

RMT *news*

Essential reading for today's transport worker

First  Great Western

STRIKE BALLOT

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NATIONAL UNION OF RAIL, MARITIME & TRANSPORT WORKERS

Unity House, 39 Chalton Street, London NW1 1JD



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Forename(s)*			
Home phone			
Mobile phone		Postcode	
Email address			
Date of Birth*		National Insurance Number*	

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)

A. White	English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British	Irish	Gypsy or Irish Traveller	Any other White background	
B. Mixed/multiple ethnic groups	White and Black Caribbean	White and Black African	White and Asian	Other mixed/multiple ethnic background	
C. Asian/Asian British	Indian	Pakistani	Bangladeshi	Chinese	Other Asian background
D. Black/African/Caribbean/Black British	African	Caribbean	Other Black/African/Caribbean background		
E. Other ethnic group	Arab	Other ethnic group, please specify			

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Sexuality	Heterosexual	Homosexual	Bisexual	Prefer not to say
Do you identify as transgender?	Yes	No	If you wish to be contacted with information about union activities for lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgender members please tick here	

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7 I undertake to abide by the rules now in force or those that are adopted.

Your signature	Date
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To: The Manager	Bank/Building Society
Address	
Postcode	

Name(s) of Account Holder(s)

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Originator's Identification Number

9	7	1	7	4	5
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Date

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CROSSWORD

EDITORIAL



VOTING FOR JUSTICE

RMT is balloting First Great Western members over the threat to jobs and safety from the introduction of the new Hitachi Inter-City trains.

The company has refused point blank to give the same assurances as East Coast over introduction of new fleet on jobs, services and safety

RMT is seeking to keep a safety competent Guard and buffet car facilities on every train and ensure that the maintenance of new rolling stock remains in-house as well as no job losses.

RMT members at Caledonian MacBrayne voted by 92 per cent for strike action on a 60 per cent turnout against attacks on pensions and collective bargaining which are under threat due to the tendering process.

That is a clear mandate to take industrial action and it is now up to management to step back from these blatant attacks on our members and get back around the table.

Following another clear vote for strike action at Network Rail the company realised that their plans for a pay cut for our members were just not acceptable.

RMT reps agreed that the pay offer was a significant improvement and a referendum of members affected is currently underway with a recommendation to accept.

It cannot be understated just how clear the will of RMT members to take industrial action has been to achieving this improved offer.

This proposal will mean members get two years of consolidated pay increases and a two-year no compulsory redundancy guarantee.

Considering at the start Network Rail stated members would have to sell off terms and conditions in order to get a pay rise and refused to guarantee no redundancies, it is clear your support for your negotiating team has forced Network Rail to move their position massively.

RMT is backing bus workers in Kings Lynn employed by Norfolk Green in their fight to win union recognition.

Despite a large majority of the workers joining, around 115 members, Stagecoach bosses have refused to recognise the union.

RMT will support and represent our members whatever grade of transport or energy worker and we are not going away.

The on-going scandal surrounding the Dutch state railways subsidiary, Abellio, which has rail contracts on the Anglia, Northern and the Scotrail franchises, has lifted the lid once more on the corruption endemic in the private sector.

The Chief Executive of Dutch railways has resigned over a new contract to provide trains in Holland, with reports of dawn raids and the Dutch government questioning how the company and some of its senior officials have been operating.

RMT has written to the UK and Scottish governments calling for a full inquiry into this mess and raised concerns over the franchising system.

It is also no surprise to RMT that in the first month of private operation the performance of east coast has declined compared to when it was under public ownership and these figures again demonstrate that privatisation was based on right wing, Thatcherite ideology and an act of industrial vandalism that smashed apart Britain's most successful rail company for just one reason - it was publicly owned.

Finally, the Tories may huff and puff about the role trade unions play in society but we will still be here long after this lot have been kicked out of office and, as far as I am concerned, the sooner the better.

Mick Cash



DOCKLANDS LIGHT RAILWAY CLEANERS STRIKE FOR A FURTHER 48 HOURS

After a vote of over 80 per cent yes vote and 48 hours of rock solid strike action at the end of May, staff working for notorious anti-union facilities company Interserve on Docklands Light Railway struck for a further 48 hours in a dispute over an assault on pay and working conditions.

RMT general secretary Mick Cash said that the union had no option but to move to further strike action.

"The union will not sit back while core issues on pay and working conditions are left unresolved.

"The ballot result delivered a huge democratic mandate that

shows the anger amongst our members and it is about time that Interserve woke up and took note.

"That anger, determination and solidarity is displayed by two lots of rock solid action," he said.

RMT reps have been in talks with Interserve management

regarding a series of issues that remained unresolved including members not receiving pay increases which maintain the differentials between grades, a long-standing claim from when the contract was with Carlisle Cleaning and Security.



RMT DECLARES DISPUTE OVER TUBE NIGHT RUNNING

RMT is in dispute with London Underground over attempts to impose new rosters on staff in the run up to the scheduled date for the introduction of night tube operation on September 12.

The union has argued that the rosters would pin staff into a regime of anti-social hours and appalling working conditions on top of a derisory pay offer from London Underground.

RMT is preparing a ballot for industrial action and has pledged to co-ordinate its campaign with sister unions who have been hit by the same ripping-up of existing agreements and the same derisory pay offer along with attempts to bully staff into agreement at local level.

RMT general secretary Mick Cash said that it was simply outrageous that management, in a mad dash

to bulldoze through the Mayor's night tube vanity project, had smashed apart long-term agreements and resorted to bullying staff into accepting roster changes at a local level.

"The message from RMT is clear – we are not having it.

"These changes would lock our members into a culture of anti-social hours and appalling working conditions that would rip apart work/life

balance whilst at the same time they are being hit with pay proposals that would undermine their standard of living.

"RMT will be co-ordinating this campaign with our sister tube unions as we seek to defend negotiating agreements, decent pay and the rights and working conditions of our members," he said.





TRANSPENNINE EXPRESS STAFF STRIKE FOR JUSTICE

Transpennine Express management sparked strike action by conductor members located at Cleethorpes and Sheffield this month after dismissing a union member following an incident involving a gang of thugs.

RMT members will take strike action every Sunday in June and refuse to work overtime on rest days or Saturdays.

RMT had identified a perfectly valid vacancy that the member could have been redeployed to but management were not prepared to take any

extenuating circumstances into account and the honesty of the individual who now faces the loss of his livelihood.

The despatch incident that led to the dismissal involved a gang of youths, including one known to have an ASBO, attempting to 'surf' a train on departure.

The RMT member spotted this and ceased the despatch process before he had reached the point of giving the train driver the right away signal. He shouted and gesticulated to the youth to move away from the train and

started the despatch process again.

He was able to give the right away signal to the driver as the youth was clear of the train. Then as the driver was about to move off the youth once again clung on to the train for about 15 yards then jumped off.

The member judged that it was safer to allow the youth to jump back off at slow speed rather than pressing the red emergency stop button which would have made an immediate emergency full brake application, possibly throwing

the youth off the train.

The youth then directed foul and abusive language at the member and spat at him.

RMT general secretary Mick Cash said that the victimised member had maintained an unblemished safety and disciplinary record during his ten years of employment.

"This dispute is about recognising the circumstances of a case and ensuring that the duty of care to staff facing abuse and dangerous behaviour on the railways is properly recognised," he said. ■





SOLIDARITY AT NORFOLK GREEN

Members from across the country flock to support bus workers claim to join the union of their choice

RMT members from across the country joined bus workers in Kings Lynn employed Norfolk Green to win union recognition.

Despite a large majority of the workers, around 115 members, at the bus depot joining RMT, Stagecoach bosses have refused to recognise the union or allow them representation at the company which is a green field trade union site.

Activists travelled from as far afield as London, Scotland, Plymouth, Nottingham and Kent to show solidarity which was not lost on the Norfolk Green management who came out of

their offices to see what the commotion was all about.

RMT assistant general secretary Mick Lynch spoke to the rally in Kings Lynn which was supported by the local Trades Union Council, explaining that RMT were here to support and represent our members and we are not going away and the bosses had better get used to it.

"We will continue to fight for the right to association and representation for the workers of Norfolk Green Buses, just as hard as any other part of our union," he said.



FIRST GREAT WESTERN BALLOT OVER JOBS AND SAFETY

FGW refuse to give same assurances as East Coast over introduction of new Hitachi fleet on jobs, services and safety

A ballot for both strike action and action short of a strike of all First Great Western members is currently underway over the threat to jobs and safety from the introduction of the new Hitachi Inter-City trains.

RMT general secretary Mick Cash said that the union had made every effort to secure a series of very basic assurances from FGW over jobs, services and safety as a result of the introduction of the new Hitachi fleet and they had simply been ignored.

The union entered into dispute with First Great Western last month over the introduction

of Super Express Trains on their franchise. RMT made it clear that the union was seeking the following assurances from management to resolve this matter:

- To keep a safety competent Guard on every train
- To keep safety critical station Despatch staff
- To keep buffet car facilities on every train
- To ensure that the maintenance of new rolling stock remains in-house
- No job losses.

These issues have been raised with the company by union

representatives on numerous occasions, however no satisfactory solutions have been proposed by management to resolve this situation.

The ballot will close on June 30 and the union remains available for talks and still hopes that management will see sense and take the necessary steps to resolve this dispute.

"We had no option but to move to a ballot of all staff for action to force the company to take this issue seriously.

"It is frankly ludicrous that East Coast, who are introducing the same trains, have given us the assurances we are seeking

but FGW have ignored us and are crashing ahead with the ripping out of buffet cars and the threat to safety-critical station and train staff purely to maximise the profits from new trains bought for them by the British taxpayer.

"RMT will be mobilising a public campaign to expose this shabby and profiteering treatment of both passengers and staff alike by a company that already has one of the worst reputations in the industry for milking the rotten rail privatisation racket for every penny they can," said Mick Cash. ■

VOTE YES TO IMPROVED NETWORK RAIL PAY OFFER

Union wins improved pay deal following overwhelming mandate for strike action

Following last ditch talks with Network Rail held at ACAS to discuss pay before planned industrial action in June, the company tabled a new improved offer which the union is recommending a Yes vote in a referendum.

The union's executive decided to conduct a referendum recommending the offer after hearing the views of RMT reps of all affected members.

The full details of the proposals are as follows: -

PAY

2015 - A two per cent consolidated increase in basic rates of pay backdated to January 1 2015.

2016 - A consolidated increase

equal to November 2015 RPI with effect from January 1 2016 which the OBR expects to be around 1.6 per cent.

Importantly, as part of the proposed agreement, RMT has retained the link to the Retail Price Index (RPI) as part of the structure of agreements with Network Rail.

REDUNDANCIES

No compulsory redundancies for those members covered by this pay claim until December 31 2016.

Job security

Network Rail and the trades unions will enter into discussion to agree a comprehensive job security package working within the principles of PTR&R, which includes: Voluntary Severance (VS), extending VS to those not affected but who want to go, via "bumping", publication of a national Network Rail vacancy list, re-training, relocation, trial-period opportunities.

Separate to the pay proposals, the latest offer provides for joint participation, under the auspices of ACAS, between Network Rail and RMT

in an Efficiency and Improvement Project to deliver savings.

This will not affect terms and conditions and these discussions would not hold up the pay offer for 2015/16. The union would consider any formal proposals that emerge and the affected members would be fully consulted in the normal way. Any proposals would have to be agreed by your union.

THE ISSUES PROPOSED FOR DISCUSSION ARE AS FOLLOWS: -

- Safe and efficient working practices and processes which identify methods to drive down incidents and accidents.



- Examine opportunities to reduce labour-only, agency, sub-contract supplier and consultancy costs.
- Joint review to create opportunities in our maintenance, operations and controllers teams to enable enhanced efficiency and improvements.
- Develop a forum between Network Rail and RMT, TSSA and Unite as appropriate, to examine options for reducing waste from the business to enable further efficiencies to be made.
- Creating single 'point care' teams.
- Cross boundary working for response teams within Route for incidents and disruption.
- Develop technology for placing of detonators and PLBs thus releasing staff for other work.
- Train and deploy resident signallers to work adjacent mechanical signal boxes on a voluntary basis for an agreed premium.

Final proposals on implementation plans for any agreed changes would be delivered by November 30 2015.

RMT general secretary Mick Cash said that having considered the latest offer RMT reps had agreed that the pay offer was a significant improvement.

"It cannot be understated just how important the massive ballot result and the clear will of RMT members to take industrial action has been to achieving this improved offer.

"This proposal will mean members get two years of consolidated pay increases and a two year no compulsory redundancy guarantee.

"Considering at the start Network Rail stated members would have to sell off terms and conditions in order to get a pay rise and refused to guarantee no redundancies, it is clear your support for your negotiating team has forced Network Rail to move their position massively," he said.

Parliamentary column

RMT parliamentary group member Jeremy Corbyn MP explains his challenge for the labour leadership



We're faced with five years of a Tory government committed to austerity-heavy! Since 2010 the coalition government were committed to reducing the deficit and cutting public expenditure and claimed this would all be achieved within the lifetime of one parliament.

It was not achieved and what we're left with is a deeply unbalanced society, a fall in real wages, and many people on insecure job conditions.

One million people rely on food banks and as a country we spend £11bn on in-work benefits, in other words subsidising low wages.

Since re-election, the Tories are now proposing a £12 billion cut in welfare spending, stringent anti trade union laws, huge cuts in local government expenditure, and even further removing the role of democratic local government in our education system. They are also attacking our fundamental human rights through the introduction of the British Bill of Rights, and systematically undermining the Equalities Act and further damaging the life opportunities of those with disabilities through massive cuts.

Labour lost the election but did increase its vote in England by 1 million but lost in Scotland and overall has

been reduced to 232 MPs.

In the election campaign Ed Miliband made some very good points on zero hours contracts, students' conditions of work, and access to pre-school education. The problem was that the fundamental Labour message being delivered estimated there would still be cuts in public expenditure to remove the deficit within one parliament. Labour lost votes to UKIP who offered nothing more than a council of despair and a fundamentally anti politic message, and also to some extent the Greens, who did oppose austerity.

Following Ed Miliband's resignation as leader, Harriet Harman is standing in but a new election has been called and it's imperative that an alternative to austerity be offered in this leadership debate.

I am a trade unionist, a former official of the National Union of Public Employees (now part of Unison) and in Parliament I support many trade union groups including the RMT. I am fully committed to public ownership of the entire rail network, and significant investment in public transport infrastructure as a way of improving our economy and jobs.



ENGINEERING FOR THE FUTURE

Engineering grades conference dominated by safety at work and Network Rail pay dispute

The 2015 engineering grades conference met in Edinburgh where the fight for safety at work, the Stood Off Agreement and the Network Rail ballot dominated proceedings.

Jimmy Brown, Liverpool No 5, slammed Network Rail for its mishandling of the introduction of the Safe Work Leader post which he argued put members' safety at risk.

He told conference how – at an early stage – all area reps had been invited to London to receive a briefing from Network Rail managers about the new post. After the briefing, the reps expressed serious concerns to management and raised numerous questions.

"We were left dumbfounded

at the inability of management to respond to the questions and concerns that were raised.

"Network Rail's rationale for creating the Safe Work Leaders was to improve safety on infrastructure, but the majority of reps left the brief concerned that this could in fact have the opposite effect and put our members at risk," Jimmy said.

Craig Belowski, Colchester and District, told delegates that he was "extremely concerned at the way that Network Rail has introduced, without agreement, changes to the rule book relating to Safe Work Leaders."

Conference backed a motion expressing concern at the fact that Network Rail has subsequently been sending staff

on Safe Work Leader training courses even though the concerns raised at the original briefing meeting have not been addressed.

Numerous delegates who had been on the course addressed conference, claiming that when they raised questions instructors were either unable to give them a response, or contradictory responses were given by different instructors.

Conference called on the union to contact Network Rail to inform them that members working for the company will be encouraged not to attend further Safe Work Leader training events until the concerns have been addressed.

Alec Hogg, Edinburgh and

Portobello, led a call for the union to defend the Stood off Agreement.

"Do not accept Network Rail's latest attempts to withdraw the agreement as part of their pay proposals," Alec said.

Greg Hewitt, conference president, argued that Network Rail wanted to get rid of the agreement for financial reasons.

"The stood off arrangement costs the company tens of thousands of pounds," he said.

Conference also backed the union establishing legal precedent to enshrine the Stood off Agreement in law.

A motion introduced by Jimmy Brown on free days and the misuse of a clause of the



2010 Principles of Agreement with regard to rostering, which means that workers don't always get at least two days free

from duty, received unanimous backing.

"Within the Liverpool Delivery Unit and I suspect elsewhere across other Delivery Units, this clause is not being applied correctly.

"Staff who are rostered on to work on a Saturday night work into the Sunday morning and then subsequently they can be rostered Monday through to Thursday night, working through to Friday morning. So in effect there is no actual free day from duty at all within that week," Jimmy said.

Greg Hewitt, told delegates that this would be his last year in the post. He reminisced about previous years' gatherings and the fact that no matter how heated the debates have been that differences were always put aside afterwards.

He told delegates "we are all travelling one road and that's the road to socialism".

Guest speaker Dennis Canavan, a former Labour MP and also former independent

member of the Scottish Parliament, expressed his support for RMT's work.

"I am a great admirer of RMT and was a great admirer of the iconic Bob Crow," he said.

RMT president Peter Pinkney argued that the union had to fight the companies over the continued use of zero hours contracts. It was up to the union to take the lead he said.

"I am proud that you are going to take on Network Rail. We need a massive turnout and a massive yes vote to strike action," he said.

Pat Collins, Council of Executives, gave a report on the union's work arising from the 2014 Engineering Grades' Conference motions.

RMT assistant general secretary Mick Lynch, told conference that he will be the new lead officer for Network Rail. Talking about the pay deal, he said:

"We will try and get you a better deal on the table.

"We aren't grandstanding, we

want a better pay deal and better job security".

RMT general secretary Mick Cash told delegates that he was proud to be speaking at the conference of his own grade. He told delegates that in spite of it being a difficult year after the death of Bob Crow the union had come through it stronger than ever.

"People ask what we will be doing in the future. The answer is the same as before, organising and building the union, and we are still growing.

"Organising isn't about only members, it's about collective bargaining, it's about education and we will be renaming our education centre the Bob Crow Education Centre.

"RMT will continue to be a member led rank and file union. That is why we have to get out there and get a good result on the Network Rail ballot." Mick said.

Next year's Engineering Grades' Conference will be held in Brighton. ■

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The prize is an Apple Watch Sport with a 38mm Silver Aluminium Case worth £299. The image of the Apple Watch Sport is for illustration purposes only. Apple Watch Sport is a trademark of Apple Inc., Registered in the US and other countries.

A photograph of an offshore oil rig and several support vessels on the sea at sunset. The sky is filled with orange and yellow clouds, and the sun is low on the horizon, creating a strong silhouette effect on the rig and ships.

SCOTTISH PARLIAMENT DEBATES FATAL ACCIDENT INQUIRIES

RMT calls for better access to justice for victims' families and industrial safety standards in Scotland

RMT gave oral evidence to the Justice Committee of the Scottish Parliament recently as part of ongoing discussions around the Fatal Accidents and Sudden Deaths (Scotland) Bill.

The Bill's policy objective is to reform the law governing the holding of fatal accident inquiries (FAIs) in Scotland, and to implement recommendations made in the 2009 Review of the Fatal Accident Inquiry Legislation led by Lord Cullen.

Among other things, the Bill aims to enact new provisions to modernise the system of FAIs in Scotland, to extend the categories of death in which it is mandatory to hold an FAI, and permit discretionary FAIs into deaths of Scots abroad where the

body is repatriated to Scotland.

RMT called for the Bill to be amended to achieve better outcomes from the FAI process for victims' families access to justice and industrial safety standards, through the following changes:

- **Stronger powers to back up FAI determinations** – At present there are no significant changes in the Bill which would give determinations (issued by the Sheriff at the end of the process) regulatory teeth to prevent industries ignoring or choosing not to act on determinations because the sanction is so light. This must be addressed if FAIs are to become more relevant to the families of victims of fatal incidents at work and

for the industries in question to learn and implement lessons.

- **Start of an FAI** – RMT supports statutory timeframes between a fatality at work and the start of an FAI as the most effective way of reducing the time lag in the overall FAI process. Families of the 16 crew and offshore workers that died in the fatal offshore helicopter incident in April 2009 had to wait nearly five years for the FAI process to report, with no meaningful outcomes in terms of justice for victims' families. A better balance between the needs of accident investigators and victims' families needs to be found in the Bill.

- **Clarity on the input of trade unions into the FAI process** – RMT continues to seek clarity on the role trade unions in a reformed FAI process. Trade unions play a vital role in supporting and advising the families of victims of workplace deaths and in assessing workplace safety standards, both existing ones and those that may be introduced in response to a sheriff's FAI determination. As such, we believe that trade unions need to be named in the Bill as organisations that are entitled or likely to be entitled to submit evidence as part of an FAI.
- **Extension of the Bill to cover deaths caused by industrial illnesses** – RMT believes that this would be an effective means of requiring companies to maintain employer liability insurance records, in order to avoid any repeat of the tragic and unjust situation faced by mesothelioma sufferers who cannot trace liable parties, having been diagnosed with an aggressive, terminal illness caused by the industry the worker was employed in.
- **Status of determinations in re-opened FAIs** – RMT believes support the

proposal to permit re-opening of an FAI in light of new evidence, yet it is unclear whether or not existing determinations will be completely wiped from the record in the event of an FAI being re-opened in light of new evidence and we are concerned that a re-opened FAI would only be able to issue one determination.

- **Jurisdictional issues** – RMT supports the proposals on extending the FAI process to cover deaths abroad but we remain unclear over the status of the FAI process in the context of seafarer deaths in Scottish waters or in international waters off the Scottish coast. The union is especially concerned by the tragic sinking of the Cypriot registered Cemfjord in the Pentland Firth on January 2 2015 with the loss of all eight crew. This bears disturbing similarities to the sinking of another bulk carrier in UK waters, the MV Swanland in the Irish Sea on November 27 2011 which resulted in the deaths of six Russian seafarers. RMT believe that there is a moral duty on the Scottish and UK Governments to ensure that lessons are learnt from the sinking of the Cemfjord, as Flag of

Convenience registers are no guarantee that this will happen.

RMT general secretary Mick Cash welcomed the opportunity to contribute to the Holyrood Justice Committee's scrutiny of a Bill that has implications for all workers in safety critical industries like transport and offshore energy.

"It's imperative for the Scottish government to listen to trade unions' views on the need to strengthen the FAI Bill and, in particular, to make trade unions statutory participants in a reformed FAI process.

"This would ensure that industries learn the lessons they need to learn from fatal workplace accidents and that families of victims are kept informed of the process from a non-governmental source," he said.

RMT national secretary Steve Todd said that much of the Bill as it stands would improve the current, woeful performance of FAIs in dispensing justice for families and improvements to industrial safety standards.

"But it is critical for the Bill to be improved, in strengthening determinations, reducing the length of FAIs and making trade unions statutory participants, for example," he said. ■

NEW PRODUCT

RMTPROTECT: NEW PRODUCT

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protect ✓

Accidents happen, but don't leave the consequences to chance...

According to RoSPA statistics there are around 650,000 emergency hospital admissions due to accidents in one year.*

650,000

hospital admissions
due to accidents in
one year*

From tripping up on the pavement to being involved in a more serious road traffic incident, there's no knowing when, why or where an accident might happen. Now RMTProtect has developed a plan which can help you protect yourself and your loved ones against the financial consequences of accidents.

Our new Accident Protection Cover provides up to **£200,000 in a cash lump sum** to help family members cope if you were to die as a result of an accident. Of course, that's the bleakest scenario. But hospital stays as the result of accidental injury are also covered by the policy, with payouts of **up to £100 for every 24 hours**

spent as an inpatient as the result of an accident† – cash which will help tide you over a difficult time.

With RMTProtect Accident Protection Cover there's guaranteed acceptance for UK residents aged 18-69, plus the option to insure your partner too. You can choose the right payout for your needs starting from £100,000 up to £200,000.

- Up to £200,000 accidental death benefit
- Up to £100 cash for every day you spend in hospital †
- 24/7 worldwide coverage

Illustrative Example:

- ✓ £150,000 accidental death cover
- ✓ Plus £75 daily hospital cash benefit †
- ✓ For just £13.09 a month

An accident can make us feel completely out of control. RMTProtect's Accident Protection Cover helps you and your loved ones stay on track.

To find out more and get a quick quote visit www.rmtprotect.com/accident.

www.RMTProtect.com

*Data for England 2010/11. Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents: www.rospa.com/media-centre/press-office/press-releases/detail/?id=1039
RMT is an Introducer Appointed Representative of RMTProtect, a trading name of Union Income Benefit Holdings Ltd who arrange this insurance. This policy is underwritten by ACE European Group Ltd. Terms and conditions apply. Cover is not provided for death from natural causes. †Maximum 180 days for any one stay.

TM&B LUB (06/15)

SCANDAL ROCKS DUTCH RAIL OUTFIT ABELLIO

RMT demands public inquiry by UK and Scottish governments into Abellio

RMT has written to the UK and Scottish governments calling for a full inquiry into the involvement of the Dutch state railways subsidiary, Abellio, in rail contracts on the Anglia and Northern rail franchises and the Scottish government's Scotrail franchise.

The call comes after the Chief Executive of Dutch railways resigned in a scandal relating to a new contract to provide trains in Holland, with reports of dawn raids on Dutch railways and the Dutch government questioning how the company and some of its senior officials have been operating.

The scandal has also seen the removal of and an investigation into the chief executive of Abellio who are bidding to take

over the Northern Rail and Anglia franchises and who last year were awarded the lucrative Scotrail franchise by the Scottish government.

RMT general secretary Mick Cash said that if the Dutch Finance Minister believes the whole culture in Dutch state railways /Abellio was wrong and needs to change then there needs to be a full inquiry and for it to be clearly shown that there was nothing irregular with the award of the Scotrail franchise to Abellio or in respect of Abellio bidding for the Northern and Anglia franchises.

The union has written to Transport secretary Patrick McLoughlin pointing out that the company, which ultimately owned by the State owned

Dutch Railways, was involved in a scandal relating to a new contract to provide trains in the southern Dutch province of Limburg and that chief Timo Huges had been forced to resign as a result.

"It is reported dawn raids were carried out as part of the investigation into possible abuse of dominance and into possible other violations of the Dutch Railway Act by NS and its subsidiaries in the European tender process for the above contract," the letter said.

Dutch Finance minister Jeroen Dijsselbloem is also demanding an explanation as to why that tender went so badly wrong.

The fact that it is reported that Timo Huges had given an

'incorrect and incomplete' statement about his involvement in passing on confidential information to a NS subsidiary during the process could cast doubt over this company's whole approach. With the press reporting that an investigation on similar grounds into Jeff Hoogesteger, the CEO of GB based Abellio Transport Holdings Ltd has seen him also removed from office without any compensation.

"For a Dutch Minister to be quoted in the press as saying "confidence in Huges on my side disappeared" and "the role of the NS requires a high degree of integrity, but it in recent years do not exist" must surely warrant a full and proper investigation," the letter said. ■



REMOVED: Sacked Jeff Hoogesteger CEO of Dutch rail operator Abellio and Scottish transport minister Keith Brown as the franchise to run Scotland's trains for the next decade was awarded to Abellio

STRIKE MANDATE AT CAL MAC



Members at Caledonian MacBrayne back action on jobs, pay and pensions

RMT members working at Caledonian MacBrayne have voted overwhelmingly for strike action against attacks on pensions and collective bargaining which are under threat due to the tendering process.

Members voted 92 per cent for strike action and 98 per cent for action short of a strike on a 60 per cent turnout.

An earlier dispute was cancelled three years ago when Transport Scotland announced that the tendering process would be deferred until 2015/16.

RMT went in dispute with CalMac again after the company has failed to provide the union with the assurances required following recent discussions and in relation to the forthcoming tendering process.

RMT is determined that jobs, pay, conditions of service and pensions should not be attacked

and the union is seeking simple assurances to protect the workforce as follows:-

Job Security – There must be no compulsory redundancies and no changes to staffing levels

Conditions of Service – There will be no changes to conditions of service without agreement being reached with the union

Pensions – a guarantee that all members will remain in the current pension scheme and that no changes will be made to the scheme without agreement being reached

RMT has also stated that regardless of who wins any future tender, all members should remain employed by Caledonian MacBrayne as this is by far the best way to protect career options, pension entitlement and working practices.

PENSIONS

Cal Mac management proposes to make the following changes to the pension fund including increasing member contributions from six per cent to 9.5 per cent - this will result in members take home pay being drastically reduced

Cal Mac also wants to align the Normal Pension Age of the fund with the increases to the State Pension Age – this will result in members potentially having to work an extra one, two and eventually three years.

It also wants to change the fund from a Final Salary scheme to Career Average Revalued Earnings (CARE) scheme – this will result in members' pensions being considerably reduced at retirement.

Finally the company wants pensions in payment to be increased in line with CPI to a

maximum of 2.5 per cent, not RPI - this will result in members' pensions not keeping up with inflation and being worth less.

RMT general secretary said that the proposals were nothing more than an attack on members deferred wages.

"Not only do management want to reduce members' potential retirement benefits, make them work longer, reduce the value of their pension at retirement, they also want them to pay more for the pleasure.

"In light of this attack and also concerns that job security and terms and conditions are under threat, members have now made their feelings clear and back industrial action.

"It is now up to Caledonian MacBrayne management to step back from these blatant attacks on our members and get back around the table," he said. ■



FIGHTING TORY ATTACKS ON TRADE UNION RIGHTS

IER director Carolyn Jones outlines how the Tories are attacking basic workers' rights and the need to unite and fight back

In the run up to the last general election, the Institute of Employment Rights (IER) issued a ten point Charter of employment law reforms essential to secure social justice, democracy in the workplace, a reduction in inequality and a growing economy (see box). Shame such a programme wasn't adopted by the political parties – the result might have been so different.

As it is The Trade Union Bill announced in the Queen's speech held few surprises. We knew it was coming. The Tories and their big business friends don't like 'third party interference' in the labour market.

To them unions are a hindrance – and a popular one at that! So the Conservatives hope that by tying unions up in ever more restrictive laws,

unions will fail to deliver their promises to provide a voice in the workplace and to protect workers' rights.

SO WHAT'S THE TORY PLAN OF ATTACK?

First they came for the strikers.

As John Hendy QC has quite rightly said, collective bargaining without the right to strike is collective begging. Not surprising then that the first target of the Tories is to further restrict our right to take strike action.

By demanding a 50 per cent turnout threshold in a ballot and an additional 40 per cent yes vote requirement in "core public services" (health, education, transport and fire services), the Tories hope to make it impossible for unions to organise lawful strikes. Add to that the new time limitations on

ballot mandates and the Bill is an open invitation to employers and courts to interfere and delay legitimate industrial disputes.

To make it worst, even during official industrial action, new laws will allow bosses to bus in agency workers to cover the jobs of strikers, abandoning a law that's been in place since 1973. Any attempt to picket the workplace to prevent the use of scab labour will be subject to new criminal sanctions, backed up by new and intrusive surveillance legislation.

THEN THEY CAME FOR THE TRADE UNION REPS

It is a fact that workers in unionised workplaces enjoy better terms and conditions. Why? Because trained trade union reps are active in the workplace negotiating,

representing and promoting the wellbeing of the workforce.

That role is ever more important as inequality in power and wealth increases. According to a recent Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) report, "we have reached a tipping point as inequality in OECD countries is at its highest since records began".

Trade unions help to rebalance power relations in the workplace – a fact commonly recognised by 70 per cent of respondents in MORI polls who say unions are "essential to protect workers' interests".

To undermine that fundamental role of trade unions, the last government put a cap on the proportion of the civil service pay bill that could be spent on trade union facility time, restricted the number of

union reps given full time release and banned paid time off for trade union activities. Now the government propose to extend those restrictions across local government and into the private sector.

Then they came for trade union finances

Plans are also in place to change how unions collect their membership fees – both through individual payments and through check-off arrangements. Believing that money is power, the Tories are determined to try and undermine trade union finances to make it difficult for unions to operate effectively.

THEN THEY REMOVED OUR RIGHTS

Undermining the role of unions at work is fuelled by Tory determination to deregulate the workplace. They want a labour market free from what they call “red tape” and what we call rights at work. They want to use the UK labour market as an example of what could be achieved throughout Europe if governments were determined enough to resist unions, remove employment rights and restrict

the rights of workers to withdraw their labour.

THEN THEY REMOVED OUR BENEFITS

The back drop to this Bullingdon Boy Bill, is a set of additional proposals aimed at slashing benefits and creating a reserve army of workers forced to beg for any type of “apprenticeship” or free work on offer – including as scab agency workers.

NOW WE MUST STAND TOGETHER

This is a divide and rule Bill. The Tory aspirations are clear. They want cheap workers, unable to withdraw their labour, unprotected by either trade unions or employment rights and threatened with destitution if they refuse to accept low-standard work. The Tories believe that money is power. We know that power lies in numbers and that by standing together and supporting each other we stand a better chance of winning. Our aspirations have to be to educate, agitate and organise. We are the many – they are the few.



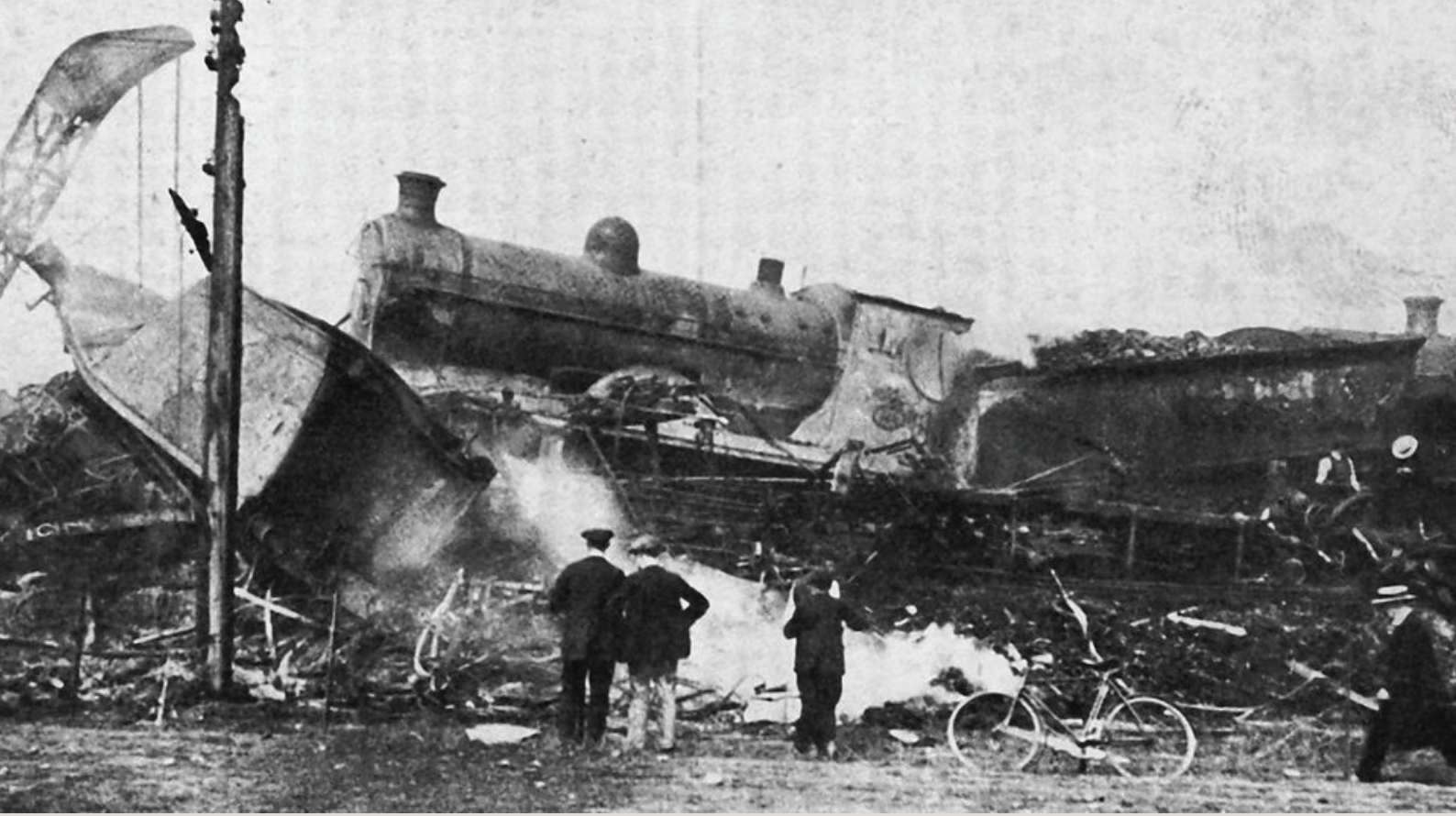
THE INSTITUTE OF EMPLOYMENT RIGHTS

The Institute of Employment Rights issued a ten point Charter of employment law reforms which we believe are essential to secure social justice, democracy in the workplace, a reduction in inequality and a growing economy. Shame such a programme wasn't adopted by the political parties – the result might have been so different.

Labour Law: What we want

1. **The right to a decent wage and to a decent income for those not in employment**
2. **The effective regulation of zero hours contracts**
3. **The right of every worker to be protected by a collective agreement**
4. **The re-establishment of sectoral collective bargaining and Wages Councils**
5. **The re-establishment of a Ministry of Labour**
6. **The right to strike in accordance with international law**
7. **The removal of a qualifying period for unfair dismissal**
8. **The restoration of the redundancy consultation rights**
9. **The right to legal protection for everyone who works, regardless of their legal status ('employee', 'self-employed', 'agency worker' etc)**
10. **The right of all workers to access to justice, including the abolition of tribunal fees.**

Professor Keith Ewing & John Hendy QC



THE QUINTINSHILL RAIL DISASTER *one hundred years on*

New research reveals
that two signalmen
were scapegoated for
Britain's worst rail
disaster

Nearly 250 people died one hundred years ago when three trains crashed at Quintinshill in Dumfries and Galloway on 22 May 1915 during the First World War in what became known as the railway's Titanic.

Two signalmen were sent to prison as part of a cover up which hid the true causes of the crash, the drive for profit, corner cutting and the war drive itself.

One of the trains was a troop transport carrying hundreds of Scottish soldiers who were bound for Gallipoli.

At 06:50 the troop train crashed into a passenger service which was stationary on the main line near the border between Scotland and England.

Just over a minute later, an express train travelling north crashed into the wreckage of the first crash.

Gas from the antiquated lighting system of the troop train's old wooden carriages caught fire and it took 23 hours to extinguish.

More than 200 soldiers were killed, as well as 12 civilians, although some remains were never identified and the exact death toll is uncertain, 246 were also injured.

The two signalmen controlling the line, George Meakin; who had worked the night shift, and James Tinsley; who was to work the early day shift, were both sent to prison.

However it has since become clear that the two men were simply scapegoats used by the Caledonian Railway Company and the government in order to cover up a catalogue of other causes which led directly to the disaster.

A recent programme to commemorate the disaster, *Britain's Deadliest Rail Disaster: Quintinshill* presented by Neil Oliver, has revealed that any enquiry today would not have convicted the two rail workers as startling new evidence reveals that the failures which led to the disaster were far more complex and wide-reaching than signalling negligence.

On the morning of the disaster the night expresses were both running late so the local train had to be shunted at Quintinshill.

However both the loops were occupied with empty goods trains.

Meakin decided to shunt the local passenger train onto the Up main line. Although not a preferred method of operation, this was not a dangerous thing to do if the proper precautions were taken. But on this occasion neither of the important safety precautions were taken.

Firstly, the preceeding box in

the Up direction at Kirkpatrick signal box was not sent the "blocking back" signal which would have informed the Kirkpatrick signalman that the line was occupied and warned him not to send any more trains towards Quintinshill.

Secondly, the signalman at Quintinshill should have placed a signal lever collar over the relevant signal lever to stop himself from clearing the signal and allowing another train to proceed from Kirkpatrick.

The fireman of the local train, George Hutchinson, also failed to remind the signalman that his train was standing on the Up main line.

However it was later uncovered that these safety rules were routinely flouted as a matter of course and the company turned a blind eye to such practices in order to keep the trains running. Moreover new evidence reveals that the relieving signalman was epileptic and had had a seizure just that morning.

The trial of the three men started in September 1915 on charges of manslaughter, defended by Condie Sandeman KC. Yet all the witnesses called were directly employed by the Caledonian Railway Company.

The company and the government, which had taken control of the railways during wartime, were clearly very keen to pile the blame on the local workforce rather than other forces at work.

The jury found Hutchinson not guilty as directed, but found the signalmen guilty as charged and Tinsley was sentenced to three years penal servitude and Meakin to eighteen months imprisonment.

Further evidence of a conspiracy is the fact that both men had clearly been told that they would be 'looked after' as both were re-employed by the rail company on their release.

However both men did not serve their entire sentences as National Union of Railwaymen MP J H Thomas, soon to become NUR general secretary, threatened industrial action unless the men were released.

This campaign succeeded and Meakin and Tinsley were released from prison on December 15 1916. After release, Tinsley went straight back to working on the Caledonian railway as a lampman.

Meakin also returned to the railway, as a goods train guard. Some years later he was made redundant from that job and set

himself up as a coal merchant, trading from Quintinshill siding, right next to the scene of the crash.

Compelling new evidence shows that the two signalmen had taken the wrap for the disaster to cover up the fact that too many trains were being allowed on the track in order to keep regular services running and to transport troops and goods.

This was putting pressure on rail workers with no extra planning put in place to deal with the increase in traffic caused by the war.

The pair were not the first signalmen to be convicted due to an accident, nor the last. James Holmes was tried for manslaughter following the Thirsk rail crash of 1892, but was given an absolute discharge. Signalman Frost was jailed for two years for his part in the Connington South rail crash in 1967.

The Hawes Junction rail crash of 1910 also involved a busy signalman forgetting about a train on the main railway line. Likewise, at the Winwick rail crash of 1934, an overworked signalman forgot about a train in his section, and was misled by a junior. ■





LGBT CONFERENCE DISCUSSES CAMPAIGNING FOLLOWING THE ELECTION OF A TORY GOVERNMENT

The Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender advisory conference called for renewed campaigning against UKIP, promoting rights for LGBT people and showing solidarity with Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners pride initiative later this year.

Opening conference, RMT general secretary Mick Cash was candid about the reasons why UKIP polled nearly 4m votes in the general election.

He said: "Members of ours will have voted UKIP.

"We have our work cut out politically and industrially and should start to deal with the

issues being raised not just demonise political parties.

"We need to have a debate with what policies can promote and support working people.

"Sooner or later we have to get our act together - we need to get proper bums on seats in the palace of Westminster.

"We should promote socialist policies and working class unity and we will only continue to support politicians who support our policies.

"There will be more time and effort spent on campaigning, such as supporting the pride events this year and I commit myself to march with you on

the day.

"It is important we celebrate land marks - we have achieved a lot but got a lot more to do on equalities," he said.

Conference heard several key note speakers including Mike Jackson - a leading activist from the Lesbian and Gays Support the Miners.

Mr Jackson, who was active in the solidarity group which recently received international recognition for its outstanding fundraising around the miner's strike of 1984 through the film "Pride", spoke passionately about his involvement in the movement.

He recalled how he first got into the organisation when he was approached by Young Communist League general secretary Mark Ashton.

"After Thatcher attacked the miners and took away their funds, my mate Mark said to me - do you fancy collecting for the miners?

"At that time there was no legislation to protect gay people - employer was free to sack you at will.

"Mark was politically savvy so we decided to collect money for the miners outside gay pubs book shops and Camden town tube station.

"We met weekly and the group steadily grew.

"Our motivation was that this was about unconditionally supporting the miners as the attack from Tory government was an attack on trade unions in general," he said.

He heaped praise on the National Union of Mineworkers who created policy to recognise gay rights after the strike was over.

"All the equalities legislation



RMT members join first Birmingham Pride march

we have today you can trace back to the miners' strike and the support of the NUM," he told an enthralled conference.

Looking ahead to the Pride march in London and union struggles in the coming years, Mr Jackson added: "LGSM will lead the Pride march and the Welsh area miners we supported will join us.

"We put out the call to the entire trade union movement regardless of sexuality to join us on pride to bring some politics back to the event.

"We have to organise educate and agitate our members –

"If you exclude black and ethnic minority, women and LGBT activists you undermine your own union," he said.

Several RMT members shared their links with the miner's strike.

RMT delegate Jo Parry said that one of the reasons the strike was important to her was that her auntie who comes from mining village.

She said that although LGSM activists were welcomed by the Welsh miners, prejudice was still a problem.

Mr Jackson added: "We have a long way to go, our real experience during the strike was very good but there is still prejudice.

"We will always be a minority and will never have emancipation on our own and we must have allies in the straight community.

"How people treat LGBT people is a litmus test for how they treat other civil liberties," he said.

Other motions that were hotly debated included calling on British government to pardon people criminalised for just being gay.

Delegate Colin Masters said: "So many people have been convicted for just having gay relationships – the association at the time was homosexual people were like paedophiles.

"These convictions are still on record.

"Only a blanket pardon is the right thing to do," he said.

President's column



UNION RULES

This year is my last annual general meeting as president but also as a delegate.

I am barred next year from standing, as are all Council of Executives who finish this year, but I have decided that it is time for younger people to be given their chance.

The AGM is the supreme governing body and we should be very proud of that. I think we are unique, within the trade union movement, in that our rank and file run the union.

Anyone can put forward rule changes, and steer the future of the union. The leadership do not decide the direction we go in, it is not compiled by experts or academics. This is done by you, although of course, they do have opinions.

This year is a rule change year. People should remember that the rule book was, and is, written by the rank and file. Every rule is there for a reason. Our forebears had to look at every possible situation, and every difficulty that we might encounter, and try to have solutions in place for everything that might be thrown at us.

This year is special in that we will be having an overhaul of the rule book. This has come about because of a resolution passed several years ago at AGM. The reason it has taken this long is that we had merger talks with TSSA and everything had to be put on hold until these talks were completed. Because of the subsequent failure of those merger talks, we didn't get round to discussing rule book and restructuring changes until 2013, my first year as president.

I remember a lot of different academics coming in to offer their services but, unlike the last one which was done by Warwick University, we decided to do it ourselves. There were a few reasons for this:- cost, some academics wanted to be 'bedded in' with branches, workplaces etc meaning a long time to make decisions.

Therefore we finally decided that our members were the best people to ask as they know what they want and are best placed to decide what is best for the union. To achieve this the CofE has conducted an extensive consultation with branches, regional councils and the membership resulting with a comprehensive document of the relevant rule changes that will be put to the delegates at this year's AGM.

They will have the final say in this. We would not have been able to do this without the hard work that was done by head office staff, the general secretaries and, of course, the Council of Executives.

Whatever happens at AGM, I am sure everything will run smoothly. The amount of work put in is phenomenal. The logistics of running the AGM is mind boggling to me. My job is quite straight forward compared to the background work that is done.

All the paperwork for the delegates, organising the overseas guests, hotel bookings, and social events all have to be sorted beforehand.

I have enjoyed the AGMs over the years, both as a delegate and as president. The roles are very different and challenging in different ways. The position of president has a very real and close relationship with the AGM. It is to the AGM that the President can be called into account. That is how it started, the AGM delegates elected a president to go to head office to make sure, on their behalf, that their decisions were carried out. Although the position is now elected by the whole membership, the role is still the same.

I will miss attending but, as I always say, it is not about individuals but about the movement.

Peter Pinkney ■

Gordon Norris speaking at the 2006 RMT AGM



LAST OF THE 'POLITICALLY MOTIVATED MEN'

Gordon Norris, last of the 'politically motivated men' named by the Labour Prime Minister Harold Wilson during the 1966 seamen's strike, passes away

Gordon Norris, a pivotal figure in the 1966 seaman's strike and the struggle to democratise the National Union of Seamen has died.

Gordon was a thorn in the side of the right wing leadership of the union for many years and a champion of seafarer's rights.

He had first gone to sea when he resided in Australia in the late 1940s and 1950s where he became involved in the Australian seamen's union.

When he returned to the UK he had intended to stay for only one year but he got involved in the fight for improved pay and conditions for British seamen as he explains:

"I had joined the Communist Party in Australia, after a childhood born in poverty in the 1920s with hunger, deprivation and a limited education, I was barely able to read and write, but had served in the Royal Navy from 1939-1945.

"However my association with the trade union movement and the Communist Party had equipped me with the political understanding, along with my previous experiences, to understand the missing link in the seaman's struggle.

"I became a British merchant

seaman and studied and mastered the rules of the NUS and the very complicated conditions and agreements of seamen's employment.

"I then joined the Communist Party of Great Britain and found allies from amongst those who had taken part in the reform movement's unofficial strikes and who too had joined the Communist Party," he wrote in a memoir.

The general secretary at the time of the unofficial strikes in 1960 was Sir Tom Yates. His attitude, and indeed that of his successor Jim Scott, was to attack left wing activists such as Gordon and other Communist Party members such as Jack Coward.

At the time there was no shipboard representation and the position of activists seeking change was very difficult.

They faced opposition from the shipowners and a leadership of the NUS which sought to crush dissent.

If they raised issues in shipboard meetings they could be blacklisted from the industry.

This was the fate of many activists following the unofficial disputes in 1960. It is also evident that individuals within the NUS headquarters monitored the activities of the left, even in collusion with the secret services.

The imposition of the 56-hour week served as the catalyst which started the 1966 strike. After four weeks of action there were facing difficulties discharging cargo due to all the ships tied up side by side in key ports.

"My resistance to the 56-hour week led to charges by the general secretary, and I was expelled at the 1965 Annual Conference in Dunoon, Scotland.

"I appealed successfully and the campaign began to succeed and, in May 1966, I was elected to the National Maritime Board Negotiating Committee.

"The policy of the 56 hour week was replaced by one of a 44-hour week with an increase in seaman's wages.

"When the ship owners

rejected the claim, the annual conference in Worthing voted for strike action.

"So began the first national official seamen's strike in this country. When all ships' crews walked off on June 28, 518 short voyage and 372 deep water vessels were tied up," wrote Gordon.

On the same day PM Harold Wilson made his famous speech about 'politically-motivated men'. He stated that in his view a few individuals had sought to bring pressure on a select few on the NUS executive who he believed dominated the majority and together with their organisation in port strike committees kept the dispute going.

Eight days later he went on to name individuals:

"I have referred to the numerical weakness of the communists in the NUS. Yet, despite this, as soon as the strike began, they were successful in ensuring that the chairmanships of the strike committees in the country's two major ports, London and Liverpool, were taken by two communists, Mr Jack Coward and Mr Roger Woods.

"Again, in the unions negotiating machinery, a leading member of the negotiating committee, not himself a member of the executive council, who was elected from the floor at the annual general conference, was also a highly articulate and effective communist, Mr Gordon Norris".

A handful of Communist party members and sympathisers were prominent during the strike but it could hardly be said that they kept the dispute going when the determination of the membership was so evident up and down the country.

However, the press made the most of Wilson's remarks to pile pressure on the union to call off the strike and this was one of the main reasons why Wilson made this unprecedented intervention.

At the 2006 RMT's Annual General Meeting in Dublin, Gordon gave delegates an

interesting insight into the strike and the use of the state against the seamen during the dispute.

He referred to the involvement of the secret services and it is evident from parts of the speech by Wilson that the government had extensive knowledge of Gordon and other key activists that could only have come from government surveillance.

With the state also playing such a prominent role in the 1984/85 miners strike, this will not come as a surprise.

"Although the 1966 seamen's strike did not achieve all the objectives it most certainly was not buried.

"An exposure of seamen's' poor wages and was achieved.

"The Pearson Report was carried out and many changes followed including the appointment of ship board shop stewards and shipboard

conditions were improved," Gordon wrote.

Democratic changes were made to the NUS rule book including the abolition of voting procedures, which allowed multiple votes for long-standing members, in favour of one member one vote.

During the six weeks' strike 890 ships were strike-bound in British ports. Not one ship broke the strike. Seamen could be proud of their part in the struggle against the ship owners and the state while support from the wider trade union movement and the working class generally was very strong.

After the dispute ended Gordon served on the NUS executive before taking up employment on-shore and he remained loyal to the trade union and labour movement throughout his life.



Speaking at NUS conference 1966

RMT STANDS UP FOR ITS MEMBERS

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

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

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

FOR THE BEST LEGAL ASSISTANCE FOR RMT MEMBERS CALL FREE ON 0845 712 5495 (0800 328 1014 in Scotland). Lines open 8.00am-8.00pm Mon-Fri (except public holidays) and 9.00am-5.00pm Sat and Sun. For the 24 hour criminal law line call 0765 911 8181 (0800 328 1014 in Scotland)



PROTECTING AND PROMOTING OUR MEMBERS' INTERESTS





RMT AT STUC

RMT joined over 300 delegates representing 38 trade unions and 20 trade union councils at the Scottish TUC Congress at the Ayr race course recently.

The RMT delegation discussed all 114 motions, amendments and agreed composites and regional organiser and delegation leader Jake Molloy reported from the STUC's General Council.

The delegation consulted the instructions from the Council of

Executives and discussed the motions in an open and transparent way and decisions were taken accordingly.

RMT delegate Andrew Elliott of North Clyde branch took part in the debate on Progressive Workplace Policies and George Lonie of Glasgow Shipping branch seconded a motion on

Scottish Ferries. Graham Wallace from the CofE and Mike Bainbridge of the Offshore energy branch also took part in debates.

RMT general secretary Mick Cash moved a composite motion on ScotRail and public ownership supported by regional organiser Mick Hogg.

RMT president Peter Pinkney seconded a composite 'motion on relations between Cuba and the US and an emergency motion on Longannet Power Station was supported by Davie O'Donnell of Fife and District branch.

All RMT delegates were active in supporting the various

fringe meetings, especially the on the People's Assembly against Austerity, attacks on our Trade Union Rights chaired by our RMT political advisor Phil McGarry and the Campaign against Euro-Federalism addressed by Mick Cash.

Various policy documents were approved by Congress, such as on the case for a Scottish Defence Diversification Agency to the political attack on Workplace Representation and opposition to TTIP. ■

AUTHORITARIAN SNP

Dear editor,

In the May issue of RMT News Jeff Kirk seems to have a misunderstanding of the term democratically elected majority. In the UK general election the Conservative Party won the most seats, an overall majority, one seat in Scotland and 311 in the rest of the Union.

They then form a government, that's how it works.

However my main point is on Jeff's understanding of the term 'regime' as supplied by the Oxford English Dictionary in his response to comments made by the general secretary in describing the SNP, and its final point 'authority at the expense of personal freedom'.

So let's have it right, the SNP are world beaters in authoritarianism. There is barely an area of public or private life in Scotland in which members of the Scottish Parliament have not had a significant impact. Informed more by campaign groups and professional bodies than the electorate, the Scottish government has shown itself to be a world beater in some of the pettiest authoritarianism around. In March 2006, over a year before the

smoking ban was implemented in the rest of the UK, smokers in Scotland were turned out of public places. The SNP also argued for a total ban on cigarette vending machines.

Another SNP move was to the Alcohol Bill passed in 2010. Its sole objective was to ensure Scots were priced out of excessive drinking, including a ban on discounts, happy hour and ID if you look under 25 and the real goal was a minimum price for alcohol.

The SNP now has its Sectarism Bill to try and ban football fans from shouting crude chants at football matches. A Hearts fan was arrested in a dawn raid by police and a Rangers supporter was recently handed a four month prison sentence for singing a well-known song on the street before the match.

Where are the free speech advocates for that attack on personal freedom? So yes the SNP is at the forefront of 'authority at the expense of personal freedom' and you don't need to be a Daily Mail reader to see its implications. Some radical progressive agenda.

Brendan Glynn

SNP SOCIALIST?

Dear Editor,

Regarding the pro-Scottish National Party letter from brother Jeff Kirk in the May edition of RMT News.

We could argue about how well the Labour Party has represented ordinary working people over the years but maybe we can agree that we spend a lot of time defending the NHS, the welfare state and equality laws which would not exist without progressive political parties and unions in the past?

Brother Kirk claims that the SNP is to the left of Labour and is not authoritarian, I beg to differ.

SNP governments have brought more power to the centre than most people realise, they have created national police and fire organisations which are subject to policies which do not take any account of local feelings.

Police Scotland has imposed armed police on communities which did not want them deployed on a routine basis.

As for being progressive or left wing, the policies of freezing council tax and free university tuition fees have helped the middle classes whereas council services and further education colleges have been cut, these two sectors being more important to poorer people than better off ones.

The SNP has a pro-business economic policy. It wants corporation tax cuts and is supported by Donald Trump and Brian Souter -no friend of RMT -and Rupert Murdoch (brother Kirk mentioned the gutter press). Left of centre SNP voters should look in detail at SNP policies and not their speeches.

IAN BROWN, EDINBURGH NUMBER 1 BRANCH

A VIEW FROM THE P-WAY



My colleague Braňo is a 50-something Slovak, with a full head of copper-brown hair.

He's short of stature, and seldom shaven, with bright blue eyes, and the Asiatic cheeks you often see on the faces of those Eastern European descendants of the Mongol Horde.

He is a humble and an hardworking man, a canny and experienced groundworker, and he's old school. He's a socialist in his own words, a man with a heart with five kids and a wife and a squad of grandchildren, all back in Central Slovakia.

He sends all his money back to them and every night after work gets the train back in the direction of London to Ealing Broadway, then makes the arduously long bus journey to the spartan box room he rents in Finchley.

Inconveniencing himself in this way, he saves more money for his family by avoiding Zone One and so he returns each morning, his life, his whole person, spent on his foreign family. Spent on them, but spent for England, boys and girls. For the tumour in her we call London, and the unsightly black vein coursing through it, her bloody railway in slick steel and grease.

This morning we were out again delivering notices of weekend piling works to local residents. 'More noise?' they say as you meet them letting the cat out or taking the kids to school. 'Well at least your house'll go up in price once we're done!' you hear yourself say. They smile, you scowl, first at yourself, at them, then at London.

You scowl, because today Braňo got chucked off our job without notice, without severance, after 18 months' continuous service, 13 days on, one day off. His ticket expired, his 'Personal Track Safety' competency, and the agency chose

not to renew it.

Recently, there has been a spate of near fatal incidents and other accidents, often involving staff they have supplied, allegedly due to 'communication issues'. Fearful for their contract, and keen to be seen to be doing something, they scapegoated Braňo, on grounds of poor English.

Now Braňo, his English isn't that bad in all fairness. But Braňo is disposable. Braňo is like me, like all of us, like the vast majority of trackworkers in the UK, a man without the most basic of employment rights.

In the media there is often a lot of talk of zero hours contracts. But there are millions of workers in this country without even a zero hours contract, those of us who are considered to be 'self-employed', though we had no say in the matter, though we apply for jobs and work our shifts like anybody else. We are the lowest of the low, the least of the least, we toilers who could stop any train, who could demand the world but are beaten back from it.

From every corner of the world we come floating like scum on the top of London's cauldron, Brazilian, Punjabi, Scouser and Pole and so we scowl, we the scum of the earth. For what is there to tell us otherwise, what dignity have we more than this work that steals from us so much of our lives?

What recognition agreement have we, what holiday or sick pay? We wallow in muck and drains and break our backs in ballast with one day off a fortnight, the world only looks at us like the wretches we are, grey folk in bright orange. We live in a world where the union is a secret organisation, where even joining it in anything other than the strictest secrecy could leave you sacked and worse,

blacklisted.

In our company offices, management were thrilled for the opportunity to sack someone, all the more happy it was a foreigner and perhaps only disappointed he wasn't black. They summoned me to explain: Shawly you can see, if we're aht on track, summink appens, and e's the larst man standing, ow's e supposed to call the signaller and get elp? I says Just like anyone else, he's been studying for his resit and he knows how to call the signaller. Sighs all round: Nah, you can't prove that, bollocks to it, e's ad a good run, e'll be orloit, they look arfter their own, them ****s.

I ask him then, how are you

feeling? Nervous, he says. What are you going to do? Maybe he says, maybe his Slovak friend, on the buildings, maybe he'll sort him out. He gestures to the scaffold on a nearby house. The sensation is of something infinitely smaller than our great railway project.

One of the gaffers back on our job, a vaguely human creature, after he heard what happened, offered to get Braño a new ticket through his trainer mate, then maybe, maybe, the agency would take him back. We all looked at each other, our six eyes knew it a lie we were telling ourselves.

So maybe, maybe, the old man will pick his haggard frame

up again and throw it to the shovel, the sweat coursing from cheeks that look as though they were designed to hide his pains. Maybe he'll sweat in bitumen on a roof, or cough blood in a basement, in orange polycottons or in jeans, in work or in idleness, for a hundred or for fifty or for nothing at all.

And maybe they'll be out this weekend, those piling rigs with their almighty Movax din, and the good people of West London will knock themselves out with jellies, or maybe just earplugs, and maybe they'll dream of a better future oh, when their houses sell for a million, and, and...

And maybe the names of

these folk, these men who built the great railway, the great artery of progress, maybe their names will be etched one day, on every troughing route, every concrete base for every overhead pylon, every catchpit for every hidden drain: Braño Betón built Crossrail! He brought prosperity to the West! Thank you Braño Betón!

And maybe new box rooms in Finchley will be filled with new tired bodies, new bones for new cities, new sighs in new languages. And the tumour that grew green from England and became her London will feed and feed and beat its black blood forever. ■

By London Clay

LETTERS

'FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT' IS FREEDOM TO EXPLOIT

Dear Editor,

Regarding Daniel Randall's letter 'No to immigration controls' in RMT News, readers should know that the First International was actually founded to forge international links between workers in order to prevent bosses from using migrant labour to undermine collective organisation and wages.

Karl Marx warned of attempts to lower wages in Scotland by bosses recruiting migrant labour from Germany, recommending German workers organise to prevent the export of labour and show they: "defend common interests of the class and will not become obedient mercenaries of capital in its struggle against labour".

I agree with the sentiments in the Eleanor Marx pamphlet Randall mentions and I also agree with the letter she wrote to the American Federation of Labour with Will Thorne saying:

"The most immediate question is that of preventing the introduction from one country to

another of unfair labour, i.e., of workers who not knowing the conditions of the labour-struggle in a particular country, are imported into that country by the Capitalists, in order to reduce wages, or lengthen the hours of work or both".

A modern example is the Lindsay Oil refinery strike where workers defended themselves from bosses shipping in cheap labour under EU 'free movement' rules in order to undermine collective bargaining, trade union organisation and wage levels.

'Freedom of movement' is just freedom to exploit. Labour is free to move as long as it keeps moving, this freedom ends once workers stop moving and demand schools for their kids, hospitals, jobs and social provisions or, as Andy Burnham put it, "free to move not free to claim".

Bosses can shift manufacturing abroad to the sources of cheap labour but they can't pick up

our construction industry, health service, railways and schools and move them to the sources of cheap labour so their answer is 'free movement'.

Labours' John Reid in an interview admitted that the Labour Party's championing of 'free movement' was to 'implement wage discipline'

Free movement has nothing to do with workers' rights, it's the right of bosses to create a transient labour force to be super exploited, driving down wages and conditions from state to state.

No coincidence that it is one of the four 'freedoms' which are the foundational pillars that the Thatcherite EU 'free' market is based upon.

RMT is correct to oppose them all in the interests of workers rather than playing junior partner to big business reframing exploitation as 'freedom'.

In solidarity, Eddie Dempsey

'NO BORDERS' IS NOT LEFT WING

Dear editor,

I first 'stirred the pot' over RMT president Peter Pinkney's poor and flimsy arguments for his maverick decision to stand for the Green Party.

In his letter to RMT News entitled No to Immigration Controls Daniel Randall attacks Eddie Dempsey for his criticisms of bro Pinkney's ill-considered view that there should be no border controls within the EU. Yet the EU capitalist alliance clearly wants to destroy effective trade unionism and divide the working class on sectarian lines.

Bro Randall may consider himself a socialist but this crass and simplistic argument ignores history. The Bolsheviks did not 'open the borders' of the Soviet Union after 1917 neither did Vietnam, China or Cuba after their revolutions. Progressive countries in Latin

America such as Bolivia, Nicaragua and Venezuela did not abandon border controls either.

Bro Randall would probably attack all these governments, in true sectarian style, as 'state capitalist' even though Lenin wrote in 1918 that state capitalism was a real progressive step compared to monopoly capitalist.

The EU is a manic monopoly capital amalgam of unreconstructed imperialist European powers who wish to use the same old methods of war and exploitation in order to aggrandise and enrich themselves.

Bro Randall should read documents by No2EU and CAEF which our union supports – a worthy legacy of our late general secretary Bob Crow.

The EU's so-called 'free movement' rules are designed to undermine effective trade unionism

purely, simply and brutally.

The unfolding tragedies in Ukraine and in the Mediterranean Sea can be laid precisely at the door of the militaristic, imperialist and corporate EU. There is nothing 'socialist' in the core aims of the EU.

Bro Randall's claims that Marx did not found the First International to combat attempts to do what the EU is currently doing now on a much larger scale is simply an attempt to falsify history in order to justify his own sectarian position.

I deeply resent even the suggestion that RMT policies are racist and his views should be treated with the contempt they deserve.

Fraternally, Steve Metcalfe
Lancaster branch

RAISING OUR BANNERS HIGH

Phil Katz, designer of RMT histories *Unity is Strength* and the companion volume *Pulling Together*, looks at the importance of trade union banners

I recently argued in a speech at the Marx Memorial Library that the art of banner making was in decline and trade unionists had grown uncertain what slogans and messages they should put on their banners.

Yet once there had been certainty and the message was clear and could be shared across the movement.

Moreover I am happy to point out that RMT, in the tradition of its predecessors the NUR and the NUS, is one of those unions where both the tradition of banner making is still alive and the message even more so.

Many readers will have seen RMT banners and marched behind them. Some have even had to carry them in all weathers or stand with them on picket lines. But the hardest part of banner-making falls to those who have to argue and then decide what imagery should be used and what should be the main message inscribed on the front.

Union banners reflect the march of history and very much describe the main aims of our movement. These can be seen in the excellent collection of rare banners in the People's History Museum in Manchester.

The first union banners were based on the traditions and cultural influences that helped shape early unions. In many of these influences, banners and processions played an important role.

There were the Guilds, mainly involving craft workers, stretching back 500 years, when new members, usually apprentices, were sworn to an oath of allegiance under a banner bearing the crest of the trade.

The banner was a near universal element, present amongst papermakers, coach-makers, stonemasons or blacksmiths. There would be important festivals and gatherings such as the procession of trades. In London, rope-makers guilds had first attended the Lord Mayor's Jubilee of Trades in the 1500s.

Unions went to great lengths to show that they had a long history as workers' organisations. Many banners would reinforce this point by using slogans in Latin or Greek. Some would depict Greek gods, the builders of the pyramids of Egypt and even Jesus to emphasise their lineage.

Although the banner may not have been that old, the idea of independent organisations of workers certainly was.

Religion, especially Methodism, played an important part in spreading trade unionism. Early trade unionists were anxious to demonstrate that they too believed in universal values and a better life. The tradition of blessing a banner continues to this day and is a feature of the Tolpuddle union festival held in Dorset every year.



Many trade unionists served in the military. Indeed, soldiers and sailors played an important role in the early struggle for working class democratic rights. Each regiment or ship would have its own colours and soldiers returning to civilian life found it natural to parade behind similar banners representing their union.

It's a little known fact that, when the unions marched to demand the return of the Tolpuddle Martyrs, they assembled behind banners arranged in the same battle

order as at Waterloo when Napoleon was defeated. The message and seriousness of intent soon got through to the King who ordered the speedy return of the agricultural labourers.

In the first half of the nineteenth century unions were illegal. So it was unusual to have banners made and few have survived for us to consider. Many trade unionists at this time were also members of other societies such as the Masons, guilds, churches and what were known as Corresponding

Societies. Because of this mixture of influences, union banners often share similar imagery to the banners of other types of organisations.

After the 1830s, although constantly harassed, unions became legal and increasingly strong. Prime minister Disraeli referred to unions simply as "the Power".

Branches and national bodies felt able to spend large sums of money, collected in pennies from members, on banners which were expected to last through generations.

Its in this period that union banners begin to carry messages such as Unity is strength, or United we stand, divided we fall. And many drew on the great coming together of Hope, Forward to the New Jerusalem. This visionary ideal drew on the revolutionary and democratic writings of Tom Paine, John Ruskin, Mary Wollstonecraft and William Blake. Chartism had its impact too. Later union banners asserted the need for socialism, often 'the world o'er'. Nowhere was this more so than on the banners of the dock and transport workers.

Around the mid nineteenth century, commerce and industry grew alongside with mass

spectator events and sports. Many of these, from boxing matches to circus visits, agricultural shows to advertising of soap, used hand painted banners to get their message across.

Unions undoubtedly drew on this new way of getting a message across. Some of the wealthier unions had a second banner made which included the universal message but also a list on the reverse of the benefits of membership. This 'second banner' became a regular feature later in the century when unions would compete for members.

A great deal of thought went into these banners. So it's no surprise that so many banners have survived for such a long time. That was the aim. But it is revealing that, whether it's the banner of the Birkenhead coal heavers or the Northamptonshire boot makers, they shared a common language and style. This was ensured because one company, Tuthills came to dominate banner production with its bank of artists and designers.

You will not find on any of the surviving banners slogans such as We demand the removal of the government or even We

demand higher pay. The banners rarely had partial or time sensitive messages.

They did not carry messages of what members were against but messages of what members were in favour of. And they often demanded the whole world.

As unions grew in strength and in density in the twentieth century, they adopted different versions of the universal message. The slogan in favour of Eight Hours Work, Rest and Enlightenment became a common feature. Latin and Greek disappeared as slogans such as Educate, Agitate and Organise and Educate, Agitate and Control emerged, principally amongst the mining and engineering unions.

As the political impact of unions grew, banners were produced to illustrate individuals who had contributed to their growth, usually popular presidents or general secretaries. Others included those who made a contribution to removing bad laws and implementing good such as universal free education, Factory Acts, ending slavery or child labour, extension of the franchise and safety laws. This range of political views of branch

members were also depicted and it was common to see banners carrying the bust of Keir Hardie flanked by Lenin.

Nowadays banners are very rarely stitched or cast onto silk and can be digitally printed on plastic in 24 hours. They are often thrown away after use. These types of banners tend to deal with the issue of the moment rather than of the aim of the union. And nowhere near as much consideration goes into the overall message. After all, the banner will cost a few hundred pounds and represent a trifling proportion of a branch funds. Whereas real banners cost many thousands of pounds and could take months to produce. Many union branches no longer have a banner at all.

In my speech I posed a controversial question. Why this decline in banner making and why did they depict confused imagery and very limited demands?

I believe the answer is that many trade unionists are unsure of the overall aim for our movement. And nowhere is this uncertainty more in evidence than in the weak imagery and absence of slogans inscribed on our union banners.



Left to Right - Martin McCleary (Branch Chair), Steve Hedley (SAGS), Gair Harvey, Neil Herbertson (Branch Chair)

BERWICK AWARD

Member Gair Harvey is congratulated by senior assistant general secretary Steve Hedley on 25 years with RMT at a recent branch meeting. ■

ST. PANCRAS BRANCH

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FOR COUNCIL OF
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EAST MIDLAND BUS AWARD

Malcolm Burton receives his 10 year membership badge from East Midland Bus branch Secretary Mick Percival ■

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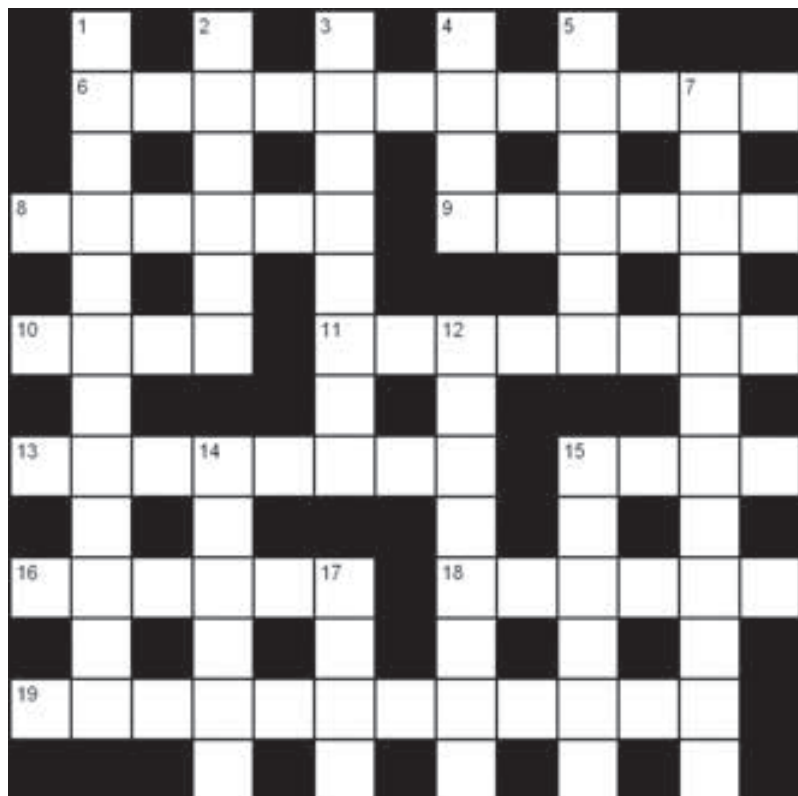
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Winner and solution in next issue.

ACROSS

- 1 Scoundrel (10)
- 8 Conscript (7)
- 9 Banishment (5)
- 10 Duck (5)
- 11 Pain in the ear (7)
- 12 Detector (6)
- 14 Payment (6)
- 16 Sportsman (7)
- 17 In the area (5)
- 19 Breathing gear (5)
- 20 Remove (7)
- 21 Container (10)

DOWN

- 1 Private accommodation (8,5)
- 2 Later than (5)
- 3 Custodian (6)
- 4 Bring to light (7)
- 5 Include again (13)
- 6 Laze (4)
- 7 Harsh (6)
- 12 Scattered (6)
- 13 Too old (6)
- 15 Warm again (6)
- 17 Jape (5)
- 18 Bookmaker (4)



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

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

