

RMT *news*

Essential reading for today's transport worker

RAIL WORKERS HIT PARIS



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www.rmt.org.uk

NATIONAL UNION OF RAIL, MARITIME & TRANSPORT WORKERS

Unity House, 39 Chalton Street, London NW1 1JD



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

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EDITORIAL

THE CHALLENGES FOR NEXT YEAR



I would like to wish everyone a happy Christmas and I hope you enjoy a decent rest after working hard all year.

There is little doubt that next year will be a challenging one due to the ongoing capitalist crisis.

The first and most important task for the union will be to defend our members as it is clear that the bankers and capitalists that caused this crisis will attempt to make working people pay for it.

The fall-out from the economic turmoil is already being felt after high street retailer Woolworth's went into administration.

RMT has 300 members working for Wincanton under contract to Woolworth's whose jobs are under immediate threat, but there will be thousands more if the government does not intervene.

Any retail collapse would be disastrous for the workforce and the knock-on effect would also undermine employment on a far wider scale, including thousands of road-freight and other transport jobs.

If the government can nationalise banks, then it must surely be right to take whatever steps are necessary to stop the real economy melting down.

The disgraceful treatment of RMT member Charlie Cicirello by National Express East Anglia, who was sacked simply for giving evidence in a court of law as a witness, will not be tolerated by this union. Our parliamentary group has raised the issue in the House of Commons and strike action has been put on.

Unfortunately, industrial action also seems inevitable at National Express East Anglia if the company presses ahead with plans to axe more than 300 jobs and cut services.

RMT has urged the company to reconsider plans to cut jobs and services, including an end to the restaurant service on Norwich-London trains.

The planned cuts would also see some already understaffed stations left with no platform staff at all, even during the busy morning peak, and the Norwich service centre closed.

At the same time NatEx has boasted of nine per cent increases in revenues and is imposing inflation-busting fares hikes.

This kind of profiteering and cost-cutting in the rail industry is a direct result of privatisation and fragmentation yet this EU rail 'liberalisation' model is being rolled out across the European Union.

That is why around a hundred RMT members joined the huge international protest in Paris against EU diktats which seek to hand European rail networks over to the private sector.

Unfortunately, I was unable to attend due to a sporting injury (which tells me that, at 47, I should really hang up my football boots). However, I did manage to attend a protest by RMT seafarers and supporters in Brussels against 'social dumping' and EU rules that threaten jobs and ferry services.

Among the demonstrators were workers from Caledonian MacBrayne, whose lifeline Scottish ferry routes were put out to tender in a pointless and damaging process prompted by EU regulations.

The EU privatising juggernaut can be challenged, as the Irish rejection of the discredited Lisbon Treaty has shown, and there has never been a more crucial time to promote policies that put people before profit.

RMT has also called on the government to lead the way in marshalling greater international co-operation to counter the growing threat of piracy faced by seafarers in international waters.

There are clearly deep economic and social problems in poverty stricken countries like Somalia that are feeding the piracy problem, and they too require international co-operation because they are a result of the global economic meltdown.

Finally, on a positive note, RMT welcome new powers in the Local Transport Act that will help to tackle some of the de-regulated free-for-all that has blighted the bus industry since its privatisation more than 20 years ago.

Members of RMT's parliamentary group such as David Drew played a positive role in winning these powers which will defend bus workers' pay and pensions, well done.

All the best

Bob Crow

When you have finished with this magazine give it to a workmate who is not in your union. Even better, ask them to join RMT by filling in the application form opposite



INFLATION-BUSTING PAY DEAL AT ARRIVA TRAINS WALES

Following the threat of strike action, RMT members at Arriva Trains Wales have won an above-inflation pay deal of nearly six per cent for the lowest paid and additional leave for train drivers.

After rejecting pay offers in a referendum by over 90 per cent, all non-driver grades, backed an improved two-year three month deal which gives a basic rate increase

In the first year pay will rise 4.75 per cent, or £750 (whichever is the greater) with an additional 0.5 per cent on basic rate in part compensation for a move of April 1 2010 pay

review date to July 1 2010.

The deal also removes the 75 per cent training rate for new recruits to Station Staff grades and increased maternity pay.

From April 1 2009 the basic rate increase will be three per cent, or RPI plus 0.75 per cent, or £800 (whichever is the greater) with an additional 0.5 per cent on basic rate in part compensation for a move of the pay review date to July 2010.

The pay offer includes an additional 0.5 per cent increase in rates of pay previously introduced for drivers from 2007.

Drivers also backed their

separate deal in a referendum, which includes an extra day's leave on top of the 4.75 per cent pay rise and another additional day in year two to take their leave to 28 days.

The moving of the anniversary date will enable an equalisation of anniversary dates with all grades as a move towards RMT's policy of single table pay bargaining.

Regional organiser Brendan Kelly said that the improved deal was a vindication of RMT's campaign for fairness across all grades, ending low pay and for a share of the financial success of ATW.

"Earlier offers clearly did not meet those objectives and were rejected by the members who also voted solidly for strike action.

"This inflation-plus deal has delivered for some of the lowest paid grades on the network," he said.

ATW company council stations grades rep Dave Bell said that the lowest paid grades wages would rise from £14,000 to £15,700 per annum.

"This is a great stride towards pay parity with other train operating companies," he said. ■

METRONET STAFF RETURN TO LONDON UNDERGROUND

RMT welcomed the transfer of the workforce at failed public-private partnership company Metronet back to London Underground Ltd.

Under the deal staff are TUPED over under the terms of the PPP code of practice which includes a clause ruling out compulsory redundancies.

Metronet is responsible for maintenance of the BCV and SSL tube lines. It came under the control of Transport for London last May after going into administration in July 2007. The other private consortium

with Tube maintenance contracts, Tube Lines, is still in the private sector.

RMT, London Underground's largest union, has been pressing for the measure for some time and welcomed Metronet Rail's move as a victory for common sense.

"It is another small step on the road for a properly integrated transport system for London after the disastrous experiment with PPP," he said.

He warned that any threat of forced redundancies of RMT members at TfL and

London Underground, hinted at by London major Boris Johnson in order to find £2.4 billion in "efficiency savings".

"If the mayor is looking for efficiencies he should find a way of bringing the Tube Lines PPP contracts back in-house as well, because they are still draining huge sums of public money from London's transport budget.

"It goes without saying that RMT will resist any forced redundancies among our members," he said. ■

EUROSTAR CLEANERS WIN IMPROVED PAY OFFER



Following two days of strike action in August, RMT cleaners working for OCS on the Eurostar contract have won an overall pay increase, a sick pay scheme and a matched contributory pension scheme at the Temple Mills Depot.

Negotiations were hampered due to the re-tendering process which has led to the contract being split and OCS has lost the St Pancras International contract which has been awarded to the Carlisle Group.

Carlisle takes over the contract on January 12 2009 so a TUPE consultation will now take place. However, the Temple Mills Engineering depot contract runs until March 2011.

As a result two separate agreements were made for the sites as Carlisle group cannot be bound to a longer-term deal at present.

ST PANCRAS

The pay deal secures significant increases in hourly rates and the most significant increases go to the lowest paid in percentage

terms as the offer is structured as a flat rate increase for all grades.

Although the proposed rates do not achieve the London Living Wage, they do represent a breakthrough figure in achieving £7.00 per hour, an increase in the cleaner's rate of 10 per cent, with £100 in back-pay.

TEMPLE MILLS DEPOT

The pay increase in this deal is the same, including back-pay of £100. The union also negotiated a limited sick pay scheme and a matched contributory pension scheme, matching up to three per cent employee contributions, from next year.

Pay rates will also increase by a further 20p per hour in October 2009 for staff that have completed NVQ level 2, taking the cleaner's rate to £7.20.

RMT general secretary Bob Crow congratulated members for holding successful strike action that brought the company back to the table with a significantly enhanced offer. ■

TUBE POWER WORKERS' TAKE STRIKE SOLID STRIKE ACTION

RMT shift 'tester' technicians responsible for finding and fixing faults on the London Tube's power supply have taken solid 36-hour strike action over their claim for pay parity with non-shift colleagues.

The union called on employer EDF Energy Powerlink to negotiate seriously to avoid further action.

RMT also raised concerns that managers, some of whom have not worked 'on the tools'

for many years, were being left to deal with power-supply faults on dozens of different types of high-voltage equipment involving currents of up to 22,000 volts.

The 25 highly skilled technicians, responsible for finding and fixing faults at London Underground's 240 power sub-stations and maintain the power supply, voted for action by a margin of more than ten to one.

"Our members have shown EDF Energy Powerlink very clearly how they feel about their claim for pay parity, and it is time for EDF to get off its high horse and talk," RMT general secretary Bob Crow said.

The shift testers are simply seeking parity with non-shift colleagues who received a £3,000 rise for flexibility that is also demanded of shift workers, but whose basic pay is now £4,000 less.

"They have already seen their work-life balance turned upside down with a massive change in shift patterns, and now they expect their employer to display some flexibility too.

"Rather than recklessly letting loose managers who have been off the job for years on potentially lethal high-voltage kit, the company should be looking for ways to end this dispute," Bob said. ■



VIOLENT PASSENGER FINALLY JAILED FOR ATTACK ON RAIL STAFF

A drunken train passenger who savagely attacked two RMT members at Plymouth station has been jailed for four years in a private prosecution after the Crown Prosecution Service refused to pursue the case.

Believed to be the first prosecution of its kind, the case was taken up by the two rail workers' employer First Great Western.

Sentencing Robert Halkett, Judge Paul Darlow said it was only down to the train company pursuing a private prosecution that "proper charges were laid and the proper sentence passed".

Halkett, who has a string of

convictions for attacks on rail staff, had pleaded guilty to two counts of actual bodily harm and a separate charge of theft at an earlier magistrates hearing.

First Great Western's barrister, Stephen Mooney, told Plymouth Crown Court how Halkett boarded a train at Plymouth station in April last year and attacked train manager Robin Hawkins after he asked for his ticket.

Platform staff member Karen Nicholson raced to assist and was then punched in the face by Halkett who fled the scene but was arrested the following day at the same station.

Photos of the injured rail

staff were taken by British Transport Police before they were treated in hospital. However, a doctor's report claimed the horrific wounds were "superficial", leading the CPS to its "incorrect conclusion" not to prosecute.

Senior CPS staff upheld the decision on appeal, leaving the rail firm "no option but to instigate a private prosecution".

Judge Darlow called the attack "entirely unprovoked", adding Halkett had "an appalling record" before sentencing him for 39 months for each assault and a further nine months for theft to run consecutively.

Following the sentencing, RMT members Karen Nicholson said that she had been 'devastated' when the BTP informed her that the case had been dropped.

"When I was told it was like being assaulted again, we have the right to work in safety. I'm very happy with the result," she said.

First Great Western's head of revenue protection Jim Beckwith said that it was the first time the company prosecuted for actual bodily harm.

"We hope we don't have to again, but if we do we won't hesitate," he said. ■

NORWEGIAN OIL WORKERS SHOW SOLIDARITY WITH RMT

Members of the Norwegian oil workers' union Industri Energi took time out from a shop stewards conference in Bergen recently to show solidarity with RMT.

Members of the Stena

Drilling Employees Association and Trinity Employees Association, effectively national branches of the Norwegian union, were proud to display a clear message of support to

offshore workers in the UK sector, displaying this eight metres long banner.

RMT and IE are presently exploring ways of working together to ensure all offshore workers in the North Sea are

properly organised.

RMT recruitment DVDs were shown to delegates who were impressed at RMT's ability to produce 'in house' films aimed at specific groups of workers. ■



Companywatch

RMT CONDEMNS 'WHOLLY INADEQUATE' NETWORK RAIL FUNDING

RMT has warned that the Office for Rail Regulation announcement on Network Rail funding last month was wholly inadequate for the needs of the system over the next five years and could lead to further tragedies like Grayrigg.

The £26.7 billion package ordered by the ORR represents a £2.4 billion shortfall on the £29.1 billion requested by Network Rail – a massive funding gap which can only hamper proposals to enhance the system.

Following 30 per cent 'efficiency savings' for the period 2003-08 Network Rail must now implement an extra 21 per cent, combining to make a colossal 51 per cent over 10 years.

After the government found billions to bail out the bankers we might have expected something of the same for our beleaguered rail system. They are quite clearly trying to fit a pint of beer in a half pint pot.

RMT general secretary Bob Crow said that the union would resist any resulting job losses and any cuts which might compromise rail safety.

"We will not be pushed back into a situation where another Hatfield,

Paddington, Potters Bar or Grayrigg tragedy occurs.

"That the ORR thinks it possible to develop the railways over the next five years on such a budget, amid projected increases in demand for passengers and freight, defies belief," he said.

The environment and economy are clearly crying out for large-scale enhancements to the system such as the implementation of high-speed lines and the replacement of the remaining diesel-powered engines with electrification.

This announcement risks undermining these, as well as countless smaller-scale proposals, before they even reach the planning stage.

Network Rail will attempt to make up the shortfall by piling pressure on a workforce which is already working excessively long hours, increasing concerns over health and safety at work.

This is especially worrying in the wake of the Rail Accident Investigation Branch report into the Grayrigg derailment, which blamed a lack of resources and imposition of unrealistic workloads for the tragedy.

Rather than look to deal with the

inefficiencies caused by the contract culture which led to the chaos at Rugby and Liverpool Street last Christmas and New Year period, the company will look to increase the pressure on RMT members working on the rail infrastructure.

Before the new round of 'efficiency savings' the screw has already been tightened:

- S&T teams in Scotland have been reduced from three to two workers, resulting in a large backlog in maintenance work. Maintenance gangs in Scotland are also faced with vacancies being left unfilled.
- S&T teams from Carlisle and Warrington are filling vacancies by working overtime.
- In the north west of England track inspections are now taking place every two weeks rather than the previous once a week inspection regime. Under British Rail the track was inspected three times a week
- In the Anglia region S&T Teams have also been reduced to two workers and there has been a reduction in the rate of track maintenance inspections. ■

RMT SEEKS POLICE APOLOGY OVER GRAYRIGG ARRESTS

RMT is seeking an apology from transport police after two track worker members arrested in connection with the Grayrigg crash and kept under caution for eleven months were finally cleared last month.

RMT said that systematic management failings, lack of resources and imposition of unrealistic workloads were at the heart of the fatal derailment that took place at Grayrigg, Cumbria, in February 2007.

"Our two members and their families have been living under the shadow of suspicion for the best part of a year and the very least they deserve is an apology for arrests that should never have been made,

"One of the members, Richard Hodgeson has tragically passed away, compounding the injustice" RMT general secretary

Bob Crow said.

He said that the arrests amounted to nothing more than a 'fishing exercise' and intimidation.

Neither of the men was directly involved in maintenance on the points and neither has been involved in any disciplinary following the crash – and in fact no-one has been disciplined for anything directly connected to the tragedy.

Both the Rail Accident Investigation Branch final report and Network Rail's own report into the crash, which claimed the life of Margaret Masson and injured 86 other people, both pointed to management failings, lack of resources and imposition of unrealistic workloads.

As a result, RMT renewed its call for a joint public inquiry

into the Grayrigg and Potters Bar rail crashes in order to address these structural failings.

Similarities between the two crashes, and the coroner's decision last year to adjourn the inquest into the seven deaths at Potters Bar in 2002 pending the outcome of the Grayrigg investigation, highlighted the need for a joint public inquiry – with a remit that includes examination of the structure and continued fragmentation of the industry.

"It is now abundantly clear that the fragmented 'contract' culture still prevalent on the railway all played their part in the complex of causes of the Grayrigg derailment," Bob Crow said.

"There is a clear link between funding cuts, unrealistic workloads, inappropriate work



practices and fragmentation on the one hand and inadequate standards on the other.

"We need an end to the contract culture brought in by private contractors and to shift the emphasis from getting things done quickly and cheaply to doing them properly and

SEAFARERS' EMPLOYMENT RIGHTS UPDATE

Over MP and Parliamentary Group member Gwyn Prosser MP tabled an amendment to the Employment Bill which would extend the minimum wage for non UK seafarers, operating between UK Ports and in the UK Offshore sector.

Prior to the debate in November, RMT regional organiser Phil McGarry was part of a Scottish TUC delegation to the Employment Minister and

Scottish Labour MPs. He briefed MPs and raise the seafarer's case with the Minister.

Aberdeen MP Ann Begg had also tabled a parliamentary motion attacking the fact that UK ships, including ferry services, are allowed to pay poverty wages below the minimum wage to non-UK seafarers including as little as £295 basic monthly pay.

Unfortunately, Gwyn Prosser's amendment, which

received strong support from MPs, was not called due to insufficient parliamentary time. The campaign, however, continues and as RMT News goes to press, the RMT Parliamentary Group of MPs is meeting new Secretary of State for Transport Geoff Hoon on the issue.

The government has also published the Equality Bill in the Queens Speech and previously indicated that the

Bill, in response to the unions campaigning and a complaint to the European Commission, will contain amendments to the Race Relations Act which would remove discriminatory pay rates against EU nationals serving on UK ships.

The union will be seeking to use the progress of the Bill to press for the strongest protections to outlaw pay discrimination between seafarers. ■

SEAFARERS EARNINGS DEDUCTIONS VICTORY

Following consistent union pressure, the government has agreed to withdraw proposed changes to Seafarers Earnings Deductions that would have hit seafaring members affected very hard.

HM Revenue and Customs had planned to introduce guidance in December 2008 which would restrict the application of the tax break to seafarers who work in the offshore oil and gas industry.

However, RMT parliamentary group member Katy Clark put down early day motion 891, which has been signed by over 70 MPs, opposing the move.

The EDM expressed concern that such a move would adversely affect thousands of seafarers many of whom work on low wages.

RMT national secretary Steve Todd said that the treasury was clearly embarrassed by the original announcement, opposed by the maritime unions and the Chamber of Shipping.

He said that the government had also stated that construction, construction support, well service and dive support vessels will continue to be classified as ships for the purposes of SED.

"New guidelines are now being drawn up and it is clear that any decision will not be retrospective and most seafarers, if not all, will be able to claim SED," he said.

A draft document is expected before the New Year and RMT will be fully involved in the consultation process. ■

THE CRISIS IN WORKING-CLASS POLITICAL REPRESENTATION CONFERENCE

**January 10, 2009
11am - 3 pm**

Friends Meeting House, Euston Road,
London NW1

Speakers

Brian Caton, POA General Secretary

Bob Crow, RMT General Secretary

Professor Mary Davis

John McDonnell MP

Mark Serwotka, PCS General Secretary

Chair: RMT president John Leach

The need for effective working-class political representation has never been greater.

The world's economies have been plunged into recession on the back of a banking crisis caused by the unregulated greed of corporate bosses.

Workers who have seen bosses raking in record profits in recent years now find themselves in fear of losing their jobs and having their pay and living standards cut.

RMT's 2008 annual general meeting agreed to organise a national conference for trade unionists to discuss the crisis in political representation.

Please register in advance at info@rmt.org.uk, or write to RMT, Unity House, 39 Chalton Street, London, NW1 1JD.

BIG TRADE UNION FREEDOM REBELLION

Last month Gordon Brown suffered his biggest rebellion in the Commons when 45 Labour MPs voted for a key clause taken from the Trade Union Rights and Freedoms Bill.

In advance of the debate, RMT supported the United Campaign to Repeal the Anti Trade Union Laws lobby of MPs to ensure that the Bill was amended to reflect three key clauses from the trade union freedom bill, namely better protection for striking workers, preventing the use of replacement labour during strikes and a duty on employers to cooperate with unions in providing information for industrial action ballots.

RMT wrote to MPs urging support for the amendments and encouraged members to send campaign postcards to their parliamentary representatives.

RMT regional organiser Phil McGarry was also part of a Scottish TUC delegation that had lobbied Employment Relations Minister Pat McFadden to urge improved trade union rights.

MPs had signed up to the three trade union freedom bill amendments tabled by RMT Parliamentary convener John McDonnell. MPs also signed up to an amendment tabled by Tony Lloyd and supported by Searchlight which would have given unions the right to expel fascists from their membership.

Despite constant pressing from MPs, the Employment Relations Minister refused to offer even a consultation to address the weaknesses in the law. A vote was forced on the amendment imposing a duty on employers in relation to industrial action ballots. Forty five labour MPs voted in favor of the amendment:

The Minister also refused to give any ground on Tony Lloyd's amendment although this amendment was not put to the vote.

The government had to rely on Tory support and the government payroll vote to ensure the amendments were defeated.

The media also said that a number of Labour MPs who had pledged to rebel were absent, campaigning in the Glenrothes by-election, making the size of the rebellion all the more surprising.

The fight for trade union freedom continues and full report including a video of the debate and how you can join the campaign for trade union freedom can be found at www.unitedcampaign.org.uk ■

Parliamentary column



PROTECTING BUS WORKERS

As the RMT news goes to press the government's Local Transport Bill will have received Royal Assent. There are some positives in the Act such as a new requirement for local authorities to factor in the effect of greenhouse emissions into their local transport plans.

The Act will also make it easier for local authorities to set up Passenger Transport Authorities, now be to be called Integrated Transport Authorities, in areas where they do not already exist.

For example there are no such transport authorities in the South West and their establishment could greatly assist in the development of integrated transport networks.

RMT members know that the real answer to poor local transport would be for government to legislate to ensure bus services could be taken back into municipal ownership but the Act does not go that far and, therefore, has to be seen as a missed opportunity. Public ownership would give much greater financial control and strategic direction, which is desperately needed at this time.

The Act will, however, give local authorities powers to do away with the deregulated free for all of current bus service provision and instead regulate bus services through the introduction of franchised services known as Quality Contracts.

This is fine as far as it goes but what was missing from the Bill when it started in the Lords back in the Autumn of 2007 was any provision to protect bus workers jobs and conditions in the event that a local authority decides to introduce such a contract.

With others, I tabled a parliamentary motion to highlight this problem. Working with the union and other

colleagues in the RMT Parliamentary group and in the Lords, we secured substantial amendments to the Bill, including the introduction of TUPE provisions and full pension protection for bus workers who are transferred to a Quality Contract.

The RMT Parliamentary group has also had to respond to the decision by the ORR to allocate £2.4 billion less funding than Network Rail said it needed. This means that important planned capacity enhancements will be shelved such as the redoubling of the Swindon to Kemble line which would have significantly improved rail access to Gloucester, Cheltenham and Stroud. The settlement will also place more pressure on the jobs and conditions of hard pressed Network Rail employees by demanding twenty one per cent efficiency savings over the next five years on top of the thirty one per cent efficiency savings which rail workers have already helped to achieve.

There is also no doubt that the recession will place a squeeze on the whole system of railway franchising. For example those companies, such as First Great Western, who are relying on a year on year increases in passenger numbers to fund their premium payments to the Government, will find themselves under severe pressure.

Instead of making cuts, the government should be mitigating the effects of the recession by extending public ownership to the railways and bringing forward large scale capital investment such as electrification and high speed rail. The Parliamentary group is to shortly meet new Transport Secretary Geoff Hoon and it will be pressing for this agenda.

David Drew MP for Stroud

RMT WELCOMES 'POSITIVE STEPS' ON LOCAL BUS POLICY AND PENSIONS

RMT has welcomed new powers given to local authorities that will help to tackle some of the de-regulated free-for-all that has blighted the bus industry since its privatisation more than 20 years ago.

The Local Transport Act gives local authorities greater control over service levels and quality, and envisages the creation of new Integrated Transport Authorities in major urban areas, which would also replace the six existing metropolitan transport authorities.

RMT also welcomed an amendment to the Act ensuring full pension protection for bus workers transferred between employers in the deregulated



bus market, as well as the right for unions to be consulted if a local authority wishes to introduce franchised bus services.

However, the union also said that only full public ownership, funding and control could

restore the bus industry to the pivotal role it should have in an integrated transport network.

RMT general secretary Bob Crow said that in future years the Act would be seen as the first step towards restoring municipal ownership and

putting an end to the profiteering of transport giants that convert huge sums in public subsidy into profits.

"We will campaign to ensure that the Act helps to address the problems of low pay, long hours and poor working conditions that have also blighted the industry as a result of privatisation, and which have created a long-term recruitment problem.

"Our own recent survey of bus workers found that only a quarter of felt secure in their job, that younger bus workers are becoming a rarity and that two-thirds said that the main reason workers left the industry was because of poor pay and conditions," Bob Crow said. ■

TRANSPORT FOR LONDON PENSION VICTORY

Transport for London has confirmed that 8,734 current and former employees have periods of employment which have not been counted as pensionable and has agreed to compensate those workers that have missing periods of service.

The missing periods concern:

- Periods of Training – where the date of pension fund entry erroneously excludes the period of training upon entering employment; ie, the date of entry to the pension fund is the date of completing training not the actual date of employment commenced.
- Fixed Term Contracts – Where employees were initially employed on a fixed term contract prior to becoming a permanent employee and the date of entry into the pension fund does not coincide with the date of moving from fixed term contractor to permanent employee, either because they were mistakenly issued with a fixed term contracts or because of an administrative error.

TfL also indicated there are 5,698 members with missing periods of pensionable service during training. The missing service varies between one day and 147 days.

The number of former fixed term contractors with missing pensionable service is 3036. For this group the missing service varies between one-hundred and fifty days to over a thousand days.

TRAINING

To obtain credit for missing Periods of Training individuals will be required to pay an amount calculated by the Fund Office. The amount payable by each individual varies according to the size of the missing period. However, the average amount over the whole system is approximately £90.

FORMER FIXED TERM CONTRACTORS

To obtain credit for any missing periods when moving from fixed term contractor to full time employee, individuals will be required to provide any piece of evidence of the date they moved to full-time employment; such as the offer letter to move to permanent employment.

RECTIFICATION

Employer contributions will be paid at the current rate of 6.1 times members' contributions (ie for every £1 you pay the

employer pays £6.10 – an all time high) rather than the rate applicable at the time of the error. The employer will also fund the administration costs.

As well as the all-time high contribution rate, other benefits are as follows:

- Employees will receive tax relief on their pension contribution at today's tax rate rather than at the rate at the time their contributions should have been made
- TfL will not adjust employees NI – thus increasing State Second Pension entitlement
- TfL will not seek interest on employee pension contributions
- Verifying documentation is not required for missing training periods.

In recognition of the potential difficulty in meeting the cost involved, individuals will be allowed to pay over an extended period based on the number of weeks/years of missing service. ie where the missing period is 13 weeks, arrears may be paid over a 13 week period.

The discrepancies came to light following an investigation pursued by unions through the TfL Pensions Working Group. ■



DON'T AXE WOLVERHAMPTON TO WALSALL RAIL SERVICES

RMT launches campaign to stop the government and London Midland rail company from axing Wolverhampton to Walsall rail services

RMT is asking members to send postcards to Secretary of State for Transport Geoff Hoon to demand that he intervenes to prevent the axing of the Wolverhampton to Walsall rail service.

The service provides an important direct link for the people of Walsall and Wolverhampton together with access to connecting rail services.

RMT general secretary Bob Crow said that it was astonishing that the cuts were being planned when there has been a significant increase in the number of people using the service.

"Axing rail services also clearly goes against government policy of seeking to expand rail capacity and reduce carbon emissions from the transport sector.

"The rail companies are making huge profits and the government can find billions to bail out the banks, surely they can keep our rail service running?," he said.

WHAT YOU CAN DO...

Wolverhampton MP Ken Purchase has tabled a parliamentary motion calling on the government to ensure that the service remains in operation.

Please support the campaign and,

- Send the postcard available from Wolverhampton branch to Secretary of Transport Geoff Hoon via RMT or email the government at rail@dft.gsi.gov.uk
- Email your protests to London Midland Train Company comments@londonmidland.com

Early Day Motion 2300

WALSALL TO WOLVERHAMPTON RAIL SERVICE

"That this House notes with extreme concern the planned withdrawal of the Walsall to Wolverhampton passenger rail service from December 2008; further notes the service provides an important direct link for the people of Walsall and Wolverhampton, together with access to connecting rail services; is dismayed that the proposed withdrawal will take place despite the fact that use of the service has significantly increased and believes that London Midland are putting profit before people; further believes that the proposed cut clearly goes against the Government's policy of seeking to expand rail capacity and reduce carbon emissions from the transport sector; and calls on the Government to intervene to ensure that this service remains in operation"

Ken Purchase MP

NEW RMT CAMPAIGN JACKETS



Showerproof and windproof campaign jackets available in navy blue, royal blue with yellow embroidery and black with silver embroidery

Sizes: small - 4 XL. Price: £40 each.

Available through the RMT web site - www.rmt.org.uk

CRAM 'EM IN AND CHARGE THE EARTH

National Audit Office report on rail franchises claims packed carriages and higher ticket prices are solutions to rail funding crisis

FRANCHISES AWARDED SINCE ABOLITION OF THE STRATEGIC RAIL AUTHORITY

Franchise	Parent Group	Start Date	End Date
Southeastern	Govia	April 2006*	2014
First Capital Connect	First Group	April 2006*	2015
First Great Western	First Group	April 2006*	2016
South West Trains	Stagecoach	February 2007	2017
London Midland	Govia	November 2007	2015
East Midlands Trains	Stagecoach	November 2007	2015
Cross Country	Arriva	November 2007	2016
National Express East Coast	National Express	December 2007	2015

* - franchise specified by the SRA

A National Audit Office (NAO) report on rail franchises predicted last month that rail passengers can expect packed carriages and higher ticket prices.

The NAO, the official financial watchdog, highlighted the example of London Midland, which was given permission to carry more passengers on overcrowded trains when it took over the franchise last year.

The Department for Transport, which assumed responsibility for awarding franchises after the Railways Act 2005 abolished the Strategic Rail Authority, agreed to increase the number of commuters the firm could force to stand, by changing the definition of "full standing capacity" from 163 people to 191.

The change came in when Govia, the company behind London Midland, took over the franchise for services between London, Birmingham and Liverpool from Silverlink.

The NAO even warned that passengers on other services would also see services deteriorate when their franchises changed hands. Meanwhile, the DfT has declared that the number of standing passengers deemed to be 'acceptable' has trebled from ten per hundred seats to thirty per hundred seats.

This change to the overcrowding criteria has serious safety implications for RMT train crew members that already experience serious difficulty moving through overcrowded carriages to deal with incidents or assist passengers with restricted mobility.

Unacceptable overcrowding levels are likely to continue, leaving passengers forced to travel in cramped conditions. One negative consequence of the overcrowding for RMT members is that all too often commuters vent their frustrations on train crew and station staff.

RENATIONALISE

Wolverhampton Labour MP Rob Marris echoed RMT policy by demanding that the nationalisation of the banks should be followed up by re-nationalising the railways.

He called on the government to take UK rail services back into public ownership and urged ministers to simply take over running the trains directly, when existing franchises come to a close.

Speaking in the House of Commons following the NAO report, Mr Marris said: "May I suggest that with the £15 billion of investment, and to try to increase rail line speeds and reduce train congestion, we should nationalise the

railways, just as we are nationalising the banks, by not renewing the franchises as they fall due?

"Many of those franchises, just like the banks, are bankrupt and would not be operating except for huge government subsidy. Let us move the railways back into state ownership," he said.

REFRANCHISING

Since 2005 eight franchises have been awarded by the DfT (see table opposite). Since 2003/04 the cost to the public purse of specifying and procuring franchises reached over £83 million, money which could have been better spent on the network itself rather than wasted on the wholly unnecessary re-franchising process.

The NAO report sets great store by the fact that the Department has reduced direct government subsidy to the eight franchises in question from £811 million in 2006/07 to a situation in 2011/12 where the DfT will receive combined premium payments of £326 million.

This doesn't mean that the train operators won't continue to make a healthy profit or pay shareholder dividends. Between 2007 and 2008 five train operators made combined pre-tax profits of £110 million and paid dividends of £84million (Arriva Cross Country, London Midland and East Midlands Trains are yet to lodge returns).

It simply means that they have to squeeze more from their passengers through inflation-busting fare increases and overcrowded services and attack the rail workforce by proposing cost cutting schemes such as removing buffet cars and closing ticket offices.

COST CUTTING

RMT successfully resisted FGW attempts to scrap their buffet cars and the union is campaigning to stop South West Trains from reducing booking-office opening times at over 100 stations and organising to save the First Great Western ticket office at Paddington.

The reduction in direct government grant is not a surprise. The Railways Act 2005 was in large part designed to take control of rail expenditure which had increased significantly following privatisation and were spiralling out of control following the Hatfield rail crash in 2001.

As part of this drive, the government has decided to 're-balance' the trough from which the ToCs make their profits by reducing direct public subsidy to the whole rail network (passenger services and the infrastructure) from £4.7 billion

in 2008/09 to £3.6 billion in 2013/14. To off-set this reduction in support the train operators will look to the passenger by increasing fare revenue from £6billion in 2008/09 to £9billion in 2013/14.

CAP AND COLLAR

Over the course of their franchise terms, four of the franchises, First Great Western, First Capital Connect, South West Trains and National Express East Coast have agreed to pay the DfT a combined sum of more than £4.5 billion.

Each franchise has a 'cap-and-collar arrangement' written into it which is actually just another example of how privatisation allows the private sector to enjoy sizeable profits when demand for the rail services is strong but ensures that the government picks up the tab if things begin to go wrong.

It works like this. The private train operators agree to make premium payments to the DfT based on some very optimistic projections of increased ridership numbers. If the revenue the TOC makes from the fare-box exceeds projections then that money is shared between the ToC and the DfT.

However, if revenue raised falls below 98 per cent of target then the DfT picks up between 50 per cent and 80 per cent of the shortfall. As is so often the case in the privatised rail industry the deal means that the private train operator is not exposed to any serious degree of financial risk.

RECESSION

Given the economy is now entering a recession, it is possible that demand for rail will not grow as quickly as was expected when the franchise agreements were signed off. This has consequences for the TOC's ability to make premium payments which in turn could leave a sizeable hole in the DfT's budget.

Even if a recession does impact on the 40 per cent growth in passengers projected in the next decade, commuter services are already seriously overloaded.

The problem is so great that demonstrations and fare strikes have been organised in the past two years in the Bristol, Bath and Oxford areas.

RMT argues that the solution to the problems created by the franchising system is to return franchises to public ownership as they expire. Sustained investment in adequate rolling stock numbers to deal with overcrowding also provides an opportunity to re-invigorate the domestic train manufacturing and maintenance sector. ■

MARCHING AGAINST EU RAIL PRIVATISATION

UNITY: French CGT rail union leader Didier Le Reste and European Transport Workers' Federation leader Eduardo Chagas march together against EU rail diktats that hand rail networks over to the private sector



Around 25,000 trade unionists joined an international protest in Paris on November 13 against European Union diktats that demand the break up and privatisation of rail networks across Europe.

French CGT union leader Bernard Thibault said that the international capitalist crisis had shown the limits of the markets.

"We have a president of the republic who says we have to draw the lessons from the global financial crisis and that not everything can be run according to the rules of the market. That's certainly true of public transport," he said.

Ignoring the current capitalist turmoil, the European Commission recently attacked 24 member states for failing to comply with neo-liberal EU rail packages.

RMT general secretary Bob Crow pointed out that the damaging privatisation of British Rail, carried out on the lines of EU directive 91/440/EEC, clearly showed that the EU rail 'liberalisation' model is a disaster.

"Rail privateers and their shareholders have bled billions of pounds out of the industry while taxpayers now pay over three times more in rail subsidies than under public ownership.

"Yet the neo-liberal mandarins of Brussels are rolling out their dangerous and failed privatisation model across the continent," he said.

Around 100 RMT members from across Britain took part in the protest, joining delegations from Belgium, Germany, Austria, Britain, Hungary, Norway, Russia, Ukraine, Portugal, Spain, Luxembourg and Italy as well as six French rail unions.

RMT member Eddie Dempsey from Paddington branch said that he was proud to be on his first demonstration with the union.

"We are here to march for decent public services and against the EU's Lisbon Treaty which threatens to destroy them," he said.

On the march, the European Transport Workers' Federation general secretary Eduardo Chagas spoke against the proposed rail freight liberalisation by the European Commission which is preparing to auction off freight to those operators who can pay.

"There is a need to develop rail as a public service, but the current strategies are nothing other than for the market, so we are saying enough is enough. We must reverse this policy, this obsession with liberalisation," he said.

ETF deputy general secretary Sabine Trier said that the EU had adopted three rail packages enforcing "fragmentation and privatisation, and for workers more stress, less job security, longer hours and a cut in the workforce by half".

She said that European rail workers were protesting against so-called 'liberalisation' and for publicly owned, environmentally sound, properly funded, customer responsive rail networks.

CGT railworkers union leader Didier Le Reste warned: "All railworkers are aware that private operators see safety regulations as a constraint, a fact which may ultimately affect the safety of passengers".

In a further sign that EU rail privatisation plans are going off the rails, the sale of 25 per cent of German railways Deutsche Bahn Mobility Logistics, a unit operating passenger and freight trains, was called off recently due to the global financial crisis. ■

RESISTING BRUSSELS' RAIL PRIVATISATION DRIVE

Bob Crow explains why RMT marched with thousands of workers from across Europe against the EU's rail privatisation drive

Thousands of rail workers marched in Paris because they understand that European Union rules demand the break up and privatisation of rail networks.

EU diktats are forcing member states to hand national rail networks over to the private sector, fundamentally attacking the concept of a social railway.

Just like British Rail in 1996, member states are being forced to split train operations and rail infrastructure and, ultimately, privatise their rail networks in order to create an internal market in what is effectively a natural monopoly.

Since the introduction of directive 91/440/EEC – which requires this split between 'wheel and steel' – three EU rail packages have been introduced to enforce 'competition' in rail freight by 2006 and full 'liberalisation' in international passenger services by 2010.

Yet governments are refusing to implement these diktats in one way or another and Brussels has launched legal proceedings against nearly all member states.

This is due to the fact that this rail privatisation drive, which no-one except big business and their EU lobby groups asked for, is throwing rail networks into the same familiar chaos across Europe.

It has also led to a struggle between France and Germany to buy up rail competitors across Europe. For instance, Germany's Deutsche Bahn now owns the UK's biggest rail freight operator EWS and French railways SNCF has just taken a 20 per cent stake in NTV, Europe's first private high-speed train operator which plans to operate between Rome and Milan.

In other words, EU 'liberalisation' policies have given the green light for an all-out economic war for control of vital transport networks and the peoples of Europe will be the biggest losers.

Yet Berlin has just cancelled the sale of a quarter stake in their state-owned railway due to the continuing financial market turmoil.

So, in order to steam ahead with rail 'liberalisation', the European

Commission is now proposing a Fourth Rail Package to ban the so-called 'holding model' for rail liberalisation used by some member states, including Germany, in place of full-blooded privatisation as in the UK.

Transport commissioner Jacques Barrot has also given governments until 2010 to end "hidden" state aid to railway companies or face a crackdown. As a result, member states are going to have to choose between the UK disastrous experience, based on EU directives, or decent, publicly-owned rail systems.

This puts the Commission on a collision course with member states and their elected governments. Hence the Commission's hurry to get its discredited Lisbon Treaty in place as transport is one of the areas where national vetoes would be abolished.

The prospect of a 'liberalised' rail industry in Europe dominated by private monopolies would clearly not operate in the interests of rail users or those who work in the industry.

SNCF chief Guillaume Pépy has predicted that only a small number of Europe-wide operators will emerge from the current process of liberalisation.

"This industry is going to be consolidated, exactly as the airline industry has been consolidated during the past 20 years," he said.

He has warned that SNCF would have to become more competitive and cut costs – that means job losses and downward pressure on wages and pensions.

Mr Pépy is also one of the driving forces behind the proposed privatisation of Eurostar by the UK, French and Belgian governments (see page 18).

But putting rail networks in the private sector, outside of any democratic control, is not an acceptable future for rail as the privateers are only willing to take money out of the industry.

That is why RMT, other rail unions across Europe and the ETF are calling for an end to EU rail privatisation and for democratically-controlled, publicly-owned railways. ■

DVD Review

A GUIDE TO ACTION

Steve Silver reviews an RMT film, available to members free, explaining union policy against the Lisbon Treaty and EU directives that privatise our public services

Want to know how the European Union is privatising rail networks in member states? Interested in exactly how the Lisbon Treaty would undermine democracy? Need to know how European Court of Justice rulings attack trade union rights? Then this DVD is for you.

This timely film, produced by the union in the wake of the Irish voters rejection of the repackaged EU constitution, explains in accessible and simple language how the anti-democratic direction of the EU affects transport workers.

The film shows how the privatisation of our railways and other public services are enshrined in a series of EU directives which take decision-making out of the hands of the citizens of member states and transfers these powers to

faceless and unaccountable mandarins in Brussels.

The film is divided into three sections the first, introduced by Brian Denny of Trade Unionists Against the EU Constitution (www.tuaeuc.org), looks at the Lisbon Treaty and offers an excellent crash course into the workings of the EU.

Veteran democracy campaigner Tony Benn explains that the Lisbon Treaty actually enshrines right wing, Thatcherite economics as a constitutional goal, a move so reactionary that it doesn't even exist in the US constitution. As Benn says, "Lisbon is an absolute charter for multinational companies to run Europe".

The Treaty also lays the basis for an EU army and a military-industrial-complex, which will allow Brussels to carry out

military adventures in its own right.

RMT general secretary Bob Crow points out that in Ireland, the only country to have a referendum on the Lisbon Treaty, it was the progressive forces which voted 'No'.

"It's not strange that big business voted yes and working people voted no" he says.

RAIL PRIVATISATION

Ian Jack – author of *The Crash that Stopped Britain*, the book about the Hatfield rail crash, talks about the lowering of safety standards as a result of privatisation.

He argues that the high-speed railways so admired in France, Germany and Spain were created by the nation and state intervention, not the market forces which the EU wants to impose.

Alex Gordon from the RMT's Council of Executives explains how Britain's disastrous rail privatisation programme was modelled on EU directive 91/440.

There are several interviews with campaigning European trade unionists that are experiencing the EU rail privatisation model pioneered in Britain.

RMT members also explain how EU diktats undermine national collective bargaining

and leads to the casualisation of jobs and 'social dumping'.

"This obsession with market competition will actually drive the salaries of our members down and down," one member says.

TRADE UNION RIGHTS

In the final section, Institute of Employment Rights director Carolyn Jones looks at recent European Court of Justice rulings which attack hard-won trade union rights to defend their members.

Carolyn and John Hendy QC explain in detail how the ECJ is seeking to shackle trade unions by giving itself the right to decide on whether strike action is valid or not, something that even Margaret Thatcher could not achieve.

Anyone who is opposed to the privatisation of the rail industry or concerned about the ongoing assault on democracy and union rights across Europe needs to see this film.

It makes a complex subject digestible and is ideal to show at branch meetings and other gatherings as an opening to a discussion on campaigning for the nationalisation of the rail industry and to defend democracy here and across the EU. ■



Send for your free DVD to RMT DVD, Unity House, 39 Chalton Street, London, NW1 1JD

Name

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.....

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RMT SAYS NO TO SOCIAL DUMPING AT SEA

RMT seafarers and supporters from across Britain demonstrate in Brussels against 'social dumping' and European Union rules that threaten jobs and services

As part of a week of action against discrimination, RMT's noisy, good-natured and colourful march was met by Belgian police in full riot gear and a water cannon, which barred the way to the parliament building.

Inside the building, RMT national secretary Steve Todd was outlining the union's concerns to European Union officials – and the one European Parliament member who

bothered to turn up.

Among the demonstrators were workers from Caledonian MacBrayne, whose lifeline Scottish ferry routes were put out to tender in a pointless and damaging process prompted by EU regulations.

That process cost taxpayers £17 million that the union and the vast bulk of public opinion said should have been spent on improving services.

"Social dumping by bosses

who replace organised crews with cheap, super-exploited overseas labour has been made worse by European Court of Justice rulings that make effective strike action to defend jobs illegal," RMT general secretary Bob Crow told an impromptu rally held in front of riot police.

"On top of that we have EU regulations that insist on putting ferry services out to tender and we are demonstrating to defend services and jobs, against legalised discrimination and for seafarers' rights

"The billions our governments are paying to bail out bankers and privateers should be going directly into services run in the public sector for the benefit of all.

"Working people across Europe need to protect their public services and this is not

the last word, but the first," Bob said.

"Since the Irish Ferries dispute in 2005, when unionised Irish crews were replaced with unorganised low-paid east European labour, we have stepped up our campaign alongside colleagues in unions across Europe," national secretary Steve Todd said.

"Our campaign aims to highlight the role being played by the EU regulations and the ECJ rulings in undermining services and jobs and attempting to make strike action to defend them illegal.

"We will continue to campaign for effective action by the UK government to ensure that decent minimum employment standards are imposed on UK-flag shipowners, but the key remains to organise maritime workers and demand our rights," Steve said. ■



FIGHTING PRIVATISATION AT EUROSTAR

In the first ever privatisation of an international passenger train operator, the high-speed rail link to Europe Eurostar is to be sold off by offloading its huge debts onto the taxpayer

The UK government is planning to sell off the three constituent parts of the London and Continental Railways (LCR) organisation which part owns Eurostar along with the Belgian and French states.

The privatisation would include the high speed rail link between Ashford and St Pancras International used by Eurostar and domestic high speed services, the stations and property portfolio as well as Eurostar UK Ltd (EUKL) - the international train operating company that operates between London, Paris and Brussels.

However, this sell-off is hindered not only by current global financial conditions but also by massive debts that the government has loaded onto the LCR and EUKL accounts during the construction of the high-speed link (HS1).

LCR was initially meant to be an entirely privately-financed company that would raise cash from the city to build and operate the high speed line and train services.

Yet the cash-raising exercise was a complete failure and the only way the link could be built was for the government to directly guarantee bonds of up to £7.5 billion. This money has now been added to the Public Sector Borrowing Requirement after a decision by the National Audit Office.

The repayment for these bonds was meant to come from track access charges levied against EUKL and the future domestic operator. But, for the government, this equation

breaks down as the passenger fares generated by EUKL can never be expected to repay the bonds and cover its own running costs.

DEBT BURDEN

The result of this, after nearly 14 years of operation, is that Eurostar UK Ltd is hopelessly crippled by debt on its balance sheet. This debt is made up mostly of massive track access charges from Railtrack/Network Rail for the old Southern region services from Waterloo International, Channel Tunnel tolls to Eurotunnel and now astronomical fees to LCR for using the new HS1 link.

Access charges alone put a burden of over £200 million onto EUKL in 2007.

Nobody in their right mind would buy such a company.

As a result, de facto, EUKL is a government company, with accumulated debt of £1.7 billion to £2.4 billion depending on the reading of the accounts, with losses transferred to the LCR balance sheet, which is backed by government guarantee.

THE PATH TO PRIVATISATION

The EUKL board has a strategy that has three key elements:

- The offloading of the accumulated debt
- Re-negotiation of track access and toll charges to make EUKL a profitable company
- Privatisation in the UK and the creation of a trans-national autonomous train operator independent of other companies in the UK, France and Belgium



OFFLOADING DEBT

The government strategy is part and parcel of the on-going EU privatisation agenda.

The 2006 third EU rail package envisages complete 'liberalisation' of international passenger services by 2010.

London has applied to the European Commission to allow it to write off the debt on EUKL's books to allow the privatisation to go ahead.

This would leave EUKL as a "clean skin" financially and ripe for the sell off. The application is unlikely to meet any opposition from a Commission which has produced three rail packages to promote its rail privatisation agenda.

EUKL has stated that offloading the debt from its books is a pre-requisite for its strategy.

In a scandalous use of public money, yet again, the tax payer picks up the losses but none of the strategic gains of the high speed services, which would be in private hands despite the fact that they refused to finance the project.

UNVIABLE

Even with a debt write-off, EUKL would not be viable. The track access charges are due to be ratcheted up again from £200 million in 2007 on a turnover of only £267 million.

Without re-negotiating the charges, Eurostar will never be a sound economic entity and would not be allowed to trade independently with its balance sheet in such disarray.

It is likely that its negotiating stance will be that without more realistic charges it will not be able to trade, so the infrastructure owners should change their charges accordingly.

The strategy also implies that the need to repay LCR's debts of in excess of £7.5 billion will be removed and that this debt too will be absorbed by the government.

The ongoing access charge is likely to be based on infrastructure maintenance and renewal costs and a fair return for the new owner - possibly Network Rail or a subsidiary - with the obligation to pay the historic construction costs removed.

TRANSNATIONAL PRIVATISATION

Currently the Eurostar service operates as a partnership between EUKL, French railways SNCF and Belgium railways SNCB. In France and Belgium the infrastructure, rolling stock, stations and staff are inherent parts of the national railway corporations and indeed the staff, such as train crew and engineers, work on other

services and stock.

This means there is no single Eurostar "corporation" operating centrally, able to plan strategically and operate the service autonomously. Eurostar is a brand operated by three separate railways in partnership.

Decisions about marketing, maintenance and operations have to be agreed through a partnership arrangement with the partners extracting revenues or paying-in, according to complex contractual arrangements based on sales, mileages, crewing, maintenance etc.

The Eurostar strategy is to create one entity in the three countries that will become the sole owner, operator and employer of the assets, rolling stock and staff.

In the UK we are familiar with this through sub-contracting, where franchises are given out, assets transferred and staff are TUPE'd over.

But this would also directly import the neo-liberal

economic model and the contract culture onto the French and Belgian rail networks – something their rail unions are opposed to.

SNCF has always been the largest shareholder of EUKL as well as being its "partner" as an operational railway. SNCF President Guillaume Pepy, who has been chairman and board member of EUKL for many years, wants to use this international privatisation as a test bed for future SNCF privatisations and contracting out of rail services in France.

RMT general secretary Bob Crow said that RMT would be working closely with the French and Belgian unions to coordinate resistance to a privatisation, paid for by the UK taxpayer, which would inevitably involve cost-cutting, job cuts and attacks on terms and conditions.

"The simpler resolution would be to place the whole group into direct public ownership," he said.



THE CREDIT CRUNCH AND RMT

In the depth of the worst global capitalist crisis in living memory, it is appalling to see all three major parties support billions of pounds being poured into the banking sector without even a promise of any real protection for working people.

While working people lose their jobs, homes and pensions, demands for more tax cuts and attacks on the weakest in our society is just not good enough. The only guarantee, it seems, is that the Tory Party is demanding even more vicious attacks on working people.

The immediate task of this union is to protect our members, whether in defence of pensions or other terms and conditions, from the ravages of this deep recession we are facing. We must also challenge claims from well-heeled politicians that workers must pay for this crisis and put forward socialist alternatives.

If the market has failed in the banking sector, which it clearly has, and requires public money to put it right, what about other areas of the economy such as transport?

We must say loudly and clearly that job losses and huge public spending cuts are not a natural solution to the crisis that capitalism has created.

If we can use public money to bail out bankers that caused this crisis in the first place, we can have democratic control over that money and defend working people and their families. If millions can be found for the banks then no one in our society should ever suffer from poverty and want.

As a result our socialist demands are more relevant today than they have ever been and the renationalisation of our railways and other utilities has never been more popular.

Yet, sadly, that message is still falling on deaf ears. At a meeting with the new secretary of state for Transport Geoff Hoon recently, our delegation demanded that any plans to privatise the Tyne and Wear Metro be dumped and it

should remain in public ownership

Incredibly, he claimed that that privatisation had brought "innovation and good practice" into the rail network including cheap fares!

Yet the very next day ATOC announced huge, inflation-busting, fare rises of seven per cent on top of ticket prices that are already the highest in Europe.

Needless to say this union will continue the fight and reverse privatisation.

In January the union will see six members of the Council of Executives return to work, to be replaced by new representatives elected by members of their respective regions.

Those returning to work are Jack Jones from North Wales and North West, Pete Rowland from Manchester and North West, Donny Shannon from Scotland, Del Marr from London and Anglia, Paul Burton from South East and Dave Nelson from Region 2 Shipping.

All of these members have played a vital and constructive part in the government of the union, the Council of Executives, which took well over a thousand decisions last year. This principal of fixed terms of office is, I believe, vital as it ensures members keep their feet on the ground and the full-time executive remains fully accountable to the members that it represents.

On behalf of the union, I wish them all the very best for the future in the knowledge that all of them will still contribute in the fight for justice in the workplace. Six new elected members will replace them in the new year and they too will have a vital role to play.

2009 will bring many challenges and our union will never cease in its responsibility to put the wellbeing of members and their loved ones at the centre of every decision that we make.

I wish you all seasonal greetings and a safe new year.

John Leach

EUROSTAR TRAIN MANAGERS BALLOTTED FOR ACTION OVER IMPOSED ROSTERS

RMT and TSSA rail unions urged nearly 100 Eurostar train managers to vote for industrial action after the company imposed new rosters, breaching an agreement which requires new shift patterns to be negotiated and approved by reps.

RMT and TSSA called ballots after the company sidestepped procedures and posted new rosters without consulting local reps.

The unions urged the company to withdraw the disputed rosters and to avoid industrial action in the run-up to Christmas by staff that play a pivotal safety role on Eurostar trains.

RMT general secretary Bob Crow said: "The company's own policy clearly states that

local working arrangements are discussed at local level, but it has completely disregarded agreements, bypassed levels of negotiation and sought to impose unfair rosters.

"Our members are angry that the company is attempting to undermine their ability to balance their working and home lives, and it is time for Eurostar to step back and talk."

TSSA general secretary Gerry Doherty said: "We are very disappointed that managers based on this side of the Channel are being treated so unfairly given all the co-operation and flexibility they showed in getting services back on track after the recent tunnel fire".

EU IGNORES VOTE TO PROTECT ROAD TRANSPORT WORKERS

The European Commission ignored a vote in the European Parliament last month to bring self-employed road transport workers within the scope of the road transport working time regulations.

The vote by MEPs in the largely consultative assembly seemed like a triumph for the lobbying efforts of RMT and other European Transport Workers Federation (ETF) affiliates demanding the extension of the Sectoral Working Time Directive (Road Transport Directive) to self-employed drivers to make our roads safer and safeguarding UK jobs.

This extension to the legislation would have improved road transport health and safety by limiting driving hours for self-employed drivers. This would have prevented directly-employed drivers, whose working hours have been

subject to legal limit since 2005, from being undermined by self-employed drivers working dangerously long hours.

Unfortunately the Commission ignored the Parliamentary 'opinion' favouring the inclusion of the self-employed and instead issued a new proposal to include only the 'false' self-employed. This means self-employed drivers may have to wait two years or longer, for protection on working hours as the matter is examined afresh by the European Parliament and Council of Ministers.

The text of the Commission's proposal is disappointing in a number of areas, not least, that it maintains the exclusion of genuinely self-employed drivers. It also proposes to weaken the definition of night work from "any work performed during night time" to "a period of work which includes at least two hours work performed during night time".

On the more positive side, it

does seek to crack down on bogus self-employment and improve monitoring and enforcement. RMT reps have reported that employers are encouraging drivers to take up self-employed status in order to be exempt from the provisions of the directive.

RMT will play a full part in the consultation and campaign with the ETF for extension of the Road Transport Directive to all drivers for the following reasons:-

- There is no serious reason to delay extending the coverage of the Directive to self-employed drivers from 2009 as originally envisaged. In fact self-employed drivers should have been included in 2005 when the original Road Transport Directive 2002/15/EC was introduced.
- Universal coverage will allow universal monitoring and universal enforcement. This will ensure that all drivers are absolutely clear which working time regulations apply to them and the maximum time limits for driving.

- Bringing self-employed drivers into the scope of the Directive ensures that unscrupulous employers do not pressure drivers to take up self-employed status.
- The liberalisation of cabotage rules which allow drivers to undertake three jobs in a seven-day period additional to their original job means that vigilance is required to ensure that all drivers are not working excessive hours, especially self-employed drivers.
- The aim of the Road Transport Directive was to reduce working hours and improve health and safety. RMT is sceptical that this is happening because of Periods of Availability. Nevertheless the industry has an unsafe long-hours culture and is unattractive to new entrants. Bringing all drivers under the terms of the Directive, together with reform of Periods of Availability could drive down hours, improve road safety and make industry a more attractive proposition for new drivers. ■



RMT MEMBER HITS THE BIG SCREEN

RMT News talks to clerical worker Ann Burkin about her other career as a successful actress and landing a role in the award-winning film *Zebra Crossings*

For most people one successful career would be more than enough to cope with. But Kings Cross-based Regional Support Assistant Ann Burkin is also an actress who stars in the award winning film *Zebra Crossings*.

On a normal weekday Ann's work for National Express entails looking after the senior crew manager and station manager, a job that she loves. She started out in 1994 working for Intercity as a Welcome Host in the First Class Lounge, holding several different posts before her current one.

Ann joined the union early on in her career "because it's nice to know there is back up support. And they are a good bunch of people in the union here" she says, adding that she shares an office with RMT branch secretary Ray Knight.

But once she gets out of work at the end of the week Ann makes her way to her Friday night acting class in Islington which operates under the tutelage of Anna Scher. Scher's famous method of teaching is renowned for giving its students a distinctively natural acting style. Many of her students have gone on to become actors in *Eastenders* and other programmes and films that require a gritty realism.

Ann says she had done acting at school and thought "acting can be done at any age; I can pick this up as an adult as well".

As luck would have it, at her first lesson – three years ago – there were people there casting for the film *Zebra Crossings*, an independent film, written and directed by Sam Holland.

Ann went for an audition and

got the part of Donna, a girlfriend of one of the main characters. Set on a south London council estate the film tells the story of four lads lives, which are characterised by petty crime and violent retribution. The film shows that despite their violent lifestyles everyone deserves a chance of redemption.

When it came to filming Ann booked the days off work. Then there was the long wait as the film went through a year of editing before it was finally ready for screening.

When the film was shown at last it was well received. It scooped a Golden Ticket Award at the Socal festival in Los Angeles and won the audience award at the Raindance Film Festival in London.

Ann says that she didn't get to see the film until the English premier at the Trocadero in October. "I didn't know what to expect, but the audience loved the film. When I watched it didn't seem like it was me up there," she says.

With the success of the film Ann wants to take her acting career more seriously. She's already done some other short films and video.

Asked if she would like to pursue acting full-time she says "acting is a dream job, but I love the job I do now".

So, while *Zebra Crossings* continues to receive acclaim it's back to work as normal for Ann, dealing with more mundane matters such as the ordering of the last of the new staff uniforms. ■



CASUALISING DANGER ON THE TRACKS

Groundstaff carry out some of the most dangerous jobs in the rail industry, yet casualisation is a real threat

Working on the ground next to tonnes of rolling steel is a dangerous job. Receiving and forming up trains, carrying out brake tests and then releasing a train carries with it a lot of responsibility.

And these are just a few of the many jobs that groundstaff can be called on to perform.

Workplace conditions are not for the faint-hearted. Underfoot is ballast, ready to move and cause you to slip and roll your ankle at any moment. The most common injuries for rail groundstaff are sprains and strains. For some workers, their injuries have been much worse including crushed and lost limbs.

Four shunters have been killed in the course of their work in the last ten years. Three of the fatalities were attributed to getting trapped in between two vehicles while carrying out manual coupling.

According to a report published earlier this year by the Rail Safety & Standards Board shunters are most at risk when moving around and between work areas where they have to negotiate rails, ballast and cabling as well as other hazards left on or near the line.

There is often no place of safety or walkway.

In July 2006 a shunter working for Freightliner was crushed and killed after falling between a locomotive and a wagon during a shunter move at Dagenham Dock down yard.

It is believed the shunter either tripped or collapsed and fell towards the moving train.

If he tripped then the Rail Accident Investigation Branches own investigation says that "the



damaged condition of the trackside walkway... presented a tripping hazard".

The investigation also found a number of other potential contributory factors to the accident.

In August 2007 a shunter was struck by a train moving within a yard at Harlow Mill, losing both his lower legs as a result.

RMT News spoke to a number of EWS groundstaff about the job in the light of what union members say are worsening conditions. Their concerns are that an already dangerous job is being made more unsafe by company practices.

"People need to know how dangerous the job is" one EWS employee told us. "There are not many based in the yards any more. Most are mobile shunters who work from home with a van. Sometimes you can drive 2000 miles in a week, all over

the country, when it's busy.

"People have had accidents on their way home from falling asleep at the wheel. I've fallen asleep myself," he says.

Health and safety was taken more seriously in the days of British Rail. "At BR you weren't allowed to do a job unless you were competent in it. Now you get 2-3 days training and are considered competent," says an aggrieved shunter.

Another told us that "on my site there used to be a proper safety briefing off the job, in a room. Now it's just a sheet of paper. So by law they are conforming, but it's a lowering of safety standards".

Mobile shunters have a whole number of jobs which they are expected to be skilled in and be able to carry out on a site that they may be visiting for the first time. One shunter said that he could be asked to do anything

including: tipper operator; loads examiner; freight guard; inspecting the wagons. "That isn't all of them," he said.

Mobile EWS groundstaff have what is ostensibly a flexible roster, but the flexibility is with the company. Shifts can run from 1.00 am to 1.00 pm followed by a long drive home. On some jobs workers are being expected to work over 12 hours.

Also, extensive weekend working can put a tremendous strain on family life, with some workers doing five weekends out of seven. The lack of staff means that it is difficult to take holiday's.

Groundstaff believe that management are taking every opportunity they can to get rid of people. This has helped create a climate where workers don't want to speak out for fear of getting sacked.

As if the job itself isn't hard

enough, workers complain of practices which include managers bragging that they have got rid of shunters. They also say that managers in yards have been observing shunters on the job with binoculars, looking for mistakes.

And there is a great fear of making mistakes. There is a general feeling that the smallest infringement will result in the sack.

"When EWS took over we were optimistic, but that was shortlived. There has been very low staff morale for the last few years," one veteran shunter said.

The move to using mobile shunters under new TS5 contracts has created great uncertainty for those based on sites, who feel their job could be next to go. Potential TS5 workers have been explicitly told not to join RMT.

There has also been a recent and even more worrying development in the direction of the casualisation of groundstaff jobs with jobs being advertised through agencies for £11.00 per hour. While the adverts make clear that shunting experience would be required they also say that there are "opportunities available" in track renewals, ballast tipping and machine operation, where no experience seems to be required.

One member said "this will lead to someone getting killed".

Another shocking attempt to reduce groundstaff was fortunately scuppered by train drivers. At one site there was an attempt to get the drivers themselves to do the shunting. However, the drivers refused to drive past the "Stop" board, putting paid to that scheme.

Nick Quirk, RMT EC member for the South West, told RMT News that he had received complaints from worried groundstaff. "These are very worrying developments and are causing a lot of concern for our members.

"The company seems to be looking to get rid of people in any way it can in order to save money," he said. ■

PADDINGTON STAFF ON THE FRONT-LINE

RMT fights for jobs at Paddington station following proposals to close ticket offices

RMT reps at Paddington station have been working hard to defend station and booking staff jobs over the last few months in the face of proposed ticket office closures.

Immediately after the shock announcement RMT's Paddington branch met to voice its objections to First Great Western's proposals, arguing that it is essential for such a busy station to be fully staffed.

Yet even before the announcement, First Great Western had already convinced passenger watchdogs Travel Watch and Passenger Focus that the cuts were a good idea.

Faced with this the union has been working to ensure that staff will be redeployed to suitable alternative jobs rather than face redundancy.

THE CUTBACKS AT PADDINGTON INCLUDE:

- The closure of the concourse ticket office
- The closure of the customer reception desk
- Paring down of the help desk
- Reorganisation of platform station assistants' grades

In total 24 staff jobs are set to go at the station, including 11 clerical officers from the ticket office and seven from the help desk.

However, union reps have pushed hard to save jobs, forcing the company to rethink its proposals. Five new jobs are to be created at the station and all those affected by the cuts are set to be redeployed elsewhere in the company. There has also been a significant victory following commitments to bring agency staff in-house (see boxed article).

Also, at the union's request, a monitoring process will be introduced in the wake of the changes.

Union reps at Paddington are keen to point out that other stations will also face ticket office closures as companies promote sales of tickets over the internet and from ticketing machines rather than purchases from a ticket office.

FGW divisional council rep Glen Burrows told RMT News that there was not one shred of evidence to back management's claim that passengers prefer ticket machines.

"We need a wider campaign for the public to back our call to maintain ticket office jobs. This is not just about Paddington, but potentially affects us all," she said. ■



AGENCY STAFF TO COME IN-HOUSE

Following discussions with RMT reps, First Great Western has agreed to end the practice of using outsourced agency staff for train cleaning and for gateline duties at the ticket barriers and has made a commitment to bring all staff in-house.

This is a tremendous boost for workers who are poorly paid and work without job security or any of the benefits of proper employment.

In future agency staff and those – many of whom have worked for many years in agency employment – will have free travel, pensions and all the other benefits that direct employment brings.

First Great Western has made a further commitment to bring cleaning staff in house across the company, not only at Paddington station.

This has the potential to lift the living standards and job security of many vulnerable workers who previously were having their employment contracts renewed on a three monthly or six monthly basis.



22 REASONS TO BE

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

1 COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

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

We have a strong team of elected officers including the newly established Wessex Organiser all to support members in the workplace. These officers are supported by a team of researchers to formulate pay claims to obtain the best negotiated conditions for you.

2 SUPPORT IN THE WORKPLACE

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

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

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

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

3 MEMBERS HELPLINE TELEPHONE 0800 376 3706

A freephone members' helpline staffed by experts in the industrial relations department advises members on all work related and membership enquiries. Lines are open

Monday to Friday 0800 hours to 1800 hours and Saturdays 0930 hours to 1600 hours.

4 LEGAL HELPLINE 0800 587 7516

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

5 CRIMINAL CHARGES

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

6 INDUSTRIAL DISEASES

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

7 PERSONAL INJURY

Personal injury claims cover extends to RMT family members and friends should they suffer an injury. RMT underwrites

settlements that would not be provided by no-win, no-fee companies.

8 EMPLOYMENT TRIBUNALS

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

9 DONCASTER EDUCATION CENTRE

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

10 ACCIDENT BENEFIT

Payable if you have an accident at work or on the way to or from work. Payable for 26 week period at ten times weekly union contribution. So from 2009 one week's accident benefit would be £36.40 with maximum payable £946.40.

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

order to qualify for accident benefit.

11 RETIREMENT BENEFIT

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

12 DEMOTION COMPENSATION

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

13 DEATH GRANT

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

14 ORPHAN FUND

The beneficiaries of this fund would be any child of a member or a members' spouse when the member dies in service or if a members spouse dies and the member has responsibility of the children. Benefit is paid while a child is in full-time education up until the age of 22. Payment is made quarterly and the rate is



A MEMBER OF RMT

£12.00 per week for children up to the age of 16, then £12.75 per week from 16 to 22.

15 OLD AGE GRANT

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

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

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

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

16 FUNERAL GRANT

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

17 CAMPAIGNING

The union has a political fund to run campaigns and provide a political voice to benefit members' interests in the workplace. RMT has a very active parliamentary group which raises issues of concern

for members in the House of Commons and puts down early day motions in support of union policy.

18 FINES POOL

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

19 RMT NEWS

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

20 WEBSITE

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

21 CREDIT UNION

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

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

22 TAX AND WILL PREPARATION

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

NOTIFICATION OF CONTRIBUTION RATES FOR 2009

Like most things, the cost of providing you with the benefits of RMT membership increases every year. The increase for 2009 is calculated in accordance with the provisions of the rule book namely at 1% over the Retail Price Index for September.

From the 1st January 2009 contributions will be increased by 21p per week, taking the full-time weekly rate to £3.64, for members aged 18 or over in an adult post. For members who are under 18 years or who, if not in an adult post, are under 20 years of age, the weekly contribution rate will be held at the current level that is £1.33, the latter rate also applying to those staff on part-time contracts of employment. For those full time workers on low pay of less than £15,000 we have a special rate of £1 per week subject to the fulfillment of certain conditions.

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

The new rates applicable are as follows:

Period	Adult/Full Time	Junior/Part Time	Full Time Low Paid Equivalent
Weekly	£3.64	£1.33	£1.00
4 Weekly	£14.56	£5.30	£4.00
Monthly	£15.77	£5.74	£4.33

PROVIDENT BENEFITS

Accident Benefit will also increase arising from the higher contribution rate and for Adult/Full Time members will be weekly £36.40 with a maximum payable sum of £946.40.

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

SAFETY REPS RIGHTS AN AGENDA FOR CHANGE

HEALTH AND SAFETY: Poster promoting social behaviour towards station staff, Euston Station, London
Copyright © Duncan Phillips/reportdigital.co.uk



The sheer number of ministers that have had responsibility for health and safety matters since Labour came to power in 1997 might cause you to wonder how high a priority health and safety is to the current government.

So it was welcome news to hear the current incumbent of the post Lord Bill McKenzie to praise the safety role of trade unions.

"Organisations that have good worker involvement deliver better performance on health and safety.

"A management culture that genuinely values employees will result in a more committed and productive workforce," he said.

He pointed out that workplaces with health and safety committees where some members are selected by trade unions have a significantly lower rate of injuries than those without cooperative health and safety management.

TRAINING

Lord McKenzie also praised the effectiveness of unions in the training of safety representatives.

"There is no doubt that the trade unions have long been the driving force behind the training of safety reps - and have been very successful in doing so.

"They have made sure their safety representatives have up-to-date knowledge enabling them to address the issues more effectively, and to deal with the more complex issues with confidence - particularly occupational health," he said.

He suggested the great majority of employers fall short of 'good practice' on worker involvement, citing a recent HSE survey that found nine out of ten employers claiming to have staff involved in health and safety management. However, when asked for further information only four in ten said they held regular meetings with workers, designated health and safety representatives or an established health and safety committee.

CHANGING ATTITUDES

While these words are welcome there needs to be real change in the attitudes and actions of employers. One worrying area

appears to be a growing number of occasions when it has been necessary to alert the safety authorities to employers' cavalier attitude to safety when trade union members embark on industrial action.

On four separate occasions in recent months the union has had to issue advice to members about potential safety problems that could arise through management's use of under qualified managers undertaking safety critical duties which RMT believes could place the safety of staff and the travelling public at danger.

At the union's 2008 AGM a resolution was adopted as RMT policy to produce a guide to the question of 'serious and imminent danger'. Regulation 8 of the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations enables workers to stop work if they feel that their safety is at risk. As a result, guidance for individual RMT members is currently being produced by the union.

The TUC have recently launched a Charter for Change that calls for the government, enforcing authorities and employers to recognise that the trade union model for health and safety is the best model which will bring about safer and healthier workplaces. The Charter is available on line: http://www.tuc.org.uk/h_and_s/tuc-15491-f0.cfm

Among the aims of the Charter are several issues RMT believes will make a major change to safety reps impact in the workplace:

- Greater enforcement of the consultation regulations
- Sanctions available against employers who deny safety representatives paid release for training
- Penalties against employers who victimise a safety representative
- A new legal duty on employers to respond to issues raised by safety representatives
- A duty on enforcing authorities to respond to a complaint from a safety representative that their employer has not responded adequately

- A specific requirement on employers to consult safety representatives on risk assessments and controls arising out of them
- The right for safety representatives to stop unsafe and dangerous work taking place

RMT believes that the most significant step will be a requirement on employers to consult safety representatives on risk assessments and controls arising out of them. While RMT will be part of that campaign we believe we cannot wait for a change in legislation and the union will be commencing a campaign at next year's Health and Safety conference to persuade employers to enter into voluntary agreements for full involvement of health and safety reps in the risk assessment process.

ORGANISED

There is a wealth of research that proves that having union organised health and safety reps in workplaces leads to lower accident rates and a healthier workforce. Therefore it is time that employers woke up to the fact that this means the work safety reps do has a positive cost benefit and with just a little more effort on the employers part could make a significant savings.

RMT has estimated that accidents and occupational ill-health cost the UK rail industry about £500,000,000 each year and if the rail industry were to improve the way they utilised the skills of safety reps there is a real possibility of reducing that £500 million figure.

RISK ASSESSMENT

RMT safety reps have the necessary skills and knowledge of working practices to participate fully in the risk assessment process and ensure that the outcome is valid for the specific workplace.

Both the Health and Safety Executive and the Office of Rail Regulation recognise the importance of involving workers in assessing risks and hazards and there are specific duties to consult on a number of issues: new or different procedures,

types of work equipment, premises and methods of working.

As these issues are commonly examined in risk assessments, it seems only logical to RMT that there is formal involvement of our health and safety reps in the risk assessment.

In order to support the campaign, next year's RMT Health and Safety conference has adopted the theme of risk assessment and delegates will be able to attend a training course on the issue as part of the conference. Nomination forms have been sent to all branches along with a call for conference motions.

UNION MEMBERSHIP

When individuals are asked why they join a trade union one of the most common answers is because of the recognition of the work our safety reps do in making workplaces safer, 70 per cent of new trade union members considered health and safety a 'very important' union issue - even more than for pay.

When an RMT safety rep has the support of an informed and involved membership they can effectively secure improvements and be a part of the process of organising their workplace. By encouraging members to participate, much more can be achieved than if members expect the union to 'sort things out'.

This means involving members in identifying issues, finding solutions and dealing with problems, increasing the number of trained health and safety representatives, working together rather than leaving it to the union, improving negotiating strength and dealing with problems when they are manageable, rather than leaving them to get worse.

RMT wants employers to see the clear benefits available to them from involving health and safety reps in a more central role in preventing accidents and occupational ill health, we want our reps to fully contribute in the safety regime and ensure that safety in the transport sector moves higher up the industry agenda. ■

RMT YOUTH VISIT CUBA



London Underground Train Operator Adrian Rowe reports from a solidarity visit by young RMT members to Cuba earlier this year



Four young trade unionists, nominated from branches across the country, had the pleasure to attend the Cuba Solidarity Campaign's Young Persons International May Day brigade 2008.

Emma Baldwin (Watford branch), Sarah Collinson (Doncaster), Christopher Lonie (Shipping) and myself Adrian Rowe (Bakerloo branch) enjoyed a fantastic experience.

Having only recently becoming more active in the union, international solidarity was a new thing for me.

Before I left for Cuba I did a bit of research, finding out about the US blockade and other problems the country has to cope with which left parts of the economy in the 1950's.

Leaving Havana airport on arrival, I could see that this was true, all the cars were classics and the buses were falling apart. I knew this was going to be an interesting trip.

We met Roberto our translator/tour guide and he took us to Camp Antonio Julio Mella, where we saw how poor Cuba actually is.

The dorm rooms consisted of bunk beds, a fan, and the doors had air holes drilled in them. For me it was going to be a long two weeks.

But I was really excited at being able to live like the Cubans do, after all that's what solidarity and trade unionism is about.

There were around 50 UK delegates from many unions including UNITE, Unison, and others.

Next day we went to Cienfuegos, staying in a purpose-built hotel for tourism with air-con, hot running showers, flushing toilets, decent food and a pool. But you had to remember that people in Cuba don't live like this.

We visited a few key places around Cuba such as a medical school where the government train doctors, a local school and a local sports school. We were welcomed by local people that had prepared speeches and presentations for us to show what Cubans are like.



VIVA: RMT's delegation in Havana on Mayday

We had the pleasure of spending time in Santa Clara, visiting the Che Guevara memorial and many sites where Che fought including where his group had ambushed an armoured train to stop weapons being used against the Cuban people.

We were also visited local people in houses and flats organised in Committees for the Defence of the Revolution (CDRs). When we arrived entire neighbourhoods would chant and seemed so pleased to see us, it was really overwhelming.

They were so proud of being Cuban and even put on presentations with the children pretending to be singers. I remember one had a mop on her head pretending to be Christina Aguilera! It really was a heart warming moment and many of us realised how proud these people were.

There were tables of food, fresh fruit and one man invited us into his house, offering us home-made wine and telling us how proud they were and the fact that their son was studying to be a doctor.

One thing that shocked us is that they said that their mortgage on the flat was nearly finished and only had 300 Cuban dollars (£150) left to pay.

The average salary for a barman – one of the highest paid jobs in Cuba – is around £120 a year, the equivalent to one day's wages as a train

operator.

This trip was not all about sightseeing and we worked for half a day each day carrying out agricultural activities such as weeding, picking fruit and cutting the grass with a machete and helping with the general upkeep of the camp.

At the end of a week we had learnt a lot about Cuba and the way Cubans live and everyone knew everyone else and we worked well as a team.

Every lunch time we were ready to go out and visit places such as old Havana and Friendship House – a kind of embassy where all trade unionists were welcome to watch shows, have dinner and meet.

We did spend some time exploring old Havana trying to speak Spanish and, at some points down back streets, it could be quite scary. But on the main road we were fine.

One of the main reasons we went to Cuba attend the Mayday Rally in Revolution Square. To attend this amazing event we had to get up at 2am and travel via coach. We were sitting at the front and on the balcony above us were Fidel Castro and the family of the Cuban Five, imprisoned in the United States for trying to stop terrorist attacks on Cuba.

Everyone in Havana stopped work for the entire day and marched in the parade, which lasted over two hours and we shook people hands and gave

away pens, t-shirts and other union products.

FREE THE MIAMI FIVE

The Cuban Five, or Miami Five, are five men who were unlawfully tried and taken to five separate prisons in the US. These people have been imprisoned for 10 years on trumped up terrorism charges. Their families have been denied visas to travel to the US to see their husbands/brothers/fathers. One of the five has never seen his child.

We attended a solidarity conference dealing with this and other issues meeting delegations from trade unions from all over the world. Delegates showed their solidarity with Cuba and pledged to go back to their union and get greater support to help free the Miami Five.

The Cuba Solidarity Campaign works with trade unions and are always keen for people to join.

CSC held a vigil for the Miami Five at the US Embassy in London recently and many RMT members took part.

Well there you have it, a short version of what we did in Cuba this year. I'm sure there are loads of things I've missed out, but the only way you will really know what Cuba is like is to join a brigade and visit Cuba.

**Viva La Revolucion!
Viva Cuba!**



ON BOARD THE PRIDE OF BILBAO

Mike Sargent reports on a visit to members working on the Pride of Bilbao – with regional organiser Peter Gale

I met up with south west regional organiser Peter Gale at Portsmouth last month to travel aboard The Pride of Bilbao for four days to meet RMT members.

As a Union Learning representative co-ordinator, I was keen to find members on board who might wish to become ULR's and help give seafarers access to educational opportunities.

Before becoming the full time officer for the region, Peter had been a very effective Union Learning rep, so he was aware of RMT Learning and the initiative to organise learning opportunities for British seafarers.

The following morning we introduced ourselves to the captain and were taken to the mess to meet some of the crew who made us very welcome and invited to use their mess for the duration of the voyage.

Peter had arranged a meeting with the deck and engine ratings for the afternoon, so we introduced ourselves, recruiting where we could, and giving away vast amounts of RMT paraphernalia, which always go down well.

I was travelling on behalf of



RMT Learning as well as supporting the regional officer, so I was also busy cajoling crew members into completing learning surveys while listening to their concerns, of which there were many.

MEETING

There is a huge ethnic diversity amongst the crew. I counted ten different nationalities on board although there may have been more. Some of these are employed directly by P&O, some through agencies in the UK and some from agencies abroad. This all adds up to a veritable stew of terms, conditions and pay structures that any organiser would find daunting.

The meeting was well attended and I was impressed by their concerns for the "job". It was explained to me that many deck and engine room crew are

in their late fifties, and the sea schools that trained them are no longer in existence, so who will take over? The officers I spoke to have similar concerns.

The ship is due to be reflagged shortly and a pay submission is about to go in. Members have issues over their pensions and the changes to NI deductions. We finished the meeting some time later with a long list of matters to resolve, some quite simple but many as unfathomable and complex as to be irresolvable.

Over the next few days I became impressed by the professionalism of the crew and the good natured culture of "mend and make do" that prevailed as they constantly tried to catch up with the work load. I stayed on board while the ship was docked in Bilbao, spending time with the

repairmen, who competed to tell me horror stories of jobs they had to do (one of them had just returned from within the on board sewage tanks, gas mask swinging nonchalantly from his hand). I also sneaked a look at the work book – seventy one jobs for the Sunday alone.

It was a privilege to make the trip and we have promised the union will return, for it can only be through organising that RMT can strengthen the position and raise a collective voice in defence of the British seafarer.

"If you are interested in becoming a local seafarer Union Learning representative, or just want to know more about it see page 32/33 or please contact: Carolyn Marshall at the Dover regional office on 01304 204262 Or e mail dovershipping@rmt.org.uk. For other information about RMT Learning please contact Andrew Brattle on 0207 529 8820 or e mail a.brattle@rmt.org.uk



NEW BUS BRANCH AT CHESTERFIELD

Never one to let retirement get in the way of organising workers, Graham Geliher set about organising a new branch for RMT members at Stagecoach Chesterfield.

Graham said that the depot had been part of Stagecoach East Midlands Bus branch for over 20 years and had been under constant attack from poaching by another trade unions.

"For a number of years, membership had been declining due to concerted efforts by both management and Unite the union to wipe out RMT," he said.

In around June last year a new committee was elected, with Malcolm Lord taking charge as the main central negotiating committee rep for the depot.

Branch meetings were then held on a regular basis and gradually members were recruited to the union and the committee generated an enthusiastic group of activists.

Within a short space of time new Health and Safety reps and a Union Learning rep were established.

At this time the depot was still part of East Midlands Bus but in April 2008 Graham set a date to retire.

This led to changes to the structure of East Midlands Bus branch and Malcolm Lord stepped in to take over and establish a new branch at Chesterfield.

With the help of the regional organiser Allen Heath and Ray Spry-Shute, courses were quickly organised to assist with training the new committee at the union's



NEW BRANCH: RMT general secretary Bob Crow congratulates new Chesterfield branch secretary Malcolm Lord

education centre in Doncaster.

Malcolm said that it was felt that the members at the Chesterfield depot were capable of operating as an independent branch.

"It was felt that this would serve the members interests better, and following many meetings and discussions the new branch was set up under the name 'Chesterfield Bus branch'," he said.

Graham said that, after years of constant attack, it was a tremendous achievement to have not only held ground, but actually

been in a position to increase membership and be able to open a new branch.

"Those members concerned should rightly feel proud of their efforts," he said.

The branch is now involved at all levels of the union nationally and is setting up its own talks on pay and conditions, with the aid of the regional organiser, and they should only go from strength to strength. "All members in the branch should realise how important it is to support your new committee and more than capable branch secretary Malcolm Lord," said Graham. ■

2009 orphan fund calendars for sale!

Calendars featuring either steam trains or modern trains are available for £6 each. 2009 orphan fund diaries also available for £2.50.

Please send your order to:

Mark Harding
Unity House
39 Chalton Street
London NW1 1JD



RMT LEARNING: FREQU

What is this learning stuff all about anyway?

1. WHAT IS THE UNION LEARNING FUND (ULF) AND WHERE DOES THE MONEY COME FROM?

Union Learning Fund was set in 1998 and the money comes from the government. The aim in creating the Union Learning Fund was to promote activity by trade unions in support of the objective of creating a learning society.

2. WHY HAS THE GOVERNMENT SET UP THE ULF AND WHERE DID THE ULF ROLE COME FROM?

- The government, in the late nineties, commissioned reports to see if the UK workforce is on track to compete with other countries in skills and the business needs of the future.
- They found out that the UK is 17th out of 30 industrialised

countries for adults without the skills needed for a modern economy.

- One in five adults, it stated, are functionally illiterate - that is, if given the Yellow Pages they cannot find the page for plumbers
- The Moser report made 17 recommendations and one recommendation was to develop a new union role (Union Learning Representative) that would support and encourage people into learning.

3. HAS RMT BEEN INVOLVED?

RMT has been bidding successfully for ULF fund since 2004 as a part of Rail Union Learning (see below). Previous to this the RMT had some successful company based

projects funded by ULF. More recently the RMT has formed its own project called RMT Learning and has secured ULF funding until March 31st 2010.

4. WHAT WAS 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, ASLEF, RMT and TSSA will continue to act together within workplaces to benefit all learners.

5. WHY HAS RMT BEEN INVOLVED?

RMT takes education very seriously, from the training of all our representatives to the professional and personal development of all our members. We know how education empowers people to become activists, to move on in their careers and take control in their personal lives. We know how important it is to have the knowhow of how to find help when you need it, whether finding a plumber in the Yellow pages or contacting your local rep. ■

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) Sharon Allen.



RECENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



6. WHAT DOES RMT LEARNING DO?

RMT Learning aims to:

- promote the ULR role and learning opportunities to members
- work with regional organisers to sign off learning agreements with companies
- to provide information and research that shows the need for learning agreements to include, number of ULRs, time off, facilities, the Skills Pledge and paid time off to learners who need help with their English and maths
- work with branches to create a clear process in recruiting and appointing ULRs
- ensure ULRs are trained at

RMT National Education Centre in Doncaster and at local TU colleges

- work with all RMT representatives on the learning agenda
- set up sustainable projects and networks for ULRs and learners

7. WHAT DOES A ULR DO?

The list below is not exhaustive and could be any or all of the following:

- Identifying members' learning needs. - This can involve one-to-one interviews, circulating and analysing questionnaires etc.
- Providing information and advice about learning or

training. - This can involve one-to-one discussions, circulating leaflets and putting up posters.

- Arranging learning or training. - This may involve making arrangements on site or going with a member to a local college.
- Promoting the value of learning or training. This can involve organising promotional days in canteens, speaking at meetings, putting up case studies.
- Encouraging and supporting learners. This can involve talking to learners about how their course is going, encouraging them to continue, finding out what the issues are if they miss a session.
- Discussing with the employer about the above. This can involve attending steering group meetings, discussing release of learners etc.

8. WHAT RIGHTS DO ULRs HAVE?

ULRs have got statutory recognition under the Employment Act 2002. This means they have got equivalent status to health and safety a representative, which includes a legal right to paid time off to carry out their duties.

9. HOW DO YOU BECOME A ULR?

- Your branch may already be aware of a ULR vacancy and will be asking for candidates to come forward. Check with your branch.
- Check to see if your company has a learning agreement. If you company has a learning agreement check to see how many RMT ULRs have been agreed.
- If there is a vacancy you will need to be endorsed by your branch. Contact RMT Learning on 020 7529 8820 or email a.brattle@rmt.org.uk and request the ULR form which you will need to get stamped by the Branch once they have appointed you.
- If your company does not have a Learning Agreement in place yet, please contact Andrew on 020 7529 8820 or email a.brattle@rmt.org.uk. Andrew will pass on your details to your Development Worker who will then contact you. ■

Want to know more? Please do not hesitate to contact Andrew on the email address and phone number above. He will then direct your query to the most appropriate person.



RMT STANDS UP FOR ITS MEMBERS

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

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

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0800 587 7516 (0800 328 1014 in Scotland). Lines open 8.00am-8.00pm Mon-Fri (except public holidays) and 9.00am-5.00pm Sat and Sun. For the 24 hour criminal law line call 0800 587 7530 (0800 328 1014 in Scotland)

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RMT OPENS NEW OFFICES IN DONCASTER AND SOUTHAMPTON

RMT has opened new offices in Doncaster for its North East region and another other in Southampton will open on January 5 2009 to serve the newly-formed Wessex region.

Former RMT regional organiser Dave McGregor last month formally opened the new Doncaster office, which is attached to the union's education centre.

Dave, a long-time union tutor, was chosen to do the honours by local members, revealing the high regard in which he is held for his many years of

service defending the interests of transport workers.

RMT general secretary Bob Crow welcomed the opening of the new North East office which would be a "great resource for members and reps alike".

The new Doncaster office is named after Thomas Steels, a Doncaster member of the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants who moved a motion in his branch in 1899 that eventually led to the founding of the Labour Party. ■

RMT North East region
Thomas Steels House
49a Thorne Road
Doncaster, DN1 2EX

Tel: 01302 760694 Fax: 01302 343960
Regional Administrator: Steve Lancey
Regional Organisers: Allen Heath, Stan Herschel

RMT Wessex region
First Floor, Enterprise House
Ocean Village
Southampton
Hants, SO14 3XB

Tel: 02380 574531 Fax: 02380 574532
Regional Organiser: Peter Gale
Regional Administrator: Naomi Brown

READING HONOURS ITS OWN

RMT general secretary Bob Crow recently attended a Reading branch meeting to present a number of awards.

(From left to right) Marindra Mali receiving a 10-year award, branch chair Chris Riley, Gurminder Gill with his 10-year badge and Darren Stock with the same, Louise Williamson, EC

member Alex Gordon, Barry Dungate got his 25-year badge, Pat Kemp with his 40-year badge, Bob Crow, Maureen Mulligan received a 10-year badge, branch secretary Chris McMahon got 25-year badge as did Tony Simpson, Roger Smith and Phil Booker, Lesley Wright. ■



SEAFARING BRIDGEMAN

Manchester shipping branch secretary Tony Lloyd presents Alan Bridgeman with his 40-year union membership medal and badge.

"Alan has been a loyal member of the union and a recruiter for many years," said Tony.

After years working on ships, Alan now he works in the North Sea rigs as a cook and still recruits workers to the union. ■



ALI HONoured

RMT general secretary Bob Crow presents a 25-year badge to 'Mr Ali', as he is known. He's a White City Driver on the Central line and a member of the Central Line West branch.

Other presentations were made on the night at the branch meeting were to Steve Caldwell White City Driver for his 25 years in membership and Mandy Faux and Harsad Nathvani both West Ruislip drivers for 10 years. ■



WORKERS PUBS - Words by Mike Pentelow, Picture by Peter Arkell

THE PLIMSOLL LINE

138 High Street, Redcar, North Yorkshire.

Samuel Plimsoll (1824-1898) was appalled at the hundreds of deaths at sea caused by the callous greed of the shipowners.

They would put overloaded and unseaworthy ships to sea which were heavily overinsured. Seamen had to sign articles before seeing the state of the ship, and if after seeing it was dangerous they refused to sail they were sentenced to three months' imprisonment with hard labour.

Many were drowned as a result, but the shipowners collected their insurance and were happy.

Their vessels became known as "coffin ships" and all

attempts to introduce maritime safety were resisted by the shipowners who were heavily represented in parliament.

Plimsoll, a Chartist sympathiser, was lucky to survive a storm at sea when sailing to Redcar in 1864. Four ships were wrecked on the same night but his finally berthed. He could not help thinking about the brave sailors that had drowned so close to him.

When he became a Liberal MP in 1868 he proposed that a loadline be painted on ships which had to remain above the water to prevent dangerous overloading.

One Conservative MP,

Edward Bates, had owned three ships that had been sunk in a single year with the loss of 87 lives. He and the other shipowners resisted Plimsoll's proposal tooth and claw, and nearly bankrupted him by serving 13 writs and notices on him simultaneously.

Unperturbed Plimsoll stuck to his guns and finally the Plimsoll Line, as it became known, was made law in 1876. It was still left to the shipowners where to paint the line, however, and one showed his contempt for the law by painting it on top of the ship's funnel. It was not until 1890 that the Board of Trade decided where the line should be painted.

The appalling conditions that the seamen were forced to work under were exposed in Plimsoll's book "Our Seamen" published in 1872. Some had less shelter than the sheep that were being carried on board, and others died of scurvy after being fed seven-year-old meat which had been deemed unfit for soldiers to eat.

Plimsoll became the first president of the National Amalgamated Sailors' and Firemen's Union of Great Britain and Ireland when it was formed in 1892.

Naturally he became known as "the Sailors' Friend". Earlier he had been called "the Miners' Friend" after supporting ways of preventing colliery explosions by detecting fire damp. He also supported measures to lower the high death rate from asthma among knife grinders exposed to metal dust in workshops.

His maiden speech in parliament was in favour of repealing the criminal laws against trade unions, which helped pass the 1871 Trades Union Act.

But his greatest pride was



summed up in a popular song called "Our Sailors on the Sea." One verse went:

*There was a time when greed
and crime did cruelly prevail,
And rotten ships were sent
on trips to flounder in the
gale;
when worthless cargoes,
well-insured, would to the
bottom go,
And Sailors' lives were
sacrificed that men might
wealthy grow.*

The pub is a Wetherspoon's.

REMEMBERING THE FALLEN



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

Over 35,000 merchant seamen lost their lives in World War Two alone.



Railway Employees' Privilege Ticket Association

REPTA 2009

Membership open to: all rail and transport industry staff, active or retired, including immediate family.

Membership Card and Handbook
£3.50: cheques/postal orders payable to REPTA to:
4 Brackmills Close, Forest Town, Mansfield, Notts. NG19 0PB
Telephone: 01623 646789
See our website: www.repta.co.uk

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LU ENGINEERING BRANCH

nominates

STEVE HEDLEY

for LT Regional Organiser

100% effort, 100% duty
and 100% for the members**HUMBER SHIPPING
BRANCH**

nominates

RAY DICKINSONFor region 2 shipping
Council of Executives
member**PERTH N01 BRANCH**

nominates

GORDON MARTINfor council of executives
Area 1 Scotland

dedicated to members

ORPINGTON BRANCH

Supports

GARY HASSELLEC election
(region 9 south East)

It's not too late to VOTE.

INVERNESS BRANCH

nominates

GERRY MCCANNfor council of executives
Area 1 Scotland

TRAIN DRIVER THANKS THE UNION

Dear editor,

As a train driver for Northern Rail and a fairly new RMT member, I would appreciate the opportunity through RMT News to express my gratitude to regional organiser John MacDonald, Paul King and the rest of Hull branch for their support during my recent disciplinary.

In July I was suspended. Two months later I was sacked and then re-instated on appeal three weeks later.

The support of the branch was overwhelming, the advice of Paul King was greatly appreciated and the professionalism of John MacDonald was fantastic. Without their efforts I wouldn't be here today.

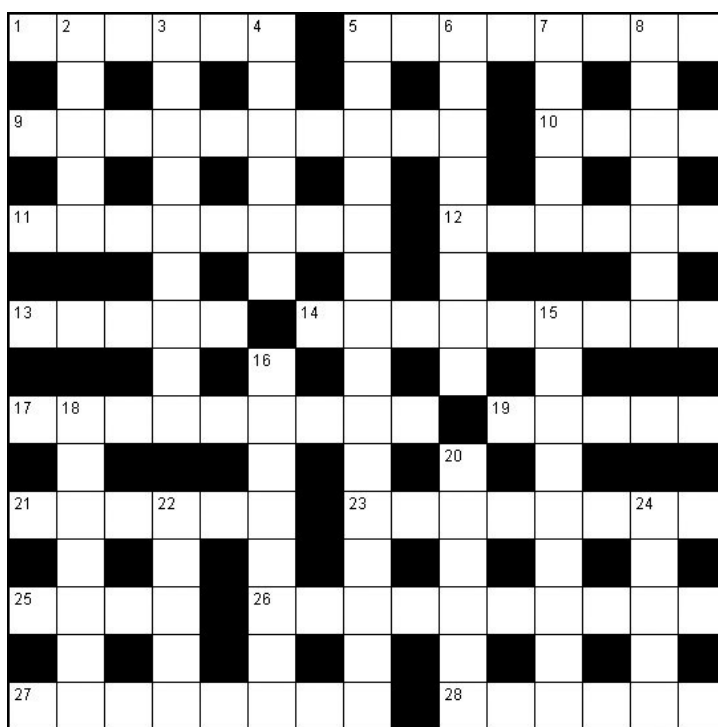
My case proves beyond a doubt that the union is more than capable of representing train drivers and I wouldn't hesitate to recommend RMT membership to others in my grade.

Once again, many, many thanks to you all.

Yours sincerely, John Burgess

RMT £50 XMAS PRIZE CROSSWORD

No. 49. Set by Elk

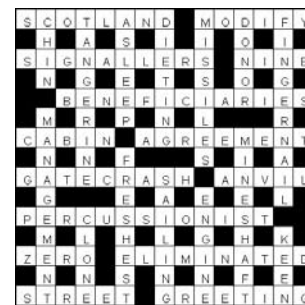
**ACROSS**

- 1 Witches' gathering places (6)
- 5 Horned, hoofed ruminant, related to goat (8)
- 9 (Male) ancestor (10)
- 10 Where the unlucky turkeys end up (4)
- 11 Green variety of cauliflower, from Italian for 'sprouts' (8)
- 12 Tried out, examined (6)
- 13 Spirit - plentiful in 5 down (5)
- 14 No-win situation (9)
- 17 Of Greek or Roman writing or orchestral music etc (9)
- 19 Mushrooms, for example (5)
- 21 Stuff of coal or diamonds (6)
- 23 People who add up (on them, in shops?) (8)
- 25 One of three seasonal 13s in 5 (4)
- 26 Mammals with pouches to carry young (10)
- 27 Simple, toxic alcohol used as antifreeze, solvent etc (8)
- 28 Attempts (at writing?) (6)

DOWN

- 2 Smell (5)
- 3 Physical or mental exertions, or tasks set (9)
- 4 Experienced seafarer (or common harbour seal) (3,3)
- 5 Dickens of a seasonal novel! (1,9,5)
- 6 Strangle - the accelerator! (8)
- 7 Millwall FC, British and Irish rugby squad, for example (5)
- 8 One of three seasonal 13s in 5 down (7)
- 15 Bigger than hills (9)
- 16 Aromatic yellowy spice from bark of Sri Lankan tree (8)
- 18 Liquid or gas which escapes (or an allowance for it) (7)
- 20 One of three seasonal 13s in 5 down (6)
- 22 Quantity (of bread) made at one time (5)
- 24 Race in which team-mates take stages (5)

Last month's solution...



The winner of prize
crossword no. 48 is
Keith Webber, Devon.

Send entries to Prize Crossword,
RMT, Unity House, 39 Chalton
Street, London NW1 1JD by
January 5 with your name and
address.

Winner and solution in next issue.

RMT CHRISTMAS CLUB

SAVE FOR CHRISTMAS THE EASY AND SAFE WAY WITH THE RMT CREDIT UNION

Saving for Christmas can be a real headache. Take some of the stress away by saving over the course of the year with the RMT Christmas Club. We'll add a little extra to your savings and pay out the money ready for your Christmas shopping spree. This account is designed for people who want a secure savings account that helps them to save for their Christmas spending.

It's based on the traditional Christmas Club principle of saving a fixed amount each month that is not accessible until the payout date. Many people like the discipline of a regular savings programme where they are not able to access the cash!

Even a small amount saved each month soon adds up. Saving is made easy by Direct Debit either monthly or 4-weekly to suit your pay cycle.

For our Christmas Club, the maturity date will be 14th November each year. We will add a bonus dividend at the maturity date and pay the money direct to your bank account. There are no vouchers or

hampers or anything of that kind – you decide how you want to spend your money.

The bonus will be added to your savings if you complete all of your regular payments. Last years bonus was 2%, and we hope to improve this in subsequent years as the Christmas Club grows.

As all of your Christmas Club money will be paid out each year it will be kept separately from your regular credit union savings and cannot be used against credit union loans.

There is also a summer savings club account on the same basis and principle with a payout date of mid-June, so that you can have ready access to summer holiday spending money.

If you want to open a Christmas Club account and are already a credit union member simply complete the form below. If you are not already a credit union member you will have to complete the form below and the credit union membership application opposite. Completed forms should be returned to our freepost address.

TERMS & CONDITIONS – IMPORTANT INFORMATION - WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT RMT CHRISTMAS CLUB

- You need to be an RMT Credit Union member to open an RMT Christmas Club Account.
- You have to save at least £5 per month into a regular RMT CU account in addition to your RMT Christmas Club Account.
- You pay a monthly or 4-weekly Direct Debit consisting of your nominated Christmas Club payment (min. £10) plus at least £5 per month to your main RMT CU account.
- Christmas Club accounts have to be opened by the end of April. Late applications commence the following November.
- As an RMT CU member you build up regular savings with a yearly dividend (3.75% in 2008) and you can apply for low interest rate loans.
- Your Christmas Club money is separate from your regular savings account. That means you will have a guaranteed sum available for Christmas maturing every 14th November, plus a savings account growing with time.
- The Christmas Club secures your money so it's there for the Christmas period. This means that your money is locked-in and you can make no withdrawals until 14th November when all of your money, plus dividend will be paid out.
- If you make all of your payments we will endeavour to add a dividend bonus of 2% p.a. as accrued through the year
- All of your money will be paid to your bank account on the first working day after 14th November.
- If you cancel your payments the 2% dividend is not applied and you cannot withdraw your money until after 14th November. If you think you will need access to your money before 14th November, this account is not suitable for you.
- The Christmas Club will continue year-on-year, so payments after 14th November start the next year's account. Of course if you wish to cancel your payments you are free to do so at any time.

Your savings are fully protected for up to £50,000 by the Financial Services Compensation Scheme

Cut here

RMT CHRISTMAS CLUB APPLICATION			
RMT Credit Union Account Number (if known)			
Surname		Address	
Forename(s)			
Home phone			
Mobile			
email		Postcode	
Date of birth		NI Numb	
Employer		RMT Branch	

Do you save monthly on 28 th ?		Or 4 - weekly (Fri)?		You can save by calendar month or 4 - weekly	
How much do you save in your RMT Credit Union Account?				£	min. £5 per month
How much do you wish to save in your Christmas Club Account?				£	min £10 per month in £5 multiples
The total each period for both accounts on my Direct Debit is				£	the total month/4 -weekly
This is the total amount you wish to save by Direct Debit monthly on the 28th or 4-weekly					

Remember that if you have a loan with us your regular Direct Debit will also include that repayment

DECLARATION

I understand the Terms & Conditions of the RMT Christmas Club Account and that membership of the RMT Credit Union is a condition of holding an RMT Christmas Club Account. I understand that my monthly savings into the RMT Christmas Club cannot be withdrawn until the maturity date which is on or after 14th November each year.

Your Signature		Date			/		/				
----------------	--	------	--	--	---	--	---	--	--	--	--



RMT CREDIT UNION LTD.

Finance Department, Unity House, 39 Chalton Street, London NW1 1JD

MEMBERSHIP NUMBER

RMT CREDIT UNION APPLICATION FORM – please complete your application along with the attached Direct Debit.

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.

I agree to my identity being checked electronically ☐

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



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



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

Name and full postal address of your Bank or Building Society

To: The Manager	Bank/Building Society
Address	
	Postcode

Name(s) of Account Holder(s)

Bank/Building Society account number

Branch Sort Code

Originator's Identification Number

Reference Number

FOR RMT CREDIT UNION LTD OFFICIAL USE ONLY
This is not part of the the instruction to your Bank or Building Society.

Instructions to your Bank or Building Society.

Please pay RMT Credit Union Ltd Direct Debits for the account detailed in this instruction subject to the safeguards assured by the Direct Debit Guarantee. I understand that this instruction may remain with RMT Credit Union Ltd, if so, details will be passed electronically to my Bank/Building Society.

Signature(s)

Date

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

This guarantee should be detached and retained by the Payer.

The Direct Debit Guarantee

- This guarantee is offered by all Banks and Building Societies that take part in the Direct Debit Scheme. The efficiency and security of the scheme is monitored and protected by your own Bank or Building Society.
- If the amounts to be paid or the payment date changes, RMT Credit Union Ltd will notify you 10 working days in advance of your account being debited or as otherwise agreed
- If an error is made by RMT Credit Union Ltd or your Bank or Building Society, you are guaranteed a full and immediate refund from your branch of the amount paid
- You can cancel a Direct Debit at any time by writing to your Bank or Building Society. Please also send a copy of your letter to us.



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