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RMT *news*

VICTORY

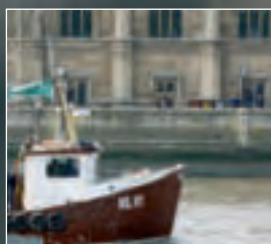
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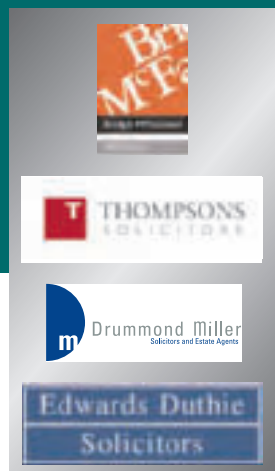
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PROTECTING AND PROMOTING OUR MEMBERS' INTERESTS



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EDITORIAL

UNITY IS STRENGTH



The tremendous victory won by members at the Metronet consortium has shown once again what can be achieved if workers stand together.

Hours before the start of three days of strike action, Metronet abandoned plans to out-source over two hundred staff and talks have begun to bring other operations in-house and other issues.

It was significant that other Tube grades were prepared to stand shoulder to shoulder with their colleagues. I am sure this played a major role in deterring management from further fragmenting Tube maintenance work.

A strike ballot threat has also delivered job security for thousands of workers employed on track renewals. The companies had shown no interest in providing guarantees for the transfer of staff following the reorganisation of contracts.

However, after being informed that RMT would be in dispute with them, representatives from all six companies turned up at our doorstep ready to do business.

The union is also working hard on harmonising the pay and conditions of Network Rail staff brought back in-house in 2004. This is no easy task and I can understand the impatience of members. However, this is a huge task and it is important we get it right and consult the membership at every stage.

Plans to bring oil workers in OILC into RMT are continuing a pace following a decision by a special general meeting of the union to prove the transfer of undertakings.

OILC abandoned plans to merger with AEEU some years ago due to OILC's principled opposition to so-called 'non-disruption' clauses – effectively no-strike deals.

There is no reason for the TUC to be alarmed by the OILC executive's decision to join with RMT. Mergers happen all the time.

However, merging for the sake of it does not necessarily bring benefits for working people. The important issue is building an organisation that can respond to the needs of working people and can fight and win a better deal for its members.

An RMT-commissioned survey of bus work members has revealed an industry with endemic low pay and insecurity. The age profile also highlights that fact that young people are not entering the industry.

RMT will be using this information as part of our submission to the government on the privatised bus sector which is heavily-subsidised by the tax payer.

RMT backs more regulation for the bus

industry but argues that privatisation has failed bus workers, passengers and the taxpayer and must be reversed.

Cleaners are facing similar problems of private employers forcing down wages in the relentless pursuit of profit. RMT's response has been to rally support from other grades to demand a living wage of £7.10p an hour and free travel.

This will be a hard struggle but it once again highlights the strength of being in an all-grades industrial union which seeks to improve the conditions of all members regardless of their job.

RMT is continuing the fight to win training for seafarers and prevent the decline of UK ratings on UK ships. The union has also defeated an attempt by Royal Fleet Auxiliary to link the introduction of Sponsored Reservists status of members to pay talks.

As a maritime union, RMT backs the growing campaign by UK fishermen for British withdrawal from EU fishing rules that have decimated the industry.

On the political front, the Labour Party has suffered the worst electoral results in living memory. It is clear that working people have lost confidence in the Blair regime which has privatised public services and taken us into illegal wars.

That is why RMT is backing the campaign to get John McDonnell elected as the next leader of the Labour Party.

John has consistently stood firm on trade union principles and for the right of working people to fight for decent pay and a better life.

The historic advances in Northern Ireland recently show that things can change for the better if the political will exists

An important fight coming up will be against the imposition of an EU Constitution that millions of working people across the EU clearly do not want.

I will be speaking at the Trade Unionists Against the EU Constitution conference in London on June 16 on this crucial issue and invite you to come along.

Finally, I would also like to invite you attend our annual Cuba garden party at Maritime House on June 19 - you can even buy me a drink!

Best wishes

Bob Crow

METRONET FORCED TO DROP OUTSOURCING THREAT

Strike action by more than 2,000 Metronet Tube maintenance workers was called off last month at the eleventh hour after the company withdrew plans to transfer RMT members and jobs to other companies.

In a dramatic about-turn, Metronet informed RMT that posts and individuals it had intended to transfer to Bombardier would now remain in-house and it had abandoned any further plans for outsourcing.

The struggling private consortium, which faces a £750 million fine for poor performance, had planned to transfer 250 staff to one of its consortium's companies, Bombardier Transportation.

RMT general secretary Bob Crow said that members had made it clear with a yes vote of over 90 per cent in a strike ballot that they were not prepared to see agreements torn up and their pay, conditions and

organisation trampled over or accept more dangerous fragmentation.

"This is the sensible outcome we sought for from the start, and it means quite simply that there will be no outsourcing of Metronet members' jobs," Bob Crow said.

The company also agreed that lift refurbishment would be brought back in house and talks have begun to bring cleaning contracts back in-house, and the ending of all biometric booking on and off.

"Our Metronet members deserve congratulating for standing solidly together to defend their organisation, jobs and conditions and prevent this further dangerous fragmentation.

"Their stand, in the face of hostile media attention, has been vindicated by the outcome of this dispute.

"I would also like to thank the other Tube grades who stood shoulder to shoulder with their



INCENSED: The Evening Standard spells out the result, highlighting its support for Tube fragmentation

engineering colleagues," Bob said.

The London newspaper *The Evening Standard* was incensed by the RMT victory, not least because it missed the story and told readers the strike was on.

The anti-union paper hurriedly put out another issue

castigating Metronet bosses for "caving in" and ran an editorial which revealed its rabid support for the further fragmentation of London Underground Tube maintenance under PPP. ■

VIRGIN CATERING STAFF TAKE STRIKE ACTION

On-Train catering members at Liverpool Lime Street took solid 24-hour strike action last month in support of the reinstatement of three colleagues, Karen Kaufman, Jackie Ross and RMT rep John Murphy, who were dismissed in spurious circumstances.

The three were dismissed after being suspended for almost six months while the company put together cases against them.

RMT general secretary Bob Crow said that despite the union conveying to management how seriously RMT viewed the situation, rather than take the opportunity to remedy things,

management instead provoked matters further.

"Knowing full well that members were more than willing to take strike action for their three dismissed colleagues, management could have held an early appeal hearing, made good their mistake by overturning the dismissals and let everybody get on with their lives," he said.

Instead the company deliberately prevaricated and would not convene the appeal hearings until April 30 in the knowledge that, under anti-union laws, the last day RMT could take strike action was April 24. ■



STRIKE THREAT WINS RENEWALS JOB SECURITY

RMT called off a ballot of track renewals staff last month following a major victory on job security for thousands of workers in the engineering sector.

The union won assurances from the engineering companies over the futures of more than 3,000 plant and renewals staff at a meeting at Unity House with all the employers involved.

The dispute arose after Network Rail decided to reorganise plant contracts and reduce the number of renewals contracts from six to four.

Initially, contractors Carillion, Balfour Beatty, Jarvis,

GrantRail, First Engineering, Amey and Amec failed to provide the union with firm guarantees over job security or terms and conditions.

However, after being informed that RMT was in dispute, they quickly delivered the appropriate guarantees.

"We are now in receipt of guarantees from all of them that TUPE will apply wherever work is transferred from one company to another, and that the companies will enter into full consultation with RMT at the appropriate time," said RMT general secretary Bob Crow.

It was a major improvement

on the previous position of each of the companies and it guarantees terms and conditions will be protected and job security enhanced.

He said that the union needs to be vigilant as the decisions on the future of both plant and renewals contracts have yet to be made by Network Rail.

"RMT will continue to ensure that the companies keep to their agreements, and that workers receive the best possible protection.

"This is a great victory, but should jobs be threatened in any way in the future then RMT will not hesitate to ballot for

industrial action," Bob said.

RMT is satisfied that the companies have provided the following five guarantees:

1. That TUPE will apply
2. If for any reason TUPE does not apply, they will guarantee to take on staff from any company that loses its contract
3. That all terms and conditions will be retained
4. That all pension rights will be retained in full
5. That no staff will be made compulsorily redundant ■



RENEWALS: Contractors Jarvis and Network Rail workers renewing worn line on the Great Western Main Line at Slough.



A group of people are standing in front of a London Underground station entrance. They are holding a large white banner that reads: "DON'T PRIVATISE OUR TUBE" (with the London Underground roundel logo below it), "EAST LONDON LINE", and "KEEP IT PUBLIC". The banner also features the logos for MMT (Metropolitan Maritime Transport) and TSSA (Transporters' and Seafarers' Society of Australia). The background shows the station entrance with its characteristic tiled walls and a sign that says "EAST LONDON LINE".

WALES WIN FOR RMT TRAIN DRIVERS

RMT train drivers at Arriva Trains Wales won seats in Company Council and LDC elections last month after all drivers were finally given the opportunity to vote in an open election following a long campaign by RMT.

RMT fielded a strong team in Alison Langton for Crewe and Shrewsbury, Stewart Pritchard at Cardiff Mainline for both LDC and Company Council seats, Brian Curtis and Steve Richards for the Cardiff Valleys LDC and Steve Richards for the Cardiff Valleys, Rhymney and Treherbert Company Council seat.

Arriva Trains Wales offered to oversee the elections jointly

with both the recognised trade unions RMT and Aslef with a full postal ballot.

In a high turn-out, over 75 per cent of ballot papers were returned.

RMT's biggest success came at Cardiff (Valleys) where the union gained all of the seats that were up for election. In the Cardiff LDC elections Brian Curtis - son of RMT regional organiser Brian Curtis - came top of the poll to win one seat while Steve Richards won the other to make a clean sweep of the LDC posts.

Steve Richards also topped the poll to win the Drivers' Company Council seat to represent all Drivers employed

by ATW at Cardiff, St Davids House depot on Valley lines and at Rhymney and Treherbert depots.

This victory shows the great strides that RMT has made representing Driver members.

Much of Steve's support came from Aslef members who trusted him to represent all drivers equally.

"I am very pleased that the union has done so well as a team" said Steve.

"There is a lot of work to be done in conjunction with our colleagues in ASLEF including the integration of the two constituent parts of the Cardiff St David's depot, Main Line and Valleys," he said. ■

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION WIN

RMT has finally won the right to see invitations to tender for rail franchises after the government dropped its appeal against an Information Commission ruling in the union's favour.

The victory was a step towards ensuring that planned cuts to franchised rail services are not hidden from the public under the pretext of 'commercial sensitivity'.

In November last year the Information Commissioner ruled that the former Strategic Rail Authority had breached the 2000 Freedom of Information Act in by refusing to disclose the contents of the 'final invitation to tender' for the Integrated Kent Franchise.

RMT requested disclosure of the invitations to tender (ITTs) for the West Midlands, East Midlands, New Cross Country and East Coast Mainline franchises but, despite the earlier ruling, the government refused to do so.

However, the government will now undertake an 'urgent review' of the four current ITTs with a view to publishing them 'as soon as possible'.

RMT general secretary Bob Crow said that publishing the invitations to tender would not compromise anyone's commercial interests.

"We have never asked to see anyone's bids, but simply to know what the bidders were bidding for.

"The only sensitivity involved was the potential political embarrassment over service cuts, fare increases and subsidy levels buried in the documents.

"In the case of the Kent franchise our fears were well founded, but those cuts were kept from us until after the deal was done.

"The franchising system has been thoroughly discredited and must ultimately give way to a publicly owned and accountable railway," Bob said. ■



VICTORIOUS: ATW Drivers Company Council Rep Steve Richards with RMT Regional Council Secretary, Steve Skelly.

RMT Parliamentary Seminar

The Future of Rail

Wednesday June 20 2007

2-5pm

Committee Room 9, House of Commons

Speakers

Tom Harris MP, Rail Minister

Bob Crow, RMT general secretary

The government publishes its five-year programme for rail capacity in July and its 30-year strategy for the railways. A new Rail White Paper could have huge implications for the rail industry and rail workers.

The RMT Parliamentary group has organised this seminar for members to discuss the future of rail. Have your say, but don't delay as there are only a limited number of places. Attendance is by registration - email: j.croy@rmt.org.uk or call 020 7387 4771.

CHANGING THE CLIMATE ON ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

The TUC has organised a conference on Environment Policy and the Climate Change Bill on June 4 2007 to be held at Congress House.

The conference will discuss a range of issues including the Climate Change Bill itself, steps that trade unionists can take in the workplace to ensure environmental best practice and the rights and roles of trade union environmental reps.

There is also a workshop on the role that transport can play in reducing carbon emissions which will be introduced by the RMT.

RMT members are encouraged to attend and registration is via the TUC on a first come first served basis.

Members who want to attend should fill in the attached form and return it to Emma Richards, TUC, Congress House, Great Russell Street, London, WC1B 3LS or email erichards@rmt.org.uk

Could branches/members who will be going to the conference also inform Sean Geoghegan at Unity House by phone on 0207 529 8284 or email s.geoghegan@rmt.org.uk



TUAEUC CONFERENCE

**NO TO THE EU CONSTITUTION, NO TO THE SERVICES DIRECTIVE
YES TO DEMOCRACY, YES TO TRADE UNION RIGHTS**

Saturday, June 19, Noon to 3pm, Friend's Meeting House, Euston, London



Speakers:

Graham Fletcher – Engineering Gazette

Carolyn Jones – Institute of Employment Rights

Bob Crow – RMT general secretary • Erik Meijer – Dutch Socialist Party MEP

Kelvin Hopkins MP • John Cryer • A Leading French trade unionist

Chair: TUAEUC secretary Doug Nicholls

TUAEUC

Trade Unionists Against the EU Constitution

RMT WELCOMES ROSCO INVESTIGATION

RMT has welcomed the Office of the Rail Regulator's decision to refer the leasing of rolling stock for franchised passenger services to the Competition Commission.

RMT general secretary Bob Crow said that since privatisation, the key feature of the rolling stock sector has been large profits and sizeable shareholder dividends, with the three rolling-stock companies raking in around £1 billion a year in leasing charges.

"It's time for the government to devise a strategy for rolling stock that puts the interest of the passenger before profits.

"The government's intention to introduce 1,000 extra carriages onto the network should not be held to ransom by the ROSCOs," Bob Crow said.

The three principal passenger rolling stock leasing companies are Angel Trains, HSBC (Rail) UK Ltd, Porterbrook Leasing Company Ltd, all of whom are directly owned by private banks.

RMT has consistently pointed to the absurdity of paying millions of pounds of public subsidy to the train operating companies, who then simply pass the money onto the ROSCOs that rake in huge profits.

The most startling example is the payment of £140,000 per year by Island Line to Angel Trains for pre-second world war London Underground stock which have only scrap value.

"RMT has been concerned for some time not just by the excess profits made by the ROSCOs, but also at the failure to protect highly skilled jobs in the rail engineering sector and the pressure on train operators to cut costs imposed by the recent high premium payment franchise awards," Bob Crow said. ■

Parliamentary column

AT THE CROSSROADS



It has been a busy and interesting time for transport issues in Parliament. Not least because my own early day motion 730 in opposition of the introduction of huge 60 tonnes lorries in the roads of this country has attracted the support of almost a hundred MPs.

The EDM recognises the environmental benefits of rail freight over other transport modes. For instance the average aggregate freight train can remove up to 120 HGV lorries from the road network.

The government has already taken steps to encourage modal shift from road to rail. However, the introduction of longer and heavier goods vehicles that could weigh up to 60 tonnes and be as long as 25.25 metres onto the UK road network is a step in the wrong direction. So ask your MP to sign up to EDM 730.

In the coming months the government will publish its 30-year rail strategy and this will lead to a Rail White Paper.

Due to increasingly pressing environmental concerns there is little doubt that we need a substantial increase in capacity in freight and passenger rail services to get people and freight off the road and onto rail.

That is why I raised an adjournment debate in the House of Commons in February in which I pressed the Government to support plans for a new dedicated rail freight line from Glasgow to the Channel Tunnel which would take more than five million lorry journeys off Britain's roads every year.

I am pleased to see that RMT is organising a special seminar in Parliament called The Future of Rail on June 20 to discuss this issue. Rail minister Tom Harris will be taking part and I would encourage RMT members to get along and put your views on the way forward.

RMT's recent survey of bus workers survey has also pointed out that there is something deeply wrong in the bus sector. Employers are paying rock-bottom wages and driving down conditions as profit takes front seat over service provision.

The bus industry needs better regulation, and government plans for better regulation outside London is a step in right direction. However, it is becoming increasingly clear that more decisive action should be taken to regain public democratic control over this important part of the transport network.

Following a recent House of Commons seminar on shipping hosted by the RMT parliamentary group, there will be a consultation exercise by the government on the unsatisfactory exemptions within the Race relations Act when it comes to seafarers.

RMT pressure has highlighted the fact that seafarers can still be discriminated against on the basis of their nationality.

RMT's parliamentary group will be involved in this process and continue to campaign for justice for seafarers. It is unacceptable that ship owners can dump UK shippers and replace them with exploited foreign labour due to a loophole in the Race Relations Act.

Finally, I am pleased to be speaking at a conference on the EU Constitution on June 16 organised by Trade Unionists Against the EU Constitution in London.

Despite the fact that millions of working people in France and The Netherlands and the TUC Congress here in Britain rejected this privateers' charter back in 2005, the EU is determined to impose it anyway without recourse to referendums.

This clear negation of all the democratic traditions of the labour movement must be opposed. The imposition of the EU Constitution without consent presents a danger not only to organised labour but to the future of democracy itself.

So get along on June 16 and get involved in the campaign for a referendum and the rejection of the Constitution.

Kelvin Hopkins
MP for Luton North

RMT ATTACKS BUS SUBSIDIES JUST FOR “BURNING FUEL”

RMT expresses astonishment that private bus operators have received almost £2.5 billion pounds government subsidy just for “burning fuel”

In a recent written parliamentary answer to Labour MP David Drew (Stroud), Bus Minister Gillian Merron provided a yearly breakdown of the staggering £2.5 billion Bus Service Operators Grant (BSOG) paid to the operators of local bus and community transport services since the Transport Act 2000.

The Bus Service Operator Grant is a government payment to bus operators on the basis of how much fuel they use.

RMT general secretary Bob Crow said that it was scandalous that private bus companies who are already making

megaprofits have been receiving billions of pounds of public money just for burning fuel.

“At a time when there is a continued fall in passenger numbers outside London, it is astonishing that the most important source of subsidy from central government is used to pay bus companies petrol costs instead of improving services to passengers.

“Public transport has a key role to play in reducing carbon emissions but subsidising fuel consumption is hardly a sensible way of meeting the government’s environmental objectives,” Bob said.

REVIEW

The union has welcomed government proposals to review the subsidy to ensure that it was linked to improving bus services and reducing carbon emissions.

“Scrapping the Bus Services Operator Grant and replacing it with payments that encourage local authorities to regulate their bus services would be a step in the right direction.

“Ultimately, the only way to ensure that

buses play their proper role in an integrated transport network is to bring the industry back into public ownership,” Bob said.

CONSULTATION

The government’s recently-published “Putting Passengers First” consultation document looking to improve bus services, will form part of the Draft Road Transport Bill to be published shortly. Putting Passengers First, states:

“Bus Service Operator Grant payments are currently linked to fuel consumed and therefore poorly targeted on objectives for patronage, punctuality and quality.

Furthermore by subsidising fuel consumption they do not fit well with our environmental objectives. There is potentially a case for refocusing subsidy, for example to provide a more direct linkage between subsidy levels and our goals of increasing bus patronage, tackling congestion, improving accessibility, environmental performance, punctuality and quality of passenger experience”. ■

PARLIAMENTARY QUESTION MARCH 29, 2007

David Drew: To ask the Secretary of State to detail each total annual payment to Bus Operators made under the Bus Service Operators Grant for each year since the grant was introduced?

Gillian Merron: Bus Service Operators Grant (BSOG) was introduced under the Transport Act 2000. It replaced the Fuel Duty Rebate scheme which had been in place since 1965. The amount of BSOG paid by the Department to operators of local bus and community transport services since 2000 is as follows:

£ million (cash prices)

2000-01 £301

2001-02 £304

2002-03 £317

2003-04 £341

2004-05 £359

2005-06 £369

2006-07 £380? Estimated.

SURVEY REVEALS BUS COMPANIES PUT PROFITS BEFORE PASSENGERS

A survey published by RMT reveals privatised bus companies are more interested in making profits than providing a service for passengers

Underpaid, overworked, unrewarded and insecure at work, this is how many bus workers feel about their industry according to an RMT-commissioned survey.

RMT commissioned the Electoral Reform Market Research to survey over 1000 bus worker members earlier this year after Bus Minister Gillian Merron asked RMT to provide views on employment in the bus industry.

The results, launched the union's bus workers conference in Lincoln last month, revealed an industry riven by long hours and low pay, with high staff turnover, job insecurity and an increasing age profile.

One of the damning conclusions was that the privatised bus companies are more interested in making profits than providing a service for passengers.

69 per cent of bus workers felt that the company they worked for was more interested in making profits than providing a service to passengers. Only 14 per cent felt their company was more interested in passengers than profits.

Only 13 per cent of bus workers felt that the company they worked for adequately rewarded staff, while two-thirds said the main reason workers left the industry was because of poor pay and conditions. Younger bus workers are becoming a rarity, with 89 per cent of bus workers over the age of 34 and 70 per cent over the age of 44.

Just over a third of bus workers have been employed in the industry for five years or less and only a quarter of bus workers felt secure in their job. Over 40 per cent of bus workers work over 46 hours a week and almost half earn less than £300 a week before tax.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

Whilst almost half of respondents felt that their company took adequate steps to protect the health and safety of employees a significant minority

(31 per cent) thought that this was not the case. Also of concern was that only a third of Bus workers thought that their company took adequate steps to minimise assaults and anti social behaviour by passengers.

Of real concern and relevant to the unions safety campaign against long hours, the survey found that 80 per cent worked more than 40 hours a week, 42 per cent worked more than 45 hours a week, 18 per cent more than 50 hours a week and eight per cent over 55 hours a week.

DAMNING REPORT

RMT General Secretary Bob Crow said that the results were a damning indictment on the bus industry.

"The bus companies own workforce believes their bosses are more interested in lining the pockets of their shareholders than providing a service to passengers.

"Despite making mega-profits on the back of government subsidy the private operators have refused to invest in their staff.

"Poor pay, long hours and job insecurity have created an industry with a high staff turnover, which is unattractive to a new generation of workers.

"The interests of passengers will be best served by bringing the bus industry back into public ownership but government proposals to make it easier for local authorities to regulate buses are a step forward.

"If passengers are to benefit from improved bus services then ministers also need to take concrete steps to ensure high quality, stable and secure employment in the bus industry," Bob said.

The results of the survey will be submitted to "Putting Passengers First", a government consultation exercise that will form part of the Draft Road Transport Bill to be published in the coming months.

The full survey will be made available on the RMT website.

RMT DEMANDS LIVING WAGE FOR CLEANERS

RMT general secretary Bob Crow joined Tube and rail cleaners outside City Hall in London last month to demand an end to poverty pay, 28 days' minimum holiday and direct employment.

The RMT blimp flew over City Hall as cleaners on both overground and underground lobby to be paid the London Living Wage, which Mayor Livingstone's office has calculated at £7.20 an hour.

"Low pay among Tube and rail cleaners is an absolute scandal and tomorrow we will be lobbying City Hall to insist on decent minimum employment standards.

"That means £7.20 an hour as the absolute minimum and a guarantee of 28 days' holiday.

"But it should also mean direct

employment - we need to get rid of parasite sub-contractors who make fortunes out of our members' misery.

ISS VICTORY

The unity of RMT cleaner members with the support of other members across the capital has already prevented 144 ISS cleaners being made compulsorily redundant.

Cleaning contractor ISS withdrew the threat of compulsory redundancies against cleaners on its Tubelines contract after last-ditch talks.

RMT told the company that it will not accept sackings that would result in dirty stations and trains, pose serious potential health, environmental and security problems and will unfairly increase the burden on remaining staff.

ISS wanted to sack 140 cleaners after private consortium Tubelines reduced the value of its train-and-station-cleaning contract by more than 20 per cent.

The company had already sacked staff with less than a year's service and sought those prepared to take voluntary severance.

The union also called on Transport for London to block the sackings pending an inquiry into how the companies have manipulated the PPP contracts to their financial advantage.

"Despite this victory the subbies are still putting the squeeze on and expecting ever more work on rock-bottom rates of pay, and the abuse has to stop," Bob Crow said. ■



RMT BACKS THAMES FISHING PROTEST AGAINST CFP

RMT backed a protest by UK fishermen on the river Thames recently to demand an end to the EU's Common Fisheries Policy and for the sustainable and democratic management of UK fishing grounds. Over 60 fishing vessels made the journey up the Thames

"Under EU fishing rules, Britain's inshore fishermen have had their fishing quotas mismanaged, while foreign vessels are overfishing UK inshore grounds by hoovering up thousands of tonnes of fish," Bob Crow said.

"The Common Fisheries Policy has become a by-word for unsustainable fishing, waste and environmental devastation, and it is time it came to an end.

"For sustainable fishing we must withdraw from the CFP and manage our affairs democratically, like Iceland, Norway and other countries, in the interests of our fishing communities and the environment," he said.

DEVASTATION

The size of fishing fleets of EU member

states is governed by rules set by EU Council of Fisheries Ministers. Each year more and more foreign fishing fleets are allowed to fish in UK waters. The Netherlands, Germany and Spain have benefited from the quota system decided in Brussels. This has meant that while UK fishing boats are 'tied up' in port foreign fleets can fish, leading to a devastating decline in fish stocks.

However, Iceland and Greenland control their own fishing grounds up to 200 miles from the coast in line with international treaties. Norway also controls its own fishing grounds in the North Sea and in a 200 miles zone where applicable.

As a result, the fishing industry in these three states is a thriving key sector of their economies and contributes towards a large part of their export trade.

Southern North Sea Inshore Fisherman's Association secretary Martin Yorwarth welcomed RMT support and described the EU quota system as "a complete disaster".

"Fishing quota mismanagement has

meant that only a tiny percentage is held by bona fide inshore fishermen.

"Over 30 per cent of quota is held by 'quota traders' and the rest is divided up between larger fishing vessels and foreign supertrawlers sailing under the UK flag despite the fact they never land in this country," he said.

Moreover, over the last two years, Dutch-owned ships have been unable to catch their Dover Sole quota in UK waters due to their huge fuel bill.

Dutch fishing vessels must use 60,000 litres per fishing trip to reach UK waters as opposed to the 100 litres per day used by UK boats.

"It is about time the government defended this important national resource and stood up for the rights of inshore fishermen," said Martin.

If ratified, the proposed EU Constitution would formally enshrine fisheries policy as an 'exclusive competence' reserved for EU institutions and place fisheries policy outside the jurisdiction of member states. ■



OLYMPICS NEED GOOD TRANSPORT LINKS, NOT MORE ROADS

RMT News looks at why Dorset needs improved rail and bus links in place before the 2012 Olympic Games, not a Weymouth relief road





CAMPAIGN: RMT member Bob Driscoll calls for improved rail links

“With over 15,000 people estimated to attend events in Weymouth every day during the Olympics in five years time, a means of getting them there and back is vital now”

Council planners in Dorset are looking to push through a relief road between Dorchester and Weymouth in time for the 2012 Olympics.

However, campaigners are arguing that what the area really needs is improved rail and bus links.

Despite receiving 5829 objections, and only 1743 supports for the road (with more objections coming from the local area, than supports) Dorset County Council granted itself planning permission on April 5, 2007.

Councillors arguments for the road ran something like: “I don’t know anything about this CO2 business, all I know is we need this road”.

Despite knowing this is the most controversial scheme in the government’s programme, a tardy Government Office South West (GOSW) did not issue an Article 14 ‘stopping notice’ until April 16.

RMT member Bob Driscoll, a relief signalman based in Yeovil, is one of those calling for improved public transport in the form of rail and bus links.

Bob, who runs the transport campaign for West Dorset Friends of the Earth, says there is a seasonal bottle neck coming into Weymouth and it makes sense to improve the rail and

bus services.

“Weymouth is well served by access to public transport, the problem lies with the size of the trains and their frequency, particularly from Bristol where two or three coach trains provide an infrequent service which suffers from over crowding,” he says.

With over 15,000 people estimated to attend events in Weymouth every day during the Olympics in five years time, a means of getting them there and back is vital now.

The Games are also seen as a way to inject much needed money and jobs into an area which has a low wage economy and large numbers of seasonal jobs.

NO RELIEF ROAD

The Weymouth Relief Road has been controversial for some time.

The present route plans to go straight through Two Mile coppice, one of the area’s only remaining ancient woodlands and a breeding ground for bats and voles, as well other important sites.

Bob feels that planners need to take this into account: “Instead of destroying the local countryside, the logical thing to do would be to encourage more people to come by train. To do

this you need longer, more frequent trains.

“There are also problems with the trains on the line from London, which presently has an hourly service, though this is looking like expanding to twice an hour in December. A section of single line between Morton and Dorchester restricts the capacity of the whole service to Weymouth,” he says.

Bob said that it is estimated that the Weymouth Relief Road will cost £77 million pounds.

“This is money that would be far better spent on duelling the line from Morton and improving the substation so that capacity on the line could be increased.

“I’m concerned that not only will the road damage the local environment, but will damage the viability of the train services in the area.

“This has happened before, for example when the A30 was duelled from Honiton to Exeter the takings on trains at local stations plummeted as people who would normally commute by train switched to their cars and I feel this is likely to happen again.

“This is self defeating and doesn’t sit well with government policy to get people out of their cars and onto public transport,” he says.

Bob insists that the Olympics are a great opportunity for Dorset, and there is a lot of talk about the legacy that is left behind after 2012.

“What I and many others in the area don’t agree with is that the legacy shouldn’t just be a road.

“It needs to be improved public transport that covers the needs of local people while being able to bring in visitors to the area that support the local economy,” he says.

CAMPAIGN

Unions are gearing up across the South West to ensure that after the Olympics have left the region they leave a lasting legacy of decent jobs and opportunities for local people.

Nigel Costley from the South West TUC points out that when the Olympics were held in Sydney trade union organisation resulted in 20,000 new members.

“Already unions in London have been very active in the construction industry, in the South West we will be working to motivate membership and engage with local communities.

“The Olympics are a publicly-supported event so must provide a platform for raising skills and training standards,” he says. ■

DEFENDING THE RO

RMT's train crew conference in Plymouth called for the defence of the role of the guard

Conference agreed that the guard's operational role continued to be eroded by many train operating companies.

Dorset Rail said that some companies were attempting to change the traditional role of the guard to a purely customer-orientated role.

Tony Gully, Bristol Rail said that RSSB amendments to the railway operational rulebook removed requirements for the guard to remain at the door control panel or in the cab until the train is clear of the platform.

"This is a further erosion of the duties of the guard.

"RSSB states that the requirement for the guard to remain at the door controls or in the cab does not allow the guard to take any effective action.

"This is a misunderstanding of the guard's primary safety-critical role," he said.

Stephen Skelly, Cardiff Rail said that the changes could

affect pay and conditions and undermine safety.

"We need to fight this now otherwise we will be dealing with the consequences for years to come," he said.

The rulebook amendment was introduced without consultation with RMT and conference called on the union to restore a clear statement of the guard's primary safety and operational responsibilities.

Ed Fontaine, Plymouth said that it was "absolutely crazy" to remove this crucial role of the guard.

"If this stands, the guard will just collect tickets and can be replaced by staff on half the wages," he said.

SOUTH WEST TRAINS

Conference unanimously opposed proposals put forward by South West Trains to force drivers to open power-operated train doors on arrival at stations, further diluting the operational role of the guard.

Assistant general secretary Pat Sikorski said that the union would resist any extension of driver-only operations, defend the operational role of the guards and retain the guard's full control of power-operated doors with industrial action if necessary.

"South West Trains want the driver to open the doors and the guard will then shut them.

"Clearly the next thing that will happen will be that the driver will be told to take over door-closing as well and the guard will carry out purely a commercial role," he said.

Billy Kimm, Liverpool said that TOC's have been picking away at the role of the guard since privatisation.

"Driver's controlling the doors is not safe and we must stand together to fight this dilution as it could affect all of us eventually," he said.

Paul Cox said that the moves were designed to bring in driver-only operation.

Conference pledged to support train crew members at SWT in defence of the guard's operational role.

Organising train crew Conference agreed to step up

efforts to organise all train crew grades into RMT.

Tony Donaghey, St. Pancras while membership was increasing, despite the hindering effects of anti-trade union laws, there were far too many of train crew grade workers not in the union.

"Privatisation has fragmented the industry and led to different rates of pay, different conditions of service, different uniforms which has tended to undermined our unity and solidarity.

"We must find ways to increase the involvement of the membership as it is the rank and file activists who are in the forefront of organisation," he said.

Paul Cox, South East Rail said that new on-board staff were increasingly taking on different tasks as restructuring had changed the nature of the job.

"Despite that we must recognise that all these staff are train crew," he said.

Alan Pottage of the union's organising unit said that workplace organisation was essential to representing members and bringing in new ones to RMT.



ROLE OF THE GUARD



"The activists are the best recruiters and all train crew grades belong in the all-grades union which is RMT," he said.

Tommy Strong, East Midlands Central said that while rail workers were split up in different companies ATOC work together.

"We have to work together and use education and information to recruit and retain members," he said.

Conference congratulated the union for opening its new education centre in Doncaster to improve the organisation and retention of members.

"I would encourage all members to take the opportunity to attend a course at Doncaster," said Tommy.

FOR A TRAIN CAB CHARTER

Conference called on the union to produce a charter for train crew cab conditions, taking into account all relevant workplace health and safety legislation, including recent changes to limits on excessive noise levels.

Delegates noted that despite recent legislation the condition of train cabs continues to vary and often still failed to meet basic acceptable health and safety standards.

Brendan Bailey, Bristol Rail said that train crew continue to be routinely expected to work in noisy, dirty, often wet and damp conditions.

"Train crew are often found working in temperatures where schools and public offices would be closed.

"Seats are not even ergonomically designed although train driving requires 100 per cent concentration for hours on end," he said.

Susan Marshall, East Midlands Central warned that cleaning fluids often used in the cabs represented a danger to staff.

"Ill-fitting doors can also impair hearing due to excessive noise," she said.

Ruth Strong, East Midlands Central said that guards often used cabs at the back of the train which were often dirty.

"We must devise a way of providing clean cabs for all staff for all units," she said.

Paul Cox said that heaters in cabs were often broken and the issue needed to be addressed.

Alex Holden, Manchester South said that whole trains are often in poor condition, not just the cab.

Barry Horne, Hull Rail said

that employers were using loopholes in health and safety legislation such as the words "where reasonable and practicable" for not acting to clean up trains.

RISK ASSESSMENT AS DISCIPLINARY PROCESS

Conference agreed that a new alleged 'safety procedure, known as Injury Prevention Programme (IPP), could be used as an informers' charter.

Brendan Bailey, Bristol Rail said that the reporting procedure was about doing risk assessments on your workmates.

"We already have adequate reporting procedures on the railway and we do not need extra ones," he said.

Dave Palmer, Plymouth said that no consultation had taken place with any unions at a national level.

"We would agree with anything that made the railway safer but IPP does not do that," he said.

LONE WORKING

Conference called for an end to lone working and for full risk assessments to be carried out on train journeys identified as high-risk.

Chris Stephenson, Bristol Rail said that members were sometimes isolated and open to verbal and physical assaults.

"These companies are abusing members' human rights and it has to stop," he said.

Ruth Strong said that such attacks can only increase as staff are cut and it is happening all over the network, especially at night.

She said that staff are also vulnerable going to and from work.

"Lone working is a prime example of profit over safety.

"If the union worked in concert we could get something done to force employers to act," she said.

Ed Fontaine said that guards put themselves at risk and lone working made things worse.

"Sooner or later some-one is going to die and we need to act now," he said.

Tommy Strong said that guards were being told 'not to put yourselves at risk' but disciplined if they do remove themselves from dangerous situations.

SAVE THE EAST LONDON LINE

Conference unanimously agreed to back the campaign to keep the East London Line in the public sector as part of London Underground.

Bob Law, Jubilee South and East London Line said that privatisation is dangerous as profit always comes in front of safety.

"After the Paddington rail disaster I assumed that LUL lines would not be handed over to the private sector, but I was wrong.

"If ELL goes that way then other lines will go into the private sector in a salami-style process," he said.

*Conference can be viewed in full on a webcast, accessible through the members' area of the RMT website ■

DEALING WITH HEAT



AGS Mike Cash looks at how the union is tackling issues around hot weather at work

Whatever environment RMT members have to work in, be it offices, on track, trains, ships, buses or vans, extreme temperatures are a cause of concern.

Following a growing number of complaints around this issue, the Council of Executives has formulated a policy on extremes of temperature (see box) to negotiate with all employers where the union is represented.

NO LEGAL DEFINITION

One difficulty in dealing with extreme heat at work is the lack of a legally defined maximum workplace temperature.

When it comes to the minimum temperature, if the temperature in an indoor workplace falls below 16°C (or 13°C for strenuous activity) then you are entitled to demand management make it warmer or be sent home.

This just doesn't happen at the upper end of the thermometer and doesn't apply to workers who work outdoors.

RMT policy has been kept short and simple and can be used to good effect in most workplace situations and deals not just with hot but also cold conditions.

If temperatures fall outside the acceptable range of 13°C to 30°C, the Health and Safety

Executive (HSE) argues that employers should carry out a risk assessment to identify the risks to workers and controls that can be put in place to reduce risks or reduce exposure.

LISTENING TO WORKERS

A key part of the HSE approach is for employers to talk to workers because "they are experts in their jobs, and may have noticed things that are not immediately obvious".

Employers should talk to RMT-accredited health and safety reps as they have the knowledge of the job and received training in identifying hazards in the workplace.

However, how many workers have ever been asked for their views on these risks and how many reps have been involved in managements risk assessment?

The key message RMT needs to get across to employers is the fact that trade-union organised reps really do make a difference to workplace safety.

The risks to workers from high temperatures range from the seemingly trivial up to potentially fatal and even minor symptoms can combine to make workers seriously ill.

The body reacts to heat by increasing blood flow to the skin's surface and by sweating.

This cools the body as heat is carried to the surface of the body.

When the body is subjected to high temperatures a number of things can go wrong. Clothing can restrict evaporation of sweat and, if insufficient heat is lost, deep body temperature can rise leading to increased sweat production, dehydration and increase in heart rate.

If this extra strain continues the body's control mechanism starts to fail.

These physiological effects can lead to some of these symptoms:

- An inability to concentrate
- Muscle cramps
- Heat rash
- Severe thirst
- Fainting
- Heat exhaustion – (fatigue, giddiness, nausea, headache, moist skin)
- Heat stroke – (hot dry skin, confusion, convulsions and eventual loss of consciousness)

UNSAFE

For staff carrying out safety-critical work, some of these symptoms could result in an inability to carry out duties in a safe way.

Moreover, individuals can react to hot conditions in different ways and some people are more susceptible than others.

Extra risks are posed to those who work outdoors including track workers, ground staff, platform staff, deck hands, rig workers. These workers face additional risks through sun burn, sun stroke, premature ageing of the skin and, in the worst cases, skin cancer.

What can employers do to reduce these risks? The first priority should be, where possible, to remove or reduce the sources of heat. This can be done by using fans or using air conditioning.

If a task is physically demanding, mechanical aids can be introduced to reduce the work rate. Employers can redesign work so that the length of exposure to hot environments

is reduced, allowing work to continue only when the temperature is below a certain level or at cooler times of the day or by providing periodic rest breaks and rest facilities in cooler conditions.

DEHYDRATION

Cool drinking water should be provided to prevent dehydration to replace the liquid lost in the sweating process. Workers should be encouraged to drink small amounts frequently before, during and after work.

Employers should also relax uniform codes during periods of hot weather. Often there is no reason why employers have to insist on workers wearing ties, tights, or jackets for work.

The issue is whether or not the clothing is acceptable in the context of the job a person does. Summer uniforms can also be made of lightweight, breathable material that aids the evaporation of sweat to increase the cooling effect.

SUNLIGHT

For workers exposed to direct sunlight, employers should include sun protection advice in routine health and safety training. Workers should keep covered up during the summer months – especially at lunch time when the sun is at its hottest.

They can cover up with a long-sleeved shirt, and where possible a hat with a brim or flap that protects the ears and neck.

Employers should provide and encourage workers to use sunscreen on any part of the body they can't cover up. Workers should be able to take their breaks in the shade, if possible, rather than staying out in the sun. Workers should check their skin regularly for unusual spots or moles that change size, shape or colour and to seek medical advice promptly if they find anything that causes them concern.

TRAINING

Employers need to provide training for workers about the risks, especially to new and

young employees. They should also identify employees who are more susceptible to risk whether because of an illness/condition or medication that may encourage early onset of heat-stress such as pregnant women or those with a heart condition.

If you suffer any of the listed symptoms of heat stress or suffer from sun-burn and feel your health has been directly affected as a result of your working conditions you should report this to your management via the accident book. Finally, have a look at the 10 point list below – if you can tick all 10 boxes you will be well protected but any gaps should be raised directly with your employer or through your RMT health and safety rep.

Does/has your employer:

- Have a policy to deal with hot weather?
- Carried out a risk assessment of the risks of hot weather, in consultation with you or your Safety Rep?
- Do they provide air conditioning in the workplace?
- Is it well maintained and in good working order?
- Do they allow for the relaxation of the dress code?
- Do they change working practices in hot weather?
- Do they supply sun screen if your job exposes you to direct sunlight?
- Do they arrange/allow you to take breaks in cool locations?
- Do they provide an adequate supply of cool, clean drinking water?
- Do they provide training in the risks and how to protect yourself from the consequences of hot weather?

Other useful information can be found on the HSE web-site at: <http://www.hse.gov.uk/temperature/index.htm>

And on the TUC website at: http://www.tuc.org.uk/h_and_s/tuc-12183-f0.cfm



RMT POLICY ON EXTREMES OF TEMPERATURE

1. DURING WORKING HOURS EMPLOYERS WILL MAINTAIN REASONABLE TEMPERATURES IN BUILDINGS IN WHICH PEOPLE WORK, THIS SHOULD NORMALLY BE AT A MINIMUM OF 13°C FOR PHYSICAL WORK OR 16°C FOR SEDENTARY WORK.

THERE IS NO LEGAL MAXIMUM BUT EMPLOYERS ARE URGED TO ADOPT AN UPPER LIMIT OF 30°C FOR NORMAL WORK AND 27°C FOR WORK WHICH INVOLVES HIGH LEVELS OF PHYSICAL ACTIVITY.

2. WHEN TEMPERATURES FALL OUTSIDE THIS RANGE, INDOORS OR OUTDOORS, EMPLOYERS SHOULD ASSESS THE RISK TO WORKERS HEALTH AND SAFETY AND IMPLEMENT APPROPRIATE CONTROLS MEASURES TO REDUCE THE RISK TO AS LOW AS IS REASONABLY PRACTICABLE.

CONTROLS MAY INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING:

FOR HOT WEATHER:

- THE PROVISION OF FIXED OR PORTABLE AIR CONDITIONING UNITS.
- RELAXATION OF DRESS CODES (NOT PPE).
- PROVISION OF COOL, CLEAN DRINKING WATER
- CHANGES TO WORKING PRACTICES – INCLUDING BREAKS IN COOLER ENVIRONMENTS TO LIMIT THE EXPOSURE OF INDIVIDUAL WORKERS TO HIGH TEMPERATURES.

FOR COLD WEATHER:

- THE PROVISION OF FIXED OR PORTABLE HEATING UNITS.
- PROVISION OF COLD WEATHER CLOTHING.
- PROVISION OF HOT DRINKS.
- CHANGES TO WORKING PRACTICES – INCLUDING BREAKS IN WARMER ENVIRONMENTS TO LIMIT THE EXPOSURE OF INDIVIDUAL WORKERS TO LOW TEMPERATURES.

WHAT IS HAPPENING WITH HARMONISATION?



RMT News asks assistant general secretary Mick Cash what progress has been made on harmonisation for maintenance staff since being taken back in-house by Network Rail

WHY DO WE NEED TO HARMONISE MAINTENANCE STAFF PAY AND CONDITIONS?

When Network Rail brought maintenance contracts back in-house in March 2004 there was a huge disparity in pay and conditions.

This situation, which reflects the fragmented nature of the industry, remains unsustainable and the harmonisation of conditions remains a clear necessity.

The union's objectives are clear – to have one set of pay and conditions for the over 17,000 employees of Network Rail's expanded maintenance organisation.

So if you are a p-way worker in Scotland or South Wales doing the same job, you should get the same pay and enjoy the same conditions of employment. RMT demands can be summarised as:

- Unified pay rates and shift/overtime premiums
- Reduction in the working week without loss of pay
- Uniformed rostering, sick pay, annual leave
- entitlements and other key conditions
- One grading system
- A national set of job descriptions

WHO IS COVERED BY HARMONISATION DISCUSSIONS?

Talks have identified who is included in the current negotiations. Broadly speaking it is everyone with the exception of managers on role-clarity 1-4 contracts or equivalent.

That means everyone from supervisors down will be covered by the discussions. Staff transferring in from contractors into the maintenance organisation will also be included.

For supervisory staff we have had confirmation that Network Rail do not plan to put them on role-clarity contracts.

Network Rail has also indicated that it wants supervisory staff working less behind a desk and more supervising trackside. This means that the company will have to address the workload put on supervisors and the fact that NR will want supervisors on similar rostering commitments as other staff.

WHAT NEEDS TO BE HARMONISED?

Your pay rates, annual leave, sick pay, overtime, enhancements, rosters and other conditions currently in your contracts need to be harmonised as outlined in the above list.

WHAT INPUT HAS THERE BEEN FROM THE UNION?

Since taking maintenance contracts back in-house, RMT has been campaigning for harmonisation. The union organised a special one-day conference in Doncaster to discuss the problems involved with RMT reps and produced a programme of issues to campaign around.

RMT has sought the involvement of reps at every stage, culminating in discussions with area council reps at last November. Union negotiators have been using the information and feedback they

have received to compile a firm set of proposals to be put forward to the Joint Working Party.

WHAT IS THE JOINT WORKING PARTY?

The Joint Working Party (JWP) is a body comprising management and unions which sole purpose is come up with a detailed set of new pay and conditions. RMT has the largest delegation as the largest union and includes me as senior assistant general secretary and five full-time RMT co-ordinators.

WILL IT BE BACKDATED?

Before we can talk about backdating, the union needs to have an agreed set of pay and conditions. Obviously, as part of these discussions, RMT will be raising this issue of backdating agreed pay rates. However, it has been difficult to achieve in the past.

WHEN WILL IT BE FINISHED?

It is expected that a set of proposals for track workers will be drawn up by June and another set of proposals for clerical, supervisory and P&T staff will be established by September. These proposals will then go out for consultation to reps. In other words, the hard bargaining has started but it is a big task.

HOW CAN I KEEP UP TO DATE WITH DEVELOPMENTS?

The union will continue to report back to reps and members on the progress of the discussions. Up-to-date information, as it becomes

available, will be sent to branches and reps as well as posted on RMT's website in the members' area. In order to access the members' area, click on 'members' at the top of the homepage and follow the instructions.

You will need your membership number and input it when prompted and, within the members' area on the left-hand side, there is a section on Network Rail harmonisation. The website will be updated when information becomes available..

When firm management proposals are presented, RMT will involve its reps and members in deciding whether these are acceptable.

WILL I GET A SAY IN DECIDING WHETHER THE NEW CONDITIONS ARE ACCEPTABLE?

Definitely. When the Joint Working Party agrees a set of proposed pay and conditions, RMT members will be given a vote to decide whether or not they are acceptable.

RMT is aware that members want the matter resolved as quickly as possible and encourages comments and feedback. Contact your local or area RMT rep, attend your branch or phone head office on 0800 376 706. Finally, if any of your workmates are not in RMT they will not be able to have a say on their future pay and conditions. It is important that these workers join the union and have a voice.

If you know of a work colleague who is not in RMT, ask them to join so you all have a stronger

TAKING STEPS T



RMT general secretary
Bob Crow reports on
progress made in
joining forces with
OILC and explains how
industrial trade
unionism is the best
defence for workers

TOWARDS UNITY

After several months of fruitful talks between RMT and the Offshore Industry Liaison Committee (OILC) and a special general meeting of the union, details of an historic proposal to unite the two unions are being finalised.

Delegates at the OILC conference, to be held in Aberdeen in October, will decide whether to put the proposal to become RMT's offshore section to a ballot of the OILC's more than 2,000 members.

The move to bring OILC into RMT has already been endorsed by a special general meeting of RMT, held in Doncaster in March, and has the support of the entire OILC executive.

RMT, Britain's fastest growing union, already organises divers and catering workers in the offshore industry, and recently won its more than 900 North Sea divers and support staff a 45 per cent pay rise after a ten-day, all-out strike.

OILC, which organises offshore engineering, drilling, construction and support workers, was set up following the 1988 Piper Alpha disaster, which claimed 167 lives.

It is an independent trade union, receiving a certificate of independence from the Certification Officer for Trade Unions in 1992 and, as OILC general secretary Jake Molloy told the SGM, represents "a vigorous and dynamic self-help organisation, run by offshore workers for offshore workers".

Jake explained to delegates that he admired the fact that democracy, integrity, transparency and accountability lays at the very heart of RMT.

He said it was refreshing to be talking to an organisation built on grass-roots involvement rather than so-called partnership. He said that RMT was an organisation that does not do 'sweetheart deals' with employers and does not sign no-strike agreements.

Jake said that as a result his executive supported a closer relationship with RMT because of our track record, not least on the recent divers' dispute.

I was proud to hear him say that RMT is a union prepared to fight for workers' rights.

Our two unions have the same outlook and organise in the same offshore maritime sector, and joining forces makes sound industrial sense.

What is more, bringing OILC and RMT together will benefit the members of both unions, and deliver more industrial clout in an industry that is notoriously difficult to organise in.

The TUC may possibly object to OILC coming into RMT and, consequently, into the TUC on the spurious basis that it is a 'breakaway union'.

Nothing could be further from the truth.

OILC were formed on the basis of need as no other organisation was doing anything for their members.

It is a bit rich for an organisation that is presiding over ongoing union amalgamations to telling offshore workers they can't join RMT and strengthen this union.

UNITY

Our industrial strategy of developing industrial unity also extends to the rail network.

Never has unity been more important on our fragmented and privatised railways. However, we still face the problems created by the existence of three separate rail unions ourselves, TSSA and ASLEF.

It makes clear industrial sense to become one union for the benefit of all rail workers. Indeed, this aspiration is enshrined in our rule book.

This has clearly been a difficult goal but I believe it can be achieved. Petty sectionalism has undermined the unity of rail workers and strengthened the hand of employers who aim is to chip away at your pay and conditions in the endless pursuit of profit.

An all-grades united union in the rail sector could protect the weakest grades and enhance the bargaining power of all rail workers. This is one of the basic principles of trade unionism. ■

"It was refreshing to be talking to an organisation built on grass-roots involvement rather than so-called partnership. RMT is an organisation that does not do 'sweetheart deals' with employers and does not sign no-strike agreements."

OILC general secretary Jake Molloy

SHIPPING NEWS

CAMPAIGNING FOR RATINGS TRAINING

RMT has joined forces with Nautilus UK and the Chamber of Shipping to submit a document to the Department of Transport setting out suggested improvements to training support for seafarers.

The document was drawn up following pressure from the union for concessions relating to the tonnage tax.

The Chamber of Shipping has also agreed to include ratings

training as an option to fulfil the Minimum Training Obligation within the tonnage tax.

Shipping companies entering the tonnage tax scheme have no mandatory commitment for UK ratings training. However, for officers, companies have to train one cadet for every fifteen officers employed.

The Chamber has agreed that shipping companies should now

be allowed to train two ratings instead of one officer to fulfil their Minimum Training Obligation as an alternative option.

This has been included within the joint document with a request for enhanced training support for companies that agree to train and employ UK seafarers, ratings and officers, for a minimum period of time.

The document has arisen partly as a result of the continued lack of progress from government following the industry joint working party which addressed training and employment measures, including those relating to the tonnage tax.

RMT has also had direct discussions with Clyde Marine and Maersk regarding similar commitments and has assisted

in persuading the Chamber of Shipping of the need to tackle ratings as well as officers training and employment support measures.

CLYDE MARINE

The union has also submitted a joint request to the Department of Transport with Clyde Marine shipping agency for improved training support.

Following a meeting with the minister, RMT and Clyde Marine agreed to follow up with a formal request.

RMT and Clyde Marine have also requested the inclusion of a ratings training option within the tonnage tax and increased financial support for specific ratings courses where SMART funding does not cover the length of the training. ■

CAL MAC MEMBERS UNVEIL NEW BANNER



Caledonian MacBrayne Port Committee unveiled their new banner at the Scottish TUC last month. The banner was made by Ed Hall in consultation with the Cal Mac members on Glasgow Shipping Branch and the Port Committee.

The Gaelic translations on the back of the banner are - "National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers" - "Glasgow Shipping Branch" and "Socialism".

Western Isles Port Committee Chairman George Lonie was joined by general secretary Bob Crow at the ceremony. The banner had its first outing at the annual MayDay march in Glasgow on May 5.



Foreland Shipping (Guernsey) Limited

Following the introduction of Time On / Time Off, Foreland Shipping (Guernsey) Limited are able to offer employment opportunities in the following rank :-

Able Seaman (SG1A)

Competitive consolidated salaries and other Company benefits apply.

Employment is on vessels operating the UK MOD Strategic Sealift Service and therefore permanent employment is conditional on seafarers obtaining and maintaining Sponsored Reservist status, certain benefits are paid for this requirement.

Interested applicants must have sailed in the substantive rank shown above and experience on Ro-Ro vessels will be a distinct advantage.

For security reasons applicants must be either British or Commonwealth Citizen's permanently resident in the UK.

If you are interested in the above position, please contact our Agents and Crew Managers, forwarding full CV by post or email to:

Bibby International Services (I.O.M.) Limited

Shearwater House, Nunnery Mills
Old Castletown Road, Douglas
Isle of Man
IM2 1QA
(ref: FSL/04.07)
Email: enquiries@bisiom.com
Web site: www.bisiom.com

SHIPPING NEWS

RFA MEMBERS REJECT SPONSORED RESERVISTS STATUS PAY LINK

An attempt by Royal Fleet Auxiliary to link the introduction of Sponsored Reservists (SR) status to pay has been successfully blocked.

RMT national secretary Steve Todd said that it was a credit to RMT members who rejected it in a referendum as it should never have formed any part of a pay review.

As RFA units are increasingly undertaking more direct roles in support of military operations, the legal status of its civilian personnel during armed conflict needs to be extremely clear.

Legally RFA members, like any other individual, military

or civilian, are entitled to use force to defend themselves.

However, international law on armed conflict states that only members of the Armed Forces are provided protection under International law and thus take a direct part in hostilities. Current legal opinion is that during armed conflict, the status of the RFA remains that of civilian.

As such, they could be regarded as unlawful combatants. This may leave the UK government open to challenge as in breach of the International Law on Armed Conflict (The Rome Statute), but more importantly leaves RMT

members legal status unclear.

Steve Todd said that there was now an obvious push from RFA Command to achieve sponsored reservist status for all RFA personnel.

"Members will be asked to enter into SR on a voluntary basis.

"The job of the union will be to ensure that no RMT member suffers any disadvantage either by signing or not signing whatever the case may be.

"Your terms and conditions, uniforms, pay, uniforms and your rights to claim your tax days remain unchanged.

"You won't be expected to salute or call anyone sir and

you will not have to undergo any more training or serve on Royal Navy ships and your rights to be represented by your trade union RMT remains.

"Nothing really changes except your status," he said.

PAY DEAL

The previous pay offer from the company was overwhelmingly rejected mainly due to the inclusion of the SR issue.

Following further discussion between RMT, Nautilus and the company a further two-year offer was tabled which kept the issue separate. The details of the offer are as below: -

FIGHTING FOR RECOGNITION AT NORFOLK LINE



Over the last twelve months RMT has been involved in a concerted effort to recruit Norfolk Line workers on three ships operating out of Dover, Maersk Delft, Dunkerque and Dover.

RMT national secretary Steve Todd said that membership levels increased if the union is to win recognition and representation rights for the people who choose it by joining RMT.

"After being frustrated by the company's apparent resistance to our requests, the union is now at ACAS discussing a voluntary recognition agreement," he said.

Steve recently attended an International Transport Workers Federation meeting which hosted a forum of 26 trade unions from 22 different countries that have experienced difficulties with Maersk.

He was also able to put the RMT case to senior Maersk management personnel who attended the meeting on the second day.

"If all else fails RMT can call on the combined efforts of the ITF and those other unions to get members their fundamental rights to be represented by the union of their choice RMT," he said. ■

Royal Fleet Auxiliary pay deal

Year 1 (2006 pay offer)

- 1.9 per cent uplift in basic pay backdated to July 1 2006;
- £450 increase to the RFA Allowance and move of RFA Allowance anniversary date to 1 July.

Examples of what this offer means to the individual (guide only):

Grade	Current Pay Scales	% uplift to scale	Increase to RFA Allowance £450 (Percentage of Current Pay)	Overall % Increase on basic pay (Pensionable)
SG1B	£20,862	1.9%	2.1%	4.0%
SG1A	£22,790	1.9%	2.0%	3.9%
L/HAND	£23,918	1.9%	1.9%	3.8%
PO 2 YR	£28,227	1.9%	1.6%	3.5%
CFO 2 YR	£31,965	1.9%	1.4%	3.3%

Year 2 (2007 pay offer)

- 1.9% uplift in basic pay;
- £158 increase to the current RFA Allowance;

Examples of what this offer means to the individual (guide only):

Grade	July 06 scales	% uplift to scale	Increase to RFA Allowance £158 (Percentage of July 06 Pay)	Overall % Increase on basic pay (Pensionable)
SG1B	£21,258	1.9%	0.7%	2.6%
SG1A	£23,223	1.9%	0.7%	2.6%
L/HAND	£24,372	1.9%	0.6%	2.5%
PO 2 YR	£28,763	1.9%	0.5%	2.4%
CFO 2 YR	£32,572	1.9%	0.5%	2.4%

NO TO THE EU CONSTITUTION, NO TO THE SERVICES DIRECTIVE, YES TO DEMOCRACY, YES TO TRADE UNION RIGHTS

How many people in Britain would vote for a document, drawn up in secret, which binds this country to join the euro, gives Brussels the power to privatise industries and services, dictates economic policy, gives the commission the sole right to make laws, militarises the EU and creates an EU police force whose officers are immune from prosecution?

Not many? Well, EU institutions agree with you. That is why they want to avoid referendums at all costs on the proposed EU Constitution which enshrine all of the above into EU law.

EUROPE SAYS NO

At the 2005 TUC Congress in Brighton, delegates overwhelmingly backed an RMT motion rejecting the EU Constitution, following the no votes in The Netherlands and France.

The Scottish STUC recently endorsed this opposition at its 2007 Congress in April and demanded a referendum if any constitutional document was once more proposed by the EU.

However, Brussels is seeking to impose the EU constitution anyway without the need for referendums. In other words, the

EU wants to impose the new rules, centralising powers to the EU, and ignore any democratic process as people tend to vote the 'wrong way'.

The strategy for doing this is to change the name of the Constitution while keeping the substance of the document the same.

As EU Commission president Jose Barroso has said "the Commission and I have always supported the constitution. But let's be clear: we will ratify a treaty that is not the Constitutional Treaty.

"It will be drawing from the latter but it will be different. It's the only possible way ahead," he said.

However, Barroso emphasised that the new EU treaty would act as a stepping stone to further transfers of power later: "nothing rules out the possibility of certain more ambitious aspects later on".

So the plan is to carry on without popular approval or consultation.

A leaked letter from German Chancellor Angela Merkel to the other 26 EU leaders recently highlighted the fact that the "new" treaty will have much of the same "legal substance" as the constitutional treaty - while making a few "presentational changes" and using "different terminology"

to describe the same plans.

In a letter to other heads of government Merkel suggested that: "The consolidated approach of part one of the Constitutional Treaty is preserved with the necessary presentational changes".

UK Foreign Secretary Margaret Beckett has refused to publish the UK government's response to Merkel's letter.

BLAIR'S LAST ACT

Outgoing prime minister Tony Blair's former adviser on Europe Sir Stephen Wall recently announced that Blair was preparing to lock incoming PM Gordon Brown into a timetable for bringing in the new EU Constitution at a key EU summit on June 22.

"Tony Blair's last act on the European stage will be to sign up to the timetable that Angela Merkel envisages, and Gordon Brown cannot repudiate that," he said.

This will mean that an outgoing Prime Minister will take constitutional decisions which binds both his successor and the country for years without consulting his successor or the electorate.

It is widely believed that Blair wants to impose the Constitution as part of his



political legacy and even to become a constitutional EU president, a post envisaged within the existing Constitution.

NO SERVICES DIRECTIVE

The proposed EU services directive also seeks to complete the single market by introducing 'free market' competition to all services.

The EU has also produced a green paper proposing an end to trade union collective bargaining in favour of individual contracts which was highlighted in the February 2007 issue of RMT News and is available on the RMT website. Such moves will allow the complete free movement of capital and the removal of national minimum standards and undermine long-established trade union rights.

CONFERENCE

On Saturday June 19 an important conference in London will discuss the implications for organised labour for the imposition of the EU Constitution and the campaign to demand a referendum. Details of the conference are on page 8 of this journal.

RMT members are invited to come and hear from national and international speakers how the Constitution is a threat to trade unions, public services and democracy.

Find out what you can do to prevent its ratification and get involved in the campaign to demand a referendum.

*Trade Unionists Against the EU Constitution has written a pamphlet outlining the contents of the Constitution and is available free by writing to:

TUAEUC
PO Box 46295
London W5 2UG ■



TUAEUC

Trade Unionists Against the EU Constitution

President's column



A democratic, fighting union

Last month I had the pleasure of being part of the RMT delegation at the Scottish TUC along with Gerry McCann, Ian Mahon, Gordon Martin, Stuart Elder, Scott Agnew, Dennis Connor, George Lonie and Janet Cassidy, along with the general secretary, CoE member Andy Gordon and both Scottish organisers.

Among the demands we raised included presenting proposals for an environmentally sustainable and fully integrated transport policy fit for tackling the problems Scotland faces.

RMT also backed the creation of environmental reps in the workplace and in support of the Trade Union Freedom Bill to give back rights taken away from trade unionists under the Tories.

Opposition to the privatisation of Caledonian MacBrayne lifeline ferry services demanded by EU rules also won overwhelming support from STUC delegates.

Opposition to the replacement of Trident nuclear weapons system and rejection of any UK/US attack on Iran won widespread support.

The STUC congress is an important platform for Scottish RMT members to put the case for union policy within the wider labour movement in Scotland.

Another important feature of STUC congress is the fringe meetings and discussions around taking place around conference among trade union activists.

I spoke at two fringe meetings on behalf of the union to demand peace in the Middle East and for the repeal of anti-trade union laws.

RMT members at Metronet on London Underground should be congratulated for standing firm against company plans to transfer 49 fleet jobs to Bombardier.

The threat of three days of strike action was enough to force an emergency board meeting of the struggling consortium that abandoned the plans which threatened the further fragmentation of Tube maintenance.

This once again highlights the fact that if workers stand together staff under threat can be protected. No doubt the bosses will try it on again in the future, but we will be ready.

Two new members have been elected to fill vacancies on the Council of Executives following my election as your president and for Peter Trend as a relief organiser. Oliver New was elected to replace me in the London seat and Pat Collins is taking over the Midlands seat from Peter.

Both these hard-working members will no doubt have to settle in quickly to carry out their new responsibilities representing their members. I wish them both well.

The union will shortly be receiving the report from the pension commission set up following a strike ballot of Railway Pensions Scheme members last year.

Rail bosses attempted to close the final salary scheme in favour of a cheaper scheme based on betting on the Stock Exchange. It is clear these plans are only on hold not defeated. As a result, we must be prepared to defend the basic right to a decent pension after spending a lifetime in the service of the rail industry.

This means using all political and industrial weapons at our disposal if necessary.

Best wishes

John Leach

RAIL UNION LEARNING CONFERENCE 2007

Nottingham Rail Union Learning Representative Ruth Strong reports on the RUL conference and asks will this be the last one?

Is there a future of Rail Union Learning? This was one of the issues under discussion at the RUL Conference held last month when Rail Union Learning Representatives from RMT and other rail unions gathered in London.

The present funding for RUL expires in March 2008. Rail union leaders will have to make bids for funding after this date. If central funding is not continued, can union learning be taken under the main RMT umbrella so that past successes can be maintained and more members can benefit from workplace learning initiatives?

This well-attended Conference, subtitled 'Making Learning Work', brought together learning reps from across the country to celebrate successes and to share best practice and advice in order to continue their achievements.

The Conference was chaired by Pauline Murphy, National Development Worker of Unionlearn (formerly TUC Education) who welcomed the delegates and introduced TUC Deputy General Secretary Frances O'Grady as the guest speaker.

Frances spoke in praise of the work done by learning reps which gave many workers the opportunities for education to fulfil their potential by updating skills or learning new ones.

She pointed out that union learning was important not only

to members who want promotion but also to employers who can only gain from a more educated workforce.

WORKSHOPS

Delegates took part in a choice of several workshops where their shared experiences were included in training sessions to develop the skills and knowledge of all.

The morning workshop was divided along individual union lines. RMT RULRs were able to explore ways of overcoming the difficulties of bringing learning into the workplace.

Afternoon workshops were arranged in subjects with a mix of delegates from all the rail unions. One workshop worth an individual mention was on 'Money Matters'. This is an example of RUL working with an external provider, the Financial Services Authority, to include money management skills in existing courses.

RECRUITMENT

A delegate asked how many new members had joined RMT through union learning. No-one knows, but it is a fact that contact by a RULR opens the door to contact with non-members and provides a valuable recruitment tool. RULRs are a new breed of union representative and are different from the functional, local or health and safety representatives.



They are trained to give confidential advice and are instrumental in developing interest in continuing education. Many RULRs have never been union activists and would probably never have considered themselves as any other sort of representative.

A feeling of optimism for the future of Rail Union Learning was obvious throughout the day. The enthusiasm of the delegates for the educational opportunities that they can bring to members was overwhelming.

Now, we depend on our

leaders to make a bid for funding to carry past successes into the future.

Last year Bob Crow said: "We support any initiative that validates the work our members do and assists their continuing personal development".

So, the question remains. Will Rail Union Learning continue?

For further information about continuing education or about becoming a Rail Union Learning Representative, go to www.rul.org.uk or contact your branch secretary. ■

TEACHING SUCCESS IN DONNY

Ray Spry-Shute highlights some of the courses being run at the union's new education centre in Doncaster



NETWORK RAIL

Over ten successful courses have been delivered for Second Stage Representatives at Network Rail which deal with their role as union reps, procedures, discipline, grievances and union organisation.

During this course, speakers from the organising unit, full time officers and Council of Executive members address course members. Senior members of the Network Rail Human Resources team give presentations which are followed by an open discussion with the students on how the future of Network Rail is perceived and how they view the "business". These courses will continue to be delivered until all Second Stage Representatives have had an opportunity to attend.

BUS WORKERS

A five-day course has been run for our bus workers from the Lincolnshire area and this will be followed by a five day course for the Southwest area.

Bus workers have always played an important role in union activities and they should take pride in their consistent high turn out on courses. Surprisingly, their numbers aren't depleted by being our heaviest smokers and, dare it be

said, a little more exercise and a few less calories wouldn't do any of us any harm, would it?

VIDEO CONFERENCING

In January, the National Education Centre purchased Video Conferencing which enables students to talk directly with head office. The President and Bob Crow have been willing participants of the video conferencing and have, on numerous occasions, spoken "face to face" with students. In the future, when students wish to ask questions of the health and safety department, legal officer or industrial relations department, we are now able to arrange this via the Video Conferencing. The Union strives to continuously improve the communications between the Head Office and the National Education Centre for the benefit of all.

BRANCH SECRETARIES COURSE

The cornerstone of NUR/RMT training for many years has been the Branch Secretaries Course. When first appointed, the Branch Secretaries Course is designed to deal with all the administration issues. With technological advances, many branches now have computers and the accounts and legal cases are now much easier to

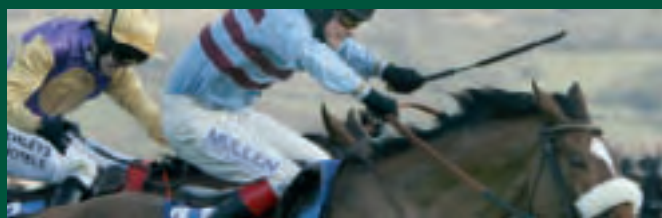
administrate. Due to this, the courses have been reduced from five to two days. However, having surveyed members who have attended this course, it is currently under review to extend this course to three days and cover "Organising a Branch" as well as "Administration of a Branch".

OTHER COURSES FOR 2007

Courses have been organised for various train operating

companies. One of the first five-day courses delivered at the National Education Centre was for GNER. There will be further courses run for South East Trains and Tyne and Wear Metro. Also, there are two proposed shipping grades courses – one for the RFA and one for P&O members. There will also be a new course for the new computer-based membership system currently being developed. ■

RMT Go Racing



FRIDAY AUGUST 17, ST LEGER TRIAL DAY

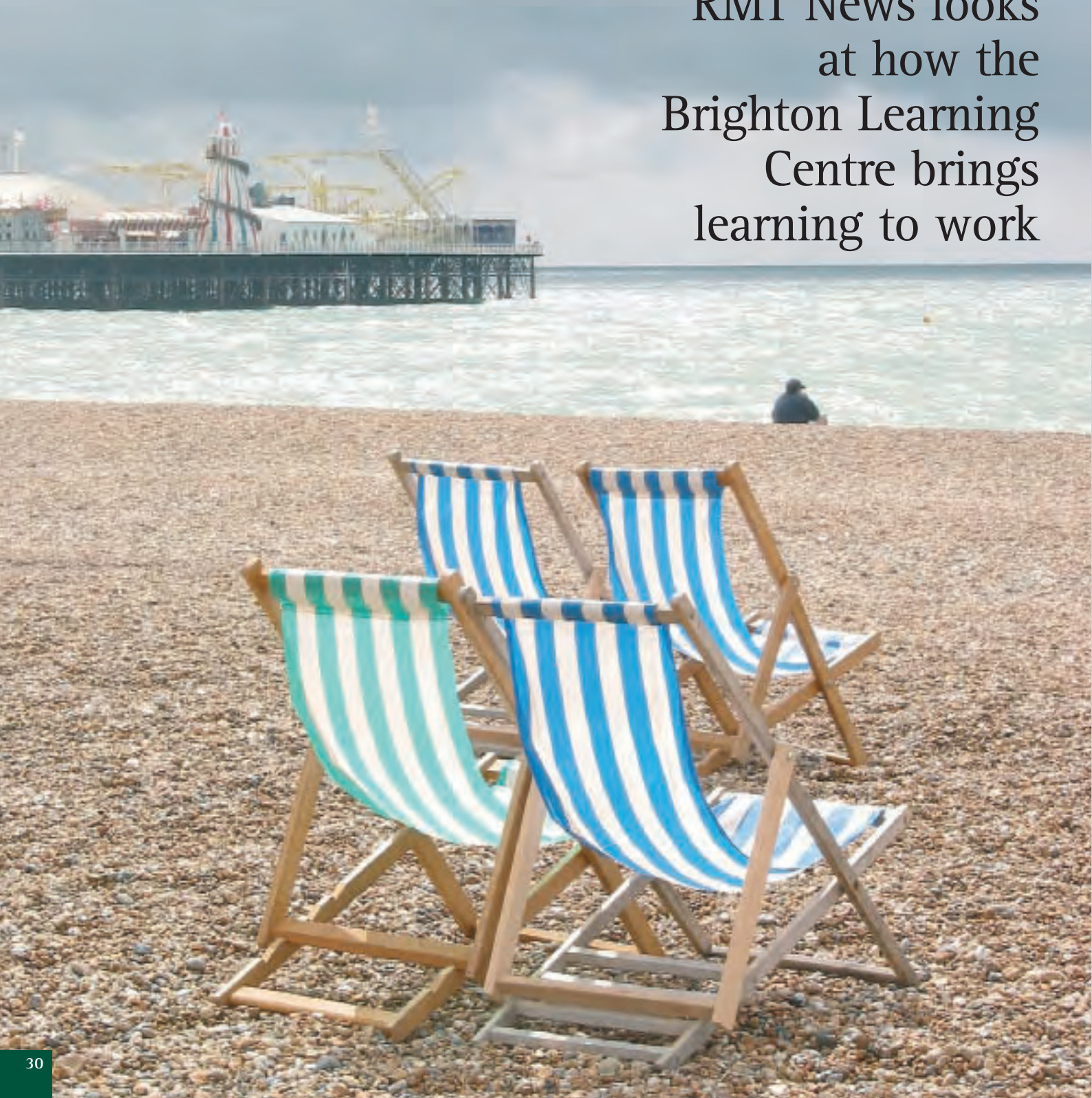
Why not come along for an afternoon of top class racing at the newly redeveloped Doncaster Racecourse? This will be an opportunity to view the new facilities at the much anticipated £32 million redevelopment of Doncaster Race course -

Special Offer to RMT members Bed & Breakfast at our National Education Centre (10 mins walk from the centre) and a ticket to the new Grandstand at Doncaster for the first meeting All this for only £75.

For further details please contact the centre manager Barbara Collinson on 01302 556870 or e-mail b.collinson@rmt.org.uk

BRUSHING UP IN BRIGHTON

RMT News looks
at how the
Brighton Learning
Centre brings
learning to work



Brighton's spring day-trippers come streaming out of the station behind the taxi rank unaware that they are passing the door of the Brighton Learning Centre.

Inside, a European Computer Driving Licence (ECDL) class is taking place.

The learning centre is transforming the lives of local railway workers with its computer, basic skills and other courses.

It is the kind of place that you wouldn't know existed unless you were told about it. Luckily, the combination of Union Learning Reps spreading the word and the success of the courses themselves mean that the centre is a big hit with station staff.



Emily King

Project manager Emily King explained that "the success of the centre lies with the fact that it is based in Brighton station at the workplace and also that the courses are free".

STUDY

Encouraging people back into learning, when for most people education finished when they left school, is the centre's main purpose.

Nobody can doubt the need for it when railway workers are amongst the least qualified group of workers in the country, according to a recent study by Warwick University's Institute for Employment Research.

While vocational courses are always popular, and people can easily see the need for them, the centre offers a lot more than that. Since it was opened at the end of 2004, courses have included Spanish, French, sign language, digital photography,

web design and family history.

The centre is managed by the Rail Union Learning Programme (RUL) which is a partnership between the RMT, ASLEF and TSSA. Apart from RMT and other unions, there are a number of funding sources which include Brighton and Hove City Council and the main employer, Southern Rail, who provide the premises.

SUPPORT

One problem for rail workers is that shift patterns can make it difficult to attend a regular class. To get round this the centre runs the same classes twice a day.

Another problem is simply finding any time at all to attend a course. Southern Rail has a learning agreement to help with this which gives staff two hours off a week to attend Skills for Life courses such as English, maths or English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL).

Many course attendees have got bitten by the learning bug. They often first attend taster computer courses or one of the English or maths classes that run throughout the year and then want to keep on learning new things.

More than 20 per cent of learners have gone on to do more than one course and some have done as many as six courses at the centre.

It isn't only the learners who are impressed with the centre, which works in collaboration with local colleges including Sussex Downs College. One tutor has remarked that "this is the friendliest and most open supportive outreach centre that I work in. It is also the best equipped".

The centre is breaking down the barriers to learning. It offers free internet access and people can use the computers at their own pace if they don't want to attend a class.

For many rail workers walking into the centre is just the beginning. The centre also offers advice on what courses are available at colleges locally providing a window into the world of learning.

Terry Springett - Brighton Station Union Learning Rep



Terry Springett left school with no qualifications. And for most of his life this never seemed to hold him back.

First he had a career in the military and then later in 1999 he joined the railways as a ticket inspector.

He always knew that his English and maths could do with brushing up but he also managed to get by as things were.

Then, when his employer Connex lost the franchise to South Central, he found, along with other staff, that he had to take an assessment exam.

In spite of the fact that he had been in the job as a revenue officer for nearly two years, and had no problem performing the tasks, he failed the assessment.

Terry knew he had to finally face up to improving on the skills that he never got from school.

In those days English and Maths courses were offered by Passport to Learning which had a room off of Platform 1 on the station, which was the precursor to Brighton Learning Centre.

"Turning the handle and walking through that door was

one of the hardest things I've ever done," said Terry.

But once he had started with basic English and basic maths his appetite for learning grew and grew.

"I went to Portslade Community College for GCSE English. I also did a computer course and other courses. At first my colleagues took the mickey but when I came back with a grade B in English, they all took me out for a drink," he said.

Terry says that attending those early courses and then later going to Brighton Learning Centre has turned him into a different person: "It's about a lot more than the subjects themselves. I'm more confident, more understanding and more tactful. Being a revenue officer means there is plenty of chance for conflict and being more articulate helps to stop a situation getting out of hand."

His experiences have made Terry the obvious choice as a Union Learning Rep at Brighton Station. "Brighton Learning Centre is the best thing to happen on Brighton station in many years," he said. ■

REPORTING FROM THE SCOTTISH PARLIAMENT

RMT Scottish Parliamentary officer Ann Henderson looks back on trade union achievements in the devolved chamber

The Scottish Parliament is gearing up to a new administration and a new legislative programme. Many new laws have been debated and agreed in Scotland during eight years of devolved government, making a difference to education, health, transport and other policies.

The work done by the STUC with the Trade Union Week in the Scottish Parliament in December 2006 highlighted the opportunities for trade unionists to work with the government, whilst still reserving the right to speak up independently for workers' interests.

The Rights of Relatives to Damages (Mesothelioma) (Scotland) Bill was the final piece of legislation considered in this session of the Scottish Parliament. This Bill was passed on March 21, with full cross party support, making a huge

difference for mesothelioma sufferers and their families.

It will now be possible for a victim to claim damages during his lifetime, without preventing the family and close relatives also subsequently making claims for damages after the death of that person. Over the last eight years, campaigns by families, trade unions, groups such as Clydeside Asbestos Group, and parliamentary debates from Labour members Duncan McNeill MSP (Greenock) and Des McNulty MSP (Clydebank) have all highlighted the difficulties faced by workers and their families, and tribute was paid to them all in the parliamentary debate in March. Thompsons Solicitors assisted with drafting the legislation.

Workplace justice

Another issue of concern to the trade union movement regards effective culpable



homicide legislation in Scotland.

Since the Larkhall Transco gas explosion in December 1999, local MSP Karen Gillon has been pursuing the need for those responsible for failure to be held to account. Employers must also be held accountable for workplace deaths.

Trade unions in Scotland, including RMT, supported her recent proposal for a Culpable Homicide (Scotland) Bill, and the STUC will continue to press for robust Scottish legislation in the new Parliamentary session.

The Corporate Manslaughter Bill at Westminster is running into difficulties, and in any event does not go as far as the 'Expert Panel' in Scotland recommended.

As STUC general secretary Graham Smith said when opening congress in April, committing to work with the FACK (Families Against Corporate Killing) campaign: 'Not one individual company or director in Scotland has been convicted of corporate homicide, an appalling indictment on our Scottish justice system'. We can expect this issue to come back to the Parliament in the new session.

BILLS

Private Members' Bills on other topics also continue to give MSPs the opportunity to link up with trade unions and the wider community in Scotland.

Although the Provision of Rail Passenger Services (Scotland) Bill brought forward

by Tommy Sheridan MSP and supported by RMT, fell at the first stage, it brought the campaign for public funding of our rail services to the fore, and will hopefully help shape the discussions in the years to come about the future of Scotland's railways. Another Member's Bill on a policy supported by the STUC came from Frances Curran MSP on provision of free school meals, which was again defeated.

However, the Scottish Executive brought forward legislation introducing statutory requirements on improving nutritional standards in primary and secondary schools, and agreed to widen the entitlement for free school meals.

The Scottish Parliament has spent a significant time in its last year considering new transport projects. Legislation has been passed enabling work to commence on the Airdre-Bathgate rail line, the Waverley line in the Borders, the Edinburgh Airport link, and the Glasgow Airport Link. The Transport and Works Bill, passed by the Parliament in February 2007, agreed a new and quicker system for approving major transport projects, and we can expect to see other new rail infrastructure investment in Scotland in the years ahead.

Other initiatives aimed at supporting public transport include the Scottish Executive's launch of a scheme for concessionary travel for all 16-18 year olds, with a third off fare prices on trains and buses in Scotland. Since 2003, 14 per cent of the total number of Bills passed by the Scottish Parliament has concerned transport, third after People and Society (17 per cent) and Justice (18 per cent), a reflection of policy and investment commitments. ■



DISCRIMINATION UNCOVERED AT NETWORK RAIL

RMT wins compensation
for member who suffered
discrimination at the
hands of Network Rail



VICTORY: Tribunal finds Network Rail discriminated against Steve Anderton

A Newcastle tribunal has found that RMT member Steve Anderton was discriminated against on grounds of disability because Network Rail had failed to make reasonable adjustments to accommodate his hearing loss.

The Tribunal recommended that Mr Anderton should continue in his timekeeper role and receive his category two rate of pay and ordered that Mr Anderton should receive £7500 for injury to feelings.

Steve was removed from his job as a track chameleon after failing a hearing test because of deafness brought about by his work.

Steve complained that the conditions under which his hearing assessment had been carried out and asked Network Rail to arrange a further test. A further medical assessment confirmed that there was no deterioration in Mr Anderton's hearing and he could continue to work on the trackside with the same conditions as before.

However, Mr Anderton was not told at that time that he could return to work on the track.

Bosses tried to shift him to either a lower-paid office job as a timekeeper or a manual job working on the tracks, both of which he was unhappy about.

RELIEF

Following the ruling, Steve said that it was a relief that this is all over and done with.

"It's a shame that it ever had to come this far, if they'd sat down and talked this through

with me, we never would have had this problem.

"They offered me a manual pick-and-shovel job which is a lower level of work than I'd been doing for 20 years.

"Then they offered me an office job which I thought was fair enough, but it was at a lower rate of pay.

"If they could have secured my pay grade that would have been it, no need for this tribunal," he said.

The tribunal heard Mr Anderton had spent the last 20 years working as a track chameleon. However, after the hearing test, Steve was told that he could not return to the Hallade team and could only return as part of the Pelaw team.

Mr Anderton's colleagues and his RMT regional organiser Stan Herschel gave evidence that the transfer to the Pelaw team was effectively a demotion.

Stan assisted Mr Anderton in raising grievances against Network Rail and gave valuable evidence on the difference between work at the Pelaw team and the Hallade team and policies in relation to sick pay if an employee is unable to return to their substantive post due to medical restrictions.

Stan said that he was "overjoyed" with the result.

"It shows no company is above the law and I hope they've learned a valuable lesson," he said.

A Network Rail spokeswoman said: "We will take on board the comments made as part of this case". ■



Aid for Cuba Garden Party

June 19

7.00 to 11.00pm



Maritime House
Clapham Old Town
London SW4

SPEAKERS:

Cuban Ambassador Rene Mujica Cantelar, Tony Benn, TSSA general secretary Gerry Doherty, TUC general secretary Brendan Barber, John McDonnell MP and RMT general secretary Bob Crow. The special guest will be Dr Juan Carlos Dupuy Nunez, head of the Cuban International Brigade to Pakistan, which provided medical assistance following the earthquake.

RMT ★ CUBA SOLIDARITY CAMPAIGN

Call James Croy on 020 7529 8822
or email j.croy@rmt.org.uk for tickets. £17 each

PORTSMOUTH BRANCH

NOMINATE

PAT SIKORSKI

FOR
ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY

RUGBY BRANCH

NOMINATE

PAT SIKORSKI

FOR
ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY

WATFORD BRANCH

NOMINATE

PAT SIKORSKI

FOR
ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY

CAMDEN NO 3 BRANCH

NOMINATE

PAT SIKORSKI

FOR
ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY

**HAMMERSMITH AND CITY
BRANCH**

NOMINATE

PAT SIKORSKI

FOR
ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY

ENOUGH! END THE ISRAELI OCCUPATION

National demonstration June 9

Lincoln's Inn Fields at 1.30 pm and marching to Trafalgar Square

2007 marks the 40-year anniversary of the Six Day War, in which the Israeli army took military control of the Gaza Strip and West Bank, including East Jerusalem. Since this time, Palestinians have lived under an occupation which has severely violated their human rights.

Israel has been in violation of international humanitarian law and over 60 UN resolutions. The Occupation has created serious poverty for the Palestinians, as well as severe human rights violations. Britain bears responsibility for this suffering.

Along with the US and many EU countries, the UK

government today is involved in a close military, economic and political relationship with Israel, and fails to stand up for the rights of the Palestinian people.

ENOUGH!

The Enough! Campaign is a coalition of charities, trade unions, faith and other campaign groups, calling for the end of the Israeli occupation and justice for the Palestinians. National trade unions that are members of Enough! include Amicus, the Bakers Food and Allied Workers Union, the Communication Workers' Union, GMB, NUJ, the Public and Commercial Services Union, the

Transport and General Workers Union, and UNISON. We are calling on all trade unions members to take action in support of this campaign, and to stand up for justice, equality and freedom.

On June 9 a national demonstration and rally will take place in London, meeting at Lincoln's Inn Fields at 1.30 pm and marching to Trafalgar Square.

Make this demonstration a clear sign to our government of the strength of feeling of the British people. It's time to say Enough!

More details:
www.enoughoccupation.org ■



Obituary

CHRISTINE LAWRENCE

September 21 1957 -
February 21 2007



It is with great sadness that I have to report the death of Christine Lawrence. Chris came to RMT three and a half years ago and was employed in the membership department. She fitted in straight away and was a diligent and hard working member of that team and up until her illness had hardly had a day off sick.

It was a shock to us all when, at the end of last year, we found out that Chris had terminal cancer. Chris loved her job and came to work as often as possible throughout her illness, despite the pain she was in, and it is testament to her courage and commitment that she managed to come to work on the odd day only weeks before she died.

Chris had a very dry and slightly wicked sense of humour and probably the dirtiest laugh you've ever heard. She made many friends at Unity House and also amongst the membership many of whom were in contact with her when she occasionally helped out at reception.

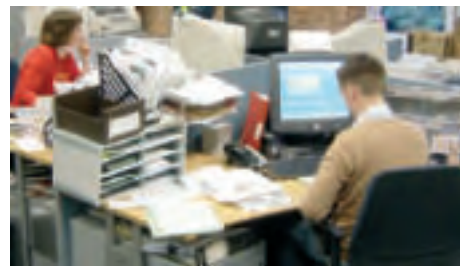
At her funeral there were at least 130 mourners and many RMT officers and staff were in attendance. It was a wonderful tribute to a colleague who was clearly loved and will be greatly missed by all who knew her. The celebration of her life following the funeral was equally well attended and many happy stories and anecdotes flowed along with the drink.

Chris leaves behind a husband Jeff, son Kevin, daughter Charlotte and granddaughter Louise, our thoughts are with them.

Kevin Carey

MEMBERSHIP PROJECT

RMT membership officer Peter Waters talks to RMT News about the new, state of the art web-based membership system - the REMOTE Access Project which will be going live soon



Membership department staff have been working with the software supplier, Miller Technology, to ensure that the system does exactly what RMT needs it to do and they have also been transferring data from the old system to the first "test build" of the new database.

Computer equipment has been installed at Unity House to run the new database and associated services, and key members of staff have been trained to undertake the testing of the new system.

Once the new system has been tested to ensure that it is working properly, RMT staff will be trained to use it. We then hope to 'go live' with the fully developed system and it is at

this point that the Branch and Regional Council Secretary training will get under way at the Education Centre in Doncaster.

One major improvement will be that, when a member's record is first opened, all of the important information about that member will be on the screen straight away and it won't be necessary to search for information such as membership number, employer or workplace.

Other information will be easily found a click or two away.

This will enable RMT staff to respond more quickly to membership enquiries.

Project Manager Peter Waters says that he is extremely

pleased with the way everything is coming together.

"As with any project of this kind, there have been problems and issues but, so far, these have been resolved to everyone's satisfaction," he says.

Peter demonstrated the new system to a recent meeting of the Council of Executives and full-time officers. He felt they were suitably impressed by it.

He says that he wants to raise the project's profile from now on so that members, activists, officials and staff are fully aware of what is happening before the system goes live. "If you visit Unity House, you will see a display of the project in the reception area," says. ■

LETTERS

Dear editor,

On the way to work, around 15 months ago, I was involved in a car accident through no fault of my own that wrote off my car and I sustained neck, leg and wrist injuries. I was off work for two weeks.

I contacted RMT and I was put in touch with Thompsons solicitors. I must say they have been very professional, keeping me updated and fully informed throughout my claim for compensation, which I have just received.

I would like to thank the union for which I have been a member for over 10 years for the help and professional service I received. I would like to thank Thompsons for the way they pushed for my injury compensation. It is highly appreciated, many thanks again and keep up the hard work.

Best wishes,
Mike Turner

Dear Sir,

Regarding the article 'Dying for a rest' in last month's RMT News, I applaud everything Pete Gale said and I am pleased that at last somebody has spelt out the daily problems of bus and coach drivers.

I know Pete and I worked at the same company for a couple of years and observed a man who worked tirelessly for his members, who did not always appreciate it.

I have not seen a better union representative. Therefore, more importance and authority has been added to this article for me and I am grateful that Pete is working full time at the union, for perhaps through him we might enjoy a higher profile within the union.

I am a National Express driver working for Bournemouth Transport, which is part of Transdev. We are about to start negotiations with the management over the annual wage review.

When I tell you that we are at present on £7 per hour you will see the urgency of a considerable increase because we neither compete with other National Express drivers or with local bus companies.

Can I ask you to give our shop steward Adam Lavin as much support as you can. He is a good man but everybody, whoever they are, can always do with a helping hand. Thank you.

Brian Harris - Annharris979@aol.com

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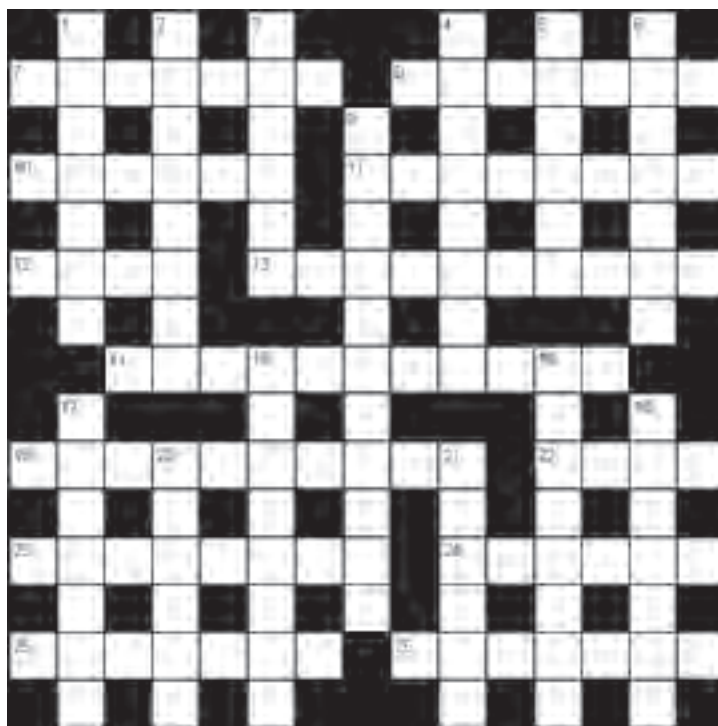
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RMT £25 PRIZE CROSSWORD

No. 35. Set by Elk



Last month's solution...



The winner of prize crossword no. 34 is G Crawshaw of Grantham.

Send entries to Prize Crossword, RMT, Unity House, 39 Chalton Street, London NW1 1JD by May 31 with your name and address.

Winner and solution in next issue.

ACROSS

- 7 Video system eclipsed by VHS (7)
- 8 Berry used to flavour gin (7)
- 10 In advance of (6)
- 11 Tube privateer that spectacularly backed down over transfers (8)
- 12, 24 General secretary of Offshore Industry Liaison Committee (4,6)
- 13 Those unfairly blamed (10)
- 14 Measure of heat (or lack of it) (11)
- 19 Jimi Hendrix, John Williams, Carlos Santana, for instance (10)
- 22 Calf meat (4)
- 23 Boring, tedious (8)
- 24 See 12 (6)
- 25 London Underground line - the red one (7)
- 26 Sporting 'judge' (7)

DOWN

- 1 Military rank (7)
- 2 Petrol, US style (8)
- 3 Bread-makers (6)
- 4 Most distant (8)
- 5 Japanese dressing-gown style garment (6)
- 6 Object kept as a reminder (7)
- 9 Disconcerted; in financial difficulty; blushing (11)
- 15 Relating to individual; private (8)
- 16 Party person (8)
- 17 Devil; match (7)
- 18 Blade fixed to rifle (7)
- 20 Score (6)
- 21 Boil gently (6)

RMT Credit Union

Our Own Savings and Loans Co-operative

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

The Right Balance

CHEAP LOANS

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

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

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

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

SPOUSE

The Credit Union Board has made the decision that spouse are also able to join.

DIVIDEND ON SAVINGS

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



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

Joining Our Credit Union

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

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

ID REQUIREMENTS

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

PROOF OF IDENTITY

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

PROOF OF ADDRESS

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

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

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

Authorised and Regulated By The Financial Services Authority FRN: 228612

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



1 PERSONAL DETAILS.

[illegible]

Employer		RMT Branch															
Job Description																	

4 Membership Status

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

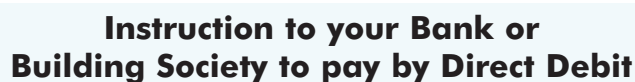
7 Next of Kin

Address

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Your signature		Date				/		/		
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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

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Branch Sort Code

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Originator's Identification Number

9	7	4	2	8	1
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Reference Number

[illegible]

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 _____

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 Paver.

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.

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