

RMT *news*

Essential reading for today's transport worker

NETWORK RAIL CUTS RUBBISHED

Rail regulator
slams planned
job cuts



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THIS
ISSUE**



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NATIONAL UNION OF RAIL, MARITIME & TRANSPORT WORKERS

Unity House, 39 Chalton Street, London NW1 1JD



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STRIKING FOR SAFETY



On a huge turnout and an 78 per cent Yes vote, RMT maintenance members at Network Rail have backed industrial action to stop the jobs slaughter in its tracks.

In a democratic ballot RMT members have overwhelmingly decided to stand and fight to stop this reckless gamble with rail safety.

Nearly 150 MPs have signed the Early Day Motion opposing Network Rail's cuts plans and have urged the government to intervene to call a halt to this crazy jobs carnage.

Even the Office of Rail Regulation has conceded that the botched attempt to bulldoze through these cuts has raised serious safety concerns.

Yet Balfour Beatty Rail is proposing to get rid of 50 per cent of permanent track staff, a decision that flies in the face of assurances that the company gave to the union back in December on job security as part of a package of new terms and conditions.

These attacks on track workers make a nonsense of the government's commitments to expand and upgrade the rail network and to maintain safety standards.

The madness of fragmenting and privatising our railways is also behind the news that train operators are running with reduced numbers of carriages as yet another cash-saving, corner-cutting device to jack up profits.

As a result passengers are crammed in to fewer carriages while the franchise holders get their fares and government subsidies and are laughing all the way to the bank.

Scot Rail's attempt to shed guards has been met with solid strike action from members and a political campaign to force the Scottish government to stop this dilution of safety.

Belgian unions have blamed privatising European Union rail diktats for the recent terrible rail disaster outside Brussels which killed at least 19 people.

The government split Belgium's national rail network into separate subsidiaries, just like in Britain, as demanded by EU directive 91/440. And, just like in Britain, people are being killed and the network is left in chaos.

That is why RMT has initiated a Europe-wide protest in Lille, France against rail so-called 'liberalisation' which began in Britain and is being spread like a disease across the continent with devastating effects.

Make sure that your branch is represented in Lille by getting a seat on the Eurostar train the union is booking for the event.

On the Tube, RMT is calling for London Mayor Boris Johnson take "urgent and decisive" action to terminate the Tube Lines contract on London Underground after LU called in forensic accountants to "examine massive and secretive payments" to Tube Lines' shareholders Ferrovial and Bechtel.

These allegations imply that transport budgets have been creamed off behind closed doors by big business while jobs and services are threatened with savage cuts.

Transport for London also branded Tube Lines as "ailing and failing", highlighting the need for the whole disaster of tube privatisation to be put out of its misery once and for all.

Yet London Underground's answer to the crisis is to slash hundreds of station jobs in order to save £16 million a year, a fraction of the money that the PPP has cost the taxpayer.

RMT has also called for P&O to reconsider the decision to abandon the Portsmouth to Bilbao ferry crossing in September with the possible loss of over 250 jobs. The union has pledged to defend members hit by the possible closure of this service.

Finally, RMT is fighting for trade union recognition in the offshore energy company Subsea 7, at the bus company Webbers and in many other workplaces. Winning recognition is the first, but sometimes very difficult, step in organising workers to defend themselves. I would like to salute those rank and file workers that get stuck in and make that first step a reality, without them the union could not operate.

Bob Crow

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SCOTRAIL, TRANSPORT SCOTLAND AND SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT IN “TOTAL DISARRAY” OVER RAIL SAFETY DISPUTE

RMT has slammed Scotrail, Transport Scotland and the Scottish government for being in “total disarray” over mapping out a way forward aimed at resolving the current dispute on First Scotrail over the safety-critical role of the guard.

RMT has held two days of strike action and is due to hold a third day of action as RMT News goes to press against plans to introduce driver-only operation (DOO) on the new Airdrie-Bathgate line.

RMT was responding to claims that Transport Minister Stewart Stevenson is “preparing to meet the union” even though RMT have had no response to a letter sent to First Minister Alex Salmond last week calling for direct talks.

The strike action has rock-solid support from members and public concern over safety has been underlined by the potentially lethal door opening incident carried out by a scab manager in Glasgow during the strike.

RMT is demanding a full investigation into the incident which the union believes shows the risks with safety that Scotrail are prepared to take.

The union has repeated the call for the publication of all correspondence over DOO and the axing of the guards to enable the union to identify who is calling the shots in the dispute.

The union is also calling for direct talks with First Minister Alex Salmond and seeking assurances that First Scotrail will not be indemnified by the taxpayer to allow the company to rip up existing agreements on rail safety and the role of the guard.

The 2001 agreement that commits Scotrail not to extend driver-only operation remains in force.

Advice from RMT’s lawyers confirms that First Group is wrong in law to argue that it is not bound by an agreement with the union made by previous franchisee National Express.

Angus McPherson of Drummond Miller has told the union that the agreement is “clearly” protected by the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) (TUPE) regulations and remains in force.

Mr McPherson cites Regulation 5a, which makes it clear that any collective agreement that is in force immediately before the transfer continues to have effect after the transfer.

RMT general secretary Bob Crow said that the situation on First ScotRail was a total shambles.

“The triple alliance between First ScotRail, Transport Scotland and the Scottish government is now in total disarray and it has left RMT with no one to negotiate with despite the fact that we are committed to meaningful talks with whoever has the power to engage us on the critical issue of rail safety,” he said. ■



KEEP THE GUARD ON THE TRAIN KEEP THE TRAIN SAFE

RMT demands new agreement on safety from train operators as union launches safety campaign

RMT has written to train operating companies across the country seeking assurances on maintaining the safety-critical role of the guard on train services the length and breadth of the country.

RMT has also launched a new campaign - "Keep the Guard on the Train - Keep the Train Safe" - aimed at highlighting the crucial role that guards play in maintaining rail safety and also aimed at ensuring that the public are fully aware of the importance of retaining the guards.

In a letter to train operators RMT has sought concrete agreement that there will be no extension of Driver Only Operation and guarantees that guard's will remain in complete control of powered door operation.

The agreement that RMT is seeking is simply a restatement by the train operating companies of previous collective agreements on the safety-critical role of the Guard dating back to

2001.

RMT General Secretary Bob Crow warned that in the current economic climate there is a drive to cut corners in order to maximise profits and to shore up the dividend payments to the shareholders of the train operating companies.

"We are simply demanding that exiting agreements with the train companies on the safety critical role of Guards on our trains are not diluted or undermined as part of the drive to pump up profits.

"We have already seen efforts by Southeastern Trains and First Scotrail to bulldoze through driver only operation and the axing of the guard," he said.

The union giving the train operators until April 20 to respond positively to this approach from RMT and as well as launching an information campaign aimed at ensuring that the travelling public fully understand the role that the guards play on their trains.



TUBE BOSSES ANNOUNCE MASSIVE JOB CUTS

RMT vows to fight 800 job cuts that would turn London Underground into a “muggers paradise”

London Underground has announced plans to slash hundreds of station jobs, threatening staffing levels agreed in the aftermath of the Kings Cross fire in 1987.

LU propose to reduce the total number of posts by around 700-800, including 100 manager posts, 450 in ticket offices positions and between 150-200 other station posts in order to save £16 million a year.

RMT general secretary Bob Crow said that if the job cuts to jobs are bulldozed through by TfL it will turn London's tube stations into a muggers' paradise.

“RMT will fight to protect passenger and staff security on London Underground and in the

event of compulsory redundancies and the undermining of tube safety we will have no hesitation in balloting for action,” he said.

A leaked management report titled “Minimum Staffing Levels” revealed that even Victoria, the busiest station on the Tube with 76 million passengers, could see its current 12 staff cut to just two during “degraded” operation.

The latest leaked tube management proposals follow on from documents passed to RMT late last year setting out a plan to close ticket offices at 144 stations with the loss of 1200 jobs.

The “Minimum Staffing Levels” report would axe posts

at sub-surface tube stations with 70 out of 116 stations reduced to a minimum level of just two staff with the remaining 46 stations still to be assessed.

Minimum staffing levels were first introduced after the King's Cross fire in 1987 that claimed 31 lives. Legislation was passed in 1989 that introduced stringent and wide-ranging firefighting and precaution measures with an estimated increase in staffing levels by 1,700.

RMT recently successfully defended these 1989 Regulations against LU and Transport for London plans to scrap them.

The effectiveness of these Regulations couldn't be better proven by the record on LU

since the 1987 fire. During the London bombings in July 2005 the measures introduced in 1989 were critical in ensuring that no fires compounded the tragedy.

Bob Crow said that despite all the election promises from Boris Johnson that he would not cut back on operational staff and ticket offices the truth is starting to emerge and it is clear that the cash-saving measures under discussion would devastate tube safety.

“RMT is committed to fighting these plans and we will continue to alert the travelling public and tube workers to the scale of the attack that is being cooked up for the capital's transport system in secret meetings,” he said. ■

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e-mail: info@rmt.org.uk
Legal helpline: 0800 587 7516 - Seven days a week



Webcast

To view an archived webcast of this conference visit www.rmt.org.uk/members

SIGNALLERS STAND FIRM

Signallers grades conference meets in Stoke as members are balloted for strike action

The union's annual signalling grades conference, held in Stoke, passed resolutions condemning the attacks on the Promotion, Transfer, Redundancy and Resettlement (PTR&R) agreement and pledged action to defend it.

The strike ballot, which is also over the imposition of rosters and management plans to end detonator protection for T3 possessions, ends on March 19 and could see the first national signallers strike since 1994.

Delegates heard RMT general secretary Bob Crow explain how the PTR&R agreement, which has been in place for decades, provides security and recompense for Network Rail workers who are forced to take another job or relocate to another area.

Under PTR&R if a signaller is made redundant they are given the opportunity to go for any vacancy in that position, said Bob. If it's on a lower grade then they are guaranteed the same pay until a job at their

previous grade arises. Among other things they are also paid their travel and resettlement costs.

Alan Tyrrell, RMT council of executives, said: "The fact of the matter is management would like to rip your contract up. That's the basic tenet of this.

"They'd like to give you a sheet of blank paper with your name on and basically that would be your contract of employment."

"What they're saying is: 'Do as you're told, roll over, get your belly tickled, and if you're not happy with it, sod off!'," he said.

Alan said that Network Rail bosses are intent on removing experienced workers who were employed under British Rail and replacing them with new recruits who they believe are more likely to toe the management line.

"They want them out. They want new people in. They want people who will do as they're told," he added. "Without the PTR&R they will ride roughshod

over you".

Ann Joss, Aberdeen No1, told delegates that a good deal had been won on PTR&R in Scotland in 2008 but it remained vital for these safeguards to be extended to the rest of the country.

"That's what we have to aim for, so that everybody has got what we have achieved in Scotland. I can promise you Scotland will support you on this issue," she said.

Ann joined other delegates in stressing that the issue had to be clearly explained to signalling colleagues, as management will exploit any ignorance as to what PTR&R actually is.

"Educate every single member out there. Even if you have to tell them 100 times. And give management a good kicking on this issue. Because up until now they think we're frightened of it and they are using our lack of knowledge as a little tool against us."

Ian Waggot, Worcester No1, warned that failing to explain

the issue fully to members risked defeat at the ballot box.

"There are still a lot of people on the railway who don't know what PTR&R is and are under the impression that it doesn't affect them. We need to get through how important this is to people."

Tim Breed, North Staffs, said it was important to understand the link between PTR&R and the imposition of rosters.

"We will lose hundreds of jobs - and then PTR&R will come into play. That correlation needs explaining," he said.

Dave Gott, Bassetlaw, said: "The message we've got to get out there is that this isn't about getting more pay or better conditions, this is about keeping what we already have."

Mark Beresford, Bedlington, said: "If we lose this one then we're at risk of losing just about everything." ■

a full report of this conference will appear in the next edition of RMT News.

NETWORK RAIL CUTS SLAMMED

RMT calls for immediate halt to rail maintenance job cuts as regulator raises fears over safety

RMT has demanded an immediate halt to plans to axe up to 1,500 safety-critical rail maintenance jobs after the Office of Rail Regulation called for a suspension in the cuts in a damning report.

The call came after RMT members working on maintenance for Network Rail voted overwhelmingly for strike action.

The ORR reported highlighted:

- * Failures to carry out practical tests on the cuts plans
- * Specific concerns on the continued problems on the West Coast Mainline where the bulk of the job cuts are targeted
- * Reductions in safety-critical working hours
- * Cutting back on safety lookouts and safety briefings.

ORR also highlighted

“inadequate employee engagement” and warned that it will have “no hesitation in taking immediate action if safety to passengers and employees is put at risk”.

RMT general secretary Bob Crow said that the ORR report was nothing short of condemnation of Network Rail’s dangerous cost-cutting plans.

“If even the ORR says the plans are untested, being implemented in haste and will put pressure on managers to cut back on safety-critical lookouts and briefings, it is clear that they must be stopped and that is why we are demanding an immediate halt.

“RMT has said from the start that Network Rail’s plans, which include the sacking of 1,500 front-line maintenance workers, can only undermine rail safety with lethal consequences, and this news completely justifies

the union’s decision to ballot members for strike action to defend rail safety and their jobs,” he said.

IMPROVEMENT NOTICE

An improvement notice has also been served on Network Rail which highlighted “systemic” failings in its track-work safety regime which could affect all routes.

Improvement notice number 1/302466657, issued by Railways Inspector Liesel von Metz, concerns lines between Cardiff Central and the Valleys and fleshes out an earlier prohibition notice.

It says that NR has contravened the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999, the Railways and Other Guided Transport Systems (safety) Regulations 2006 and the Health and Safety at Work Act.

The notice also raised the prospect that “similar failings may be present in other Maintenance Delivery Units across all routes”, pinpointing a shortage of lookouts to ensure safe track working.

“Network Rail bosses are presiding over a cost-driven dismantling of railway safety culture,” Bob Crow said.

“We know that maintenance teams are already overstretched and that the inspection regime was slated by the inquiry into the Grayrigg crash, yet they want to sack 1,500 track workers and water down safety systems.

“When the Inspectorate is finding such fundamental faults it is time to call Network Rail’s management to account, and if there are breaches of the law they should be in court facing charges,” he said. ■

AROUND 150 MPS HAVE SIGNED EARLY DAY MOTION 80, TABLED BY LINDA RIORDAN MP, WHICH SAYS:

That this House notes the decision of Network Rail to announce the loss of thousands of frontline maintenance jobs by spring 2010; believes that this will mean that in a matter of months there will be a drop of up to 20 per cent. in the number of rail workers carrying out essential inspection and maintenance work; further believes that these deep and rapid cuts raise genuine and urgent concerns as to whether Network Rail will be able to ensure the safe and efficient running of the railway, including the adequate inspection and repair of track, signals, overhead lines and other infrastructure; is deeply concerned that Network Rail is failing to consult the trade unions on the safety implications of the proposals; further notes that the cuts are in part due to the fact that the economic rail regulator, the Office of Rail Regulation (ORR), has asked Network Rail to make efficiency savings of 21 per cent. over the next five years; is further concerned that because the ORR is both the safety and economic regulator it will be difficult for an objective view to be taken as to whether the safety of passengers and workers will be put at risk; believes the cuts cannot be justified.



Parliamentary column

GEARING UP FOR A GENERAL ELECTION

John McDonnell MP calls for support for RMT-backed Labour candidates at the General Election on May 6

The General Election is a matter of weeks away and every poll puts the Tories ahead of Labour. Members of the RMT Parliamentary Group have stood up for socialist politics, for sustained investment in public services and consistently argued that it is an absolute disgrace that working class people are being made to pay for a financial crisis that was not of their making.

It is essential in the next Parliament that we have a maximum socialist representation and the Labour MPs in the RMT Parliamentary Group are proven, dedicated and hard working socialists with every chance of getting re-elected.

But we have the Tories breathing down our necks. This is the same nasty party of Thatcher, now bankrolled by Ashcroft's millions. As my friend Jeremy Corbyn MP said, "The Tories do not need or want the support of the most needy and desperate in society".

I am proud to be a friend of this union and honoured that your Council of Executives has determined to do everything it can to support members of the RMT Parliamentary Group at the forthcoming General Election.

This is my unashamed call to all RMT members and socialists to get behind us - we need your support now more than ever. You don't have to be a Labour Party member, we are mobilising trade unionists to come and campaign for us. See the table below for information on how you

can get involved.

Over the last Parliament, the Labour MPs of the RMT Parliamentary Group have been tireless campaigners on issues which make a real difference to RMT members, such as fighting job cuts, against staff assaults, for employment rights for seafarers, for a publicly-owned railway and Tube and for repeal of the anti-trade union laws. Most recently, we have been forcefully opposing Network Rail's proposed cuts to maintenance staff.

The political work in Parliament supports the Union's industrial strategy and we have been busy tabling Early Day Motions, hosting meetings, initiating and intervening in debates, tabling amendments to legislation, leading and participating in delegations to Government ministers and asking questions in the House of Commons. We desperately want to continue to do this work on behalf of RMT members and that is why we must win the election.

In stark contrast to the language of cuts, as well as supporting RMT policies, members the RMT Parliamentary Group has championed progressive causes, affecting the livelihoods of every working class person: The People's Charter, a massive programme of council house building, keeping the Post Office public, stopping welfare reform and tackling head-on the racism of the BNP.

We all know too, that taxes on the wealthy are too low, that Trident should be

abandoned, ID cards cancelled and troops withdrawn from Afghanistan. We stand on the positive platform of increasing the state pension, ending tuition fees for students and real measures to tackle poverty and inequality.

Please support us now as we prepare for the General Election, contact the Election Agents below as soon as you can. We need as many RMT volunteers as possible and stand with us together, as socialists.

Bob Crow writes: The RMT Parliamentary Group of MPs, led by John McDonnell, have never shirked from rolling up their sleeves and campaigning as hard as they can for RMT members. They are loyal friends of this union and as socialists, we want to everything we can to get them re-elected.

RMT activists should contact the Election Agents below without delay to find out how they can get involved. Volunteering is not just about Election Day itself, these MPs need us working for them now, in the weeks leading up to the Election. Labour Party Prospective Parliamentary Candidates Karl Turner and Nancy Platts have also agreed to join the RMT Parliamentary Group if elected and have been endorsed by the RMT Council of Executives. Don't worry if you haven't helped on a canvas before, there will be plenty of help and support available and you'll be amongst friends and colleagues of the trade union movement.

Election contact details for members of the RMT Parliamentary Group and Labour PPCs endorsed by the Council of Executives

Name	Constituency	Election Agent	Contact Details
Abbott, Diane	Hackney North & Stoke N		
Clark, Katy	North Ayrshire and Arran	Gordon Mckay	01505 684127; gandjamckay@aol.com
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Smith, Geraldine	Morecambe & Lunesdale	Phil Farrell	01772 321879(h)/01524 411368(w); pfarrell@blueyonder.co.uk
Turner, Karl	Kingston Upon Hull East	TBC	

YES TO SAFETY **NO TO EU RAIL** **PRIVATISATION**

Transport unions from Ireland, France, Belgium, Portugal and others are signing up to support the international protest on Tuesday, 13 April at the European Railway Agency in Lille, northern France



This month RMT News carries a striking pull-out poster - 'Rail Safety - Not EU Rail Privatisation' - to support a demonstration called by RMT and sister unions across Europe in Lille, an hour and 20 minutes from London St Pancras, the new frontline in the fight against profit-driven, railway safety cost-cutting.

The Financial Times reported last month that a Franco-British Intergovernmental Commission on Channel Tunnel safety is preparing for European Union competition from 1 January this year.

Terry Gates, of the safety authority, said the IGC believes that in light of EU rail legislation, it was time to ask: "whether rules written many years ago remained relevant".

RMT general secretary Bob Crow described the comments as: "an appalling admission that EU rules promoting free-market competition between international train companies are leading to cuts in essential fire safety regulations, which have proven effective in protecting staff and passengers in the 15 years since the tunnel opened to international traffic".

In February, RMT president, Alex Gordon and executive member Mick Lynch from RMT's Eurostar Passenger Services branch met the IGC and the Channel tunnel safety authority (CTSA) along with the Fire Brigades Union, ASLEF, TSSA and French rail workers' union SUD-Rail to explain the views of trade unions whose members work in the Channel tunnel.

SAFETY FIRST?

The unions were shocked the safety authority questioned the need for 30 minutes running capability for a train on fire, a core safety capability of Eurostar trains, designed to ensure a train travelling at 100km/h can exit the tunnel and evacuate passengers safely. RMT told the CTSA that lower train maintenance, operational and staff-training costs at the

expense of safety was unacceptable and would be resisted.

Worse still, CTSA suggests operators wishing to run short trains (Eurostar trains are specifically designed to a standard 375 metres length to ensure they are always adjacent to cross-passage tunnel escape doors), Multiple Unit trains without continuous through access, or even diesel-powered trains should specify "acceptably safe" arrangements for evacuation of passengers from the train in the event of a "worst case scenario".

The safety authority also claims "Splittability" - the ability of Eurostar trains to split and exit the tunnel in either direction - "does not make a significant contribution to safety".

Trade unions point out that CTSA is only undertaking a safety review because the EU insists on competition over international rail routes from 1 January 2010. All the trade unions oppose attempts to dilute safety to ease the way for EU rail competition.

For the last 20 years EU directives, now reinforced by the discredited Lisbon Treaty and European Court of Justice anti-union judgments, have aimed to strip elected national governments of the ability to plan ownership and investment in public transport systems, including railway networks.

COMPETITION UNDERMINES SAFETY

The first EU rail package in 2001 followed Directive 91/440/EC from July 1991 designed to enforce market rules in railway management by separating infrastructure from train services. It laid down open access for international rail freight from March 2003. The second EU rail package in 2004 made the European Railway Agency (ERA) responsible for safety regulation and brought forward open access for all rail freight from 1 January 2006.

Under so-called 'freight liberalisation' one company after another has fallen under control of the two largest, DB Schenker and SNCF Fret (renamed as 'Captrain').

A succession of major freight train accidents since liberalisation in 2006 has highlighted effects of EU competition. On 26 April 2008, a runaway 'Veolia' freight loco ran through Montauban station at over 60 km/h. Without the presence of mind of SNCF staff, it would have struck a crowded regional passenger train. "The pursuit of profit is leading companies to cut back on jobs, working conditions, operational procedures and training", said SUD-Rail.

At Livernan, in Southwest France, a trainload of tractors hauled by Euro Cargo Rail, a DB Schenker subsidiary hit an SNCF freight train in May 2009, hospitalising the driver. "What would have happened if it had been a passenger train? We fear that people would have been injured or worse!" said Didier Le Reste, French CGT rail union general secretary.

At Viareggio, in Tuscany central Italy on June 29 2009, 26 people were injured and 32 people killed in a fireball following derailment of a 'liberalised' freight train made up of mixed DB Schenker and General American Transportation Corporation (GATX) LPG tanks.

Didier Le Reste claims rail freight liberalisation has provoked "a spate of proven incidents and accidents".

"Railway safety cannot become a variable of liberal policies, in the name of competition and liberalisation as pushed by the European Union," he warns.

The Third EU rail package in September 2007 makes international passenger liberalisation compulsory by January 1 2010 and unions fear it will launch the same process of competition, cost-cutting and takeover in passenger rail services.

The European Commission is due to "recast" its First rail package this year, banning countries from managing rail infrastructure and train operations in the same parent holding company. The Commission is also expected to publish a Forth rail package requiring compulsory competitive tendering (franchising) of domestic passenger train services.

The anti-democratic and unpopular Lisbon Treaty transferred sovereignty over transport issues to the EU from elected national governments through 'Qualified Majority Voting' (QMV), designed to make railway renationalisation illegal, unconstitutional and impossible.

RMT and sister rail unions in Europe argue for an alternative to the EU obsession with market forces and competition. Rail networks must be democratically owned and managed to provide jobs and services that people and the economy need.

The current economic recession calls for a massive investment in green rail jobs to build a social railway that can provide for the needs of the whole population, not only the needs of big-business.

For democratic, public ownership of public transport as a public service through renationalisation of the entire railway industry in Britain, ending the failed PPP of London Underground and the privatisation of Tyne and Wear Metro the rail unions must confront the liberalisation and competition agenda of the undemocratic European Union.

Any RMT members wishing to join the demonstration in Lille against EU Rail privatisation on April 13 can do so by contacting Michael Carty in RMT's national policy department on 0207 528 8307 or by emailing m.carty@rmt.org.uk



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REPRESENTING BUS WORKERS

RMT News talks to Dave Letcher, a bus worker currently serving on the union's executive committee

Dave Letcher usually works as a bus driving instructor for First Devon and Cornwall, but for the next three years he has swapped his training cab for a seat on the union's ruling Council of Executives.

He has worked in the industry for nearly 35 years and has seen a lot of changes, including bus privatisation which has fragmented the industry and brought new challenges.

Therefore, he says, representing bus workers is no easy task in what is a difficult time for the industry.

"Each company has its own collective bargaining arrangements, which means that wages differ from company to company.

"For instance at my company drivers will earn, after this year's increase, £8.20p an hour. This is the culmination of a three year package that finally harmonises the pay rates for all First Devon and Cornwall bus

drivers. However this is towards the lower end of the scale of wages in the bus industry, where drivers in urban conurbations can earn considerably more. It still represents an appallingly low wage compared to the responsibility the job entails. The rate for the job is more than 50% less than that earned by most train drivers who share similar levels of responsibility"

He says that privatisation and competition has led to a contraction of services and a worse deal for the travelling public.

"A recent retendering exercise in the Cornwall area will see a serious loss of services around Helston and Camborne, from one operator being taken over by another.

"Helston depot will be reduced by six peak vehicles and Camborne by two, impacting on staffing levels," he said.

Dave points out that bus

competition actually works against the interests of the travelling public in many areas.

For instance commuters going to Penzance may get to the town with one operator but may have to leave town using another, making return tickets impossible to use.

Ultimately, Dave says, buses will have to be regulated if the services are to be expanded to encourage people out of their cars.

"Without regulation, and ultimately renationalisation, many people just can't rely on expensive and intermittent services and won't change their habits," he says.

Dave says that RMT must expand its bus membership if it is going to defend the interests of bus workers.

In the South West RMT is on the verge of getting trade union recognition at Webbers bus company, that serves Minehead,

Bridgwater and Taunton, and, further afield, Brylaine bus company in Lincolnshire, which serves the Boston area.

He says that however difficult it is in the industry only one thing that will protect you in the long term, your RMT membership.

"At the end of the day RMT membership gives you security.

"You can get representation, protection and collective bargaining rights which have given bus workers the weapons to defend themselves.

"As such we still have pension rights, holiday pay and sick pay and other benefits that many private operators simply do not offer.

There is also the RMT fines pool, which you really need if your work involves being out on the road," he says.

Dave says that bus workers are transport workers and RMT is a democratic, all grades industrial union.

"Bus workers also have their annual grades conference, which this year is in Bournemouth on April 22 to 24, make sure you get there and make your voice heard," he says.

For more details about the bus workers' grades conference contact your branch secretary.

You can contact Dave Letcher at d.letcher@rmt.org.uk or phone 020 7255 9145 or 07854236052 ■



CLOSE FERRY OWNERS' 'SHAMEFUL' LOW-PAY LOOPHOLE!

RMT has urged support for measures to close a 'shameful' legal loophole that allows operators of ferries between UK ports to ignore minimum wage legislation and pay non-UK seafarers as little as £2 an hour.

Lord Rosser introduced to the House of Lords an amendment to the Equality Bill which would ensure that the national minimum wage applies to all seafarers on all vessels, regardless of flag, operating between UK ports and in the UK offshore sector.

A second amendment would incorporate into the legislation draft regulations that go a long way to eliminating the right of ship-owners to ignore the Race Relations Act and to discriminate on the grounds of nationality, ensuring that they are implemented speedily (details below).

RMT national secretary Steve Todd said that it was scandalous that seafarers in UK waters, even on UK ships, can be paid at poverty rates at as little as £2 an hour, and that shipowners have managed to keep themselves above discrimination law for so long.

"These amendments would help to bring some justice to seafarers who have faced super-exploitation for far too long.

"The draft regulations are clearly a step in the right direction and are to be welcomed, but it is important that they become part of the primary legislation to ensure they are implemented as soon as possible," Steve Todd said.

Over 60 MPs have signed Early Day Motion 294 put down by Gwyn Prosser criticising the

Foreign Office for claiming that applying the minimum wage on ferries that trade solely between UK ports could mean the UK is in breach of United Nations Convention of the Law of the Sea.

The EDM calls on the Foreign Secretary to immediately publish the legal advice on which their blocking action is based and allow the advice to be subject to urgent independent scrutiny.

RACE RELATIONS ACT - DRAFT REGULATIONS IN THE EQUALITY BILL

As currently drafted the regulations will mean the following changes to seafarers pay discrimination:

UK-FLAGGED SHIPS

For UK flagged ships, wholly or partly in UK waters, no discrimination will be allowed, even for non-EU nationals.

EU-FLAGGED SHIPS

For EU/EEA flagged ships in UK waters adjacent to UK waters, no discrimination will be allowed for EU/EEA nationals.

But this only applies if the legal relationship of the seafarers employment can be located within Great Britain or there is a sufficiently close link.

FOR UK-FLAGGED SHIPS OUTSIDE UK WATERS

Discrimination would only be outlawed in these circumstances if the ship was registered in the UK, the seafarer is a British citizen or an EU national, and the legal relationship of the seafarers employment can be located within Great Britain or there is a sufficiently close

EARLY DAY MOTION 294 SEAFARERS' POVERTY PAY AND THE FOREIGN OFFICE

That this House notes that for a number of years discussions have been taking place in both Houses with government and with the TUC to seek to resolve the horrendous situation whereby ferry company owners and others, whose vessels regularly trade on fixed routes between UK ports are allowed to pay poverty wages substantially below the minimum wage to non-UK seafarers including rates as little as £2.00 per hour; welcomes the fact that a number of members have supported amendments to the Equality Bill which would close this loophole; is therefore dismayed that the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) is blocking these amendments by claiming that applying the minimum wage on ferries that trade solely between UK ports could mean the UK is in breach of United Nations Convention of the Law of the Sea; further notes the FCO have adopted this position despite independent legal advice to the contrary provided to the RMT union and also the advice of the International Transport Workers Federation; is appalled that in the 21st Century the Foreign Office is effectively allowing the continuation of poverty wages to continue in UK waters; and calls on the Foreign Secretary to immediately publish the legal advice on which their blocking action is based and allow the advice to be subject to urgent independent scrutiny.

Gwyn Prosser MP



FIGHTING FOR RECOGNITION AT SUBSEA 7

RMT CAMPAIGN AGAINST ROYAL FLEET AUXILIARY PRIVATISATION

RMT is currently conducting a referendum to establish if RMT members working for Subsea 7 are prepared to take industrial action following the company's continuing resistance to recognition for members who are not covered by the ODIA (Offshore Industry Diving Agreement).

At a recent International Transport Federation Task Force Meeting at which national officer Steve Todd was representing RMT, discussions took place regarding international offshore problems.

Steve took this opportunity to raise the issue of Subsea 7's constant refusal to have all workers covered by the ODIA agreement. The meeting was also attended by several ITF affiliates who all have contracts with Subsea 7 in some form or other. Those affiliates included IE (formerly NOPEF) from Norway, MUA from Australia and MUNZ from New Zealand. In briefing these other affiliates and detailing to them the very serious nature of the problem we are encountering with Subsea 7, the initial reaction was one of shock and surprise from other affiliates and then one of support for our actions in pursuing our aims and aspirations.

All of those affiliates mentioned, took part in the debate and were offering messages of solidarity and support for RMT members. Steve moved a successful motion at the meeting noting that the company was clearly in direct conflict with the ITF Offshore Policy.

The meeting unanimously voted to support RMT in their campaign to ensure that SUBSEA 7 meets all the

requirements to comply with ITF Policy upon signing any new ITF Special Agreements with the company.

Representatives from IE Norway said that they would be contacting Subsea 7 in Norway and asking them to facilitate a meeting between IE, RMT, Subsea 7 Norway and Subsea 7 UK.

The resolution is virtually asking affiliates to boycott the renewal or the signing of any agreements with Subsea 7 which in turn would allow Subsea 7 to gain what they call an ITF Blue Certificate.

The Blue Certificate ensures that the operator is free from boycott action or hinderance from ITF affiliated unions internationally. They can only be given once the companies/operators have opted into an ITF-approved agreement with the appropriate ITF affiliates.

"The resolution does not mention boycotts and for legal reasons we would not be allowed to following the recent turn of events in Europe which saw legal action being brought against the Finnish Union's and the ITF in cases commonly known as the Laval and Ruffert judgements.

"Although not mentioning boycott action, what is being asked for is tantamount to this and it received overwhelming support.

"We are now waiting on IE Norway to set up a meeting and we will keep members advised of any progress," said Steve.

In the meantime, the referendum closes on March 22 and RMT will continue to press the company in pursuit of recognition.

RMT shipping representatives met with Kevan Jones MP – Under Secretary of State for Defence and Minister for Veterans – who has responsibility for the Royal Fleet Auxiliary (RFA) Value for Money review at the Ministry of Defence.

RMT national secretary Steve Todd told the minister that the union found it totally unacceptable that a further review was being carried so soon after Flexible Global Reach and with all the worry and concern that it would cause.

Flexible Global Reach concluded in 2007 with the outcome that an evolved RFA was best suited to continue to provide support for the Royal Navy. At the time the union had been advised that the current arrangements for the RFA would remain in place until at least 2020.

The union told the Minister that the RFA plays a vital role in supporting Royal Navy operations and over the years the RFA had consistently demonstrated the value in retaining a civilian crewed fleet to provide strategic support the armed forces.

The union advised that the RFA had a long record of demonstrating an adaptability and flexibility to meet changing

circumstances with the highest professionalism demonstrated by its seafarers.

Steve Todd said that RMT saw no justification for spending all the time and money in conducting a further review of the role of Royal Fleet Auxiliary.

He advised the Minister that their support for the armed forces should ensure that they are not considered for commercialization and that the RFA is an essential resource for an island nation.

The Minister informed the union that he understood its concerns and was aware of the vital role played by RFA in supporting the Royal Navy.

There were no preconceived outcomes, he heard RMT arguments and said that he would ensure that RMT had every chance to reflect these arguments in the working group discussions.

Whilst the union has had a positive meeting with the Minister responsible it remains vigilant as to the threat of possible privatisation.

"Members can be assured that the union will continue to make robust representations, and at no time will we stand by and see RMT members' jobs placed in jeopardy through any proposals to outsource the service," Steve Todd said. ■

SHIPPING INDUSTRY TRAINING PACKAGE

Following general secretary Bob Crow's meeting with the prime minister Gordon Brown on the training package, the union and other industry representatives have received a response.

The prime minister has stated that due to current financial constraints he is not able to grant the additional SMART training funds as requested in the joint Industry document. Instead, he has asked officials in the Department for Transport, and Business, Innovation and Skills Department (BIS) to identify how

existing seafarers training and qualifications could qualify for additional funding.

This could include programme funding from BIS for the sectors Adult Skills qualifications, as well as apprenticeship funding by making the sector compliant with the National Apprenticeship Service guidance. These will be pursued with the Merchant Navy Training Board.

It is disappointing that no further SMART funds could be authorized but the union will pursue all possible options.



LEGAL NEWS



TUBE DRIVERS WIN COMPENSATION

A London based tube train driver received £33,000 in compensation after receiving a back injury after a fall.

The member was injured when he drove his train into a station and alighted from his cab. As he pulled the gate towards him the lack of room meant he had to step out of the way of the gate, causing him to slip in between the platform and the track, causing him to injure his back.

The company's insurers refused to negotiate a settlement and it was necessary to commence court

proceedings, which led to a settlement.

Another London Underground member was injured as he was alighting from the front cab and lost his footing. To avoid contact with the live rail he swung his body away and fell backwards onto the train steps.

As a result he suffered ligament, nerve and tissue damage to his lower back.

Following correspondence and detailed negotiations with the other side's representatives a settlement of £5,250 was negotiated. ■

CITY LINK DRIVER WINS EMPLOYMENT TRIBUNAL

An RMT member employed by City Link in London has won his case for unfair dismissal at a recent Employment Tribunal.

The member claimed that he had been given excessive delivery workloads that couldn't be fulfilled, and had been threatened with disciplinary action and a final written warning. This led to him taking sickness leave while he awaited a grievance meeting.

During the member's sickness leave his nine month old daughter was taken seriously ill while abroad and the member had to rush out to be by her side. This absence was authorised and he was told by management to keep them informed of the situation, which he subsequently did.

On his return to England the member found that he had received several letters from the company, including one saying that he had been dismissed for gross misconduct.

The tribunal found that the member had kept in reasonable contact with the company during his period of absence and that the company had not followed its disciplinary procedures correctly.

The member contacted RMT and Thompsons Solicitors acted on his behalf.

James Lenihan at Thompsons said: "The member feels vindicated by the judgment which upholds his argument that he was unfairly dismissed. There were extensive and serious failings in City Link's actions and it is unacceptable that the member was forced to go to Employment Tribunal to obtain any measure of justice. This case should serve as a reminder to employers of their obligations to undertake independent and reasonable investigations before contemplating the dismissal of an employee".

SIGNALLER WIN INJURY CLAIM

A Humberside signaller received a payout of £6,500 after fracturing his ankle at work.

The member was working a signal box that was without mains electricity or water and was therefore powered by a generator. Before leaving the box at 12.30 am – as the box was uninhabitable – the member switched off the generator in the downstairs room and secured it. He then had to return the key to the box upstairs.

As he was descending the steps from the signal box his foot slipped and he fell awkwardly, landing on his left foot and fracturing his ankle.

The other side's insurers refused to negotiate a settlement and it was necessary to commence court proceedings before reaching a settlement.

CONDUCTOR RECEIVES £39,000

A conductor based at a Welsh station received a back injury after he slipped on a marble floor on a train platform.

RMT solicitors had to commence court proceedings which resulted in satisfactory settlement terms and the member was awarded £39,182.69 compensation.

TECHNICIAN COMPENSATED FOR SERIOUS INJURIES

A Cardiff based technician received £6,000 compensation after injuring himself while unloading a flatbed lorry at a depot. He slipped, landing heavily on one side. As a result he suffered a punctured lung, 6 fractured ribs and extensive bruising.

Following negotiations between RMT solicitors and the employer's representatives a satisfactory settlement was negotiated. ■

Inaugural Charles Watkins Memorial Lecture

6pm Wednesday March 31, 2010
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“Labour History for the Labour Movement – Why we must reclaim our past”
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Transport union RMT has established an annual memorial lecture in recognition of the
1909 Ruskin College strike that led to the formation of the Plebs League.
This lecture recognises and celebrates the struggles to establish independent working
class education for trade unionists.

Pulling Together: A Popular History of RMT will also be formally launched at the event.
The event is free and open to all trade unionists

PULLING TOGETHER *A Popular History of RMT*

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of members over 150 years

Pulling Together gives
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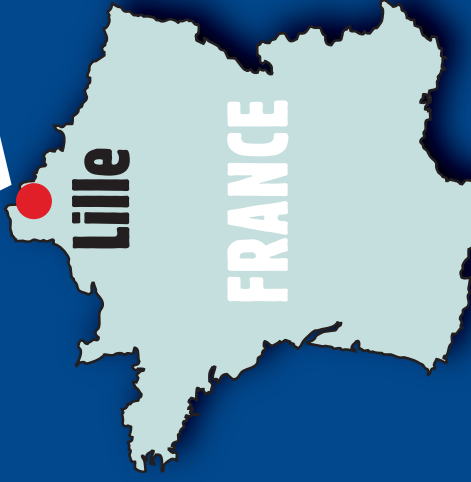


Rail unions from across Europe will lead a protest at the European Railway Agency in the French city of Lille against dangerous EU rules opening up rail traffic to competition which threatens safety and jobs.

**For more details contact your branch secretary
or Mick Carty at RMT Policy Dept, Unity House,
39 Chalton Street, London NW1 1JD
Tel: 020 7829 8307 or E-mail: m.carty@rmt.org.uk**



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Lille

FRANCE

INTERNATIONAL NEWS



GREECE STRIKES AGAINST EU AUSTERITY MEASURES

Over two million workers took part in a solid general strike in Greece last month against austerity measures demanded by the European Union, bringing the country to a complete standstill.

Airports, schools, council office and ministries all lay empty as the action which spanned both the public and private sectors was hailed a complete success by union leaders.

Early morning picket lines were enforced across the country with workers blockading their bosses offices. Major cities saw huge marches as workers vented their anger at the economic crisis.

Workers face wage cuts and losing jobs and pensions Greece is the first eurozone member that is set to experience the full wrath of forced EU austerity measures following the recent recession.

The country has been stripped of voting powers in the EU and Brussels is demanding that the country reduce its 12.8 per cent deficit to three per cent in the next three years.

The EU council has demanded that Greece must comply with austerity demands by March 16 or have all powers to determine spending and taxing removed

altogether. Under article 126.9 of the Lisbon treaty the EU council can impose its own cuts on any member state which amounts to a complete surrender of sovereignty. Ireland, Spain and Portugal all find themselves in a similar predicament.

The imposition of Thatcherite EU policies, which are backed by richer member states such as Germany and the IMF, are designed to restore stability to the Euro. The effects on Greek workers would be immediate and painful. Pensions would be devalued while the pension age would be raised. Cuts to public services would see a fall in standards for everything from education to public transport and healthcare. Meanwhile in an almost perverse appeasement to the super rich, controls designed to tackle tax evasion would be diminished.

The mood on the streets of Athens was understandably furious. Many were chanting the slogan: "No sacrifices, make the rich pay for the crisis!". Another general strike is planned for later this month while individual sectors are planning their own actions.

BELGIAN RAIL UNIONS SLAM EU DEREGULATION

Belgian rail unions have slammed the European Union's deregulation policies as a cause of the country's worst rail disaster near Brussels last month and many rail workers waged a spontaneous 24-hour strike for better working conditions.

The rush-hour head-on collision between two commuter trains on February 16 at the suburb of Hal/Buizingen, south west of Brussels was the deadliest for decades, causing at least 19 deaths and 162 injuries, many of them critical.

Rail workers stopped work the following day, halting national traffic and halting international Eurostar and Thalys services.

"Strikers demanded tighter safety rules and alerted the authorities and the public to attacks on their working conditions since the European Commission deregulated European rail traffic in 2005," said Gerard Gelmini of the FGTB rail Union.

That year, in line with EU rail directives, the Belgian government split the SNCB,

Belgium's national rail network, into three separate subsidiaries after 170 years existence operating as a single company.

Gerard Gelmini slammed the "mad rise in productivity" that endangers rail workers and the travelling public.

"You can have as much safety and security as you want but it doesn't mean anything if there is insufficient investment in training and unless there are decent working conditions," he said.

In 2004, the SNCB was told to upgrade its automatic signalling system over the entire network but six years later only one quarter of trains are equipped with the system. An SNCB spokesman blamed budgetary cuts and EU regulations for lateness in fully establishing the safety rules.

BERLIN OPENS METRO LINES TO COMPETITION

The German government is to follow European Union rules Berlin's metro to competition instead of investing in an overhaul of the capital's collapsing S-Bahn system.

Over the last six months services have deteriorated with



The wreckage of two commuter trains is seen in Buizingen, Belgium last month. Two commuter trains collided head-on at rush hour in a Brussels suburb, killing 20 people. Union blame EU rail liberalisation diktats.

fewer and shorter trains, defective braking systems, lateness and a maintenance backlog resulting in an increasing number of metro users travelling by car, resulting in chaotic traffic.

In 1994, management of the S-Bahn is the responsibility of Deutsche Bahn (DB), the state-run rail operator that is earmarked for privatisation when Germany's economic and financial crisis eases. Last year, the Greater Berlin Council withheld 37 million euros in subsidies as fines for DB's bad management and now it says it wants to hand over a quarter of S-Bahn lines to a private competitor.

The present operator carries 1.3 million passengers daily. A major row is expected with DB that says it will not relinquish the lines. Its present S-Bahn contract ends in 2017.

FRENCH UNIONS FIGHT RAIL DEREGULATION

As France's powerful rail unions continue industrial action against projected job losses in 2010, they are stepping up pressure to fight the government's EU-inspired freight and passenger plans.

Meanwhile, the national financial watchdog, the Cour des Comptes, has slammed working time, retirement and salary arrangements of the country's national rail operator, SNCF.

In its annual report, released at the same time as the unions' February 3 strike, France's national financial accounting body, has criticised the SNCF's bad management and recommended it "optimises its workforce and improves productivity", and adapts to EU's competition rules.

Unions say that the loss of 15,600 jobs between 2002 and 2008 – almost nine per cent of the workforce – is unacceptable and want talks on management's plans for passenger services and its inability to attract freight traffic.



OFF TO LILLE!

RMT is calling an international protest at the European Railway Agency in the French city of Lille on April 13.

This will be important for several reasons. Imposition of neoliberal European Union rules, dreamt up by unelected European Commissioners, is devastating transport networks across the EU.

From January 1 this year the EU's 'Third Rail Package' demands all international passenger rail routes must be opened to market competition, accelerating fragmentation and privatisation.

In crisis-hit Greece, the All-Greek Federation of Railway Workers reports EU-driven rail privatisation has caused the loss of over half of all rail jobs in the country. French rail workers are fighting huge job cuts in the liberalised rail freight sector and Belgian rail workers are furious at EU rail liberalisation policies, which they say created the conditions for the recent catastrophic rail crash at Buizingen near Brussels.

Ferry services in Italy face privatisation, like RMT shipping members at Caledonian Macbrayne. Greek ferry workers are fighting social dumping as the government seeks to replace them with exploited foreign workers in a drive to save money.

These attacks on workers and public transport services have a common cause: EU obsession with liberalised market competition, which is driving a dangerous race to the bottom in safety, wages, jobs and conditions.

French, Belgian and British rail unions are united against plans to dilute current safety rules for passenger trains transiting the Channel tunnel, which EU competition zealots claim could prevent Deutsche Bahn, Trenitalia, or French privateer Veolia from competing with Eurostar services.

This is a perfect example of what is wrong with the EU. Railways embody the principle of cooperation, not competition. Yet, in its ideological quest to lever in market competition to international rail services, the EU is inviting the Channel Tunnel Safety Authority to reduce safety standards to facilitate lower costs for competitors. The EU wants competition introduced at the cost of safety standards.

Currently, passenger trains using the tunnel must have the capability to split and exit the tunnel in either direction in an emergency. Eurostar is the only train operator satisfying this safety requirement.

Last month, RMT together with railworkers' and firefighters' unions met an Intergovernmental Commission on Channel tunnel safety preparing the route to meet EU competition requirements. We found the IGC has been conducting 'secret consultations' with rail industry bosses on 'dumbing down' safety standards. Having been caught out, the IGC is now promising to take full account of trade unions' views on their proposals.

This makes our international protest in Lille even more important. Make sure your branch is represented!

Last month in Liverpool I had the privilege to address the best-attended RMT Young Members' Conference ever. It reminded me of attending RMT's AGM as a young member in Llandudno in 1992. If youth is the future, then judging from this year's Conference, RMT is in good hands.

Our well-attended National Conference of Signalling Grades in February this year in Stoke discussed the current dispute with Network Rail. I reminded conference delegates of the great tradition of industrial unionism represented by signalman, Charles Watkins, a pioneer of the National Union of Railwaymen.

RMT's inaugural Charles Watkins Memorial Lecture will take place from 18.00 on Wednesday, March 31 at the Marx Memorial Library in London and is advertised in this magazine.

Professor Mary Davis, labour historian and author of *Comrade or Brother?: The History of the British Labour Movement 1789-1951* and *Sylvia Pankhurst: A Life in Radical Politics* will be speaking on the subject of 'Labour History for the Labour Movement: why we must reclaim our past'.

We ignore our history at our peril. *Pulling Together: a popular history of RMT*, will also be formally launched at the lecture. I hope to see you all there, but if you can't make it order a copy, it's free to members!

In solidarity
Alex Gordon

A STRIKING UNION THE CASE OF RMT

Professor Ralph Darlington provides an evaluation of RMT's repeated threat and use of strike action in recent years

A crucial ingredient of the RMT's organising approach has been the explicit rejection of social partnership in favour of union militancy and strike mobilisation as the path to the defence of workers' conditions and the reinvigoration of union organisation. Indeed, in many respects RMT's 'brand image' is essentially that of being a striking union.

For example, on London Underground and the national railway network between January 2002 and December 2009 the union balloted in favour of industrial action on at least 141 different occasions, with such ballots leading to strikes (mainly 24 or 48-hour) on 59 different occasions, and involving no less than 172 strike days overall. Per thousand

members, the RMT has probably organised more ballots for industrial action and more strike action than any other union over recent years.

Strikes in early 2010 by signallers in South Wales, ex-Metronet signal workers on the tube, and ScotRail train drivers and guards, as well as the threatened strike by Network Rail maintenance and operations staff, are merely the latest manifestation of the willingness of RMT members to wear the 'militant' union badge proudly.

Significantly, almost every single one of the union's ballots on the Underground and the railways during the period 2002-09 returned overwhelming majorities in favour of action, with a mean of 83 per cent. The proportion of union members participating in such ballots was also creditable with a mean of 39 per cent on the Underground and 66 per cent on the railways.

Case study research provides evidence that in many cases there has been a direct relationship (or 'virtuous circle') between the RMT's 'striking' approach, its effectiveness in obtaining bargaining gains, membership growth and union revitalisation. Thus building support for ballots for industrial action and the very process of strike mobilisation itself has helped the union to regularly update information about existing members (so employers are less able to challenge the validity of ballot results) and to identify non-members who can be approached to join. It has provided an important focus for reps to engage in an active direct dialogue/campaign with members/non-members to encourage them to vote in favour of strike action and to become involved if action takes place.

Moreover the threat/use of



strike action has often successfully leveraged significant collective bargaining concessions from employers on pay, rosters, jobs, working practices, pensions, outsourcing, etc. This has strengthened the RMT's bargaining position and provided material evidence of the union's power and effectiveness vis-à-vis the employers. It has boosted members' morale, confidence and sense of collective power generally. In turn, this has encouraged union recruitment and reinvigorated reps and activists which see that the union can 'deliver'.

There have been a number of other important contributory factors to success. First, there has been the role of national leadership, notably Bob Crow, in emphasising the virtues of union militancy and solidarity. Second, there has been the vibrant campaigning work of the Organising Unit in embedding recruitment within RMT and encouraging strong and combative workplace reps organisation.

Third, there is the industrial and inclusive all-grades nature of RMT which has provided it

with a clear core motivational identity and encouraged a high degree of attachment and loyalty from members. Fourth, there is the highly democratic form of union structure and organisation, which has helped to stimulate devolved membership engagement. Fifth, there is the large milieu of assertive workplace reps and activists which have played a crucial ideological and organisational role in winning support for collective action and building union organisation.

Sixth, there is the left-wing political culture inside the union which has also encouraged resistance to employers, neo-liberalism and New Labour, as well as support for alternative independent political projects. Finally, a highly significant contextual factor has been the operational vulnerability of the railway and underground networks to strike action, with RMT's strategic position providing it with enormous potential bargaining power.

However, there have also been some limitations and challenges. First, strikes are necessarily 'high-risk' and a successful outcome far from

certain – ineffectiveness/failure can weaken union organisation, undermine morale and potentially result in membership loss. Second, there is employers' counter-mobilisation, including attempts to utilise anti-union legislation to obtain court injunctions to prevent strikes, as well as the use of strike-breaking managers and agency staff.

Third, there is the danger of counter-productive targeting of union action (for example, New Year's Eve on the tube). Fourth, there is the negative impact of repeated suspension/cancellation of strike threats on the confidence of union reps and members. Fifth, there is considerable variation in the level of union organisation/strength between individual companies and different specific grades within companies. Sixth, there is the problem of inter-union rivalries (notably with Aslef) undermining action.

Undoubtedly the scale of the current economic recession and employers' offensive is posing more formidable challenges for union organisation, but some issues for further consideration

might include the following:

- union strength is not a fixed entity – it inevitably requires constant replenishment
- spreading 'best practice' to lift the level of union organisation and resistance across the board
- strategic and tactical identification of both employer and union vulnerabilities and of how they might be exploited/overcome
- development of more co-ordinated and strategically targeted strike mobilisation campaigns (grade/company/sector) to match increasingly more generalised employer attacks
- and further attempts to relate the industrial struggle to independent political campaigning to the left of New Labour. ■

Ralph Darlington is Professor of Employment Relations at the University of Salford and spoke recently at a public meeting about RMT organised by LU Fleet branch.



MERCHANT NAVY PENSION SETS NEW COURSE

Pension arrangements for Merchant Navy Ratings to change later this year

There has been concerns for some time that it would not be possible to maintain the current pension arrangements offered by the Merchant Navy Ratings Pension Plan (MNRPP). The key reasons are the number of members has declined resulting in an increasing proportion of contributions being spent on administration costs and changes have to be made to ensure the plan meets the government's new pension rules, originally set to be introduced in 2012 but now put back to 2013.

The Trustee intends to replace the MNRPP with a new Group Personal Pension Plan called The Merchant Navy Group Personal Pension Plans (MNRGPP) to be arranged with AEGON Scottish Equitable. All future pension contributions will be made into this plan. Each employer will establish their own section of the MNRGPP.

It is intended that the old pension will close to future contributions on 30 June 2010 and the new one will start on 1 July 2010.

RMT's nominees on the Trustee Board and the employers Trustees have insisted that the future arrangement must continue to offer the same life assurance benefit which the MNRPP provides. RMT and Chamber of Shipping have agreed the new proposals.

WHY DOES THE PENSION NEED TO BE REPLACED?

- The administration costs for Occupational Pension Schemes have risen as a result of changes in pension rules and these reduce the

benefits payable at retirement. A Group Personal Pension Plan can operate with lower administration costs, increasing the amount invested behalf, which in turn increases the pot of money available to provide retirement benefits.

- The MNRGPP is able to offer a wider choice of pension options and investment choices. The Joint Ratings Pension Committee has arranged for contributors to receive ongoing independent pensions advice on this and other pension matters from Pensions & Wealth Planning Ltd, at no cost.

WHAT ARE THE MAIN FEATURES OF THE NEW GROUP PERSONAL PENSION PLAN?

- Employers will contribute four per cent of employees Pensionable Salary towards their pension.
- Employee's own contributions will continue to be a minimum of 3.9 per cent of Pensionable Salary. Whether employees are taxed in the UK or not, they will benefit from tax relief up front equal to the standard rate of Income Tax, currently 20 per cent. As a result, the net deduction from pay will be 3.12 per cent of Pensionable Salary. Employees may contribute more if they wish.
- Employees will benefit from FREE pensions advice from Pensions & Wealth Planning Ltd, through Group Pension Meetings, regular clinics and a telephone hotline service.
- Aegon Scottish Equitable is



one of the largest insurance companies in the world and have substantial financial strength. Importantly, they also have consistent long-term past investment performance across a wide range of investment funds. Scottish Equitable is building a website for members, designed to assist in making the right decisions in saving for retirement.

- Employees will have the opportunity to invest their pension plan in a way that matches their personal attitude to investment risk. But, if they prefer to leave investment decisions to the Governance Committee, a lifestyle pension option will also be available, reducing investment risk as retirement approaches.
- There will be flexibility to select when benefits may be taken, but once contributions

are invested they cannot normally be accessed until age 55.

It has been agreed that a governance committee comprising of RMT officials and employer representatives will be established to ensure that the new pension operates in the members' best interests as well as providing good value.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

The Joint Ratings Pensions Committee is keen that all plan members understand why they are making this recommendation and have written to members seeking any views or comments with a deadline of responding in writing or email by 31 March 2010. Members questions on this matter, should be directed in the first instance to contact Russell Warman at Pensions & Wealth Planning Ltd on 01252 861380 or by email at enquiries@penwp.co.uk. ■

www.rmtjunction.org.uk



Hundreds of RMT members 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:

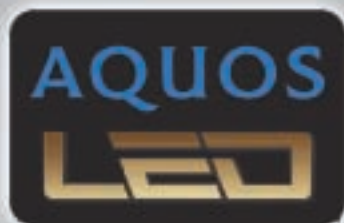
1. Register with RMT Junction at www.rmtjunction.org.uk
2. Upload some details (as much or as little as you like) to your profile, as well as a profile picture (click on "Profile" in the black bar at the top).
3. Join the "Win an ipod" group (simply type "ipod" into the search box at the top-right of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



SHARP



cutting edge technology | huge energy savings | great prices | 5 year warranty

Other LED TVs have a single row of LED lights along the edge of the screen, whose light is reflected onto the back of the picture. Sharp LED TVs, on the other hand, have hundreds of individual LED lights that sit behind the entire screen, from corner to corner. As a result, the blacks are richer and deeper and the colours brighter and more vibrant. Sharp's LED TV technology uses up to 40% less energy than traditional LCDs and is mercury free.

As a Sharp Affinity Programme member, the technology can be yours at much reduced prices. Visit sharp.co.uk/page/rmt to register for your discounts, using your exclusive Affinity Access Code: 'RMT'. When returning to the site, please remember to log in first in order to see your reduced prices. Prices include VAT. Delivery for orders over £250 is free and we'll even include a 5 year warranty to boot. That's sharper technology at sharper prices!

SH[^]ARPER TECHNOLOGY.

REGISTER NOW AT WWW.SHARP.CO.UK/PAGE/RMT

book reviews

KILLING NO MURDER

By Rob Griffiths, Manifesto Press

Killing No Murder; South Wales and the Great Railway Strike is Robert Griffith's extended English language version of his Welsh language book Streic! Streic! Streic! on the class politics of the 1911 rail strike and its significance today.

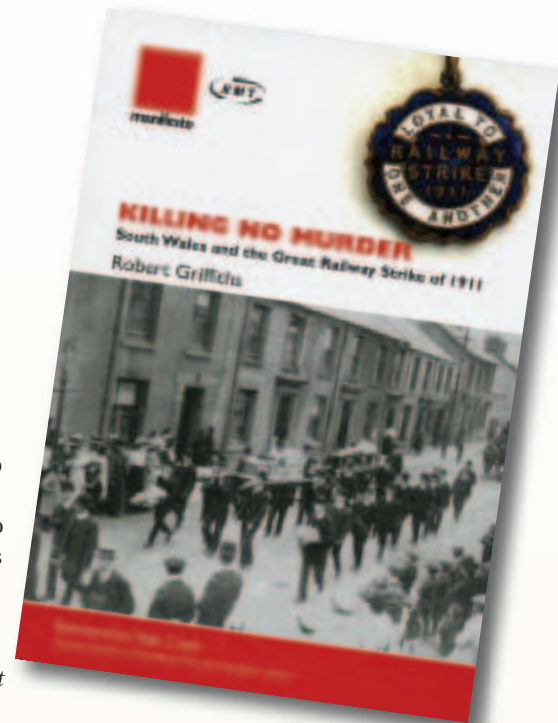
The book, published in conjunction with RMT, begins with an introduction to the political life of south Wales, within the British context, and through an analysis of Parliamentary politics, the role of religion and the early trade union movement. Detailed accounts of the terms and conditions of railway workers are provided, and the second class manner with which the workers in the railway industry were treated in comparison with, for example, the coal, steel, and tinplate industries is highlighted. From the start, this history analyses the material conditions in which railway workers lived and demonstrates how far railway trade unionists have come today through struggle.

Solidarity between railway workers and

other trade unionists such as the miners is noted in the run up to the Great Strike, with railway unions providing financial support to the striking workers in the Rhondda valley. The valley was then under military occupation in order to suppress the dissatisfaction of the workers there, and to quell persistent rioting. Mention is also given to the international solidarity expressed by railway workers through their support of Dublin transport workers who were locked out of work in 1913.

In all the book is a highly commendable account of Churchill's role as a class warrior, the role of the state in opposition to the labour movement and the active undermining of Harold Spiers for refusing to shoot a railway worker. *Killing No Murder* is an accessible book which clearly demonstrates that unity and militancy can win ■

**Copies are available from Unity House at the reduced price of £5, cheques made payable to RMT*



WHEN WE WERE MINERS

By Ian Isaac, Ken Smith Press

When We Were Miners is an account of the South Wales miners' part in the great miners' strike of 1984-85, written by one of the participants.

Ian Isaac was part of a group of young miners' leaders for whom the strike was a baptism of fire. The book is very much an eyewitness account of Ian's role in the South Wales coalfield and the National Union of Mineworkers and gives a real flavour of the period, the issues and the battles that were fought.

The book explained how the coal industry and the union grew up in Wales, giving fascinating details about the growth of the Labour movement.

Ian started his own working life at Cowley car plant in Oxford, where he became very politically active and involved in the union, but returned to Wales where he began his mining career in St John's Colliery. In 1978 Ian became St John's NUM lodge secretary, an important position which he held during the strike. One of Ian's roles was to coordinate pickets from the Maesteg

district. The battles that the pickets faced were some of the most vicious ever fought. Two miners, David Jones and Joe Green, lost their lives in the process.

Support for the miners came from across the labour movement, but the author reserves special mention for rail workers:

"It would be true to say that the only section of the trade union and Labour movement who instinctively understood the miners' dilemma were the railworkers. This affinity had echoes of the past, of the Triple Alliance of miners, transport workers and railwaymen during the 1926 general strike. Recently, rail workers had lost thousands of jobs unnecessarily during the 1950s and 1960s."

The book even credits national RMT regional organiser Peter Skelly for his assistance in writing the book.

When We Were Miners is much more than a personal account of the strike as it weaves personal memoir with historical detail. There is a lot of information in the book – yet it still remains highly readable ■



SCOTTISH SOLIDARITY FOR VENEZUELA

Scottish Venezuela Solidarity Campaign holds inaugural meeting in Glasgow

Former RMT regional organiser Phil McGarry chaired the first meeting of the Scottish Venezuela Solidarity Campaign recently.

He said that the role of campaign was to combat the widespread misreporting in the mass media of events in Venezuela.

"We need to win a broad understanding of the achievements of the Venezuelan people and the government under president Hugo Chavez," he said.

An example of the media distortions in Britain included a report in one of the tabloids suggested that Venezuela was the only country that had not cancelled Haiti's debts.

"The fact of the matter is that Venezuela had led the way in cancelling the £313 million owed to Venezuela and it is continuing deliveries of oil to assist the country in re-building its infrastructure," he said.

Venezuelan Embassy counsellor Alvaro Sanchez noted that the placing of misinformation in the media was extremely damaging because it gave legitimacy around the world in a way not accorded to the US sources themselves.

Alvaro detailed the links between Venezuela and Scotland dating back to the Wars of Independence 200 years ago and the role of General Gregor McGregor a keen lieutenant of Simon Bolivar.

He warned that the pro US right was on the offensive and that 2010 was the year in which progressive solidarity with Venezuela, Cuba and other Latin

American Alba countries - The Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America - would be critical.

Labour MP Colin Burgon said a recent study by the University of the West of England showed that of 144 mentioned of Venezuela on the BBC only three had noted achievements and the rest had been hostile or neutral.

He stressed the importance of Venezuela and its allies in offering a direct alternative to neo-liberalism, a doctrine based on unfettered market dominance.

"Today the big business backed philosophy of neo-liberalism represented the biggest threat to our own democracy and to economic recovery.

"Venezuela, on the other hand, represented a future for 21st century socialism," he said.

Unite Assistant General Secretary Jennie Bremner, chair of the London-based Venezuela Solidarity Campaign (VSC,) stressed the need to support democracy in Latin America and explained the reasons for the recent launch of the Venezuela-Under-Threat campaign.

"The military coup in Honduras last summer, the exposure of some of the plans in Ecuador and Paraguay, the agreement to establish seven US military bases in Columbia, and the reactivation of the US force fleet all indicated that the region was entering a new phase in which active efforts would be made to reverse the type of progressive change since the election of Hugo Chavez 10



SOLIDARITY: from left to right - Colin Burgon MP, Mike Kirby (Unison), Chair Phil McGarry (RMT), Jennie Bremner (Unite) and Alvaro Sanchez from the Venezuela Embassy.

years ago," she said.

Unison convenor Mike Kirby, who joined a delegation to Venezuela last year, said that Venezuela was a society in the midst of democratic transformation in which there was genuine pride and commitment in what had been achieved under the Chavez government.

"Over the past year Venezuela had faced the world economic crisis by doing the exact opposite of what was demanded by the IMF, by strengthening public sector activity and spending.

"The alliance of Alba countries represented an example to the rest of the world what could be achieved by democratic planning and co-operation, coupled with the political will to make it work," he said.

The meeting also elected Phil

McGarry chair and ten members were elected to the executive committee from various trade union affiliates including Unison, Unite, UCU and EIS.

Phil said that future plans for the campaign included a potential fringe meeting at the STUC Congress in Dundee and a formal annual general meeting.

He had received affiliations from the RMT Scottish regional council and the RMT Glasgow Shipping branch, and interest had been shown by other RMT branches. It was also noted that the CWU had affiliated and this was welcomed.

A vote of thanks was given by John Foster of the EIS who thanked the speakers for their contributions and thanked Phil for the sterling work he had put in over the previous year to get the organisation up and running. ■

A TRIBUTE TO CAROLYN SIDDALL

After a brave fight against cancer Carolyn Siddall passed away on December 5 2009.

Carolyn joined RMT in July 2003 when she became an employee in the South East Regional Office. Two years later she moved across to become a highly valued member of RMT's Organising Unit.

However, her relationship with the union went back many years before her direct employment. A political activist in the London of the eighties, Carolyn had already embraced a tradition that held action to be of paramount importance.

As a militant in NALGO it was natural that she would get drawn into actions of other fighting trade unionists, solidarity was the order of the day then, for everyone. Carolyn as an influential member of NALGO provided platforms for other trade unions to speak from, not least of all our union. She personally played a major role in the campaign to reinstate two of our drivers, sacked for trade union activities by London Underground's Central Line management. She later worked tirelessly in the campaign against the part-privatisation of London Underground.

Carolyn brought enormous experience with her to our union. As leader of the huge Newham NALGO branch she became a veteran campaigner. Carolyn led the fight to defend her unions' actions against a rotten corrupt borough that involved five years of hard battles. She loathed racism in all its forms and passionately campaigned in Newham against it, bringing her again into contact with our union members doing the same.

Carolyn fought to establish the Stardust Youth Centre and the Asian Women's Refuge. She organised the UK-wide Socialist Movement Trade Union Committee. She set up 'Unshackle the Unions' to draw the left together to organise against the anti-trade union laws, bringing hundreds together at packed meetings of trade unionists. She put her all into solidarity work for the miners during their year long strike. Along with senior RMT figures she was a founder member of the Socialist Labour Party and recently of the Peoples Charter.

Carolyn was in her element working with others united in the fight to rebuild RMT. She was completely at home wherever she was organising for recruitment into the



union. In spite of her experience and history Carolyn never strutted her stuff, or claimed a special platform to air her views. She was modest and listened to the views of others at all times and was respected because of it and will be missed because of it.

In May of this year a memorial service will be held in London to enable all those who for various reasons could not get to the funeral. An announcement of venue and date will be announced later. ■

Geoff Revell

FRANK MURRAY

Francis (Frank) Henry sadly passed away on Saturday December 12 2009. Frank was a signal man for 48 years, starting in 1955 and retiring in 2003. Frank was also railway snooker champion in 1970 something that he and his family are very proud of. He will be greatly missed. ■



RMT STANDS UP FOR ITS MEMBERS

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

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

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

FOR THE BEST LEGAL ASSISTANCE FOR RMT MEMBERS CALL FREE ON 0800 587 7516 (0800 328 1014 in Scotland). Lines open 8.00am-8.00pm Mon-Fri (except public holidays) and 9.00am-5.00pm Sat and Sun. For the 24 hour criminal law line call 0800 587 7530 (0800 328 1014 in Scotland)



PROTECTING AND PROMOTING OUR MEMBERS' INTERESTS



NEW LGBT COMMITTEE

The newly-appointed RMT Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual and Transsexual Advisory Committee is determined to make a success of their role in voicing the aspirations and concerns of RMT LGBT members. Above all, they want to reassure LGBT members that RMT is here for them.

One of the main topics the new delegates dealt with was planning the forthcoming LGBT Conference on May 14 2010. They are determined that the Conference to be held in Belfast will be a success. If you are interested in going, please contact your branch secretary for details or email p.wilkinson@rmt.org.uk ■



CAMBORNE CELEBRATES BUS FAMILY

RMT executive committee member Dave Letcher presents 40-year and 10-year RMT membership badges to father and son, Graham and Roy Etherton.

Graham started as a bus conductor at Western National (as it then was) in the same month as Dave, June 1969.

Graham duly obtained his bus driving licence and has been based at Camborne bus depot ever since. His son Roy joined the company just over ten years ago and works as a cleaner.

Graham's wife Jane has also been involved with the canteen for many years and Graham does not look underfed. The picture



featuring Graham, Dave and Roy represents something in excess of 85 years service within the bus industry in Cornwall, with Graham having completed over 40 years, Dave over 34 years, and Roy having served for 10 years ■

PENZANCE FLIES THE FLAG



New executive member for the south west Dave Letcher and incoming president Alex Gordon attended the first meeting of Penzance No 1 branch this year recently.

Brian Pascoe is the new local staff rep for conductors on First Great Western at Penzance and on the far left is the new branch chair James Bannister ■

Letters

SOLIDARITY FROM NEW YORK

Dear editor,

As you and your brothers and sisters battle to preserve the livelihoods of 1,500 rail workers and the safety of thousands of passengers against this latest round of cuts, I bring you words of encouragement and solidarity from the Transport Workers Union of Greater New York, Local 100.

We wholeheartedly agree with your union's assertion that "Rail Cuts Cost Lives" and I would hasten to add from our own here in New York, that rail cuts and lack of maintenance are fiscally foolish in the long run.

It has taken a generation of work and billions of dollars to rebuild our subway tracks that were left devoid of regular maintenance in the 60s and 70s. The math is simple: a few million today or billions tomorrow.

Ironically – despite this recent history – we here in New York are facing a similar assault on our work and our members' jobs in the name of a "balanced budget". Apparently myopia afflicts management on both sides of Atlantic.

We wish you luck and great success in your latest campaign for jobs safety.

Fraternally,

John Samuelson

THANK YOU

Dear editor,

The London Orphan Fund Committee would like to express our gratitude to Paul Jackson of London Underground Engineering branch for his most generous donation of £300.

Only the committee and the widows and orphans know just what this means in assisting the families of our late colleagues. Many thanks.

Yours sincerely

Jim Stevenson

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

WAT TYLER

80 HIGH STREET, DARTFORD, KENT

Leader of the Peasants' Revolt
In 1381 Wat Tyler and his followers called at this tavern (called the Rose and Crown pub in those days) to "quench their thirst with flagons of ale" before marching up to London to demand from the king that they be freed from bondage. Dartford had been one of the early towns to revolt on June 5 against the hated poll tax imposed by Richard II, and on their way to London the rebels took over Tyler's home town of Maidstone five days later. By the time they reached Mile End in east London so many peasants had joined them that the king met them there and agreed to their demands to pacify them. He said he would free them from their bondage to the lords if they allowed him to stay king. But it only took a few days for the word of the king to be proved worthless. The king met Tyler at Smithfield on June 15 and asked him to disperse his followers. Tyler replied "with a great oath" that he would not

leave until the king put in writing what he had promised and signed it in a charter. He demanded there should be no more serfdom and that all men should be free and equal with no more lords, and that the possessions of the church be seized and divided among the common people. Playing for time again, the king agreed to this (once more on condition that the monarchy was retained) and once more ordered them to disperse. Tyler ordered a jug of ale which he drank in one go, for which he was accused of showing contempt for the king by the Mayor of London, William Walworth, who arrested him. When Tyler resisted Walworth stabbed him in the neck and other noble lords followed up by plunging their swords into his body. His wounded body was carried by his supporters to St Bartholomews hospital for treatment. But Walworth and his men followed them there and dragged Tyler out and beheaded



him in the middle of Smithfield. They then took the head on a pole to the king at Clerkenwell. The king promptly knighted Walworth as a reward (a gruesome early example of the honours' system). Shortly after this the king, who had promised freedom to the peasants, had them slaughtered on the spot, and effectively crushed the revolt. Four hundred years later Tyler was hailed for his valour in standing up against the odious poll tax by Thomas Paine. He stated: "All his proposals made to Richard were on a more just and public ground than those which had been made to John by the Barons [Magna Carta in 1215]... If the Barons merited a monument to be erected at Runnymede, Tyler merits one at Smithfield." Sadly, the only commemoration of Tyler at Smithfield is the dagger which killed him, in Fishmongers Hall. The Chartist also honoured the memory of Tyler in the 1840s, naming one of their brigades after him, and picturing him on the banner of the Sheffield brigade. The pub is in "The Real Ale Pub Guide" of 2009 (edited by Nicolas Andrews). * Jack Straw was the other main leader of the Peasants' Revolt, and had a pub named after him called

Jack Straw's Castle (recently turned into flats and a restaurant) at North End Way, Hampstead Heath. This was where he addressed from a hay wagon thousands of the rebels. In the 19th century the pub was often visited by Karl Marx when picnicking on the heath. Another pub, however, survives to celebrate Straw and the revolt. It is the White Lion in Fobbing, Essex, the village where Straw was born and bred, and where the revolt was first sparked off. A plaque on the pub explains it is "to commemorate the villagers of Fobbing who, in the year 1381, stood for the freedom of the English people against oppression. Oh what avail the plough and sail, or life, or land, if freedom fail." Inside a notice describes how Straw drove the poll tax collectors out of the village and demanded a freedom charter. Straw, like Tyler, was beheaded, while his fellow Fobbing villagers John Gildborne (who has a close named after him) and Thomas Baker were hanged for their part in the uprising. At nearby Pitsea, the 600th anniversary of the revolt was marked by the opening of the Wat Tyler Country Park by the then TUC general secretary, Len Murray. ■



WHAT ABOUT BUS WORKERS

Dear editor,

Last month RMT News had a lot of rail and shipping news, but not a single word on bus workers.

The branch at my workplace is lucky to have to have very dedicated officials who do their best on our behalf in all negotiations at individual depot level. Even though we work for a large national group, there is little sign of any input from the union at regional or national level.

RMT published a bus workers' charter setting out plans to improve pay and conditions, but I have seen no sign of it

being implemented.

Bus drivers are paid considerably less than train drivers for longer basic hours and I can see no justification for such a wide difference.

I appreciate train drivers have to have greater technical and route knowledge. But they do not have to steer and negotiate other unpredictable traffic, deal with passengers or collect fares. I have driven a tram in Germany so I do have some knowledge of driving rail-borne vehicles for comparison.

Bus drivers are every much the poor relations in RMT and I can see no hope of

improvement unless there is a radical reform of how we are organised. Industrial action at local level is undermined as the big companies bring in scab managers across the country to break it.

The only way any of the bus charter is ever going to be introduced is by reorganising at national level and taking on the big groups nationally. This may mean joining forces with other unions involved in the industry to form a national forum, but I can see no hope of improvement if the present fragmented system is allowed to continue.

Yours sincerely, David Smith

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Other family members £2.50
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See our website www.repta.co.uk

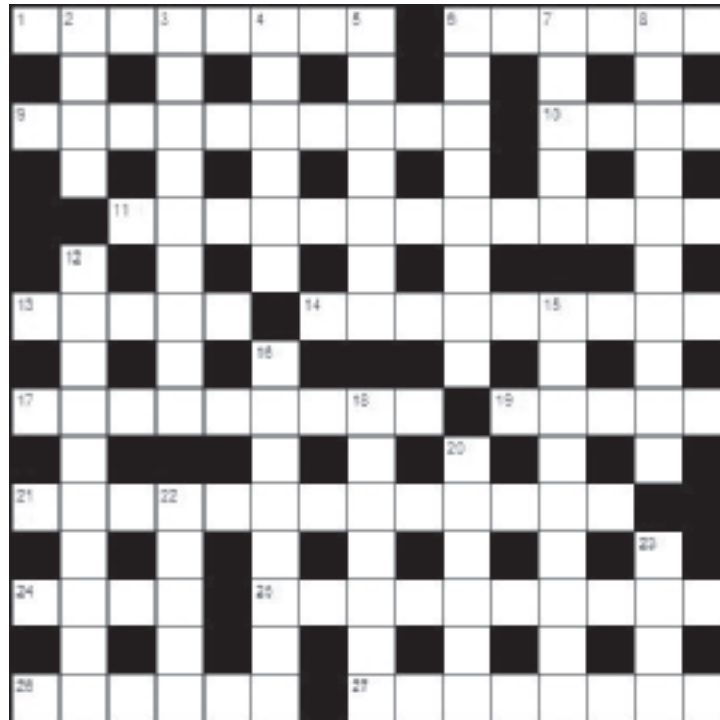
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www.indianwellskissimmeevillas.co.uk

RMT £25 PRIZE CROSSWORD

No. 58. Set by Elk



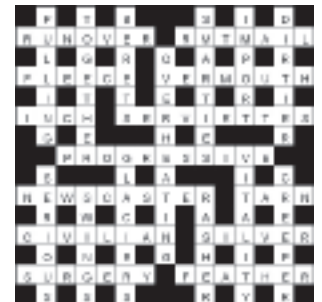
ACROSS

- 1 Flourishes, especially financially (8)
- 6 Take weapons from; make one feel at ease (6)
- 9 Natives of central Asian country bordering Russia and China (10)
- 10 Leave out (4)
- 11 Nastiness (13)
- 13 Place to demonstrate against EU rail 21 on April 13 (5)
- 14 Access passage to colliery (9)
- 17 Right side (of vessel) (9)
- 19 Soup (5)
- 21 Sell-off of public assets (13)
- 24 Famous or professional poet (4)
- 25 Punctures made by serpents -- or pints of cider and lager! (10)
- 26 Academy Awards (6)
- 27 Problems that hold up progress (8)

DOWN

- 2 Chess piece with which to 'castle' (4)
- 3 One who operates points etc (9)
- 4 Chocolate and cream bun (6)
- 5 Language spoken in many African countries (7)
- 6 Conflicts, especially between union and employer (8)
- 7 Item of cutlery (5)
- 8 What to demonstrate in 13 for -- and what 21 undermines (4,6)
- 12 They study the past (10)
- 15 Mouth organ (9)
- 16 Competition; challenges (8)
- 18 Scamps (7)
- 20 Thoroughfare (6)
- 22 Russian spirit - 'little water' (5)
- 23 All hands required here? (4)

No. 57 solution...



The winner of prize crossword no. 57 is P Ross of Romford.

Send entries to Prize Crossword, RMT, Unity House, 39 Chalton Street, London NW1 1JD by April 9 with your name and address.

Winner and solution in next issue.

RMT CHRISTMAS CLUB

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

If you want to open a Christmas Club account and are already a credit union member simply complete the form below. If you are not already a credit union member you will have to complete the form below and the credit union membership application opposite.

Completed forms should be returned to our freepost address.

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

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

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

Cut here

RMT CHRISTMAS CLUB APPLICATION

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

Do you save monthly on 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.



WORKERS MEMORIAL DAY



In **2010** alone ...

15,000+

workers are likely to die from cancer caused by their work

4,000

will die from other work-related lung diseases

1,000

will be killed while driving or being driven as part of their work

200+

will die as a result of an injury they get at work

1,000s

more will have their lives cut short due to other diseases or illnesses caused by work

Every single death is avoidable.

Having trade union representation in a workplace can help to prevent these deaths. Research shows that unionised workplaces have half the number of fatalities of non-unionised ones. Remember the dead. Fight for the living.

28 April

Commemorate Workers Memorial Day in your workplace with two minutes' silence at 12pm

Your union health and safety representative is ...