reported that relief staff had sometimes been granted an annual or compensatory leave day, only to find on the day before they are on a night turn, ruining the annual or compensatory leave day off.

He said that the present agreement stated that "if at all possible, relief staff should not be rostered on nights if they are on annual or compensatory leave the day after".

"The problem with the present system is that there is no way that you can guarantee the member wouldn't be put on a night turn the previous day," he said.

Conference agreed that the signallers' agreement must be re-written to show "under no circumstances should a Relief Signaller be rostered nights prior to either annual leave, compensatory leave".

Conference also backed a motion moved by Kelvin Eastham, Three Bridges for the union to remove the "pro-rata" on annual leave arrangements which leaves members on 12-hour shifts with less leave than

those working eight hour shifts.

Kelvin pointed out that this does not apply to all grades in Network Rail who work shifts but receive the full entitlement like, Operations Controllers, Electrical Controllers and Causation staff.

"We are being discriminated as we do not get our full entitlements," he said.

Conference also rejected a motion that members with children of school age should be guaranteed a minimum of one week "rostered" summer holiday each year during the school holiday period.

Ian Allen, North Staffs said that it would discriminate against those members without children.

TRAINING

Conference called for proper off-the-job training on correct communications procedures for all signalling staff.

Dave King, Stirling said that such training should part of the current safety briefing package and all signalling staff should be trained to the same standard.

"In-box training should also be conducted by a nominated trainer who should remain with any trainee throughout their period of training," he said.

Delegates also backed a call for a training allowance for members carrying out in-box training.

Mark Cherry, Doncaster warned that in many instances management is introducing new equipment without adequate training and the union should be arguing that additional equipment should be evaluated.

Conference agreed that it was time that the signaller continuous assessment programme, known as 'SACP', was removed from the workplace.

Alan Brooks, Broadlands said that the process had become time consuming, stressful and a distraction to members during their turn of duty in a safety critical position.

He warned that something had to be done before someone, somewhere was distracted and a tragedy occurred.

"Management also want you to sit down and fill in forms in your own time so that they are covered if something goes wrong," he said.

Mark Cherry outlined instances where signal panels were being left uncovered while SCAP was being carried out.

"The priority should be running the signal box and running the job," he said.

Conference also agreed that 'briefing days, designed to update members on safety critical duties, was being abused by the company and no longer being used for the purpose that they were originally intended.

Alan Brooks said that such days had become an extension of the 'SCAP' process and successfully moved a motion calling for briefing days to be restored to their original use.

FREE TRAVEL

Conference renewed a call for the union to pursue a claim for free rail travel passes for signallers that have joined the railway post 1996.

Barry Hoper, Keith said that issue remained a real 'bone of contention' among members and needed to remain on the agenda.

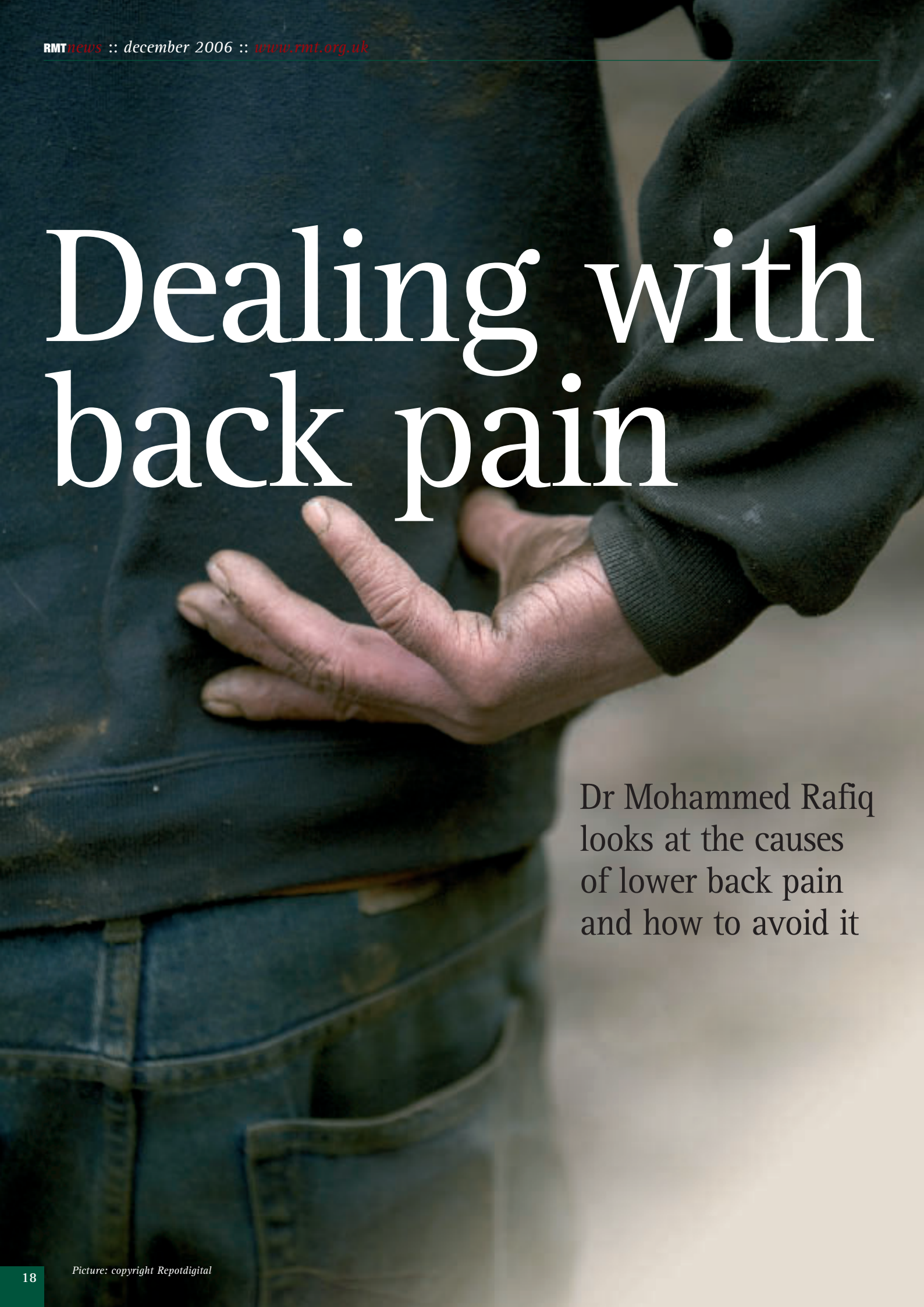
"Ex-BR employees enjoy privilege travel, families, pensioners and children get discounts, me, who works on the railway has to pay full wack.

"This is not about getting something for less, it is about feeling valued and a part of the railway," he said.

Tim Breed said that a national debate was required and called on the union to pursue a claim for every grade to receive travel. ■

**A webcast of Conference can be viewed in full within the members' area of the RMT website. Any problems in accessing the relevant pages e-mail webmaster@rmt.org.uk*

Dealing with back pain

A close-up photograph of a person's lower back and hand. The person is wearing a dark blue jacket and blue jeans. Their right hand is pressed against their lower back, indicating pain or discomfort. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

Dr Mohammed Rafiq looks at the causes of lower back pain and how to avoid it

Low back pain means a pain affecting the lower part of the back (lumbar spine).

The lumbar spine is an intricate structure consisting of:

- Five small bones (vertebrae)
- Shock absorbing discs (intervertebral discs) that sit between and cushion the bones.
- Ligaments that hold the vertebrae and discs together.
- Tendons that connect muscles to the vertebrae.
- Fibres, which carry nerves from the brain to the lower part of the body.
- Nerves
- Muscles.

The lumbar spine bears the entire weight of the upper body and as a result it is under constant pressure. The lumbar spine is prone to damage especially during activities, which involve bending, lifting and twisting. Damage to any of the structures of the lumbar spine can result in low back pain.

Low back pain can be described as being:

- Acute, lasting less than 3 months.
- Recurrent, a repeat episode of the acute symptoms. Most people have at least one episode of recurrent low back pain.
- Chronic, lasting more than 3 months.

INCIDENCE

80 per cent of the Western population suffer with it at some stage in their lives.

Five per cent of industrial workers have time off work because of it each year.

In Britain it accounts for 11.5 million lost working days per year.

RISK FACTORS

Factors, which can increase the risk of developing low back pain:

- Bad posture
- Age over 30 years
- Smoking
- Lack of exercise
- Obesity
- Heredity factors
- Occupational factors:
- Jobs in the construction industry
- Jobs involving heavy lifting, lots of bending and twisting, or whole body vibration (like truck driving or using a sandblaster).
- Desk based job may result in or contribute to pain, especially if you have a bad posture, or sit all day in an uncomfortable chair.
- Presence of other medical conditions:

Many diseases can either cause or contribute to low back pain.

These include:

- Different types of arthritis such as osteoarthritis and rheumatoid arthritis.
- Cancers elsewhere in the body that may spread to the spine.
- Stress:

Emotional stress can cause the back muscles to become tense and painful.

CAUSES

Mechanical Problems

Mechanical problems interfere with the way the spine moves. For example:

- Strain on the intervertebral disc may cause it to rupture (herniate) and press on the nearby nerves (as in sciatica).

- Degeneration of the intervertebral discs with age results in loss of their shock absorbing ability.
- Muscle spasm.

Injury

- Strain or tears to the muscles, ligaments and tendons supporting the lumbar spine.
- Fractured vertebrae (may result from osteoporosis or accidents and falls).

Other medical conditions

- Curvatures of the spine (like scoliosis)
- Spinal stenosis (narrowing of the spinal canal. The spinal canal is the tunnel through which nerves from the brain to the rest of the body pass).
- Various types of arthritis

Infections and tumours involving the spine

Depending on the cause, the onset of the pain maybe sudden or slow. The pain maybe localised or may travel into the buttocks or down the leg. The leg pain may be associated with numbness or tingling.

DIAGNOSIS

By simply taking a history and carrying out a physical examination the doctor can diagnose the cause of the pain. In 95 per cent of cases there is no need for any tests.

Tests such as X-rays or MRI scans etc. are only needed if the pain has been present for longer than six weeks or the examination suggests there may be an underlying cause for the pain (such as a disc problem).

TREATMENT

90 per cent get better within a few weeks, irrespective of treatment received.

If there is no serious underlying cause for the low back pain (like loss of bowel or bladder control, weakness involving the legs, weight loss or fever) the recommended treatment is:

- Continue with normal activities as much as possible
- Restrict bed rest to a minimum as prolonged rest delays recovery.
- Apply ice packs to the painful area for the first 48-72 hours, then use heat (hot water bottle) after that
- Take over the counter painkillers.
- Use anti-inflammatory drugs and stronger painkillers only after consulting your GP.
- Stretching and strengthening exercises are important in the long run. However, starting these exercises too soon after injury may make the pain worse.

PREVENTION

- Stay fit
- Improve your body posture.
- Learn correct lifting and handling techniques. ■

**The author is an Orthopaedic Surgeon and Managing Director of Trauma Claims Consultancy (TCC). TCC leads the market in the provision of independent medico-legal reports. TCC provides expert assistance in any medically related claim nationwide. For further information of services visit www.tccltd.co.uk For further information or advice contact Mohammed Rafiq on 01926 484 333 (Monday – Friday 9am – 5pm).*

LOL MAKES LEGAL HISTORY ON ASSAULTS

Following a long and courageous campaign, Warrington RMT branch secretary Lol Jones has won a legal victory ensuring that in future all assaults on public servants are met with mandatory prosecution.

Lol's campaign began after he suffered a brutal assault at work and the guilty man, a well-heeled trainee solicitor, used a huge legal team to exploit loopholes in the law and avoid prosecution.

The trouble began for Lol, a Conductors' Health and Safety Rep, over three years ago while conducting a FNW service from Manchester Victoria to Lime Street, Liverpool.

Six male passengers were harassing a lone female and, on leaving the train at Newton-le-Willows, the last man turned and viciously head-butted Lol, rendering him unconscious and hospitalised.

Some months later the British Transport Police finally identified a suspect, Stefan Whalley, who then chose to turn himself in to the civil police.

The BTP allowed the civil police to take ownership of the case and they decided that a caution was appropriate for this brutal assault on a public servant. It later transpired that the assailant was a trainee solicitor in a well-known local legal firm.

Lol and his colleagues were outraged and, with the assistance of Regional Organiser Andy Warnock-Smith, strong representations were made to the company to support a private prosecution and the matter was subsequently listed for St Helens magistrates' court.

After four adjournments and a not guilty plea, the court ruled a 'breach of process' had occurred as a caution had already been issued and accepted. The accused was represented by an unusually large and experienced legal team.

By now, Northern Rail had taken over the



BREAKTHROUGH: Lol Jones (far right) celebrates with Bob Crow and RMT rep Billy Kimm

franchise and they continued to support Lol through an appeal to the high court, obtaining a stunning victory which upheld his right to bring a private prosecution.

In his observations, the Lord Justice ruled that the police caution would require amendment and case law was established, citing the action as against a Stefan Whalley, whereby attacks on rail staff are now viewed as assaults against public servants and merit mandatory prosecution.

This would ensure that future cases cannot be influenced by friends in high places.

However, Whalley's legal team, decided to invest yet more money by appealing to the House of Lords. Solely on the question of timescale technicalities, the Lords decided that no further action could be taken against the man who had carried out the brutal attack.

"Although understandably aggrieved that

my attacker escaped punishment, I am delighted in the change of law which will benefit all railway staff in future," says Lol.

Liverpool Lime Street RMT rep Billy Kimm said that this was an important victory which meant that all staff assaults had to be taken seriously in future.

"It is bad enough being attacked anywhere, but being assaulted at work and then seeing that nothing is going to be done about it can seriously undermine the morale and confidence of frontline staff," he said.

Lol's campaign was a courageous one and he had nothing but praise for his local RMT representatives and to his employer Northern Rail for standing by him.

"I would particularly like to thank Phillip Cook of Northern Rail, whose contribution to this change in case law cannot be underestimated, and to my family for their unstinting support and belief," he says.

Well done Lol! ■

TIME FOR REAL ACTION ON ASSAULTS

Assistant general secretary Mike Cash outlines why employers could do more to stem the raise in assaults on transport staff

The rise in assaults on Northern Rail shows that employers are still not doing enough to protect and support staff from assaults.

The experience of Warrington and District Branch Secretary Lol Jones proves that we have a long way to go before members feel safe at work.

The extraordinary lengths he had to go to push the forces of law and order is also a sad reflection of police priorities.

No-one should have to end up in the highest courts just to get them to do their job. This case involved the Greater Manchester Police, but their attitude is a reflection of many police forces.

There is a positive outcome, and the police should not be giving any more assurances about future prosecution when issuing a caution.

It also shows employers can overturn police decisions not to prosecute by applying for a judicial review. In addition, the police are now more likely to consult the victim.

However, the union would prefer to work with the police and the employers to prevent assaults in the first place.

Whilst I accept that ensuring assailants are caught and prosecuted can be a deterrent, it has little effect if it is going to result in no more than a ticking off.

We have started discussions with the British Transport Police over this issue, and indeed Ian

Johnston, the Chief Constable of the BTP addressed RMT's health and safety conference earlier this year.

The aim is to work with them to address the way they treat staff assaults. They are under tremendous pressure, particularly in the current political climate due to the war in Iraq, but we feel more can be done.

We do not want to hear about members calling the police to deal with violent passengers only to find the police arrest a member instead merely because they sought to defend themselves.

PREVENTION

Employers have a responsibility to protect staff and not become complacent.

There are industry-wide poster campaigns – like the one with misspelled words on every major station. It is a clever way of getting the message across, but has it worked and what is the next step?

Unfortunately, when we want to get them around a table to come up with common solutions involving more direct action on assaults, they run a mile. However, if we can have an industry-wide commission on pensions, why can't we get together on assaults?

Yet, when we have asked for statistics on a company-by-company basis, they refuse. When we say staff assaults are

getting worse, they say it's not true; it's just that more people are reporting them.

That is something the union has difficulty arguing with because the employers refuse to share all the information with us.

Employers fear that it will enable the union to compare one company with another, and perhaps show some in a poor light.

On the other hand, it could highlight examples of good practice or effective policies, but this would probably be the exception rather than the rule.

The Rail Safety and Standards Board produces industry-wide assault statistics through their computerised Safety Management Information System (SMIS), which is based on information from individual companies.

However, when RMT talks to the railway inspectorate and the rail regulator who have access to this information, we get the feeling they don't know the scale of the problem. Such is the state of the industry since privatisation.

RMT's aim is to push the problem of staff assaults higher

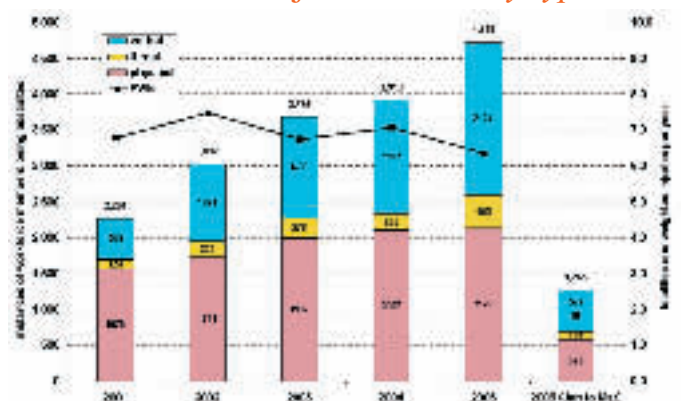
up the agenda. That is why the union's executive has agreed a number of measures:

- Relaunch our workplace violence policy with leaflets and briefings for our representatives on implementing the policy
- Raise the matter with our sponsored MP's and ministers
- Seek the support of the British Transport Police, Railway Inspectorate and Rail Regulator for our campaign
- Get companies to support judicial reviews and private prosecutions if all else fails.
- Seek an industry-wide forum on workplace violence

The union applauds what Lol Jones has achieved. The determination he has shown are in the best traditions of the union.

It is up to us all to ensure that the fight to eradicate violence in the workplace continues. I am sure Lol would agree that prevention is better than the cure.

Increase in rail workforce assaults by type



This chart shows all assaults on staff between January 2001 and March 2006. It suggests that assaults are becoming more frequent. However, most of the increase in the overall number of assaults is derived from the increase in verbal assaults.

Keep the East London Line public



RMT general secretary Bob Crow explains why London mayor Ken Livingstone has got it wrong by privatising the East London Line

The cat is out of the bag after the mayor of London finally revealed that he has cut a deal with the government that requires the East London Line to be privatised.

That is a step forward from denying that any privatisation is planned, or the nonsense that the extended East London Line was always to be thrown to the privateers.

After ten years of private-sector failure on the national railway network, the same fate has been lined up, for the first time, for a London Underground line.

Make no mistake, this is the thin end of a privatisation wedge that so far we have managed to keep away from Tube operations, and that is why there is a determination to stop it.

Thieving scum?

A couple of years back the mayor referred to private train operators as “rapacious thieving scum”: now there are four of them shortlisted to run the East London Line.

I remember standing alongside Ken when he said that there was blood on the tracks thanks to rail privatisation, and that it should never be allowed to be spilled on the Tube.

He pledged then that if there was a strike against the proposed part-privatisation of the Tube he would stand with us on the picket line.

Ken should know Tube workers better than to suggest that we are looking for a ‘third way’ on the East London Line – we are campaigning for the very way that he espoused himself.

For Tube workers, privatisation is resisted because we know it is expensive and dangerous.

Under this plan, a railway currently in the public sector will be turned over to a privateer whose sole aim is to make a profit.

Trains would be operated and our members employed by a private company, while signalling would be controlled by Network Rail, another private company.

It would be one thing if the mayor took over responsibility for the North London Railway and, after consulting the unions, reluctantly conceded there was no prospect of bringing its operations back into the public sector.

It is something entirely different to take the publicly-run East London Line, parcel it up with the NLR and hand it over to a privateer.

The attempted justification is that Transport for London wishes to link the line with the current Silverlink Metro services that come under TfL control from November 2007, led by the TfL-controlled London Rail.

Let us get one thing straight: there is no physical, technical or legal reason why the integration of ‘London Overground’ services cannot be done while retaining the East London Line operations in the public sector.

TfL has also intimated that the line was always to be franchised out to the private sector, this is simply not the case.

The decision to make the Passenger Service Operator a private-sector company can only have been made in the spring of this year.

The documents we have seen indicate not only that senior LUL managers were hoping that the line’s operations would remain within LUL, but that it was also still in the running to be named PSO as recently as March.

No consultation

What makes matters worse is that this whole shady deal has been shrouded in secrecy, with a shortlist of bidders – National Express, Govia, MTR Laing and NedRail – issued with invitations to tender.

There has been no ‘stakeholder consultation’, the invitations to tender are not in the public domain and bidders have been told not to divulge what they are being asked to bid for.

Even the miserable franchise process for the national railway network has been more transparent than that.

Along with our colleagues in the TSSA we have complained to London Rail over the absence of consultation and the lack of transparency surrounding the process.

The campaign against any further rail privatisation is supported not least by Labour Party policy.

In September the TUC Congress voted to oppose the ELL privatisation plan, and the most recent opinion poll shows that 74 per cent wanted the ELL operated by the public sector.

A number of London MPs have signed Early Day Motion 2398 supporting the campaign against privatisation.

Private train operators have been a disaster for Britain’s railways. Subsidy and profits are up, yet services remain worse than under public ownership.

The ‘public private partnership’ has already fragmented Tube infrastructure and undermined safety and efficiency, while delivering little else than guaranteed, risk-free-profits at £2 million a week.

That mistake should not be repeated with the East London Line, and it doesn’t have to be.

Expecting the labour movement to embrace it is like expecting the Christmas turkey to take the lead in stuffing itself. ■

SAVE YORK WORKS

Rail workers and local politicians have joined forces to stem the continuing decimation of York's rail industry

A packed public meeting convened in York recently discussed recent job losses, corruption and fears that rail contracts are being awarded out of the city.

RMT general secretary Bob Crow was among the speakers that argued that Network Rail had a responsibility to stem the loss of engineering jobs in York by stopping the policy of awarding contracts elsewhere.

York was once home to thousands of rail engineering workers at sites off Leeman Road and Holgate Road, but this has now dwindled down to fewer than 100, with many former workshops and maintenance yards lying empty.

Bob said that it was a

symptom of privatisation that Network Rail were now awarding contracts on the basis of the lowest bidder rather than doing a proper maintenance job in a workshop environment.

The carriage works site once played a key role in York's once proud wagon building industry and today it can still maintain the entire range of on-track engineering and maintenance equipment.

However, Network Rail has been moving towards using a myriad of sub-contractors working out of vans to carry out essential trackside maintenance.

Fastline, part of Jarvis, which carries out maintenance contracts for Network Rail, is

shedding up to a dozen skilled engineering jobs as a result – leaving fewer than 30 staff at its two Leeman Road workshops.

The plight of the workshops was also symbolised by the fact that three local men, former Network Rail contractors, were arrested recently during a multi-million pound fraud investigation into the attempted purchase of part of York's former carriage work site.

The three were arrested on suspicion of conspiracy to defraud Network Rail following a 12-month investigation into corruption over the proposed purchase of the site in Holgate Road.

There are allegations that the site was to be purchased for £8.5 million with the aim of selling it on for £20 million.

RMT regional organiser Stan Herschel said that Network Rail had just "sat back" and allowed

the erosion of York's manufacturing industry.

"We used to regard York as the home of the railways and must have employed about 20,000 workers," he said.

York RMT branch chair Bill Rawcliffe warned that decisions were being taken without any thought or care about how they will affect local industries and communities.

"Network Rail is playing fast and loose with people's livelihoods and contracts should be given to the most competent workforce available in York," he said.

Local Labour councillor David Scott told the public meeting that he agreed.

"I'm concerned that contracts are going elsewhere and as a council we have to show that York is a good place to be based," he said. ■

BRING ALL TUBE CONTRACT WORK BACK IN-HOUSE

London Underground work should be brought back in-house before the privateer contractors bring the entire system grinding to a halt, RMT declared recently following more engineering overruns and failures.

As the capital was plunged into chaos by overruns on three of London's essential Tube arteries, the union renewed its call for the privatisation of the network's infrastructure, known as PPP, to be scrapped.

"Privatisation of Tube infrastructure has demonstrably failed, failed and failed again," RMT general secretary Bob Crow said.

The latest problems occurred on Monday, November 20 when there was no service on the Central and Circle lines for much of morning and the District line was part suspended due to failures by infrastructure

consortium Metronet.

Problems included a signalling breakdown on the Central line, broken down machinery, rails and fixings supplied to the wrong site and contractors with out of date access licenses.

RMT has also learned that a large amount of work was called off without warning last month to avoid embarrassing work over-runs the day before Metronet's chief executive was due to appear before the London Assembly's transport committee.

Transport watchdog chairman Brian Cooke called on the government to step as the private consortium could not cope with the two Tube contracts – one to maintain the Central, Victoria and Bakerloo lines and the other for all sub-surface routes, including the Circle and District.

The previous week the PPP

Arbiter issued a damning report on Metronet's failure to deliver despite the fact that the privateers were racking in profits amounting to £1 million per week.

Arbiter Chris Bolt concluded that the company was "significantly behind schedule" and there was "poor delivery of maintenance and renewals" on track work.

Metronet was awarded the PPP contracts in 2003 and made £48 million last year alone.

The consortium, made up of Atkins, Balfour Beatty, Bombardier, EDF Energy and Thames Water, could now face fines of £1 million for the massive breakdowns in Tube services.

However, RMT general secretary Bob Crow questioned the point of a £1 million fine to a firm that made more than that in profits every week.

"The problems of the PPP won't be sorted out by taking some of the public's money back off the contractors now and then.

"Failure is built into the very fabric of the PPP and it has to be ended," he said.

The union has argued that Tube infrastructure work should be carried out by an organisation whose sole aim is providing a service, not by privateers whose main aim is to drain as much profit as possible out of the system.

"PPP is a complex device designed to convert public money into guaranteed, risk-free profits.

"This should serve as a warning that plans to allow privateers to get their hands on the operations of the East London Line should also be scrapped," Bob said.

TRADE UNIONISTS LAUNCH SHOP-FLOOR FIGHTBACK



Hundreds of shop stewards from across Britain gathered in London in October to found a grass-roots network capable of mobilising trade unionists to fight for workers' rights.

Opening conference, president Tony Donaghey said that RMT had convened the meeting, in line with an AGM decision, to create the broadest possible unity among rank-and-file trade unionists.

"The simple fact is that the trade union movement today has fewer freedoms than when the Trades Disputes Act was passed a century ago and that has to change," he said.

The meeting elected ten rank-and-file trade unionists to act as a steering group to organise a shop stewards conference next spring.

RMT activist Linda Wiles, Transport for London RMT branch secretary, and Waterloo RMT branch secretary Greg Tucker were both elected to the steering group.

RMT Devon bus branch secretary Paul Dyer said that he was proud to move the motion to launch the project, which was unanimously agreed by over two hundred activists packed into Camden Town Hall in

London.

The network, made up of workplace reps to offer support to unions in campaigns and industrial disputes, would not interfere in the internal affairs and elections of trade unions.

RMT general secretary Bob Crow said that the organisation of workplace reps had always been a crucial barometer of the general health of the trade union movement.

"If we are to roll back the tide of privatisation and war, it is an absolute necessity, and rebuilding the grassroots of the movement is an essential part of that process," he said.

T&G deputy general secretary Barry Camfield said it was "absolute hypocrisy" for former general secretaries that had become Labour ministers to lecture trade unionists that they cannot have basic rights that are enshrined in international law.

He pointed out that it was a rank-and-file movement that built the campaign to win

political fund ballots for trade unions brought in by the Tories.

"We need to change the centre of gravity towards shop floor representatives if we are to create the conditions for change," he said.

Trade union rights Institute of Employment Rights director Carolyn Jones said that one of the first tasks of the new organisation would be to build towards a mass lobby of parliament being planned for next year in support of the Trade Union Freedom Bill.

Rob Williams, a T&G rep said that the meeting was the start of a grass roots fight back.

"We were never handed anything, we had to fight for it and we have to fight for our rights now," he said.

Ian Allinson, an Amicus rep, warned that trade union membership in the private sector had plummeted and it had to be addressed.

"Private sector bosses are determined to keep unions out

and we must be as just determined to organise that sector," he said.

Dave Chapple, a Communication Workers Union rep, said that many workers were breaking unjust anti-trade union laws every day and were clearly prepared to fight if they are given a lead.

"We need a democratic grassroots movement that is not dominated by any single party," he said.

Prison Officers Association general secretary Brian Caton was among a dozen trade union general secretaries that welcomed a new movement that would be built on the traditions of "free, independent and democratic trade unionism".

"My union has already enjoyed the support of other trade unionists in the fight to win back our right to take industrial action, despite threats from the government to put us in prison.

"Give us our trade union rights, they are human rights," he said to applause.

RMT News will report on any developments and the union's website will carry regular updates and monitor progress.

LONDON ANGLIA BRANCH NOMINATES MICK CASH FOR ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY	LEEDS GOODS & CARTAGE BRANCH NOMINATES MICK CASH FOR SENIOR ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY	BRIGHTON JOINT BRANCH SUPPORTS MICK CASH ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY TRIED AND TESTED	DOVER SHIPPING SUPPORTS MICK CASH FOR ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY
EUSTON NO1 NOMINATES MICK CASH FOR ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY	CARLISLE BRANCH NOMINATES MARK RUSSELL FOR ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY	COLCHESTER AND DISTRICT SUPPORTS MICK CASH ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY	SOUTHAMPTON NO 5 BRANCH NOMINATES MICK CASH ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY SUPPORT THIS PROVEN AND EXPERIENCED CANDIDATE
LINCOLNSHIRE ROADCAR BRANCH NOMINATES MICK CASH FOR ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY	YORK BRANCH NOMINATES MARK RUSSELL FOR ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY	WIGAN BRANCH SUPPORTS MICK CASH ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY	NEWPORT (IOW) NO 2 BRANCH NOMINATES MICK CASH ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY AND RESPECTFULLY SEEKS SUPPORT
ASHFORD 1 BRANCH SUPPORTS MICK CASH ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY THE TRIED AND TESTED CANDIDATE	TEESIDE BRANCH NOMINATES MICK CASH FOR ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY	LUL ENGINEERING SUPPORTS MICK CASH ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY	POOLE & DISTRICT BUS BRANCH NOMINATES MICK CASH FOR ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY AND ASKS MEMBERS TO SUPPORT HIM
WATFORD BRANCH NOMINATES MICK CASH FOR ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY	GLASGOW NO 5 BRANCH NOMINATES MICK CASH FOR ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY	JUBILEE SOUTH & EAST LONDON LINE SUPPORTS MICK CASH ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY	CARDIFF SEVEN BRANCH SUPPORTING MICK CASH ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY
BASSETLAW BRANCH NOMINATES MICK CASH AND SEEKS SUPPORT	AYR BRANCH NOMINATES MICK CASH FOR ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY AND ASKS MEMBERS TO SUPPORT THESE CANDIDATES	CAMDEN NO 3 SUPPORTS MICK CASH ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY	KINGS CROSS BRANCH NOMINATES MICK CASH SECOND TO NONE
SOUTH LONDON RAIL BRANCH NOMINATES MICK CASH FOR ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY THE CANDIDATE WITH UNMATCHED EXPERIENCE	EAST MIDS BUS BRANCH NOMINATES MICK CASH FOR ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY	MARCH & DISTRICT BRANCH NOMINATES MICK CASH ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY A MOST ABLE CANDIDATE	GREAT NORTHERN RAIL BRANCH NOMINATES MICK CASH ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY THE OUTSTANDING CANDIDATE
	ST PANCRAS BRANCH NOMINATES MICK CASH ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY	SOUTHWEST MIDLANDS BRANCH SUPPORTS MICK CASH ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY	
		LEEDS CITY BRANCH MICK CASH ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY	



21 REASONS TO BE

There are many good reasons to be an RMT member and below are just 21 of them

1 COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

The union has a dedicated team of officers elected by you to serve your interests negotiating with employers on issues from pay, hours of work, pensions and working conditions.

To provide a better service to members RMT increased the number of officers by two in 2005 and a further two starting from 2007. These elected officers are supported by a team of researchers to formulate pay claims to obtain the best negotiated terms for you.

2 SUPPORT IN THE WORKPLACE

RMT has a national network of 230 branches organised under regional councils aimed at providing local support.

Every member has their own branch secretary to provide immediate support and advice in the workplace.

The union has health and safety at work representatives coordinated from head office to ensure safety is given due priority by employers and risk is properly managed.

RMT's equal opportunities specialists also provide support to ensure fairness and help to stamp out bullying and harassment.

3 MEMBERS HELPLINE

tel 0800 376 3706

A freephone members' helpline

staffed by experts in the industrial relations department advises members on all work related and membership enquiries. Lines are open Monday to Friday 0800 hours to 1800 hours and Saturdays 0930 hours to 1600 hours.

4 LEGAL HELPLINE

tel 0800 587 7516

If you have a legal query on any topic besides workplace issues, members can ring up the Legal helpline. RMT provides legal representation throughout the course of personal and domestic claims such as divorce, property purchases, debt etc and can give some initial advice to help you on your way.

5 CRIMINAL CHARGES

Should a member or family members find themselves in police custody, RMT's Criminal helpline can give initial advice and the provision of a duty solicitor should the need arise. Members who are charged with crimes at or connected to work and who are not guilty can be considered for legal representation. All legal representation is discretionary and according to Rule.

6 INDUSTRIAL DISEASES

Members who have suffered an industrial disease will receive free legal support to make a

claim. Such claims are underwritten by the union and members will not have any deduction from their settlement unlike claims run by no-win, no-fee companies.

7 PERSONAL INJURY

Personal injury claims cover extends to RMT family members and friends should they suffer an injury. RMT underwrites settlements that would not be provided by no-win, no-fee companies.

8 EMPLOYMENT TRIBUNALS

Should a member find themselves unfairly dismissed, discriminated against or have any claim which has reasonable prospects of success at an Employment Tribunal, RMT will provide legal representation. Even if the union is advised that the claim is unlikely to succeed, members who make a claim are eligible to receive free legal advice.

9 DONCASTER EDUCATION CENTRE

The union is in the process of setting up a new RMT education centre, offering a range of courses for activists to increase professionalism and support for members in the workplace.

10 ACCIDENT BENEFIT:

Payable if you have an accident

at work or on the way to or from work. Payable for 26 week period at ten times weekly union contribution. So from 2007 one weeks' accident benefit would be £32.30, with maximum payable: £839.80.

Accident benefit is only payable if you have been off for three days or more. Accident must be reported to branch secretary within 26 weeks in order to qualify for accident benefit.

11 RETIREMENT BENEFIT:

Payable to any member who retires over the age of 60, or aged 55 if retired through redundancy or resettlement. Ill health retirement also payable; proof of this must be sent with application for retirement benefit. This is payable at a rate of £3 per year up to 2004, then £5 per year after that date.

12 DEMOTION COMPENSATION

Payable to any member who is experiencing loss of wages through being permanently demoted or downgraded as a result of illness or injury. Payment of £300 provided that member reports this to Branch Secretary within 12 weeks.

13 DEATH GRANT

If a member dies in service (i.e. not retired) then a payment of £600 is payable to the members'



A MEMBER OF RMT

next of kin. Documents to be sent in with application for death grant would be death certificate and copy of will or probate, if neither are available, a copy of the funeral invoice will suffice.

14 ORPHAN FUND

The beneficiaries of this fund would be any child of a member or a members' spouse when the member dies in service or if a members spouse dies and the member has responsibility of the children. Benefit is paid while a child is in full-time education up until the age of 22. Payment is made quarterly and the rate is £12.00 per week for children up to the age of 16, then £12.75 per week from 16 to 22.

15 OLD AGE GRANT:

This one-off payment is payable to shippers who, at the time of the merger of NUR/NUS (September 1990) had twenty years continuous service. Payment rates are as follows:

20 years service: £200.00
25 years service: £250.00
30 years service: £300.00
35 years service: £350.00

This benefit is paid out at retirement age of 65. If a member retires before that age, they can elect to either wait until they are 65 and receive Old Age Grant, or waive the right to this benefit and receive normal Retirement Benefit.

A claim for this benefit must be made within six months of

the claimant attaining the qualifying age.

16 FUNERAL GRANT

On the death of a member of the Shipping Grade who had had twenty years service at the time of the NUR/NUS merger and was five years or less from the relevant age of retirement, the sum of £200.00 is payable to the person or persons nominated to receive said Funeral Grant. The sum of £70 would be paid if the members spouse died, provided in both cases the death occurred after the members retirement.

17 CAMPAIGNING

The union has a political fund to run campaigns and provide a political voice to benefit members' interests in the workplace. RMT has a very active parliamentary group which raises issues of concern for members in the House of Commons and puts down early day motions in support of union policy.

18 RMT NEWS

Members will receive a lively informative journal delivered direct to you containing industry sector updates and major issues affecting workers. There are 10 editions each year plus a free diary packed with useful information. Regular newsletters are also produced for the various grades of RMT members.

19 WEBSITE

RMT's popular website www.rmt.org.uk is full of industry information as well as a members-only area. This gives you access to a continually updated pay and conditions database and you can view various RMT conferences, including the AGM. You can also debate union-related issues through the members' forum and view and update your own membership details.

20 CREDIT UNION

RMT's has its own Credit Union, run by members for members. It offers a savings and loan scheme at competitive rates of interest on a not for profit basis. Members can also access their account through the RMT website.

21 TAX & WILL PREPARATION

The union can also provide a personal taxation service and will preparation service. ■

NOTIFICATION OF CONTRIBUTION RATES FOR 2007

Like most things, the cost of providing you with the benefits of RMT membership increases every year. The increase for 2007 is over the rate of inflation to expand our growing activities and provide a better service to you the members.

From January 1 2007 contributions will be increased by 23p per week, taking the full-time weekly rate to £3.23, for members aged 18 or over in an adult post.

For members who are under 18 years or who, if not in an adult post, are under 20 years of age, the weekly contribution rate will be held at the current level that is £1.33, the latter rate also applying to those staff on part-time contracts of employment.

Direct debit payments will be increased accordingly as will contributions collected by employers under paybill arrangements. Members who pay contributions to cash collectors will receive a new contribution card from the collector.

The new rates applicable are as follows:

<i>Period</i>	<i>Adult/Full Time</i>	<i>Junior/PartTime</i>
Weekly	£3.23	£1.33
4 Weekly	£12.92	£5.30
Monthly	£14.00	£5.74

PROVIDENT BENEFITS

Accident Benefit will also increase arising from the higher contribution rate and for adult/full time members will be weekly £32.30 with a maximum payable sum of £839.80.

LINCOLN CELEBRATES 320 YEARS OF SERVICE



Pictured left to right: Ade Wildsmith, Colin Fields, Keith Adams, Tony Day, Lou Chan, chair Dudley Bunning and Pete Lewis.

Lincoln no1 branch chairman Dudley Bunning presented three members, Rex Beech, Pete Lewis and Colin Fields with 40-year awards at a social event recently.

Eight members receiving 25-year awards were Keith Adams, Lou Chan, Mark Cuppleditch, Tom Hirons, Simon Kemp, Mark Perry, Tony Day and Don Turner.

Branch secretary Ade Wildsmith passed on the thanks of the union for the loyal support all these members had given and food and drinks followed. ■

WELFARE – THE POOR RELATION OF HEALTH AND SAFETY

Preparations are well underway for the first of the RMT's National Conferences for 2007.

The fifth National Health and Safety Conference will be held at the Cliffs Hotel in Blackpool on Thursday March 15 2007.

Delegate nomination forms and requests for motions have been sent out and health and safety reps who wish to attend conference should see their branch secretary for a form.

Conference is held under the banner of a

particular theme. This year the Health and Safety Advisory Committee have chosen the theme "welfare – the poor relation of health and safety".

The meeting is open to all RMT-accredited health and safety representatives from all sectors in which the union organises. It is an ideal opportunity to meet reps from other industries, hear speakers on the conference theme and debate general health and safety resolutions submitted by branches.

Speakers confirmed to attend so far include Hilda Palmer from Greater Manchester Hazards Centre and Dr Olivia Carlton, Head of LUL's Occupational Health and Safety Unit and a representative from HMRI.

Branches who wish to submit motions, which should be relevant to the transport sector as a whole, for debate at conference should do so by the end of January 2007. ■

INTEGRITY AND SAFETY FOR OUR WORLD-CLASS TUBE

Metronet Rail is injecting new life into London Underground's network. We're investing more than £2.5 million each working day to maintain, upgrade and improve trains, tracks, signalling and related infrastructure. This will create a world-class Tube and make a lasting difference to the lives of three million daily commuters.

Effective signalling systems lie right at the heart of an efficient and successful rail operation. The integrity and safety of our technology is always of paramount importance, which is why we're strengthening our operational management team and also deepening our resources at technical level in signals maintenance.

TRACK CIRCUIT TECHNICIAN OPPORTUNITIES

(REF: METRONET414)

Nights – £33,000pa

The Track Circuit Technician will undertake to oversee: to laid down specifications and standards in accordance with trading of contractual agreements; corrective and preventative maintenance, installation, fault rectification, modification and testing for which the job holder is competent and suitably licensed, in accordance with LUL Standard No 2-01203-015 (Cat 1).

Internal candidates will have completed Basic Electrical/Electrical Theory and Track Circuit courses and external candidates will need to undertake a 10 week Track Circuit Technician conversion training course (based at Acton) on days, becoming fully conversant with Metronet equipment and ways of working. Within the role will be the opportunity to develop and progress to Technical Office Grade.

The successful candidate will be competent in problem solving, investigating systems and fault finding on specific assets. They will undertake work on assets, of track circuits and associated equipment as well as some AWC work.

It is essential that external candidates have signalling experience up to tester level. An IRSE Licence (1.4.160; 1.4.110; 1.4.120 or 1.2.110) is desirable but not essential.

To apply for the role, please send your CV and detailed covering letter (quoting the appropriate reference number) to: Anne Baugh, Floor 1C, Templar House, 81 - 87 High Holborn, London WC1V 6NU or email: recruitment-AP@metronetrail.com Tel: 0207 038 5206

Closing date: 29th December 2006



WE SHALL REMEMBER



RMT national officer Steve Todd laid a wreath on behalf of the union last month at Tower Hill in London in memory of over 30,000 merchant seamen that lost their lives during the fight against fascism.

YVONNE TAKES ON ANOTHER MARATHON

RMT member Yvonne Scarrot celebrated her 40th birthday recently by running in the Toronto marathon in Canada, raising about £360 for charity.

Yvonne had planned to run in the London marathon for charity earlier in the year but she was unwell and advised not to run.

She had a great run, but due

to very windy conditions she finished three minutes off her personal best and completed in three hours 21 minutes.

Nevertheless Yvonne finished 16th and even managed to beat some of the elite runners.

"I would like to thank all that sponsored me, and will be on the start line in London 2007," she said. ■



Orphan fund calendars for sale!

Calendars featuring either steam trains, modern trains or vintage buses are available for £5 each. Orphan fund diaries also available for £2

Please send your order to

Mark Harding
Orphan Fund
Unity House
39 Chalton Street
London NW1 1JD



INTERNATIONAL FOCUS

CHAVEZ IN THE DRIVING SEAT



Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez took over the controls of a new Japanese-made train in the capital Caracas last month.

The popular nationalist leader inaugurated the new billion pound rail line which will transport tens of thousands of people to and from working class suburbs. A one-way ticket will cost less than a pound.

BRITISH RATINGS STRIKE ON FRENCH FERRY

British ratings working on the Dieppe - Newhaven route held a four-hour strike supported by their French colleagues recently.

The strike on board the Dieppe was in protest at the seafarers' programmed dismissal

by the Compagnie Maritime d'Orbigny (CMO) following delivery of the 142-metre Seven Sisters on October 21.

Compensation won from the Seine Maritime district council, the route's owner, was lower than RMT's claim but higher

than management's offer.

The 600-passenger, 62-lorry ferry joined its sister ship Côte d'Albâtre, delivered last March. The Spanish-built vessel is operated by 40-strong, mostly French crews under the full French flag.

FRENCH RAIL STRIKE WINS CONCESSIONS

French rail workers have won concessions from the national rail operator (SNCF), following a strike by six of France's eight rail unions that disrupted the system for 36 hours in November.

In a letter to each union general secretary, Anne-Marie Idrac, the new SNCF president, facing her first strike, confirmed the operator will hire 1,000 employees in 2007 in addition to 1,000 more drivers, that 200 ticket office jobs would go instead of 1,000 originally earmarked and that the company's ailing freight operation would not be restructured into a separate company. Wage talks will begin in February. Didier Le Reste, the general secretary of the CGT rail union, which represents almost half the workforce, said the strike was to fight to keep the railways as a public service, for salaries, jobs – 14,000 have gone since 2002 – and for the future of SNCF's freight activity, which is being "jeopardised by the European Union's policies. All the countries that have liberalised their freight activity have seen a fall in business," he said.

ITALY MARCHES AGAINST AUSTERITY

Demonstrators marched in many Italian cities in November, during national protests against the government's planned austerity measures.

Rail, air and local transport workers joined in nationwide strikes against the government's 2007 draft budget. Strikers also called for the government to abandon plans to slash pensions and demanded more spending on social

programmes.

Morena Piccinini, a senior official at Italy's largest union Cgil, said: "If the government goes ahead with the pension bill, we can't rule out further industrial action".

Rome is having difficulty meeting strict economic rules for staying within the eurozone.



SOLIDARITY: The banner reads 'Cut to public schools spending. Stop Now'.

GERMANY SET FOR RAIL SELL-OFF

Germany's ruling coalition of conservative Christian Democrats and Social Democrats have finally reached agreement on the full privatisation of national rail operator Deutsche Bahn (DB), by 2009.

Following serious disagreements about implementing EU rules and splitting infrastructure and train operations, the government will continue to own the 34,000km of track and 5,500 stations - but not take on DB's debt.

Unions have called off industrial action following a promise of no direct dismissals until 2010. But they are still concerned that up to 80,000 jobs could go thereafter despite a 2005 union agreement protecting 130,000 of DB's 230,000 jobs.

Full details of the initial sell-off, which probably will involve up to 49.9 per cent of DB, are expected in the spring. Meanwhile, stations and booking offices are closing and fares have gone up for the third time in two years.

ESTONIA RENATIONALISES RAIL NETWORK

The Estonian government has announced plans to buy back Estonian Railway (Eesti Raudtee), the transport company it sold a 66 per cent stake in only five years ago.

The government has said that private investors in Baltic Rail Services, the company that bought Estonian Railway, had failed to meet their financial obligations.

Economy Minister Edgar Savisaar signed an agreement on October 18 to re-nationalise Estonian Railway by purchasing the remaining 66 per cent of the company for 2.4 billion kroons.

He said that re-purchasing the railway was important in terms of international policy and Estonia's domestic affairs, given that the rail route is primarily a trade connection with Russia.

As its first step, Prime Minister Andrus Ansip said the government would consider raising cargo fees charged by Estonian Railway to pay for infrastructure improvements.

"The investments made so far are not sufficient, and due to the sell-off, Baltic Rail Services lost the moral duty to invest in the railway too," he said.



Unity and progress

It has been an honour and a privilege to serve as your president for the last three years and congratulations your new incoming president John Leach.

I am particularly proud to have served a union that leads the way as a progressive and challenging organisation that is not afraid to stand up for working people everywhere.

RMT policies have led the way in industrial matters and on political environment and social issues.

The advent of so-called 'globalisation' has had a negative impact on our members through downward pressure on wages and job cuts. RMT has been at the forefront of the battle against this trend and has fought against the European arm of this phenomenon, known as the European Union.

EU directives, drawn up by unelected and remote EU institutions, have attacked the many services that working people rely on. Transport directives are privatising ferry and rail services across the EU.

While pensions, postal services and healthcare are also being forced into the private sector by EU diktat to enhance profits for the few.

The services directive also threatens to hand over a whole range of essential services to the corporate carpetbaggers and asset strippers, if they are allowed to get away with it.

Nevertheless, resistance to this process is growing and, I am proud to say, RMT is not afraid to be a part of that challenge and deal with the issues of our times effectively.

More and more people recognise that the private sector is not providing the services or efficiency promised by the Tories and Tony Blair's clique.

Just look at the West Coast Mainline debacle where Virgin was given £590 million in extra subsidy than planned. It is clear that this kind of profiteering will not produce an increase in capacity our environment demands.

The deregulated bus industry also continues to decline and all the evidence points to the need for regulation and democratic control of this important sector.

Bringing rail maintenance back-in-house has already played a major role in Network Rail's efficiency gains.

While the operating profit made by Network Rail will be ploughed back into the industry - it's a pity it isn't the same for train operations.

We still have to endure the spectacle of train operating companies siphoning millions of taxpayers' money out of the industry in return for providing a generally poor service.

With this level of corporate greed, just imagine how much worse it would be for transport workers if their union was not there to fight for their interests.

RMT's determination to defend working people is directly reflected by the fact that we are the fastest growing union in Britain. That is something we can all be proud of.

I have enjoyed my term of office.

But there is one major disappointment, it is the distinct lack of progress of realising RMT's long-held policy regarding the need for a single union for rail workers.

The arguments for such a body are overwhelming and the benefits are self-evident.

The removal of sectional interests and the greater unity of workers are honourable goals and I still believe they can be achieved for the betterment of all transport workers.

Thanks again to everyone that has helped me do my job and good luck for the future.

Tony Donaghey,
retiring RMT President

the RMT Christmas quiz 2006

As Old Father Time bows out for another year and it's time to look back on the events of the past 12 months with RMT's fun seasonal quiz. All questions relate to a news story which occurred during 2006. Good luck, but remember - Google is cheating.



ARTS AND ENTERTAINMENT

1. Hollywood biopic Walk the Line recounted the life story of which legendary country singer?
2. Heavy metal rockers Lordi won the Eurovision Song Contest representing which country?
3. Which fashion capital banned super-skinny models from its catwalks amid concerns over health?
 - a) Madrid
 - b) Milan
 - c) Paris
4. Big Brother winner Pete Bennett suffers from which neurological disorder?
5. According to Stephen Frears's hit film The Queen, what is Prince Phillip's pet name for Elizabeth II?
 - a) Cupcake
 - b) Cabbage
 - c) Sauerkraut



WORKPLACE

6. Which former Labour politician was awarded the first ever honorary RMT membership?
7. RMT's annual general meeting broke new ground by using which Internet innovation?
8. How did South West Trains propose to resolve overcrowding on their services?
 - a) Run more frequent services
 - b) Add extra carriages
 - c) Remove seats to create more standing room
9. This year marked the 40th anniversary of the 1966 seamen's strike. What was the dispute about?
10. RMT membership grew this year to nearly:
 - a) 70,000
 - b) 75,000
 - c) 80,000
11. Which rail infrastructure company finally recognised RMT after members took strike action in June?
12. Which lifeline ferry service did the European Union demand was privatised despite widespread public opposition?
13. Which Tube Line is London mayor Ken Livingstone proposing to hand over to the private sector?
14. Where is the union's new education situated?
15. What issue led to a national yes vote for a rail strike before employers backed down?





PEOPLE

16. Pop star Madonna sparked criticism from charities by adopting a child from which impoverished African country?
17. Which British royal was pictured wearing a Che Guevara t-shirt?
18. Belfast airport was renamed in honour of which famous former resident of the city?
19. Which Hollywood star was forced to apologise for an anti-Semitic rant during his arrest for drink-driving?
20. Which British pop star did a stint of enforced community service cleaning the streets of New York?

POLITICS

21. While supposedly standing in for Tony Blair, deputy prime minister John Prescott was photographed doing what?
22. Which failed Conservative policy did Tory leader David Cameron apologise for his party having inflicted on Scotland during the 1980s?
23. Where did Labour hold its annual conference?
24. Cherie Blair came under fire when it emerged that she spent £7,700 of Labour funds on what?
25. Chancellor Gordon Brown announced plans to spend £25 billion on:
 - a) hospitals and schools
 - b) public transport
 - c) nuclear weapons

GONE – BUT NOT FORGOTTEN

26. The BBC sparked controversy by axing which long-running piece of music from Radio 4's early morning broadcasts?
27. Which founding member of Pink Floyd died after years spent living as a recluse?
28. Which BBC DJ, who compered the first Top of the Pops in 1964, also presented the last-ever broadcast of the axed music show?
29. Which cult Scottish poet, famed for his madcap nonsense verse, died at the age of 83?
30. Legendary British racehorse Desert Orchid, who died at the age of 27, was known by which affectionate nickname?

SCIENCE

31. Which celestial body lost its planetary status at the insistence of boffins from the International Astronomers Union?
32. Swiss scientist Albert Hoffman, who celebrated his 100th birthday this year, is credited with accidentally discovering which drug in 1938?
33. Computer laptops produced by which company, were recalled worldwide after several burst into flames?
34. At what age did IVF mother Patricia Rashbrook give birth to become Britain's oldest mum?
35. Bird flu reached the United Kingdom this year – true or false?

SPORT

36. Which Italian footballer did France captain Zinedine Zidane head butt in the World Cup final?
37. Which seven-time Formula One champion announced his retirement from the sport?
38. Which reality TV star collapsed during the London Marathon, having boasted of doing no training prior to the event?
39. Which golfer sank the winning shot in Europe's Ryder Cup victory over the USA?
40. Pakistan forfeited the controversial 4th test match with England at which cricket ground?



(1) Johnny Cash (2) Finland (3) Madrid (4) Tourrette's Syndrome (5) Cabbage (6) Tony Benn (7) Webcam (8) Remove seats (9) 40-hour week (10) 75,000 (11) Grant Rail (12) Caledonian MacBryne (13) East London Line (14) Doncaster (15) Closure of final-salary pension (16) Malawi (17) Prince Harry (18) George Best (19) Neil Gibson (20) Boy George (21) Playing croquet (22) Poll Tax (23) Manchester (24) Her hair (25) Nuclear weapons (26) UK Theme (27) Syd Barrett (28) Jimmy Saville (29) Ivor Cutler (30) Dessie (31) Pluto (32) LSD (33) Dell (34) Sixty-two (35) True (36) Marco Materazzi (37) Michael Schumacher (38) Jade Goody (39) Henrik Stenson (40) The Oval.

ANSWERS...

BOOK REVIEWS

BRIGADISTA: AN IRISHMAN'S FIGHT AGAINST FASCISM

by Bob Doyle

CURRACH PRESS ISBN: 1-85607-939-2

When RMT's annual general meeting bestowed the rare distinction of an honorary union membership upon Bob Doyle (right) earlier this year in Dublin, it was in recognition of an extraordinary life spent battling injustice.

In his conference speech Bob, a former member of the National Union of Seamen, recounted his experiences as a volunteer with the legendary International Brigades, fighting to defend Spain from fascist rebellion.

This year marked the 70th anniversary of that epic battle for democracy – a story retold in Bob's gripping autobiography, published to coincide with the commemorations.

Born into a Dublin slum in 1916, Bob experienced extreme poverty and saw the harsh injustices endured by working people in their daily struggles to survive.

Bob's political awakening came when he witnessed the brutal rise of the Blueshirts – Ireland's fascists of the 1930s, who were

backed by the rich, the police and the church hierarchy.

"Every bullet I fired in Spain would be against the Dublin landlords and capitalists," he says of his decision to join the International Brigades – volunteers from across the world who fought on the side of the Spanish Republic against the fascist aggression of Franco, Hitler and Mussolini.

Bob was captured in battle and held in a concentration camp where he endured months of beatings and torture before his eventual release in a prisoner exchange.

He soon settled in London, throwing himself into trade union activity, left-wing politics and the fight for peace and justice, making him a familiar face at meetings and demonstrations in this country over the past 60 years.

But Bob never forgot his duty to Spain, returning to the country incognito on numerous occasions, and at great personal risk, to smuggle and distribute anti-fascist propaganda up until the restoration of



democracy in 1975.

Every RMT member should find inspiration in this book detailing the exemplary life of Bob Doyle – seaman, trade unionist and anti-fascist.

Chris Kasrils

PAUPERS PROGRESS: FROM POOR RELIEF TO OLD AGE PENSION

by Joe Harris

NATIONAL PENSIONERS CONVENTION ISBN 1-902245-20-2

This important book by Joe Harris, with some wonderful illustrations, offers the general reader a unique opportunity to read a condensed history of the plight of the old, many of whom are still treated as second-class citizens, dependent on means-tested benefits.

The issues raised at every stage in that history are still with us today to remind us all that every generation has to fight and win the same battles for justice.

But it would be a great mistake to think that this is only about problems facing the old, because it is really about wealth and poverty more generally and has a strong class element in it

at every stage.

The rich have always had enough to manage on but, when asked to contribute to help the poor, they have resisted by classifying those in need as "deserving" or "undeserving" to justify their meanness.

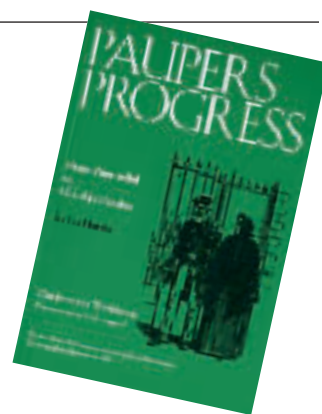
Parish relief, the law against helping beggars, the workhouse and all the injustice bear a startling resemblance to some of the same arguments used today to restrict the payment of what is needed.

The turning point in making progress came after the Chartists campaigned for the vote. The advance of democracy allowed the poor to use their vote to "buy" the services that were

needed and local government began to provide municipal services for health, education and even some welfare.

Indeed, the importance of political democracy lies in the fact that it transferred power from the marketplace to the polling station, from the wallet to the ballot and the Lloyd George pension scheme was a forerunner of the welfare state built after 1945.

I remember Barbara Castle's speech well in the Cabinet: "The wealth that we enjoy was earned for us by those who have now retired and we owe it to them to see that they enjoy a fair share in the wealth which we create."



It was a phrase that ushered in the pensions link with earnings which Thatcher abolished.

Indeed, we are back to a means test now dressed up as a "minimum income guarantee," which is seen by many pensioners as too humiliating to claim.

Joe Harris's great book should be read by all activists for it provides the ammunition we need to win the arguments that must be won.

Tony Benn

BOOK REVIEWS

LET NO WHEELS TURN: THE WRECKING OF THE FLYING SCOTSMAN, 1926

by Margaret Hutcherson

On May 10, 1926, a group of men removed a rail from the mainline near the village of Cramlington, Northumberland, and the Flying Scotsman was derailed.

It may seem strange that anyone could write in RMT News with sympathy for those who could undertake such an act, but that paradox is one of the many aspects that make this book such a good read.

These events took place during the General Strike, when rail workers were among millions on strike in support of miners, who had been locked out for refusing to accept a cut in their already poverty pay and an increase in working hours.

It was a time of desperation, almost unimaginable poverty and sharp conflict between haves who wanted more and

have-nots who had nothing left to give up.

It was a strike that pitched the trade union movement on a collision course with the might of the state, and in which any trade unionist that fell foul of the law felt the full force of its vengeance.

Such was the fate of the eight Cramlington miners who were singled out as responsible for the derailment of the Flying Scotsman.

Never mind that their intention had been to stop scab coal trains running and that they had no inkling that the Flying Scotsman, crewed by scabs, was approaching.

Never mind that, once their mistake was realised, attempts had been made to stop the train, and that no serious injuries were suffered.

Never mind that far more damage was done during the strike by inexperienced scabs, whose ineptitude resulted in several deaths.

In one crash at Edinburgh, at around the same time as the Flying Scotsman came off the road, three were killed and 16 injured thanks to a scab.

For the miners, as for the striking railway workers, it was a hand-to-mouth existence in squalid conditions.

Such was the poverty that, on the very day of the miners' court appearance, a mother had been arraigned for killing her baby because she couldn't bear to watch it slowly starve to death.

For the well-to-do scabs the strike was it was all a bit of a laugh, a chance for adventure, to play at railwaymen.



The brutal sentences meted out to the miners found guilty of the derailment were greeted a sustained campaign which led to reductions.

Full of detail, painstakingly researched and well illustrated with photographs, newspaper clippings and strike bulletins, this book is well worth reading – and if you order now, they'll do their utmost to get it to you before Christmas.

Derek Kotz

Order at the special price of £7 including postage, with cheques payable to M Hutcherson, from PO Box 450, Torquay, TQ1 9AZ, quoting RMT offer, or order online from www.letnowheelsturn.com, using code RMT.

THE SERVICES DIRECTIVE – A RACE TO THE BOTTOM

by Brian Denny

DEMOCRAT PRESS ISBN 1-904260-07-1

This pamphlet explains how this deeply undemocratic directive seeks to erase national laws that get in the way of large private companies taking over service provision across the EU.

Under these plans all public services are treated as “economic activity,” or tradable commodities like any other business.

The first chapter reveals how healthcare remains under threat despite the fact that it was removed from the provisions of the directive.

The European Commission has got round this little problem by simply drawing up a new directive to cover healthcare, which amounts to 10 per cent of the EU's GDP and, therefore, a huge potential for private profit.

The pamphlet looks at the origins of the services directive which can be traced to the signing of the Single European Act back in 1986 by Margaret Thatcher.

We learn that it was the Tory government's close relationship with big business groups like the European Roundtable of Industrialists which put the EU on this road to the ‘Thatcherisation’ of Europe, as one Tory MP put it.

The services directive and the ‘internal market’ principles behind it also represent a threat to jobs, decent wage levels and trade union rights.

This easy-to-read booklet also outlines the ongoing ‘Vaxholm’ case, presently before the EU's own European Court of

Justice, which threatens to outlaw Swedish labour law and the right of trade unions to enter into collective bargaining agreements.

The argument being put by the Commission and their court is that nothing can be allowed to get in the way of the free movement of ‘services, labour and capital’.

This echoes the oppressive Victorian argument that trade unions operate in ‘restraint of trade’ and should be outlawed.

However, trade unionists have always maintained, quite correctly, that giving big business the right to do what it likes, where it likes does not represent freedom but the shackling of workers and a threat to representative

democracy.

I would wholeheartedly recommend this pamphlet as it puts sometimes confusing events into sharp focus.

It will prove invaluable for anyone seeking to understand the neo-liberal, right wing direction of the EU and the threat this poses to jobs, manufacturing, trade union rights, pensions, democracy, our public services and our civil rights.

Tony Benn

Available for £1 plus p&tp from Democrat Publications PO Box 46295 London W5 2UG



THE JIMMY KNAPP CANCER FUND



Bob Crow at TUC this year with Eva Knapp, widow of Jimmy and a hard-working member of the Cancer Fund.

The Jimmy Knapp Cancer Fund was established in August 2001 following Jimmy's death, after a year long battle with cancer, to be an ongoing memory of his life and work.

Respected and admired for his energy, passion and leadership the fund aims to be a positive reminder of the caring contribution Jimmy made to the trade union movement and his concern for his fellow human beings.

The fund continues to give towards the support of research of cancer, the counselling of patients, their families and friends and the hospice movement.

To date over £365,000 has been donated and with your help this figure can be greatly increased. All donations will help the fund with its work in supporting cancer related activities.

For more information visit www.jimmyknapp.org

Your support would be greatly appreciated.

Donations Form

Cheques may be sent payable to 'The Jimmy Knapp Cancer Fund' at Ground Floor, Congress House, 23-28 Great Russell Street, London, WC1B 3UB.

If you are a UK Tax payer you can make your donation worth nearly a third more at no extra cost to you by completing the following and sending with your donation:

I enclose my donation of £ payable to the Jimmy Knapp Cancer Fund, or...

Set up a Standing Order, payable to Unity Trust Bank plc, Sort Code 08-60-01, for the account Jimmy Knapp Cancer Fund, numbered 20106997.

I am a UK taxpayer and I want the Jimmy Knapp Cancer Fund to treat all donations from April 2006, until I notify you otherwise, as Gift Aid Donations. I am currently paying income tax or capital gains tax that is equal to or more than the tax deducted from my donation.

Signed: dated:

Address: E-mail:

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NOMINATIONS FOR 2007 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Annual General Meeting is the "supreme government of the union", deciding Union policy and scrutinising the decisions taken by the Council of Executives.

At the invitation of Edinburgh No 1 & Portobello District Branch, next year's AGM is to be held in Edinburgh at the Pollock Halls of Residence, University of Edinburgh, from Sunday June 24 to Friday June 29.

There will be 62 delegates to the AGM and branches have been asked to make their

nominations by January 5 2007. So, if you are interested in attending the AGM as a delegate, get along to a branch meeting and find out more.

You need to have been a member of the union for at least five years by the end of next year, be employed and be under 65 years of age.

Once nominations have been made, if there is more than one nomination for a delegate place, elections will be held. The ballot will open on January 11. Ballot papers are sent out to branches, votes are taken at

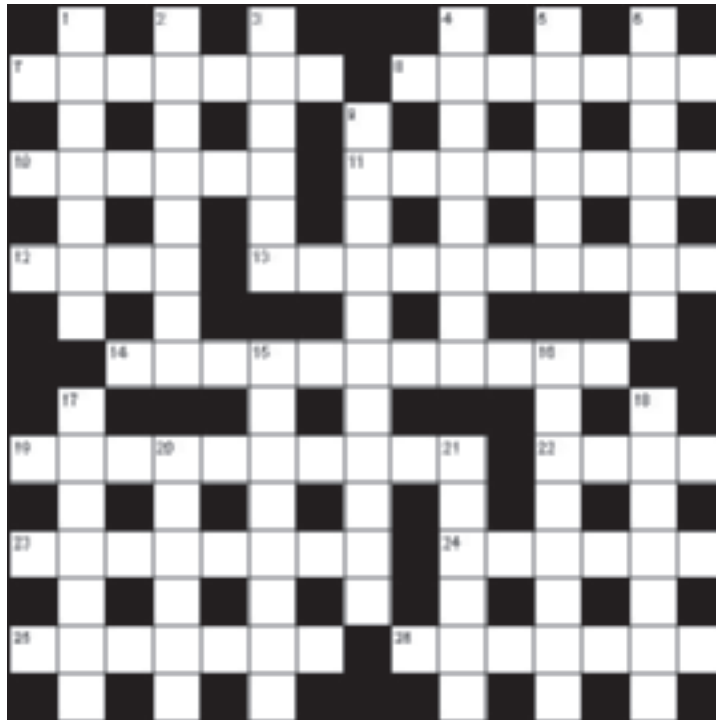
branch meetings and the papers returned to Electoral Reform Services, the independent scrutineer that oversees the union's elections.

The ballot will close on Wednesday February 21, so you will know whether or not you have been elected by the beginning of March - giving you plenty of time to arrange your time off work to attend.

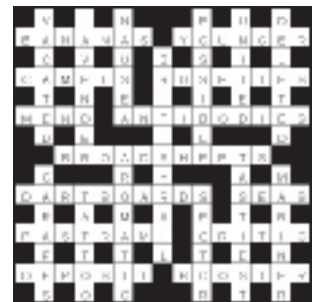
For further information about the role and function of the Annual General Meeting, see Rule 3 in your RMT Rule Book or on the RMT website, under 'Constitution'.

RMT £25 prize crossword

No. 28. Set by Elk



Last month's
solution...



The winner of prize
crossword no. 27 is
P E Leesham from Frome in
Somerset.

Send entries to Prize Crossword,
RMT, Unity House, 39 Chalton
Street, London NW1 1JD by
January 1st with your name and
address.

Winner and solution in next issue.

ACROSS

- 7 Blade fixed to firearm (7)
- 8 Base ten number system (7)
- 10 Spiky plant, likes deserts (6)
- 11 Bits taken out (8)
- 12 Tatty clothing, cleaning cloths (4)
- 13 Two-wheeled motor vehicle (10)
- 14 Blow them, or eat them! (11)
- 19 The ones who pay... (10)
- 22 ...the ones who get paid (4)
- 23 Plant expert (8)
- 24 In the 2 their unity paid off (6)
- 25 Cut off (7)
- 26 1960s beat combo from Liverpool (7)

DOWN

- 1 Mad, fruit (7)
- 2 Where 24 won last month, after ten days on strike (5,3)
- 3 Rubbish or goods thrown overboard (6)
- 4 College teacher (8)
- 5 The act of marrying at least once too often (6)
- 6 Of this world (7)
- 9 Where people live, or financial arrangements (11)
- 15 Hills separating northwest England from northeast (8)
- 16 Dig (8)
- 17 Any one of certain elements in seventh group of periodic table (or headlamps!) (7)
- 18 Ships plying back and forth with passengers and or goods (7)
- 20 Former NUS general secretary Jim (6)
- 21 Make unhappy (6)

RMT Credit Union

Our Own Savings and Loans Co-operative

Our RMT Credit Union is a great new benefit for members. It exists, not to make a profit, but to provide help and support to all our members for their savings and credit needs. By saving together, and lending to each other, we take the profit motive out of savings and loans. All the surpluses created by the Credit Union are recycled as benefits to members through cheap loans, and the ability to pay dividends on savings.

The Right Balance

CHEAP LOANS

Decisions on interest rates are made by our members. This year our AGM decided to offer very cheap loans to members. This means we can now offer loans at **9.9 per cent APR**, equivalent to **0.825 per cent per month** on the declining balance. See our great rates below.

We strike a balance between low interest rates on loans and paying a dividend on savings. We enable members to have ready access to cheap loans while building up a substantial and useful savings account. We can do this because our Credit Union is run on the same principles of mutual support and members' democratic control as our trade union, so you can be sure that it's run in the interests of us all.

DIVIDEND ON SAVINGS

We don't exist to make profits. With the surplus we make from interest on loans we can collectively decide to pay a dividend. We recently paid a dividend of 3% on savings – a very healthy dividend rate compared to banks' interest rates

Loan term (months) 9.9% APR (0.79% per month)

Amount	12	24	36	48	60
500	43.93	23.05	16.11	12.66	10.60
1000	87.87	46.1	32.22	25.31	21.2
1500	131.80	69.15	48.33	37.97	31.80
2000	175.74	92.20	64.44	50.63	42.40
3000	263.61	138.30	96.66	75.94	63.59
4000	351.48	184.40	128.88	101.26	84.79
5000	439.35	230.49	161.10	126.57	105.99
7500	659.02	345.74	241.65	189.86	158.98



Because we're a members' organisation with a democratic structure, we're able to make the decisions that provide a virtuous circle of saving together, providing credit at low interest rates and sharing the benefits by paying a dividend on savings.

Joining Our Credit Union

The Financial Services Authority requires us to comply fully with money laundering regulations. It's a bore but we have to do it. It means that before we can open your account we have to verify your identity and your address.

You need to complete the application form opposite along with the Direct Debit. You'll also need to get your ID verified and send it with the application to us. If you're near a regional office or Unity House you can bring it in and we'll process it there.

ID REQUIREMENTS

Getting your ID verified is quite straight forward. You need two separate forms of ID such as the following:

PROOF OF IDENTITY

- Personal Cheque used for your first month's savings if drawn on an account that includes your name
- Current valid full UK Passport; EU member state ID card
- Current valid full foreign passport
- Current UK full Photo Card Driving Licence
- Current UK provisional, Photo Card Driving Licence (Old styles not accepted)
- ID pass from Network Rail, Trans Pennine Express, Central Trains, Eurostar
- Discharge book (shippers)
- Inland Revenue Tax Notification (current year)

PROOF OF ADDRESS

- Current UK full, signed driving licence (if not used for Proof of Identity)
- Current UK provisional, driving licence Photo Card (if not used for Proof of Identity)
- A current [within last three months] Utility Bill (not mobile phone bill)
- Recent Bank, Building Society or Mortgage statement
- Current Council Tax bill
- Pension or benefits book
- Tenancy or rent book/agreement
- Recent Inland Revenue notice of coding or tax demand

The list above is not exhaustive and other documents will be considered.

You can get your branch secretary or regional office to verify and sign photocopies of the documents. As an alternative, you can also get another person of authority such as your employer, doctor, Solicitor etc to verify the forms of ID. The copies of the documents must have an official stamp and signature on them and a contact name and address. Or, you can send originals to us at the address below. Send completed verified copies of documents or originals to: RMT Credit Union, Unity House, FREEPOST NW3706, London NW1 3YD. If sending valuable documents by post you should send them recorded delivery. For assistance: Tel: 020 7529 8835

Authorised and Regulated By The Financial Services Authority FRN: 228612

RMT CREDIT UNION LTD.

Finance Department, Unity House, 39 Chalton 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

9 7 4 2 8 1

Reference Number

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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 RMT TODAY!



Visit www.rmt.org.uk to join online
or call the helpline on freephone

0800 376 3706

Problems at work? Call the helpline

Open six days a week

Mon to Fri - 8am until 6pm, Sat - 9.30am to 4pm

e-mail: info@rmt.org.uk

Legal helpline: 0800 587 7516
Seven days a week

