

RMT *news*

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**RMT'S NEW EDUCATION
CENTRE IN DONCASTER
OPENED BY PADDY CRUMLIN
AND ANNE SCARGILL**

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RMT News is compiled and originated by National Union of Rail, Maritime & Transport Workers, Unity House, 39 Chalton Street, London NW1 1JD. Tel: 020 7387 4771. Fax: 020 7529 8808. e-mail bdenny@rmt.org.uk The information contained in this publication is believed to be correct but cannot be guaranteed. All rights reserved. RMT News is designed by Bigband Creative and printed by Leycol Printers. General editor: Bob Crow. Managing editor: Brian Denny. No part of this document may be reproduced without prior written approval of RMT. No liability is accepted for any errors or omissions. Copyright RMT 2005

EDITORIAL

NEW CHALLENGES



May I begin by offering new-year greetings to all members and I hope you have a successful 2007.

I would like to thank everybody that re-elected me to be your general secretary. It has been an honour to serve the membership over the last five years and an even greater one to be allowed to continue in office for another five years.

The union has already had many issues to face this year as rail services in the west of the country go into virtual meltdown, hundreds of planned cleaning job cuts on the Tube and Central Trains saw fit to lock-out the workforce over the christmas period.

The core issues behind these developments are clear.

The Greater Western rail franchise was won on the basis of cuts to enhance profits for FirstGroup, Tube Lines are cutting cleaners to increase profits and the Central Trains dispute is driven by the same logic.

On the bright side, following successful strike action by out diving members, fellow offshore union OILC have made clear its desire to merge with RMT. This is a welcome development and I am sure it is the start of a long and fruitful partnership.

One of my new years resolutions is to campaign for the disastrous 'Public-Private Partnership to be scrapped if the capital is to have a world-class metro system by 2012.

On the fourth anniversary of introduction PPP, an RMT study inside has drawn together the conclusions of a catalogue of damning reports and reviewed the continuing chaos that underline the need to end a scheme that has "failure built into its very fabric".

The study shows how warnings that the PPP would turn out to be an expensive failure have come true, and concludes that the privateer 'infracos' will not be able to deliver.

Above-inflation rail-fare increases have also been in the news and this move will drive more people off trains and into cars.

The government talks about the climate challenge and the importance

of reducing carbon emissions, but allowing such fare rises will only result in more polluting road traffic.

It is only a six months since the Commons Transport Select Committee condemned the shambolic state of rail pricing structures and exposed the private sector's inability to operate the railways as a public service.

Since then we have also had the stark environmental warnings in the Stern report, but it seems it is to be 'big business as usual' for the private train operators.

Well done to Wrexham RMT branch secretary Dave Bithell in his successful campaign in the Welsh Assembly to secure an offer of funding for Network Rail to construct a new local railway depot.

This branch has once more highlighted the effectiveness of political campaigning to advance the interests of the members.

The union is carrying out many such campaigns in conjunction with our parliamentary group led by John McDonnell MP.

RMT was instrumental in winning support for a Trade Union Freedom Bill which John will be shortly presenting in parliament.

The group has also put down early day motions on a number of issues from the need to keep the East London Line in the public sector, defending safety standards on the River Thames and against cuts to services on the Greater Western franchise.

The level of campaigning and what we can do for transport workers of all grades relies heavily on membership levels on the ground, in the workplace, where it matters.

The bigger the membership the more we can achieve. On that basis, why not make a new-year resolution yourself to recruit a colleague to RMT and help build a strong effective organisation at your workplace.

All the best

Bob Crow

BRISTOL PROTESTS AGAINST RAIL CUTS AND OVERCROWDING SCANDAL AT FIRST GREAT WESTERN

RMT has called on the government to end the scandal of hazardous overcrowding on train services run by First Great Western in Bristol, the west of England and south Wales by releasing 'mothballed' trains into service.

Many train units are currently standing idle in "warm storage" in private railway sidings across the region while services are slashed due to the shortage of trains as FirstGroup struggle to meet the repayment terms of the franchise agreement.

RMT general secretary Bob Crow called on Railways Minister Tom Harris to intervene as train service cancellations hit over 60 a day and other services are being replaced by buses since FGW introduced a new winter timetable last month.

"While perfectly serviceable trains are sitting in sidings, long-suffering commuters are daily shoehorned into fewer and shorter trains and railway staff bear the brunt of the anger and frustration experienced by rail users.

"Ultimately, the government should take the franchise back in-house and run it in the public sector," he said.

First Great Western introduced a new timetable on December 11, which significantly reduced the frequency and quantity of trains across the franchise.

Bristol East MP Kerry McCarthy has already put down early day motion 311 (right) on the crisis and over 40 MPs have signed up.

PROTEST

Campaigners recently marched on local government offices against the cuts, which equate to cutting around 2,000 seats on trains a day, and presented a protest letter to Tom Harris.

RMT assistant general secretary Pat Sikorsky said that the government must tell FGW that these "crazy" cuts are unacceptable.

"The Department of Transport is facing in two directions - on one side it is squeezing rail providers into giving more and more to the treasury and on the other it is saying it wants more people to travel by rail," he said.

RMT regional secretary Alex Gordon pointed out that some Inter City 125 services will now be stopping at intermediate stations to counter the local services being withdrawn.

"But these will be very limited and won't run at the times when most people want to travel and what will happen when these so-called 'high speed trains' are running late from London?" he said.

FirstGroup was awarded the new franchise just over a year ago, paying the government around a £1 billion premium in return.

Yet this month FirstGroup received a 'yellow card' warning that unless services improve it would lose the Greater Western franchise. ■

Early Day Motion 311

FIRST GREAT WESTERN TRAIN SERVICE REDUCTIONS IN BRISTOL AND WEST OF ENGLAND

"That this House notes with concern that from December 11 2006 users of First Great Western train services in the Bristol and West of England area will suffer the loss of their early morning train service from Cardiff to Bristol, early morning services and late evening services between Bristol and Gloucester, irregular intervals between trains from Bristol to Weston-super-Mare and Taunton, reduced capacity on short platform stations to Weston, such as Worle, loss of connectivity on trains to and from London and extensive reductions in train services to local stations in the Bristol area; further notes that First Great Western plans to reduce the amount of rolling stock used on train services in the Bristol area, including cutting Cardiff-Portsmouth trains from three to two coaches, an overall reduction of 1,839 seats, equating to a 20 per cent, cut in train seat availability, and a reduction in the number of trains from 69 to 57, equating to an 18 per cent. cut in trains; calls on the Government to urge First Great Western urgently to reconsider the reductions in levels of rolling stock on these key services, the consequences for overcrowding and forcing passengers onto the already heavily congested road network, with all the outcomes for increased carbon emissions, pollution and road traffic accidents that these train service cuts will lead to; and further calls on the Government to ensure that capacity and train service frequency in the Bristol and West of England area are maintained and improved".



Bristol on the march: Andy Robertson (Bristol Trades Council); Councillor Helen Holland (Bristol City Council, Labour Group Leader); Nigel Costley (TUC SW Regional Secretary); Pat Sikorski (RMT AGS); Kerry McCarthy MP (Bristol East) joined protesters against rail cuts

UNION WELCOMES STEP FORWARD ON BUS POLICY

RMT has welcomed proposals to give local authorities a bigger role in shaping bus provision and called for further steps to return the industry to proper public control.

RMT general secretary Bob Crow described the move as a 'positive step' which previous Transport Secretaries had shielded away from over the last decade.

He said that giving local authorities a bigger say on timetabling, bus frequency and fares would help make a start towards unravelling the chaos brought about by bus deregulation.

"However, this should be one of a number of steps, which must include action to reverse the long-term decline in bus-workers' pay and worsening of conditions, together with action to cut fares and reverse the decline in bus use," he said.

The union has called for a national bus strategy to encourage bus use and that does not permit a two-tier system to emerge where local authorities do not prioritise good bus services - social exclusion and climate change do not stop at local authority boundaries.

RMT has maintained that the fact that the measure will be brought before parliament alongside planned road-pricing pilots in the draft Road Transport Bill also underlines the importance of ensuring that all road-pricing revenue is ring-fenced for investment in transport.

"Ultimately ministers must take steps to stop the continual drain of public money from the bus industry by the privateers, who last year alone pocketed nearly £275 million in profits between them, despite the continued fall in passenger numbers outside London.

"The only people to benefit from deregulation and privatisation have been the privateers, and they remain a barrier to the bus industry playing its full role in an integrated transport network that encourages people out of cars.

"If the government wants to see the bus industry play its full economic and environmental role it must take further steps to bring the industry back under public control," Bob Crow said ■



BRING TRACK RENEWALS BACK IN-HOUSE

RMT has called for Network Rail's track renewals contracts to be brought back in-house after the company announced a reduction in the number of main contractors working on capital contracts this year.

"Network Rail are missing a golden opportunity to bring all their renewals contracts back in-house, and we will continue to campaign for that sensible

goal," RMT general secretary Bob Crow said.

"Simply re-shuffling some of the existing cards will still leave four privateers raking it in at the public's expense and subcontracting work to a dangerous muddle of subbies, agencies and one-man-and-a-dog outfits.

"Network Rail could make far greater efficiency savings and help re-establish a

world-class safety culture by bringing all renewals contracts back under a single roof, as they already have with track maintenance," Bob said.

The union's immediate concern will be to ensure that 'transfer of undertakings' rules apply and that there is no threat to members' jobs, pay and conditions ■



CENTRAL TRAINS TURNS STRIKE INTO LOCKOUT

Central Trains bosses refused an RMT offer to suspend Christmas and New Year strike action by 550 senior conductors to hold talks over the imposition of centralised rostering and closed the railway for three days.

RMT's offer to suspend strike action to hold talks on a seven-point peace plan was turned down flat by the company, which has instead ran no services and locked out all staff.

RMT general secretary Bob Crow was concerned that Central Trains was not interested in reaching a deal.

"We held out an olive branch to Central Trains but they chose simply to ignore it, which raises the fear that public money is once more being used to back a rail employer against its employees in an industrial dispute.

"If taxpayers' cash is being handed to Central Trains to indemnify them against losses and penalties arising from a dispute the company has engineered itself, it would explain why they have walked away from talks.

"Central should understand that if they are to settle this dispute they must thrash out the

issues involved around the talks table," Bob Crow said.

RMT conductors voted by a margin of more than six to one to strike over the imposition of

centralised rostering and to take action over the company's attempt to give conductors a worse Christmas-working deal than other staff. ■



BOB CROW RE-ELECTED UNOPPOSED

Bob Crow has been re-elected unopposed to serve a second five-year term as RMT general secretary from February 2007 after receiving 131 nominations from the union's 225 branches.

Outgoing RMT president Tony Donaghey was delighted that one of his final duties as president was to announce that Bob Crow had been re-elected unopposed as general secretary of "our great and growing union".

"RMT membership has grown by a third from 56,000 when Bob became general secretary in 2002 to well over than 75,000 today, and the 100,000 benchmark is now well within our sights.

"The union's finances have been completely turned around, enabling us to put more organisers out in the field, improve the service members receive and even open our own education centre," Tony said.

Bob said that it was the greatest honour to be able to serve as general secretary and an even greater honour to serve a second term.

"The priorities remain the fight for jobs and better pay and conditions at work and continue building RMT membership, campaign for public transport to be returned to the public sector, and fight for trade-union rights," he said. ■

WREXHAM RAIL CAMPAIGN PAYS OFF

A local RMT campaign to expand rail services from Wrexham to London has paid off following an announcement from the Welsh Assembly Government that an offer of funding has been made for Network Rail to construct a new railway depot at Wrexham.

The new depot could pave the way for extra rail services from Wrexham which could see up to five trains a day running from London to Wrexham from June 2007 and create more jobs locally within the railway industry.

Plaid Cymru's North Wales AM Janet Ryder has actively backed the campaign begun over two years ago by RMT Wrexham branch secretary and local Councillor Dave Bithell to develop new rail services to London from Wrexham.

In September 2004, Dave Bithell submitted a proposal to the Executive Board of Wrexham County Borough Council which sought to establish a new rail service to London.

Ms Ryder has repeatedly raised the issue with the Transport Minister in the National Assembly following a series of recent meetings with the Leader of Wrexham County Borough Council.

Ms Ryder said: "I am delighted that the campaign started by Cllr Dave Bithell over two years ago seems now to be paying off at last and he and the RMT union deserve congratulating for all their efforts so far to establish this new service, and with it these valuable jobs, in Wrexham".

Welsh Minister for Enterprise, Innovation & Networks Andrew Davies said that this investment in the railway infrastructure will lead to the creation of 55 new and permanent employment opportunities. ■

RMT TELLS MAYOR TO ACT AGAINST 'OBSCENE' CULL OF CLEANERS' JOBS

RMT handed in a letter to London mayor Ken Livingstone to halt the 'obscene, unnecessary and potentially dangerous' cull of more than 200 ISS cleaning jobs ordered by fat-cat London Underground contractor Tubelines.

RMT called the emergency lobby of the Greater London Authority at City Hall after bosses at cleaning contractor ISS confirmed that 204 cleaners – more than a quarter of its Tubelines workforce – are to be sacked by the end of March.

RMT general secretary Bob Crow said that the union is "stunned and absolutely furious" at the scale of job losses that ISS casually let slip just before Christmas.

"It was bad enough when we were led to believe that up to 100 jobs were under threat, but the true scale of the damage Tubelines is doing to our members and their families and to London Underground is obscene, unnecessary and potentially dangerous," he said.

Tubelines made nearly £160 million in profits in just three years, but that is clearly not enough because now they want to squeeze even more profit out of the people

who already do the dirtiest jobs for the lowest pay.

The union is asking the Mayor and London Underground for urgent discussions to see what can be done to force Tubelines to reverse this decision.

RMT has argued that there is no way that levels of station and train cleanliness can be maintained on the Jubilee, Northern and Piccadilly lines with a loss of 27 per cent of the cleaning workforce.

There are also serious safety and security issues involved in cutting cleaning staff, not least at a time when tons of newsprint are being dumped in stations and on trains every day.

Bob Crow said that RMT would use every means available to stop these job cuts, but it is time for the Mayor, TfL and London Underground to tell Tubelines that it cannot impose these massive cuts. ■



Go Ahead bus and rail workers unite

A groundbreaking meeting of RMT Bus and Rail representatives working for Go Ahead took place at Unity House earlier this month.

RMT represents Go Ahead workers on Southern Trains, South East Trains, Wilts & Dorset Bus, Solent Blue Bus, Southern Vectis

Bus and Damory Coaches.

The meeting was called as result of resolution passed at the 2006 Busworkers' Conference. RMT representatives updated the union's national officers Mick Cash and Pat Sikorski on issues affecting Go Ahead workers.

Representatives welcomed the opportunity to share experiences with fellow workers from different Go Ahead companies. Further meetings are planned and approaches are being made to Go Ahead management for them to meet with the union and our representatives at a national level. ■



A YEAR FOR TRADE-UNION FREEDOM

On centenary of the 1906 Trade Disputes Act, 2007 must be the year of trade-union freedom

RMT has started the year by demanding that 2007 is the year in which trade unions begin to win their freedom from more than a quarter century of anti-union laws.

Exactly a century after parliament ruled that 'an action against a trade union...shall not be entertained in any court,' RMT has renewed its call for the restoration of the trade-union rights envisaged by the framers of the 1906 Trade Disputes Act.

"A century ago even Tories accepted that the courts were no place to drag trade unionists involved in an industrial dispute," RMT general secretary Bob Crow said.

"But today's employers have been handed so many legal traps that any union standing up for its members' rights and jobs is hauled in and out of court like a yo-yo," he said.

TAFF VALE JUDGMENT

At the turn of the last century the union's forebears were sued by the Taff Vale Railway Company and fined £23,000 in damages simply for exercising their right to strike.

It was the massive upsurge of protest and political organisation that followed the vicious Taff Vale judgment that forced parliament to accept that unions should have legal immunity from employers seeking damages from workers in dispute with them.

The Trade Disputes Act is still

theoretically there, but after nine lots of Tory anti-union laws chipped away at it there are now countless ways that employers can drag unions into court for daring to stand up for workers' rights.

FIGHTING FOR RIGHTS

Today the union is building massive backing for the TUC's campaign for a Trade Union Freedom Bill, to help right the wrongs of the last 25 years and level the playing field.

The Trade Union Freedom Bill would establish as law basic trade union rights, including the right to strike and take solidarity action, better protection for striking workers, fairer balloting and industrial-action notice procedures, restricting the use of injunctions by employers, and preventing the use of replacement labour during strikes.

However, the Blair government seems more interested in doing a state-funding deal with the Tories that would end the Labour-union link and keep union rule-books under legal siege, and is even egging the European Court of Justice to rule that there is no such thing as the right to strike.

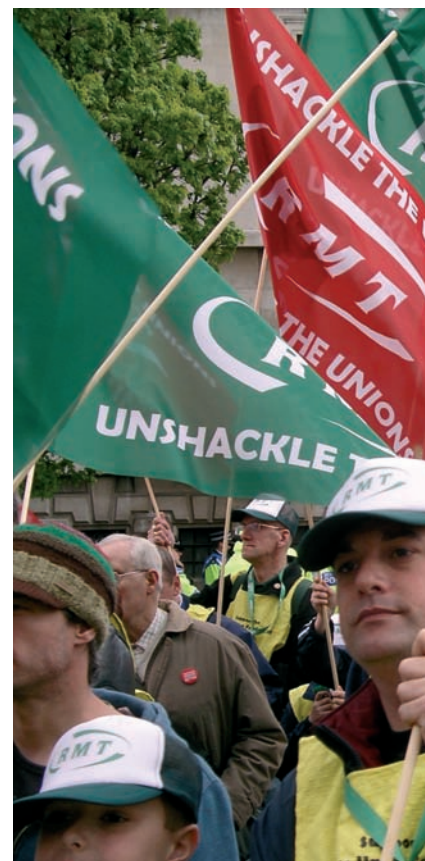
Nonetheless, most Labour back-benchers have signed up to the idea of a bill that would enshrine basic trade union rights into law, and publication of the bill by John McDonnell MP should be the trigger for a mighty campaign behind it. ■

Early Day Motion 532

TRADE UNION FREEDOM BILL CAMPAIGN

Tabled by John McDonnell
get your MP to sign

That this House recognises that free and independent trade unions are a force for good in UK society around the world and are vital to democracy; welcomes the positive role modern unions play in providing protection for working people and winning fairness at work; notes the 1906 Trades Disputes Act granted unions the legal freedom to take industrial action; regrets that successive anti-union legislation has meant that trade union rights are now weaker than those introduced by the 1906 Trades Disputes Act; therefore welcomes and supports the TUC campaign for a Trade Union Freedom Bill whose principles include better protection for workers, such as those sacked by Gate Gourmet in 2005, the simplification of ballot procedures and to allow limited supportive action, following a ballot, in specific circumstances; and therefore urges the Government to bring forward legislation to address these proposals.



Parliamentary column

FIGHTING FOR TRADE UNION FREEDOM



Workers and trade unions in Britain today have fewer rights than anywhere else in Western Europe.

Not only do trade unionists risk losing their jobs if they take industrial action, but their union faces the confiscation of its assets and, potentially, total demise if they are associated with action in solidarity with others.

A Trade Union Freedom Bill will bring the rights of British workers into the 21st century. We have already won the argument in the labour movement. It's the policy of the TUC and Labour Party Conference voted to back solidarity action last year. Around 170 Labour MPs have backed the demand for such a Bill.

However, I realise that many in the wider community have only heard about this campaign for workers' rights through the largely hostile media.

That's why it is our duty to go out and explain to people why this Bill is so important for improving the quality of their life at work.

I believe that we can achieve a consensus in favour of this legislation. We did it with the campaign for a minimum wage by explaining how it would work and what its implications would be. We can do it again.

The Bill would give all workers the right to strike or take official industrial action free from the fear of dismissal or victimisation. Employers will be prevented from sacking or penalising staff for taking action before, during or after a dispute. Employers would also be banned from taking unfair deductions from workers' pay packets for taking official industrial action and ensure that workers have the right to pay for the work they do. Workers will be given the right to enforce the rights easily and effectively. Courts will be able to order employers to stop penalising staff before a full hearing and order that sacked workers should get their jobs back.

Employers would also be prevented from hiring agency workers to carry out work normally done by staff taking official industrial action.

The Bill will simplify bureaucratic rules about industrial action notices and ballots. Unions will only have to give seven days' notice of their proposed start of industrial action and will

not have to give notice of a ballot.

They will also be free to ballot for action, even if previous calls for industrial action have been unsuccessful.

Employers will not be allowed to use legal loopholes to get injunctions stopping industrial action. Injunctions will not be granted for minor technical errors when a clear majority of members have voted to back industrial action.

Balloting rules will be brought into line with how MPs elected - that is, ballots will stand unless unions make a mistake that could have changed the ballot result.

The law on industrial action is years out of date and fails to recognise changes in the economy like contracting out, modern business structures and the complex patterns of ownership.

A Trade Union Freedom Bill will give unions the ability to take industrial action:

- * over the terms and conditions offered by a future employer where jobs are being transferred to the new employer.
- * against associated employers of the employer involved in a primary dispute, which will help to ensure that employers cannot use technical loopholes to prevent workers in the same workplace, with the same management structure and effectively the same employer from taking action in support of each other.
- When there is official action being taken in one workplace, supportive action against another employer should be allowed after a ballot:
- * when work or production has been transferred to that employer during a dispute or during a strike.
- * where a union is taking defensive action in the first workplace and the other employer has contributed to the dispute, for example, by aggressively cutting costs.

This is a fight for justice which I believe we can win.

John McDonnell
MP for Hayes and Harlington

EDOM



RMT OPENS NEW EDUCATION CENTRE IN DONCASTER

RMT's new state-of-the-art residential education centre in Doncaster was recently opened by Marine Union of Australia national secretary Paddy Crumlin and Women Against Pit Closures co-founder Anne Scargill

RMT's national education centre will be used to train workplace and health-and-safety reps as well as branch officials, regional and national officers and staff.

"This is an exciting moment for a growing union and enables us to offer IT training and other education facilities in a comfortable residential centre" said RMT general secretary Bob Crow.

"With a growing membership and more and more new reps to train, opening a new national education facility was rightly identified by the RMT executive as a priority for the union.

"The labour movement has always aimed to educate as well as to agitate and organise, and this splendid new centre gives a tremendous boost to an essential function," Bob said.

MUA leader Paddy Crumlin said that he was "pleased as mustard" to open an institute of learning for working people.

"At a time of unprecedented attacks on wages and conditions everywhere, it is important to remember that the working classes around the world have won many battles because they equipped themselves with the tools to fight unjust laws.

"Globalisation has led to a

polarisation of wealth and power and trade union rights are under attack but this house of learning will equip hundreds of reps to resist at the shop floor, where it matters," he said.

Anne Scargill said that it was a privilege to unveil the plaque on the education centre in a Doncaster, which has a huge working class history particularly around the mining industry.

Centrally located and less than a mile from Doncaster station, the former nursing home building was chosen with ease of access in mind for transport workers from all over Britain.

The building has undergone six months of renovation overseen by Mick Hardacre.

It now boasts a fully-equipped classroom suite with full IT facilities, 20 bedrooms, living and dining rooms, a kitchen, garages and a bar.

Arrangements for under-five child-care have also been made with a local nursery less than 500 yards from the centre.

*The RMT National Education Centre is at 47-49 Thorne Road, Doncaster, DN1 2EX and a full virtual tour is available on the RMT website. ■



STAFF: Rita Hickman, Jenny Derr, RMT education officer Ray Spry-Shute, Bob Crow, Kate Lee and Barbara Collinson



STATE-OF-THE-ART: Education officer Ray Spry-Shute gets to grips with the new IT system



Kitchen Chef Tony Hickman ready for action

A SATISFIED CUSTOMER

Dear colleagues,

Having just spent a week at the union's new training facility in Doncaster with other colleagues from operations and engineering, I have to say that it is second to none, both in terms of accommodation and sleeping arrangements. The meals are first class and the staff are exceptional.

The training facilities within the centre are excellent with role plays on a daily basis and constant use of IT equipment to make information more accessible and at a touch of a button for the reps.

The tutors themselves, both Mick Tosh and Graham Buchanan, were extremely helpful and were always on hand to explain things in an easy and understandable way.

As most members will know, this training facility has been required for many years and, since the closure of Frant Place, it has set this union back many years in being able to represent and engage fully with members.

I would like to think that, as representatives of this union, after being put through these intensive courses, that we will return to our areas better equipped to take on the unscrupulous managers and companies that we deal with on a daily basis.

I would also like to thank general secretary Bob Crow who has continually thought in a forward-thinking and progressive manner as regards to training and facilities for all RMT members.

Best of luck to the RMT education centre, long may it reign.

Yours Sincerely
John McDougall
Area council rep
East Scotland

Doncaster NEC Programme of Courses January to March 2007

January 8 to 12

RMT Representative's Course, 5 Day, Network Rail (GN & GE)
Tutors: Ron Rodwell & Mick Tosh

January 15 to 19

RMT Representative's Course, 5 Day, Network Rail (E&W Midlands)
Tutors: Glen Burrows & Graham Buchanan

22nd & 23rd January 22/23

Video Conference to be set up

January 24/25

RMT Regional Office Staff

January 29 to February 2

RMT Representative's Course, 5 Day, (Wightlink)
Tutors: Mick Tosh & Greg Hewitt

February 5 to 9

RMT Representative's Course, 5 Day, (Network Rail Manchester & Liverpool)
Tutors: Gary Hassell & Peter Pinkney or Dave Collinson

February 2007 12 to 16

RMT Representative's 5-Day Reps Course (Preston, West Coast South Network Rail)
Tutors: Paul Goodier & Graham Buchanan

February 2007 19 to 23

RMT Representative's Course, 5 Day, Northern Rail To x Be
Tutors: Greg Tucker & Ken Slade

February 25 to March 2

RMT Representative's Course, 5 Day, (Bus Course)
Tutors: Dave Letcher & Andy Lister

March 5/6 March

RMT Branch Secretaries 2 day School
Tutors: Paul Goodier & Dave Jones

March 12 to 16 March

Closed Staff Training & Updating

March 19 to 23 March

RMT Representative's Course, 5 Day, (Thames Valley, Wales & Marches, West Country Network Rail)
Tutors: Steve Richards & Dave Jones

March 26 to 30 March 2007

RMT Representative's Course, 5 Day, (Thames Valley, Wales & Marches, West Country Network Rail)
Tutors: Greg Hewitt & Glen Burrows

April 16 to 20

Network Rail South East Territory Maintenance

April 23 to 27

Network Rail South East Territory Operations

SHIPPING

SHIPPING, OFFSHORE AND DOCKS REPORT

National secretary Steve Todd outlines the situation for shipping, offshore and docks members

ROYAL FLEET AUXILIARY

After offering new year greetings, I would firstly like to talk about developments within the Royal Fleet Auxiliary(RFA).

This union spends a lot of time making sure that our submission to RFA's annual pay reviews is on time. Yet now we find ourselves waiting four months to sit down and start talks on this year's review.

Despite numerous efforts to speed things up members are, apparently, at the mercy of the Treasury waiting for them to give RFA the parameters for discussing pay.

RMT has written to the Commodore calling time and letting the company know our position quite clearly. Despite this the union has been forced to invoke the Disputes procedure and would not be able to rule out industrial action.

Since then a derisory offer has been received, soundly rejected by the membership in a referendum.

Aside from the pay issue, members will no doubt be aware of the future staffing review which is being carried out. There are now only a couple of options left for the powers-that-be to consider and they are:-

- Are the RFA vessels better and more efficiently left manned by RFA crews under

an evolved RFA? (Certainly this is the position we are arguing for)

- Are the some vessels best manned by RN crews and others by RFA or a mixture of both? (Not sustainable)
- Would RFA vessels be better staffed by RN (Certainly on a 'costs alone' this is an option where they will ever get 'best value') The crewing being cost alone being into millions of pounds more far outweighs the costs vessels being manned by RFA.

Whatever option is chosen, RMT will defend members' jobs and has made that clear on more than one occasion. These vessels have been run efficiently, safely and very successfully in both war and peacetime by merchant seamen, many of them who lost there lives in wars and conflicts serving in RFA ships.

SPONSORED RESERVISTS

The final draft will be in circulation for members' consideration, following numerous previous drafts. The final one should have taken into consideration all the points and concerns members have expressed. The final choice will be left to individuals and rightly so, after all it's not compulsory and your jobs are not



threatened by this, nor are your terms and conditions. One piece of advice is don't rush into this and if you are unsure of anything, contact RMT if you have any queries or concerns. I know many of you are apprehensive about signing up to this, if it's any comfort to you, our members at Foreland Shipping on the strategic RO/RO vessels have been sponsored reservists for over five years and it has had little or no effect on them or their terms and conditions.

TONNAGE TAX

Over a year has now passed since interests in the shipping industry made submissions regarding the review of the Tonnage Tax and the union is still awaiting the government's findings and recommendations.

The union is continually pressing government departments and the ministers' office and will continue to do so until we get answers. RMT's view is if the tax not connected to employment and training, it's not worth having.

We hear how well the industry is doing as a result of the introduction of the tax, how much revenue is being generated in the city and how many ships have come back under the UK flag. We say "let's have some jobs now".

RACE RELATIONS ACT

A bit of good news on the issue of the unfair nature of section nine of the Race Relation Act is that we have been re-assured that the government is still committed to a review of the Act.

It is about to commence the consultation process and the union still believes that a review of section nine, which allows shipowners to pay foreign national lower wages, will help create the level playing field we have been seeking. It would certainly stop the use of cheap foreign labour and might help put a stop to the social dumping which not only threatens jobs but is blatant discrimination.

DIVING SUPPORT VESSELS

With the divers' dispute now settled to the union's satisfaction, RMT now has to start concentrating on the pay reviews for the DSV crews.

It's worth remembering that this group of workers are essential to the safe and effective running of the vessels which many of our diver members work on.

These members have also been left behind in the pay stakes and a number of their issues need addressing this time around. The union will need to be prepared for a bumpy ride,



but if the membership is as strong as the divers, we can prevail and certainly make some improvements. Those of you who are members are asked to convince the non-members to get off the fence and get into membership. A strong, united membership sends out a clearer message than a weaker one.

GULF OFFSHORE

Amid fears that the company Gulf Offshore was looking to bring in cheaper labour, RMT met with senior company officials in Aberdeen recently and received categorical assurances that the company is still committed to the continued employment of British ratings.

The company went to great lengths to re-assure us that they are only using Eastern European seafarers whilst there is a shortage of UK ratings. There are problems in recruiting suitably qualified ratings to fill slots, something RMT has found hard to argue with when the union has sent around to branches circulars advertising vacancies on more than one occasion last year.

The union is committed to working with the company in resolving this problem and the company is still committed to our agreements and our ratings.

STENA FERRIES

The union has not had an easy year with Stena Ferries and I hope this year is a better one. While not arguing the company's position for them, they do have serious competition particularly in the Irish Sea, with so many operators employing low-paid crews.

RMT is committed to a campaign against this along

with our colleagues in SIPTU, NAUTILIS UK and the ITF. However, the introduction of the Stena Seafarer in Holyhead with a vast majority of the crew being Polish on inferior terms and conditions posed an imminent threat to our members' terms and conditions and jobs.

The Polish seafarers were already employed on the vessel and we could not insist on them being removed. They are European seafarers and insisting they are removed is not possible under EU rules. The union explored the possibility of taking industrial action against Stena, only to be advised that legally we could not as the vessel was being operated by Northern Marine and although they are strongly related through the Stena group, they are, in fact, registered as a separate legal entity.

The vessel is an addition to the Holyhead route following the introduction of an extra sailing. Following months of negotiation with the company, the union managed to get 13 catering jobs and is still arguing over four Abs jobs which we should have and a number of assurances have been given. The current pay review is under way and the referendum has concluded with members voting to accept the company's offer below.

STENA LINE SEAFARERS ACCEPT PAY OFFER

RMT members at Stena Line have accepted a two-year deal for a four per cent increase in basic rates of pay backdated to November 1 2006 in the first year and An RPI increase plus 0.6 per cent increase with effect from November 1 2007.

The daily refit allowance is to be increased to £25 per full calendar day and will be paid on production of receipts.

If a recall takes place for training during a week off, payment will be made as follows: -

- A full day of training inclusive of travel on that day, 12 hours pay.
- A half-day of training, inclusive of travel on that day, 6 hours pay.
- Where travel takes place on a separate day from the training day, current arrangements are unchanged, and actual hours of travel will be paid up to a maximum of 8 hours.

For some time the union been seeking to harmonise rates of pay for OBS staff on Fast craft and Conventional craft. The company has agreed to increase Fast Craft rates by the following

- An increase of £250 to be applied to the Cabin Assistant Max Rate (£18,801) on acceptance of the overall pay award.
- An increase of £250 to be applied to the OBS Technician on acceptance of the overall pay award.
- To assist in the finance of these payments, the rate of New Entrant Cabin Assistants (£14,797 will be frozen for 12 months subject to further review. Current staff on the new entrant rate will not be affected by the pay freeze and will receive the pay award.

P&O IRISH SEA - RECOGNITION

At present, RMT only has recognition for members on the MV Mariner and we have been successful in ensuring whatever pay increase was negotiated for the MV Mariner's crew was also applied to the other vessels.

Belfast Branch Secretary Mick McQuaid, along with regional organiser Ian MacIntyre, has been busy

recruiting catering ratings on these ships and ably representing members with grievances and disciplinary issues.

However, formal recognition has not been forthcoming, but the company has now indicated it is prepared to move on this and I expect to conclude formal recognition early this year.

PORTS

RMT recently submitted its views on the future of UK ports in a Department of Transport consultation process, arguing for the promotion of rail links with sufficient capacity and capability. The use of rail should be actively promoted and not solely dependent on the agreement of the developer, unless of course it is to be condition of port developments with existing rail capacity constraints.

The government should be promoting coastal shipping so that a greater market share. Promoting rail and coastal shipping is in accordance with the government's environmental and social objectives for cutting carbon emissions and reducing congestion.

There is no evidence that trusts or municipal ports are distorting the ports sector market. In fact, the government needs to retain its existing control over the trust ports as the ports sector needs a strategic framework. Expansion of the ports sector should be defensible on environmental grounds and ports development can best be facilitated when it is linked into a wider sustainable transport strategy.

It has not been an easy year all round in the industry and I don't expect next year to be any different.

RMT will continue to lobby and campaign for jobs and training and continue defend and improve your terms and conditions and I thank you all for your support over the past year and wish you and your families a prosperous new year.

FRAGMENTING THE EAST LONDON LINE

RMT News looks into attempts to dump the East London Line into the private sector and the resulting fragmentation which caused such chaos on the railways following privatisation

As part of the London Underground network, the East London Line currently has unified signalling, train and station operations under public control, with maintenance and renewals sub-contacted to Metronet.

However, the extended line, due to be finished in 2010, will consist of an unnecessarily complex hybrid of the and national rail network and private companies.

In fact a total of eight companies will be involved in running the new service. Of these two companies will be responsible for signalling operations, two for infrastructure maintenance, two for infrastructure renewals, one for train and station operations and one for train maintenance

Specifically, track, stations and signals maintenance and Renewals between Dalston Junction and New Cross/New Cross Gate will be the responsibility of London Underground but sub-contracted to a private contractor.

Track, station and signals maintenance between New Cross Gate to West Croydon and Crystal Palace and from Dalston to Highbury and Islington and the rest of the North London Line will be responsibility of

Network Rail. Renewals for the same section of line will be also sub-contracted out.

Signalling operations between Dalston Junction and New Cross Gate will be the responsibility of London Underground. But between New Cross Gate to West Croydon and Crystal Palace and from Dalston to Highbury and Islington signalling operations will be the responsibility of Network Rail.

Passenger train services and operations of stations will be the responsibility of the successful bidder. Meanwhile, responsibility for maintaining trains will be the responsibility of Bombardier.

Got all that? If you did you a part of a very small group of people who did not have to sit down for a while to understand who was exactly supposed to be doing what.

CAMPAIGN

If this scenario sounds familiar it is because this is the sort of fragmentation that occurred following privatisation which has proved so disastrous for Britain's railway network.

The Public Private Partnership on London Underground has created a fragmented network with frequent service disruptions.



Privatising the East London Line will make matters worse. Eight different companies will be involved in complex contractual relationships to operate, maintain and renew signalling, track, trains and stations.

That is why the TUC has joined RMT and TSSA to campaign against moves by Transport for London to privatise the East London Line by 2010.

This privatisation will also be the thin end of the wedge, with other lines and services being threatened with sell-off in future.

If this privatisation takes place it will be the first Tube passenger service to be privatised, making it easier to argue for the privatisation of other services.

The union is urging members to use a new postcard (above) to ask your MP to sign Early Day Motion 286 (right) which supports the retention of the East London Line in the public sector.

Act now to stop the East London Line sell-off. ■

EDM 286 FUTURE OF LONDON UNDERGROUND PASSENGER SERVICES

Jeremy Corbyn

That this House welcomes the important role that the London Underground East London Line extension will play in creating a world class transport infrastructure in preparation for the 2012 London Olympic and Paralympic Games; further notes that the East London Line is currently operated in the public sector by London Underground; is concerned that there are proposals to transfer responsibility for operating the line to the private sector which would represent the first privatisation of a tube passenger service; believes that the benefits of an extended East London Line will be best achieved by the service remaining wholly in the public sector; notes the IPOS/MORI poll showing that three quarters of people in London and the South East want the East London Line operations kept in the public sector; welcomes the decision of the 2006 TUC Congress opposing the privatisation of the East London Line; and supports the rail unions and TUC campaign to keep the East London Line wholly in the public sector.

WELFARE—THE POOR RELATIVE OF HEALTH AND SAFETY

Next month's RMT health and safety conference in Blackpool will be discussing why welfare is so low on the workplace agenda

It is sometimes easy to forget when working in the health and safety field to remember that health and safety reps also have a responsibility to look after worker's welfare.

The sixth national health and safety conference in Blackpool on Thursday February 15 2007 aims to re-dress the balance by taking "welfare – the poor relative of health and safety" as its theme.

One reason for welfare not featuring on our radar could be that the legal requirement to provide welfare in the workplace is fairly insignificant. The minimal Welfare Standards are set out in the Workplace (Health Safety and Welfare) Regulations in just five short Regulations (Reg 20-25).

DUTY OF CARE

Employers have a duty to provide toilet and washing facilities, backed by Guidance on the number of facilities that should be required, depending on the size of the workforce.

Toilets should be easily accessible, in a separate room, lockable from the inside,

supplied with toilet paper and kept clean, ventilated and lit. Washrooms should be close to toilets and supplied with hot and cold water, soap and a means of drying.

If the work involves strenuous activity, dirty work or results in contamination of the skin then showers should be provided. Facilities for men and women should be kept separate unless the convenience is in a separate room which is capable of being secured from the inside.

They also have a duty to provide a supply of clean drinking water and unless a drinking fountain is installed cups should also be provided. The drinking water supply should not be installed in the toilet and normally connected to the mains.

Employers also need to provide clothing accommodation and changing facilities.

Accommodation for personal clothing not worn at work and special work clothing not taken home must be provided and if there is a risk of contamination of these clothes then the

accommodation should be separate.

Where possible the accommodation should include facilities for drying clothing. Changing facilities should also be provided where it is more than outer clothing being changed and separate facilities should be provided for men and women.

Facilities should be provided to allow staff to eat meals and rest. These rooms should contain adequate numbers of tables and chairs and kept clean and have a good level of hygiene. Finally, those parts of a workplace that are used by disabled people at work must be organised to specially provide for those people.

Of course these standards are only relevant to fixed workplaces. For instance, they don't apply to mobile workers such as on the permanent way, or road vehicle drivers.

The position for offshore workers appears to be even worse. Put 'welfare' into the MCA website and the first five responses come out in favour of animal welfare. Is this a case of welfare conditions being better for livestock than humans?

But welfare provision in the 21st century isn't just about toilets and lockers, aren't we entitled to ask that our employers look after us better in our workplaces?

Many staff will, in the course of their employment, have to deal with the effects of suicide and other workplace traumas – a good employer should have practices and procedures in place to support staff at such difficult times.

Some will encounter violence in the workplace, how will a good employer support them? Others may be injured, made ill or suffer from work-related stress as a result of their job, what support can they expect employers to provide?

RMT's health and safety conference will provide a platform for health and safety reps to discuss these important issues.

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.

You still have an opportunity to register to attend conference—see your branch secretary or contact the health and safety team at head office on 020 7529 8838. ■



PPP—FOUR YEARS ON

RMT News looks back at the chaos PPP has brought to London Underground

On 31 December 2002 the private consortium Tube Lines assumed responsibility for the engineering functions on the Jubilee, Northern and Piccadilly Lines.

Engineering functions on the remaining London Underground lines were passed to the Metronet BCV (Bakerloo, Central, Victoria) and Metronet SSL (all other LU lines) consortia on April 4 2003. The companies that make up the private consortia are;

- Metronet - Atkins, Balfour Beatty, Bombardier Transportation, EDF Energy, RWE Thames Water
- Tube Lines - Amey and Bechtel

OPPOSITION

Before the Public-Private Partnership was introduced politicians, trade-unions, transport users and transport specialists were convinced that the scheme would not work.

In September 2000 the Industrial Society report, *The London Underground Public Private Partnership*, An Independent Review, explained that the PPP was offering a guaranteed 15.3 per cent return on equity for 30 years with benchmarks for performance set five per cent below the levels expected of the publicly owned London Underground.

The report concluded “that the PPP should not proceed unless it passes the re-specified Public Sector Comparator we have outlined. In other words the PPP should go forward only if it meets much more vigorous

safety and value-for-money criteria, and if it is substantially amended to protect against the risk that the contracts are incomplete and overgenerous. If it fails to meet these criteria, then the bidding companies should instead bid for turnkey projects funded and financed by LUL within the public sector. In the interim, this should be undertaken through orthodox Treasury financing, while the preparation begins for London to undertake its own bond issues.”

In February 2002 the House of Commons Transport, Local Government and the Regions Select Committee report, *London Underground*, concluded “that it is inevitable that the PPP will lead to significant and expensive disputes over the contracts and between staff and employers”. The report went on to explain that “The initial forecasts that the PPP would provide a saving of £4.5 billion over public sector management were inadequate and flawed”.

Transport for London also maintained that government should not sign the PPP because the scheme was not value for money, it was unsafe and unmanageable and the proposed contract terms did not properly protect the public interest.

The government chose to ignore the warnings and concerted campaigning and imposed the PPP against the wishes of the vast majority of Londoners.

The results have been in line with the fears and concerns raised pre-transfer by the opponents of the scheme.

By July 2006, Metronet and

Tube Lines had been paid £3.3 billion in performance-adjusted Infrastructure Service Charge. Given this huge taxpayers’ subsidy it is little surprise that the Infracos have generated huge profits for their shareholders.

Between 2003/04 and 2005/06 Metronet BCV, Metronet SSL and Tube Lines made pre-tax profits of £286 million (see Appendix A for complete figures). Regrettably, performance has not matched profit margins. A catalogue of no fewer than eight reports has cast serious doubt on the PPP’s ability to deliver the upgrade of the London Underground in an economic and efficient manner.

FAILURE

In June 2004, TfL published *London Underground and the PPP – the first year*. The report identified that during 2003/04 “the Underground’s assets continued to provide dramatic demonstrations of their inadequacy”.

The 2005 TfL report explained that in 2003/04 it was too early to judge the performance of the PPP but bluntly stated: “In short, performance is not good enough and is less than was promised”.

The report explained that engineering overruns had increased by some 35 per cent on the first year and were averaging more than one a week. The overruns were often caused by poor project planning and execution.

The 2005/06 report explained that London Underground had issued a Corrective Action Notice (CAN) to Tube Lines due to “persistent poor performance” on the Northern Line which “was manifest in repeated track, signal and rolling stock failures”.

In relation to Metronet the late delivery of only 14 of the 35 station upgrades and the incorrect preparation of District Line tracks for summer

temperatures and disruptive incidents on the Victoria and Central Lines “undermine the progress Metronet is making and our confidence in the capability of Metronet’s management.”

The report goes on to say that the upgrade of the Waterloo and City Line “is an acid-test of Metronet’s capability to manage major projects”. In the event the Waterloo and City Line re-opened over a week late on 11 September 2006, exposing Metronet to fines for the late completion of works.

The line has since been closed twice due to dust and dirt caused by on-going engineering works causing visibility problems for train operators.

In June 2004 the National Audit Office published two reports into the PPP. *The London Underground PPP: Were they good deals?* detailed the PPP’s huge start-up costs including £109 million spent by London Underground (LU) on external advisors and £275 million paid by LU to reimburse private-sector bidder costs.

The report went on to say that final PPP costs remained uncertain. Not known for its radical language, the NAO states: “...there is only limited assurance that the price that would be paid to the private sector is reasonable”.

June 2005 saw the publication of the GLA Transport Committee’s report *The PPP: Two Years In*. Whilst recognising strong performance on the Piccadilly and Central Lines the Chair’s foreword found “...poor performance on the Northern Line has led to Tube Lines’ proposals to close sections so that work can be carried out to repair track and signalling. On some lines the programme for track and station renewal is running behind schedule”.

In March 2005 the House of Commons Transport Select Committee published their

Performance of the London Underground report which found that "disregarding the costs of the Jubilee Line extension, central government expenditure in constant terms has increased from £44.1m in 1997-98 to £1,048m in the current financial year (2004-05); an increase of 2,276 per cent - over twentyfold".

Even taking into account the increase in maintenance funds following the completion of Jubilee Line extension, funding from central government has more than tripled since 2000-01.

In relation to performance the report found: "Availability is the most important factor for Tube travellers. All the Infracos needed to do to meet their availability benchmarks was to perform only a little worse than in the past. On most lines, they did not even manage that. We hope that they will be able to meet the more demanding targets for availability expected in the future; we have no confidence that will be the case".

The report also raised some concerns in relation to the consortia membership noting that Jarvis had sold its shares in Tube Lines during the course of the Committee's inquiry.

ARBITER REPORT

On November 16 2006, the Office of the PPP Arbiter published the first review of Metronet performance and found that between April 2003 and March 2006 Metronet BCV and Metronet SSL had not performed in an overall efficient and economic manner and in accordance with good practice.

The Arbiter found that Metronet's station programme across BCV and SSL was behind schedule, with only 14 of the 35 station upgrades completed. Only 12.7km of the expected 30km track renewals on the sub-surface Lines had been carried out.

Despite being behind with key infrastructure upgrades, unit costs have proved to be more expensive than expected in the bids submitted by the Metronet Infracos.

The Arbiter report explains: "In summary, Metronet has delivered significantly less than was expected in its bid, at higher unit costs and has earned less performance revenue than expected."

The result is that the consortium is on line to overspend by some £750 million by 2010. It is not yet clear if Metronet shareholders will have to pay for this shortfall or whether the burden will fall on the tax-payer through additional payments or the scaling back of the renewals programme.

DERAILMENTS

As noted in the Transport for London annual reports on the PPP there have been a number of high profile derailments on the London Underground post-transfer.

- Chancery Lane - 25 January 2003
- Hammersmith - 17 October 2003
- Camden Town - 19 October 2003
- White City - 11 May 2004

The report into the Chancery Lane derailment revealed that information contained in a vital safety alert issued by Infraco BCV following the September 2002 Loughton derailment, had been inadequately disseminated to both London Underground and infrastructure operational staff.

The Loughton derailment occurred in the three years of shadow running, a period during which the Infracos were charged with learning and applying the lessons of operating the network before full asset transfer in 2003.

However, the investigation into the White City derailment found that these lessons were not being learned. Metronet managers had not been fully conversant with the terms of the Chief Engineer's Regulatory Notice (CERN) issued following the Camden Town derailment.

As a result, measures required to avoid serious incident have not been adequately relayed to track operatives.



DERAILMENT: Chancery Lane derailment was caused by shadow running

SCRAP IT

Since April 2006 there have been a number of high profile problems on the Tube, notably the late re-opening of the Waterloo & City Line and the massive disruption to the network caused by infrastructure failure and over-running engineering works.

After four years, RMT believes that the PPP structure remains so fundamentally flawed that it is incapable of delivering the required improvements to London Underground's performance in order to provide an economic and efficient service to the travelling public and put in place the world class transport system required for the 2012 Olympics and Paralympics.

The PPP's separation of 'wheel and steel' and the fragmentation of Tube maintenance has in many instances resulted in deterioration in service and value for money for the tax- and fare-payer.

Ultimately, performance can only be sufficiently improved

through the scrapping of the PPP, and the government should bring forward the necessary legislation that will lead to London Underground assuming direct control of the Tube's infrastructure. ■

Pre-tax profits

Tube Lines	
Period	Pre-tax profits in £m
2003/04	£41.5m
2004/05	£54m
2005/06	£63.2m
Total	£158.7m
Metronet BCV	
Period	Pre-tax profits in £m
2003/04	£24.1m
2004/05	£20.3m
2005/06	£16.1m
Total	£60.5m
Metronet SSL	
Period	Pre-tax profits in £m
2003/04	£26.4m
2004/05	£27m
2005/06	£13.4m
Total	£66.8m
Combined pre-tax profits since 2003/04 - £286 million	

THE FUTURE OF FREIGHT

Philippa Edmunds of Freight on Rail campaign looks at important developments in the fight to get freight off the roads and onto rail

The first week of December has seen two important transport-related announcements emanating from the Treasury.

The Eddington Transport review acknowledges the importance of rail freight both economically and environmentally and states that each transport mode should pay its full environmental costs.

This policy, which accepts recommendations from the Stern Climate Change Report, recognises rail freight's sustainability and safety record and should mean that the different modes are treated more equitably.

Remember, that tonne for tonne carried, rail freight produces one tenth of the carbon dioxide, (the principal green house gas) of road transport.

Road charging is a central theme of the review which again should enhance the case for rail. We will be working with our partners to pressurise the Department for Transport to ensure that a significant element of revenue raised through road charging is spent on rail enhancements.

CAPACITY

Eddington states that a main priority is to improve capacity and performance on the existing rail network, allowing for longer and heavier trains and removing key pinch points, especially in

cities and around ports. Just visualise that an average intermodal train can remove 70 HGVs from our roads to understand rail freight's role in alleviating road congestion.

Improving connectivity to the ports must include gauge and capacity enhancements for intermodal freight which is forecast to be the fastest growing rail freight sector over the next ten years. Bear in mind that a quarter of goods imported into the UK through the major ports, are transported by rail now, and the shipping industry wants much more rail as the following quotes illustrate.

"As an industry we need all the rail freight we can get" - Maersk

"Rail to and from the UK's major ports is proving more reliable than road. Dedicated K&N rail services from Southampton and Felixstowe are recording 95 per cent reliability levels, compared with 'low-mid 80 per cent' for comparable road haulage". Kuenhe & Nagel 2005

The planning system is central to economic, social and environmental prosperity which explains the importance of the Barker recommendations, announced on December 5, to reform and 'streamline' the planning system.

Freight on Rail campaigns to identify and protect rail lands through identifying and

protecting sites, lines and sidings with existing or possible future rail potential.

Planning decisions are for all time, so once sites and rail alignments are gone, they are gone for ever. The Barker proposals, which were endorsed by the Chancellor during his Pre Budget Statement, would strip minister of the powers to approve major transport projects to be replaced by an independent planning commission. This measure could improve the prospects for getting planning permission for rail freight interchanges, which is vital, if freight is to be shifted from roads to rail.

However, the crucial questions here are who will appoint the planning commission, what will its remit be, how will the 'Statements of Strategic Objectives' work and how will link to the existing spatial planning system?

There are wider questions about the Barker proposals to lift some of the restrictions on car-based out of town shopping centres and streamline planning. A free-for-all helps no-one, especially rail freight. We believe that many of the problems with delay in implementing transport infrastructure can be traced back to lack of a clear national dimension to spatial strategy.

A national over-arching spatial plan informs both regional, via the Regional Spatial Strategies, and local policy, via Local Development Frameworks.

POLICIES

Eddington's recommendations need to be translated into government policies with funding in place so that the rail infrastructure is enhanced so that the predicted 50 per cent growth in rail freight kilometres can take place within the next ten years.

We are waiting to hear whether key rail freight enhancement projects for the

Southampton to the West Midlands, the Felixstowe to Nuneaton and the Gospel Oak to Barking routes and others will be awarded funding contributions from the Department for Transport.

The Chancellor's Pre-Budget Report, a precursor to his Spring budget, was announced on December 6 but the industry will have to wait until the Comprehensive Spending Review next July to get the government's overall transport spending commitments.

In regional terms, Regional funding allocations (RFA) are an important mechanism for getting upgrades to the railways so Freight on Rail members will be lobbying local and regional authorities to prioritise rail projects in advance of the next RFA round in 2008. We believe that authorities should fund rail freight schemes instead of road schemes if that is the best way to reduce road congestion, reduce accidents and emissions pollution.

As part of our regional programme, we are currently planning a joint rail freight event for late March 2007 with 'The Northern Way', which is encompassed of the three northern regions.

Freight on Rail would like to hear from you if there are local threats to rail interests such as possible loss of rail lands or routes due to redevelopment or removal of protection of rail lands in local plans and Local Development Frameworks.

We need you to be our eyes and ears locally as once a rail site or route is gone, it is gone for ever and is lost to society.

We can advise on planning policy and legal precedents which may be relevant to save your local sites and routes and write to the relevant authorities.

Contact Philippa Edmunds
020 8241
9982: Philippa@freightonrail.org.uk
Members are - EWS, Freightliner, Rail Freight Group, RMT, TSSA, ASLEF, AMICUS, Network Rail and Transport 2000.

EDDINGTON DOESN'T GO FAR ENOUGH

The long-awaited Eddington report on the links between transport and economic growth, productivity and environmental sustainability fails to promote getting people out of cars and planes and onto trains, buses and trams

December 1 2006 saw the publication of the long-awaited Eddington report which was commissioned in the 2005 Budget in order to advise government on the links between transport and economic growth, productivity and environmental sustainability.

Authored by Sir Rod Eddington, the former chief executive of British Airways, the report has failed to seize the opportunity to recommend the massive increase in public-transport capacity our economy and environment desperately need.

Despite government projecting a 30 per cent increase over the next decade in both passenger numbers and the volume of freight tonnes lifted, rail is some way down Eddington's agenda.

In addition, new road building is not ruled out and, despite acknowledging that aviation should meet its social and environmental costs, the report argues that there are significant economic benefits in expanding the sector.

With the exception of CrossRail, Eddington makes no specific recommendations in relation to new rail infrastructure projects.

Indeed, the report warns against being "seduced by grand

projects with speculative returns".

Eddington instead concentrates on upgrading existing lines and dealing with pinch points on the network. Welcome as that is, it is a serious omission to support the introduction of road user charging designed to deal with congestion and environmental damage, whilst at the same time refusing to endorse the construction of a north-south, high-speed line. The Institute of Civil Engineers announced themselves "dismayed" that the report had not recognised the economic and environmental benefits of such a line.

NEED FOR EXPANSION

RMT provided Eddington with a detailed submission which included the case for significant expansion in the rail and bus networks to deal with the likely effect of road user charging, the development of a high-speed, north-south rail link and increasing the modal share of freight moved by rail and sea within the wider framework of an integrated, publicly-owned transport system.

Commenting on the report, general secretary Bob Crow said that it must herald a step change in transport policy if we are to meet the climate change



challenge outlined so starkly in the Stern report.

"Every penny raised by road-pricing should be spent on creating the public-transport network that Britain needs, and not spent on ever more roads," he warned.

He went to argue that government should back its commitment to reduce carbon and other greenhouse gas emissions with statutory targets for getting people out of cars and planes and onto trains, buses and trams. ■

TRANSPORT FOR LONDON PENSION FUND REPORT— ILL-HEALTH PENSIONS

Assistant general secretary Pat Sikorski outlines developments in the campaign to defend the Transport for London pension fund

The current Ill Health benefits provided by the Pension Fund have been under attack for well over a year now from the management side appointees on the Trustee Board.

Despite the consistent and carefully considered opposition of this union's nominee and a few others, the Trustee Board had been on the brink of accepting a new set of Guidelines for the granting of ill health pensions, which would have completely overturned past custom and practice going back decades, and severely restricted the availability of the "up to ten years service enhancement" provision in the current rule.

However, the management side had steered clear of actually amending the Rule for fear of this allowing fund members to demand the convening of a special general meeting, which undoubtedly would have thrown out these proposed cuts in benefit.

But management's carefully laid plans were blown out of the

water on the very eve of the most recent Trustee Board meeting.

NEW RULES

The government has announced in the pre-Budget report that they intend to include in the Finance Act 2007 a new discretionary power to reduce ill-health pensions when it would not be appropriate to stop the pension altogether. This new regulation will be effective back-dated to April 2006.

This is a complete U-turn.

As recently as April 6 last year, another set of Government Regulations had insisted that ill health pensions, once granted, could only be stopped altogether and not varied in any way.

At the time, management had seized on this new regulation – which was contrary to the clear intent of the Pension Fund rules which allow for an ill health pension to be varied – to insist on ramming through all the cutbacks they wanted.

Now it is clear that the

government's new regulations take us all back to square one. Ill health pensions will be able to be varied and so that's in line with our current rules and current Guidelines. So what's the point of all the changes anyway?

The real reason for the changes was to get rid of the well known benefit that allowed someone who could no longer do their own job for LUL, TfL etc to get up to ten year's extra on their service.

In its place management want to deny anyone getting an enhancement, or indeed in some cases getting any ill health pension, if they can do any paid work at all.

This is a grotesque attack on a benefit granted to those who, through no fault of their own, have fallen sick or had a serious accident – a true return to Victorian values!

The problem for management is that no-one yet knows what the new Government Regulations will actually say. Therefore their cutback plans must be put on hold until the new regulations are issued.

The Trustee Board had no option but to refer the matter back to the Ill Health Working Group of the Operations Committee until such time as

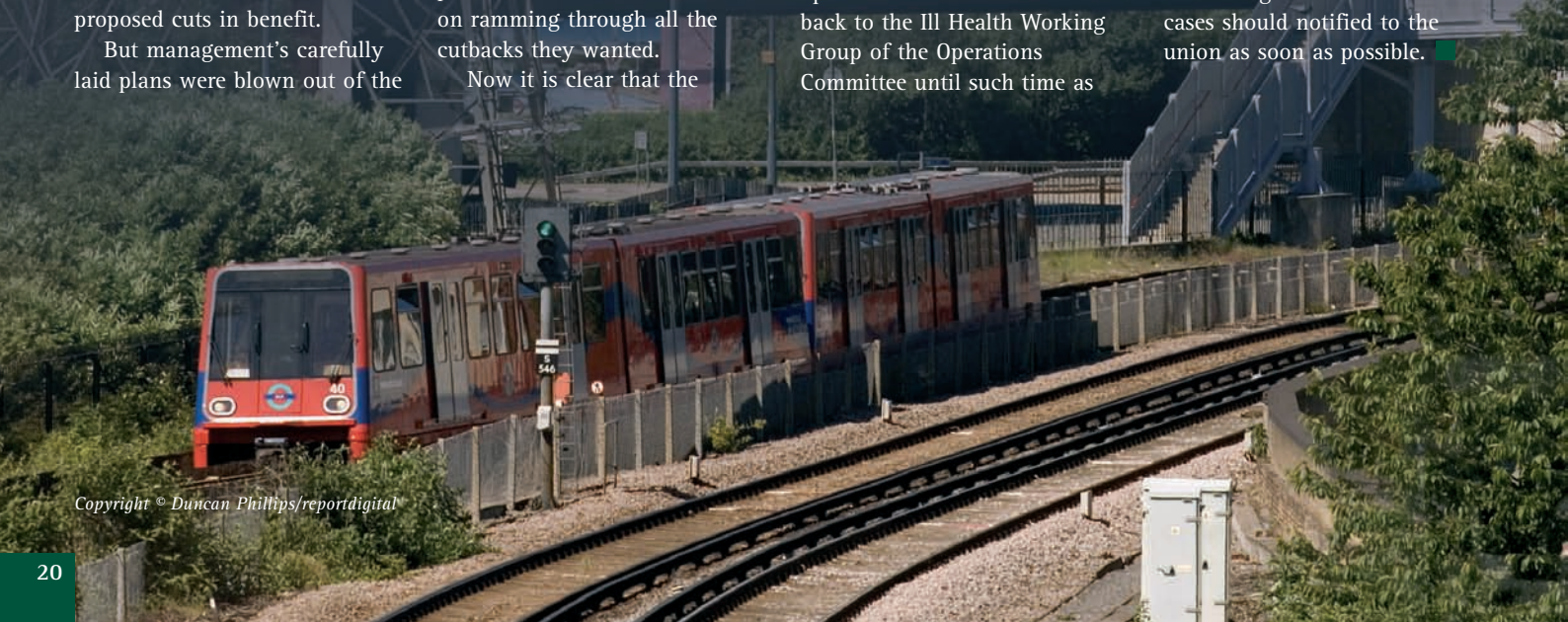
the position is clarified.

This means that the moratorium on monitoring/means-testing all existing ill health pensions as at December 13 2005 is still in place.

It should also mean that, for the time being, all applications for ill health pensions should be considered and granted in line with the current rules as interpreted by the current agreed Guidelines.

However, it has come to light that certain individuals are being denied the ill health pension to which they are entitled. Certain management officials believe that the ability to do any paid work, even though the member of the fund may be certified by a medical practitioner as being unfit to continue with their job for LUL etc, means that they can have their application considered, but simultaneously denied them, under the power to vary the pension which appears in a later clause of the relevant rule.

In other words before the new Guidelines have been agreed some people are already implementing them. Reps should remain vigilant and all such cases should be notified to the union as soon as possible. ■



TRADE UNION WEEK IN SCOTLAND

RMT Scottish Parliamentary Officer Ann Henderson reports on a recent trade union week to raise the priorities of the labour movement

The Scottish TUC, in conjunction with the Scottish Parliament and with the Scottish Executive, succeeded in bringing trade unionists' priorities to the fore during the trade union week.

There was an opportunity to promote the STUC Manifesto for Scotland '7 for 2007' which puts forward STUC policy on the economy, on public services, and on wider issues of civic society and equality.

In a debate in the Parliament Chamber, Margaret Curran MSP, Minister for Business, welcomed trade union week, saying that she hoped this would be the first of many and that "Parliamentary democracies and free societies require strong, independent trade unions – on that there can be no qualification".

MSPs from different parties participated in the debate, and during the week attended briefing events on different issues, such as Agency workers (CWU), Relocation of public sector jobs (PCS), and reports on unionisation of migrant workers (TGWU and UCATT), and on the STUC Skills and Lifelong learning programme, in which the Rail Union Learning representatives participate. Attention was also drawn to the role the trade unions play in Scotland in tackling racism. During the debate in the Parliament, Bill Butler MSP (Glasgow Anniesland) was able to commend the Trade Union Freedom Bill, currently lodged at Westminster.

The Scottish Executive and the STUC signed up to a Memorandum of Understanding

in 2002, and there is no doubt that dialogue and policy discussion with the trade unions has improved as a result.

Examples can be given of some of the legislation introduced by the Scottish Executive, such as the Emergency Workers (Scotland) Act, which seeks to better protect those working in emergency services; and the recent Rights of Relatives to Damages Bill, which seeks to address the needs of workers suffering from asbestosis related diseases.

RMT briefed every MSP on current rail and ferry priorities, and also flagged up our earlier support for a proposed Culpable Homicide Bill, and on the role that transport policy can play in tackling climate change.

MSPs in the RMT Scottish Parliamentary Group also receive regular updates from the union.

RMT is represented on the STUC General Council, and next year RMT Regional organiser Phil McGarry will hold the Presidency.

The Trade Union Week in the Scottish Parliament was welcomed at Westminster, with an Early Day Motion lodged by Katy Clark and signed by a number of other Scottish MSPs.

The initiative was undoubtedly a success, and as the Scottish elections approach in May 2007, the higher profile for trade unions is most welcome. ■

For more information on the STUC: www.stuc.org.uk

For more information on the Scottish Parliament debate: www.scottish.parliament.uk



SCOTLAND – INVESTING IN PUBLIC TRANSPORT

In a new strategy document, the Scottish Executive has restated its commitment to build new rail lines, to invest in strategic road links, to improve the bus network, and to support the lifeline ferry services.

There is a strong emphasis on encouraging the use of public transport, and on the environmental impact of transport policy.

Whilst tensions still exist between the commitment to public transport, the strong road lobby and the continuing expansion of air travel and airport capacity, the Scottish Executive's strategy has been widely welcomed.

Significant new rail projects are now underway in Scotland. The Scottish Parliament is currently examining the Airdrie – Bathgate rail line, which will connect the whole of the Strathclyde rail network, through central Scotland, to Edinburgh.

The Glasgow Airport Link has completed all stages of the parliamentary process, and whilst lobbying continues for funding the Glasgow Crossrail project, the Airport link construction will be underway shortly.

The Edinburgh Airport Rail Link, whilst more controversial both in construction design and costs, is also now into the parliamentary process.

Recent ministerial statements have indicated that tighter regulation of the buses will be

required if the goal of an integrated transport strategy is to be achieved – although stopping short of complete bus re-regulation, which is what the unions have called for.

RMT and the STUC have submitted comments at every stage of the consultation on transport policy. The STUC Memorandum of Understanding encourages early discussion with the relevant trade unions on the Executive's policy agenda, but disappointingly this has not been mentioned in the National Transport Strategy.

The STUC has raised this point, and RMT is working with the STUC to press for an early meeting with the Transport Minister to discuss all aspects of the Transport Strategy. Meetings are already scheduled on the current Hebrides and Western Isles Ferry services tendering process.

An integrated and efficient public transport system has to be at the heart of Scotland's economic and social policy, working with those who are employed in the transport industry. Progress has been made under devolution, and the union will be working to make sure that continues after the elections. ■

For more information contact RMT Scottish Parliamentary Officer Ann Henderson c/o RMT Regional Office, 180 Hope Street, Glasgow G2 etc.....

Visit the Scottish Executive website for the Transport Strategy documents www.scotland.gov.uk

Meetings and conferences 2007

FEBRUARY

RMT National Health and Safety Conference	February 15	Blackpool
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MARCH

RMT National Women's Conference	March 2/3	Doncaster
Supervisory Grades Conference	March 10/11	Newport, Gwent
BTUC Women's Conference	March 14/16	Scarborough
RMT Black & Ethnic Minority Members'	March 20/21	Bristol
RMT Young Members' Conference	March 24/25	London
Traincrew and Shunters Grades Conference	March 27/29	Plymouth
Catering Grades Conference	Mar 30/April 1	Shanklin, IoW

APRIL

Station Staff and Associated Grades	April 13/14	Birmingham
BTUC Young Members' Forum	Apr 13/15	Leicester
Scottish TUC	April 16/18	Glasgow
Busworkers' Conference	April 20/21	Lincoln
BTUC Black Workers' Conference	April 20/21	Southport/Bristol
RMT Retired Members' Conference	April 24	London
Engineering Grades Conference	April 26/27(tbc)	York (tbc)
Road Freight Grades Conference	Apr 28	Plymouth

MAY

RMT National Lesbian, Gay & Bisexual Members' Conference	May 11	Manchester
Wales TUC	May 23/25	Llandudno

JUNE

RMT National Conference of Branch & Regional Council Secretaries	June 3	Inverness
BTUC Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender Conference	tba	
RMT Annual General Meeting	Jun 24/29	Edinburgh

SEPTEMBER

BTUC	September 10/13	Brighton
Signalling Grades Conference	September (tbc)	York

CALLING ALL RMT HOTEL, CATERING & ANCILLARY MEMBERS

The 2007 Grades Conference for Hotel, Catering and Ancillary members will be taking place on the Isle of Wight from Friday March 30 until Sunday April 1 2007.

This is an ideal opportunity for members in these grades to meet fellow RMT members and discuss formally and informally issues concerning your working terms and conditions and the union in general. You also get the opportunity to formulate union Policy on issues that relate specifically to your grades.

Either the general secretary or an assistant general secretary is in attendance as well as a member of the general grades committee – so turn up and give them a grilling as well!

If you need any further information contact your branch secretary or the conference Secretary as soon as possible (but no later than February 15 2007).

The Conference Secretary is Christopher Kefford and he can be contacted on 01234 402253 or 07973 830116 – his email address is c.kefford@ntlworld.com

IMPORTANT MESSAGE TO ALL RMT ROAD TRANSPORT MEMBERS

The 2007 Grades Conference for Road Transport Grades will be taking place in Plymouth on Saturday April 28 2007.

This is an ideal opportunity for Road Transport members to meet fellow RMT members and discuss formally and informally issues concerning your working terms and conditions and the Union in general. You also get the opportunity to formulate policy on issues that relate specifically to road transport matters.

Either the general secretary or an assistant general secretary

is in attendance as well as a member of the general grades committee – so turn up and give them a grilling as well!

If you need any further information contact your branch secretary or the conference secretary as soon as possible. ■

The conference secretary is Andrew Hill and he can be contacted on 0113 260 0069 or 07944 589151 – his email address is andy@rmt-union.fsnet.co.uk

These are your conferences so why not attend and have your say on matters that relate to you?

WINTER BLUES FOR HOMES

Getting out of deep water

UIA insurance outline the benefits of having quality home insurance

It is that time of year again, Christmas is over and winter still seems endless to most of us. However, this doesn't just mean you have to worry about digging out your warm clothing and finding your umbrella.

The bad weather has already caused more significant problems to the homes of some people and unfortunately there is still the worry of worse to come.

Therefore it is an important time to consider the cover your home insurance provides, including checking you have your provider's contact details in case of an emergency. UIA has been providing insurance to trade union members for over 100 years and therefore has plenty of experience dealing with customer claims. Mary Dolan, Claims Manager at UIA shared a few experiences with us...

GETTING OUT OF DEEP WATER

Following a washing machine leak which flooded the floor, UIA policyholder, Mary Parker, had something more serious to contend with in January 2005: the Carlisle floods. We asked her how UIA handled it.

"Following the floods, we had two feet of water in the house. As soon as I got in touch with UIA, I immediately got a response from the loss adjuster who came down to Carlisle.

Accommodation was offered, but very difficult to get hold of locally because of the sheer demand. So we only moved out while the work was being done. The service we received from UIA was excellent. Most of all,

we appreciated their speed and efficiency. People were very empathetic and there was always someone to contact. There were no discrepancies or queries over compensation. UIA couldn't have improved its service really.

Seeing other people's levels of distress made me really grateful for UIA's service. It is traumatic enough without having to fight the bureaucracy of insurance companies as well. So choosing the right insurer is really important."

CALM AFTER THE EXPLOSION

Of course, home insurance claims at this time of year are not always due to the unpredictable UK climate. It may not seem like it, but it has been over a year since the explosion at the Buncefield oil depot in December 2005.

Following the blast, which caused extensive damage to many homes in the Hemel Hempstead area Rita French needed to make a claim on her UIA policy. She talked about the service she received.

"I was really impressed with the response from UIA. I phoned about 48 hours after the event, and the claims handler was very helpful and sympathetic. He did everything that he said he would do, and the whole process has gone very, very smoothly. In addition, we've had several phone calls from the claims department to check that everything is progressing as planned.

We have made 2 major claims in the past with other insurers. Although they were



both settled eventually, it was a long, protracted process on both occasions, with a lot of form filling. The service from UIA was a lot smoother. That was a very pleasant surprise."

THE IMPORTANCE OF FRIENDLY SERVICE

The overriding message from these stories emerges, as it does from many claim encounters highlighting the importance of a friendly voice at the end of the phone and a smooth process to a claims completion.

RMT's own Bob Crow also highlights the importance of good service. He is a satisfied UIA customer and comments on how pleased he was with his home insurance quote.

"Not only is it a very

competitive rate and a very friendly service, but it is great to know you can rely on insurance oriented towards the trade union and labour movement. "I would recommend UIA to anyone," he said.

If you would like to find out more about UIA and the products they offer visit www.uia.co.uk or call for a quote on 0845 842 8421, quoting reference News 107. ■

Lines are open from 8.30am – 8pm Mon – Fri, 9am – 1pm Sat. For quality and protection, your call will be recorded. We exchange information with other insurance companies and the police to prevent fraud. RMT is an Introducer Appointed Representative of UIA (Insurance) Ltd, which is authorised and regulated by the Financial Services Authority.

INTERNATIONAL FOCUS



FRENCH PROSECUTE MARITIME POLLUTERS

Moroccan-flagged chemical tanker Al Farabi has been accused of trailing a 12-mile oil slick within France's 200-mile Exclusive Economic Zone in September.

Its owner has paid a £172,000 bond and the captain is summoned for trial next April.

A court also fined the owner and master of the Maltese-flagged freighter Fast Independence £345,000 recently for illegally discharging oil sludge after a French navy patrol aircraft spotted it last May trailing miles of discoloured water.

Since a 2002 law granting the Brest, Le Havre and Marseilles courts competency based on the International Maritime Organisation's

Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (MARPOL) provisions, the court has dealt with 37 cases of illicit maritime pollution.

Most offences occur within the Brest court's jurisdiction between Mont St Michel in Brittany and Bayonne near the Spanish border.

The main offenders are Flags of Convenience: Panama (five cases), Malta (four) and the Bahamas (three). Cyprus, Saint Vincent and Grenadines and the Isle of Man each have two cases. But ships registered in Italy (four cases), Greece (three) and France (two) also offend.

The maximum prison sentence on French - but not foreign - masters rose from four to 10 years.

The largest fine so far -

£550,000 - was imposed last April on the owner and the master of the Maersk Barcelona container carrier, caught in trailing a 50 mile slick.

Shipping unions and other maritime organisations are concerned at the increasing criminalisation of seafarers in accidental pollution cases.

In response to an EU draft directive introducing criminal liability, they have demanded that seafarers not be criminalised in compliance with the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) and MARPOL.

There is a growing trend for a ship's flag state to try cases under UNCLOS - the Montego Bay Convention - under which a ship's flag state has the right to try masters

and owners accused of pollution, no matter where the offence is committed.

A row has erupted with Malta claiming precedence over France to try the Fast Independence case.

The Brest court questioned why Malta did not invoke Montego Bay in previous pollution cases in French waters.

Brest court chief prosecutor Xavier Tarabeux says that the higher fines are having an effect with the number of detentions falling.

The Al Farabi incident is the first for 12 months.

But it is suspected that, to avoid detection, some pollution may be taking place at night or at the limit of France's Exclusive Economic Zone. ■

BARGE USE GROWS IN US



Tugboat pilot Curtis Logsdon (foreground left) talks to deckhand Paulie Perez while tying up and moving four barges of sand on route to Chicago. Barge usage is growing in the United States to haul more bulk goods like grain, coal and ethanol. ■

GREEK TRANSPORT WORKERS JOIN ANTI-AUSTERITY STRIKE



Greek transport workers took part in a 24-hour general strike by trade unions across the country last month against the conservative government's austerity budget.

The 2007 draft budget aims to cut the deficit to 2.4 per cent to avoid sanctions from the European Union. The budget envisages massive spending cuts to meet eurozone requirements. ■

ITALIAN TRANSPORT WORKERS UNITE



Italian subway, tram and bus workers held a nationwide one-day strike last month after seven major trade unions demanded a renewal of labour contracts. ■



New challenges, new opportunities

Over the next three years I will face many exciting challenges as your newly-elected president. One of these duties will be producing a regular column for RMT News.

Looking back over the hard work of previous incumbents, it occurred to me that my experiences will be filtered through to you in this column.

In this technological age of modern communications such e-mails, I hope that my monthly 'blog' in print will be interesting to you the membership.

Firstly, I would like to introduce myself. I am 39 years old and I have worked on London Underground for over 21 years. I live with my partner and our three sons aged seven, four and two.

My experiences as an active trade unionist have taught me plain speaking is the best form of communication. One of my core beliefs is also that the union is about its members, the workers that need protection day-in, day out. As workers, we should have the right to combine on a democratic basis to collectively pursue a better life for ourselves and our families.

This union has a well-honed rule book which enshrines these simple but crucial principles. RMT is a member-led union and I am proud of the fact that I, along with every national official and the Council of Executives, am accountable to the membership.

This has led us to become a strong and united force for transport workers to defend and improve their pay and conditions despite all the anti-trade union laws governments have thrown at us.

In the year ahead there are many issues and challenges that face RMT members in the workplace. Looming large is the report back due on the pensions commission for

the rail industry instigated after RMT and TSSA balloted for strike action.

It is important to remember that without the resolve of rail workers to take action the employers would simply have binned a properly-funded final pension scheme in favour of a fund based on the casino known as 'the market'. There may be some hard decisions to make.

The campaign against the privatisation of the East London Line continues to grow as more and more information emerges about the ill-advised fragmentation of a Tube line.

As a fellow Tube worker said, if you tolerate this you line will be next.

There are many struggles ahead which all our branches and regional councils can play a part from the defence of jobs on failing franchises such as GNER to the fight to defend the pay the conditions of our seafarer members effected by social dumping.

This year, the union's AGM will take place in Edinburgh and will be intervening with strong arguments at the TUC Congress. Obviously, I shall be playing a role at both events but I also intend to visit as many branches, regional councils and workplaces as possible.

As for the next three years, our union is growing and we must continue to reach out to transport workers and make a case for a more compassionate world. Society is crying out for a more rational approach that takes into account the needs of human beings and the environment. Trade unions have never been more relevant and together we can begin to build the future today.

John Leach,
RMT President

NEW WESTERN BANNER UNVEILED

Labour leadership contender and RMT parliamentary group convenor John McDonnell unveiled a stunning new South Wales and West of England RMT banner in a ceremony in Bristol recently.

The Hayes and Harlington MP, alongside RMT general secretary Bob Crow, presided over the formal handing over of the banner by its creator, renowned banner-maker Ed Hall, to the union's South Wales and West of England regional council.

The front of the banner

depicts the dramatic western portal of Box Tunnel - the most difficult engineering problem that Isambard Kingdom Brunel had to solve when building the Bristol to London line.

It is a testament to the skill of the railway navvies, Brunel and his engineers that the Box Tunnel remains a functional element of the London Paddington to Bristol railway line.

Emerging from the tunnel mouth are a 'Castle' class, steam engine of the Great Western Railway, built in GWR's

Swindon works and a 'Intercity 125' High Speed Train, built by British Rail Engineering Limited and officially the fastest diesel in the world.

At the foot of the banner is the union's motto, Unity is Strength in English, and Mewn undeb mae Nerth in Welsh.

On the reverse of the banner the artist has recreated the Rhondda historical mural found at Trehafod railway station between Porth and Pontypridd in Rhondda-Cynon-Taff, South Wales.

The mural represents the

close relations between the miners and rail workers, depicting the production, extraction and distribution process of the South Wales mining industry from pithead in the Cynon valley via the Taff Vale Railway to Cardiff docks.

Beneath the picture is the slogan: "We honour the Taff Vale railway strikers of 1900" and a quote from the 1906 Trade Disputes Act, which for the first time legalised the right to strike: "An action against a trade union ... shall not be entertained in any court." ■



BANNER: Campaigning MP John McDonnell and banner creator Ed Hall present the new design

COVENTRY HOLDS LONG-SERVICE AWARD CEREMONY

Coventry No 1 Branch held a long service awards ceremony at the Royal Warwick's Club in Coventry recently.

The proceedings were started by Branch Chairman Steve Kingham, who welcomed the award winners and their guests and invited the General Secretary Bob Crow to present the awards.

Bob began by acknowledging how important it was to belong a strong union such as RMT and went on to say how it was also important to recognise the people at the grass roots, as they are the backbone of such an organisation and thanked them all for their long service.

Steve Kingham then called upon the General Secretary to make a presentation to Ray Billingsley and his wife Hazel. Ray is retiring as Branch Secretary after 33 years in the

post, which is believed to be a record. A collection had been made for Ray and he was presented with the collection of over £200 toward a LCD TV. His wife Hazel was presented with a bouquet of flowers.

25 year awards went to:

- L Bishop (Central Trains)
- K Patel (Network Rail)
- P Patel (Virgin Trains)
- D Pitcher (Network Rail)
- L Simmonds (Network Rail)
- K Yuruker (Network Rail)

40 year awards went to:

- M Chandi (Virgin Trains)
- R Mundy (Virgin Trains) Retired
- B Read (Network Rail)
- R Billingsley (Lynx/Excel logistics/UPS) Retired ■



(left to right): Ray & Hazel's Grand Daughter, Katie, Ray, Bob, Hazel



(left to right): back row: L Bishop, L Simmonds, R Billingsley, B Crow, K Yuruker, D Pitcher, M Chandi, S Kingham
Front Row: B Read, K Patel, R Mundy, P Patel

CARDIFF HONOURS THEIR OWN

Cardiff Rail branch members Steve Jones, Brian Hinton, Dave Sellick, Clive Stevens, John

Moore all received their 25-year badge recently in a ceremony at Cardiff Transport Club. ■



Right to Left: Front row; Steve Jones, Brian Hinton, Dave Sellick, Clive Stevens, Bob Crow, John Moore Back row; Brian Curtis – regional Organiser and Peter Skelly Amey Convenor

JACK EVANS 1949 - 2006

A big man with a personality to match, Jack was well known across all the grades on London Underground.

Sadly he died on October 12, leaving his wife and three children. The non-religious funeral was carried out to Jack's wishes for no flowers, no tears and a good wake afterwards were carried out, with Bob Crow and Simon Peacock (senior manager) addressing the capacity crowd who had travelled up to pay tribute.

Jack's negotiating skills and his thoroughness in preparing disciplinary cases were particularly remarked on - he was always first to support anyone who had suffered an injustice.

Jack was born and bred in Islington, and although he moved out to Welwyn Garden City he always retained a close connection with Islington.

Having been apprenticed as an upholsterer, Jack changed direction and started with the Underground as an Adult Trainee Examiner at Ealing Common Depot.

After a spell on permanent nights at Parsons Green sidings he eventually took on the job for which he is best remembered, callpoint Train Technician at Earl's Court.

Always a union activist and left wing socialist, Jack was a local rep at Ealing Common from 1974, later taking on both Negotiating and Health & Safety roles, and being elected to Sub Surface Lines Fleet Functional in 2001.

Diagnosed with cancer of the pancreas in October 2004 Jack continued to take a keen interest in RMT activities and attended Fleet Maintenance branch when he could, until being medically retired in February this year.

Passionate in all he did, Jack would relax by playing football well into his 40's, and by fishing. He packed more into his life than most of us could fit into two or three lives - he even had two leaving parties, both memorable. A great friend and the strongest of RMT reps, he will be sadly missed.

Martin Eady

OBITUARY

It is with great sadness that I have to inform you of the death of Denis Roy Sharp. Denis was a train operator with the Jubilee line based at Wembley Park depot.

He spent 28 years of flawless service with London Underground and took early retirement in August 2004. He spent the last year of his life battling cancer with strength and dignity until his illness took him from us on November 8 2006.

Dens funeral took place at

Islington and St Pancras Cemetery and was attended by his family and friends, old and new. A gathering of friends and family at Dens home in Kingsbury was a memorable occasion for all who attended. A fitting tribute to a man held in such high regard by so many.

Goodbye Den, wherever you are now I hope you are at peace, you'll never be forgotten.

Matt Whyte



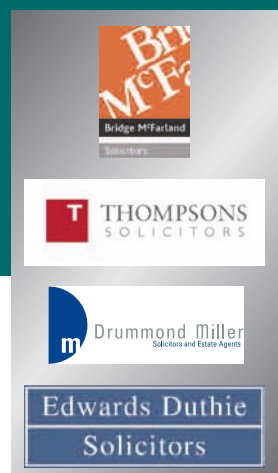
RMT STANDS UP FOR ITS MEMBERS

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FOR THE BEST LEGAL ASSISTANCE FOR RMT MEMBERS CALL FREE ON 0800 587 7516 (0800 328 1014 in Scotland). Lines open 8.00am-8.00pm Mon-Fri (except public holidays) and 9.00am-5.00pm Sat and Sun. For the 24 hour criminal law line call 0800 587 7530 (0800 328 1014 in Scotland)



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THE LONDON ORPHAN FUND COMMITTEE

BUFFET DANCE

FRIDAY, 23rd MARCH, 2007

at

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NORTH CUTTS, GREAT NORTH ROAD, HATFIELD

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SPANISH HOLIDAYS

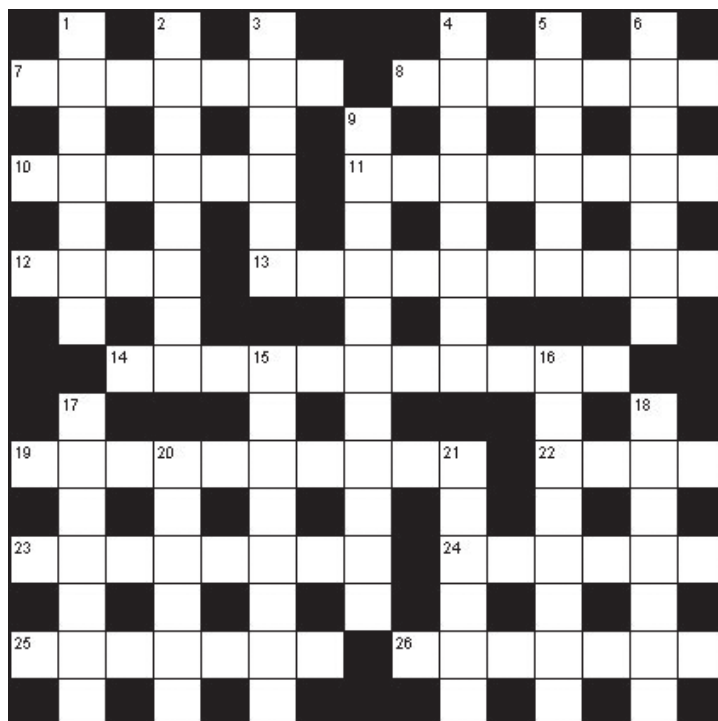
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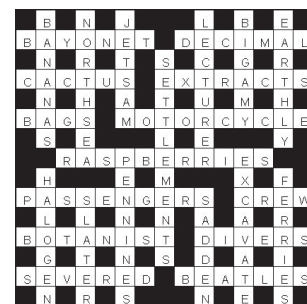
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RMT £25 PRIZE CROSSWORD

No. 31. Set by Elk



Last month's
solution...



The winner of prize
crossword no. 30 is
Steve Arnold of Grimsby.

Send entries to Prize Crossword,
RMT, Unity House, 39 Chalton
Street, London NW1 1JD by
February 2 with your name and
address.

Winner and solution in next issue.

ACROSS

- 7 Woody, US singer, songwriter and labour activist (7)
8 Ewan, singer, songwriter and activist, husband to one of the 24s (7)
10 Condition caused by too much pressure (6)
11 Two-wheeled pedallers (8)
12 Source of sugar, or salad vegetable (4)
13 Small retailer (10)
14 Empty of tables, chairs, beds etc (11)
19 'Bard of Barking'; did album of 7 songs (5,5)
22 Fish, or criticise! (4)
23 Samuel, the seafarer's friend, 1824-1898 (8)
24 Singer, songwriter, activist - Peggy or Pete! (6)
25 Young hare (7)
26 Non-specific; army officer (7)

DOWN

- 1 Marine reptiles with shells (7)
2 To menace, intimidate (especially by offering violence); or warn of danger (8)
3 Small roofed stalls for selling papers, sweets etc (6)
4 Eaten traditionally on Shrove Tuesday (8)
5 Up and about, fit and busy (6)
6 Not naked (7)
9 Responsible (to electorate) (11)
15 Without breaks; complete (8)
16 Went over (limit) (8)
17 Ceded, or gave up (7)
18 Motorway, US style (7)
20 sea-creature with shell that clings to rocks, vessels; type of mine (6)
21 Provides seal between engine cylinder and head, etc (6)

RMT Credit Union

RMT ADVANCE

a great new savings & credit account for RMT members

The RMT ADVANCE account is a great new way for RMT members to have access to a guaranteed lump sum once or twice a year, while building up a savings reserve.

The key features of the RMT ADVANCE account are:

- A fixed monthly premium which guarantees a yearly cash Advance paid directly to you
- You can set up two schemes so that you have a payout to coincide with the Christmas and summer holidays
- Choose the premiums and cash advance to suit your needs
- Continual growth of a cash reserve which attracts a dividend to boost savings
- The premiums are structured so that in each 12 months you have repaid the value of your Advance in full.

By paying the regular premium of your choice you set up a credit agreement for the Advance that will generate an automatic payment to you at the following times:

- Christmas ADVANCE paid on the second Friday of December
- Summer ADVANCE paid on the second Friday of June

This will mean that you will have ready cash available for the Christmas spending spree or your summer holidays, or both.

The RMT Advance loan is at a very low cost 9.9% APR, which is extremely good value. For every £100 you borrow you will only pay £5.48 in interest over the 12 months. Of course your savings also attract our Credit Union dividend (equivalent to interest) which in the last 2 years has been 3%. This means that while you have access to a guaranteed lump sum, your savings will continue to accumulate.

The RMT ADVANCE account offers great value and benefits for RMT members. If you wish to apply for an account please complete the application form attached.

- You can still get a Christmas 2007 advance if you submit your application before 12th May 2007, but the savings accumulated in the first year will be reduced compared to those illustrated below.
- For a Summer ADVANCE 2008 we will need your completed application before 12th November 2007 so that we can get your premium payments established.

Don't forget to include your proofs of identity and address, which are required by law. We will return your documents straight away, or you can send us copies if they are verified by your branch secretary or employer etc.

Your savings accumulate year after year

You can have a Christmas or summer payout, or both

THE TABLE BELOW DEMONSTRATES THE SIGNIFICANT BENEFITS OF THE RMT ADVANCE ACCOUNT

To achieve the full savings benefits illustrated you will need to have been saving for 12 months prior to the Advance, so get your application in as soon as possible. The table demonstrates the savings accumulated for full payment of 12 premiums from year 1

Plan	Premium	Advance	Credit cost per year	Accumulated Savings		
				Year 1	Year 3	Year 5
A	£27	£250	£13.70	£324	£444	£564
B	£31	£300	£16.44	£376	£496	£616
C	£40	£400	£21.92	£482	£602	£722
D	£49	£500	£27.40	£587	£707	£827
E	£58	£600	£32.88	£693	£813	£933
F	£67	£700	£38.36	£798	£918	£1,038
G	£93	£1,000	£54.80	£1,115	£1,235	£1,355
H	£115	£1,250	£68.50	£1,379	£1,499	£1,619
I	£137	£1,500	£82.20	£1,642	£1,762	£1,882

All premiums are rounded to nearest £ for the purposes of illustration. You will be informed of the precise premium. The premium will repay the Advance within 12 months while you continue to save £5 per month. Let us know if you wish to save more. The accumulated savings illustrated assume premiums are paid for a full 12 months before the first Advance.

RMT CREDIT UNION LTD.

Finance Department, Unity House, 39 Chalton Street, London NW1 1JD
RMT ADVANCE ACCOUNT 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 RMT Advance Account Premiums & Payout**I wish to open a: ☐ Christmas Advance Account ☐ Summer Advance Account ☐ Both

Please tick the appropriate box(es) and indicate the appropriate Plan, Premiums and Payouts below

The account(s) I wish to open are:	Christmas Advance Plan ☐	Premium £	Payout £
	Summer Advance Plan ☐	Premium £	Payout £

(Please see table opposite. Write in the plan letter, premiums and payout amounts you require)

For 2007, Direct Debits for Christmas Advance will commence in January with a double payment. Summer Advance will be paid out in July 2008 with Direct Debits commencing in July 2007.

6 Normally your payments are made once a month (28th) to RMT Credit Union Ltd.**7 I undertake to abide by the rules now in force or those that are adopted. For the RMT Advance Account I undertake to pay the monthly premiums indicated, and at the agreed time I will receive the appropriate payout which will consist of a part rebate of my shareholdings and a credit unions loan.**

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
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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

