

RMT *news*

Essential reading for today's transport worker

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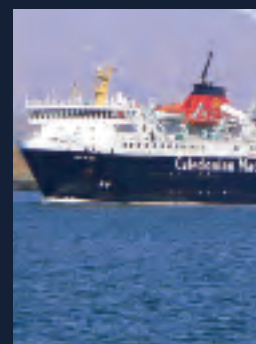
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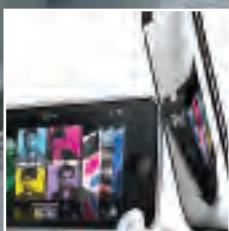
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www.rmt.org.uk

NATIONAL UNION OF RAIL, MARITIME & TRANSPORT WORKERS

Unity House, 39 Chalton Street, London NW1 1JD



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CREDIT UNION

EDITORIAL

SAVE OUR SHIPPING



The Royal Fleet Auxiliary fleet is currently delivering desperately needed material aid to Haiti.

Yet, as we go to press, private companies are in talks with the Ministry of Defence with a view to handing over RFA operations to the private sector.

In private hands, as elsewhere, we can expect cost cutting, job losses and a much poorer service. UK ratings would be disposed of in favour of low paid foreign ratings, in a process known as social dumping, and profit would be the overriding motive.

This union does not believe that this is the best way to run a lifeline service like the RFA. If it was, why doesn't the government privatise the armed forces or even the royal family? Their answer would be that such institutions are too important. Our answer should be that the RFA is too important to be handed over to profit hungry privateers.

That is why RMT is opposed to the break up of the Clyde and Hebrides ferry network, currently operated by Caledonian MacBrayne.

Instead of spending millions in consultation processes designed to deliver these services to the private sector, why not spend it on increased pay for the people who work in these industries?

Rail guards and drivers at Scotrail have shown how to fight cutbacks by voting overwhelmingly for strike action against dangerous plans to impose driver-only operation(DOO).

I have written to the Scottish government, urging them not to use public money to indemnify the company during strike action that it has provoked by tearing up a 2001 agreement not to extend DOO.

London Underground signals members are taking strike action after LUL managers ripped up agreements and imposed new rosters with no consultation with this union.

These attacks should be familiar to signallers working for Network Rail that are currently being balloted for industrial action.

Maintenance staff at Network Rail are also being balloted for national industrial action against 1,500 threatened job cuts, the imposition of rosters and the watering down of safety measures.

Cutting jobs and cutting corners across the rail network is a reckless gamble with safety which would create the conditions for another Hatfield,

Paddington, Potters Bar or Grayrigg disaster.

We all saw the lethal consequences of cutting back on maintenance under Railtrack and now Network Rail wants to turn the clock back to those dark days. We owe it to our members and the traveling public to oppose these financially-driven cuts.

If you are one of those members, I would urge you to vote Yes to strike action in order for the union to carry out its historic task of defending the jobs, conditions and safety of workers.

We held a successful lobby of Parliament last month and the publication of our dossier highlighting problems resulting from cutbacks on the network has already led to some progress. For instance the Office of Rail Regulation has warned the government that 'useful intelligence' on the safety implications of the cuts from RMT have helped the railway directorate to better target inspections.

To keep up the pressure the union will be marking the third anniversary of Grayrigg Rail crash on February 23 with a lobby outside the Department for Transport.

RMT is also organising a Europe-wide protest in Lille, France on April 13 outside the headquarters of the European Rail Agency against dangerous EU diktats demanding 'open access' for privateers on EU rail networks.

This has already led to proposals to water down safety rules in the Channel Tunnel, in order to allow greater 'competition', and to privatise Eurostar. So join the RMT delegation with sister unions for the international protest on April 13.

Grades conference season is upon us and I'm pleased to see that offshore members are gathering in Aberdeen on March 22 to discuss issues that directly affect them.

Whether you are a bus worker or in engineering, catering or road freight there is a grades conference for you. These events are not just talking shops as each conference can send two motions to the union's annual general meeting so get along if you can and make your voice heard.

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

SCOTRAIL GUARDS AND DRIVERS BACK STRIKE ACTION

Union calls on Scottish government not to compensate Scotrail with public money during any strike action against the introduction of driver only operation

More than 550 RMT guards and drivers at First Scotrail will take strike action after voting overwhelmingly for action against plans to impose driver-only operation (DOO) on the new Airdrie-Bathgate line.

RMT members voted for action by a margin of five to one in favour of strike action on a 82 per cent turnout.

The union has written to Scottish transport minister Stewart Stevenson MSP to urge the Scottish government not to use public money to indemnify the company against fines or losses incurred during strike action it has cynically provoked by tearing up a 2001 agreement not to extend DOO.

The union also met the minister and he agreed that retaining conductors was not a cost issue and agreed to look at an RMT safety dossier setting out the safety case for retaining conductors.

Initial reports demonstrate that First Scotrail could be in fundamental and deliberate breach of its franchise agreement with the Scottish government and endangering the safety of passengers.

The current agreement stipulates that on train services where the conductor has been removed there will be a ticket examiner.

However just by looking at one depot on one route alone

where conductors have been removed by First Scotrail four hundred separate services ran with the train not staffed at all by a ticket examiner or only partially staffed.

The overwhelming vote shows just how angry RMT members are that a company that gave its shareholders £18 million last year is prepared to reduce safety standards for the sake of just £300,000.

RMT general secretary Bob Crow said that anyone in doubt of the crucial role played by guards need only read First group's own rigorous training manual – and railway workers know from bitter experience that properly trained guards save lives.

"We know that downgrading guards' safety duties on the Airdrie-Bathgate line is the thin end of the wedge, and we have already exposed Scotrail's systematic breach of its contractual obligation to run trains with at least two staff members aboard.

"Scotrail's scandalous attitude to safety is underlined by its shabby attempts to put together an inadequately trained scab army rather than accept that it has lost both the economic and safety arguments to keep the guard in charge.

"I hope that rail users in Scotland will understand that we are making a stand for their



safety as well as our members', and join with us in demanding that the Scottish government steps in to stop First Scotrail putting cash before safety.

"I also hope that ministers will not be tempted to use public money to indemnify Scotrail for a dispute the company has brought on itself by tearing up an agreement," Bob Crow said.

Hundreds of people have sent in RMT postcards in support of Scottish Parliamentary motion S3M-05202 'Safety First' put down by Elaine Smith MSP.

Write to your MSP asking for their support or send an RMT postcard available from your branch secretary.

A new motion calling on the Scottish government to give an urgent public and unequivocal assurance that Scottish taxpayers' money will not be used to compensate First Scotrail in the event of a dispute is also being drawn up. ■

PARLIAMENTARY MOTION

S3M-05202 Elaine Smith (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Scottish Labour):

Safety First

That the Parliament welcomes the new rail service between Glasgow and Edinburgh via the Airdrie to Bathgate route and the continued electrification of the railway in Scotland; is alarmed, however, that proposals to remove the guards from this service and introduce driver only operation (DOO) are coupled with the reopening of this route; is deeply concerned that this will increase safety risks because passengers will not benefit from the protection of having a guard responsible for the safe running of the train, including controlling the doors and emergencies such as driver incapacity, failure of train safety systems and derailments; further shares the view of the STUC Women's Conference that the proposed introduction of DOO on the service demonstrates that the safety concerns of women passengers have not been adequately addressed; is further concerned that this decision breaches previous assurances to the trade unions that there would be no extension of DOO in Scotland and believes that this could be the thin end of the wedge leading to the removal of guards on other routes; considers that retaining the guards would cost less than the salary of First ScotRail's highest-paid director and less than 5% of the company's most recent post-tax profits, and therefore urges the Scottish Government and First ScotRail to put safety and passengers before profit and keep guards on these services. Supported by: Sarah Boyack, Cathy Jamieson, David Whitton, Helen Eadie, Bill Butler, Marlyn Glen, Marilyn Livingstone, Rhoda Grant, Malcolm Chisholm, Dr Elaine Murray, Trish Godman, Rhona Brankin, Cathy Peattie, John Park, Rt Hon George Foulkes, Patricia Ferguson, Andy Kerr, Des McNulty, Cathie Craigie, Margaret Curran, James Kelly

RMT WINS 10 PER CENT PAY RISE AT STRATFORD MARKET DEPOT

Planned strike action by RMT fleet maintenance workers on the Jubilee line Stratford Market Depot was suspended recently following a new improved pay offer from the company.

Under the last minute deal all current Train Maintainers grade four got an increase from £29,158 to £32,000 and all train maintainer grade three got an increase £34,000 to 35,500.

Members were due to stage a 24 hour walk-out over a pay discrepancy between maintenance workers employed by Alstom at Stratford and others depots on London Underground.

An overtime ban had also been planned and a second strike with more to follow every week until a solution was

reached.

RMT member's anger over the unfairness of the pay discrepancy was reflected in the 100 per cent vote for strike action and action short of a strike.

RMT general secretary Bob Crow said that he hoped that management would now recognise that it could not go on treating fleet maintenance staff at Stratford as poor relations.

Regional organiser Steve Hedley congratulated London Underground members from train drivers, station staff and engineers and others that showed their solidarity by ensuring that no short cuts would be taken with safety during the dispute.

A Transport for London spokesman said that the dispute was a matter for Tube Lines, which has the PPP contract for running the Jubilee line, and its contractors Alstom.

TUBE LINES FUNDING

An independent adjudicator has dismissed Tube Lines' claim for a further £327 million of public funds to cover costs it has incurred due to delays in upgrading the Jubilee and Northern lines.

The ruling said that London Underground had not breached its contract and thus it bore no responsibility for any extra costs.

The independent adjudicator added that Ferrovial and Bechtel, the two companies

behind the Tube Lines, would have to bear the burden of full costs of the overruns.

LU managing director Richard Parry said: "We are very pleased to have seen off this attempt to take lots of money from the public purse and drag our reputation through the mud."

"Tube Lines needs to stop making further spurious claims for additional fare payers' and taxpayers' money –given the handsome returns already being earned by shareholders Bechtel and Ferrovial –and get on with the job at hand".

Tube Lines has a thirty-year agreement with the London Underground to maintain and upgrade track, trains and stations on the Jubilee, Northern and Piccadilly Lines. ■

EDF MEMBERS WIN IMPROVED OFFER

After taking strike action over the Christmas period and operating an overtime ban, members at EDF Powerlink on London Underground have won an improved pay offer for 2009/10.

After rejecting a one per cent pay offer, the company has agreed an increase in basic salaries and allowances of 1.5 per cent with effect from April 6 2009 followed by a further increase with effect from April 5 2010 of RPI plus 0.5 per cent based on the published headline

RPI figure for the year to February 2010.

The minimum increase for April 2010 will be 0.5 per cent.

The company also agreed to a huge increase in overtime as set out opposite.

A working party has also been established to investigate options on staff travel costs. RMT regional organiser Steve Hedley congratulated all EDF members who had refused to be fobbed off with excuses about a recession caused by bankers and winning a fair pay rise. ■

Job Role and Current Rate	per hour £	Phase 1 – 07.1.2010 Rate per hour £	Phase 2 – 5.4.10 Rate per hour £
Band 4 Fitter/Day Tester -	£12.83	£14.21	£14.90
Band 4 Tester (Shift) Top -	£12.83	£13.94	£14.50
TRI/Foreman 2 Top -	£15.66	£17.33	£18.17



VOTE YES TO STRIKE ACTION

Network Rail maintenance and signalling staff balloted for strike action against job cuts, imposition of rosters and other attacks on conditions

RMT is balloting Network Rail members for national industrial action against 1,500 threatened job cuts, the imposition of rosters and the watering down of safety.

Mass meetings of workers' affected by the cuts have been taking place up and down the country and Network Rail maintenance and signalling staff will begin receiving ballot papers at the same time as this magazine.

RMT general secretary Bob Crow said that plans to axe 1,500 maintenance jobs across the rail network was a reckless gamble with safety which would create the conditions for another Hatfield, Paddington, Potters Bar or Grayrigg disaster.

"We saw under Railtrack the lethal consequences of cutting back on maintenance and

Network Rail now want to turn the clock back to those dark days by forcing staff out of the door in order to hit budget targets.

"It's outrageous and we have no option but to ballot for action and I would urge members to vote Yes," he said.

Network Rail has refused to give further assurances about no compulsory redundancies beyond 2010 or give guarantees' about capex work to be undertaken in future years by maintenance members.

It has also refused to place potentially redundant members in permanent jobs within the maintenance organisation thereby offering no future job security and failed to provide details of further changes being planned by the company.

Network Rail has also

proposed making changes to the way in which T3 possessions are carried out by doing away with placing detonators at either end of a possession to protect track workers.

This is about saving time, and therefore money, on setting up possessions – and RMT has told NR that it is unsafe and unacceptable.

Inevitably, the onus for the safety of such possessions being transferred to signallers and if anything went wrong, it would be the signaller, who ended up in the dock on a manslaughter charge – not Iain Coucher or Peter Bennett.

Network Rail is bent on imposing new rosters on signallers, effectively tearing up the 1994 restructuring agreement and 2001 JWP agreement.

Network Rail has refused to provide assurances that it will comply with rostering parameters agreed between the union and the company and clearly intends to ignore the agreements.

Network Rail has also been undermining the Promotion, Transfer, Redundancy and Resettlement (PTR&R) agreement – designed to protect members who find themselves displaced from their post.

The company has made no secret of the fact that it would love to see PTR&R disappear in order to create a situation in which it can move people to wherever it wants, whenever it wants or, make people redundant without reference to procedure.

Vote Yes to strike action.



ANOTHER OVERHEAD FAILURE ON WEST COAST MAINLINE

RMT has called for an investigation into Network Rail's maintenance failings on the West Coast Mainline after the latest in a series of overhead line failures halted train services in both directions.

The union renewed the call for Network Rail to suspend cost-cutting plans that would lead to chaos and could precipitate a major rail disaster.

The latest overhead line failure, at Berkhamsted, is the third in just three months and represents the shape of things to come if Network Rail goes ahead with its planned cuts.

RMT general secretary Bob Crow reported that there were just three people on duty at the depot that covers Berkhamsted,

and that the chaos was worsened by delays in getting skilled staff out to sort the problem

"We know that Network Rail has been chipping away at staffing levels and wants to reduce the complement of permanent staff on overhead lines by a quarter.

"Despite the £9 billion upgrade to the West Coast line there are still clearly major problems, yet Network Rail is aiming nearly half of its proposed job cuts at the route.

"This is exactly the sort of chaos we have warned will be caused regularly if Network Rail goes ahead with its cash-driven cuts policy, and it must be stopped," Bob Crow said.

RMT PLEDGES TO FIGHT BABCOCK RAIL JOB CUTS

RMT has pledged to fight devastating job cuts in Glasgow by Babcock Rail.

The job cuts have been prompted by Network Rail's plans to defer up to one-third of track renewal work to save money.

In a profit statement, Babcock bosses confirmed that they are considering the possibility of closing the rail division, reducing its size or selling it off.

The union warned that the job loss programme has already begun with over 260 jobs being axed in recent months.

The cancellation of the Glasgow Airport Rail Link by the SNP administration in Scotland and a new wave of maintenance cutbacks being driven through

by Network Rail has added to the sense of crisis in the industry.

RMT general secretary Bob Crow said that with unemployment figures continuing to rise the threat to 1,600 engineering jobs at Babcock Rail is another massive potential body blow to UK industry.

"We need urgent government intervention to protect what's left of our industrial production capacity at companies like Babcock Rail and with the planned expansion and modernisation of the rail network the threat that any of these 1,600 workers could end up thrown on the dole is madness," he said.

LONDON UNDERGROUND SIGNALS MEMBERS TAKE STRIKE ACTION

24-hour strike action put on for every Sunday until further notice after LUL managers rip up Signals Framework Agreement, shift patterns and impose new rosters that deprive members of thousands of pounds

RMT London Underground signals staff took 24 hour industrial action earlier this month over the imposition of rosters, breaches of agreement and outsourcing.

The former Metronet contract workers covered by the Signals Framework Agreement voted by a massive majority of over 90 per cent for strike action following the imposition of new rosters which would leave staff thousands of pounds worse off.

Further 24 hour strikes will now take place every weekend from 06.45 hours Sunday to

06.45 hours Monday until further notice.

Last minute talks failed after LUL management refused to discuss issues raised by the union.

LUL management has unilaterally ripped up agreements, bulldozed through shift patterns that treat staff like slabs of meat that can be pulled off the shelf when it suits managers and the increased use of outside contractors.

RMT general secretary Bob Crow said that the overwhelming vote for action

had shown LUL management that if they think that they can ride roughshod over our terms and conditions then they need to think again.

"It's their bully-boy management style which has forced us into this dispute and our members have sent out the clearest possible message that they are not prepared to be beaten into submission.

"LUL seem to be hell bent on confrontation by tearing up the Signals Framework Agreement and by unilaterally introducing new working practices which mean they can make people

work what hours they like, when they like.

"On top of that, our member's job security is being undermined by the handing over of work to external private contractors which could be done internally.

"Those are the issues at the heart of this dispute and RMT would expect management to take note of the angry and determined response of our members, reflected in this ballot result, and withdraw the attacks on procedures and working conditions," Bob said.



RMT MEMBERS LOBBY PARLIAMENT AGAINST NETWORK RAIL CUTS

RMT hands dossier of rail safety failures to MPs at lobby in protest at 1,500 maintenance job losses

Hundreds of members from all over the country joined RMT's lobby of Parliament recently to send a message to MPs that "Rail Cuts Cost Lives".

Many travelled overnight to be part of the fight against rail maintenance job cuts.

The noisy gathering opposite the House of Commons rammed the unions' message home to elected representatives.

MPs were handed an RMT dossier after hundreds of rail workers contacted a confidential RMT email line to say lives could be put at risk.

The dossier highlights the worst examples of where the scaling back of work and changing standards in preparation for the job cuts are already leading to a serious deterioration in safety.

These first-hand accounts make for extremely disturbing reading. Examples include: -

- Reduced track safety inspections
- Delaying the repair of faulty level crossings
- Reduced safety checks on railway signals

Committee Room 14 in the heart of Parliament was jam packed with RMT members and the mood was electric and uncompromising.

Over one hundred MPs have already signed Early Day Motion 80 tabled by Linda Riordan opposing the Network Rail jobs carnage and many MPs prepared came along to show their support.

Luton North MP Kelvin Hopkins launched an impassioned plea for both the reversal of the NR cuts and the renationalisation of the entire rail network.

Citing the recent chaos on the First Capital Connect franchise, he said that "The railways were handed over to the private companies in good order, they are not in good order now.

"I want to know when someone is going to prosecute Jarvis over Potters Bar?

"We now have a fraction of the maintenance workforce we had under British Rail and

anyone can see that we need more staff, not less," he said.

Katy Clarke, North Ayrshire and Arran MP and another member of RMT's parliamentary group, called for urgent action from the Transport Secretary Lord Adonis over the rail jobs massacre.

"The government needs to intervene immediately, they will have blood on their hands if they don't.

"As an MP I get constant complaints from my constituents about safety and security on the railways and they simply will not believe that the government don't have the power to act," she said.

RMT parliamentary group convenor John McDonnell laid the blame for the cuts drive at Network Rail firmly at the door of top boss Ian Coucher.

"The bosses at Network Rail want to do what they like and pay themselves what they like and it's about time the government dragged them in and told them that the games

up.

"How many more disasters will it take before the people in control recognise the connection between resources and rail safety?" he said.

There were also rousing contributions from RMT president Alex Gordon and general secretary Bob Crow who said that the union was on a "war footing".

"We are sending out a clear message to Coucher and to the government that if they want to trigger national industrial action in the run up to the general election in defence of jobs and safety then on their heads be it," he said.

Sister rail unions, TSSA and ASLEF, backed the initiative and representatives from both organisations addressed the rally.

ORR RESPONDS

Following the lobby and the release of the union's dossier of Network Rail failures, the Office



of Rail Regulation wrote to Transport Secretary Lord Adonis.

In the letter ORR chair Anna Walker said that 'useful intelligence' on the safety implications of the cuts from RMT had helped the railway directorate to better target inspections.

"I can assure you that we have been scrutinising Network Rail's restructuring proposals for some time and we will continue to do so.

"We will make our own independent judgment on whether the proposed new structure can safely maintain the railway, and will take appropriate follow up and enforcement action if we believe safety may be compromised as a result of the changes.

"I have asked Ian Prosser, our director of railway safety, to report to the ORR Board on February 16 his conclusions and next steps on the RMT's concerns and he will then write separately to Bob Crow, to respond to the specific points he has raised.....we expect assurance, confirmed by our own inspection activity, that safety will not be compromised as a result of changes made," she wrote.

In response to the ORR letter RMT general secretary Bob Crow welcomed the intervention of the rail regulator in response to the RMT dossier.

"Clearly Network Rail should call an immediate halt to the cuts process that has already left many depots short of staff as vacancies have been left unfilled," he said.

RMT will continue to collect reports from members on the ground and will feed this into the ORR and the government to reinforce the safety case against these cuts.

RMT has no doubt that the impact of slashing safety-critical maintenance staffing levels to the bone will have fatal consequences if Network Rail is allowed to get away with their plans. ■

**A film of the lobby can be found on YouTube by searching the site for - Network Rail workers lobby MPs over job cuts*

Parliamentary column

DEFENDING RAIL



Recently we had an excellent Lobby of Parliament by over 200 RMT members on the subject of Network Rail's scandalous plans to axe 1,500 jobs in key areas of maintenance.

The reality of this hatchet job on the western region is the proposed axing of 300 maintenance workers.

Too many Parliamentary lobbies, for whatever reason, end up as missed opportunities for activists and MPs; not this one. RMT members and their executive emphatically expressed to the many MPs who attended the anger of rail maintenance workers at Network Rail's cavalier approach to safety.

This anger is keenly felt by those of us MPs who are active in the RMT Parliamentary Group. We continue to be snubbed by Network Rail Chief Iain Coucher in our efforts to convince Network Rail's Head Officer to come to Parliament to answer the serious concern that MPs have over the planned job cuts – Mr Coucher insists that we must come to his plush new office around the corner from Kings Cross station.

The continued refusal to simply attend a meeting with MPs in Parliament does not reflect well on the Chief Executive of a company that is backed by the government and, not unlike most train operating companies, would not survive without public subsidy.

Politicians and trades unionists need to impress upon the public the real threat to workers and public safety from Network Rail's alarming plan. UK plc might be in economic recession but no country can afford to scrimp on rail safety. We saw at Hatfield, Potters Bar and Grayrigg the fatal consequences of such hazardous economising.

There have already been some

positive results from the Lobby, with the Office of Rail Regulation shaken out of its reluctance to comment on Network Rail's sharpening of the axe. The ORR is, of course, vulnerable to accusations of a conflict of interest in this matter. It is part of the regulatory cabal that told Network Rail to make efficiency savings of 21% by 2014 yet is also the body responsible for enforcing health and safety on the rail network – a clear conflict of interest.

MPs Ann Cryer, Kelvin Hopkins and myself went to see the Rail Minister, Chris Mole to impress upon him the damage that these cuts will have on the rail Industry, and on morale amongst Network Rail employees in particular. We left him in no doubt that this situation needed to be resolved as a matter of extreme urgency or the campaign would be escalated.

What is so disappointing is that these disastrous cuts come at a time when we should be investing in a better rail network including taking back into public hands those failing franchises that have been a complete drain on the state. The government needs to completely re-orientate itself to listen to those who know most about the railways having spent their working lives in the industry.

On a personal note can I thank those RMT members who have supported my campaign for the re-doubling of the Stroud Valleys line between Kemble and Swindon. Though we are not quite there in terms of finding the £45 million budget to progress this I am sure that the strength of feeling over this matter will force the rail authorities with government support to undertake this key piece of work.

David Drew

MP for the Stroud Constituency

MILLIONS WASTED ON RAIL FRANCHISING SINCE 2003

RMT slams government for wasting nearly £80 million of public money on rail franchising since 2003

RMT slammed the government for “presiding over a culture of private waste” on the railways after figures obtained by RMT parliamentary convenor John McDonnell revealed that the cost of rail franchises since 2003 is a staggering £76 million.

In a series of parliamentary questions John McDonnell attempted to find out the full costs of franchising since privatisation.

Incredibly, the government has been unable to provide financial information between 1996 and 2003 but in a parliamentary answer transport minister Chris Mole confirmed that the price of private rail franchising to the public purse between 2003-2005 was £42.4 million and between 2005-2009 was £33.8 million.

RMT released the new financial information exactly two months after the East Coast Mainline franchise was seized back from National Express and taken into public ownership.

RMT General Secretary Bob Crow renewed the union’s call for an end to the “expense, waste, disruption and fragmentation of rail

privatisation”.

“Tens of millions of pounds that could have been invested in the rail network has been squandered on drawing up and tendering train operating franchises.

“When you add in the hundreds of millions soaked up in public subsidies by the train operating companies, and the huge amounts extracted from the system in profits, dividends and bonuses, we can see the epic scale of the publicly-funded rip off which is rail privatisation.

“While precious resources are being wasted on propping up the failed policy of rail privatisation 1,500 safety-critical rail maintenance jobs are being threatened with the axe.

“That’s the distorted priorities of the current UK rail system – unlimited funds to keep privatisation afloat while safety is compromised out on the tracks in a dash for cuts,” Bob said.

RMT also slammed the government for admitting that they have not carried out any value for money comparison on the alternative option of

running rail services in the public sector.

In a written response to RMT parliamentary group member David Drew MP, transport minister Chris Mole revealed that his department has made “no assessment of the value for money of operating rail passenger services in the public sector”.

Despite all the talk about tougher contracts, this announcement on franchises is a complete capitulation to the train operating companies. Coming just days after the First Capital Connect commuter franchise went into meltdown it is unbelievable that the government would even consider shifting the goalposts even further in favour of the private companies.

ELECTION

RMT will be make the continuing chaos of rail privatisation a major issue in the run up to the general election, warning Labour that their plans to extend franchises up to 22 years would be “electoral suicide which will alienate millions of passengers sick and tired of the disruption

and fragmentation of the taxpayer sponsored rip-off on the rail network”.

RMT warns that the moves to extend the length of franchises, confirmed by Transport Secretary Lord Adonis, are designed to fatten-up private sector returns on the East Coast Main Line, which is due for retendering next year, and where two previous gambles on privatisation have collapsed into chaos.

Bob Crow added that rail privatisation had been a licence to print money.

“Fares and other charges have been jacked up – often by stealth – and over £11 billion has been handed over in subsidies to the train operators in the past ten years while they have extracted profits of over £2 billion since 1997.

“RMT will fight these rail franchise extension plans and we will make this a major issue in the run up to the general election.

“We will continue to fight for the safe and reliable alternative to this taxpayer sponsored rip off and that means public ownership of the entire rail network,” he said. ■

RMT WINS CAMPAIGN ON EAST COAST MAIN LINE

An agreement has been reached between the union and East Coast Main Line that ensures a guard will remain fully in charge of the opening and closing of the doors on the class 180 trains running on the line.

RMT welcomed this victory as an important milestone in the battle against Driver Only Operation (DOO and significant in terms of the on-going fight to retain guards on the new Scotrail Edinburgh/Glasgow via Airdrie to Bathgate route.

Following representations made by RMT representatives the five class 180 trains currently forming part of the East Coast fleet have been modified to ensure that guards control all aspects of door control.

The negotiators were also able to get a guarantee from East Coast that it does not intend to operate these trains under DOO or to transfer any element of door control to the driver.

RMT general secretary Bob Crow said that success on the East Coast Main Line was a great victory in our continuing campaign to have guards on all trains and the fight to ensure that the guards should retain full operational and safety duties.

"This is a campaign supported by the public and the East Coast success will put pressure on other Train Operating Companies to follow suit and particularly Scotrail on their new Edinburgh/Glasgow via Airdrie to Bathgate route," he said. ■

FIRST CAPITAL CONNECT FAILS THAMESLINK FRANCHISE



Luton North MP Kelvin Hopkins, a member of RMT's Parliamentary group, has tabled Early Day Motion 773 demanding that First Capital Connect be stripped of their Thameslink franchise.

The EDM calls for the service taken in-house and "run as a publicly-owned and accountable public service for the benefit of passengers, taxpayers and railway employees".

First Group, the franchise holder of the FCC operation and Scotrail, has been branded the 'Worst Company in Britain' over continuing failures on their rail operations - cutting corners to maximise dividends while soaking up £140 million last year in taxpayer subsidies and creaming off over £90 million in profits.

The House of Commons held an adjournment debate in which Kelvin Hopkins was joined by other members of the union's Parliamentary Group in piling pressure on

the government to sack FCC and renationalise the chaotic franchise.

Secretary of State for Transport Lord Adonis has already not ruled out stripping FCC of the Thameslink franchise unless urgent improvements were made.

EARLY DAY MOTION 773 SAYS:

"That this House notes the continued poor service on First Capital Connect and that consequently the company is in breach of its franchise agreement; is appalled that passengers have suffered this disruption whilst First Group's Chief Executive was paid over £1 million in 2009 and the company's profits have exceeded £800 million since rail privatisation; welcomes the fact that the Minister of State for Transport has confirmed that all options are on the table when considering the future of the franchise; and urges the government to take the franchise in-house

and run it as a publicly-owned and accountable public service for the benefit of passengers, taxpayers and railway employees."

RMT general secretary Bob Crow said that the time for threatening First Group over their Thameslink franchise was over.

"Now it's time for the government to act, sack the company and return their operations to direct public ownership.

"This is a company that has made £800 million in profits since privatisation and whose Chief Executive was paid over £1 million in 2009.

"Not only is their Thameslink service a disgrace but on their Scotrail franchise they are prepared to rip up the safety rules and kick the guards off their trains.

"They are a disgrace and the sooner the government dumps them the better," he said. ■

HANDS OFF ROYAL FLEET AUXILIARY

RMT campaigns against privatisation of the Royal Fleet Auxiliary fleet

RMT has launched a campaign against privatisation the Royal Fleet Auxiliary (RFA) fleet, the navy's lifeline delivering fuel, food and other essential material including humanitarian aid to disaster-stricken areas.

RFA Largs Bay is currently being loaded with desperately needed material aid to Haiti as RMT goes to press.

Yet up to 20 private shipping companies are in talks with the Ministry of Defence with a view to participating in the privatisation of Royal Fleet Auxiliary operations.

Currently, RFA crews on sixteen ships provide specialist civilian support for the Royal Navy under the auspices of the Ministry of Defence.

The Treasury has announced that the role of the RFA is to be considered as part of the Treasury's Operational Efficiency Review.

Clearly the danger is that a decision will be made to privatise this operation and outsource the services currently performed by RFA to competitive tender and private operation. The companies will no doubt tell the Ministry of Defence that they can undercut the existing RFA crew and ship costs.

Privatisation supporters point

out that RFA ships typically carry specially trained crews that are twice as large as equivalent commercial vessels. They also believe costs could be drastically cut by following the commercial sector and shedding UK ratings in favour of low paid foreign ratings in a process known as social dumping.

The Treasury has formally stated that it will examine the current arrangements for delivering maritime operational support through the RFA. RMT has been informed that the union will be part of the Review Group which will consider the issue in detail and that no judgements have been made.

Initially the Review Group will consider the relationship between the number of ships RFA run, their existing tasks and how they should be designed and trained to operate and the actual costs.

There will also be ship visits which RMT hopes will demonstrate the operational complexity and the integrated nature of RFA work.

RMT remains committed to playing a full role in arguing the union's case within the Review Group. However should the Ministry of Defence seek to privatise the functions of RMT members, or threaten their jobs

and conditions, the union will mount a vigorous campaign in opposition.

The arguments that will be deployed will include the following:

- Under Flexible Global Reach an extensive review was carried out just over three years ago and this concluded in 2007 with the result that an evolved RFA was judged as best suited to continue to provide support for the Royal Navy.
- The Flexible Global Reach Study concluded that the commercial options should not be taken forward as they failed to provide the operational capability required.
- RFA crew have consistently taken on new roles and responsibilities to match the changing requirements of the times, for example with specialist training in such areas as helicopters, fire-fighting and damage control, use of self-defence systems, specialist navigation and warfare, naval communications and command systems.
- The seafarers have also embraced changes in occupational status which

have allowed greater scope for operational activity whilst still preserving merchant navy categorization, and allowing an exchange of expertise and specialist skills.

- The future of RFA is inextricably linked with the future of UK seafarers. RFA is the largest employer of UK seafarers, employing a total of 2,500 seafaring ratings and officers with secure training and employment. A threat to the future of RFA would therefore undermine the DfT objective of developing and retaining UK maritime skills.
- RFA personnel have consistently demonstrated professionalism, expertise, dedication and flexibility. They demonstrate the value in retaining and developing a specialist civilian crewed fleet to provide strategic support for the armed forces. For an island nation it is strategically wise to preserve this vital resource.

Further meetings of the Review Group will be taking place in the next few months. In the meantime RMT will, alongside RMT Parliamentary Group, be making representations direct to the relevant Minister. ■

RFA ON HAITI MISSION

AID: RFA ship *Largs Bay* being loaded at Marchwood military port in Southampton with vital aid and supplies as part of the international relief effort in Haiti.

It will carry 40 Land Rovers for charity personnel to reach the worst affected areas, shelter materials and support equipment such as forklift trucks to help rebuild the port. *Largs* is a dedicated amphibious supply ship which means that it can use onboard powered rafts to discharge aid to a beach if necessary.



HANDS OFF SCOTTISH FERRY SERVICES

RMT steps up campaign against the break up of the Clyde and Hebrides ferry network, currently operated by Caledonian MacBrayne

RMT is setting up a series of meeting in Scotland in May as part of the campaign against proposals to break up the Clyde and Hebrides ferry network, currently operated by Caledonian MacBrayne.

The union will use the meeting to spell out the case for the retention of the existing life line ferry network. RMT is also concerned for the future of other ferry services, such as the Northern Isles arising from the review of Scottish ferry services by the Scottish government.

RMT has consistently opposed tendering of ferry services on the Clyde and Hebrides ferry network and will continue to do so. At the current time Caledonian MacBrayne operate the routes but there is no guarantee for the future with the Scottish Executive continuing to bend to the will of the European Commission and the implementation of the EU maritime regulations.

PRIVATISATION

Under these rules, RMT members are faced with the immediate

threat of privatisation by default through the possible fragmentation of the Clyde and Hebrides ferry network.

RMT General Secretary Bob Crow and National Secretary Steve Todd have already met with Scottish government officials to express concerns over the way the review of Scottish Ferry services is taking place.

Civil servants have commissioned consultants to examine how ferry services are currently operated and how these services should be organised.

It is possible that additional ferry services might be recommended, but the consultancy work being undertaken by Professor Alf Baird University of the Transport Research Institute at Edinburgh Napier University is also examining the structure and existing networks of ferry services, including the Clyde and Hebrides, and the Northern Isles.

RMT has made a detailed submission outlining arguments for the retention of the Clyde

and Hebrides network direct to the Scottish government:

- The existing network provides important economies of scale and gives flexibility through redeployment of tonnage.
- Services are run on the basis of needs for local communities and businesses rather than profit
- Cross subsidy enables the routes that may be profitable in the summer to subsidise the rest of the network
- Caledonian MacBrayne provides important training opportunities for ratings at a time when training in the UK Shipping Industry has dwindled to alarmingly low levels.
- The company remain an important employer for not only the UK shipping industry but also within the island communities and passengers value the existing service.
- The introduction of any new operators onto the Clyde and Hebrides ferry network could

be very serious for the retention of Scottish maritime skills in the event that new companies sought to exploit the lack of employment regulation in the maritime industry and replace local seafarers with low cost foreign nationals.

- The current workforce arrangements are not costly as portrayed by the critics, the Clyde and Hebrides services are provided on a lean and mean service of 13 ships that guarantee reliable ferry services to island services.
- The employer has a stable workforce underpinned by a collective bargaining agreement and a workforce that understands the value of lifeline services to fragile island communities.
- The European Commission has now approved the existing network so there is no reason for the Scottish government to contemplate fragmentation within the Scottish Ferries review. ■

SAVE OUR MARITIME SKILLS

RMT general secretary Bob Crow met with Prime Minister Gordon Brown recently to press for increased funding for seafaring ratings training.

He told the Prime Minister that urgent help was needed to boost ratings training. The proposals for increased training support for seafaring ratings and officers were presented as part of a UK Shipping Industry training document that has now been with the Department for Transport since 2007.

Representatives from all sides of the UK Shipping Industry were in attendance at the meeting, together with

Parliamentary Group members Gwyn Prosser MP and John McDonnell MP, and the Prime Minister has promised to respond within a month.

The Prime Minister indicated that the Industry proposals may have a place alongside other initiatives on apprenticeships and job creation programmes.

The document has arisen following pressure from the union for concessions relating to the tonnage tax.

At the current time shipping companies entering the tonnage tax scheme have no mandatory commitment for UK

ratings training.

However, for officers companies, have to train one cadet for every fifteen officers employed. The proposals would mean that shipping companies can train two ratings instead of one officer to fulfill their Minimum Training Obligation as an alternative option.

The joint document also includes a request for enhanced training support for companies that agree to train and employ UK seafarers, ratings and officers, for a minimum period of time.

Seafarer members will receive a campaign postcard



with this magazine (above) and are urged to send them directly to your MP. Cards can be obtained from regional and shipping offices, or you can e-mail s.yandell@rmt.org.uk at Head Office.

RMT WINS JUSTICE FOR NETWORK RAIL MANAGER

RMT Three Bridges branch secretary Dave Crawford speaks to RMT News about an important case in defence of a Network Rail Manager

RMT Three Bridges branch secretary Dave Crawford has represented dozens of union members over the years in his capacity as a lay official of the union.

But it is not often that a union member gets to advocate on behalf of one of his former managers.

"It is certainly one of the more unusual cases I have had to represent someone in," says Dave.

"But what happened was so unfair and unjust that it there was never a question that I wouldn't take on the role of advocate".

Dave explains that problems began for the member – a local operations' manager at Network Rail – before Christmas, when he went into what he thought was a routine meeting with his

manager.

The meeting was anything but routine as the member was asked to see another manager and before he knew it was suspended from work.

The issue revolved around the fact that the member was responsible for managing a trainer.

The trainer found that he would sometimes turn up for days he was booked in and there would be nobody to teach. Clearly there had been a problem, but it wasn't so simple, the member had himself been on training courses or leave on some of these problem days.

The member thought that within a short time he would be called back into work and the problem would be sorted. After all, in all his 41 years in the job he had an unblemished

disciplinary record.

When he wasn't called back into work within a few days the member phoned the union's helpline to get advice. Through that phone call he was put in touch with local officials.

Dave was meant to represent him at the disciplinary hearing but they arranged it for when I was on leave. It isn't the first time something like that had happened so, as a backup plan, Adrian "A.J." Yates, South London branch secretary represented him. Adrian did a "fantastic job" but the member didn't see justice at that point.

Two witnesses, who it had been agreed with Network Rail were to attend the hearing, were not there on the day.

Rather than reschedule, the hearing went ahead anyway. Adrian pointed out that there were five relevant pieces of information that had been requested which had not materialised from the company. Between this evidence and the lack of witnesses this led to a

further 28 procedural irregularities.

The outcome of the hearing was that the member's job was to be downgraded from local operations' manager to shift manager. With the support of the union the member vowed to fight on.

APPEAL

An appeal hearing was held in January at which Dave represented the member.

"At first I was sceptical," he recalls, "nobody seemed very optimistic about the case. "But we were listened to by someone independent, from outside the area," he said.

As a result the decision to downgrade the member's job was overturned. Finally, after being suspended over the Christmas period with no communication or knowledge of his fate he had got justice.

Importantly, since the case has been dealt with, the member reports that management have made real efforts to put the issue in the past and ensure that he is back doing the job that he loves to do, as usual, without any acrimony.

Dave says that the company seemed unaware that the member was in the union originally.

"They were even more surprised to see a relief signalman represent a manager.

"But from our point of view this was a terrible injustice against a longstanding RMT member and we had to make it a win for fairness," he says.

"All the work was worth it to see our member's face when he got the decision and rushed to ring his wife to tell her the good news.

"The case sends out a strong message that no matter what grade you hold RMT will stand shoulder to shoulder with you," a smiling Dave says. ■

DEFENDING THE WELFARE STATE & PUBLIC SERVICES

MARCH & RALLY

SAT 10 APRIL 2010

ASSEMBLE 12 noon for 1pm

Temple Place, Embankment

RALLY 2pm

Trafalgar Square

Speakers, music and entertainment

Supported by ASLEF, BECTU, BMA, CWU, FBU, GMB, KNP, NPG, NUJ, NUT, POA, RMT, PCS, RADAR, TSSA, TUC, UCATT, UCU, UNISON, UNITE and RSDA/N.

Since 1948, Britain has supported the principle that state pensions, health care, education and other public services are best provided by society as whole.

This is now under threat.

- The state pension is totally inadequate, leaving at least 1 in 4 older people to live in poverty
- 7m households have a child living in poverty and existing benefits provide a very limited safety net
- Unemployment now stands at over 2m and welfare offers no solution
- 10m adults are disabled and face huge barriers to escaping financial hardship
- The NHS is slowly being privatised behind a smokescreen of choice and competition, and patients are suffering as a result
- Our public services are now facing massive cuts and further privatisation

The welfare state and public services are an essential part of any civilised society - pooling the risk across the population and providing support and services to us all.

Let's speak out now!

GRAYRIGG SAFETY ADVICE NOT FULLY IMPLEMENTED

RMT demands a halt to rail maintenance job cuts after six out of ten key track safety recommendations made following the Grayrigg derailment were either not implemented or partly implemented

Six recommendations to improve rail safety following Grayrigg derailment in Cumbria in February 2007 have yet to be implemented according to a damning report for the Rail Accident Investigation Branch (RAIB).

RMT called for an immediate halt to plans to axe up to 1,500 safety critical rail maintenance jobs following the report revealed that six out of ten of the safety recommendations on track inspection and repair, following the fatal derailment on the West Coast Mainline, have either not been implemented at all by Network Rail or have not been fully

implemented to the satisfaction of the Office of Rail Regulation (ORR).

The RAIB report into the Marks Tey derailment in Essex on June 12 2008 contains a specific section on the Grayrigg derailment on February 23 2007 in which one person died and 30 suffered serious injuries.

The RAIB report says that the Office of Rail Regulation "does not believe that sufficient work has been done" on four of the ten key track inspection and repair recommendations and on two of the recommendations "Network Rail has proposed not to implement" contrary to the view of the ORR that the

recommendations remain valid.

However a Network Rail spokesman said that the recommendations were not binding.

RMT believes that the failure of Network Rail to either implement, or implement fully, the majority of the track inspection and repair recommendations arising from the Grayrigg disaster is tied in with the cuts drive and that the safety position will be undermined with lethal consequences if the maintenance job cuts are bulldozed through.

RMT general secretary Bob Crow said that it was a shocking

indictment of Network Rail's attitude to safety that, three years after the fatal derailment at Grayrigg, it has failed to either implement, or implement fully, the majority of the key track inspection and repair recommendations.

"There is no doubt that the impact of the planned maintenance job losses will have lethal consequences and will create the perfect conditions for another Grayrigg or Potters Bar.

"That is the message that we are taking to the public with the demand that the maintenance jobs massacre be halted immediately," he said. ■

RAIB report into Marks Tey with Grayrigg references can be found here
http://www.raib.gov.uk/cms_resources.cfm?file=/100114_R012010_MarksTey.pdf



PROTEST IN LILLE!

Join RMT demonstration in Lille, France on Tuesday April 13 to demand 'Rail Safety - Not EU Rail Privatisation'

RMT is joining forces with French and Portuguese rail unions to protest outside the European Railways Agency in the French city of Lille against dangerous EU rules demanding 'open access' for private rail companies.

Under the European Commission's third rail package all EU international passenger rail services must be opened up to 'competition' as of January 1 2010.

Under the Lisbon Treaty, which came into force last December, transport issues are now covered by Qualified Majority Voting (QMV), effectively abolishing national vetoes and handing further powers over transport to EU institutions.

Both these developments, which no electorate has voted for, has unleashed an orgy of takeover bids and rapidly sped up moves towards the creation of huge rail monopolies dominated by France and Germany.

SNCF

For instance rail privateer Arriva is in talks with French state-owned rail operator SNCF over moves to create a European transport group with revenues of about €6 billion.

Arriva, which has already presence in Europe, is in talks with SNCF over a combination of Arriva and all, or part of, Keolis, its transportation business.

Combining the operations of Keolis and Arriva would give the French operator access to private sector expertise on winning franchises and marketing to run a railway in a competitive market as set out by EU rules.

Arriva, which runs most of Wales's train services and CrossCountry trains, has



managed to grab a share of the EU-led rail privatisation bonanza in Europe by bidding for local authority contracts and franchises as they come up.

Its European division reported £1.4 billion in revenues for 2008 but lacks a significant presence in France to match its operations in other big European countries and Scandinavia.

Adding Keolis to its business would transform the size of Arriva, in order to compete with its larger rival FirstGroup. Keolis's turnover was €3.2 billion in 2008, with 56 per cent of that from France and the remainder from international operations.

The company has minority stakes in several UK rail operating companies, including a holding in Govia – the operator of Southeastern, Southern and London Midland – with Go-Ahead group.

Arriva recently announced that 11-month revenues had grown in its bus and train businesses and that cost cutting measures would offset higher fuel costs.

Some €200 billion of European transport services remain in state hands and the

new EU rules, combined with tight budgetary pressures set out in EU treaties such as Maastricht, mean these are increasingly likely to be privatised or put out for tender.

SNCF is basically preparing for a battle, primarily with German-state owned rail operator Deutsche Bahn over control of Europe's rail passenger lines.

DEUTSCHE BAHN

Deutsche Bahn is scrambling to win control of rail services outside its homeland.

It owns Chiltern Railways and has taken over the UK rail freight monopoly English, Wales and Scottish railways, which is now renamed DB Schenker and is cherry-picking operations in the drive for profits.

Earlier this month DB Schenker announced plans to shut down Trafford Park – the company's "flagship" depot in the North West – and Falkland Depot in Fife Scotland.

The union has said that the plans were a massive kick in the teeth for rail freight in the UK and are a bitter blow for both the North West and Scotland.

"It is breathtaking hypocrisy for bosses at DB Schenker to

spout off about rail freight and the environment at the same time as drawing up plans that rip the heart out of rail freight in the North West and in Fife," said RMT general secretary Bob Crow.

EUROSTAR

DB also wants to compete with Eurostar in running passenger services through the Channel Tunnel.

Deutsche Bahn wants to run its 186mph InterCityExpress (ICE) service between London and Cologne, but current tunnel safety rules stands in its way.

Currently passenger trains using the tunnel must be able to split in half and leave in separate directions in the event of an emergency. The escape doors from the main tunnels to the emergency service tunnel that runs between them are 375 metres apart.

A standard-length train could find itself stranded some distance from an escape door in a fire, forcing passengers to travel further on foot, possibly through smoke, to reach an exit.

Eurostar is the only passenger train operator that satisfies the safety regime. Its trains are owned by SNCF, the

French state operator, London & Continental Railways of the UK or SNCB of Belgium, partners in the cross-Channel service.

An Inter-Governmental Commission on Channel tunnel safety is preparing the route to meet EU competition rules to open international passenger traffic to competition.

IGC UK secretariat head Terry Gates said no final decision had been made but it was time to ask whether safety rules needed to be rewritten.

He told the *Financial Times*: "The IGC would not want to stand in the way of trains passing through the tunnel. But safety is paramount".

Eurotunnel spokesman John Keefe said: "The simple position is that there is now open access for all high-speed train operators who have got equipment that meets safety requirements".

RMT has warned that the pressure from EU competition rules is already leading to safety being watered down.

For instance, RMT members working for Eurostar recently passed a vote of no confidence

in the company's senior management and have demanded assurances on the safe running of the service following the major breakdowns just before Christmas.

During the disruption Train Managers were requested to work on a train alone in contravention of all safety rules.

In a letter to the company, RMT has also demanded disclosure of the full facts on a range of staff concerns such as why it took up to eight hours to get stranded trains out of the Euro Tunnel and why it took an additional four hours after the trains left the tunnel to implement any contingency plan to rescue passengers and staff.

JOIN THE PROTEST

Make sure your branch is represented in Lille. A circular will shortly be sent out from head office calling for participants to sign up or contact head office on 020 7529 8307 or e-mail m.carty@rmt.org.uk ■

JOINT UNION STATEMENT

RAIL SAFETY NOT EUROPEAN RAIL PRIVATISATION

We call upon the European Railways Agency (ERA) to give a clear commitment that rail safety and jobs will not be sacrificed in the interests of competition and profit.

We note that:

- the ERA is responsible for implementing the rules governing the European internal market across national rail systems
- since 2006 liberalisation of rail freight has led rail unions to raise serious concerns over safety following a series of avoidable accidents involving privatised freight operators including in the Channel Tunnel (21 August 2006 and 11 September 2008), Montauban (26 April 2008), Livernan (21 May 2009), Viareggio (29 June 2009)
- the Inter-Governmental Commission on the Channel tunnel is examining the safety regime to prepare the route to meet European Union requirements to open international passenger traffic to competition from 1 January 2010
- the UK secretariat of the IGC safety authority has said that in light of European rail legislation it is time to ask whether current safety rules remain relevant
- Eurostar is the only passenger train operator that satisfies the current safety regime
- the current review of safety appears likely to scrap the requirement that passenger trains using the tunnel be able to split in half and leave in separate directions in the event of an emergency
- the escape doors from the main tunnels to the emergency service tunnel that runs between them are 375 metres apart - a standard-length train could find itself stranded some distance from an escape door in a fire, forcing passengers to travel further on foot, possibly through smoke, to reach an exit

We reject any weakening of operational safety rules governing cross-border rail traffic. We are concerned that the drive to competition contained in the EU rail packages is causing national and international safety authorities to put the interests of competition before safety.

We call on all transport unions and organisations that defend public transport and the environment to oppose the systematic destruction of national rail networks, jobs and safety standards brought about as a result of the implementation of European Union rail liberalisation packages. As a first step we are calling for a mass protest at the offices of the European Railway Agency in Lille on Tuesday April 13 2010.

Signed by RMT, ASLEF, CGT(France), SNTSF (Portugal)

LONDON UNDERGROUND ENGINEERING RMT BRANCH SPECIAL MEETING

All welcome

ORGANISING, MILITANCY AND REVITALISATION: THE CASE OF RMT

March 4
18:00 at Bloomsbury Central Baptist Church
near Tottenham Court Road Tube

SPEAKERS:

PROFESSOR RALPH DARLINGTON
RMT GENERAL SECRETARY BOB CROW
RMT PRESIDENT ALEX GORDON

The meeting will look at why RMT has adopted an alternative organising model, rejecting social partnership in favour of mobilizing workers through industrial action and overtly political trade unionism. Such an approach has been neglected by academics and practitioners alike, despite appearing to be more successful in terms of growing membership levels, collective bargaining gains and the vibrancy of union organisation.

Professor Ralph Darlington critically evaluates the relationship between union organising, militancy and revitalisation by examining the experiences of RMT.

RATTLING CAGES

Vice chair of RMT London taxi branch John Kennedy looks at the prospects for taxi members in 2010

Welcome to the New Year and a new decade of what appears already to be a future that threatens the livelihoods of the taxi trade in London due to the failings of Transport for London to get a grip of touting here in the capital. There is also a problem with the illegal formation of mini-cab ranks that appear outside any venue that is granted a satellite mini-cab office licence.

Mini-cabs are here to stay but the right to ply for hire is solely the right of taxi-cabs and it should worry all taxi-cab drivers that case/common law appears to be ignored by those in authority in the vain attempt to try and create a second class, second rate immediate hire mini-cab service outside clubs and bars within London.

RMT and its London taxi branch is the only trade union able and willing to organise a fight back that others only talk of. In fact this may explain why two trade publications Taxi and Cab Trade News have attacked RMT in recent months for they don't seem to like taxi-cab drivers asking questions that they seem unwilling or unable to answer.

The future for the London taxi-cab driver can be brighter and we at the London taxi branch must ensure that we continue to build upon the great work done so far and ensure our voice is heard within Parliament, city hall and on the ranks.

At the December branch meeting 16 motions were passed which gave the branch not only a spine but a solid foundation that we can build on for we will not be dictated to by any other trade organisation nor will we be bullied by the incompetent management at Transport for London.

The Taxi trade in London is in real danger but with your support we can grow the branch into an even larger force within the capital and press on defending your right to ply for hire and the threat from a badly run mini-cab licensing regime.

RMT is the only union for self employed taxi-cab drivers to join, we are democratic, we have more members attending branch meetings than other trade orgs can muster for an AGM, you the membership decide and shape policy unlike other organisations who decide in secret what is good for you, your family and trade.

So let your colleagues know that RMT



TAXI!: RMT general secretary Bob Crow with members of the RMT taxi branch at a recent recruitment day at Waterloo Station.

will be campaigning to rid the streets of the capital of rickshaws and pedicabs unlike the LTDA and the union UNITE who say they want a ban but then wish to allow a bill through Parliament that will give rickshaws and pedicabs ranks!

We at RMT stand up and fight for the rights of our members and if that means we have to upset a few people at Transport for London so be it, for your conditions matter more than a few careers of middle ranking meddling civil servants.

Just remind yourself of what we have achieved in 2009, we have set up a branch from scratch, challenged TFL/PCO regarding our standards and won the day even though others knew that an individual with "serious problems" was on the knowledge.

RMT led the campaign and changed policy and forced TFL/PCO into a U-turn. We have halted the progress of the bill

which seeks to give powers to councils and TFL to appoint pedicab/rickshaw ranks. We are leading the campaign to remove mini-cabs from the M4 bus lane whilst others just stand by and do very little other than slate us in their trade publications.

So please do have a look at the branch blog www.rmtlondontaxibranch.blogspot.com look out for the RMT London taxi branch newsletter and hopefully we shall see you on the ranks and branch meetings soon, so may we take this opportunity to wish you and your family a very happy New Year for 2010.

Let us move forward together and continue the great work we have done so far and just in case you were wondering or having any doubts we do not represent mini-cab drivers and we don't support the use of tachographs in taxi-cabs for the self employed taxi-cab driver. ■

www.rmtjunction.org.uk



Hundreds of RMT member sign up to be a part of RMT Junction, the union's social networking website

Similar in concept to websites like Facebook, RMT Junction assigns users to groups based on their branch, region or workplace etc. Users are free to also set up their own groups relating to anything they like – all within a secure online environment.

One union activist told RMT News: “I can see this being a fantastic tool in helping members across the country and from different work areas to keep in touch with each other.”

Another said: “This is a good idea and as a rep I like it a lot. It has loads of potential.”

Within groups users can converse with other members and post materials such as photos, newsletters or other files, embed YouTube videos and write their own blogs and messages.

Users are also able to “friend” others on the network,

allowing them to keep tabs on what new materials acquaintances have posted or groups they have joined etc.

In fact, just like Facebook, RMT Junction will only really function at its optimum as more people sign up to and use it. It is RMT members themselves who will populate the site with their contributions – a blank canvas waiting to be filled by ordinary members.

As an RMT member you can sign up and get active on the network straight away. Simply visit www.rmtjunction.org.uk to register. You will need your RMT membership number (which can be found on your membership card) and your national insurance number (usually found on your wage slip).

You will need your RMT membership number and National Insurance number to

do so but it should be stressed that the website does not store your NI number, merely checks it against the central RMT database.

It is hoped that in time RMT Junction can become a powerful organising tool in the struggle to win decency and fair pay at work for the union's 80,000 members.

And of course there is still a chance to win an iPod in our special competition to launch RMT Junction. Instructions can be found on this page.

While RMT Junction aims to provide a secure online

environment, members should always exercise caution about any material they post online – particularly if it includes criticism of their employer.

Subscribers to Facebook and other social networking websites have lost their jobs after posting disparaging comments about individual managers or the firms they work for.

No system can guarantee itself 100 per cent watertight against a determined hacker. Caution should be the watchword before posting content, particularly about your employer. ■

Win an ipod!

The latest iPod Touch could be yours in our special competition to launch RMT Junction. All you have to do is:

1. Register with RMT Junction at www.rmtjunction.org.uk
2. Upload some details (as much or as little as you like) to your profile, as well as a profile picture (click on “Profile” in the black bar at the top).
3. Join the “Win an iPod” group (simply type “iPod” into the search box at the top-right of any page to find it).

A winner will be picked at random and announced in the March edition of RMT News.

iPod kindly donated by UIA Home Insurance, www.uia.co.uk



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RMT WINS FOR MEMBERS

RMT takes up members' legal cases free of charge, and, unlike commercial "no win/no fee" solicitors, takes no commission on successful claims.

SHIPPING MEMBER WINS ASBESTOS CLAIM

A Yorkshire-based RMT member exposed to asbestos in his workplace over a 25 year period and went on to develop the asbestos related disease Mesothelioma, has been awarded over £143,000 compensation against his employer.

The member, who was in the Merchant Navy for his entire career, was exposed to asbestos when lagging was removed from pipes and repairs had to be carried out by engineers.

The ship had lagged steam pipes which ran from the engine rooms and boiler rooms all over the ship, through the alleyways, and into the cabins. The steam pipes also went into all the working rooms, including the Galley where he worked. When the lagging was removed, it would create a haze of dust around the area where the repair was being carried out.

It was during the annual dry docking that the member believed he suffered the most exposure to asbestos. When the ship came in to dry dock various trades would carry out repairs and the ship was extremely dusty during that period. The member remained on ship during that time, carrying out his duties. At the end of the period he was also involved in sweeping up the dusty ship.

It was open knowledge that asbestos was in use on the ship but at the time the workers were unaware of the health dangers that it posed.

After the member contracted Mesothelioma and sought compensation, the company's insurers refused to negotiate a settlement, so it was necessary for the union's lawyers to commence court proceedings. As a result the member was



KILLER: Protesters outside the House of Lords demand compensation for deaths from asbestos related cancer

awarded £143,873.

Helen Tomlin, asbestos team supervisor for Yorkshire region at Thompsons, was the solicitor who dealt with the case.

Ms Tomlin said that Mesothelioma was a devastating terminal disease caused by exposure to asbestos.

"This was a particularly difficult case and I would like to thank the union for supporting the member throughout its duration.

"I am pleased that we got a settlement within the member's lifetime for him and his family and also to show that employers can be held to account," she said.

HGV DRIVER INJURED BY OVERSTACKING

AN HGV driver in Northampton received £12,000 in compensation after suffering strain injuries due to his lorry being regularly overstacked.

Night workers would invariably improperly stack or stack the contents of his lorry too high resulting in the contents falling over on the way to the store. This meant that the member had to lift and manoeuvre boxes when he reached his destination.

As a result the member suffered strain injury to his neck and severe headaches over a period of time, leading to

psychological injuries.

RMT lawyers commenced court proceedings against the employer's insurers after they refused to negotiate a settlement. As a result the member was awarded £12,000.

RAIL MAINTENANCE WORKER WIN COMPENSATION

An RMT rail maintenance worker was injured while carrying out routine maintenance on the railway at Winterset, Wakefield.

As he was walking up the side cess the cover on the drain catch collapsed and his left leg fell into it, causing him an injury in the process.

After negotiations with the employer the member was awarded £2,600.

MEMBER COMPENSATED AFTER FALL

A London Underground fleet maintenance worker was injured at Hammersmith Depot while working for Metronet. The union member slipped on some grease on access steps while he was entering a road pit. He fell approximately 5 foot, receiving injuries to his head, leg and back.

Metronet's insurers refused to negotiate a settlement so RMT lawyers commenced court proceedings. As a result the member was awarded £10,000.

MEMBER AWARDED £62,000

A Cumbrian rail worker was injured when he slipped while changing insulators on an overhead line. As he was working on the line the Acrow jack slipped, causing him to fall and break his leg.

The union member was awarded £65,000 as result of court proceedings initiated by RMT lawyers when the other side's insurers refused to negotiate a settlement. ■

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

EU DEMANDS ITALIAN FERRY SELL-OFF

Italy has been told by the European Union to privatise the country's 76-vessel ferry company Tirrenia di Navigazione, Europe's largest operator.

Pressurised by the European Commission, the sell-off starts with the privatisation process for Toremar, the first of Tirrenia's five regionally based operators.

Toremar's eight vessels link the Italian mainland with islands off Tuscany. The other subsidiaries comprise Naples based small island operator Caremar, 14 vessels, Sardinia based Saremar, seven ships, that links the island to Corsica and nearby islands, the 23 strong fleet of Siremar connecting Sicily with the Aeolian Islands, Lampedusa, Pantelleria and the

Aegadian Islands and Tirrenia's 22-vessel Adriatic Division with connections between the Italian mainland and with Albania.

Privatised Tirrenia Group companies will operate under 8-12-year public service concessions. Italy's Ustica Lines and Moby Line, France-based Corsica Ferries and Argentinian operator Buquebus are among have already shown interest in Toremar's sell-off and could be joined by Veolia Transport. Applications must be lodged by March with the successful candidate selected in September.

Ratings unions say they will react when they see the conditions of the sell-off and the effect on members' jobs.

FRENCH RAIL UNIONS STRIKE FOR JOBS

France's four main rail unions have united to take action

against plans to axe 3,600 jobs this year.

The powerful CGT rail workers' union, UNSA, SUD and the CFDT have called a 24-hour strike on 3 February for jobs and conditions, to counter management's restructuring plans and in defence of French Rail (SNCF) as a public service. The day of action could be the start of more action as the SNCF "only negotiates if it is compelled to", said CGT general secretary Didier le Reste.

The unions say that the SNCF, which has reduced its workforce by 21,500 jobs in the last seven years. The action follows stoppages in December and pressure on the SNCF to boost its share of rail freight following the European Commission's opening of domestic freight routes to market competition in April 2006.

GREEK RATINGS' UNION FIGHT SOCIAL DUMPING

The powerful Greek seamen's union, the Panhellenic Seamen's Federation (PNO), has launched a campaign of industrial action against the employment of low-paid Romanian in the latest case of social dumping in the shipping industry in Europe.

The Greek/Italian Minoan Lines' newest vessel plans to employ 50 low-paid foreign seafarers on the Cruise Europa, delivered to the Grimaldi group subsidiary in 2009 and the largest on Greece-Italy routes.

While the operator is following the trend of European-based operators to pay foreign seafarers less than Greek nationals, it is also infringing on Greek legislation on the crewing levels that must be assured by the country's seamen.

The Greek association of coastal trading operators is campaigning against the

national rules, citing the recent bankruptcy of three ferry companies: GA Ferries, SAOS Anen and Kallisti Ferries.

VEOLIA BIDS TO COMPETE WITH SNCF

Rail group Véolia Environment is in talks with Italy's state-owned rail operator Ferrovie dello Stato to operate high-speed trains in France from then beginning of 2012.

The probable first route would link Milan and Paris. Trenitalia is the first foreign operator to have requested slots in France after the European Commission introduced EU 'open access' rules for international rail passenger routes last month.

This will also allow Trenitalia to compete with French Rail (SNCF) by operating with a stop in France before Paris, in this case in Lyons although private passenger transport in a foreign country will not come into effect until around 2015.

Veolia is also looking possible competition with Eurostar between Paris and London, which would also include the Paris-Lille section. And a Brussels - Paris service via Lyons, also in competition with the SNCF.

POLISH HOLOCAUST SURVIVORS DEMAND JUSTICE

The last remaining Polish victims of the transport trains that took millions to Nazi death camps have mounted a claim for compensation after learning that Germany's state rail company is planning to run again on Polish rails.

Some 7,000 survivors are demanding compensation from Deutsche Bahn for the profits of the company's European expansion, which was made possible by the deregulation of rail competition under EU rules from January 1.

CHINA BUILDS HIGH-SPEED RAILWAY



China Railway High-speed (CRH) trains begins running in western China this month, linking XiAn in northwest Chinas Shaanxi province with Zhengzhou in central China's Henan province.

The new train completes the

505-kilometre journey in 1 hour and 48 minutes at a speed of up to 352 km/h, cutting the travel time from the current six hours. The line, part of a major east-west railway artery between Xuzhou and Lanzhou, cost about £4 billion.

Publicly-owned Deutsche Bahn is the successor to the wartime Reichsbahn, which charged its coerced passengers for their journeys to concentration camps including Auschwitz.

The call for compensation is being supported by Train of Commemoration, a German organisation dedicated to preserving the memory of the victims of deportations.

It estimates that Deutsche Reichsbahn made at least £400 million at today's value by charging transportees from all over Europe.

"Deutsche Reichsbahn was a state-owned logistical system of the Nazi regime so every deportation was carried out by them. This is Deutsche Bahn's heritage and its obligation," a spokesman said.

DB admits that the systematic murder of Jews, trade unionists, Roma and others would not have been possible without the railway but has so far refused to answer calls for compensation.

FINAL AGREEMENT SIGNED IN SEAFRANCE DISPUTE

The long running dispute over staffing at French Calais-Dover operator SeaFrance finally concluded following a series of meetings over crewing procedures on the four remaining SeaFrance cross Channel vessels.

The main block to a final conclusion was the disagreement by the majority CFDT ratings union with some of the details in the agreement. But the CGT ratings' union and the CGT-CGC officers' union committee have negotiated on the details and all four unions last month signed the final document, ending months of conflict.

The remaining discussions include the fine points of crewing on the three ferries and the Nord-Pas-de-Calais freighter, recapitalisation of SeaFrance by its mother company, French rail (SNCF) and organisation of the promised jobs and voluntary redundancies for the agreed 482 jobs to go. ■



WESTMINSTER TO LILLE

I was proud to chair RMT's recent Parliamentary lobby against Network Rail plans to slash 1,500 safety-critical rail jobs.

Hundreds of RMT members from Fort William to Brighton descended on London to give MPs the message "Rail Cuts Cost Lives".

Well done to everyone who mobilised for the union's first lobby of the year – it won't be the last. No one who was there will forget the rip snorting speech by general secretary Bob Crow, which brought a packed House of Commons Committee Room to its feet in applause.

MPs were left in no doubt that trade unionists won't stand for them turning a blind eye to greedy bosses running down rail maintenance, risking another rail disaster. Candidates at the forthcoming general election should be asked if they oppose these cuts. You can check if your MP is one of the 123 so far to sign House of Commons Early Day Motion 80 'NETWORK RAIL AND SAFETY' from Linda Riordan MP here <http://edmi.parliament.uk/EDMi/EDMDetails.aspx?EDMID=39617>.

While railworkers face unemployment, Network Rail boss Iain Coucher buys himself a million pound Estate in Scotland, complete with boathouse, jetty, 173 acres of land and a couple of islands. It makes you wonder if you're dreaming.

How can a man with a £4,000 office chair and no discernible talent other than presiding over a 'culture of fear and bullying' that led one former Network Rail boss to receive a £500,000 out-of-court settlement after accusing a senior executive of sex and racial discrimination, deserve a mind-boggling pay package of £1.24million?

Network Rail members being balloted for industrial action can have their say on Mr Coucher and voting papers are now arriving at members' homes. This dispute will be our union's toughest test since rail privatisation in 1994. But a fight for public safety, for workers' safety, for jobs and for our future is a fight worth having.

The fight for safety is also being carried out by the union over the privatisation threat hanging over the Royal Fleet Auxiliary and Caledonian MacBrayne. This union will fight tooth and nail to stop the break-up of these essential lifeline services.

RMT members employed by Eurostar report that during recent disruption, trains were despatched with no working International Train Radio and staffed with only one Train Manager.

These trains are designed to be split in the Channel tunnel to allow them to be driven out from either end in case of fire, such as the serious one that occurred in September 2008. Such a breach of safety procedures is totally unacceptable.

Yet an Inter-Governmental Commission on Channel tunnel safety is preparing tunnel rules to meet European Union requirements to open international passenger traffic to competition from January this year. RMT has warned that the pressure from EU competition rules is already leading to safety being watered down.

RMT, together with other unions, will be leading a protest for 'Rail Safety - NOT EU Rail Privatisation' in Lille, France on Tuesday April 13, 2010 to coincide with the European Transport Workers' Federation international day of action. If we can take as many to Lille as we did to Westminster, we will certainly make an impact.

Finally, I want to encourage RMT members to attend a public meeting sponsored by our London Underground Engineering branch on 'Organising, Militancy and Revitalisation: The Case of the RMT' on Thursday, March 4 from 18:00 hrs at Bloomsbury Central Baptist Church, 235 Shaftesbury Avenue, London WC2H 8EP - nearest tube station Tottenham Court Road.

It promises to be an interesting evening for anyone interested in building fighting, democratic trade unions.

**Solidarity wishes,
Alex Gordon**

BLACKPOOL TOWERS!

RMT Blackpool and Fylde Coast branch unveiled its new branch banner at a special meeting recently.

The banner features Blackpool's most famous landmark together with the branch name and the words "Workers United For All Grades". The banner also features the famous Blackpool beach donkeys walking along the shore line, the branch assured RMT News that this has no relation to local managers.

It was designed and produced by well known Labour movement banner maker Ed Hall and was donated to the branch by secretary Colin Waite.

Council of Executive member Craig Johnston was joined at the ceremony by Nick Quirk, a Council of Executives member until December last year.

Both executive members praised the branch for its increasing level of activity, including regular well-attended branch meetings, that has led to a significant jump in membership in the last 12 months.

Blackpool branch activists played a high profile part in the North West No2EU-Yes to Democracy election campaign

during the Euro elections and leafleted local stations for the anti-fascist "Hope Not Hate" campaign warning people of the dangers of voting for the anti-trade union BNP.

The branch also helped launch a newsletter for Northern Conductors at Blackpool, Barrow and Workington with the assistance of Northern Rail Conductors Company Councillor Kevin Morrison.

A special presentation was also made at the branch meeting to Matt Drummond – Chair of neighbouring Preston Branch who had represented Conductors at Blackpool on the Northern (and before that First North Western) company council for a number of years.

The banner has already had its first public display when members leafleted Blackpool North Station recently as part of the campaign against Network Rail job cuts.

The branch has also produced a branch tie featuring the tower, the branch name and the red rose of Lancashire. The banner will be attending this years' Durham Miners Gala in July as part of the increasing RMT presence at that event. ■



RMT DOUBLE WIN AT NORTHERN RAIL



WIN: from left to right, Craig Johnston, Shaun Richie, Workington branch secretary Sean Dixon and John Largue

Northern Rail drivers and RMT members Shaun Richie and John Largue have both been elected as local driver reps, taking a cleaning sweep of the seats for the union.

The two Workington branch members will be Local Lead Committee (LLC) reps for a period of three years.

RMT executive committee member Craig Johnston said

that he was delighted with the result.

"I believe Shaun and John will make excellent reps and have already done sterling work by helping to increase the activity of RMT 's Workington branch.

"This once more shows that RMT is the only all-grades specialist transport union," he said. ■

RMT WINS RECOGNITION AT ST JAMES SECURITY ON TYNE AND WEAR METRO

RMT has won trade union Recognition at St James Security which provides contracted Revenue Protection and Passenger Services for Nexus on the Tyne and Wear Metro.

The Metro, currently under threat of privatisation, is a well organised trade union workplace with RMT playing a leading role exemplified in the current campaign against the sell-off

St James Security provide contracted security services to retail outlets as well as transport systems and did not recognise trade unions for any of their contracts. The St James Security workers were aware that their colleagues working for Nexus on the Tyne and Wear Metro are members of a recognised trade union, RMT. As one of the first St James members to join the union pointed out: "we could see how the guys on Nexus dealt with issues and the protection that they got because

they were in the RMT and we asked ourselves why we couldn't have the same".

The Newcastle and Gateshead RMT branch were contacted by the St James workers some time ago about getting RMT recognised for the workers on the St James, Nexus contract.

Regional council and branch activists, the organising unit and regional officer Stan Herschel launched a recruitment and organising campaign. After several months of leafleting, paying visits and talking to workers about the union, RMT believed we had enough members to ask St James for Recognition. At this stage the company were not keen on this happening and RMT started the legal process of getting RMT recognised using the Central Arbitration Committee (CAC) procedures.

After the CAC process began Stan Herschel was contacted by the company to discuss



REPS: RMT reps Dave Wooton and Andy Armstrong step into the breach to represent their colleagues at work

recognising the RMT voluntarily, whilst these discussions were going on the organising campaign continued with letters going out to members, visits being made to the workplace and leaflets handed out and members being encouraged to look at who they would want as reps when recognition was achieved.

After Stan had met with the company twice the company signed a voluntary recognition agreement with RMT which is

based on the model agreement the union put to the company.

RMT now has one elected industrial rep Dave Wooton and health and safety rep Andy Armstrong, in place, with one reps position still to be filled. It is now about making sure that RMT structures are in place and supported so that the agreement works and member's issues individually and collectively are dealt with through the agreed procedures and to their satisfaction. ■

PULLING TOGETHER *A Popular History of RMT*

New free union publication gives an insight into the struggles, defeats and victories of members over 150 years

Pulling Together gives members an engaging and colourfully illustrated window on the history of the union up to the present day.

It tells the story of how the union developed under very difficult circumstances against very powerful opponents and maintained itself as a democratic, fighting

organisation that today represents members in all sectors and grades of the transport industry.

Pulling Together is available free to members from Unity House, 39 Chalton Street, London NW1 1JD with a stamped, addressed envelope or by e-mailing bdenny@rmt.org.uk



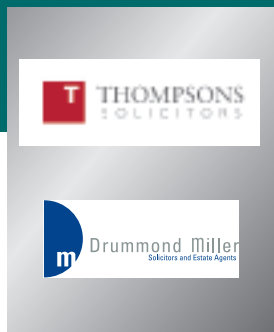
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PROTECTING AND PROMOTING OUR MEMBERS' INTERESTS



letters

NAÏVE OVER NATIONALISATION

Dear editor,

As a local union representative working on the East Coast mainline I read with interest Linda Riordan MP's column in RMT News and agreed with her observations.

However, as an ex-journalist I am always surprised by the naivety of politicians and union representatives who cannot understand why the government does not show any enthusiasm for re-nationalising the railways. The answer seems obvious to me.

However dysfunctional the privatised rail network is, it remains from a government's point of view, one step removed from its doorstep and therefore one step removed from real, vote-threatening blame.

No government is going to bring something in-house when it is clearly nervous about what the consequences might be in terms of tabloid headlines. However unpopular certain aspects of the system might be to the public, any criticism of the government is, at best, indirect and so not power-threatening.

You only have to look at the debacle on the East Coast, with first GNER and then National Express, when it should have been the government that shouldered the majority of the blame not the companies. There were negative articles in the press but nothing that was ever going to shift things decisively in our favour.

For any government to take seriously the idea of re-nationalisation both politicians and the public have to be educated about what the future model for the railways should be. The public must be told honestly how much it will cost, as well as how much it is costing them now, and the politicians must be persuaded the correct checks and measures will be put in place. This requires detailed, reasonable argument not sloganeering.

If politicians from all sides cannot be persuaded that a nationalised network can be run efficiently without it being a party political football then we will never win what remains our biggest battle.

Chris Morpeth
Berwick

SUPPORT BA WORKERS

Dear Editor,

I fully support attempts by BA cabin crew to protect their jobs and conditions and their planned action over Christmas even though this would have personally inconvenienced me.

The recent decision by the High Court to ban strike action was not only a travesty of justice but the biggest threat to democracy since the Florida recount of 2000.

Over 80 per cent of Unite members eligible took part in the secret ballot and 92.5 per cent of them voted for industrial action.

Yet to have the ballot declared void and the strike illegal by an unelected High Court Judge that clearly harbours anti-union feelings is a disgrace and sets democracy in this country back 150 years.

The governments' own findings after recent General Elections have found that there is still a problem with fraudulent voting in this country.

As a result if the decision reached by Mrs Justice Cox is implemented, it stands to reason that all elections should be declared null and void. We live in a country where a Prime Minister can govern with his party getting less than 35 per cent of the popular vote and MEPs can be sent to represent this country in Europe with a 30 per cent electoral turnout but a democratic vote of over 90 per cent is thrown out by the courts.

Mrs Justice Cox even questioned the timing of the strike, saying "a strike of this kind over the 12 days of Christmas is fundamentally more damaging to BA and the wider public than a strike taking place at almost any other time of the year". This issue is not her decision to make, it is for the trade union concerned to decide when and where to strike.

If the CWU had not announced a series of rolling strikes early on in the year, they would never have gotten an anti-union Royal Mail management back round the negotiating table.

The latest legal decision against BA workers shows that the ruling class is back on the attack, effectively telling us that 'democracy only applies to the management and political classes, to hell with the workers'. Welcome back to the 1800s.

Yours Sincerely,
Scott Agnew
RMT Aberdeen Shipping branch chair

PULLING TOGETHER

Dear Editor,

My friend and comrade Garry Hassell has just given me a copy of the RMT's latest publication Pulling Together.

It is beautifully produced, with smashing illustrations, wonderfully researched and written, that gives a clear history of the union and the way this relates to the major struggles of the labour movement and the important role played by all the unions that now constitute RMT.

For me as union person that has been around for nearly five decades, it is the reading of events witnessed during that period presented so concisely that is a real delight. While it has every right to call itself A Popular History of RMT, do not be fooled, it is a scholarly piece of work and so easy to read that it will be of real benefit to all members and others both in and out of the labour movement.

Yours fraternally
Andy Durr

CONGRATULATIONS

Dear editor,

I would like to thank everyone for their support in the recent election for RMT national president, I very much appreciate it.

I would also like to wish Alex Gordon every success in representing our union both nationally and internationally as RMT president.

Best regards,
Derek England

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

CAPTAIN WEBB

BAGLEY DRIVE, SHROPSHIRE

As a merchant seaman Matthew Webb (1848-1883) was to show the same courage that was later revealed in his daredevil swimming stunts.

Born in the mining village of Dawley, four miles from Wellington, he joined the merchant navy at the age of 14. When a fellow crew member fell overboard in the middle of the Atlantic, young Matthew did not hesitate in diving in to rescue him. As a result he became the first ever recipient of the Stanhope Gold Medal for Bravery.

His reputation of being fearless had been built up from childhood when he learned to swim in the strong currents of the River Severn near his birthplace. It was while he was serving on a steamship in 1873 that he read about a failed attempt to swim the English Channel and became determined to attempt it himself. Violent storms meant he had to abandon the first attempt after seven hours in the water on August 12, 1875.

The historic second attempt, making him the first ever person to achieve the feat, took place 12 days later. He set off from Dover and after eight hours' swimming he was stung by a jellyfish. But, fortified by a generous measure of brandy supplied by the boat following him, he pressed on.

By dawn the next day he was in sight of the French coast at Cap Gris Nez, but the tides against him were so strong that he had to swim another five hours before being able to reach shore at Calais. He had swum 39 miles in 21 hours 40 minutes.

An instant hero he was welcomed by crowds wherever he went and he was able to make a living as a swimming showman. Because swimming the rapids of the Niagara Falls between America and Canada was considered impossible he found it an irresistible challenge - one which was to be his downfall. He jumped in on the United States side on July 23, 1883, but was dragged under by the currents of a whirlpool after just ten minutes. His body was found four days later, and he was buried at the age of 34, in a nearby cemetery.

Because the attempt to swim the rapids was considered suicidal he was deemed by his local church at Coalbrookdale to have committed the sin of killing himself. The church decided it could not have a memorial to him as a sinner inside its building, but allowed one outside. ■



The stained-glass window of Capt Webb in the Champion pub (courtesy of artist Ann Sotheran).



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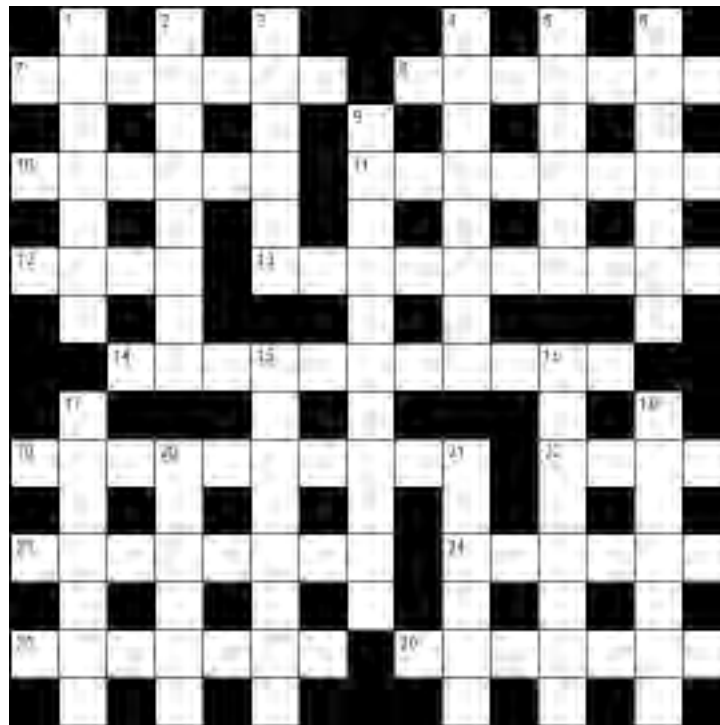
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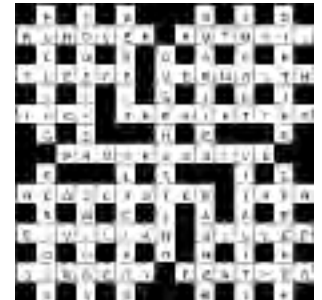
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No. 57. Set by Elk



No. 56
solution...



The winner of prize
crossword no. 56 is
T Barret, Enfield.

Send entries to Prize Crossword,
RMT, Unity House, 39 Chalton
Street, London NW1 1JD by
March 10 with your name and
address.

Winner and solution in next issue.

ACROSS

- 7 Items discussed at meetings (7)
- 8 (Sword wielded by) member of Japanese military caste (7)
- 10 Unbending, rigorous, severe (6)
- 11 First Group subsidiary trying to impose driver-only operation (8)
- 12 Present (4)
- 13 (Car) sales franchise (10)
- 14 Between childhood and adulthood (11)
- 19 Africa, Asia etc (10)
- 22 Heal (4)
- 23 Most odd (8)
- 24 Went to sea (6)
- 25 Bravely resistant (7)
- 26 Low-growing evergreen moorland shrub with purple flowers (7)

DOWN

- 1 Hated (7)
- 2 Shareholder's payout (8)
- 3 As one (6)
- 4 What north Americans call petrol (8)
- 5 All trains should have them -- even on 11 (6)
- 6 Ocean (7)
- 9 Bump off for cash or political gain (11)
- 15 Lamps (8)
- 16 Road users usually on two wheels (8)
- 17 Insured, hidden, protected (7)
- 18 Colder than the fridge (7)
- 20 Root vegetable (6)
- 21 Female sibling or union colleague (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 28th?		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 date you next get paid weekly ☐ if 4 weekly (Fri) ☐ date here.....

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 Chalton Street, London NW1 1JD

Name and full postal address of your Bank or Building Society

To: The Manager	Bank/Building Society
Address	
	Postcode

Name(s) of Account Holder(s)

Bank/Building Society account number

Branch Sort Code

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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