

RMT *news*

Essential reading for today's transport worker

EUROPEAN UNION ATTACKS WORKERS' RIGHTS



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NATIONAL UNION OF RAIL, MARITIME & TRANSPORT WORKERS

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EDITORIAL

DEFENDING YOUR RIGHTS AT WORK



Train-catering staff, train managers and senior conductors at First Great Western are to be balloted for strike action over the removal of catering facilities from trains.

The ballot, scheduled to close in mid-June, follows the company's failure to give assurances over job security and safe working conditions.

Seafaring members at Northlink ferries in Scotland have won a five per cent pay increase and two weeks paid holiday, the best deal in the industry.

Infrastructure workers at Network Rail have voted by three to one to take industrial action over the failure of the company to enter meaningful talks on harmonisation.

Meanwhile signal workers have voted down strike action over this year's pay deal. All these stories reflect the members' wishes and the union's executive will always respect that.

It is important to remember that these hard-won democratic rights to make our own decisions have been under attack by various governments for many years.

We already have to jump through legal hoops to take industrial action and the latest threat to trade union rights, which should be basic human rights, comes from the EU courts.

The European Court of Justice is slowly giving itself the right to decide when workers can withdraw their labour and even the 'proportionality' this action can take.

This unaccountable court has ruled in a number of cases that EU rules on 'free movement' gives protection to bosses against industrial action.

If the proposed Lisbon Treaty and its legally binding Charter of Fundamental Rights come into force this EU court would have huge powers to decide when and why working people can take action to defend themselves.

That is why this union campaigned for a referendum and called for a no vote. We can only hope that Irish workers reject the treaty in their referendum on June 12.

On the bright side, rail and ferry infrastructure in New Zealand is being renationalised after 15 years of decline in private hands.

The government has recognised that the only way to achieve the massive investment needed is to bring it back into public hands.

On June 17, RMT will be hosting an international conference of rail workers to oppose EU diktats demanding the privatisation of rail networks across Europe and learn the lessons of what is happening in New Zealand.

The dreadful experience of the implementation these rail directives in the UK in 1996 should have been enough to prove this dangerous experiment will not provide an efficient and sustainable rail system.

It is a pity this lesson still hasn't been learnt as Tyne and Wear metro is being sized up by the privateers.

It also wasn't heeded when Tube privateer Metronet went belly-up leaving taxpayers with a £2 billion bill.

The shareholders simply walked away to sniff out their next PFI contracts, and even had the gall to insist on retaining the contracts they'd handed themselves under the PPP.

Last September RMT members at Metronet went on strike to prevent any further dangerous fragmentation of the Tube's maintenance workforce, and to prevent the people who keep the network going being made to pay for the shareholders' shameful behaviour.

Metronet's contracts now stand poised to be re-absorbed into the Tube structure they should never have been separated from in the first place.

It is right and proper that the new Mayor Boris Johnson allows that process to take its course.

And, for the new mayor's benefit I also say this: RMT wants good industrial relations, but it will never enter into a no-strike agreement.

Finally, congratulations to Dave Bithell at being re-elected as an independent councillor in Wrexham with an increased majority and his successful battle to win a direct rail link between his home town and London. An inspiration to us all, well done.

Best wishes

Bob Crow

NO PRIVATEERS ON TYNE AND WEAR

RMT has pledged to fight tooth-and-nail fight against plans that could see Tyne and Wear Metro's infrastructure fragmented and handed over to privateers to milk of public money.

Warning against the creation of a Metronet Mark II, the union has committed itself to fight "all the way" if Nexus, Tyne and Wear's Passenger Transport Executive, tries to hand any part of Metro's maintenance to the private sector.

The government has earmarked £600 million for a welcome upgrade of the Metro network, but has stipulated that maintenance of new ticket machines, trains and infrastructure – all currently done in-house by Metro staff – is competitively tendered for.

RMT general secretary Bob Crow said that the corpse of Metronet was barely cold, yet the government is insisting that

another highly successful Metro system is subjected to a process that could see its maintenance thrown to the privateers.

"They say that history's tragedies repeat themselves as farce, but this time there is not even any pretence that there will be any private-sector investment.

"That means that private shareholders stand to get a fat profit for doing nothing more than overseeing what Metro's own maintenance staff already do perfectly well," he said.

The plans would fragment the Metro along the same lines that have caused such massive safety problems for the national rail network and London Underground

Rail privatisation, on the national network and on London Underground, is generally recognised as a colossal, wasteful and dangerous failure yet the country's last

wholly publicly owned railway is being threatened in the same way.

Nexus has proposed a "Metro Reinvigoration" programme comprising of three phases.

Phase One, to be in place before 2010, covers the installation of new ticket machines.

Phase Two, which is scheduled to begin in 2010, aims to refurbish the Metrocars, stations, track and overhead lines.

Phase Three starts in 2008, to build a new generation of Metrocars and signalling systems. It is proposed that the private sector will not make any investment in the Metro, but will simply be paid a fee.

Invitations to tender for the ticketing system were sent out on April 21 2008 and contracts to be signed on November 4 2008. ■

EAST MIDLANDS CONDUCTOR STRIKE SUSPENDED

Planned strike action by more than 130 RMT senior conductors at the new East Midlands franchise on the first three Saturdays in May has been suspended.

The action was suspended to allow for talks to be held under the auspices of ACAS.

The dispute centres on the company's plan to use managers and other grades to guard trains on Sundays and to impose a new grade of senior conductor with inferior conditions, outside existing negotiated structures.

RMT general secretary Bob Crow said that the dispute could be easily resolved if the company had entered into meaningful talks earlier.

"However, if no agreement is reached we still have a mandate to take strike action if necessary," he said.



RMT WELCOMES DIRECT WREXHAM-LONDON RAIL SERVICE

RMT has welcomed the opening of direct rail services between Wrexham and London, which began this month.

RMT also paid tribute to the "tireless efforts" of Wrexham RMT branch secretary Dave Bithell, whose campaigning over many years has helped bring about Wrexham's rail renaissance.

The move follows the investment of more

than £900,000 by the Welsh Assembly government in a new rail depot in the town, for which Wrexham RMT has campaigned for many years, and which general secretary Bob Crow urged Welsh AMs to back.

"The start of direct rail services is great news for Wrexham, for Wales and for the rail industry," Bob Crow said.

"As well as the welcome creation of 50

new jobs it will also ease congestion at busy interchanges in Birmingham and London, and it is good for the environment because it will encourage people onto trains and out of cars.

"Our members at Wrexham RMT, and particularly branch secretary Dave Bithell, have campaigned for this for years, and I know they will be delighted," Bob said. ■

RMT ACTIVIST RE-ELECTED WREXHAM COUNCILLOR

RMT branch secretary David Bithell has been re-elected as an independent councillor on Wrexham council with a huge majority in the May elections.

David, who was instrumental in winning the campaign the new direct train link to London, gained 895 votes with Labour getting 115 and the Tories winning just 72 giving a majority of 780.

He was elected to the council in 2004 with a majority of 48.

In the last four years on Wrexham council David has also served on the executive board and as lead member for children and young people.

He successfully campaigned for 50 new jobs for Wrexham and the new direct train link to London with operates five trains a day to London run by



Wrexham and Shropshire Railways.

He is also a member of the Wrexham trades council and a member of the Mersey Dee Alliance campaign for the electrification of the Wrexham-Bidston Line. ■

PAY DEAL AT P&O FERRIES PORTSMOUTH

Negotiations have concluded on behalf of members at P&O Ferries Portsmouth and after consultation with reps and members, the following offer has been accepted:-

- An increase of 4.2 per cent to basic rates or, if more, an increase of £650.00. The £650.00 is in response to points raised by the Regional Organiser for those on a '2002' contract. The lowest paid will receive an increase of five per cent.
- Retention for a rating who is due to go 'off watch' is retained on the ship for

over two hours then the following compensation rates will apply. Each hours pay will be calculated at a one for one basis:-

0-2 hours	No compensation
2-3 hours	3 hours pay
3-4 hours	4 hours pay
4-5 hours	5 hours pay
5-6 hours	6 hours pay
6-7 hours	7 hours pay
7-8 hours	8 hours pay

- When a rating is retained beyond the rostered watch plan by more than eight hours, the existing arrangements will apply. ■



DEFENDING CATERING FACILITIES AT FGW

RMT is balloting all on-board catering members and guards with responsibility for high speed services employed by First Great Western following the removal buffet cars from some services.

The company has also refused to guarantee job security and the quality of work of catering and on-train members.

The union is now in dispute with FGW over these issues and will be conducting a ballot for strike action of customer service hosts and chefs as well as train managers and senior conductors members at FGW. Ballot papers must be returned by second post June 19 2008.

Staff have concerns that the removal of buffet cars would increase lone working and place members in a vulnerable position. This is particularly the case on late night trains, where the service cuts have occurred, as catering staff could retreat to the buffet cars in case of assault or verbal abuse.

The union's parliamentary group of MPs will be shortly tabling an early day motion on the issue. ■

WHY I JOINED RMT

Name: Claire Franklin

Job: Conductor



I joined the union when I first joined the railways. I work for Southeastern and it seemed the natural thing to do. Being a member of a union is a great insurance policy and joining RMT seemed the most sensible option. I belong to Hastings branch and get to meetings whenever possible.

I started off as platform staff and moved on to train crew as a conductor. As an all grades union it doesn't matter what job you do, you are a railway worker and can be protected by RMT.

I am also a union learning rep and we are establishing a sign language course for train crew staff to help deaf people deal with the transport network. ■

RMT WINS EQUALITY FOR FIRST GREAT WESTERN TRAIN-MAINTENANCE AND CLEANING STAFF

Planned strike action by than 400 train-maintenance, shunting and cleaning staff at eight First Great Western sites between Penzance, Swansea and London has been called off after the company conceded to union demands.

24-hour strike action planned for Sunday, May 18 was called off after the company dropped plans to extend the use of engineering contractors within and agreed to pay all overtime within the

engineering grades at a time and quarter with effect from June 8 2008.

The company also agreed to implement 35-hour week rosters and a 25 per cent increase in earnings for some of the lowest paid cleaning grade members.

RMT general secretary Bob Crow congratulated members on sticking together and standing up to a management that had not previously been prepared to treat staff equally.

"The vast majority of FGW engineering and cleaning staff were still being paid the flat hourly rate for their overtime, rather than the time-and-a-quarter enjoyed by other FGW staff, including train-crew and station staff," he said.

Staff at Bristol, Reading, Oxford, Penzance, Exeter, Plymouth, Swansea, and Old Oak Common in London had voted by a three-to-one margin for strike action.

"Due to the steadfastness of

members at FGW, these inequalities have been removed.

"This once more shows what can be achieved if all grades organise and work together in one industrial union," Bob Crow said.

This month RMT also launched a charter for train maintenance depot workers to address the issues of disparity between pay rates, overtime enhancements and employment conditions. ■

Companywatch

As the economic storm clouds gather and the credit crunch bites, it's worth sparing a thought for the rich.

A good place to start is the *Sunday Times* rich list which reveals the UK's top multimillionaires who are now collectively worth more than £412.8 billion. This is up nearly £53 billion on last year and up from a mere £99 billion back in 1997. This represents a 317 per cent increase in wealth for the country's richest people.

Top of the transport super-rich is Sir Richard Branson who presides at number 20 worth £2.7 billion.

Although he has slipped down the list through the falling share price of Virgin Media, he has made pots of lolly in transport by squeezing those looking for flexible rail travel.

From January 2 a passenger buying a standard class open return ticket between London and Manchester has to cough up £230, up from £219, more than

double the rate of inflation.

This is the only ticket available on the day of travel during a three-hour period in the morning and another three hours in the afternoon.

In the past four years Virgin Trains has raised the London to Manchester fare by more than 30 per cent.

Transport privateers and Stagecoach owners Brian Souter and his sister Ann Gloag also benefited from this scam as a 49 per cent shareholder of the Virgin Rail Group. The pair comes in at 113 on the rich list with a personal fortune of £717 million.

Brian and Ann handed themselves £100 million in 2006 after receiving £300 million in public subsidy to run some of their franchises.

RMT pointed out at the time that it once again proved that rail privatisation was a "crude

device to convert taxpayers' and farepayers' money into fat cat profits".

On the shipping side, Stena Group owner Stefan Olsson comes in at number 148 on the list after Swedish business magazine *Veckans Affärer* valued him at £534 million.

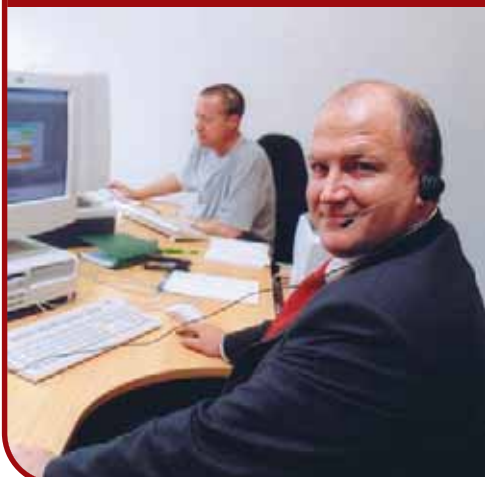
Sir Martin Laing and family currently preside at 472 on the rich list with just £175 million. Laing retired in 2004 as head of John Laing plc, the infrastructure and railway company which owned the Chiltern Railways franchise.

Fund management company Henderson Group acquired Chiltern Railways in 2006 when one of its subsidiaries bought John Laing, for £950 million.

In turn, Henderson sold Chiltern Railways in March to German state railways Deutsche Bahn for around £180 million. Got all that? ■

Name	Position in List	Worth	Companies include
Richard Branson	20	£2.7 billion	Virgin Rail Group
Brian Souter	=113	£720 million	South West Trains, 49% share in Virgin Rail Group, Stagecoach Devon, Hampshire, East Midlands, Yorkshire
Stefan Olsson	148	£534 million	Stena Group
Martin Laing	472	£175 million	Chiltern Railways

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ROUGH JUST

RMT News looks at how controversial rulings by the European Court of Justice could undermine your rights at work

A recent ruling by the European Court of Justice (ECJ) has delivered another blow against social and employment protection measures and in favour of the rights of employers.

The EU institution decided in the Rüffert case that a German public body was not entitled to include a clause in a public works contract requiring contractors to pay Polish workers the same rates as those set down in German collective agreements.

The liquidator of the contractor claimed damages arguing that the German principality law was incompatible with the freedom to provide services contained in Article 49 of the EC Treaty.

The court agreed and went

on to rule that the Posted Workers Directive – which sets out the minimum terms and conditions for foreign workers – was not applicable because the relevant collective agreement did not apply to the whole country or to private sector contracts.

Richard Arthur of Thompsons solicitors warned that the Rüffert case went further in terms of undermining collective bargaining rights at work than previous judgments in the Laval and Viking cases.

In the Laval case, the ECJ ruled that a trade union campaign in Sweden to stop a firm paying poverty wages was not 'proportionate', and had not been taken for 'reasons of overriding public interest'. In Viking, a Finnish ferry re-

flagged its ships to Estonia to exploit cheaper Estonian labour.

The ECJ found for the Viking Line, stating that EU rules on the free movement of goods, labour and capital gives protection against worker's actions in the interests of 'freedom of establishment', while insisting that the right to take industrial action is a 'fundamental right'.

Richard Arthur warned that the Rüffert case could open the doors to widespread social dumping which meant the introduction of low pay and poor conditions through bringing in sweated foreign labour.

"The ECJ's stance that minimum standards would undercut the competitive advantage of employers such as the Polish contractor in the Rüffert case is completely misguided.

"Employers are already protected by the EC Treaty's non-discrimination principles and they should not be protected if they seek to obtain

competitive advantage by undercutting collective agreements in the member states in which they seek to operate," he said.

NO TO LISBON

Should the proposed Lisbon Treaty and its Charter of Fundamental Rights come into force we would rely on the court to rule in disputes regarding the interpretation of any of the Charter's provisions.

The court's findings would have force throughout the EU.

The ECJ has already made it clear in a number of cases that: "it is well established in the case law of the Court that restrictions may be imposed on the exercise of fundamental rights, in particular in the context of a common organisation of the market".

It is clear from these precedents that the 'fundamental rights' that would be conferred on us by the Lisbon Treaty would not be fundamental at all but could be varied or restricted in the interests of a 'common



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organisation of the market'. This means all the rights conferred on us by the Charter can be decided by the Court and case law is taken into account when reaching decisions.

This growing marketisation of human rights is illustrated by judgments of the ECJ delivered during the last six months in the Laval, Viking and Ruffert cases.

It represents a threat to RMT members covered by local collective bargaining agreements. A company could claim that their rights to 'freedom of establishment' override your rights to protect your wages and conditions at work.

However, Richard Arthur maintained that it was right and legitimate that workers and trade unions should seek to impose minimum labour standards, such as commitments to abide by rates of pay in collective agreements, in public procurement contracts.

"They should be permitted, and indeed encouraged, to do so in the interest of maintaining national labour standards and preventing social dumping," he said.

RMT general secretary Bob Crow said that Irish workers should reject the Lisbon Treaty in their referendum on June 12 because it underpins these ECJ judgments and the EU's market values.

"They should resist this 'race to the bottom' in the interests of the 'market' and in so doing, send a clear message to employers across Europe that workers are not going to accept anti-worker EU diktats that favour of big business and encourage social dumping," he said. ■

Parliamentary column

DEFENDING BUS WORKERS



The Local Transport Bill currently progressing through Parliament seeks to make it easier for local authorities to regulate bus services through the introduction of Quality Contracts. There is currently no legislation, however, that provides protection for bus workers' employment, pensions and conditions of service where bus services are transferred from a wholly deregulated and private market to a Quality Contract.

February's edition of RMT News reported on the union's campaign to seek amendments to the Local Transport Bill to protect bus workers employment conditions and pensions. The union has already won some amendments in the Lords to provide TUPE protection for the bus workers and the Bill was recently subject to detailed scrutiny at Committee Stage in the House of Commons.

Working with RMT and T&G section of Unite, Labour MPs tabled amendments at Committee stage that would provide further protections of bus workers employment and pensions.

In supporting these amendments Graham Stringer MP warned the Minister, Rosie Winterton, that protections were needed because "some of the bus operators were 'cowboys'".

"It is as well to be prepared for reckless intentional and unintentional behaviour, given the statements of Brian Souter, who said that he would withdraw all services if he lost a contract... that is the real world in which we operate," he said.

Mr Stringer said the purpose of his amendments were to "protect employees who operate services in such areas by allowing them to transfer to the new operator—the winner of the contract".

"It also provides that if such people are contracted to provide public services, they should be able to join and have the benefit of the local government pension scheme," he said.

Labour MP Ian Stewart also argued that one clear benefit of quality contracts was that once one is in place there will be stability of bus

service provision and, he hoped, of employment. "The difficulty, which the Bill has not yet adequately addressed, is in ensuring stability of service and employment during the transition to quality contract," he said.

Supporting amendments that would protect bus workers existing pension benefits, Mr Stewart reminded the Minister that the government had previously introduced legislation to protect existing pension benefits in other reorganisations of the transport sector such as the privatisation of British Rail and the public-private partnership for the London Underground.

The Minister responded saying that "those are all matters on which we hope to give some reassurance and we very carefully consider the points made about the application of TUPE during the transitional period and the need to secure a fair degree of pension protection".

She strongly indicated that the government would bring forward further amendments at Report Stage – the last stage before the Bill gets Royal Assent – to introduce pension protection and extend TUPE employment protection and introduce regulation and guidance in other areas.

She also been confirmed that bus workers who transfer to a Quality Contracts would be eligible to join the Local Government Pension Scheme and that trade unions will have to be consulted before a quality contract is set up.

MPs will be seeking a special meeting with the Minister before the final stages of the Bill and David Drew MP has tabled Early Day Motion 1368 which "applauds bus workers, who as essential public servants, play a vital role in keeping Britain moving; believes bus workers deserve the strongest possible protection in the event that a local authority decides to introduce a Quality Contract; and therefore supports amendments to the Local Transport Bill which will ensure the protection of bus workers' employment, terms and conditions and pensions".

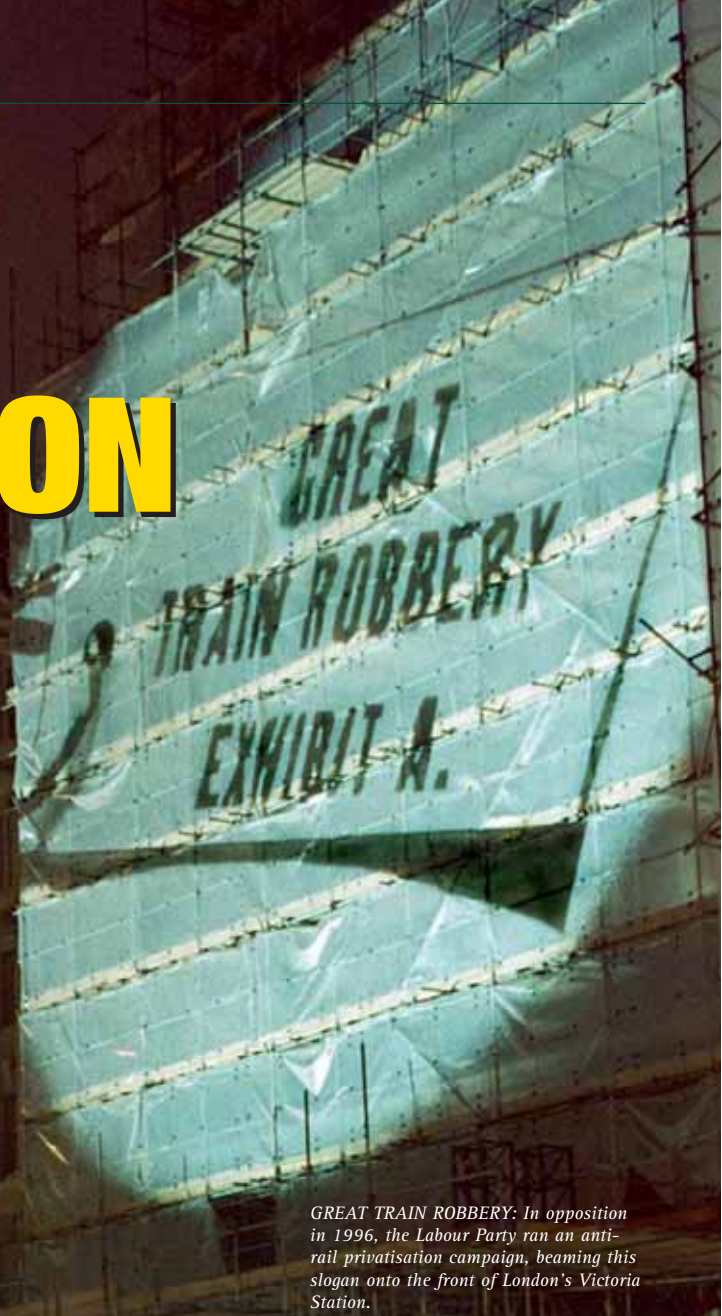
Get your MP to sign 1368 EDM.

RESISTING EU RAIL PRIVATISATION

On June 17 RMT is hosting an international conference - *Resisting EU rail privatisation*. Make sure your branch is represented



PROTEST: German protesters wear giant masks of Germany's Social Democratic Party leader Kurt Beck (R) and Hartmut Mehdorn, head of German rail operator Deutsche Bahn during a demonstration Berlin last month to protest against the privatisation of the rail operator. The banner reads 'Stop the privatisation of the rail operator now!'



GREAT TRAIN ROBBERY: In opposition in 1996, the Labour Party ran an anti-rail privatisation campaign, beaming this slogan onto the front of London's Victoria Station.



RMT's conference - 'Resisting EU rail privatisation' - is shaping up as an important event for trade unionists with delegations already confirmed from the Ukraine, Turkey, France, Finland, Sweden, Germany, Belgium, Norway, Romania, Russia and Latvia.

Discussions about EU rail privatisation, what it is and how to resist it will include speakers such as Kelvin Hopkins, MP from the RMT Parliamentary group and Rene Roover, representing the group of left-wing Members of the European Parliament.

All RMT branches can send delegates and attendance is payable from Branch Management Funds. However, places are limited and allocation will be on a first-come, first-served basis.

FUNDING CUTS

Last month the unelected European Commission issued a stark warning to elected governments to end "hidden" state aid to railways, confirming the Commission's long-term objective of shifting resources from a Social Railway to a profit-driven rail sector serving freight and big business priorities.

Recent takeovers of rival private operators by French and German state-owned railways have pushed the Commission to reinforce its privatisation agenda across Europe using private rail firms to compete against nationalised railways to undermine railworkers' pay and conditions and drive up profits.

Last year the Commission also approved the sale of EWS to German national railways, Deutsche Bahn (DB) on condition that it "committed to fulfil EWS' expansion plans in France".

This was seen as tacit support for EWS' attack on the freight business of SNCF - France's national railways where EWS hold an operating licence.

DB even promised other private rail operators access to EWS driver training schools and maintenance facilities in France. France is top of the Commission's hit list when it comes to attacking railworkers' hard-won rights at work.

SNCF retaliated last month by buying Dresden-based rail freight operator Import Transport Logistik (ITL) with subsidiaries in Netherlands, the Czech Republic and Poland.

SNCF also bought road freight group Geodis (a former SNCF-subsidary, privatised in 1996 by the then Transport Secretary, Anne Marie Idrac, now SNCF President) for £470 million.

French rail union, SUD-Rail is concerned at this attempt to dissolve SNCF's freight arm into the private sector at the same time as SNCF bosses are trying to impose

degraded and dangerous working conditions on freight train crews. SNCF is transferring more public sector activities into areas where social rights are weaker, SUD-Rail argues: "All of which makes it likely the next SNCF sector to be hived off will be rail freight followed by full privatisation (on the pretext of having 'to raise capital quickly'), which obviously will euphemistically be called 'opening up to capital'".

State-owned rail operators still dominate every European country except the UK and Estonia. Heiko Fischer, of VTG, Europe's largest private wagon-leasing company, complained recently: "The big state railways, with strong financial support from their owners, are now on a buying spree to buy up rail assets, especially the private competition".

Passenger rail services are next for 'liberalisation' in 2010. Already the Commission is intent on stopping states using profitable freight to cross-subsidise loss-making passenger services.

SPLITTING WHEEL AND STEEL

A French government audit has just exposed how EU directive 91/440 drawn up in 1991 seriously damaged the rail system. EU member states were ordered to split railways into separate companies: in France SNCF runs trains and a new company, RFF (Network Rail France) owns the infrastructure. French railways' £17.25 billion of debt was transferred to RFF.

The German government absorbed £27.5 million of DB debt itself in 1994, but France was unwilling to increase government debt because it was trying to join the Euro. Today RFF's debt tops £31.3bn and speed restrictions now affect large stretches of the network because 46 per cent of French track urgently needs upgrading.

The French audit office favours the government absorbing RFF's debt to allow renewal and maintenance on some rail lines and closure of others. The French government prefers allowing RFF to push up track access charges, simply redistributing losses to rail users in a structurally unviable system.

FOR A SOCIAL RAILWAY!

RMT argues against splitting infrastructure and operations into separate companies as demanded by various EU directives and rail packages since the system clearly doesn't work.

After all, we learnt this lesson in the disastrous privatisation of Britain's railways when rail routes were handed to private train operators and the track was handed to Railtrack plc.

This led to a catastrophic deterioration in

track maintenance and many deaths and injuries to staff and passengers.

European member states have spent £5.5 billion on infrastructure since 2004 and paid £11.5 billion a year to maintain so-called 'unprofitable routes'. The Commission says total state aid in 2002 was £39 billion but doesn't include railways, one of the biggest sources of national subsidy.

Britain dispenses less state aid than any other EU country, but the £26 billion bailout of Network Rail doesn't count even though total UK state aid for 2002 was a tenth of the size at £2.89 billion.

RENATIONALISATION

The New Zealand government is showing the way out of the funding crisis created by privatisation by re-nationalising rail and sea ferry operations next month.

NZ finance minister Michael Cullen complained that under the privatisation carried out in 1993 "we end up just subsidising the private sector".

He said that rail privatisation and the subsequent running down of the assets had been a "painful lesson" for the country.

"Running a commercially viable business that was able to contribute to the economic and environmental development of New Zealand was proving extremely difficult without government support," he said.

His prime minister Helen Clark also said that the Labour-led government's plan was a step towards a sustainable transport network.

"With rising fuel prices and growing awareness about the challenges of global climate change, many nations are looking to rail as a central part of 21st century economic infrastructure," she said.

NO TO LISBON

To emulate New Zealand's refreshing approach to transport, EU member states would have to reject the EU's various rail diktats and its mania for rail privatisation.

If the renamed EU constitution, the Lisbon Treaty, comes into force it would be even harder for member states to regain democratic control of their railways as transport is one of the areas where national vetoes would be abolished.

This would mean any member state wishing to renationalise railways as New Zealand is doing could be outvoted by the other member states.

As the Brussels 'liberalisation' juggernaut rumbles on, who will stop it? On June 17 railway trade unionists across Europe will be discussing just that. Make sure your branch doesn't miss out and see advert on back page of RMT News. ■

CAMPAIGNING FOR SHIPPING, DOCKS AND OFFSHORE MEMBERS

National officer Steve Todd outlined the union's agenda at the bi-annual general meeting of the shipping, docks and offshore grades meeting in Aberdeen

Firstly, I would like to thank all the branches that nominated me to continue as your national secretary for another five years. It is an honour to serve the shipping, docks and offshore members of this great industrial union.

I have continued to campaign for improved training and employment opportunities for UK seafaring ratings, the application of the National Minimum Wage and fighting for employment rights all nationalities employed on vessels in UK territorial waters.

In Scotland RMT is campaigning for both Clyde and Hebrides and Northern Isles lifeline ferry services to be fully-integrated public operations not subject to EU tendering rules.

JOINT TRAINING PROPOSALS

A joint document from all sides of the UK Shipping Industry had been presented to the Department for Transport. The agreement seeks enhanced training support for companies that agree on a voluntary basis to train and employ UK seafarers, for a minimum period, extended beyond training time. In return companies would receive increased SMART training funds.

Significantly it has been

proposed that companies now have an equal option to train ratings as well as officers to fulfill their tonnage tax training commitment. This has arisen following pressure from the union for concessions relating to the tonnage tax.

Currently, shipping companies entering the tonnage tax scheme have no mandatory commitment for UK ratings training, only a voluntary one.

However, for officers, companies have to train one cadet for every fifteen officers employed. The Chamber of Shipping has agreed that shipping companies should now be allowed within the regulations to train three ratings instead of one officer to fulfill their Minimum Training Obligation should this be a preferred option.

In addition, the joint document agrees to examine all SMART rules to maximise the availability of assistance for ratings.

Proposals will be presented to the shipping minister in order to obtain funding approval.

RACE RELATIONS ACT

RMT will continue to press for reform of the legislation that allows foreign national seafarers to be discriminated against in respect of their pay and



conditions when working on UK flagged ships.

Following pressure from the union the Department for Transport are consulting on changes to the existing legislation.

In order to achieve compliance with the legislation the UK government as a minimum will outlaw discrimination against EU nationals.

I will be seeking to keep the issue of discrimination on seafarers' pay firmly on the agenda with support from the RMT Parliamentary Group.

Unfortunately, possible changes have been delayed due to the decision to delay changes to the legislation pending the passage of the Single Equality Bill later this year.

The union will consider all legal options, including the possibility of backing an individual RMT seafarer who wishes to pursue a case at an Employment Tribunal.

NATIONAL MINIMUM WAGE

The union is seeking changes to the legislation covering seafarers in respect of the National Minimum Wage. At the

moment shipowners only have to pay the National Minimum Wage for UK nationals on UK-flagged ships, whilst foreign nationals are exempt.

I am working with the RMT Parliamentary Group to get an amendment to the Employment Bill which is currently going through Parliament. Following the work of the group, Baroness Muriel Turner outlined possible amendments in the House of Lords to secure a fairer deal for seafarers.

The National Minimum Wage should be applicable on all vessels in UK territorial waters and which are on regular trading routes between the UK and other EU states and the offshore one-port sector.

An Early Day Motion has been tabled on the issue by Gwyn Prosser MP and signed by 54 MPs.

DEFENDING SCOTTISH FERRY SERVICES

The union is committed to campaigning against a further round of tendering of Northern Isles ferry services.

The needless tendering exercise for Clyde and Hebrides ferry services enforced by



European Union diktats cost more than £17 million. I also intend to raise the transfer of contracts of employment offshore which has resulted in a further loss of revenue.

It is of great concern that the European Commission has also announced plans to Investigate subsidies currently received by Caledonian MacBrayne and Northlink for operating Clyde and Hebrides services and Northern Isles services.

This Investigation could have grave implications for the Scottish ferry network and in particular the Clyde and Hebrides routes.

It is vitally important that the network is not broken up with a minority of profitable routes open to cherry picking from other private sector operators.

I have asked the STUC to seek an urgent meeting with the European Commission on this matter and will campaign vigorously against any Commission findings that present a threat to the security of employment and the pay and conditions of RMT members.

RMT will be lobbying politicians in Scotland and the European Parliament on the need to change the existing tendering regulations.

FERRY WORKING GROUP

RMT successfully intervened at the ETF Ferry Conference in November 2006 dispute to set up a ferry campaign in the wake of the Irish Ferries dispute.

At the first meeting of the steering group RMT argued for a plan of action to raise the profile of the shipping industry amongst politicians, in particular the discriminatory practices still widespread within the Industry.

The ETF agreed a lobby of the European Parliament and the union will coordinate any forthcoming ETF actions with our domestic campaigning around the Race Relations Act.

The union is seeking to work alongside fellow affiliates to ensure that higher regional standards apply around UK, Ireland and France. Working with the ITF, RMT will be supporting action against those shipping companies that refuse to negotiate and continue to drag the Industry down through social dumping, introducing low pay and inferior conditions and a disregard for health and safety.

RMT has also concluded an agreement with officers' union Nautilus UK for both unions to claim negotiating rights for British-owned or controlled FOC vessels. We now have equal influence with Nautilus UK over the minimum pay and conditions that must apply on vessels that our owned or controlled in the UK.

RMT is in the process of discussions with Nautilus UK and the International Transport Workers Federation on how other UK-owned vessels not currently covered by the ITF can

be targeted and minimum standards enforced.

The union is also working with Nautilus UK and Irish and French affiliates to ensure that the ITF Athens policy is applied to ships that trade around the UK Coast.

ILO CONVENTION

The union has been represented on the Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA) working party that is considering the implementation of the ILO Convention on seafarers' rights in the UK.

Implementation will follow various consultation exercises by the MCA. A number of submissions have already been made by the union.

The union has been working hard to ensure that seafarers serving on UK flagged vessels benefit in full from any new rights under the new Convention, and also that existing UK entitlements are not devalued where they are higher than the minimum standards outlined in the new Convention. ■

ITF SEAFARERS ON DEFENDER RECEIVE OVER £40,000 ARREARS

Four International Transport Federation seafarers on the Defender received over £40,000 in arrears of pay following a bitter stand-off between the ITF and the ship's agents Forestry Fleet/Shipping in the Irish port of Cork.

However, five other seafarers on board signed agreements presented to them by management agreeing to sever links with the ITF and not to seek arrears of pay until the vessel returned to Latvia.

ITF Inspector Ken Fleming said that the ITF had learnt some valuable lessons from the dispute and would be watching Forestry Fleet/Shipping activities very closely from now on.

"I would advise companies engaged in the import or export of goods to check out very thoroughly the shipping lines they use.

"If the Defender had been arrested and the cargo impounded it could have seriously inconvenienced customers. The cheapest shipping quote does not always translate into the quickest or most economical service," he said.

SIPTU regional secretary Gene Mealy welcomed the

payments to the seafarers and the work put in to bring this "appalling" situation to light in Cork.

He said that it had sparked a humanitarian response from SIPTU dockers who were shocked at what was happening.

"I also have to recognise the very responsible attitude of the stevedore concerned in helping resolve the dispute and the assistance of the Harbour Master, Pat Farnham.

"Cork prides itself on maintaining decent employment standards in the port and a process is being put in place to prevent a recurrence of this situation," he said.

Mr Fleming said it was the first time dockers from SIPTU, or any union, had decided, to support seafarers.

"That is what solidarity is all about and Cork has sent out a message I hope will be listened to by dock workers in other ports," he said.

He also thanked Port State Control for responding so promptly to the situation and investigating the safety conditions on board where they discovered "a number of deficiencies in urgent need of attention". ■

BUS WORKERS DEMAND DECENT TERMS AND CONDITIONS

The bus workers' grades conference meeting in Paignton called for legislation to protect jobs, pensions and terms of employment



RMT busworkers called for a high-profile union campaign to safeguard terms and conditions under the government's local transport bill.

Parts of the bill, bringing greater regulation over the bus industry by returning the right to set timetables, fares and routes back to local authorities under what are termed "quality contracts," are welcomed by RMT in the union's fight for renationalisation.

But the union's busworkers conference, which met in Paignton last month, warned that job security, pension benefits and terms and conditions could be threatened by the legislation, which is expected to complete its passage through parliament in July.

It unanimously backed a resolution moved by Pete Edwards, Exeter No 2 urging the union to further pressure the government over the issue.

Concerns centre on the possibility of workers losing their rights when they are transferred to new operators awarded the quality contracts by the local government authority.

"The government are making out that this transport bill they're putting through is a good thing," Pete told conference.

"There are a lot of good points in there – local authorities will get more control of bus services."

But even the employers, who oppose the legislation for their own reasons, like to warn the union that workers could be adversely affected, Pete explained.

Keith Sanders-Hole, Exeter No 2 said: "I don't really think that our members realise this is going on. That's why we're calling for a high-profile campaign to bring this to the fore."

Assistant General Secretary Mick Cash told conference that the union had made submissions to the draft bill as well as the transport select committee and had meetings with civil servants and MPs, in a bid to win the best deal for members.

"Our aim is simple, our objective is clear – your jobs, your terms and conditions and your pension should be protected," he said.

"We'll see over the coming months whether the work we've put in is going to pay dividends.

"It's a very, very difficult situation. It's a mess out there and implementation will be sporadic across the country."

CARBON MONOXIDE

Conference also backed a resolution calling for action to monitor carbon monoxide levels in drivers' cabs.

Dave Gilby, South Devon Bus said: "We are dealing with traffic now that is unbelievable and inhaling all these emissions constantly.

"I believe it is essential that there should be testing and monitoring within our cabs," Dave added.

He explained that toll booths are equipped with a device which alerts the operator to high levels of carbon monoxide, urging something similar for bus workers.

Paul Dyer, North Devon Bus said drivers suffering from asthma or other chest conditions were clearly at greater risk, adding: "let's kill the fumes and not kill ourselves."

Conference backed a call for legislation to ensure that ageing buses should be withdrawn from service after 10 years.

"How many of us drive vehicles that are 20 years of age?" asked Dave Gilby.

"That are shooting out black smoke. That we book off time and time again. The health and safety of the travelling public with vehicles of a decent standard can only improve."

But Graham Geliher, East Midlands Bus suggested that a 10-year lifespan could be too low.

"Is a bus ruined at 10 years of age?" he asked. "The last time we had an influx of new jobs we lost fitters' jobs where I work."

Paul Young, Newport, Isle of Wight, warned: "Companies are not going to buy expensive top-of-the-range buses if they're

going to chuck them out after 10 years with no resale value."

Andy Bradford, Exeter No 2 moved a successful motion for a nationwide review on the use of speed humps on bus routes, warning that drivers who pass over the obstacles countless times are at risk of injury.

"The constant jerking and bouncing when going over these ramps experienced by drivers is likely to cause back injuries and for seats to collapse."

Delegates backed his call for the block type of speed restriction measure to be used rather than road-width ramps.

WITHDRAWAL OF SERVICES

Conference warned that the introduction of free bus travel for pensioners, introduced this year, may be abused by companies and used as an excuse to withdraw services.

Keith Murphy, Newport, Isle of Wight, told delegates that his local manager had already hinted at the loss of services as a result of the scheme.

There needs to be a

nationwide co-ordination, detailing reports where companies are threatening similar moves throughout the country, he said.

Pete Edwards, Exeter No 2 said that bus industry bosses are already complaining that they are not getting high enough subsidies to run the scheme.

"It's sad because this is the greatest opportunity this industry has had for many, many years. All these extra people who are travelling on the vehicles can't be a bad thing."

HOUSING

Delegates also backed a call for government to classify bus staff as essential workers for the purposes of housing.

"We are very low paid for the job we do and mortgages, more often than not, are really out of our reach," said Dave Gilby.

"Bus drivers work all the hours God sends. It's something we give to the public, we work hard for and yet we seem to get a little less back." ■

FAREWELL TO GRAHAM

Assistant General Secretary Mick Cash paid tribute to veteran RMT bus activist Graham Geliher (left), who is retiring after decades of service to the union and the industry.

"The contribution Graham has made over numerous years and the work he's put in has been tremendous.

"He's going to be a hard act to follow," said Mick.

Graham was the long-standing secretary of the East Midlands Bus branch. He was central to the struggle against union de-recognition and victimisation following bus privatisation in 1986.

By 1991 the branch had won back union recognition and today the company has a



full set of agreements and one rate of pay and all reps are released to do union business.

Conference delegates paid tribute to him as a leading light of the bus grade within the union who has served on the executive committee of the union.

Graham said that he was proud to play a part in such a great industrial union like RMT. ■

Network Rail infrastructure maintenance harmonisation

RMT

OK, OK! YOU CAN STAY AS YOU ARE!

maybe for a little while

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TO DO LIST
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Engineering grades conference called on the union to implement a new, rejuvenated strategy to tackle the harmonisation of pay and conditions on Network Rail after the failure of negotiations on the issue.

The call, made at the union's annual engineering grades conference which met in London last month, followed the landslide rejection of the company offer by 6,641 votes to 56 – a margin of more than 100 to 1.

Conference unanimously backed a motion urging a "new strategy," including greater involvement from area council reps, and for the union leadership to "rejuvenate this campaign."

Moving the resolution Gordon Martin, Motherwell and Wishaw said: "Network Rail have dictated the whole agenda, given this union the run-around and treated the members with contempt."

He suggested that the company tactics had been a "ploy" used to demoralise staff in an attempt to turn them against the union.

"We've been far too soft. From today the agenda must be our agenda. We need to start a fightback against this bully-boy company," he said.

Speaker after speaker warned that despite management assurances that its proposals will mean no change to workers' pay and conditions, it has a list of issues that it wants to negotiate separately, which could be used to attack pensions, jobs, hours, pay and sociable rostering.

"Terms and conditions would be decimated, you'd see people sacked left, right and centre and trade union activists victimised," said Gordon Martin.

Kenny Ray, Andover and Salisbury said: "Our fight begins now – make no mistake about it. Our officials need to go into every area and speak about the battles that lie ahead. This is a fight we cannot lose".

RMT general Secretary Bob Crow told conference that

harmonisation remained "the most important issue" facing the union, hailing the members' rejection of Network Rail's offer as "the best referendum result ever seen".

With a looming recession, and the prospect of rising unemployment, the company will be able to point out that workers are queuing up for jobs, he added.

"And when we are weak – then they will impose their terms and conditions. Well people say that fear is contagious – but there is a thing more powerful than fear, and that is courage."

ZERO TOLERANCE ON ASBESTOS

Delegates unanimously backed a call for a "zero tolerance" policy towards asbestos and for the union to instruct members not to work where the deadly material is present.

Greg Hewitt, Brighton and Hove, quoted government statistics showing that 90,000 people will die from exposure to asbestos, and because it can lay dormant for 40 years, 60,000 of those deaths are yet to happen.

He accused managers of instructing workers to drill holes where asbestos is present.

"They maintain that they are working within the legislation and that's good enough. Well I don't think so," he said.

So deadly is the material that there have been cases of wives and children contracting mesothelioma just by hugging their husbands and fathers on their return from work and inhaling tiny particles of asbestos, he added.

Doug Hammersley, LUL Engineering recalled how a close relative died of the condition over a five-year period and the agony of "watching someone die slowly without being able to catch their breath."

NO MORE METRONETS

Conference called for infrastructure engineering on the London Underground to be brought back into public hands following the "spectacular

collapse" of failed privateer Metronet.

Les Harvey, LUL Engineering, said: "We need to make sure that privatisation of any railway company is a thing of the past. The only people to profit from a railway should be the travelling public and the people who work on it".

He also warned that the record of another PPP company Tubelines was not much better, branding management "a bunch of bullies who intimidate staff," as conference backed his motion calling for an RMT investigation into its finances and performance.

Delegates also backed an emergency motion from LUL Engineering critical of the "heads of agreement" document signed by LUL and the union which settled the recent Metronet dispute before industrial action took place.

NO MORE GREYRIGGS

Conference warned of Network Rail's attempts to reduce the number of dedicated track patrolling teams, warning that derailments at Hatfield, Potters Bar and Greyrigg could have been prevented.

"We need competent, complete and effective track inspection as part of a safe and reliable railway for the public," said Alex Hogg of Edinburgh No 1 and Portobello, moving the resolution, which received unanimous approval.

Kenny Ray said: "My experience tells me you cannot inspect track by a moving vehicle. It is just not feasible".

WELFARE

Infrastructure companies are failing to provide welfare facilities for workers, including toilets or eating facilities, conference heard.

It backed a call from Jim McAleenan, Wishaw and Motherwell warning that members are being sent out to work in severe weather and hazardous conditions for up to 12-hour shifts without the provision of these facilities. ■

SOLIDARITY WITH CUBA

International guest Luis Marron, representing the Cuban embassy, praised RMT's assistance to his country in its struggle to maintain independence and national sovereignty in the face of United States aggression.

Next year marks the 50th anniversary of the Cuban revolution, which saw a US-backed dictatorship overthrown and replaced with a government whose achievements in education, health and poverty alleviation have won plaudits worldwide.

US President George W Bush has included Cuba in his infamous "axis of evil," yet terrorists, who openly boast of their involvement in bombing a Cuban airlines flight, with the loss of 73 lives, are free to walk the streets of Miami, Mr Marron told delegates.

Cuba Solidarity Campaign director Rob Miller told conference that 24 British unions – or 94 per cent of TUC affiliates – have signed up to the campaign.

Mr Miller singled out RMT for particular praise, saying that the union had led the way in support for CSC over the years.

"We are determined to make the 50th anniversary celebrations a massive success with events across Britain," he added.

* Tickets are still available for RMT's sixth annual garden party for Cuba on Tuesday, June 17 at Maritime House, London. Priced at £18 they include unlimited food and drink and live Cuban band. Contact James Croy on 020 7387 4771 or j.croy@rmt.org.uk to book.

EU THREATENS TO IMPOSE NEW MEGA LORRIES ON UK ROADS

25.5 metre, 60 tonne Heavy Goods Vehicles could be imposed on UK roads by next year by the European Union warns Freight on Rail campaigner Philippa Edmunds

Thanks to joint lobbying the Secretary of State for Transport, the Rt Hon Ruth Kelly, has stated that "she would need a huge amount of persuasion to allow longer heavier lorries" (LHVs) on UK roads.

Last October German transport ministers also voted to reject LHVs highlighting the increased safety risk, after extensive trials in Germany.

However, European Commission officials in Brussels at the Transport and Energy Directorate (DG TREN) seem very enthusiastic about longer, heavier lorries and are due to recommend that LHVs are allowed on certain types of EU roads either across all member states or that individual member states decide.

With the latter option, LHVs would come to the UK by default over time because if other European countries allowed them, the road haulage industry could claim that excluding longer heavier lorries (LHVs) would be anti-competitive.

Procedurally, this recommendation, expected in September, would have to go to other EC departments before going before the Parliament, where MEPs on the Transport committee would vote before the motion went before all the Parliament and Council of Ministers. This means that

legislation could be changed in the new European Parliament in the second half of 2009.

Freight on Rail maintains that a decision to allow 60 tonne 25.5 metre long lorries would have massive transport and environmental implications for society and could lead to the government failing to meet its emission reduction targets as well as causing severe road congestion and severe decline of sustainable freight alternatives at a time when fuel prices and sources are uncertain.

GOOD FOR THE ENVIRONMENT?

Analysis shows that all previous increases in lorry dimensions have led to more lorries driving around less full causing more congestion and pollution which is the absolute reverse of what was claimed would happen.

The same argument is being used again to justify longer heavier lorries. Since the last increase in maximum weights, average vehicle occupancy has been going down and over a quarter of lorries are running around empty.

The claimed environmental benefits of LHVs rely on very high levels of load utilisation – in excess of that routinely achieved within the haulage sector. Therefore at lower levels of utilisation the environmental performance of LHVs would be worse.

German trials showed that utilisation of above 77 per cent for LHVs was needed for fuel costs to breakeven. In 2006, UK HGVs over 33 tonnes were only 73 per cent full.



GOOD FOR RAIL?

Until there is a level playing field between modes so that road costs are fully internalised it is difficult for rail and water freight to compete. The European Commission calculates that lorries currently pay on average around 60-65 per cent of costs imposed on society.

The latest UK research shows that lorries are only paying between 36-61 per cent of the costs they impose on society.

Sanctioning LHVs would decimate rail freight, making it even harder for rail to compete in the vast majority of markets resulting in a downward vicious circle. Experience has shown that changes in price, where one mode exceeds the lowest available price, leads to significant (if not total) modal shift.

Studies have found that transport costs per tonne/km could be reduced by up to 15 - 20 per cent with LHVs. Falling costs per tonne/km with the larger vehicles will lead to

increased demand for road transport. Increased demand for road transport would cancel out any environmental gains from any increased efficiency, as well as cancelling out any initial minimal effects on congestion.

Distribution centres are likely to be rationalised saving on costs of land while the distance freight travels is likely to increase, in line with previous trends.

DANGEROUS ROADS?

The road haulage industry has a poor record in complying with existing road regulations ranging from exceeding speed, weight and driving hours limits, all of which put the public at extra risk.

For example on major non built up single carriage roads a staggering 76 per cent of articulated HGVs exceeded their 40 mph limit by 6mph on average, with 28 per cent exceeding the limit by more than 10 mph in 2005.

LHVs would have dangers of their own due to their size and lack of maneuverability. DfT research showed that because of

their size and weight, when they are involved in accidents the level of injury tends to be higher.

The same research found that HGVs were twice as likely to be involved in fatal accidents as cars. There are concerns about braking distances, blind spots on overtaking, especially with foreign left-hand drive vehicles, reversing, stability of double trailers, maneuverability including turning circles especially on motorway roundabouts, slip and access roads to depots. Even bendy buses, which are 18 metres long, cause more than twice as many injuries as any other bus.

The promoters are claiming that these vehicles will be restricted to motorways, dual carriageways and major roads, but there is no mechanism available to keep them to this and the type of road has not been fully clarified.

Unlike other European countries, the UK allows all vehicles to operate on any road and at any time unless specifically prohibited from doing so and then it often allows entry for access.

As a result, we will get these very large vehicles travelling down local roads to access depots that are wholly unsuitable for the purpose, with consequent intrusion, noise and road damage and safety implications.

HGVs are up to 160,000 times more damaging to road surfaces than the average car; some of the heaviest road repair costs are therefore almost exclusively attributable to the heaviest vehicles.

A 60 tonne lorry would be 4.7 times more damaging than a 44 tonne lorry on a suspension bridge. The damage to underground structures, including gas and water mains, electricity and telecommunications, caused by existing HGVs is as yet unknown and the impact could be even greater with larger vehicles.

Freight on Rail is campaigning for longer heavier trains which are a better environmental and social solution supported by the general public. ■

Freight on Rail contact 020 8241 9982 email philippaedmunds@freightonrail.org.
uk: www.freightonrail.org.uk





SAY NO TO LISBON- SAY YES TO DEMOCRACY

You can tell a lot about the European Union's Lisbon Treaty by the way it was drawn up, says John McDonnell MP



NON: Millions of French and Dutch workers rejected the EU constitution in referenda three years ago but Brussels ignored the votes and repackaged it as the Lisbon Treaty

The EU Constitution process began over six years ago with the creation of a self-selected group of the European political elite in a convention chaired by ex-French president Valéry Giscard d'Estaing.

One of the representatives from Britain was one of my parliamentary colleagues Labour MP Gisela Stuart.

Despite being widely known as a europhile, Gisela was appalled by the lack of transparency and democracy within the convention.

Not once in the sixteen months she spent on the Convention did representatives question whether deeper integration was what the peoples of Europe really wanted.

The debates focused solely on how the European Union could be further centralised and no

votes were ever taken before the final agreement.

There was no provision for consultation with citizens or national parliaments by convention members. There was no opportunity for the peoples of member states or their national parliaments to give their point of view or vote before the convention adopted the constitution.

This would go a long way to explaining why millions of French and Dutch voters rejected the unloved constitution three years ago.

As some member states had rejected the constitution that should have been the end of that. If anything, it could have been the start of a wide-ranging democratic debate engaging the peoples of Europe on what sort of Europe we all wanted to see develop. The choices between a democratic social Europe extending civil liberties and establishing economic rights, or a market-led Europe dominated by transnational corporations with the sole aim of maximising profit.

BIG STATE BULLYING

Instead – after a two-year ‘period for reflection’ – EU leaders established an ‘exclusive mandate’ on an EU intergovernmental conference (IGC), ordering member states to confine themselves to discussing only the contents of the rejected constitution.

The bigger states like Germany and Britain pressurised the weaker, smaller EU states to accept this strategy as a fait accompli.

The Czech delegation regarded the summit at which this cajoling and bullying took place last October as “a fiasco” with one member stating that “without a partner from one of the larger states, we were powerless”.

Many representatives from member states, like Gisela Stuart, also became disillusioned when it was clear that the old EU constitution had simply been repackaged under a different name, the ‘Reform’ then the Lisbon Treaty. She described this as a “deeply dishonest process”.

As the chief author of the constitution Giscard d'Estaing said: “All the earlier proposals will be in the new text, but will be hidden and disguised in some way”.

The process of imposing an ‘exclusive mandate’ on states prevented an open debate and forced member states into a take-it-or-leave-it situation – thus restricting any opportunity for constructive debate on future methods of democratic participation and political co-operation.

In the past with all EU treaties, from Rome to Nice, an intergovernmental conference has preceded the tabling of a draft treaty where unanimity and ratification by all member states was required.

In the case of the “exclusive mandate” these principles were set aside by the European Council – an informal group of EU heads of government.

There were clear warnings that the new treaty was worse as it would formally incorporate the European Council into EU structures for the first time.

This body was originally set up in 1974 as a forum for heads of EU member states to meet. Under Lisbon it will, in effect, become the “Cabinet” of the new government of Europe.

This would impose a legal obligation on EU leaders to “promote its values, advance its objectives, serve its interests” rather than those of the people within their individual countries that they were elected to represent.

UNDEMOCRATIC SUPERSTATE

In effect, a bureaucratic European superstate is created with powers and structures put in place in which EU institutions become unaccountable to the electorates of member states.

If democracy is to have any meaning, surely it is the ability of the electors to hold their leaders to account and for the politicians to recognise their responsibility to exercise power in accordance with the democratic wishes of those people who elected them.

This new constitution would break those lines of accountability and responsibility. The role of individual leaders will be reversed. Instead of representing the interests of their people in Europe, their legal responsibility will be to represent the interests of the EU above all else.

In other words, Lisbon would give the EU its own legal personality and distinct corporate existence for the first time.

In doing so, it would also enable the EU to have its own foreign minister and diplomatic corps, its own public prosecutor and federal police force and take over all the powers and institutions of the existing European Community.

SAY NO TO LISBON

The Lisbon Treaty constitutes an immensely significant change in the way over 500 million people are governed.

The future of European governance is too important to be determined by sleight of hand by a small elite group of politicians and bureaucrats.

Let us have a real debate about Europe's future: a democratic debate by the people, for the people and not this shabby constitutional stitch-up. ■



The TUC is organising a national one-day conference on 16 June 2008, to demonstrate the scale and ambition of trade union engagement in the challenge of climate change, nationally and in support of a new UN treaty.



TUC Climate Change Conference

Trade Unions & Climate Change - *A Just Transition*

A national one-day conference and debate on trade unions and climate change, with Hilary Benn, Secretary of State for the Environment, a Green Academy of six themed workshops, and a plenary debate with an expert panel.

This conference explores the necessity for a 'Just Transition' in the rapid shift to a low-carbon society. Trade unions have a leading role to play in this transition:

- Because of their responsibility towards the workers they represent.
- To ensure that it is not they who bear the brunt of environmentally-driven policies.
- In the workplace, by engaging workers and employers in building sustainable workplaces.
- Through the promotion of social justice beyond the workplace and tackling inequality on the national and international stage.

At the conference, the TUC will publish *A Just Transition: Trade unions and climate change*, a groundbreaking report calling for a green and decent jobs strategy that involves trade unions, social protection measures and skills and training initiatives.

International negotiations on a future post-2012 Kyoto climate change treaty have reached a critical stage. The conference will hear from Secretary of State Hilary Benn MP on how the UK is meeting its national and global obligations, and discuss the ITUC's priorities for the new treaty.

Chaired by Paul Noon, General Secretary of Prospect and TUC General Council lead on the environment, the conference will be a major opportunity for delegates to challenge and contribute to the debate on unions and climate change.



Keynote speakers:

Rt Hon Hilary Benn MP
Secretary of State for the Environment

Frances O'Grady
TUC Deputy General Secretary

**Monday 16th June 2008, 9am - 4.30pm,
Congress House**

YOUNG MEMBERS GETTING ORGANISED

EC member Nick Quirk reports on this year's young member's conference which took place in London recently

The young member's conference held in London was another successful event, firmly establishing this section as an important area in terms of recruitment, retention, education and activism.

Senior Assistant General Secretary Mick Cash opened the conference by explaining how important it is for young workers to be involved in political movements.

"Politicians are important as they inflict things on us as transport workers such as privatisation, flags of convenience and continual attempts to erode our terms and conditions of work so it's important to be actively involved in politics and fight for your future," he said.

He also expressed pride at



how the union is developing young members, working alongside the education department and organising unit to promote and educate new members coming into the union and the workplace.

Joanne Parry, Transport for London branch warned that "in an environment of global decline in trade union membership, it is so vital to promote the importance of trade unionism to the youth of Britain before it is too late".

Becky Crocker, Camden No.3

added that "we should be seeking to create a position within the union to work for the needs of our young members".

Ross Marshall, Central Line West introduced the campaign to protect affordable homes and put pressure on the government to provide more council housing.

"We need to take a serious look at the rising cost of housing in which young people are taking huge risks in taking out large mortgages to get on the property ladder," he said.

UNION LEARNING

James Liness, European Passenger Services said that the union should continue to promote education in the workplace.

"The rail union learning scheme is a great way of learning new skills in a good environment but what we need is more union learning reps throughout the country from all areas of the transport industry,"

he said.

This was echoed by guest speaker Jen York, the development worker for the RMT Learning project, who emphasised the importance of urging companies to encourage education in the workplace.

Other guest speakers included Hamish Drummond of the PCS union who spoke to the conference about the history of working class struggle and James Fitzsimmons from the Cuba Solidarity Campaign who gave a report on the latest news of the campaign.

A young member's Parliamentary meeting will be organised so that the issues discussed at this and previous conferences can be asked directly to MPs and invited speakers.

For further information on RMT Learning please contact Andrew Brattle on 020 7529 8820 or email rattle@rmt.org.uk ■



INTRODUCING RMT LEARNING

RMT Learning project manager
Teresa Williams explains how
the two-year learning project
aims to bring learning
opportunities to members



RMT has successfully bid to the Union Learning Fund for a two-year learning project called RMT Learning.

This project will be continuing some of the great work undertaken by Rail Union Learning over the last four years.

The time has come though to make the learning agenda and to make Union Learning Reps (ULRs) an integral part of the union.

The unique role of the 'Rail' Union Learning Rep (RULR) will continue to be supported by RMT Learning. The model learning agreement developed by Rail Union Learning will continue to be used in negotiations.

RMT Learning has development workers for the South (currently being recruited), the North, Network Rail and Shipping.

Development workers will be ensuring that the building blocks needed to make union learning sustainable are in place. This includes working with branches to embed the role of the ULR, talking to employers about the benefits of the union learning agenda and Learning Agreements and supporting regional officers in getting the very best Learning Agreements possible.

BRANCHING OUT INTO LEARNING

RMT Learning kicked off the project by bringing branch secretaries and ULRs together at the Branching Out into Learning conference, aimed at firmly embedding the ULR within the branch.

The one-off conference

looked at ways to achieve this and develop an effective working relationship for the benefit of members and their branch.

The day started with an introduction from the union's education officer Ray Spry-Shute. Ray explained that the role of the ULR could be likened to that of the Health and Safety rep when that role was created. To start with the role of the safety rep wasn't widely understood and perhaps wasn't thought of as important, whereas today it's a crucial part of the union.

RMT general secretary Bob Crow addressed the conference pointing out how important it was for members to be supported in whatever they wanted to learn.

Bob went on to say that many of our members are low paid and that learning was one very real way for people to improve their pay and conditions.

The union's organising unit were at the conference, because ULRs often come in contact with non-members and the very visible service that Union Learning Reps give is often enough for people to see joining the union as worthwhile.

Jen York from RMT Learning held a seminar on learning styles. We all have different learning styles, which is why ULRs are so important.

ULRs can ensure that members get access to the sort of learning that suits them.

This was followed by a series of workshops enabling delegates to discuss with their roles within the union. The workshops

produced some excellent ideas on the issues and on some practical steps to get the branch and ULRs working together.

These ideas are going to be compiled into a document that branches can refer to when creating their own policy on learning.

As one delegate put it "I enjoyed the interaction between branch secretaries and learning reps, and good to see a common aim in strengthening RMT in the workplace".

In some branches the role of the Union Learning Rep is already so well embedded that the Branch Secretary is also a ULR.

Yet some branch secretaries freely admitted that they knew very little about what ULRs did. Some ULRs reveal that they didn't know their branch secretary.

This conference has made a very real difference to the involvement ULRs will have in their branch in the future.

It is the cornerstone of what we want to achieve and that's

having the ULR working in and being supported by the branch.

CLOSING STATEMENT FROM RAIL UNION LEARNING

Rail Union Learning was formed in 2004, bringing together under one umbrella the individual learning projects that ASLEF, RMT and TSSA were running. After four years of working together, successfully establishing the unique role of the 'Rail Union Learning Rep', the time has come for each of these unions to concentrate on making learning integral within their structures.

Taking forward the many positive aspects of Rail Union Learning, ASLEF, RMT and TSSA will be running separate learning programmes from April 2008. Naturally, they will continue to act together within workplaces to benefit all learners.

For further information on RMT Learning please contact Andrew Brattle on 020 7529 8820 or email a.brattle@rmt.org.uk



Learning team:

RMT education officer Ray Spry-Shute, Development Worker (North) Graham Chesters, Project manager Teresa Williams, Shipping Development Worker Mike Sargent, Network Rail Development Worker Jen York, Administrator Andrew Brattle. Development Worker(South) to be announced.





Aid for Cuba Garden Party

JUNE 17

Maritime House
Clapham Old Town
London SW4

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or email j.croy@rmt.org.uk for tickets.

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LEGAL

DEFINING THE WORD 'REDUNDANT'

An Employment Appeals Tribunal in *Martland v Cooperative Insurance Society* case has found that redundancy dismissals were in fact dismissals for some other substantial reason.

The tribunal considered whether a dismissal, when the workforce is immediately offered re-engagement on new terms and conditions of employment, amounts to a 'redundancy' dismissal, entitling the workforce to redundancy payments.

The employees appealed, arguing that they had been

dismissed because there was a reduction in the need for employees to do 'work of a particular kind', i.e. work under those terms and conditions.

The EAT upheld the ET's decision, holding that 'work of a particular kind' referred to the generic type of job - in this case, insurance salesmen.

The tribunal was entitled to find that the job was still essentially the same, despite the substantial changes to the terms and conditions of employment. ■

UNION WINS INJURY COMPENSATION

Union solicitors Thompsons recently reported the successful conclusion of an injury compensation claim, winning around £19,000 for a member.

Whilst the member was walking along a lane his foot went into a large pothole in the roadway causing him to fall.

He suffered multiple injuries including a broken orbit, injuries to his arms, legs, ribs, face, nose mouth and bruising to his

stomach.

The other side's insurers refuse to negotiate a settlement and it was necessary to commence court proceedings. Satisfactory settlement terms were agreed and the member was awarded the compensation.

Cases such as this show the value of the union's legal service. It also shows that the union is prepared to take cases that claims companies and no win/no fee solicitors will not. ■

LEGAL VICTORIES IN BRIEF

- £20,220 secured for a track machine operator whose jaw was broken when his head became jammed in part of a machine.
- £2,633 for a conductor who injured her wrist, arm and shoulder when she slipped on a pool of water on the train floor.
- £100,000 for a maintenance worker who received 11 per cent his body when he suffered an electric shock climbing into a train unit that

had not been isolated. He was unable to return to his job. The case exposed an unsafe system of work at the depot.

- £3,000 each paid to six members who claimed unfair dismissal after being made redundant by an employer who switched to using contractors to do their work.
- Significant settlement on behalf of members at Lynx/UPS over the employer's failure to inform and consult. ■

SATISFACTION IN CREWE

Dear editor,

I am writing to say a big thank you to both RMT and Bridge MacFarland solicitors for their help during my claim for injuries I sustained on a foot crossing at Crewe back in December 2005.

I was off work for thirteen weeks whilst recovering from a head and neck injury but RMT and John MacDonald and, in particular, Zoe Thornton from Bridge MacFarland were very professional in their approach to my claim.

The claim has now been settled to my satisfaction which I believe would have been made much harder outside RMT. Thank you.

Regards

Mark Testrow
Driver, Crewe

MESOTHELIOMA COMPENSATION BATTLE

Dear editor,

In November 2004, I made an application for legal assistance in the case of my father, Virgilio Giacomini, who had just been diagnosed as suffering from mesothelioma and died in January, 2005.

The case of the disease was attributed to his attendance at the Nuneaton rail crash on June 6 1975 and the defendants subsequently admitted liability in his case.

The case was directed to Mark Wright. I am now pleased to report that settlement has been agreed and my mother will receive an award shortly.

I write to express the thanks of the family to the union for taking up our case and to say we are extremely grateful to Mr Wright for the way he steadfastly and efficiently dealt with the matter. Throughout the past three and a half years Mr Wright dealt promptly with any queries I raised. He always kept me advised of the progress and, in particular, has always shown sensitivity and respected that, as a family, we always acted in the best interests of our mother.

I understand Mr Wright has now transferred to Thompson's solicitors who will, in future, be undertaking cases. I therefore want to let you know how grateful we are to the union and, in particular, to Mr Wright.

Yours faithfully

Ida Cash

FLEXIBLE WORKING SURVEY

RMT News is asking members with children under the age of six if the new legal right to request to work flexibly has helped them to adjust their work patterns



With legislative measures, such as parental leave, extended maternity leave, the introduction of paid paternity leave and the right to flexible working, the struggle of juggling childcare and work would hopefully be a thing of the past.

However, this is 'light touch' legislation. The flaw in this is the assumption that employers would willingly embrace the concept of work/life balance. Whilst some progress has been made, there is little evidence of a cultural change in the companies that employ RMT members.

FLEXIBLE WORKING?

In relation to flexible working, the legislation only provides a right to request.

If the request is declined, the scope for taking a claim to a Tribunal is limited to if the reason for the refusal is outside the comprehensive list of permitted reasons to decline the request, or if the reason is based on incorrect facts, or if the correct procedure has not been followed.

Unfortunately, Tribunals do not have the power to force employers to agree to a request.

It is sometimes possible to claim sex discrimination in that the requirement to work a set pattern or hours, indirectly

discriminates against women. Alternatively, if only women are granted the request as opposed to men, this might also be sex discrimination.

Even if granted, some managers subject the individual to reviews. In one case, on male RMT member had to undergo this process every three months.

This obviously subjects the individual to unnecessary stress and was completely unwarranted as there had been no material changes at the particular depot where he is a guard, nor had his own circumstances altered.

As he was the only one at the depot working flexible hours, it was clear that cultural change had not taken hold there.

RMT receive many complaints from both sexes about their requests being turned down. In one such case, a female member whose relationship came to an abrupt end became the sole carer of their young son.

She put in her request to work flexibly and was turned down. The difficulties of finding childcare when working on a roster, proved impossible for the member. Not surprisingly, she suffered stress and was signed off work by her GP. She was rightly advised to lodge a grievance. In one of the most

shocking examples to date, she was sacked.

RMT provided legal representation to take the company to an employment tribunal but the case was settled before the hearing. As the settlement included a confidentiality clause, the union cannot name the company but RMT is closely watching it.

NETWORK RAIL

One company that the union can name and shame, is Network Rail. RMT did support a female signaller in Scotland who had no alternative but to resign as Network Rail had declined her application to work flexibly. The case did go to a hearing and the member won. Representation was given ably by our Scottish Solicitors Drummond Miller.

In the written judgment, the Tribunal noted that 'only six per cent of the signallers in Scotland are female'.

The nature of the work did not, in the Tribunal's view, provide an explanation of the very significant imbalance of the gender makeup of the workforce.

The Tribunal considered that there was a real possibility of a link between the specific treatment which the member received and the more general picture which emerged as to the

gender makeup and work patterns of Network Rail's workforce.

The inference drawn by the Tribunal was that 'women may be being discouraged from applying for work and/or pursuing careers as signallers.'

They concluded that 'it is, in our opinion, a matter which the respondent, as an employer, should be examining closely'. RMT will be taking this up with Network Rail.

Unfortunately, this was a rare victory and the odds are often stacked against claimants. Whilst the examples given in this article relate to childcare, the right was extended to carers in April 2007.

A review commissioned by the government appears to be leaning towards the age limit being raised to about 12-year old in respect of childcare.

Crucially, there is no word of the legislation being given more teeth. It will still remain just a 'right to request'.

RMT needs to take the case for flexible working to your employer.

To help do that effectively, please spare a few moments to complete the questionnaire opposite.

This information will enable RMT to put forward arguments based on what is really happening in your workplace. ■

FLEXIBLE WORKING SURVEY

Please read this survey carefully. After you have read the survey, please answer as many questions as you can. For each question, please tick one box only.

- | | |
|---|--|
| <p>1. What Company do you work for?
<input type="text"/></p> <p>2. Are you employed full time or part time?
☐ Full time ☐ Part time</p> <p>3. Do you have children under the age of 6, or a disabled child under 18?
☐ Yes ☐ No</p> <p>4. Do you have children over the age of 6?
☐ Yes ☐ No</p> <p>5. Do you have caring responsibilities for anyone else, such as a spouse, partner, civil partner?
☐ Yes ☐ No</p> <p>6. In your present job, have you ever asked to work flexible hours?
☐ Yes ☐ No</p> | <p>7. If you answered yes to question 6, did you apply under the Right to Request to Flexible Working?
☐ Yes ☐ No</p> <p>8. If you answered no to question 7, was the arrangement informal?
☐ Yes ☐ No</p> <p>9. If you answered 'Yes' to question 7 or 8, was your request granted?
☐ Yes ☐ No</p> <p>10. If you answered 'Yes' to question 9, was your request granted in full or did you have to compromise?
☐ Yes ☐ No</p> <p>11. Does your Company cultivate a culture in the workplace where asking to work flexibly is acceptable?
☐ Yes ☐ No</p> |
|---|--|

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire. Please tear out and return in an envelope marked "Freepost, Flexible Working Survey, RMT, Unity House, 39 Chalton Street, London, NW1 1JD.

RMT STANDS UP FOR ITS MEMBERS

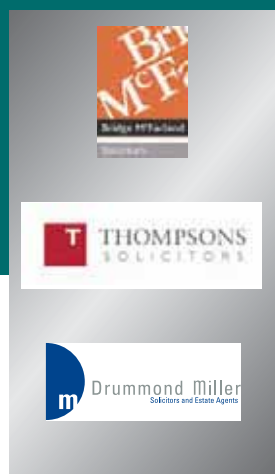
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PROTECTING AND PROMOTING OUR MEMBERS' INTERESTS



SCOTTISH PROGRESS

Ann Henderson reports from the Scottish TUC Congress in Inverness



STUC Congress delegates from affiliated unions and trades councils debated a wide range of policies, including manufacturing, taxation, energy, transport, broadcasting, opposition to the trafficking of women and children, public sector job losses and opposition to plans to close the Glasgow passport office, with a loss of 140 jobs.

STUC membership figures show an increase in trade union membership in Scotland by 20,000 and there is growing confidence in the relevance of the labour movement.

The pension dispute between UNITE members and Ineos at the Grangemouth Oil Refinery was centre stage. The STUC Congress gave unanimous support to an emergency resolution that condemned the management for attacking the company

pension scheme, and Congress stood in solidarity with those workers who took strike action to defend their pensions and their terms and conditions.

John Swinney MSP, Minister for Finance and Sustainable Growth, addressed Congress shortly after the Scottish Government announced April 3, a three-year extension for First Group, the current franchise holder.

It came as a complete surprise to trade unions, passenger groups, MSPs and local authorities.

The terms of the agreement appear to greatly benefit the company, and with a commitment of nearly £800 million public money, trade unions wanted answers.

Emergency motions were tabled at Congress to expose the franchise settlement and challenge the SNP administration on its pre-election commitments to look at running the franchise on a not-for-profit model. The Minister gave no reassurances on that point.

Congress also heard from Alex Salmond MSP, First Minister – and from Gordon Brown, Prime Minister. Wendy Alexander MSP addressed Congress for the Labour Party in the Scottish Parliament.

Congress discussed the political situation facing the labour movement in Scotland includes a continuing debate around the powers of the Scottish Parliament. Matt Smith, UNISON and STUC Treasurer, will be

joining the Calman Commission, which will be looking at the devolution settlement.

RMT DELEGATION

This year Congress was chaired by RMT regional organiser Phil McGarry as he completed his year as STUC President.

In his President's address, which won a standing ovation, Phil spoke of the need for urgent legislative action on agency workers and for justice for those affected by asbestosis.

Phil defended the public sector and attacked expensive private finance deals and called for the return of trade union rights in accordance with ILO conventions.

Turning to international affairs, he attacked the illegal attacks on Iraq and said it was time to bring the troops home.

He also called for solidarity with the peoples of Cuba and of Venezuela, and with the people of Palestine and a commitment to building a Scottish society based on equality and justice.

RMT delegates spoke in a number of debates, in particular on transport policy and on the Trade Union Reform Bill and workers' employment rights.

The 111th STUC Congress remained confident that working together it would continue to change and improve lives.

Some coverage from STUC Congress can be seen on the website www.congress.tv



NEW ZEALAND RENATIONALISES RAIL AND FERRY NETWORKS

Transport workers in New Zealand celebrated the renationalisation of rail and ferry operations this month.

Rail and Maritime Transport Union (RMTU) General Secretary Wayne Butson said that move would see national transport assets returned to the people of NZ.

"The RMTU campaigned long and hard to get the Labour-led government to renationalise the network," he said.

Mr Butson said that from the day that the government sold off rail to an US-led

consortium, the lot of rail workers and customers had gone in a down hill direction and there had been an exodus of key skilled workers.

"The flavour of the day was to extract the cash, replace it with debt and do just enough to keep it going," he said.

The RMTU is keen to be a part of the rejuvenation of the New Zealand rail industry so that it can deliver the safe sustainable transport option demanded by global warming and escalating fuel prices. ■



FRENCH PORT WORKERS CONTINUE OPPOSITION TO PRIVATISATION

France's powerful port workers' union FNP-DCGT has stepped up its round of 24-hour strikes with demonstrations and a work-to-rule action that is effecting the country's port activity resulting in severe delays in ship arrivals and departures.

The FNP-DCGT is fighting the conservative government's plans to privatise stevedoring

activity including several aspects of port activity including crane driving and gantry operations.

It says that it does not want French ports to be given over to private interests and foreign multinational companies.

Despite firm CGT letters calling for dialogue to the French President and Prime minister so that the text can

be suspended and amended, the cabinet has approved the basis of a bill shortly to go before parliament. But the union says this will not deter it from stepping up its industrial action.

The ports that have been most affected by the action that started at the beginning of April are the seven main French gateways and

especially Le Havre, the country's biggest container port, Marseilles, the biggest general port, where action continues despite a local court decision brought by the port authorities declaring the work to rule illegal.

Many other ports have also been affected and the Queen Elizabeth 2 cruise liner had to annul its call to Bordeaux. ■

ITALIAN RAIL UNIONS CONCERNED AT EU COMPETITION RULES

Italian rail unions are concerned that the election in April of right-wing billionaire Silvio Berlusconi as the country's prime minister could bring forward the opening to competition of rail transport, earmarked by the European Union for January 1 2010.

The French government has already announced it wants to advance the date by a month to coincide with winter service schedules.

Ferrovie dello Stato (FS) is

not out of the red but reported a 2007 loss of 409 million euros, five times smaller than its 2,115 million euro deficit in 2006. Its turnover was almost 15 per cent up in a year. Meanwhile, the new high speed lines between Bologna and Verona and Bologna and Milan are due to begin service by the end of this year with new services between Milan and Novara and between Bologna and Florence opening twelve months later. ■

FRENCH RAIL UNIONS FIGHT TO DEFEND RIGHTS

A report from an official French government body risks lighting a powder keg among French rail unions following its conclusion that one railway employee in three should be transferred to the RFF.

The company was set up in 1997 to finance and maintain 30,000km of track, but without hiring personnel so that the debt of the SNCF, the French national rail company, would be within the limits set down by the EU for companies in the public sector.

The idea is to reduce the SNCF's debt. At the moment the RFF pays the SNCF to maintain the network. If the government accepts the plan, around 55,000 SNCF maintenance employees would lose their hard-won rights and status as national rail employees.

The majority CGT union has already said it will "create the conditions for a major movement to oppose the break-up of the SNCF" while five smaller rail unions have also said they oppose any transfer move. ■

GERMAN COALITION PRIVATISES DEUTSCHE BAHN

Germany's right wing "grand coalition" government of the conservative CDU-CSU and the SPD plans to sell around 30 per cent of Deutsche Bahn's (DB) passenger and freight activity this autumn.

The rising left-wing Die Linke minority fiercely opposed the sell-off.

The CDU-CSU had wanted an immediate 50 per cent sell-off. They said the present privatisation was a "first step" and they will sell another 25 per cent if they win the 2009 elections, while the SPD said there would not be a further sale.

The 34,000km national rail network, electrical supply system and almost 4,000 stations will remain under 100 per cent government ownership.

One major question for the coalition is the degree of control over future private shareholders, especially regarding line closures.

With assurances that guarantees job protection until 2023, the unions are now concerned that private investors will put money into DB with the sole aim of running the group down.

They are also concerned by a recent internal DB report showing that 10,000 of the country's 27,000 mechanical signalling systems are more than 80 years old and the 8,000 of the electro-mechanical systems have operated for over 60 years.

And the governments of Germany's powerful Länder, or regions, are now demanding a say in defending regional rail transport networks, an issue that has been only been dealt with by parliament. ■

Solidarity on May Day



Workers May Day is a day of international solidarity with all working people throughout the world fighting for peace and against neo-liberal globalisation and the drive to impose anti-worker policies.

This year I joined the RMT delegation on the annual march through London which began at Clerkenwell Green.

It was great to see the LU Engineering and Leeds City branch banners among the usual colourful array of trade union standards.

It is always a pleasure to meet new members and catch up with colleagues including those from my own branch Finsbury Park beneath their banner. I have also had the privilege to meet members from across the country as part of my duties as president attending the grades conferences that take place this time of year.

From the health and safety conference in February to the catering grades conference I attended just recently members are coming together to discuss common concerns and draw up our objectives and aspirations.

This is part of the yearly cycle of conferences and meetings building up to our annual general meeting at the end of June, this year in Nottingham.

As president, I chair each AGM for the three years of my tenure and my last one in my term is in the Isle of Man next year. The AGM is the parliament of the union and discusses and votes on motions sent from branches and grades conferences and appeals against executive committee decisions.

This 12-month cycle of democracy has been built up over many years and represents the lifeblood of the union. Without these

structures the union could not operate and maintain the confidence and trust of the membership.

These structures are designed to allow members to take part in the debates and decision-making processes of the union not to keep them out.

So if you feel strongly about something go to your branch and take part in the debates that happen there, go to your regional council and your grades conference.

It is at these bodies that you have the power to make policy that could improve the lives of thousands of transport workers.

You can write a motion from your branch which can be sent to the AGM and you could even stand for election to become a delegate and present your motion, which will be democratically debated and voted on.

AGM decisions are binding on all members and are, in effect, instructions to the leadership of the union. AGM delegates have a duty and responsibility to the membership and it is a highly respected position.

You may win your motion, you may lose, but either way you would have contributed to the democratic culture of this union which we can all be very proud of. The measure of how successful a union's structures are is how many workers voluntarily join it. And, judging by today's growing membership figures, we ain't doing bad.

I would encourage all members who don't attend branch meetings to take that extra step and get involved if you can. The stronger we are the more we can achieve together.

John Leach

JIM CONNELL REMEMBERED



RMT general secretary Bob Crow attended the trade union festival in Kells, County Meath, Ireland this month to celebrate the life of Jim Connell who wrote the socialist anthem *The Red Flag* in 1889.

The festival marked the tenth anniversary of the Jim Connell memorial stone at Crossakiel, Kells.

A relative of Jim Connell from Cork, Maura Geraghty (above), was guest of honour with Bob Crow.

Jim Connell wrote the anthem of the international socialist movement on a train

from Charing Cross to New Cross during the London dock strike.

He addressed a crowd at Crossakiel on his last visit to Ireland before he died in London in 1929.

Bob addressed the crowd at this year's event, pointing out that if Jim Connell was here today he would recognize many of the problems facing working people and their organisations.

"We must find the confidence that Jim Connell inspired with his words and defend and extend workers' rights," he said.



The people's flag is deepest red,
It shrouded oft our martyred dead,
And ere their limbs grew stiff and cold,
Their hearts' blood dyed its ev'ry fold.

Then raise the scarlet standard high.
Within its shade we'll live and die,
Though cowards flinch and traitors sneer,
We'll keep the red flag flying here.

Look 'round, the Frenchman loves its blaze,
The sturdy German chants its praise,
In Moscow's vaults its hymns are sung
Chicago swells the surging throng.

Then raise the scarlet standard high.
Within its shade we'll live and die,
Though cowards flinch and traitors sneer,
We'll keep the red flag flying here.

Jim Connell

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RMT SAYS FAREWELL TO BRIAN AND JIM



Brian Curtis and Jim Stevenson both retired from the union recently after both serving 21 years as divisional organisers.

Brian was elected as DO for South Wales and South West in 1987 and Jim also took up the same duties in the South East and Anglia region.

Brian joined the NUR in 1971 as a member of Barry Docks branch and became branch secretary.

He was also secretary of South Wales Ports area council, a regular delegate to the Dock and Maritime grades conference and served on the executive committee from 1985 to 87.

Brian was well known as an effective organiser and served as chair of the Wales TUC. He was recruited to the Labour Party

by Michael Foot and became treasurer of the Welsh labour Party sat on the MP selection committee for Labour seats in Wales.

Jim joined the union in 1961 and became branch secretary of the Kings Cross branch. He also served as secretary of the Training Catering National Council and the Catering Grades Conference.

He served on the EC twice from 1980/82 and 1986/88 and when he first elected he was described by his branch as having "a welcome blend of youth and experience".

He also gained notoriety by appearing in the cult film classic 'Get Carter' as an extra serving Michael Caine a silver service dinner while he travelled to Newcastle.

Jim was heavily involved in raising funds for the London widows and orphans fund and will be continuing in his duties as

secretary.

RMT general secretary Bob Crow thanked them for the unique contributions they both made to the union and wished them all the best for the future.

"I am sure Jim and Brian will be around to still give valuable advice to RMT members of all ages for many years to come," he said. ■

PRESTON NO 1 BADGE AVAILABLE



The cost is £5.75 including post and package, orders to Trevor Jordan, 3 Edward Street, Morecambe, Lancs, LA4 4BL

Cheques are payable to RMT Preston no 1 branch. The price is based on an order of 100 comes down to £5 a badge. The price to non-RMT members is £10 plus sae Jiffy Bag.

WILF PROUDFOOT PASSES AWAY

Former Assistant General Secretary Wilf Proudfoot died recently at the age of 69.

Wilf joined the NUR at the age of 15 on commencing BR Service at Shildon Works in 1954.

He was made redundant in 1960 but rejoined at Shildon and transferred to Derby. During this time he was secretary of Derby No. 2 Branch, Shop Representative and member of the Works Committee - Derby Loco Works, Delegate

and on EC to NUR Midland District Council, Delegate to the Derby and District TU Council.

On a national basis, He was a delegate to the AGM in 1973 and TUC in 1973, 1977 and 1981. He was elected as Divisional Organiser in 1977 covering Division 1 Glasgow from 1978 until transferring to the Yorkshire, Humberside, Lincs and Nottingham Division.

Wilf was appointed as headquarters officer in 1988 before his election as Assistant

General Secretary in 1991.

He also represented the union on the TUC Transport Industries Committee and was a representative on the European Community's Joint Committee on Railways.

He was a member of the Labour Party and member of the EC of the Labour Party Scottish Council.

A letter of condolence has been sent to his family and the union was represented at the funeral. ■

CARLISLE CITY BRANCH ON THE MOVE

RMT Carlisle City branch now meets at The Kings Head pub, Fisher Street, Carlisle on the first Tuesday of every month

IRAQI TRADE UNIONISTS VISIT RMT

RMT President John Leach and Council of Executives members Alex Gordon and Pat Collins welcomed a delegation of transport trade unions from Iraq to Unity House recently.

The Iraqi delegation was visiting the UK at the invitation of the TUC to discuss solidarity between transport workers and the anti-union laws - old and new - that face Iraqi trade unionists trying to reconstruct democratic unions.

The TUC and RMT, along with the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF), support the abolition of these laws.

The delegation explained the colossal challenges Iraqi workers face in trying to rebuild their economy devastated by years of neglect, international sanctions and war.

They said international solidarity was crucial in helping Iraqi unions to fight the onslaught of neo-liberal economic forces that seek to subordinate the Iraqi economy without consideration for workers' rights.

The delegation included Turki



Lazm Jabber, head of the Iraqi Dockers' Union in Basra and Hussein Jasim Al-Mohammed, vice president of the Transport and Communication Workers' Union; and two women Salafa Hammond Mohammed, a member of the Iraqi Railway Workers Union and Zainab Abdulameer Kadhim of the Airline Workers Union.

IRAQI TRANSPORT WORKERS

The Iraqi transport workers unions were significant in the growth of civil society and secularism in Iraq from the 1940's onwards and the railway and dockers' unions founded the Iraqi General Federation of Trade Unions, before it was smashed by Saddam Hussein in

the 1980s.

Iraqi trade unions were abolished in the public sector by Saddam's notorious decree 150 in 1987 that banned collective bargaining.

In April 2003, the Iraqi transport workers' unions reconstituted themselves soon after the collapse of Saddam's dictatorship.

The Transport and Communication Workers' Union head office in central Baghdad became the centre for all Iraqi trade unionist activities for several months, including hosting the first open trade union conference after the war on 16 May 2003.

However, the new Iraqi government has obstructed trade

union development by issuing anti-unions laws (8750) and Ministry of Transport Order (7642), based on Saddam's notorious Decree 150.

John Leach gave the Iraqis a brief history of the union, its structures and values and explained why democracy is fundamental to the union.

John told the delegation that RMT strongly opposes sectarianism of any kind.

Alex Gordon took the delegation on a visit to London Transport Museum where RMT's Transport for London, branch Chair, Joanne Parry and two members took them on a guided tour. ■

LES ROBERTS

Les Roberts, a stalwart of the union for fifty years, died on April 18 aged 84 after a short illness.

Les had been active in the NUR and RMT since he joined Deptford branch in 1956. He became both Branch Secretary and Secretary of the NUR's South East District Council in 1978, and held these posts until his retirement in 1988.

He was also a station staff rep, first as a local rep at London's Cannon Street for

over 20 years, and then as a second stage rep on British Rail's Southern Region Sectional Council 'C'.

Les was also a regular at the Passenger Traffic Grades Conference and the Branch Secretaries' Conference, and on four occasions was an AGM delegate.

Les made many good friends in the Union, and he became a close friend of Jimmy Knapp when Jimmy was the Union's Divisional Organiser for the South East.

After he retired, Les continued to be active in the union's South East Region, going out in recruiting teams and chairing its retired section. He continued to attend union AGMs and Grades conferences, where he raised thousands of pounds for the Orphan Fund by running raffles, and selling Orphan Fund goods.

This was just part of the work Les did for charity and voluntary groups. He was General Secretary of the Southern Region Woking Homes, Secretary of the Southern Region First Aid, a member of the St John's

Ambulance Association (the Order of St John), and much more.

In 1983 Les was awarded the British Empire Medal (later upgraded to the MBE) for services to trade unions and to the St John's Ambulance.

Les was far more than a meetings man. He organised branch socials, he enjoyed a drink and a song, he relaxed working in his garden, and he was devoted to his family. He will be greatly missed but fondly remembered by all his friends in RMT.

Jeff Slee ■

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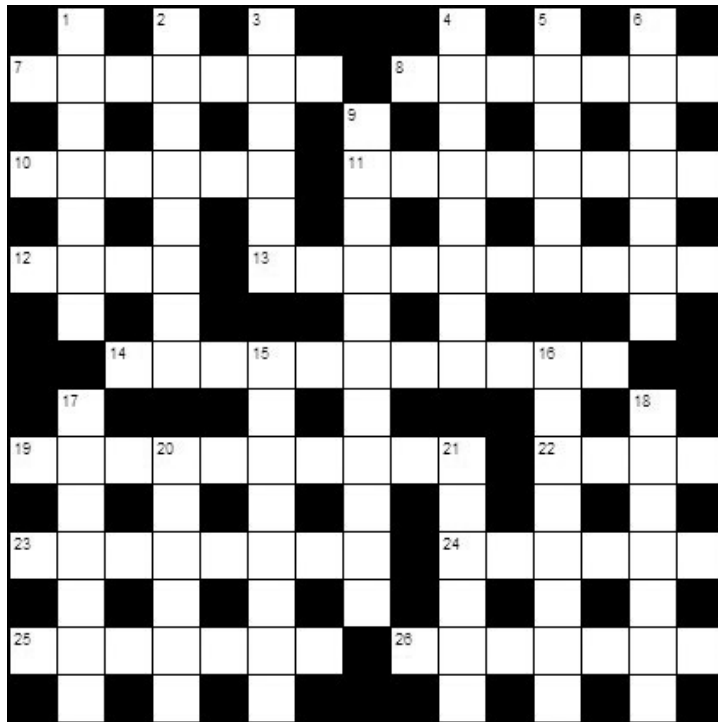
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01425 472115**APPEAL FOR INFORMATION**I am researching my family
history and am trying to piece
together the events surrounding
the death of my father.His name was Thomas Joseph
Timmons, he was 21 and
working as a plate layer for
British Rail. Because the
accident happened in 1963
there are no longer any records.The accident occurred on
Thursday 13 June 1963 at 8amat Harlington Station on the
down slow line. He was resident
at Ashburn Road, Luton at the
time.I would be interested in any first
hand accounts or in talking to
someone who might have
worked with him, or even if
someone had any idea of where
such information might be kept.I have tried newspapers,
national records office and therail company but have no actual
report on the complete accident.
I can be contacted at the
following addressT.MAHER
Metzinger str.42
Nuertingen 72622
E-mail Terry.Maher@gmx.de
GERMANY
(tel.0049-7022-951532)**£25 PRIZE
CROSSWORD***No. 44. Set by Elk*Last month's
solution...The winner of prize
crossword no. 43 is
A Butler of Par, Cornwall.
Send entries to Prize Crossword,
RMT, Unity House, 39 Chalton
Street, London NW1 1JD by
June 13 with your name and
address.

Winner and solution in next issue.

ACROSS

- 7 Play or film with songs (7)
 8 Rotted (7)
 10 Parent's sister - the BBC (6)
 11 Scottish port and offshore industry hub, hosted
this year's RMT maritime conference (8)
 12 Western Scottish port, embark for 22 here (4)
 13 9s who employ seafarers (10)
 14 Those who seek autonomy or independence
(11)
 19 Conveniences (10)
 22 Think about -- a Hebridean island? (4)
 23 Least dirty (8)
 24 As Delboy would say: "A nice little -" (6)
 25 Spear thrown for sport (7)
 26 Against (7)

DOWN

- 1 Residential areas outside the urban centre
(7)
 2 Measurement from place A to place B (8)
 3 Makers of bread and cakes (6)
 4 Type of spiced sausage (8)
 5 Area cultivated for flowers, shrubs etc (6)
 6 Thin, usually decorative, layers, especially
of wood (7)
 9 Profit is the name of their game (11)
 15 Eating disorder (8)
 16 The day after this one (8)
 17 Iron road (7)
 18 Said (to have committed crime?) (7)
 20 Astonished (6)
 21 Nodding off (6)

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By saving together, and lending to each other, we take the profit motive out of savings and loans. All the surpluses created by the Credit Union are recycled as benefits to members through cheap loans, and the ability to pay dividends on savings.

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.

CHEAP LOANS

Decisions on interest rates are made by our members. This year our AGM decided to offer very cheap loans to members. This means we can now offer loans at 12.68 per cent APR, equivalent to 1.056 per cent per month on the declining balance. See our great rates below.

IT'S NEVER BEEN EASIER TO JOIN

All RMT members and their families and retired RMT members can join our Credit Union. You simply complete the form opposite. Under government legislation we have 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.

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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Amount	12	24	36	48	60
500	44.58	23.70	16.77	13.33	11.29
1000	89.17	47.39	33.54	26.67	22.59
1500	133.75	71.09	50.31	40.00	33.88
2000	178.33	94.78	67.08	53.34	45.18
3000	267.50	142.18	100.62	80.01	67.77
4000	356.67	189.57	134.16	106.68	90.36
5000	445.84	236.96	167.70	133.34	112.95
7500	668.75	355.44	251.55	200.02	169.42





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Please use **BLOCK CAPITALS** and **black ink**.

1 PERSONAL DETAILS.

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

2 **Marital Status** married ☐ partner ☐ single ☐ divorced ☐ **Drivers Licence No.**

3 Your Employment.

Employer		RMT Branch	
Job Description			

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

5 Membership Status

RMT TU Member ☐ Retired RMT TU Member ☐ RMT Family Member ☐

6 **How much do you wish to save £** This is the amount you wish to save by Direct Debit monthly on the 28th ☐ or 4 weekly (Fri) ☐

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

We are checking new member identification electronically. To do this, we now carry out searches with credit reference agencies who supply us with relevant detail including information from the Electoral Register. The searches will not be used by other lenders to assess your ability to obtain credit.

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To: The Manager	Bank/Building Society
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Postcode	

Name(s) of Account Holder(s)

Bank/Building Society account number

Branch Sort Code

Originator's Identification Number

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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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- 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.
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RESISTING EU RAIL 'LIBERALISATION' AND PRIVATISATION



RMT conference for European rail trade unionists

10:00–17:00 Tuesday June 17 2008

ITF Headquarters,
49–60 Borough Road,
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The privatisation of Britain's railways has resulted in attacks on jobs, working conditions, pensions and safety and has also resulted in a less efficient more expensive railway.

Now this model of privatisation, enshrined in various EU directives and EU rail packages, is being rolled out across the European Union.

RMT is inviting rail trade unionists from across Europe to participate in a one-day conference to discuss these issues

If you wish your RMT branch to be represented return forms sent to branches to head office. Attendance at the conference can be taken from Branch Management Funds. Places are limited and allocation will be on a first come first serve basis.