

RMT *news*

Essential reading for today's transport worker

EIRE WE GO

Union re-launches branch in the Irish Republic



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EXPRESS ANGLIA PAGE 8



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EWS PAGE 12



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NATIONAL UNION OF RAIL, MARITIME & TRANSPORT WORKERS

Unity House, 39 Chalton Street, London NW1 1JD



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EDITORIAL

FIGHTING FOR JOBS



Privateers in the transport sector are responding to the economic crisis by attempting to attack working conditions of RMT members and cut jobs on a huge scale.

RMT exists to defend its members so the union has called ballots for strike action at a number of companies from c2c to EWS/DB Schenker.

In each dispute members are being expected to pay for a capitalist crisis they did not create. This is unacceptable.

If the government can shovel unimaginable amounts of money into the coffers of the banks, then it can defend the country's transport network. Yet government ministers have claimed that nothing can be done to stop train operating companies from cutting hundreds of jobs.

In a letter to transport secretary Geoff Hoon, all the rail unions have called for a freeze on dividends, with profits instead invested to protect services and jobs, and urge the government to run the industry in a way that helps the economy to weather the recession.

Britain's railways are a core industry that is too valuable to the economy and the environment to allow it to be vandalised for selfish short-term interests.

Unleashing the anarchy of the free market got us into this mess and only government action can get us out of it. It was also the neo-liberal agenda of the European Union that has led to social dumping and growing attacks on workers' rights.

The strike action by energy workers was a protest against EU rules that allow companies to treat workers like commodities to be shunted about at will in their drive for profits.

We have seen this is the shipping industry where a loophole in the Race Relations Act has allowed ship owners to discriminate against UK seafarers and exploit foreign ratings on much lower rates of pay. Stena line ferries at Harwich is trying to do just that and

get rid of UK ratings.

European Court of Justice decisions in the Viking and Laval cases have also determined that workers are forbidden by EU law from taking collective action to stop social dumping.

All workers, regardless of nationality and race, deserve protection from exploitation.

The solution to such Victorian thinking is a political challenge to EU rules and the supremacy of the ECJ, not just tinkering with EU competition laws such as the posting of workers directive.

It was a pleasure to address our re-established shipping branch in Ireland recently.

The branch will soon be showing the excellent new RMT DVD on the Lisbon Treaty to members and campaigning for a 'No' vote in a second referendum on the discredited EU constitution which Irish voters have already rejected.

The need for working class political representation has never been higher on the agenda.

That is why RMT recently held another conference on the issue in order to find solutions to this looming economic crisis that benefit working people and their families.

A positive development has been the creation of a Trade Union Liaison Group in parliament set up by a number of MPs and trade union general secretaries including myself.

Trade unions should not only be relying on MPs to change things for the better. RMT will continue to organise outside Parliament, too, to change things for ourselves.

But this initiative is a great step forward and we should make the most of it.

Finally, in this issue of RMT News every bus worker will receive a handy pocket-size guideline outlining working time regulations.

Best wishes

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

RESIST FIRST CAPITAL CONNECT TICKET-OFFICE CUTS

RMT has launched a campaign to fight plans by First Capital Connect to slash the opening times of ticket offices across its rail franchise.

The union is committed to working with passengers and MPs to keep services intact and protect loyal rail workers' jobs after the First Group subsidiary announced plans to cut 800 hours a week from the opening times of more than 40 stations.

The vast bulk of the planned cuts are aimed at 28 stations, which would see ticket office hours reduced by a total of 750 hours every week and threaten up to 22 jobs.

Yet the company saw its revenues grow by eight per cent in the six months up to last September while imposing hefty fare hikes.

First Group also poured more than £55 million into shareholders' bank accounts over the same period.

RMT general secretary Bob Crow said that the company was simply seeking to protect massive profits by taking the axe to the services provided by RMT members.

"These cuts would see some stations lose their ticket offices entirely at the weekend and will leave stations inadequately staffed

at weekends and in the evening. That can only make passengers feel less secure

"Ticket machines are no substitute for real people offering help and advice, not least for disabled travellers, and some passengers would end up paying even more than the inflated fares they already have to or abandon their journey.

The union is urging FCC passengers to

write direct to Passenger Focus using postcards produced by the union to register their objection.

"We know that passengers want to see more staff on stations, not fewer, and these cuts are the last thing that commuters, rail workers or the economy need," Bob Crow said.



NETWORK RAIL SPENDING CUTS THREATEN SAFETY

Massive cuts in railway track renewals ordered by Network Rail threaten a potentially catastrophic undermining of rail infrastructure safety and RMT has called for them to be reversed.

RMT has learned that Network Rail has ordered the deferral of 28 per cent of its track renewals programme thanks to a massive financial squeeze imposed by the Office of Rail Regulation – which is also the industry's safety

watchdog.

The squeeze is also being felt on the maintenance side of NR, which is also seeing cuts in the frequency of track inspections and routine signals maintenance.

RMT demanded re-instatement of Network Rail's full programme of planned renewals work and a reversal of cuts in maintenance regimes and inspections.

RMT general secretary Bob Crow said that the 22 per cent efficiency savings demanded

by the ORR were being translated into a massive assault on planned renewals, inspections and maintenance that raises the spectre of another Hatfield or Potters Bar.

"It is only a few months since Network Rail was slapped with an improvement notice on its inspection regime after the tragedy at Grayrigg, and the last thing the industry needs is further cuts.

"When Network Rail talks of "volume phasing to be adjusted to help deliver more

value for money" what they mean is that they are cutting their track renewals programme by nearly a third, and that must be reversed.

"The government has said it will create jobs, and it beggars belief that in the current economic climate Network Rail should be allowed to contemplate a massive cut in renewals work that is not only essential for safety's sake but will also benefit the economy too," Bob said.

NEW BRANCH FOR EIRE



EIRE WE GO: Left to right Bob Crow, Steve Todd, Eire branch secretary Declan Roche, branch chair Billy Naesons and regional organiser John Tilley

Union re-establishes shipping branch for members in the Republic of Ireland

RMT general secretary Bob Crow and national secretary Steve Todd attended the launch of the new Eire shipping branch recently for members working on the Stena line from Rosslare to Fishguard.

Steve Todd said that for many years former NUS and latterly RMT members always had a branch in southern Ireland in addition to the one in the north.

The branch in the south was mostly made up from members in Dublin and was therefore based in Dublin.

"Obviously as time marched on less and less of our members ceased to either live or work in the Dublin area, either through retirement redundancy or other reasons.

"Most of the membership in the Irish Republic these days are based in the Rosslare, Wexford

area mainly working for Stena on the ferries," he said.

He said that members in the area were very active in negotiations with employers but felt that with no branch there was no opportunity to play a role in the wider affairs and democracy of the union.

Both Bob Crow and Steve Todd were delighted to address the members and discuss the various issues that affect them.

Eire shipping branch secretary Declan Roche said that it was the first of many meetings which would follow in Rosslare on a regular basis.

"We now have over 80

members and if there is a need to hold meetings in other key areas such as Dublin this will be considered as well," he said.

Declan said that the next branch meeting would include a showing of RMT's new DVD dealing with the Lisbon Treaty and the threat to workers' rights.

"We had a referendum last June on the Lisbon Treaty and the Irish people voted no.

"I believe it is fundamentally undemocratic to force us to vote again and we'll be campaigning for another no vote," he said. ■



RMT WINS RE-INSTATEMENT FOR RMT TUBE CLEANER REP

Tube cleaning contractor ISS reversed a decision to dismiss RMT rep Clara Osagiede (right) after activists lobbied the company's headquarters before her appeal was heard.

However, the company upheld a decision to sack another rep Mary Boayke in a move RMT general secretary Bob Crow branded as a "ruthless attack on workers' rights".

Some 700 low-paid cleaners working for Tube privateers including ISS took unprecedented strike action last summer against low pay.

Mary and Clara were among those that helped lead the fight to win the London living wage of £7.45 an hour and unionising previously unorganised workers.

The dismissals were seen as reprisals by ISS and an attempt to hit back at the union.

"RMT reps at ISS are picked on for disciplinary charges far more often than other employees and the company is clearly acting vindictively after the union secured its historic victory against low pay," Bob revealed.

He explained that Clara was "charged with gross misconduct despite being on recognised union duties and Mary was fired on trumped-up charges of sleeping on the job when she



was in fact ill".

RMT London regional organiser Steve Hedley declared that Mary's treatment by ISS had been "ruthless".

"Management are furious that their workers have so successfully organised and stood up against low pay. Sacking Mary is an attack on the cleaners and an attack on the union," he said.

Mary explained that she had closed her eyes at work because she had an eye injury – and she was at work because ISS still refuse to give their cleaners sick pay.

"It's terrible what has

happened to Mary, there has been a backlash from the contractors since we won the living wage," Clara said.

"The companies want to get rid of some activists and silence others, but they won't stop our struggle," she defiantly declared.

Protesters descended on the ISS headquarters in Greenwich, south London, to demonstrate in solidarity with the victimised union reps as they attended their disciplinary hearings.

The RMT reps received strong backing from Labour MP John McDonnell and Tony Benn, who sent letters to ISS bosses demanding an end to the

attacks.

"It is a disgrace that, since the strike action last summer, union activists, who already face daily exploitation and abuse at work, have faced victimisation and disciplinary action.

"Being able to engage in trade union activities is a basic human right and I completely support the RMT cleaners," Mr McDonnell said.

Bob Crow pledged that RMT would keep fighting for Mary.

"We defend our members to the end, and we will make sure that any employer who tries to victimise our reps know it," he insisted ■

NEW REGIONAL ORGANISER FOR LONDON

Steve Hedley has been elected as the new regional organiser for the London area. Steve thanked all those that took part in the election.

"We will need this vibrant democracy in the London Transport region of our union if we are to tackle the challenges we face," he said.

Steve, who has worked for infrastructure companies on the railway and on the Tube for many years, said that winning decent pay deals, defending working conditions and promoting dignity at work would be the cornerstones of his

work.

"Our members should not be forced to pay for the economic crisis caused by the bankers that have been handed billion in taxpayers' money," he said.

He pointed out that London mayor Boris Johnston should not be looking to cut funding for London's transport network but seeking funding from the government to protect services.

"If private financial institutions can go cap-in-hand for public money then public services should be treated in the same way," he said. ■



PLANNED JOB CUTS AT SWT WILL HIT RAIL SERVICES

RMT has accused South West Trains of trying to hoodwink the public into believing that services would be unaffected by planned cuts.

The company has claimed that cuts in substantial numbers of platform, ticket-office, information, clerical and cleaning staff will not affect services which passengers already pay through the nose for.

RMT general secretary Bob Crow said that despite record passenger numbers, record profits, year-on-year inflation-busting fare increases and a massive increase in dividends, SWT wanted to pare staff to the bone, and they need to be told it's not on.

"Even after being told by the government to scale back plans to axe ticket-office opening times, nearly 100 full-

time ticket office jobs are earmarked for the chop, and that is a disgrace.

"On top of that they want to run shorter trains, which can only result in spreading overcrowding to off-peak services.

"This big squeeze on passengers and rail workers can only get worse as SWT tries to make its premium payments and keep Stagecoach

shareholders happy, and the time has come to end the nightmare and bring the franchise back into the public sector," Bob said.

He said that RMT would fight any compulsory redundancies and hoped that the passengers SWT had tried to hoodwink would tell the company that it has no right to shed staff simply to keep profits and dividends up. ■

RMT WINS RECOGNITION AT CARLISLE SECURITY

An historic recognition and procedure agreement has finally been signed with the Carlisle Group covering RMT members on the Merseyrail security contract.

Following an initial refusal by the company, the union made application to the CAC (Central Arbitration Committee) for union recognition.

Once RMT had presented the claim and demonstrated the staff's desire to be represented by the union, the company agreed. The application was

also supported by Merseyrail.

The Voluntary Recognition Procedure Agreement was jointly signed by Regional Organiser Andy Warnock-Smith and Operations Director of Carlisle Group Security Martin Woollam (right).

Andy Warnock-Smith said that it was a significant development for the staff employed on the Carlisle contract and staff were now in the process of electing local and health and safety reps. ■



SOUTH EASTERN JOB CUTS UNJUSTIFIED

RMT has called on South Eastern Trains to halt unjustifiable plans to axe 300 rail workers' jobs.

As news emerged that the Govia-owned franchise intends to shed staff to protect profits and shareholder dividends, RMT warned that it would not accept compulsory redundancies among its members.

The union also urged the government to stop transport privateers sacrificing jobs and services to protect profits and

massive shareholder dividends.

RMT general secretary Bob Crow said that Southeastern is part of the Govia group that has been raking in record profits and the planned cuts were not only completely unjustified but underline that is interested only in making money.

"The franchise has seen its passenger numbers grow by more than six percent and its passenger revenue grew by 13 per cent in the last year.

"Govia is two-thirds owned

by the Go-Ahead group, which poured nearly £50 million in dividends into its shareholders pockets last year and which boasted of another year of record results.

"They have been happy to cream it at the expense of massive subsidy, overcrowding and inflation-busting fare increases, but at the first sign of a downturn they want to make the rail workers who actually provide the service pay with their jobs," he said.

Bob pointed out that Southeastern did perfectly well in the public sector for two years before Govia got its hands on it, and if the privateers could not maintain jobs and services they needed to hand back the keys.

"These are jobs that our members and the economy cannot afford to lose, and Southeastern should understand that RMT will resist compulsory redundancies with every means at its disposal," Bob Crow said.

RMT STEPS UP CAMPAIGN TO SAVE NATIONAL EXPRESS JOBS

Norwich MR Ian Gibson joins campaigners at Liverpool Street



The public campaign against plans by National Express East Anglia to slash 300 jobs was taken to commuters arriving at London's Liverpool Street station recently and they signed up in their droves to protect their passenger services.

Norwich North MR Ian Gibson and RMT general secretary Bob Crow were among the campaigners handing out postcards for commuters.

Passengers were asked to tell National Express East Anglia chief executive Andrew Chivers that the company's plans are unacceptable because they would reduce passenger security, destroy award-winning catering facilities, reduce the help available to disabled passengers, make access to service information more difficult, and result in dirty trains.

Mr Gibson has tabled a commons motion 436 condemning the cuts, which has already been signed by many MPs, and is seeking a meeting with Transport Secretary Geoff Hoon.

"We are stepping up the pressure on National Express. Colleagues and I will be meeting with Geoff Hoon to seek his view on the company breaking the franchise.

"What National Express is doing is unacceptable. It is contrary to the statement they made on services when they signed the franchise.

"We support the RMT and the workers and we will do all that is possible to stop

these job cuts that will reduce service to save private profit," said Mr Gibson who recently joined RMT's parliamentary group.

Passengers are angry that rail privateers like National Express have been systematically draining huge sums of cash out of the industry as profits while seeking to cut staff and services.

When National Express took over the franchise it promised to improve customer services and information, retain kitchen facilities on London-Norwich trains and put more staff on stations and trains, but now it is doing the opposite.

National Express Group has so far paid out £40.2 million in shareholder dividends in 2008 and presided over a six per cent increase in rail ticket prices.

THE PROPOSED CUTS

- Loss of 242 jobs and freezing of 61 vacancies (total of 303 jobs, which could increase to 315)
- Norwich customer contact centre to close and the function transferred to Newcastle and National Rail Enquiry Service.
- Removal of restaurant services from Norwich Trains on the intercity service
- Substantial decrease in on-train revenue collection and protection on Stansted Express services with a reduction in staff numbers from 45 to 25
- Removal of safety critical train dispatch

jobs at several stations

- Staff cuts include: 3 drivers, 11 cleaners, 44 caterers, 53 retail staff, 19 Stansted Express train crew, 7 workshop engineering staff, 73 call centre staff, 4 revenue-protection staff, 14 HQ support and 15 area support staff

PROMISES MADE BY NATIONAL EXPRESS WHEN SIGNING THE FRANCHISE

National Express Group gave the following commitments in January 2004:

- Improved booking office facilities and new customer information systems.
- Opening of a new Customer Service Academy in the region providing a dedicated training facility for all employees of the Greater Anglia franchise focusing on continuous improvements in customer service.
- London to Norwich trains will continue to offer catering facilities from on-board kitchens.
- Appointment of a Customer Service Director for the region to oversee the delivery of customer benefits within the franchise as well as the appointment of a quality audit team to monitor standards.
- Recruitment of 40 additional customer-facing roles at stations and on trains improving communication with passengers. ■

Companywatch

NATIONAL EXPRESS MAY QUIT RAIL

National Express could quit the train business altogether if its £1.4 billion east coast franchise places too great a strain on group profits, according to *The Guardian* newspaper.

The news came after the Department for Transport revealed that five franchises - out of 19 across the UK - have been classed as "red" under a "traffic light" system monitoring the financial health of rail contracts.

National Express agreed to pay the DfT £1.4 billion for the right to operate trains between London and Edinburgh until 2015.

Since the deal was struck in August 2007, when passenger numbers were rising and the privateer was allowed to impose inflation-busting fare rises.

However, a note published this month by the investment bank JP Morgan said that the east coast contract could miss revenue targets this year and make an underlying loss of over £26 million.

National Express needs revenue growth of about 10 per cent to meet targets this year but this looks increasingly unlikely, raising the prospect of the National Express 'handing in the keys' of the franchise.

National Express also owns the National Express East Anglia and c2c franchises, which expire in 2013 and 2011 respectively.

JP Morgan described the east coast franchise as the "key swing factor" in its parent group's fortunes. National Express has a stock market value of about £530 million and its debt burden of £1.1 billion is a cause of concern to analysts, standing at more than three times projected earnings for 2009. Alongside its rail operations, National Express owns coach and bus businesses in the UK, Spain and the US.

National Express abandoned its train and tram operations in the Australian city of Melbourne back in 2002 following the group's failure to squeeze more subsidies from the state government of Victoria despite more than a year of negotiations. ■

Parliamentary column

NEW PARLIAMENTARY TRADE UNION LIAISON GROUP LAUNCHED



RECEPTION: from left to right Joe Marino, general secretary Bakers, Food and Allied Workers' Union (BFAWU), Matt Wrack general secretary FBU, Jeremy Dear general secretary NUJ, Neil Gerrard MR, Bob Crow general secretary RMT, Mark Serwotka general secretary PCS, Jonathan Ledger general secretary NAPO. Picture: PCS/Photo Fusion

Despite the chair of the RMT's Parliamentary group, Labour MP John McDonnell's absence from the Palace of Westminster — exiled from the House of Commons for his dramatic protest against the government's approval of Heathrow's third runway — many MPs joined together with union leaders last month to launch his initiative to give unions a stronger voice in Parliament.

Representatives of transport workers, firefighters, journalists and bakers declared their support for the Trade Union Co-ordinating Group (TULG), which intends, as Mr McDonnell's fellow Labour MR Neil Gerrard emphasised, "to be the political expression of workers in Parliament".

"It makes sense for unions to have campaigning MPs on their side in this current climate. And it makes sense for MPs to have unions aiding our debates and arguments in Parliament," he said.

The TUCG brings together seven unions - BFAWU, FBU, NAPO, NUJ, PCS, POA and RMT - with the objective of co-ordinating campaigning activities on many of the key issues facing union members and giving the movement a new and stronger representative voice in Parliament.

The meeting built on the original launch of the group at last year's TUC Congress, where a packed rally packed agreed to approach MPs friendly to the labour movement in order to try to combat the neoliberal arguments dominating debate in the House of Commons.

John McDonnell MR said that with people struggling to make ends meet, save their jobs

and keep a roof over their heads the Labour movement urgently needed a consistent voice in Parliament that would fight against the attacks on welfare, ongoing privatisation, and campaign for peace, the restoration of and civil liberties and trade union rights.

As a result seven union leaders took the offensive into Parliament to demand that MPs stand up for workers and challenge ministers.

NUJ general secretary Jeremy Dear said that "those MPs who are timid in the face of power, those who put privatisation and profit above the right to dissent. We hope that this new group will reverse that orthodoxy".

Fire Brigades Union leader Matt Wrack added that his members were "suspicious of politicians".

But he said that the union had decided to become involved because "our work with John McDonnell has convinced us that we can have an impact in challenging ministers".

NAPO general secretary Jonathan Ledger and bakers' union leader Joe Marino both emphasised that workers need representation "more than ever," while RMT general secretary Bob Crow pointed out that unions were not "relying on MPs to change things for us.

"We will be organising outside Parliament, too, to change things for ourselves. But this initiative is a great step forward and we should make the most of it," Mr Crow insisted.

Civil Service union PCS leader Mark Serwotka agreed, adding that the "significance of this meeting is its optimism. We are saying that we can hold the government to account — and we will," he said. ■

TEBAY – FIVE YEARS ON

Five years after the tragic accident at Tebay which killed four RMT members and the union is still battling to get better protection for track workers from runaway vehicles

February 15 2009 will be the fifth anniversary of the appalling accident at Tebay in which four RMT members tragically lost their lives and a further five suffered a horrendous range of physical and psychological trauma.

The accident happened after a faulty trailer loaded with 14 tonnes of scrap metal careered down a 1-in-74 gradient on the West Coast mainline in Cumbria, ploughing into a ten-strong track maintenance team working in an engineering possession.

RMT members Chris Waters, Colin Buckley, Gary Tindall and Darren Burgess all lost their lives.

Following the tragedy, RMT highlighted the need for secondary protection within a possession to stop runaways taking place. If such protection had been used at Tebay it would have prevented such a loss of life.

Yet in the last year or so there have been a further three runaways at Glen Garry in December 2007, at Drumfrochar last May and at Cambridge Heath last October. These three incidents show that the rail industry has failed to get to

grips with the problem of runaways and that the stance taken by the union in pressing for further protection for rail workers is correct.

PRESSURE

As a direct result of pressure from RMT, Network Rail's Safety Improvement Team established a Runaways Working Group at the first meeting of the group in March 2008 RMT were represented by their nominees executive committee member Jack Jones and RMT health and safety officer Paul Clyndes.

The meeting considered an analysis of UK runaway incidents and sought to

establish common causes and possible solutions to the issue of runaways. The group then considered what the rail industry had done post-Tebay to protect workers. The group believed that up to 20 per cent of the runaway incidents analysed by them could have been prevented by some type of secondary protection.

Finally, a paper was presented to the group on forms of secondary protection currently available, their design, uses, advantages and associated risks.

In April 2008 RMT representatives, accompanied by members from the Lancaster RMT branch attended a Hazard and Operability Review (HAZOP) workshop to take forward the issues identified from the previous meeting.

As a result of this, HAZOP agreed that there was no current suitable form of secondary protection that did not import a significant degree of risk arising from its use but that such a piece of equipment was required to provide added safety to track workers.

Network Rail agreed to establish whether there was a manufacturer that could design and manufacture an item of equipment based on low cost, easy use principles that would provide additional secondary protection to workers.

TRIALS

Following discussions within Network Rail, trials were held at Shrewsbury in August 2008 at which RMT were again represented by the attendees of the HAZOP workshop. A concept device designed to be placed 200 metres on the up gradient of a work site, which would provide a 12-second warning for runaways travelling at 40mph was demonstrated.

Following the demonstration a number of improvements were suggested by the observers and the company went away to do further development work.

Following this trial a separate company approached Network Rail with an alternative design proposal. Network Rail did some initial evaluation but the alternative company had delivered a design that did not fit the required specifications.

Network Rail have now gone back to the initial supplier who are doing further design work on the original proposal.

RMT wrote to Network Rail last December expressing its dismay at the slow progress with this matter and questioned their commitment to the proposals. Although Network Rail has responded positively there are still issues the union needs the company to address so that the likelihood of a further Tebay is removed as a threat to workers on the rail network. ■



FOCUSSING ON RISK ASSESSMENTS

This year's RMT health and safety conference in Doncaster will be focussing on risk assessment

Every year the RMT's National Health and Safety Conference focuses on a general health and safety area.

In previous years the conference has covered issues such as accident investigation, welfare facilities and workplace violence. This year's conference has been designed to fit in with the European campaign for

safety and health at work for 2008-09 which will focus on risk assessment.

The European focus is a two-year campaign aimed at employers, workers and safety representatives, and is intended to promote the benefits of completing and implementing a risk assessment.

The campaign seeks to

demystify the risk assessment process to show that risk assessment is not necessarily complicated, bureaucratic or a task only for experts.

The campaign also aims to raise awareness on this issue, provide information and practical advice, encourage activities that have a positive impact in the workplace, and identify and recognise good practice.

CAMPAIGN

There has been a long campaign by the wider trade union movement to secure a legal right for health and safety representatives to be consulted on all risk assessments. While RMT will actively participate in this campaign, the union believes legislative change is some way in the future and that the need for involvement of safety reps cannot wait.

RMT will therefore be launching a campaign to persuade employers to enter into voluntary agreements to involve safety reps in the risk assessment process. Early talks have been held with a number of companies who we expect will take the lead in this process.

Although the management of risk is and must remain the responsibility of employers there is much evidence and support for the view that worker representation in risk assessment makes the resultant assessment more likely to accurately reflect the hazards in a workplace and the measures that are put in place to control the risk arising from the hazards more effective in ensuring worker safety.

RMT has already developed a one-day course in understanding risk assessment and this course is being made

available to all delegates to the RMT health and safety conference. This course gives our safety reps the ability to look at a risk assessment, understand the approach the employer has taken and then to examine and improve the final product.

If the RMT campaign is to be successful the union will have to develop this course so that safety reps have the ability to not just evaluate a risk assessment but to take part in the process as equal partners alongside management. In fact, it will probably prove to be necessary to train safety reps alongside managers.

COMMONLY RISK ASSESSMENTS FOLLOW A FIVE STEP APPROACH:

1. Identify the hazards.
2. Decide who might be harmed and how.
3. Evaluate the risks and decide on precautions.
4. Record the findings and implement them.
5. Review the assessment and update if necessary.

Health and safety reps understand this process and, more critically, they have an understanding of the work that is involved and how best to control the risks arising from the work. RMT believes it has a central role to play in the process and that employers who exclude safety reps from risk assessment are more likely to have in place risk assessments that are not fit for purpose.

If employers are to be believed when they express their commitment to health and safety they must be seen to react positively to the RMT's campaign. ■

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VOTE FOR STRIKE ACTION AT DB SCHENKER OVER JOBS AND CASUALISATION

RMT members at the rail freight company formerly known as EWS are being balloted for action against job cuts and casualisation

RMT members at railfreight company Deutsche Bahn Schenker, formerly English, Welsh and Scottish railways (EWS), are being balloted for strike action after the company failed step back from a major assault on jobs and working conditions and the threat of casualisation.

In a postal vote on a breakdown in industrial relations, which opens on

February 11 and closes on February 25, RMT members in all grades at the company will be urged to give the union a huge mandate for strike action.

The union has sought assurances from DB Schenker that there will be no compulsory redundancies, that it will lift the threat of regrading and stop the introduction casualisation through zero-hours contracts.

RMT general secretary Bob

Crow said that on all counts the company had failed to give such assurances and has, instead, proposed a pay freeze and possible pay cuts, as well as refusing to honour the existing pay award.

"The company has also consistently failed to honour its recognition agreement with RMT for members in all grades and depots, is sidestepping bargaining procedures and evading legal, including denial of the 90-day consultation period on redundancies.

"Rather than sit down with us in a constructive way to find a path through current difficulties, the company has gone on the offensive with a fundamental attack on jobs,

conditions and the union.

"That has angered staff who have given loyal service to EWS, and the union is urging RMT members to let the company know how they feel with a resounding yes for strike action," Bob Crow said.

RMT has called on the government to take action to prevent job losses at DB Schenker that would undermine the government's own pledge to implement a 'new environmentally friendly approach' to Britain's freight industry.

The union said that the proposed cuts would inflict long-term damage to an environmentally and economically crucial industry. ■

RMT TYNE AND WEAR METRO STAFF BALLOTTED FOR STRIKE ACTION

Union ballots over privatisation threat to Tyne and Wear Metro jobs, pensions and conditions

Around 250 RMT members employed by Nexus at Tyne and Wear Metro are being balloted for strike action over the threat to jobs and conditions posed by moves to privatise the network's operations.

Members have been urged to vote for action after the company failed to deliver assurances on the future security of jobs, pensions, travel concessions, pay, staffing levels and negotiation arrangements.

The launch of the ballot came as over a hundred people attended a public meeting of the Keep Metro Public campaign in Newcastle to hear RMT general secretary Bob Crow, RMT regional organiser Stan Herschel and Unison national officer Heather Wakefield oppose the privatisation threat.

Bob Crow told the meeting that Tyne and Wear's transport executive was unfortunately pressing ahead with plans that could see the Metro's operations handed to the private sector.

"We have sought assurances that our members' futures will be secure and those assurances have not been forthcoming and we are left with no option but to ballot our members for strike action.

"RMT's opposition to the privatisation of Metro isn't academic, but is based on years of bitter experience and the knowledge that the threat to our

members' jobs and futures is real.

"Privatisation and fragmentation of the national railways and London Underground resulted in widespread assaults on job security, pay, pensions, travel concessions, pay, staffing levels and safety," he said.

The government has agreed to provide £300 million for the 're-invigoration' of the Metro, all of which will come from the public purse. However, Nexus, which itself had put the case to keep Metro as an integrated railway, has invited private-sector bids to operate passenger services and maintain infrastructure.

The list of 'approved bidders' includes Serco-Ned, a consortium of the engineering company and the Netherlands' state-owned railway; Deutsche Bahn, the German state railway, and the Hong Kong-based MTR Corporation, as well as an in-house bid from Nexus, the Tyne and Wear passenger transport executive.

Heather Wakefield said that every penny of the £300 million earmarked for the Metro's modernisation should be spent on maintaining it as Britain's best performing railway.

"But if the Metro's operations are handed over to one of the three private bidders next year we will see huge sums of public



cash siphoned out into private pockets as profits.

"Our economy is reeling from the damage done to it by corporate greed. That is the wrong way to go for the Metro," she said.

Stan Herschel said that Nexus and the government were playing Russian roulette with the future of the Metro.

"Metro has proved time and again that it is run properly and efficiently in the public sector, and it beggars belief that anyone could even think of putting its operations into private hands," Stan said.

An opinion poll conducted by ICM Omnibus for Keep Metro Public revealed that only around 20 per cent of local people wanted the Metro in private hands while the 60 per cent wanted it in publicly hands.

Tyne and Wear Metro was the best performing rail operator

in the UK last year, according to Office of Rail Regulation figures, running 95.57 per cent of trains on time in 2007/08, ahead of all privately operated franchises. RMT's demands to Nexus are:

- No compulsory redundancies, now or under future owners
- All staff in the same pension scheme, which will not worsen now or in the future
- All staff continue to receive reduced travel cost arrangements now or in the future
- All staff and their contracts will remain working with Nexus/Tyne & Wear Metro
- No changes to staffing unless agreed with the trade unions
- One collective bargaining arrangement for all staff working on the Tyne & Wear Metro ■

WORKING PEOPLE NEED POLITICAL REPRESENTATION

RMT hosts a conference
looking at the crisis in
working-class political
representation as New
Labour continues with a
right-wing agenda



Working people and their families are having a tough time entering the New Year with a deepening recession, rising unemployment and soaring food, fuel and transport costs.

With continuing privatisation, record home repossessions, and no end in sight to the Tories' anti-union laws, many are questioning why the bankers who caused the crisis are being handed billions in bail-out cash while bosses who still make millions in profits are threatening to cut jobs.

Following a decision by the union's annual general meeting, RMT hosted a conference looking at the crisis in working class representation, gathering activists and representatives from trade unions and political organisations together to discuss the way forward.

RMT general secretary Bob Crow opened the debate at Friend's Meeting House in London by pointing out that the necessity for such a debate had become "even more urgent as bosses tried to make workers pay for the economic crisis".

"Unions can fight – and we will – but we have to recognise that unions can only go so far.

"Workers need political representation because without it, all the gains we made during economic good times can be taken away in a slump," he said.

Bob told the conference that it was a "travesty that pensioners are suffering because they can't afford to turn on the heating this winter, while millionaire bankers get handed billions of pounds".

"Working people are not being represented anymore," he insisted, criticising the government for not doing more to help.

"Labour is finished. It's over. Some say that the party can still be changed, but Labour can't be changed. Maybe there will have to be a new political party for workers sometime down the road," Bob added.

PEOPLE'S CHARTER

He urged activists to use the idea of a "People's Charter" – a



POA general secretary Brian Caton

manifesto of key demands in favour of working people – to help organise those workers "fighting back".

"The mood has changed and people are not sitting back accepting what is going on. A charter will spark discussion in workplaces and homes and say that an alternative is possible," he concluded.

Prison Officers' Association general secretary Brian Caton praised RMT for "taking the initiative in sparking this debate that we urgently need to have".

"I am still a Labour Party member, but that party has become unfair.

"I believe in a workers' party but we are not being represented as workers in Labour," he stated.

Mr Caton suggested that some unions remained far "too close" to the government, and urged the "rank and file to regain their unions to make sure that those who lead them are representing their members rather than going for ermine and awards".

CHARTISTS

London Metropolitan University professor of labour history Mary Davis pointed out that "there has never been a crisis in ruling class political representation" in this country.

She encouraged activists to "learn from the radical, revolutionary Chartists and replicate their success in building a movement based on a 'People's Charter'".

"Extra-Parliamentary struggle is needed to push those inside Parliament who claim to represent us to the left," she insisted.

Coventry Socialist councillor Dave Nellist contributed to the lively conference debate to call for independent working class or union candidates to stand in local elections, while Unite union executive member Ian Allinson sounded a note of caution to warn activists that many workers still looked upon Labour as "their party".

"Let's work together. Don't exclude Labour Party members from our struggle because they are among the workers that we need for a stronger voice," he said.

RMT Parliamentary group convenor, Labour MR John McDonnell, agreed that "we need to go at a pace that can bring the most people with us".

"Many organisations, even the actors' Equity union and the Musicians' Union, as well as firefighters and civil servants, are now questioning their political representation in Parliament.

"A 'People's Charter' can be a tool to provide workers with confidence and build a dramatic movement that could look to direct action – such as stopping home repossessions or a factory closing – as a way forward," he said.

Local government workers' PCS union general secretary Mark Serwotka sent a message of support to the conference,

thanking RMT for bringing political and union activists together.

"When all the main political parties have the same policies, it is clear that an alternative voice for working people is needed more than ever," he stated.

National Shop Stewards' Network activist John Reid added that the recession was politicising millions of people who were now looking for new political ideas.

He emphasised that "RMT's experience of struggle and fighting back can lead the way in helping to educate workers on the best way forward".

RMT executive committee member Ollie New pointed out that community organising was "essential to ensuring more effective political representation for workers".

"Union activists shouldn't just turn up at election time. We must have a constant presence in the local community, fighting and organising on the issues that matter to the people around us," he urged.

Closing the conference, Bob Crow emphasised that workers "are facing attacks right now, so we have a responsibility to act right now".

"Let's go ahead with a 'People's Charter' and win over the hearts and minds of workers to ensure better political representation for our class," he said. ■

SEA CHANGE AT MERCHANT NAVY PENSION FUND

Employers past service liability contributions set to increase significantly

2009 is a big year for the Merchant Navy Royal Pension Fund (MNRPF) following on from the valuation of the Fund. A formal valuation is carried out every three years, and the Fund has an informal valuation each year. The 2008 valuation results are being discussed at the moment, but the initial results show that the shortfall of assets held against the Fund liabilities has increased significantly.

THERE ARE A NUMBER OF REASONS FOR THIS:

- The Trustee has taken a more cautious position in estimating future investment returns
- The expectation that members will live longer and draw pensions from the Fund.
- The regulations which govern how Trustees have to act have been changed since the 2005 valuation. These regulations mean that all Trustees have to take a more safety first attitude than they would have been expected to be before.

The impact of these three factors means that the deficit has increased to £203 million. The

impact of this on seafarers' employer contributions is to more than double the £13 million they have paid annually since 2001.

It was assumed by the Actuary in his last valuation that the deficit would be cleared in 2015, if the Employers continued to pay the £13 million each year. Because of the revised Actuarial assumptions it is expected that the Employers will have to pay at least £26 million per year for at least 10 years before the deficit is cleared.

MEETINGS

There are around 50 employers who contribute to the Fund. Because of the impact of the valuation results, the Trustee is consulting with employers about the underlying assumptions which have been used in calculating the results, and a meeting is to be held with the Employers this month to discuss the actuarial assumptions.

After this the Trustee will

discuss and finalise the valuation report and the increased contributions will be required from the Employers.

The expected future long term deficit in the MNRPF means that, apart from the pension increases for service after April 1997, it is highly unlikely that there will any future pension increase paid to pensioners.

MNPA Ltd has not been able to contact more than 8,000 members. This means that these members don't receive benefit statements, annual reports or any communication from the Trustee. The Trustee cannot trace these members as they may have changed address, died or forgotten about the benefit they have earned and they can't be paid their benefits.

There is a rule which allows the Trustee to reclaim the benefit from these members back into the Fund if they have not claimed this by age 68. An exercise is being considered which means that these liabilities are not taken into account by the Trustee and the assets used to meet other MNRPF pensions. If a member appears after this time, the Trustee will still pay the benefit due but it will take longer to sort out and pay the benefit. If you are unsure that you have kept the Fund updated of your latest address please write to :

MNRPF, MNPA Limited,
Leatherhead House, Station
Road, Leatherhead KT22 7ET

If you know of someone who was or may have been a member of the Fund in the past please ask them to contact MNPA if they are not yet claiming a pension when they should be.

When the MNRPF closed in May 2001, agreement was reached with the employers to form the MNRPP, which is a money purchase pension plan, and has

- employer contributions
- employee contributions
- death in service benefits

Your contributions get tax relief when you pay them and the lump sum on retirement is also tax free. Should you die before you retire, the lump sum of twice your earnings is again paid tax free to your family or dependents. You also get a quarterly benefit statement from the administrators.

The Trustee will shortly be introducing the chance for you to look at your benefits on line and will be writing to you with more details about this.

If are not a member and want to join you should ask your employer if they participate in the MNRPP and complete the application forms so that you get the Plan benefits started.

The priority of the Trustees, both RMT-nominated and those from the Chamber of Shipping, is to ensure that the Fund is kept going to enable all members to receive the benefits they are entitled to, now and in the future.

The MNRPF is valued at about £600 million and has 28,000 members. ■

PENSIONS' ACTION DAY

The National Pensioners Convention organise a day of action on April 6 to demand a decent state pension

Britain's economy is in crisis and, in order to help out banks and business, taxes will be increased and social services cut.

The living standards of millions of working, disabled and retired people are threatened. Nowhere is this more evident than on the issue of pensions; facing both existing pensioners and future generations.

PROTEST

On April 6 the basic state pension will rise by just £4.55 a week and £2.70 for millions of women who rely on their husband's contributions. This will raise the pension to a mere £95.25 for a single pensioner. Such a low state basic pension means millions of pensioners remain on means-tested benefits and today's workers face poverty when they retire.

Only a decent state pension provides an effective and reliable way of guaranteeing real financial security in retirement.

That is why the NPC is calling on all affiliates and supporters, including RMT, to organise protests on April 6 and make a stand for a decent state pension for all generations.

THE PENSION ISSUE

For years, successive governments have relied on means-tested benefits for existing pensioners and good quality occupational pensions for today's workers as a way of avoiding having to pay a decent state pension. But this approach is now unravelling.

Despite government suggestions that they have reformed pensions – our state pension system needs urgent attention in order to ensure real financial security for everyone in retirement, and end the over-reliance on private pension

schemes which are governed by a volatile stock market.

WHAT WE NEED

As a first step, the state pension should be set above the official poverty level of £165 a week, paid to all men and women, and linked to earnings or prices (whichever is the greater) now.

This could be financed through a number of measures, including:

- Using the surplus in the National Insurance Fund, which currently stands £46 billion, and is forecast to grow to £114 billion by 2012
- Abolishing the upper earnings limit on national insurance contributions would raise at least £8 billion a year
- Scrapping higher rate tax relief on private pension contributions would raise up to £20 billion

WHAT CAN BE DONE?

All affiliates are encouraged to take part in this nationwide day of action. Please consider organising some form of protest,

such as:

- Stage a lunchtime demonstration outside local DWP offices (where possible in conjunction with the PCS union)
- Hold a public meeting with guest speakers from supporting organisations and/or local politicians, prospective parliamentary candidates and MPS (where possible)
- Organise a street stand and/or distribute campaign leaflets to the public
- Organise some form of protest/direct action/publicity stunt as agreed by your members

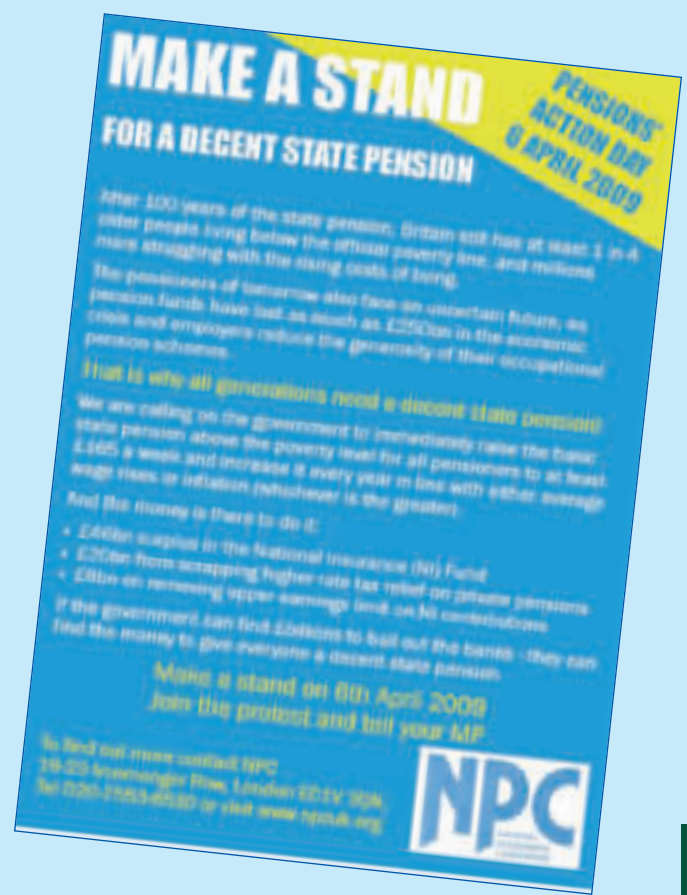
Make sure you inform the NPC office what you are planning so that we can co-ordinate efforts across the country and notify the media accordingly.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Contact Neil Duncan-Jordan
NPC National Officer

Email: info@npcuk.org

Tel: 07940-357-608 ■



THE NORTH YORKSHIRE MOORS RAILWAY

A HISTORY

Acting membership secretary of the newly-formed North Yorkshire Moors Railway branch Tam Naylor tells the story of one of Britain's best-loved heritage steam lines

The Whitby and Pickering Railway was one of the earliest lines in Britain to be built. Originally horse-drawn, the line opened on May 26 1836 and was closed by Dr Beeching on March 8 1965.

Due to the remoteness of the town of Whitby, the line to Middlesbrough was kept open which meant that the first seven miles to Grosmont were still on the network, but British Rail claimed that the Pickering section was losing £50,000 a year. Two years after closure it was decided that the line should re-open and formed the North Yorkshire Moors Railway Preservation Society.

British Rail was keen to lift the line for re-use, due to it being double track with a quantity of checkrail on the tight curves. This spurred the society into action and early in 1968 the single line of the first seven miles from Grosmont to Summit were purchased for £35,000 with a further £7,500 for three stations and eleven

line-side cottages.

Special trains ran for volunteer use from 1970 by which time the local councils and planning committees were beginning to take notice.

There were many advantages to providing public transport within such a scenic area and financial assistance enabled the society to purchase the line to

Pickering.

Now that the society had assets it became a Historical Railway Trust. NYMR is the first operating railway in Britain to achieve charitable status. After gaining permission to operate as a light railway the first train ran through to High Mill at Pickering in April 1973.

The station at Pickering was under threat of supermarket development but by 1975 trains terminated there.

There were virtually no structural facilities to operate the newly-formed railway. The signal-cabins were operational but the box controlling Pickering station by colour-



FUEL: Southern Railway 825 under the Coaling stage at Grosmont.



GROSMONT: Southern Engine 825 leave Grosmont with the Pullman Diner

light signals was not fully re-commissioned until 1986.

Levisham and Goathland were re-commissioned in 1975 and 1973 respectively and control NER lower quadrant signals. Grosmont station only had a ground frame outside the gate box, which was superseded, by a new box in 1996.

The absence of a locomotive shed was partially solved in 1973 when a repair shed was built near the tunnel at Grosmont.

The Motive Power Depot now has a boiler or fabrication shop, running shed, wheel drop and lathe, machine shop and the only working coaling stage in the country.

Initially the locomotives were coaled by hand from sacks delivered by the coal man that later improved with the purchase of a digger.

The North Eastern Locomotive Preservation Group also has a restoration shed.

The coaching stock is based at the Carriage and Wagon Depot, Pickering. Repair and maintenance work was done in the open air until the shed came into operation in 1984.

There is now a paint shop and further repair shed for the London and North Eastern Railway Coach Association.

Much of the single track is now laid with concrete sleepers and re-aligned over bridges and

viaducts. The permanent way department have a shed near Pickering paid for by the York Area Group.

The expansion off the line has included longer platforms, which aids coach washing.

The NYMR is more a tourist attraction than a passenger railway. It currently employs approximately 85 permanent staff and over 50 seasonal workers. There are shops, tea-rooms and booking offices at most of the stations as well as a dining train based at Grosmont which operates up to four days a week during the season.

The NYMR was started by volunteers, with many later gaining employment, and owes much of its existence to the huge amount of enthusiasm that these people bring to all areas. Most of the footplate crews are here for the love of it as well as many within the operating, MPD, P-Way, C & W and S & T departments not to mention the station and area groups.

The NYMR first enlisted the NUR's help in 1981 and now all pay and conditions are negotiated through RMT.

There are over 50 members and now we operate on the mainline many volunteers are also seeking protection. The NYMR is now a commercial business with all the concerns that go with it. ■



RMT members accepting long service awards, receiving their badges from Peter Skelly RMT Relief Organiser at the Gosmont Crossing Club.

NEW RMT BRANCH FORMED AT NORTH YORKSHIRE RAILWAY

Acting branch secretary for the newly-formed North Yorkshire Moors Railway branch 1146 Chris Parrish talks to RMT News

RMT has been recognised with the North Yorkshire Moors Railway heritage line for negotiating staff wages and conditions since 1991.

But members have now inaugurated their very own branch with some 50 members, representing around half the total company workforce.

"The branch has just been established although, in fact, the union has been active on the railway for 20 years," Chris says.

This is a considerable achievement when you take into account the fact that there are also a significant number of temporary seasonal workers who don't make it into the union's ranks. Previously, RMT members

on the railway were in the Scarborough branch, but having such a large membership in one place it made sense to organise a local branch.

There is certainly a demand for the union: "We recruited eight members over the Christmas period alone," says Chris.

One of the factors that Chris believes has helped get the branch off the ground is the "strong social element and use of the local Crossing Club for branch meetings and social events".

The next branch meeting, due to take place at the end of this month, will elect the first branch committee. Bob Crow is the guest speaker. ■



AWARD: RMT member Adam Dalguish, the NYMR chief boilermith, receives his ten-year RMT badge from RMT Relief Organiser Peter Skelly at the Crossing Club.

LEGAL

RMT MEMBER WINS COMPENSATION FOR FOOD POISONING

An RMT member has received £25,000 in compensation after he became gravely ill following serious food poisoning at a Chinese restaurant.

Stephen Yenson, from Clacton on Sea in Essex contracted salmonella after eating chicken curry and egg fried rice at a Chinese restaurant in the town in July 2004.

As a result of the infection Stephen was off work for more than a year after he developed reactive arthritis and was bed ridden for three months. The condition has left him physically disabled.

Although he has now returned to work at Network Rail his disabilities mean he must undertake an office-based job.

Stephen contacted his union RMT after he became ill to

pursue a claim for compensation against the Chinese restaurant. The union instructed its lawyers Thompsons Solicitors who were successful in gaining a settlement.

The restaurant did not admit liability for exposing Stephen to salmonella.

Stephen said that he never imagined he would end up off sick for more than a year after going for a Chinese meal.

"I have been left with long term affects from the food poisoning and I am now physically restricted. I didn't know salmonella could be so damaging to my health.

"I am fortunate I have been able to go back to work. If I had been a manual worker like a builder I would have had to give up work altogether," he said.

RMT general secretary Bob

Crow said that the case highlighted how trade union legal services can support our members outside the work place.

"This free service is not confined to those injuries which are linked the member's work or employment," he said.

Andrew Wells from Thompsons Solicitors added said that he was pleased to have been able to help Mr Yenson to

gain compensation for his illness.

"Salmonella is one of the most common types of food poisoning. It can be avoided by those involved in the preparation of food by having good kitchen hygiene and by making sure potentially contaminated foods like chicken and eggs are cooked properly," he said. ■

MEMBER WINS COMPENSATION FROM VIRGIN RAIL GROUP

The union's solicitors won compensation of over £15,000 to customer services assistant Janet Wilson who was injured while going about her duties in the employment of Virgin Rail Group.

Mrs Wilson was injured as she was serving tea and coffee on a Virgin Pendolino train. As she was passing through the coaches the doors closed suddenly, trapping her right wrist. The train also went over some points at this moment causing the train to jolt.

Following a letter of claim, liability was conceded by the employers and medical evidence was commissioned.

The claimant sustained a fracture to the right wrist and underwent an operation to unite the fracture Mrs Wilson was off work for six months and suffered reduced earnings as result and she made a good recovery.

The union's solicitors entered into settlement

negotiations with the company and the matter settled for £15,250.

Janet said that she was happy with the result and 'really glad' to have been in the union. ■



SUMMARY OF FATAL AND NON-FATAL ACCIDENTS AND ASSAULTS TO MEMBERS FOR THE PERIOD JULY 1 TO SEPTEMBER 30 2008

	Fatal Accidents	Non-Fatal Accidents	Assaults
Rail Operating Grades	0 [1]	85 [80]	9 [14]
Rail Engineering Grades	1 [0]	13 [31]	0 [0]
Workshops	0 [0]	0 [1]	0 [0]
Road Transport	0 [0]	1 [3]	0 [0]
Buses	0 [0]	15 [17]	1 [0]
L.U.L. and Metros	0 [0]	15 [16]	4 [3]
Shipping	0 [0]	5 [11]	0 [0]
RMT Head Office staff	0 [0]	0 [0]	0 [0]
Taxi Driver	0 [0]	0 [1]	0 [0]
Other [unidentified]	0 [0]	45 [33]	3 [1]

CLAIMS FOR DAMAGES AT COMMON LAW FOR THE PERIOD JULY 1 TO SEPTEMBER 30 2008

Number of claims settled	83 [77]
Total amount recovered	£770,249.24 [£568,747.00] [including CICA Claims]

The figures in brackets are those for the previous quarter.

LEGAL ASSISTANCE GRANTED IN RESPECT OF CHARGES BROUGHT BY THE POLICE FOR THE PERIOD JULY 1 TO SEPTEMBER 30 2008

Road Traffic Act	10 [11]
Other police charges	4 [7]

LEARNING ON LONDON UNDERGROUND



Lead Union Learning Rep Bjorn Bradshaw-Murray talks to RMT News about spreading the message of adult education for RMT members working on the Tube network

After attending education courses Bjorn Bradshaw Murray himself became a passionate advocate of adult education through Union Learning.

Bjorn took an introduction to spoken French course and also a business course and got so much out of them personally that he believed that everybody should be able to take up the opportunities that he had.

The train driver – who is currently on secondment working as a signal operator on the Metropolitan Line – found himself giving his fellow workers advice about where to find courses and became an obvious choice as Union Learning Rep (ULR).

“There is a lot of courses out there,” says Bjorn. “From Line Dancing to Zoology to NVQ’s and A Levels”.

When Bjorn’s colleagues come to him interested in pursuing a course he carries out research to find what options there are

and where is the best place for them to attend.

Sometimes the best place to learn is through the company itself. London Underground Limited (LUL) give staff two hours a week for qualification-based courses. The Learning Zone at LUL’s head office offer GCSE Maths and English to all staff.

However, not everyone wants to attend company courses.

“If they have a problem with literacy, and want to go on a course to improve it then they may not want LUL to know that, so then it’s more appropriate to find a course at a local college or organised by the Workers’ Educational Association,” Bjorn says.

Online courses are also very popular, where people can learn at their own pace and not have to break up their working week.

The most important role that Bjorn plays

as a ULR is getting RMT members to attend courses run by the union. As lead rep he also co-ordinates activity with the other nine ULRs currently operating on the combine.

Bjorn has been involved with organising successful beginners’ computer courses taught by professional tutors which cover real basics such as how to use a mouse up to more complicated tasks like creating a Microsoft Powerpoint presentation.

Bjorn’s plans as Learning Rep for 2009 include organising more computer training sessions and some cheap language courses.

If you are interested in taking up a course or even becoming a ULR you can speak to a rep or contact Andrew Brattle at Unity House. ■

Andrew Brattle
RMT Learning Administrator
RMT Learning at Head Office 020 7529 8820
www.rmt.org.uk/learning

HOW DO YOU BECOME A ULR?

Your branch should be able to find out if there are any vacancies and will be asking for candidates to come forward. Check with your branch (if you are not sure which branch you are in ring head office).

If there is a vacancy you will need to be appointed by your branch.

Once appointed RMT will write to your company informing them of your appointment.

Once appointed you will need to undertake training.

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





UNION LEARN

COMPUTING AT LONDON MIDLAND:

RMT union learning rep Karen Lloyd shares her experience of organising a computer course for her colleagues at London Midland

Following a lot of hard work from people who know learning is for life and a fantastic approach from London Midland, we were able to get the first Information Technology Qualification (ITQ) course off the ground at Watford Junction.

We worked in partnership with City and Islington College who agreed to deliver an ITQ course in four one-day sessions and twenty four learners enrolled.

It had not been easy as we had a change of internet provider just weeks before the course was due to start so this set us back a few weeks.

Also, the room was double-

booked and we had to change the dates so another room could be found. After several calls, the Revenue Protection Manager said we could use their training room.

This meant that laptops would need to be transported back and forth to cover the ITQ course but we needed to do this to prevent further delays. Too many people had put in too much hard work to see this course end up being put back again. We were not about to let the learners down.

The course did go ahead, and yes, we did have a few people drop out due to other commitments. However, the



majority of learners completed the course and they are now awaiting their results.

For me, I have enjoyed the whole thing from start to finish. The problems we had were a learning curve and I now look

forward to getting many more people involved in learning.

We are planning a presentation event soon when all of the successful learners will receive their ITQ level two certificates. ■

ICT COURSE FOR RAIL WORKERS AT LEEDS STATION

RMT members working at Leeds station for Northern Rail have just completed the first computer course set up for rail workers in Leeds.

After holding successful Open Days to promote adult learning to rail workers at Leeds station it was clear that there was great demand for ICT courses.

Working in partnership with Park Lane College in Leeds, union learning rep(ULR) Mohammed Ilyas organised an ICT course which was delivered for seven learners at a college venue close to the station.

The learners told us that the employer is increasingly relying on computers and new

technology in its business activities and the new skills they have learned are helping them at work and at home.

Janet Prudhoe attended the course and is now confident sending e-mails. "I am now sending e-mails regularly and I can also send attachments now," she said.

Kevin Flynn said that he enjoyed the course: "I am now much more confident using a computer than I was before attending this course".

Glynn Mitchell said that after completing the course he was now "keen to move on to more advanced stuff such as learning about Excel

spreadsheets and using formulas".

A new ICT course is scheduled to start very soon.

The attached photos show

three of the successful learners and their ULR (l-r Kevin Flynn, Mohammed Ilyas, Janet Prudhoe and Glyn Mitchell) with their certificates ■



NING NEWS



RMT EDUCATION CENTRE RUNS ULR COURSES

The RMT Education Centre in Doncaster hosted its first union learning rep (ULR) courses recently.

The first five-day residential ULR course took place in September and was well attended with nine new RMT ULRs. All of the reps and the tutor were impressed with the facilities and the support staff at the centre during their four-night stay. The TUC tutor from Lewisham College Frank Crompton said that the centre was an "excellent venue" to deliver reps courses.

The Learner Reps course is the first stage of training for all new ULRs. The course includes: identifying learning needs, providing information to members about learning opportunities, the value of learning and skills in the workplace, negotiating training and learning with employers, and how to find information and work with other partners to progress the learning agenda in your workplace.

Frank said that the reps had worked hard to achieve all of the course objectives. All of the ULRs stated that they enjoyed the course and the opportunity

to spend time with other RMT reps.

Shipping ULR from Wightlink Ferries Eddie Mills said: "I really enjoyed meeting with other RMT reps and I am looking forward to putting what we have learnt here into practice".

London Midland rail ULR Ian Unitt said that he really enjoyed the course.

"It was very informative, a good mix of people, and I'm really looking forward to getting my teeth into the role," he said..

Graham Chesters, Development Worker (North) attended the course to meet with the new ULRs and to provide information about RMT Learning and the role of the RMT Learning Development Workers.

NEW COURSES

The second five-day initial ULR course has just been completed and more courses are scheduled to run throughout 2009. If you would like to enroll on a course please contact Andre Brattle in the RMT Learning Office or speak to your Development Worker. The new courses are scheduled to run as above. ■

March 23 2009	Initial ULR Course
June 1 2009	Initial ULR Course
September 1 2009	Initial ULR Course
November 30 2009	Initial ULR Course
June 8 2009	Dyslexia Awareness
Nov 23 2009	Skills for Life Awareness

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SAYING NO TO THE LISBON TREATY **AGAIN**

People's Movement representatives addressed the RMT executive recently to outline the campaign for a 'No' vote in Ireland in the upcoming second referendum on the Lisbon Treaty

From the moment that Irish people rejected the Lisbon Treaty on June 12 2008, it was clear that the European Union would force another vote, activists from the People's Movement (PM) in Ireland told the RMT executive committee recently.

PM secretary Frank Keoghan and Kevin McCorry thanked the union for the assistance it gave in the successful campaign last year and for its continuing support in any future referendum which EU leaders say must be held before October 2009.

"Irish people expected their sovereign decision to reject the Lisbon Treaty to be respected and forcing this re-vote only serves to further highlight the

contempt for democracy by EU institutions.

"The EU is now entering a post-democratic phase," warned Frank.

Brussels and political elites have also ensured that France and Dutch voters that rejected the EU constitution in 2005 were not even allowed to vote on the reheated version called Lisbon.

"When the Irish rejected Lisbon we were voting against a neo-liberal free-for-all, militarism and the removal of sovereignty and for Irish independence, decent public services and our neutrality," said Kevin, who was formerly secretary of the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association which fought for democratic rights in

the north of Ireland.

He said that the growing feeling in the country resembled the resentment felt by many in the 1970's when democratic rights were withheld from nationalists in the north.

"There is clearly a growing anger within communities that Irish political elites and Brussels are ignoring them.

"This second referendum, whenever it comes, will reflect that and people will also be putting forward a people's agenda for change," he said.

Kevin said that this meant calling for the return of political and economic powers taken by EU institutions as well as national resources like Ireland's fishing grounds which have been devastated by EU policies.

He said that the Irish Ferries dispute in 2006, when Irish seafarers were replaced by Eastern European labour at far lower wage rates, had alerted people to the dangers of social dumping.

A number of European Court of Justice rulings such as the Laval and Viking cases has even increased the prospect of social dumping by attacking workers'

rights to national bargaining and giving employers powerful rights to displace workers at will.

"Should Lisbon come into force this court would become the supreme court of a new superstate.

"Yet the European Court of Justice has already made it clear in at least two cases that the "fundamental rights" in the Treaty's Charter of Fundamental Rights could be restricted in the interests of a "common organisation of the market" or to advance "objectives of general interest pursued by the Community".

"In effect the market becomes the substitute for democracy, and human rights become marketised and that is a fundamental attack on workers rights," said Frank.

The Charter also guarantees "freedom to conduct a business in accordance with Community law." But this is qualified in the EU's objectives: "The Member States and the Union shall act in accordance with the principle of an open market economy with free competition".

In effect, this imposes a



VICTORY: Peoples Movement members celebrate on June 13 2008



treaty obligation to establish a neo-liberal economic model, something that is not even in the US Constitution.

Downward pressure on wages and the steady erosion of workers' rights have clearly not impressed Irish workers.

Add to this the massive economic crisis brought about by increasingly discredited neo-liberal economics – which become constitutional goals if Lisbon is ratified – and Brussels may have real trouble selling more of the same medicine as a legal requirement.

Frank pointed out that even those who supported the Lisbon Treaty first time round would not necessarily give it support a second time.

Immediately after the first referendum Labour Party leader Eamon Gilmore, who campaigned for a Yes vote, declared that he accepted the

decision of the people.

As Irish people will be voting on the same text as the one that was rejected, it is very unlikely that the Labour Party will campaign for a yes vote in any second referendum.

The People's Movement has also produced a covenant to respect the Irish people's decision in the first referendum and many local politicians and councils have signed up.

"We are organising a programme of activity across Ireland and we will continue until Lisbon is buried," Frank said.

RMT general secretary Bob Crow and president John Leach thanked the PM for their work, offered the continuing support of the union and presented a donation. ■

Visit www.people.ie for more information



DONATION: Frank Keogan Kevin McCorry, Bob Crow and John Leach



THE RECESSION AND RMT

With the economic downturn in full flow, we are wrongly being told that we will have to tighten their belts and expect less.

Visiting RMT members at work recently some thought that pay offers this year may be low and in some cases might not be available at all.

I told them that this should not be the case and employers had a moral as well as a practical duty to give every employee a decent pay rise.

As a union, RMT fights to get members pay rises – it is one of the most important things we do – and we reject that any worker should have to pay for the greed of the financiers and capitalists.

Similarly, it was appalling to see workers at Woolworth's going through Christmas with the sack hanging over them, whilst billions were given to the banks. RMT members EWS – now called Deutsche Bahn Schenker – also face compulsory redundancies despite being employed by the German State railway.

EWS, the largest freight operator in the UK, is being basically run into the ground. This is a crime. The obvious benefits to the environment of carrying goods on rail rather than road and the need for our members to have jobs is self-evident.

Members on South Eastern Trains, South West Trains, National Express East Anglia and EWS and many other firms have been told that there will be redundancies and a pay freeze. Your union will resist every single cut and attack on its members in any way it can. Ultimately, that is why people join a union, to forge the strength to resist.

The bosses are using this economic crisis now as an excuse to slash and burn at our hard won conditions of

employment. On Network Rail 28 per cent of renewal work has been shelved and this could have a dire impact on safety. On London Underground, LUL/TFL has announced 1000 job cuts and RMT will resist every single one. This is placing stress and on workers and their families. But it does not have to be this way.

The media reports these dire economic developments as if it is out of our control, rather like the weather. Yet economic decisions are all man-made and can, therefore, be unmade. The billions spent on banks must be spent defending working people that make up the vast majority of society. In order to achieve this public services and transport must be publicly-owned.

The free-market experiment of the last twenty years, known as globalisation, has clearly failed. Unfettered greed has, predictably, led us to this global crisis but there is another way and another world is possible.

Market forces have failed to protect the rail, bus and shipping industries and those who work in these industries. Government intervention and nationalisation has effectively already happened in the banking sector so why not in our crisis-ridden public transport sector.

This is politics, the politics of day-to-day life in Britain today. Ultimately, we cannot avoid politics – even if we do want to avoid career politicians who seem to be completely out of touch with the real world. We can challenge these elites and create our own agenda through our own strengths and defend the interests of working people.

John Leach

CAMPAIGNING AGAINST WORKPLACE VIOLENCE

RMT's Workplace Violence Campaign is seeking to reduce assaults on transport staff

Each year on April 28 trade unionists mark Workers' Memorial Day and pays tribute to those who have died as a result of their work - be it through accident, work-related illnesses such as stress, cancer or violent assault.

More people die each year owing to their work than do in wars. Workers' Memorial Day also reminds us that we must continue to fight to improve conditions for the living.

RMT's Workplace Violence Campaign launched last year

seeks to reduce the number of verbal and physical assaults on all transport staff.

This year, the International Transport Workers' Federation is dedicating its Action Day - Unions Say No to Violence, held this year on April 28 - to the growing problem of violence in the transport industries.

RMT will be holding events which will encompass both themes of No Violence and Remembrance.

RMT is keen to build on the success of its first Early Day Motion against workplace violence, which gained 125 signatures from all parties, and MP's will be tabling another on April 28 this year.

Regional events will also be held including leafleting of

large stations to ensure maximum national coverage for this important day and campaign. Volunteers will be sought to assist in these events so please contact your Regional Organiser soon to find out how you can help.

The campaign has been received well by members of the Rail Personal Security Group, funded by the Department for Transport, and RMT is now participating in various related projects.

One of these projects concerns the role that alcohol plays in undermining railway safety and security for staff and passengers.

In-depth research will be carried out by Ipsos MORI a well established and respected company who will be interviewing frontline staff, passengers and TOCs. This work will begin in March. Another project will be looking at staff training in conflict situations and finding effective methods of evaluation.

RMT has passed a 'Best Practice' policy document on reporting and recording assaults on staff to the National Maritime Occupational Health and Safety Committee.

RMT is working hard to ensure that the issue of workplace violence is kept on the top of the Chamber of Shipping's agenda and has asked for the establishment of a cross-company group that deals solely with this. The first meeting will be held next month.

As yet there are no cross-company committees for the road-transport or bus industries but the EDM and campaign will be seeking to address this. RMT will lobby transport ministers and employers with a view to establishing and sharing best practice procedures. ■



ON STRIKE IN CORSICA

Mike Sargent reports on his strange trip to Corsica and how he ended up on a picket line

I recently decided on a whim to take a break with my partner Julie and visit Corsica.

Detesting the lab-rat conditions of air travel, we opted to travel by train and sea.

After reaching Paris, we had a pleasant "plat du jour" in the Basque Beret, a cafe near Gare Du Nord station which I had visited the previous week with an RMT delegation on the huge international protest against the privatisation of EU rail networks.

We joined a TGV bound for Nice the following morning to catch the overnight ferry to Corsica, spending the time watching rugby with the crew and a few passengers.

As the ship docked at Ile Rousse, our first view of picturesque Corsica was stunning.

We had planned to travel around the mountainous island using the one-metre gauge railway and that's where our travails began.

Due to engineering work, the rail journey to the pretty citadel town of Calvi was a bus-replacement service in order to pick up a train the next day.

The next morning, in darkness and sheeting rain, we made our way to the station only to find that the doors were locked.

I could see people inside and, after an age of being ignored, I managed to elicit the following response to my questions from a surly *cheminot* in French – "En Greve!" (On Strike!).

The following morning we returned to find the strike by the STC union still on, but we managed to thaw out the supervisor by revealing my RMT membership while Julie waxed lyrical about Corsica. Eventually, he invited us to accompany him to the next station along the line at Ponte Leccia.

Here, it was higher above sea level and even colder. Once he had vanished nothing moved except the sign affixed to the door flapping in the cold wind – En Greve!

A French-Canadian film crew took pity on us and took us to Corte, the old island citadel capital. The only problem is that the only way out of Corte is by car or train unless the road is blocked by snow and snow clouds were definitely gathering.

After getting a refund for rail ticket (yes, I am still waiting for it to show on my bank

statement) we opted to hire a car. Of course, only a top of the range vehicle was available and the exchange rate is dreadful, but did we want to get out of Corte this year?

Back at sea level was a bit warmer but the lads on the picket line were still gathered round the fire of blazing pallets, laid symbolically on the end of the track.

I felt rather fraternal towards the lads so we chatted for a bit and I found out what the strike was all about. The ferry left for Marseilles that night and during those few days we experienced one of the most extraordinary journeys I have ever undertaken.

Once back home, I looked up the STC and found it was another fighting union like RMT, so my branch wrote to them expressing solidarity and best wishes. I shall write again soon about my refund. ■

EN GREVE: Mike Sargent (second right) with Strikers in Corsica



RMT CREDIT UNION PAYS 3.5 PER CENT DIVIDEND

RMT Credit Union chair Mick Lynch reports on the recent RMT CU annual general meeting and its decision to pay a dividend to members

It has been a good year for the RMT Credit Union and the annual general meeting in the union's headquarters recorded its thanks to all the volunteers and staff in the finance department who run the organisation.

The great thing about the RMT Credit Union is the membership decides what we do with our money.

Delegates decide on a combination of interest paid to our savers (the dividend) and the prudent accumulation of a reserve. So, we decide how much to pay out as a reward to our members and how much to keep aside in order to build, strengthen and develop our Credit Union.

Having created a surplus for the year after tax and other considerations the AGM decided to pay a dividend to members' savings of 3.5 per cent.

The Christmas Club received a two per cent dividend. We were also able to provide £17,500 to the general reserve in order to build for the future.

We hope that 2009 will be another year of growth and that all RMT members will join us so that we can create our own financial organisation as an



alternative to all those banks that have let working people down so often.

MEMBERSHIP GROWTH

Membership at the end of the year ending September stood at just over a thousand members, representing a membership growth of 40 per cent.

This growth is encouraging but we want more RMT members to join us and help us to build our own democratic not-for-profit financial institution.

The Credit Union is a mutual savings and loans organisation and the chief role of the Board is the safe and effective stewardship of our money.

The AGM take the board's reports and takes decisions on developing the organisation.

At the close of the reporting year the financial position was:

- £905,000 in savings
- A loan book of £581,000
- Total assets are £1million
- An operating surplus of over £56,000

These numbers demonstrate that

our members continue to trust their Credit Union with their investments and that we are capable of the responsible stewardship of their funds.

FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE

We generate the surplus comes from two areas. Firstly, the interest we charge on loans to our borrowing members and, secondly, from the interest we receive from our own bank and investment accounts.

On our loans, we have two levels of interest. For members borrowing in excess of their savings account we are charging the credit union standard of 12.68 per cent APR. For members that borrow up to their savings levels we provide a Guarantee Loan rate of 7.9 per cent APR. But we only charge interest on the declining balance and members can make extra payments at any time to save on interest.

CHRISTMAS AND SUMMER HOLIDAY CLUBS

Many members took up the chance to join our savings clubs

which pay out for Christmas and Summer holiday periods. The Christmas Club paid out at a good time for the Christmas splurge and had accumulated nearly £30,000. The Summer Holiday Club is growing steadily and will also pay out at a good time for the holidays in 2009.

ECONOMIC CLIMATE

Everyone's aware of the difficult economic situation and it presents both opportunities and potential perils for our Credit Union.

Many RMT members will view the Credit Union as an organisation that they can trust. We hope that leads to a growth in membership and will help us to develop our services and benefits for the good of our members and of our trade union.

While we are more than happy to help people with their financial arrangements, we must not get into risky lending practices and we should not contribute to heaping more debt onto people who cannot afford it. ■

JOIN THE RMT CREDIT UNION

£2000

MAY DAY DRAW

RMT's Credit Union is celebrating reaching its first 1,000 members and its first £1 MILLION in assets with a £2,000 prize draw for all new and existing members. On May 1, in association with RMT lawyers Thompsons, the RMT Credit Union will award a first prize of £1,000 and four £250 prizes to lucky winners who will have the money added to their shareholdings to save or spend as they wish.

To be eligible you have to be a member of the RMT Credit Union by April 30 2009



FED UP WITH THE BANKS? TRY THE RMT CREDIT UNION

The RMT Credit Union is your financial helping hand – and it's part of the union!

Irresponsible banks have driven us to a massive economic crisis. Now is the time for working people to pull together and turn to our traditional values of self-help and mutual support.

That's where your RMT Credit Union comes in. Owned and controlled by RMT members, it provides savings and loan facilities on a not-for-profit basis.

WE ARE NOT A BANK AND WE DON'T PUSH CREDIT CARDS

We enable our members to build up their savings and benefit from the yearly dividend – 3.5 per cent in 2008 – and we provide access to low-cost loans.

There are also Christmas and Summer Holiday Clubs so that you can save to have cash ready when you need it at the most expensive times of the year.

What is a credit union? – frequently asked questions answered on the RMT website – visit <http://www.rmt.org.uk/Templates/Internal.asp?NodeId=108614>

RMT CREDIT UNION – EVERYONE'S INCLUDED!

Unlike the banks the RMT Credit Union is not seeking to make profits from your money. The surplus it generates is used to provide a dividend on savings, to keep loans as cheap as possible and to build up the Credit Union so that we can improve our services.

RMT CREDIT UNION – BE PART OF IT!

The RMT Credit Union belongs to all of us, so join us now.

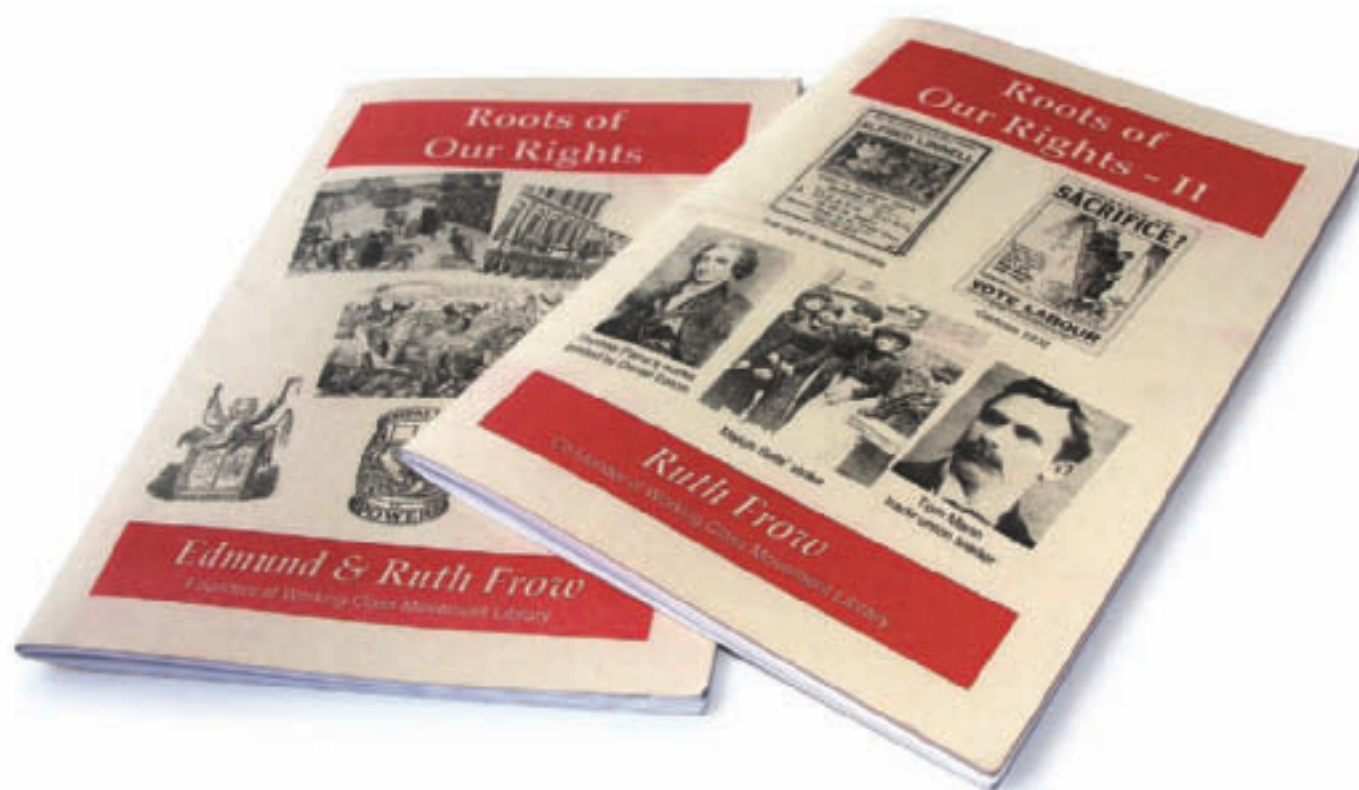
If you join by April 30 you could win one of our great celebration prizes.

Membership is open to RMT members and retired members, and family of RMT members are welcome too.

For details and an application see your copy of RMT News, or email c.union@rmt.org.uk or by call the RMT Credit Union direct on 020 7529 8835.

ROOTS OF OUR RIGHTS

Steve Silver reviews two pamphlets on working class history and the struggle for democracy



These two pamphlets give you bite size chunks of British history in a way that you won't have seen it before.

All those topics that you have heard of and wished you knew more about are covered in these A5 publications. Each subject is condensed to only two pages, written in an accessible style.

The first pamphlet opens with the Peasants Revolt, and the rise of the capitalist system, when John Ball said that

England would never be free so long as goods "be not in common... By what right are they whom men call lords greater folk than we?"

Other subjects covered include: The English Civil War; Oliver Cromwell; Thomas Paine and the Rights of Man and Wolfe Tone and the United Irishmen.

TRADE UNIONS

Perhaps most relevant to trade unionists is the final article of

the first pamphlet titled The Right to Combine. The piece explains how trade unions were formed in the 1800s in the wake of strikes across Britain by weavers, spinners and miners.

An article on the Luddites shows – against popular wisdom – that Ned Ludd's followers were not trying to stop progress but were organising to save peoples jobs.

What the publications show are that the rights that we have were won over the centuries

were invariably the result of hard won battles fought by working people.

The pamphlets were written by two important figures in the labour movement, who like many working class activists, are little known to the wider public although their influence has been great.

Edmund (Eddie) Frow (1906–1997) was a tool room engineer and trade union activist from a working class background. Offices held in the Labour



Tom Mann

Movement ranged from shop steward to national committee member of the Amalgamated Engineering Union (AEU).

Eddie was prominent in the National Unemployed Workers' Movement in the 1930s and was imprisoned for his activities and became the basis for the character in *Love on the Dole*.

Ruth Frow (1922-2008) had a teaching background and was active on the peace movement where her commitments included secretary of Teachers for Peace and the Manchester Peace Committee, and first chair of Manchester CND.

Both Eddie and Ruth were fanatical book collectors and built a massive collection relating to the labour movement. So large in fact that their local authority, Salford City Council, provided

accommodation for the important collection in what is now known as the Working Class Movement Library.

The pamphlets distil some of the knowledge that the Frow's amassed from a lifetime of collecting books and pamphlets on working class history.

The second pamphlet, *Roots of Rights II* was written by Ruth Frow and published shortly after she passed away. It naturally carries on from where the first publication left off opening with an article on that much celebrated enemy of the rich, Robin Hood.

Other articles cover topics such as: *Women in Action*; *Trial by Jury 12*; *Tom Mann*; *Bloody Sunday* and *Colonialism*.

DEMOCRACY

With both pamphlets the common thread is how democratic rights have been won through struggle. It is only by understanding how the rights that we enjoy have come about that we can understand just how they are threatened.

The article on Tom Mann explains how over 100 years ago "the skilled artisans of the 'pompous trades and proud mechanics' found themselves joined in trade unions by unskilled men and labourers

I would like to receive my copies of *Roots of Our Rights*
I enclose £4.00 payable to Democrat Press

Name

Address

.....

.....

Postcode

Send to : Democrat Press PO Box 46295, London, W5 2UG

organised by Mann and Ben Tillett. Within one year the membership of the TUC more than doubled to reach over one and a half million".

While each article only touches the surface of the topic covered, the further reading section at the back gives the reader the opportunity to pursue the subject.

In the final words of the article on Independent Working Class Education: "We badly need a rallying call behind which all progressive forces can unify.

Educate! Educate! Educate!" – in the interests of the working class, might fit the situation! There's nothing wrong with learning from history".

The pieces were originally published in the *Democrat*, the paper of the Campaign Against Euro-Federalism (CAEF) www.caef.org.uk These pamphlets, published by Democrat Press, bring them together for the first time. They are priced at £2 each and are available post-free to RMT members. ■

TONY BENN LAUNCHES REVAMPED WORKING CLASS LIBRARY

Veteran campaigner Tony Benn opened the revamped Working Class Library in Salford, Manchester recently.

Cartoons conveying the public horror felt when workers were attacked by government soldiers in Manchester at the Peterloo massacre in 1819 and a badge presented to a suffragette to commemorate her time in prison are amongst the items in the library's new permanent displays.

The former Labour MR said at the opening ceremony that the library was one of the greatest educational institutions in Britain

"Why does it matter? I've come to the conclusion that every generation has to fight the same battles again and again and the purpose of history is to learn from others



what their struggles were like to help you to fight the battle today," he said.

The Working Class Movement Library, founded by Ruth and Eddie Frow, records over 200 years of organising and campaigning by ordinary men and women.

The Working Class Movement Library can be found at 51 The Crescent, Salford, M5 4WX

www.wcml.org.uk



Match girls strike



50 YEARS OF CUBAN REVOLUTION

2009 is the 50th anniversary of the Cuban revolution which saw the corrupt US-backed dictator Batista overthrown.





Cuba50 is a celebration of Cuban culture and arts. It will be a showcase for film, music, dance, theatre, sport, photography, art and education. Events will run the length and breadth of the UK culminating in an open air festival in Manchester.

But the 50th anniversary is also a time to campaign. A major part of Cuba50 will be to celebrate fifty years of the Revolution. However, we also aim to use this anniversary to further pressure the UK Government to 'normalise' its own relations with Cuba and to end its complicity with the US blockade.

TUC SUPPORT

The TUC Congress in 2008 unanimously passed a motion marking "the 50th anniversary of the Cuban Revolution and its achievements, including eradicating illiteracy, free education, plus greatly reduced infant mortality rates and increased life expectancy". The level of support for Cuba has gone from strength to strength and it is worth remembering that RMT have been consistent supporters of the campaign.

While there are those in the US who want to continue with a criminal and failed blockade policy, there is no reason why we cannot demand that our government normalises its relations with Cuba and promotes better trade and cultural relations. Already trade unions are passing motions of support for Cuba50 and

planning initiatives for their members to get involved. Over the coming months we will be launching series of campaigning initiatives around Cuba50 where RMT members can make their voices heard.

ACHIEVEMENTS

Over the course of half a century Cuba has developed a unique society. In the fields of health and education Cuba has made massive strides. Cuba holds the 51st position out of 177 countries (2008) on the UN Human Development Index, placing the island in the category of 'High Human Development'.

Cuba has a free health service for all the population. Life expectancy is 78.3 years. In 1959 life expectancy was just 58 years. Cuba has the highest doctor-patient ration in the world: 1 for every 170 patients. This ratio is even smaller in the remote, mountainous areas. Before 1959, 60 per cent of all doctors lived in Havana and large sectors of the poor urban population and practically all of the rural population were not covered by the medical system. Cuba has 9.4 dentists per 10,000 of the population compared with 1959's figures of 1 per 27,052.

There is free education at all levels including university level. Today's literacy rate of 99.8 per cent is one of the highest in the world. Cuba has over 4,000 libraries including 387 public libraries. In 1964 the number of libraries was just 32.

Cuba has also made great progress in developing a more environmentally friendly and sustainable development. In 2006 a World Wildlife Fund report placed Cuba as the only country in the world achieving sustainable development as defined in terms of the Human Development Index and its ecological footprint for the period. Cuba's organopónicos (communal organic allotments) situated in and around its major cities, with 109 in Havana alone, have been praised world wide for being an example of the sustainable cultivation and distribution of vegetables. BBC gardener, Monty Don, described Cuba's efforts at urban agriculture as a "model for the world".

INTERNATIONALISM

Cuba has also become a world leader in humanitarian internationalism. Cuba's medical brigades have sent 36,500 doctors (2008) to work in 81 developing countries around the third world to provide services to populations who otherwise would have no access to medical care. 'Operación Milagro' is a project developed by Cuba which has allowed more than a million patients from Latin America and the Caribbean requiring eye surgery to be operated on in Cuba or in centres run by Cubans in other countries. In culture and sports Cuba has a tremendous record in providing accessible and free services to all. This provision is

why Cuba has achieved so much internationally in this area. In the 2008 Olympics Cuba won 24 medals, ranking 12th overall in the medals table and finishing higher overall than any other country in Latin America and the Caribbean.

All this and much more have been achieved despite the continuing US blockade which for almost 50 years has tried to hinder the progress of the Cuban people's revolution. People often wonder just what more could have been achieved without the aggressive blockade.

Taking part in the Youth May Day Brigade (see ad) and May Day study tours is a great way to experience the celebrations for the 50th anniversary, give practical solidarity and a chance to take part in the May Day parade with 1 million Cubans.

If you want to get involved in Cuba50 start planning now. Contact CSC for more information and together we will make Cuba50 a wonderful celebration which will really show the depth of solidarity there is here in the UK for Cuba. To take part in the Cuba50 celebrations you can:

- Sign up to the Cuba50 mailing list at <http://www.cuba50.org/>
- Organise Cuba50 events locally
- Join the Cuba Solidarity Campaign at www.cuba-solidarity.org.uk
- Affiliate your branch to the Cuba Solidarity Campaign – 0208 800 0155 ■

RMT STANDS UP FOR ITS MEMBERS

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

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

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

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PROTECTING AND PROMOTING OUR MEMBERS' INTERESTS



LIVE WORKING OR DIE FIGHTING HOW THE WORKING CLASS WENT GLOBAL

By Paul Mason, Vintage books, £12.99

This paperback is a must read for every member and activist in the union. It recounts modern industrial struggles and draws parallels with strikes that have taken place in the past.

It is also an antidote to those theorists and commentators that say the working class is dead or that we should accept our lot because modern society is as good as it gets. Paul Mason reminds us that the struggle for decent pay, or safety or respect in the workplace is a ceaseless battle that continues to be fought in every continent and that working men and women will fight back and want more than the crumbs offered from the bosses table.

The book opens in 1904 on a building site for a new Cathedral in Liverpool. Under cover of darkness, a docker is guided to the spot where the foundation stone is to be laid by the King the following morning. He digs a hole and buries a 'workers time capsule', including local labour and left wing newspapers and notes:

"To the finders, hail! We the wage slaves employed on the erection of this cathedral, to be dedicated to the worship of the unemployed Jewish carpenter, hail ye! Within a stone's throw from here, human beings are housed in slums not fit for swine.

This message, written on trust-produced paper with trust-produced ink, is to tell ye how we today are at the mercy of trusts".

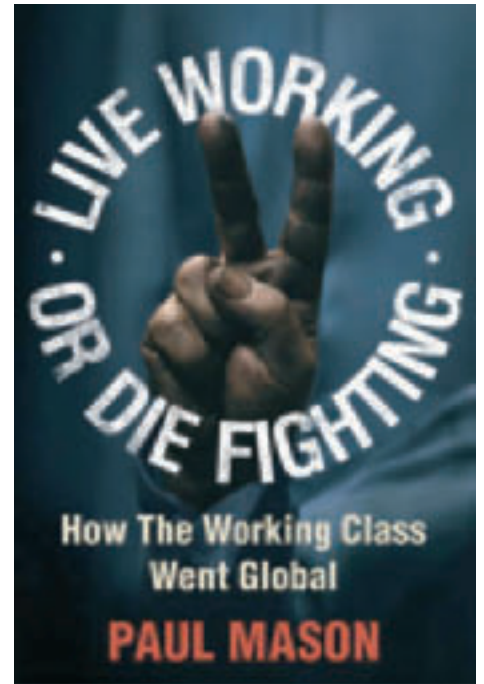
Trusts at the time were the modern day equivalent of multi-nationals. Paul Mason goes on to tell how there was an anti-trust movement just as there is now an anti-globalisation campaign.

The docker was Jim Larkin, later to lead workers in Ireland across the religious divide and unite them in their trade union that, in 1913, secured recognition and better pay during the famous "Dublin lock out".

Paul Mason's book is full of real life stories and dramas of ordinary people doing extraordinary things in the pursuit of dignity and respect and solidarity.

Paul Mason is the economics editor of Newsnight and he had to get special permission from the BBC to write this book. Clearly he is sympathetic to the cause of working people and making it to such dizzy heights with such strong sympathies is good going.

The book deals with workers struggle for safety in China, the movements against globalisation in India as well as the formation of "new unionism" in the docks of London and the railways of the USA amongst other struggles past and present.



Whether you are part of the fight for a living wage for cleaners in London or for safety for workers offshore in the North Sea or, like me, your priority is to get a tea machine installed in your workplace, you need to read this book.

Its title is taken from the slogan adopted by the Lyon silk weavers who in 1831 for a short time, took control of the city. Drawing lessons from the past, Mason's book offers a glimpse of the possible. Read this book - be inspired. ■

Brian Munro



Lynn Burke of Penzance bus branch receives her 25-year membership badge at Penzance bus depot from the branch chairman Dave Grosvenor. Lynn started with National Express and is currently working at Penzance bus station as regulator.

EXETER RAIL BRANCH MOURNS

Exeter Rail branch expresses great sadness on the death of Sister Alison Langton who died in a tragic car crash on November 6 on her way home from the branch meeting after receiving her 10-year RMT membership badge. Alison was a bubbly and outgoing person she will be missed by all.

PEOPLE'S PUBS - Words by Mike Pentelow, Picture by Peter Arkell

DIC PENDERYN

102-103 HIGH STREET, MERTHYR TYDFIL



"A martyr of the Welsh working class" is how Dic Penderyn (1808-1831) is described in a plaque unveiled by then TUC general secretary Len Murray opposite this pub in 1977.

Penderyn was hanged for inflicting stab wounds on a soldier, who was quelling riots against wage cuts. The soldier never died and did not think it was Penderyn who stabbed him.

Yet as one of the leading rioters against wage cuts at a time of increasing food prices the authorities decided to make an example of Penderyn.

A banner showing the rioters soaking white flags in calf's blood is inside the pub. It symbolises the slogan "bara neu waed" (bread or blood) and is one of the origins of the red flag representing working class struggle.

Dic moved to Merthyr Tydfil at the age of 11 when he and his father became ironstone miners. At the age of 20 he was sacked for his outspokenness against inhuman working conditions.

He was fond of his drink and was known as a strong debater on behalf of rights for working people, which sometimes got him

into fights. Once, for example, he thrashed the parish constable (John Thomas) which helped make him a marked man when the authorities were looking for someone to punish for the riots.

Wage cuts were imposed on the miners in 1830, and then by a further 40 per cent in May 1831 when bread prices were rising. A mass meeting of 3,000 workers, some carrying red flags, voted almost unanimously to go on strike.

When bailiffs attempted to seize their property the rising began on May 31 and spread like wildfire.

Soldiers were brought in and based themselves at the Castle Inn (now the Castle Cinema, opposite the Dic Penderyn pub). Dic was part of a delegation that met the employers seeking higher wages. When this failed the crowd attempted to disarm the soldiers. In the fracas 16 soldiers were wounded, but when they fired on the crowd 24 workers were killed, and 70 wounded.

About 300 to 400 armed rebels drove the military out of town, however, and Dic was in charge of blocking the road with boulders to prevent army reinforcements getting through. The workers held the town for four



days and were only defeated when an extra 800 soldiers were brought in.

Dic was among the 28 deemed to be ring leaders who were arrested. The main witness who claimed to have seen him stab the soldier was someone who had a grudge against him after being beaten by him in a fight. The testimony of 13 witnesses (including a chief constable) that Dic was not at the front where the crime took place, was ignored in the verdict.

Even the judge obviously had doubts as he recommended a reprieve of the death penalty, which he was compelled to order. But the Home Secretary, Lord Melbourne, was determined to make an example of him and ruled it out.

There was a short stay of execution, when over 11,000 people (almost the entire population of the town) signed a petition for a reprieve. But on August 13 he was publicly hanged in Cardiff.

After his death the town became one of the strongest centres of Chartism in Wales.

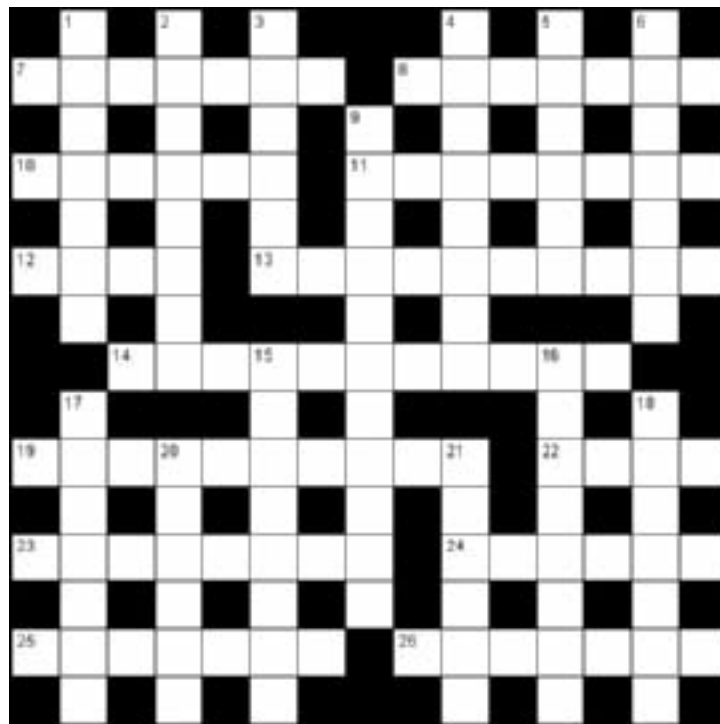




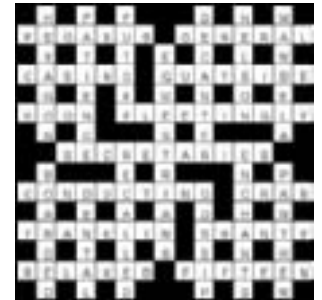
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RMT £25 PRIZE CROSSWORD

No. 51. Set by Elk



Last month's solution...



The winner of prize crossword no. 50 is Alan Worth, Dorchester.

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

Winner and solution in next issue.

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Menorca. Villas and apartments available in most resorts. For brochure phone Nigel: 08702 402669
www.menorcavillaholidays.co.uk

Indian Wells Kissimmee villas. 10% discount on rates for RMT members. Beautiful 3 bedroom 2 bathroom villa in Florida 5 minutes drive from Disney. Exceptionally central location, own pool with screen porch and overlooking a lake. Will sleep 8 and cot facilities are available. 01202 427854.
www.indianwellskissimmeevillas.co.uk

ACROSS

- 7 Class of element -- used in headlamps (7)
- 8 Went back, as hairline (7)
- 10 Participant in sport or game (6)
- 11 Building away from the main one -- might contain toilet (8)
- 12 Baked mixture of flour, sugar, eggs etc (4)
- 13 Very big retail outlet (10)
- 14 Annual commemoration (11)
- 19 Retired folk (10)
- 22 Lake, particularly in Cumbria (4)
- 23 Grapes are grown here... (8)
- 24 ...and their product kept here (6)
- 25 Small variety of falcon (7)
- 26 Indicated; sharp (7)

DOWN

- 1 Iron road (7)
- 2 Socialist former MR, honorary RMT member (4,4)
- 3 Striped creatures (6)
- 4 False teeth (8)
- 5 Rising; disgust (6)
- 6 Pudding (7)
- 9 Understands (11)
- 15 On its own, away from others (8)
- 16 Walking, or talking nonsense (8)
- 17 Game or round that determines overall winner (7)
- 18 Not looked forward to (7)
- 20 Afternoon snooze (6) 21 Our 1 should be in the public one (6)

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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