

RMT *news*

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TUBE ASSAULTS ROCKET



UNDERGROUND



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NATIONAL UNION OF RAIL, MARITIME & TRANSPORT WORKERS

Unity House, 39 Chalton Street, London NW1 1JD



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2 Your Employment. Employer*	Location
Job Description*	Part Time YES NO

3 Sex. Male Female

4 Ethnic Group. (Please specify. This information is used as part of our equal opportunities policy)

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9	7	1	7	4	5
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EDITORIAL



VOTE NO

RMT is recommending that members vote NO in a referendum for Network Rail members in all grades over what amounts to a pay cut.

Over 17,000 RMT members will be balloted in all areas of Network Rail and the union has made it clear that if members reject the offer RMT will automatically be placed in dispute and will then be balloted for industrial action.

RMT remains available for talks and we hope that the company will appreciate the anger amongst staff at the current offer on pay and conditions and that Network Rail will come back to the table with an improved package.

RMT is also preparing a ballot of offshore sector members working in the energy sector as several operators move from existing 2:3 or 2:2 shift patterns to a 3:3 shift pattern in order to drive down costs.

There will also be cuts to sick pay, pension contributions, travel allowances, stand-by payments and in some cases actual rates of pay. On top of this, any paid leave entitlement will have to be taken during field breaks, so there will be an additional 28-days worked per year for no additional pay.

And Royal Fleet Auxiliary members are being balloted for strike action against the implementation of the RFA Future Development Programme.

All these decisions to ballot for industrial action have not been taken lightly and the union has been left with no choice as employers seek to make workers' pay for the growing economic and funding crises which have been heightened by this dreadful government.

This Tory-led government even plans to raid the Railways Pension Scheme and the Transport for London Pension Fund.

It has also dumped the East Coast Main Line out of the public sector and back into the laps of the privateers this month.

This is despite its financial and performance success as a public service and in the face of two previous,

grotesque private failures that took the inter-city route to the brink of collapse.

The ideological insanity driving this reprivatisation has been exposed again as official figures revealed that it was only one of two franchises to make money for the Treasury.

The Office of Rail Regulation (ORR) said that in 2013-14 private rail operators received almost £4 billion in subsidies from the taxpayer – handing on hundreds of millions of pounds to shareholders.

Conversely, publicly owned and operated ECML contributed more than £1 billion to the public purse.

As a result of Tube cuts brought in by the Tory London mayor Boris Johnston assaults on Tube station staff have risen by 44 per cent in the last five years according to new research issued by the Labour group on the Greater London Assembly.

RMT is calling on the Mayor to abandon ridiculous plans for night running, ticket office closures and staff cuts without any consultation whatsoever.

RMT is not opposed to extended running but there are massive issues on staffing, safety and maintenance which have not been addressed and which would need to be signed off by our reps.

Night running would mean increased drunkenness and risks to both passengers and staff alike and could only work with substantial increases in staffing right across the board and that means an immediate reversal of the current cuts programme.

Finally, as the warmer weather starts to appear, for RMT this means that the grades and advisory conference season is upon us and I hope to get to as many as possible to meet the members and hear your concerns.

Best wishes

Mick Cash

REMEMBERING TEBAY



On the 11th anniversary of the tragedy at Tebay, RMT representatives joined friends and relatives of the four union members killed due to the criminal negligence of one of Network Rail's sub-contractors.

Colin Buckley, Darren Burgess, Chris Waters and Gary Tindall, were all employed on the railway along with six other members of the gang who received physical and psychological injuries.

Two men were found guilty of the manslaughter of the victims at Newcastle Crown Court. Mark Connolly was jailed for nine years, reduced to seven at Appeal, and Roy Kennett was jailed for two years.

The anniversary was marked on Sunday 15 February 2015 by a commemorative rally at the site of the memorial stone, just south of Tebay village.

Speaking at the rally, RMT president Peter Pinkney said that despite changes made by the industry since the tragedy, a real risk of track-workers being struck by a runaway vehicle still remains.

"Last year we learned, thanks to the tireless campaign of the Tebay survivors and RMT Lancaster branch and representatives of the union, that real protection was now one step closer.

"But all the promises that made us so optimistic last year have been broken and there has still not been deployment of adequate secondary protection for our track-workers," he said.

RMT has been frustrated that it is taking Network Rail this length of time to get a product onto the infrastructure while every day track workers face the same risks as faced by those

workers killed and injured at Tebay.

However RMT representatives met with Network Rail just before the anniversary rally and were told that 60 Rearguard secondary warning systems have now been delivered to the routes from the manufacturer as part of a centrally funded and agreed national programme.

In addition Network Rail has committed that by May 29 2015 it will have completed the following points:

- Network Rail shall have a policy in place, jointly agreed with the union, whereby use of the Rearguard equipment is mandated in all circumstances unless it can be demonstrated that other mitigations are in place that makes the equipment unnecessary when controlling the risk from runaways.

- Network Rail shall have developed a communications plan to highlight and support the national roll-out of the equipment. RMT have will support this communication plan through use of its own media.
- Network Rail shall have a full training programme in place that will ensure that all staff who need to use the equipment are fully conversant with its method of use. RMT has proposed that to assist the company it will seek volunteers from amongst Area and Local Health and Safety Reps to deliver the training.
- Network Rail has also agreed to offer a demonstration of the Rearguard system to relatives and survivors of the Tebay tragedy. ■



EAST COAST THROWN TO THE WOLVES

Protests along the East Coast Main Line marked the final day of its operation in the public sector as the government dumped it back into the laps of the private sector this month.

This is despite its financial and performance success as a public service and in the face of two previous, grotesque private failures that took the inter-city route to the brink of collapse.

Protests took place at Kings Cross, Edinburgh Waverley and Doncaster.

Since 2009, East Coast has returned over £1 billion to the Treasury – paying cash back to the taxpayer while the private

companies line their pockets with subsidies and has had record high customer satisfaction ratings.

In the public sector East Coast has increased profits with that money being invested directly back into improving services instead of being trousered by private shareholders.

RMT general secretary Mick Cash said that six years ago the East Coast Main Line collapsed into chaos when National Express threw the keys back because they couldn't extract enough profit.

"That followed an earlier

spectacular private sector failure on the line when Sea Containers went bust.

"It was left to the public sector to not only rescue this vital North/South rail link from total meltdown but to turn around its performance and to start handing hundreds of millions of pounds back to the taxpayer in contrast to the rip-off private companies.

"Now, in an act of gross national betrayal of the British people that will cost us dear, the route is being handed over to Virgin/Stagecoach to be run again solely in the interests of private profit, taking a third

gamble after the two previous corporate failures.

"This re-privatisation is based on pure, right wing ideology and is an act of industrial vandalism that will smash apart Britain's most successful rail company for just one reason – it is publicly owned.

"RMT has marked this latest scandal on Britain's privatised railways and the union will renew the fight to return the entire network to public ownership – a policy supported by 70 per cent of the British people," he said.



RMT SLAMS EUROSTAR SELL OFF

Tories desperate to sell profitable state asset before the next election

The release of profitable results for Eurostar has sparked new calls for the Tories to abandon plans to sell off the state asset.

Profits at the cross-channel rail firm rose two per cent to £55 million last year with sales up one per cent to £867 million.

Passenger numbers also increased three per cent to 10.4 million as the business celebrated its 20th anniversary and unveiled its new state-of-the-art e320 trains schedule to enter service at the end of the year.

RMT general secretary Mick Cash said that the news that Eurostar had broken through the 10 million passenger barrier made a mockery of government plans to try and railroad through the sale before the May election.

"The Eurostar sell-off plan is a gross act of betrayal of the British people by a right wing government hell bent on selling off the family silver regardless of the real cost.

"This also compounds the issue of foreign ownership of Britain's railways as the French state have first refusal on our

slice of the highly profitable Eurostar cake.

"The French and Belgians think we are insane knocking off such a valuable and strategic infrastructure asset.

"The Eurostar sell off is just a short sighted act of industrial vandalism based on a bankrupt pro-privatisation ideology," he said.

The UK owns 40 per cent of Eurostar while the French state owns 55 per cent through its rail firm SNCF and its Belgian counterpart SNCB has the remaining five per cent.

Eurostar reports continuing growth in passenger numbers and sales revenues in 2014 with a new Lyon-South of France service proving popular with customers.

This performance was underpinned by an increase in business travel bookings throughout the year. In 2014 the number of Eurostar business travellers increased by four per cent compared with 2013.

Following the company's decision in November to purchase seven additional e320s to meet growing demand and



Euro-bizarre!
TORIES TO FLOG RAIL FIRM NOW IT'S PROFITABLE

CRITICS yesterday demanded the Government backtrack on plans to sell the taxpayers' Eurostar stake - after it announced healthy results.

Profits at the cross-channel rail firm rose 2% to £55million last year with sales up 1% to £867m.

Passenger numbers increased 3% to 10.4 million, bringing the total number to more than 150 million since the high-speed train service launched in 1994.

Eurostar only made its first profit in 2012 after raking up 17 years of losses. Yet ministers have chosen now as the time to sell the 40% stake in the company.

Rail union the RMT, which has vowed to fight the sale, branded the move 'a gross act of betrayal of the British people by a right-wing government hell bent on selling off

the family silver regardless of the real cost."

General Secretary Mick Cash added: "It makes a mockery of this rotten Government's plans to try and railroad through the sale of the British slice of this cash-generating asset before the May election."

The French state, which owns 55% of Eurostar through rail firm SNCF, has first refusal on the UK's share.

Belgian counterpart SNCB has the remaining 5% chunk.

The sale could raise around £300m for the Treasury, part of Chancellor George Osborne's £20billion privatisation bid to reduce the Government's debt pile.

A Treasury spokesman said: "The Government

has never intended to retain its 40% stake in Eurostar.

"Late last year we believed that it was the right time to bring the stake to market.

"However, we have been clear that our key objective is to maximise value for money for the UK taxpayer and we will only sell the stake if this objective can be met."

The move comes as Eurostar kicks off a new £1billion plan to further boost the firm's fortunes.

A state-of-the-art fleet of e320 electric high-speed trains will enter service by the end of 2015, with year-round direct services to the South of France beginning in May.

Eurostar boss Nicolas Petrovic said ticket sales on the route from London St Pancras had got off to a "cracking start".

DEBT Osborne

provide services to new destinations, the reported operating profit for 2014 reflects additional non-cash charges against the value of the existing fleet.

In total, Eurostar is investing over £1 billion in its fleet and its service and will be introducing 17 new trains over the next three years.

To meet the growing demand

for high speed rail services beyond its traditional destinations, on May 1 this year, Eurostar is launching a new all year-round direct service to the South of France stopping in Lyon, Avignon and Marseille.

However Tory Chancellor George Osborne wants to sell the UK stake for around just £300 million.

TAXI DRIVER LICENCE CHAOS

RMT has written to the government to demand an end to the chaotic mismanagement of driver licencing which is putting members' livelihoods at risk at a time when the trade is coming under unprecedented pressure and attacks.

A licence to operate a taxi is issued by the driver's local authority. As part of being licenced, taxi drivers are required to have their good character verified via an enhanced criminal records

check.

In the capital, Transport for London (TfL) previously had responsibility for administering all aspects of the licensing process. However, the criminal record check for London taxi drivers recently was transferred and is being carried out by the Home Office's Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS).

This is a service for which taxi drivers pay a substantial fee (around £60). However DBS has been unable to process checks promptly and a substantial

backlog of around 36,000 applications has arisen.

Since the criminal records check was transferred to DBS, TfL is no longer willing to show any flexibility, leaving members unable to earn a living, with many more facing the same situation.

RMT is demanding that Transport for London has the power to issue temporary licences or otherwise extend existing licences pending the completion of background checks.

The DBS must also hire more staff and responsibility for administering taxi drivers' criminal records checks must revert back to TfL.

RMT general secretary Mick Cash said that chaotic mismanagement was threatening the ability of members to make a living.

"This intolerable situation cannot be allowed to continue and requires urgent action as set out in RMT's letter to the Home Office," he said.



HULL TRAINS STRIKE VOTE

RMT members on Hull Trains have voted by more than nine to one for industrial action in a dispute over the redundancy of a staff member who the union believes is being forced out of the company.

The dispute hinges on entirely bogus company claims that they have recently had to

have a 'necessary minor reorganisation' which identified an individual as being at risk of redundancy.

At the members appeal hearing the company stated that she did not fall under the collective bargaining agreements and therefore existing agreements did not apply.

However, as part of the 2014 pay award the company identified that same member as an employee who was covered by collective bargaining and on acceptance of the pay award she was granted the pay uplift along with all the other employees who are covered by collective bargaining and who all benefit

from the job protection agreements.

RMT general secretary Mick Cash said that Hull Trains' failure to abide by the collective bargaining procedures as unacceptable.

"This union will not tolerate any member being removed from employment by underhand means," he said.



FIGHTING FOR CITY LINK WORKERS

RMT is pursuing individual and collective claims on behalf of staff dumped during the collapse of City Link over the Christmas and New Year holidays.

Individual members' claims for redundancy pay, notice pay, holiday pay, outstanding wages and unfair dismissal are being prepared by RMT lawyers.

In addition, collective claims

for the failure by City Link to inform and consult over the dismissals are being prepared and are being taken into the ACAS procedures by the union. The failure to consult should mean that a protective award of up to 90 days is payable to the staff affected.

RMT is aware that these claims will be treated as "unsecured creditors" as Jon

Moulton and his outfit Better Capital were careful to convert their stake into secured loans before the collapse leaving them at the front of the queue for the distribution of assets.

The union is also aware that the value left in the wreckage of the company is rapidly being drained away as administrators Ernst and Young have paid themselves nearly £2 million in

fees.

RMT General Secretary Mick Cash said that the fight for justice for the City Link workers goes on.

"Now is the time for justice and to salvage what we can for the staff who paid a heavy personal price for this brutal exercise in bandit capitalism," he said.



SAY NO! TO NETWORK RAIL OFFER

RMT is sending referendum ballot papers to Network Rail members in Operations, Maintenance, Customer Services and associated grades over what the company claims is its final pay offer.

The union is recommending that members vote NO to reject the proposals which are summarised as follows.

- 2015 - No increase in pay.
- 2016, 2017, 2018 - An RPI level of inflation increase in pay would be applied for each year.
- "No Compulsory Redundancy" commitment extended until December 31 2015.
- A 33 per cent reduction in off peak travel for employees, friends and family.

17,000 RMT members will be balloted in all areas of Network

Rail in the referendum and the union has made it clear that if members reject the offer RMT will automatically be placed in dispute with Network Rail and the workforce will then be balloted for industrial action. The referendum will close on March 24 2015

RMT General Secretary Mick Cash said that as far as the union concerned no pay rise in 2015 is a pay cut as it means that members pay will not keep up with the cost of living.

"The travel offer we have received is nothing more than a card that can be purchased by any member of the travelling public, falling well short of our demand of free travel for all. In addition, we are extremely concerned that the 'No Compulsory Redundancy' commitment only applies to the first year of the four year deal.



"RMT is in no doubt that this leaves Operations and Maintenance members extremely vulnerable, especially with the continued development of Rail Operating Centres and the on-going cuts programme at Network Rail.

"Having discussed this proposal with reps from across the country, RMT is strongly recommending members vote NO to reject this offer – a vote

that would automatically place us in dispute and which would trigger a full, national industrial action ballot.

"RMT remains available for talks and we hope that the company will appreciate the anger amongst staff at the current offer on pay and conditions from Network Rail and that they will agree to our call to come back to the table with an improved package." ■

NETWORK RAIL BOSS ATTACKS INDUSTRY SAFETY RECORD

Network Rail chief Mark Carne has said that unsafe working practices were causing "appalling tragedies" and hundreds of casualties each year.

Three workers were killed and 122 suffered major injuries in 2013-14 working on the railway infrastructure, according to Network Rail figures, and Mr Carne admits that injuries on the railways running at ten times comparable industries.

RMT general secretary Mick Cash said that the figures were

"an appalling indictment" and Mr Carne should ensure that Network Rail brought all works back in house and improved pay and conditions

"RMT has warned repeatedly that the safety culture on Network Rail has been diluted by savage cuts to staffing and the proliferation of agencies and contractors which has led to casualisation of safety critical work and a surge in staff on zero hours contracts.

"Those warnings have come home to roost with a vengeance

in these shocking figures.

"It is all very well Mark Carne admitting that injuries among our members are running at ten times the level of comparable heavy industries.

"But that is an appalling indictment on NR and the question is what is he going to do about it?

"For starters he needs to halt the cuts and end the fragmentation and casualisation by bringing all works back in house.

"Secondly he needs to show

that NR value their staff by maintaining and improving pay and conditions right across the network.

"Failure to address those issues will result in a continuation of the current appalling tide of accidents and injuries which are threatening our members' lives on a daily basis," he said.

Mr Carne, who became chief executive of Network Rail a year ago after joining from the oil industry, said that rail had failed to keep pace with other sectors

in safety, and a change in workforce culture – through measures including shortlisting qualified women for every job – was essential.

In an unusually frank speech, Carne said that about 600 railway workers a year – employees and contractors – were injured to the extent that they cannot return to work the next day.

“If I were back in oil and gas, a comparable figure for the same amount of activity would be between 30 and 60 people – the difference is that stark.

“That means that over 500 of our people are getting hurt every year, well over one a day, because our work practices have not kept pace with comparable heavy engineering industries,” he said.

Carne admitted that pressure to get work finished quickly had led managers to “send signals that suggest we don’t care as deeply as we could about our workforce and their safety and health”.

He said that tracks had been left untended and problems unreported.

“We have too many tragic accidents caused by behaviours and conditions that others had seen and walked past.

“I spoke recently to a young man who had his leg amputated because equipment failed and crushed him. The equipment had failed previously, but nobody had reported it,” he said.

Mr Carne said he had instigated a programme to tidy up a railway that was “frankly, sometimes a bit of a scrapheap”, including picking up tens of thousands of tonnes of old rails and sleepers.

The speech was delivered at the Institute of Engineers in central London. Lord Adonis, the former Labour transport minister, said that he had “never heard a CEO be so critical of his own organisation”. ■

Parliamentary column



KAREN GUYOTT'S SHOCKING CASE

Tube worker Karen Guyott's case is a shocking indictment of London Underground's treatment of its own staff.

To single out a worker with epilepsy in their ominous ‘Fit for the Future’ review of staff does not bode well for workers’ rights at a time when automation on trains and in stations is being exploited by the Mayor and his managers to cut labour costs.

In fact, TfL first tried to sack Karen in 2010 when they first learned of her condition. She is one of 16 London Underground operational staff and 11 TfL staff diagnosed with epilepsy. It is unacceptable for public or private organisations to attempt such discriminatory employment practices in this day and age.

Together with my colleague Grahame Morris MP I raised Karen's case in a recent parliamentary debate on epilepsy as the precedent that TfL is seeking to set in dismissing a worker on grounds of her epilepsy is a dangerous one for all workers, and not just for other people with epilepsy in the transport industry.

It should be clearly stated that what TfL have done in sacking Karen contravenes the Equality Act 2010 which classes epilepsy as a disability. This requires employers to make reasonable adjustments so that people suffering from epilepsy can continue working. Although epileptic episodes can be triggered by long hours or other work related stress, almost three quarters of the 600,000 people suffering from epilepsy in the UK today are seizure free once they find the most appropriate treatment.

In addition, a recent employment appeal tribunal, *Dyer v. London Ambulance NHS Trust*, stated that the duty in the Equality Act to make reasonable adjustments must always be considered, and that only in the rarest of cases could no reasonable adjustments be made. That affirms that even when it comes to epilepsy, the duty to make reasonable

adjustments could extend to redeployment.

RMT successfully fended off TfL's first attempt to sack Karen and London Underground did make reasonable adjustments at that time yet they are back again, persecuting a worker with epilepsy when they should be using her as an example to other employers to avoid the stigma against people with epilepsy.

It is also worth recalling the events in January that TfL have used to dismiss Karen. One of her colleagues moved her from a place of safety and left her outside a locked station supervisor's office that was close to an escalator. Karen became disorientated and wandered towards the escalator, but her colleague realised the danger and moved her into the office. As a result of that incident, instead of providing training for Karen's colleagues, London Underground argues that Karen's condition is too risky for it to manage, and it is clear that it is no longer willing to accommodate her.

Karen's prominence as a trade union activist is also a factor worth considering and if London Underground is using epilepsy as an excuse to dismiss a trade union activist when they are pushing through a massive cuts programme, then the facts around this case would become even more shocking and unacceptable.

The Government must make it crystal clear to TfL and all employers that it is unacceptable to discriminate against someone due to their having epilepsy. The RMT Parliamentary Group will continue to support people, such as Karen, who are fighting blatant discrimination. We will continue to raise her case with the Government and the Mayor, as this cannot be allowed to stand – TfL is a significant public sector employer and it must be an example of best practice in the treatment of disabled workers and trade union activists.

Kate Hoey is Labour MP for Vauxhall



SIGNALLING GRADES MEET

Conference condemns unfair recruitment selection policy which leaves existing workforce at a disadvantage

The annual signalling and operations grades' conference meeting in Llandudno discussed some of the key issues facing the fast changing sector of the rail industry.

Conference president Phil Boorman welcomed delegates and thanked North Wales, Holyhead and Wrexham branches for their organisation of the event. He also thanked Alan Aitkenhead, conference secretary who was unable to attend and is stepping down from the role, for the hard work that he had put in for the grade over the years.

Delegates called for an end to the unfair signaller recruitment selection policy which means that the existing workforce is at a disadvantage when applying for new jobs.

They also called for all existing agreements to be amalgamated into one common

agreement book and an end to anomalies with the rest of the industry over annual leave.

Nathan Gill, Wakefield and Healey Mills called for the union to raise the issue of signalling recruitment selection policy with Network Rail as a matter of urgency.

"It is perverse that at a stroke your natural career progression has been culled because of a test that Network Rail will not give you your score or feedback, so you can never improve upon it and your existing experience is effectively made worthless.

"The union should pursue an agreement with Network Rail to make provision within the selection process for a measure of seniority to be introduced, as recognition of a candidate's experience.

"As jobs are relocated to Rail Operations Centres, this measure along with PTR&R will give

security to existing members of staff.

"Such a move will enhance the safety of our members who work on the trains and on the track as inexperienced new starters will not be placed in high graded, busy signalling locations on the results of one test alone," he said.

Nicola Williams, Three Bridges, led a call for all existing agreements for signalling grades to be amalgamated into one common agreement book.

"Now that Network Rail's re-signalling scheme is in full flow and promotion, transfer and redundancy for these nationwide schemes is being applied, it has become apparent that there has been much confusion amongst both trained reps and the membership as a whole over the disparate number of books and agreements which may or may

not apply under modern employment and equality law.

"We need our lead officers to sit down and compile one common book of agreements, without weakening or watering down any existing agreements whilst bringing them in line with current legal requirements.

"One clear guide will reduce future confusion and be an easy point of reference for all members to view and use, and would be easy to link to the RMT website for quick reference," she said.

Kelvin Eastham, Three Bridges, moved a resolution condemning the annual leave matrix that signallers currently have to work under.

"We want to see Network Rail bring the signalling grades in line with other grades by replacing the unfair annual leave matrix that leaves our grade feeling like second class



employees of Network Rail. “his has been a long running aspiration of this conference and it is now more than time to bring this matter to a fair conclusion.

“With the new Regional Operating Centres now going ahead we have many grades working in one place and all bar the signalling grade are in receipt of either 28 days annual leave for under ten years’ service or 30 days for over ten years’ service. It is now time to bring this anomaly to an end,” he said.

John Walker, Hull Rail, successfully moved a resolution calling for RMT to fight to retain the role of the signaller.

He told conference that Network Rail had confirmed a new interim role for Signaller TM with the trade unions for first deployment only.

However, when phase two – pod working – is introduced Network Rail are suggesting this will be a new role.

“The custodian of railway safety from signalling trains to ensuring workforce safety on the operational railway has always been the role of the signaller.

“T3 possessions, line blockages, points failures, OHL tripling isolations, and many other degraded working situations are all examples of safety critical work carried out by signallers on a daily basis. This role should only be carried out by signallers and not other graded staff, such as controllers,” he said.

Tim Butler, Council of Executives, gave a well-received report on the work carried out resulting from the resolutions from the previous

year’s conference.

RMT president Peter Pinkney, addressing his own grade, told conference that this was likely to be the last one he attends not only as president but also as a worker in the grade.

In a passionate speech he gave a roundup of the current political situation, attacking the government for its anti-trade unionism and UKIP for its racism. He called for the Labour Party to back trade union rights and nationalisation.

Condemning the Network Rail pay deal, a four-year deal which offers no pay increase in the first year, Peter called for action: “What we need to do is to strike and to get a massive yes vote to make that happen”.

RMT general secretary Mick Cash thanked John Tilley and Peter Skelly for their help

nationally since the passing of former general secretary Bob Crow. He told delegates that the union was in a good position but would only remain so if it continued to organise and agitate.

“All the gains we have made will disappear if we don’t continue the work and training, education and organising are the way forward.

“Every rep and full-time official should be mapping our membership against the workforce so we can build where we need to,” Mick said.

Turning to the Network Rail pay deal Mick added: “We need to stand together and show our mettle and industrial muscle and fight the company”.

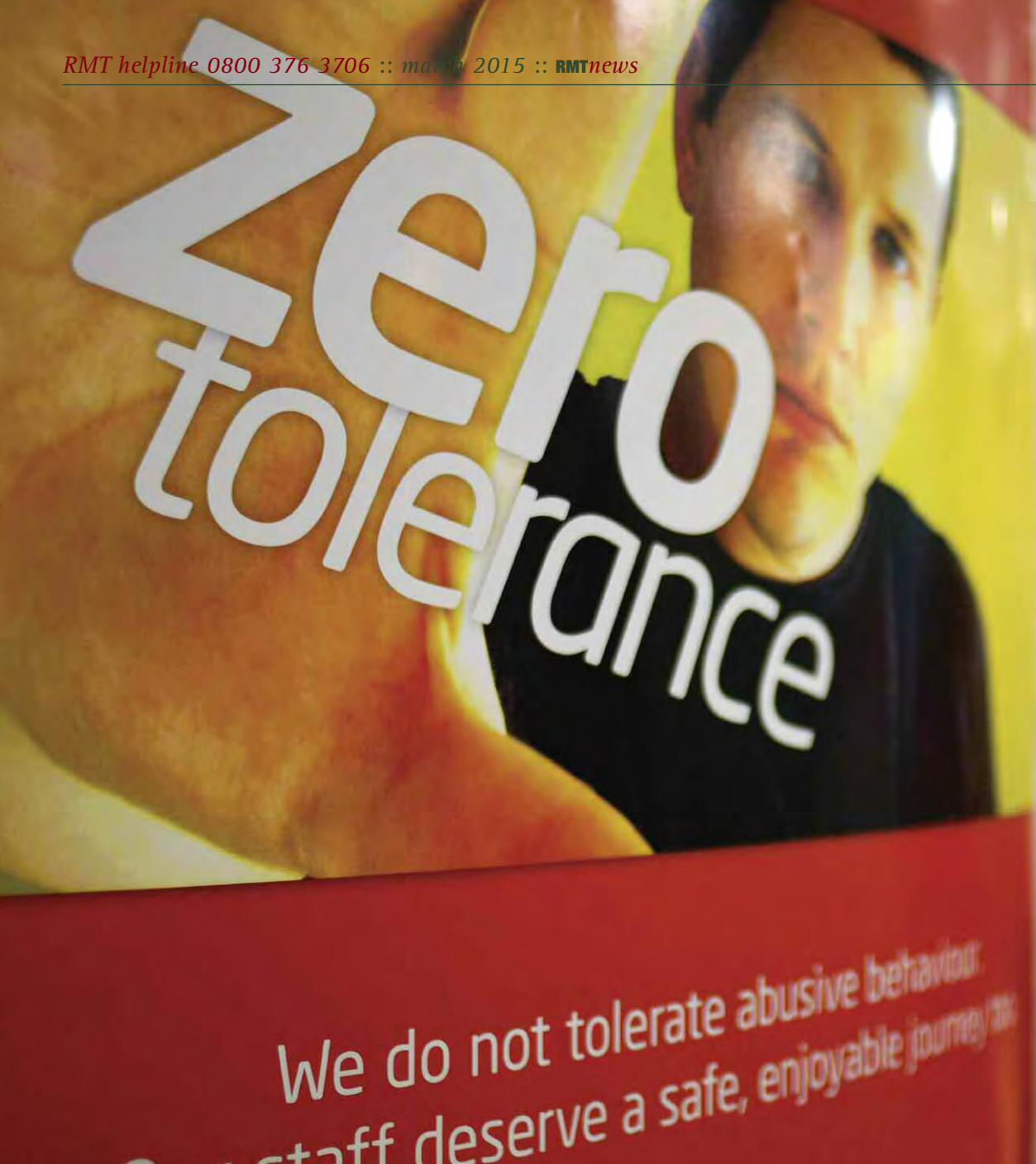
Next year’s conference will be held in Perth.



Mick Cash



Peter Pinkney



BULLYING AND HARASSMENT **STAMP IT OUT**

Well-attended RMT national health
and safety conference discusses
bullying in the workplace



The theme of the 13th RMT national health and safety conference meeting in Doncaster was Bullying and Harassment and how it can be stamped out and many guest speakers addressed delegates on this emotive theme.

Darren Procter, the former RMT shipping grades executive member and now ITF inspector, said that bullying and harassment on-board ships was rife. He spoke of the people he sees who frequently find themselves unpaid and who get threatened and abused if they dare to speak out.

The ITF is an association which is made up of globally affiliated unions and Darren is one of 128 world-wide inspectors that visit vessels that are not crewed by RMT, or union, members and which fly flags of convenience to avoid UK regulations and employment legislation.

There is often no regard for Health and Safety and Darren has personally witnessed some frightening examples of malpractice. One vessel that Darren visited had been damaged by fire and was due to sail with a crew that hadn't been paid for three months.

Fortunately Darren was able to stop this vessel from sailing but he said that, sadly, this was not a particularly bad example. Some crew he had seen had no food on-board and with no washing or other basic facilities along with little, or no, pay.

Many times these crew members would be abused and bullied if they threatened to speak to a visiting ITF inspector. The ITF tries to improve the terms and conditions and health and safety for these abused maritime workers.

Catherine Horner from Thompsons Solicitors gave advice on what legally constituted bullying and harassment and on recent legal precedent. Catherine was followed by Ian Cloke, policy manager for the UK Chamber of Shipping. Ian spoke about a joint initiative between trade unions and the Chamber of Shipping that been set-up specifically to tackle the issues of bullying and harassment for maritime workers.

Ian said that this initiative had led to the creation of revised guidelines on how these matters should be dealt with and displayed a video that had been produced on the subject. The purpose of this video was to raise awareness of, and stimulate discussion about, bullying and harassment as well as to share examples of best practice.

Next up was Kelly Barlow, HR Director for South West Trains, who spoke of her experiences of introducing a five-year strategy that sought to work in partnership with trade unions to tackle the bullying and harassment that she admitted did exist within that company.

Conference was treated to an entertaining speech from Hilda Palmer from the Greater Manchester hazards campaign. Hilda reminded delegates that it is the fortieth anniversary of the introduction of the Health and Safety at Work Act.

Hilda spoke passionately about the bullying and harassment practiced by the current government, and the right-wing media, and the terms they use to belittle the health and safety culture, and its enforcement, in order that they

can further erode the legislation as part of their on-going campaign to placate big business.

Hilda spoke of the numerous health and safety reps who find themselves blacklisted and bullied and of the avoidable deaths caused by these attitudes.

She said the Act is "a wonderful thing but if we get another government like this one then we will see the end of it". Hilda also claimed that to listen to the government's public praise for the Act was to ignore the elephant in the room, which is that they have been systematically killing it off because employers feel it is far too restrictive.

Hilda gave a history of its introduction and the reasons for its inception. This was followed by a lively panel discussion with many forthright and challenging questions put to the conference guests.

RMT President Peter Pinkney paid tribute to all the hard work carried out by the unions Health and Safety reps in the year since the tragic loss of former general secretary Bob Crow.

Peter spoke about how he recently attended the Tebay memorial event to lay a wreath on behalf of the union.

"Sadly, in the eleven years since the tragedy, there had been a distinct lack of improvement in terms of health and safety for track-workers," he said.

Peter remarked upon the number of health and safety reps present that he had trained alongside, who were now considered old-hands, and his pleasure at the number of younger reps in attendance who are coming through to represent the next generation.

Peter, who is in his last year as President, wished the reps well for the future as, with an up-coming election, another future government of the same hue as the current incumbents would represent a huge threat to all existing health and safety legislation.

Conference secretary Iain Minto then invited delegates to observe a two minute silence for both Bob and the victims of Tebay.

The union's Council of Executive was represented by shipping grades member Lee Davison who reminded conference of the tragedy of the Herald of Free Enterprise and how the reams of red tape that has been introduced since then that tries to limit, and reverse, the improvements and changes that have been made since.

Conference discussed seven motions with two being carried forward to the union's AGM in Newcastle.

Conference agreed that a merged resolution from Edinburgh No1 and the Doncaster branch calling for a campaign to put pressure on rail companies to eliminate the effects of breathing in ballast dust, which can lead to COPD, and the musculoskeletal disorders which can be caused by walking on ballast.

A second motion will go forward called on the union to launch a campaign to apply pressure on Network Rail to eliminate asbestos from any railway buildings and infrastructure.

A member of Sheffield and District branch spoke of his personal battle with lung cancer caused by a lifetime of exposure to asbestos.



TUBE STAFF ASSAULTS ROCKET



UNDERGROUND



Union calls on London Mayor to abandon 'ridiculous' plans for night running, ticket office closures and staff cuts

Assaults on Tube station staff have risen by 44 per cent in the last five years according to new research issued by the Labour Group on the Greater London Assembly.

Labour's London Assembly transport spokesperson Val Shawcross AM said that the sharp rise in assaults on staff sparked renewed concern about the London Mayor Boris Johnson's plans to axe 900 staff and his ticket office closures programme.

She said that the recent stabbing of a customer assistant at Lancaster Gate was yet another warning ignored by the Mayor as he bulldozes ahead with his cuts programme.

"Aging almost 900 staff from the tube stations and spreading the remainder out across the ticket halls and platforms risks leaving tube station staff dangerously isolated.

"This is particularly true given recent figures from London Underground show that 62 per cent of Tube staff assaults take place in a booking hall or at gate lines.

"What nobody wants to see is staff left feeling unsafe on quiet platforms and in empty ticket halls. We need to see immediate action from the Mayor to get to the bottom of this worrying rise in assaults and to show that his station staff cuts aren't going to leave workers more vulnerable in the future," she said.

Boris Johnson has also launched plans for night running as a blatant pre-election stunt without a shred of consultation with the union.

RMT general secretary Mick Cash said that it was a ridiculous way to conduct important negotiations and to unveil major service developments.

"RMT is not opposed to extended running but there are massive issues on staffing, safety and maintenance which have not been addressed and which would need to be signed

TFL DATA ON STAFF ASSAULTS IS DRAWN FROM THE TFL HEALTH, SAFETY AND ENVIRONMENT REPORT 2013/14

Year	Actual assaults	Increase since 2009/10	% rise of assaults from 09/10	Employee numbers	Assaults per head	Heads per assault	Assaults as a % of Employee nos.
2009/10	1,917	0		17,882	0.1072	9.328	10.72%
2010/11	2,376	459	23.94%	10,760	0.2208	4.529	22.08%
2011/12	2,479	562	29.32%	9,875	0.251	3.983	25.10%
2012/13	2,297	380	19.82%	10,042	0.2287	4.372	22.87%
2013/14	2,753	836	43.61%	10,064	0.2735	3.655	27.35%

off by our reps.

"This announcement has been made against the backdrop of a near doubling in assaults on staff, cuts to over a thousand jobs and the axing of guards on London Overground.

"Night running would mean increased drunkenness and risks to both passengers and staff alike and could only work with substantial increases in staffing right across the board and that means an immediate reversal of the current cuts programme," he said.

Val Shawcross echoed union concerns saying that there were are serious worries about TfL's approach to staffing.

"With alcohol a proven factor in a significant number of assaults, we have to ask how safe employees will feel being the sole member of staff at a station at 3am and dealing with crowds of passengers coming back from a night on the town," she said.

The most recent TfL figures show that the number of assaults on Tube staff has nearly doubled in the last five years, rising from 1,917 in 2009/10 to 2,753 in 2013/14.

The rise in the number of assaults comes despite a 44 per cent cut in the number of staff. This means there has been a significant increase in the proportion of employees suffering assaults each year, up from 11 per cent to 27 per cent in 2013/14.

Concerns were also raised

about the staffing proposals for the night tube service which is due to start in September.

Last year 25 per cent of reported assaults on staff cited alcohol as a contributing factor with data showing assaults on staff are most likely to take place between 11pm and 12am on a Friday and Saturday night. Despite this TfL plans to employ just 250 members of staff to cover 138 night tube stations, leaving some stations staffed by only one employee.

RMT activists, alongside community groups, recently took the fight against staff cuts and the closure of tube ticket offices to the public with leafleting and petition signing outside Tube stations.

With the Mayor's ticket office closure programme now underway, RMT is ramming home the point that increasing passenger demand, forecast to continue to surge in the coming years, combined with increased levels of violent incidents against both passengers and staff are exposing Boris Johnson's cuts programme for the reckless gamble that it is.

The union is also reinforcing the point that the closure of ticket offices, and the associated loss of jobs, discriminates against those groups who specifically require assistance to access the tube network, effectively turning the Underground into a no-go zone for some of the most vulnerable in society.

Meanwhile, RMT is continuing to raise safety, operational and staffing issues associated with the Mayor's drive to introduce 24 hour weekend tube running.

RMT London regional organiser said that the fight against LUL ticket office closures and job cuts was widely supported by the public.

"This new research shows that RMT members will be left vulnerable and isolated and at constant risk of attack as the cuts are driven through.

"The recent stabbing of a customer assistant at Lancaster Gate was just millimetres away from a potential fatality and yet those in charge, from the Mayor down, continue to ignore the brutal reality that confronts the tube workforce every single day of the week.

"These cuts have lethal consequences and RMT's fight to stop them goes on.

"RMT is uniting with the community to draw attention to the access and safety risks associated with this ill-conceived cuts programme at a time of surging passenger demand and increasing levels of violence.

"RMT will continue to oppose the ridiculous plan for ticket office closures and staff cuts and we will continue to keep the pressure on the mayor and LUL to put customers first," he said.

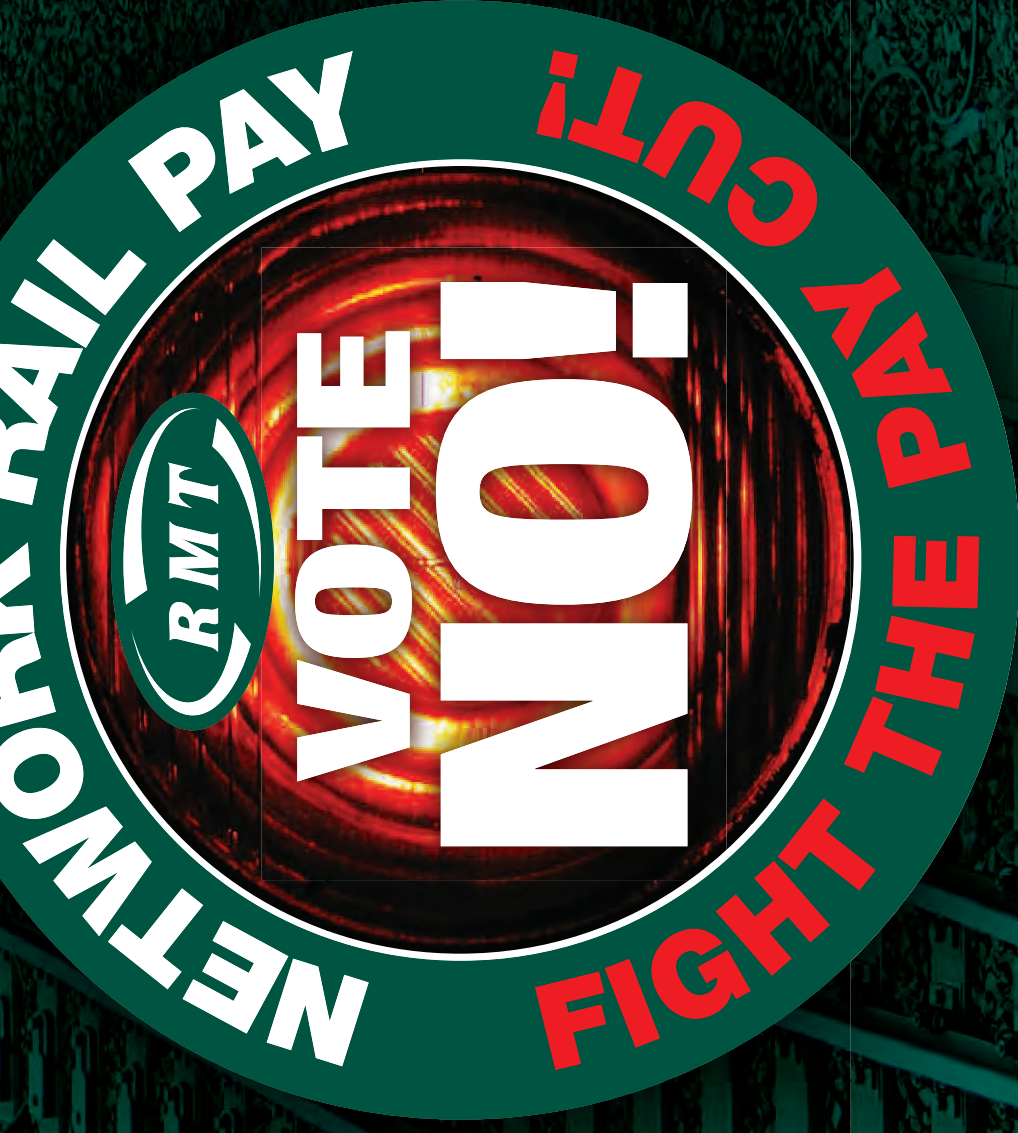


Britain's Largest Specialist Transport Union

Network Rail has tabled a final four year pay offer to the unions. The deal involved a pay freeze in year one – that amounts to a real-terms pay cut. On top of that job protection guarantees will expire this year with no assurances into 2016 and the travel-concession arrangements are also seriously undermined. RMT is conducting a referendum ballot on the offer of **ALL Network Rail members** with a recommendation to register a strong **NO** vote. A **NO** vote will put us into dispute with Network Rail and will trigger a ballot for industrial action.

**Fight the attack on pay and conditions
at Network Rail – VOTE NO in the RMT referendum**

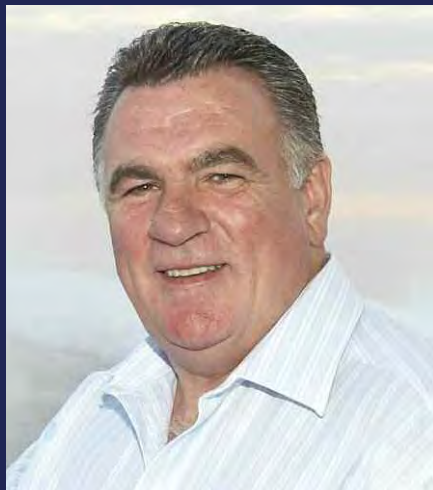
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SHIPPING AND OFFSHORE

National secretary Steve Todd reports on the latest developments in the shipping and offshore for RMT members

Royal Fleet Auxiliary members are being balloted for strike action against the implementation of the RFA Future Development Programme which has already been overwhelmingly rejected in a referendum of affected members.

RFA has already implemented a 3.4 per cent uplift in core salary levels and an increase of the RFA Allowance by an additional £425 per person per year and the inclusion of the RFA Allowance into core salaries, the equivalent of an average 1.3 per cent pay rise.

However there has been a failure to agree over banding in the competency based system and apprenticeship terms and conditions have not been agreed with RMT.

The union also does not accept the increased workload placed on Leading Hands ie administrative assistants and stores accounts and RFA has failed to provide written assurances that members will be deployed in the 'right place at the right time'.

RMT does not accept that the staffing levels proposed on TSoC vessels are adequate.

On Stena Line in the Irish Sea the union is demanding a substantial increase in rates of pay and improvements to conditions of service.

However the company has declared that any pay increase must be based on its ability to pay within the restrictions of on-going costs saving exercises and any increase could only be achieved by agreement on future savings on manpower costs. The offer was recently rejected by the members in a referendum. RMT has strongly objected to a link between the annual pay review and other cost saving measures and the company

maintained its position that it must make savings going forward.

Discussions are ongoing as we go to press but a ballot for industrial action has not been ruled out.

A ballot for industrial action is also likely for offshore members working in the energy sector as several operators including Apache, Marathon, Talisman, CNR, Enquest have announced that all contractor staff will move from existing 2:3 or 2:2 shift patterns to a 3:3 shift pattern in order to drive down costs.

There will also be cuts to; sick pay, pension contributions, travel allowances, stand-by payments and in some cases actual rates of pay. On top of this, any paid leave entitlement will have to be taken during field breaks, normally taken from time worked, so there will be an additional 28-days worked per year for no additional pay.

The change to shift patterns will also see a 20 per cent reduction in staff numbers and many ad-hoc employees will also face redundancy as engineering projects are cancelled or delayed.

This attack on RMT members must be resisted by all means at our disposal and we should look to engage with IE energy union in Norway, as well as the ITF and Industrial. The Scottish TUC has organised a summit scheduled for this month to deal with the growing crisis in the energy sector as a whole.

Finally an agreement has been reached with P&O (cruise operations) a 2.5 per cent increase, backdated to April 1 2014, plus an additional four days annual leave. Following a consultation of affected members, this offer has been accepted and the increase, along with backdated monies, was paid to members in November.



RMT WOMEN MEET

RMT activists from across the country held a successful Women's conference in Wigan in March, vowing to stand up for female carers in the rail industry and to stamp out sexual harassment and violence in the workplace.

Held on International Women's day and marking 100 years of women in the unions that merged to form the RMT – the National Union of Railwayman and National Union of Seaman, delegates urged transport employers to take their concerns seriously.

Moving the successful motion, Wigan branch delegate Eileen Blackburn said: "As with large majority of families women are expected to be the primary caregivers and as a union we need to be hammering home this point to the employer when requesting the right to flexible working to assist our women members."

She pointed to new research showing 56 per cent of full time female workers with family caring responsibilities have considered resigning from their jobs because of difficulties at work.

"Our branch finds this unacceptable," said Ms Blackburn.

"The branch therefore instructs the general secretary to

write to all companies within the rail industry to request assurances that flexible working requests are given the utmost consideration when our female members have caring responsibilities."

Delegates also put pressure on employers and the British Transport police to address the serious issue of sexual assaults on the transport network.

There has been a 21 per cent increase in reported sexual violence on the rail network and a 30 percent increase in sexual harassment offences on London transport.

Seconding the motion, Chair of national women's conference Becky Crocker said that the union should use its political channels such as the RMT Parliamentary group and London Assembly to apply pressure take serious action on the issue such as employing more frontline staff.

Both motions will go to RMT AGM to be debated by the union.

Other highlights of the weekend event included speeches from local Labour MP and RMT-backed candidate Lisa Nandy and RMT general secretary Mick Cash.

Ms Nandy who has campaigned for public ownership of the railways, railed against the ConDem austerity

"onslaught" which has made life unmanageable for many of her constituents.

Addressing the conference, she said: "This is a town that was battered by the miners' strike and it is a testament to those families and particularly the women in those families that this town wasn't ripped apart.

"Many don't know if they will survive this onslaught.

"We have a government committed to 1930's levels of spending just to get a triple A credit rating from a handful of unaccountable financial institutions," she said.

Pointing to the fighting spirit of people in Wigan, Ms Nandy recalled a recent campaigning session with the RMT over driver only trains and cuts to staffing.

"For the first time the interests of those who work on the railways and those who use the railways are exactly aligned.

"People were coming to us saying how concerned they were for their safety at night travelling from Wigan Walgate.

"We already know that the situation for women travelling alone at night and I travel to Manchester and come back quite late at night, it is really quite frightening if there are no staff around to support you,"

she said.

Mick Cash praised the union and its women members over the last 100 years but said pressure on wages had meant it would take women 70 years to reach pay equality across the UK workforce.

"The past we inherit the future we build and shape.

"That's how we should celebrate 100 years of women in the union. The rank file leads the leadership and we get on with the job," he said.

Concluding the conference, council of executives member Michelle Rodgers, told RMT News: "The key things members speak about is the abuse and violence that women are expected to take in the workplace and I think that is wrong. As a union we should be doing more to get the message out this unacceptable.

"The union have dealt well with individual cases but we haven't done enough to send the message out to the wider travelling public that any kind of violence is not acceptable and that we should be able to live in a society with no fear.

"That is what equality is about – accepting people for who they are and what they are," she said.

PENSIONS UNDER ATTACK

RMT pensions officer Paul Norris outlines government plans to raid the Railways Pension Scheme and the Transport for London Pension Fund



From April 6 2016 a new Single-Tier State Pension (STSP) of approximately £144 per week which will replace the existing Basic State Pension (BSP) of £113.10 per week and the State Second Pension for those retiring after this date.

While the government claims that the STSP will be fairer and offer future a bigger pension at retirement it has failed to mention that this will be at the expense of workers' company pension schemes which are presently contracted-out.

So that the STSP is at no additional cost to the treasury the government is preparing to raid those pension schemes such as the Railways Pension Scheme (RPS) and the Transport for London Pension Fund, which contract-out of the State Second Pension.

Under the present system occupational pension schemes can opt-out (contract-out) of the State Second Pension. As a result members receive a National Insurance Contribution (NIC) rebate worth 1.4 per cent (on earning between £153 and £805 a week) and employers 3.4 per cent.

As from April 6 2016 this rebate will no longer exist which will mean that pension scheme members will see an increase in their NICs (1.4 per cent) and therefore a reduction in their take home pay.

However, while members will have to take this increase in NICs on the chin the government is introducing overriding legislation which will allow employers to recoup their

entire 3.4 per cent NIC rebate without the need of trustee consent.

In effect what this will mean is that employers after taking actuarial advice can change members' future service benefits, up to 3.4 per cent, or/and increase members pension contributions without the need to get agreement from the trustees.

Employers will still need to consult with members and trade unions but once the consultation exercise is finished employers can go full steam ahead and make the necessary changes.

Initially the government proposed to introduce an override which would have allowed employers to recoup their rebate from those individuals in privatised industries, such as the railways, who have statutory protection in relation to pensions.

After pressure and campaigning from RMT and other trade unions the government backed off from this proposal but have refused to do the same in regards to non-protected persons.

Non-protected persons make up approximately 71 per cent (62,000) of contributing members in the RPS and 85 per cent (18,500) in the TfL Pension Fund.

While employers will receive 'special treatment', allowing them a free hand to recoup their rebate, members could see any state pension gains wiped out by having their occupational benefits reduced for future

service.

RMT has been campaigning to get the override removed from the pension bill via our Parliamentary group. The union has also met with the Pensions Minister and the Department for Works and Pensions on a number of occasions. Regrettable this has been unsuccessful.

The government have stated that this override should only be used as "a last resort where the only other option is to close the scheme", however, employers are already setting themselves up to raid pension funds to claw back, what they see as, their money.

NETWORK RAIL

One employer that can't wait until April 2016 to begin recouping their NIC rebate is Network Rail. Management recently informed RMT via the Network Rail Pension Forum that it wishes to begin recouping the rebate with immediate effect.

RMT has been informed by management that Network Rail's additional annual payroll costs associated to the ceasing of Contracting-Out will be in the region of £27 million per annum.

NR has, therefore, proposed changing the present cap on pensionable pay increases which is built into the RPS60/65 pension schemes from RPI + 0.5 per cent to a flat rate RPI cap and will come back for any monies not recouped at the end of 2016. This is despite the scheme being fully funded.

However, not content with this proposal Network Rail management have decided to link the present round of pay negotiations and the signing off of the 2013 RPS valuation as part of any final agreement.

RMT representatives on the Network Rail Pension Forum have made it clear to management that contracting-out, pay negotiations and the valuation results of the RPS60/65 sections are three separate issues and should therefore be dealt with separately.

Despite RMT opposition and our sister unions, management have begun consulting with members on their proposal.

However, while management is clearly keen to force through their proposal they are unable to do so while they have no agreement in respect of the valuation with the recognised trade unions.

Undeterred, management again have again tried to coerce the trade union side into supporting their proposal. Again RMT informed management that there will be no agreement unless all three issues are connected.

While RMT waits for Network Rail's next step other employers are also showing a keen interest in recouping their NIC rebate. Notably those train operating companies.

TRAIN OPERATING COMPANIES (TOCS)

RMT representatives on the RPS Informal Pension Working Group have reported to us that

TOC employers are already testing the water to see if they can reach some form of generic agreement which could be used across TOCs to recoup their 3.4 per cent NIC rebate.

These discussions have been taking place through the Informal Pensions Working Group which is made up of TOC employers and rail unions.

The additional payroll costs resulting from the ending of contracting out will be in the region of £49 million per annum. Therefore management has tabled a number of possible options which could be used to mitigate this additional cost. These proposals include changing accrual rates, aligning the normal retirement age of the RPS with the state pension age (60 to 68) and changing early retirement reduction factors.

What is particularly disturbing about this approach from management is that like Network Rail section many of the TOC pension schemes are also well funded.

While the TOCs would like some form of agreement by 2016, neither RMT nor our sister unions are in a position to agree to any of the proposals already made.

The increase in NICs is taxation by stealth. While the government claims that individuals of contracted-out pension schemes will be compensated by a larger state pension it is these very members who will be funding this policy at the expense of increased NICs and reduced future occupational benefits. What the government is clearly doing is 'robbing Peter to pay for Paul' at the expense of workers' pensions.

Rail unions recently met to discuss a joint strategy to protect our members' future pension rights. While RMT is more than aware that employers may use the Trustee Consent Override route to force through their proposals, the union is also conscious that members need protecting from this piece of nasty government legislation which threatens the value of workers' occupational pensions.

President's column



CONFERENCE SEASON

I recently attended three conferences and it felt a bit like a farewell tour. I suppose that's because it is.

The first one in Llandudno was my own grade, the signallers' conference. As usual, it was a very lively affair. There was a lot of debate about the future of the grade, PTR&R etc, especially with the grade about to be decimated in the next few years.

But the subject which dominated was the four-year pay deal which has been offered by Network Rail. This has created a lot of debate at all levels and not just with signallers but also infrastructure activists.

At recent meetings with reps at Unity House, the strategy was debated and they came out in favour of some sort of industrial action. At the signallers' conference there was overwhelming support for industrial action. In my opinion that should be strike action. Action short of strike is difficult to police, but also, in my opinion, immoral. When there are people out of work, nobody should work overtime. In fact, overtime is the workers' number one enemy.

We should be fighting for better basic pay for all and filling vacancies so we can give future generations hope. At my first signallers' conference in 1993 we called for strike action and got a massive turnout (well over 80 per cent) with a huge yes vote. It is up to all Network Rail workers to make sure that we have a repeat of this and show that enough is enough.

The second event was the health and safety conference meeting in Doncaster. Again, there was a very large turnout. This conference has grown and grown over the years and is certainly one of the most popular. I never cease to be amazed at the ability and knowledge of our reps. They are at the forefront more than anyone else and they have to be extremely vigilant, especially with the cuts in the industry because of the

relentless pursuit of profit.

I laid a wreath at Tebay again this year and if there was ever a terrible example of what happens when you make cuts Tebay is it. We must always remember our comrades that died there and their families.

My last engagement was the young members' conference in the birthplace of trade unions as well as capitalism, Manchester. This conference has always meant a lot to me. I can still remember attending the first one in Plymouth as and EC representative. I was very pleasantly surprised to see not only a wide divergence of grades, companies and gender represented but the large amount of experience in the room. There were industrial reps, health and safety reps and several branch secretaries.

This proves that our union, contrary to some opinions, is very active in organising with its' young activists. In fact, they are pretty good at organising themselves! In fact, the theme of the two days, was all about organising themselves. National education officer Andy Gilchrist and Dave Marshall from the organising unit have to be congratulated for all the hard work that they put in helping the young members, especially as they are so busy with their 'day jobs'.

It was great to see old (not in age obviously) friends and to see how well that they are coming on including people such as Chris Hodds, Peter Miller, George Waterhouse, Martin Mulligan, and Adrian Rowe. I see a great future for them within this union. There was also a welcome amount of new delegates, and I am sure that they will have a great future too.

Finally, I want to pay a special tribute to the outgoing conference president Rosie Kirk and thank her for all the effort and hard work that she has put in over the last year, thanks junior.

Peter Pinkney

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LEGAL

ACAS THE NEW REGIME



Liam Welch of RMT legal department explains changes to access to employment tribunals

The limitation period for submitting a claim to the Employment Tribunal is three months less one day. The date of limitation runs from the date of the relevant act (for example the date of dismissal or the date of a discriminatory act). Please note, it does not run from the date of the appeal.

Due to the changes in the law from May 6 2014 before your claim form can be accepted by the Employment Tribunal you must have registered your claim with ACAS and completed a process known as Early Conciliation.

The purpose of ACAS Early Conciliation is to see if they can settle your claim without the need of the Tribunal. The Employment Tribunal will not consider your case unless you send them a certificate saying that you have completed the Early Conciliation procedure, which you can get from ACAS after negotiations.

In effect, ACAS will act as the go between the claimant (you) and the respondent (your employer). If an agreement can be achieved, then ACAS will provide an out of court settlement agreement which is binding on both parties. Conciliation can be lodged at any time after the relevant act has taken place (e.g. an act of discrimination or a dismissal), provided it is within the time limit of 3 months less one day.

ACAS has the effect of stopping the limitation clock. Therefore a claim could potentially be submitted three months less

one day from the date of the relevant act. However, we advise that claims are submitted to ACAS three months less two days from the date of the relevant act, if submitting online, at the very latest and preferably earlier.

We recommend that ACAS applications are submitted online via the form on the ACAS website at www.acas.org.uk/earlyconciliation.

ACAS will normally advise that you submit your claim to them after your appeal, which can be sensible advice, however remember that limitation runs from the date of the relevant act and not from the date of appeal.

Therefore if an employer is delaying the appeal procedure for an inappropriate amount of time then you should bear the limitation period in mind and if it will expire soon then you should not wait to submit your application to ACAS. If time limits allow, before making an application to ACAS you should preferably submit an L2 form for legal advice through your regional office and speak to a member of the legal department. The key is not to delay and to get the ball rolling as soon as possible.

ACAS will normally send quick confirmation that the application has been received. If applying via post then more time will be needed to account for postal times. Members can submit cases themselves

online, however the union will assist you with this should you notify them in time. When submitting a claim you should ensure that all details are correct on the form – you should pay particular attention to ensuring:

- The correct name and registered address of your employer.
- The correct dates of employment.

If you wish the union to deal with conciliation on your behalf with ACAS then you should mention this on the submission form. Please note that only a recognised Regional Officer can act as a union conciliator.

No other representative in the union can do this unless express permission is granted by your general secretary Mick Cash. The appointed union representative will liaise with you, take your instructions and inform ACAS, who will in turn inform your employer. They will then negotiate through ACAS for an appropriate offer, if available.

In summary, you must bear in mind that there is a strict time limit of three months less one day to lodge your claim form with an Employment Tribunal, but prior to this you must participate in the ACAS Early Conciliation process. The Union will be able to assist you with conciliation if requested. Registering with ACAS stops the limitation clock running and you can do this online at www.acas.org.uk/earlyconciliation.

DEFENDING CALMAC WORKERS

The Scottish TUC joined unions representing Caledonian MacBrayne workers at the Scottish Parliament last month to call for existing employment and pension rights to be maintained in the next contract for the Clyde and Hebrides network.

The delegation also called for an end to any privatisation of these lifeline services and an end to constant re-tendering of Scottish ferry contracts demanded by EU rules.

MSPs agreed that the re-tendering these lifeline services was disruptive, unpopular and expensive and that the Scottish government should exempt Scottish ferries from European competition law that requires regular re-tendering of maritime public services.

RMT national secretary Steve Todd, regional organiser Gordon Martin and CalMac rep Brian



Reynolds took the lead in outlining to MSPs the implications of removing employment and pension rights protections in the next contract for Clyde and Hebrides ferry services (CHFS), currently provided by public sector operator CalMac.

If these key protections were not included in the next contract the Scottish government would effectively be inviting private operators to undermine terms and conditions, cut pensions and,

crucially, introduce low cost crewing models which could see non-UK seafarers on lower rates of pay replace Scottish seafarers, breaking the link between communities and staff on these lifeline services.

The CalMac unions and the STUC are currently in discussions with the Scottish government over the specifications of the next CHFS contract. But officials are being evasive over whether Cal Mac workers will continue to receive the same protections from mass

redundancy, low cost crewing, inferior pension provisions and an undermining of general terms and conditions of employment, should the next contract be awarded to a private sector company.

The SNP government previously handed the 2012-18 contract for Northern Isles ferry services to Serco. If the unions do not receive basic assurances of these protections for staff on Clyde and Hebrides services, then a serious industrial situation will arise. ■

CALMAC CULINARY AWARD

Caledonian MacBrayne has become the first ferry company to take VisitScotland's 'Taste Our Best' seal of approval to the high seas.

Seven of the company's Mariners restaurants on board the larger ships have been awarded this accolade – particularly

special as CalMac prepares to embrace Scotland's Year of Food and Drink. Two others are in the process of being assessed and, once in service, MV Loch Seaforth will also be appraised by the judges.

The ships which have achieved this impressive award are MVs Isle of Lewis,

Hebrides, Caledonian Isles, Finlaggan, Hebridean Isles, Isle of Arran and Lord of the Isles. These vessels ply routes throughout the Western Isles, Argyll and Arran, serving variously Lewis, Harris, North Uist, South Uist, Skye, Barra, Coll, Tiree, Colonsay, Islay, Campbeltown and Arran. ■





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President: Peter Pinkney

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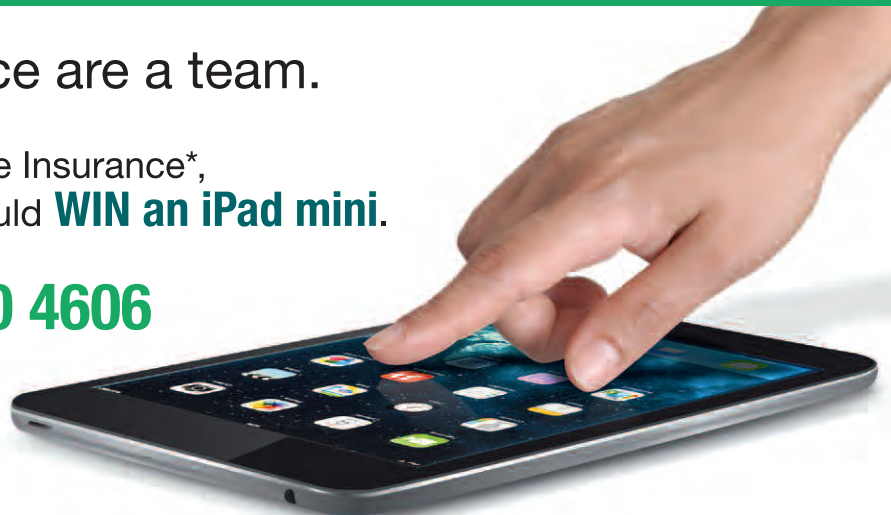
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HOTEL AND CATERING GRADES MEET



The annual national conference of hotel and catering grades met in Birmingham recently to discuss recruitment

Conference president Derek England opened the meeting by urging delegates and members in the grade to go back to their workplaces to recruit and to invite their colleagues to attend in future.

"Sometimes people look down on our grade but we do have respect and influence and so any of your colleagues you come across try and get them to come and let their voice be heard," he said.

Senior assistant general secretary Steve Hedley said that it was "pertinent that today that

we mark the death knell of public ownership of the railways" with the passing of the East Coast franchise to Virgin.

"This had been a franchise that had returned vast sums to the national purse on behalf of the British taxpayer and had not been subsidising cheaper rail fares for German or Dutch commuters.

"Every country seems to be able make money out of the British railways apart from the British," said Steve, before giving an update on the high-profile campaign RMT has been running to maintain buffet-cars on both the East Coast and First Great Western Inter-City services.

The campaign has been successful in gaining assurances that the East Coast route will maintain a buffet service, and may possibly increase trolley staff, however, this has not been the case with First Great Western and the campaign continues.

Steve also spoke about his organising strategy that will be based around establishing points of contact within all workplaces so that the union can have a network of active reps and branches who can recruit at work.

This approach had been a success at St Pancras in recruiting members from the SSP franchises.

He said that the "catering

grades need to recruit catering members, possibly working with the organising unit regionally, but the culture needs to change and everybody has to take responsibility for recruitment".

There was a wide range of motions for conference to debate; including one from Bristol branch concerned with suitable welfare provisions for SSP members.

Richard Brooks, Bristol branch spoke of how often SSP staff (workers in the various station franchise outlets) would have no access to kitchen, or rest, facilities and would, therefore, have to resort to purchasing expensive food from these same outlets.

He said that third-party

contractors are entitled to free meals and urged the union to embark upon a campaign to reinstate free meals for SSP staff.

Steve Conway, Leeds City supported said that Rail Gourmet staff did not have to pay as the Train Operating Companies foot the bill. He said that the lowest paid staff shouldn't have to pay and queried why all staff shouldn't have the same facilities.

Graham Roberts, Plymouth No: 1 called for all catering staff to have Personal Track Safety (PTS) training.

He said that this issue would be further exacerbated should First Group scrap guards as this would result in a 50 per cent drop in the number of safety trained staff and, therefore, it would be vital that catering staff should receive PTS training.

Becs Hartley, Exeter Rail explained how all staff used to be trained but that this is no longer the case.

Derek England queried if receiving this training might not put us in conflict with members of other grades but it was explained that the purpose of the motion was for all on-board staff to receive paid training and not to take on additional responsibilities.

Derek England, Leeds City stood down as conference president to call for all companies with Inter-City Express trains to include a full buffet service car that can also be utilised as a safe place of refuge for members should they feel threatened or vulnerable.

He said that this facility should include pull-down screening, lockable doors, panic buttons and a PA system.

Steve Harvey, Plymouth No: 1 gave his full support and said that "there is not nearly enough facility currently and from a comfort and safety perspective it is totally wrong that there is absolutely nowhere to go; a safe refuge area is a necessity".

Plymouth No: 1 branch also raised demands that First Great Western maintains a buffet car

on all its Inter-City services. It was agreed that the buffet car acts as a safe place of refuge for staff as well being what the passengers want.

A trolley service is insufficient for the number of passengers being carried and also the buffet car does act as an important point of information for passengers. Pat Collins, speaking for the Council of Executives, said that the management didn't understand the basics of how trains work and that the trains aren't big enough for an adequate trolley service to pass through.

Derek England presented a second motion from Leeds City calling for an updated catering grades charter to be produced as a means of introducing people to the issues faced by this grade.

The charter would further serve to promote the benefits of an all-inclusive, all grades union as it could highlight strategies employed across the country by different regions to similar issues.

"We are the railway family; we can bring down governments when we are together but we have a huge difference in terms and conditions.

"We should give news of successes and differences to try and get best terms and conditions across the grades to be utilised as a rallying cry for everyone," he said.

Petrit Mihaj, Finsbury Park called for the charter to also include catering members in the maritime and off-shore industries.

Steve Conway also called on the union to meet with MPs and the British Transport Police over fears that the police were putting intoxicated members of the travelling public onto trains unsupervised.

Conference also heard from Midlands regional officer Ken Usher who delighted delegates by informing them that the two recently dismissed catering grades members, Charlie Letham and Sonia Jones, had both now been reinstated.

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MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS COURSE

Adrian Rowe reports from the second RMT course dedicated to mental health awareness

In the first course since the pilot, 12 RMT members attended the mental health awareness course, held at the national education centre in Doncaster.

This was a five day course and on the first day the fifth day seemed quite far off. Whatever reason people signed up for the course, you can guarantee that each person had experienced some sort of involvement with someone who has suffered with mental health issues and it's not a secret that one in 4 people suffer from some sort of Mental ill health throughout their lives.

For those who have not had or dealt with mental ill health, then this course is perfect for you in order to understand how



to best help our members. Like most of us on the course, we live our lives day to day with people who have mental health issues. I'm not afraid to admit that I have suffered with depression (those people who wondered where I had gone for those couple of years). I was seeking help and now my life has never been better.

Interestingly, if you mention 'mental health' in the workplace mess room, you would almost certainly be met with a "nope, I'm fine! I'm not a nutter! Just got to man up!" When in reality, if you sat down with the person in private and had the

conversation, they would probably open up more.

Out of the course, we decided that we would go back to our workplaces and show our presentations to our members – I dedicated a noticeboard to the issue with help from the Charity – Mind. This gives people the option to just have a cup of tea and talk or a quick text message. I also use the opportunity to highlight that stress is the biggest killer in the workplace and ways to alleviate it.

This course isn't about helping you with your own mental health issues. The course

is about the different types of mental ill-health and giving you an awareness of it. It makes you think of situations that you could be faced with and also gives you the tools you need as an activist and a representative to effectively fight against managers that don't understand mental health. I would encourage every rep to attend this course if you can. It really is eye opening and I think you'll find it inspires you to want to do more, to campaign and help your members get through their own battle of mental ill-health. ■

WOMEN IN OBAN

RMT Learning Project seeks to help female employees at Caledonian MacBrayne Ferries

Using education to improve equality in the workplace is a key objective of the Scottish Government's Development Fund.

Working in the traditionally male-dominated maritime sector, RMT Learning Project Worker Dan Henderson identified a need to help female employees at Caledonian MacBrayne Ferries take up opportunities to progress their careers and improve the gender balance at management level in the company.

Working with CalMac, Dan applied for support from the

Highlands and Islands Learning Fund for a 'Women into Leadership and Management' course for women from across the CalMac network including Arran, Mallaig and Oban.

The course, which took place in Oban, was delivered by learning provider, Social Enterprise Academy. Issues covered in the course included improving confidence to apply for management positions, benefits to employers of having women in management, potential barriers for women and how to overcome them, and understanding the factors that

may be holding women back as individuals.

Dan said: "Working with CalMac through our Learning Steering Group, we analysed the figures for women in management roles both ashore and onboard the ships, and looked for ways to increase the numbers of women coming forward.

"We felt that women would benefit from an introductory course and that this would give those workers a better understanding of management

roles and how and where they could progress to take up the opportunities that are available within the organisation.

"The feedback from the course has been very positive and we would hope that the learners will now go on and take up other leadership and management courses through union learning in the Highlands and Islands, that will support them in their career aspirations and also improve the range of management talent available within CalMac," he said. ■



LETTERS

GO GREEN?

Dear editor,

We seem to be giving the Green Party a lot of space in RMT News to put their views to the RMT membership.

I would be careful about what some of their policies would mean for RMT members.

The Greens would, I fear, will be aiming to bring in a congestion charge for most cities which would cost our members large amounts in congestion charge payments.

I am a guard on Virgin East Coast at Leeds station and I need a car to get to work. I work unsocial hours and if a congestion charge was introduced would we have to pay it or not when I come to work at 05.00 hours? But then have to pay a charge when leaving work at 12.00/13.00? I can't get a bus, I need my car.

So let's be careful who we give support to.

Kind regards

Bob Taylerson

WHO TO VOTE FOR?

Dear Sir,

The last issue of RMT News highlights in its letters column the dilemma that is facing us on the left in politics today.

RMT president Pinkney is quite correct in saying that if we are looking to the Labour Party for salvation then we are going to be disappointed.

The party now has little to do with the aspirations of the working class. It is wedded to the free market, the City of London and all that that implies given the HSBC and other situations of late.

The words such as socialism and renationalisation would make the present Labour Party run to change its collective underwear. Is Peter Pinkney right to look at supporting the Greens? Of course he is if that is the only party advocating the return to public ownership is the Greens. But then if, like me, you think that the EU is a failed experiment that is wrecking democracy across Europe the only party that I can vote for is UKIP.

We do not have a united front that works toward the principles of freedom, democracy and workers' rights. Maybe the time has come for the TUC to build a new party representing its members and ordinary people but here I would ask the question 'where is the TUC, does it still

exist because it is seldom heard anywhere?

How can we support the Labour Party when in May it will advocate more austerity, keep Thatcher's anti trade union laws and seeks to divorce itself from organisations like ours because we embarrass it in the City? For those who have something approaching a tribal kinship with Labour then surely the time has come to re-evaluate our loyalties?

What then to do in May? UKIP and the SNP and the Greens have shown that to appeal to the old working class you have to listen and not lecture them regardless of how untrendy or unpalatable such subjects as immigration and the way the EU is dominated by the European Central Bank.

These issues are avoided by the main parties because they need the cheap labour that immigration supplies. These relatively new parties are making great headway and perhaps we should look at the tactics more closely in May's election with the prime objective of ridding ourselves of the elites that run our parliament now.

Yours sincerely,

Rod Northcott

Retired member

VOTE TUSC

Dear editor,

Brother Craig Johnson paints a stark picture in his letter in last month's RMT News and I would agree with every word of it. However in his final paragraph he writes that we need to 'get rid of this Con Dem government'. Is he suggesting that we should vote Labour?

Should we vote for the party which when last in power took us to war in Iraq, introduced the bedroom tax (for private tenants), introduced university fees and academy schools, privatised significant parts of the NHS and maintained the anti-trade union laws which are the most oppressive in the western world?

The party has actually called the police on its own members in Falkirk during the Ineos dispute last year leading to the Unite union convenor (a loyal Labour party official) at the site being forced out of his job. Labour is passing on savage Tory cuts in every local council it controls resulting in hardship for the most vulnerable and it promises to stick to Osborne's austerity plans for the first two years of a Labour government.

Labour's Rachel Reeves has publicly stated that Labour will be 'tougher than the Tories' on our welfare system. They still refuse to promise to renationalise the railways, something supported by 70 per cent of the public.

The despair of many natural Labour voters is one reason for the rise of ultra-Tory UKIP.

The Greens might talk socialist but Brighton proved that when in power they are prepared to wield the axe. Now in coalition in Bristol they have just approved the next tranche of the city's £83m cuts budget and the Green deputy mayor is attempting to get the council to drop its no-evictions policy for those affected by the bedroom tax! Is Brother Pinkney aware of how un-socialist his comrades can be when they take power?

Labour is no longer a party for working class people and offers no alternative to the Tories or Lib Dems. RMT is a key part of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) which, unlike the Green Party who equates union money with that of big business donors, sees unions as a force for good in society.

TUSC is aiming to stand 100 parliamentary candidates and 1,000 local council candidates in May.

Those who say we need a Labour victory need to accept the reality of the situation we are now in. Whichever Establishment party wins in May working people will pay the price, the only difference is one of timing.

It is time to build a socialist and pro-working class alternative to the mainstream parties of austerity, privatisation and sleaze. The trade unions are in the best place to make that happen and RMT stands head and shoulders above the others.

Yours in solidarity,

Ted Woodley, Birmingham Rail branch

GO RED

Dear editor,

We are all aware that our president brother Pinkney has decided to stand for parliament as a Green Party candidate. At the time of Brother Pinkney's announcement the Council of Executives had not considered the matter.

Previously when national officers have stood in elections it has been the collective decision of our executive or our AGM, specifically TUSC and No2EU.

While it is Brother Pinkney's individual decision to stand as a parliamentary candidate for the Green Party, he has done so while in office as our national president.

This has led to all media coverage announcing him as 'RMT president' misrepresenting the collective view of our membership.

This continues to be the standard despite Brother Pinkney's attempts to clear this misconception up as in his New Statesman interview, which was particularly telling.

He describes himself as a Marxist and then recalls a Syriza speaker who mentioned Karl Marx but was brave to say that was another century, in other words outdated.

Marxism is a scientific discipline, I wonder if he would be as quick to cast aside Darwin as 'of another century'?

His vision is that the Greens can be a British 'Syriza'. The shocking capitulation of Syriza to the troika and the Bundesbank was well predicted by Greek Marxists of the KKE who applied a class analysis to the Greek crisis. A class analysis of the Greens would lead us to a similar conclusion.

In his reply to Steve Metcalfe he unashamedly defends the Greens appalling attack on striking refuse drivers in Brighton and makes no mention of the greens policy of ending trade unions funding political parties.

He also misleads us on green EU policy. They do want a referendum but only want to 'reform' the EU. This is the same fatal mistake that Syriza made.

Brother Pinkney also doesn't believe in immigration controls. Karl Marx founded the First International to prevent employers using scab labour from Europe to undermine British workers. But that was another century.

I wonder who the GMB and Unite members at the Wilton International SITA EfW Plant in his constituency of Redcar would agree with, in this century, as they take strike action over their employer using EU free movement to undermine their collective agreements with cheap labour?

The opportunity is fast coming to unite the labour movement around the project of building a mass party of labour, rooted in the trade unions, federalised, democratic and organised on class lines.

This will not be achieved by making the leap into a liberal party that has opportunistically dressed itself in left clothing but in reality has no connection with the working class, is anti-trade union, pro-EU and pro-capitalist, but by collective action and hard work.

The Interviewer noted Brother Pinkney looks a little bit like Trotsky. Much like the Greens and Syriza look a little bit left wing. A class analysis shows us that looks can be deceiving.

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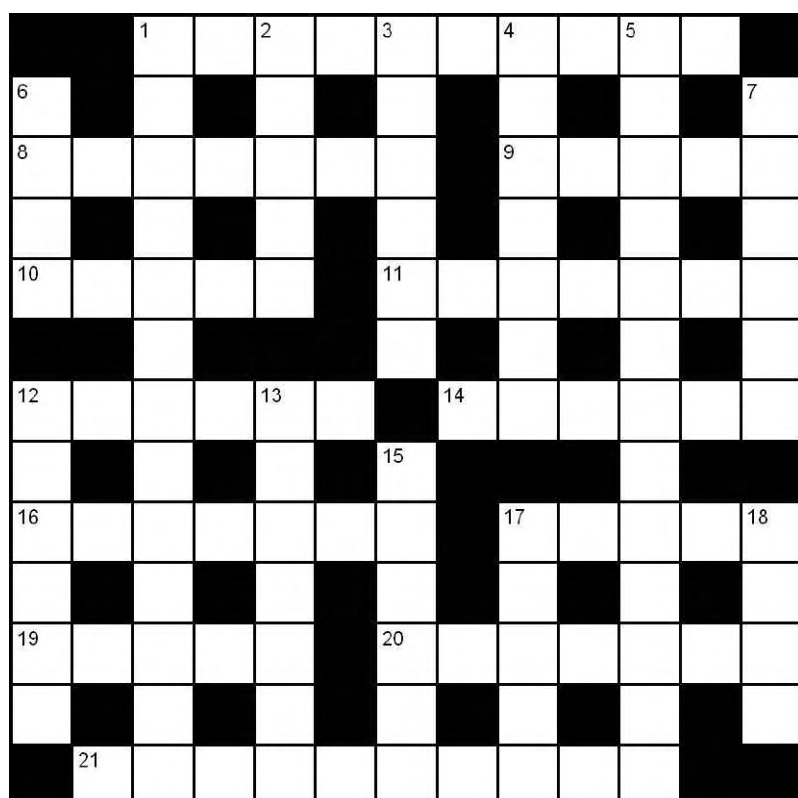
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Winner and solution in next issue.

ACROSS

- 1 Firmly established (4,7)
- 8 Stern (7)
- 9 Exceptionally bad (5)
- 10 Precise (5)
- 11 Arch of facial hair (7)
- 12 Disinherit (6)
- 14 Be present (6)
- 16 Ward (7)
- 17 Sticky (5)
- 19 Enact (5)
- 20 Despotism (7)
- 21 Replicable (10)

DOWN

- 1 Unemotional (13)
- 2 Occurrence (5)
- 3 Long pin (6)
- 4 Metrical unit (7)
- 5 Fizziness (13)
- 6 Stare (4)
- 7 Defective (6)
- 12 Apartment, US (6)
- 13 Struggle (7)
- 15 Group of six (6)
- 17 Pulsate (5)
- 18 Toy (2,2)



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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.

