

RMT *news*

Essential reading for today's transport worker

A FIGHTING UNION

FULL 2017 AGM REPORT

INSIDE THIS ISSUE



PICCADILLY LINE
NIGHT TUBE CRISIS
PAGE 4



GREATER ANGLIA
BALLOT
PAGE 5



CUT FARES NOT
GUARDS
PAGE 8



NARROW GAUGE
BIG PLANS
PAGE 26



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NATIONAL UNION OF RAIL, MARITIME & TRANSPORT WORKERS

Unity House, 39 Chalton Street, London NW1 1JD



APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP – please complete your application along with either the attached Direct Debit or a separate paybill mandate form.

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

BRANCH NUMBER

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	
Job Description*		Part Time	YES ☐ NO ☐
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	☐

6 How do you wish to pay.	Your Pay Number	
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



Instruction to your Bank or Building Society to pay by Direct Debit



Please fill in the whole form including official use box using a ball point pen and Send to: RMT, 39 Chalton Street, London NW1 1JD

Name and full postal address of your Bank or Building Society

To: The Manager	Bank/Building Society
Address	
Postcode	

Name(s) of Account Holder(s)

--

Bank/Building Society account number

--

Branch Sort Code

--

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

--

Your National Insurance Number

--

FOR RMT OFFICIAL USE ONLY

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

Instructions to your Bank or Building Society.

Please pay RMT Direct Debits for the account detailed in this instruction subject to the safeguards assured by the Direct Debit Guarantee. I understand that this instruction may remain with RMT, if so, details will be passed electronically to my Bank/Building Society.

Signature(s)

Date

Banks and Building Societies may not accept direct debit Instructions from some types of account

This guarantee should be detached and retained by the Payer.

The Direct Debit Guarantee

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



contents

Page 4

PICCADILLY LINE NIGHT TUBE CRISIS

Page 5

GREATER ANGLIA BALLOT OVER GUARD THREAT

Page 6

MERSEYRAIL FIGHT TO RETAIN SAFETY-CRITICAL GUARDS

Page 7

ABUSES OF MARITIME CONVENTION IN UK WATERS

Page 8

CUT FARES NOT GUARDS

Page 10

EU OWNERS ROB UK RAIL PASSENGERS TO HOLD DOWN THEIR DOMESTIC FARES

Page 11

REMEMBERING PIPER ALPHA

Page 12

NO RAIL PRIVATISATION IN WALES

Pages 13 - 23

AGM 2017

Page 25

A WORKING CLASS VICTORY

Page 26

NARROW GAUGE, BIG PLANS

Page 28

REMEMBERING DAVE SAYERS

Page 30

CROSSWORD

EDITORIAL



WINNING AT WORK

Firstly I want to pay tribute to our members in the Piccadilly Line workshops who have secured a stunning victory in the fight against casualisation and the two-tier workforce.

Their victory may not have landed as much media coverage as the brilliant court success by UNISON over tribunal fees but it proved once again that when the working class is organised in strong, militant trade unions they can shift the tide decisively in our favour.

RMT is gearing up for another campaign against cuts and creeping privatisation at Network Rail. Financial cutbacks are again impacting on the renewals work, threatening public safety, and there is renewed talk of a phased privatisation of some functions which we know only too well is likely to be the thin end of a very long wedge.

Campaigning over the threat to the guards' grade has ratcheted up over the summer with both Greater Anglia and South West Trains joining Southern, Northern and Merseyrail in the front line of this crucial battle over rail safety. The union has met with Chris Grayling, the transport secretary in this minority Tory government, and we have made it crystal clear that we expect his department to force their rail contractors back to the negotiating table. The public

and political support for the fight against DOO continues to grow as we set the pace in our local communities.

The union was delighted to welcome Labour Leader Jeremy Corbyn to the AGM in Exeter where he set out the programme for repealing the Tory legislation that privatised our railways as the launch pad for the return to public ownership. What a breath of fresh air to hear a Labour Leader talking about popular, socialist policies.

Our shipping members are continuing to raise the banner of our SOS2020 campaign with more events scheduled over the autumn. The scandal on the Streamline vessel in Aberdeen was yet another concrete example of the Ships of Shame that operate in British waters and reinforced the importance of RMT's on-going campaigning work in the maritime sector.

Regardless of the current political uncertainties, for RMT it is business as usual in the fight over pay, conditions, jobs and safety in every sector where we organise and nothing will shift us from the programme of work set out by this year's annual general meeting.



PICCADILLY LINE NIGHT TUBE CRISIS

RMT warned that the Night Tube on the Piccadilly line is in crisis with a serious lack of trained train operators available to run the service.

RMT has been informed that the amount of drivers available to run the Mayor's flagship Night Tube service on the Piccadilly Line is now so low that last weekend saw only seven trains running instead of the normal 22 – a near reduction of 70 per cent. The union understands that the situation

could continue until Christmas.

The impact on the service has meant waits of up to an hour for a train for customers, serious safety concerns for drivers, and serious issues for stations staff facing angry customers – many intoxicated – waiting on platforms in the middle of night.

This lack of drivers is not down to sickness or industrial action but operator LUL's lack of planning in getting enough drivers trained in time – something that RMT has

repeatedly warned management about.

The issue has been further exasperated by management's reluctance to fully take on board a number of legitimate concerns raised by RMT Health and Safety reps.

RMT general secretary Mick Cash said that Tube bosses need to send out a clear signal that they are addressing the driver shortage issues which have reduced the Night Tube on the Piccadilly Line to chaos.

“London Underground also need to urgently address the major safety and customer service issues arising from the Piccadilly Line Night Tube crisis that they have created.

“Instead of dismissing some of the key points raised by our safety reps, LUL needs to listen to the concerns of its workers and implement an urgent solution so that Night Tube trains and stations are staffed and run safely and customers get the service they were promised.”

TUBE DE-STAFFING CRISIS GROWS

RMT has reacted with disbelief at the news that, despite clear warnings by the rail safety regulator, the Office of the Rail Regulator (ORR), after the tragic death at Canning Town, London Underground continue to run stations unstaffed.

The de-staffing policy also contributed to an incident at Ickenham on August 3 when a member of the public fell down the stairs and lay unconscious at the bottom of the stairs for over 30 minutes.

It was pure luck that a train operator coming through the station saw the individual lying on the floor and raised the alarm.

The injured man was assisted by customers and London Underground eventually sent staff that had to be poached from other stations – leaving them unstaffed in turn.

A second incident at Preston Road on June 5 involved a person under a train with no station staff on duty.

RMT general secretary Mick Cash said that it simply defied belief that London Underground was still recklessly running services on the world's busiest railway through stations that have no staff available. That is despite a legal warning from the safety regulator, the ORR, and a growing catalogue of serious incidents including a fatality.

“RMT will be continuing to push the demand with LU directors that where the cuts mean that there are no staff available, then the station should be closed.

“How many more serious incidents will it take before London Underground get to grips with the staffing crisis on their stations?,” he asked. ■

TUBE LINES VICTORY OVER TWO-TIER WORKFORCE

The union has saluted a major victory secured by members in the Piccadilly Line workshops at Northfields and Cockfosters depots as Tube Lines pulled back from proposals that would have opened the door to casualisation and a two-tier workforce.

RMT general secretary Mick Cash said that discussions with RMT reps regarding rostering during the three month leaf fall period have concluded with an agreement covering the next two years to allow extra lifting work due to the leaf fall season for 2017 and 2018.

“The issue has been considered by the union, which has congratulated all Piccadilly Line fleet members and reps on waging a spirited and effective

dispute leading to success in resisting the implementation of a two tier workforce through the introduction of 35 new members of staff on two year fixed term contracts.

“Every aspect of our joint strategy has been achieved including no use of agency staff, any redeployment being temporary and solely within the Tube Lines/LUL family, no onerous rosters and ultimately, the 35 new starters now on fully employed contracts.

“This victory has proved once again that the combination of a militant approach by a strong, industrial union backed by tough and skilled negotiators can deliver the goods for working people,” he said. ■



GREATER ANGLIA BALLOT OVER GUARD THREAT

RMT is balloting guards on Greater Anglia, for both strike action and action short of a strike, over the potential extension of Driver-Only Operation following the company's continuing refusal to give a guarantee on the role of the guard throughout the length of the franchise.

A meeting had been held between Greater Anglia and RMT reps, including general secretary Mick Cash. At that meeting management failed to provide union reps with the assurances they had been seeking with respect to the role and responsibilities of the guards now and for the length of the franchise.

That failure has left RMT with no option but to serve notice on the company and

press ahead with the balloting process for Greater Anglia Guards members.

RMT general secretary Mick Cash said that the company had been given every opportunity to give a guarantee on the future role of the guard on their services and failed to do so.

"RMT will not sit back and wait for the company any longer and we have no option but to proceed to ballot in order to protect safety and access on Greater Anglia services.

"The union remains available for further talks around the crucial issue of the guard guarantee," he said.

Dutch state-owned company Abellio which runs the franchise also plans to remove the vast majority of ticket offices across the franchise.

The company, which currently holds the franchise until 2026, has informed the union that it plans to remove 57 of the currently 64 ticket offices across the Greater Anglia network threatening hundreds of ticket office jobs.

It intends to only have seven remaining traditional ticket offices located at London Liverpool Street, Colchester, Norwich, Cambridge, Chelmsford, Ipswich and Stansted Airport.

That means closing the bulk of the remainder of their station-based services during the next year in three stages, with seven ticket offices to close by this summer. Greater Anglia has also revealed that it intends to introduce revenue staff and place ticket vending machines

(TVMs) at all stations with major implications for jobs and services.

RMT is completely opposed to any closures or reduction in opening hours of ticket offices, to any cuts in station staff jobs and the potential introduction of lone working at stations. As a result the union is planning a campaign of opposition designed at engaging the public, passenger groups and campaign groups and politicians right across the area in an all-out drive to halt the ticket office massacre.

"This is all part and parcel of a national drive to de-staff our trains and stations as the private train companies look to smuggle in a faceless railway in a dash to fatten up their own profit margins," he said. ■



MERSEYRAIL FIGHT TO RETAIN SAFETY-CRITICAL GUARDS

RMT ordered three days of strike action in July on Merseyrail after the company refused to discuss the crucial issue at the heart of the dispute - the future of the safety critical role of the guard.

Members are angry that Merseyrail continues to turn down a union proposal to set up a "safety working group", alongside outside safety bodies and the train manufacturer Stadler, on the principle that a second safety-critical person would be retained on all services.

The company has refused all efforts by the union to get a

serious and meaningful talks back underway.

RMT's executive has paid tribute to the Merseyrail members who had already taken two days of rock solid action and mounted a highly effective picketing operation on those strike days with fantastic levels of public support.

RMT general secretary Mick Cash said that it was disgraceful that Merseyrail continued to refuse all reasonable attempts by the union to settle this dispute.

Merseyrail have repeatedly kicked all conciliatory approaches by RMT negotiators

back in our faces and made it crystal clear that all that they are interested in is the union signing a surrender document which gives them a free hand to rip apart the safety culture on the railway.

"It is that cynical and hostile stance from Merseyrail which has left us with no option but to put on this further round of strike action.

"RMT recognises the severe impact that the action will have but we are dealing with an employer that refuses to listen or engage with the union on the critical issue of safe rail operation and we ask the public

to understand that we have no option but to take this high-profile action to force the company back to the negotiating table.

"Merseyrail is completely ignoring the clear wishes of their own passengers, who overwhelmingly oppose the idea of Driver Only Operated trains on their network.

"That pig-headed attitude has forced the union's hand and the idea that we would compromise on the fundamental issue of rail safety is absurd," he said.

ABUSES OF MARITIME CONVENTION IN UK WATERS

RMT launches formal Gulfmark complaints to regulator over social dumping by paying rock bottom wages

RMT has launched complaints to UK government regulators to take action against UK-Flagged offshore supply vessels owned by Gulfmark where UK ratings have been replaced by non-EEA seafarers on basic rates of pay as low as \$3.41 per hour, in contravention of the Maritime Labour Convention.

The complaint comes following the scandal of the North Promise a UK flagged offshore supply vessel operating between Aberdeen and oil and gas installations in the UK sector of the North Sea. Crews on this and other supply vessels have had their pay and conditions undermined and undercut in contravention of union agreements. It is just the latest in a series of seafarer pay scandals in UK waters.

RMT general secretary Mick Cash stated: "We can no longer tolerate the Red Ensign

being used as a cloak of respectability for social dumping or the systematic replacement of UK Ratings with seafarers from thousands of miles away who are recruited to work for poverty wages on vessels from UK ports.

"The crew on the North Promise are not being employed or paid in line with the collective bargaining agreement covering that vessel, which was signed by UK maritime unions, including RMT. Action must be taken to stop this race to the lowest levels of pay and conditions and to fully enforce the MLC.

"The government has rightly acknowledged the problem of NMW application and enforcement for seafarers but we need action now to tackle the entrenched issue of seafarer pay inequality on vessels like this, otherwise the UK's economically vital maritime skills base will be lost," he said.

RMT national secretary Steve Todd said the problem with this Gulfmark vessel shone a light on an industry-wide practice that should no longer be tolerated by the government or the reformed UK Register.

"Government agencies, specifically the Maritime Coastguard Agency and HMRC need to respond to the case of the North Promise, and quickly.

"Migrant seafarers on this vessel and across the international shipping industry are treated almost as if they are lucky to receive a wage at all and ultimately that



exploitation is getting worse and we are encountering it more and more on vessels, including those flying the Red Ensign in the North Sea oil and gas industry.

"The MLC is being undermined, wages are appallingly low and employment, equality and immigration laws are flouted by crewing agents to provide the cheapest seafarer Ratings possible. This is more like modern slavery than a modern shipping industry," he said. ■

NORTHERN GUARDS TAKE ACTION

Guards on Arriva Rail North took a further three days of strike action in July as the company continued to resist all efforts to make progress in the long-running dispute over rail safety and the head-long dash towards Driver-Only Operation.

The company has set impossible pre-conditions on future talks and rejected point blank every attempt to try and broker a safe and sustainable settlement to the dispute.

As well as refusing to guarantee a second safety critical member of staff on trains the company continues

to plough on with plans to introduce a minimum of 50 per cent driver controlled operation across the franchise without agreement and in the teeth of opposition from the public, politicians and their own staff.

Political support continues to grow for RMT's campaign against the dangerous, cash-led DOO proposals and it was a significant issue throughout the general election campaign.

RMT's executive committee is continuing to review tactics in this important dispute in consultation with the members

at Northern.

RMT general secretary Mick Cash said that the sheer intransigence of Arriva Rail North meant that the union had no option but to confirm a further round of strike action.

"We are angry and frustrated that Arriva continue to face up to the facts and also continue to ignore a perfectly reasonable union proposal to invite the DfT to join us in three way talks aimed at finding a solution.

"The public, who support RMT's campaign for a guarantee of a guard on their

trains, will be appalled that Arriva Rail North has failed yet again to offer any kind of progress whatsoever in the talks and have instead opted to try and bulldoze through their plans regardless.

"RMT commends our Arriva Rail North Members on their rock solid display of strength, resolve and unity during the action so far in opposition to the introduction of driver controlled operation and defence of the guards to guarantee a safer, securer and more accessible railway for all," he said. ■

CUT FARES NOT GUARDS



Rail fares rising almost twice as fast as wages but cuts mean passengers are paying more for less

Rail fares have increased at twice the speed of wages since 2010, according to new analysis released by the union as the government announced the latest fare hike of 3.6 per cent.

The analysis shows that rail fares have risen by around 32 per cent in eight years, while average weekly earnings have only grown by 16 per cent.

The latest fare hike announced this month means a minimum of an extra £337 million in revenue for the private Train Operating Companies.

According to the ORR, train companies collected £9.384 billion from fares in 2015-16. This is the most recently available figure.

Only regulated fares will go up by 3.6 per cent, unregulated fares will go up by more which is why the £337 million is a minimum.

The rises mean for example



that a new nurse or police officer commuting from Chelmsford to London, where annual season ticket would cost £4,000 after the latest rise, would pay twenty per cent of their salary on an annual season ticket.

The findings come as the government announced another round of regulated rail fare hikes for the coming year.

Rail workers protested at the stations around the country warning that passengers are paying “more for less” because even as fares rise rail engineering work is being delayed or cancelled, skilled railway jobs are being lost and staff are being cut on trains, stations and ticket offices.

RMT protests with banners also called for reduced fares, public ownership and protection of jobs.

RMT general secretary Mick Cash said that the government policy of suppressing workers’ wages while at the same time presiding over corporate welfare on our privatised railway has resulted in a toxic combination of fare rises easily outstripping wages.

“The private operators and government say the rises are necessary to fund investment but the reality is that they are pocketing the profits while passengers are paying more for less,” he said.

He warned that passengers



packed onto unreliable trains and paying higher fares will be rightly outraged as private train operators coin in yet more cash.

“With over three quarters of Britain’s railways now in the hands of foreign states this extra £337 million won’t be invested in essential upgrades and modernisation here, but will be siphoned off to subsidise transport services over the Channel.

“Public ownership of this essential service is the only solution for Britain’s rail passengers,” he said.





TORIES OUT

RMT members from Cardiff 7 branch joined the Tories Out march held in London earlier this month. The man in the middle is Mark Brice who retired on ill health grounds that very day after 33 years of RMT membership and activism.

NOTTINGHAM BUS RECOGNITION DEAL



RMT has signed off a trade union recognition agreement with Nottingham Community Transport bus company which operates many routes throughout the city.

Neil Clark of Nottingham Community Transport is signing on behalf of the company with RMT regional organiser Sean McGowan and behind them are senior RMT reps within the company, Brother Alan Mycroft and Brother Andy Fletcher.

EU OWNERS ROB UK RAIL PASSENGERS TO HOLD DOWN THEIR DOMESTIC FARES

RMT has pointed out that passengers travelling on services in the UK operated by Italian, German and Dutch state railways, are shelling out multiples of what their counterparts elsewhere in the EU are paying for comparable journeys on the continent run by the same operator. For example:

- Passengers in the UK travelling on Italian state owned C2C railways are paying 2.4 times more than their counterparts on similar services run by the same operator in Italy;
- Passengers in the UK

travelling on German state owned Arriva North railways are paying a third more than their counterparts on similar services run by the same operator in Germany; and

- Passengers in the UK travelling on Dutch state owned Greater Anglia railways are paying twice as much as their Dutch counterparts on similar services run by the same operator in The Netherlands.

RMT general secretary Mick Cash said that passengers travelling on lines operated by Italian, German and Dutch state

railways could be paying around two and a half times more than their counterparts on comparable journeys on the continent run by the same operator.

"That means UK passengers on our clapped out privatised railway, are paying more and more to help keep fares down on other European railways.

"It is a national scandal that this Government is perpetuating by allowing more foreign state owned outfits to bid for British rail services, while simultaneously blocking any British public ownership of our railways," he said. ■

REMEMBERING PIPER ALPHA

On July 6 1988, 29 years ago, an explosion and resulting oil and gas fires destroyed Piper Alpha, killing 167 people, including two crewmen of a rescue vessel, and 61 workers aboard survived.

Thirty bodies were never recovered.

At the time of the disaster, the platform accounted for approximately ten per cent of North Sea oil and gas production, and the accident is the worst offshore oil disaster in terms of lives lost and industry impact.

RMT general secretary Mick Cash said that Piper Alpha would always cast a long shadow over the North Sea and the global offshore oil and gas industry, serving as a constant reminder of the need for rigorous and continuously improving safety standards.

"We repeat our commitment to securing and enforcing those standards for the current generation of offshore workers.

In doing so, we serve the memory of those who lost their lives in such appalling circumstances.

"Today we remember the 167 victims of this tragedy and stand with their families and loved ones on the anniversary of their loss," he said.

RMT national secretary Steve Todd said that RMT honoured and respected the memory of those who perished in the North Sea on July 6 1988.

"We also pay tribute to the families, loved ones and colleagues left behind in such painful circumstances.

"The lessons learned from this catastrophic incident should never be forgotten or downgraded," he said.

In Aberdeen, the Kirk of St Nicholas in Union Street has dedicated a chapel in memory of those who died containing a Book of Remembrance listing all who died. There is a memorial sculpture in the Rose Garden of Hazlehead Park.



REMEMBERANCE: Flowers lie at the foot of the Piper Alpha Memorial at Hazlehead Park, Aberdeen.



A monument was unveiled earlier this year by Inverness trades council to those who lost their lives at work.

RMT Inverness branch secretary Kim Gibson, RMT Parliamentary Group MSP Dave Stewart and other members

attended the unveiling of Inverness Workers Memorial on the banks of the River Ness. It is reckoned to be the most

northerly of memorials of its kind and one where RMT was active in making it become a reality.

NO RAIL PRIVATISATION IN WALES

An Arriva Trains Wales passes along track near Abergele and Pensarn station in north Wales.

RMT demands that first minister call immediate halt to £5 billion welsh rail privatisation plan

RMT has written to Welsh First Minister Carwyn Jones demanding that he call an immediate halt to plans that would unleash a £5 billion privatisation of Welsh railways.

In a letter to Mr Jones general secretary Mick Cash says;

"I met with colleagues from Transport for Wales (TfW) on July 25 2017 to go through the forthcoming Wales and Borders franchise.

The meeting was a sham as it was blatantly obvious to me that a decision had already been taken to give the private sector the South Wales Valley lines and the Hansford Review into Network Rail has now confirmed my belief that privatisation of Network Rail is the chosen option:

"The forthcoming South

Wales Metro upgrade project will provide an interesting new example, as the successful third party bidder will take over, upgrade and extend transport infrastructure around Cardiff".

Andy Thomas Managing Director of Network Rail's Wales Route has also confirmed this stating "That under TfW and the government, there would be a transfer of those assets and the running of those services."

Furthermore this shows that Ken Skates claim that this is "an ambitious and creative not for profit model" is equally bogus.

I am staggered to find that it is a Welsh Labour government that is privatising Network Rail's infrastructure and is acquiescing with a Westminster Tory government in the piecemeal privatisation and break up of Network Rail.

It is equally disgraceful that this privatisation is one which will guarantee that the successful 'third party bidder' will be either the French, German, Dutch or Chinese government.

I cannot express how disappointed I am that this privatisation is happening despite the expressed opposition of my union and passengers and in the face of overwhelming public support for the renationalisation of the railways.

We therefore demand that you immediately stop the process to privatise the South Wales Valley lines and meet with me to discuss this as a matter of urgency.

I look forward to hearing from you at your earliest opportunity".

Mick Cash said that the idea

that RMT would sit back while plans were hatched for a £5 billion scheme to hand Welsh railways lock, stock and barrel to private operators under the control of the Dutch, German, French or Chinese was ridiculous.

"RMT is appalled and angry that a Labour administration in Wales would even consider a proposal that mirrors the failed Public Private Partnership on London Underground which collapsed in total chaos.

"The plan would also pave the way for smashing up and privatising the publicly owned Network Rail area by area.

"This plan needs to be called to a halt right now and we are giving Carwyn Jones the opportunity to pull back from the brink," he said.

■

RMT FIGHTS TO SAVE NEWPORT BABCOCK RAIL DEPOT

Following pressure from the union Babcock has now agreed to meet Welsh government ministers to look at "all sensible and appropriate alternatives" in the wake of their recent announcement of the proposed closure of their Newport Rail depot, which is currently putting 31 jobs at risk in Wales.

The news comes after a recent tri-partite meeting with RMT and Network Rail and pressure from Welsh Assembly Members.

Under the original proposals Babcock intended to move work out of Wales to England to facilitate the Newport depot closure.

Workers from the Midlands and Bristol will then need to travel to Wales to carry out the company's railway contracts there. These jobs are skilled specialist railway jobs giving good skilled employment in a low employment area – recent work carried out from this depot in the Cambrians and on the Ebbw Vale line has been highly

praised.

In addition to the loss of the depot the move would undermine jobs with good RMT negotiated terms and conditions and replace them with much lower paid contractors. This casualisation of the work will inevitably mean less safety for the workers.

RMT general secretary Mick Cash said that the Welsh government now had a golden opportunity to work with Babcock to keep this depot open to allow these much needed jobs

to remain in Wales.

"It was announced recently that the Welsh government successfully negotiated Spanish train builders CAF to set up in Newport with Welsh government financial assistance and Babcock Rail workers are looking for similar support.

"RMT wants to thank John Griffiths AM Newport East and other AMs for their support which has ultimately led to the company reconsidering the closure," he said.

■

AGM REPORT

Cardiff 2017



AGM 2017

A FIGHTING UNION

SOMETHING happened,” Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn said as he opened the 2017 RMT AGM. “That something was the determination of an awful lot of people in the Labour party and the trade union movement to do something different.”

The delegates in the hall were - like most RMT activists - well used to doing things differently. But the message of six days of lively debates, international speakers and rallying cries was that the RMT spirit is not just alive and well - but infectious.

Mr Corbyn hailed Labour’s recent achievement or “almost 13 million votes on a democratic socialist manifesto”. He said Labour’s programme had been “well judged, and it was right - because it was simply saying: ‘We don’t have to go on like that.’”

He praised the work of RMT activists, saluting the union’s fight against driver-only operation on railways across Britain.

“We want our railways run in the public interest with fare rises capped, service levels improved and stations and

trains safely staffed.”

“Wouldn’t it be so much better if you were publicly employed delivering a public service?”

“This election was a turning point against a cynical manipulation,” he added. “It isn’t over and it hasn’t gone away. We’ve got to go further,” he said.

Delegates gave Mr Corbyn a rapturous standing ovation.

Opening proceedings, Exeter City Council leader Peter Edwards, a former bus driver and NUR and RMT activist, said: “30-odd years a union rep made me the person I am”.

RMT general secretary Mick Cash said: “We can only survive because we have people like yourself come back and still stick with the union”.

The first motion to be debated was emblematic of a discussion that was to characterise the whole week - the uses and abuses of modern technology across the transport sector. Bosses have sought to exploit new developments to further maximise profit margins and target trade unionists. But, delegates and union officers repeatedly said, workers must



Mick Cash and
Jeremy Corbyn at
AGM

fight for technology to instead be used to reduce workload and improve workplace safety.

The AGM unanimously endorsed a call for “clear and strict guidelines on how CCTV is used and monitored in regards to disciplinary cases”.

Delegates said that managers in the industry were going to “appalling lengths” to use footage to mount disciplinary cases.

Ross Marshall, Central Line West said: “We’ve heard several cases where managers were taking weeks and weeks to trawl through CCTV.”

Matthew Partridge, East Midland Central said his branch had lost six “bloody good activists” from CCTV-related disciplinarys.

“It was only due to us going to a ballot that we managed to get them an agreement,” he said.

Jim Buchanan, Dorset Rail said: “I’m sick and tired of amateur Miss Marple-ing.”

RMT senior assistant general secretary Steve Hedley said: “People have the right to right to privacy in the workplace.”

32-HOUR WEEK

The issue of who reaps the gains of new technology was also central to the AGM’s decision to fight for a 32-hour week across the sector.

A motion overwhelmingly endorsed said that workers were faced with “longer hours and more onerous shifts”. Delegates said that this was leading to “physical and psychological illness”.

Iain Minto, Newcastle and Gateshead, called for “a 32 hour week with no loss of pay”.

Willy Strang, Edinburgh No. 1 and Portobello District added: “Fatigue’s the biggest issue out there, the only way we can address that is getting a shorter working week.”

But others said that an overtime culture was making matters worse.

Ted Woodley, Birmingham Rail said: “What I find troubling is that in the rail industry where I am drivers are working 35 hours and guards 36 but there’s a deep-rooted culture from the past... of overtime and rest day working.”



Ian Mearns MP

AGM 2017



"If every single driver and guard didn't do rest day working, the railway would be forced to recruit."

Peter Creaby, Central and North Mersey agreed, saying: "We're our own worst enemies. We might get a 32-hour week but people will be putting in a lot more."

Lewis Norton, London Taxi, suggested the call was not appropriate for the self-employed. "The only thing they actually have to increase their earnings is to work more hours," he said.

George Bennett, Humber Shipping, warned that the problem was even worse in the ferry sector, where some British workers were on an "agreed 12 hour day and 82 hour week". He said that non-EU workers were working eight weeks on, followed by four weeks off without pay.

Steve Hedley disputed the argument that the policy would be detrimental to the self-employed. "It's not through personal choice that people in the taxi industry work overtime, it's economic necessity"

"What we should be doing is embracing new technology and then sharing out the wealth," he said.

Conference rejected a motion calling for "extra payments" for workers "facilitating the public use of technology" designed to replace the "human public

interface" of customer service in booking offices.

Peter March, Hull Rail said: "This is about safeguarding the jobs of people in the ticket offices.

But after Steve Hedley raised concerns about the practical difficulties of such a strategy, the proposal was voted down.

LONDON BRIDGE

Conference also heard of a worrying reluctance from bosses to stand up for staff assaulted at work.

Staff at London Bridge tube station were recently balloted for industrial action - but fell foul of new anti-strike laws - after workers were disciplined over an incident with a violent passenger.

Ross Marshall said: "We had quite an astonishing situation at London Bridge. Not only did members go to defend our colleagues, but the person involved was a violent well-known fare evader.

"If you were listening to what the company were saying it was like our two members were going round with baseball bats, *The Sweeney* style, battering people. I'm telling you that did not happen."

Chris Reilly, Reading, said that train operating companies were now including drunk people and people on drugs within its definition of "vulnerable" passengers

deserving of special treatment.

"More and more of these companies are saying the customer is always right, regardless of what they do," he said.

Chris Davidson, Bristol added: "We had a member at Paddington who was going through chemo twice a week waiting for a transplant. The management tried to dismiss her.

"The reason they gave her was the public going through the gateline might hit her about. That show's how seriously the company take assault".

Delegates voted for a motion calling for the union to "push for the strongest penalties against perpetrators".

Steve Hedley warned: "If it can happen in London Bridge it could happen to you."

BUS ASSAULTS

In stark contrast to rail operators using CCTV to victimise workers, AGM heard that bus companies were failing to maintain cameras - meaning passengers assaulted at work could not be prosecuted. A motion on the subject was adopted by delegates from the 2017 bus workers' industrial organising conference. It noted that assaults were "becoming more frequent with members being attacked, intimidated, threatened or verbally assaulted". Meanwhile

companies were not taking assaults "seriously", because "they see prosecuting people as bad press".

Paul Rossiter, South Devon bus said: "The companies and the managing directors are just ignoring it.

"Companies are using austerity as an excuse not to do things. There's a lack of care."

Mark Gale, Poole and District Bus said; "For me, clearly the focus of the companies needs to move away from having CCTV to protect them and their liabilities - and they need to start supporting their staff."

RMT assistant general secretary Mick Lynch said it was an "amazing coincidence" that CCTV cameras could be used to check up on staff not checking fares on trains, "but when there's an assault on staff the CCTV's not working".



Peter Edwards

AGM 2017



John Samuelson,
TWU 100

Thousands of British bus workers were also suffering from a lack of adequate toilet facilities, delegates heard. A resolution adopted by AGM noted that councils were closing public loos due to funding cuts, and that “bus companies appear to be doing very little if anything at all to keep them open”.

Health effects from having to endure long periods without toilet breaks include urinary tract infections, risks for pregnant women, constipation, bowel problems and incontinence.

“Thousands are suffering in silence,” Mark Gale said.

Mick Lynch added: “They’re being told to go into McDonalds and pubs. They have to make do and mend, so to speak.

“In some cases used to have adequate for facilities... but the companies are not putting their hands in their pockets.”

He said the executive would call on companies to “do deals with the local authorities to provide respectable, clean facilities”.

SIGNAL FAILURES

Disciplinaries were also a major concern among signalling grades. A motion moved by David Filby, Three Bridges said signallers were “being harassed by managers to carry out certain scenarios that are not covered by the rules and regulations” - and then being threatened with penalties for refusing.

“This was causing huge amounts of stress and

discomfort among workers,” he said.

Mick Cash suggested managers in Network Rail were seeking to pass the buck when their own finances inhibited adequate staffing.

“It’s quite clear our colleagues on Network Rail are under a lot of pressure. People are always looking to blame somebody,” he said.

Signalling and operational Grades also raised the issue of Network Rail not providing workers with free or privilege travel passes. A motion adopted at AGM called for an industrial action ballot on the matter should a claim with Network Rail be rejected.

Pre-privatisation staff had the allowances but those who joined after do not - leading to a “two-tier workforce”.

Ian Allen, South West Midlands said: “In 20 years there will be no-one on Network Rail who will have travel facilities for them or their families.”

Glenroy Watson, Finsbury Park said that it was also an issue on the tube - which had become a “three-tier system” of allowances.

Delegates called on TOCs to work with Network Rail to provide free travel.

Mick Cash said: “Until [nationalisation] happens we’re going to have to use our industrial campaign, work with our colleagues in Aslef and TSSA for an industry-wide campaign.”

Fears were raised that

Network Rail’s heavy reliance on sub-contractors was a bid to cut costs and undermine “hard-fought for terms and conditions”. A resolution approved by AGM called for the general secretary to write to Network Rail and demand a “thorough review... with a view to increasing their headcount” internally and end the reliance on contractors.

John Holmes, Derby Rail and Engineering said: “They just seem to keep bringing contractors in all round the country”.

David Filby said: “If you’ve got Network Rail employed staff who are usually local to the area or have local knowledge, it’s much safer.”

Mick Lynch said: “We’ve got a structure that gives us officers in the army but no soldiers.”

And he said the union should bring non-unionised contracted staff into its ranks.

“We’ve got to make it a permanent job for those people, to end casualisation”.

Another resolution raised concerns that Network Rail was attempting to reduce terms and conditions - and in particular, scrap stood off arrangements - in exchange for pay rises. It noted that Network Rail HR officials were frequently enforcing their own interpretations of the agreements, leading to big regional variations.

William Strang, Edinburgh No. 1 and Portobello District said: “Stood off arrangements should not be given up at any



Christie Caine of
the MUA

AGM 2017



Mick Cash

cost.

Mick Lynch assured AGM: "We never accepted even a discussion on those elements.

"We will not accept trading off these good agreements... in return for cash".

AGM also heard that many employers were using sickness absence procedures to trigger disciplinary action based on a "crude count of absences".

Jim Buchanan, Dorset Rail said: "It is a punishment as far as I can see it".

Jayesh Patel, Bakerloo Line

added: "These triggers are not fair, and it's time for our reps to go in there and highlight the equality issue".

IN THE VANGUARD

Working conditions were also a key issue for van drivers employed by Freightliner. A resolution from the 2017 national road transport industrial organising conference decried the "outrageous" deduction of 30 minutes of pay each day for lunch.

Owen Herbert, Swansea No. 1

said: "We've got certain grades having to pay to have a break."

Mick Lynch said: "They're still with the vehicle... they're still required to pull over and stop and spend some time not being paid."

A "lack of resilience" in rostering on Freightliner - particularly in the Garston Liverpool Engineers Department, was also discussed.

Mark Neal, Birmingham Engineering said "Some of our members are obliged to work 12 hour shifts".

Mick Lynch said that there was a worrying trend of companies failing to adequately equip depots - not providing enough staff to cover holidays and even breaks.

"It's becoming a feature in the railway. The company thinks if you need two or three people on duty that's all you need.

"They say to our members if you don't do this overtime we'll close the terminal. People are being blackmailed with their own jobs," he said.

BUFFETS

AGM resolved that the union should campaign to save catering members' jobs "with the same gusto as it has for train managers in respect of DOO".

Rebecca Stevens, Plymouth No. 1 said: "On-board catering is always being attacked. We are pretty much the second person

on the train after the guards."

Chris Reilly, Reading related how GWR guards and catering staff had gone on strike in defence of each others' jobs. "We've got to win the hearts and minds of our members to say 'if you want to fight we'll support you'," he said.

Terence Sim, Euston No. 1 said: "Let's not stand by and watch another element of our railway disappear to privatisation."

Steve Hedley said that workers reciprocating a defence of each others' jobs was crucial to win the fight to save posts. "When caterers go on strike they don't stop trains, when guards go on strike they do," he said.

The resolution said that operators should be "required to give a written guarantee" that catering staff would be employed in-house.

Rebecca Stevens also proposed a motion, endorsed by the conference, raising concerns that percentage-only pay rises were hitting low-paid catering staff hard. Delegates agreed that "enhanced payments" to lower-paid grades should be considered "essential" in pay negotiations.

AGM also affirmed that the union should campaign for a £10 an hour minimum rate for cleaners. This should be "enhanced to a higher rate for members working in the London



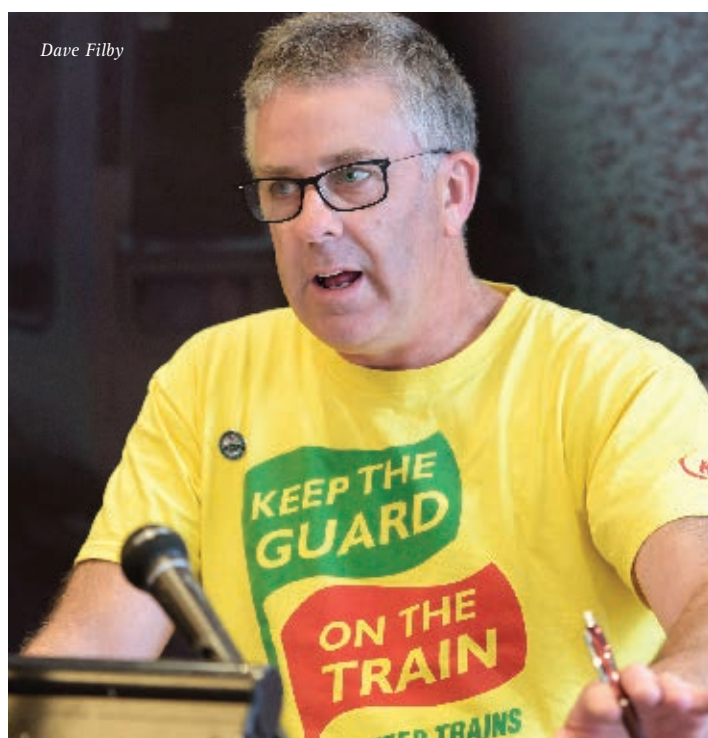
AGM 2017



Lorna Tooley



Millie Apedo-Amah



Dave Filby

area", the resolution stated.

A further motion noted that TOCs and contractors were "buck passing" to one another to avoid responsibility for cleaners' pay and conditions. The motion instructed the union to write to all contractors and TOCs, demanding clarity over which was responsible for each element of workers' contracts.

Delegates noted that there was still much work to be done to ensure to firm up conditions among cleaning grades. "Sick pay is really an area that really requires attention," Glenroy Watson said.

Mick Lynch said that London mayor Sadiq Khan had failed to improve the lot of cleaners on Transport for London. "He's not lifted a finger since he's been in power," he said.

"There's no reason why cleaners can't be treated as in-house applicants for London Underground jobs and can't be treated as in-house applicants on the TOCs."

SOUTHERN FAIL

Unsurprisingly, the ongoing fight against driver-only operation was discussed in depth at AGM. A resolution adopted from the retired members' advisory Conference highlighted how elderly and disabled passengers were put at "substantial risk" by DDO. This amounted to a "serious breach" of the Equality Act, the resolution said.

Denis Connor, Glasgow No. 5 blasted the government's "total, total disregard of their own legislation".

Chris Reilly said: "We've got people retired and disabled who have always struggled to travel on trains which is a disgrace in 2017."

"We hear about dignity and respect from our companies. It's about time you showed us dignity and respect, but it's about time too you showed dignity and respect to the elderly and disabled passengers."

Jim Buchanan, Dorset Rail warned of the dangers of the

popular characterisation of DDO disputes as being simply about train doors.

"It trivialises the debate, it devalues what we do," he said.

Fears were raised about the threat posed by DDO to staff working on the platform-train interface (PTI). Moves towards "self-dispatch" of trains poses a threat to station staff as well as guards. A resolution from the health and safety advisory conference was unanimously approved by AGM. It called for the union to "vigorously defend" station staff "from the ticket office right through to the platform edge".

Chris Reilly said GWR were looking to remove dispatch staff after the replacement of the Thames Turbo trains "so the company can save money".

Steve Hedley said DDO "not only affects guard jobs and the safety there, but it also has an effect on jobs on the station and passengers on the station getting injured". He called for the union to "bring in the station staff" into its campaign against the practice.

AGM also heard that passengers were being put "at risk" by the use of scab labour during guards' strikes.

Delegates said managers and admin staff were being hurriedly trained to step in.

Peter Creaby, Central and North Mersey condemned the "sausage, chips and beans operation" run by Merseyrail during a recent strike.

Jared Wood, Neasden suggested that workers could take action by refusing to "familiarise" managers with duties.

"The general manager of the Metropolitan Line was refused familiarisation at Baker Street – which pleased him no end, I can tell you," he added.

Delegates paid tribute to Southern rail workers Millie Apedo-Amah, Keith Mitchell and Isobel Gray – who in turned thanked RMT activists from across the country for their support.

Mr Mitchell, East Sussex

AGM 2017

Mark Armstrong



Coastal said: "We ask you to go back to your members and tell them, we do thank you."

PRIVATISATION

A discussion on franchising came after Virgin Trains East Coast (VTEC) majority owner Stagecoach announced that its pre-tax profit had fallen to £17.9 million in the year to April 29, down from £104.4m.

The company said it was "in discussions" with the government "regarding our respective contractual rights and obligations" under its franchise. This prompted speculation that Stagecoach could be the third operator walk away from the franchise.

Ross Marshall said: "We have to remember the railway is a public service. It shouldn't be run for profit."

Chris Reilly said: "The casualisation of the workforce is being done just so that the profiteers can make more money."

William Strang, Edinburgh No. 1 and Portobello District added: "Mr Branson and his cronies have gone to the DfT to try and re-negotiate the franchise. The keys could be going back again."

Delegates also supported a move to re-establish the Hands Off London Transport campaign. This was a coalition of unions and passenger groups which came together to oppose ticket office closures under Boris

Johnson's mayoralty.

Gary Harbord, Piccadilly and District West hailed the success of the recent industrial action by tube station staff. He said it was the "first time in history a stations-alone dispute shut down most of central London".

Eamonn Lynch, Jubilee south added: "The union has to be leading the fight."

Steve Hedley backed the call for a united front, saying: "This isn't just about station staff and drivers, this is about everyone."

Delegates also voiced dismay over the axing of the subsidy to Transport for London.

Declan Ritchie, LU Fleet said: "I don't understand how our government can give money to companies like Southern, and prop them up, when a publicly-owned company gets nothing."

Ross Marshall asked: "Where they're going to find £700m [to plug the shortfall] from? It's going to be in attacks on our members."

TRADE UNION ACT

AGM resolved to build a "campaign of resistance" to new anti-strike laws. The union has largely managed to exceed arbitrary ballot thresholds, but a number of disputes have been stymied by low turnouts. A turnout of 50 per cent is now required for all strike votes.

In certain public services, unions must jump the additional hurdle of 40 per cent of eligible workers voting yes.

A motion passed noted that the TUC had "failed to lift a finger to oppose the [Trade Union] Act."

Jared Wood said: "The government has looked back at historical data and they know that it will be extremely difficult for us to reach those thresholds. That's why they set them where they did."

The motion said RMT "should seek to build an alliance of trade unions that commit to support one another" if any union or activist faces legal action as a result of the Act."

In a fraternal address, Prison Officers' Association general secretary Steve Gillan said new times demanded new tactics.

"Irrespective of legislation, we will do what our members require us to do," he said. "And if that's defiance of the law sometimes, then so be it."

And Labour MP Ian Mearns said unions still "need to be vigilant" about the threat of further anti-strike laws. A private members' bill which would have required transport unions to provide a skeleton service was defeated earlier this year - but the Gateshead MP said the Tories could still come back for another bite.

Delegates also affirmed their

dismay at the actions of the Indian government in Kashmir. A resolution adopted at AGM called on the government to "take immediate steps in resolving this colonial injustice".

Glenroy Watson, Finsbury Park said: "We have to look beyond the White Cliffs of Dover."

One person liberated is not enough we must seek to liberate all."

But Jayesh Patel said: "From what I've read... this is not like Palestine, where you've got kids throwing rocks and grenades being thrown back."

AGM delegates were in the hall as news arrived of the criminal prosecutions against former top police officers for their activities at Hillsborough.

Peter Creaby, Central and North Mersey said: "I'm from Liverpool and was there that fateful day. We've showed everybody we never, ever give up."

"Rest in peace, the 96. It's not revenge we want, it's justice."

The names of the six men now facing prosecution were read out to the hall by Chris Reilly.

"Let's make sure justice is served," he said.



John McDonnell MP

AGM 2017

Steve Hedley



Glenroy Watson



Denis Connor



HEALTH

A resolution demanding all employers conduct risk assessments measuring cancer risk to women transport workers received overwhelming support. Millie Apedo-Amah, South London Rail said: "One in eight women will develop breast cancer during their lifetime. A percentage of breast cancer cases in the UK are linked to shift work."

"We have three women in the Women's Advisory Committee who have battled with breast cancer, and they are all shift workers."

Kim O'Shaughnessy, Deptford said: "I'm one of the people who have been affected. You're trying to deal with life and the fact that your life might be curtailed. You shouldn't be struggling in work to have the dignity and support."

Another motion said that the union should provide counselling so members do not rely on the goodwill of bosses. Reps warned that "less stable" working environments faced by young people would leave them particularly exposed to mental health issues.

Lorna Tolley, East Ham said: "As working-class people the way we experience mental health issues is different from the middle and upper classes."

She said relying on employers to provide mental health services left workers at risk of victimisation. "People trust the union more than they trust the bosses," she added.

General secretary Mick Cash said: "We can and we should be doing more to help our people survive in the workplace."

But he warned: "We're not the NHS, who should, can, and must be doing more."

He said the union had to "have a good, hard, long look" at how it could provide support directly.

"It's got to be professional, it's got to be right," he added. "You can't just turn round and ignore the employer in all this."

AGM also committed the union to drawing up a "model

policy for mentally-healthy transport workplaces". This would mean changes to shifts, better support services and a revamp of risk assessments. Next year's national health and safety advisory conference will have mental health as its theme. The conference will also be dedicated to the memory of RMT health and safety rep Leon Brumant, who died in April 2016.

Lorna Tooley paid tribute to Leon, saying: "He was the kind of person who asked the questions nobody else dared to ask. He would challenge things about yourself that you never knew needed challenges."

And she said: "Time and time again management have got no training, no understanding, no empathy of mental health conditions."

"Too often as a rep I'm having to go and educate these managers. That's not my role."

LGBT RIGHTS

Delegates resolved to "call upon the union to organise, support and mobilise for protests" against the rounding up, detention, torture and killing of gay men in Chechnya. James Deery, Ipswich said the union should "give a voice to these people and make a campaign to put pressure on the Russian government of the Chechnyan region to stop these atrocious acts".

Another resolution hit out at the detention and deportation of LGBT refugees. In 2010 Theresa May committed to implementing a Supreme Court ruling that the government should not deport LGBT asylum seekers to countries where they would be persecuted.

Lorna Tooley said: "It's disgusting that in 2017 people are still being treated as criminals in this country just because they happen to be LGBT."

"My fear is that with the Tory DUP coalition rights of LGBT people in this country are going to be attacked even further."

AGM 2017



Jeremy Corbyn addresses conference

Mick Stubbs, Southampton Shipping added: "The fact is we should be offering refuge to everyone who is oppressed and deserves protection."

Mick Cash described the practice as "another example of a broken May promise".

SOLIDARITY

Delegates endorsed a call to link up with the *National Campaign Against Fees and Cuts* in the fight for free education.

Attendees hit out at the current tuition fees system. Lorna Tooley said: "Education is run for a profit."

Ian Allen, South West Midlands concurred: "It shouldn't be about how much money you've got."

Mick Cash said: "Free education ain't free. If you educate somebody, they put it back into our society."

But he said the best way to implement this "get bums on seats in the Palace of Westminster".

He added: "I do believe if we're going to affiliate [to the

Labour party] we should make sure the NCAFC fully fits in with our values and the way we operate."

Delegates affirmed their solidarity with striking workers at Picturehouse cinemas - who have fought heroically for better pay and conditions, and faced the victimisation of their union reps.

"There's a lot of naughty stuff going on," Jayesh Patel, said.

Declan Ritchie, LU Fleet added: "It's up to us as a union to support our fellow unions, especially when management are being so blatant and so belligerent with their treatment of union reps."

AGM recorded its opposition to divide and rule tactics from politicians and the media seeking to blame older generations for the need for public spending cuts.

Lorna Tooley, East Ham said: "It's absolutely disgusting that older people are blamed for austerity. It's absolutely a class issue and not a generational

issue."

Steve Hedley added: "They want to use the young people as a battering ram against the old people, and we can't have that."

Addressing AGM, National Pensioners' Convention chair Ron Douglas warned that a "two tier system" was emerging in state pensions.

The union's own hardship funds were discussed - with delegates urging Unity House to make arrangements for online crowdfunding appeals.

David Filby said that all official online communications should include links to fundraising web pages.

Others warned that such pages must make clear they are official appeals on behalf of the union, and that fundraising sites were not charging excessive fees.

AGM resolved to support the Merthyr Rising festival - which celebrates the legacy of the 1831 rebellion in the south Wales town. Mick Lynch said: "The British working class have been spoon-fed kings and

queens, but there is a history of radicalism there."

A motion urging councils to set no-cuts budgets was also approved. Owen Herbert, Swansea No. 1 said: "We're told they can't set illegal budgets, but that's not what we're asking for." He said councils could "dip into reserves" to avoid cuts and build a national movement against local government austerity.

Mark Armstrong, Bridgend Llantrisant and District added: "We've got Labour councils imposing Tory austerity."

Mick Cash said: "In principle we should do what we can to fight austerity, but whether this is the only tool I'm a bit wary of."

"The real solution is getting a government that is prepared to finance our services... and debates like this become a thing of the past."

SOCIAL MODEL

AGM further committed to supporting the "social model" of disability. disability advisory

AGM 2017



committee chair Janine Booth said: "Society has looked at disability in a medicalist way, and we want to look at it differently."

She said the social model considered that "people are disabled by the society they live in putting barriers against their equal participation in society", and made a distinction between impairment and disability.

"Under a medical review people you feel sorry for disabled people, under a social model you feel solidarity with disabled people," she added.

Lewis Norton, London Taxi, warned that cabbies would have to "fight tooth and nail" to retain accessible vehicles.

Delegates also agreed that RMT should conduct an accessibility audit to ensure all premises, events and activities are accessible.

LEARNING

A call for the union to develop "bitesize" training sessions of up to 90 minutes received strong support. These could be held before branch meetings or after work - making them accessible to more members.

Mick Stubbs urged: "Let's see how we can get these bitesize

courses into where our members in the shipping grades are."

Mick Cash added: "Training is meant to arm us, whether you're a rep, an activist an official, to do a job at work.

"It's got to have an outcome. It's got to be a means to an end."

But a motion calling for a "full-time co-ordinator for union learning representatives" was lost.

Jim Philp, Fife & District said: "Unfortunately the money that was available has dried up due to government cuts."

Mick Cash lamented: "There's been a lot of turmoil and problems with the unionlearn project. The reality has been since 2010 the Tories have got hold of it and tried to strangle it to death bit by bit."

INTERNATIONAL

Christy Cain, of the Maritime Union of Australia, said that international solidarity between transport unions was essential in the twenty-first century. "We do it because we need to be global, we do it because employers are global," he said.

Joe O'Flynn, general secretary of Irish transport union Siptu praised Labour's

change of direction under Jeremy Corbyn.

"Right now, the president of my union has been elected president of the Irish labour party. That is the direction we want to take Irish Labour - similar to yourselves - and I hope we succeed in doing that".

Howard Phillips, vice president of New Zealand's RMTU said: "We left the [New Zealand] Labour party in the 1980s when those bastards were doing us over.

"We came back with the sole aim of progressing working class struggle and class



Assistant
general secretary
Mick Lynch

AGM 2017

RMT president Sean Hoyle



consciousness, and getting us to the point where another world is possible.

"We got them to the point where in 2008 they nationalised the railways in New Zealand," he said.

John Samuelson, international president of the US Transport Workers' Union, said: "Jeremy Corbyn made a speech up here that you would never see a mainstream Democrat give in the US."

He said that Democrats had "doubled down on the same anti-worker repub-lite politics that got 'em jammed up in the first place".

Giving the general secretary's report, Mick Cash said: "On the backdrop of new technology, they're saying they're going to get rid of guards. They're going to have a fight on their hands.

"What we're fighting for is a safe, secure and accessible railway.

"We're not completely perfect - we never will be completely perfect. But we are what we are: a strong, fighting, member-led, democratic union, proud to be RMT." ■

PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS

RMT president Sean Hoyle opened his address to AGM by congratulating Jeremy Corbyn and the Labour Party for gains made in the snap election which confounded the media and the Tories that had predicted a majority anywhere between 50 and 100 seats.

Mr Hoyle said that millions had voted "for the many not the few" - in the words of Labour's campaign slogan - thanks to "the Labour manifesto of hope coupled with the great campaign Jeremy and his team ran".

"They keep talking about Labour didn't win, Labour didn't win.

"But I thought about it and ask what was lost? I tell you what was lost - a Tory majority, the dementia tax, the scrapping of free school dinners and Theresa May's credibility - that it what was lost.

"I've been a very big critic of the Labour party for many years," Mr Hoyle continued, "but even I can see light at the end of that tunnel".

Mr Hoyle also criticised commentators and politicians who said that it was wrong to "make politics" out of the tragic blaze at Grenfell Tower in west London, which took place shortly before AGM.

"A decision was taken during the recent

refurbishment of the block to decline to use non-flammable cladding - which was just a few pounds more expensive per panel.

"And, following the 2009 fire at Larkanal House in Camberwell, a report recommended that sprinkler systems be installed in tower blocks. The recommendations of the report have still not been implemented.

"I keep hearing how we need to keep politics out of this disaster which maybe a very good idea if you are one of the politician that had every opportunity to make our Tower blocks safer, but voted down the amendment to do so, as in their view it would mean over-regulation.

"If you have chosen to put sub-standard cladding on those blocks, you should be had up for murder," he said.

Mr Hoyle ended his address with a rallying cry for unity and called for delegates and visitors to AGM to link hands - to display the spirit of solidarity that binds the union together.

I hate the word homophobia. It's not a phobia. You're not scared. You're an arsehole.

Morgan Freeman

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LEGAL

A WORKING CLASS VICTORY



RMT salutes UNISON for defeating Tory attempts to impose tribunal fees on workers

In a ground-breaking judgement, the Supreme Court has ruled that the government's decision to introduce tribunal fees in 2013 was in breach of both domestic and UK constitutional law, as it was found to have unlawfully intruded on the citizen's right of access to court.

The Fees Order was successfully challenged by UNISON, with the assistance of the Equality and Human Rights Commission, after having lost beforehand in the Court of Appeal and two Divisional Court hearings.

The Fees Order meant that the cost of bringing an employment claim to tribunal ranged between £390 and £1,200, with discrimination cases costing upwards of that due to their often lengthy and complex process.

Effectively, this barred many low to mid income households and workers whose financial realities meant it was not feasible for them to bring their cases to court; factors such as the uncertainty surrounding whether a case would be successful and that the financial

rewards of a successful small claim would be outweighed by the hefty financial cost that came attached.

The Supreme Court acknowledged this as an unlawful impediment to justice, as well as finding that the Fees Order discriminated against women, who were more likely on average to bring discrimination cases to court.

The nail in the coffin for the Fees Order was the fact that it had failed to reduce the number of weak cases that wasted time and money, which had been the Government's main justification when they implemented the Order, whilst causing a 79 per cent drop in the number of cases brought to tribunal over the last three years.

This showed that not only was the Order ineffective but also prevented those who had faced injustice in the workplace from being able to defend themselves in the courts.

As a result of the ruling fees are no longer payable when bringing an employment case to tribunal. This means that no one has to pay a fee to lodge a claim nor does a hearing fee have to

be paid. If a claim has already been lodged and a notice to pay the hearing fee has been issued it will not have to be paid.

The government has agreed to reimburse those who had paid the fees, which leaves them looking to pay reparations of up to £32 million. The mechanism for reimbursing fees has not yet been announced. Further guidance will be given once we know the mechanism for recovery of fees.

If the fee was paid as part of a settlement agreement it will be difficult for an employer to recover the fee as they are bound by the terms of the settlement agreement. Where the tribunal ordered the employer to pay the fee we will have to wait for further details from the government as to what they propose to do about it.

RMT shall be seeking legal advice on the best and most effective way to recover the thousands of pounds on fees we have spent defending member's cases.

However RMT's criteria for taking on a case has never been motivated by the costs and only simply ask whether there are

reasonable prospects of success and if there are then RMT fights the case; that position has never changed even with the introduction of fees.

In the long term, this is a victory for all trade unions working together against the government's attempts to commercialise justice and workers' rights, as any future restrictions the government may try to implement will be put under fierce scrutiny as a result of today's judgement.

RMT general secretary Mick Cash said that it was a brilliant and ground breaking victory for every worker in Britain and the union salutes UNISON for its determined efforts in this case on behalf of the entire British working class.

"The result proves conclusively that the only chance workers have of defending themselves against bad bosses is through their trade unions.

"The victory today is a massive boost for the whole trade union movement as we fight against the tidal wave of attacks on workplaces the length and breadth of Britain," he said.

NARROW GAUGE, BIG PLANS

Isaac, a 1952 narrow gauge steam locomotive, chugs on the line at Woody Bay station.



The Lynton and Barnstaple narrow gauge railway is moving one step closer to fully restoring the original line

The Lynton and Barnstaple Railway in North Devon is a non-profit organisation currently offering one mile narrow gauge train rides at Woody Bay in Exmoor National Park but it has one aim: to fully restore the legendary railway.

The line was closed in 1935 and the original engines and rolling stock sold off for scrap. But, thanks to the dedication of thousands of determined supporters across the country, it is slowly being rebuilt. As part of this project, on September 30 it is unveiling a replica of the Lyn, one of the original steam

engines that used to weave through one of the most beautiful landscapes in the country.

Enthusiasts have also lovingly restored carriages salvaged from wrecks found in gardens and farmers' fields across Devon including one rebuilt by an East Anglia support group.

When asked if trains really could be running along the original 19 mile route, L&B director Ian Cowling has no doubt about it.

"Not only does the Trust own or have access to around 90 per

cent of the track bed, there is huge national support amongst the public as well as local councils and organisations," he said.

The railway carried over 52,000 visitors last year on just one mile of track. An extended line running from Barnstaple to the small coastal town of Lynton, which is linked to Lynmouth by a water-powered cliff railway, would be irresistible to all.

The original line was built like a main line in miniature, partly to save money and to allow for the tight curves as it

climbs onto the shoulder of Exmoor.

In 1898 builders blasted through solid rock and built eighty bridges including two viaducts. The magnificent eight-arched Chelfham Viaduct curves 70 feet above the valley floor and has now been fully restored to enable it to bear trains once more.

Moreover a £16.5 million project to restore part of the railway could be 'shovel ready' in just over two years. North Devon Council has granted planning permission for 'phase 2a' to reinstate the line from

Blackmoor Gate to Wistlandpound, as well as to convert the Old Station House Inn back into a working L&B station once more.

The Lynton and Barnstaple Railway Trust has set up the L&B Blackmoor Company plc to buy and convert the old pub into a station as well as an 'engineering hub' for the whole line.

Potential investors are now being invited to register their interest and have a stake in the rebirth of a railway. A further five applications have yet to be decided by Exmoor National Park and Ian Cowling said that, if approved work on the ground would start.

This would deliver 5.5 miles of track and increase the prospect of reopening the entire stretch from Lynton to Barnstaple.

"This phase unlocks the whole railway, because it gives us a base at Blackmoor Gate," said Mr Cowling.

"The site is also large enough to house a museum for the huge collection of artefacts we have

and are continuing to receive.

"We have been discussing it with the owners for some time, but we have to raise the money from share sales and that offer is open until November," he said.

This extension would also bring 78 new jobs, 20 on the railway and another 50 locally. Mr Cowling added: "In 10 years' time, we could be putting up to £10 million back into the local economy every year".

The L&B is one of the most exciting narrow-gauge restoration projects in the country and it has already won awards for "outstanding achievement in railway preservation". Staff and volunteers are justly proud of what has been achieved and are just as keen to finish the job. "We'll get there," said Ian with amused stoicism but they are always looking for help.

For more information on the line or becoming a Lynton and Barnstaple Trust member go to www.lynton-rail.co.uk



Guard Jim Price releases the handbrake aboard a narrow gauge steam train guards carriage at Woody Bay station.



Driver Chris Carder oils the motion on Isaac, a 1952 narrow gauge steam locomotive, in between runs from Woody Bay station on the reopened railway.



EXPANSIONS: L&B director Ian Cowling indicates the direction of the line extension to Old Blackmoor Gate

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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 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.





REMEMBERING DAVE SAYERS

RMT general secretary Mick Cash made a presentation to Dave Sayers wife and kids Jan, Charlie and Chloe at a memorial at East Sussex Coastway branch to mark a year since Dave's passing.

Mick presented them with branch strike badges and some flowers on behalf of the branch.

Dave was the branch harassment officer and died while on strike. Dave's picture

has been on the branch banner ever since he died and has been on every picket line since then. Dave always saw the good in everything and if it was not for him and his memory there would

have been a lot of the 23 striking conductors out of a job. Dave was an inspiration to the branch and cannot be replaced, but the branch strives to live by his example. ■

SURF'S-UP!

UNISON's Croyde Bay holiday resort in North Devon offers five per cent discount to RMT members

Croyde Bay holiday resort has a lot to offer including onsite surf lessons at Walking on Waves Surf School, where you can learn from a former European Champion. The newest exciting activity is Stand Up Paddleboarding Tours which take you on an exciting route through the estuary past views Braunton Burrows and around to Saunton.

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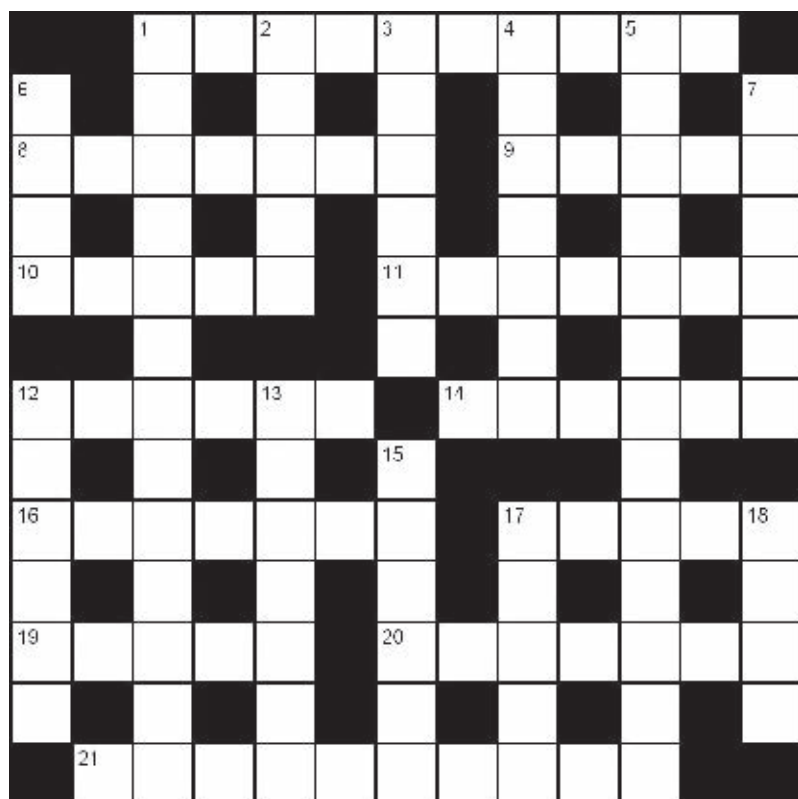
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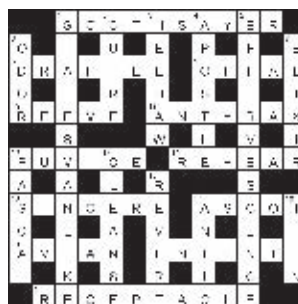
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£50 PRIZE CROSSWORD



Last month's solution...



The winner of last month's prize crossword Winner D Thomson.

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

Winner and solution in next issue.

ACROSS

- 1 Convenience (10)
- 8 Eliminate (7)
- 9 Thick (5)
- 10 More than enough (5)
- 11 Gemstone (7)
- 12 Closing passage (6)
- 14 Behind (6)
- 16 Admit(6)
- 17 Attraction (5)
- 19 Leg bone (5)
- 20 Turkish term of respect (7)
- 21 Collection of pieces (8)

DOWN

- 1 Offensive (13)
- 2 Annoy (5)
- 3 Fuel (6)
- 4 Unlimited (7)
- 5 Healing (13)
- 6 Greek letter (4)
- 7 Face-to-face (4,2)
- 12 Arouse (6)
- 13 Too old (7)
- 15 Warm again (6)
- 17 Civilian dress (5)
- 18 Corrosive (4)



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Forename(s)			
Home phone			
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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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Date

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Signature(s)

Date

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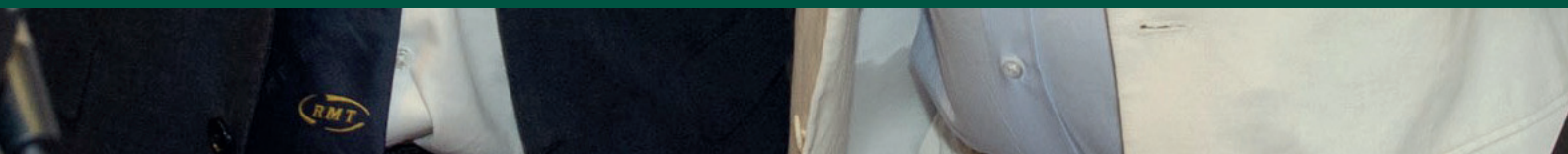


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Jeremy Corbyn. Labour Party leader. RMT AGM. Exeter. June 2017.



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