

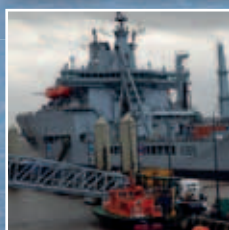
RMT *news*

Essential reading for today's transport worker



NO PAY FREEZE FOR TRANSPORT WORKERS

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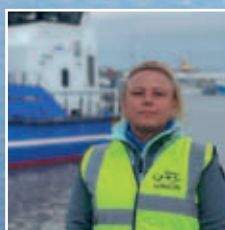
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www.rmt.org.uk

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

INSURANCE

UIA Mutual offers great value, low cost Home, Travel and Pet Insurance to RMT members and their families.

- Interest free direct debits (spread over 10 months)
- No fees to amend your policy
- Accidental damage to TVs, laptops and game consoles covered
- Cover for damage caused by subsidence
- Alternative accommodation for family and pets if needed

Call on 0800 030 4606 to talk to UK-based call centre agents from 8.30am to 8pm Monday to Friday.

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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CROSSWORD

EDITORIAL



A FIGHTING UNION

I want to start this month by congratulating RMT members on Scotrail, East Midlands Railway, the Caledonian Sleeper, Stadler and the Tyne and Wear Metro who are all engaged in current disputes over pay, fairness and workplace justice. Every single one of you is a credit to this fighting, campaigning trade union.

I have no doubt at all that this wave of industrial action is just the tip of the iceberg as the employers seek to exploit the fall-out from the COVID pandemic to hammer down on pay, pensions, jobs and conditions.

Your executive has taken the strategic decision to engage in talks with the rail industry employers, alongside our sister unions, through a joint industry-wide forum. Let me be clear, our involvement in these discussions is solely to enable us to defend you, our members, and to put RMT's agenda right at the heart of the future shape of the transport sector. Your Union has made no advance agreement and are not committed to acceptance to any of the particular measures, changes or proposals that may come forward in these processes.

Whilst those discussions are on-going our campaigning work as an industrial trade union is not only being maintained but is being stepped up on the

workplace issues that matter to you.

Alongside the Transport Workers Are Essential Workers campaign we have now launched our Bust The Transport Worker Pay Freeze initiative. With inflation soaring and skills shortages deepening it is ludicrous that we are confronted with this nonsense of a cap on wages and we intend to ram that message home.

These campaigns are not industry, sector or grade specific, they are about working to bring the whole RMT membership together wherever and whenever we can to maximise our strength.

The attacks we face on rail are mirrored on buses, shipping and offshore. We also know that we face a barrage of attacks on Transport for London as the government seizes control of transport finances in London.

As a union we face a massive challenge as the UK slowly emerges from COVID lockdown. Our unity, workplace strength and organisation will be the foundations on which we defend livelihoods and standards of living.

Every single one of us will have a crucial role to play in the battles we are fighting both now and in the weeks ahead.

M. Lynch

RMT PAYS TRIBUTE TO RFA MEMBERS



HUMANITARIAN: RFA *Wave Knight* Replenishment Vessel in the Port of Liverpool, built by Vickers Shipbuilding and Engineering VSEL Barrow-in-Furness

The union paid tribute to the humanitarian principles that RMT members continue to uphold on seas across the world following news that the Royal Fleet Auxiliary (RFA) tanker *Wave Knight* had delivered 75 tonnes of humanitarian aid to stricken residents of the Caribbean island of St. Vincent following a major volcanic eruption earlier this year.

RMT general secretary Mick Lynch paid tribute to the professionalism and dedication

of all RFA seafarers in performing lightening stops to transport the food, water, medicine and construction material that the people of St. Vincent need to get through this traumatic disaster.

"I would also like to pay tribute to those seafarers, including RMT ratings, on the UK flagged MV *Anvil Point* who rescued 25 people in distress off the West Saharan coast this month.

"We are in turbulent times politically but RMT is proud of

our seafarers who continue to uphold the vital principles of humanitarian relief and rescue at sea," he said.

The union also welcomed the contract for three new Royal Fleet Auxiliary ships as RFA vessels *Fort Austin* and *Fort Rosalie* are over forty years old and RFA members will be relieved that the process for awarding the contract to build three new Fleet Solid Support Ships has finally begun.

"As well as awarding this

contract to shipbuilders and the maritime supply chain in the UK, it is essential that these ships, when they are commissioned continue to be crewed with civilian Ratings and Officers and are covered by the RMT Collective Bargaining Agreement.

"This is an important development, and we hope that this is the first in a number of MoD contracts that support UK seafarers and shipbuilding," Mick Lynch said.



RECOGNITION AT GYRODATA

RMT has been striving to achieve recognition with Gyrodata, a company in the energy industry, since late 2019 following a recruitment campaign and an electronic survey of over thirty Survey Specialist members.

Whilst the union was able to secure an initial meeting

with the company where an agreement in principle was reached, talks and negotiations were affected by the ongoing global pandemic. However, following a period of consultation for a number of redundancies with the company, RMT was able to

secure another meeting with the company in November to ensure that the process of negotiating recognition was restarted.

As a result the union was able to achieve a recognition agreement that gained the full support of members based at

Gyrodata.

The union's national executive committee placed on record their thanks to the lead officer and all involved in securing another important Collective Bargaining Agreement for offshore members.





NRCs: Two First Group First Great Western trains depart Paddington railway station passing under large signal gantry numbers

FIRST GROUP SIGN NATIONAL RAIL CONTRACTS

National Rail Contracts (NRC) will replace the current Emergency Recovery Measures Agreements (ERMAs)

FirstGroup has signed new National Rail Contracts with the Department for Transport (DfT) for its South Western Railway (SWR) and TransPennine Express (TPE) train operating companies which will begin this month.

These National Rail Contracts (NRC) will replace the current Emergency Recovery Measures Agreements (ERMAs). The contracts will have a runtime of two years and include options to extend by a further two years at the DfT's discretion. They will be comprised of a fixed management fee component as well as a variable performance fee component.

Under these new contracts, unlike previous franchise agreements, FirstGroup will bear no revenue risk and only very limited cost risk under an annual budget agreed with the DfT.

FirstGroup holds a 70 percent share of the First MTR joint venture for the SWR train operating company. Under the NRC, its fixed management fee will be £3.3 million per year. There is also scope to earn a further fee of up to £9.9 million GBP – the maximally attainable performance fee. This performance component will be calculated based on four categories: operational performance, customer

satisfaction, finance, and business management.

During the NRC, FirstGroup will introduce a new fleet of Alstom-made suburban trains and implement on-board 5G.

FirstGroup's fixed management fee for the TransPennine Express train operating company will be £2.3 million per year. The maximum performance fee it could earn on top of this is £5.2 million. There is room for an additional incentive fee to be earned by FirstGroup for taking part in significant 'industry change' projects such as the TransPennine Route Upgrade programme that is set to start in 2021 and

conclude in 2028.

As the largest UK operator with four passenger rail contracts expected to run to at least 2023, FirstGroup welcomed the transition to the new model for "generating more resilient and consistent returns for shareholders".

The West Coast Partnership ERMA is in place until the end of March 2022 and an NRC is planned with a duration up to 2032. The existing Emergency Measures Agreement for Great Western Railway has already been extended to this month and the underlying GWR direct award runs to April 2023 with an extension option of up to one year. ■

PROTECTING TAXI MEMBERS

RMT London Taxi branch member Christopher Johnson explains how the union is protecting the rights of disabled workers in the gig economy

We all know how exploitative the gig economy is with these companies' hell-bent on avoiding their responsibilities to workers, especially disabled workers.

While working as a black cab driver in early 2019 I was involved in a non-fault traffic accident with a minicab driver which has turned my life upside down, leaving me with a disability and needing surgery.

In 2020 I applied to join a taxi app named Gett but my application to join this

company was rejected.

Gett's unique selling point is that they provide a 100 per cent wheelchair accessible fleet to their passengers. However, due to my disability, Transport for London who regulate taxi services in London granted me an exemption excluding me from picking up wheelchair users as I do not have the physical ability to load wheelchair users into my taxi.

It was claimed one of the reasons Gett refused to allow me to work for them was

because they would not make the reasonable adjustments to their business that the equality act requires when having a disabled person working for them.

The taxi branch, my branch secretary Andy Nicholls and the RMT's legal department supported by Thompson's solicitors have provided unbelievable support over a difficult period – but to have the rights to disability protection under the Equality Act gig economy workers need to establish workers'

rights.

Workers' rights under the 'Employment Rights Act' is something that these gig economy companies are desperate to avoid.

RMT understands the importance of bringing the gig economy into line and ensuring that all members are protected from exploitation – can any of us afford not to be an RMT member which is a progressive trade union in a changing workplace?



RECOGNITION DEAL AT DH

RMT members have won a voluntary recognition agreement with Den Hartogh, a logistics company, at its Wilton site on Teesside.

The campaign started in February 2020 with workers from Den Hartogh approaching RMT South Shields office asking if they could join the union. The agreement was signed off in March 2021, with the recognition campaign run virtually through Zoom, Whats App, e-mails and phone calls due to Covid restrictions.

The pictured meeting was actually the first time the members at Wilton had met with anyone from the union, organisation unit member Donald Graham. Donald said that the union had shown that even through the difficulties created by Covid restrictions it had been able to adapt and continue to help workers Organise, even when we have



been socially distanced.

"Chris Iley in the South Shields Office along with regional organiser Micky Thompson have really gone the extra mile, during this difficult time, to help the members at Wilton get this agreement over the line.

This real meeting was greatly appreciated by

members and they were able to agree through face to face discussions, the next steps forward to make this agreement work for them," he said.

One of the newly elected Reps John Morrison said: "It's great to actually meet directly with someone from RMT after over a year of using other

ways of communicating and be able to celebrate winning Recognition together.

"We are though fully aware that this is the hard work just starting. We joined RMT because there are issues in our workplace we want to get sorted and we believe RMT can help us do that, lets get it done," he said. ■



SUMMER OF STRIKE ACTION ON SCOTLAND'S RAILWAYS

RMT members are standing firm in four disputes across Scotland this month

RMT members are standing firm in strike action again this month as the union called on the Scottish First Minister to put pressure on Abellio and Transport Scotland to negotiate settlements in four disputes.

The union has warned that it was the absence of political leadership that has left Scotland's railways facing a long hot summer of strike action in a series of fights for workplace justice.

With RMT members committed to an ongoing programme of action on both ScotRail and the Caledonian Sleeper run by SERCO, the union said that it was wholly unacceptable that leading political figures in Scotland, including the First Minister, had made no comment or intervention whatsoever, making a nonsense of their claims to support fairness and justice for the Scottish people.

RMT members on the SERCO Caledonian sleeper are committed eleven days of strike action this month over a pay freeze the company is

attempting to impose on workers.

Fleet Maintenance Staff at the Perth Depot also took strike action this month over a breach of the dignity and respect policy.

RMT general secretary Mick Lynch has written to the Scottish Transport Secretary Michael Matheson MSP to demand an urgent meeting to discuss how the disputes can be resolved.

Since March 2020, the Scottish government has been fully funding and managing the ScotRail franchise under Abellio's Emergency Measures Agreement (EMA) and it appears that only the Scottish government can resolve these disputes.

Mick Lynch said that RMT members across Scotland remained determined in their fight against pay freezes, for workplace justice and parity between grades.

"I want to pay tribute to each and every one of them.

"Strike action is a last resort – when all other avenues have failed – and the fact that we now have four

disputes running in Scotland shows just how badly privateers like Abellio and Serco run their operations and treat their workers.

"If the companies will not sit round the table and engage in serious talks aimed at resolving each of these disputes then the politicians responsible for issuing the franchises need to intervene and force their hand.

"The political leadership in Scotland, including the First Minister herself, needs to end its silence, intervene as a

matter of urgency, and put pressure on Abellio ScotRail to resolve these disputes and the action involving our engineer members at Perth and the workforce on the SERCO Caledonian Sleeper.

"RMT remains available for talks in this growing barrage of disputes and it's about time the political leadership in Scotland put pressure on Abellio and SERCO to get round the negotiating table with the trade union," he said.



ABELLIO STUNT BACKFIRES

Privateers Abellio attempt to turn Scottish football fans against ScotRail workers fighting for pay justice has backfired spectacularly.

Dutch-owned Abellio ScotRail had taken to Twitter and tried to blame staff for disruption to services for the England Scotland game – even though the match was

on Friday and the next strike was on Sunday and the company have refused talks to try and broker a settlement.

The ScotRail tweet sparked a storm of protest with Twitter users queuing up to slam Abellio and back the ScotRail workforce.





BACKING THE PROFITEERS

Transport Secretary makes “insulting and ill-informed” comments about rail workers at Parliamentary Transport Select Committee

Tory Secretary of State for Transport Grant Shapps used an appearance at the Transport Select Committee last month to give his full backing behind the pandemic profiteers while dismissing the plight of rail staff with ‘insulting and ill-informed bragging’ about his role in saving jobs.

Mr Shapps was asked by Grahame Morris Labour MP whether he was concerned about reports that whilst rail workers were subject to pay freezes and threats to thousands of jobs the government was paying out £80 million in profits to private train companies in just six months during the first bailout, as well as funding rolling stock

companies so they can pay tens of millions in huge dividends.

Mr Shapps replied that ‘the millions you talk about’ represent ‘a very small percentage, a tiny percentage’ of the cost of the entire system.

Asked about what he had to say to staff facing a pay freeze and concerned about job cuts, Mr Shapps offered them ‘a huge thank you’ for their service during the pandemic but said nothing about pay and jobs in the future, while claiming to have saved ‘every single job on the railways without exception’.

RMT general secretary Mick Lynch said that all Mr Shapps had to say were some casual

and insulting ill-informed bragging on jobs and a big fat nothing to reassure staff about the future.

“To say hundreds of millions in government funded pandemic profits is a small amount when rail workers are being told to stomach a government imposed pay freeze is appalling.

“To then tell MPs they have saved every job on the railways when we know many jobs have been lost already and thousands more under threat to come is misleading MPs.

“Our members have done their duty and they’re looking at a future where they’re being sized up by a government and companies that see them as a

cost to be cut.

If you’re a pandemic profiteer though, it’s trebles all round because this government definitely has your back,” he said.

Figures released by the Department of Transport last month reveal that in six months, the Train Operating Companies made more than £88 million in profit, much of which will go overseas.

Eversholt, one of the three Rolling Stock leasing companies who own more than 85 per cent of trains running on Britain’s railways, paid their shareholders a dividend of £46.5 million for the year covering March 2020, to March 2021.

The government has

guaranteed to pay all Eversholt's lease charges under the bailout packages agreed with the industry and has done nothing to stop the

Rolling Stock Leasing companies paying dividends during the pandemic.

Indeed, according to Eversholt's most recent

accounts, its Directors 'do not believe that COVID-19 presents any material risks to the Group' and say that 'the key critical judgement in

reaching this conclusion to be the UK government's continued support to the rail industry'.

TABLE SHOWING DFT MANAGEMENT FEE PAYMENTS TO PASSENGER RAIL OPERATORS UNDER EMERGENCY AGREEMENTS, MARCH TO SEPTEMBER 2020

Operator	Total fees payable	Owner	Amount of profit available for export
Chiltern	£1,885,000	Arriva (Deutsche Bahn)	£1,885,000
Cross Country	£5,386,000	Deutsche Bahn	£5,386,000
East Midlands	£4,798,000	Abellio (Dutch state railways)	£4,798,000
East Anglia	£6,169,000	Abellio (Dutch state railways)	£6,169,000
Essex Thameside	£1,428,000	Trenitalia (Italian state railways)	£1,428,000
Great Western	£13,911,000	FirstGroup	£0
South Eastern	£7,973,000	Govia (comprising Go-ahead 65% and Keolis 35%)	£2,790,550
South Western	£10,033,000	First (70%)/MTR (Chinese state, 30%)	£3,009,900
Thameslink, Southern and Great Northern	£17,831,000	Govia (comprising Go-ahead 65% and Keolis 35%)	£6,240,850
TransPennine Express	£2,876,000	FirstGroup	£0
West Coast Partnership	£11,313,000	First (65%) Trenitalia (35%)	£3,959,550
West Midlands	£5,187,000	Dutch State railways and two Japanese private firms	£5,187,000
Total	£88,790,000		£40,853,850

THE UK MARITIME
ANCHOR FUND

the
seafarers'
charity

Are you a merchant seafarer looking for help?

The UK Maritime Anchor Fund is open to any working age UK national seafarer experiencing hardship due to financial problems caused by COVID-19, regardless of length of service or rank.

Grants are available to cover a significant reduction in income, top-up of Universal Credit and payment of priority debts relating to mortgage or rent, as well as confidential advice on financial matters, relationship counselling, and mental health support.

The Seafarers' Charity has launched the Fund with key delivery partners to support merchant seafarers affected by the coronavirus pandemic. To learn more about the Charity, visit: theseafarerscharity.org.

If you're a UK merchant seafarer needing help, contact SAIL, a Citizens Advice service for seafarers and their families on 0800 160 1842 or email advice@salline.org.uk.

The Seafarers' Charity (Seafarers UK, formerly King George's Fund for Sailors) is a Registered Charity, no. 226446 in England and Wales, incorporated under Royal Charter. Registered in Scotland, no. SC038191. Registered Office: 8 Hatherley Street, London SW1P 2QT.



NO PAY FREEZES

Transport workers are essential workers but attempts are being made to cut wages and conditions

Train operating companies, Transport for London, offshore, shipping and bus industries and Network Rail are all attempting to impose pay freezes and undermine terms and conditions despite praising workers during the Covid pandemic as heroes.

RMT general secretary Mick Lynch warned that the union had some huge battles to fight in the coming period to resist an onslaught of profit-driven cuts.

Transport and energy bosses are all being expected to follow the governments pay freeze diktat when current deals expire despite the fact that inflation is running at above three per cent.

Existing negotiating and bargaining machinery is being ridden over roughshod in a drive to hammer down on the living standards of Britain's transport workforce.

RMT's executive has launched the 'Bust the transport worker pay freeze' campaign and has moved onto a dispute footing with every employer seeking to impose both the pay freeze or the most minimal increases that take no account of the impact on livelihoods across the workforce.

The campaign came on the back of new union research recalling that private

companies on rail alone were making more than half a billion pounds in annual profits.

"It is scandalous that transport workers, who have kept Britain moving throughout the COVID pandemic at well-documented personal risk, are being rewarded with the Government-imposed kick in the teeth of a pay freeze, even as rising inflation cuts the value of their pay and privateers sweat the network for an annual profits bonanza of over half a billion pounds each year. Our members are watching their pay lose value month by month while the profiteers are laughing all the way to the banks.

"We are launching an industry-wide fightback to secure pay justice for Britain's transport workforce. It is time to cut corporate profits to increase our members pay.

"RMT's executive has made it clear that the threat of pay freezes, job cuts and attacks on pensions and working conditions will be met with a co-ordinated campaign of industrial action and we will be working with unions facing the same workplace austerity to maximise our impact.

"The government needs to lift the pay freeze shackles from the transport sector and

allow us to get on with the business of negotiating pay rises for our members with their employers," Mick Lynch said.

TOC'S

The train operating companies have been instructed by the Department of Transport to follow the model for public-sector workers which was announced by the Chancellor in the November spending review. Consequently, funding will be prioritised for the lowest paid rail workers, so those earning less than £24,000 will receive a minimum £250 increase. For those earning above this threshold, DfT has instructed the Train Operating Companies that there is no funding available for any increases to basic rates of pay.

Dispute already exist between RMT and Serco Caledonian Sleeper, Greater Anglia, London North Eastern Railway and Southeastern.

NETWORK RAIL

RMT is also set for nationwide rail dispute in response to threat of thousands of rail worker redundancies by September and a fifty per cent cut in rail safety maintenance work.

The union is moving to a national dispute footing with

Network Rail after it revealed the government controlled company was planning for thousands of job losses and a wholesale dilution of safety standards, including a halving the frequency of safety critical maintenance work.

The attack on jobs and safety comes on top of an attempt by the company to implement an open-ended pay freeze on Network Rail workers and a wholesale attack on working conditions.

TUBE

The union is stepping up its fight to win full funding for Transport for London with the launch of an online petition. The petition comes in the wake of the launch of an RMT campaigning document 'A Future for Public Transport in London', which makes the case for staff to be at the heart of a fully funded and rebuilt public transport system in London.

The publication sets out not only the cost of cutting jobs before the crisis but also how more and better jobs are essential to rebuilding London's public transport after the crisis.

The union believes that the government must stop using London transport as a political football and guarantee its the long term funding required to move out of lockdown.

London transport staff have been key worker heroes throughout the pandemic and this continued uncertainty is a disgraceful way to treat them.

SHIPPING

RMT has launched a campaign against social dumping and in defence of local seafarer jobs of after Irish Ferries announced plans for a new Dover-Calais service.

Irish Ferries currently operate roll-on roll-off ferry services between Dublin and Holyhead and Rosslare and Pembroke with low paid foreign crews recruited by Matrix Ship Management of Cyprus.

Hundreds of Ratings in Dover were made redundant in the middle of the pandemic by P&O Ferries and Irish Ferries entry into the Cross Channel ferry market has been welcomed by local politicians and port representatives despite the impact that Irish Ferries' business model may have on local seafarer jobs and skills, trade union rights and maritime safety standards.

RMT has also written to the Scottish Transport Minister, Graeme Dey MSP calling for a ferries summit with the recognised trade unions, following the decision to charter the Pentalina catamaran from union-busting firm Pentland Ferries for work on CalMac's Clyde and Hebrides routes.

Not so long ago, Pentland Ferries took the Scottish government to court over perceived unfairness in subsidised lifeline ferry services. Now they are invited onto a publicly owned and operated contract without any consultation with the trade unions organising CalMac staff.

Stena Line has also unilaterally scrapped a company sick pay scheme which has been in place for seafarers and port workers in Stena Line until the start of the pandemic, forcing staff infected with or displaying symptoms of Coronavirus to

rely on Statutory Sick Pay.

BUSES

An RMT survey has revealed that a cuts disaster looms for Britain's bus network unless the government takes far more radical action than is set out in its National Bus Strategy.

The survey of councillors at Local Transport Authorities in England, outside London, found that 67 per cent thought that their Council would be

forced to cut funding for local bus services in the future, with two-thirds of those citing lack of Central Government funding as the reason.

In the deregulated bus market, cash strapped local councils are forced to subsidise any socially or economically necessary routes that the commercial operators do not deem profitable, yet they are still banned from setting up their own municipal bus

company.

The governments recently published National Bus Strategy has committed to reviewing this ban, and RMT is demanding that the ban is reversed as a matter of urgency.

On pay Stagecoach East Midlands and Stagecoach Chesterfield have already offered just one per cent pay rise while inflation is running at 3.1 per cent. ■

STAFF OUR STATIONS RMT REGIONAL MEETINGS

**Fighting to protect your job, pay and conditions
and for a safe, secure and accessible railway**



All RMT station grades members are invited to attend a Staff our Stations campaign meeting in their region. Issues being discussed include protecting jobs and conditions, opposing casualisation and keeping ticket offices open.

Meetings are taking place online from 6pm – 8pm on the following dates:

Manchester & North West Weds 7 July
North East Mon 19 July
Scotland Mon 2 August
South Wales & West Mon 16 August
Wessex Fri 10 September

Midlands Mon 12 July
North West & North Wales Mon 26 July
South East Mon 9 August
South West Mon 6 September

Register now at: <https://bit.ly/2S9Tjke>

All Station Staff are ESSENTIAL workers!



THE TRAINCREW CHARTER

RMT launches
revised and
updated charter
at the traincrew
grades organising
conference

The Traincrew Charter is a vital document. It sets out the union's vision for the essential role of traincrew on the railways and it has three functions.

Firstly, it sets out the demands RMT seeks to get embedded in agreements with our employers. Secondly, it makes the case for traincrew to the world beyond our industry, explaining the essential nature of the work traincrew do. Finally, it tells traincrew themselves that the union is your voice in the workplace.

The traincrew union RMT is the union for traincrew, including drivers, guards and other on-board staff. The union fights to defend the jobs and conditions of our traincrew and to promote the proper staffing of our railways.

For too long, governments and train operating companies have seen traincrew as a cost to be cut. RMT has been the voice for these hard-working staff. The union has fought ceaselessly against

attempts to bring in Driver-Only Operation and cut guards from passenger services and even to bring in Driverless trains on Metro and Underground services.

RMT believes that traincrew are at the heart of a railway that values its passengers and sees them as more than fares to be collected or cash cows for profiteering.

A SUMMARY OF THE CASE FOR TRAINCREW

- Travelling by train is safer with a 'safety-critical' guard trained and armed with skills and knowledge that enable them to respond a wide range of emergencies on the train.
- Passengers want more guards. Even before the pandemic, passengers consistently identified on-board staff presence as being a vital part of the 'security package' for people travelling on the

railway.

- When asked disabled people want more staff, especially on-board traincrew.
- So called 'Driverless trains' are a risky gamble with passengers' lives and there must be no extension of driverless trains on Metro, Underground or any other services.
- There must be a guard at all times on all passenger services and no extension of DOO or DCO on any route or service.
- There should be a guard in every portion of a multiple – unit train in passenger service where no through gangway is provided.
- The guard is the person in charge of the train at all times and instructs the Driver regarding movement and dispatch of trains. The Driver controls the movement of trains.
- The guard should have full control of the power operated doors.
- Guards are skilled, safety critical staff. They shall be fully qualified and knowledgeable in all operational matters including: route and rolling stock knowledge; local working instructions in stations, yards, sidings; emergency protection and evacuation procedures including full detonator protection.
- Guards are responsible for reporting defects affecting the movement of trains.
- Guards play an invaluable and irreplaceable role in ensuring the safety and comfort of passengers, far beyond their operational duties.
- Guards play a critical role in ensuring the railway is accessible to disabled, elderly or vulnerable passengers.
- Managers who are not trained in the full range of guard or driver

competencies must not be used to work a train as a guard or driver.

- There must be an end to the culture of de-staffing, downgrading and casualising staff and intensifying work.

JOIN THE FIGHT!

RMT has fought long and hard against the attempts by successive governments and train operating companies to de-staff our trains.

This is not about resisting new technology. RMT believes that technology and the jobs of train crew should develop and evolve together through agreements with unions. But the truth is that for

decades, attempts to bring in Driver Only Operation or Driver Controlled Operation

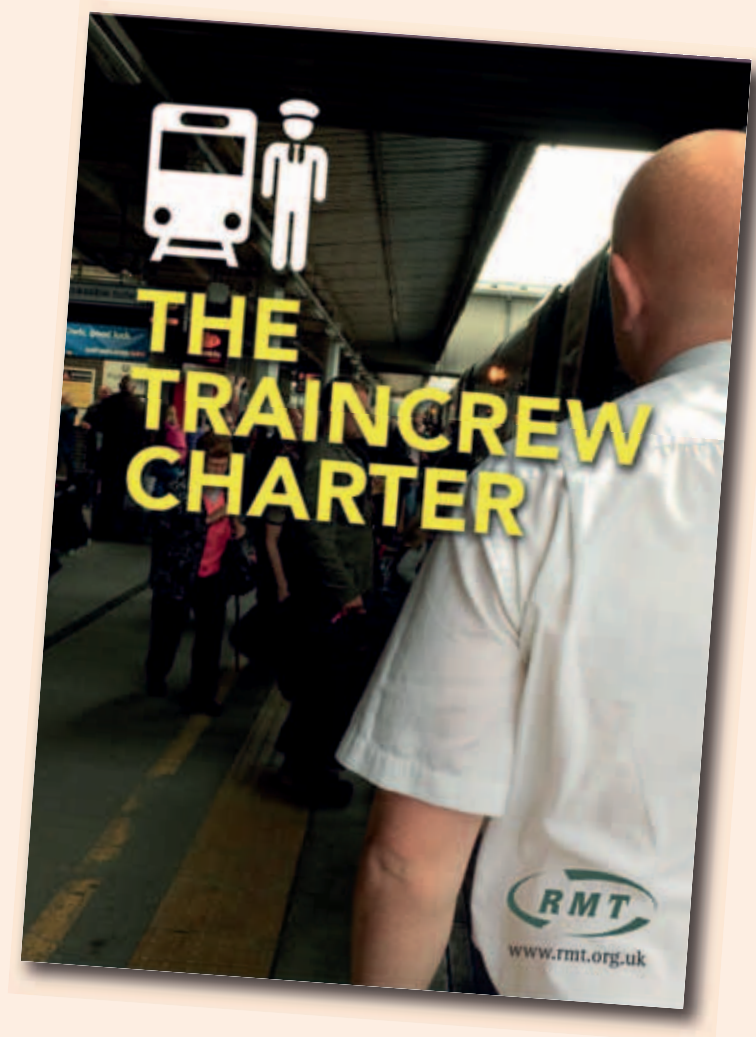
have been motivated by attempts to cut costs and raise profits on our privatised railway.

The interests of the passengers and staff who make up our railway have been ignored and disputes have been forced on us.

By being prepared to take united action to defend traincrew jobs, RMT members have forced a series of retreats and concessions on employers that keep the Guard on the train. At the same time,

RMT has built campaigning support for traincrew among politicians, passenger groups and the wider public. RMT will keep up the fight for traincrew.

■ For a full version of the RMT's traincrew charter to the RMT website www.rmt.org.uk



ORGANISING THE EAST COAST

RMT targets the east coast ports of Grimsby and Great Yarmouth for major recruitment campaigns

The union has launched recruitment campaigns in the English ports of Grimsby and Great Yarmouth as there are a growing number of vessels operating in both renewables such as wind farms as well as the oil and gas industries.

RMT national secretary Darren Procter said that offshore vessels operated daily in the ports including crew transfer vessels (CTV) servicing the oil and gas or renewables sector on the East Coast. There was also a number of fishing vessels within Grimsby port that were being used as guard vessels.

"We had very positive dialogue with crews about what RMT is doing within the renewables sector explaining that we are having political

engagement around licensing and campaign for the use of local labour, UK ports and the use of UK flagged vessels.

"We spoke with some crew from Green Marine who all took membership forms and I am confident that they will all sign up to RMT. We also spoke with crew on Isle of Jura who all identified an interest and took away literature and application forms.

"Through engaging with workers at the ports, we have established that there were a number of workers who were not currently members of any trade union and were unaware of any union being in active in the area.

"We discussed political and industrial issues specific to the renewables sector and they

were interested in the work the union undertakes on behalf of its members, with a number of workers taking membership applications and RMT literature away from the meeting," he said.

Darren has also been engaged with RMT's sister union in Australia, the MUA and learned of a particular campaign whereby they used targeted social media to engage with potential members which is of very little cost and can target a specific location.

Future activities are planned to increase membership via ship visits to the offshore supply vessels and crew transfer vessels/workboats which serve wind farms in East Anglia. These visits will also

help the union identify vessels which may not be paying the National Minimum Wage or adhering to other applicable National Legislation whilst working on the UKCS. Activities are being arranged for:

- July 5 2021
- August 2 2021
- September 6 2021
- October 11 2021

The union has identified that these ports have enormous recruitment potential and is calling on local branches, regional councils and activists to assist in increasing membership, establishing a strong RMT presence as well as building intelligence on rates of pay and contract issues. ■

BLACK AND ETHNIC CONFERENCE MEET BY ZOOM

Delegates call for stepping up the justice for cleaner campaign and to act on issues around mental health

This year's black and ethnic minority members advisory conference (BEMMAC) took place by way of zoom this year.

Conference elected a new chair Oluwarotimi Ajayi and a new secretary Jennifer Aggrey-Fynn to carry on the work of the committee between conference along with the advisory committee itself.

Incoming chair Ajayi said that he and the committee were looking forward to representing the interests of black and ethnic members of the union and to make sure that their voices are heard.

"We believe that the work of BEMMAC and our other Equalities groups play an integral part in the advancement of our union," he said.

Conference delegates also backed a Paddington branch calling on the union to organise an annual event celebrating black and ethnic labour movement icons, an event first called for by the 2017 BEMMAC meeting.

As a result conference called on the union to arrange a national event in October 2021 to celebrate the life and work of Claudia Jones and to invite historian David Horsely, author of the new publication 'The political life and times of Claudia Jones' as guest



New RMT black and ethnic minority members advisory committee chair Oluwarotimi Ajayi

speaker.

Conference also called for the stepping up of the justice for cleaners campaign and other outsourced workers such as ABM cleaners on London Underground.

Delegates also called for the profile to be raised of

black and ethnic cleaner reps by ensuring branches and regional councils allocate slots for these activists to report back.

Delegates also discussed the issues around mental health and called on the union to recognise how experiencing



Jennifer AggreyFynn

racism could be stressful and negatively impact the overall health and mental health specifically of members, reps and activists.

Conference recognised that a growing body of research indicates that those exposed to racism may be more likely to experience mental health problems such as psychosis and depression.

To remedy any shortfall in mental health awareness, conference called on the union to review its policy and provide additional resources to deal with the effects of racism.

Delegates also once more nominated Liverpool to be the venue for next year's conference which will hopefully be held in person. ■

'GREAT BRITISH RAILWAYS'?

RMT slams the 'missed opportunity' of the Williams-Shapps plan to end fragmentation

The government finally published its long-delayed report into the future of the railways last month and launched 'Great British Railways' with a clear admission that the privatisation and fragmentation imposed over 25 years ago had failed.

RMT welcomed the fact that the Williams-Shapps Plan recognised that rail privatisation had failed to deliver, only creating a complex and fragmented system that does not work for passengers which remains particularly unpopular with the public.

The plan recognised that the costs of this fragmentation are substantial and estimated that removing duplication and interface costs could save £1.5 billion every year after five years.

The creation of a unified state body, Great British Railways, with responsibility for the infrastructure, timetabling and, crucially, ticketing, could have been a significant step forward towards recreating many of the benefits of a publicly owned and integrated railway.

But in fact, as RMT general secretary Mick Lynch said, Great British Railways represented "a missed opportunity by the

government to make a clean break from the failures of the past that have left Britain's railways in the slow lane".

The ticketing reforms announced were highly limited. Instead of genuine flexible tickets, for example, the plan envisages what is essentially a carnet system.

More fundamentally, having come so close to the logical step forward, the government had defaulted to its dogmatic attachment to private sector train operation.

'Most passenger services' will be run by private sector operators under new Passenger Contracts, run like concessions. It is not clear what will happen to the services being run by the Department for Transport's Operator of Last Resort.

GUARANTEED PROFITS

Passenger Service Contracts are touted as being a new, more regulated mode of service delivery. In reality, they continue the approach of the EMAs and ERMAs, which shift all the risk onto Great British Railways, while guaranteeing profits for private train operators.

Since 1997, private train operating companies have extracted £3.2 billion in dividend payments from franchising.

According to DfT data published this month, in the six month period of the EMA contracts, during a national crisis, the train operating companies received management fees (available to be turned into dividend payments) of £88 million. This is guaranteed profit.

In addition, the plan says nothing about the profiteering by the three rolling stock companies, the Roscos. RMT analysis has shown that these companies extract an average of £260 million in dividends every year. This is now being paid for directly by the taxpayer. During the pandemic year, Eversholt paid out a £46.5 million dividend, claiming that because of government support they were at no risk from Covid-19.

So, the profiteering is set to continue. Given that 71 per cent of the train operating companies are foreign owned, while the Roscos have overseas subsidiaries in low tax regimes and tax havens, much of this profit will flow not just out of the industry, but out of the country.

RMT's position is clear. Instead of guaranteeing profits for private train operators, Great British Railways should directly run these passenger services as set out, for example, in GB Rail: Labour's

plan for a nationally integrated publicly owned railway.

That would mean that any profits made could be reinvested in the railways, as happens with the services currently run by the DfT's OLR. LNER paid a dividend of £40 million to the DfT last year. If all these contracts were run directly by GBR, including the ones currently being run by the OLR, this money would be reinvested in the railways.

Under the plan as envisaged, most profits will continue to go overseas to foreign owned state companies or shareholders.

DEVOLUTION

The Williams-Shapps Plan is also vague on the impact on devolved authorities. The plan says, 'Existing devolved administrations and authorities across Great Britain will continue to exercise their current powers and to be democratically accountable for them'. It is claimed that 'The whole-system, planning and operating functions needed to deliver a joined-up network will be directed by Great British Railways, working in partnership with devolved transport authorities where appropriate.'

The plan does not include any proposals to break up the infrastructure on regional or

devolved lines, a point reinforced by Secretary of State Grant Shapps at his appearance at the Transport Select Committee last month when he made clear his opposition to breaking up the network infrastructure. However, Mr Shapps indicated that devolved authorities in Scotland and Wales would retain the ability to run passenger services through the Operator of Last Resort, effectively the public sector, if it wished.

RMT has welcomed the resistance to breaking up the rail infrastructure on national lines and the indication that devolved decisions on public ownership can continue in Wales and Scotland will not be immediately challenged but, as with so much, the devil will be in the detail and this is an area the union will be watching closely.

WORKFORCE: AN ASSET, NOT A COST

In terms of workforce matters, there is a similar story. The Williams-Shapps plan is one step forward, two steps back.

Great British Railways is tasked with creating an integrated workforce strategy that allows staff to develop skills and build careers on the railway. This is a step in the right direction, acknowledging that privatisation brought fragmentation which blocked career development, compartmentalised people and de-skilled them. It is not clear what role unions are to have in this.

However, the logical step would be for all staff to have a single employer, as in Labour's GB Rail: Labour's plan for a nationally integrated publicly owned railway. Continuing with private sector train operators acting as employers will function as a barrier to integration and skills development as they seek to drive down costs.

Equally problematic is the fact that Great British Railways is being given a mandate to drive costs out of the railway

while focusing entirely on one cost: staff.

GBR will be mandated to seek efficiency savings and the Office of the Rail Regulator (ORR) will be given responsibility for monitoring how well it does this. As a first step, in collaboration with ORR, the government will introduce new transparency requirements and reporting and analysis on productivity and pay. ORR will collect and publish comprehensive data on salaries and provide comparisons with other sectors and labour markets. It will also oversee, report and benchmark the sector's productivity. The Williams-Shapps plan also appears to envisage a further attack on ticket offices.

AUSTERITY FOR STAFF

Austerity is already being implemented on the railways. The government has already mandated the imposition of a pay freeze for staff employed by TOCs and said that it wants 'changing working practices'. Network Rail has threatened an open-ended pay freeze and a 50 per cent cut to maintenance scheduled tasks with a potentially massive effect on maintenance staffing. As a result Great British Railways and the ORR appear to be being reinvented as mechanisms for delivering permanent austerity on rail.

Yet the focus on staff is deeply misguided. There is no significant productivity problem on the railways. In reality, staffing costs have grown roughly in line with the needs created by growing passenger usage. The productivity of staff employed by TOCs has increased by two per cent between 2010 and 2019 against growing usage, measured in passenger kilometres. Network Rail's staff costs as a percentage of revenue did not significantly grow over the same period.

In addition, any attack on jobs would be disastrous for the future of the railways. In October 2020 Transport Focus

published research showing that the key to rebuilding passenger confidence in returning to the railways was enhanced staffing: "There is a strong sense that the ideal response to the pandemic would be to see more staff on trains and at the station, rather than less". RMT has also already pointed out the dangers of Network Rail's planned assault on jobs and conditions.

Completely absent from the discussion of costs was any mention of the cost of servicing Network Rail's debts to private bondholders, acquired while it was a private company. Network Rail owes £24 billion plus interest in the form of these loans and servicing this debt consumes around 30 per cent of its revenue.

ROSCOS

Similarly, there is no discussion of the fastest rising cost in the railways: privately owned and leased rolling stock. Rolling stock lease costs have risen by 91 per cent in the last five years, according to the National Audit Office, while the amount that TOCs spend on rolling stock as a percentage of spending has increased by 77 per cent in the last 10 years. Unit costs of rolling stock increased by 41% between 2010 and 2019. Last month, the National Audit Office described the costs of rolling stock leasing as 'significant'.

The government has made no attempt to control these growing costs. When asked whether the government had considered capping any payments to these companies, Heaton Harris answered, "There has been no assessment made as these are legally binding contracts between the train operator and the rolling stock company. The expectation is that all contracted rolling stock will be required to manage social distancing on trains".

Roscos pay out an average of £260 million in dividends

each year. Last year, Eversholt paid out a dividend of £46.5 million, at a time when all their lease payments were coming directly from the taxpayer.

The union believes that Great British Railways is a huge missed opportunity, born of a recognition that privatisation has failed and coupled with a dogmatic attachment to guaranteeing private sector profit. As a consequence, GBR looks set to become an instrument for imposing dangerous and damaging austerity on our rail network.

Great British Railways seems have an unspoken mandate to shield the continued extraction of profit at the expense of a railway that serves the British people.

LEGISLATION

Legislation is needed to establish the new body GBR and to alter the ORR's remit and role. This is not expected to be in place until 2023. RMT will be scrutinising this legislation working with our Parliamentary Group and other allies to seek to improve and provide protections in the legislation.

However, the government has said it wants some changes in place before that.

A new flexi season ticket will be on sale from this month and more National Rail Contracts will be announced this year and South-Western and Transpennine Express franchises have already been signed.

RMT's campaigns against job cuts at Network Rail is already up and running. The campaign to protect jobs and pay among our members working for the TOCs and their supply chain is gearing up and the union will continue to expose the profiteering of the fat cats behind the façade of Great British Railways. A rational, publicly owned, planned and people-centred railway has perhaps got a step closer, but it still has to fought for and won.





CELEBRATING DIVERSITY

RMT LGBT+ conference opposes "gay conversion therapy"

"Diversity has got to be celebrated, not repressed, it's got to bloom in our union," RMT general secretary Mick Lynch said in his address to the union's LGBT+ conference. "The union must come together, because what unites us - with all our diversity - is more important than what divides us."

Meeting online for the second time thanks to Covid-19 restrictions, delegates resolved to stamp out homophobia, transphobia and prejudice in the railways, in Britain, and across the world. The conference unanimously endorsed a motion calling for a total ban on "gay conversion

therapy". The resolution, which will be put before RMT's AGM, requests that the union work with the wider movement to pressurise the government to ban the practice.

Janine Booth, Finsbury Park said: "It's an incredibly important issue. A lot of LGBT people are being subjected to mental and sometimes physical torture.

"The Queen's Speech made matters even worse - the government just procrastinated over it. What the bloody hell do you need to consult on? This really is a live issue. We need to pile into the fight to get these so-called cures banned."

Daniel Lill, Bletchley & Northampton asserted: "People do need to realise this still goes on, and there is help out there for people put in these situations. The cure is: you don't need to be cured. We need to stand together and say we don't accept this."

Ebony Kingston, Neasden said: "Cured of what? For being themselves? This is the problem with some people. They think you can wave a magic wand and it just disappears. For me, that's homophobic in itself."

Delegates spoke movingly about their own experiences of coming out - and a lack of understanding from their

families.

Laurence Coles, Wimbledon said: "When you come from a background like mine, where my family didn't really understand what being gay was, it's just who I am."

Sarah Schaffer, Southampton Shipping said: "One of the things I did go through was attempted conversion attempts by family, in the first year when I came out. A lot of it is down to people's perceptions, lack of education, lack of knowledge.

"What are you going to cure at the end of the day? We could go through a year of it, we're still going to be there, we're just going to be a bit

more pissed off with you."

Guest speakers at the conference also highlighted the difficulty in getting the Tory government to combat the anti-LGBT+ agenda.

Quinn Roache, TUC LGBT+ and disabled workers' policy officer, highlighted a "slew of anti-trans cases" in the past year, saying these had the "potential to undermine women's rights, LGBT rights and the right to protest" as well as the primary threat to trans rights.

Quinn went on to report a "surge in the number of LGBT+ hate crimes being committed" and asserted: "We don't believe being trans is an illness, and we need to ensure the government does better."

Thomas Labrune, from the LGBT+ anti-violence charity Galop, said: "We do experience domestic violence and violence from our partners at at least the same levels as straight and cisgendered people."

"It's tough because we are in very tight-knit communities, and speaking about these experiences is very hard."

For the conference's second submission to AGM, delegates voted to highlight the plight of the LGBT+ community in Ghana. The resolution highlights the role of legacy British Empire colonial laws relating to "unnatural carnal knowledge". This criminal code is being "used on occasion to harass same-sex couples" in spite of there being no Ghanaian law directly prohibiting homosexuality, the conference heard.

Nathan Wallace-Esnard, Central Line East said: "The motion itself refers to Britain's colonial past in West Africa. What we're seeing now is a right-wing fundamentalist Christianity in America, as well as the Roman Catholic church, have had an influence over there in Ghana recently."

John Stack, Finsbury Park said: "Same sex acts and the LGBT community are heavily

oppressed in Ghana."

With extensive media coverage of the campaign for gender neutral announcements on trains and at stations, delegates also debated a call for RMT to itself shift to gender neutral language. LGBT+ conference endorsed a motion calling for the union to move away from "the old terminology that is used to address members as either brother or sister".

In order to "become more inclusive for the wider membership", this "should be changed to be more gender neutral and inclusive", the motion said.

Moving the resolution, Steve Moule, Birmingham Rail, said it would "get the union kicking and screaming into the twenty-first century... so we are gender neutral ourselves".

Alex Grant, Cambrian added: "The situation where we're in now is where the union is behind many capitalist organisations."

But some delegates objected to the motion's stipulation that the terms "brother" and "sister" should be replaced with "member".

Janine Booth said: "It specifically says change the form of address to member, and I think that is a cold, dehumanised term." She said terms such as "comrade", "friend", and "ally" would be more appropriate.

Martin Duncan, Perth No. 1 said: "I don't like the term member any more than I like the term conductor, or

member of staff." He said that "brother" or "sister", contrastingly, suggested a "familial connection" between union activists.

Simon Gilson, Euro Passenger Services said: "For me, member seems a little stilted, like it should be followed by a number. I fully agree with Janine and Martin that comrade would be a better substitute, personally."

Sarah Schaffer said: "When you're beginning your transition process, there's a desire for affirmation sometimes - one of the things that can help with things is terms like 'sister' or 'brother'."

Georgie Duane, Neasden added: "There's certain aspects to my daily life when there is a 'sister' or female annunciation to myself I think that's really affirming, it boosts my confidence."

Nathan Wallace-Esnard countered: "The motion asks for something which is really a positive development. From a personal point of view, when I make my announcements I reference 'passengers' or 'customers'."

Responding to the debate, Steve Moule said: "Maybe the wording is slightly wrong at the end of it by saying we should call everybody 'members', but that can be changed. I'm more than happy for this to go to the NEC to be amended by the equal rights sub-committee. Perhaps we could discuss it at the advisory committee meeting and put our guidance on it to go to

the sub-committee."

Delegates voted in favour of the motion, with the proviso that it would be sent to the NEC with advisory guidance allowing for flexibility over preferred substitute terms.

The advisory committee reported plans to have an RMT presence on Pride events over the next year - with next year's conference set to take place in Birmingham at the time of the city's own Pride. Delegates also agreed that a wider plan of activities would be agreed at the June meeting of the LGBT+ advisory committee.

Janine Booth said: "If all we're going to agree is to agree we're going to go to some prides, then we're missing an opportunity."

Martin Sherris, Bristol added: "Pride should be a bare minimum."

Daniel Lill said: "We need to be seen to be the ones who are doing the leading." Making the case for the RMT to accredit fully-fledged LGBT+ workplace reps, permitted to represent members facing homophobia and transphobia in the workplace, he said: "They didn't want to sit there with a union rep who is - no disrespect - general purpose."

RMT president Michelle Rodgers told delegates: "The one thing I'm proud of in this union is that we support our equalities groups. I want to thank every single one of you for the growth I've had in this role in terms of learning." ■





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ALAN POTTAGE
FOR ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY

PADDINGTON NO1 BRANCH
SUPPORTS
EDDIE DEMPSEY
FOR ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY

CHESTERFIELD BUS BRANCH
SUPPORTS
PAUL WARD
FOR THE NEC POSITION
FOR YORKSHIRE & LINCOLNSHIRE REGION

EAST LONDON RAIL BRANCH
NOMINATES
ALAN POTTAGE
FOR ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY

EDINBURGH NO1 AND PORTOBELLO DISTRICT
BRANCH
NOMINATES
ALAN POTTAGE
FOR ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY

LEEDS CITY BRANCH
SUPPORTS
PAUL WARD
FOR THE NEC POSITION
FOR YORKSHIRE & LINCOLNSHIRE REGION

NORTH STAFFS BRANCH
NOMINATES
ALAN POTTAGE
FOR ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY

EXETER RAIL BRANCH
NOMINATES
ALAN POTTAGE
FOR ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY

WAKEFIELD AND HEALEY MILLS BRANCH
SUPPORTS
PAUL WARD
FOR THE NEC POSITION
FOR YORKSHIRE & LINCOLNSHIRE REGION

SOUTH WEST MIDLANDS BRANCH
SUPPORTS
EDDIE DEMPSEY
FOR ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY

PICCADILLY AND DISTRICT WEST BRANCH
NOMINATES
ALAN POTTAGE
FOR ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY

MIDLANDS BUS BRANCH
SUPPORTS
PAUL WARD
FOR THE NEC POSITION
FOR YORKSHIRE & LINCOLNSHIRE REGION

CAMDEN 3 BRANCH
NOMINATES
ALAN POTTAGE
FOR ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY

HAMMERSMITH & CITY BRANCH
NOMINATES
ALAN POTTAGE
FOR ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY

OFFSHORE ENERGY BRANCH
SUPPORTS
ALAN POTTAGE
FOR ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY

EUROPEAN PASSENGER SERVICES BRANCH
NOMINATES
EDDIE DEMPSEY
FOR ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY

SOUTH HANTS & EASTLEIGH WORKSHOP
BRANCH
NOMINATES
ALAN POTTAGE
FOR ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY

LU ENGINEERING BRANCH
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NOMINATES
EDDIE DEMPSEY
FOR ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY

NOTTS & DERBY BUS BRANCH
NOMINATION FOR
PAUL WARD
FOR THE YORKSHIRE AND LINCOLNSHIRE NEC
POSITION

WIMBLEDON BRANCH
SUPPORT
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FOR ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY

WATERLOO BRANCH
NOMINATES
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ORPINGTON BRANCH
SUPPORTS
EDDIE DEMPSEY
FOR ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY

PORTSMOUTH BRANCH
NOMINATES
ALAN POTTAGE
FOR ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY

UNITED AGAINST FASCISM

Chris Kasrils reports on an on-line event hosted by Glasgow shipping branch to celebrate the wartime anti-fascist alliance between Britain and the USSR

RMT seafarers and friends recently honoured the heroism of British merchant navy crews who served on the legendary Arctic Convoys, transporting vital aid to the embattled Soviet Union at the height of World War II.

The union's Glasgow Shipping branch hosted an inspiring online commemoration, featuring archive newsreel, poetry, song and the launch of a new book by socialist historian Colin Turbett.

Eighty years ago this month in June 1941 Germany invaded the Soviet Union. Britain, which had hitherto faced the Nazis alone, suddenly had a powerful, yet beleaguered, anti-fascist ally in Moscow.

By August that year, an initial British naval convoy departed on its perilous voyage to Russia's far north. It was the first of 78 such missions which, by the end of hostilities in 1945, saw 1,400 merchant navy vessels deliver four million tons of war materiel, food, fuel and medical supplies.

With good reason, Britain's wartime leader Winston Churchill declared life on the convoys to be "the worst journey in the world." Conditions were beyond

appalling. As well as constant harassment from enemy forces, sailors had to contend with the extreme environment of the north Atlantic.

"The Germans realised that one torpedo sinking one ship could destroy as much equipment as might be achieved by an advancing army on the battlefield, suffering much greater loss to achieve the same result," Colin told the Glasgow gathering.

Summer convoys were largely abandoned when it became apparent that the near endless Arctic daylight turned ships into sitting targets. Conversely, winter sailings provided natural cover, with nights of 20 hours or more, along with the constant misery of sub-zero temperatures. It was said that the only place one could escape the cold was fully clothed in your bunk or hammock.

J. H. Potts, the then president of the National Union of Railwaymen, forerunner of today's RMT, experienced this first-hand when he travelled with the convoys on a three-month fact-finding mission to wartime Russia. His experiences were recounted last year in an article in RMT News.



The principle destination was the port of Murmansk, although convoys also travelled further east to Archangel. On arrival in Murmansk they found the city all but destroyed. German bombers, based just 15 minutes flying time away in occupied Norway, continued to pound the docks as the

precious cargoes were unloaded.

Colin, whose late father Desmond was a Royal Navy veteran of the convoys, explained that British merchant crews were often looked down upon as the navy's "poor relations" at sea. As many as a quarter hailed from ethnic minorities— Somalians, Chinese

and Malaysians among them. Inevitably, these recruits from across the British Empire received the very worst tasks on board.

Glasgow Shipping branch veteran Fred Potter recalled his own father's role escorting the convoys as a sailor in the Royal Navy. He participated in the ill-fated mission known as "PQ17," where incompetence and bungling by naval top brass led to disaster.

Under German attack and amid confused orders the convoy was instructed to scatter, leaving a collection of converted whaling ships, banana boats and trawlers to "the tender mercies of the Germans," Fred told the meeting.

Out of a total of 39 civilian vessels, 24 were sunk in the incident, which was one of the worst moments of the war for the British navy. By 1945, a staggering 27 per cent of all British merchant seafarers had been killed by enemy action.

Yet official recognition for the bravery shown by convoy participants has been slow in coming. It was not until 2012, after a long campaign by veterans, that a special medal, the Arctic Star, was instituted by the British government.

Sheila Gilmore and Natalia McAlister read poems in English and Russian commemorating the heroism of the seafarers. Natalia, who hails from western Siberia but has settled in Scotland, said that she was so moved by the gathering that she decided to add a few words of her own.

As a Russian she said she often found herself saddened by widespread ignorance in Britain and elsewhere regarding the sacrifice her country and the other Soviet republics played in the defeat of fascism.

Colin also took up this theme, speaking powerfully about the need to defend "historical memory."

Previous histories of the Arctic Convoys had been coloured by Cold War prejudices in the West, he said. False narratives were spun from the 1950s onwards claiming Russian ingratitude for the precious supplies and that British seafarers were met with hostility on arrival in the country.

"What I found both from talking to the veterans and reading their accounts from the time is you get an entirely different picture. In fact, many of them mentioned their links with people in Murmansk and Archangel up until today," he added.

Igor Shchekotin of the Seafarers Union of Russia joined proceedings from Moscow, declaring: "The importance of the support provided by the Allies to the USSR during wartime cannot be overestimated. The Arctic Convoys not only proved to be a vital means of supply, they brought together many countries in the joint fight against the common enemy – Nazism".

- A full recording of the Glasgow Shipping commemoration can be viewed at www.tinyurl.com/RMTarctic c. Colin Turbett's book: 'The Anglo-Soviet Alliance – Comrades & Allies during World War 2' is published by Pen & Sword and available in hardback for £25 or on offer from the publisher for £20. Visit www.pen-and-sword.co.uk for your discount. ■



NUR president J H Potts



ALLIANCE: Chipping ice off the forward superstructure of HMS Manchester in Arctic waters in 1941

Celebrating the Alliance

Whilst here I attended a huge anti-Fascist demonstration in honour of the British-Soviet Alliance. The issuing of the terms of this new Pact caused great jubilation throughout Russia. The meeting was organised by the local Youth Movement, and young speakers took the rostrum, representing dockers, timber workers, railroads, the Red Army, Air Force and Navy.

While awaiting a visit I visited the local...

TESTIMONY: NUR president Potts describes a solidarity anti-fascist meeting

President's column

HARD WON RIGHTS

Well, what a month! I am going to start with my disappointment in the ballot results recently to protect those that protect you.

Our reps and activists put their heads above the parapet daily to keep checks and balances between your hard-earned terms and conditions and the abuse of these by the management within your companies.

A lot of the time you will be oblivious to this going on as they are trained and experienced so there are no waves of panic for you the members. However, this role is unpaid and done for their love of this trade union and the will to want to help their fellow members and in recognition of what their forefathers fought for years ago

such as decent pay, safe work practicing with breaks and of course holidays among many other things.

Management didn't gift these, they were won with membership solidarity and often through industrial disputes.

When one of these reps are singled out it's because they have been doing what they are meant to do and become an issue for your management teams via holding them to account on your behalf and they do that believing they have their fellow RMT members behind them supporting them with faith in the system we all sign up for.

So, when we ballot because sometimes that system lets us

down "WE SHOULD ALWAYS SUPPORT THEM WITH A HUGE MANDATE" that says loud and clear we have your back like you have had ours over the years.

It is time we all played our part and stop letting our representatives down - stand up and be counted don't leave it to others "IT IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY" to return the ballot papers and keep Our Union the Militant Union that Will protect you and your safety and jobs.

Its Pride month and I want to thank Georgie Duane and the LGBT+ conference for their support. Stay proud and I hope I get to share some time with you all soon. You do an amazing job educating our union and helping



to change our policies to make us a kinder world. I have enjoyed and learnt a lot from our equality members and long may that last THANK YOU.

Finally, we have a series of meetings in the regions to defend station roles as part of our 'Staff our stations' campaign, please join in online and lets build a strong network of defence to protect all our station grades jobs.

Solidarity
Michelle Rodgers

DISABLED MEMBERS SPEAK OUT 'MANAGERS ARE NOT DOCTORS'

Gwen McNeil urges other disabled workers to stand up for their rights

My name is Gwen McNeil and I am a Conductor with Scotrail.

I was diagnosed at the age of twelve with acetabular dysplasia (shallow hip sockets), which had been present since birth but was missed. In adulthood, this has developed into osteoarthritis.

Various conditions at work present problems to me, including walking on ballast and the one-and-a-quarter-mile walk required in emergency situations. So, although I have recently been passed as fit for work, I can't carry out my safety-critical duties.

I have been referred to orthopaedics to look at hip replacement number two (the

first was ten years ago and frustratingly I managed to work right up until my operation day with that one). I'm currently stuck in limbo, as waiting lists for most if not all NHS procedures have increased due to Covid-19, and I don't think there are any alternative longer-term jobs suitable at my depot.

So far, management have given me a temporary support role as a rep making sure colleagues understand the recent return to revenue briefing and risk assessment. I guess they are waiting for my referral appointment to begin forward planning.

I am a local RMT rep and assistant branch secretary, and

am keen to work with the company to ensure that it works with any worker with a condition or impairment to give them the assistance and adjustments they personally require.

I also joined RMT's Disabled Members' Advisory Committee, and have had some involvement in setting up a Scottish sub-committee.

I would like, through the union, to put forward changes to how the job runs to make it more accessible and suitable to disabled workers. Thanks to completing the RMT Disability course, I now know that there is a legal requirement for employers to make reasonable adjustments, including



changes to hours and workload.

If you are in a situation like mine, then please don't be defeated or accept there's nothing your employer can do. Legally, you have that wee bit of protection and your reps can help you with this. Also, managers are not doctors, so never forget that it is **your** condition so you are best placed to advise what will help you in your workplace.



BACK ON THE ROAD AND STAYING SAFE

With the latest lockdown easing, RMT members are heading back out on to the roads. As a motorist all you want to do, is to get from A to B safely, the last thing you want is to have an accident or to have your car or its contents stolen.

Road Accidents

In 2019, more than 216,000 vehicles in the UK were involved in an accident resulting in an injury. 73% of accidents involved cars, and 25% of all accidents happened either when commuting or on work business*.

Here are some simple steps to take before you start your journey, which could help

prevent an accident:

- * Check how long your journey is likely to take and give yourself plenty of time to get to where you need to be
- * Check your oil level, tyre pressure, windscreen wash and lights, including brake lights
- * Set up your SatNav now, not while you're moving
- * Decide which playlist or radio station you want to listen to, and keep your volume at a reasonable level - make sure you can hear what's going on around you
- * Take your earphones out (if you're wearing them)

- * Put your phone on 'Do not disturb'
- * If you're not feeling well, stay at home or ask someone else to drive

VEHICLE CRIME

During the past 12 months the Metropolitan Police[^] recorded 25,441 vehicle thefts and 62,475 crimes involved items being stolen from vehicles, in London alone. The average cost of items stolen from a vehicle in 2019/20 was £382. Some simple measures to protect your vehicle include:

- * Lock your vehicle
- * Keep your keys safe - out of sight and away from

your front door

- * Keyless entry / start - keep your key in a security pouch to prevent it being scanned by thieves
- * In slow moving traffic keep your car doors locked and leave enough space between you and the vehicle in front to let you get out of a tight spot
- * Avoid parking in dark and secluded areas and look for a car park with a Park Mark award if possible

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HAIR PIN: Adapted railway track defences alongside the railway line near Chipstead Golf Club

THE STOP LINE RAILWAY

RMT News explores the fascinating story of the last defences designed to halt an expected Nazi invasion in 1940

When the British Expeditionary Force was evacuated from Dunkirk alongside sizeable numbers of allied troops in May 1940 it looked as though the anticipated Nazi Operation Sealion invasion of Britain that summer was inevitable.

In response a huge number stop lines and anti-tank islands were established along major routes such as railway lines to hold up the enemy and track and train crew workers even today will recognise the remains of these formidable defences all around the country.

The need to prevent tanks from breaking through was of key importance. Consequently, the defences generally ran along pre-existing barriers to tanks, such as rivers and canals, railway embankments and cuttings and other natural obstacles. Where possible, usually well-drained land was allowed to flood, making the ground too soft to support even tracked vehicles.

Crossing points in the defence network such as bridges, tunnels and other weak spots were called nodes or points of resistance. These were fortified with removable road-blocks, barbed wire and land mines. These passive defences were overlooked by trench works, gun and mortar emplacements and pillboxes. In places, entire villages were fortified using barriers of scaffolding, sandbagged positions and loopholes in existing buildings.

Some defences were disguised and examples are known of pillboxes constructed to resemble haystacks, logpiles and innocuous buildings such as churches and railway stations.

Thousands of miles of anti-tank ditches were dug mechanically but occasionally by hand. Roads offered the enemy fast routes to their objectives so they were blocked at strategic points using lengths of bent railway track placed into sockets.

There were two types of



STOP LINE: Hexagonal Type 22 Pillbox near the River Thames, Lechlade, Gloucestershire

socket roadblocks. The first comprised vertical lengths of railway line placed in sockets in the road and were known as hedgehogs. The second type comprised of railway lines bent or welded at around a 60° angle, known as hairpins.

Similar blocks were placed across railway tracks because tanks can move along railway lines almost as easily as they can along roads.

Preparations were already at an advanced stage to build static defences around London and that work was accelerated. There were a number of these concentric lines around the capital and similar defensive works were built right across the country including right across Somerset.

The idea was to hold back and delay a Nazi advance to allow for troops to be mobilised in a series of counter-attack operations supported by airborne assaults.

These lines were made up of a series of pillboxes covering anti-tank ditches and concrete obstructions but they also made clever use of the natural lie of the land, such as hills and rivers and none more so than the railways.

There are still signs of the strategic importance that the railways would have played in



STOP LINE: A pillbox defending Garston Lock, Kennett and Avon canal in Berkshire.

any invasion in 1940 with the remains of pillboxes and concrete tank traps at strategic points but one reminder that has been almost totally lost over the past eighty years are these steel hairpin obstructions formed from bent sections of track set into concrete sockets.

The London Outer Stop Line runs through Surrey and the section alongside the railway track as it runs past Chipstead Golf Club is particularly well preserved. RMT News was delighted to be invited in by the green keeping team at the club to take a closer look and we were lucky that a vegetation clearing gang had been along the track only days before, making for some unique pictures.

Luftwaffe reconnaissance shots from the time show both the network of covering pillboxes, all of which remain intact, and the man-made anti-tank ditch which carves through the course before meeting up with the hairpins and concrete anti-tank bollards which are located on the railway embankment as it rises up to track level.

It is extraordinary to think that these hastily and improvised measures were all that may have stood as the last line of defence holding off a Nazi advance on London. We can only pay tribute to the brave men and women, including railway workers signed up for the Home Guard, who would have been expected to hold them to the death. ■

FAREWELL STARRY

Ken Usher pays tribute to former RMT national secretary Anthony Ramon Santamera

I want to start by acknowledging the magnificent contribution that Tony Santamera has made throughout his life in defence of our members, families, communities and our class.

As a lifetime socialist, committed trade unionist, Internationalist, humanitarian and anti-fascist he was more commonly known as Tony or even Starry to his close friends and comrades. He was a leading rank and file activist within the National Union of Seamen through the late 60's, 70's and 80's prior to being elected as a full-time officer of the NUS in March 86, involved with many campaigns, disputes, regular attendee at various Branches and BGMS.

In 1979, prior to being an FTO, he amongst others arranged for collections and charity nights to be organised in support of those lost at sea on MV Pool Fisher with only two survivors and 13 souls perished. Less than a year later MV Derbyshire went missing during typhoon Orchid presumed to have sunk in the South China Sea with the loss of all 44 on board including two wives.

He worked hard to support

the formation and continued running of the Liverpool Retired Seafarers Group, which still exists today.

As a community activist Tony along with other activists of the Liverpool NUS Shipping Branch, Trades Council and Merseyside Trade Union and Unemployed Centre took part in the People's March for jobs in 1982. Tony was instrumental in ensuring support from the NUS/RMT was given to other disputes such as steel workers, construction, miners and dockers.

During his time working aboard the MV Manx Viking, he ensured that the crews adopted the Bolsover group of mines and each week collections were taken for a fiver a head.

This support is acknowledged by way of certificates of appreciation and a replica Davey lamp issued by the group. As the shipboard convenor he was always proud to declare to all, "that not one ounce of coal, not one, was conveyed to the IOM during the 84/85 miner's strike on the Manx Viking".

He was a founding member and the first elected chairman of the Heysham/Douglas Port



Committee. Tony was soon after to be elected as chairman of the National Ferry Port Committee. A committee that was originally set up to ensure greater communication, liaison and networking of activists to share information on the respective gains in terms and conditions, pay and benefits.

However, it wasn't long before the then NUS hierarchy saw the power and might that the committee could wield

and the demands that they were making for change within the wider union and that certain officials had done their utmost to prevent meetings being convened.

Starry would not tolerate any fly by night chancers who he would suss out quickly but when he saw genuine potential he would seek to encourage, develop and nurture less experienced representatives by passing on his knowledge and experience.

In March 1986 he was elected as the senior branch secretary under the NUS the first rank and file member to take the senior post. He was responsible at that time for Liverpool, Heysham, Douglas and Manchester and soon to be followed by Holyhead.

In June of the same year he was proud to host the NUS BGM at the town hall in Liverpool. Despite Liverpool being renowned the world over as a major maritime port and for its militancy, it was the first time the BGM had been held in our great city.

One of the agenda items during that BGM to which I had been elected as a delegate was the controversial issue of the periodic election of national officers in line with one of the Seafarers Reform Movement's aims and aspirations. The hierarchy was trying to condemn the move on the basis that we would be supporting and adopting the right wing 1982 Employment Act, or 'Tebbit's Law'. The debate went to and fro and it was only when Tony reminded the top table and voting delegates that this had been a long-term aim and aspiration from the 1960 and 1966 national strikes and not a capitulation to Tory legislation.

This was a brilliant move which swung the vote in favour.

Tony met with the Derbyshire Family Association in particular Paul Lambert and the Rev Peter McGrath and committed to support the campaign to find the wreck and to secure some justice for its lost crew. He offered the use of our NUS office then in Paradise St, Liverpool.

Although Tony had great links with many of Liverpool's councillors and MPs of the day, many of them being classed as militants - the links were through the community in which he had grown up, lived as an adult or just socialised in or around Holy Cross, Scotland Road (Scotty as we know it), over the bridge

and now the Eldonian Village - not through membership of the Tendency.

When elected to post of National Officer in 1989 Tony committed to ensuring that the remnants of the P&O recognition agreement was resurrected following the '88 dispute and a campaign of recruitment and organisation was undertaken.

In the aftermath of the Herald of Free Enterprise disaster and 193 lost followed by the loss 167 lives at the Piper Alpha, Tony attended various meetings of the International Maritime Organisation and worked diligently in ensuring that the UK's Maritime and Coastguard Agency were pressing for improvements to safety standards on ferries, bulk carriers and offshore platforms.

As RMT National Secretary in liaison with the Derbyshire Families Association and then MP for Garston Eddie Loyden, they continually pressed the Department of Transport and the ITF to undertake a search of the South China Sea for the wreckage of the MV Derbyshire despite some opposition.

Following the landslide General Election Labour victory in 1997, the then deputy leader John Prescott MP announced that the government would open up a new enquiry and use evidence previously rejected. The ITF agreed that additional funds would be made available to commission a vessel to undertake a search of the target area. In the final hours of the last day within the target area, just before a decision was made to call a halt to the search, signals were picked up of what was to be declared the MV Derbyshire. Armed with the undisputable evidence secured during the search, the final report from the subsequent enquiry, cleared the crew of any blame 'through poor seamanship' which came as a massive relief to the DFA and all its



supporters.

Tony was also instrumental in ensuring that the deficit of the Merchant Navy Ratings Pension Fund was addressed and accordingly legal action was taken following merger by RMT to lock the remaining companies into their deficit liabilities at a time when they were all trying to do a runner to their offshore tax havens.

Tony was also chairman of the Charity Care Ashore, which owns the "Springbok" Estate in Alfold, Surrey providing convalescence, respite, holidays and living accommodation to serving and former seafarers and following his retirement he was nominated by RMT for the Merchant Navy Medal for his Meritorious Service to Seafarers.

As a very skilled, knowledgeable and articulate negotiator over his working career he was involved in many a negotiation meeting. Some of which led to disputes. Tony was always sensitive to the impact that a dispute would have on members and their families. He always questioned himself on whether there was anything more that he personally could have done as a negotiator to negate the need of a strike. He also possessed a gift of reality and pragmatism and recognised that sometimes there also had to be the potential for compromise, a fall-back position, to secure a lasting settlement "cast in tablets of stone" as he would often say.

In negotiations he would

always press for that 'extra nugget' by telling management that there is a massive difference between a recommendation for acceptance and a strong recommendation for acceptance, more often than not securing that extra bit for the benefit of the members.

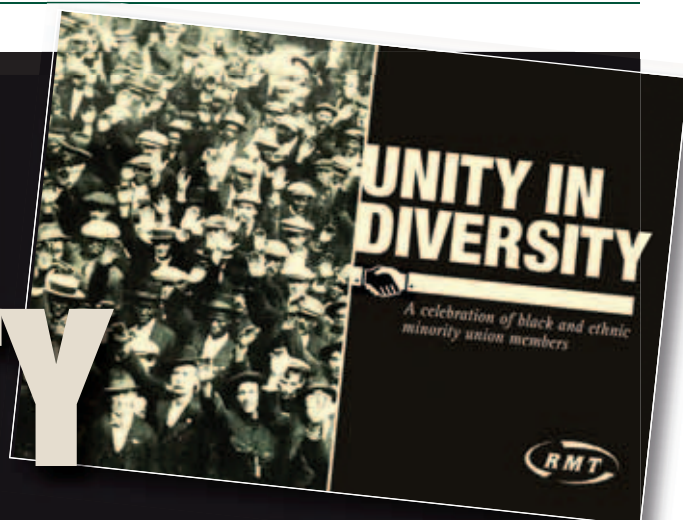
Tony was a great inspiration and source of encouragement to many of us in the NUS/RMT in various ways. Those of us who knew him and worked with him all gained from his experience, guidance and teachings. Tony was without doubt my industrial mentor and accordingly throughout my own 35 years as an FTO of the NUS/RMT the improvements, benefits and successes that I have been able to secure for the benefit of our members comes from the experience and guidance that I received working alongside my great friend and former boss.

Tony will forever be praised for the work that he did on behalf of seafarers, their families, the wider TU movement and our communities, but let us not forget that above all else he was a loving and caring husband to Carol who he idolised and a great father to Maria, Tony, James and baby Carol, Grandad, Brother, Uncle, Cousin, Brother-in-Law and a dear loyal friend to many.

Goodnight and god bless comrade, until we meet again



UNITY IN DIVERSITY

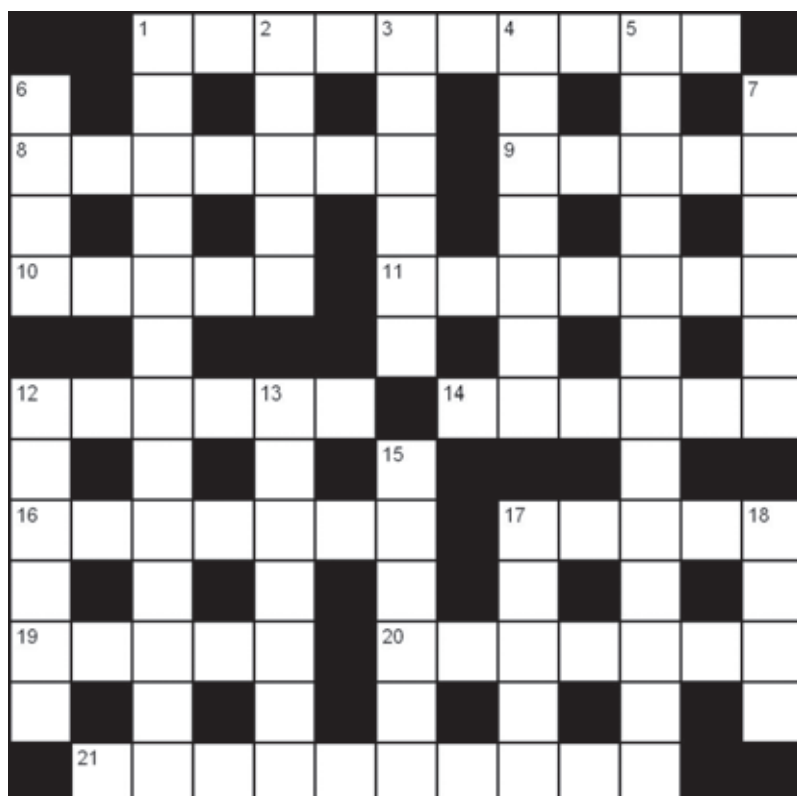


A celebration of black and ethnic minority union members

RMT published a pamphlet to mark the 25th anniversary of the union's black and ethnic minority members' advisory committee and its annual conference.

Available from jwebb@rmt.org.uk

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Last month's solution...



Send entries to Prize Crossword, RMT, Unity House, 39 Chalton Street, London NW1 1JD by July 20 with your name and address.

Winner of last month's crossword was Andrew Jefferis, Yate.



Crossword sponsored by UIA

ACROSS

- 1 Advocate of nonalignment (10)
- 8 Line touching a curve (7)
- 9 Spanish accent (5)
- 10 Fear (5)
- 11 Walker (7)
- 12 Card game (6)
- 14 Past (6)
- 16 Put in motion (7)
- 17 Roofer (5)
- 19 Ring-shaped cake (5)
- 20 Feudal domain (7)
- 21 Extremely pleasing (10)

DOWN

- 1 Refusal to use violence (13)
- 2 Turn upside down (5)
- 3 Revolve (6)
- 4 Frothy (7)
- 5 Self-awareness (4-9)
- 6 Breeding horse (4)
- 7 Order (6)
- 12 Spirit (6)
- 13 Endowment recipient (7)
- 15 Sorrowful (6)
- 17 Pulsate (5)
- 18 Backside (4)



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