

RMT *news*

Essential reading for today's transport worker

RMT WINS OLYMPIC GOLD

RMT members at
Network Rail win deal

**Credit
Union
hits
£2 million**

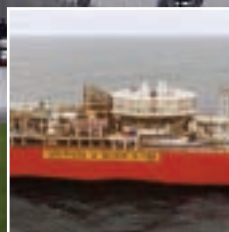
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NATIONAL UNION OF RAIL, MARITIME & TRANSPORT WORKERS

Unity House, 39 Chalton Street, London NW1 1JD



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

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EDITORIAL



WINNING WAYS

RMT has secured a 'ground-breaking' two-year Network Rail deal to cover the period of the Olympics.

The deal will see 10,000 workers across the country receive a 5.2 per cent pay rise this year, backdated to January, and a further rise of inflation plus 0.5 per cent from next January.

The package recognises the important role that transport workers will be expected to play during the games and rewards them financially while protecting their trade union rights.

RMT will be seeking similar deals with other companies.

RMT has also won the re-instatement of unfairly sacked Tube driver Eamonn Lynch and further talks to resolve the unfair dismissal of fellow driver Arwyn Thomas.

London Underground only agreed to RMT demands shortly before planned strike action was due to begin and after he won his unfair dismissal case.

The fact that the tribunal declared that Eamonn lost his job simply for being a member of a health and safety committee should be a matter of grave concern not just for Tube workers but the wider travelling public.

Tory responses to these attacks were predictable as they were dangerous. London mayor Boris Johnson used the dispute to demand even tougher anti-strike laws.

This ConDem government is also planning to cut Health and Safety Executive funding by 35 per cent which would mean that inspections on major sites would only now take place after a death or serious injury had occurred.

Yet it is the threatened HSE that will be investigating the near disaster on board the oil vessel Gryphon operated by Maersk Oil involved in an incident in the North Sea which had the potential to become a major disaster.

Sir Roy McNulty's similar slash and burn proposals for rail would lead to massive job cuts, fare hikes, the break-up of Network Rail and other drastic cost-cutting measures to slash £5 billion in subsidies.

All of the inefficiencies in the rail system are down to the fragmentation and profiteering of privatisation which has bled billions in profits and subsidies out of the industry.

That is a cold hard fact that McNulty and the government have ignored and only the train operators will be laughing all the way to the bank.

The union has also demanded that the government ban First Group from bidding for Great Western and any other rail franchises following their early termination of the current contract has saved them £826 million that was due to the UK taxpayer.

By pulling out three years early First Group have dodged over £800 million due to the UK taxpayer while soaking up £141 million in taxpayer subsidies - that's the best part of £1 billion that it has cost the British people to underwrite this scandal.

This kind of highway robbery is what awaits Scottish Ferries if the European Union gets its way and imposes the break-up and privatisation of these lifeline services.

On a more positive note as RMT News goes to press a bus member has been acquitted of a dangerous driving charge at Southampton Crown Court despite hostile local media.

This was down to the hard work of Bournemouth branch secretary Mark Dean and Malcolm Cherry of Thompsons solicitors which RMT News will be reporting on next month. Well done and, despite Mark's team West Ham being relegated this season, I'm sure he will be happy with the result. It is just one more reason to join a fighting trade union like RMT.

Finally, it is great news that RMT's Credit Union assets have hit £2 million. It means that even more RMT members can take advantage of this service which provides loans and promotes responsible saving at the same time. So if you are not a Credit Union member join today.

Bob Crow

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

McNulty: A DECLARATION OF WAR

The long-awaited report on the future of our railways identifies fragmentation as the problem – and sets out to make it worse, says RMT general secretary Bob Crow

If ever there was a case of 'right diagnosis, wrong treatment', the McNulty report on the railways is it.

The knighted former head of the Civil Aviation Authority was never going to recommend re-nationalisation, but his report is breathtaking not only in the way it scapegoats the workforce, but also in the way it simply ignores the evidence that privatisation is the problem.

Essentially it recommends that rail workers and passengers be made to pay the price of privatisation.

If the government implements the report in full the rail network will be set back for decades, and industrial relations will become a battleground on every front.

Shrugging aside the billions that have been removed from the industry by the privateer train operators and leasing companies, he recommends a massive cull of railway staff and a war on pay, conditions and pensions, despite the fact that productivity has increased ahead of pay.

And despite recognising the damage done by the

fragmentation imposed when the Tories privatised British Rail in the mid-1990s, there will be a sharp increase in safety risks as the network becomes even more fragmented, with a significant shift of power towards the privatised train operators.

The changes McNulty recommends would increase the private-sector drain on the network, and with the government determined to lower subsidy, would leave the taxpayer, passengers and staff to pick up the bill.

He says that Britain's railways are 30 per cent less efficient than publicly owned comparators, but he proposes to close the gap by breaking up Network Rail, giving longer franchises, attacking staff conditions and paving the way for an attack on regional railways.

But more than a third of the total savings would come from staff, with further cuts in maintenance, driver-only operation becoming the default mode, a cull of station staff and the scrapping of regulations that protect ticket offices.

There is a close correlation

between the privateers' profits and the level of public subsidy, but none between subsidy and increasing labour costs – yet it is staff, not the privateers, who are singled out for attack.

Research by Passenger Focus and others shows that passengers want to see more staff on stations and trains, not fewer, and ghost stations and trains will become yet another disincentive to travel, particularly at night.

The report says NR should just be a holding company with route-level concessions operated franchises or other organisations, and there should be early pilots for joint ventures and concessions of rail infrastructure.

And it lines up an attack on regional railways, which he pointedly notes are around six times more expensive to run per mile than long-distance and commuter franchises.

McNulty has simply not considered the benefits of re-integrating the railways under public ownership.

And he ignores the billions drained from the industry in profits and the evidence that

railways in Europe are cheaper precisely because they remain in public ownership and are less fragmented.

Despite recognising that British commuters already face the highest fares in Europe, McNulty also recommends the levelling up of fares for off-peak travel, saying that "the market" could bear higher charges.

His inexplicable plan to shatter track and signalling infrastructure will create a series of mini-Railtracks, raising the chilling spectre of Hatfield and Potters Bar, and reversing the re-integration of maintenance in the not-for-profit Network Rail.

McNulty wants an end to the cap on fare increases, and when rail fares have already increased in real terms by 15 per cent over the last decade, while air fares have fallen by 34 per cent and car travel costs by eight per cent, it is a move that will also force people back into cars.

McNulty is not a recipe for a modern, democratic, mass rail system, but a declaration of war perhaps even more profound than Beeching half a century ago. ■

RMT WINS OLYMPIC GOLD

RMT secures pay and rewards package deal to take Network Rail staff through the Olympics

RMT has secured a 'ground-breaking' two-year pay and rewards package deal which includes a ten per cent pay rise to cover the period of the Olympics.

The deal, secured with sister union TSSA, will see 10,000 signallers, engineers, customer service staff and other employees across the country receive a 5.2 per cent pay rise this year, backdated to January, and a further rise of inflation plus 0.5 per cent from next January.

Staff involved in the Olympics will enjoy a £3.50 an hour bonus for each shift they work during the Games. Overall that will be worth about £500 a head. The deal includes:

- £500 additional money for working through the Olympics period
- More than ten per cent pay increase on the basic over the next two years - 5.2 per cent this year and RPI plus .5 per cent in 2012.
- Agreement of a disputes procedure throughout the Olympics period that means no union member can be dismissed and which recognises the continuing right to withdraw labour.

RMT general secretary Bob Crow said that it was a ground breaking offer that gives Network Rail staff more than ten per cent on the basic between now and next year.

"The package recognises the important role that transport workers will be expected to play during the games and rewards them financially while protecting their union rights at the same time.

"At this time of austerity we think that £500 extra payments and ten per cent on the basic represents a good deal and proves that strong union organisation can deliver for the members," he said. ■

RMT REJECTS LATEST PAY OFFER FROM LONDON UNDERGROUND

RMT has rejected the latest revised pay offer from London Underground.

The union said that whilst it showed a slight improvement, the offer was still below inflation and does not adequately address claims for improved conditions. The revised offer also remained a five-year offer.

It therefore falls well short of settlements the union has achieved with other companies, and for a one-year

deal of a substantial increase in pay and improved conditions.

RMT general secretary Bob Crow said that the union had continued to liaise closely with Unite and TSSA on this issue.

"This co-operation has strengthened the ability to achieve a better deal for members and will continue to invite other organisations to also be part of this unity between trade unions," he said.



JUBILEE LINE DRIVERS BALLOTTED OVER SAFETY

RMT is balloting Tube driver members on the Jubilee Line for action short of a strike in a dispute over attempts by management to ride roughshod over agreed safety procedures.

As a direct result of the continuing failures and breakdowns of the operating system on the Jubilee Line, a legacy of the tube privatisation fiasco, tube bosses are now under instruction from the top to ignore agreed safety procedures to short-cut the clearance of blockages on the line.

Without conducting a full risk assessment, and without issuing proper briefings to train operators, tube bosses are trying to impose from above a massive change to safety procedures that would allow them to instruct drivers to move trains in restricted manual mode (overriding the automated Jubilee operating system) through the RS (route secure) protocol over points without the need to scotch and clip the points.

Scotching and clipping has long been rail industry standard procedure for ensuring that points are manually fixed in a safety-critical situation to avoid any chance of derailment or of a train following the wrong route - a failure that could have devastating consequences.

RMT general secretary Bob Crow said that the high-profile spate of failures and breakdowns on the Jubilee Line was driving an attempt to short-cut the consultation machinery and safety procedures.

"The solution to the growing problems on the Jubilee Line is to tackle the core faults with the fleet and operating systems that the failure of tube privatisation has lumbered us with - cutting corners on safety procedures is a guaranteed recipe for making a bad situation even worse," he said.

HEATHROW EXPRESS MEMBERS BACK STRIKE ACTION



RMT members working for Heathrow Express have voted overwhelmingly for strike action and action short of a strike in a dispute over pay.

RMT members based at Heathrow Airport and Paddington will strike for 48 hours from 03:40 hours on May 27, and for 24 hours from 03:40 hours on Friday June 24. Further action will also be scheduled in July.

Over 90 per cent of those taking part in the ballot rejected an offer from the company for the two years up to the end of 2012 as "unsatisfactory" and backed strike action and action short of strike action.

RMT general secretary Bob Crow said that Heathrow Express had tabled a two year pay offer which was loaded with strings and which fails to meet workers' demands for

a fair deal taking them through the Olympics period.

"As a result our members have now voted by a massive margin for action.

"It is now down to the company to come back to us with a proposal that properly rewards our members for the hard work they put in to delivering the successful and highly-profitable Heathrow Express service," he said

LU ALSTOM MEMBERS TRANSFERRED TO TUBE LINES

RMT has welcomed the transfer of the train maintenance contract on London Underground's Jubilee Line from the privately-owned Alstom to the publicly-owned Tube Lines.

The transfer comes at a time when the Jubilee Line is plagued by delays and disruptions, and illustrates that the union was right to campaign against the contracting-out of Tube maintenance work.

The union also called for the other contract held by Alstom, on the Northern Line, to be transferred to Tube Lines as part of the return of all contracted-out services to a fully-integrated, publicly-owned public transport system.

London Transport regional organiser Steve Hedley said that throughout the transfer process, the union insisted that members suffered no attack on their terms and conditions of employment.

He said that talks on these matters are ongoing, with the exception of the issue of pensions, as about 25 Alstom staff are in a Defined Benefit (DB) scheme which Tube Lines does not have.

"To resolve this issue and avoid detriment to our members, we demand that TfL admit all Alstom (and Tube Lines) staff into the TfL final salary pension scheme and be given free passes in line with everyone else in TfL and LUL," he said.

TUBE STRIKE SUSPENDED AFTER SACKED DRIVER REINSTATED

RMT calls off strike action after Tube bosses agree to resolution talks over unfairly sacked tube drivers



RMT suspended planned industrial action on London Underground following an agreement with Tube bosses to re-employ unfairly sacked driver Eamonn Lynch and to resolve the unfair dismissal of sacked driver Arwyn Thomas in advance of his Employment Tribunal.

London Underground agreed to reinstate RMT Tube driver Eamonn Lynch shortly before strike action was due to begin and after he won his unfair dismissal case after being sacked for allegedly breaching safety rules.

RMT balloted drivers for strike action following both sackings which were clearly linked to the pair's trade union activities as both drivers won interim relief tribunals which meant LU was forced to continue to pay the men's wages.

"This dispute has only ever been about securing justice for

our members who have been unfairly dismissed," said RMT general secretary Bob Crow.

"As a result of this agreement Eamonn Lynch can return to work with his continuity of employment and standard of living protected.

"I want to pay tribute to the loyalty and determination of our members on London Underground who have continued to stand shoulder to shoulder with their colleagues.

"Their strength and courage has been a shining example to the entire trade union movement," he said.

Hot-headed London mayor Boris Johnson, who has consistently refused to meet RMT officials, accused the union of being 'completely crackers' for organising industrial action and used the dispute to demand even tougher anti-strike laws.

This is despite the fact that an

employment tribunal concluded that Mr Lynch had been dismissed because he was a member of a health and safety committee and for his trade union activities.

The fact that, in a safety critical industry, an employee could lose his job simply for being a member of a health and safety committee is a matter of grave concern not just for RMT members but for all tube workers and the wider travelling public.

The tribunal was also highly critical of London Underground witnesses.

It found the manager who conducted the disciplinary hearing, Alana Stewart, was an unreliable and unsatisfactory witness. In one paragraph of the judgment they accuse her of 'dissembling' – pretending – before the tribunal.

The tribunal found the manager who conducted the

appeal, Chris Taggart, was more interested in excusing his colleagues than giving a fair hearing. By contrast, the tribunal stated that Mr Lynch was a straightforward and truthful witness.

The tribunal concluded that he was truthful about the incident that led to his wholly unjustified dismissal.

The tribunal found that London Underground had failed to follow its own procedures and concluded that no reasonable employer would have decided that dismissing Mr Lynch was proportionate.

The damning verdict totally vindicated RMT's campaign which was really about whether trade union officials can go about their lawful business without fear of victimisation by a management who appear to be out of control. ■

TRADE UNIONS MARK WORKERS MEMORIAL DAY

Trade unions marked Workers Memorial Day around the world last month to remember those that died at work and to demand a safer working environment.

RMT called for the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) to be properly resourced and condemned planned cuts of around 35 per cent to its budget.

HSE union rep Simon Hester warned that the cuts meant that inspections on major sites would only now take place after a death or serious injury had occurred.

Mr Hester delivered the stark warning at a Workers' Memorial Day event in London just days after a fatality on the London Gateway building site in Essex.

The protest outside the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) in Westminster took an unexpected turn when minister Chris Grayling emerged from the building to be confronted by angry union members led by Tony O'Brien from the Construction Safety Campaign.

Mr Grayling, the minister responsible for the savage HSE cuts, was surrounded by protesters and while refusing to discuss his plans resorted to the infamous ministerial brush-off



"my door is always open" - clearly not as the picture (above) shows.

The London WMD rally, one of a growing number across the country and globally, was addressed by RMT president Alex Gordon who listed a catalogue of fatalities, blasting out the message that the entire movement needed to unite in the fight against the co-ordinated attack on health and safety at work.

Figures from the HSE reveal that last year 152 workers were

killed at work and thousands of people died of mesothelioma and occupational cancers and lung diseases.

The Trade Union Co-ordinating Group put down early day motion 1761 in Parliament as part of the growing support amongst MPs at Westminster for full recognition of Workers Memorial Day and the concern that exists at the savage cuts to the HSE.

In Australia, International Transport Workers Federation

(ITF) president Paddy Crumlin said that more men and women continue to be killed at work than in wars.

"It remains one of the greatest global tragedies that many of these deaths are preventable.

"International Workers' Memorial Day commemorates those workers who tragically never came home.

"Today we remember them as we continue the fight to raise safety standards for all workers," he said. ■

RMT WINS ROYAL WEDDING U-TURN

Southeastern Trains cleaning contractors, Wettons Cleaning Services, has reversed its decision not to pay any enhancements in pay or granting lieu days for staff who worked the extra bank holiday for the royal wedding last month.

As a result of Wettons decision not to honour the

additional bank holiday to workers earning just £10,600, the union immediately demanded a meeting with the company and it agreed to recognise April 29 as an additional bank holiday for all staff.

Wettons has now confirmed it will adhere to the terms and conditions of

employment for all TUPE transfer staff (COMATEC, ISS and EX-BR) for the additional bank holiday.

All other employees will receive an additional day's annual leave and those employees that worked on the day will receive normal pay and a day in lieu.

Profits have soared for the

company more than 200 per cent over the last six years and the boss survives on £376,000 a year.

The union will continue to fight for decent wages and conditions for the cleaners pursue a similar written agreement for next year's Royal Jubilee. ■

MPS CALL ON EAST COAST TO STOP OUTSOURCING JOBS TO INDIA

RMT has condemned moves by publicly owned East Coast railway to export to India jobs currently done by staff at the National Express call centre in Newcastle.

East Coast, in public hands following the serial collapse of franchises run by GNER and National Express, has given preferred-bidder status for customer-relations functions to Intelnet Global Services, which has operations in Plymouth and Mumbai, and to ATOS Origin, which operates in Wolverhampton.

RMT called the decision a “bitter blow to the economy and communities of the northeast” which, if allowed by the government to stand, showed an “astonishing” lack of commitment to protecting jobs in the region.

The union welcomed a parliamentary motion, EDM 1585 tabled by Gateshead MP Ian Mearns, which calls on ministers to intervene to reverse a decision that is “unacceptable” and which “demonstrates the failure of fragmentation and sub contracting in the rail industry”.

The EDM said that the moves “demonstrates the failure of fragmentation and sub contracting in the rail industry; and calls for an urgent, industry wide assessment of the benefits to the passenger, taxpayer and economy of bringing all railway services in-house”.

RMT general secretary Bob Crow said that it was bad enough that the government wanted to re-privatise the East Coast Mainline when it has already collapsed twice in private hands, but it beggars belief that the government should even contemplate allowing these jobs to be exported.

“These are core functions that should be done in-house, and this is another classic example of the failure of privatisation and a market-mad contract-culture that sees only profit and loss and never the damage it does to services and the lives of real people,” he said. ■

Parliamentary column



TORIES ATTACK THE RIGHT TO STRIKE

I am very pleased to report I was present in Parliament to help defeat Tory MP Dominic Raab’s Ten Minute Rule Bill on April 26 which aimed to restrict the right of workers to take strike action.

Given its status, the Bill had no hope of becoming law, but floated the prospect of further anti-trade union legislation. That’s why it was vital it was roundly defeated by 171 votes to 121. Under the terms of Raab’s Bill, a union in the transport or emergency services sectors would only be able to take strike action if it was supported by a majority of eligible voters, rather than the current simple majority of those voting.

As RMT members know, Britain already has some of the most restrictive trade union legislation in the developed world. What’s needed is the repeal of this legislation, not further constraints on unions trying to defend their members.

During his speech it was offensive to see Raab, on the one hand align himself with the cause of those famous strikes in British history; the match girls and at East London docks and then on the other castigate today’s workers for using their right to down tools. This man is the enemy of liberty.

With inflammatory language, he described a Britain that few outside the Tory right would recognise: where the public is held hostage by “trade union bosses” who “bully the majority of union members into supporting strike action”, singling out RMT, PCS, Unite and BECTU.

He gave himself away by saying “our law gives unions too much power” and had the temerity to pose the question “who is prepared to stand up for the hard-working majority in this Country?” as if the Tories have ever been the friend of

working people.

This Bill sought to clobber workers not bad employers. Trade union leaders don’t bully members into voting one way; members cast their votes in secret. Under his proposals, industrial relations would worsen because it would strengthen the position of anti-union employers.

The bare-faced cheek and double standards of the man were astounding. He wants a law for unions requiring 50 per cent support before strike action can be taken, but this standard doesn’t apply elsewhere in public life, including Parliamentary elections. Raab didn’t win 50 per cent support from eligible voters in his Esher and Walton constituency (he polled 32,134 votes of 76,962 electors). Applying his own rule, he should not be allowed to sit in the House of Commons. As Bob Crow said of these Tories: “They want one law for the political class and another for the working class”.

His proposals were a clear attack on trade union members and the human right of workers to take strike action as set out in the UN ILO Conventions. Particularly of course, it was an assault RMT members and industrial militancy.

Raab and his ilk, including Tory Mayor Boris Johnston, can’t abide workers banding together in solidarity against their employers in the form of strike action and winning concessions as a result.

At this critical time when the coalition government is ripping up our public services and welfare state, the ability of workers to be able to industrial action to defend their livelihoods and communities is essential.

Ian Lavery
MP for Wansbeck



CAMPAIGNING AGAINST CUTS IN BUS SERVICES

You can view this conference as a webcast on the RMT web site

RMT's bus workers' conference meeting in Exeter calls for campaigns on cuts, safety and conditions

RMT bus workers' conference in Exeter called for the union to campaign against cuts and for better safety and conditions in the industry.

Keith Sanders-Hole, Exeter No 2, proposed that the union should support the local passenger-led campaigns that are taking place to save bus services.

"We need to be actively involved. We should be with the anti-cuts campaigners who are campaigning to save our jobs," he said.

Conference called for the union to keep bus branches informed of anti-cuts campaigns and to support local bus branches involved in these campaigns.

RMT president Alex Gordon agreed on the importance of linking up with community-led anti-cuts campaigns. He pointed to the massive demonstration in London on 26 March as confirmation of how strong the feeling is amongst the public against the huge swathe of cuts that is taking place across the public sector and publicly subsidised privatised services.

"We may be in the private sector, temporarily, but it is still a public service.

"In the bus industry we are



AWARD: Longstanding RMT member and bus worker Peter Edwards received an award from assistant general secretary Mick Cash on his retirement from the industry.

"Conference will not be the same without Pete's charm and wit and we all wish him all the best for the future," he said.

facing an onslaught from George Osborne's spending review and many local authorities see bus services as expendable.

"In Somerset we have seen massive cuts while in Cambridgeshire they aim to cut 100 per cent of the bus grant over the next four years.

"These cuts go right across the board but will be felt in rural communities in particular," he said.

Dave Gilbey, South Devon Bus, told the conference that the entire bus industry was under attack nationally and locally.

"With every cut jobs will go and so will our pensions.

"They want our jobs and the money that we have put worked for and put into our pensions," he said.

Guest speaker Sophie Allain of the Campaign for Better Transport, told conference about the work of the Save Our Buses campaign that had been launched earlier in the year.

"The campaign is about defending buses from the public service cuts and it has brought together a broad coalition including all the major unions.

"We are looking at legal challenges and whether proposed local authority cuts are within the law. We need to inject buses into the anti-cuts movement," she said.

SAFETY

The lack of safety equipment and non-working equipment on buses was drawn to the attention of the conference by numerous delegates.

The issue had special resonance in the wake of serious physical attacks on RMT bus drivers recently.

Conference called on the union to make driver alarms a mandatory fixture in the cabs of all new vehicles.

Phil Coakley, Poole and District, said he was surprised to learn that new vehicles were being brought into depots without an alarm as standard.

"Only with the delivery of

new vehicles to our depot did we realise that the alarms were not part of the spec.

"They should be fitted as standard," he said.

Assistant general secretary Mick Cash, argued that the need for clearer guidelines on the condition a bus has to be in before it is deemed safe to go on the road.

"It is important that we campaign and highlight the problem of non-working equipment on buses," he said.

AGAINST ATTACKS ON CONDITIONS

Joe Galea, Notts and Derby Bus, explained how members transferred under the Transfer of Undertakings Protection of Employment (TUPE) often found themselves working under worse conditions.

This is in spite of the fact that TUPE legislation is meant to ensure that when a business is transferred from one owner to another the employees are

employed on the same terms and conditions.

"Some of our members have been employed by three different companies at three different locations in four months," he said.

"Although this is better than being without a job in these hard times, each time they have had to move further away from their original location and their terms and conditions have tended to change slightly each time.

"Members who lived close to their workplace now find themselves travelling long distances to work," he said.

Relief regional organiser Pete Skelly agreed that while under TUPE members' rights were meant to be protected, that in fact this wasn't always the case.

"With TUPE, every time you are moved you lose something.

"They cut costs by attacking wages and conditions," he said.



STAFF OUR STATIONS

RMT station grades meeting in Rhyl prepare battle plan to defend jobs and station safety

A co-ordinated industrial and political campaign can halt concerted attacks by train-operating companies on station staff jobs, delegates at the station grades conference declared.

A highly charged gathering in the north Wales resort of Rhyl sketched a plan of action, including industrial action and a national public campaign aimed at harnessing popular support for safer stations.

The full-scale onslaught on station staffing threatened jobs, safety and service standards and undermined all other grades, delegates agreed, adding that

the campaign should identify itself clearly with the growing anti-cuts movement that was signalled by the huge demonstration held in London in March.

The hypocrisy of those seeking to divert attention from government cuts by whipping up wedding hysteria, while cleaners were denied the right to time off and half of Britons earned less than £408 a week was slammed by assistant general secretary Pat Sikorski.

Leaks of the McNulty report on the future of railways in Britain gave a clear indication of the government plan to slash

jobs and spending while protecting the profits of parasites who had bled the industry since privatisation, Pat said.

"If there is waste in the industry it is the billions taken out as profits, yet the government is bent on rewarding TOCs that have ripped our industry off by handing them the infrastructure as well."

That, and McNulty's view that the industry was "too obsessed with standards", would only result in further dangerous maintenance cuts and sweating of assets to squeeze out even more profit, undermining safety and raising the prospect of another Hatfield or Potter's Bar.

Station grades company council reps should be brought together to flesh out the industrial and campaigning priorities, said Pat.

Ross Marshall, Central Line West, pointed to campaigning already undertaken, which had garnered much public sympathy and been backed by postcard campaigns and early-day motions tabled by the union's parliamentary group.

"It's time for that to go national, with regional rallies, merchandise and a media campaign," said Ross.

"Every TOC is after us and station staff are the easiest to get rid of, and if we don't fight back we will be gone," said Michelle Rodgers, Manchester South.

"The framework for the campaign is already there: let's roll it out – we'll get massive support from the public," Michelle said.

The union had been battling station staff cuts for nearly two years at London Midland, said Denis James, Birmingham Rail, and more than 18,000 members of the public had backed the union's postcard campaign and objected to station cuts.

"It is important to recognise that we need to organise, stand together and fight, and that the public is behind us on this," said Denis.

"We have a fragmented railway, but from Land's End to John O'Groats we should

fighting together to protect our jobs and services and to get us all back on the same pay, terms and conditions – and if we stick together we can beat any management," said Denis Connor, Glasgow 5.

The "real power" that had been displayed by station staff over four recent days of strike action across London Underground was acknowledged, and delegates vowed to give every backing to station staff displaced by LUL's cuts.

The union was facing many battles on many fronts, fighting the government and the TOCs, and to defend for pensions and the welfare state, said Jane Gwynn, Jubilee Line South and East London Line.

"The LUL strikes proved that we can do it if we stick together, and that applies as much to the mainline as it applies to London Underground," added Jason Humphreys, Jubilee Line South and East London Line.

The March 26 anti-cuts demonstration had been magnificent, but it was crucial to keep organising and fighting, getting involved in local campaigns and trades union councils, said Doug Oxer, Manchester Victoria.

Cuts in station staff would only have the effect of increasing the already unacceptable level of abuse, violence and assaults, said Doug.

Conference president Chris Reilly, Reading, emphasised the importance of the union's High Court victory over Serco Docklands' attempt to invalidate the union's strike ballot.

"That judgement will make it easier for all trade unionists seeking to take action to defend jobs and services," Chris said.

That victory had given a massive boost to the entire trade-union movement, said Peter March, RMT executive.

Had the union lost it would have faced a bill in excess of £100,000 – but Serco had had to pay those costs and had been forced back to the table to negotiate a better deal.

However, the Tory-led government would try to turn

the screw of anti-union laws even tighter, Peter warned.

BTP MEETING DEMANDED TO TACKLE GROWING ASSAULT PROBLEM

DELEGATES demanded a summit with the chief inspector of the British Transport Police to press for a solution to the increasing burden of dealing with assaults and other crimes placed on revenue-protection and other station staff.

"Even now we are lucky if a 999 call is answered, but the BTP is in line for swingeing cuts," noted Ross Marshall, expressing alarm at trials of giving RPIs more powers to deal with what should be police matters.

Delegates recalled serious incidents to which the BTP had failed to respond in time – or even at all.

The BTP needed to be funded properly by the government – and while private-sector companies were making huge profits from the industry they should be paying their share too, said Denis Connor.

- DELEGATES slammed the increasing use by TOCs of non-operational and inadequately trained people to cover safety-critical staff in breach of safety rules, especially during strikes, and called for an investigation with the evidence handed to the Office of Rail Regulation.

TOCs were attempting to create a two-tier workforce, said Linda Wiles, TfL No 1: "Do we have to wait for someone to be killed before we do something about this?" she asked.

- MORE pressure needs to be put on train-operating companies to provide hepatitis B vaccinations, delegates agreed, endorsing a call by Caroline Parry, Gloucester, to keep up the momentum to get employers to take a practical step to recognise their duty of care.
- FAILURE by Network Rail and train operators to improve the level and quality of

information provided to front-line rail workers at times of severe weather was condemned by conference.

Promises by NR and TOCs to liaise and improve the flow of information had come to nothing, and staff were left in the dark to face the anger of the public, said Tim Wilkinson, Gloucester.

- EMPLOYERS should shoulder their responsibility to get staff to late or early shifts, especially when TOCs themselves change shift times, delegates agreed

It was scandalous that staff were being expected to foot the bill for travel to work when their employers had imposed changed shift times, noted Denis Connor,

Staff should be given travel expenses or time to cover the additional costs imposed on them, and conference asked that the union take up the issue with all relevant companies.

- POSTERS aimed at attracting all relevant grades to the station and associated grades' conference should be produced to boost attendance among members, such as cleaners and retail, who do not already attend.
- POCKET 'know your rights' booklets should be produced by regional councils for all station staff to help counter managements that continually made up rules and bypassed safety in order to hide inadequate staffing levels.
- SOLIDARITY and support was extended to Chris Smart, sacked recently for doing his job as a workplace RMT rep. Chris was looking to an industrial tribunal to throw out the flimsy case against him – which amounted to being accused of 'harassing' a manager simply by writing letters seeking time off for RMT duties.
- NEXT year's conference will be held in Teignmouth, Devon. ■

LEITH SHIPPING BRANCH RELAUNCHED

Leith shipping branch is up and running again after being in moth balls for years, writes national secretary Steve Todd.

The branch was relaunched earlier this year and has a new branch secretary in Jim Rutherford, a Forth Ports employee from Grangemouth.

New branch chairman Brian Reynolds works for Cally-Mac and is another long standing member of the union and, indeed, Leith branch.

The branch has a proud history and boasts many well known names from the former NUS days in its membership, former general secretary Sam McClusky, former assistant general secretary Harry Bygate and myself, to name but a few.

I am proud to have been a member of this historical branch and recall the great and lively branch meetings of the late 80's and 90's. This branch always commanded a great turnout of members and it is great to see Brian taking over the chair at last and I wish him, Jim and the branch every success for the future.

The branch also has the only, former NUS and now RMT, tug boat port in the UK. There is also the big old building on the "Shore" near Leith Docks, now private flats, which was once NUS headquarters. It is hoped that now the branch is up and running, the meetings will gather momentum and they will start sending members and motions to both BGMS and AGMs and provide a service to members they deserve. Long live "Sunny Leith". ■

COASTGUARD CUTS CAN KILL



SAVING LIVES: A total of 8,313 people were plucked from the sea by lifeboats last year and lifeguards helped 18,775 people across UK's beaches.

Unions have told MPs that government plans to cut back on coastguard centres, leaving just one in the South West, and the privatisation of rescue services would put lives at risk.

The House of Commons Transport Committee took evidence on the coastguard cutback plans from PCS, RMT, Prospect and Nautilus.

Under government proposals, the number of round-the-clock coastguard centres will be reduced from 18 to just three 24-hour operational centres - at Aberdeen, in the Southampton/Portsmouth area and at Dover.

In addition, there will be five sub-centres open during

daylight hours - at Swansea, at Falmouth in Cornwall, at Bridlington in East Yorkshire, at either Belfast or Liverpool and at either Stornoway or Shetland.

Shipping minister Mike Penning has claimed that the major cutback of the coastguard would improve services.

The government has not consulted staff or unions about the changes which would hit frontline services.

RMT general secretary Bob Crow said that it was a shocking indictment of ConDem government.

"It's clear nothing is safe from the ConDem austerity axe

- including emergency, life-saving services like the coastguards and search and rescue.

"It is amazing that plans to cut our coastguards could even be considered, let alone implemented, and shows that they are quite prepared to hack away at life or death services.

These proposals must be fought tooth and nail every step of the way," he said.

Shadow transport secretary Maria Eagle said: "The Tory-led government's proposal to close so many of our coastguard stations is ill-thought out madness that will leave our coastline a more dangerous place." ■

SEAFARERS AWARENESS WEEK TO HIGHLIGHT 'SEA BLINDNESS'

Coordinated by Seafarers UK, the leading maritime welfare charity, Seafarers Awareness Week - 6-12 June - aims to highlight 'sea blindness', i.e. the widespread public ignorance about the UK's dependence on seafarers.

Seafarers UK is making a thought-provoking video to reveal how our 'island nation' would suffer if food, fuel and goods were not safely delivered everyday by ship. Social media - Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, etc - will be used to reach a

younger audience.

Triggered by the video, an interactive web TV show will be shown on media websites and there will be live radio interviews around the UK. ■

Website:
www.seafarersawarenessweek.org

WHAT'S NEW ON RMTV



www.RMTv.org.uk

Catch the latest video updates on RMT's own on-line station at www.rmtv.org.uk

CHANNEL 1: RMT IN ACTION

May Day: footage and interviews from this year's International Workers' Day celebrations

CHANNEL 2: NEWS BULLETINS

Network Rail pay deal: Bob Crow on the ground-breaking Olympics deal.

Re-instate Arwyn and Eamonn: as RMT wins the re-instatement of Eamonn Lynch and commitment to resolve Arwyn Thomas's case before his full tribunal hearing, Pat Sikorski outlines the overwhelming case against the victimisation RMT reps on London Underground

CHANNEL 3: HISTORY

The People's Flag: First in an acclaimed four-part documentary on the history of the labour movement, by Chris Reeves

CHANNEL 4: RMT EXTRA

The Banner Man: Ed Hall shares the secrets of banner-making in an exclusive RMTv interview

Japanese tsunami: Japanese transport union EB on the impact of the devastating earthquake and tsunami and the international solidarity shown by unions to help bring relief

Catch them all and a lot more at www.rmtv.org.uk



RMT takes fight to communities directly affected by attacks on Cal Mac lifeline services

RMT has demanded that the Scottish government and Caledonian MacBrayne "come clean" and lift the threat to jobs on the Gourock-Dunoon ferry route after news leaked that the publicly owned company had bid to downgrade to a passenger-only service.

The company, which currently runs a combined passenger and freight service across the Clyde, has conceded that crew and staff had found out 'by default' that it was preparing to drop freight operations under cover of the tendering process imposed by Holyrood.

RMT general secretary Bob Crow, in Scotland campaigning to defend lifeline ferry services and jobs, has written to the Scottish government seeking assurances that jobs and services on the route would be protected.

"It is completely unacceptable that loyal CalMac staff and the people who rely on the services they provide should find out through gossip that decisions have been taken that cast a long shadow over essential jobs and services.

"The government has been sitting on the whole unnecessary tendering process for nearly two years, and we understand that CalMac has been actively looking at new passenger-only vessels for some time," he said.

RMT, along with the STUC and local community campaigners and trade

unionists, held meeting in Balivanich, The Uists and Stornoway, Lewis this month addressed by Bob Crow, national secretary Steve Todd and president Alex Gordon.

"The speculation about job losses and privatisation following the tendering of the Gourock-Dunoon route, at the instigation of the European Parliament, is a graphic demonstration of the threat posed to the Scottish Ferry services and we are seeking urgent assurances that there will be no compulsory redundancies and no privatisation," said Bob.

One of the routes threatened by privatisation is the Ardsrossan sailing to Brodick in the Isle of Arran. The union had the first of the two meetings in Brodick addressed by Steve Todd, and RMT Parliamentary group member Katy Clark MP.

Steve spelt out the dangers to the island community of the Scottish government proposals making clear that privatisation would hit the terms and conditions and job security of the workforce as well as service levels and fares.

Katy Clark MP spoke out against the proposals and stated that most people were unaware of the threat of privatisation.

She urged the meeting to spread the word amongst the community and step up opposition to the proposals. She also urged people to lobby candidates for the Scottish Parliament and other elected politicians.

Currently the Scottish government is only allowed by the European Commission to subsidise passengers on the Gourock to Dunoon route due to the existence of private sector operator Western Ferries who also run a freight service close to the town centre of Dunoon.

The Scottish government has now rushed out a tender specification requiring Caledonian MacBrayne to compete for the route alongside a number of private sector companies.

The EU notified the Scottish government that they required a tender for the ferry route in December 2009 but Holyrood has delayed action until the last possible moment.

Scottish government transport minister Keith Brown has so far refused to guarantee that TUPE or pension protections apply.

In 2006 prior to the first round of tendering for the wider Clyde and Hebrides ferry network the Scottish government explicitly safeguarded the future of the workforce in the tender specification.

At the time the tender document for the Clyde and Hebrides network required a subsidy clawback if any new operator winning the tender subsequently sought to make increased profits by reducing terms and conditions or attacking pensions. ■

WORKERS' EDUCATION THEN AND NOW

*Richard Ross of London
Metropolitan University's
Centre for Trade Union Studies,
looks at how educating workers
is more important than ever*

STRIKE: Ruskin students on strike in 1909



Globalisation, neo-liberalism, deregulation, privatisation, financial crisis... trying to understand what is going on and why can be difficult, yet is so important.

More than ever high level education is vital for anyone who takes an interest in politics or wants to be active in their union.

The Centre for Trade Union Studies at London Metropolitan University is run by and for trade unionists. Over 100 students, including from RMT, are studying with us. We offer courses in Labour and Trade Union Studies, starting with a Certificate of Higher Education, through to a BA degree and a Masters degree. Union Learning Reps can study for the Certificate of Professional Development in Union Learning. All these courses can be taken part-time and you don't need formal academic qualifications to apply. For some courses attendance is one day a month, for others two weeks and two days a year. This makes it possible for students from all

over the UK to take these courses.

We are in a long tradition of workers' education although the history of workers' education is rarely spoken or written about. It is in danger of being lost from view. We need to reclaim this history so we know where we have come from and that other possibilities are available. Shedding a light on the past might help us to illuminate the future.

Two rival organisations provided the bulk of workers' education before the Second World War. The Workers' Educational Association (WEA) had been founded in 1903. Its rival, the National Council of Labour Colleges, was established following a strike by students at Ruskin College, Oxford in 1909.

The WEA and Ruskin had similar aims, to bring the benefits of education to workers, but the question arose as to who should determine and control that education. Was it to be the middle class, bringing enlightenment to the working class, or was it to be workers

themselves and their institutions, such as trade unions? Was the purpose of education to fit workers into a capitalist society or to question and help to change that society?

This question came into sharp focus at Ruskin College. The college, founded in 1899, became heavily influenced by Oxford University. Many of the students were trade unionists who began to feel that the purpose of the college was to transmit ruling-class ideas, particularly in the field of economics.

They organised their own classes, formed the Plebs League to put pressure on the college authorities and in 1909 went on strike and established the Central Labour College, in opposition to Ruskin, as "a declaration of working-class independence in education". Many of the strikers were from RMT forerunner, the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants.

Trade unionists who studied at the Central Labour College ran their own classes when they returned home. In 1921 these classes came together to form the National Council of Labour Colleges (NCLC).

The NCLC and the WEA were poles apart ideologically. The NCLC stood for independent working class education, by which they meant education independent of the state and those that controlled it.

For the NCLC, the WEA was a tool of the state, designed to integrate the working-class into a common national culture. They ridiculed the WEA's claim to be 'impartial'. From the WEA's point of view, NCLC education was 'propaganda'.

In sum, whilst the NCLC stood for revolutionary change in society the WEA stood for reformism, a divide that continues to run through education, trade unionism and politics today.

The NCLC's aim of working class education by and for the working class had led to it calling for the TUC to be responsible for trade union education. In 1944, at the



From the "Plebs," the monthly magazine of the National Council of Labour Colleges, 15 South Hill Park Gardens, London, N.W.7

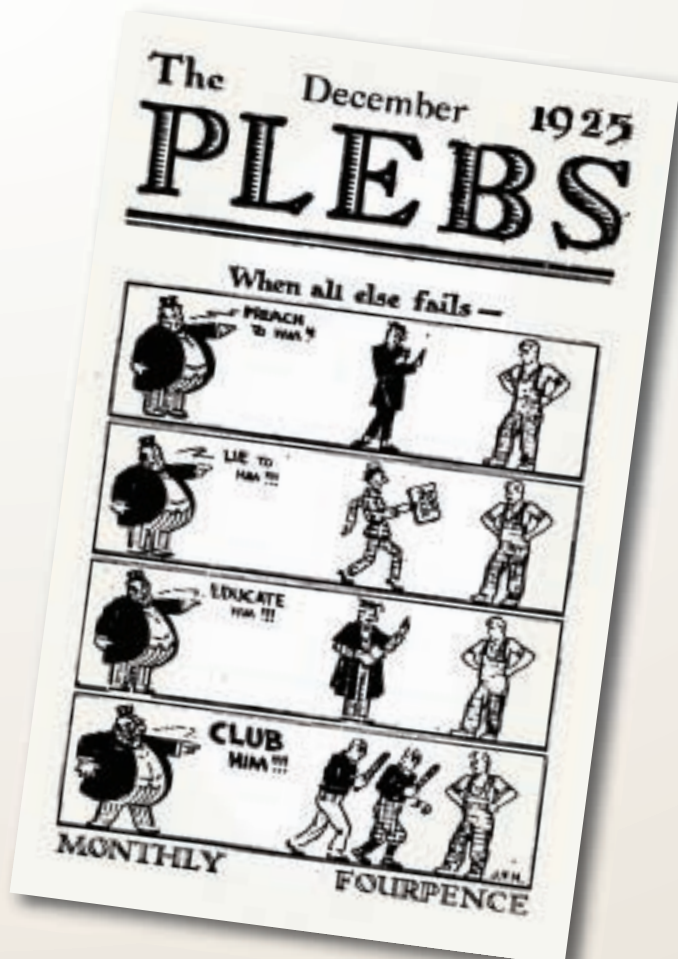
instigation of the National Union of Railwaymen, the TUC examined the possibility of a residential college. This eventually became Congress House, the TUC Memorial Building, a war memorial to trade unionists, opened in 1958.

Whilst it was being built TUC courses were run at Maritime House, the headquarters of the National Union of Seamen.

Financial difficulties that unions faced after the Second World War led to further calls for the rationalisation of Trade Union Education. The educational work of unions themselves, as well as the TUC was growing and the duplication of providers was costly. In 1964 the TUC Education scheme came into being taking over the NCLC and the trade union work of the WEA.

Although workers' education was rationalised in 1964 the questions that were raised in 1909 with the Ruskin College strike are still relevant. What is the purpose of worker's education? Who should control it? Who should provide it? How can independent working-class education be achieved? The Plebs League wanted "neither crumbs (nor) condescension", but control of their own destiny. We must not forget this history.

For further information about trade union courses at London Metropolitan University contact Richard Ross, by email at: r.ross@londonmet.ac.uk or phone: 020 7133 5211.



TRAINCREW AND SHUNTERS

This year's Train Crew and Shunters conference held in Nottingham discussed the McNulty report into rail "efficiency" which promises new and savage wave of cuts right across the industry

It was fitting that the opening address should come from the current Sheriff of Nottingham - Councillor Penny Griggs - with a message a far cry from her predecessor of legend.

Councillor Griggs received a warm welcome as she explained to delegates that she is a railwayman's daughter and that her dad is a former shunter who joined the NUR in August 1941.

She went on to outline the City's commitment to an integrated and publicly owned transport system, with the bus services under elected local authority control, making the

point that there is no excuse for the trains to be run by private operators for private profit.

Craig Johnson gave the report back to the conference on behalf of the Council of Executives. Craig opened by homing in on the abuse of CCTV by the employers in disciplinary cases:

"Why is it that CCTV is always available to punish our members but never available to exonerate them? It has become a tool in the bosses arsenal to harass and bully staff and the executive are issuing clear guidance to branches in an effort to stop this abuse."

Craig took the conference through the range of issues flowing from last years meeting and ended with the message that "...piles of work has been done but there's still plenty more for us to do."

General Secretary Bob Crow warned the delegates that the McNulty report into rail "efficiency" would be the starting pistol for a new and savage wave of cuts right across the board with no-one safe from the axe;

"I am putting this conference on alert, there is a real battle to come on the back of McNulty that will impact on everyone in the rail industry regardless of grade or employer. The need for unity amongst rail workers across our industry has never been greater."

Conference had a packed agenda covering issues from the working week to violence, train dispatch and support for victimised tube drivers Eamon Lynch and Arwyn Thomas.

Blackpool and Fylde Coast's motion on the abuse of the Avantix machines was carried

unanimously with the mover warning that "...the machines are riddled with faults and staff end up getting the blame when something goes wrong."

The motion calls on the union to make sure that all disciplinary matters relating to the failures of the Avantix machinery are defended vigorously.

A timely emergency motion on the use of anonymous social media to attack members sparked off a debate that shone a light into the murky recesses of just how dodgy employers can abuse something as seemingly innocuous as Facebook and Twitter.

London Midland had even gone as far as setting up a specific Twitter account where anonymous and unfounded allegations against individual members of staff could be



posted, opening the floodgates to disciplinary cases sparked from behind a cloak of secrecy by individuals looking to make mischief with no come back whatsoever.

As the mover said: "what we are seeing is technology being used to allow our members to be victimised on the basis of malicious and anonymous tweets..."

Daren Ireland, explained that on some Virgin services managers are handing out business cards inviting the public to complain about staff using social media;

"This is cyber-bullying of staff instigated by the Train Operating Companies and we need to stop it."

The emergency motion was carried unanimously.

A fraternal address by Lee Barron from the CWU in the Midlands brought home the importance of cross-union solidarity in the teeth of the common attack that trade union members are facing under the ConDem government.

A motion on violence from

Warrington and District also drew unanimous support with one delegate outlining a specific case where a member of staff was assaulted on board a train and even though the train had been stopped and the police were called there was immediate and sustained pressure from the train operator to get the unit moving again regardless of the seriousness of the incident.

Assistant general secretary Pat Sikorski explained the background to a successful emergency motion calling for full support for sacked and victimised underground drivers Eamon Lynch and Arwyn Thomas and the callous disregard by the company for the interim relief findings at the Employment Tribunal.

Pat held up the drivers cases as the most blatant victimisation of members on the grounds of trade union activity that you could ever expect to see - and as an example of the lengths that that bosses will go to in their efforts to try to break the strength of union organisation. ■

CREDIT UNION HITS £2 MILLION!

RMT Credit Union looks at loans companies like Wonga.com which are preying on some of the poorest people in the country, charging interest rates of over 4,000 per cent

Payday loan firms such as Wonga.com claim to be responsible lenders. They advertise on national television in the knowledge that there are people who are so desperate for money that they will pay over the odds for a short term loan, even as much as a representative APR (annual percentage rate) of 4,214 per cent.

A loan of £400 would cost a staggering £517.48 to redeem 28 days later - next payday for the majority of RMT members. That's a massive £117.48 in interest.¹

It is amazing that less than 30 years ago, BBC and ITV refused to broadcast football matches if

logos were worn on shirts. Yet it is now almost taken for granted that there will be advertising at nearly every televised event in the sporting calendar. Advertising is accepted so much that scarcely anyone bothers about the fact that Blackpool FC is sponsored by payday loans rip-off firm Wonga.com.

Recently *The Guardian* published an article including a table showing that Blackpool had three of the ten most deprived areas in England. In other words *The Seaside* are sponsored by an outfit that preys on some of the most vulnerable people in our society.

RESPONSIBLE LENDING AND BORROWING

Contrast the RMT Credit Union's approach. As an RMT member you can join the Credit Union by saving as little as £5 a month. That's less than the cost of a newspaper each day and the money still belongs to you - we call it a shareholding. Our first aim is to encourage members to save we have just reached the £2 million mark!

After three months you can ask for a loan of up to three times your savings. After a year, you can borrow up to five times what you have saved. RMT Credit Union is regulated by the Financial Services Authority.

The law states that we cannot charge more than two per cent a month on the outstanding balance. In practice, the maximum rate that we charge is one per cent a month on the outstanding balance or 12.68 per cent APR and there are reduced rates of 9.9 per cent and 7.9 per cent available to members.

RMT Credit Union doesn't pay interest. It pays a dividend after all running expenses and Corporation Tax have been met. Last December we paid a dividend of two per cent on balances at September 30. This was much better than the advertised interest rates of most high street banks and building societies during the twelve months to September 2010; they were paying less than one per cent. We also have other savings products including a Summer Club and a Christmas Club as well as a Junior savings club for children of RMT Credit Union members, details of which are available at the back of this magazine

services against a backdrop of increasing demand and front-line cuts."

Labour MP Ian Lavery said that hundreds of millions of pounds of taxpayers' money was being pumped into a totally fragmented rail system while billions were being syphoned off in dividends. ■

¹ Figures correct at 23.04.2011 - Source company website.

nationalshopstewardsnetwork

conference 2011

strike together

to defend jobs and pensions

save our NHS

stop cuts and privatisation

fight for the right to strike

fight the anti-union laws, stop blacklisting & victimisation

Speakers include: Alex Gordon RMT President Janice Godrich PCS President Keith Gibson Saltend Lock-Out Committee Frank Morris Blacklisted Olympics Worker



Saturday June 11th

11:30am - 4:00pm

South Camden Community School,
London NW1 1RG

Registration: will open at 10:30am

Email: info@shopstewards.net



www.stopcuts.net

www.shopstewards.net

PO Box 58262, London E10 9DE

NEAR DISASTER IN NORTH SEA



Floating oil
production unit
Gryphon gets
'lucky' 175 miles
off the coast north
east of Aberdeen
as the lights go out

*CATASTROPHE: Deepwater Horizon oil rig sinks
ablaze in the Gulf of Mexico*



Earlier this year the Gryphon Alpha Floating Production Storage and Offloading (FPSO) vessel operated by Maersk Oil was involved in an incident which had the potential to become a major disaster.

Had it not been for the swift actions of the crew mixed with a degree of 'luck', there could have been a significant loss of life and untold environmental consequences.

For all those sitting at home and tuning into the evening news, it was reported as – 'vessel loses anchors resulting in 74 non-essential staff being airlifted to safety'. By and large this is all that's been reported – until now.

On February 4 the vessel faced a storm with conditions reported to be around 70-80 knots wind speed and 7-9 metre seas. These are not serious conditions and they are certainly well within the operating parameters for the vessel.

However, on this day and for reasons which have yet to be reported, the vessel lost its heading and began rolling as it turned side on to the weather.

Sources told RMT that the vessel rolled to around 21 degrees, which is very dangerous for a vessel of this size considering it had around 250,000 barrels of oil sitting in its storage tanks at the time.

Because the vessel was rolling to such an extent, various plant and equipment began to shut down as 'low level oil' alarms were falsely triggered. Power generation and with it the "directional positioning" was lost and the vessel was at the mercy of the storm.

The crew rapidly got to work to try to restore power and with it their ability to ride out the weather. It was the quick thinking and competence of the crew that got the power up and running within a short period of time and this was swiftly followed by the command from the Offshore Installation

Manager (OIM) to shut all wells and subsea systems down.

The OIM has been praised by crew members for his actions afterwards as the pipelines and umbilicals running into the turret from the sea bed wells began to be ripped through the decks and out of their fixings as the vessel drifted.

Several pipelines (risers) bringing oil to the vessel and several gas lift risers used to inject gas into the oil reservoirs far below the sea bed were ripped apart. Equipment on the sea bed was badly damaged as "riser bases" were dragged along the bottom with pipelines and anchor chains.

One "mid-water arch", used to guide and support the risers up from the sea bed, was broken in half while the anchors which were being dragged over equipment ended up tied in knots. Only two anchors of the 1ten holding the turret in position remained unscathed after the incident, while four were broken and the others were crossed over each other effectively making them useless. Two of the chains ended up crossed and looped over another mid-water arch. The vessel drifted some 180 metres from its original position before emergency tugs came to the rescue.

As the oil and gas pipelines ruptured and were ripped through the decks it is reasonable to assume leaks of oil and gas occurred. Whether by accident or design, but fortunately for the 117 personnel onboard at the time, no leaking oil or gas found any kind of ignition source. The umbilicals providing power and control to the wells and subsea equipment were also torn out. Having narrowly avoided a capsizing and still struggling to keep the power on to regain heading in the storm, the last thing the crew needed was a blaze aboard a vessel storing 250,000 barrels of oil.

Maersk hasn't as yet indicated whether there was any

oil and gas leakage, simply stating they have informed the relevant authorities in HSE and Department of Environment and Climate Change (DECC). However sources suggest that some 4,000kg of gas escaped around the turret area and something like 4.4 tonnes of oil leaked subsea. If this is the case, Maersk would have to submit an OIR 9B reporting form to the HSE for any gas leak and a PON 1 (Petroleum Operations Notice) for any oil spill to sea.

RMT regional organiser Jake Molloy suggested that 'the incident had the potential to be the UK's version of the Macondo blowout in the US Gulf of Mexico albeit on a smaller scale'.

Maersk claimed that it was irresponsible to make such a suggestion because Macondo was a drilling incident and the Gryphon was not.

However Jake Molloy explained: "I said what I did because I believe the potential for a subsea oil leak was real, albeit not on the same scale as the Gulf of Mexico leak.

"It was the potential for leaking oil on the seabed which caused me to compare it with Macondo, nothing else.

"As I understand things, all of the wells were shut in on the instruction of the OIM before lines began to rupture as the vessel was pushed off station.

"Had the OIM not taken this action, and if the 'fail safe' systems had been relied on to close in the wells, it could have been a different story.

"The umbilicals were ripped out, meaning the ability to control some wells from the vessel was lost and I would hope the fail safe systems would have worked, but you don't really want to be putting them to the test where it can be avoided, as a failure could have left a well flowing oil up a pipe to a vessel that was no longer there!

"I appreciate the producing wells are low-pressure, low-volume wells, but any oil

leaking on the sea bed is serious," he said.

HSE investigations have begun but it will not be releasing anything publicly for some considerable time as any findings may yet be the subject of a prosecution for Maersk Oil due to previous incidents.

In April last year the HSE wrote to Maersk about its "Power Management Systems" on the vessel expressing concerns about aspects of the operation. June 2010 saw another longer letter with various concerns including; "a full penetration crack found in the port side shell of the water ballast tank.[...]the crack was 1690mm in length with 430mm of this at full penetration with seawater seepage".

Finally in October 2010 the HSE set out a list of issues and concerns, one of which deals with the purging of cargo tanks and carries a serious warning.

The Inspector says; "The current methodology utilised for the purging of the cargo tanks allows the potential for ingress of air and also the possibility of the passage of flame back into the cargo tanks when they are filled with hydrocarbon vapours. This could lead to catastrophic failure of the tank and potential for a 'domino' effect with total loss a realistic possibility." The union wonders whether this particular concern was dealt with before the events of February 2011?

The Gryphon will be out of action for some considerable time and Maersk face a hefty repair bill.

But on the positive side, the workforce and supervision acted in a professional and competent fashion.

There was no loss of life, no serious injuries and no significant environmental damage. Sadly this wasn't the case for the Deepwater Horizon last year. Putting the tragic loss of life in that event aside, Maersk's repair bill will be loose change when compared to BP's final costs. ■

DON'T BUY INTO THE ISRAELI OCCUPATION

Garry Hassell of the RMT executive reports on a recent visit on behalf of the union to the Palestinian territories under Israeli occupation

I was given the opportunity to spend five days in the West Bank, Palestine.

I couldn't fly in to Palestine as Israel won't allow a working airport, so via Tel Aviv and then 50 minutes drive to Jerusalem.

The driver, a Palestinian born and bred in Jerusalem, had the right ID and the correctly coloured number-plates to take me to a small family run hotel in east Jerusalem, this was to be base for the visit as I engaged with the Palestinian people, its trade unions, its political representatives, its refugees, its roads, its security, its laws and its neighbour who is occupying its land and taking its water and terrorising its people and children...

I learned and saw so much that in all honesty 800 words

isn't enough, I could do 8,000 and still not do it justice.

I saw how water is taken off Palestinian land and sold back to the Palestinians for more than twice the price that Israelis are charged, the same apartheid tariffs are in place for electricity and gas.

Children as young as 12 are imprisoned for allegedly throwing stones, stood in a military court in shackles and cuffs, barely able to see over the dock at the hearing officer, Palestinians are under constant military law.

I met Mohammed, an elected representative, his English was way better than mine and he laughed out loud and chuckled as he told me at the Red Cross headquarters where he is in self-imposed house arrest, "my

children are too young to understand, they think I don't love them, they know I'm not in a prison, 'come home with us daddy,' they say" he told me. Mohammed was elected, but Israel didn't like the election result, so they put him in jail for 14 months, and 18 hours after his release they issued him with papers for exile, so he slipped into the Red Cross building some 229 days earlier and has stayed there ever since.

Down to Hebron, here I found Israeli soldiers guarding roads and streets and pavements that the Palestinians could not use, only the Israeli settlers could use them, in reality this is basic, raw apartheid.

I went to meet the Hamimi family. The men started the story about how their house was

attacked by soldiers with tear gas, but the women who spoke after the men made it so much more real. When a woman is telling you how she will die to save her child, how she did everything to stop the soldiers firing into her house, how she was arrested and driven off to a military base and the children had to go to the top of the house to get away from the tear gas as the soldiers wouldn't let them out of the front door, to fresher air; when a woman, a mother is telling you this and passion is there and love is there and it is said with face contortion and emotion, I defy anyone not to feel disgust.

The UN are here and they have solid detailed work of Palestine life. It is full of graphs and percentages and numbers

THE WALL: The Israeli government is busy building walls around the Palestinian communities in the occupied territories. It has imposed a law which deems that if you fail to tend your land you lose it. Palestinian land on the wrong side of the wall which allow no access is confiscated by Tel Aviv.



and bar charts - not my cup of tea, but understandable if they're to meet the everyday needs of what is being asked of them.

So I went to a UN school. Every 3rd youngster seemed to be in an F.C. Barcelona shirt. I made the link between Barcelona sponsorship of UNICEF. I wondered, will I see a Boro shirt!

"Hey mister, what's your name" they shout, "Garry!" and it echoes back at you as they all say it, I played football with these lads, two lamp-posts for goal, pot-shots, heading, juggling, back-heels and mazy dribbles, the youngsters all laughing, enjoying themselves under the scorching mid-day sun...and then the serious side, these kids were 2nd-and 3rd-generation refugees, living in a refugee camp, they have lived here all of their lives and their parents had been here since 1967, one-room housing, rubbish and waste everywhere, to my Brighton seaside nostrils the stench was overbearing and I shook my head in disgust - a dead emaciated cat was strewn in a gutter, it was the sort of place where even the rats would move out from.

This is the very real day to day face of Palestine and its people.

What the Palestinians said to me time after time was that they didn't want aid, they didn't want food parcels, they didn't want war, they didn't want bullets and they didn't want bandages.

What they did want was their country and land, the right to govern themselves, to raise taxes and have schools and hospitals, a police force from the people for the people, a airport, a railway, tourists, free elections and jobs, jobs and more jobs with trade unions looking after them.

I don't buy into the Israeli occupation and that's why in order to do my little bit, I'm boycotting Israeli goods and specifically those that are grown on the West Bank by Israeli companies and settlers...join me.

President's column



TORIES FLY ANTI-STRIKE KITES

Last month rightwing Tory MP Dominic Raab proposed a new law to impose further restrictions on the right to strike in Britain.

According to Raab, if a trade union wants to strike in transport or 'essential services', it must not only win a majority in a secret postal ballot as at present, it should also have to win a majority of all those eligible to vote.

At present, UK law requires a union to win a simple majority in a ballot, a standard method in any organisation.

For example, at the last general election, Dominic Raab polled 32,134 votes in a constituency of 76,962 voters, more than a quarter of whom did not bother to vote.

His party polled 10.7 million votes nationally, with their Liberal Democrat mates polling 6.8 million, in a UK electorate of 45 million people. Neither Mr Raab, nor his party, nor their governing coalition partners would have been elected under rules he proposes for trade unionists.

Although Raab's particular kite failed to fly, it is the opening salvo in a declaration of war by the ConDems against the trade union fightback against the effects of unprecedented and vicious attacks on jobs and public services.

Successive UK governments have breached ILO and European Conventions to which UK is signatory, which define strike action as a fundamental human right.

The former Conservative government's Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992 required unions to inform employers of the identity of individual union members involved in strike action, even though employers can seek damages against employees for strike action.

The Labour government's Employment Relations Act 1999 replaced this rule with a general requirement to provide employers with sufficient information to enable them to identify which employees were on strike, in order to make "suitable arrangements".

Judges have interpreted this requirement such that unions must now provide information to an employer in the form of a matrix or spreadsheet showing numbers of union members balloted and called on to

strike in every affected workplace and job category.

Since 2009 employers have targeted this legal requirement in particular for challenges aimed at obtaining High Court injunctions against lawful strike action.

The bosses legal strategy has been to persuade judges that unions have failed to supply sufficiently accurate information. It can easily be imagined that in the vast majority of industrial disputes the precise numbers of union members employed in various workplaces or job titles are extremely detailed and complicated.

High Court judges had granted injunctions banning strike action by RMT members on Docklands Light Railway after finding union strike notices "defective" and union explanations of how they ensured reliable membership data for balloting and engaging in strike action "inadequate".

However last March the Court of Appeal in London overturned those injunctions and comprehensively disposed of arguments previously used in the High Court to justify them.

The Appeal Court also confirmed that international law does confer a right to strike under International Labour Organisation Conventions 98 and 151. In addition, the European Convention on Human Rights upholds the right to strike as an element of Article 11(1) on freedom of association.

Such an authoritative judgment was made at a time when this government is seeking to destroy nearly a million public sector jobs and a similar number of private sector jobs through cuts and outsourcing, while attacking wages, pensions and public services.

The judgment was, therefore, not only a victory for RMT but also a massive victory for seven million trade unionists in this country.

It also means the policy of coordinated strike action to defeat the cuts agreed at last year's British TUC Conference can now become a practical reality.

Alex Gordon



NETWORK RAIL PAYS SIGNIFICANT DAMAGES FOR RAIL DEATH

Union wins case for widow and to ensure Network Rail follows its own safety procedures and policies

The widow of a rail worker, whose husband Charles Stockwell died in April 2007 when he was struck by a fast-moving train, has been awarded a substantial sum in compensation by Network Rail.

Mr Stockwell, then aged 50, was killed whilst welding track as a train approached the busy Ruscombe Junction in Berkshire. Because of the job he was doing, Mr Stockwell could not see or hear the train coming.

He had been working in a "red zone", in which trains continued to run on all four lines, with lookouts. According to Network Rail policy, this was a system that should only be undertaken when all other methods were unavailable.

However, the obligatory RIMINI form had not been completed by the works scheduler. The RIMINI form is required to be completed at the planning stage for all track works and contains a hierarchy of safe systems of work which

have to be worked through in order that the safest method of work available is used.

The tragedy came just a month after another welder had managed to jump clear of a train in similar circumstances.

After that near miss Network Rail issued a Safety Bulletin, though this was not seen by Charles or his colleagues. Following his death, Network Rail issued further instructions to employees that they were always to go to a place of safety once an approaching train had been observed.

But the fundamental issue in the legal case was why managers decided that the works should be carried out in red-zone conditions when the risk assessment using RIMINI had not been carried out.

RMT appointed Thompsons Solicitors to seek damages on Mrs Stockwell's behalf and argued that the accident and death was caused by negligence and a fundamental breach of

the statutory health and safety regulations by Network Rail in not following its own procedures and policies.

Andrew Hutson from Thompsons argued in a hearing that working in red zones, where trains are still running, is inherently unsafe.

"Clearly, it is very dangerous to work where trains are still passing, particularly at high speed, and the time available to get out of the way is minimal.

"Network Rail has a responsibility to enforce proper standards and systems for the safety of their workers and regrettably in Mr Stockwell's case, this failed," he said.

SAFETY MUST BE PARAMOUNT

RMT general secretary Bob Crow said that the tragic case reinforced RMT's continuing campaign for a safe working environment on Britain's railways.

"Our thoughts are with Mrs Stockwell and Charles' family and friends and we hope that the legacy of his totally unnecessary death will be a renewed focus on safe working practices out on Britain's

railways," he said.

Mrs Stockwell said that her husband had always said it was a dangerous job and that things needed to change, yet Network Rail always insisted that safety was their number one priority.

"Despite this, Charles died doing the job he enjoyed, and I am still left wondering how it could have happened.

"My husband's death has affected the whole family and it's something we'll never get over, when Charles died I lost a part of my life," she said.

Andrew Hutson said that the aim in bringing the case was to help ensure other rail workers are not placed in such danger.

"Network Rail's systems must be improved and we would like to see an end to red-zone working and the safety of those repairing tracks must be paramount.

"However, given the costs and complexities of pursuing this case – we simply could not be sure that we would succeed – I fear that if the government's proposed civil justice reforms are implemented then we would be unable to pursue such a case again," he said. (see page 25) ■

THOMPSONS LAUNCHES NEW LOOK WEBSITE

Thompsons Solicitors has relaunched its website www.thompsons.law.co.uk

The new look site makes it easier for trade unionists to access Thompsons' employment law, health and safety and other legal materials.

The redesign, launched on May 1 after months of planning and development work, comes at a time when those injured or made ill either at or away from work, or who have suffered discrimination or injustice will be feeling uniquely vulnerable in the face of government

attacks on their rights.

A new resources section contains employment and personal injury law booklets, factsheets and updates on everyday legal issues, the Thompsons flagship bi-annual publications *Labour and European Law Review* and *Health and Safety News*, and the firm's responses to government consultation papers on changes to employment, health and safety and civil justice laws.

There is also an e-training section consisting of a range of practical and simple to complete

modules to empower those who represent members in the workplace.

Tom Jones of Thompsons said that firm had a proud 90-year history of working with trade unions to ensure members are aware and take advantage of their legal rights.

"We aim to provide the best union and legal representation but we are always most effective if those we represent have greater knowledge themselves of the law.

"Our new website is easy to navigate and provides the most



up-to-date information possible on the law as it affects people who have been injured or otherwise suffered an injustice," he said. ■

Know your rights

Government attacks compensation rights



Thompsons solicitor Andrew Hutson explains how the Con Dem government intends to attack compensation rights by taking money from the victims and handing it to big business instead

A Labour MP famously warned in the 1980s that under Margaret Thatcher's government people should not be ordinary, young, fall ill or get old. We can now add, under this ConDem government, or be injured at work.

For not only is the coalition looking at ways to tear up many of the health and safety laws that protect workers in order to reduce so-called "burdens" on the Tories' mates in big business, it plans to introduce a new system for claiming compensation for workplace injuries that will rob many of the ability to seek justice for the negligence of their employer.

This isn't about the cuts to legal aid that have dominated the headlines recently. This is about attacking the ability of unions to offer injured members and their families free legal representation by expert lawyers with no deductions from their damages.

The reforms announced by the Tory Justice Secretary Ken Clarke in March to the way that personal injury claims will be funded are complicated. But what it means is that those injured at work and elsewhere who are not in unions will

struggle to find a lawyer prepared to take on their case unless it has at least a 75 per cent prospect of success.

At Thompsons we estimate that up to 25 per cent of people injured at work through no fault of their own and who would get a lawyer under the current legal system will be unable to if the government's planned reforms of the civil justice system go ahead.

Clarke ignored the overwhelming opposition of RMT, other unions and victim support groups to the proposals.

He plans to end the system of the losing defendant in a personal injury claim – usually an employer – having to pay towards a fund to cover the costs of things such as medical reports in cases which do not succeed and the costs of investigating those claims.

Lawyers will instead be expected to deduct a proportion of those costs – up to 25 per cent – from claimant's compensation for the injury and things such as loss of wages.

Injury victims will supposedly be paid slightly more damages (much less than 25 per cent) to provide for this. It's far more likely though that anyone not in a union with a less than certain

claim, or at least one that will need investigation before it is possible to decide if the claim has a good prospect of success, will be turned away because solicitors will be unable to risk the case losing. This is, of course, unless the individual is able to pay up front for the costs of running the claim.

Take some of the successful injury claims for RMT members reported in the March edition of this magazine. One member received £1,500 compensation after suffering noise-induced deafness as a result of excessive exposure to noise throughout his employment. Another got £3,877 for back and neck injuries caused by pulling a stiff lever to move points. And a welder member won £20,000 for a back injury suffered as he moved a grinder from a van to trackside.

These cases, like many more, required detailed investigations, court fees, medical reports and other outlays in order to proceed and to prove that the employer was liable for the injuries. The employer's insurers often refused to admit liability or to enter into settlement negotiations until court proceedings were issued. And so the costs of running the claim crept ever higher. The new

regime attacks the ability of unions to pursue similar cases.

Perhaps the most tragic example of how the government's plans will deny access to justice for injured people would be that of RMT member Charles Stockwell (see opposite page).

RMT lawyers pressed on in spite of the complexities of the case and the need to obtain several expert reports.

Network Rail continued to deny responsibility and so Mr Stockwell's widow was forced to bring court proceedings, which ultimately were successful.

The government expects victims or unions to make up for the shortfall their proposals will create. This is a straight smash and grab – taking from victims in order to hand money to big business, employers and insurance companies in the City.

Little wonder that insurance companies are so keen on the changes and will be laughing all the way to the bank if they are implemented.

RMT will be working with its Parliamentary group and campaigning with other unions and injury victim support groups to fight these reactionary proposals. ■

RMT PERSONAL INJURY HELPLINE 0800 376 3706

ORGANISE OR



Alan Pottage, Head of RMT organising and education, looks at the struggle against Apartheid in South Africa

April 22 marked the anniversary of a brutal event in South Africa during the 1987 rail strike. Rail workers, members of our sister union, the South African Railway and Harbour Workers Union (SARHWU), were gunned down by the authorities in a desperate effort to crush the strike.

SARHWU members played a heroic role in the fight against the oppressive apartheid regime. NUR members Doreen Wepler and Geoff Revell, were sent to South Africa with funds and messages of solidarity and asked to prepare a report to take deep into the British labour movement. This was achieved.

Organised trade unions in South Africa were rightly considered a threat to the apartheid regime because they played an essential part in the liberation movement. Boxes of dynamite were detonated in the basement of the Congress of South African Trade Unions

(COSATU) headquarters by agents operating for the regime. As SARHWU Headquarters operated from within the building they lost all the material apparatus needed to organise. Nevertheless they had an important victory, celebrated as 'a milestone in labour history'.

The support that was campaigned for nationally and internationally by the union's solidarity initiative Rail Against Apartheid (RAA). RAA played an important part in assisting SARHWU to rebuild its organisation.

RAA was created by rank and file members to organise the support and understanding of the South African struggle, clearly held by our membership, with the aim of building a sister union in South Africa. Meetings were held across the country, grades conferences addressed and many energetic campaigns launched to ensure

our union was at the forefront of organising international solidarity.

I first got involved in RAA in 1987. I was 23 and was attending our union's Annual General Meeting's young members' course in Dundee. The National Executive member, Brian Whitehead, handed me a RAA campaign leaflet. I thought it was great that my union was making direct links with our sister union so I wanted to help.

I teamed up with founder member and RAA organiser Geoff Revell, who was also on our National Executive. A rejuvenated SARHWU was once again in the frontline of struggle in a country living under a state of emergency.

Under the cover of that state of emergency the infamous Germiston massacre took place on January 9 1990, on the outskirts of Johannesburg. Striking SARHWU members

were brutally attacked, killed and maimed by thugs working for the regime.

COSATU general secretary Jay Naidoo met with Geoff in London and urged a visit with the same objectives as before. So Geoff and I flew to Johannesburg just days after the massacre.

On landing at Jan Smuts airport Geoff was taken away and detained by South African security. Geoff had unknowingly become a 'listed person'.

In the confusion surrounding Geoff's detention, I managed to slip in and avoided subsequent arrest attempts for a week. I was well protected by the 40 strong strike committee.

RAA activists along with the union's national leadership and our Parliamentary Group of MPs were soon kicking up a storm. One RMT tutor abandoned his course and took direct action at the South African Embassy in London by holding his own sit in. He held a homemade placard that read 'Release Geoff Revell Now!' His name was Bob Crow.

GERMISTON MASSACRE

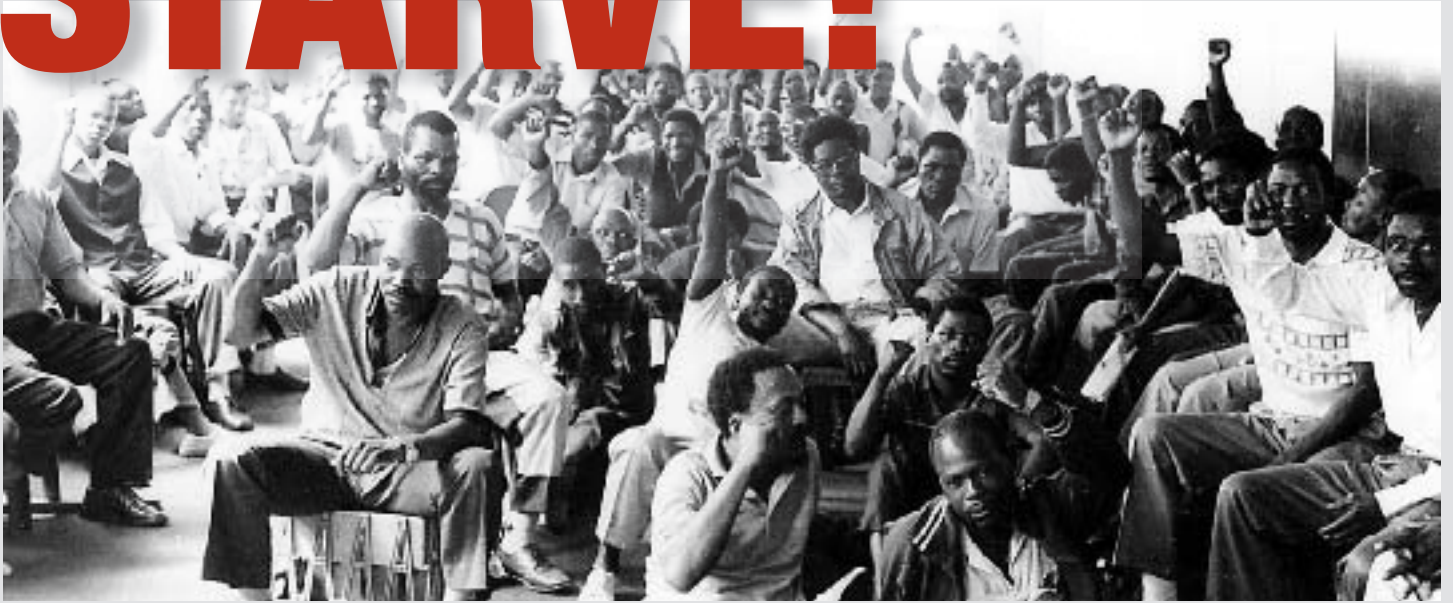
A train of striking SARHWU members arrived in Germiston station and was met by 1,000 heavily armed vigilantes, set up by the authorities to kill strikers. The police stood at the back and watched as a slaughter took place. Terrified passengers tried to keep the train doors closed by pulling them shut only for their fingers to be hacked off by machetes.

After twenty long minutes



I had just been advised that Geoff Revell was not getting released from detention

STARVE!



the police intervened by firing gas canisters into the packed train and SARHWU members had to flee either to safety or into the hands of the mob. It was horrific carnage.

I managed to smuggle sworn affidavits out the country that make a gruesome read. All the vigilantes were dressed in brown railway overalls and included six local police officers – *agents provocateurs*. Terrified rail workers tried to climb fences to escape but were hacked to death.

I met with one young survivor whose skull was

crudely stapled together. Blood stains covered his 'NUR 75th Anniversary' t-shirt, a gift from Geoff's previous visit. Unbelievably, he was more concerned about Geoff's fate in the detention unit than the horrors that surrounded him.

Eight were murdered and 50 seriously injured yet the Chief of Police said to the media 'the vigilantes were not arrested because they had done nothing wrong'.

I spoke at several mass meetings of strikers. Tensions were incredibly high and at one an undercover cop was manhandled out after his gun had been spotted inside his jacket. I was then smuggled into the Soweto township at night. I had to lie on the back seat of a car under a blanket. I met many SARHWU members and their families in the huts they were forced to live in. I'll never forget the image of Soweto in the dark as the township was eerily lit by millions of candles due to the absence of electricity.

VICTORY

In 1990 SARHWU won their strike and the racist regime also crumbled. So it's a timely reminder to us all that a determined fight can overcome huge odds and defeat the strongest of enemies.

I learned a lot during those days. Workers were able to organise despite facing a hostile employer where bullying and torture was common. SARHWU's national president, Justice Langa, told me how he had to hide in the boot of a car and be smuggled into the workers' compounds in order to organise. He also suffered torture in detention.

ORGANISE OR STARVE

Despite huge obstacles, SARHWU was able to organise 45,000 members, which gave them the power to win major battles. One of their slogans was

'Organise or Starve'.

Twenty years after we were both arrested and expelled as 'enemies of the state', Geoff and myself are helping to organise workers into our own union. We are part of a very motivated and dedicated organising unit that helps activists set up organising campaigns. We need to ensure that RMT is strong enough to win victories.

My experience and the privilege of meeting so many brave fighters have definitely strengthened my resolve. SARHWU's fighting spirit still remains a huge inspiration to me. ■



Justice Langa, National President



PHILANTHROPISTS TAKE TO THE STAGE

A new production of *The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists* promises passion, pathos, songs and laughter – and RMT members can see it for free

ROBERT TRESSSELL'S timeless socialist classic *The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists* takes to the stage this summer in a hilarious two-handed musical version – and RMT members can get to see it FREE in a special staging at the TUC's Congress House Theatre.

The acclaimed singing, musical and acting talents of Neil Gore and Fine Time Fontayne have been combined with Stephen Lowe's adaptation of the novel by director Louise Townsend to create an evening of songs, pathos, passion and laughter that captures the novel's socialist vision.

The fast-paced show, which begins touring in July, shares with its audience a year in the life of a group of painters and decorators as they renovate the Cave, a three-storey town house, for Mayor Sweater, and traces their struggle for survival in Edwardian England.

These workers are the 'philanthropists' who throw themselves into back-breaking work for poverty wages in order to generate profit for their masters.

Included is the Great Money

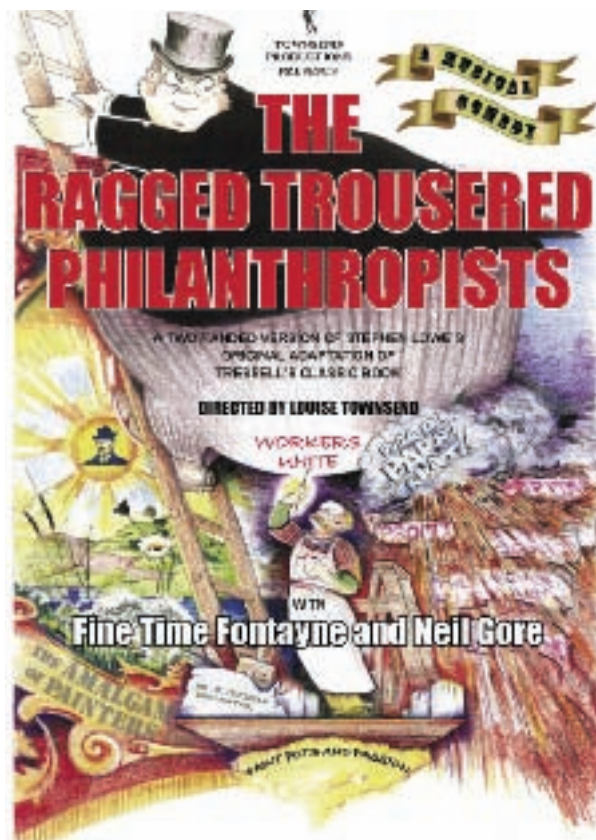
Trick – the pointed demonstration by the novel's hero, Owen, of how capitalism generates poverty for working people and enormous wealth for the few.

The story is brought to life using comedy routines, music-hall songs and uplifting hymns from the chapel and temperance halls sung in graceful harmony.

"RMT jumped at the chance to sponsor this production and we are delighted to offer members the chance to see it for free at a special performance at the TUC's theatre in London," said general secretary Bob Crow.

"The power of the *Philanthropists* has drawn countless people into working-class and socialist politics, with its withering portrayal of life under capitalism in 'Mugsborough' – based on the Hastings in which Tressell worked."

"This production brings the *Philanthropists* to life with wit and power, and I hope that it inspires a new generation to read the novel and become part of the struggle for a better world." ■



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Tour dates

July	19:	Marsworth Village Hall, Marsworth, Bucks
	21:	Hertford Theatre
	25-17:	Theatre by the Lake, Keswick
	29:	TUC, Congress House (RMT/SERTUC Theatre Club)
	30-31:	The Rosemary Branch, London
Sept	2:	Library Theatre, Birmingham
	7:	The Met, Bury, Lancs
	14:	Brewery Arts Centre, Kendal
	15-17:	Arts Out West
	21-27:	Carn to Cove, Cornwall
Oct	28:	Plough Arts Centre, Great Torrington, Devon
	4-8:	Citizens' Theatre, Glasgow
	12-16:	Live and Local, Midlands
	18-23:	Highlights (in the North West)

See RTP for free – claim your tickets now

RMT has joined with the TUC's Southern and Eastern Region Theatre Club to stage a performance of *The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists* at Congress House in London on the evening of Friday July 29.

To reserve your FREE tickets – maximum four per person – contact Derek Kotz at Unity House, on 020 7529 8803 or at dkotz@rmt.org.uk.

- For details of performances, contact venues or see www.townsendproductions.org.uk.
- To enquire about hosting a performance, email townsendproductions@hotmail.co.uk or call Louise Townsend on 07949 635 910

YOUNG MEMBERS MEET

Young members conference chair Adrian Rowe reports on the annual meeting this year held in Plymouth

Both Plymouth number 1 and number 5 branches hosted this year's young members conference with both providing an exceptional social event.

I had the honour to open conference and it was very pleasing to see that the room was full of vibrant faces, ready to take on the bosses.

Around 50 delegates attended the conference this year, over the past few years, delegation numbers are building, which can only be a good thing.

The theme was fighting the cuts, assisted by Alan Pottage and Dave Marshall from the RMT's organising unit, Ivor Riddell and Bill Hendy of RMT Learning and education officer Andy Gilchrist who is also

secretary of the young members' conference.

The meeting promoted teamwork through learning and small groups were given topics to choose from, research and feedback in a presentation at the end of the conference. This ensured everyone was involved and given the option of debating people's views throughout the workshops.

Richard Williams from the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) addressed conference about how the FBU is fighting the cuts and the recent industrial action in London. Richard admitted that the FBU doesn't have a youth section but said that he would be requesting that the FBU start one.

Conference was also

privileged for the second year running to be addressed by general secretary Bob Crow and president Alex Gordon, both having to travel from different conferences to get to Plymouth.

Bob and Alex both reiterated the need to fight for our rights and to remember that workers had fought hard for rights to leave, conditions and to work safely.

Both speakers said that the ConDems would stop at nothing to push through their savage cuts which would affect the young generation more.

Vice Chair of the conference, Ashley Farrant from Plymouth 1, presented me with an engraved tankard after I have served three years and chair.

I was very moved and

honoured to serve the union in this role but I believe that it was time to let somebody else move into the chair.

Resolutions to the conference this year were on the subjects of pensionable age, education fees and cuts, young members age limit and youth employment and apprenticeships.

These were wide-ranging debates, with some motions falling, but two were chosen for the AGM.

I closed conference as chair for the last time, thanked everyone for attending, and hoped to see them all next year. So if you are a young member get to the 2012 young members conference to be held in London and ensure you bring a friend too!



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)

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PROTECTING AND PROMOTING OUR MEMBERS' INTERESTS



BEWARE SALARY SACRIFICE

Many employers that operate pension schemes are introducing salary sacrifice arrangements to inflate profit margins

Despite RMT objections, many employers that operate pension schemes for employees have introduced salary sacrifice arrangements as a way of reducing National Insurance Contributions (NIC).

Whilst staff are promised lower NIC contribution, which marginally increases their take-home salary, employers are the real winners when it comes to these savings.

Salary sacrifice schemes have a number of aliases including PaySave or Smart Pensions, and these arrangements allow employees and employers to save NIC on their pension payments. They work by reducing each individual's salary by the amount of their contribution of their pension scheme; thus the employee's pay is lower and NIC are reduced accordingly.

The NIC rates for 2011/12 for

employees is 12 per cent or 10.4 per cent for those who are contributing members of a pension scheme which is contracted-out of the State Second Pension. An employee earning £27,000 and making pension contributions of seven per cent will save less than £5 a week. However, employers' savings are potentially much greater.

NIC rates for 2011/12 for employers are 13.8 per cent, and for employers who operate a pension scheme which is contracted-out the NIC rate is 10.1 per cent. For every employee who agrees to participate in a salary sacrifice arrangement there is a potential saving to the employer of up to 13.8 per cent on their gross salary. It goes without saying that this saving is worth a lot more than £5 a week to the employer.

Participation in salary sacrifice should not affect other terms and conditions of employment; however, in certain circumstances, such as those on low incomes, it can affect entitlements to state benefits such as the Basic State Pension, Jobseekers Allowance, Incapacity Benefit, Maternity Allowance and Bereavement Benefits.

This is because the reduction in salary would take earnings below the Lower Earning Limit, currently £102 per week for 2011-12, which would reduce the build up of entitlements to these benefits.

RMT policy is opposed to salary sacrifice schemes as these arrangements effectively reduce the value of NIC collected by the Treasury, which are, of course, used to fund the National Health Service and State Pensions.

RMT believes that where salary schemes are introduced all savings should be paid into the employer's pension scheme to improve the funding position and reduce contribution levels. This is particularly essential

where company pension schemes are in deficit. It is the union's experience that where employers have made extra revenue, this profit has not been put back into the pension scheme.

RMT is also totally against employees being automatically opted-in to such schemes. Management should not assume that employees wish to participate because they will slightly increase their salary. It is clear that many employers are automatically enrolling employees in so that they can cream off the significantly higher financial gains from salary sacrifice. As a result RMT has campaigned actively to encourage workers to opt-out by sending them individual RMT opt-out forms to be sent to their employer.

The union will continue to organise and campaign against employers who intend to introduce salary sacrifice as a way of inflating their profit margins at expense of state benefits and members' future pension entitlement. ■

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FROM CABLE STREET TO SPAIN: THE FIGHT AGAINST FASCISM

Jim Jump previews events to mark 75th anniversary of the start of the fight against fascism

In 1936 hundreds of men and women began making the journey to Spain to join the International Brigades to oppose General Franco's fascist-backed coup.

And in that same year the people of London's East End stopped Sir Oswald Mosley's Blackshirts from marching through their streets – adopting the slogan used by the defenders of Madrid: “They shall not pass” – “No pasarán”.

Many of those who took part in the Battle of Cable Street on October 4, 1936 went on to fight for the Spanish Republic's democratically elected government during the Spanish Civil War of 1936–39.

The International Brigades rallied over 35,000 people from more than 50 countries to the anti-fascist cause. Some 2,500 of them came from Britain and Ireland, of whom 527 died in Spain.

Meanwhile Britain's Conservative-led government was eager to appease Nazi Germany and fascist Italy. Indeed a large part of the ruling class admired Hitler and Mussolini for the way they dealt with their opponents on the left. Those same people detested Spain's government and its modest programme of social and economic reform.

So the British government supported a hypocritical policy of “non-intervention” in the Spanish Civil War, which meant enforcing an arms embargo on the Spanish Republic and turning a blind eye to the huge military assistance given to Franco by the fascist dictators.

But just as the people of the East End forcibly prevented the police from clearing the way for the Blackshirts to march through their streets, so the International Brigade volunteers defied government threats to prosecute them for enlisting in a foreign war.

Brigaders and their supporters warned that the bombing of Guernica, Barcelona and Madrid would soon mean Nazi bombers over Britain

unless fascism was crushed in Spain. They were proved right: five months after the Spanish Civil War ended on April 1 1939 with victory for the fascists, Britain and Germany were at war.

With only the distant Soviet Union and Mexico willing to supply it with arms, the Spanish Republic was doomed. The cause of freedom in Spain was lost – democracy was not restored until after Franco's death in 1975 – but the resistance of the Spanish people and the International Brigades crucially checked the advance of fascism in Europe.

The International Brigades also showed the world an example of international solidarity and selfless commitment to anti-fascism. Inspired by the International

Brigaders who took the road to Spain via Cable Street, a new generation must say once again: “No pasarán”.

The annual International Brigades commemoration takes place in Jubilee Gardens on London's South Bank on Saturday July 2 at 1pm.

A weekend of events is also being organised in London on September 30 – October 2, coinciding with the commemoration of the Battle of Cable Street. ■

For more details contact:
secretary@international-brigades.org.uk
The International Brigade Memorial Trust
6 Stonells Road, London SW11 6HQ
20 7228 6504
Charity no. 1094928
www.international-brigades.org.uk



NO PASARAN: A demonstrator is arrested by police officers after a mounted baton charge, in East London, on Oct 4, 1936, in a failed attempt to clear the way for Oswald Mosley's fascist blackshirts to march through the area.

PRODUCTIVITY V JOB SECURITY

Dear editor,

In the Ragged Trousered Philanthropists Robert Tressell described the The Great Money Trick thus: "Those who control the means of production will always control the price and profit margins of commodities produced, to the point that the commodities workers produce cannot be afforded by the workers who produce them".

There is, however, another money trick: one of productivity verses job security.

Why pay two employees £100 a week each when, via productivity, you can get one employee to do both jobs for £150? The company gets greater profit and a lower pay bill, and one worker gets an extra £50 a week – but the sacked worker gets nothing.

In a valiant attempt to reach harmonised pay rates and T&Cs, RMT recently entered into an agreement with Network Rail over changes in working practices, and added to that was an incentive scheme. They came in two separate parts, the first for the acceptance of the change in working practices, for which we received a taxable, one-off lump sum of £2,000 and a one per

cent increase in basic pay.

The next two steps depended on increases in productivity of five per cent which would add one per cent on to our basic rate of pay over a set period of time.

How can we have a policy of 'no compulsory redundancies' yet agree to a productivity deal? It is hypocritical and to be frank, if we accept it, downright shameful.

The productivity deal will only legitimise job cuts, allowing NR to claim that its cuts figures were right. It will also lower the pay bill, so for NR it's win-win. But it will probably sound the death knell for employees who are displaced and waiting for January 2012. If we continue to increase productivity, it can only threaten what is left of the workforce.

It is true that the members accepted the £2,000 and the one per cent increase, but that was just to accept the change in working practices: the further one per cent is for increases in productivity, and then if only if we hit the five per cent target.

We need to make a clear distinction between what constitutes an agreement and what is an attempt to reach a productivity goal, because they are different things.

The five per cent target is set by NR: it is not an agreement that we will reach the five per cent but an understanding that if we reach the five per cent increase in productivity, the one per cent rise will be triggered.

NR has not said what will happen if we don't reach the goal, or if we reach six or seven per cent – and we will not know because guess who does the calculations? We must therefore look very carefully between how much productivity we can achieve and at what point it drives down employment.

Do not be mistaken in thinking we have agreed a watertight deal, or that we need to re-ballot members because I don't believe we do. The ballot was for accepting the change in working practices and the company will not want to go back on that.

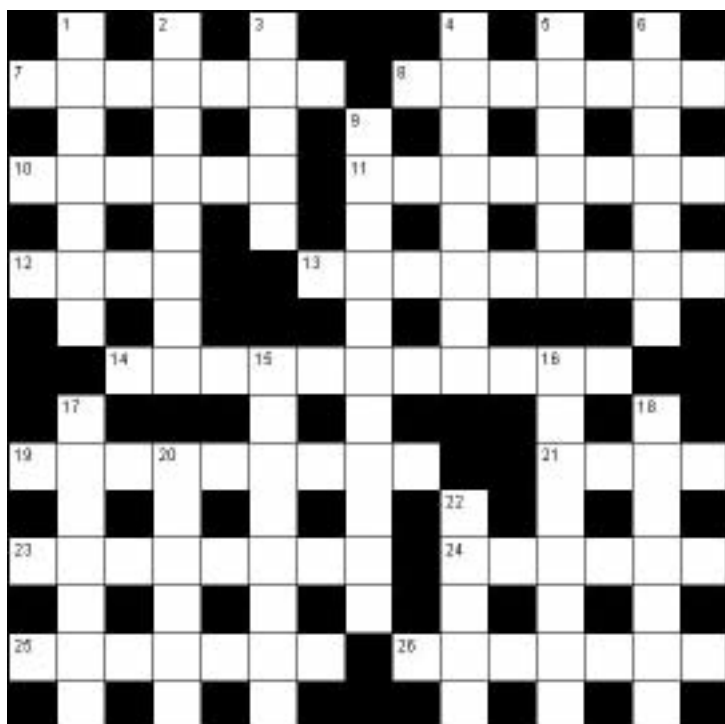
We shouldn't kid ourselves that jobs are safe, as the greater the increase in productivity the greater the chance of job losses.

We should all think twice before we see the pound signs: are they the bait leading us to the scrapheap?

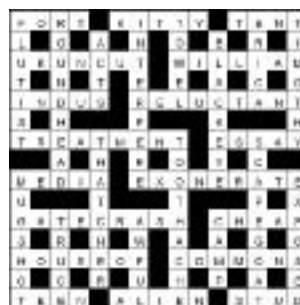
Greg Hewitt, Brighton

£25 PRIZE CROSSWORD

No. 70. Set by Elk



No. 69 solution...



The winner of prize crossword no. 68 is L Conway of Ramsgate.

Send entries to Prize Crossword, RMT, Unity House, 39 Chalton Street, London NW1 1JD by June 14 with your name and address.

Winner and solution in next issue.

ACROSS

- 7 Power store; gun emplacement (7)
- 8 Ties up (7)
- 10 Where flour becomes bread and cakes (6)
- 11 Tries (8)
- 12 Payment for transport (4)
- 13 Fought over; opposite of walkover (9)
- 14 What the government should do to transport (11)
- 19 Remains beyond one's welcome (9)
- 21 South African currency (4)
- 23 Of an important moment in time (8)
- 24 Pieces of music for nine players (6)
- 25 Cooking instructions (7)
- 26 Three-dimensional representations (7)

DOWN

- 1 Mad fruit? (7)
- 2 And so on, in Latin (8)
- 3, 5 Victimised Tube driver (5, 6)
- 4 Non-drinking (8)
- 5 See 3 (6)
- 6 Male union member (7)
- 9 Victimised Tube driver (6,5)
- 15 Buried (8)
- 16 22 is this, as the slogan goes (8)
- 17 Kept away from (7)
- 18 One more? (7)
- 20 Keep, or hold back (6)
- 22 State of one-ness – gives trade unions 16 (5)

OPEN A JUNIOR DEPOSIT ACCOUNT!

RMT Credit Union offers members the opportunity to open an account for their children to allow them to save for the future

Here at RMT Credit Union we know how important it is for family members to understand money even at an early age. We also recognise that parents and grandparents often want to set aside some money or build up a lump sum for their children or grandchildren to provide them with a good start in life.

It is never too early to start and the longer the savings are held, even when saving small amounts, with a regular dividend they soon mount up. With this in mind RMT Credit Union has developed a Junior Savings Account which can be tailored to suit your needs.

WHO CAN OPEN AN ACCOUNT?

The account needs to be opened by an existing RMT Credit Union adult member but it can

be opened for any child living at the same address. Accounts can be opened from birth, right up to the age of 16. The junior saver must be living at their parent or guardian's address and an original birth certificate must be produced to be able to join.

HOW DOES IT WORK?

The account is opened by the member on behalf of the junior saver. The account will be in the child's name but control of the account will remain with the adult.

HOW DO I OPERATE THE ACCOUNT?

Unlike full members, juniors do not have a regular income so the parent / guardian opening the account for the junior member will have to set up the account to save a minimum of £5.00 every month / 4 weekly or weekly. The savings is collected by Direct Debit from a bank account

HOW DO I KEEP UP TO DATE WITH THE ACCOUNT?

A statement is sent out to the junior members once a year around Christmas time and of course you are able to keep in touch via the usual methods such as phone and email. Your child will be able to view their own account online to see how much they have saved. Additional statements can be requested at no extra charge at any time.

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN THEY REACH 16?

At the age of 16, the junior account must change to adult status. At this point, the junior will now be considered an adult member and will automatically gain full control of the account. They will therefore have full access to any funds you have deposited in their account however, at this stage they may need to provide identification prior to withdrawing any funds.

ONCE 16, DO THEY HAVE TO SAVE REGULARLY EVERY MONTH TO KEEP THE ACCOUNT OPEN?

We recognise that they might be going on to higher education or may not even have left school at that stage. We do not want to lose them as a member, particularly as they may not be eligible to join again should they leave, so we are happy to maintain the account while they are in full time education. Don't forget that once they are 18 they gain all the benefits of being a full member and ability to use all the Credit Union's products.

HOW SAFE IS IT?

Just like all savings held with the Credit union they are fully guaranteed by the Financial Services Compensation Scheme up to £85,000.00.

You can apply for a membership form to join the Credit Union by writing to RMT Credit Union Ltd, Unity House 39 Chalton Street, London NW1 1JD or downloading a form from the RMT website. ■





JUNIOR DEPOSIT ACCOUNT

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

MEMBERSHIP NUMBER

Please use **BLOCK CAPITALS** and **black ink**

Please read and fill the Application Form carefully. **Remember to include the Junior Depositor's original birth certificate.** Please return the completed form to RMT Credit union, 39 Chalton St, NW1 1JD.

1 JUNIOR DEPOSITOR DETAILS.

Surname	
First name	
Middle name	
Date of Birth	/ /

2 PROPOSING MEMBER'S DETAILS.

Title (Mr/Mrs/Miss etc)		Home address	
First name			
Surname			
Home telephone		Postcode	
Mobile		Email	
RMT Credit union account number		Trade union membership number	
Relationship to Junior Depositor			

3 PAYMENT DETAILS (by proposing member)

The direct debit mandate below should also be completed and returned to the RMT Credit union office attached.

I wish to save (minimum £5.00) £ Date you next get paid

Monthly 28th ☐ Weekly ☐ 4 weekly (Fri) ☐

On behalf of the "Junior Depositor" named above.

4 TO HELP US FULFIL OUR LEGAL OBLIGATIONS, PLEASE ENCLOSE THE JUNIOR DEPOSITORS BIRTH CERTIFICATE WITH THIS APPLICATION FORM

I confirm that the Junior Depositor named above resides at my address. I wish to apply for Junior Depositors account on behalf of the above named person. I agree to abide by the rules of the RMT Credit Union Ltd and declare that the information given by me on this form is true and correct to the best of my knowledge.

Proposing Members signature

Date



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 accept instructions to pay Direct Debits.
- If there are any changes to the amount, date or frequency of your Direct Debit RMT Credit Union Ltd will notify you seven working days in advance of your account being debited or as otherwise agreed.
- If you request RMT Credit Union Ltd to collect a payment, confirmation of the amount and date will be given to you at the time of the request.
- If an error is made in the payment of your Direct Debit, by RMT Credit Union Ltd or your bank or building society, you are entitled to a full and immediate refund of the amount paid from your bank or building society.
- — If you receive a refund you are not entitled to, you must pay it back when RMT Credit Union Ltd asks you to.
- You can cancel a Direct Debit at any time by simply contacting your bank or building society. Written confirmation may be required. Please also notify us.



JOIN RMT BRITAIN'S SPECIALIST TRANSPORT UNION



Visit www.rmt.org.uk to join online
or call the helpline on freephone

0800 376 3706

Problems at work? Call the helpline
(Now with two operators)

Keep your RMT membership details up-to-date

In the light of draconian anti-trade union laws that have been used against the union, members should keep their personal data up to date. It is also important to note that in order to keep members informed your union requires your mobile telephone number and email address.

Members can do this via the RMT website, telephone the RMT helpline above, or writing to the membership department at RMT head office, Chalton Street, London NW1 1JD.

