

RMT *news*

Essential reading for today's transport worker

EAST COAST MEMBERS SPEAK

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www.rmt.org.uk

WORKING FOR YOU

RMT membership helps you at work and saves you money

RMT has developed a number of benefits to save members money. This includes negotiating access to savings and special offers from our approved partners.

COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

The union has a dedicated team of elected officers and local reps to serve your interests negotiating with employers on issues from pay, hours of work, pensions and working conditions. They are supported by a team of researchers to formulate pay claims to obtain the best negotiated terms for you.

CAMPAIGNING

The union has a political fund to run campaigns and provide a political voice to benefit members' interests in the workplace. RMT has a very active parliamentary group which raises issues of concern for members at Westminster, the Scottish Parliament and Welsh Assembly.

PERSONAL INJURIES

Personal injury claims cover if you suffer an accident in work or outside work. RMT underwrites settlements that would not be provided by no-win, no-fee companies. Call 08457 125 495.

INDUSTRIAL DISEASES

Members who have suffered an industrial disease will receive free legal support to make a claim. Such claims are underwritten by the union and members will not have any deduction from their settlement unlike claims run by no-win, no-fee companies. Call 08457 125 495

EMPLOYMENT TRIBUNALS

Should a member find themselves unfairly dismissed, discriminated against or have any claim which has reasonable prospects of

success at an Employment Tribunal, RMT will provide legal representation and pay the fee. Even if the union is advised that the claim is unlikely to succeed, members who make a claim are eligible to receive free legal advice.

ACCIDENT BENEFIT

Payable if you have an accident at work or on the way to or from work. Accident benefit is only payable if you have been off for three days or more.

Accident must be reported to branch secretary within 26 weeks in order to qualify for accident benefit.

RETIREMENT BENEFIT

Payable to any member who retires over the age of 60 or aged 55 if retired through redundancy or resettlement. Ill health retirement is also payable; proof of this must be sent with application for retirement benefit.

TAX AND WILL PREPARATION

The union can provide a personal taxation service and will preparation service.

DEMOTION COMPENSATION

Payable to any member who is experiencing loss of wages through being permanently demoted or downgraded as a result of illness or injury. Payment of £300 provided that member reports this to branch secretary within 12 weeks.

ORPHAN FUND

The beneficiaries of this fund would be any child of a

member or spouse if the member dies in service or if a members' spouse dies and the member has responsibility of the children.

Benefit is paid while a child is in full-time education up until the age of 22. Payment is made quarterly and the rate is £12.00 per week for children up to the age of 16, then £12.75 per week from 16 to 22.

RMT CREDIT UNION

Accessible savings and affordable loans from RMT's Credit union.
www.rmt.org.uk/about/credit-union

ONLINE SHOPPING DISCOUNTS

Shop online with RMTrewards.com and earn cashback savings from hundreds of retailers, like B&Q, Argos and Tesco. It's free to join, plus you'll get a FREE £10 Welcome Bonus in your online account! (Terms and conditions apply)
www.rmtrewards.com

FINES POOL

if you drive a company vehicle as part of your job you can join the RMT fines pool for £7 per year. The Fines Pool will reimburse members for any speeding fines, related court costs and lost time to attend a court hearing.
www.rmt.org.uk/member-benefits/fines-pool

BEREAVEMENT BENEFIT

A Death Grant of £600 is payable to the nearest relative or legal representative if a member dies through any cause prior to retirement.

CASHBACK PREPAID CARD

Fancy cashback on your everyday shopping? Use your RMT Prepaid Plus Cashback card at over 50 partner retailers, including Sainsbury's, ASDA and Boots, and earn unlimited cashback! It's different to a credit or debit card - you can only spend what you load so there's less chance of getting carried away.
www.rmtprepaid.com

FREE £5,000 ACCIDENTAL DEATH COVER

As a benefit of your RMT membership you can register for £5,000 Free Accidental Death Cover. Cover is for UK residents aged 18-69.

12 months free cover. Annually renewable and always FREE. The Cover is underwritten by Advent Insurance PCC Ltd - UIB Cell.
www.rmtprotect.com

HOME INSURANCE

Get a £50 Love2Shop Reward when you buy a UIA Home & Contents insurance online.
www.uia.co.uk/rmt
RMT DRIVE
Risk Free Car Purchasing for RMT Members
www.rmtCAR.oco.uk

HEALTH CASH PLAN

For a small monthly premium you can claim cash-back on dental, optical and therapy treatments. Visit
www.bhsf.co.uk

Join RMT by visiting
www.rmt.org.uk

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EDITORIAL



SPEAKING OUT

RMT members working on the East Coast Mainline were asked what they think of privatisation with some incredibly revealing results.

Many members have been working the line many under all the three failed private operators.

Over 90 per cent said that they wanted East Coast taken back under public ownership and over 86 per cent believed VTEC had submitted a bid that was impossible for the company to deliver.

Whether working the route for six months or 40 years, it was clear that they care passionately about the service and what can be achieved.

It is this same compassion and care that is behind the struggle to keep the guard on the train in a number of disputes with different operators.

It is also why the union has secured overwhelming votes to continue with action on Greater Anglia and South Western Railway after being forced to renew the mandates with both employers under the new wave of Tory anti-union laws.

The union is also fighting the continuing fragmentation of Network Rail and attempts to move towards route privatisation.

In fact RMT submitted evidence to the Transport Select Committee inquiry into Rail Infrastructure Investment last month and called for a people's railway and the democratisation of Network Rail.

As we told the inquiry it all depends on whether you want a national asset that is for the people, providing a transport system, or whether you just want to keep providing profits for people who are going to exploit the people using and working on that system.

The same arguments can be made for the bus industry but, as a new report shows, private greed and lack of investment is leading to the further

decline in bus services including Stagecoach's decision to close its Kings Lynn depot this month threatening over 100 jobs.

That is no way to run an industry and the private sector is clearly not interested in stemming this decline.

We are making some political headway for seafarers as RMT campaigning has secured a concrete government commitment to help end wage undercutting in the maritime and offshore sectors.

The Department of Transport published its 'Maritime 2050' consultation strategy document last month which promised to extend the National Minimum Wage for seafarers in territorial waters and one port voyages.

Now we must hold them to that commitment. Only last month the union demanded that Jersey and Guernsey ferry operator Condor should be sacked for paying low wages and providing a poor service.

RMT has a seat on the Merchant Navy Training Board and it has long argued for more apprenticeship schemes to stem the steep decline in UK ratings on UK-registered ships.

Therefore we must welcome the fact that apprenticeship numbers have grown to nearly 280 this year, many of which are in companies in the public sector such as Caledonian MacBrayne and the Royal Fleet Auxiliary. More must be done but this is encouraging news.

Finally RMT is holding a special general meeting at the end of next month on affiliation to the Labour Party. I do not wish to pre-empt the debate but whatever decision is made we must continue to work together to defend working people.

Mick Cash

When you have finished with this magazine give it to a workmate who is not in your union.



CAMPAIGNING FOR GUARDS

RMT members held a week of protest earlier this month at stations across the north over threats to safety, service and accessibility on the second anniversary of German state-owned Arriva taking over the Northern Rail franchise.

A further phase of industrial action involving members on South Western Railway also went ahead over Easter in the dispute over safety and the role of the guard.

There was further "solid and united" industrial action last month on Southern Rail in Britain's longest running industrial dispute over the removal of guards and the introduction of driver-only operation.

RMT members on Northern Rail also took strike action late last month in the dispute over guards and rail safety. The union also wrote to the German transport minister seeking an urgent meeting aimed at breaking the current deadlock.

In the letter to Alexander Dobrindt, the German Federal Transport Minister, the union said that the on-going industrial

action in Britain would continue and called on him to use his position to seek a solution.

"Your help in this matter is vital to avoid the German government being seen as the one prolonging this dispute and jeopardising safety, security and accessibility on UK rail services," the letter said.

The union has pointed out that the move by Arriva to expand driver-only operation would mean nearly half a million trains running annually

without a safety critical guard on board.

Yet there is nothing in Arriva's franchise agreement that requires them to axe guards from Northern trains and that the decision was wholly theirs alone.

RMT also secured overwhelming votes to continue action in the rail safety disputes on Greater Anglia and South Western Railway after being forced to renew the mandates with both employers under the

terms of the new wave of Tory anti-union laws.

On Greater Anglia the strike vote was over 80 per cent yes on a turn-out of over 80 per cent and on South Western Railway the turn-out was 63 per cent with a yes vote of 73 per cent.

RMT general secretary Mick Cash said that once again members had stood united and renewed the mandate to carry on the fight to put public safety before private profit.



Doncaster



"Both Greater Anglia and South Western Railway have opted to play for time over the past six months rather than acting responsibly and getting round the table with the union to work out a solution to all these disputes that puts safety and the guard guarantee centre stage.

"That is the package we have successfully negotiated in both Wales and Scotland and it defies belief that we are being denied the same positive outcome on these English franchises.

"Now that the staff have spoken the ball is in the court of both Greater Anglia and South Western Railway and we expect a swift and positive response to

the union's call for genuine and meaningful talks," he said.

RMT members leafleted stations across the north including Doncaster, York, Harrogate, Huddersfield, Barrow in Furness, Carlisle, Windermere, Whitehaven, Buxton, Manchester, Wigan, Liverpool, Blackburn, Sheffield and Leeds.

The message was that it was bad enough that Northern passengers had not seen any sign of the promised improvements but it is unforgivable that Northern was about to make matters worse by getting rid of guards who do so much to assist passenger service, safety and accessibility. ■



MERSEYRAIL/RMT STATEMENT

ACAS joint statement on behalf of Merseyrail and RMT

Following twelve hours of constructive talks held under the auspices of the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS) Merseyrail acknowledged RMT's clear position that the only way that this industrial dispute will be resolved is by having a second safety critical person on every train.

Based on this, both parties agreed to work together to identify, explore and assess a range of options to determine their affordability and value for money.

Merseyrail and RMT have agreed to re-convene talks with Acas within the next seven days and that while these talks continue, they will remain confidential as part of the process.



DLR STRIKE AFTER TALKS COLLAPSE

Strike action on Docklands Light Railway went ahead last month after the operator Keolis Amey Docklands (KAD) collapsed talks at ACAS by failing issues at the heart of the dispute.

RMT officials made strenuous efforts throughout two days of last-ditch talks at ACAS to reach a negotiated settlement but were met by a stone wall thrown up by the company.

The talks were seen by the union as an opportunity to resolve a raft of issues that amount to a comprehensive breakdown in industrial relations on a number of important fronts including:

- Outsourcing of jobs through the use of contractors, undermining the job security and pay and conditions of DLR permanent staff
 - Attacks on rostering agreements that would worsen work/life balance
 - Abuse of key policies and procedures, including attendance procedures
 - Payroll and taxation failures leaving RMT members to deal with the consequences
- RMT general secretary Mick

Cash said that the union was bitterly disappointed and extremely angry that KAD had kicked away a golden opportunity to resolve the issues at the heart of the dispute in the ACAS talks.

"Our members are standing united and determined on DLR in a dispute that is about ending the undercutting of jobs and conditions through outsourcing, ending the abuse of procedures and defending the basic principles of workplace justice.

"The union has serious safety concerns about the ad-hoc and highly limited service that KAD have been able to cobble together through a combination of a few scabs and an under-trained group of managers. Instead of running risks and cutting corners the company should be negotiating a settlement to this dispute.

"This dispute is over the fundamental issues of workplace justice, fairness, the outsourcing of key functions and sticking to agreements and practices that Keolis seem to believe that they can trample all over.

"RMT members employed by KAD have had enough of being

treated like dirt and have made it clear that they are prepared to stand up and fight for their fundamental rights.

"Docklands Light Railway is a key component of the transport network in the Capital City and the way that staff are being treated is a stain on London.

"The London Mayor, who chairs Transport for London, needs to take full note of the workplace abuses that are happening on his watch and should now step in and help us to achieve a negotiated settlement with the company," he said. ■





RMT AT WOMEN'S TUC

RMT women delegates gathered in Congress House in London last month to celebrate 100 years of some women being able to vote for the first time and 150 years of the TUC.

During three days of debates and discussions, the main topics were equality for all women, ending pregnancy discrimination, the effects of mental and domestic abuse on women and sexual harassment.

Shirley Fulton, Dover Shipping spoke on Women's wellbeing and working time, calling for positive action to be taken to reduce the number of hours worked at sea, therefore reducing the negative impacts on seafarers. The RMT is looking for an increase on the number of women seafarers at work in all sectors of the industry.

Cat Cray, Neasden seconded a composite on sexual

harassment. At a time where this is media coverage on the #metoo campaign, RMT was calling for companies to treat sexual harassment and assault in the same way as other kinds of harassment.

Trade unions must play a vital role in educating both employers and employees to eliminate sexual harassment and assault in the workplace.

Mary Jane Herbison, Glasgow moved a motion on

highlighting sexual assault on public transport continues to increase despite the increasing use of CCTV.

"TOCs are putting profits before the safety of their passengers.

"That's why it is necessary to keep the guard on the train and the vast majority of the travelling public want to see a guard on every train," she said.





BEECHING ON THE BUSES

private profiteering and cuts decimating local bus services

A toxic combination of private profiteering, localised cuts and the uncontrolled growth of services like Uber is killing off bus services RMT has warned.

The country has already lost 134 million miles of bus routes over the past decade as campaigners warn of "Beeching-style" cuts to services.

A passenger watchdog Transport Focus report has revealed that the proportion of bus passengers satisfied with the value for money that bus tickets represent, has – in some areas – fallen to as low as 51 per cent in Essex.

RMT said that greedy bus companies had been ratcheting up prices, exploiting the fall in the cost of their subsidised fuel and cherry picking profitable routes at the expense of access

to services for communities and vulnerable groups for whom bus services are a transport lifeline.

Bus routes are now so severely reduced that hundreds of thousands of people have become reliant on volunteer-run bus services to drive them to hospital appointments and go shopping, it has emerged.

A series of cuts to local spending on buses has led to Britain's network shrinking to levels last seen in the late 1980s leading to fears that bus provision could be reduced to the same degree as railways were in the Sixties, when thousands of miles of track were scrapped and hundreds of stations closed following a report by British Railways Board chairman Dr Richard Beeching.

Transport Focus has said that

it is concerned that bus services were heading in a "similar" direction.

A spokesman for the group said that there was a growing danger of elderly and vulnerable people becoming isolated as a result of a shortage of buses, which he said play a "vital role" in connecting communities.

"The removal of services will certainly have a large impact on vulnerable people. Local authorities are facing difficult decisions as cuts are unavoidable.

"Passengers should be the priority and local authorities should aim to make passengers involved, and have a good communication with them when making changes," he said.

RMT general secretary Mick Cash said that it was long

overdue that profiteering by the private bus companies was ended and local authorities are again allowed to own their own bus fleets and run their own bus services.

"RMT welcomes the commitment of Jeremy Corbyn's Labour party to the municipal control of buses.

"The toxic combination of private profiteering, localised cuts and the uncontrolled growth of services like Uber is undermining bus services and condemning thousands to the misery of transport poverty.

"We need a wholesale change in policy that once again puts publicly owned and controlled bus services centre stage as part of a wider transport policy for Britain," he said.

Parliamentary column

POLITICAL SCHOOL GOES TO PARLIAMENT

Delegates to the union's political school visited the House of Commons last month as part of their week-long course which took place at the RMT Bob Crow education centre in Doncaster.

They were drawn from a wide spectrum of grades from rail, road transport, shipping and bus from all over the country.

Delegates included John Coom, Andover Bus branch, Keith Saunders, Bridgend, Liantrisant & District branch, Chris Gryce, Camden 3, Paul Thomas, Cardiff 7 Daniel Newman, Dover Shipping, Glenn Craddock, East Kent, Andrew Ritchie Fife & District, Graham Keeble, Leeds Goods & Cartage, John Lauder and Clive Scott both from Newcastle Rail and Catering.

They were welcomed to Parliament by Labour MPs and



RMT Parliamentary group members Grahame Morris and Jo Stevens.

The purpose of the residential school is to raise awareness of the tools available for political campaigning and lobbying by the union at all levels and internationally.

It is led by RMT political officer James Croy who gives an overview of the course, organises sessions with speakers and gives an insight into the process of working with politicians to further union aims.

The next RMT political school takes place in October and is

open to all RMT members whatever level of experience. If you are interested in applying contact your branch secretary, or for more information contact James Croy at j.croy@rmt.org.uk or ring 020 7529 8822.

MARCH & RALLY SATURDAY 12 MAY 2018

**Assemble 11am at Victoria Embankment
(between Hungerford Bridge and
Blackfriars Bridge)**

www.tuc.org.uk/newdealforworkingpeople
#TUCnewdeal

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Changing the world
of work for good

WE DEMAND

**A NEW
DEAL FOR
WORKING
PEOPLE**

RMT WINS PAY COMMITMENT

Union secures commitment on minimum wage in shipping and offshore sectors

RMT campaigning has secured a concrete government commitment to help end wage undercutting in the maritime and offshore sectors.

The Department of Transport published its 'Maritime 2050' consultation strategy document last month which said that the "welfare and wellbeing of our people must be of topmost concern as they are one of our most valuable resources. As a result we are currently working in a number of employment areas that will improve the working conditions and reward of personnel. Among these are actions to extend the National Minimum Wage for seafarers in territorial waters and one port voyages. The full extract is below:

3.32 The welfare and wellbeing of our people must be of topmost concern as they are one of our most valuable resources. As a result we are currently working in a number

of employment areas that will improve the working conditions and reward of personnel.

Among these are actions to:

- extend the National Minimum Wage for seafarers in territorial waters and one port voyages;
- deliver greater certification and recognition of other countries training certificates.
- provide easier access to visas / ID documents for seafarers
- extend international agreements on social welfare and protection to seafarers and fishermen
- continue to be at the forefront globally of tackling modern day slavery issues, working with relevant bodies to ensure that going forwards there are no instances of such practices in British waters and worldwide.

- implement the seafarers' directive by amending employment legislation to give seafarers same protection as employees on land

This is a significant step forward in eliminating the scandal of undercutting and below minimum wage rates of pay in the maritime and offshore sectors.

RMT national secretary Steve Todd, said that the government must now stick to this clear commitment to extend the National Minimum Wage for seafarers working in UK territorial waters and on one port voyages to the offshore sector, as campaigned for by members and in RMT meetings with government.

"RMT will now be stepping up our campaign for swift and effective legislation from the Government to enact this as part of our wider campaign to



completely end undercutting and the scourge of nationality based pay discrimination against seafarers and offshore workers," he said.

RMT general secretary Mick Cash welcomed the movement, at last, to apply and enforce National Minimum Wage pay rates for seafarers working between UK ports and from the UK to offshore installations.

"This is a major victory for RMT's hard working seafarer and offshore members who continue to provide safe and secure services for passengers, businesses, the freight sector and the offshore industry," he said.

APPRENTICESHIP SUCCESSES

Union welcomes increase in apprenticeships, many in the public sector

RMT has welcomed the fact that seafaring apprenticeship numbers have grown to nearly 280 this year alone many of which are in companies in the public sector such as Caledonian MacBrayne and the Royal Fleet Auxiliary.

RMT has a seat on the Merchant Navy Training Board and it has long argued for more apprenticeship schemes to stem the steep decline in UK ratings on UK-registered ships.

RMT national secretary Steve Todd said that these were the biggest numbers for a

generation but much more needed to be done.

"To give it some context, for UK seafarers to meet the forecast increases in demand for Deck Ratings alone, a government report last year said that the number of Deck Ratings aged under 30 in training needed to rise to 470 per year.

"I would like to commend the RFA and particularly our RMT convenor and apprentice development office Ian Boyle who has done great work in encouraging apprenticeship schemes.



"Scottish Ferry operator Cal Mac, also in the public sector, is also blazing a trail for young men and women that are looking for careers at sea.

"It is interesting that the public sector is outstripping the private sector when it comes in

investing in our young people," he said.

CalMac has expanded Modern Apprenticeship (MA) programme to include harbour operations by joining forces with Forth Ports Ltd to devise a new Port Operations MA, the

first time a port owner has partnered up with another company to deliver specialist training.

CalMac is recruiting a total of 25 MAs including six Deck Ratings, four Engine Ratings, 10 Retail Ratings and five Port Ratings.

It operates out of 33 harbours and slipways across the West Coast, and apprentices will learn all aspects loading, unloading and securing cargo, mooring, passenger operations and workplace transport operations.

CalMac's HR director Christine Roberts said that increasing training opportunities were a key commitment of the successful bid to continue delivering ferry services across the west coast.

"I'm delighted to announce the expansion of our MA programme as these will be the next generation of staff with the key task of ensuring the safe

berthing, loading and unloading of our fleet.

"Port operators need to learn to deal with everything from fishing boats to cruise ships. This new MA will give them the ideal foundation to build a career in harbour management," she said.

Over the 15-month programme of on-the-job and classroom training MAs will qualify to SVQ level 2 in Port Operations along with an additional industry qualification in Plant and Health & Safety.

Jackie Anderson, HR Director from Forth Ports welcomed working in partnership with CalMac to deliver the Port Operations Modern Apprenticeship.

"We are investing in our training and development programme at Forth Ports and as part of this we are currently building a new training academy at the Port of Grangemouth," she said. ■

RATING APPRENTICE FIGURES BROKEN DOWN BETWEEN COMMERCIAL OPERATORS INCLUDING CAL MAC AND THE RFA

Total numbers in commercial companies

Specialist Area	Year 2017/18
Deck	81
Engine	23
Catering	3
Other*	10
Total	117

Broken down by company

Company	Deck	Engine	Catering/Other
Svitzer	6		
Red Funnel	4		
North Link Ferries	3	3	
Northern Marine	19		
DFDS	10	5	3 (catering)
P&O Ferries	5	5	
Serco	15		
Calmac	12	7	10 (retail)
Northern Lighthouse	2	2	
Princess Cruises	5		
Gosport Ferries		1	
Total	81	23	13

RFA

Specialist Area	Year 2017/18
Deck	39
Engine	45
Catering	24
Comms	34
Steward	21
Total	161

SACK CONDOR

Union calls for Jersey and Guernsey ferry operator to be sacked for paying low wages and providing a poor service

RMT held protests last month at Portsmouth International Port calling for an end to Condor Ferries paying poverty wages on their ships.

Condor is contracted by the Jersey and Guernsey governments to operate lifeline ferry services between Portsmouth and Poole and the Channel Islands.

Ukrainian Seafarers working on a three-month contract with Condor Ferries have been paid £2.46 per hour for a 12-hour

working day.*

RMT's SOS2020 campaign is calling out companies' profiting from the exploitation of seafarers, which includes Condor Ferries' owners, the Australian bank Macquarie who extract a management fee under the current contract with the Governments of Jersey and Guernsey.

RMT calls on politicians and the public in Jersey, Guernsey and the UK to support our demands for:

- A Living Wage employer (£9.75 per hour), as a minimum on lifeline Channel Island ferry services.
- Recognition for RMT to collectively bargain for seafarer ratings.
- Register all UK-Channel Island ferries in the Red Ensign Group.
- Binding targets for Seafarer apprentices over the life of the new contract.

RMT general secretary Mick Cash said that UK and Channel Island seafarers cannot and should not have to compete with pay rates as low as £2.46 per hour.

"With wages like that it is no wonder that between 1980 and 2016 the number of UK ratings

fell by over 60 per cent.

"There are 87,000 ratings jobs on ferries and other merchant vessels working from UK ports, with a vast majority paid below the UK National Minimum Wage and RMT is fighting to change this," he said.

RMT national secretary Steve Todd said that, in addition to the disgraceful low wages, 81 per cent of Channel Islanders in 2016 were dissatisfied with Condor Ferries, the result of rising fares, safety incidents, service cancellations, delayed freight supplies and exploitative employment practices.

"This is no way to run a lifeline ferry service for the people and businesses of the Channel Islands," he said. ■





EAST COAST MEMBERS SPEAK

RMT members working
on East Coast Mainline
speak their minds
about privatisation
with some incredibly
revealing results

RMT has released a new pamphlet highlighting the failings of the privatised East Coast mainline in the words of the staff who work on the service.

The publication was brought out as transport secretary Chris Grayling prepared to reward greedy privateers Stagecoach and Virgin with a new contract to run services on the East Coast Mainline in a massive reward for corporate incompetence.

East Coast Mainline: what our members say, takes the form of quotes from RMT members working on East Coast.

The union carried out a survey of over 1,600 RMT members and asked how they felt about what has happened to their work and to the franchise.

Many members have been working the East Coast mainline for British Rail, Great North Eastern Railway (GNER), National Express East Coast

(NEXC), Directly Operated Railways Ltd (DOR) and Virgin Trains East Coast (VTEC).

The three private operators (GNER, NEXC, VTEC) won the contract with bids promising £1.3 billion, £1.4 billion and £3.3 billion respectively and they have all failed.

Over 90 per cent said that they wanted East Coast taken back into public ownership and over 86 per cent believed VTEC had submitted a bid that was impossible for the company to deliver.

Whether working the route for six months, or more than 40 years, it was immediately clear that they care passionately about the service and what can be achieved.

RMT general secretary Mick Cash said that the report threw the spotlight on the catastrophic and costly failure of privatisation on the East Coast Mainline in the words of those

who know the railway best, the frontline staff.

"Three private operators have failed on East Coast with impossible bids, exposing privatisation as a total failure as our members show in this pamphlet.

"The union will continue to fight to protect jobs, services and safety and for the long term solution of public ownership," he said. ■

The pamphlet can be downloaded here <http://bit.ly/rmtcoast>



"VTEC have stripped this workplace of staff, moral & atmosphere. They over promise and under deliver to their passengers through staff cuts which in turn gives the passengers cause to vent their anger at us. No wonder we have such a high sick bill because VTEC have just created this monster themselves.

"VTEC have increased their manager numbers and reduced front line staff. You have no idea who is managing you and who to go to with a problem.

"Many of us felt they had overbid, as we had many years behind us with several changes of operator.

"Zero home/work life balance now.

"Terrible management and hugely overbid for franchise.

"Too many management with no railway knowledge at all.

"I dislike coming to work which was never the case until 18 months ago, I'm made to feel worthless.

"Staff moral rock bottom due to bad management.

"BY FAR THE WORST COMPANY EVER TO MANAGE THE ECML!

"I've seen a lot of people around me disintegrate from being happy and bubbly and excited about being part of a great company, to now being stressed and over worked and to not even want to turn up to work, its genuinely quite heartbreaking to witness.

"Due to greed and managerial incompetence, I am ashamed to say I work on the ECML. Up until the start of this franchise, I was proud to say I worked on the premier line in Britain, now I am embarrassed.

"VTEC are clueless, they have run the staff into the ground, over worked us. The management have no clue and they have given us duties which mean we are unable to deliver a good level of service.

"Also the management don't listen to the front line teams and introduce something without thinking about it first. Example of this is the customer experience managers given responsibility for areas of the business that they know nothing about, this lasted for some places 2 weeks and others a year, until it's gone back to the way it was as it didn't work.

"Most stressful time in 20 years on the railway. Bullied us. Intimated us. Threatened us.

FOR A PEOPLE'S RAILWAY



Union addresses House of Commons committee on rail infrastructure and calls for end to causalisation and privatisation

RMT submitted written and oral evidence to the Transport Select Committee inquiry into Rail Infrastructure Investment last month calling for a people's railway and the democratisation of Network Rail.

RMT assistant general secretary Mick Lynch spoke on behalf of the union to counter arguments put forward by a panel of privateers during the oral evidence session.

The session began with a question from Transport Select Committee chair Lillian Greenwood MP regarding the regulation of the industry and even whether or not it is appropriate.

Mick Lynch responded by saying that "everyone keeps going on about the independent safety regulator, and there are at least three bodies I could name that claim to be that, or are labelled as that in the media.

"We would like a stand-alone, independent safety regulator that is not under the control of any stakeholder in the industry.

"That is an issue we want addressed, we would like Network Rail to be directly responsible to the Minister and the Ministry.

"We think it should be a people's railway with direct accountability to the Ministry," he said.

Tory MP Martin Vickers questioned the panel on Network Rail's efficiency.

Mick Lynch responded by saying that efficiency was a word that was used all the time to RMT members.

"It does not have a definition and nobody knows what it is.

"If it means getting more

work done for the same money or less or in a quicker time period, you can understand that.

"What we tend to experience is a proliferation of middle managers and accountants all looking for efficiencies.

"It tends to come down to the man or woman on the track in the orange outfit who has been told, 'your terms and conditions are a bit expensive'.

"The documents we have seen lately do not contain a definition that gives us any comfort. We think that ultimately it will be a squeeze on the workforce.

"The efficiencies they have tended to go for over the last 20 years have meant tens of thousands of people leaving the industry, insecure employment, casual employment, zero hours, tax dodging and all the rest of it.

"It has not made a particularly modern railway and there is a lot of waste. People such as Carillion come into the industry and claim to be efficient and then they disappear.

"There is also a proliferation of white-van man. There is not enough regulation, as far as I am concerned, and there is too much slackness.

"From the top, it looks very efficient, but at ground level it just looks like a drive to the bottom and some people regard that as efficient, but it is not acceptable to us," he said.

A number of the respondents advocated changing the period review process, and the control period process, to fragment the current arrangements and have different processes surrounding each franchise or route.

Labour MP Daniel Zeichner

challenged this stating;

"That would be quite complicated, wouldn't it? You would end up with multiple control periods depending on where the franchises were".

Mick Lynch agreed and said that Network Rail was already forever cancelling prospective jobs.

"They are cancelling actual jobs all the time, every week and every night, because they cannot plan or they have run out of money.

"Our understanding of the previous control period is that they spent an awful lot of money at the beginning and did not leave any money, or not enough money, to be smoothed across the five years," he said.

Tory MP Steve Double asked for views on the periodic review process and whether it was too long or should be truncated.

Mick Lynch responded that it should not be done on the back of a fag packet.

"What we would like is that the outcome should be more prescriptive as there is too much discretion.

"If the country is stumping up money for the industry, it should have some idea of what it is going to get and some commitment from the people who are delivering it as to how they will do it and what will be the result at the end," he said.

Labour MP and RMT Parliamentary group member Grahame Morris asked about the impact on jobs and skills of the current stop-start approach to work on the railway.

Mick Lynch said that contractors were forever calling for more work on the basis that they will have to get rid of people "and if I lose these

people I won't be able to take the next work".

"It is responding to the demands of the contractors and in some cases the contractors are as big as Network Rail.

"It is only an arm of their sector and you end up with dependency on a casualised workforce," he said.

Committee chair Lillian Greenwood turned the discussion towards devolution and fragmentation, noting that RMT was sceptical about the role of the system operator in overcoming the risk of fragmentation.

Mick said that the whole devolution project was a halfway house to route privatisation.

"Some people will make millions and millions of pounds if they get towards a privatised railway based on the routes.

"There will be sections of the country that will lose out because they are under-invested or under-innovated," he said.

Huw Merriman MP proceeded to question the panel on introducing private investment in the rail industry to which Mick Lynch responded by saying that allowing a third party to take control of stations and get all the improvement money would deny Network Rail a massive revenue stream.

"These people are looking to make billions and billions of pounds out of a national asset.

"It depends whether you want a national asset that is for the people, providing a transport system, or whether you just want to keep providing profits for people who are going to exploit the people using that system," he said.

DEFENDING THE ROLE OF THE GUARD

Train crew and shunting conference delegates pledge to fight for rail safety

The 2018 industrial organising conference of train crew and shunting grades pledged to continue to fight on both the industrial and campaigning fronts to defend the role of the guard when it met in Aberystwyth recently.

Colin Rigby, Cambrian welcomed delegates to Aberystwyth explaining that the branch was proud to host the conference as the culmination of hard work and building local membership after it was re-established in 2013.

The role of the guard and safety was a key theme of the conference.

Billy Kim, Liverpool No 5 explained how TOCS had been allowed by successive governments and safety regulators to erode first aid provision on board trains.

"We are concerned at the varying levels of knowledge and

training given to the second member of on board staff on trains throughout the UK dependant on which TOC you work for or are travelling with," he said.

Conference backed his call for a minimum standard of training in first aid for the second member of on board staff.

Jim Buchanan, Dorset Rail highlighted two recent examples where acid had been used as a weapon on trains on South Western Rail and called for additional kit to be able to help victims.

"The inclusion of alkaline water in first aid kits can enable on train staff to assist victims as quickly as possible until emergency services can attend any incident," Jim said.

Speaking on safety standards, Kevin Morrison, Blackpool and Fylde proposed a unanimously

backed motion calling for an agreed standard process for route learning.

"Over the last couple of years it has become apparent that some train operating companies are being left to manage their own safety standards to the detriment of their own staff.

"Particularly in terms of the level of briefing and instruction when it comes to route learning, TOCSs do not seem to be allocating enough resources in terms of materials and management support, especially when routes have been reopened after a long period of time due to major engineering weeks," he

said.

RMT assistant general secretary Steve Hedley congratulated members of the grade who had been taking strike action on the various companies in defence of the role of the guard.

"We are in a fight not just with the companies but with the DfT as these franchises were written by the DfT.

"What we need is an industrial and political strategy to win these disputes. We need a political strategy because it is clear we are fighting with the government and there is no way we will be throwing in the towel



on any of these disputes," he added.

The view that the Government was preventing the companies from settling the disputes was backed up in a panel discussion by guest speaker Peter Rayner, a former chief operating manager and board member at British Rail.

"The government is the controlling arm in all this, just as it was the controlling arm in the disputes I had over D00.

"Whilst I have not of course seen the documents, there is no doubt in my opinion the present franchise agreements will have clauses inserted by government that by inference insist on the McNulty formulae that:

"The default position on all the GB Rail network should be D00, with the second member of the traincrew only being provided where there is a commercial, technical or other imperative," he said.

He argued that those clauses will have been redacted from the published documents.

"It is up to you and indeed the travelling public to point out that needs of vulnerable people and the confidence to travel by older people are all 'other imperatives', he added.

Fellow panel guest speaker Dan Carden MP, Liverpool Walton, told conference that one of the first campaigns he supported on assuming office in 2017 was to keep the guard on the train.

Dan pledged that a Labour

government would see an end to D00 and see the railway brought back under public control.

"Our railways are being used to support the Tory agenda, siphoning money from the bottom to the top," he said.

Conference gave a vote of thanks for Merseyrail drivers for refusing to cross RMT picket lines and also sent solidarity greetings to French rail workers currently striking in opposition to privatisation plans.

RMT general secretary Mick Cash thanked delegates for their hard work over the last year defending the grade and engaging in disputes and campaigning, particularly over D00.

"I am proud of the campaign to keep the guard and oppose D00. What is happening is all about government policy and whether we have a human railway which is staffed or not.

"The hard work has paid off. All the campaigns and industrial action we have been engaged in means that people have heard of us. Managers know what they are dealing with when it comes to RMT.

"We gained a 3.9 per cent pay increase on Network Rail this year. How many other public sector workers have achieved that?

"Our membership as a national union is still holding strong in spite of the attacks on us," he said.

He went on to outline how

the union will be facing challenges with new technology impacting on jobs.

"We have got to maintain trade unionism, wages and conditions in the face of it. The fact that we are organised on DLR – and that has modern technology – shows that it can

be done.

"Our aim remains one union across all grades with everyone in it. That is what we need and we are a campaigning, fighting and democratic union and that is what we are going to stay," he added.



RMT PLEDGES SOLIDARITY WITH STRIKING FRENCH RAIL WORKERS

RMT pledged "total solidarity" with striking rail workers in France in their fight to defend jobs, workers' rights and the principle of a publicly-owned railway.

Members at the union's train crew conference confirmed the support and general secretary Mick Cash sent the following message to the CGT union in France:

"I am writing to inform you that members of the National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers (RMT) representing guards, shunters and train drivers meeting today in Aberystwyth called for 'total solidarity' with striking French railworkers.

"We wholeheartedly support you and your efforts in taking rolling strike action in defence of jobs, workers' rights and France's publicly-owned railway.

"RMT is sending total solidarity and support to our brothers and sisters in France fighting in defence of jobs, workers' rights and the principle of a publicly-owned railway".

"After more than two decades of exploitation and profiteering on Britain's railways since privatisation we know exactly what is at stake in France right now and we are proud to convey our full backing to the unions involved in the struggle," he said. ■





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BOOK REVIEW

JOSEPH LOCKE

Civil Engineer and Railway Builder 1805–1860

by Anthony Burton

This biography deals with one of the most notable English railway engineers of the nineteenth century often ranked alongside Robert Stephenson and Isambard Kingdom Brunel.

Yet Joseph Locke is often overlooked as one of the three engineers that developed the railways from colliery lines into inter-city routes.

The Locke family had been colliery overseers for generations and Joseph, once he had completed his rudimentary education at Barnsley Grammar School at the age of thirteen, seemed set to follow in their footsteps.

However, at the age of nineteen he was taken on as an apprentice by an old friend of

his father, George Stephenson, and sent to the new locomotive works at Newcastle. His enthusiasm and willingness to learn soon brought promotion, and he became a highly valued assistant engineer on the prestigious Liverpool and Manchester Railway.

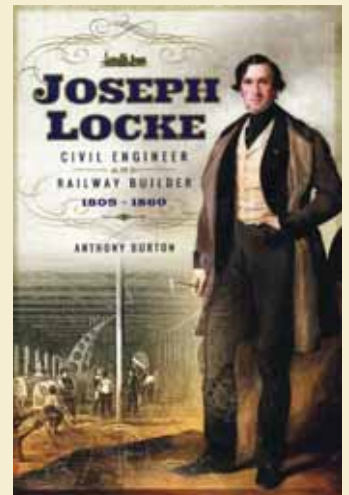
During his time there he wrote a pamphlet with Robert Stephenson, arguing the case for steam locomotives and had the embarrassing task of having to correct calculations for a tunnel being built under the direct supervision of George Stephenson. After its opening, he moved on to work on the Grand Junction Railway, at the start working alongside Stephenson rather than as his

assistant.

But before long, they had quarrelled and the directors handed the whole works over to Locke's control.

By 1847 he had grown wealthy enough to buy Honiton manor in Devon for the equivalent of £80 million today, complete with the seat in Parliament on the Liberal Party benches that came with it. He held the Devon seat for the rest of his life.

Locke continued as chief engineer on some of the most important lines in Britain, and his reputation grew to the point where he was also in demand for work in Europe, building major routes in France, the Netherlands and Spain.



Locke's greatest legacy is the modern day West Coast Main Line (WCML), which was formed by the joining of the Caledonian, Lancaster & Carlisle, Grand Junction railways to Robert Stephenson's London & Birmingham Railway. As a result, around three-quarters of the WCML's route was planned and engineered by Locke. ■

Published by Pen and Sword books
RRP: £25
ISBN: 9781473872295

NETWORK RAIL MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS

RMT reps from all over Scotland attended the first joint mental health awareness training course between the union and Network Rail earlier this month.

RMT equality rep and local health and safety rep Davie O'Donnell said that the five day course was expertly tutored by Andy Boyack from the union.

"It was a real insight into the impact mental health issues can have on individuals, families and in the workplace.

"With paid release negotiated on our behalf by RMT regional organiser Gordon Martin and a really positive contribution from Lindsay Saddler, Head of Maintenance Scotland Route and Kirsty Diamond from Network Rail Human Resources Department, this trailblazing event shows what can be



achieved through positively working together which can only be a good thing for RMT members in Scotland," he said.

As part of his contribution Ms Saddler made it clear that she was keen to discuss other joint training opportunities with regional organiser Gordon Martin who will ensure this

offer is taken up and used in members' best interests.

"I look forward to learning what other opportunities become available and would encourage representatives and members to apply to attend these courses as they really are a great opportunity to learn about issues people face and

how to work collectively to overcome these problems.

"Unity is strength and through working together we can all contribute to making Network Rail a safer and better place to earn a living," said Davie O'Donnell. ■



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RMT member, work accident claimant

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LEGAL

ASBESTOS VICTORY

Son of RMT member awarded compensation after asbestos disease claim



RMT and Thompsons Solicitors have successfully secured compensation for the son of a Crewe man who died after developing the asbestos-related condition, asbestosis.

The RMT member worked at an engineering facility between 1947 and 1985, first as a crane driver at its iron works, then a millwright assistant and, later, a furnace man in the steel foundry. Asbestos was prevalent across the facility as it was used to lag its pipework, boilers and furnaces. Joe would come into contact with it regularly, particularly in his role as furnace man.

Throughout his career at the factory, which spanned nearly four decades, he was never given instruction on safe working practices with asbestos and was not provided with protective equipment to limit his exposure.

In the summer of 2014, 29 years after retiring, Joe developed pneumonia and was taken to hospital. A scan revealed scarring of his lung tissue but the cause was unclear. His breathing began to deteriorate until, shortly before his death in March 2015, it was so poor he was unable to walk more than 30 feet.

It was discovered post-mortem that he had been suffering from asbestosis, a debilitating lung condition caused by inhaling asbestos

dust.

His son contacted the union on his father's behalf and instructed asbestos disease specialists Thompsons Solicitors to make a compensation claim. The defendant admitted that Joe had been negligently exposed to asbestos.

The son said: "For the last nine months of my dad's life, he was in and out of hospital and we had no idea why. It was frustrating for our entire family because we could not comprehend why his health was deteriorating so rapidly. It took his death for us to understand that it was caused by asbestos, but that only raised more questions.

"I've come to realise just how widespread this issue is and that my dad is not the only person that has become severely ill because they were exposed to dangerous substances, like asbestos, at work.

"RMT and Thompsons' legal team helped make sense of all of this for me and my family, and did everything they could to hold my dad's former employer accountable for what happened."

RMT general secretary Mick Cash said that the member had devoted the best part of his career to the engineering facility so that it was sad that, ultimately, it was a contributing factor to his tragic death.

"As he was a member of the



union, his son was able to contact us free of charge and successfully make a claim for compensation with the support of Thompsons Solicitors.

"His RMT membership ensured his son received his damages in full, with no deductions," he said.

Alan Dolphin, of Thompsons Solicitors, added that as they were instructed post-mortem,

our legal experts were unable to gather a report from Joe about his direct exposure to asbestos.

"Luckily, we were able to speak with witnesses and build a claim using other evidence, highlighting the negligence of the employer and it ensured that the RMT member's family got the answers they were desperately seeking," he said.



FREIGHT WORKERS PLAN STRATEGY

Freight and logistics workers plan campaign of recruitment to build membership in the busy sector

The union's national freight and logistics industrial organising conference agreed to focus on building a practical organising strategy when it met in Eastleigh recently.

RMT regional organiser Mick Tosh welcomed delegates to the conference which was hosted by South Hants and Eastleigh Workshop branch:

"I am glad we are talking about organising, it gives us an opportunity to engage and draw people into the union's activities.

"If we can all engage just one more person and encourage them to come next year then we can double size of this conference," he said.

Andrew Hill, Leeds City proposed a unanimously backed

motion calling for the union to back the reinvigoration of the freight sectors.

"We call on the NEC to provide adequate funding and

propaganda resources, to mount a serious recruitment campaign throughout the whole of the freight industry," he said.

The organising strategy is to

be developed by the conference liaison committee prior to be putting forward to the national executive for approval.

Two new charters will be



developed for both road and rail freight. The focus will be on using safety standards which are suffering as both sectors see increasing casualisation.

Conference also agreed to identify big industrial targets for recruitment – such as Pentalver – with regional councils and branches coordinating the organising both sectors.

The new strategy document is intended to be a first step towards reinvigorating RMT's profile and membership levels in both the road and rail freight sectors.

Conference president George Marshall told delegates that it had been a difficult year for the freight industry.

"The roads are getting more overcrowded while employers demand more from drivers for less pay," he said.

RMT assistant general secretary Mick Lynch explained how this new freight conference covering both road and rail was the successor to the old road freight conference, historically one of the most vibrant sectors of the union.

"Today the union is still well organised in companies like Freightliner and DB Cargo and the task ahead is to build on that.

"Across the sectors we have over 80,000 members in a thriving union," he told conference.

He explained that there were new challenges which could never have been envisaged before as companies explored technologies such as drones. He told delegates that Network Rail had already opened an air department using drones for remote investigation.

The conference ratified a new constitution and standing orders and elected George Marshall, Leeds Goods and Cartage, as president and Andy Hill, Leeds City Branch as secretary.

Next year's conference will be held on 13 April, hosted by Leeds Goods and Cartage branch. ■

President's column

INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY



Recently we received a request from the French union CGT to join them in a nationwide protest against President Emmanuel Macron's plans to 'reform' the state railway SNCF.

I travelled over to France for the day with NEC members Paul Reilly, Brian Pascoe, Del Marr, Andy Budds and newly elected chair of our women's conference Christine Willet to support our comrades. I have to say that when you see how the French protest and fight for their rights you have to be inspired...maybe we should send the TUC over next time.

Following on from the rally Tuesday April 3 began three months of rolling rail strikes which will see rail stoppages on two days out of every five, until June 28. Some 48 per cent of train drivers are taking part in the strike, which has been dubbed 'Black Tuesday' by the French press.

The railways in France have been allowed to build up massive debt and now we see the same approach as we had in this country over twenty years ago, whereby an underfunded network is chopped up and privatised.

The EU has ordered the opening up of the French state railways to competition from 2023 and Macron is preparing now.

It was great to meet up with Kate Hudson and Caroline Lucas MP again when I went along with NEC members Paul

Shaw and Paul Reilly to the sixty year anniversary event for CND in Westminster.

In April 1958 the first march to Aldermaston, Britain's bomb factory in Berkshire, launched the CND movement which mobilised thousands against the Bomb and shaped radical protests for generations.

CND Vice President Bruce Kent recalled "it took 40 years to get votes for women. The ending of slavery took almost 50 years, so the fact that things take a long time doesn't deter us. CND will keep campaigning and demanding change until all nuclear weapons around the world have been abolished". Well said Bruce.

While traveling around picket lines during our various disputes we often get offered a cup of coffee and a cake or two, but when we turned up at the Docklands Light Railway picket line recently we were met with an array of curries and other foods that really were of restaurant quality. Don't be surprised if more of the NEC members turn up next time.

"We are in danger of destroying ourselves by our greed and stupidity. We cannot remain looking inwards at ourselves on a small and increasingly polluted and overcrowded planet."

[Stephen Hawkings]

In Solidarity, Sean Hoyle



CELEBRATING 25 YEARS

Delegates to the union's annual black and ethnic minority members' conference met to celebrate 25 years in existence

Black and ethnic minority RMT members gathered in Cardiff last month to celebrate 25 years since the Black and Ethnic Minority Members' Advisory Committee (BEMAC) came into existence.

The union celebrated the anniversary by publishing *Unity in Diversity* – an RMT pamphlet to educate union members on the struggles of black workers.

Over 70 delegates heard the pamphlet author SI Martin speak at a special event to discuss the experiences of black transport workers over the last 150 years including the successful defeating of the colour bar at Euston station by guard Asquith Xavier.

Delegates also discussed a number of motions at a lively conference including one expressed solidarity with Grenfell victims and pledging to stamp out racism in Britain.

Moving the successful motion to affiliate to Justice4Grenfell campaign, Harlesden Engineering Branch delegate Jason St. John said the campaign had created, “a unified community voice on this issue...that lessons are learnt to avoid similar events and loss of life happening again.”

Seconding the motion, Finsbury Park branch delegate, Nathan Wallace pointed out that he had been born in a council house, like so many at Grenfell, adding: “This motion is aimed at preventing another atrocity – which came about through austerity.”

However some delegates had concerns including Glen Hart, Morden and Oval who cautioned conference to make sure charities and organisations campaigning following the disaster had “victims’ interests at heart.”

However in reply, Mr St John said that although he understood the concerns of from the floor the people need help now.”

Racial discrimination on the railways was another focus of conference with Zimck Maroh, Glasgow moving a unanimously-backed motion to engage employers to make sure

there is a zero tolerance policy to racial abuse of all kinds.

Mr Maroh recalled an incident where he was racially abused and feared for his safety.

“It took six police officers to restrain him,” he told a shocked conference.

He added that it was important the union ensured incidents were reported to the “British Transport Police and to assess how effective their anti-hate strategies are”.

Conference was also addressed by executive member Eddie Dempsey and general secretary Mick Cash.

Mr Cash emphasised the important role played by BEMAC and that unity in the RMT was key to the union’s success.

“We are the sum of our parts but together we are an all grades union and when we pull together we are stronger.

“Even if you personally are not in a dispute you are still benefiting. The profile we get helps reps when they deal with employers, sometimes they just walk in and the employer rolls over,” he said.

Mr Dempsey spoke to delegates about the importance of organising and winning, suggesting that “nothing is ever won without struggle”.

He praised the work done by the committee in mapping a region to find out how many black and ethnic minority

members there were and what positions they held within the union structures.

Asked about the lack of ethnic minority representation at the top of the union, Mr Dempsey pointed out that he himself along with many other leaders of the union were of Irish heritage but agreed that lack of black and female representation was an issue.

Urging delegates to put themselves up for election, he said: “If you want things, you have to fight and organise for them. We do have ethnic minority representation – but not black representation and we need to address that.

“We are militant industrial trade union and we never do something that our members can do for themselves.

“We are an economic weapon of our class in the struggle,” he said.

Other speakers from the wider community spoke about knife crime and prejudice against LGBT people.

Stefan Brown from ‘Stop Our Kids’ addressed the “epidemic” of knife crime within the black community and how he goes out each night with his charity to try to stop more young lives being taken.

Controversially, he said that he was in favour of “stop and search” as a means of police cracking down on knife crime.

“I took four knives last week off various youths and four guns this year so I hope I have helped save someone’s life.

“I agree with stop and search if it is done right. The community should be there to observe it, making sure it is done properly. I just want to stop the violence on our streets,” he said.

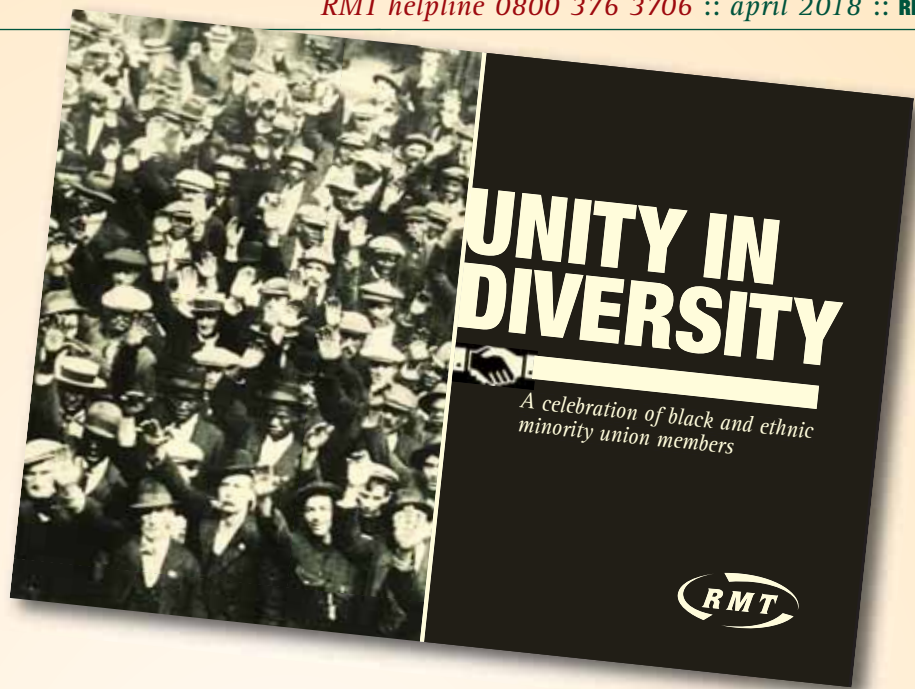
Mr Brown’s comments prompted a long debate on the issue, with retired members’ delegate Frank Murray pointing out the majority of stop and search is used for minor drugs offences, not knives.

Conference chair Glen Hart said that although he appreciated the work Stefan did, “we shouldn’t support any racist policies that attack our community.”

Delegates also discussed LGBT issues with Reverend Jide Macaulay – founder and director House Of Rainbow CIC who spoke of the difficulties of being from Nigeria, having a family and coming out as gay in later life.

He said that he had suffered discrimination on the grounds of his race, background and sexuality.

“There no specific black LGBT services so where do the gays and lesbians go when they have issues in the workplace? This is something we need to address,” he said. ■



NOT GUILTY



Martin Hill of EPS branch reports on a victory in Canada after court throws out case against workers blamed for Lac-Mégantic rail disaster

Railworkers and working people in Canada won a big victory earlier this year following the end of the three-and-a-half-month frame-up trial of train driver Tom Harding and train traffic controller Richard Labrie, both members of United Steelworkers Local 1976, and low-level former Montreal, Maine and Atlantic Railway manager Jean Demaitre.

The jury declared all three not guilty on all counts for the Lac-Mégantic disaster.

On July 6 2013, a runaway train carrying 72 cars of crude oil rolled seven miles into Lac-Mégantic, Quebec, derailed, exploded and burned, killing 47

people and levelling the town centre.

Instead of implementing measures to ensure future rail safety, the companies and governments responsible framed up the driver Tom Harding and train controller Richard Labrie. After the explosion, Harding risked his life to depressurise brakes and avoid further destruction, making him a hero in the eyes of many in town.

However he faced 47 counts of criminal negligence causing death, and was threatened with life imprisonment.

A year before the disaster the Canadian government had approved the MMA's request to

haul crude oil with a "crew" of one. In the past, trains of this size had crews of five or more.

Harding reported to company dispatchers that he left the train after completing his 12-hour shift for his scheduled sleep.

The lead engine was running, powering the air brakes, and he'd set handbrakes on seven cars. Before leaving, Harding called MMA's rail-traffic controller to report mechanical problems on the locomotive and thick smoke belching from its exhaust. They agreed he could leave the engine for the night.

Due to negligent company maintenance, a fire broke out on the lead engine during the

night. Local firefighters switched off the engine when they put the fire out. When the dispatcher informed him, Harding asked if he should go there and start another engine. Go back to sleep, the dispatcher told him, the company has sent someone else.

The company sent a track manager, who wasn't trained on operating locomotives. He took no further steps. Without an engine powering the air compressors, the air brakes eventually bled off and the train started its deadly roll.

The charges against Harding centre on allegations he didn't set enough handbrakes. The

Transportation Safety Board of Canada said that an insufficient number of hand brakes was just one of 18 factors contributing to the disaster, as was the rail line's "weak safety culture".

The handbrake issue was a deliberate diversion to turn attention away from the actions of the bosses and the government and to fuel the frame-up. Government guidelines and company rules specify that a "sufficient number" of handbrakes should be applied to parked trains in case the air brakes fail or are turned off.

The railway's rulebook said that nine should be set on a train like the one Harding was operating. The Safety Board report concluded that it would have taken at least 17 and as many as 26 handbrakes, depending on how tightly they were set, to secure the train.

But to determine what is "sufficient" needs at least two workers, taking the time necessary to set, test and observe if the brakes hold, because conditions vary. It can't be set by a rulebook or formula.

The report also claimed that Harding didn't properly test the hand brakes, because he ran a test while the locomotive's air brakes were on. But this was common company practice. Engines were equipped with a "fail-safe" feature to apply the brakes if the air pressure drops, but they didn't operate that night, because the rate of leakage was too low.

Harding "had parked the train there for years," said his lawyer, Thomas Walsh. "The procedures haven't changed. The distance from Nantes to Lac-Mégantic hasn't changed. The incline hasn't changed. What has changed is the train length, the volatility of the crude oil, the crew size and the condition of aging equipment".

The USW campaigned to support Harding and Labrie, and won widespread support. "Our colleagues should not be held criminally responsible for negligent management practices of a company like MMA or the government's lax regulation that



so easily allowed an engineer working alone to operate a train carrying explosive materials," said USW Local 1976 President Steven Hadden.

1000 people joined a "Grand March for Rail Safety" on October 11, in Lac-Mégantic, the small town devastated by the disaster, supporting Harding and Labrie and demanding that oil trains should not be allowed through the town until the line has been made safe.

Outside the court room, Jean Clusiaux, whose daughter Kathy died in the explosion, praised the not guilty verdict.

"I felt relieved because these are not the right people who

should be there," he said.

Clusiaux said that Harding, Demaitre and Labrie didn't deserve to be blamed for the fatal rail disaster and explosion in downtown Lac-Mégantic. "These are human beings with families who worked hard all their lives," he said.

Many people from Lac-Mégantic attended the trial. Clusiaux was there every court day. When reporters asked him who he thought was guilty, he pulled a crumpled piece of paper from his pocket and started reading a list of high company officials, beginning with former CEO Edward Burkhardt.

"This is a victory for

workers," said Gilbert Carette, a former Quebec highway maintenance department worker. "This tragedy, caused by company negligence and government deregulation of the rail industry, was placed on the shoulders of innocent workers".

The impact of the court victory was shown a few days after the trial, when the Canadian government finally agreed to finance a rail bypass to take dangerous freight away from the town – something the people of Lac-Mégantic had been fighting for since the disaster.



BELFAST SHIPPING NOMINATES STEVE TODD FOR RE-ELECTION FOR NATIONAL SECRETARY	OBAN SHIPPING BRANCH SUPPORT STEVE TODD FOR RE-ELECTION FOR NATIONAL SECRETARY	Heathrow Express branch Nominate STEVEN SKELLY For Relief Regional Organiser (South)	EAST LONDON RAIL BRANCH NOMINATES PAUL MCDONNELL FOR RELIEF REGIONAL ORGANISER SOUTH
HUMBER SHIPPING NOMINATES STEVE TODD FOR RE-ELECTION FOR NATIONAL SECRETARY	SOUTHAMPTON SHIPPING BRANCH SUPPORT STEVE TODD FOR RE-ELECTION FOR NATIONAL SECRETARY	Finsbury Park branch Nominate STEVEN SKELLY For Relief Regional Organiser (South)	POOLE AND DISTRICT BUS BRANCH NOMINATES STEVEN SKELLY FOR RELIEF REGIONAL ORGANISER (SOUTH)
EIRE SHIPPING BRANCH SUPPORT STEVE TODD FOR RE-ELECTION FOR NATIONAL SECRETARY	ST PANCRAS BRANCH NOMINATES STEVEN SKELLY FOR RELIEF REGIONAL OFFICER	PETERBOROUGH BRANCH SUPPORT PAUL MCDONNELL FOR RELIEF REGIONAL ORGANISER SOUTH	BASINGSTOKE NO1 BRANCH NOMINATES PAUL MCDONNELL FOR RELIEF REGIONAL ORGANISER SOUTH

LETTERS

WIDE OF THE MARK

Dear editor,

I was deeply saddened to read some of the disturbing comments in last month's edition of RMT News attacking my long-time friend and branch member Bro Steve Shaw. What shocked me the most was the comments directed at him around his lack of understanding on equalities issues and the difficulties minorities are faced within the workplace. This couldn't be wider of the mark and further from the truth, I can only assume these individuals who wrote these comments cannot know him too well.

I have known Steve Shaw for around 15 years and he has been the biggest voice in advocating equalities in my workplace and branch during my time as an RMT member. He educated me personally on the importance of trade unionism and the importance of how we're all equal in having a voice in the workplace with no exceptions. He gave me the confidence to become active and participate in branch debates, whilst encouraging me to become a regular delegate to our women's advisory committee.

I was asked to say a few words whilst opening the women's conference in my home town of Wigan in 2015 and I paid Steve the compliment of saying "if it wasn't for him then I wouldn't have had the confidence to be stood speaking here today" and I stand by ever word I said. So I would challenge these people who wrote these naive remarks, come and speak to the members Steve Shaw represents for yourself and see if they share your views, although I could save you the bother as the answer will be a firm NO!

In Solidarity, Judy Keating

DISGRACEFUL ATTACK

Dear Editor,

I feel the need to respond to the letters in last month's magazine as what I can only describe as disgraceful and ill-advised attacks on our respected, loyal branch member Steve Shaw by a divisive faction within our union quite clearly acting on instructions by others.

What saddens me more than anything is that this publication has been used as a tool to beat a fellow member with in a pre-empted political manoeuvre intent on damaging his unblemished reputation as a loyal and capable member of our region.

I must ask the Editor, who has the final say on the content of this magazine as it clearly concerning to me amongst others that these attacks have been allowed to be published in the first place as I think I'm right in saying the question he asked was directed at our President and nobody else?

I have known Steve Shaw for the best part of 25 years and served as a local rep alongside him for three terms of office. I struggle to comprehend what members may be suggesting here in their letters as this isn't the same person I've known as a work colleague, rep, branch officer and regional council officer. We are proud to have a member with Steve's knowledge and calibre representing us and we are the only winners following the completion of his term of office on our National Executive Committee.

I would finish in saying when the president was elected I was Wigan branch chair and we invited him to our branch meetings at the request of Steve Shaw. To my knowledge he didn't have the decency to even respond to our invite, let alone send apologies. Had he attended our branch he would have seen how seriously we take diversity and equalities issues with regular attendances from minority groups being the highest in our region. So maybe bear this in mind in future before putting personal agendas before the interests of the membership.

In Solidarity, Eddie Mchugh

PRESIDENT'S ROLE

Dear Editor

I am writing to you in response to the letter printed from brother Steve Shaw of Wigan branch that you printed in the February edition of RMT news.

I am somewhat confused as to the point that Brother Shaw is attempting to make.

To compound my confusion, Steve mentions that he has previously decided to give Sean Hoyles the benefit of the doubt.

Surely if there were any concerns in reference to the alleged abuse of the Presidential powers, Steve would have been positioned ideally seeing that he served as a member on the EC for the past 3 years and worked with Sean, no doubt, in a day to day basis.

Is it not the role of our President to encourage equality and ensure that our democratic form reaches out to all members.

Is not also the role of the President to recognise what he believes to be a job well done, so paying tribute to both Cathy and Michelle would be business as usual.

From what I can gather from Steve's letter, it is clear he has a problem with woman and equality and has created a pointless attack against the President to only enhance his own profile for the up and coming Presidential elections.

In conclusion, I have had the pleasure of meeting our President on several occasions. He clearly has the ability to demonstrate the integrity to enhance the office that he holds and I have only ever known him not only to be sincere but so clearly genuine.

In response to Steve, I think it's time you laid your cards on the table and state your true intentions and stop making pointless attacks because they may contradict your own agenda. Sometimes, it is so easy for us to see in other people what we don't like about ourselves; you should bare this in mind.

Nate Andrews

Manchester South Branch

Editor's note: As an open and democratic union RMT News often prints letters which articulate a certain point of view that others may disagree with. There has now been a full and frank exchange on this matter and it will not serve the interests of the union to continue it any longer in the pages of this magazine. As a result this matter is now closed.

ANSWERING QUESTIONS

Dear editor,

I am writing in response to the letters last month concerning Bro Steve Shaw.

I have known Steve for 25 years both as a colleague and a friend and in all that time he has been nothing but a fighter, servant and a leading example of union representation to all who know him at his workplace, within his own region and also on a national level while serving on our NEC.

Some of the responses insinuated that Steve knew nothing of the struggles faced by migrant workers entering the workplace and the industries that our union organises in. If they had bothered to try and get to know Steve at all they would maybe have been able to find out that he is indeed himself the offspring of a parent who came to the UK facing many of the same challenges that some of our fellow members today have faced as migrant workers themselves.

Crucially the original question that was asked in Steve Shaw's letter has still not been answered. In the previous election the current President at that time stood against a candidate from a BEM background. If our President feels so strongly about under representation within our union amongst minority groups, why did he stand against a candidate from one of the groups that are under-represented in our union at a national level? Has he only realised that minorities are under-represented within the last two years.

As Secretary of the North West and North Wales regional council, I noted with interest Bro Mo Malik's comments on the issue. I agree as a white middle-aged male I need to try and better understand along with other delegates the issues our BEM colleagues and other minority groups face and would like to extend an invitation to him as a member within our region, to start attending our regional council meetings. It would be great to see minority groups represented at these meetings.

Kind regards, Neil Sharples

QUESTIONS RAISED

Dear editor,

In defence of Bro Steve Shaw I feel he raises a valid point by asking about electioneering. This matter has been raised before with no answer that I can recall.

In the US Presidential election Donald Trump used Facebook to prosecute his case for why he should be president, Facebook with a following of millions, he won.

Compare that with RMT News and a readership of 80,000 members all with a vote and a president coming to the end of his tenure, starts talking about equality. Bro Shaw has a point, why didn't the president stand aside in favour of another candidate.

I am also concerned about letters in the March issue, from members who have been in the union for forty years and members who state that they are RMT tutors who have "met a wide brush of members". If this is the case, it raises the question why have they not done anything to resolve the issues raised?

An RMT rep is meant to represent all members not sections. We are not an elitist union but inclusive of ALL. As for standing for offices in the union, members should be elected on merit not appointed. I don't think Bro Shaw needs equality training but the question he raised needs addressing.

Yours fraternally, Denis Connor, Glasgow5

UNFAIR BALANCE

Dear Editor,

I write in response to the 6 letters which were published in your March edition, which gives unfair balance to the issues raised in Steve Shaw's letter.

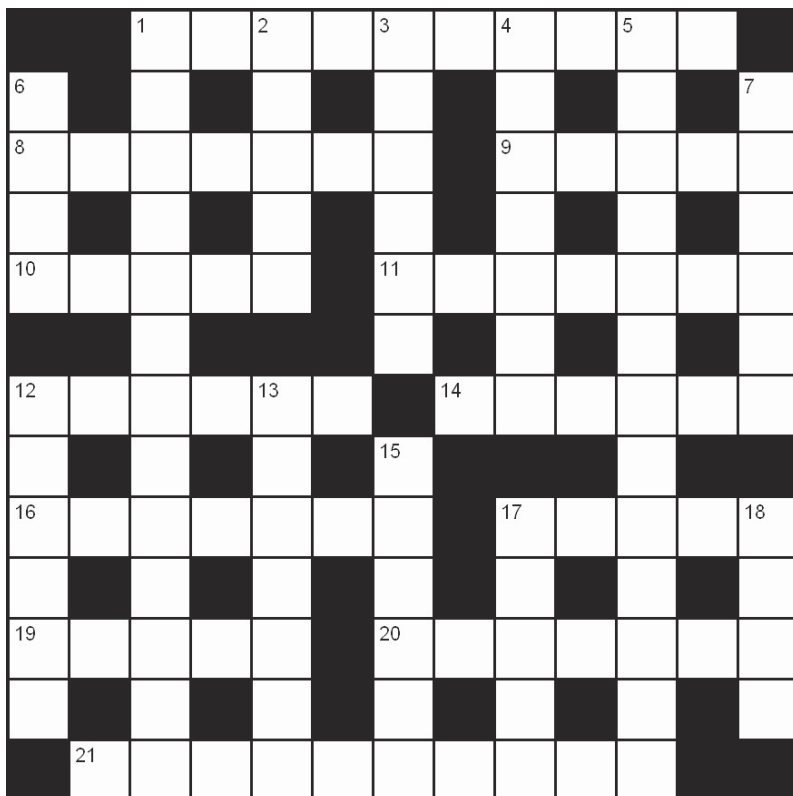
Whilst I am in favour of better rights of representation in the union's structures for equality groups, there is a need to be aware that the RMT News outside of branch adverts shouldn't be used to promote potential candidates in forthcoming elections.

As a Regional Organiser I worked with Brother Steve Shaw for a number of years, and have always found that he has positive views on equality issues.

Whilst he is always upfront with his views, that shouldn't be misinterpreted as being ignorant on the importance of equality issues.

Yours fraternally, Andy Warnock-Smith, Retired Regional Organiser

£50 PRIZE CROSSWORD



Last month's solution...



The winner of last month's prize crossword is Peter Shaw, Sheffield.

Send entries to Prize Crossword, RMT, Unity House, 39 Chilton Street, London NW1 1JD by May 14 with your name and address.

Winner and solution in next issue.



Crossword sponsored by UIA

ACROSS

- 1 Make more complex (10)
- 8 Begin again (7)
- 9 Anew (5)
- 10 Lock of hair (5)
- 11 Diplomatic building (7)
- 12 Inundation (6)
- 14 Change to ice (6)
- 16 Small salmon (7)
- 17 Grasslike plant (5)
- 19 Porcelain (5)
- 20 Increase (7)
- 21 Pleasing (10)

DOWN

- 1 Productive (4,9)
- 2 Resources (5)
- 3 Brood (6)
- 4 Room (7)
- 5 Supremacy (13)
- 6 Gravel (4)
- 7 Biochemical catalyst (6)
- 12 Bug (6)
- 13 Too old (7)
- 15 Return to normal (6)
- 17 Colonial term (5)
- 18 At any time (4)

Camden No3 branch Nominate STEVEN SKELLY For Relief Regional Organiser (South)	Southall, Ealing and Slough Branch Nominates STEVE SKELLY For RMT Relief Regional organiser (south)	Cardiff Rail Branch Nominates STEVEN SKELLY For RMT Relief Regional Organiser (South)	Paddington branch Nominates STEVE SKELLY For RMT Relief Regional Organiser (South)
Norwich branch Nominate STEVEN SKELLY For Relief Regional Organiser (South)	Swansea No 1 Branch Nominates STEVE SKELLY For RMT Relief Regional organiser (south)	Dover branch Support PAUL MCDONNELL For relief regional organiser South	Waterloo branch Nominates STEVE SKELLY For RMT Relief Regional Organiser (South)
LU Engineering branch Nominate STEVEN SKELLY For Relief Regional Organiser (South)	Swindon Rail Branch Nominates STEVE SKELLY For RMT Relief Regional organiser (south)	Wimbledon branch Nominate PAUL MCDONNELL For relief regional organiser South	Reading branch Nominates STEVE SKELLY For RMT Relief Regional Organiser (South)
BASINGSTOKE 2 BRANCH NOMINATES PAUL MCDONNELL FOR RELIEF REGIONAL ORGANISER SOUTH	Mid Cornwall Rail Nominates STEVEN SKELLY For Relief Regional Organiser (South)	Croydon No1 branch Nominates PAUL MCDONNELL For relief regional organiser South	Bristol branch Nominates STEVE SKELLY For RMT Relief Regional Organiser (South)
NEWPORT IOW NO 2 BRANCH NOMINATES PAUL MCDONNELL FOR RELIEF REGIONAL ORGANISER SOUTH	Watford Branch Nominate STEVEN SKELLY For Relief Regional Organiser (South)	Euston No1 branch Nominates PAUL MCDONNELL For Relief Regional Organiser	South West and South Wales Shipping Nominate BRO STEVE TODD for re-election as National Secretary
March and District Branch Nominate STEVEN SKELLY For Relief Regional Organiser (South)	Colchester and District Nominate STEVEN SKELLY For Relief Regional Organiser (South)	PORTSMOUTH BRANCH Nominate PAUL MCDONNELL For RELIEF REGIONAL ORGANISER (SOUTH)	South West and South Wales Shipping Nominates STEVE SKELLY for Relief Regional Organiser (South)
Jubilee South Branch Nominate STEVEN SKELLY For Relief Regional Organiser (South)	Rhondda Branch Nominates STEVEN SKELLY For RMT Relief Regional Organiser (South)	Bridgend, Llantrisant & District Branch Nominates STEVE SKELLY For RMT Relief Regional Organiser (South)	Glasgow shipping branch Nominates STEVE TODD For re-election as National Secretary
Plymouth No.1 Branch Nominate STEVEN SKELLY For Relief Regional Organiser (South)	Exeter 2 branch Nominate STEVEN SKELLY For Relief Regional Organiser (South)	East Sussex Coastway branch Nominates STEVE SKELLY For RMT Relief Regional Organiser (South)	South East Essex branch Nominate PAUL MCDONNELL For RELIEF REGIONAL ORGANISER (SOUTH)



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