

RMT *news*

Essential reading for today's transport worker

FIGHTING FOR JOBS AND SAFETY



NO TO AUSTERITY!

FARES NOT STAFF

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www.rmt.org.uk

NATIONAL UNION OF RAIL, MARITIME & TRANSPORT WORKERS

Unity House, 39 Chalton Street, London NW1 1JD



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Please use **BLOCK CAPITALS** and **black ink**. * Information that must be provided.

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1 PERSONAL DETAILS.

Surname*		Address*	
Forename(s)*			
Home phone			
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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	
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Please fill in the whole form including official use box using a ball point pen and Send to: RMT, 39 Chalton Street, London NW1 1JD

Name and full postal address of your Bank or Building Society

To: The Manager	Bank/Building Society
Address	
Postcode	

Name(s) of Account Holder(s)

Bank/Building Society account number
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Normally your payments are made once a month to RMT. If you prefer to pay 4 weekly instead please tick

Originator's Identification Number

9	7	1	7	4	5
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Reference Number

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- This Guarantee is offered by all banks and building societies that accept instructions to pay Direct Debits.
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- If you request RMT Credit Union Ltd to collect a payment, confirmation of the amount and date will be given to you at the time of the request.
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MORE ANTI- UNION LAWS

The Tories have launched the biggest crackdown on trade union rights for 30 years, including new plans to criminalise picketing, permit employers to hire strike-breaking agency staff and choke off the flow of union political funds.

RMT members across the country are fighting privatisation, jobs cuts and threats to safety and these battles have intensified since the election for obvious reasons.

The new Tory regime is not only encouraging employers to attack workers it is bringing in a raft of anti-trade union laws to tie the hands of anyone that wants to defend them.

We know that these brutal new anti-union laws are specifically targeted at workers in the transport sector who have shown in recent months that they have the guts to stand up and fight for jobs, pay, services and safety.

But the Tories have failed to stop over 20,000 trade unionists from standing united and taking strike action on the Tube in order to fight for workplace justice.

All four unions representing tube workers overwhelmingly voted for strike action with RMT delivering a mandate of over 91 per cent.

Tube management has managed to alienate their entire workforce with the way they have approached the issue of night running.

Bulldozing through the new rosters without discussion and outside of the long-standing agreements was always a disaster waiting to happen.

London MPs, including party leader contender Jeremy Corbyn, have called the London Mayor to withdraw the arbitrary imposition of night working coming on the back of massive cuts to staffing and strains on the existing infrastructure.

The problem is also the current pay offer of 0.75 per cent, effectively a pay cut, at a time when living costs in London have continued to rise dramatically.

RMT is not opposed to night running but we will not agree to more night

working for staff with no compensatory time off or improvements in pay.

Labour MPs have also expressed support for RMT members at First Great Western taking action over staffing cuts.

MPs put down a motion saying that they were "dismayed that passengers are being treated in this way when they are paying the most expensive fares in Europe, while FGW is making huge profits and First Group's chairman has seen his pay rise by 243 per cent in four years to almost £1.6 million a year".

Despite the growing anti-union environment we are still making progress such as winning trade union recognition for bus workers employed by Norfolk Green Bus Company.

This long-running and determined campaign shows what can be done when workers stand together and negotiations on improved wages and terms and conditions have already begun.

There have been victories for shipping grades at Caledonian MacBrayne and the Royal Navy supply line the Royal Fleet Auxiliary.

After two days of solid strike action RMT members working on ferry sailings to over 20 islands on the west coast of Scotland have won assurances protecting their current terms and conditions and their pension scheme.

Long-running industrial action short of a strike taken by RMT members at the RFA has also led to a comprehensive agreement covering a wide range of issues including a significant pay increase for apprentices and training opportunities for ratings.

Finally you will see that the union has just held its annual general meeting which decided policy for the next 12 months. I am pleased to say that the union has emerged stronger and more united than ever thanks to the work of delegates that debated motions from branches across the country representing all grades of transport worker.

Best wishes

Mick Cash

THE BIGGEST CRACKDOWN ON TRADE UNION RIGHTS FOR 30 YEARS



OFFICIAL PICKET

Trade unions condemn Tory government proposals designed to shackle workers organisations even more

Tory Business secretary Sajid Javid has unveiled proposals to criminalise picketing and make it harder for workers to strike legally and for Labour to get union funding.

The scale of the reforms goes far wider than the previously trailed plan for strikes to be made unlawful unless 50 per cent of those being asked to strike vote in the ballot.

The Trade Union Bill will also require that at least 40 per cent of those asked to vote support the strike in most key public services. In the case of 100 workers asked to strike, the action would only be lawful if at least 50 workers voted and 40 of them backed the strike.

The double threshold would have to be met in any strike called in health, education, fire, transport, border security and energy sectors – including the Border Force and nuclear decommissioning.

It also proposes that ‘unlawful’ picketing should become a criminal as opposed to civil offence and new protections should be available for those workers unwilling to strike. A named official will be required to be available at all times to the police to oversee the picket including the numbers on the line, currently set at six, in an existing code of conduct.

- Give employers the right to hire strike-breaking agency staff as well as require a union to give the employer at least a fortnight’s notice before the industrial action starts.
- Empower the government to set a limit on the proportion of working time any public sector worker can spend on trade union duties.
- Give the government certification officer powers to fine trade unions as much as £20,000 for breaches of reporting rules including an

annual audit on its protests and pickets. The certification officer will also have power to initiate investigations and will in future be funded by a joint levy of unions and employers

- Require a clear description of the trade dispute and the planned industrial action on the ballot paper so that all union members are clear what they are voting for.

The Trade Union Co-ordinating Group, which comprises nine trade unions including RMT, said that with the current Tory government was only elected on less than 25 per cent of all those eligible to vote.

TUCG dismissed the blatant ideology and hypocrisy of Tory Ministers and MPs in calling for these extensive and draconian reforms.

“Attacking workers basic right to organise will lead to increasing inequality in an already unequal society,” it said.

It called for unity, solidarity and co-ordination in the face of these unfair and unjust attacks on workplace rights.

RMT general secretary Mick Cash said that these brutal new anti-union laws were specifically targeted at members in the transport sector who have shown in recent months that they have the guts to stand up and fight for jobs, pay, services and safety.

“The response of this Government mirrors the actions of hard-right regimes throughout history - shackle the unions, criminalise its members and use a raft of new laws to try and bankrupt workers’ organisations.

“The trade union movement must unite to fight this brutal assault on the most basic of human rights and that campaign will be taken into the communities who stand to lose access to safe and reliable services as this noose of the anti-union laws is twisted round our necks,” he said. ■

TAXI MEMBERS DEMAND JUSTICE



Parliament rally demands the right to 'ply for hire'

Taxi drivers in London and across the country, fed up with attacks on their livelihoods and the free rein given to well-connected corporations such as Uber, fought back last month with a protest at Parliament.

Cabbies were protesting at the failure of Transport for London and other local authorities to enforce existing regulations and challenging the excuse that the law as it stands is insufficiently clear.

Together with other

concerned organisations, RMT is campaigning for a change to the law – there must be a statutory definition of 'plying for hire'.

Speakers at the rally included Raja Amin of RMT Midlands regional council, Mick Bailey and Lewis Norton from RMT London Taxi branch, Mohammed Halim of the Birmingham Taxi branch and Umar Khan of the Leicester Taxi branch.

Grahame Morris MP, a member of RMT's Parliamentary

group who put down Early Day Motion 142, said that smartphone apps such as Uber were circumventing the law governing the taxi and minicab industry.

His EDM supports existing regulations whereby private hire vehicles (PHVs) may only pick up passengers when pre-booked rather than from a rank or in response to being hailed.

It says that such regulations provide passengers with important safety protections against unregulated drivers who have not undergone extensive criminal record and medical checks or had to pass a formal taxi driving assessment like licensed taxi drivers.

However Transport for London was failing to carry out its licensing and enforcement functions and is allowing PHVs

to operate and that this was primarily due to the absence of a statutory definition of plying for hire.

"This undermines public confidence in a safe and secure licensing regime and will ultimately undermine the viability of the current taxi service," he said.

Since Uber started operating in London in 2012 the number of people applying to study The Knowledge, the geographical training for licensed taxi drivers, fell from 3,326 to 2,159 last year.

RMT Parliamentary group convenor John McDonnell MP called on the government to bring forward urgent legislation which provided a clear statutory definition to protect the distinction between taxis and PHVs. ■



TUBE DISPUTE ROLLS ON

Unions stand united and solid for workplace justice on London Underground



Over 20,000 members of all four Tube unions stood united, solid and determined to fight for workplace justice by taking strike action in July, shutting down the entire combine.

All four unions representing workers on London Underground overwhelmingly voted for strike action with RMT delivering a mandate of over 91 per cent.

RMT general secretary Mick Cash said that they were a credit to the entire trade union movement.

"Tube management has managed to alienate and anger their entire workforce across all grades with the way they have approached the issue of night running.

"Instead of macho, death-or-glory posturing over take-it-or-leave offers now is the time for serious and mature negotiations which address the issues at the heart of this dispute.

"Bulldozing through the new rosters without discussion and outside of the long-standing agreements was always a disaster waiting to happen.

"Staff feel angry that they are being bullied into accepting new patterns that would wreck work life balance and LU has to

wake up and understand that grievance instead of pretending that it doesn't exist.

"The company also needs to remember that we remain in dispute with them over the parallel issue of 850 station staff jobs losses - job losses that would make a mockery of delivering passenger and staff safety on the night tube.

"The ball is now in firmly in LU's court," he said.

A new wave of industrial action has already hitting services as drivers were threatened with being sent home for refusing to drive unsafe trains.

Tube services are already being hit as staff refusing to take out trains that have not been prepped in the previous 24 hours and also refusing to train up staff who have been shunted around the network, outside of their normal jobs and locations, to try and plug gaps created by the ongoing overtime ban.

Within hours services on the District Line were disrupted due to a shortage of trains.

Staff refusing to take out unsafe trains have been threatened with being sent home and having their pay docked in a move that will

inflame the current situation even further and which makes a mockery of the safety culture on London Underground.

RMT has also been called in for an emergency meeting with the safety regulator the Office of Rail Regulation (ORR) following a series of serious breaches of safety protocols directly linked to the overtime ban.

"Instead of addressing the issues at the heart of the night tube dispute LU are instead ignoring safety concerns and threatening drivers who refuse to take out trains that have not been properly prepared.

"That is outrageous and deliberately inflammatory," he said.

London MPs have also condemned the "disgraceful" treatment of tube workers and called the London Mayor to withdraw the arbitrary imposition of night working.

Jeremy Corbyn MP and others have tabled a motion pointing out that uncontrolled and unmanaged night work can have a serious impact on the physical and mental health of employees and detrimental to family and social life.

The motion expresses

concern that night running was being rushed in on the back of massive cuts to staffing and strains on the existing infrastructure, raising genuine concerns amongst the workforce that the safety and service to passengers and workers will be jeopardised.

The problem at the heart of this dispute is also the current pay offer of 0.75 per cent is effectively a pay cut at a time when living costs in London have continued to rise dramatically.

This is at a time when the Mayor wants to ram through night running without any consultation whatsoever.

RMT regional organiser John Leach said that was not opposed to night running but will not agree to more night working for staff with no compensatory time off or improvements in pay, not just a one off payment of just £750.

"The slash and burn antics of the Mayor and his cuts-led agenda will be met with resistance by staff that want to deliver a decent public service in return for dignity and respect at work, is that really too much to ask?," he said.

FIRST GREAT WESTERN JOBS AND SAFETY ACTION

MPs express dismay and call on company to think again about staffing cuts

RMT members at First Great Western took 48-hour strike action in early July over the threat to jobs and safety from the introduction of the new Hitachi Inter-City trains.

RMT said that the company was simply playing for time in talks and were going through the motions rather than tackling the fundamental issues at the heart of the dispute and addressing the union's key points which are:

- 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

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

"RMT is angry and disappointed that the company have ignored the massive vote for action by their staff and have instead opted to plough ahead with a series of actions that will decimate jobs, services



and safety.

"It is 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 on 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," he said.

In a motion tabled in parliament Cardiff Central MP Joe Stevens and other MPs expressed "dismay" at the actions of First Great Western and call on the company to "think again" about staffing

cuts.

The motion expresses concern that despite increases in passenger numbers FGW was planning to use the introduction of the new Super Express Trains to remove the buffet car, abolish the operational role guard and cut safety critical station and train maintenance staff.

MPs say that they are "dismayed that passengers are being treated in this way when they are paying the most expensive fares in Europe, while FGW is making huge profits and First Group's chairman has seen his pay rise by 243 per cent in four years to almost £1.6 million a year".

LORNE STEWART MERSEYRAIL STAFF STRIKE OVER SACKINGS

RMT cleaners and maintenance staff working on Merseyrail stations for contractor Lorne Stewart took strike action last month in support of two long-standing colleagues and union activists sacked on trumped-up charges.

The two, with some 70 years' service between them, were dismissed for allegedly claiming pay for hours not worked, despite the lack of any credible

evidence to support the charge.

The sacked cleaners are the latest in a long list of victims of disciplinary action aimed almost exclusively at RMT members in what the union believes is a crude attempt to weaken and marginalise the union.

Particular targets have been workers who retain cherished British Rail 'Blue Book' working conditions, regarded as too

expensive by the employer.

RMT general secretary Mick Cash said that despite blatant intimidation members had stood up for their sacked colleagues and given a clear message to Lorne Stewart that these sackings are unfair and unacceptable.

"It is time for Lorne Stewart to step back from the brink, recognise the anger of our members over these sackings

and re-instate two loyal workers who have done nothing wrong.

"Merseyrail and Merseytravel also have a moral responsibility to ensure that their contractors do not behave like 19th-century mill-owners, and they should be making it quite clear that they will not allow their own reputations to be tarnished by these bully-boy tactics," he said.



NETWORK RAIL MEMBERS WIN IMPROVED DEAL

Network Rail members voted by over 80 per cent to accept an improved pay and conditions offer from Network Rail which followed an overwhelmingly vote for strike action.

The company moved from the original nought per cent pay offer, effectively a pay cut, to two per cent this year, the equivalent to RPI next year and a guarantee of no job cuts for two years.

RMT general secretary Mick Cash thanked Network Rail members for their determination, solidarity and

support for their union over the last few months.

"Without this support this deal would simply not have been possible. It just goes to show what can be achieved when members stand united and are prepared to fight for decent pay and conditions," he said.

However he warned of "creeping privatisation" as key sections of Network Rail are lined up for sell off.

The government has confirmed that six key sections of the organisations business are to be tendered out as it moves towards creating Railtrack two.

The big four accountancy firms are all vying for sections of the corporate functions which include finance, infrastructure and accounting services.

Even more alarmingly, big banks, including NM Rothschild are eyeing up 'equity execution advice' roles which are expected to include working out ways to begin the re-privatisation of Network Rail on a piece-by-piece basis.

One of the NM Rothschild senior players was also an advisor to the privatised Railtrack which collapsed into chaos leading to the creation of

Network Rail.

"This government has wasted no time in re-organising Network Rail to fit their agenda and in pressing ahead with this ideologically-driven programme of creeping privatisation.

"However, the public remembers only too well the lethal days of Railtrack and the privatisation disaster which led our railways to the scandals of Hatfield, Potters Bar and other incidents which forced the creation of Network Rail," he said.



SOUTHERN CATERING STAFF SACKED

Southern/Thameslink Railways and their catering company Rail Gourmet have axed around 70 staff at just four days notice.

Southern said that the sudden termination of the catering contract was part of the transfer into the new, expanded Thameslink franchise as they intend to run no more trolleys on their trains even though they are operating services in excess of two hours from the south

coast to London and on a number of other routes.

The existing Southern franchise ended this month and the new merged Thameslink/Southern/Great Northern franchise started up with all of the RMT Rail Gourmet members sacked.

Yet Rail Gourmet was told three months ago that their catering trolley services were to be axed.

In a further ludicrous twist Rail Gourmet even offered

consultation on the dismissals two days after the staff were sacked.

It has already been made clear to the union that there are no other jobs for these workers except maybe a handful at the London depot on inferior terms and conditions.

RMT general secretary Mick Cash said that the disgraceful move was an attack on low paid members and the services that they

provide to the travelling public.

"This brutal assault is being driven through with just a few days notice and makes a mockery of consultation processes and the very basic duty of care to employees. The fact that is all bound up in the franchising process speaks volumes about how rail privatisation impacts on staff and passengers alike in the drive for profits," he said.

SOUTHERN ENGINEERS VICTORY

Planned strike action by fleet engineers on Southern Rail was suspended after a breakthrough in last minute talks which agreed a reduction in the working week.

Southern, with the agreement of Govia Thameslink Railway, agreed a reduction in the working week, in a phased way, to a 37 hour week by May 2017 as part of a multi-year deal to

be negotiated with GTR.

RMT general secretary Mick Cash welcomed the fact that Southern recognised that the hard work and commitment of engineering staff had

contributed towards the operation of the company.

"I would like to take this opportunity to thank members for their steadfast support in this dispute," he said.

Parliamentary column

VOTING NO TO EU MEMBERSHIP

RMT's recent decision at its annual conference to support a No vote in the referendum on the UK's membership of the European Union is welcome and is part of a growing tide of socialist and trade union voices calling for a 'No' vote.

There should be no doubt that the EU is anti-working class, anti-socialist and anti-democratic. This has been the case since its first incarnation as the European Common Market in 1957 and the evidence is now overwhelming.

One in four workers are now unemployed in Greece and Spain, with youth unemployment at double that. Living standards have been cut as economies have contracted under the lash of austerity and thousands have been forced to move abroad to look for work. Unemployment in Spain has been the equivalent of over 7 million without jobs in Britain. Three hundred thousand Irish working people have left their homes to look for work overseas since the 2008 banking crisis, the equivalent of over four million in Britain.

Membership of the Euro has acted as an economic vice on these economies, fixing them at unsustainable currency parities above all with Germany. Only when the Euro is dismantled so that those EU members in severe economic difficulties can begin to manage and rebuild their own economies again will the sufferings of their peoples be reversed.

Gordon Brown's 1997 decision to resist UK membership of the Euro saved Britain from economic catastrophe after 2008. Larry Elliott writing in *The Guardian* rightly suggested that if Britain had joined the Euro at the then prevailing parity, and had been unable to depreciate after 2008, the economy would have been wrecked. Britain would have been the first to crash out of the Euro and the whole edifice would have collapsed. As it is, Sterling depreciated by 27 per cent against the Euro after the crisis and gave a degree of protection from the savage economic storms which have devastated other EU economies.

But the anti-socialist and anti-democratic nature of the EU were long ago recognised by the left and it is the left which threatens it today. The virtual disappearance of PASOK, the formerly socialist Greek political party, who chose to walk into a deadly embrace

with the conservative New Democracy Party to inflict austerity on workers, has been a modern Greek tragedy. Other pro-EU social democratic parties elsewhere in the EU are suffering too. Syriza in Greece and Podemos in Spain have grown quickly to fill vacuums on the left.

But to return to the nature of the EU and what it is for. It is of course a branch of global neo-liberalism, of laissez-faire capitalism, constructed to raise up the power of the market and progressively dismantle the socialist and social democratic structures which were established and were so successful in the immediate post war decades.

The EU political class does have a serious problem however, because working people have a strong attachment to these post war structures - welfare states, public services, redistributive taxation and the public ownership and democratic accountability of public utilities and other sectors.

The reactionary Thatcherite revolution inflicted on Britain has pushed the neo-liberal agenda far beyond that of Continent Europe, but the direction and objectives are the same. It is of significance that the neo-liberal push in the EU was actually initiated quietly by Thatcherite ideologues in Britain, including the then Deputy Governor of the Bank of England in the mid-1980s. The so-called Single European Act was the first major step on that road. However, on the Continent, it is fear of the likely political reaction by millions of workers which has held back the neo-liberal thrust.

The left and the working class resisted the attempt to impose a 'European Constitution', voting against in referendums in France and Holland, despite pressure from allegedly socialist parties to vote in favour. The Swedish elite failed to persuade the Swedish people to join the Euro and the Norwegian political class twice failed to get Norwegians to vote to join the EU. Euro-scepticism is indeed growing right across the EU and a Greek exit from the Euro remains a probability.

The EU is in trouble and it is the working class which poses the real threat to its future. It is time for democratic governments across the EU to reclaim power from Brussels and begin again to



represent the real interests of their peoples and move in a socialist direction.

The EU economy is failing and it is not just the southern fringe of the EU where problems exist. The elephant in the room so to speak is in fact France and, as France finds it increasingly difficult to sustain its membership of the Eurozone, a seismic change really is in prospect.

It is the EU which has in effect derailed President Hollande's initial progressive agenda promised before his election. The French, like other members of the Eurozone, need to be able to adjust the value of their currency, against Germany in particular, which means re-establishing the Franc and beginning once again to manage their economy at a national level with appropriate monetary and fiscal policies and direct state intervention to generate full employment and long-term economic stability.

The whole EU economic strategy has proved a failure and, while a useful level of co-operation between economies on a voluntary and mutually beneficial basis is appropriate, bureaucratic control and economic dictats from the EU institutions do not work. It is time for the EU to recognise its failure and leave the countries of Europe to reconstruct the democratic socialist/social democratic post war world which worked so well.

Kelvin Hopkins MP is a member of the RMT Parliamentary Group



RECOGNITION WIN AT NORFOLK GREEN

After a long-running and determined campaign RMT has won trade union recognition for bus workers in Kings Lynn employed by Norfolk Green Bus Company which is owned by Stagecoach.

Despite a large majority of the workers, around 115 members, at the bus depot joining RMT Stagecoach bosses had resisted recognition or allow workers representation at the company which was a green field trade union site.

Therefore the union demanded a Central Arbitration Committee (CAC) recognition hearing which was held in London last month. RMT reps Dave Peploe and Howard Yelland and other driver activists travelled down from Kings Lynn to hear whether their campaigning efforts would result in RMT recognition at Norfolk Green for them and

their workmates.

CAC members were taken aback by the size of the RMT crowd. Such hearings are public but it is unusual that anyone to attend as observers.

RMT had around twenty people at the hearing and extra seats had to be found for everyone before the hearing could begin.

RMT also ratcheted up the pressure by running a ballot for industrial action at Norfolk Green in response to company's unfair treatment of staff. The company had held around 40 disciplinary hearings since the beginning of the year in a company with only 140 drivers.

The company presented letters between them and another union as evidence claiming that the company agreed to recognise the other union for collective bargaining.

RMT argued that a written

intention to recognise another union was not evidence of an actual recognition agreement.

The union also argued that such actions would completely undermine the purpose of the law (Schedule A1, TULR(C)A 1992). The law allows workers, if over 50 per cent of them want it, to get legal recognition for the union of their choice.

The CAC adjourned and two days later it announced that it had found in favour of RMT to the delight of everyone involved.

RMT assistant general secretary Mick Lynch said that during the campaign members had stood together and supported each other in the face of blatant opposition from their employer.

"Thanks to their determination and defiance we now have recognition in the company.

"Negotiations on improved wages and terms and conditions have already begun and the benefits of RMT organisation are already being seen by the workers," he said.

Dave Marshall of the union's organising unit said that it had been a hard-fought campaign with activists travelling from all over the country to show solidarity and the support of the local trades council.

"Drivers at the company contacted us last year and due to their organising efforts and with strong support from the union, membership within the company rocketed from a few to over 100 in a period of six months.

"This gave us majority membership and meant we could take a claim for recognition to the CAC," he said.



AGM REPORT

Newcastle 2015





RMT annual general meeting delegates discuss and decide policy

A storming show of unity and determination were the hallmarks of the union's annual conference in Newcastle in June.

Delegates voiced the anger of union members against attacks on jobs, pay and conditions by the privateers and their allies, the Tories in government. They also committed the union to a growing tide of resistance.

Proposals on how to fight back repeatedly won unanimous support in a remarkable display of unity and solidarity. The conference was also a display of the union's democratic processes in action.

RMT general secretary Mick Cash said that the government's programme of austerity, cuts, privatisations and attacks on jobs and workers' rights, "throws down a massive challenge to the entire trade union movement".

Union members are already embroiled in battles with employers including London Underground, Northern Rail, Trans Pennine Express,

Caledonian MacBrayne Scottish ferries, the Royal Fleet Auxiliary, Southern Railways and First Great Western.

"The entire labour movement will need to stand united in the face of massive threats to services, jobs and union rights from the newly-elected Tory Government.

"RMT is involved in a wide range of current industrial disputes and this trade union will play its full part in uniting the battles that lie ahead as we challenge the poisonous, Thatcherite tribute act treading the political boards under the leadership of David Cameron and George Osborne," Mick Cash said.

Conference started on the day after 250,000 people marched in London against austerity in a demonstration organised by the People's Assembly and backed by RMT and other unions. Anti-austerity demonstrations had also taken place in Glasgow and other major centres.

Conference also took place

against the looming threat of new government legislation shackling the right of working people to strike in defence of their jobs, working conditions and public services.

"The big anti-austerity protests this weekend are just the start.

"The cuts coming down the chute in the next twelve months will decimate services with the vultures from the private sector hovering to pick over the bones.

"The new wave of anti-union laws are designed to shackle and criminalise those in the front line of the resistance - the trade union movement," Mick said.

He said that the attack on working people was "cooked up on the playing fields of Eton" and would be "resisted and defeated on our streets and on our picket lines".

After the fiery opening, delegates went on to debate a wide range of motions.

The increasing risk of assaults on passengers because CCTV and ipads are being used

to replace station staff was discussed.

Senior assistant general secretary Steve Hedley told conference that recorded assaults on passengers had increased by 44 per cent.

"What CCTV does not do is intervene when someone is attacked on the station.

"But a member of staff being on the station is likely to be a deterrent," he said.

Conference unanimously backed a campaign against the automation of station staff work and the decreasing standards associated with it.

Conference also voted to resist the next raft of anti-trade union legislation planned by the Tory government.

The legislation will impose minimum turnouts in ballots on industrial action, from a government elected by only 25 per cent of those entitled to vote.

Delegate Miguel Dias said: "Strike action is every man's and woman's right, it is what separates workers from slaves".

He said that the planned legislation is “all about arming the bosses and disarming the workers.

“An effective and fighting trades union movement is essential to human rights and standing up for decency.

“We are not going to go away and we are going to fight,” he said.

A successful motion said that conference had to be “the stepping stone of resistance” to driver only operations and demanded a “full blown dispute” if train operators did not drop the plans.

Mick Cash said that train operators were even planning for coping with up to 10 days’ strike action – with widespread disruption for passengers – to force through driver only operations and the removal of safety-critical guards.

Delegate Stewart Holt, a train guard for 30 years, said: “We are getting picked off one by one,” as more than 30 per cent of trains are now driver-only operated.

Delegate John Stewart, Leeds said: “This is upon us now and they are even putting it in the franchises now” a reference to the Department of Transport telling bidders for franchises that they will win operating contracts only if they commit themselves to driver-only operations.

Delegate Paul Shannon said that London Underground bosses were going even further by introducing driverless trains.

Enlarging on the bosses’

preparations for strikes, Mick Cash said that a report by the Rail Safety Standards Board, which is funded by train operating companies, is advising bosses to plan for 10 days of industrial action against the driver-only plans – and while the plan would boost profits, the Board stated that the unquantified effects on safety could have “potentially fatal consequences.

“This report shows that the train companies and their cheerleaders are preparing to cause chaos and shut down the railways for days on end in a desperate and profit-led gamble on Driver Only Operation.

“It is extraordinary that on the one hand the train companies are taking the axe to the guards but behind the scenes they are admitting there has been no safety analysis, that the plans could prove fatal and would open the door to mass fare evasion.

“Our fight on this crucial issue goes on,” he said.

During conference RMT members at First Great Western were balloting on strike action against the removal of safety-critical guards. FGW members voted overwhelmingly to strike and have since staged strike action.

Mick Cash said that similar battles were being waged across the train operating companies.

Conference also voted to demand that all new inter-city express trains retain buffet cars, not just to serve passengers, but with pull-down screening,



Linda Wiles

lockable doors and panic buttons to provide safe refuges for staff in the event of trouble breaking out on trains, as sometimes happens.

AGENCY STAFF

Conference heard how rail privateers are attempting to flood their operations with zero-hours agency staff at the cost of their own employees. Zero hours workers are called in to work only when needed, and sent home without wages at the whim of bosses if they are deemed surplus to requirements.

There was a successful call for “immediate industrial action” against one privateer.

Northern Rail is increasing its use of agency staff despite agreements that they be used only in special circumstances such as at unstaffed stations at peak periods.

But conference heard that Northern Rail was spreading the practice across the north, in clear breach of the agreement.

In an impassioned speech, Merseyside delegate William Kimm proposed the call for industrial action and said:

“Unfortunately we have brothers and sisters on zero hours – and this is not an attack on them.

“It is an attack on the Tories, on the bosses. We need the TUC and everybody on our side. We are in dispute with them, and we will get a yes vote.

“Every operating company is affected this, it is a cancer from within,” he said.

Eddie Dempsey, a First Great Western train driver from Paddington, said: “This as an endemic problem not just to railways, not just to transport,



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but the entire labour market. "Companies like Interserve that employ the cleaners have seen their profits spiral.

"We have got to drive these agency contracts out of the industry completely," he said. Assistant general secretary Steve Hedley said that the union was "absolutely" behind the campaign and conference unanimously backed the motion.

RESISTANCE

Conference heard from several guest speakers. Among them was left Labour MP John McDonnell who said that an "alternative of resistance" was building in Britain as the "elected dictatorship" of the Tory government launched its next phase of destruction of

public services, attacks on the poor and disabled, and the final wrecking of the National Health Service.

In a hard-hitting speech he called for support for Labour MP Jeremy Corbyn for the Labour leadership, and proposed a radical alternative manifesto for a Corbyn-led Labour Party: scrapping Trident, introducing a house building programme, abolishing anti-union laws, and introducing a genuine living wage.

He urged union members to vote in the leadership election under Labour's "supporter" membership scheme, through which anyone can join the Labour Party for £3 and have a vote in the leadership contest.

He said that people are

saying there is no alternative but to resist and RMT was one of the best examples of resistance.

"London is like a rebel city," he said, quoting student occupations, strikes, housing occupations, and the 250,000-strong anti-austerity march.

There was unanimous backing, including from the Council of Executives, for a call for a campaign to make Network Rail clean out asbestos, which is still killing railway workers, decades after the deadly mineral was banned.

Conference heard how the most deadly form of asbestos-related diseases, mesothelioma, a cancer of the lung, is claiming 3,000 lives a year in Britain. Death occurs within 12 months of diagnosis said delegate Billy Riley.

But it is still found in rail network buildings and equipment across the UK.

"It was widely used in the railway industry. Surely we should be getting rid of it now," he said.

He said that three members of RMT's Sheffield and District branch suffered asbestos-related conditions.

Delegate Greg Hewitt said that people had contracted mesothelioma by simply hugging their parents at the school gates because they had fibres on their clothes; others by washing asbestos workers' clothing.

DEFENDING PENSIONS

Dire warnings of the problems facing pensioners today – and the even worse crisis which will face pensioners of the future – were delivered to conference. The continuing abolition by bosses of occupational pension schemes, and the failure of state pensions to increase in line with wage increases, had already left one in six older people in Britain struggling to survive on less than £175 a week and six million, mainly women, receiving less than £10,500 a year.

But the future would be even worse, said Tony Geraghty of the union's retired members' section, who said that in the future state pensions would be even more vital than today.

"We are asking the union to pay more attention, and focus more on the state retirement pension," he said.

"In years to come, if trade unions do not pay more attention to the state pension, workers will have nothing to rely on. We need to campaign for a state pension that gives dignity in retirement," he said.

Shelley Fulton, a catering rating with P & O ferries in Dover, said that at 60 she did not know if she would be capable of working to the age of 67 – or what pension she would eventually have.

"They are going to take us all back to Victorian times," she said.



Steve Hedley



Conference voted unanimously to strengthen links with pensioners' groups, including the National Pensioners' Convention, lobby the government for state pensions to stay above the poverty line, press for pensions to be linked to the best wage increases with a minimum of 2.5 per cent, and campaign against attempts to increase retirement age above 67.

The union is to increase its joint work with disabled activists in their campaign against cuts – especially attacks on transport services and making access by disabled people ever more difficult.

Conference voted unanimously to re-affiliate to Disabled People Against Cuts (DPAC).

Delegates gave high praise to DPAC's growing campaign of direct action.

Janine Booth said that for five years under the coalition government disabled people had suffered "awful attacks".

"The Remploi factories were closed, the independent living fund attacked, services to disabled people cut, work capacity assessments introduced

and sanctions on benefits".

She read out a series of newspaper headlines: A father who received a letter saying his son's benefit sanction was being lifted – five weeks after the son killed himself; an Aspergers sufferer who starved to death after losing his benefits, a disabled woman who committed suicide after being sanctioned.

"There are Tory politicians who say disabled people should be exempt from the minimum wage and paid £2 an hour," she said.

But, she said, disabled people are fighting back with a campaign which made the sanctions assessment firm ATOS "toxic", forcing the government to dump them.

She said that DPAC had helped kick out Tory sanctions minister MP Esther McVey at the general election and joined striking tube workers on the picket line in the fight to defend station staff – the staff who help provide access to public transport.

Steve Hedley said that the new Tory government was again putting disabled people in the firing line in its next £12 billion cuts package with a £1 billion



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Mick Cash

cut in carers' allowance, and £1.5 billion in disability benefits.

Conference voted unanimously to step up its work with DPAC.

UNITY

There was unanimous backing for a call put forward by Neasden branch for the creation of a federation of four British transport unions. If successful the plan could result in co-ordinated action to stop greedy transport bosses in their tracks – as is already happening on London Underground.

Delegate Lewis Peacock, a maintenance technician at London Underground, said: "We know that with a Tory government elected we are going to see further and more stringent attacks on working people.

"This resolution was written before the election and what it is calling for is to build on our proud record of fighting back.

"There were the attacks of the coalition government. Now we will be fighting further.

"To build on our strategy calls for us to look for co-ordinated action in our regions and nationally building and working with other unions

in our industry – like on London Underground."

The four unions at London Underground– RMT, ASLEF, TSSA and Unite, took action jointly, staging a united 24-hour strike on July 9.

Lewis said that there had to be an end to factionalism.

"We have to find ways to work together and out of that hopefully get a federation of transport unions. That is what this is calling for," he said.

Delegate Paul Shannon, an instructor operator on London Underground, warned of more attacks and austerity imposed by the government.

"This is extremely important, sixty per cent of the cuts have not yet come in," he said.

He said that he had visited devastated mining communities and that other communities face the same fate.

"Everybody has the right to a good job, good terms and conditions, and we have to fight for them. But it has to be by working together, all the trade unions, and we have to build on that.

"We have to consider co-ordinated action where we can," he said.

Signaller delegate David Filby said: "We have to deliver a message to the TUC: 'Get off

your backsides!'"

Mick Cash said: "What we have got to do is be united, we should be looking at how we co-ordinate the work."

FIGHTING FASCISM

Conference threw its weight behind Solidarity with Anti-fascist Resistance in Ukraine (SARU).

Assistant general secretary Steve Hedley said that opponents of the proposal would be "dancing on the graves" of 30,000 merchant seaman who died under Nazi bombs in the Second World War, and hero railway workers who fought fascism in Spain in the Spanish Civil War.

The motion to support Ukraine's anti-fascist resistance was proposed by Eddie Dempsey who spoke out against the Western-backed government of western Ukraine, which included open Nazis.

He reported on a visit he recently made to Ukraine, saying that anti-fascists he met there had since been murdered.

Conference responded with

overwhelming support for the motion.

Guest speaker and Durham miners' leader Davy Hopper pledged the support of ex-miners and their communities to rail workers in forthcoming industrial battles.

In a stirring speech he said that the last three deep coal mines in Britain face closure this year.

He said that the transport industry was also under attack.

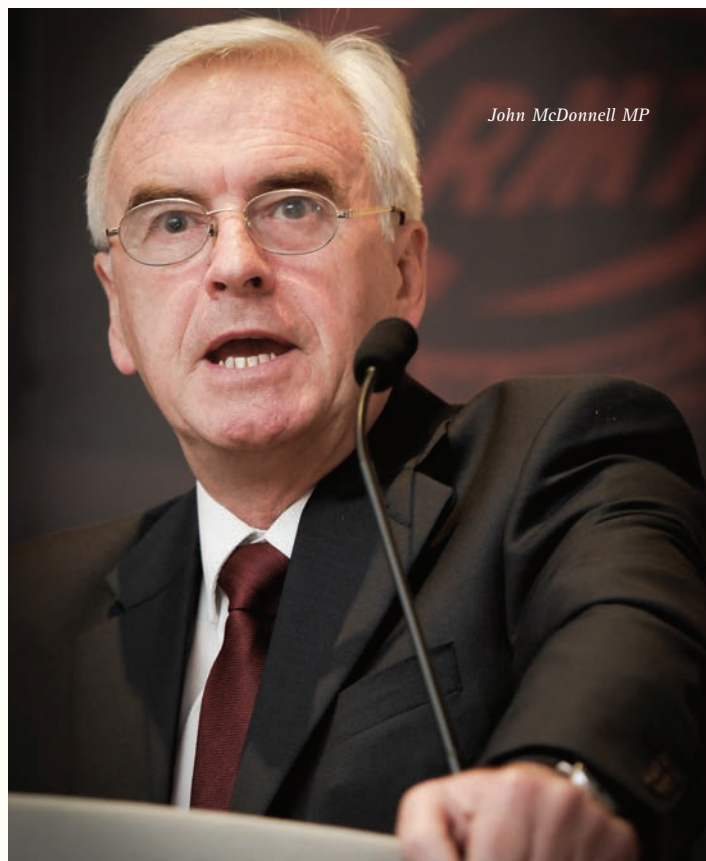
"You have a hell of a battle on your hands and I know that battle will come.

"They are looking for you, they are looking for you because you are unionised and they hate unions.

"I hope you win and I hope you will be united. Don't be isolated like the miners were," he said, referring to the epic 1984/5 miners' strike against pit closures.

"There are not many miners left but we still have influence in our communities and we will support you.

"The miners will not be found wanting – what is left of



John McDonnell MP

RIDING AND HIKING FOR BOB



Delegates raised £810 in a raffle for the British Heart Foundation in memory of the late general secretary Bob Crow.

Delegates bought tickets from the Credit Union stall run by Nicky Hoarau who also signed up new CU members during conference.

Friends and family are also taking part in a London to Paris cycle ride and climbing Ben Nevis to raise money for the BHF.

Ben Anderson, Daniel Davies, John Hendy and Anthony

<http://lastinghope.bhf.org.uk/london-to-paris-bike-ride>

HIKING

Bob Crow's partner Nicola Hoarau will join RMT members, Terry Hurlock, Gabriel Barton, John Dougherty and Mat Webb will hike Scotland's highest peak, Ben Nevis on Saturday 19 September 19.

The British Heart Foundation is the UK's number one heart charity and the biggest source of funding of heart research in the UK. Coronary heart disease

Hoarau are the Red Riders that are cycling a gruelling 400 kilometres to the French capital in early September.

Anthony said that by undertaking this great challenge he hoped to raise awareness and fund research into heart related illnesses.

"We ride in memory of the late and great Bob Crow, a man with a huge heart and defender of the working people and hope we too can keep legacy alive. Please give by using the web link below

is the UK's single biggest killer and most of us know of someone that has been unfortunate enough to suffer with heart problems.

Bob had already identified the charity as a worthy cause before his untimely and sad death, ironically from a heart condition. Please consider making a donation via the following webpage:

<http://lastinghope.bhf.org.uk/bobcrow>

them. Our communities will not be found wanting," he promised.

He made a damning attack on the Labour Party, and said that it had to be taken back to its original role of representing the interests of the working class.

"We have a position where we have 28 Labour MPs in Durham and Northumberland, but only four or five who are in my opinion worth supporting.

"Almost half of them are supporters of Progress" he said, referring to the well-funded right-wing Blairite movement operating inside the Labour Party.

"We have got to fight back and we have a mandate to fight back. And these Progress MPs, we have got to get them out. Progress is a party within a party, funded from outside the party.

"The Labour Party has been ripped off us," he said. He mocked three of the four candidates for leadership of the

Labour Party.

He told the conference that thousands of ex miners and their families would be taking out the £3 "supporter" category of Labour party membership.

"And they will be voting for Jeremy Corbyn," he said.

"We will be encouraging people to get on to the streets in a campaign of civil disobedience – like Ghandi did sixty or seventy years ago.

"And let the fight back start here from this conference, we have to get off our knees," he said, winning a standing ovation.

Conference heard how First Great Western (FGW) was recruiting a special category of staff to be used as a strike-breaking scab workforce.

The staff, known as "customer ambassadors," have their own distinctive uniforms earning them the nickname "Ribena kids".

Delegate Eddie Dempsey said that staff had been placed in a



Jay Patel

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Earl Phillips of
the New York
Transport
Workers' Union

special "non-operational" management role.

He said that FGW's plan was to have a reserve workforce to break strikes.

Assistant general secretary Steve Hedley said that the company was conducting a "vicious" campaign.

"If the guards are on strike they (the ambassadors) will become guards. If the gateways are on strike they will stick them on the gates.

"They are trying to smash up union organisation by bringing in this flexible grade," he said.

Brian Pascoe, an FGW guard, said that the "ambassadors" were becoming disillusioned with their treatment.

"The feedback I am getting from some of these ambassadors is that they want to get into this fight.

"These workers are very dissatisfied with their lot and they were told they were a special grading, getting more than other staff.

"Now they realise that this management service grade is a poison pill.

"They are starting to come over to us en masse, now is the time to recruit these workers," he said.

Conference voted unanimously to demand formal collective bargaining, recognition for the new staff and, if necessary, ballot for industrial action.

Delegates agreed to prepare for an alliance of militant unions to organise a general strike against the Tories' vicious new anti-union laws.

Such an alliance would be prepared to deny anti-strike laws and take joint action.

Since the conference Britain's biggest union, UNITE, had pledged itself to resist repressive new legislation which amounts to "unjust laws".

There was unanimous support for four emergency motions – three of them identical – which also ruled out re-affiliation to the Labour Party or any other party, leaving branches and regions free to support individual election candidates whose socialist political principles were in line with those of the union.

Delegate Jayesh Patel, a London Underground train driver, told conference: "People are well and truly worried about what is coming".

He said that the new Tory anti-union laws would not only set minimum voter turnouts in strike ballots. In addition, workers including fire-fighters and transport workers "would have to run a minimum level of services as well – a strike not as we know it".

"I am sick and tired of going to London or Glasgow and waving a flag, and nothing happening.

"Flash in the pan

demonstrations of anger are not going to win it for us," he said.

Steve Hedley said: "We should be calling on the TUC to organise a general strike to fight back against these laws. The TUC will I believe be reluctant to smash these laws.

"So we will have a coalition of the willing, like the FBU (fire-fighters), CWU (communications workers), parts of the PCS (civil servants) and parts of the GMB.

"We should organise if necessary outside the structure of the TUC to fight these laws and we should not go at the pace of the slowest.

"We have to organise this fight-back, this is where our movement started.

"We have an absolutely proud history," he said quoting as an example the Tolpuddle Martyrs – farmworkers who were imprisoned and sentenced to transportation in the 1830s for forming a union.

"We must stand on the shoulders of our forefathers and mothers and break these unjust laws," he said.

TPE PROTEST

Conference delegates de-camped from the venue en masse to protest outside the city's Central Railway Station highlighting the re-franchising of the north's two regional rail services, Northern Rail and Trans-Pennine Express. Three bidders were shortlisted to operate Northern – the state-owned rail companies of France, Germany and Holland.

The government forbade any bid from the British state sector – another factor in the union's campaign calling for the re-nationalisation of Britain's rail services.

The union estimated that the new Northern and Trans-Pennine Express services will mean over £1 billion transferring



Eddie Dempsey

from railways in the North to subsidise foreign railways.

General secretary Mick Cash said: "Newcastle is right at the heart of the fight to stop the profit-led carve up of jobs and services that is at the core of the new Northern and Trans-Pennine franchises and we are showing our support and solidarity with our local members leading the fight for rail in the North East," he said.

NO TO EU

The union will campaign for an "out" vote if the Tories stick to their pledge to stage a referendum on Britain's membership of the European Union.

David Cameron made the promise before the general election in order to win popular electoral support.

The union has long supported UK withdrawal because the EU is pursuing a neo-liberal agenda of enforced privatisation of public services.

The EU is also negotiating the controversial Trans-Atlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) with the United States. The deal, being negotiated behind closed doors, will give transnational corporations the power to sue governments if they enact legislation deemed to affect future profits.

General secretary Mick Cash said that the union had reaffirmed its long-standing policy of opposing EU membership.

"EU policies are at odds with the aspirations of this union as the various treaties and directives are demanding the privatisation of our rail and ferry industries.

"The EU is also secretly negotiating trade deals which will decimate our health and education sectors and hand huge powers to transnational corporations over nation states and their governments.

"The Tories will be campaigning to stay in the EU come any referendum as they



Peter Pinkney

FAREWELL TO ARMS

RMT president Peter Pinkney opened his last annual general meeting with a barnstorming call to action.

In his last speech to the conference as his three-year term of office ends this year Peter called for an end to division and for unity to challenge "the worst government we have ever known".

He told delegates: "The general election was probably the worst result we could have expected.

"In the Queen's' speech their intentions were blatant: more stringent anti-union laws, more benefit cuts, more attacks on the poor.

"I have always hated Thatcher but this lot are worse.

"Thatcher had this cult of the individual – people buying their own council houses and the rest.

"But this lot are the old aristocrats who hate the working class and believe the working class should know its place.

"I think this government is the worst we have ever seen – the rich looking after the rich,

looking after their own".

Calling for maximum unity he criticised those who bickered on political points on the left and said: "Before the general election people were busy attacking each other, attacking the Greens, attacking the Labour Party – but not UKIP, not the Tories.

"How are they assisting people who are going hungry, living on the streets, not able to get access to health care?" he said.

He compared the plight of the poor with the "obscurity" of wealthy people paying three million pounds for a house in London – and then "upgrading" to a more expensive property.

But he said there could – and must – be change.

He quoted Cuban revolutionary leader Che Guevara who had said: "Only those who dream will see those dreams converted into reality".

He said that RMT had dreams and a duty "to stand together, and if politicians will not do it, we must do it on behalf of every downtrodden person in the world".

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Lewis Peacock



Peter March



Scutineers
compare
notes

support this right wing, neo-liberal, anti-worker agenda," he said.

OFFSHORE CRISIS

Delegate Mikey Craig spotlighted the appalling crisis facing workers in Britain's off-shore energy sector – mainly oil rigs – with thousands of job losses.

He said that the 25,000-strong offshore workforce had been reduced by 6,000 in the

previous nine months and that another 6,000 job losses were expected this year. In all a reduction of 50 per cent was expected over a two-year period.

The redundancies had followed a drop in oil prices, but were continuing even though prices had risen again, and despite tax breaks for the industry from the Tory government – thanks to the greed of oil companies.

"Those that are going to be fortunate to keep their jobs also face a massive attack on their terms and conditions," he said.

The attacks already include an attempt by bosses to end the two weeks on three weeks off work schedule, replacing it with three weeks on and three weeks off with no extra pay for the extra week's work.

Medical cover, travel pay and overtime rates were also under attack.

He won support for a call to bring together all unions involved in off-shore work, including shipping operations supplying rigs, to join forces and co-ordinate action to resist the job losses and attacks on working conditions.

SOLIDARITY

Conference gave its usual warm welcome to overseas delegations, including Earl Philips of the New York Transport Workers' Union. He told conference how RMT's late general secretary Bob Crow had visited New York for meetings and having been overwhelmed by Bob's enthusiasm, the union re-organised and stepped up recruitment, increasing its 30,000 membership by 10,000. He said that his union had also moved to a new headquarters and that a portrait of Bob hangs in the office of the union's president on the wall behind his desk.

"He sits in a chair at his desk where he often gives television interviews so that picture of Bob is seen regularly on TV screens in New York.

"Our union is a fighting union, just like yours," he said.

Conference also welcomed Asle Reime, national secretary and head of organisation at Industri Energi, the Norwegian union representing workers on oil and gas rigs, and the shipping operations which supply them.

He told conference that, as in Britain, jobs, terms and conditions were under attack, and that his union's members

were responding with strike action.

Other conference decisions included:

- campaigning to make rail companies to do more to eliminate the effects of ballast dust
- action to ensure employers allow paid time off for learning
- to press employers to allow flexible working for women workers with caring commitments
- to investigate and record instances of sexual assault against and harassment of women passengers and to press the Department of Transport, Transport for London and all public transport providers to take action over the issue;
- to create a "young member" position in all branches
- to write to RMT Parliamentary group MPs to support the pardoning of men convicted under indecency laws for being homosexual
- to campaign for a new "workers' party" based on trade unionism and socialism
- send support to train guard Glenn Watson following his unjust dismissal by Trans-Pennine Express and a collection was taken for Glenn.

There was condemnation of appalling racism and ethnic cleansing in the Dominican Republic in the Caribbean resulting in an overwhelming vote in support of a boycott. Delegate Glenroy Watson said that the Dominican Republic had stripped citizenship from tens of thousands of its residents because their roots are in neighbouring Haiti, though they were born in the Dominican Republic.

The two countries are a single land mass on one island.

But people of Haitian descent are to be ethnically cleansed – sent to a country they have never seen – people whose

parents or grandparents came to the Dominican Republic to work on its sugar plantations decades ago.

Mr Watson told conference how in 1937 20,000 Haitian men, women and children were rounded up, attacked, beaten and many murdered in an outburst of racism and xenophobia.

Delegate Richard Burns, a Virgin West Coast train manager, said that he had holidayed in the Dominican Republic for five years running.

He had witnessed the treatment of Haitian sugar plantation workers as virtual slaves.

"We tried to give them water and food, but they were too terrified to take it.

"I have not been back since, I am boycotting the Haitian Republic," he said.

Conference voted to support the boycott call with two votes against. Among targets of the boycott are tourism, sugar, cigars and rum.

JOHN COGGER AWARD 2015



RMT general secretary Mick Cash presented Rebecca McGovarin with this year's John Cogger young member award.

Rebecca is a member of Plymouth No.1 branch who works for Cross Country. She joined the union in 2010 and has been branch chair for over a year. She is also a health and safety rep and a local rep.

Mick Cash, youth award winner in 1985, congratulated Rebecca for all her hard work representing members and in the running of the branch.

"Members like Rebecca are the cornerstone of the union and there is no reason to believe she will not be running the union in the years to come," he said.



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RMT
MEMBERSHIP
ENTITLEMENT

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Did you know that your RMT membership entitles you to £5,000 of Accidental Death cover completely free of charge? It's a membership right for all members who are UK resident and aged between 18 and 64.

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RMT General Secretary Mick Cash says "We've negotiated this free cover for members with our membership benefits partner RMTProtect and I want to make sure members make the most of their union benefits and take this up – you never know when an accident could happen".

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The plan pays out £5,000 to your estate if you should die as the result of an accident. The cash is intended to help those you leave behind with sudden and unexpected costs, including funeral arrangements.

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12,151

deaths caused by accidents in 2013*.

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Terms and conditions apply. Cover lasts for 12 months, however you can renew it every year for free. RMT is an Introducer Appointed Representative of RMTProtect. RMTProtect is a trading name of Union Benefit Holdings Ltd (UIB) who are authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority, register number 307575. This can be checked on the FCA website www.fca.org.uk. The insurance is underwritten by ACE Europe Life Limited.



A VIEW FROM THE P-WAY

David Nightingale looks at the problem of sewage on the tracks and how India might have the solution

Human excrement dropped from trains straight onto railway infrastructure has caused outrage for many years in this country.

There is potential for staff and the public to catch untold viruses from airborne waste and other fluids emitted by passing trains.

The dumping of raw sewage is not a new phenomenon and comes as no surprise to rail workers. Yet when the question is posed to the general public about sewage on the railways the majority can't believe this dreadful practice exists.

What about government ministers? Has the government been keeping it under wraps? What is being done about it? And what are other countries

doing to solve this problem?

The problem with on-board toilets is where to store the waste or the depositing of the waste elsewhere. The first toilets built were crude to say the least given some of their names. The drop chute toilet as the name suggests drops the waste down the chute and onto the tracks, also the Hopper toilet was the same, it worked like a Hopper train used for grain distribution.

In fact the earliest recorded literature on the solution to depositing waste was in 1915. This method involved on-board staff disabling the flushing mechanism whilst travelling through cities, but once passed through the city the waste was dumped onto the track again.

Track workers operate in a

potentially dangerous environment. Yet while other hazards are risk assessed by competent persons and the hierarchy within the company one hazard, human waste, is widely ignored. This is despite the fact that rail travel now is booming and more and more money is spent on upgrading infrastructure, platforms and on the business itself.

More passengers and more rolling stock equals more sewage and waste products dumped on the track. In particular parts of the country, waste is often ankle deep and before any work takes place this has to be removed.

Let us not forget the passage of trains at high speed. Track side staff and in some cases

members of the public are regularly sprayed with fluids from passing high speed trains, this act surely cannot be tolerated much longer as the potential health risks are monumental.

Each year rail workers will at some stage suffer from the effects of coming into contact with sewage. The majority of illnesses are small like upset stomachs, gastroenteritis and just feeling unwell in general but what about the serious diseases? I believe there may be a significant under reporting of diseases linked to sewage because workers fail to recognise the link between ill health and the work they carry out.

There are serious waterborne

diseases linked to raw sewage and rail workers are at considerable risk whilst accessing on the infrastructure. Exposure to raw sewage may result in:

- Hepatitis, this may result in jaundice and inflammation of the liver
- Occupational asthma, wheezing and coughing accompanied by a tight chest, this is produced by inhalation of dead organisms.
- Infection of the skin and eyes requiring treatment
- Alveolitis, inflammation of the lungs which can lead to emphysema and permanent lung damage.

So what are train operating companies doing about this problem? A recent survey by the consumers favourite, Which? Magazine rated train operators train toilet cleanliness.

Bottom of the pile, pardon the pun, was Northern Rail for having the dirtiest toilets whilst First Trans Pennine Express and Grand Central trains scored highest for cleanliness. So what do these figures say about sewage dumped on the track? Well lets us look at the reply from Northern Rail. "We will take these comments on board. We know we can always do more for our passenger's expectation, and we have the financial resources to do that".

Well it would appear from their nameless spokesperson that they do have the financial resources to fit new toilets to their aging rolling stock but are doing absolutely nothing to resolve the sewage problem, this goes for the other train companies mentioned in the report.

Old Rolling Stock

The rail network has been in decline for years but now more money is pumped into new stations, track and electrification yet most of the rolling stock was introduced pre-privatisation over 20 years ago.

We only have to look at the Pacer trains, essentially Diesel Multiple Units (DMU), which are one of the worst culprits for

ejecting sewage on the infrastructure.

These old, worn-out trains still operate despite being over 30 years old. They are basically British Leyland bus bodies with a train axle and wheels bolted on them and this is just one part of the problem. Yet Transport Secretary Patrick McLoughlin recently stated that Pacers will still have a role, so much for George Osbourne and his 'northern powerhouse' pledge.

We will have to wait until the franchise is offered up at the back end of 2015 to see what will transpire. By 2020 these old relics will fall foul of disability discrimination laws but I have heard there may be plans to get around that!

Another problem is government purse strings. It has come up with a like-for-like train but instead of a diesel unit they are bringing in Electric Multiple Units (EMU's).

The government has agreed with Thameslink to take their old 319 units that have been in service since 1987. But a new moquette and extensive paint job can't disguise the true age of this unit. This is basically a hand-me-down from the South of England and appears to be a swap with no solution.

Solutions

The sewage problem has been talked about for years and there are specialist companies who are in the process of designing retrofitting waste storage tanks to trains.

Trains built in the last couple of years have sealed effluent tanks fitted to them but over time, because of scale build up the tanks, they can become unhygienic and reduce the functionality of them.

Continuous and preventive maintenance stops scale build-up and helps break down organic matter in a safe and controlled way. Manufacturers expect the life span of a train to be about 40 years, but only if correct maintenance is performed regularly.

The companies willing to fit tanks have stated that some train operated companies have

made a start but progress is painfully slow. The train companies have known for years about this problem but it would appear it is not a priority for them whilst they are making record breaking profits.

There would appear to be another solution. In India, with its colossal population and large passenger numbers, they have fitted Bio-Toilets to their trains. These green toilets have been a huge success thus far.

The bio-toilet not only helps in maintaining cleanliness by preventing discharge of human waste on tracks but, in turn, also protects the railway lines from corrosion. The new green toilets have been designed by the railways in conjunction with the Defence, Research and Development Organisation. The

bio-toilets are fitted below the coach floor underneath the lavatories and the human waste discharged into them is acted upon by a particular kind of bacteria that converts human waste into non-corrosive, safe neutral water.

This is excellent venture goes some way to show that train companies in the UK are still behind the times. They are making huge profits and for some reason are not investing in effluent tanks for their trains.

This is the 21st century, let's move with the times and find a way of dealing with this problem. If we stand by idly then the future health of track workers, lineside operatives and the public will continue to be at risk.

SEWAGE VICTORY!

RMT campaign brings forward date for elimination of dumping of sewage on Scotrail fleet

The union has secured a major victory in bringing forward the date for the elimination of the dumping of sewage on the tracks by Scotrail trains.

The approved schedule of works sets out a clear timescale whereby all Scotrail trains will be fitted with controlled emission tanks. Although this programme of works does not meet RMT's target date of April 2016 it should see around 40 per cent of the fleet having these tanks fitted by that date with the rest fully fitted by December 2017.

RMT general secretary Mick Cash said that the fact the programme for the elimination of the disgusting and dangerous practice of dumping sewage on our railways was advanced in Scotland was 100 per cent down to the hard work and

campaigning over several years by RMT representatives, members and officials.

"Network Rail in Scotland is also in the process of arranging briefings to frontline maintenance staff and offering vaccinations to reduce the risk to staff from untreated human excrement which is another important development resulting from the RMT campaign.

"If real targets can be laid down for ending the scandal of sewage on our railways in Scotland then they can be achieved across the whole network. It's time for the train companies and the politicians to stop the excuses and get on with it," he said.

CALMAC ACTION WINS ASSURANCES

Union wins cross party support for campaign against threat to wages and jobs arising from EU-enforced privatisation

After two days of solid strike action RMT members working on ferry sailings to over 20 islands on the west coast of Scotland have won assurances protecting their current terms and conditions and their pension scheme.

RMT had suspended further strike action on Caledonian MacBrayne Ferries and on Argyll Ferries to allow negotiations to continue with all parties on key issues at heart of the dispute.

RMT general secretary Mick Cash said that thanks to the hard work of negotiators the union had reached a clear agreement on the key issues involved in the dispute.

"I want to pay tribute to the solidarity and determination of our members which has enabled us to secure this agreement and I also want to thank the local communities who have supported us in this fight.

"Although the dispute is over the fight to retain the lifeline ferry services in the public sector continues," he said.

A motion tabled by Independent MSP John Finnie in the Scottish Parliament on the threat to jobs and services at CalMac has attracted cross party support including from Labour and the SNP, the party pressing ahead with the privatisation process.

The motion noted that the private sector company, Serco, was bidding to take over CalMac services, and believed that the interests of islanders

and the Scottish economy would be best served by these lifeline ferry services remaining in the public sector.

RMT national secretary Steve Todd said that the CalMac workers were drawing on broad political and public support.

"The assurances on jobs, staffing, safety and the future of the ferry services will allow us to move forwards but the campaign to keep lifeline ferry

services in the public sector goes on," he said.

A new independent poll carried out by Survation has found that almost two thirds of Scottish voters think Caledonian MacBrayne ferry services should remain the public sector while only one in ten support privatising the service.

The poll also found that six out of ten Scots supported the right of Calamac Workers to take industrial action to defend staffing levels, jobs and pensions from the threat of privatisation, while only one in five oppose Calmac workers.

SURVEY RESULTS

Two operators, Serco Caledonian Ferries Ltd, a privately owned company, and CalMac Ferries

Ltd, a publicly owned company, have been invited by the Scottish government to tender for the Clyde and Hebrides Ferry Services (CHFS) contract which covers lifeline ferry services between the mainland of Scotland and 22 of the major islands on Scotland's West Coast.

Workers employed by CalMac Ferries Ltd, which currently runs the lifeline ferry services between the mainland of Scotland and 22 of the major islands on Scotland's West Coast are taking industrial action over concerns that jobs, staffing level, pensions and conditions could be threatened by the possible privatisation of these services.



WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS IS CLOSEST TO YOUR VIEW?

	All	CON	LAB	SNP
The Scottish government should decide that these ferry services remain publicly operated	64%	49%	63%	72%
The Scottish government should decide that these ferry services should be privately operated	11%	20%	11%	11%
Don't know	25%	31%	26%	17%

WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS IS CLOSEST TO YOUR VIEW?

	All	CON	LAB	SNP
I support the right of CalMac workers to take industrial action	58%	33%	67%	66%
I oppose the right of CalMac workers to take industrial action	20%	49%	13%	15%
Don't know	22%	18%	20%	19%

RFA SETTLEMENT

Long-running industrial action short of a strike taken by RMT members at the Royal Navy supply line the Royal Fleet Auxiliary has led to a comprehensive agreement covering a wide range of issues.

The union has achieved a pay increase for apprentices from £11456 to £14648 in the first year and from £12557 up to £15138 in the second year and from September all meals for apprentices will be paid for at training establishments.

RMT has also ensured that LHAA members will be offered alternative employment within the RFA and appropriate training to enable them to achieve Officer status.

Stores accountants ships office duties have been amended and the on-board LSO can now request assistance from SA members.

RFA has agreed in principle to increase some personnel in some TSoC departments and a

review of staff numbers in this area as well as of the current banding system.

RMT national secretary Steve Todd said that the union had achieved two major milestones, securing the update of the JSP 767 (LSD(A) Handbook) with what the EMF need to provide upon embarkation.

"After a series of protracted negotiations new agreed working routines for stewards and cooks have also been agreed which should see a reduction in work loads.

"I would like congratulate you all on standing firm throughout this dispute.

"Without members participating in the recent industrial action, the union would not have been able to force management back around the negotiating table.

"It is a testament to the effectiveness of a strong and organised workforce that is prepared to stand up to



management," he said.

RMT general secretary Mick Cash said that the issues in dispute were all about valuing a workforce that played an integral part of the defence of the UK and training that workforce for the future.

"The union salutes our members' solidarity and determination to get this dispute resolved," he said. ■

MARCH AND DISTRICT BRANCH
SUPPORT

KATY MAZUR

FOR COUNCIL OF EXECUTIVES REGION 10

EUSTON NO 1 BRANCH
SUPPORT

KATY MAZUR

FOR COUNCIL OF EXECUTIVES REGION 10

KINGS CROSS BRANCH
SUPPORT

GEORGE WELCH

FOR COUNCIL OF EXECUTIVES

SOUTH EAST ESSEX BRANCH
SUPPORT

KATY MAZUR

FOR COUNCIL OF EXECUTIVES REGION 10

SOUTH EAST ESSEX BRANCH
SUPPORT

DERRICK MARR

FOR PRESIDENT

ST. PANCRAS BRANCH
SUPPORTS

ALLAN JEVES

FOR COUNCIL OF EXECUTIVES REGION 10

WATFORD BRANCH
SUPPORTS

WAYNE MOORE

FOR COUNCIL OF EXECUTIVES REGION 10

NO SOCIAL DUMPING AT CONDOR

RMT Southampton Shipping branch chair Mick Stubbs (right) spoke at a protest outside the headquarters of HQ of Macquarie Bank in Sydney, Australia over its involvement with Condor Ferries which is employing cheap foreign labour in Britain undercutting UK ratings in a process known as social dumping.

Condor Ferries, which runs vessels between the UK, Channel Islands and France, is paying as little as £2.35 per hour to Ukrainian crews that it brought onboard to replace British crews – well below the UK minimum wage. Using the excuse that they are non-domiciled in the European Union, these seafarers are also made to work longer hours while receiving shorter leave.

"It is a scandal that Macquarie Bank allows its



operators to pay £2.35 per hour.

"The whole city of Sydney is invited to take a look at what is going on and express its rejection of this discrimination," Mick Stubbs said at the protest.

Over 70 people joined the demonstration including Maritime Union of Australia

members. Assistant branch secretary MUA Sydney Paul Garret said that he was pleased to support RMT members in their fight to stop employers undercutting UK seafarers.

The International Transport Workers' Federation also fully supports the campaign. ■

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SCOTTISH LGBT CONFERENCE

Barry Weldon reports on the fourth annual Scottish TUC workers' conference

Scotland hosted its fourth annual STUC LGBT workers conference in Clydebank recently which I was proud to attend and represent RMT.

This year's venue was the fabulous Beardmore Hotel which is owned and operated by NHS Scotland, proof that nationalised services operate well if not better than private companies with all staff paid the living wage and terms and conditions in line with NHS Scotland employees.

Motions were passed on support for same sex LGBT parental rights, Support for young transgender people, fights against the Scottish Defence League, PEGIDA and UKIP, equality within blood donation along with others.

RMT's motion on International LGBT Representation was carried unanimously. It called for the STUC to lobby the European TUC and other international organisations to organise and establish LGBT committees specifically to tackle the suppression of basic human rights across the world.

Emergency motions were passed on the Tories sickening new plans to scrap the Human Rights Act which is not only a threat to LGBT people but everyone as we would lose our right to life, freedom from

slavery and forced labour, freedom of thought, belief and religion, expression or freedom of association as trade unionists.

Speakers included Nathan Gale whose story for me as a disabled worker is truly inspiring, Nathan and his partner Robert were refused access to Glasgow's Polo Lounge due to Robert being in a wheelchair staff cited a lack of disabled facilities at the premises. They had been to the popular venue before but on this occasion were refused access.

After the incident Nathan took legal action against Polo Lounge owners G1 Group, which is owned by leisure and property tycoon Stefan King. His firm G1 topped a list of companies'

across Britain which face penalties for neglecting to pay the legal minimum wage.

The court ruled that they had been discriminated against under the Equality Act and won his case. It is one of the only civil cases seen in Scotland under the Equality Act in relation to access for disabled people.

Other speakers included Phyllis Opoku Gyimah the founder of UK Black Pride, the annual inclusive event that celebrates our culturally diverse Black LGBT community which is open to everyone.

Another speaker was Becky Kent from the Scottish Transgender Alliance, which works to improve gender

identity and gender reassignment equality rights and inclusion in Scotland.

Lindsay England from Just A Ball Game also spoke about the football campaign group helping grass roots and professional sports groups and education establishments and trade unions build on the delivery of safety inclusion and respect around LGBT people, sexual orientation and gender identity.

I am proud to say I have been elected on to the STUC LGBT workers' committee and look forward to working hard to represent my union and hope to see more members attend next year's conference.



RMT AT LONDON PRIDE

RMT general secretary Mick Cash joined the annual London Pride march last month as part of the noisy RMT delegation

Letters

VOTE TO GET OUT OF THE EU

Dear Editor,

At last we are to be allowed a referendum on European Union membership and the chance to reject it and the economic disaster it has become.

We also have the chance to leave behind EU directives that encourage the privatisation of our railways and ferry services to the detriment of our citizens.

However we do have a long way to go to convince many of the benefits of leaving the EU, but convince them we must. A No vote is the only way forward for our country to regain its ability to govern itself once again and decide its own transport policies without interference from the EU.

Our union must campaign strongly for a no vote and carry on the legacy of Bob Crow and the 'No2EU' party.

Yours Sincerely,

Ian Bentley

SCOTLAND AND THE SNP

Dear Editor,

In a final response to the two replies to my letter maintaining that the SNP is to the left of the Labour Party I would like to address some of the issues raised.

In response to Ian Brown, I agree with Ian that Labour have historically been the party that represents working people in the Westminster parliament.

I voted Labour for many years but am now unable to do so. I would argue that tragically 'Labour' now equals 'Tory' – a party that is full of career politicians, like Douglas Alexander and the odious Jim Murphy – thankfully 'rumbled' by the Scottish electorate and deposed.

Jeremy Corbyn is the obvious choice for leader if Labour seriously wants to stand a chance of winning the next Westminster election; trying to ape the Tories and win the centre ground will achieve nothing.

I never said that the SNP were perfect, nor socialist. However they do offer alternative policies to the electorate that the 'mainstream' parties no longer afford (ie renewable energy/anti-austerity/scrap Trident etc.). Perhaps this explains their landslide victory in Scotland and should offer a lesson to the Labour party.

The Police Scotland and Fire authorities have been introduced but I fail to see how this will affect anyone on a local basis. I understand that the armed police officers to which he refers have been deployed on routine duties rather than 'sitting around' waiting for incidents.

As for council cuts I would suggest that these are a result of cuts to the Scottish budget imposed by Westminster which would not be happening if the SNP achieved their core ambition ie Scottish independence.

As for Brendan Glynn's letter, my original comment about parliamentary majorities was obviously written before the awful result in the UK general election. Brendan's idea of personal freedoms seems to be very selective. He argues for people to be allowed the personal freedom to blow cigarette smoke in my face in pubs, restaurants and other public places – non-smokers obviously shouldn't have the personal freedom to breathe clean air.

According to Brendan sectarianism is about the freedom to use 'crude chants at football matches' and 'sing well-known songs' in public. The fact is that the vast majority of Scots are not 'old firm' (Rangers/Celtic) supporters and support the ending of dangerous, outdated sectarian nonsense.

Next up – minimum alcohol pricing. This legislation is being challenged by big business but has the support of the Chief Medical Officer, the BMA, the Royal Colleges, the Association of Chief Police Officers, and numerous campaign groups like Alcohol Focus Scotland.

Hot on the heels of the anti-sectarianism bill and minimum alcohol pricing the SNP government passed a bill to legalise gay marriage in Scotland, making it the first part of the UK to do so; the third major seriously contentious bill to be put before the Scottish Parliament by the majority government in barely over a year. All three were faced with considerable political opposition yet the public have responded by voting SNP in larger and larger numbers.

Jeff Kirk

Edinburgh No1 Branch

TUC'S DISABLED WORKERS CONFERENCE

Dear editor,

I would like to thank RMT and specially Jim McDaid, Leon and Toyo for their support and nominating me as a delegate to attend the TUC disabled workers' conference.

It was first time for me and I was honoured and privileged to be there and see the work that reps from all the unions do and their campaign against the austerity and cuts and how all this have a direct impact on disabled people and welfare of disabled people.

It was also an honour to meet Janine Booth and see her work as a campaigner for disabled people's rights, she was also re-elected as a chair of conference. So a big thank my union and to you all for giving me the opportunity to be part of this.

Regards

Ketan Jagada

THANK YOU FROM GLENN WATSON

Dear editor,

I am writing to say a huge thank you to all RMT AGM delegates that contributed to the collection made for me following my dismissal from TPE.

The support and generosity I have received from union members and branches has been phenomenal and the money collected as well as collections from work colleagues has helped me to start a small business of my own to help me through these hard times.

My family and I will always be grateful to all that helped and also I would like to say a special thank you to John Tilley, Gary Jackson and everyone who stood on the picket lines at Cleethorpes and Sheffield.

These have been testing times for me but the solidarity shown by RMT members helped us reach a settlement that we were happy with.

Thanks again, Glenn Watson

LABOUR REALITY

Dear editor,

Recent correspondence in RMT News refers to the free movement of labour, Karl Marx's 19th century analysis and even a RMT president's support for the Green Party.

As a Labour councillor can I appeal for reality to break out? In May the Conservative victory means basic trade union rights will change. There is no chance of getting rid of Thatcherite legislation that bars secondary action.

The trade union movement must recognise is that you cannot beat capitalist oppression by syndicalist methods. Workers' rights in terms of better conditions, social provision and services will only come through Parliamentary legislation.

The trade union movement needs to go back to basics and teach the next generation who face far worse life chances, that collective action and mutual support is the way forward, not individualism.

That, brothers and sisters, will involve higher taxes certainly for the better off and even for transport workers.

Please RMT wake up to reality. We have the most reactionary government since 1945 or even the 1930s. Learn to get through to your members that the majority in the UK are far removed from Karl Marx. Far too many are greedy, materialist and separatist. The way to protect all workers is to back Labour, warts and all.

Yours fraternally

Andrew Beere

Labour councillor

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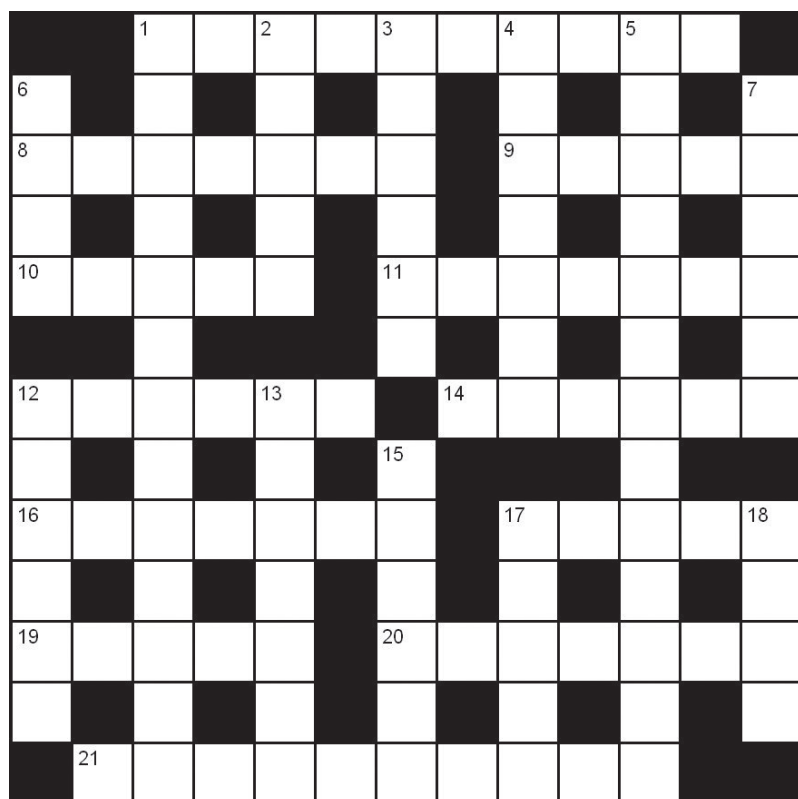
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£50 PRIZE CROSSWORD

APOLOGY: Last month's crossword grid was reprinted from the May issue in error, sorry for any inconvenience caused.



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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Date of Birth		National Insurance Number	

2 **Marital Status** married ☐ partner ☐ single ☐ divorced ☐ **Drivers Licence No.**

3 Your Employment.

Employer		RMT Branch	
Job Description			

4 **Mr** ☐ **Mrs** ☐ **Ms** ☐ **Miss** ☐

5 Membership Status

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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.

