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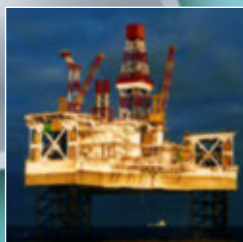
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WORKERS PAGE 12**



www.rmt.org.uk

NATIONAL UNION OF RAIL, MARITIME & TRANSPORT WORKERS

Unity House, 39 Chalton Street, London NW1 1JD



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CREDIT UNION

EDITORIAL

RMTv GOES LIVE



I am always keen to keep members in all grades informed of developments in their industry and in the union.

That is why I am proud to announce that RMT's very own TV station has gone live on the web.

RMT members will be able to go to the website www.rmtv.org.uk to receive news and views of what is going on.

RMTv will seek to highlight disputes like the ones at train operating companies First Capital Connect and National Express East Anglia where members voted overwhelmingly for strike action against planned job cuts and ticket office closures.

These companies are simply seeking to slash jobs in order to maintain profits and dividends.

National Express paid out more than £40 million to shareholders in the six months up to June 2008 and has just raised ticket prices by six per cent yet now it wants to cut platform, cleaning, restaurant-car, retail, revenue-protection and call-centre staff.

Wilts and Dorset bus company have also launched an attack on members' pensions, which are only deferred wages as far as RMT is concerned.

Employers are clearly using the economic crisis to attack jobs, wages and conditions and to generally make staff pay for the turmoil and not the shareholders. Yet these attacks can be stopped if transport workers stand together.

RMT members recently lobbied Network Rail headquarters to demand an end to cuts in vital engineering work that threaten to undermine railway safety and cost 1,000 jobs.

And the fight has only just begun to stop London Underground and TfL making Tube staff pay for a crisis caused by bankers and government ministers more concerned with privatising services than the interests of working people.

Yet, it is encouraging that after months of negotiations led by Jake Molloy and his team, RMT has secured protection for offshore workers against

the dreaded Not Required Back policy.

This is a practice where a company manager could instruct the employer that any contract worker is not required back, no reasons given, no justification, just a simple - 'don't send him back'.

For over a decade OILC and subsequently RMT following the merger has fought to have the scourge of NRB removed and now Oil and Gas UK has agreed new guidelines prior to the removal of an individual from an offshore installation.

On the political front, RMT has signed up to the People's Charter. Details of the charter, outlined inside explain why the government is wrong to spend billion of pounds of our money bailing the banks and big business.

The Charter sets out what must be done to get out of this crisis and put people before the interests of bankers and speculators.

This economic crisis is resulting in a crisis of political representation. None of the major political parties seem to understand what people are experiencing and how disillusioned with mainstream politicians they now feel.

That is why the RMT executive unanimously backed the creation of a new progressive EU-critical alliance No2EU - Yes to Democracy to stand in the euro elections on June 4, 2009.

If the Lisbon Treaty came into force it would enshrine right wing, Thatcherite economics as constitutional goals and enforce the privatisation of our public services at a time when these policies have clearly failed.

European Court of Justice rulings also attack basic trade union rights even more than the Tory laws we already have in the UK. That is why RMT supports giving a voice to the millions of workers to oppose to these developments. Find out more at www.no2eu.com.

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



KEEP METRO PUBLIC TAKES CAMPAIGN TO LONDON

Campaigners to keep Tyne and Wear Metro in the public sector stepped up their campaign last month with a London lobby of the HSBC rail business awards outside the upmarket Grosvenor House Hotel in Park Lane.

The Metro was nominated for three awards, yet the Tyne and Wear passenger transport executive – Nexus – has lined up three private-sector bidders to compete for the right to exploit its operations and some infrastructure.

This is in spite of the fact that 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. Nexus says that its figures so far this year are even better, with 96.72 per cent of trains run on time. The network also carried more than 40 million passengers for the first time in 16 years.

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

The Government has agreed

to provide £300 million for the “re-invigoration” of the Tyne and Wear Metro, all of which will come from the public purse. Some of this would end up being siphoned off in dividends to shareholders if the service was in private hands.

Campaigners distributed leaflets outlining their case to keep the Metro out of the hands of the profiteers. The leaflet

asked: “If the Tyne and Wear Metro is so successful, why privatise it?” It went on to show the lack of logic in the fact that Nexus had put the case to keep Metro integrated, yet was inviting private-sector bids to operate passenger services and maintain infrastructure.

RMT regional organiser Stan Herschel told RMT News: “Nexus and the government are

playing Russian roulette with the future of our Metro, yet there is no earthly reason for the bidding process to take place at all.

“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,” he said. ■

TUBE WORKERS DEMONSTRATE AGAINST JOB CUTS

Nearly 10,000 members across London Underground and Transport for London are being balloted for strike action in two separate disputes centred on jobs and pay.

The ballot, which closes on April 8, was launched as it emerged that the number of jobs under threat across the Tube and TfL could reach as many as 3,000.

RMT is balloting all members at LUL, including former Metronet staff in the separate dispute at TfL.

On London Underground, bosses are threatening to tear up an agreement aimed at

safeguarding jobs, and has refused to rule out compulsory redundancies.

LUL has also refused to budge from an unacceptable five-year pay offer that gives no real-terms increase for four years, and which could even see pay cut, and there have been so many complaints of breaches of disciplinary and attendance procedures they appear co-ordinated.

TfL is also threatening compulsory redundancies as part of a £2.4 billion cuts package, and has so far failed to table any pay offer at all.

“London Underground seems to think that observing

agreements is optional, and its plan to cut jobs is simply unacceptable,” RMT general secretary Bob Crow said.

“After three months of stonewalling LUL has also tabled what is at best a five-year pay freeze which it knows full well could never be accepted, and its managers appear to have been given the nod to unleash a fresh round of bullying.

“LUL’s own ‘Valuing Time’ study acknowledges that staff productivity is at an all-time high, with passenger numbers up to record-breaking levels of four million a day,” he said. ■

RMT REVEALS SCALE OF DEFERRED RAIL WORKS

Almost 200 locations where essential rail engineering works have been deferred by Network Rail from its 2009-10 schedule have been identified by RMT.

The union published lists from three of NR's regions, passed to the union by whistleblowers concerned at the safety and service implications of postponing works to replace rails, sleepers and ballast in order to save money.

The lists name locations in the Southern, Western and

London to Crewe regions which have had work deferred, despite it having already been agreed and placed with contractors last year – and are only a part of the 28 per cent of work that NR has postponed.

RMT expects to receive details from other regions, including Scotland and the north of England, and estimates that over 1,000 railway engineering jobs are under threat thanks to the deferrals.

"Network Rail cannot seriously expect us to believe

that this work is being deferred to take advantage of more efficient but unknown future methods of delivery when the jobs being cut had already been placed with contractors," RMT general secretary Bob Crow said.

Network Rail's actions bring into question what has changed to overturn the original decision that work should take place at the 200 locations in the coming year.

Bob Crow added: "The simple fact is that Network Rail is under massive pressure to

save money, but it is shocking that it is prepared to defer essential works on this scale and cut the frequency of track inspections and signals maintenance in order to do so.

"Gordon Brown has said that it is committed to using investment in public works to help our economy ride out the recession, but unless he intervenes to reverse these cuts he will be allowing infrastructure safety standards to be undermined and subsidising redundancies instead." ■

RMT ACTIVIST REINSTATED AFTER "BRUTAL" SACKING

Former RMT EC member and train driver Derrick Marr (right) is back at work following negotiations in the wake of an important victory at an employment tribunal.

Derrick was dismissed earlier this year by National Express East Anglia – three weeks after returning to work – following his second three-year stint on RMT's governing council of executives.

The company claimed he had effectively resigned in 2005 after failing a medical upon his return, but John Hendy QC, representing Derrick, argued that he was in employment in 2009 and had in fact been dismissed for his high-profile union activities.

After hearing both sides the tribunal said the company had adopted a "brutal approach" with the dismissal, and had displayed no sympathy towards Derrick Marr's medical conditions, which include diabetes and high blood pressure.

The tribunal awarded Derrick "interim relief", under which the company was obliged to continue his contract pending the outcome of a full tribunal hearing. Interim relief is awarded only when the tribunal believes the claimant has a very strong case for unfair dismissal.

After the tribunal's findings were announced the company chose not to wait for a full tribunal and Derrick's

unconditional return to work was negotiated.

Richard Arthur, from Thompsons solicitors, the firm that dealt with the case, said that the verdict was important because: "The tribunal found that the dismissal was 'brutal' and that there was a good chance that it was because of his trade union activity. It's rare for a tribunal to be won on grounds like these but the facts were very stark."

RMT general secretary Bob Crow said that the ruling pulled apart the pretexts that National Express put forward for sacking Del Marr. "It was quite clear that he was dismissed because he has been an effective trade union rep for many years, and



we are pleased that the company has done the decent thing and re-instated him unconditionally."

Happy to finally be back at work Del added: "I'm thankful for the tremendous support I had both from the union and also from the other drivers at Southend Victoria depot". ■



NATIONAL EXPRESS CUTS

The reality

One family is facing the harsh reality of what the drive to protect profits means at National Express RMT.

Karen James (a local rep) and her mother Ruth are both victims of the company's job cuts which leave all platforms on the Southend Victoria area without staff. Meanwhile, Karen's Dad Trevor has also seen his ticket office supervisor job go.

South East Essex Branch members (pictured from left to right) Derrick Marr, Ruth James, Karen James and Chris Lewis attended Billericay station and distributed approximately 1,800 leaflets and postcards to National Express East Anglia (NXEA) Managing Director Andrew Chivers protesting against the job cuts.

Karen and Ruth were joined by South East Essex branch committee members Derrick Marr (secretary) and Chris Lewis (auditor) and all four received friendly and favourable responses from the morning

peak commuters at Billericay.

A similar exercise carried out recently at Liverpool Street saw 470 postcards signed and returned by disgruntled NXEA

customers and the company subsequently threatening a legal redress over the affect of the postcards.

RMT members on NXEA

recently voted for strike action over the job cuts and the companies growing use of agency and contract labour (see page 11). ■



NATIONAL EXPRESS PUTS PROFITS FIRST

RMT demands dividend freeze to protect jobs and services

RMT declared that plans by the National Express group to cut rail jobs and services – despite a 28 per cent rise in UK rail profits and a nearly £60 million 2008 dividend payout – were an insult to passengers and transport workers alike.

As National Express posted pre-tax 2008 UK rail profits of £81.3 million, up from £63.3 million in 2007, and nearly £60 million in dividends in 2008, up nearly £6 million on

2007, RMT demanded a complete freeze on dividend payments to protect jobs and services.

National Express has made big profits on the back of massive fares increases, public subsidy and overcrowding. "In the light of the money they have made, plans to cut jobs and pare services to the bone are an insult and a disgrace," RMT general secretary Bob Crow said.

The union affirmed that it

will resist job cuts, and called for no dividends to be paid by National Express to shareholders while there is a threat to cut jobs and services. Talk about maintaining profitability through "cost initiatives" and "revenue support" was dismissed as a smokescreen for cutting jobs and services and taking even more public money.

"Even in the good times rail franchising has been a massive drain on the rail industry, but

in the recession it is threatening to do untold harm to the very fabric of the network.

"What is supposed be a public service has become a crude mechanism for converting huge sums of passengers' and taxpayers' money into profits, and it is time to bring rail operations back into the public sector where they belong," Bob Crow said. ■

FINAL GUIDANCE ON SEAFARERS EARNINGS DEDUCTIONS (SED)

The Inland Revenue has just published their final Guidance Notes on eligibility for Seafarers Earnings Deductions.

This now updates SED entitlement taking into account the new rules that are being implemented by the Inland Revenue. RMT has been working

alongside Nautilus UK and the Chamber of Shipping to try and reduce the negative impact on our members who are employed within the offshore sector of the UK Shipping Industry.

The full impact of the regulations are still being digested but it is clear that,

despite some concessions, certain members employed in the offshore industry are still likely to be adversely affected. The revised Guidance will apply for the financial year of 2008/09.

The Guidelines were meant to be published in December but

have been considerably delayed. Guidance Notes, which explain the changes that have been made regarding classification of workplaces and whether or not they are eligible for SED, should now be available on the Inland Revenue website. ■

RETAIL STAFF AT C2C TAKE STRIKE ACTION

More than 130 members of Britain's two biggest rail unions working in retail grades for train operator c2c took strike action for 24 hours in early March after intensive talks failed to resolve a dispute over holiday entitlement.

RMT and TSSA members took action in a dispute that

centres on a company holiday policy that includes paying staff only for bank holidays they work.

"We called off a strike two weeks ago to allow further talks, but despite hours of discussions there has been no satisfactory movement from the company and we have no alternative but to reinstate

strike action," RMT general secretary Bob Crow said.

"Our members are quite clear that they want an unequivocal commitment to 28 days' paid leave, and not ever-more complex ways of avoiding it," Mr Crow added.

TSSA general secretary Gerry Doherty said that it beggared belief that National

Express are refusing bank holiday pay to staff after announcing profits of £194 million for last year.

"National Express pays bank holidays at its three other franchises-but not at c2c. It is unfair and they should admit that fact," Gerry Doherty said. ■



A PEOPLE'S CHARTER FOR CHANGE

Campaign to build one million signatures

RMT-supported initiative calling for Britain's economy to be brought under democratic control

Britain is in the grip of an economic crisis. So is the world. Every time there is a slump the politicians and financiers seem mystified as to how the system has failed. But boom and bust is the way it works. It's not stable.

When the economy grows, banks, corporations and speculators, driven only by greed, gamble other people's money in their global casino. When they lose confidence in their profit making schemes and panic, the bubble bursts and we pay the price.

Redundancies throw hundreds of thousands on to the dole. Savings are lost. Homes are repossessed. Pensions lose value. Workers are put on short time. Wages and conditions are cut. Public services are slashed.

The Government is spending billions of pounds of taxpayers' money bailing the banks and big business out of their crisis. The People's Charter says that it's not right. It sets out what must be done to get out of this crisis and put the people first, before the interests of bankers

and speculators.

The aims of the Charter are to create a movement with over one million people in Britain signing up to 6 key principles: A Fairer Economy for a Fairer Britain; More and better Jobs; Decent Homes for All; Save and Improve Public Services; For a Fair and Just Britain; For a Future Without War.

Other key elements of the People's Charter include a commitment to justice and fairness, a demand to the end of the wars that has seen billions of pounds wasted and hundreds of thousands of lives lost. The People's Charter is also clear that public sector services should remain in the public sector and that public services that have in the past been hived off to the highest bidder should

be brought back into public ownership.

The Charter was launched with the support of 12 trade unions, MPs and high profile people in the public eye, or in their own fields, including Doreen Lawrence, Linton Kwesi Johnson, Professor Keith Ewing, Saffron Burrows, Peter Tatchell, John Hendy QC, Imran Khan (solicitor), Tony Benn, Ken Loach, Max Stafford-Clark and Mark Steel.

Early Day Motion 942 welcoming the forthcoming launch of the People's Charter has been tabled in the House of Commons by Charter co-founder John McDonnell MP.

Mr McDonnell said: "The office is already being inundated with calls and requests. People want to see a real alternative

Picture by Stefano Cagnoni



SIX POINTS FOR DEMOCRATIC CHANGE

- A Fairer Economy for a Fairer Britain
- More and better Jobs
- Decent Homes for All
- Save and Improve Public Services
- For a Fair and Just Britain
- For a Future Without War

and real change. Even before its launch there is real enthusiasm and support growing for a genuinely popular campaign to demand that the government puts people first”.

RMT general secretary Bob Crow, one of the principal founders of The Charter, said: “People up and down this country are facing the harshest set of economic conditions for over 100 years.

“They are losing their jobs and their homes, while at the same time the bankers that brought this country to its knees are being guaranteed their livelihoods, their bonuses and their half a million pound pensions.

“The People’s Charter for Change is a six point progressive programme of policies that offers a clear alternative to the failed programme of recent years” he said.

RMT not only support The People’s Charter for Change, but will be actively campaigning up and down the country to get as many signatures as possible to make sure the government understand the strength of feeling across Britain today.

RMT members can sign up to the charter and find out more information on the campaign by going to <http://www.thepeoplescharter.com>

Parliamentary column



DEFEND RAIL SERVICES

“Take the National Express when your life’s in a mess” sang the Divine Comedy. Well it would appear that far from being able to sort out a mess National Express East Anglia, are the ones making one. I have battled long and hard over the years for better services between Norwich and London. The fight began with Anglia Railways then it changed to One Railway and now National Express East Anglia.

It seems that whatever they are called or whoever has the franchise we have had delayed trains, passenger complaints, staffing issues and failure to fund proper upgrading of the railways. Now we are threatened with massive job cuts and the loss of the restaurant car. Frankly, nobody in Norwich is ever happy with the service.

This culminated in me holding the “Norfolk MPs One Railway Inquiry” in 2006. I took submissions of evidence from the public so that people’s concerns over the service were on record. I then organised a public meeting in the style of a select committee interviewing panel.

The panel consisted of a local Lib Dem MP and a local Conservative MP and me. We were able to candidly question the Managing Director and Head of Corporate Affairs from One Railway and the Route Director from Network Rail. The inquiry was useful for railway staff, the public and the MPs. The operator was able to explain the conditions they are working under and the difficulties they face and we were able to address the submissions we had had from the public and staff. As a result of the inquiry major works to improve services were brought

forward from 2011 to 2009.

To be fair to the operator they are of course fighting the years of underinvestment by successive Tory governments which saw our railway system run into the ground. There is now a long term investment programme partnered with Network Rail to upgrade the Norwich to London line and improve carriage stock.

However things took a turn for the worse in late 2008 when it became apparent National Express East Anglia was planning to massively downsize their operation putting 300 jobs at risk. I was not about to let this happen without a fight. I joined forces with the RMT and passenger groups to mount a campaign to save the jobs in Norwich and to save the jobs on the restaurant car. I use the service regularly myself and I know the restaurant car staff very well – they run a fantastic and well used operation.

I was pleased to receive a round of applause from the staff the day after I had been pictured in the paper with Bob Crow leafleting the public in Liverpool Street asking them to get behind the campaign to save the jobs – if you’re reading this maybe a free meal next time?

I am due to lead a delegation of MPs to see Transport Secretary Geoff Hoon in March. Unfortunately the Government has so far claimed it is not able to interfere. The privatisation model which has led to a series of under funded regional monopolies has been a disaster for the railway network.

Ian Gibson
MP for Norwich North

LONDON MIDLAND CONDUCTORS STRIKE

Safety lapses by management to run trains

Around 100 RMT train conductors working at London Midland depots at Bletchley, Northampton and Watford held two 24-hour strikes this month after the company failed to settle a long-running dispute over Sunday working.

The conductors voted overwhelmingly for action over attempts to pressure staff into working Sundays.

The decision to strike followed the company's failure to honour a long-standing agreement that former Silverlink staff can opt out of working on Sundays and should receive

enhanced payments for working into rest days. The ballots, involving depots at Bletchley, Northampton and Watford, saw votes returned by a margin of eight to one for action.

RMT is seeking an urgent investigation into London Midland by the railways inspectorate after receiving reports of serious safety lapses by managers undertaking striking conductors' duties.

Passengers were put at risk of serious injury when a manager put in charge of a 12-car commuter train on 13 March opened doors on all twelve

carriages when it stopped at an eight-car platform at Bletchley during the morning peak. The union understands that the stand-in manager failed to follow the normal procedure of isolating the doors of the rear four carriages to ensure that they did not open, exposing commuters to the danger of falling onto the track.

In a separate incident, understood to have taken place in March managers undergoing refresher training on a train out of Euston left the real conductor behind and the train ran without a conductor as far as

Watford.

RMT called on the railways inspectorate to investigate the competency of managers undertaking conductors' duties as well as the procedures followed by the company.

RMT general secretary Bob Crow said: "Instead of negotiating sensibly the company seems hell-bent on confrontation and is even intimidating reluctant managers into covering the conductors' safety critical work."

A further two day strike is planned for the 29 and 30 March. ■



STRIKE VOTES ON TWO COMMUTER LINES

United action to defend jobs

RMT members at two major commuter train-operating companies voted overwhelmingly for strike action to defend jobs this month.

RMT members at First Capital Connect voted by more than three to one to strike, and at National Express East Anglia by more than two to one, after the employers refused to provide unequivocal assurances that there would be no compulsory redundancies.

In a third ballot over jobs – at South West Trains – where bosses suspended a pay rise and where managers are known to have told staff that those who voted for action would get less redundancy pay, members voted narrowly against strike action.

“Our members at National Express East Anglia and First Capital Connect have struck a blow against selfish employers who are seeking to slash jobs solely in order to maintain profits and dividends,” RMT general secretary Bob Crow said.

As RMT News goes to press the union’s executive was due to meet to decide on the course of action members will take if

the employers fail to withdraw their plans to cut services.

Commenting on the narrow vote against strike action at South West Trains Bob Crow said: “The General Grades Committee and I would like to restate this union’s policy of opposition to the redundancies in SWT in any form and we will now have to explore possible legal and political avenues in our campaign to defend jobs.”

NATIONAL EXPRESS EAST ANGLIA

National Express paid out more than £40 million to its shareholders in the six months up to June 2008 and raised ticket prices by six per cent in January.

Its “business reorganisation” includes plans to cut more than 300 jobs, including platform, cleaning, restaurant-car, retail, revenue-protection and call-centre staff. The plan includes displacing permanent rail staff with casual contract and agency staff, and the company already has 175 agency workers working on barriers.

The company failed to withdraw its business-reorganisation plans, to assure

the union that there would be no compulsory redundancies or to negotiate on the issue of contract and agency labour.

FIRST CAPITAL CONNECT

First Capital Connect proposes to reduce the opening hours of well over 40 ticket offices across its network by 800 hours a week, despite increasing fares by up to nine per cent in January and its parent group paying £55.5 million to shareholders in the six months up to September 2008.

RMT asked First Capital Connect to withdraw its proposals for staffing in the Customer Services Department and for an assurance that there will be no job cuts or compulsory redundancies. The company has not withdrawn its proposals and has given no unequivocal guarantee that there will be no compulsory redundancies.

SOUTH WEST TRAINS

Despite a 33 per cent dividend increase for Stagecoach shareholders, its subsidiary South West Trains has announced a total of 660 job losses – well over ten per cent

of its workforce – including ticket-office, cleaning, platform, revenue-protection, information and clerical staff.

Despite increasing ticket prices by a minimum of six per cent, SWT’s cuts would lead to some stations being totally unstaffed and extensive understaffing.

The company has failed to provide an assurance that there will be no compulsory redundancies.

“The job losses being imposed to protect the short-term, selfish interests of the parasites running our railways threaten to do lasting damage. Our reps are telling us that trained and experienced rail workers are being bullied and cajoled into leaving for fear of worse terms if they are forced out, and that some operators are turning increasingly to using low-paid casual agency staff,” Bob said.

There are also a number of other forthcoming ballots due to take place: At South Eastern over jobs, safety and imposed conditions; East Midlands Trains over job cuts and at Southern Railway over lone working and pay cuts. ■



OIL WORKERS WIN PROTECTION

RMT hails the removal of NRB

Since the early days of oil and gas exploration off British shores there has been a shadow hanging over every worker employed in the industry – the shadow of NRB, (Not Required Back).

This is a practice where an oil company manager can tell the employer of a contract worker that their employee is not required back on their respective installation. No reasons given, no justification for the decision, just a simple – “don’t send him back!”

What NRB has meant is that for nearly 30 years, contract workers have been exposed to draconian practices where reporting safety concerns could potentially lead to termination of employment.

Last month that shadow was removed as a result of the concerted efforts of OILC/RMT. Now, new guidelines issued by industry body Oil and Gas UK require bosses to give clear reasons for removing contractors from sites.

For over a decade OILC, as an independent trade union, and subsequently RMT’s offshore branch, has fought to have the scourge of NRB removed. Oil workers have battled through employment tribunals

on to employment appeals and even to the highest court in Scotland, the Court of Session.

The legal route delivered to some extent, ensuring that some workers were compensated for the injustice brought on them.

This brought about a change in the approach of contract companies who would often redeploy workers rather than dismiss them.

But more needed to be done, and at the historical OILC AGM in October 2007 – which led to the merger of OILC and RMT – a strategy was agreed which would “name and shame” oil companies that continued to use NRB.

The first exposé was of Danish outfit Maersk Oil after three members were NRB’d for raising safety issues. This was followed

by 4 other major oil companies being exposed for similar practices.

The union’s strategy was to target the oil businesses reputation. By exposing their unjust actions RNT hoped to force the industry to change. And after six months of negotiation and debate, RMT secured the introduction of a process which is set to provide protections to workers never previously imagined.

RMT regional organiser Jake Molloy said: “We welcome the introduction of this guidance and believe it can deliver on several fronts.

“From industry it certainly delivers the message that NRB is no longer tolerable in this day and age.

“This means the guidance should act as a real deterrent to bad practice on the part of individual managers.

“We hope it will encourage greater involvement of workers in the safety agenda, as any perceived fears about NRB should be dispelled. Finally, in the event of a dispute about the removal of a worker, the process delivers a degree of fairness and natural justice which was previously absent,” he said. ■





WHY I JOINED THE RMT

by Steve Eagle

The demonstration at the beginning of February was a special day for the London taxi trade. More than eight thousand drivers took to the streets of central London and blockaded Trafalgar Square.

Not only will new legislation mean that minicabs (private hire vehicles) will be able to form ranks – ostensibly plying for hire in the West End at night – plans are also afoot to introduce this unlawful practice elsewhere in London.

On approaching Trafalgar Square I was absolutely delighted to see the RMT banner promoting the newly formed London taxi section, as were many of my colleagues. For too many years the taxi trade has taken it on the chin from the Public Carriage Office and the local authorities in London.

For too long we have seen the erosion of our taxi work at night by minicab drivers who

intimidate legitimate hackney carriage drivers by trying to "muscle out" the taxi trade and form no go areas.

Not only have the authorities failed to protect the taxi driver from the worst abuses of touting by turning a blind eye to this, they persecute us by handing out parking tickets where we have had to stop at cash points or otherwise not get paid. Also, taxi drivers are penalised by London boroughs should they park for a moment to use the toilet. This is a situation that cannot go on.

The taxi trade in London is almost on its knees and it may

take many years of hard work and dedication to try and undo the damage that has been done. That is why I have joined the RMT, as I know that the union will not stand for this abuse against its members.

The London taxi service has been around for over three hundred years: the first licences were granted by Oliver Cromwell in 1643.

I have no doubt that with the support of the RMT and the formation of a new taxi trade branch in London that the addressing of grievances will be paramount. There is already a keen interest from my colleagues to join a union that has a track record of promoting the well being of its members in whatever transport trade group.



RMT SUPPORTS TAXI DRIVERS' ACTION AGAINST PRIVATE-HIRE RANKS

RMT taxi drivers joined a demonstration last month in Trafalgar Square organised by the Licensed Taxi Drivers' Association and the London Cab Drivers' Club.

The protest was against the Public Carriage Office – the taxi driver's licensing authority – and Westminster City Council for colluding to undermine licensed taxi trade with the creation of a rank for private-hire vehicles in London's west end.

The move blurs the distinction between licensed hackney carriages – taxis which ply for trade lawfully on the streets – and private-hire vehicles which break the law by touting for fares that have not been pre-booked.

"Allowing private-hire ranks is a flagrant breach of the hackney carriage laws and is an attempt to undermine the licensed taxi trade," RMT regional organiser Brian Whitehead told RMT News.

"It is an attempt at legalising touting and if the PCO and Westminster council get away with it, other PHV ranks will follow as surely as night follows day, threatening the licensed taxi trade everywhere," Mr Whitehead said. ■



LESS DIVIDENDS, LOWER FARES

Government plans to reject franchises' attempts to prevent a cut in regulated rail fares were welcomed by RMT last month



The current rail fares pricing formula set by the government in 2004 – at the train operators' request – have meant that regulated fares have risen one percent ahead of inflation each year. However, interest rate cuts designed to stem the current recession could bring down the RPI figure to less than minus one per cent, triggering an automatic cut in regulated fares.

The prospect of fares cuts is horrifying franchise holders who say they can't afford a loss of revenue. The RMT argued last month that any shortfall should be paid for by a freeze in shareholder dividends, and not by cuts in services and jobs.

RMT also urged ministers to ensure that operators do not impose further massive hikes in unregulated fares.

The union has published research which indicates that rail passenger numbers could fall for up to three years after the recession bottoms out. The research looked at the UK economy and the impact it has on rail passenger use.

The paper looked back at the effect of previous recessions on passenger use in the rail industry, and looked ahead to the impact that the current recession might have upon the privatised rail industry.

Examining data for the last twenty-one years (1987-2008), RMT found some correlation between the rates of growth in UK GDP and in rail passenger use. For example:

- At the height of the 'Lawson boom', rail passenger growth was over 8% – the highest rate in the period under study
- When the economy went into recession in the early 1990s, rail passenger use also declined
- Rail passenger use has grown consistently every year since the mid-1990s, coinciding with the period of sustained GDP growth under the final Major years and New Labour.

The research explained how GDP growth has begun to trail off – and there are fears that passenger growth, which has

slowed in the last year, may descend into negative growth in 2009. Such concerns are consistent with the early 1990s downturn when the economy reached its lowest point in 1991/92; the corresponding low point in rail passenger use did not come until 1994/95.

RMT believes that this raises serious questions about the viability of the Department for Transport's (DfT) franchise model in a period of recession.

Most rail franchises are expected to receive either lower subsidies in 2008/09 or to pay higher premiums to the DfT.

The union fears that rail companies will come forward with unpalatable solutions such as:

- attempting to renegotiate franchise agreements, including cutting services on less profitable routes.
- Cutting staff numbers to reduce overhead costs, which would increase unemployment and could lead to worse services and less passenger safety
- Raising rail fares, which could drive passengers from the rail into private transport

All of those options would jeopardise a range of public policy objectives on the railways, including:

- Modal shift from road to rail to reduce carbon emissions
- Social exclusion – increased rail fares will drive poorer farepayers with no alternative private transport options from the railways
- Increasing employment towards a target of 80%
- Improving passenger safety at rail stations and reducing staff assaults

RMT also welcomed a Commons motion last month, signed by three dozen MPs, urging the government to prevent train operators compensating for a fall in fares through cuts in jibs and services.

The motion adds that operators not prepared to absorb a decrease in fares and protect

jobs and services through a freeze in dividends should relinquish their franchises and the rail services should be returned to the public sector.

RMT general secretary Bob Crow said: "It is only right that operators that have made obscene sums of money out of the railways should not to be allowed to tear up their contracts simply to maintain dividend payments to shareholders".

"But by the same token they must be told not to cut jobs and services either – and RMT is already balloting members in several franchises to beat off unacceptable cuts by operators who can see no further than

their shareholders' bank statements.

"We are witnessing the death throes of a franchising system that has proved itself incapable of delivering the railway our economy and environment need – and it would be irresponsible beyond words to allow them to damage the fabric of our rail network as they die.

"What is needed is a dividend freeze, and if the private operators cannot run our railways in the interests of passengers, the economy and the environment the sooner they hand back the keys and allow them to be run in the public sector again the better." ■

EARLY DAY MOTION 700 – RAIL FARES

**TABLED BY JOHN MCDONNELL ON
FEBRUARY 4, AND SIGNED BY 35 OTHERS
BY 25 FEBRUARY**

That this House notes the research undertaken by the Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers Union which demonstrates that the big five transport groups, Arriva, First Group, National Express, Go-ahead and Stagecoach posted increases in dividend payments of between 10 and 33 per cent in 2008; further notes with concern that despite these high profits, passengers endured hikes of six per cent on regulated fares and up to 11 per cent on unregulated fares at the start of 2009; is concerned that this institutionalised profiteering is in part due to regulated fares being linked to a formula where the January increase is based on the preceding July's retail price index (RPI), plus one per cent; further notes, however, that the severe recession means the RPI is likely to fall below zero in July 2009, meaning that passengers will receive a welcome reprieve in fare prices; in these circumstances, calls on the Government to ensure that the train companies do not cut services or make redundancies but instead shoulder the cost of the decrease in fares through a freeze in their dividends; and believes that if they are not prepared to freeze their dividends and protect services and jobs they should relinquish their franchises and rail services should be returned to the public sector.



VENEZUELA: A DECADE OF PROGRESS

Election victory spurs formation of
Scottish Campaign Committee

A decisive election victory for the newly formed Pro Chavez United Socialist Party of Venezuela (PSUV) led RMT in Scotland to support the launch of a Scottish Venezuelan Campaign Committee



The elections were conducted by the state funded Venezuelan National Electoral Council (CNE) whose remit is to organise and run the elections within the country.

Women were at the forefront of the election process. The CNE's President and Vice-President are both women and women comprised 50 per cent of the nominations – in accordance with legislation – which means that based on a list system 50 per cent of the candidates elected will be women.

Over 2.5m Venezuelans voted in the selection process just to endorse the nominees as candidates. Some 6,000 candidates from 285 political organisations stood for office.

All concerned, including the 150 international observers from Europe, Asia, Africa, North & South America, concluded that the election processes, inclusive of the electronic voting system, was technically robust, professional, democratic and allowed for full participation by the Venezuelan people.

It is not hard to understand why Chavez's policies are vote winners. The banks, electricity, cement and steel industries have been nationalised. His National Poverty Programme, adopted in April 2008, is set to renovate the overcrowded shanty towns where most people live. A major expansion of his public house building programme is well under way.

Also, millions of people now have free access to a doctor for the first time through new healthcare initiatives. Child malnutrition has fallen from over 20 per cent in 1998 to

around 4 per cent today. 98 per cent of Venezuelans now eat three times per day thanks to Chavez's Government programme including subsidised supermarkets and the provision of free school meals for children.

Education has also been at the forefront of Chavez's programme. Over 1.5 million Venezuelans learnt to read and write in five years. Illiteracy has been eradicated to UNESCO standards.

These social, cultural, political and economic advances in such a short period of time have spurred the RMT in Scotland to support and encourage the development of the Scottish Venezuelan Campaign Committee.

In doing so Phil McGarry, RMT Regional Organiser, has fulfilled a commitment he gave whilst President of the STUC during 2007/2008.

At the Congress in April 2008, during his Presidential address, Phil said he "would be contacting like-minded people to set up a Scottish Venezuelan Campaign Committee".

That initiative has now been taken forward and at a meeting at the end of last year a "steering committee" was appointed comprising of nine representatives from the various trade union affiliates.

Two meetings of the steering committee have taken place to examine constitutional issues and it is intended that an inaugural AGM will be held on or around 29 March 2009.

Keynote invited speakers include Doctor Samuel Moncada the Venezuelan Ambassador, Brian Wilson from the Scottish

Venezuelan Society, a representative from the National Venezuelan Information Centre in London, Jon Cruddas MP the Secretary of the Labour Friends of Venezuela. Thereafter a formal committee will be elected and a final Constitution approved.

The organisation, once formally established, will raise awareness of Venezuela's progressive policies, build solidarity links and promote social and economic progress and democratic participation, but most of all set the record straight over misinformation from the media.

Phil McGarry told RMT News: "I was privileged to visit Venezuela in March 2008 as a representative of the Scottish wing of the British Peace Council.

"The AGM of the World Peace Council had its Congress there and I took the opportunity to see for myself the social progress made under Hugo Chavez's leadership".

He added that, "I was particularly impressed by the initiative taken by Dr Richard Holloway, Chief Executive of the Scottish Arts Council, to establish a Youth Orchestra from the deprived areas of Raploch in Stirling, drawing from the experience of Sistema's Youth Orchestra from Venezuela."

He concluded: "The achievements in Venezuela have shown that it is possible, if the political will is there, to create a society based on equality and social justice. Chavez's Government should be an inspiration to all leaders worldwide."

Venezuela has made substantial advances as President Hugo Chavez uses the country's resources, particularly its oil wealth, to substantially reduce poverty and transform the lives of most of the population.

The popularity of Chavez's policies was reflected when his Government retained their majority with a clear mandate to continue with their policies. There was a strong turnout with some 65% of the voting population casting their ballot.

In the build up to election day a huge education exercise was conducted over the voting system process, using the state owned public broadcasting system, training sessions and mass leafleting.



RATHER GO TO

Tamar Katz tell RMT News why she won't be conscripted

"Everyone is conscripted into the Israeli army at 18, but when I was 16 I began to have doubts about putting trust in our generals" Tamar Katz told the RMT Women's conference in Newcastle at the beginning of March. Tamar was addressing the conference as part of a tour which has found her speaking at trade union, student union and other meetings from Brighton to Edinburgh.

Tamar spoke to RMT News after the meeting about how she came to decide to refuse to be drafted, a choice that has led

the 19-year-old to serve three spells in Israeli military prisons.

"I live in Tel Aviv, which is largely removed from the everyday realities of occupation and war. There is more freedom for Israelis who live in Tel Aviv than elsewhere, it's a city just like any other in the world" Tamar says.

At the age of 16, like other Israeli schoolchildren, Tamar went to an Israeli military base where the youths were expected to give an indication of what sort of job in the army they might want.

However, a tour organised by "Breaking the Silence", a group of ex-soldiers opposed to the occupation, opened Tamar's eyes to the reality of occupation.

What she saw of the way people live under occupation in Hebron – a world away from life in Tel Aviv – was enough for her to make up her mind that it wasn't something that she wanted to be a part of.

In 2008 Tamar was one of some 20 young Israeli's who refused to serve in the armed forces. She said at first that the military authorities didn't believe that her refusal was either serious or politically motivated. "At first they just thought I was another young person who didn't want to be parted from their family. They gave me several opportunities to change my mind, but when they

REFUSENIKS

The Israeli youths who refuse to be part of a brutal occupation

By Janine Booth

If you lived in Israel, you would not have been able to start working in the transport industry after finishing school.

You would have to serve in the military instead. If you have teenage sons or daughters, they would be called up for service, and you would no doubt be anxious as they left home for the Palestinian territories brutally occupied by Israel for over 40 years.

But some teenagers are refusing to go, unwilling to play a part in the continuing violent repression of the Palestinians and denial of their human and national rights. They are known as the Shministim (Hebrew for "high school students"), and

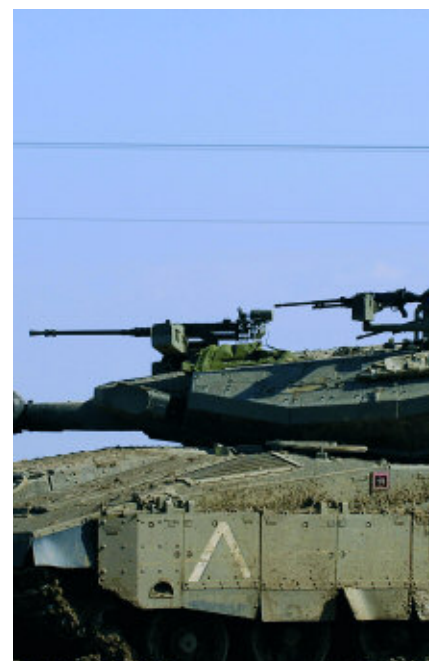
have spent repeated spells in prison for their defiance, but have also attracted support for their courageous stand from around the world – including from RMT.

The Shministim have been refusing military service since before the Israeli army's recent assault on Gaza, but that operation – which claimed more than 1,000 Palestinian lives – has hardened their resolve. RMT condemned the war on Gaza with general secretary Bob Crow saying: "Common humanity demands that the world tells the Israeli government that it must stop the bombing and end the inhuman blockade."

As she entered prison, 19-

year-old Army refuser Maya Yechieli Wind explained her stance, saying, "One form of violence cannot stop another. This current violence is the result of decades of ongoing occupation of the territories and sieges on Gaza since the disengagement. I mourn the unnecessary deaths of both Palestinians and Israelis."

RMT believes that Israel should withdraw from the Palestinian territories to its pre-1967 borders and supports the Palestinians' aspiration for an independent state alongside Israel. The union does not support Hamas, nor do we condone rocket attacks on Israeli civilians. ■



JAIL

realised that I was serious, they took me away to military prison," she said.

Tamar served 12 days in prison. It was the first of three spells that she served at the end of 2008, the second for 18 days and the third for 21 days. Part of her last sentence was spent in an isolation cell.

Prison hasn't diminished Tamar's hope for peaceful solution to the problems of the occupation and conflict. She is clear that the first steps must come from Israel's leaders who need to remove the settlements in occupied territories as a first step. "If there were no occupation there would be no need to fight," she says. ■

There will be a full report from RMT Women's Conference in next month's magazine

You can read more about the Shministim, and send them a message of support on the web at <http://december18th.org>



RMT DEMANDS ZERO TOLERANCE ON ASSAULTS

On top of the economy going into freefall and the attack on jobs by various transport companies, RMT members also have to deal with the unacceptable threat of physical and verbal attacks at the workplace every day.

It is a fact that every single day of the year RMT members are assaulted both physically and verbally while carrying out their duties. In fact, I would hazard a guess that over half of the union have either been assaulted themselves or know some one that has been.

Only the other day I witnessed this familiar scenario for myself. A train manager was just doing his job, asking to see tickets, when he received a torrent of abuse which included all the usual threats.

The train manager shrugged it off and I can understand why he chose to deal with it in that way. However, it is vital that every time that this happens then we report the matter to your union.

It is clear that the strains caused by the economic crisis and the social problems that go with it will continue to put people under pressure. The policy of the government and train operating companies to pass on the cost of the crisis onto passengers by raising fares and cutting services is causing grief. And passengers often take it out on the first person that they see in uniform and you can bet that won't be a manager.

But there can be no excuse to attack people trying to do their job under sometimes very difficult conditions.

What makes matters worse is that the employers nearly always seem to blame the staff, yet they still expect our members to protect revenue as far as possible. With performance driven bosses and passengers' abuse,

frontline staff feel like they are getting it from all angles.

RMT has the issue of workplace violence and staff assault permanently on the agenda of the Rail Personal Security Group. The union is lobbying to have similar cross-industry groups established for the bus and shipping industries.

We are taking part in various research projects related to the issue and a current project is looking at the effects of alcohol on safety and security on the railway.

We've had one member threatened with discipline and costs for "allowing" a passenger to steal his ticket machine! Is this a case of blaming people for doing their job too well? The stress of working in frontline jobs with constant abuse can become a serious health issue and can even lead to medical discharge. The employers should be offering total back-up and support instead of looking to scapegoat the staff. The lack of understanding from management is frankly sickening at times.

RMT's Transport Workers' Charter of Protection has been produced and reps should be using this as a basis for negotiating improvements to staff safety. Our workplace violence campaign will also be reinvigorated at regular intervals to ensure that the transport sector never loses focus of staff assaults. Our next big date for this issue is on April 28 when we mark Workers Memorial Day in conjunction with the ITF's and their 'Unions Say NO to Violence' campaign. Our Parliamentary group will be tabling a new Early Day Motion and members will be leafleting major stations throughout Britain. Look out for further details in the near future.

John Leach



FAREWELL TO AN ANTI- FASCIST FIGHTER

Bob Doyle 1916-2009

Bob Doyle, one of the last of the International Brigaders who fought to defend Spanish democracy in the 1930s, passed away at the end of January after a short illness.



Born in a tenement in North King Street, Dublin, two months before the Easter Rising, he was part of a family of five placed in foster care with nuns in Co Wicklow.

"Most of the time we had religion, Irish and Catholic nationalism. The nuns were severe and sadistic," he recalled in his autobiography, *Brigadista: An Irishman's fight Against Fascism*.

In the early 1930s Bob joined other anti-unemployment protesters in standing up to fascist Blueshirts led by former Dublin Police chief Eoin O'Duffy.

Bob joined the Dublin battalion of the IRA, and in 1933 Bob followed his mentor and close comrade Kit Conway into the Republican Congress and the Communist Party of Ireland. They had concluded that nationalism alone would not solve the problems of poverty.

Like many of the Irish volunteers Bob identified the struggle to defend the democratically elected Republican government of Spain as a fight for democracy everywhere. He believed that the participation of the Blueshirts on the side of Franco had besmirched the good name of the Irish people.

He made his own way to Spain, landing in Valencia. In Cadiz Bob witnessed the docked German and Italian battleships which, according to the British

and French governments (with their policy of non-intervention), did not officially exist. He returned to Spain in December 1937, crossing over the Pyrenees on foot like thousands of other volunteers from across Europe.

He became a weapons instructor with the International Brigade. Keen to fight, he disobeyed orders and joined a group going to the front line. After heavy fighting at Belchite he was taken prisoner by Italian fascist troops on the Aragon front in March 1938.

Bob was imprisoned for 11 months in the disused monastery of San Pedro where he was interrogated and photographed by visiting Gestapo officers. Along with fellow prisoners he was brutally beaten for minor breaches of the prison rules. Bob was released as part of an exchange with Italian prisoners and returned to

Dublin.

During the Second World War Bob enlisted in the British Merchant Navy. It was in London that he met and married his wife, Lola, who worked at the Spanish Embassy in London.

After the war Bob made London his home, where he became a militant print worker and shop steward and a lifelong member of the Connolly Association and the Communist Party. He also made frequent trips back to Spain to engage in clandestine work for the underground left-wing and trade union movement.

He was arrested and fined in the late 1940s for helping to defend the Jewish community by opposing Oswald Mosley's Union Movement on the streets, and in 1958 he was active in defence of west London's black community in what became known as the "Notting Hill Race Riots".

Bob was made an honorary member of the RMT and in 2006, at the age of 90, was a speaker at the union's AGM.

He told the conference how his experiences as a merchant seaman had helped further politicise him.

In the same year he embarked on a tour of Ireland, as part of the launch for his autobiography. The years had not caused him to lose any of his fight. In Belfast he told his audience:

"When I am told that Spain was the last noble cause, I know that I am speaking to someone who doesn't want to see the obvious truth. In 1936 there were many apologists for racism and oppression who did not want to see fascism for what it was.

"Today the fight against those who put profit before people is just as intense, and the stakes are higher than ever. We must make common cause with those in the third world who are now in the front line, as Spain once was...

"Those who stand up to corporate global capitalism, like Chavez in Venezuela and Castro in Cuba, must be defended.

"Those whose greed would destroy our environment, with catastrophic consequences for humanity, must be defeated. It is indeed a noble struggle and it will not be over until the liberation of the entire human race. *La lucha continúa*," he said



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MAGGIE'S END

One of the most controversial and cutting edge plays of the decade is heading to London in March to mark the 25th anniversary of the Miners' Strike.

Maggie's End, which is sponsored by NUM North East Area, UNITE, the GMB and RMT is a dark comedy that begins with the death of Margaret Thatcher.

It will be performed for two weeks from April 6 to 18 at the 500-seat Shaw Theatre in Euston Road, an off West End venue near Kings Cross railway station.

Written by internationally acclaimed playwrights Ed Waugh and Trevor Wood, Maggie's End premiered at the Gala theatre in Durham last October and attracted nearly 2,000 people to its sell-out performances.

The play was inspired by press reports that the Labour government is making plans to give Baroness Thatcher a state funeral when she dies.

Trevor Wood said: "When we first heard these reports we thought that they were a bit of political kite-flying and that the idea would be quietly buried but they've since re-surfaced.

"There's little doubt that most Labour supporters would see a state funeral for Margaret Thatcher as the ultimate betrayal by their party and that to acknowledge her in this way would re-open many of the sores of the 1980s.

"We wanted to explore what the possible repercussions of this could be, particularly in the north of England, where many communities were decimated during the Thatcher years.

"In the play, a former militant campaigner's sense of outrage over the betrayal brings him into conflict with his only daughter, who has risen through the ranks to become a senior minister in the New Labour government, and threatens to destroy his family."

Mr Wood continued: "Despite Mrs Thatcher's death being the catalyst for the play, Maggie's End is really about the legacy of Thatcherism and examines how far the New Labour government has travelled from its traditional roots."

The play will mark the 25th anniversary

of the miners' strike, which ran from March 12, 1984, until March 3, 1995.

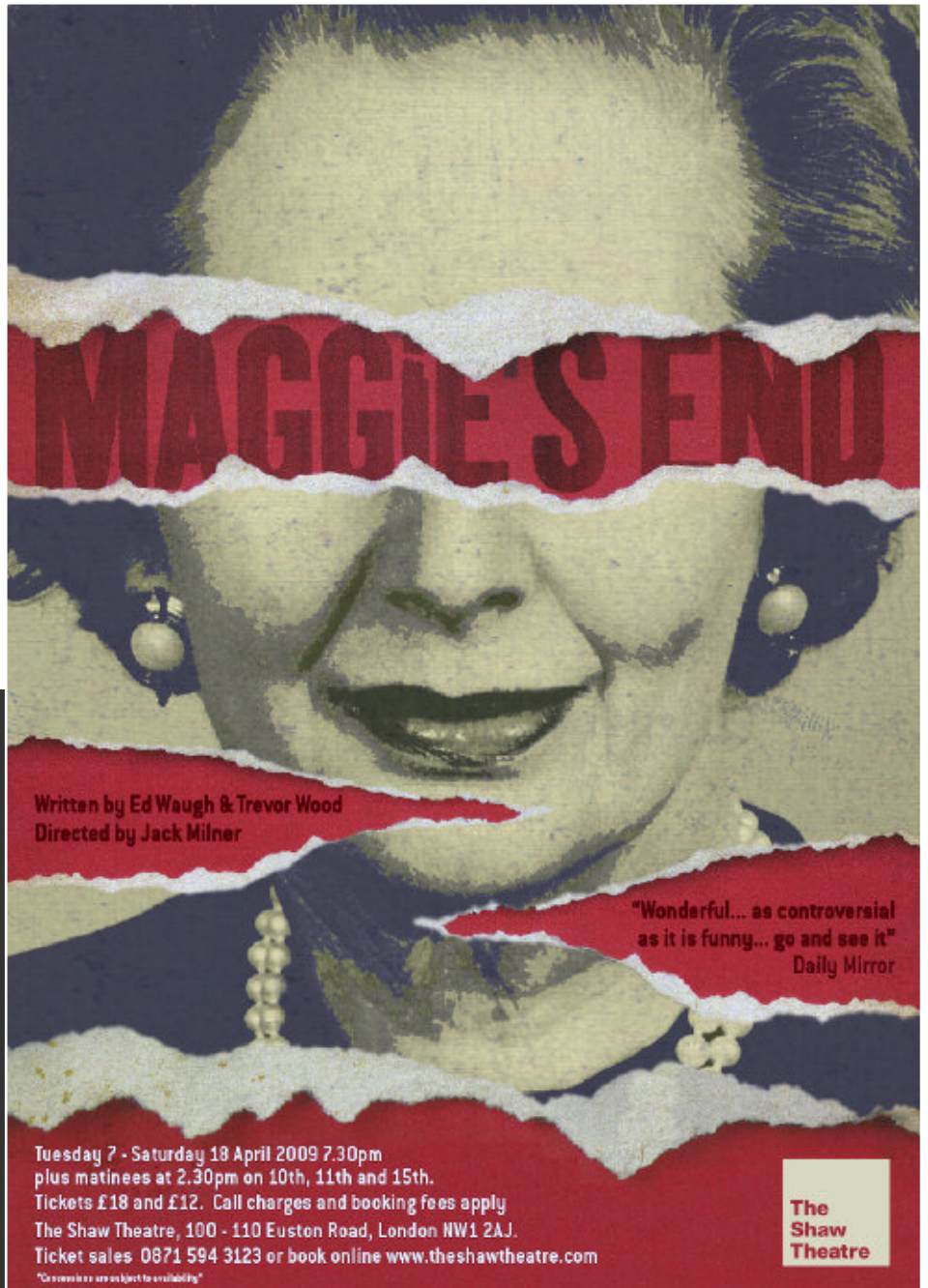
Davey Hopper, NUM North East Area secretary, said: "Maggie's End is a great play and we wanted to bring it to the capital.

"The British public should never forget the despicable role the Thatcher government played in destroying mining communities as well as the shipyards, steel mills and other industries".

He added: "We got fantastic help from London-based miners support groups during the strike and we look forward to seeing everyone involved with them again. ■

Maggie's End, directed by Jack Milner, runs from April 6 to April 18 at the Shaw theatre, Euston. Tickets cost from £13 and are on sale now.

Contact the box office on 0871 594 3123 or book online www.theshawtheatre.com



Written by Ed Waugh & Trevor Wood
Directed by Jack Milner

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"On occasion we are subject to availability"

The Shaw Theatre

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LEGAL REPORT...

TUBE BOMBING HERO WINS RMT CLAIM

A tube train driver who helped seriously injured passengers following the London bombings has won a three-year fight for compensation with the backing of the RMT.

Stuart Bell, 57, from Waltham Cross in Hertfordshire, was driving a train in the London Underground in July 2005 when four bombs exploded on three trains and a bus killing 52 people.

Despite being psychologically traumatised by the event, and being forced to go on sick leave for a year, he was denied compensation from the Criminal Injuries Compensation Association (CICA), a government organisation which pays money to those who have been physically or mentally injured because they were the victims of a violent crime.

The original offer to Mr Bell from CICA was their minimum award of just £1,000. This was challenged when the RMT stepped in with its lawyers Thompsons Solicitors. Following an appeal CICA eventually

awarded Mr Bell £4,400.

Mr Bell was driving a train in the underground when the attacks happened. He drove his train to Russell Square where he helped passengers injured from the bomb which had gone off on the southbound Piccadilly Line train.

The dad of four said: "It was horrendous. I helped with the evacuation of the station at Russell Square before the police arrived. Some of the passengers were in a terrible state.

"I'm not a hero. I did what I could to help, just like anyone would but the events of that day will always be with me.

"I was off work for 12 months afterwards. I couldn't believe it when CICA said that because I was not at reasonable fear of immediate physical harm I was not entitled to compensation. I may not have sustained a physical injury but mentally the events of that day will never leave me. We had no idea how many bombs there were and now it is a constant fear while driving

in the underground."

RMT general secretary Bob Crow said: "The CICA's approach to this case was extremely unsympathetic. Mr Bell had to wait almost three years to get this result. With the unions support he was able to successfully challenge CICA's decision."

Andrew Hutson, from Thompsons Solicitors, has dealt with more than 25 CICA claims for the RMT.

He said: "Mr Bell's actions on the day of the bombings were heroic. He helped hundreds of underground passengers to safety and provided first aid to those who were injured in surroundings which resembled a battleground. He may not have been injured in the blasts himself but as a result of his actions he suffered Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and was on sick leave for 12 months.

"It is only right that he is compensated on the same level as someone who was physically injured by the bombings." ■



HOLLAND BATTLEFIELDS VISIT THE FAMOUS 'BRIDGE TOO FAR'

A fascinating introduction to the Dutch battlefields of the Second World War.

You will take a trip to the famous National Liberation Museum – where you can experience the occupation, celebrate the liberation and witness the rebuilding of Holland and Europe after the war. Enjoy a bus excursion through the Nijmegen area, tracing the landing grounds of Operation Market Garden of 1944, the largest airborne landing operation in history. You will also take a trip to Arnhem to see the famous 'bridge too far', visit the Airborne Museum and also a Dutch vineyard.

You will stay at the 3-star Sport und Tagungshotel on the outskirts of the old weaving city, Goch. The hotel has numerous sport and wellness facilities including a swimming pool, sauna and solarium.

What's included:

- nights on board ship in a 2-berth inside en suite cabin
- transfer from port to National Liberation museum (approx 2 hours)
- battlefield tour including, entrance to the Liberation Museum, guided tour, coffee and liberation cake, entrance to the Airborne Museum and vineyard
- 2 nights bed, breakfast and dinner at the 3-star Sport und Tagungshotel de Poort in Goch, plus entrance into spa and swimming pool

Departures from Newcastle: 6th September and 1st November 2009
Book by 30th April 2009.



COMEDY CRUISE 2 NIGHT MINI CRUISE TO AMSTERDAM

Laugh all the way to Amsterdam on this 2-night mini cruise with a difference. Enjoy a delicious buffet dinner in the 7 Seas Restaurant before sitting back and enjoying three first-class comedians.

Ian Moore has achieved great success on the national comedy circuits where he has supported the likes of Lee Evans. Award-winning comedienne Jo Enright (Phoenix Nights, I'm Alan Partridge) will entertain with her unique stand-up. While American comedian Rex Boyd is a highly sought-after act on both the national and international comedy circuits.

What's included:

- nights on board ship in a 2-berth inside en suite cabin
- comedy and entertainment on board
- All-you-can-eat dinner and buffet breakfast on one crossing
- transfer to/from Amsterdam and free optional sightseeing tour

Departures from Newcastle: 18th June 2009
Book by 30th April 2009.



ORCA WILDLIFE CRUISE TO ESBJERG GREAT FOR FAMILIES

Enjoy the views of the Stour and Orwell estuaries as you sail from Harwich, and the west coast wildlife of the Jutland peninsula in southwest Denmark. This route is famous for its seal colonies and its birds, which migrate through western Denmark in large numbers during the spring and autumn. In calm seas we may also encounter Harbour Porpoises.

After you arrive in Esbjerg you can also take part in our exclusive Fanø island wildlife walking tour. Our ORCA wildlife officer will take you on a leisurely ramble across the beautiful beaches, dunes and heaths of this tranquil island, taking in the fresh air and wide horizons as you search for wildlife.

What's included:

- nights on board ship in a 4-berth inside en suite cabin
- Introduction and welcome pack
- waterlilies as we depart Harwich and arrive in Esbjerg (weather dependant)
- Adult information for adults
- to Fanø with wildlife officer*

Departures from Harwich: Every 3 or 4 days in April, May, Sept and Oct 2009
Book by 30th April 2009.



40 YEAR BADGE AWARDED



Neil Mackenzie (left) of Glasgow Shipping branch receiving his 40 Year Badge from Phil McGarry, RMT Scottish Regional Organiser

FURNESS BERMUDA LINE REUNION

Looking for ex crew members and staff of the
Queen of Bermuda and Ocean Monarch
for a reunion at:

The Merchant Seaman's War Memorial Society,
Springbok Estate, Alford,
Cranleigh, Surrey, GU6 8EX
15th, 16th and 17th May 2009

Contact:

Peter Manley

Work Tel: 01282 695121, Home Tel: 01282 617243

Email: pmanley@graham-eng.co.uk

or

William Cox

Tel: 01453 844117

Email: william.cox15@btinternet.com

LETTERS

QUESTIONING SUPPORT FOR CUBA

Once again, RMT News carries a double-page spread about Cuba. Some of our members are beginning to think that the union is obsessed with this island!

It is right that RMT takes an interest in international issues, that it celebrates the fall of the terrible Batista regime 50 years ago, and that it opposes the US blockade of Cuba.

However, it is not right that in its extensive coverage of Cuba, the union simply cheerleads the Cuban regime rather than reporting on the concerns of our fellow workers in Cuba, nor that it finds no room for any criticism of the regime.

Elsewhere in RMT News, the union rightly and robustly criticises our own government, and discusses the possibility of a new political party for working people. The fact is that were we in Cuba, we would not be able to publish such things, as criticism of the government is suppressed and only the ruling party is allowed to stand candidates in elections!

When it comes to Cuba, RMT needs to support our fellow workers and take off the rose-tinted spectacles through which the union sees the regime.

Janine Booth

Stratford no.1 branch

SEND ELECTION ADDRESSES PLEASE

Cardiff Rail Branch held its December meeting, and part of the business was to elect delegates to the various BTUC and Welsh TUC conferences for 2009. This task was made nigh on impossible by virtue of the fact that none of our branch members knew anything about the vast majority of candidates, or their reasons for seeking election, as none of the candidates had sent out an election address. Most of our ballot papers had only first and second choice candidates marked by us before being returned to Unity House.

As the elections are carried out by region, and the constituent branches of each region are known, would it in future be possible for candidates to try and send out election addresses in order that we can make full selections at branch meetings based on better knowledge of the candidates in question? This could be done via email utilising the branch email addresses published in the RMT directory.

Greg Harrison

Cardiff Branch

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

JOHN'S CROSS INN

BATTLE ROAD (A21), MOUNTFIELD, EAST SUSSEX



The classic socialist novel *The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists* by Robert Tressell has a vivid description of a works' beano – based on a real one that took place in this pub.

The author, real name Robert Noonan (1870-1911), attended it in August 1905 while working as a painter and decorator for Adams & Jarrett of 20 Alfred Street, St Leonards.

The beano at the pub, seven miles north of Hastings, included a cricket match on an adjoining pitch against rival firm Wright & Son – and was worthy of any scene in a modern day soap opera for its brilliant depiction of characters recognisable in everyday working life.

The foreman called "Misery" in the novel, for example, was based on one of Noonan's bosses at Bruce & Co in York Buildings, Hastings. Noonan was indeed being paid a miserly 7d (just under 3p) an hour and had to work from 6 am until late into the night to make ends meet.

The novel explains how

capitalism forces firms to undercut each other in what nowadays is called "a race to the bottom."

And the scene known as "the money trick" is a masterful explanation in simple terms of how labour is exploited.

Noonan's workmates in real life said he believed in a co-operative commonwealth in which the means of production were owned by the community, and goods were produced for use.

Born in Dublin he worked his passage at the age of 18 to South Africa where he joined the International Independent Labour Party, and a brigade of United Irishmen who fought against the British in the Boer War.

In 1902 he sailed with his daughter Kathleen (his wife had died of tuberculosis) to England and settled first in Western Road, St Leonards, then Flat 5, 115 Milward Road, Hastings (where he started writing *The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists* in 1906), and finally an attic flat at 241 London Road, Hastings (where

he finished the novel by 1910).

The novel describes how workers, to get employment, had to buy foreman drinks in The Cricketers pub in South Terrace (on the corner of Waldegrave Street), Hastings.

Noonan drank there himself as it was near his home. The Hastings branch of the marxist Social Democratic Federation held its first meeting in this pub, which has since been renamed the Baraka cocktail bar.

Noonan earned the nickname "Raphael" for painting a mural in St Andrews Church in Queens Road. The building was demolished in 1970 but the

mural is now on display in Hastings Museum and Art Gallery.

In a less pious moment Noonan was fined ten shillings (50p) for squaring up to a policeman who had stamped on one of his Chinese cracker fireworks on bonfire night.

After he died he was buried in a pauper's grave.

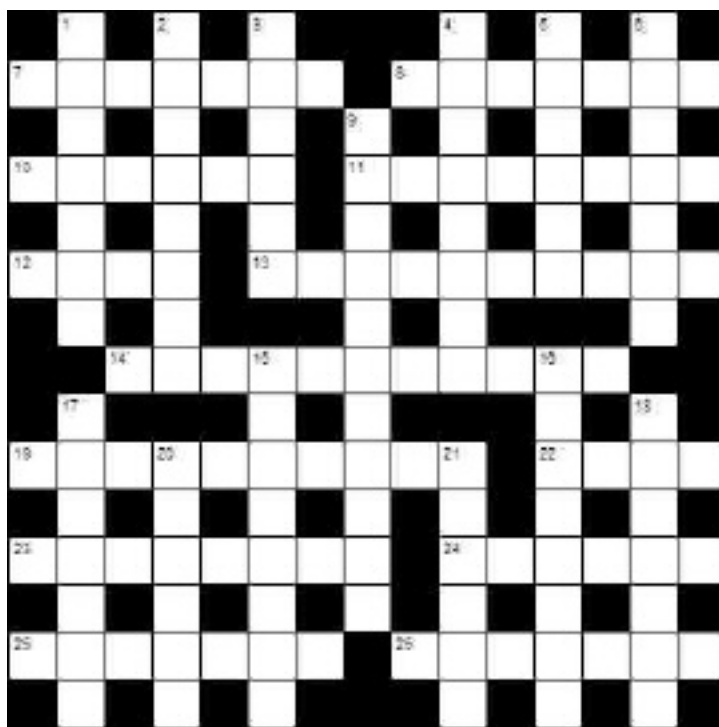
The *Ragged Trousered Philanthropists* first appeared in 1914 after being drastically altered to change its message. It was finally published uncensored in 1955, since when it has inspired generations of socialists. ■



VISIT: RMT EC members and staff visited the pub in 2003



No. 52. Set by Elk



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

Winner and solution in next issue.

CLASSIFIED ADS

New Bed & Breakfast, Portumna, Co.Galway. Beautiful country setting yet close to town for lively pubs, restaurants and shops.
Ideal for Fishing, Golfing, Touring or just relaxing. Minutes from River Shannon, Lough Derg, Portumna Golf Course and Forest Park.
10% Discount and 1/2 Price Stena Ferries for RMT Members.
Tel. 00353 909759596
email. murrays.ireland@yahoo.co.uk

- 7 Diver's outfit (7)
- 8 Spoiler of fun (7)
- 10 Tusked, seal-like creature (6)
- 11 Not compulsory (8)
- 12 Pressurised beer containers (4)
- 13 Very surprised (10)
- 14 Still too many on the railways (11)
- 19 Clock -- or the person who watches it? (10)
- 22 High wind -- or RMT organiser based in 9 and 24 (4)
- 23 Operatic text (8)
- 24 Ancient Anglo-Saxon kingdom - RMTregion (6)
- 25 Unit of sound measurement (7)
- 26 Riled (7)

1 Slandered or libelled (7)
2 Strong coffee, Italian style (8)
3 Afternoon nap, Spanish style (6)
4 Clear, sharp (8)
5 Mixtures of metals; wheels! (6)
6 Turned, as wheel (7)
9 Hampshire port, site of newest RMT office
(11)
15 Places of entertainment, or war (8)
16 List - of ships, or students? (8)
17 Split, separated (7)
18 Overnight train, or what it passes over (7)
20 Insect - eavesdrop (6)
21 Making progress in boat; arguing (6)

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.

last
months
form here!

TAXI DRIVERS!

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or call the helpline on freephone

0800 376 3706

Problems at work? Call the helpline

Open six days a week

Mon to Fri - 8am until 6pm, Sat - 9.30am to 4pm

e-mail: info@rmt.org.uk

Legal helpline: 0800 587 7516
Seven days a week

