

RMT *news*

Essential reading for today's transport worker

WHY WE WORK



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www.rmt.org.uk

NATIONAL UNION OF RAIL, MARITIME & TRANSPORT WORKERS

Unity House, 39 Chalton Street, London NW1 1JD



APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP – please complete your application along with either the attached Direct Debit or a separate paybill mandate form.

Please use **BLOCK CAPITALS** and **black ink**. * Information that must be provided.

BRANCH NUMBER

1 PERSONAL DETAILS.

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

2 Your Employment.

Employer*		Location	
Job Description*		Part Time	YES ☐ NO ☐

3 Sex.

Male ☐ Female ☐

4 Ethnic Origin.

White ☐ Black African ☐ Black Caribbean ☐ Black Other ☐
Pakistani ☐ Indian ☐ Chinese ☐ Bangladeshi ☐ Irish ☐ Other (please state)

5 How do you wish to pay.

Direct Debit (you must complete form below) ☐ Paybill Deduction (complete separate form) ☐ Your Pay Number
I confirm my paybill mandate has been sent to my pay office. ☐
Phone Freephone 0800 376 3706 to confirm your company offers paybill facility.

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

Your signature Date



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



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

Name and full postal address of your Bank or Building Society

To: The Manager	Bank/Building Society
Address	
Postcode	

Name(s) of Account Holder(s)

Bank/Building Society account number

Branch Sort Code

Normally your payments are made once a month to RMT.
If you prefer to pay 4 weekly instead please tick ☐

Originator's Identification Number

Reference Number

Your National Insurance Number

FOR RMT OFFICIAL USE ONLY

This is not part of the instruction to your Bank or Building Society.

Instructions to your Bank or Building Society.

Please pay RMT 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, if so, details will be passed electronically to my Bank/Building Society.

Signature(s)

Date

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

This guarantee should be detached and retained by the Payer.

The Direct Debit Guarantee



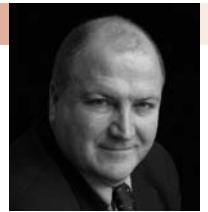
- This guarantee is offered by all Banks and Building Societies that take part in the Direct Debit Scheme. The efficiency and security of the scheme is monitored and protected by your own Bank or Building Society.
- If the amounts to be paid or the payment date changes, RMT will notify you 10 working 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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EDITORIAL

WHY WE GO TO WORK



Pay is always on the agenda and so it should be. It is the reason we go to work.

The subject is even more important when the cost of living rises but wages do not rise with it. You don't have to be an economist to work out that workers are experiencing this today.

Average household debt in the UK – excluding mortgages – is close to £10,000. More than half of that is generally on expensive high interest credit cards and unsecured loans.

RMT understands the impact this has on members and it is important we stand together and build a strong presence in the workplace to resist attempts by employers to impose lower wages.

This process is clear in the privatised transport sector where private operators will exploit any loophole and put the squeeze on pay wherever they can to extract more profits.

This is the main reason why the recent re-shuffle of rail franchises will not solve the structural problems blighting Britain's railway network.

The continued failure of rail franchising stands in stark contrast to the improvements in track maintenance made by Network Rail as a not-for-dividend company, effectively in the public sector.

It has delivered real improvements in efficiency and safety since maintenance was taken back in-house and this success story should be extended to passenger operations.

This approach would also give a much-needed boost to the privatised bus industry.

The Local Transport Bill is welcome, as far as it goes. Giving local authorities a bigger role in shaping bus provision and greater control over timetables and fares are positive steps towards encouraging bus use.

But the fact remains that private bus operators are bleeding huge sums out of the industry, and they are not averse to blackmailing local authorities into parting with even more subsidy on pain of losing lifeline routes.

The union has also challenged Transport for London to deny that it

intends to remove guards from busy North and West London lines before the 2012 Olympics.

Privateer consortium MTR-Laing, which took over the franchise from National Express in November, was invited to bid on the basis of operating driver-only operated trains on the lines from December 2011.

The expanded London Rail franchise is intended to include the privatised operations of the East London Line when it re-opens after extension in 2010 – the first-ever privatisation of a London Underground line.

It was a real pleasure for RMT to welcome maritime trade unionists from around the world at Unity House recently to common problems. Discussions were held on campaigns to defend and improve maritime safety standards, skills, pay and conditions, and to resist social dumping and counter the threat posed by flags of convenience.

The lack of action from the TUC to implement Congress policy and demand a referendum on the renamed EU Constitution is disappointing.

That is why members are being urged to write to their MPs to demand the referendum which the Labour government promised two years ago. Labour and Lib Dem MPs in marginal constituencies should understand that if this promise – which both parties backed in the 2005 election – is not kept they will lose their seats.

This will be the last RMT News before Christmas. This is a time to enjoy yourselves but also to remember those that are less fortunate around the world. This union stands for peace not war and for the abolition of hunger.

I'd like to wish everyone an enjoyable and well-earned break over the festive period and a Happy New Year.

Best wishes

Bob Crow

WHY I JOINED RMT

Name: Kevin Jackson Job: London Underground train operator



I joined RMT seven years ago whilst training for a CSA's job at King's Cross and I have not regretted it since.

The reason I joined was because I felt then, as I do now, that RMT was the largest and most influential union on London Underground, representing each member equally, regardless of their grade, job or employer.

I also feel that it's the only union that actively opposes PPP, scrapping of the Section 12 fire safety regulations, Ticket Office closures and other issues which directly or indirectly affects us all on the Underground. ■

UNIONS WIN RE-INSTATEMENT FOR WEXFORD EIGHT

RMT has won re-instatement for eight seafaring members employed by Stena Europe, Fishguard.

The eight were dismissed by the company on charges of failing to join the ship and failure to take a breathalyzer test.

Both charges were strenuously denied and members maintained that they were merely exercising what they believed was their right to be accompanied by a trade union official.

Following an appeal hearing against the sackings and a ballot for industrial action it was agreed that certain policies needed to be revised and the eight were re-instated.

RMT national officer Steve Todd said that this positive outcome was only brought about due to the perseverance of the union at local and national level. ■

WELDERS SEEK JUSTICE

Former Jarvis rail maintenance welders have been in dispute with Network Rail since May this year over the company's refusal to honour a commitment made by Jarvis to pay higher rates for additional skills.

Jarvis agreed to settle the long-running dispute before the workers from Liverpool, Crewe and North Wales were brought back in-house by Network Rail.

The welders have been working to rule for a number of weeks after waiting seven years for the issue to be

resolved.

However, the company has done nothing to reach a settlement while safety critical work may be compromised.

Recently, welders from Sheffield and Doncaster have balloted for the same action and workers from Grimsby, Newcastle, Barnaby and Lincoln have shown interest in the escalating dispute.

Welder Dave Edwards said that Network Rail had verbally agreed to continue the talks held with Jarvis.

"When we tuped over to Network Rail our fellow workers in ultrasonics who had the same representation as us received their pay increase, but Network Rail then reneged on there verbal agreement," he said.

Assistant general secretary Mick Cash called on the company to pay the money due to welders.

"There is a clear moral case for rewarding these workers for the skills they have and it is time to do the right thing and move on," he said. ■

RECOGNITION DEAL AT GNER

RMT has finally secured formal recognition for all Customer Service Manager grades employed by GNER.

This follows RMT reaching agreement with GNER to incorporate Level 3 CSMs into the collective bargaining arrangements.

Prior to this agreement,

Level 3s had no collective negotiating rights and were part of the management "consultative" set up.

However, before entering into a formal agreement, management wanted to ensure that RMT representation had the support of the Level 3 CSM staff themselves and proposed

a referendum ballot to establish this.

Of the 74 members of staff concerned no less than 66 of them were already RMT members. Therefore came as no surprise that the vote was 45 in favour of collective bargaining by RMT with only one vote against. ■

GRAND CENTRAL RECOGNITION

RMT along with the other rail unions successfully negotiated a recognition agreement with Grand Central Railways.

Grand Central Railways was given the go ahead earlier this year to run services on the East Coast Mainline that would "compete" with GNER.

Grand Central is not a full train operating company but is operating under EU rules which demand 'open access' to rail routes.

It remains uncertain when

the new services will actually start but the company has acquired and tested sufficient quantities of rolling stock that could be operating "quite soon".

Grand Central will operate on the Durham Coast route, serving Sunderland, Hartlepool, Eaglescliffe and Thirsk and will have direct trains to London as well as direct links to York.

General secretary Bob Crow placed on record the union's appreciation of the efforts made by RMT's negotiating team. ■

HEATHROW EXPRESS AND RMT SIGN RECOGNITION AGREEMENT



Heathrow Express, the non-stop rail service between London Paddington and Heathrow Airport, and RMT have signed a trade union recognition agreement.

The agreement recognises RMT for consultation and negotiation.

RMT general secretary Bob Crow said that the agreement marked a huge and positive step forward.

"This allows us to get on with the business of negotiating on behalf of RMT's growing membership at Heathrow Express.

"I would like to place on record my thanks to all those who have helped in getting us where we are today, not least our Heathrow Express members themselves," he said.

Managing Director of Heathrow Express Brian Raven said that the decision to recognise RMT ensured the integrity of the company's union representation process.

"As a growing number of Heathrow Express employees are RMT members, this demonstrates our commitment to ensuring appropriate representation," he said. ■



NO TO BLACKLISTING

RMT and the Offshore Industry Liaison Committee (DILC) have launched a name and shame campaign to fight the blacklisting of workers by oil and gas operators.

The practice of NRB (Not Required Back) is used by employers to claim a worker is no longer able to work on an operator's installations but no reason is given to the contractors.

OILC general secretary Jake Molloy said that that practice was carried out with impunity as workers has virtually no means to challenge the actions of the operator.

"The contracts between operators and contractors

always include a clause allowing the operator to deny anyone access to their installations and for any reason," he said.

He said that contract workers had lived in fear of this practice for over thirty years.

The two unions want this practice ended, particularly where the action is related to workers questioning health and safety matters.

Both union accept stringent safety levels are required and unsafe personnel should be dealt with but NRB is "arbitrary, unaccountable and an opaque application of industrial relations gangsterism". ■



NOW BRING TUBELINES BACK IN-HOUSE

RMT has welcomed the news that Transport for London is the only formal bidder for failed Tube privateer Metronet and called for the Tubelines' contracts to also be brought back into the public sector.

The union also warned that it would be "unthinkable" to farm out any train maintenance to Bombardier, one of the privateer corporations responsible for the Metronet debacle.

RMT general secretary Bob Crow said that it was a relief that the administrator had abandoned attempts to prop up Metronet and pretend that there was some commercial life left in it.

"We hope that we can start drawing a line under the

disastrous PPP," he said.

As a result two-thirds of London Underground's infrastructure work will be coming back under public control.

However, a third of the network's infrastructure remains in the hands of Tubelines, whose sole reason for existence is to take as much money as possible out of the industry.

"We campaigned against the PPP from the start, and we will continue to campaign for a return of all Tube infrastructure work to the public sector and for TfL to reverse its wrong-headed decision to privatise the operations of the East London Line," Bob said. ■



Demonstrate

NO PRIVATISATION OF THE EAST LONDON LINE

Thursday December 13 @ 11.00 am

Outside City Hall

Nearest Tube station - London Bridge

Bring banners

CompanyWatch

STAGECOACH BONANZA

Bus and train operator Stagecoach expects to report annual profits ahead of expectations due to “stronger than anticipated revenue growth”.

One of the reasons that Stagecoach is enjoying such a bonanza is the fact that one of its interests South West Trains, Britain's busiest commuter rail routes, hiked up off-peak fares by up to 20 per cent back in the spring.

South West Trains (SWT), which promised the government £1.19 billion over 10 years in return for retaining its franchise, began charging the higher prices for those who travel into London Waterloo just outside the morning rush-hour.

First-class fares also increased by between 15 and 20 per cent and the rises come on top of increases of up to 5.3 per cent.

SWT also profited from this summer's flooding by telling its staff to sell more expensive tickets to passengers forced to take diversions to avoid inundated lines.

After incensing passengers by raising some fares by 20 per cent in May, SWT instructed guards and ticket office staff not to sell cheaper long-distance tickets via Oxford.



BONANZA: Stagecoach shareholders enjoy bonanza while passengers and staff feel the pinch

A standard open return ticket from Basingstoke to Manchester via Oxford costs £115. Another route is via London but that ticket costs £262. Nice work if you can get it.

As a result of this profiteering Stagecoach rail operations saw revenues grow by 15.7 per cent up in the 24 weeks to October 24 while bus operations climbed by 7.9 per cent, while in North America the transport group's revenues were up 4.2 per cent in the five months to September 30.

Earlier this year Brian Souter, the chief executive of Stagecoach and his sister Ann Gloag collected £168 million after the group decided to up its capital return to shareholders by

75 per cent.

In a trading update the company said strong results reflected a growing demand for public transport and Stagecoach's continued focus on “product innovation”.

That's one way of putting it.

Stagecoach admitted the growth could be partially attributed to the introduction of ‘revenue-enhancing initiatives’ by its South West Trains franchise.

“Some of these initiatives have been introduced earlier than had been assumed in the original franchise bid and the exceptionally good revenue growth in the UK rail division in the period partly reflects the

benefits of this,” Stagecoach stressed.

The group revealed that like-for-like revenues for its Virgin Rail joint venture, which operates the West Coast and CrossCountry train franchises, also increased by 11.6 per cent over the same period.

The reality for passengers is, of course, overcrowding and year-on-year over-inflation fare rises, while staff that have to face angry commuters every day.

Stagecoach will announce its interim results for the six months to October 31 on December 5 and it is likely to be more good news for shareholders while more people take to their cars. ■

IT'S EASY TO JOIN YOUR CREDIT UNION

RMT members can now join the Union's Credit Union with even less fuss by simply filling in the form.

Previously members had to produce two forms of identity and send them through the post.

As a result of the introduction of a new system you simply complete the form provided.

Credit Union administrator Nicola Hoarau said that under government legislation regarding money laundering the union had to check your identity and address but we can now do this electronically so you do not

have to send any documents with your application.

“These are not credit checks.”

“If you do not want the Credit Union to check your details by this method you can still produce two forms of ID,” she said.

Credit Union members can now make your payments on a calendar monthly basis (28th of each month) or on a four-weekly basis which ties in with the pay cycles of many transport workers.

The choice is yours so just indicate on the form.

The Credit Union takes regular payments

by Direct Debit although one-off additional or missed payments can be made by cheque. Members must make savings payments of at least £5 per month/four-weekly.

The Credit Union AGM takes place on December 10 at Unity house and is open to all share holders.

If you wish to join complete the application at the back of this magazine and return it to the RMT Credit Union at Unity House. ■

For further information: Tel: 020 7529 8835 or email: c.union@rmt.org.uk

FOR TRADE UNION FRE

Hundreds of trade unionists from across Britain converged on parliament last month to call for support for fair trade-union laws that allow workers the freedom to fight inequality and poverty.

Protesters were joined by MPs and union leaders calling for support for the Trade Union Rights and Freedom Bill, which would remove some of the most punitive restrictions imposed by anti-union laws.

The bill, introduced by John McDonnell MP, was scheduled to have its second reading the next day but a Tory MP deliberately filibustered, or talking out Parliament's time, so that the Bill could not be debated.

In spite of the lack of progress in the Commons, the bill has not gone away and indeed over 131 MPs have signed Early Day Motion 532 on the issue.

The demonstration, called by the United Campaign to Repeal

the Anti-Union Laws, was followed by a rally in the House of Commons.

"This bill offered the ideal opportunity to re-establish basic civil liberties for trade unionists in this country," John McDonnell said.

STUC president Phil McGarry said: "If we have a government that is listening and learning it should acknowledge the growing support for a bill that will right some of the massive wrongs that have undermined collective bargaining".

Leading labour lawyer John Hendy QC said that nine waves of anti-union laws, all opposed by Labour in opposition, have "left working people having to jump through hoops to take industrial action at all".

The United Campaign will continue to campaign for the Trade Union Freedom Bill and will be producing a newsletter and details of forthcoming events in the near future. ■



DEMAND A REFEREN

RMT members have been urged to write to their MPs to demand a referendum on the rejected EU Constitution which was resurrected last month as the so-called Treaty of Lisbon.

While EU leaders toasted their deal, around a quarter of a million trade unionists were marching outside the summit against this "neo-liberal" treaty in the biggest demonstration in Lisbon in 20 years.

RMT general secretary Bob Crow said that the Labour government promised a referendum two years ago and it was time to keep that promise.

The government has claimed that the new treaty was different. However, the Labour-dominated House of Commons Scrutiny Committee recently came to the conclusion that the new treaty is

"substantially equivalent to the Constitutional Treaty".

The treaty will abolish over 50 areas of national veto, including transport, and give Brussels and its European Court of Justice huge legal and economic powers over all member states.

The author of the Constitution Valéry Giscard d'Estaing confirmed that the new treaty was "a catalogue of amendments" designed to be "impenetrable for the public".

He said that the tiny changes to the original constitution were made to "head off any threat of referenda".

Trade Unionists Against the EU Constitution has produced a pamphlet outlining the contents of the treaty which is available from Unity House or from info@tuaeuc.org ■



REFERENDUM: Members of RMT's South East regional council hand out TUAEC pamphlets to TUC delegates

Parliamentary column

EEDOM



NDUM



WE WANT A REFERENDUM

I am very disappointed that the government has not tackled the deficiencies in the new national boatmasters' license regime brought about by EU rules.

These moves have changed the system that has maintained strict qualifying standards on watermen and lightermen since the 1989 Marchioness disaster.

This means that we are caving in to the lower standards specified in the EU directive that seeks to harmonise licenses across the EU at a weaker, more dangerous level. From now on, boatmasters operating in my constituency will only have to be in training for two years instead of five.

The specific local knowledge for the unique operating environment of the River Thames has been downgraded from two years to six months.

This failure in maintaining control over our own laws shows the importance of keeping jurisdiction over such vital matters.

The EU Constitution has been brought back from the grave as the so-called "Reform Treaty".

This treaty threatens to take away our power to veto the EU in 60 new areas – everything from transport to energy policy to employment policy to public services like health and education. Even sport is included. This means the UK could be outvoted on important issues which directly affect our citizens.

I believe it is essential that the public should get a vote on such an important document which will sweep powers away from our elected representatives and place them in the hands of Eurocrats who cannot be removed democratically.

At the last general election, the Labour manifesto promised to give the British people a referendum on the treaty. I was proud of that promise, and it is one that I take seriously.

Now my government, all of whom were elected on that same promise, are trying to backtrack, claiming that what we have before us is a new treaty. The old treaty fell when it was democratically rejected by the French and the

Dutch.

Across Europe, the leaders of all the countries who signed up to this treaty recognise that it is almost identical to the old, rejected one.

The author of the constitution, former French President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing has admitted "All the earlier proposals will be in the new text but hidden and disguised in some way". Yet still Gordon Brown says there is no need for a vote.

Although the Prime Minister speaks of having achieved "red lines" to protect the national interest, these are effectively a distraction.

They are essentially the same 'red' lines the Government painted in 2004 when they promised a referendum in the first place. They are limited, and if we dare to use them, the EU will impose charges on us!

We need a constructive debate on our relationship with the EU. The public are tired of the massive bureaucracy gradually encroaching on everything we do.

The bureaucrats of Brussels must not be allowed to dictate to us. The views of the British public should not be by-passed by some re-drafting of the Constitution. I called for a referendum on the Maastricht Treaty when the Conservatives were in power in 1992, and it is just as important to have one now.

The Prime Minister has already made welcome U-turns on super-casinos, 24-hour drinking and the re-classification of cannabis – those were tough decisions, but they were the right decisions to take.

He must understand that the people of the United Kingdom overwhelmingly want to see him make the right decision here.

My postbag has been full of messages from my constituents in Vauxhall. They want him to keep his word and let them have a say. Make sure that you contact your MP and urge them to support a democratic vote.

Kate Hoey

PAY... IT'S WHAT WE GO TO WORK FOR

We all want job satisfaction. But the bottom line is that whether we have found the perfect job, or we're still hoping to find it, the reason we go to work is to get paid. And what we get paid should reflect the work we put in. Above all we should expect a fair day's pay for a fair day's work.

If, like millions of British workers, you are short of cash by the third week in the month, if you'd need to take out a loan to cover a financial emergency such as a boiler or car repair, then no doubt you could do with more pay.



DEBT

Average household debt in the UK – excluding mortgages – is £8681.

More than half of that is generally on high interest credit cards, car and finance deals and unsecured personal loans meaning that people will pay back a lot more than they borrowed.

In the 12 months up to September 2007 more than a million householders used credit cards to pay their mortgage or rent according to the housing charity Shelter.

This is hardly surprising when property prices have risen much faster than wages and people are forced to take out huge mortgages to get on the housing ladder.

HOUSING

The average cost of a home in England and Wales rose by 9.4 per cent to £182,914 in the twelve months from September 2006 to August 2007.

According to the Council of Mortgage Lenders people are taking on record amounts of debt in order to get onto the property ladder. First-time buyers are now borrowing an average of £119,000 at a typical loan-to-income multiple of 3.39. This is the highest recorded multiple since 1974.

The large amounts of debt are particularly worrying when the trend is for interest rates – and therefore mortgage repayments – to rise. Since July 2003, when the Bank of England's rate stood at 3.5 per

cent, there have been eleven 0.25 per cent rate rises and only one 0.25 per cent decrease. The official Bank rate now stands at 5.75 per cent.

Rent is also going up as the cost of property is increasingly out of reach. According to statistics from the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS), rental growth has reached record levels in 2007, and surveyors predict that this trend will continue.

With no choice but to take out big mortgages, people's finances become highly vulnerable to interest rate rises or a collapse in the property market. We saw where this leads in the early 1990s when tens of thousands of people found themselves in negative equity – having mortgages on their

property that cost more than their home was worth – after the housing market collapsed.

Many analysts believe that the rise of property prices cannot continue and that the bubble will burst.

It's already happened in the United States where rises in interest rates have caused a mortgage crisis in the last year, where an estimated 1.5 million householders faced losing their homes during 2007.

For nearly all of us our mortgage or rent payment is our biggest monthly outgoing. But it isn't the only thing that has far outstripped pay increases.

We go to work to get paid and a fair day's pay should at least keep up with the cost of living. ■

THE TRUE COST OF LIVING - DO YOUR WAGES COVER IT?

ONE WAGE FOR THEM...

- For every £1 a worker earns, a director earns £98.
- Directors of Britain's top companies saw their pay soar 37 per cent last year, unlike many of their employees who had to settle for rises of around three per cent.
- Chief executives were awarded an average of £2,875,000 last year.
- Earnings for the chief executives of the FTSE 250 firms have increased by 90 per cent since 2001-2 to an average of £1.4 million each.
- This year has seen the fastest growth in company profits for more than 12 years.
- In 2006 Network Rail paid its top four executive directors total bonuses of more than £1.1 million, taking their combined pay, including pension contributions, to more than £3.3 million.

AND ANOTHER FOR US...

- Britons work the longest hours in Europe, clocking up unpaid overtime worth billions of pounds.
- Workers put in £23 billion of unpaid overtime last year, losing out on an average of £4,800 each.

- People working for nothing did an average of seven hours and six minutes extra work every week.
- UK workers do the longest hours in Europe, with four million working more than 48 hours a week on average, 700,000 more than in 1992, before the working time directive was supposed to place legal restrictions on working hours.
- For all this work the average weekly wage is £561.50 or £29,198 a year.

'EVERY ASPECT OF DAILY LIVING NOW ASKS MORE AND MORE OF WORKERS WAGES...'

YOUR HOUSE

- The average council tax bill in Britain has increased by 91 per cent over the past decade.
- The average council tax per dwelling in Britain is £1,078 compared to £564 in 1997-98.
- The price paid for all fuel and light by household consumers rose by an inflation busting 22.9 per cent in the last year.

- Household water and sewerage bills in England and Wales are to rise by an average of 7 per cent in 2007-08 by around £20 to £312.
- At 5.75 per cent interest rates are now the highest they have been in six years. Each 0.25 per cent interest rate increase adds more than £15 to a monthly repayment on a £100,000 mortgage.

YOUR FOOD

- Food price rises have far outstripped inflation this year. Milk has gone up 11 per cent, eggs have gone up almost 18 per cent, butter has gone up 5 per cent and meat 6 per cent.
- We are encouraged to eat more fresh fruit and vegetables. But can you afford to? The cost of fruit has risen by 6.6 per cent and vegetables by 7.7 per cent in the last year.

YOUR DEBTS

- Our parents were used to saving money but debt has become an essential part of life for most families. Average household debt in the UK – excluding mortgages – is now £8,681.

- A 30 year old worker now needs to save £200 per month to ensure a pension of £628 if they retire at 65.

YOUR KIDS

- Average costs for a full-time nursery place for a child under two are £152 and can cost as much as £200 a week per child. This means many parents spend a third of their wages in childcare.
- A worker with a child ages 10 would need to put away £6 per week in order to provide £3,000 towards their child's education at 18.
- The full costs of attending university for three years is currently over £30,000

YOUR TRAVEL

- Train fares have gone up by 4.7 per cent
- The cost of running a car is now £5,500 per year or £106 per week.

YOUR HEALTH

- A prescription now costs £6.65 per item
- An NHS eye test is now £18.85
- The average pair of glasses now costs £160

TRANSPORT COMPA

Private transport operators profit from £1.3 billion in unpaid tax using a deferred-tax loophole

The private rail industry is profiteering on £1.3 billion in unpaid tax and is using a deferred-tax loophole intended to encourage investment to fund massive increases in dividend payouts to shareholders.

Nearly half of the £1.5 billion in dividends paid out in the last five years by nine private train and bus operators and rolling-stock companies has been funded by unpaid tax, according to a detailed analysis for RMT, Tax paid by Railway Companies, by tax expert Richard Murphy* of Tax Research.

The companies whose accounts are analysed in the report are: First Group PLC, Go-Ahead Group PLC, Stagecoach Group PLC, Arriva PLC, National Express Group PLC, Virgin Rail Group PLC, Porterbrook Leasing Company Limited, HSBC Rail (UK) Limited and Angel Trains Limited.

Almost £1.3 billion of deferred tax is owed by the biggest six train-operating companies (TOCs) and the three rolling-stock leasing companies (Roscos) – but this is tax that will most likely never be paid,

and is effectively a hidden subsidy that dramatically increases cash profit levels.

The report shows that the nine companies' declared profits almost doubled from £435 million in 2002 to £810 million in 2006, but their declared tax charges remained almost constant at about £190 million a year throughout the period.

The declared percentage rate fell from 43 per cent in 2002 to 24 per cent in 2006.

SUBSIDY

This though hides the real story. Tax is not paid on accounting profits. The accounts charge for goodwill is not, for example, allowed for tax. And the charge for tax in accounts includes 'deferred tax' – which this survey shows is never likely to be paid, as well as the current tax bill the company expects to settle in cash.

Comparing pre-goodwill profits and current tax charges that will actually be paid shows that these companies' profits

ANIES IN TAX DODGE

rose from £584 million in 2002 to £894 million in 2006, and that the tax they actually paid plummeted to £109 million in 2002 and just £71 million in 2006, at a rate of just 7.9 per cent in that year.

The study also reveals that by 2006 one pound in every three used to fund the private-sector rail operators was represented by deferred tax – which is in effect a tax-free loan from the government, with no repayment date.

“Deferred tax is supposed to be an allowance against investment and amounts to a hidden subsidy for rail firms, but it is being exploited to increase dividends to shareholders,” said report author Richard Murphy.

“Rail companies are hiding behind accounting rules when presenting their figures that let them suggest they’re paying more tax than they are, and that means the massive hidden

subsidy the tax system gives them is not apparent. It should be,” Richard Murphy said.

He pointed out that the companies paid almost £1.5 billion in dividends to shareholders in a five year period and half of this sum was financed by tax not paid.

“What better use could have been made of that tax not paid, in the railway industry or in society at large?

“And why have we allowed the railway industry become a mechanism for financial planning, one of whose primary purposes is to turn unpaid tax into an income stream for shareholders?

It’s certainly no way to run a railway,” Richard Murphy said.

LEGAL?

RMT general secretary Bob Crow made the point that it might be legal “but it shouldn’t be”.

“Passengers are facing a future of massive fare increases and the government is cutting direct subsidy to the rail industry by £1.5 billion over the next six years, yet these private companies are sitting on a tax-break nest-egg worth £1.3 billion,” he said.

Bob said that the money that should be funding railway engineering, but it is being used instead for financial engineering and turning hidden subsidies into pure profits for shareholders.

“At the very least the government should tell these companies to stump up the £1.3 billion they owe in tax and use the money to reverse the planned funding cuts.

“Better still they should face the fact that the private sector’s involvement in the railways is a

barrier that stands in the way of delivering the growing, affordable people’s railway that our economy and environment desperately need,” Bob said.

* Richard Murphy is a chartered accountant and graduate economist. He is director of Tax Research LLP and advises the Tax Justice Network, the Publish What You Pay campaign and many NGOs on tax and development.

A regular radio and TV commentator on tax and corporate accountability, he has also addressed international diplomatic meetings on these issues. He writes a daily blog at www.taxresearch.org.uk/blog ■



INVESTIGATING ACCIDENTS

Next year's RMT Health and Safety Reps Conference will be focussing on accident investigation

Accident investigation will be the main focus for next year's conference which will be held in Doncaster on Thursday February 28 2008.

All Health and Safety representatives are invited to attend and circulars will be sent out later in the year to register for a place.

Speakers will be invited from the Marine Accident Investigation Branch and the Rail Accident Investigation Branch.

There will be space available for stalls which will give candidates the opportunity to further discuss issues raised during the conference with the two investigative bodies.

Branches and regional councils will be invited to submit resolutions to the conference and circular NP/120/07 has been issued in this respect.

This would be an ideal opportunity for Health and Safety reps to meet and

familiarise themselves with the members of the National Health and Safety Advisory Committee as well as networking amongst themselves.

COMMITTEE

The National Health and Safety Advisory Committee was established following a decision at the union's 2003 AGM. The Committee meets quarterly and is responsible for organising the annual National Health and Safety Conference.

Members of the Committee are elected in accordance with Rule 12A and serve a term of three years. A Liaison Advisory Committee comprising three members of the main committee is elected at the previous year's conference with responsibility to oversee Conference organisation.

The work of the Committee depends upon general health and safety resolutions received from Branches and Regional Councils but do not deal with



local or individual issues.

Members aren't meant to be Health and Safety specialists, rather their main role is to provide a link between the Regional Councils, Head Office and Branches. Some of the items that the Committee is currently dealing with include catering trolleys, driving whilst at work and Network Rail's Health and Safety Procedures. The items are discussed at the quarterly meetings and then reported back to the General Grades Committee who will decide on action to be taken.

The Committee also agrees the theme for the annual Health and Safety Conference and has input to the day's agenda.

Last year's theme was 'Welfare – the Poor Relation of Health and Safety' and a number of speakers, including from the Office of Rail

Regulation, were invited to give their view on this often neglected topic.

Delegates agreed that the theme brought up a number of issues that were not given the same importance as safety and a full write up of the conference was sent to branches earlier this year.

In July, the committee met at RMT's training centre at Doncaster to discuss the union's current workplace violence campaign and to fine tune the role of the members.

It also looked at the proposals for new industry specific Health and Safety training courses that RMT will be running in-house at Doncaster.

These courses aren't meant to take the place of TUC courses but will enhance the training that reps receive. ■

RMT HEALTH AND SAFETY ADVISORY CONFERENCE

At the Catholic Club,
Waterdale Doncaster
Thursday February 28
2008, 10am

All safety representatives are invited to attend, please seek nomination via your branch. Resolutions are to be submitted through Branches and Regional Councils.

The theme of this conference will be Accident and Investigation. Speakers are invited from the Rail Accident Investigation Branch and the Maritime Accident Investigation Branch..

DON'T SET YOURSELF UP FOR A FALL

The transport industry continues to have one of the worst records for major injuries due to falls from vehicles during the loading and unloading of goods.

Figures released by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) in 2004/05 showed that transport accounted for 31 per cent of all workplace fatalities.

With an estimated three million people working with vehicles as part of their normal job, HSE's ongoing workplace transport campaign warns workers to take sensible precautions to minimise risks in all vehicle related work. The latest focus is to ensure they do not set themselves up for a fall.

Every year 2000 workers are seriously injured after falling from their vehicle. Last year four workers actually lost their lives after falling from their lorry.

Simple sensible precautions can avoid these incidents and the distress they cause.

The HSE awareness campaign aims to help those who are responsible for buying and managing workplace vehicles with simple steps that can be taken to improve the safety of vehicles:

- Vehicles should be well maintained and checked regularly
- Procedures for loading and unloading should avoid the

need to work at height where possible

- Floor surfaces should be anti-slip when possible, or, slip-resistant footwear provided
- If work at height is unavoidable steps, platforms and other safety equipment should be provided ■

Extensive guidance and advice, including safety checklists, is available to vehicle buyers, managers and workers at an interactive falls from vehicle homepage:

*<http://www.hse.gov.uk/fallsfromvehicles/index.htm>
Single copies of the CD Rom version of campaign materials are available from HSE Books using stock code MISC748a from:
<http://www.hsebooks.com/Books/default.asp>*

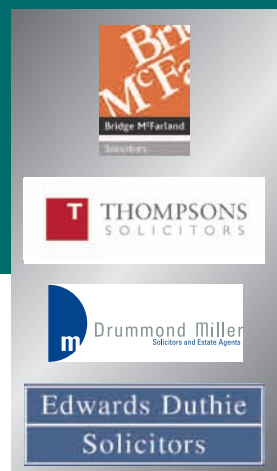
RMT STANDS UP FOR ITS MEMBERS

If you have suffered an avoidable injury or illness, our team of expert lawyers can help you

The law says you're entitled to compensation for illnesses or injuries caused by the negligence of others. And because the RMT only uses expert personal injury lawyers, you can be sure of a service that is second to none.

Contact us now for fast and efficient advice – even for your family members.

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



PROTECTING AND PROMOTING OUR MEMBERS' INTERESTS





FINES POOL



CAN YOU AFFORD NOT TO JOIN – £5,000 WAS PAID OUT LAST YEAR

FACT Mr Brown and Mr Green both drive the firms company vehicles as part of their job.

FACT Both Mr Brown and Mr Green were caught speeding and each fined £200.

FACT Mr Brown could not afford to pay and borrowed the money, which he is paying back at high interest. Mr Green was a member of the Fines Pool, **it cost him £5**. Do not not leave yourself in a position of wondering how to pay.

If you drive a company vehicle as part of your job and are an RMT member, then you can join the Fines Pool. The fines pool will reimburse members for fines committed under the Road Traffic Act during the course of their employment (with the exception of offences involving drink or drugs, parking fines, smoking, mobile phones & seat belt offences, or violations of the Driving Hours Regulations), court costs, lost time to attend court hearing concerning an incident under the Road Traffic Act during the course of their employment.

In order to receive a direct debit form to join the fines pool, please complete the pro-forma below and send to: **Unity House, 39 Chalton Street, London NW1 2PQ**

Name

Address

Branch

Member No or National Insurance No

RMT HEAD OFFICE FINES POOL

As of January 1 2008, the existing Fines Pool will be administered from Unity House and will be open to more members

If you drive a company vehicle as part of your job and are an RMT member, then you can join the Fines Pool.

The fund will reimburse members for fines committed under the Road Traffic Act during the course of their employment (with the exception of offences involving drink or drugs, smoking, parking fines, or violations of the Driving Hours Regulations), court costs, lost time to attend court hearing concerning an incident under the Road Traffic Act during the course of their employment.

To join the Fines Pool, either contact your branch secretary and ask for an application form, or contact Head Office on 020 7529 8291, or look on the RMT website for further details.

Another rail runaway

RMT demands urgent action after the twelfth rail runaway since Tebay tragedy

RMT has demanded urgent action to stop the continuing stream of runaways on Britain's railways after another road-rail vehicle ran out of control for seven miles between Brentwood and Romford in Essex on the morning of Sunday November 4.

RMT understands that the incident, involving a privately-owned and operated road-rail vehicle, would not have been possible had modifications, required under an improvement notice issued by the railways inspectorate last year, already been carried out on it.

NO ACTION

However, the improvement notice gave Network Rail until the end of 2007 to implement changes and allowed contractors to continue operating unmodified vehicles. RMT understands that the vehicle involved in Sunday was due for modification next week.

The Romford incident brings to 12 the number of runaways recorded since four rail workers were killed by a runaway trailer at Tebay in Cumbria on February 15, 2004.

"Every one of these runaways is a potential killer and every one of them is preventable, but the industry has so far failed to protect track workers," RMT general secretary Bob Crow said.

"There could have been 12 more Tebays since our four members were killed in Cumbria in February 2004, and that is unacceptable," he said.

The union was promised urgent action after two runaways in Stockport in August 2004, but it took the inspectorate another two years to issue an improvement notice, and even then they gave Network Rail a year to do something.

It is only since the latest incident that NR has finally suspended the use of the type of vehicle involved at Romford.

RMT argues that action is required now to protect track workers, but the union is still waiting for a meeting with Network Rail to discuss the possibility of secondary protection.

The common thread linking all of the runaways is that not one of the vehicles is owned or operated by Network Rail itself.

"It is only when Network Rail takes proper control of the assets and skills needed for renewals that we can begin to ensure that these vehicles are in working order and operated safely.

"Network Rail has already made its maintenance safer and more efficient by bringing it back in-house, and they now need to complete the job and bring renewals back in-house too," Bob Crow said.

The fatal runaway incident at Tebay, Cumbria, took place on February 15 2004, killing four and injuring three. The incidents listed below are those recorded since.

1	May 2004	RRV	Sheildmuir
2	August 2004	RRV	Stockport
3	August 2004	RRV	Stockport
4	November 2004	RRV	Aylesford
5	August 2005	Loco	Blake Street (Lichfield)
6	November 2005	Trolley	Larkhall
7	August 2006	Loco	East Didsbury
8	July 2006	Ballast cleaner	Cheddington
9	November 2006	RRV	Copenhagen Tunnel (Kings Cross)
10	December 2006	Multi-purpose veh	Kingswood
11	January 20007	Flat wagon	Armathwaite,
12	November 20007	RRV	Romford,

The Rail Accident Investigation Branch's notice of the Romford incident investigation can be read at:

http://www.raib.gov.uk/publications/current_investigations_register/071104_romford.cfm



SHIPPING NEWS

REMEMBERING FALLEN SEAFARERS

RMT national secretary Steve Todd represented the union at the annual remembrance service at the Merchant Seamen's War Memorial garden at Tower Hill, London.

He said that it was a privilege to lay the wreath on behalf of those seafaring colleagues who lost their lives in both the First and Second World Wars and, of course, the more recent conflicts such as the Falklands.

"Whilst not glorifying war, it is always a very moving occasion and the numbers of veterans gets fewer every year.

"It's a tribute to those very brave men and women that the service is also attended by the younger generation who are prepared to ensure they are not forgotten," he said.

The Memorial Garden is certainly an education walking

around and reading the names of the ships with the crew lists from captain to cabin boy.

Over 35,000 merchant seamen were lost in World War Two alone, most the victims of U-Boat attacks, with over 5,000 taken prisoner.

It is often forgotten that British merchant ships were on the front line in the struggle against fascism.

However, under British law when a ship was sunk the obligations of the shipowner to pay the crew's wages went with it.

Those fortunate to complete their tough passages received their pay in full.

Those whose ships went down, including the relatives of those killed, would very often only receive wages due up to the day of the sinking. ■



EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES IN AUSTRALIA

Opportunities have arisen for seafaring jobs in Australia's supply vessel industry which is due to expand rapidly in the next couple of years with massive investment in offshore oil and gas exploration.

RMT was first contacted by our very good friends at the Maritime Union of Australia (MUA) earlier this year asking if we could supply RMT members as a number of vacancies were coming up.

Obviously a lot of issues needed ironing out and, following meetings earlier this year with MUA assistant

national secretary Mick Dolman, these opportunities have now become reality.

Mick, along with the Freemantle Branch Secretary Christy Cain, are due to visit London to finalise things and meetings with the employing companies are being arranged.

Amongst the obvious things to sort out are tours of duty, superannuation and work visas (417s as they are referred to) this is obviously different from normal work visas.

Rates of pay will be under the MUA collective bargaining agreement and swings (tours of

duty) will be the same as for Australian colleagues.

The MUA are insisting that you have to be an RMT member and unemployed members will be prioritised. Whilst there is a recognised shortage in Australia at present, RMT must accept that if MUA members become unemployed or available they would obviously take priority. However, indications are that this is highly unlikely.

The jobs available are Integrated Ratings which are similar to GP or IDF so ABs with engine room watch-keeping or Motormen with similar are required.

This is another area that needs to be dealt with through the Australian Certification authorities.

RMT is grateful to the MUA for this initiative and congratulate them for their efforts. The union has a very good relationship with the MUA and work closely with them in the international field and this is a further demonstration of our cooperation and friendship.

Any paid up RMT member that is interested should send their CV to RMT headquarters marked for the attention of Steve Todd National Secretary. ■

SHIPPING NEWS

RMT HOSTS INTERNATIONAL RATINGS' FORUM

Unions from around the world discuss joint work for safety, skills and maritime standards

Maritime trade unionists from more than two dozen countries gathered at the London headquarters of UK ratings' union RMT recently for a session of the International Transport Workers Federation's International Ratings' Forum.

Campaigns to defend and improve maritime safety standards, skills, pay and conditions, and to resist social dumping and counter the threat posed by flags of convenience were on the forum's agenda.

"As Britain's ratings union, we are proud to host this important gathering of the global family of maritime ratings' unions," RMT general secretary Bob Crow said.

"Attacks on maritime

workers' rights, casualisation, erosion of skills and agreements and social dumping are global problems that require a global trade-union response, and the ratings' forum has a key role to play," Bob Crow said.

"Co-operation and solidarity among maritime unions are crucial in countering the increasing attacks our members face around the world," said forum chair Carl Tauson of Swedish union SEKO.

RMT national secretary Steve Todd said that the ratings' forum gave unions the opportunity to discuss common problems globally and to see what could be done collectively to resolve them and to put a stop to the race to the bottom.

CARING FOR ORPHANS OF SEAFARERS

The Royal Liverpool Seamen's Orphan Institution has been looking after the children of seafarer's for 140 years and it is still going

In 1868 a group of Liverpool ship-owners, led by James Beazley, sponsored a project to provide an institution to care for the large numbers of orphaned children of deceased Merseyside seamen.

The sponsors had long been concerned how best to help the families of Merseyside men lost at sea or who had died as a result of an accident or from natural causes.

Records show that in 1866 the number of seamen serving on British Merchant vessels totalled 196,371 and a staggering 4,886 died during that year, 2,390 by drowning.

The overall project was such an outstanding success that in early 1869, the Liverpool Seamen's Orphan Institution came into being and a temporary building in Duke Street Liverpool was commissioned to house the first children.

TODAY

Today there is no longer an orphanage, but still a need.

The work of the Institution continues today from offices in Liverpool to approve grants, consider financial aspects and formulate plans to implement

the purpose of the Institution.

There is a small team who put into practice the decisions taken at the committee meetings and the secretary, Linda Gidman pays regular visits to families throughout the UK to learn of the many educational successes the beneficiaries have achieved.

It has become clear that despite government payments there is a need for the Institution in helping to resolve the fears and anxieties of widows suddenly faced with the daunting task of raising a family without adequate financial resources.

The Royal Liverpool Seamen's Orphan Institution is there to help you with each application considered on its own merit. You have nothing to lose by making that application and we know the children will have everything to gain. ■

*For further information contact;
The Royal Liverpool Seamen's Orphan Institution
3 Ground Floor
Tower Building
22 Water Street
Liverpool
L3 1AB
Telephone: 0151 227 3417
Email: enquiries@rlsoi-uk.org*



ON COURSE AT DONNY

RMT's Education Centre at Doncaster is gearing up for residential courses for members in the new year

As can be seen from the 2008 course programme RMT will be running courses for members from all transport undertakings in the first three months of the year.

Most of the courses are for second stage reps once these have been completed training will then start for newly elected reps that are unable to attend the TUC 10x1 day courses.

There will also be membership courses for the union's branch secretaries, which will help them, understand and use the union's new membership computer system.

Following the successful opening of the new Education Centre at Doncaster in October 2006, staff have been having a busy time with Reps from all over the country attending.

Most of the students have been second stage reps and the feedback has been very positive.

Employers have given paid release and also attended for an afternoon question and answer session, along with the union's full time officer and council of executive member.

The centre will also be piloting a series of one-day health and safety courses in November, which it hopes to rollout to health and safety reps in the later part of 2008, these will be held in the regions and at Doncaster.

It is important to remember that the excellent residential and educational facilities at Doncaster would not be possible without the staff, Barbara the manager, Tony and Rita who have provided all the catering facilities and Jenny and Kate who have kept the centre spotless throughout the year. So get on a course and find out for yourselves. ■

DONCASTER COURSES JANUARY TO APRIL 2008

January 7/11 Arriva Trains Wales five days reps course

January 14/18 Balfour Betty Rail five day reps course

January 21/25 Cal-Mac five day reps course

January 28/February 1 UPS five day reps course

February 4/8 Membership Training

February 11/15 Membership Training

February 18/22 RMT/OILC/NOPEF

February 25/29 First Engineering/Network Rail

February 3 to March 7 First Engineering/Network Rail

March 12/19 Maintenance Work

March 21/24 Bank Holidays

March 25/28 Membership Training (four days only)

March 31/ April 4 First Engineering / Network Rail

April 7/11 First Engineering / Network Rail

April 14/18 Transport for London five day reps course

RMT SECURES DAMAGES FOR NOISE-INDUCED HEARING LOSS

RMT has secured £6,000 compensation for a member in Kent whose hearing was damaged while working at Bombardier Transportation UK Ltd.

William Wilkinson was not supplied with hearing protection until after the damage was done. His claim was handled by RMT law firm Thompsons Solicitors.

Mr Wilkinson, who worked for Bombardier Transportation UK Ltd from 1989 to 2002, secured £6,000 after it emerged that he was not supplied with hearing protection until 2002.

William Wilkinson suffered a deterioration in hearing and has trouble hearing conversations with people.

"I've also been told that my hearing will deteriorate with

time and that in due course I will need the assistance of hearing aids," he said.

RMT general secretary Bob Crow said that members face many hazards in the course of their work but noise is one where simple protective equipment can protect them from injury.

"William Wilkinson is one of many rail workers to suffer hearing loss as a result of the failure of his employer to provide that protection.

"We would urge other members to come forward if they have experienced similar hearing problems as a result of noise at work," he said.

Vincent Reynolds from Thompsons Solicitors warned that noise remained one of the most underestimated workplace



risks.

"It is important that where someone believes that they may have sustained hearing damage at work that they seek legal advice as soon as possible.

He said that members will

only have three years from the date of injury or the date that they knew of the injury to bring a claim.

"Time is, therefore, of the essence," he said. ■

SIGNAL WORKER WINS BACK INJURY COMPENSATION

The union won £50,000 compensation for a signal worker based in the Highlands after he suffered a significant back injury at work.

First Engineering had been carrying out repairs to the signal box in which the member was engaged at work.

As part of the renovations, First Engineering removed the stairs to the signal box.

During the course of her shift the member required to leave the box to issue instructions to a fellow worker. Unfortunately, she had forgotten the stairs had been removed and fell eighteen feet to

the ground suffering a back injury.

The union sued Network Rail for making her work in such an unsafe workplace. The company claimed that the accident was principally the member's fault.

However, prior to a hearing, Network Rail admitted liability and settled the case for £50,000.

Her solicitor, David Wilson of RMT Scottish solicitors Drummond Miller said that it was a "brilliant result" for a very tricky case.

"Not only were there significant concerns on contributory negligence, but the medical position was extremely complex.

"Luckily, the Union was prepared to back the member to the hilt and obtain specialist medical evidence from the country's leading back expert which helped to persuade the Defenders to put a significant offer on the table," he said.

He said that the case is a good example that not all claims lawyers are the same.

"It is very rare for no win no fee lawyers to obtain extra medical evidence such as was obtained in this case.

"Had Mrs F been forced to rely on the original medical evidence she would have received an award of less than £10,000," he said. ■

CAL MAC MEMBER WINS £80,000

The union has won £80,000 compensation for member who suffered a back injury as a result of unloading cargo from a Caledonian Macbrayne Ferry.

The member had been expected to move a barrel weighing 200kg in clear breach

of the Manual Handling Operation Regulations. Whilst liability was never an issue, the company claimed that the member was partly to blame.

Four months after the accident, the member suffered a disc prolapse and the company

denied that the injury was caused by the accident.

Five specialist consultant orthopaedic surgeons were instructed by both sides but the company settled the claim before the hearing.

David Wilson, the Scottish

RMT lawyer, said that Disc prolapse cases were often extremely difficult to win.

"However, thanks to the union we were able to instruct the best experts both on Manual Handling on board ships and medical causation," he said. ■

PRIVATISING RAIL IN EUROPE

Despite the disastrous results of rail privatisation in Britain, the EU is rolling out the same 'liberalisation' model across the bloc

DIKTAT: Empty rails are seen in the main train station of Frankfurt/Main, central Germany during recent strike action as Berlin attempts to privatise the rail network.



After the European Parliament voted to open international EU rail passenger traffic to 'market competition' by 2010, Luca Cordero di Montezemolo – chairman of Ferrari and Fiat – announced plans to launch Europe's first private, high-speed train service.

Taking advantage of the EU's so-called "third rail package" rubberstamped on September 25, Montezemolo and co are set to announce the service called NTV.

Alstom, Siemens and Bombardier are on a shortlist to build the trains, and are scheduled to start running in 2010.

Montezemolo is chairman of Confindustria, the main Italian employers' body and his partners include industrialist Gianni Punzo and Giuseppe Sciarone, former head of passenger services with the state-owned Trenitalia operator.

Sciarone has been the chief executive of Rail Traction Company, Italy's private rail freight operator, founded when the EU 'liberalised' rail freight.

PRIVATE MONOPOLY

These latest EU diktats directly benefit Europe's largest rail interests and assist the development of private rail monopolies, particularly in Germany.

German rail operator Deutsche Bahn (DB) has extended its dominance of the sector buying up rail freight companies in Poland, Slovakia, Netherlands, Denmark, Spain and most recently, English, Welsh, Scottish Railways Ltd with a 75 per cent share of the UK rail freight market. DB is due to be privatised, with an initial public offering of 30 per cent expected this year.

Austria's national railway company (OeBB) also confirmed that it has had discussions with Germany's Deutsche Bahn on the potential for a strategic partnership between the two rail operators.

EU SPIN

The EU spin machine portrayed this major step towards a fully privatised passenger rail market as a 'victory for consumers', claiming new rights for passenger compensation.

However, the small print reveals that such compensation is triggered only if train operators are held responsible for delays, not if they are caused by engineering work, points or signal failures or bad weather.

EU Directive 91/440/EEC, which mandates member states to create a "vertical

split" between train operations and rail infrastructure, means that severe rail disruption, such as swept parts of the UK this summer, would almost certainly not leave rail companies facing compensation claims.

The 'liberalisation' measures in the EU's so-called 'third rail package' also includes common EU rules for train driver certification covering medical fitness and professional skills to facilitate "professional mobility and cross-border services".

CABOTAGE

Train companies that operate over international routes from 2010 will also be able to practise 'cabotage' – meaning to stop and take on passengers in countries they cross.

This latest 'package' amending Directive 91/440/EEC marks the second major step in implementing EU rail privatisation since rail freight was liberalised in 2003. This allowed trans-Europe networks to be opened to competition, followed by international freight and domestic networks from March 31, 2006.

A similar staged 'liberalisation' process is now being applied to passenger rail despite the appalling results in the UK. The European Commission will now report on the next stage of 'liberalising' domestic rail services by 31 December 2012.

This hugely complicated process, proposed by the German MEP Georg Jarzembowski, amounts to little more than the enforced mass privatisation of the entire rail sector across the EU.

OPPOSITION

The European Parliament left group GUE/NGL has opposed the introduction of competition for international rail services, arguing that once again hardline neo-liberal ideology, promoted by corporate lobbyists, had prevailed.

GUE/NGL President Francis Wurtz described the "Jarzembowski report" as a new stage in the politics of "liberalisation at all costs" without serious studies of the effects of 'liberalisation' such as the disastrous experience of rail privatisation in the UK.

He told the European Parliament that such a path was "dangerous for public employment and service and a path subjected to an obsession with competition and the market". However, Jarzembowski,

an MEP from German Chancellor Angela Merkel's right wing CDU, assumed that "national governments are going to apply the new Regulation as soon as possible also for domestic trains. We will be able to do away with the notorious change of train drivers at borders".

It is easy to see why DB bosses would welcome interoperability and a common EU train driver licence. The newspaper Bild am Sonntag has reported that DB is planning to hire foreign train drivers from Austria and Switzerland to break a national rail strike by the GDL drivers' union.

"We plan to hire locomotive drivers from other countries such as Austria and Switzerland to help out," a senior manager told the newspaper.

BUSINESS RAILWAY

The right wing Belgian MEP Dirk Sterckx described the latest agreement as a "serious step" towards a European railway market.

"European railway companies have to organise themselves to face international competition, national administrations will have to act more as regulators instead of financers of national monopolies," he said.

The third rail package is a dramatic escalation of the drive to transform rail services from a social railway towards a rail business with an investment bias towards freight and business travel and away from regional and urban social rail services.

While Brussels may dress 'rail packages' and privatisation up as a matter of consumer rights, competitiveness or 'liberalisation', in fact, it marks a decisive turn by the EU towards consolidation of the neo-liberal project embodied in the Single European Act of 1986 and further developed through the Lisbon Strategy in March 2000.

It is a strategy that is also reflected in the EU Constitution rejected in 2005 and now being undemocratically resurrected. One of the 52 areas where all national vetoes will be abolished, as envisaged in the Constitution, is transport including rail.

The effect of EU rail privatisation will increase downward pressure on jobs and wages in the rail sector and inevitably undermine safety.

For European rail unions a serious strategy to defeat the social dumping which will undoubtedly follow is long overdue.

*Next spring RMT is organising an international conference to discuss these issues. ■

FRENCH RAIL WORKERS' STRIKE FOR PENSION RIGHTS

All eight unions representing France's rail workers have launched massive strike action against the right-wing government's plan to abolish retirement provisions, writes **Jeff Apter in Paris.**

The latest action is even more powerful than the first 24-hour stoppage in October.

National rail traffic and urban transport networks in Paris and cities and towns throughout France have been brought to a standstill.

The seven transport unions at the Paris city transport system (RATP) called the action "unprecedented" as it involved all grades of operational, administrative and managerial staff.

Reiterating their opposition to the plan, they resolved to "organise a longer dispute" if the government did not step back.

Metro, tram, gas, electricity and workers in other industries benefiting from threatened retirement provisions also strongly supported the action.

Hundreds of demonstrations have taken place all over France bringing together over 300,000 people.

Employees in several industries working in dangerous jobs and or having to work

unsocial hours benefit from the longstanding retirement arrangements in place since the end of World War Two.

On the railways, train drivers can retire on full pension at 50 and other rail workers at 55 as long as they have made national insurance contributions for 37.5 years.

The government is seeking to raise the number of years of contributions for a full pension to 41 years by 2012, sparking the country's biggest strike movement for 12 years.

It is President Nicolas Sarkozy's first major confrontation with the trade unions since being elected in May.

In 1995, France was paralysed by a three-week rail union-led stoppage that compelled the then President Jacques Chirac to withdraw similar pensions cuts.

After the latest strike, Minister of Labour Xavier Bertrand offered to meet the unions again but said the government would not change its plans.

CGT trade union federation general secretary Bernard Thibault, formerly general secretary of the CGT rail workers' union who famously led the successful 1995 transport strike, questioned what was the

point of a new meeting if the government planned to make the cuts.

A meeting of all eight unions decided unanimously on a further day of action "in mid-November" if no significant movement from the government is forthcoming.

CGT rail general secretary Didier Le Reste confirmed the unions' continuing anger and hostility to the government's measures.

"More than three-quarters of all rail employees stopped work in the strike – six per cent more than in the spontaneous movement in 1995.

"We are resolved to continue the fight against the government's intention to increase in the number of years of national insurance payments to be able to retire on a full pension and against indexing pensions to price rises rather than to salary increases", he said.

He reiterated the CGT rail union's demand for a round table conference bringing together the government, employers and all unions affected by the cuts.

Seven civil and public servants' unions also held a day of action on November 20 over low pay and job cuts. ■



CONFRONTATION: French President Nicolas Sarkozy confronted by a CGT union representative during a surprise visit in a maintenance site of the national rail operator SNCF in Saint-Denis, north of Paris, following strikes against pension cuts.



STRIKE: Rail workers on strike stand at Munich station, southern Germany demanding higher wages and new contracts. Sign reads "This station is strikebound".

GERMAN RAIL WORKERS STRIKE

Germany is hit by strike action over pay by German rail workers facing privatisation

German train crews launched three days of strike action in November bringing rail fright to a halt in the longest industrial action since 1994.

The latest strike followed 24-hour action in October which brought regional and local rail traffic to a halt in the bitter dispute between Deutsche Bahn (DB) and the GDL rail union in its bid for a 31 per cent salary increase for train crews.

Members of GDL, the smallest of the country's three rail unions has waged successful strike on the German national rail company's regional network and overhead urban rail services.

The union has rejected a pay offer of 9.5 per cent plus a one-off payment of £1,394, but said it was willing to resume talks.

Agreements in Germany are usually struck for all grades in an industry and it is very unusual for separate talks to take place.

In July, the other two unions, Transnet and GDBA, won a record 4.5 per cent pay increase

plus a one-off payment of £400 in a deal with government-owned DB from January 2008. Inflation is currently running at 1.9 per cent. But GDL's longstanding policy is for a separate agreement for its 12,000 train drivers, guards and other crew in DB.

Transnet and GDBA wanted the July deal to cover all DB's 134,000 employees. But GDL president Manfred Schell insists on an agreement well above that struck by the other two unions, including a claim for a monthly starting salary of £1,660 for drivers, equivalent to a 31 per cent pay rise.

However, GDL says this is one of the lowest salary starts for the grade in Europe and almost 96 per cent of the membership voted in favour of strike action.

Public sector strikes in Germany are rare and behind the industrial action lurks the stagnating purchasing power of German workers and the government's quest to privatise DB.

Rail workers' buying power for more than a decade has been stymied by wage freezes as the government prepares the operator for privatisation, with a first tranche expected to be sold off next year.

Basing its research on Ministry of Labour statistics, a report last month in the newspaper "Bild" revealed that although the average salary rose by 48 per cent in the last 20 years, at the same time tax, national insurance and other deductions have increased by 66 per cent.

NO RIGHT TO STRIKE

There is no constitutional right to strike in Germany and GDL's plans for a series of stoppages in August were frustrated after DB obtained an injunction that declared them illegal because they "hinder competition at the national level".

This did not affect major regional and local stoppages, especially commuter services in Berlin and Hamburg, which were allowed to go ahead.

DB then agreed to withdraw its legal action and GDL said it would suspend its strike action after two mediators were appointed.

At the end of August, the two sides accepted the

mediators' conclusions that GDL should be allowed to negotiate separately for its members.

The union said it would extend suspension of its strike until September 30 to allow time for talks with management. At the same time, it was decided that separate talks take place with the other two unions to look at DB's overall grading structure.

SUPPORT

There is widespread public support for the strike. While DB made profits of £1.3 billion last year and its management received 60 per cent salary increases, wage austerity continues to affect much of the general population.

In addition, a clause in Transnet and GDBA's agreement with DB allows them to reopen pay talks if GDL wins more than their July settlement.

The separate talks on DB's grading structure could facilitate train crew pay into a new overall arrangement for the whole industry and, at the same time, result in a higher settlement for the other two unions' members.

Mr Schell warned that GDL would consider indefinite strike action if Deutsche Bahn failed to improve on its latest offer.

A CHARITY DEDICATED

Founded in 1858, the Railway Benefit Fund (RBF) has stuck steadfastly to its motto - looking after our own

Almost 150 years on and the Railway Benefit Fund, remains the only charity devoted entirely to active and retired railway employees and their families and is still fulfilling its original stated purpose: "To provide some form of care and financial aid to needy railway personnel".

There have been, and are now, many thousands of railway families with reason to be thankful for the foresight of those early railway workers who saw the need for such an organisation.

Mr C, a Merseyrail ticket inspector with eight years service, would agree. Married, he has recently been diagnosed as having terminal cancer. Further treatment is not an option.

His wife has also undergone an operation for breathing difficulties and, on her return home from hospital, will need a long period of convalescence during which her husband will be in decline.

Prior to Mr C's illness the couple had carried out a number of extensive repairs to their home and borrowed to cover the cost. Because of the money owed and the very

uncertain future the RBF made a grant of £1,000 to alleviate some of the financial burden and obvious worry.

DICKENS

Charles Dickens, as one of the organisation's first presidents in 1867, drew public attention to the debt owed by railway travellers and the railway industry to its staff "in their hazardous and dangerous form of employment".

In the years following and up to the present time the RBF has pursued the same aims and has been supported financially by all grades of staff as well as the trade unions and management.

According to RBF chairman David Allen, a former director of finance with British Rail, many are surprised there is still a need for an organisation such as the RBF in the modern rail industry.

"I can assure you there is. We get requests for financial assistance beyond that which we can possibly support.

"And we know there is a great deal more real hardship out there caused by illness,

loss of work, a breakdown of a relationship, or by the effect of rising costs on older pensioners. A lot of people need our help," he said.

GRANTS

One of those people was Billy Davies, a signalman from Shrewsbury, whose five-year-old son Edward is severely autistic.

The RBF provided a grant of £3,300 to help Edward obtain specialist treatment at the world-leading Boston Autism Treatment Centre in the USA. As a result Edward has gone, in the words of his Dad, "from being a totally non-verbal child unable to make eye contact to a boy who is laughing, has some language to express himself and can light up a room with his beautiful smile".

Another was Mr S, a conductor with First Transpennine Express for six years, who has separated from his partner. Complications with his old home arose as a result of the split.

Moving out and into rented accommodation involved a great deal of expense. This resulted in financial hardship



D TO RAILWAY PEOPLE

and left him with a number of debts.

The situation was further complicated by the theft of his credit card. The RBT helped with a combined grant of almost £480 to clear a Court Order plus electricity and water rate arrears.

That help is generally available to former employees of London Underground, the British Railways Board or its subsidiaries and to active or former employees of an organisation carrying out a function previously undertaken by London Underground, the British Railways Board or its subsidiaries as well as the spouse, children or other relatives or persons who are or were immediately and wholly dependent upon them.

It includes:

- Financial support to current and ex railway employees and their dependents when it is needed through illness, injury, bereavement or adversity.
- Child care grants to help with the costs of higher education, equipment, school clothing etc. for parents with financial problems.

- Providing grants to staff, retired staff and their dependants who are suffering long-term sickness or who have had to retire early through ill health. This can cover shortfalls in nursing home fees.
- Helping disabled people with the costs of powered vehicles and making life easier for them by providing mobility aids.
- Annuities where there is a low income and covering shortfalls in the ever-increasing cost of funerals.

Mr T, a Southern Railways carriage cleaner with 20 years service is another serving railway employee to be helped by the RBF. He is married with four sons, the eldest of whom suffers from neurological disorders and has suffered strokes. However, Mr T is able to do voluntary work for which he needs his own computer.

Eventually, this could lead to some form of paid employment. The RBF came to his aid with a grant of nearly £500 to assist with the purchase of a suitable laptop, which he can take with him whenever his work takes him away from home.

There are countless more cases of varying degrees hardship and need where a small financial grant from the Railway Benefit Fund has made a big difference to people's lives. "In 2006 we gave 780 grants to a value of more than £490,000 ranging in value from a few hundred to well over £1,000," said David Allen.

"But our income, particularly from our investments, is falling. With only six per cent of our income in 2006 coming from giving we have had to cut back in order to balance the books. So we really do need the industry to know more about us and that we can continue to help railway people in a variety of ways in which employers can't – looking after our own."

It's a sentiment shared by RMT General Secretary Bob Crow: "Today there is as much need for the Railway Benefit Fund as ever.

"It's an excellent organisation that brings often desperately needed help to colleagues experiencing financial hardship.

"I would urge all RMT members to give the RBF all the support they can," he said.



RAILWAY BENEFIT FUND

Got a problem? Get in touch. We help railway families with problems of all kinds.

We also need your backing!

Help railway people by raising money or by becoming a volunteer.



**RAILWAY
BENEFIT
FUND**

www.railwaybenefitfund.org.uk

Looking after our own



Let's look after our own – support the RBF. Call 01270 251316

ENGAGING IN POLITICS

Gordon Martin shares his experiences at the first political school at the union's new education centre in Doncaster

A dozen RMT members from across the country gathered in Doncaster in October to attend the first political school at the union's new, fully-equipped education centre.

RMT activists from the rail, bus and maritime industries were present at the week-long course.

The political school covered various issues of importance to the union and the wider trade union movement. It also gave the group the opportunity to travel down to Westminster for the demonstration and rally in support of John McDonnell's Trade Union Freedom Bill.

As you would expect the week began with an overview of the content of the work we would be doing during the week and an excellent lecture on the history of our union from Council of Executives representative Alex Gordon.

This was followed by a thought provoking session with Professor Roger Siefert. Roger covered the nature of employment markets, political strategies adopted by the movement and the relationship between the Labour Party and the unions today.

Mr Siefert was of the opinion that RMT lack political influence while we remain outside the Labour Party. The assembled students made our disagreement with his analysis perfectly clear.

Day two covered international issues facing the labour movement.

SOLIDARITY

Colombian metal workers trade union leader Harold Tello explained in great detail the dangerous situation trade unionists face in his country

where activist's are murdered on a regular basis by government-backed thugs and multi-national companies.

Iran is another country which is a dangerous place for union activists and students and tutors at the school sent a letter of protest to the Iranian President at the disgraceful treatment of Mansour Osanloo who is the president of the bus workers union in Tehran.

CAMPAIGNING

Brian Denny of Trade Unionists Against the EU Constitution gave an in-depth report on the dangers within the proposed Treaty for trade unionists.

He said the centralisation of power to Brussels meant more privatisation and much less democracy.

Ian Davidson MP also addressed us, via video link, on the issue and called on all RMT members to write to your MP to demand a referendum that the government promised it would hold two years ago.

Paul Meszaros from the anti-fascist magazine Searchlight advised students on how we can help defeat the rise of the BNP and other far-right groups and the current Hope Not Hate campaign.

There was a general discussion about how and why we campaign as a union. RMT political officer James Croy gave excellent direction as we broke into groups to discuss campaigning tactics.

This was followed by press officer Derek Kotz who gave advice on how to handle the media.

Students spent in day in London at Parliament as guests of John McDonnell MP, RMT's parliamentary group chair.

He gave us an insight into the work of the 22-strong group

of MPs and how it operates on behalf of the union. He also gave us expert tips on how we should use parliament to our advantage in our campaigns.

We attended the demonstration in support of John McDonnell's Trade Union Freedom Bill outside parliament.

General secretary Bob Crow and Scottish regional organiser and present STUC president Phil McGarry gave speeches amongst others on the need to secure union rights for British workers.

The final day at Unity House in London included a course review.

We discussed many ideas on how to improve the course, although we were all in agreement this one was excellent.

Take my advice, if you get the chance get on this course next year. No matter what level of political experience you have, you will learn something on this course which could benefit our entire membership in the future.

Gordon Martin ■



VISIT: John MacDonnell MP welcomes RMT's political school to Parliament

WHY A POLITICAL SCHOOL?

Transport workers join RMT for better pay and conditions and protection at work. But members also recognise the union needs a political voice so the union can campaign in the political arena to advance members interest which is why in its 2004 political fund ballot 88 per cent of members voted to retain the fund.

The week-long RMT political school is designed to help students gain a better understanding of the union's political involvement in lobbying parliament and the government as well as in the international arena.

The school gives participants a better understanding of how activists can support and develop political campaigns to advance the interests of RMT members.

As well as, our guest speakers, thanks should go to education officer Ray Spry-Shute, tutor Ron Rodwell and education centre manager Barbara Collinson and all her staff who looked after everyone.

The school was a success because all the participants were committed to campaigning for the interests RMT members and for a better world in general through a strong and united union.

Participants were Christopher Davidson, Darryl Emberson, Craig Johnston, Paul King, Agnes Lingard, Gordon Martin, Helen Mooney, Brian Reynolds, Steven Skelly, Christopher Smart, Micky Thompson and John Whittingham.

RMT will be advertising more political schools open to all RMT members whatever your level of experience. If you are interested in applying contact your Branch Secretary or for information get in touch with James Croy at j.croy@rmt.org.uk or ring 020 7529 8822. ■

President's column

Transporting international solidarity



Everyday we see and hear about news events from around the world that should concern us all. Indeed our own union has seafaring members throughout the globe, and we all have a responsibility and to fight for the planets future, against war and injustice.

It was towards this end that I was part of our union delegation to a Labour Conference to Stop the War in San Francisco in the United States last month, organised by the International Longshore and Warehouse union locals 10 and 34.

Transport workers from around the world gathered to discuss security issues and the movement against the war and the fight against racism.

We were able to meet dockworkers, rail workers and teachers all representing their unions. It's when you do this face to face, with workers from other countries and cultures, that you realise how much we have in common with them rather than with management in our own countries.

Meeting US dockworkers suffering strict surveillance whilst at work – on the pretence of national security – and I may as well have been talking to transport staff in the London Underground or elsewhere in the UK.

All these have faced the same kind of heavy-handed management taking advantage to spy on their workers. Of course our union believes and fights for real security at work. We also understand that the causes of war have to be addressed as well. And we ain't going to be the fall guy for failed government policies

I was very impressed to see a branch of the ILWU (local 10) in action, they made everyone feel very welcome in their premises and supportive to workers in their workplace.

I told them of the similarities between their branch and any RMT branch meeting, certainly at my own branch, Finsbury Park. It was on this basis that we were able to discuss many other common issues as well.

The two-day conference was very important for grassroots international solidarity. There were differences of views in debate, but our bond as trade unionists and fraternity as internationalists prevailed. We all got a lot out of the meeting and felt stronger and able to defend our members.

John Leach

RMT SETTING THE PACE

Gregor Gall looks at how
'cool' RMT is bucking the
trend and continues to grow
in size and influence



The 1970s is constantly back with us – whether in terms of the recycling of clothes and fashion, musical influences on new bands, reformed bands and the reruns of television shows from that decade or seventies nostalgia programmes. The young of today are forever using the term ‘cool’ from back then.

One bit of the 1970s that is not being rerun is the power of organised workers, much to the glee of the Blairites, Brownites and neo-liberals.

But one union that is punching well above its weight is the specialist transport union, RMT. On the back of this, the Strawbs should maybe reform and re-release their 1973 hit ‘You can’t get me – I’m part of the union’.

Again, it’s had another year full of steady, secure and sizeable progress on a number of important fronts for RMT. The most obvious measure of this has been the continuation of the year-on-year increase in union membership, which now stands at over 75,500.

In his address to this year’s annual general meeting, general secretary Bob Crow argued RMT does not “look for confrontation for the sake of it but the union absolutely rejects the notion that ‘partnership with the employer’ is in the workers’ interests.

“I firmly believe that workers respond positively to such a strong, honest and clear message and see our union as relevant,” he said.

RMT’s membership figures would certainly suggest he’s right about the union’s distinctive ‘brand’. Bob was also re-elected unopposed for another five year term of office (2007-2011) after spearheading RMT’s robust form of trade unionism which has seen a 20 per cent increase membership under his leadership.

Last year, RMT published an account of its post-1979 history in a book called ‘Never on Our Knees’. And this slogan has again been the touchstone of

how the union has approached its industrial and political work.

TAKING ACTION

Over the last year, the union has notched up some impressive victories and advances. Among them are that around 1,000 RMT divers in the North Sea fought for and won a 44 per cent pay rise over two years after a ten-day strike.

In the aftermath of this, RMT membership increased in many areas offshore and the strike cemented the trajectory towards the 2,200 strong, anti-partnership OILC offshore union joining RMT to provide a strong united front against the oil industry employers.

Similarly, the union’s signal workers employed by Network Rail in Scotland took strike action and won their demand to have their 35-hour week fully implemented. Solid strike action by Central Trains conductors also saw the company forced back on its plans to change its rosters.

Ferry company Wightlink also withdrew imposed new rosters after it had been notified of pending industrial action.

Meanwhile on the London Underground, the threat of a strike was enough to resist a productivity-linked pay deal and the union stopped cleaning contracting, ISS, from making compulsory by redundancies by starting a ballot for industrial action. Finally, RMT called off its ballot for action against rail network contractors after it gained the assurances it wanted on job security for its members.

It is hard to believe that these employers would not have given in unless they knew RMT was willing and able to take effective industrial action. To this extent, every strike by RMT members has been an investment for the whole membership.

It is on this basis that in the last year, the union, in response to higher inflation and interest rates, has been able to secure a number of pay agreements in excess of five per cent.

Of course, there is something very fundamental that lies behind these successes – high union density, robust and effective national leadership and strong workplace union organisation.

METRONET

The Metronet dispute in early September this year highlights much about the strength of character of the union as well as its understanding of the industrial realities of working life today.

Despite huge pressure from government, employer and the London mayor as well as acres of media criticism, the union stood its ground while others fell by the wayside.

RMT understood that taking effective action is the most likely way to bring employers to their ‘senses’, and that calling off action for talks merely undermines the union’s leverage in those very talks. Keeping the clock of industrial action ticking is a lesson of the Metronet dispute.

Behind the headlines, guided and focused involvement of members and activists through the union’s Organising Strategy and directed by the union’s Organising Unit has helped to ensure that the union knows it has troops it can rely on.

Although much of RMT’s organising efforts are concentrated on ‘in-fill’ work, where it already has union recognition, it has continued to build a presence amongst new employers and on greenfield sites.

Over the last twelve months, it has won union recognition for 250 workers at Grant Rail after using a one-day strike to impress its case, ratings on Norfolk shipping line vessels and for 150 workers at the Truronian bus company. It is also running a number of recognition campaigns at, for example, P&O ships and Palmers maintenance contracting.

But the union is not complacent and knows that it has a job of work to do in

shipping, where it faces the issue of immigrant labour being used to undercut indigenous workers, road freight and providing support the newly-elected reps, particularly in newly-organised workplaces.

RMT is aware of both its own self-interest, that of the wider union movement and how the two fit together. It has put resources into the establishment of the National Shop Stewards’ Network, which held its first conference this year in London.

The union has also continued to develop its form of left-wing politically-engaged trade unionism, whether that be to stop the privatisation of the Tube, gain the re-regulation of the bus industry, obtain legislation on corporate manslaughter or in support of the Trade Union Freedom Bill or John McDonnell’s campaign for Labour Party leadership (despite not being affiliated to Labour).

So RMT is making a reality of a recent comment by one of its long-serving activists, reported to have said: ‘It’s cool to be in the RMT’.

RMT is a union that is not ashamed to be labelled the ‘the raucous bad boy of the union movement’ by the Guardian (29 June 2004) or fearful of being accused of ‘damag[ing] the legitimacy of collective action by the Observer (9 September 2007) because for the union RMT stands for Robust, Modern Trade-unionism.

RMT Membership

Year	Number of members
2000	57,869
2001	59,277
2002	63,084
2003	67,476
2004	71,544
2005	73,477
2006	74,989
2007	75,575

* Gregor Gall is Professor of Industrial Relations at Centre for Research in Employment Studies at the University of Hertfordshire.



22 REASONS TO BE

There are many good reasons to be an RMT member and below are just 22 of them

1 COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

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

To provide a better service to members RMT has increased the number of officers by two in 2007 and a further officer will start in 2008. These elected officers are supported by a team of researchers to formulate pay claims to obtain the best negotiated terms for you.

2 SUPPORT IN THE WORKPLACE

RMT has a national network of 220 branches organised under regional councils aimed at providing local support.

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

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

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

3 MEMBERS HELPLINE

TELEPHONE 0800 376 3706

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

4 LEGAL HELPLINE 0800 587 7516

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

5 CRIMINAL CHARGES

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

6 INDUSTRIAL DISEASES

Members who have suffered an industrial disease will receive free legal support to make a claim. Such claims are underwritten by the union and members will not have any deduction from their settlement unlike claims run by no-win, no-fee companies.

7 PERSONAL INJURY

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

8 EMPLOYMENT TRIBUNALS

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

9 DONCASTER EDUCATION CENTRE

The union has a new Education Centre in Doncaster offering a range of courses for activists to increase our professionalism in the workplace. The centre has an Information Technology suite which is a valuable training resource together with video linkage to Headquarters enabling conferences with the General Secretary and other officials.

10 ACCIDENT BENEFIT

Payable if you have an accident at work or on the way to or from work. Payable for 26 week period at ten times weekly union contribution. So from 2008 one week's accident benefit would be £34.30 with maximum payable £891.80.

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

11 RETIREMENT BENEFIT

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

12 DEMOTION COMPENSATION

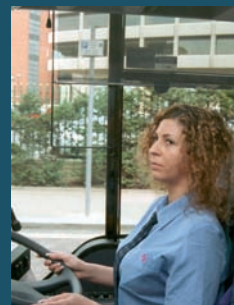
Payable to any member who is experiencing loss of wages through being permanently demoted or downgraded as a result of illness or injury. Payment of £300 provided that member reports this to Branch Secretary within 12 weeks.

13 DEATH GRANT

If a member dies in service (i.e. not retired) then a payment of £600 is payable to the members' next of kin. Documents to be sent in with application for death grant would be death certificate and copy of will or probate, if neither are available, a copy of the funeral invoice will suffice.

14 ORPHAN FUND

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



A MEMBER OF RMT

15 OLD AGE GRANT

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

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

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

A claim for this benefit must be made within six months of the claimant attaining the qualifying age.

16 FUNERAL GRANT

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

17 CAMPAIGNING

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

18 FINES POOL

From January 1 2008 the existing Fines Pool will be administered from Head Office and will become open to more members.

If you drive a company vehicle as part of your job and are an RMT member, then you can join the Fines Pool. The fund will reimburse members for fines incurred under the Road Traffic Act during the course of your employment, court costs, and lost time to attend court hearing. This excludes offences involving drink or drugs, smoking, mobile phones, seat belts, parking fines, or violations of the Driving Hours Regulations.

19 RMT NEWS

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

20 WEBSITE

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

21 CREDIT UNION

RMT's has its own Credit Union, run by members for members. It offers a savings and loan

scheme at competitive rates of interest on a not for profit basis. Members can also access their account through the RMT website.

22 TAX AND WILL PREPARATION

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

NOTIFICATION OF CONTRIBUTION RATES FOR 2008

Like most things, the cost of providing you with the benefits of RMT membership increases every year. The increase for 2008 is over the rate of inflation to expand our growing activities and provide a better service to you our members.

Following a decision taken at our Annual General Meeting we shall be creating a new Wessex Regional Council with an associated new Regional Organiser and a new member of the Council of Executives to support members in the workplace.

From the 1st January 2008 contributions will be increased by 20p per week, taking the full-time weekly rate to £3.43, for members aged 18 or over in an adult post. For members who are under 18 years or who, if not in an adult post, are under 20 years of age, the weekly contribution rate will be held at the current level that is £1.33, the latter rate also applying to those staff on part-time contracts of employment. For those full time workers on low pay of less than £15,000 we have a special rate of £1 per week subject to the fulfillment of certain conditions.

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

The new rates applicable are as follows:

Period	Adult/Full Time	Junior/Part Time	Full Time Low Paid Equivalent
Weekly	£3.43	£1.33	£1.00
4 Weekly	£13.72	£5.30	£4.00
Monthly	£14.86	£5.74	£4.33

PROVIDENT BENEFITS

Accident Benefit will also increase arising from the higher contribution rate and for Adult/Full Time members will be weekly £34.30 with a maximum payable sum of £891.80

We maintain a tight control of our costs and continually re-examine them to ensure that we make best use of our resources to deliver improved services to you. I am sure you will agree that RMT membership continues to provide excellent value for money.

AS THE WATERS CAME FLOODING IN, SO DID THE CLAIMS

UIA Helping RMT members through the crisis

Summer 2007 was the wettest since records began with many areas deluged with rain. The resulting floods caused widespread damage

Yorkshire, Derbyshire, Humberside, Gloucestershire and Worcestershire were among the worst-affected areas, with two months rain falling in one day alone. Such was the devastation that the emergency services and the military mounted the biggest single rescue operation since World War Two.

A state of emergency was declared in Hull where over 35,000 people were affected by flooding.

GETTING HELP TO THE FLOOD VICTIMS

At Union Income Assurance (UIA) the priority was helping RMT policyholders, amongst others, who had been affected by the flooding and needed a swift and reliable service. UIA teams rushed into action, quickly adding extra capacity to

their UK based call centres to ensure all calls could be handled immediately.

One such RMT member, living in Wakefield called them on 21st July, when flood water damaged the basement of her home. UIA quickly put established processes into place and loss adjusters were appointed the same day.

CONTINUING THE CONTACT

In the days following the floods, claims handlers kept in touch with her on a daily basis to check that she was happy with progress. The claim is now progressing well, starting with the process of drying out the property and replacing all damaged items. The member has been very impressed with the service, and feels that she is being kept well informed by

everybody involved. UIA still ensure they call the member on a weekly basis to check that everything is ok.

UIA claims manager, Mary Dolan and her team remember those Summer days as some of the most hectic of their lives. "People needed us to be there and help them out fast. We were constantly reassuring people, arranging alternative accommodation and liaising with disaster specialists", they recall.

It's at times of emergency that your insurance proves its worth

The 2007 floods have highlighted many problems for UK home owners, including the need for adequate home insurance. It may sometimes feel like just another household expense, but when considering the full impact an unexpected event can have on your life, it is re-assuring to know that there is support there to rely on to get things back to normal, as soon as possible.

When choosing home

insurance, it is important to not only evaluate the right policy level in order to ensure all of your valuables are covered, but also to think about the level of service you can expect to receive in the event of a claim. Consider whether your chosen insurer, like UIA, offers a claims line open day and night, 365 days a year, only employs contractors who are experts in building repairs and disaster recovery and whether they provide temporary alternative accommodation as standard.

2007 has shown that anywhere in the UK could be subjected to natural disasters such as flooding and therefore it is important to evaluate the home insurance cover you have in place.

To talk to UIA, an approved supplier for RMT about the home insurance cover they offer call on 0845 842 8421 from 8.30am to 8pm, Monday to Friday, and 9am to 1pm on Saturday. Alternatively visit www.uia.co.uk for a quote or to buy online. ■



DONNY HONOURS MELVYN

General secretary Bob Crow presented Melvyn Taylor with his 40-year Medallion and Badge at a recent of Doncaster branch meeting.

Melvyn joined the union on May 1 1966 and has had numerous jobs during his career on the railway.

He now works for Northern Rail in Doncaster as a guard and he is the Staff Rep for the union and a regular attendee of the branch.

Bob congratulated Melvyn for his contribution to the union over many years.

"People like Melvyn represent the backbone of the union," he said. ■





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YVONNE IN GREAT NORTH RUN

RMT member Yvonne Scarrott finished the this year's Great North Run in 1 hour 31 minutes after successfully qualifying for a 'fast paced club' place directly behind the elite men.

"Being placed with the elite was a truly memorable experience, I had an enjoyable run and this was a great result," she said.

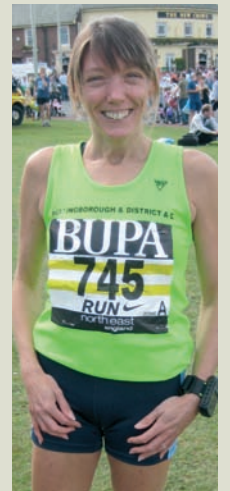
Yvonne was third in her age group – 40 – and 27th lady overall in the worlds biggest half-marathon with

almost 50,000 entrants.

Although Yvonne had a guaranteed entry, she decided to do this race for 'Kith & Kids' a London Charity for children with learning difficulties.

Yvonne is also running a Marathon in Italy on November 18 and appreciates donations from members

Donations can be made via www.justgiving.com/yvonnescarrott I can also be contacted at Earlsfield 00 62647. ■



GRUNDY MEMORIAL UNVEILED

RMT colleagues joined union president John Leach to unveil a memorial to former Council of Executives member Arthur Grundy in a park in his hometown of Denton, near Stockport. The Mayor and local Labour councillors who knew Arthur also attended.

Arthur passed away last year aged 61 following many years of service to the labour and trade union movement.

A member of the Manchester Victoria branch, Arthur served as secretary of the Manchester and North West of England regional council and many other offices within the union. He was also a Tameside Labour councillor from 1999 to 2006. ■



LETTERS

Dear editor,

In the October edition of RMT news is a letter from Exeter Rail branch secretary referring to my letter about funding for the local elections from the branch political fund.

At the branch meeting October 4 the suggestion that I had somehow misled my comrades was put to me.

I made it quite clear that the letter that I originally sent was heavily edited, possibly due to space available in the magazine, and therefore gave the wrong impression.

It was most certainly the case that I expounded the view that the Labour Party was no longer worthy of the support of trade unionists or the "working classes" given that they have betrayed pretty much all that it once stood for.

I also stated that I was standing for the Liberal Party, (not the Lib Dems) on the grounds that this party is closer to the principals of trade unionism and socialism than the party which still calls itself the Labour Party.

On this basis I asked for support and this was given by the overwhelming majority of the members present, with nine in favour to one against and one abstention.

Quite why my fellow comrades seem to want to differentiate between what I told them I was now standing for and just how they were prepared to support me is a matter for the individuals to decide but I was quite open in explaining my views on the Labour Party.

Gordon Brown and his cohorts have no intention of re-nationalising the transport industry and are content to allow the creeping privatisation of the NHS.

Why is it that there are still so many trade unionists who insist on closing their eyes to what is really happening? It is my view that we as trade unionists and socialists need to take a close look at where our monies and our votes go and a debate needs to take place on what, if any influence the TUC now has on the modern Labour Party.

We can of course vote for other parties such as George Galloway's Respect party or even vote communist but in Exeter the Liberal party has four seats on a hung council so in my opinion this is where I should be concentrating my efforts to ensure that my vote is effective.

Yours sincerely, Rod Northcott

Dear editor,

Since the privatisation of our railways I have heard many a bizarre story of how things are in a total mess. I recently had an experience which beggars belief in September.

At GNER's main booking office I asked for two return tickets from Kings Cross to Markinch, Fife.

I was told that it would be cheaper buying four singles, which I accepted. When handed the tickets I discovered, because we were returning on a Sunday, that a change of train was required at Dundee, which is nearly 30 miles north of Markinch.

However, the booking clerk assured me this was the correct route and even fetched a supervisor who confirmed it was so.

I demanded my money back and pointed out that anyone with any knowledge of the east coast of Scotland will know that Dundee is north of Markinch. Why travel to Dundee and back through Markinch to Edinburgh?

Yet GNER insisted this was the correct route. The only other way is via Perth and Stirling which would require another change and, it being a Sunday, a long wait.

I returned some days later to Kings Cross with my wife who could not believe this bizarre story.

She was given the same cobblers as I was and we even asked the booking clerk to get the map on the screen. He accepted the evidence shown to him but still insisted this was the correct route.

I hope some-one high up in GNER takes note.

Joe Mitchell

Dear Editor

Why is the RMT promoting the interests of the Prison Officers Association? On the basis of my enemy's enemy is my friend? The campaign for full Union Rights and recognition should not be diluted and distracted by support for the virulently anti-working class and historically racist POA.

Prison is an almost entirely working class experience - 80,000 and counting (a trebling in 30 years) - not full of murderers and rapists but in the main gaoling short term petty offenders and those caught feeding drug habits. There are few pension fund plunderers and corporate manslaughterers inside.

The POA's main strategy in their recent industrial action is to achieve pay parity and status with the Police (also bound by no strike legislation). Indeed they regard themselves as the forgotten 'thin blue line' overlooked and ignored compared to the Police, with their generous pay and conditions. Can anyone recollect the POA standing up to be counted in ANY industrial dispute on the side of the workers EVER.

Does the RMT support the BNP in its spurious call for a right to free speech so it can peddle its racist, anti-union /pro-boss rubbish? No, it has taken a political line and correctly adopts a No Platform for Fascists policy.

I also noticed this issue the new RMT T-shirt proudly displays the 'Solidarity Forever' motto on the back. This slogan was popularised by the Wobblies (IWW) at the turn of the last century. Thousands of their supporters were imprisoned, many starved, beaten and murdered in America's prisons in their uncompromising stand for workers unity and control. It was Jay Gould a smug US industrialist who once boasted he could hire one half of the working class to scab on the other.

Phil, Brighton RMT member

ORPINGTON BRANCH CELEBRATES

Orpington branch honoured its long-term members recently by presenting them with 40 and 25 year badges.

From left to right: Steve Franks, Trevor Samson, Scott Debell, Arthur Walledge, Dean

Cornwell, Mick Smith, RMT president John Leach, Ali Hussein, Mick Foulter, Ray Hopkins, Jimmy Walters, Mick McCarthy and branch secretary Paul Burton. ■



RMT'S NORTH EAST OFFICE HAS MOVED

The new address is

RMT, 1st Floor, Holgate Villa, 22 Holgate Road, York YO24 4AB

The new phone number will be 01904 673452

The fax number remains the same 01904 655156

The e-mail addresses won't be affected.

The office will be closed whilst move everything to the new premises during week commencing November 26 and will be up and running again in the new office from Monday December 3.

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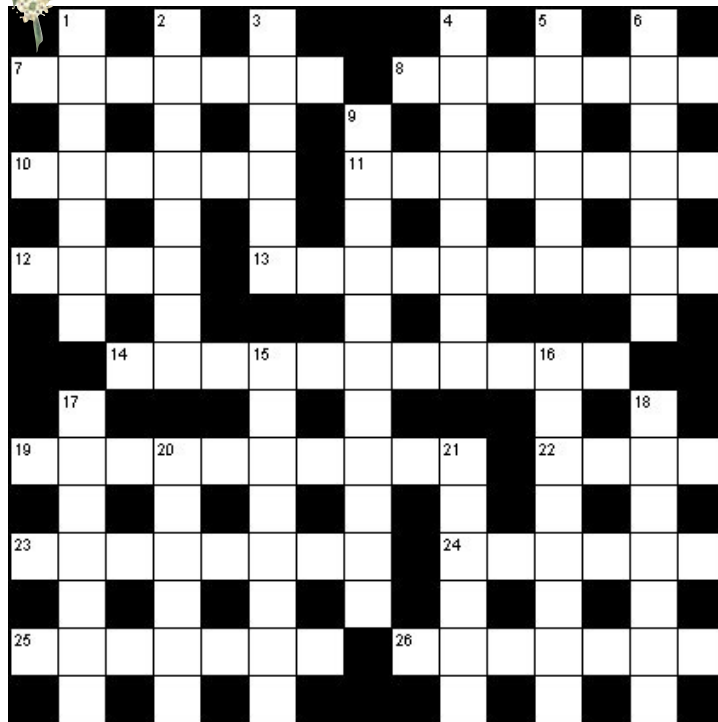
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I	S	S	T	U	C	P	I						
S	N	O	W	S	H	O	E	S	U	N	I	O	N
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N	A	I	L	S	S	O	C	I	A	L	I	S	T
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P	U	G	I	L	I	S	T	S	S	K	I	F	F
I													
C	U	B	I	C									
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S	A	D	I	S	T	S							
S	T	A	R	D	O	M							

The winner of prize
crossword no. 38 is
**Colin Gray from Abbots
Langley.**

Send entries to Prize Crossword,
RMT, Unity House, 39 Chalton
Street, London NW1 1JD by
December 15 with your name and
address.

Winner and solution in next issue.

ACROSS

- 7 15 who had a shiny 8 (7)
8 More likely to get one like 7 if not 4 (3, 4)
10 Polly put it on (but Suki took it off) (6)
11 Tied up (8)
12,22 Seasonal pudding (4-4)
13 Elvis's hotel? (10)
14 One with a tale (or 17) to tell (11)
19 One who lives in a given place (10)
22 See 12
23 19 of Caribbean island invaded by US in
1983 (8)
24 One who lugs band's equipment (6)
25 Traditional German Christmas cake (7)
26 Sporting judge (7)

DOWN

- 1 Not noisily (7)
2 Feeling that a person or thing (or court?) is
beneath consideration (8)
3 Elizabeth will make one after the 21 on
December 25 (6)
4 Doesn't touch a drop -- even at Christmas
(8)
5 Elicit fond feelings (6)
6 South African spear (7)
9 Dirty, smelly vehicles loved by many (5, 6)
15 7 was one of Santa's (8)
16 Closing stages of contests, especially chess
matches (8)
17 Lie (7)
18 RMT has them in Birmingham, Aberdeen
Bristol, Dover, Glasgow, Liverpool, London
and York (7)
20 Declares (marriage) invalid (6)
21 Creature unlikely to vote for Christmas (6)

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It strikes a balance between low interest rates on loans and paying a dividend on savings. It enables members to have ready access to cheap loans while building up a substantial and useful savings account. The Credit Union can do this because it 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.

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2000	176.67	93.12	65.38	51.59	43.39
3000	265.01	139.68	98.07	77.39	65.08
4000	353.34	186.25	130.77	103.19	86.77
5000	441.68	232.81	163.46	128.98	108.46
7500	662.51	349.21	245.19	193.48	162.69

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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 10.9 per cent APR, equivalent to 0.908 per cent per month on the declining balance. See our great rates below.

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MONTHLY OR FOUR-WEEKLY PAYMENTS

You can now also make your payments on a calendar monthly basis (28th of each month) or on a four-weekly basis which ties in with the pay cycles of many transport workers. The choice is yours so just indicate on the form. We take regular payments by Direct Debit although one-off additional payments can be made by cheque or cash. Members must make savings payments of at least £5 per month/four-weekly.

If you wish to join complete the application and return it to the RMT Credit Union at Unity House:

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For assistance: Tel: 020 7529 8835
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Email address			
Date of Birth		National Insurance Number	

2 **Marital Status** married ☐ partner ☐ single ☐ divorced ☐

3 Your Employment.

Employer		RMT Branch	
Job Description			

4 **Mr** ☐ **Mrs** ☐ **Ms** ☐ **Miss** ☐

5 Membership Status

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

8 **Next of Kin**

Address

.....
.....

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

Your signature

Date

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If we cannot verify your identity and address by this method, we will ask you to provide paper documentation instead. Full details of these can be supplied to you by calling 020 7529 8835.



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	Postcode

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Bank/Building Society account number

Branch Sort Code

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9 7 4 2 8 1

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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

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The Direct Debit Guarantee

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