

RMT*news*

Essential reading for today's transport worker

FIGHTING FOR GUARDS



INSIDE THIS ISSUE



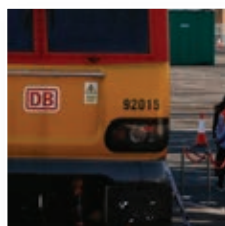
GUARDS TAKE ACTION
PAGE 4



HERALD OF FREE ENTERPRISE
PAGE 6



HEALTH AND SAFETY CONFERENCE
PAGE 14



DB CARGO JOB CRISIS
PAGE 20



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			
Mobile phone		Postcode	
Email address			
Date of Birth*		National Insurance Number*	

2 Your Employment. Employer*	Location	Part Time	YES	NO
Job Description*				
3 Sex. Male	Female	Annual Basic Salary		

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

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

5 Sexual orientation (This information will be used for monitoring purposes as part of our equal opportunities policy)

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

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Direct Debit (you must complete form below)	Paybill Deduction (complete separate form)	I confirm my paybill mandate has been sent to my pay office.
		Phone Freephone 0800 376 3706 to confirm your company offers paybill facility.

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

Your signature	Date
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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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Branch Sort Code

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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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Your National Insurance Number

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FOR RMT OFFICIAL USE ONLY

This is not part of the instruction to your Bank or Building Society.

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Date

Banks and Building Societies may not accept direct debit Instructions from some types of account
This guarantee should be detached and retained by the Payer.

The Direct Debit Guarantee

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



contents

Page 4

GUARDS TAKE ACTION!

Page 5

DEFEND MARTIN ZEE

Page 6

HERALD OF FREE ENTERPRISE - 30 YEARS

Page 7

LIME TREE COLLAPSE UNDERLINES
CRUCIAL GUARD ROLE

Page 8

TUBE FLEET MAINTENANCE ACTION

Page 9

SOS2020 CAMPAIGN UPDATE

Page 10

A BETTER DEAL FOR INFRASTRUCTURE
WORKERS

Page 11

SUPPORT MARTIN ZEE

Page 12

STOP TICKET OFFICE CLOSURES

Page 14

FATIGUE - LONG HOURS LIMIT LIFE

Page 16

SIGNALLING SAFETY

Page 18

SAFE IN THE WORKPLACE, SAFE AT HOME

Page 20

DB CARGO JOBS CRISIS

Page 21

PRESIDENTS COLUMN

Page 22

CONTROL PERIOD 6 UPDATE

Page 25

LANDMARK UNFAIR DISMISSAL VICTORY

Page 26

GENERAL STRIKE MEDAL

Page 28

WORKERS' PLAYTIME!

Page 29

GARY WATTS OBITUARY

Page 30

CROSSWORD

EDITORIAL



FIGHTING FOR GUARDS

There is one reason why the train operating companies and the Tory government standing behind them want to get rid of guards, close ticket offices and generally de-staff the railways – to cut costs and hand the extra profits to the shareholders.

It will not bring down fares, improve services or increase safety yet this is clearly their agenda.

That is why there is widespread public support for the magnificent stand of over 2,000 guards and drivers (earlier this month) which took 24-hour strike action on Southern, Northern and Merseyrail.

MPs in the north have also shown their support by putting down an Early Day Motion calling for a second safety-critical member of staff on-board the train.

It says “there is no need for a dispute if Northern Rail is allowed by the government and Rail North councils who oversee the franchise to reach a similar agreement reached by TransPennine Express which have retained guards”.

There is in fact nothing in the franchise agreement to prevent Northern Rail from keeping the guarantee of a guard on every train but if the government is blocking a deal then it is time for Rail North councils and councillors to stand up to Tory ministers and insist they allow a settlement.

RMT has already made agreements with Scotrail, East Coast and Great Western which retains the guarantee of a guard. Moreover all these agreements cover new modern faster trains that are being ordered for these franchises.

The union is also considering legal options over failure of the government-controlled Office of Rail Regulation to protect the rights of disabled passengers on Southern rail.

The ORR is responsible for agreeing train companies disabled persons protection policy. Yet it has not even assessed the effects on disabled passengers of removing the guarantee of a guard prior to GTR Southern extending Driver-Only Operation.

This is not surprising given that the

ORR is both the regulator and holds the purse strings.

Cost-cutting and the drive for profits has also led to the casualisation of rail infrastructure industry. That is why the union has produced a charter to get a better deal for agency and sub-contracted workers.

Across the rail network, where once there was collective bargaining for pay and conditions for all infrastructure workers, there are now multiple contractors, sub-contractors and agencies that seek to get as much as possible for as little in return as possible. This leads to bullying, low pay, lack of sick and holiday pay and poor health and safety.

The break-up of full-time unionised employment for infrastructure workers was a deliberate act calculated to push wages and conditions down and profits up.

RMT is best placed to respond to these attacks as it is an industrial union uniting workers in all grades and across all employers, on every worksite, in every depot, regardless of employment status, licenses or competencies.

This month sees the 30th anniversary of the sinking of the *Herald of Free Enterprise* which resulted in significant changes to maritime safety regulations. The union has successfully fought off industry attempts to scrap these legal requirements but RMT remains vigilant.

The union has also stepped up its SOS2020 campaign to demand real jobs for UK seafarers and an end to the scandal of low pay on UK-flagged vessels.

Now we are firmly in our grades conference season where transport workers in all sectors set the union's agenda and send motions up to our annual general meeting in June. These meetings are the life-blood of our essential democratic structures that bind us all together in one struggle to improve the lives of our members.

Best wishes

Mick Cash

GUARDS TAKE ACTION!



Southern Rail, Merseyrail and Northern Rail staff walk out against Driver-Only Operation

Over 2,000 RMT members working for three rail franchises across England launched 'rock solid' 24-hour strike action earlier this month in defence of the role of guard.

It was the 30th strike day at Southern Rail in nearly a year despite a campaign of intimidation from Govia Thameslink Railway (GTR) that also operates the Thameslink and Great Northern (TSGN) rail franchise.

RMT general secretary Mick Cash said that despite a relentless campaign of spin and intimidation from Southern, RMT guards' and drivers' continued to hold firm in the fight for rail safety nearly a year on .

"RMT members on Southern have shown incredible courage in this year-long battle to put

passenger safety before private profits , they are a credit to their communities and the entire trade union movement.

"Instead of their usual barrage of distortions and misinformation it is about time Southern/GTR got out of the bunker and entered serious and meaningful talks," he said.

RMT is considering legal options over failure of Office of Rail Regulation (ORR) to protect the rights of disabled passengers on Southern rail.

The ORR has key responsibilities for overseeing the rights of disabled passengers including being responsible for agreeing Train Companies Disabled Persons Protection Policy.

RMT's concerns arise from reports that disabled passengers on GTR Southern are being

treated less favourably than other passengers as a result of the company's decision to end the guarantee of a guard on driver-only services.

MERSERYRAIL

Guards and drivers working for Merseyrail also took action over similar DOO proposals and have refused to work rest days since 6 March.

The action was solid with pickets out in force at all key points and the response on the ground was described as 'wholly positive'.

RMT regional organiser John Tilley said that the strike was all about safety and about putting the welfare of the travelling public before the profits of the private rail companies.

"It's about time Merseyrail and their cheerleaders woke up

to that reality and started serious talks with the union that secure a safe future for their services and the guarantee of a guard on their trains," he said.

Merseyrail and Merseytravel claims that they cannot afford to keep guards had already been exposed as misleading by new research showing that dividends paid out by Merseyrail are up to £14million a year, almost three times the cost of keeping guards.

The research also shows that in 2014 the revenue income of Merseyrail was £51 million, and Merseyrail paid out a dividend not far short of £14 million meaning a quarter of passenger fares ending up in the pockets of Merseyrails owners, Serco and Dutch state-owned Abellio.

RMT believes that instead of getting rid of Guards Merseyrail

should forsake some of its dividends to pay keep the guards and if it does not do so voluntarily then Merseytravel should renegotiate its contract with Merseyrail.

If Merseyrail won't cooperate then, when their contract expires in 2028, any new contract should ensure that revenues are retained to keep the guards - this is easily achievable as the new trains are to be brought through a 30 year long financing deal.

NORTHERN RAIL

Pickets were also out across Northern Rail as members fight for passenger safety and the retention of the guard on the

services and the response was reported to be 'fantastic'.

Mick Cash said that franchise holder Arriva Rail North should now listen to their staff, listen to the public and recognise that there is no case whatsoever for axing the guard from their trains.

"This action could have been avoided if Arriva hadn't back pedalled from earlier pledges to retain the guard.

"It is now down to the company to engage with the union in talks over a safe and sustainable future built around the guarantee of a guard on the trains," he said.



There was a show of solidarity by RMT members across the country with Merseyrail guard Martin Zee at the start of his court hearing in Liverpool earlier this month. The Crown Prosecution Service decided to prosecute despite the fact that the company has taken no action against him.

Martin was involved in an incident at Hamilton Square last year in which an elderly woman was injured when she fell between the train and the platform after the door closure procedure had commenced.

By following training Martin received from the company, he was instrumental in assisting

the train driver in isolating the electrical supply to the third rail by placing the short circuit bar on the running and conductor rail. Martin offered assistance to the woman until the emergency services arrived.

RMT general secretary Mick Cash said that if the CPS did not withdraw these charges it

could result in grave consequences for the rail industry in general, leaving staff with no level of protection regardless if they even follow agreed company training procedures whilst carrying out door operating procedures.

HERALD OF FREE ENTERPRISE - 30 YEARS

Thirty years ago this month the *Herald of Free Enterprise* owned by P&O Ferries, although still in the colours of Townsend Thoresen, capsized just outside the Port of Zeebrugge in Belgium killing 193 crew and passengers.

RMT national secretary Steve Todd and Lee Davison Dover shipping branch secretary attended the Sailors Society memorial service at St Mary's Church in Dover to commemorate the anniversary.

A two minute silence was observed by all in attendance followed by the names of the people who lost their lives being read out including entire families.

After the church service the ships bell recovered by divers was presented to the Herald Families Association.

RMT executive committee member Lee Davison said that the people of Dover knew where they were on the evening of March 6 1987.

"I was 10 years old having tea with my nan when it came up on the TV, I got straight on the phone to see what Ship my dad was on at the time fortunately he was on the sister ship *Pride of Free Enterprise*.

"30 years on the *Herald of Free Enterprise* is still in everyone's hearts," he said.

The disaster resulted in significant changes to international maritime safety regulations, including the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS) Convention.

The union successfully fought off industry attempts in 2014 to scrap the legal requirement for emergency

equipment lockers on-deck for ro-ro passenger ferries, although the union was unable to persuade the government to retain three regulations covering weight distribution and weighing of cargo.

The UK Chamber of Shipping's Blueprint for Growth document published last year contains a shopping list of regulations which the industry would like to see cut in areas including vessel stability and minimum hours of rest for seafarers.

Steve Todd said that the disaster should never be forgotten and the influential safety regulations put in place after should never be allowed to be diluted by shipping companies to cut costs.

"These regulations were put in place so that an incident of



this magnitude never happens again and RMT must continue to defend safety at all costs within our maritime sector," he said.



LIME STREET COLLAPSE UNDERLINES CRUCIAL GUARD ROLE

The safe evacuation of hundreds of passengers trapped for hours on trains in tunnels outside Liverpool Lime Street station last month underlines the importance of a safety-trained guard on every train, RMT has warned.

RMT paid tribute to the “magnificent” response of railway staff and emergency services – and warned of the potentially lethal consequences if the trains involved had not had qualified guards aboard.

At least one train was seconds away from colliding with the collapse and the damage caused to the four lines affected was so severe that they could be out of action for a month.

Both Arriva Rail North (ARN) services caught up in the collapse had conductors aboard, trained in dealing with emergencies and evacuations, leaving their drivers free to deal with communications with control.

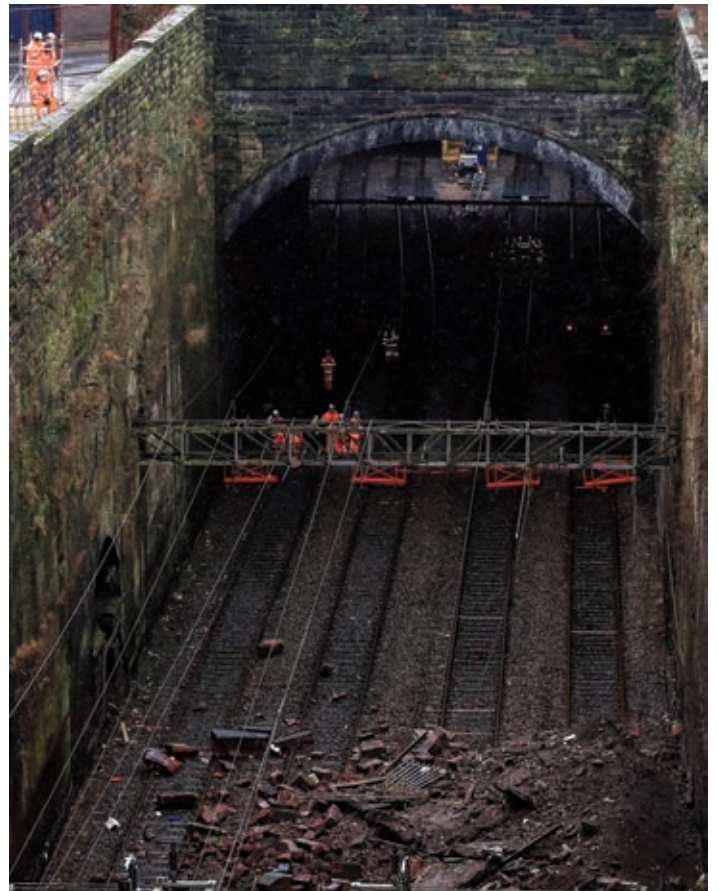
RMT general secretary Mick

Cash said that it was clear that the response of railway staff and emergency services was magnificent and that we are very lucky indeed that this was not a major disaster.

“If ARN’s plans to extend driver-only operation had already been in place, the two Northern services involved would not have had guards aboard, with potentially disastrous consequences.

“Without guards to keep passengers calm and lead safe evacuations we would have had the potentially lethal prospect of passengers de-training themselves in cold, dark tunnels and stumbling towards tons of debris and damaged 25,000-volt overhead power lines.

“This is yet another graphic illustration of why attempts to impose or extend driver-only operation amount to a fundamental attack on safety for passengers and rail workers alike, and why RMT will use every means available to us to resist them,” he said. ■



GUARD: Network Rail workers at the scene in Edge Hill in Liverpool, after a wall collapsed, they repaired the damage 24 hours earlier than estimated.

RMT DEMANDS SAFE TAXI RANKS IN NEATH

RMT is demanding that Neath Port Talbot council listen to the concerns of local taxi drivers and urgently provides safe and viable taxi ranks while town centre redevelopment takes place.

Currently, taxi drivers are required to park in permanent ranks in Neath and elsewhere, but the Neath town centre

redevelopment has meant that when work begins, taxi drivers will lose their current ranks on Wind Street.

RMT taxi driver members are opposed to Neath Port Talbot Councils interim plans which they believe do not provide a safe and commercially viable rank in the town centre.

RMT general secretary Mick Cash said that members rejected a suggestion from Neath Port Talbot to use Orchard Street as drivers believe it is unsafe, something which the council also accepted after a petition.

“RMT urges the council, particularly the cabinet, to listen to the concerns of drivers

and the public and work with the drivers to find a suitable location and consider carefully their preferred suggestions when the issues are next considered by cabinet.

“A solution must be found quickly before taxis lose their base and the public are confused over taxi services in Neath,” he said. ■



TUBE FLEET MAINTENANCE ACTION

RMT London Underground Fleet members launched a campaign of industrial action this month following numerous unresolved breaches of agreed machineries and agreements by LUL management.

Members voted overwhelmingly for action including an overtime ban following numerous unresolved breaches of agreed machineries and agreements by management.

RMT reps have listed these

breaches as including:-

- Not consulting or negotiating with this union over reduced staffing levels within Fleet
- Breaching our agreement on Night Tube and failing to recruit adequate additional staff to cover this work
- Actively attacking RMT reps for carrying out their trade union duties
- Not following the correct process when seeking to change rosters
- Removing a long and established practice of 'phone in days' throughout Fleet without agreement

RMT general secretary Mick Cash said that this list was not exhaustive.

"The current level of flagrant abuse and ignorance of long-standing policies and procedures by London Underground is appalling and the anger among RMT Fleet grades members was clearly demonstrated in the ballot results.

"The continued failures by the management side have left us with no option but to begin a campaign of industrial action.

"RMT's position could not be clearer and it is down to London Underground to start taking this list of grievances seriously, to stop trying to impose fundamental changes to agreed policies and working conditions and to halt the bullying and harassment of our reps. RMT remains available for serious talks," he said. ■

TUBE DRIVERS' STRIKE

Further action taken on Central, Waterloo and City depots

Tube Central Line train operators took further strike action last month against the forced displacement staff and the failure of ACAS talks to resolve the dispute,

RMT general secretary Mick Cash said that the continuing action was due to the pointless and aggressive approach by London Underground that was always going to spark an angry

backlash.

"If LU are allowed to get away with this move on the Central Line they will start shunting drivers around the combine at the drop of a hat regardless of the consequences.

"Staff across London Underground are angry and prepared to stand up and be counted the company would be wise to recognise that," he said.

NIGHT TUBE DRIVERS BACK STRIKE ACTION

Night Tube drivers have voted overwhelmingly for both strike action and action short of a strike over a block on career progression which has been imposed by London Underground.

Members voted by over 96 per cent for strike action and by over 98 per cent for action short of a strike.

As a result of a blatantly

discriminatory policy night train operators have been prevented from moving into vacant full-time positions for a period of at least 18 months. All other staff, including part-time night staff are eligible to apply.

In addition, LUL has advised that night train operators do not attract the overtime rate of pay until they exceed 35 hours

in a week. As night train operators are currently contracted to only 16 hours, they are prevented from being compensated for any late finish due to, for example, service disruption.

RMT general secretary Mick Cash said that it was outrageous that London Underground had decided to discriminate against their Night Tube drivers.

"This is a senseless and damaging policy that picks out one group of staff for negative treatment and of course the drivers are angry.

"RMT calls on LU to see sense, stop these stupid attacks on career progression and fair reward for overtime working and confirm that this discrimination has been lifted," he said. ■

SOS2020 CAMPAIGN UPDATE

Plans include a day of action on Thursday May 18 in Poole, Dorset to highlight exploitation of seafarers

RMT branches and members have taken a series of actions to protest against the scourge of low pay in the UK shipping industry including protests against exploitation on ro-ro freight vessels in Aberdeen and Rosyth.

Following RMT's action in Aberdeen port, the Scottish government announced that it was reviewing the charter arrangements for the Seatruck vessels Helliard and Hildasay, chartered by Serco NorthLink on Northern Isles routes, with a view to applying the National Minimum Wage, at least.

The union will continue to campaign for collectively bargained rates of pay agreed with RMT to be paid to ratings on all vessels in the Scottish and UK ferry industry but the progress on the Helliard and Hildasay is a significant step.

The next steps in the campaign include an SOS 2020 day of action, Thursday May 18 in Poole, to highlight seafarer exploitation and protest against the continued undermining of collective bargaining and employment rights at Condor Ferries, where seafarers are paid below £3

per hour.

The first stage will be to leaflet delegates attending an event for European Maritime Day 2017 at Poole Lighthouse Arts and Conference Centre, 21 Kingland Rd, Poole BH15 1UG.

RMT members and activists are asked to mobilise for this and to arrive at the venue at 8am for leafletting delegates from the UK and European governments, as well as the shipping industry.

The second stage of the Day of Action will be a demonstration against low pay and the exploitation of seafarers, outside the head office of Condor Ferries, also in Poole: Condor House, New Harbour Road South, Hamworthy BH15 4AJ.

Branches in Scotland have also taken the campaign to the spring political party conferences. Delegates at the Scottish Labour, Conservative and SNP conferences were left in no doubt as to the importance of protecting jobs and services in the Scottish ferry industry from pay discrimination and a continued loss of maritime skills.

The union has again asked ITF Inspectors to board vessels on the union's ships of shame list, in order to obtain up to date pay information.

This includes Flag of Convenience operators Condor Ferries, Seatruck (Irish Sea), Irish Ferries and P&O Ferries (Irish and North Sea). ITF Inspectors have already taken action against a serial offender on the union's list, the Cypriot registered MV Daroja, operated by Streamline Ferries between Aberdeen and the Orkney and Shetland Islands.

Non-UK ratings on-board are paid a scandalously low basic wage of £2.56 per hour. The vessel was detained by the MCA in November 2016 for infringing international maritime safety regulations, despite having been involved in a serious collision with an oil bunker barge in water off Peterhead in August 2015.

The union's discussions with Government and employers in the Legal Working Group on the National Minimum Wage and seafarers have concentrated on application between UK ports, with good progress made.

The shipping industry continues to pat itself on the back for profiting from seafarer exploitation, with Seatruck recently receiving the Maritime Mersey Industry award for 'business of the year.'

Non-UK seafarers on Seatruck routes between Liverpool and Dublin, Heysham to Dublin and Heysham to Warrenpoint are reportedly paid £4.61 per hour but this figure could be lower.

What is certain is that pay on Seatruck ships operating from UK ports should be raised to the UK NMW, at least, as is now the case on the Helliard and Hildasay.

UK government's post-Brexit ports policy is also causing concern, with a 'free ports' policy being pushed by right-wing think tanks and Tory MPs. Under these proposals, a port and some of the surrounding land is designated a 'free trade zone' where domestic customs, tax and other relevant legislation does not apply. This would potentially undermine publicly owned ports infrastructure in the UK, concentrating even more power over ports and maritime policy in private hands. ■



SUPPORT: The Morning Star conference in Glasgow gave its full support to the SOS2020 campaign including the shadow chancellor John MacDonnell



A BETTER DEAL FOR INFRASTRUCTURE WORKERS

RMT has produced a charter to get a better deal for agency and sub-contracted workers

The culture of privatisation and sub-contracting has wreaked havoc in the rail industry, not least for the people who work in it.

Across the rail network, where once there was central collective bargaining for standard pay and conditions for all infrastructure workers, there are now multiple contractors and agencies that seek to get as much as possible for as little in return as possible and avoid any dealings with RMT.

The break-up of full-time unionised employment for infrastructure workers was a deliberate act calculated to push wages and conditions down and profits up. For infrastructure workers the fragmentation has resulted in vastly differing and often poor pay and conditions with little, if any, security of employment.

Many agency and sub-contract workers find themselves in the worst of all worlds, engaged by agencies and sub-contractors that 'outsource' their pay and conditions to an accountancy firm, making them nominally self-employed,

denying them the employment rights they should have and unable to establish who their employer is.

If the union to set the negotiating agenda and improve pay, terms and conditions, safety and welfare, any response must be across all sub-contract companies and agencies on the network, and that is the purpose of this charter.

RMT's strength is that it is an industrial union uniting workers in all grades and across all employers, on every worksite, in every depot, regardless of employment status, licenses or competencies.

It is common for infrastructure workers to be on 'five days', '48 hours', '24 hours' or even zero notice of termination of employment, and even these conditions are often ignored, with employees laid off for weeks at a time or permanently with no notice. A similar practice occurs where agency workers book on as instructed only to be sent home a few hours later with no pay.

Infrastructure workers that have contributed to their

employers' successes are often treated no better than a tool, a sleeper, a piece of rail or ballast – to be used and discarded when no longer wanted, without regard for them or the work they have done.

These Victorian practices are not only grossly unfair, but are probably illegal in some cases.

Infrastructure sub-contractors or agency workers are workers in supervisory, skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled grades at a number of key agencies or contractors that have supply contracts with Network Rail or London Underground.

Over the years Network Rail and London Underground have both re-negotiated or re-tendered their contracts with supply companies bidding against each other to secure the contracts.

Making reduced cost one of the main factors to win a bid set in motion a 'race to the bottom' among the bidding agencies and contractors, a race which hits the infrastructure sub-contractor and agency workers hardest.

Many individuals are now paid less than ten or even 15 years ago, while the agencies and contractors are raking in increasing profits for their owners and shareholders.

Sub-contracting

To make matters worse, a new breed of sub-contractors sometimes known as 'gang masters', who often work on the infrastructure themselves, are setting themselves up as 'sub-agencies' to supply infrastructure workers to the principle agencies or contractors.

To work for a sub-contractor to a principal agency generally means seeing a regular payment being skimmed off your wages, and being prone to even more abuses thanks to the unregulated manner in which these sub-sub agencies operate.

Moreover, most infrastructure workers work through accountants who handle their pay and 'human resource' issues. These accountancy firms commonly help themselves to a generous slice of the workers'

wages for little assistance in return, often locking the workers into using their 'services' through their close relationship with the work agencies.

Often managers in the work agencies also run these accountancy firms as well, leading to the total entrapment of workers.

Many agencies and sub-contractors claim they have any sick pay or holiday schemes but often this is not the case or claim that low-paid employees should be putting money away themselves. Pensions are also non-existent amongst these workers.

Despite health and safety laws, infrastructure workers are regularly expected to perform unsafe work to "get the job done". If they refuse they're told to "get another job", or they may just happen to get laid off. Facilities such as lockers,

cleaning and messing facilities are mostly non-existent and workers are often denied breaks on long possession shifts.

Aims of the charter

RMT's aim is to end the abuse and bring rates of pay and conditions of service up to the best in the industry. This will not happen overnight, but RMT will challenge each and every company on the basis of this charter and the benchmarks within it.

The aspirations in the charter are not exhaustive, but will be utilised in the formulation of a pay and conditions claim submitted by the RMT on behalf of infrastructure workers.

The aims of the Infrastructure Workers' Charter:

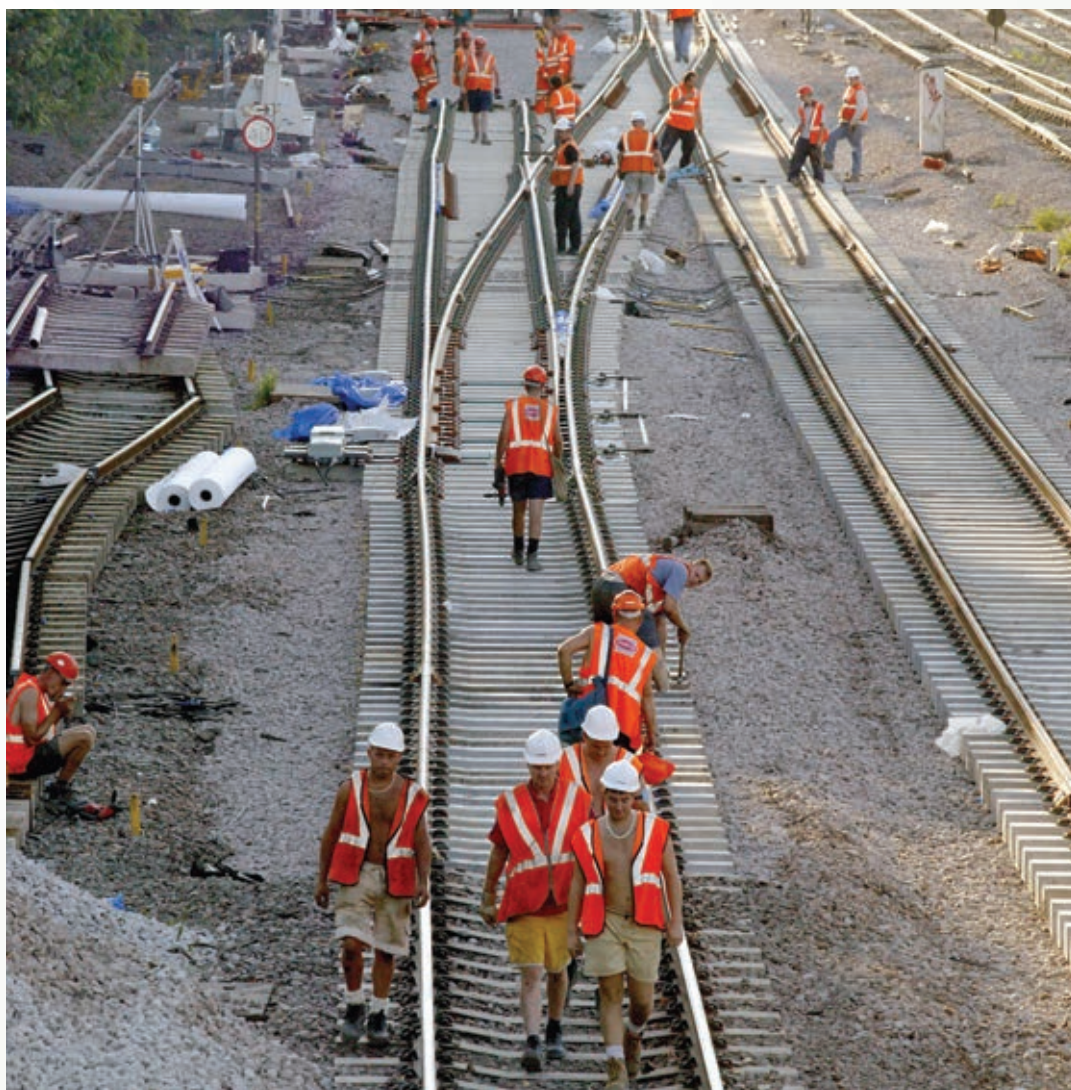
- EMPLOYMENT SECURITY
- END LOW PAY
- HOLIDAY PAY
- PAID SICK LEAVE
- PENSIONS

- TRAVEL PASSES
- FAIR DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURES
- GRIEVANCE PROCEDURES
- HEALTH, SAFETY AND WELFARE AT WORK
- UNION AND HEALTH AND SAFETY REPS

The charter has set out the unacceptable situation infrastructure workers find themselves in and the changes needed to make working conditions fit for the 21st century.

Research shows that in companies and workplaces where the union is well organised, rates of pay are higher and terms and conditions better.

Therefore the charter is a recruitment tool to encourage people to join the union to improve their condition at work, copies are available from head office and from your branch secretary. ■





STOP TICKET OFFICE CLOSURES

Clerical grades call for the stepping up of the campaign to halt ticket office closures

The supervisory, clerical and other salaried grades conference met in Portsmouth on the eve of three sets of rail strikes in defence of guard's jobs setting the militant tone for the fight to

save ticket office jobs in the year ahead.

Mike Sargent, Dover District called on the union to step up the fight to oppose ticket office closures. He explained that the

drive by the train operating companies for ticket machine and online sales were profit driven and often leave the passenger paying a more expensive fare.

Mike gave anecdotal evidence from his own workplace where passengers told him how relieved they were to find the ticket office open as they struggled to use the



machines.

"In the current climate of new technology being introduced to replace the 'human public interface' it is appalling that our members working in the ticket office grades are expected to facilitate the public use of technology designed to replace this group of workers.

"It is reprehensible that these workers are expected to collude in their own demise as they struggle with understanding the new technology as well as explaining it to unhappy passengers, especially during the peak service.

"There has been no training given other than a 'manual' and yet we are expected to just get on with it," he said.

Tracy Marshall, Hastings gave an account of the realities of working in a ticket office in the present climate.

"I work in a ticket office and see little old ladies come up to

me unable to operate the machines. Other people can't find how to get a cheap ticket.

"I have never felt as bad in the job as I have recently. We can't help people when they have a problem with their keycard as they have given up the right to deal with a human being once they have one.

"We haven't been trained properly, we have been issued an A5 manual and left to get on with it," he said.

RMT president Sean Hoyle told delegates that they represented workers at the forefront of the attack on rail workers' rights as companies made a drive to ultimately introduce ticketless travel.

He argued that the only way to fight back was to organise and recruit.

"I call on delegates to pledge to organise on June 13, Bob Crow's birthday," he said.

RMT assistant general secretary Steve Hedley told

delegates that this was a crucial conference in order to learn from each other and build a strategy in the face of the new technology that was being foisted on members.

Steve explained that it wasn't only about saving jobs and that passengers were being short changed by the new technology.

"Train operating companies say that one in 20 people are overcharged at ticket machines. That amounts to millions of pounds every year and this is the kind of argument that we need to get across," he said.

He told delegates that they shouldn't underestimate the power that the union has and reminded them that in the latest London Underground strike it was ticket office staff that shut things down when they came out on strike.

Guest speaker Ronnie Draper, Bakers, Food and Allied Workers Union, said that the

measure of success of the work of RMT can be seen by the constant attacks on the union in the right-wing press.

Ronnie pledged the support of his union for RMT strikes in defence of guards' jobs.

"The first thing an incoming Labour government should do is renationalise the railway with no compensation for the companies. They have made enough profit," he said.

Ronnie slammed the extension of anti-trade union laws restricting striking and picketing and called for an end to zero-hour contracts.

Brian Woods, Feltham, told delegates how the clerical sector had a decades-long history as one of the original conferences of the NUR and won support from delegates for a resolution calling for it to remain as a stand-alone conference for supervisory, clerical and other salaried grades.

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Keep your RMT membership details up-to-date

In the light of draconian anti-trade union laws that have been used against the union, members should keep their personal data up to date. It 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.



Fatigue- **LONG HOURS LIMIT LIFE**

2017 RMT health
and safety
conference discusses
the problems of long
working hours

Delegates to this year's health and safety conference meeting in Doncaster agreed that for too long workers in the transport industries were faced with working longer hours and more onerous shifts.

Garry Hassell, Brighton and Hove called on the union to start a campaign to reduce working hours across the transport sector in order to protect workers from the harmful effects of fatigue, including physical and

psychological illness, and where applicable to negotiate with employers to ensure working-hour limits are not breached.

Delegates also agreed that RMT should campaign for a maximum 32-hour week, without loss of pay.

"The amount of information we have heard during conference makes it plain that we cannot go on as we are.

"Companies are understaffed and employ a process that gets the maximum hours for

minimum cost and at maximum sacrifice to workers including differing shift patterns that makes it hard for our members to live.

"How can it be that some workers do 36 hours, some 40 and some 45? There should not be anomalies within and across companies. 100,000 contractors supplement the 35,000 Network Rail staff – that tells you the scale of understaffing on the railways.

"That's why we need to campaign for a 32 hour working week," he said.

Steve Mann, Hastings said that the figures spoke for themselves

"Seven out of the last eight track workers fatally injured actually died whilst travelling home rather than whilst at work due to fatigue.

"The RSSB figures state that 21 per cent of workers admitted to suffering from fatigue but that is only what is being reported, they need to investigate fully.

"Two years ago many of the same sentiments were shared when we spoke about stress and the same issues arose," he said.

Willie Strang, Edinburgh No: 1 applauded the solidarity and strength of all RMT members who have stood fast over the past few months against the extension of Driver-Only Operation and in defence of the role of the guard in various disputes.

"These disputes are all focused around safety and although some of them have been satisfactorily concluded others have become long and drawn out affairs that have been politically-motivated and orchestrated.

"The Platform Train Interface is the riskiest area within passenger train operations and is where there have been numerous unfortunate incidents," he said.

Delegates called the union to mount a new campaign dedicated to protecting all staff whose work connects them to the Platform Train Interface in order to defend any attacks on staffing levels at railway

stations.

"Another trap and drag incident took place at Newcastle as well as at Hayes and Harlington.

"These incidents are only the tip of the iceberg; the RAIB list eight similar incidents, not to mention numerous occurrences of people messing around or customers who trip and slip down and between the platform.

"This has happened at busy platforms at Dundee and Kings Cross, as well as quiet ones and at Berwick upon Tweed a passenger in a wheelchair rolled onto the tracks.

"In recent years 19 people have been killed at the platform edge whilst in 2015 there were 1,490 PTI incidents which is 1,490 too many in our opinion," said Mr Strang.

Jim McDaid, Bakerloo said that London Underground had lost its guards about twenty years ago and it hadn't worked.

"Trap and drag incidents happen every day of the week and with record passenger numbers – four million journeys a day – it stands to reason that we need a guard on every train.

"At Baker Street station alone there were 210 incidents in the last year of passengers falling on to the tracks.

"London Underground has spent millions of pounds on alternative solutions so don't listen to independent bodies saying the tube is a haven for this model," he said.

RMT assistant general secretary Mick Lynch reminded delegates of how dangerous the industry was, how the union must work to ensure that we create a safe environment and how rank and file members can ensure that this happens.

He said that the on-going disputes on Southern, Northern and Mersey rail were all about health and safety and in defence of railway standards.

"They are prepared to take risks with people lives in order to ensure that a bare minimum of regulations are performed.

"We can't rely on them to protect us, we can only rely on our health and safety reps and members working towards a



safer railway.

"Health and safety and industrial reps are in it together and we must be united. A message must go out from this conference that we will stand up and fight, stand up and argue and, if necessary take industrial action" said Mick.

This message was reiterated by senior assistant general secretary Steve Hedley who spoke of having attended a Southern Rail picket line that morning and how they had now sacrificed thirty day's pay over a safety issue – D00 – and how the RSSB and ORR had ducked the fatigue and staffing issues.

"They represent an industry that is interested in making money rather than improving health and safety standards.

"This is because they know that every penny they spend in health and safety is a penny that won't go back to their shareholders.

Sir Roy McNulty said that the railway was 25 per cent overstaffed so the government

wants to remove these roles.

"This is why they want to get rid of guards, why dispatch staff are being removed and why gate-line staff are being replaced by agency workers.

"Casualisation is the cancer that is eating away at this industry. Are the regulators independent? The ORR staff are all appointed by a government minister every five years, they are aligned with the government so are they going to contradict them?

"The RAIB work for the British government and are paid by the DfT and funded by train-operating companies.

"Over 70 per cent of accidents on the railway happen on the 30 per cent of the network that is D00 and that is no coincidence.

"We have to up our game and our health and safety representatives are best placed to explain to the public about the importance of these safety issues," he said.



SIGNALLING SAFETY

Signalling grades discuss safety, joint working parties and travel facilities

A packed signalling grades organising conference held in Kinston-Upon-Hull welcomed the two-year pay deal with no compulsory redundancies but heard warnings that the Tories wanted to re-privatise Network Rail and attack transport unions.

RMT assistant general secretary Mick Lynch said that the government was looking at devolved route structures and a fracturing of NR as a whole.

"This could lead to regional collective bargaining and it is something we must guard against," he said.

RMT general secretary Mick Cash warned that the 2016 Trade Union Act, which comes into force this month, was designed to prevent trade unions from defending their members.

Currently, industrial action can be lawful if a simple majority of those balloted vote in favour. The Act introduces a 50 per cent turnout requirement.

If the majority of those balloted perform a public services specified in the

regulations, such as education, fire, health and transport, at least 40 per cent of those eligible to vote must back action.

"We need to increase our power at the workplace by recruiting members and getting reps in place.

"Our reps are important because they tell us what the membership wants that's why we knew we had widespread support for this year's pay deal," he said.

Gerry Hitchen of the organisation unit echoed the call to build the union by strengthening membership at the workplace where it matters.

"The need for branch and regional plans is now in the union's rulebook, Rule 10, and we need to carry out workplace mapping exercises in order to find out who is not in the union," he said.

Delegates also heard reports from the various National Operations Council working groups in a number of areas

including the Digital Railway project, Mobile Operations Managers, rest breaks, recruitment, PTR&R, rostering and role clarity.

NOC member Phil Boorman said that it was an important arena to challenge Network Rail and get the union's voice heard.

"We present reports to the RMT executive committee and they instruct us accordingly," he said.

NOC member Dave Gott warned that health provider OH Assist had been brought in "on the cheap".

"This union has conditions of service medical rules that are still valid and that means they can't make medical assessments over the phone.

"I fail to see how OH Assist can make assessments in such a way and it is totally unacceptable," he said.

Steve Loeber, Colchester and District also raised concerns that signallers were being harassed to carry out certain scenarios not covered by the rules and regulations.

"If signallers refuse to execute the instructions implement the rules and regulations as per the book, they are often threatened with disciplinary action.

This is placing signalling personnel under very severe stress and discomfort within the workplace," he said.

Paul Kemp, Surrey and Hants said that members had tools to confront harassment in the workplace that were, in fact, the law.

"It is a health and safety law called Work Safe Procedure and it can be invoked if you have 'reasonable belief' that you or the public is in danger.

"This protects the individual if they refuse to carry out an instruction which they believe to be dangerous," he said.

Alan Rogerson, Newcastle Rail & Catering called for an end to Network Rail's practice of pre-planning and publishing line blockages for 'non-specific work'.

"These published line blockages are there just in case they might be needed, and there



Network Rail National Operations Council members: Phil Boorman, Mark Bellenie, assistant general secretary Mick Lynch, Dave Gott Stewart Keating, (not pictured) AJ Yates

just might be work in that area on the day, and that there might be a team available.

"This to be a misuse of the Planning Arrangements and it creates unnecessary, additional work for the signallers covering the area," he said.

Lee Alcock, South West Mids said that such blockages were often imposed all day on large areas but often the work only took a few hours on a much smaller section of track.

"For the safety of all involved, line blockages should be kept to the minimum distance of blockage and not cover vast areas," he said.

Alan Rogerson also said that signallers were under pressure to find margins for blockages during their normal duties without the additional multi-line/area blocks that are far better suited to T3 possessions.

Conference called for an industrial and political campaign to win full travel facilities for Network Rail staff.

Tim Breed, North Staffs said that under 30 per cent of the workforce still retained travel facilities taken away for newcomers following privatisation over 20 years ago.



BADGE: Signaller Steve Loeber receives his 25-year badge from assistant general secretary Mick Lynch

"These safe-guarded staff also get better pensions as a result and this means we have a two-tier workforce.

"We need to get the RMT parliamentary group involved to demand we want our travel

benefits back," he said.

Dave Filby called on the union to look at equality law and how could it be that three quarters of the workforce get less than the remaining quarter.



SAFE IN THE WORKPLACE, SAFE AT HOME

Annual RMT women's conference debates sexism, safety issues and women's rights

Transport workers' pledged to fight sexism and keep women safe in the workplace, at the annual RMT women's conference earlier this month meeting on the Isle of Wight.

Over 50 delegates passed key motions on the effects of cancer, the abortion act and had a wide ranging debate about violence at work and in the home during the two-day conference.

Moving the unanimously supported motion on putting pressure on bosses to do more for employees suffering from cancer, Janine Booth, Finsbury Park said: "Studies show that night shifts increase risk of cancer so we need to raise that with employers during our collective bargaining units.

"We also need to defend the NHS from Tory cuts," she said.

Cat Cray said that there were colleagues in the room who

had suffered from cancer and criticised equalities legislation as "not going far enough".

Ann Joss, Aberdeen pointed out that transport was a "male dominated industry" and there was a burning need to take the employer to task over the issue, referred to a fellow member who had had only a 10 minute "back to work" phone call after cancer had gone into remission.

"We need to send clear message to every employer we negotiate with; that they will not treat members like they have done previously," she said.

Sharon Petrie, Paddington No 1, who recently helped lead a strike by cleaners over sick pay, gave an emotive speech about looking after her husband who tragically died of cancer pointing out that work gave her no support or sick pay.

Executive member Michelle

Rogers said that this should be on everyone's agenda – "cancer doesn't discriminate and neither should we".

Conference sent a strong message about abortion rights on the 50th anniversary of the act that allowed women the right to choose.

Janine Booth said that abortion services have been cut under austerity.

"We can't be complacent about the abortion rights that we do have.

"Whatever your view is on abortion - it is the choice of the woman whose body is affected by it," she said.

Safety of women members was a key focus of conference when national health and safety officer Paul Clyndes spoke of specific dangers faced by women in the workplace (see other article).

RMT president Sean Hoyle

urged the trade union movement to do more to combat violence against women at work and in the home.

"These are not problems that trade unions should not shy away from they are by definition industrial problems.

"If you are at home because of being a victim of domestic violence, you will be disciplined and the trade union movement has to do more and should come from places like this conference," he said.

RMT general secretary Mick Cash praised the guards taking action in defence of their jobs on Southern Rail, adding: "This is the longest running dispute I have witnessed and I have been round since 1978.

"I don't remember a dispute like this and our southern guards are making history, It is inspirational," he said.

GENDER IN OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH

RMT health and safety officer Paul Clyndes addresses the place of Gender in Occupational Safety and Health (GOSH)

RMT health and safety officer Paul Clyndes explained to conference how women and men have physical, physiological and psychological differences. These differences can determine how risks affect them and that the different employment experiences of women and men where women still tend to work in areas where illness arises from less visible risks, while men are frequently exposed to more visible and dangerous work can also have an impact on their health and safety.

Even in the same workplace, with the same job title, carrying out the same tasks, women and men can experience different demands, exposures and effects. Paul talked about how

GOSH is not about discrimination but should be about understanding and then differentiating.

Traditionally health and safety has concentrated on risk prevention, in visible dangerous work, largely carried out by men, in sectors like mining and construction where inadequate risk control can lead to

fatalities. In contrast to this the approach to women's "work" has been protective, prohibitive and based on an assumption that women's work is safer.

Paul then took delegates through a number of areas of risk and asked delegates who was more exposed to risks – women or men?

ACCIDENTS

Men have higher accident rates

UPPER LIMB DISORDERS (ULD)

Women have higher incidences of ULD in some highly repetitive work carried out by them, particularly where they have little control over the way they work.

NOISE/HEARING LOSS

Men as they are more often exposed to noisy environment, though some traditional women's areas such as textile industry and food production also see high incidences in women.

ASTHMA, ALLERGIES AND SKIN DISEASES

Women are more at risk due to

a combination of inhalation and contact with cleaning chemicals, or contact with chemicals in jobs such as catering and hairdressing.

OCCUPATIONAL CANCER

Men have generally higher cancer rates especially with exposure to harmful substances such as asbestos.

INAPPROPRIATE PPE

PPE is typically designed for your 'average man', causing problems for many women and 'non-average men'.

REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH

Both women and men are affected neglected areas include fertility, menstrual disorders, menopause and male reproductive health.

LONG HOURS

Both are affected – Women are more likely to do more unpaid work. Men are more likely to work very long paid hours. Both want a better work life balance.

Paul also talked about how harassment and violence had differing effects on women and men. Research shows that women are at particular risk of physical and psychological violence. Women also tend to work in lower paid and lower status jobs where violence is more common. Women entering non-traditional occupations are particularly at risk of discrimination and sexual harassment.

Work on reproductive health has largely focused on 'protecting' women when pregnant – usually to their disadvantage. There are many hazards to reproductive health of both sexes and their offspring including chemical, biological, physical and ergonomic.

Some substances in workplaces can be harmful to

the women and the child if passed through seminal fluid.

RMT WOMEN IN HEALTH AND SAFETY ROLES

Women make up 47 per cent of UK workforce, however just 27 per cent of TU safety reps are women.

In the RMT, women make up 15 per cent of our membership yet only 8.5 per cent of safety reps are women. On a more positive note, women made up over 13 per cent of delegates to NHASAC last week. Paul asked delegates – so of who are already safety reps to think about how we could encourage more women to take on the role of safety rep. We already know safety reps position in the workplace reduces accident rates by 50%, imagine how much better that figure could be if there were more women!

RMT needs to integrate GOSH better in union activity. RMT is part of the TUC GOSH group and pushes the agenda for improved health and safety standards for all workers and in all industries where we are represented.

Paul outlined some simple steps women could take to better tackle GOSH issues: Review your employers' policies and management practices – you may spot gaps in agreements or procedures that can be addressed.

For instance, are performance measures gender sensitive? Are data returns gender disaggregated to provide gender-sensitive intelligence? Are risk assessments made with only input from one gender?

Women are not a homogenous group and not all women work in 'female' jobs. The same applies to men. A holistic approach taking diversity into account is the way forward. ■

BRITAIN-CHINA FREIGHT TRAIN: A freight train carrying containers from China, arrived at DB Cargo's London Eurohub rail freight depot in Barking earlier this year after travelling 18 days from the eastern Chinese province of Zhejiang.



DB CARGO JOBS CRISIS

RMT runs referendum on improvements to proposals made by DB Cargo on job cuts and working conditions

Since Britain's largest rail freight operator, DB Cargo UK, announced plans last year to shed almost 900 jobs, more than a quarter of its workforce, and undermine conditions RMT has won a reprieve until this July.

The company had also planned to bulldoze through unfair proposals which would have seen a cut to sick pay, ill health severance and redundancy payments.

Following the union's intervention the proposed

changes were deferred and RMT will continue to press the company to alter their position.

RMT's negotiating team worked tirelessly to ensure that the effect of these proposed changes would not have a major impact on members. This includes extensive talks with management over their restructuring plans and by insisting on a thorough review of the hubs in these negotiations. As a result RMT has been able to reduce the

numbers of staff leaving the business from 200 to 158, thereby securing a further 48 posts.

The company has proposed to introduce two new roles, Operations Supervisor and Mobile Operative, with the plan to implement these roles in early July. This raised a number of concerns and issues including the use of personal vehicles to travel between sites.

A revised handbook has been sent to members and a number

of concerns have been addressed. The National Executive Committee recently considered this matter and acknowledged the vast improvements achieved which are as follows:-

- Joint negotiation rights for all Groundstaff employees (including former TS grades).
- An increase in pay for all Groundstaff members.
- Removed the requirement for personal car use.

- Removed the 30-minute unpaid meal break and all Groundstaff breaks are now paid.
- Campaigned to introduce principles of rostering including 32-hour rest period.
- A timetable agreed to ensure all Groundstaff will receive 33 days' annual leave with the removal of the matrix for calculating annual leave entitlement.
- A guarantee protection for TS salary's going forward who end up on an operative salary

The union has considered these improvements and the views of the negotiating team and a referendum ballot is currently underway with a recommendation to vote Yes as these are the best terms that can be achieved through negotiation.

The German-owned firm said that the decision to phase out coal-fired power stations had resulted in a 78 per cent year-on-year reduction in the number of coal trains operated by DB Cargo.

The problems facing the UK's steel industry have also led to a 33 per cent decline in the number of DB Cargo trains running in the first nine months of 2016.

At the time RMT said that it was a "devastating blow" to the rail freight industry and called on the government to intervene to save jobs.

The government has published a rail freight strategy underlining its commitment to rail freight, including ensuring more capacity on the network.

But the union accused the Tories of a "shocking lack of support" for the freight sector.

RMT general secretary Mick Cash said: "This is devastating news brought on through a combination of cut-throat practices in the UK rail freight industry and a shocking lack of government support for this key section of our transport infrastructure".

President's column



JOBSTOWN NOT GUILTY!

Now that new anti-trade union laws are in force in Ireland making legal industrial action much harder, the Jobstown story struck a chord with me.

In April, 18 working class people from the community of Jobstown, Dublin will face trial for "false imprisonment" for the "crime" of peacefully protesting against Troika austerity in the form of water charges.

Their protest – against the then-deputy Prime Minister Joan Burton – became emblematic of a mass working class movement which forced the suspension of the water charges.

Outrageously they are being dragged to court following dawn police raids on their homes last year on trumped up charges which carry a maximum life sentence.

A 17-year old boy has already been convicted of this offence. The accused include a member of the Irish Parliament Paul Murphy, from the Anti-Austerity Alliance and the Socialist Party, and two elected councillors from the same party. If Paul Murphy is sentenced to more than six months in prison he will be stripped of his position as MP, thus depriving the community of their political voice.

Thank you to Sarah Sachs-Eldridge for bringing this to our attention
jobstownnotguiltygb@gmail.com

We are now in conference

season and I have already attended our young members and women's events. I can say that things are looking bright with many able members stepping up to take over from the old guard in the not too distant future and wouldn't it be great to have more diversity in senior positions.

Currently we have no women or black and ethnic regional organiser/senior officials. For the first time we have two women on the national executive committee Michelle Rodgers and Kathy Mazur. But when they finish their term of office at the end of this year, we could have only white males in all positions and while we all are elected on merit, it wouldn't really reflect the diversity within our membership would it? As a member led union, only you can change this.

Finally, I see from WikiLeaks that MI5 and the CIA have been using the Samsung F800 television to spy on some people...John Reid former NEC member often told me that he thought we were bugged...you never know!

'No attempt at ethical or social seduction can eradicate from my heart a deep burning hatred for the Tory Party. So far as I am concerned they are lower than vermin' Nye Bevan

Yours in solidarity
Sean Hoyle



CONTROL PERIOD 6 UPDATE

RMT responds to Network Rail spending plans to run from 2019 to 2024

Network Rail Control Periods are the five-year timespans into which the owner and operator of most of the rail infrastructure in Great Britain works for financial and other planning purposes.

Each Control Period begins on April 1 and ends on March 31 to coincide with the financial year. As Network Rail is responsible for developing and maintaining railway infrastructure, the Control Periods are used to decide priorities for investment.

The Office of Road and Rail (ORR) began the Periodic Review 18 (PR18) process by publishing its Initial Consultation in May 2016. PR18 will determine Network Rail's outputs and funding in control period 6 (CP6), which is expected to run from April 1 2019 to March 31 2024.

RMT has fully engaged in the process to date, including by responding to the initial consultation.

The ORR has also consulted on the development for the

Network Rail national system operator in CP6, draft guidance on Network Rail's strategic business plans, and the Financial Framework for PR18.

RMT has responded to each consultation as published and also engaged directly with Network Rail, and both the Welsh and Scottish governments. This has included through identifying Network Rail matters in the Welsh Economy, Infrastructure and Skills Committee consultation and participating in Transport Scotland's Rail Infrastructure Strategy workshops. Written submissions have been prepared by the union in each case.

RMT believes that now is the time for the ORR to work towards producing an ambitious programme of investment in, and rationalisation of, the rail industry.

Most recent periodic review processes have been driven by the austerity agenda and the recognition by ORR that the wider fiscal constraints on governments are "likely to

reduce the scope for new substantial capital investment to accommodate growing demand”.

RMT believes that the best overall approach which can be taken in PR18 is to consolidate the functions and workforce of Network Rail and work to ensure that backlogs in maintenance and renewals are dealt with, that safety critical work is carried out on-time in order to ensure that the infrastructure is not further denigrated, and that leakages (both financial and in safety terms) are addressed by the return of functions and the contractor workforce in-house.

It is essential that the change in the status of Network Rail, and the consequent direct impact on public finance of railway spending, does not result in the compromise of safety or the railway being less equipped to address growing demand.

For this reason, whilst heightened public accountability is welcome, RMT believes that

the funding cycle should be extended to beyond a five year period under a long term planning process, to ensure that it does not fall foul of either the temporary interests of elected representatives or the short term avarice of the private sector.

Furthermore, RMT rejects the assertion that private sector interests be characterised as “customers” of Network Rail given that they are publicly subsidised and have recently had the Network Grant re-routed through their coffers.

Passengers and taxpayers along with society and the economy as a whole should be considered to be the customers of Network Rail as they are the end users, beneficiaries and funders of the network.

RMT believes that the periodic review process needs to be strengthened and its remit increased to ensure long term planning. Furthermore, it should not be solely efficiencies driven but also take into account the wider value of the industry to

both the economy and society as a whole.

RMT has consistently repeated its priorities to the ORR and other stakeholders as being:

- Total opposition to the fragmentation and/or privatisation of Network Rail
- The safeguarding of the workforce (including the call for all work to be returned in-house). RMT has argued that a unified workforce creates superior economies of scale, retains skills and increases productivity.
- The maintenance and improvement of safety standards including addressing the backlog of safety critical maintenance and renewals work with specific funding ring-fenced to do so and that the removal of all level crossings should be a key aim within CP6.

TIMESCALE

In late May/early June the Secretary of State for Transport

and Scottish Ministers will publish their High Level Output Specifications (HLOSs) and Statements of Funds Available (SoFAs).

Around mid-October 2017, Network Rail will publish its Strategic Business Plans. RMT will then have the opportunity to comment on them to inform ORR scrutiny. This will be the first time concrete examples of Network Rail’s plans will be made publicly available.

This will be followed by the ORR publishing its draft determination (mid 2018) to which RMT and others will again respond, and finally in October 2018 the final determination will be published (October 2018).

This will then take it onto the Implementation phase, and at the end of 2018 Network Rail will begin consulting on its Delivery Plans which both the ORR and Network Rail would hope to have finalised by the beginning of CP6 in April 2019.

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Allen Margrett, 46, from Coventry

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PROTECTING AND PROMOTING OUR MEMBERS' INTERESTS



LANDMARK UNFAIR DISMISSAL VICTORY



Haylee Chambers of Thompsons Solicitors outlines a landmark case of unfair dismissal

RMT has won a landmark case for a career railway worker who was unfairly dismissed by Network Rail for failing a drugs test while off sick.

The member began working on the railways in December 1976 and held an unblemished record of employment. In 2010, he began to suffer from lower back pain which was made much worse after a car accident in May 2014. His condition meant he was signed off sick by his GP in January 2015 and could not return to work.

By September he was in such severe pain that painkillers were not helping him and a friend suggested that cannabis could help relieve the pain.

He took his friend's advice and smoked cannabis, something he had never done before. Shortly after, he attended a pre-arranged meeting with his manager who suggested that he may be eligible for ill-health severance. This would have provided him with a severance package and he was keen on the idea as he was already on half-pay.

Around the same time, the member was

asked to attend a routine medical appointment, similar to many other he had attended throughout his sick leave. However, at this appointment he was tested for drugs and tested positive for cannabis.

At a disciplinary meeting, supported by his union rep, the member was found to be in breach of his Network Rail's drugs policy for testing positive for cannabis while on work premises and he was dismissed for gross misconduct which invalidated his severance package.

The member appealed the decision on three grounds. Firstly, that the punishment was excessive due to the fact that he was about to leave the company and was on sick leave; secondly, that he had not been at work at the time of the test and the purpose of the policy was to control the risk of employees at work and finally that not all evidence had been considered.

After his appeal was dismissed, the union instructed Thompsons to investigate the claim. After taking the case to an Employment Tribunal, it was found that the member had been unfairly dismissed for the

three reasons he had appealed on. He was awarded damages for unfair dismissal and his ill-health severance package was secured.

WHY IS THIS AN IMPORTANT CASE?

It is clear that Network Rail's drug policy was intended to protect workers' safety when they were at work. The fact that he was not working at the time meant this policy should not have applied.

The case also displays the importance of union membership. Without the union and the expert legal advice it provided its member, he would have not been able to fight his case for unfair dismissal and would have been left without any severance package. This result has meant he can focus on treating his back pain, whilst having his severance package to fall back on.

Using Thompsons through RMT's legal scheme, members are guaranteed to take home 100 per cent of the damages they are awarded.



GENERAL STRIKE MEDAL

Historic 1926 General Strike medal awarded to NUR member Walter Richards is donated to RMT by grandson

A medal presented to National Union of Railwayman member Walter Richards for services rendered during the 1926 General Strike has been donated to the union.

Walter's grandson Alan Richards sent the medal to Unity House saying that he was sure that his grandfather would be glad to see it become part of the union's collection on display outside the boardroom.

Walter was one of six children of a gardener from the village of Yarpole in rural Hertfordshire living in a tied cottage on the Shobdon estate. A bright boy, he won a scholarship to the prestigious Lucton School and walked the five miles there and back every day.

Fascinated by the romance of steam and the rail industry, he joined the Great Western Railway in 1903 as a clerk. He moved to Barton station and the engine yards at Hereford before marrying in 1915 and moving to Kidderminster. He volunteered for the army during the First World War but was considered to be in a 'reserve occupation' at the time.

He moved back to Hertford with an eight-year-old son to become a train driver. It was here that he joined the Communist Party and immersed himself into raising funds for the great General Strike.

Alan's grandmother explained to him that Walter received the medal for his unstinting support and dedication to supporting the strike.

"They were comparatively better off financially than many others and, being a generous couple, felt it was their duty to give what support they could," said Alan.

The strike was called by the TUC in an attempt to force the British government to prevent the mine owners reducing 1.2 million locked-out coal miners' wages by 13 per cent and increasing their shifts from seven to eight hours.

It lasted 10 days, from May 3 1926 to May 13 1926 and around two million workers

went out, huge numbers from other industries stayed off work, including bus, rail and dock workers, as well as those working in printing, gas, electricity, building, iron, steel and chemical jobs.

The government enlisted right wing activists and upper class volunteers to maintain essential services. After ten days the TUC, which had been holding secret talks with the mine owners, called off the strike without a single concession made to the miners' case.

The miners struggled on alone and by the end of November most were starved back to work and down the mines, working for less pay and longer hours. Due to blacklisting others remained unemployed for many years but were looked after by local communities.

A year later, Mr Baldwin's government passed the 1927 Trades Disputes Act, which banned sympathy strikes and mass picketing.

The act was repealed in 1946, but in the 1980s the then Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher reintroduced the ban, which still applies today.

Walter's family remember with irony that in the 1930s he drove the king's train despite being a life-long communist. Alan Richards also remembers that during World War Two Walter built a flagpole raised the Red Flag following an altercation with a Tory neighbour.

"I believe my grandmother insisted that it was taken down after a few days to save embarrassment but he kept to his socialist principles all his life and expressed them at every opportunity," Alan said.

Walter retired in 1954 and in the same year he built a bungalow for his wife and himself but sadly succumbed to a stroke in 1961 just before his 72nd birthday.

"He wore his medal on his gold watch always and was exceedingly proud of it and his long association with the National Union of Railwaymen during his lifetime," said Alan ■



MEDAL: July 1944 Walter Richards at 55 year old with his daughter Maisie and Alan Richards aged 4



WORKERS' PLAYTIME!

The Workers' Music Association has places on its annual August summer school of music

Workers' Playtime, remember the radio programme? Since the 1940s the Workers' Music Association (WMA) has organised a summer school for working people to enjoy a week of listening to and playing music.

Do you enjoy music in your spare time? Nearly everyone listens to music to relax but there are many people, who play an instrument or sing, to relax, spend time with others, and forget about the day-to-day demands of work.

As amateur musicians and singers we all wish we could improve how we play and sing and get more confidence to perform for others. If you can spare a week in August to indulge your musical interests have a look at our website; www.wmasummerschoolofmusic.co.uk

You'll find courses on jazz, folk, Chamber music, opera, composition, orchestra, brass as well as solo and choral singing. Details of music to be studied will be on the website shortly.

All tutors have a labour movement background and give their time to the Summer School simply for satisfaction of seeing people improve and blossom in their own kind of music. It's also an opportunity for you to get out of your musical 'comfort zone' and try something different.

Many of our past students first attended the summer school for one course but are now involved in four or five of the



different courses available.

Ingestre Hall is in Staffordshire about six miles from Stafford in beautiful countryside. It is owned by Sandwell Authority and has been refurbished as a residential centre for Performing Arts. So you have it all. A week in rural

Staffordshire, supportive and experienced tutors, a purpose built centre, comfortable accommodation and an opportunity to spend a week with others who love music. You can indulge yourself in your own style of music or try something. It's all there for you.

Look at the website; and ask your trade union about the WMA. Over the years we have had people who have been sponsored by their trade unions. You can download an application form from the website or contact isla@wmasummerschool.org.uk ■



RETIRING SIGNALLERS: RMT assistant general secretary Mick Lynch made presentations to retiring members at the signalling grades conference meeting in Hull. (left to right) Martin Dicks, Mick Lynch, Kenneth Toffs, Dougie Hill, Steve Riggott and Peter Thomas.

OBITUARY



Gary Watts

Gary Watts served as Norwich branch secretary from 1983 to 2001 and served on the East Anglia District Council.

Many colleagues past and present remember Gary for his infamous sense of humour, laughing at anything including himself, as well as his more unusual antics especially as a referee for the Norfolk Football Association, where he once famously sent himself off.

He was a steadfast union worker and was well known for his encyclopaedic knowledge of agreements, being able to recite an agreement off by heart complete with minute

number no matter how far the agreement went back. In fact management would often ring Gary up to clarify a disputed agreement if they got stuck.

Over the years Gary's vast experience has helped many members in all sorts of situations, and he truly was one of the more iconic, if somewhat unsung, heroes of the trade union movement to which so many owe a debt of gratitude and thanks.

Gary leaves his widow June and a grown-up family and he will be sorely missed by many friends and colleagues old and new. ■

BRITISH HEART FOUNDATION CYCLE



London Underground signals cycling team takes on cycling fundraiser

We are team L2B Signal Response 2017! We are a London Underground signals cycling team and we are undertaking the London to Brighton cycling challenge to raise money for the British heart foundation.

The BHF is a charity that plays a fundamental role in the undertaking of research and raising awareness of heart related issues and is a charity that is very important to all of us. We hope that we can contribute in some small way to help the British Heart Foundation further their cause and help those who have been impacted by a heart related illness. ■

Please help us by doing your bit and donating on our just giving page below

www.justgiving.com/fundraising/L2BSignalResponse2017

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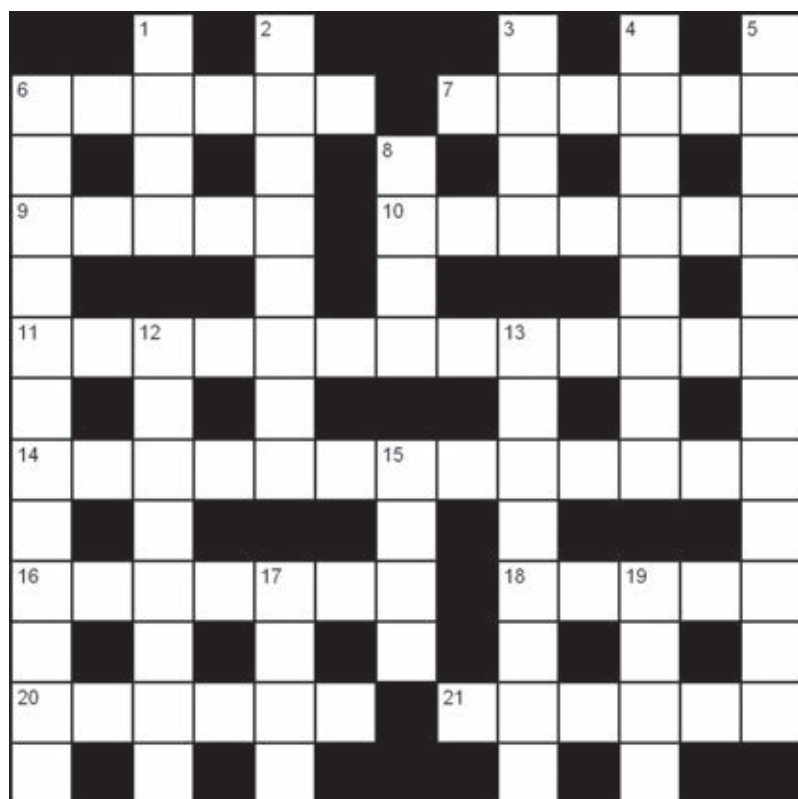
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Winner S A Wood, West Mids.

Send entries to Prize Crossword, RMT, Unity House, 39 Chalton Street, London NW1 1JD by April 13 with your name and address.

Winner and solution in next issue.

ACROSS

- 6 Give away (6)
- 7 Lunatic (6)
- 9 Dance (5)
- 10 Spire (7)
- 11 Worn by exposure (7,6)
- 14 Sea studier (13)
- 16 Coastal defence (7)
- 18 Stealing (5)
- 20 In slumber (7)
- 21 Make attractive (6)

DOWN

- 1 Amaze (4)
- 2 Long run (8)
- 3 Smog (4)
- 4 Kill (7)
- 5 Author of film scripts (12)
- 6 Frontiersman (12)
- 8 Russian dictatorship (4)
- 12 Willing to comply (8)
- 13 Demanding (8)
- 15 Wide chasm (4)
- 17 In bed (4)
- 19 At any time (4)



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Job Description			

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