

RMT *news*

Essential reading for today's transport worker

TUBE WORKERS STRIKE!



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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

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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.

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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.
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www.rmtprotect.com

HEALTH CASH PLAN

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

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CROSSWORD

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EDITORIAL

FIGHTING FOR TRANSPORT WORKERS

After nearly a year of industrial action and campaigning members at Network Rail have voted for an improved offer covering pay, jobs and conditions by a margin of three to one.

At the start of negotiations Network Rail had proposed a pay increase of as little as two per cent. Yet this deal represents a total pay uplift of between 15.2 per cent for the lowest paid grades to 10.3 per cent for the highest paid, representing an additional 1.1 per cent over the two years of the deal as well as increased backpay.

In addition, Network Rail has withdrawn any insistence that the union accepts its 'modernising maintenance' agenda and renewed the no compulsory redundancy agreement until 2025 as well as discounted rail travel benefits.

These improvements are solely down to the inspiring solidarity and determination of members at Network Rail and we will continue to scrutinise and challenge any plans to undermine safe working.

However, our dispute with the Train Operating Companies remains firmly on and our members recent highly effective strike action across the fourteen train companies has shown their determination to secure a better deal.

Therefore, it is vital that the

union secures a mandate in the upcoming re-ballot of members on the 14 TOCs as required by the anti-union laws in this country. More information and materials will be forthcoming on this issue.

This month also marks the first anniversary of the P&O jobs massacre which threw 800 seafarers out of work and replaced them with low paid agency workers. A recent report by cross-party MPs has found that the government response to P&O Ferries does not protect UK seafarer jobs and conditions in the maritime industry.

As a result, we will continue to campaign for the mandatory link between Tonnage Tax companies, who will be enjoying dramatic increases in Corporation Tax relief from next month, and UK seafarer training.

This union will also continue to fight for all grades of transport workers wherever possible whether they are bus workers, logistics or offshore. This is never an easy task and we are clearly operating under difficult circumstances.

Nevertheless, we can still win by utilising our democratic structures and harnessing the power of workers to fight back and win a better deal for all RMT members.

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



PROTEST: RMT assistant general secretary John Leach addresses strike rally in Trafalgar Square

TUBE STRIKE

London Underground members take action in defence of jobs, pensions and agreements

On the eve of strike action on the tube this month RMT urged London Mayor Sadiq Khan to reverse the managed decline of London Underground and protect pensions, passenger safety and halt job cuts.

Over 10,000 RMT members took strike action across the tube joining teachers and other education workers in NEU and UCU, civil servants in PCS and Prospect and junior doctors in the biggest day of strike action in Britain for many years.

Transport for London has refused to take pension attacks off the table and continues to impose cuts as £600 million is not yet budgeted for.

As well as the 600 station job cuts, which are leaving

stations unable to cope as rosters are imposed, massive productivity plans are now on the table for trains members. All agreements are under review, which could lead to much less certainty on shift patterns, an increased working day and an attack on work life balance.

Now LUL threatens to redeploy members into lower paid jobs with only temporary protection of earnings. On several engineering functions management has started a re-organisation that will delete a number of jobs.

Members have been told that they will have to be assessed for other roles and may be displaced into a lower paid job.

TfL's financial crisis is entirely created by the

government. When Boris Johnson was London Mayor, LUL still received an operational subsidy of around £100 million in today's prices.

Johnson, Mayor Khan and LUL management all supported the idea of self-financing with no subsidy despite the fact that no similar metro system anywhere in the world operates on this basis.

Restoring that subsidy back to 2016 levels would provide the £600 million that TfL is still looking to cut.

In his letter to the London Mayor, RMT general secretary Mick Lynch made clear that London Underground managers were imposing new rosters across tube stations which are based on cutting 600 station staff jobs.

"In January, I wrote to you

raising my serious concerns about the safety consequences of these cuts. Because they are now so short-staffed, managers appear to be mis-using waivers in order to override agreed minimum safe staffing levels at Tube stations.

"This means that stations are now opening with too few or, in some cases, no staff. I asked for a moratorium on these station staff cuts while an investigation took place, yet managers are proceeding with the use of the new rosters. I repeat my call for you to instruct LU managers to halt these cuts pending meaningful discussions with RMT.

"Similarly, the threat to our members' pensions remain live, in spite of the fact that both you and TfL know there is no need for the reforms being

demanded.

"In the *Evening Standard*, you are quoted as saying that tube staff, who worked throughout the pandemic to maintain a reliable service, do not deserve the "sword of Damocles" hanging over them in the form of attacks on their pensions.

"I urge you once again to act on this understanding and rule out the implementation of detrimental pension changes to the TfL pension.

"The fact is that both these disputes are the consequence of a failed funding model in London's transport system.

"As you are aware RMT is campaigning for the restoration of TfL operational funding.

"No other comparable city to London seeks to run its public transport system without an operational subsidy and the folly of attempting to do so has been cruelly exposed by the demand shocks of the pandemic.

"TfL's need for emergency funding from government has led to dependence on striking deals with a spiteful



Kings Cross

administration with an agenda to drive down the living standards of transport workers.

"I'm sure you will agree that there is no sustainable future for TfL on this basis.

"In advance of our strike action on these disputes in November, my union made the offer to London Underground management to

suspend our strike action in return for a moratorium on job cuts and changes to agreements on working conditions and an assurance that attacks on our pensions would cease.

"This offer was refused outright by London Underground management".

Mr Lynch concludes the

letter by urging Mayor Khan to change course and reverse the managed decline of London Underground campaign for the funding that TfL needs to maintain the jobs, pensions and conditions of its workforce and the services it provides to the travelling public of London.

RMT WINS PUBLIC OWNERSHIP FOR CALEDONIAN SLEEPER

RMT welcomed a decision by the Scottish government earlier this month to take Caledonian Sleeper into public ownership as a vindication of vigorous campaigning.

The announcement, made by Jenny Gilruth MSP in the Scottish Parliament, was a victory for RMT's long hard-fought campaign for public ownership of the iconic service.

It will give the Scottish government an opportunity to ensure this sustainable, low carbon route between Scotland and London can be run for passengers' interests, not private profit.

Previously contractor Serco

ran the services making millions of pounds in profit for shareholders and speculators.

This decision means that both the Scottish and Welsh governments are running all of their rail passenger services in public ownership.

RMT general secretary Mick Lynch said that the union had campaigned tirelessly for this victory and congratulated every part of the union who had a hand in making this a reality.

"The Scottish government has done the right thing and now joins the Welsh government in bringing all passenger services into public ownership.



VICTORY: RMT members from Inverness No.1 branch attended the opening of Scotland's newest station at Inverness Airport with a protest to take the Caledonian Sleeper into the public sector. Conor Cheyne of Inverness said that only public ownership could ensure a good working environment for staff and affordable tickets for passengers.

"We thank the sterling work done by Richard Leonard MSP and other Scottish politicians who have supported us in this successful campaign.

"This decision should be a wake-up call to the

Department for Transport in Westminster, to end its failed obsession with privatisation and bring the whole railway system into public ownership," he said.



PROTEST: RMT general secretary Mick Lynch addresses a rally outside Parliament before a meeting inside marked a year on from P&O's illegal sacking of 800 seafarers and their replacement by cheap agency workers.

NO MORE P&O'S

Union calls for a new deal for seafarers as numbers in the industry fell by over 21,000

RMT has called on the government to provide a new deal for seafarers after the latest statistics showed a big employment drop in the industry.

The union launched a week of action to mark the first anniversary of P&O Ferries unlawful and brutal attack on nearly 600 Ratings' jobs covered by the RMT collective bargaining.

The union's message was clear that if it can happen at P&O it can happen anywhere and with the government's latest attack on the right to strike it was clear that the Tories wish to further strengthen the hand of employers and corporations against workers.

The union held

demonstrations outside Parliament and a rally addressed by politicians including such as Labour Shadow Transport Secretary Louise Haigh MP and RMT national secretary Darren Procter.

Protests were also held outside DP World's head office and in Dover and in Hull addressed by local MP Karl Turner MP, TUC general secretary Paul Novak and others.

According to the latest figures, the total number of seafarers employed in the UK shipping industry fell by over 21,000.

Overall, the number of Ratings jobs fell by 28 per cent, although there was a small increase in the number

of UK Ratings. Figures are provided in large part by the Chamber of Shipping - an employers' organisation.

RMT has continually stated that such stats do not provide a consistent overview about how difficult the situation is for seafarers following the industrial vandalism carried out by P&O, when they sacked almost 800 seafarers without warning.

RMT general secretary Mick Lynch said that UK seafarers needed a new deal that puts jobs, good terms and conditions at the heart of the industry, across every sector including ferries, offshore energy and deep-sea work.

"There is an unhealthy relationship between shipping bosses and the government

that allows a race to the bottom in terms of terms, conditions and super exploitation.

"Maritime labour from outside the European Economic Area is being brought in, under flags of convenience where those workers are super-exploited by low wages and appalling working conditions.

"The government needs to step in to protect UK Ratings and end exploitation of seafarers from across the world who work in UK waters," he said.

RMT has also written to the Transport Secretary demanding that the government beef up its Seafarers Wages Bill with greater protections for crews



Dover

on ships.

The Seafarers Wages Bill, in its current form, only provides for a limited extension of the National Minimum Wage to seafarers on international routes from UK ports.

The bill should refer to the broader terms and conditions contained in the charter, as a Labour amendment has called for.

Waiting for the Bill to pass before releasing a voluntary seafarer welfare charter, not only lets P&O off the hook it preserves a culture of seafarer exploitation which the Government claim they want to tackle as quickly as possible.

In the letter, Mick Lynch writes: "As we approach the first anniversary of this disgraceful assault on seafarer jobs and rights in our maritime communities, RMT request that the government now circulate the latest copy of the Seafarer Welfare Charter to Unions and employers. We are extremely concerned by the Government's removal of an agreed roster pattern (based on our collective agreements with Stena Line and DFDS) and the restriction on trade union membership of the Seafarer Protection Forum, the implementation mechanism for what the Government intend to be a voluntary Charter. We

hope that the Government's final draft of the Charter has addressed these short comings in the interests of seafarer employment and welfare standards.

"We welcome the government's engagement with RMT and Nautilus over the Nine Point Plan. We also support the government's negotiations with governmental counterparts in France, Ireland, Belgium, Holland and other countries on short sea shipping routes from the UK, although we are disappointed that progress seems to be limited to the Channel routes between the UK and France.

"The remaining parliamentary stages of the Seafarers' Wages Bill are imminent and seafarer unions and parliamentarians must have sight of the latest version of the Seafarers Welfare Charter in the interests of primary legislation which effectively tackles the exploitative crewing model used by P&O Ferries and other operators of international services in UK ports.

"We look forward to receiving a copy of the government's proposed Seafarer Welfare Charter before the Commons Report Stage of the Seafarers Wages Bill," the letter said. ■



OFFSHORE ENERGY PROFITS SOAR

RMT slammed the news last month that Norwegian oil and gas company Equinor raked in profits of over £60 billion.

RMT general secretary Mick Lynch said that Equinor had made exorbitant profits off the

back of offshore contractors, many of them from Britain, who had suffered stagnating wages, insecure work and are forced to make their own pension arrangements.

"The grotesque profits at

Equinor need a serious response, including conditions of licence, a guarantee of trade union rights and recognition that exists in the Norwegian sector of the North Sea.

"Offshore workers are growing increasingly angry about the amount of profit and dividends being ripped out of the industry at their expense," he said. ■

BALFOUR BEATTY STRIKE



Preston picket

RMT members at Balfour Beatty Central Rail Systems Alliance (CRSA) have been taking industrial action this month after the company has continued to refuse to offer an acceptable pay award as part of the 2022 pay negotiations.

RMT representatives have for several months now been pressing the company to negotiate regarding a sensible agreement regarding the

outstanding pay claim at a time when Balfour Beatty continues its financial success story.

The company's latest accounts show that during this period the company's revenue was £8.26 billion with profits of £139 million, an increase of £109 million on the previous year or 363 per cent and £29 million was paid out to shareholders.

The highest paid Director received total pay and benefits of nearly £3 million an increase of nearly £700,000 on the previous year or 31 per cent.

RMT is determined to achieve a just and fair award for its members and it is obvious that from the above that it is easily affordable for the company. Unfortunately, the company has chosen to ignore these facts and RMT

has no other option to proceed with a ballot to protect your interests.

RMT remains available for negotiations at any stage to resolve this dispute, but it demands fair pay for CRSA members. ■

CONTRACTED OUT DLR STAFF STRIKE



Contracted out staff working for ISS on the Docklands Light Railway took 48 hours strike action last month.

Cleaners, security, revenue protection and travel safe staff will walk out after rejecting an insulting pay offer of less than two per cent.

RMT which represents the workers highlighted the fact ISS staff on the DLR are underpaid compared to others

on TfL performing equivalent roles. On top of poor pay, ISS staff have so far not been told whether they will get access to the free travel facility.

This is despite the fact London Mayor Sadiq Khan having already promised all contracted out staff would get free travel across Transport for London.

RMT General Secretary Mick Lynch said that the level

arrogance on display from ISS was staggering.

"This multi-million pound company already pays staff poorly and with inflation running at over 10 per cent, an offer of 1.8 per cent revealed what contempt they hold their staff in.

"RMT will be relentless in its representation of contracted out workers who are some of the most exploited in the

transport system.

"This strike action is a demonstration of the strength of our members resolve to win pay justice.

"Ultimately Mayor Sadiq Khan needs to end the injustice of exploitation of contracted out staff by bringing these workers back in house as soon as possible," he said. ■

NETWORK RAIL MEMBERS ACCEPT IMPROVED OFFER

The deal does not accept the company's 'modernising maintenance' agenda and union will continue to campaign on safety



RMT members at Network Rail have voted to accept a new and improved offer covering pay, jobs and conditions by a margin of three to one.

In a turnout of 86 per cent per cent, members voted by 76 per cent to 24 per cent to accept the offer and the RMT National Executive announced that the vote meant the end of the trade dispute with Network Rail.

The new offer which was improved with new money was made following the most recent strike action in January and the threat of more action.

Key features of the offer include:

- An uplift on salaries of between 14.4 per cent for the lowest paid grades to 9.2 per cent for the highest paid
- A total uplift on basic earnings between 15.2 per cent for the lowest paid grades to 10.3 per cent for the highest paid grades. This represents an

additional 1.1 per cent over the duration of the deal

- Increased backpay
- Renewing of the no compulsory redundancy agreement until January 2025
- Network Rail withdrawing their previous insistence the offer was conditional on RMT accepting the company 'modernising maintenance' agenda, which the union will continue to scrutinise and challenge including on safety
- Discounted rail travel benefits

RMT general secretary Mick Lynch said that when the union first declared the dispute with Network Rail a year ago, RMT was told that Network Rail workers would only get two per cent to three per cent.

"However, since then strike action and the inspiring solidarity and determination of members has secured new



money and a new offer which has been clearly accepted by our members and that dispute is now over.

"Our dispute with the Train Operating Companies remains firmly on and our members recent highly effective strike action across the fourteen train companies has shown their determination to secure a

better deal.

"If the government now allows the train companies to make the right offer, we can then put that to our members but until then the strike action scheduled for March 30 and April 1 will take place.

"The ball is in the government's court," he said



FIGHTING FATIGUE AND FOR SAFETY

Health and safety conference grills the ORR and discusses the impact of fatigue in the workplace

This year the 21st National Health and Safety conference took place in the beautiful city of York with up to 170 delegates in attendance last month.

RMT general secretary Mick Lynch criticised the role of the Office of Rail and Road (ORR) ahead of a keynote speech to conference by the ORR Chief Inspector of Railways Ian Prosser.

RMT has been critical of ORR's role during the current national rail dispute for failing to exercise its role as the regulator, failing to hold employers to account for their use of insufficiently trained 'contingency labour' to break the strikes.

The union has also raised many examples rail safety breaches caused as a result which the ORR has done

nothing about.

"The ORR has a responsibility to investigate the unsafe use of strike breaking labour and should be holding rail employers to account for their activities.

"Our members have reported railway safety breaches on strike days, but this has been ignored by the regulator.

"Rail companies have a statutory responsibility to run a safe railway and their approach on strike days so far has been totally unacceptable.

"Safety on the railways is at the forefront of our members minds which is why RMT is totally opposed to Network Rail's so-called "modernising maintenance " plans.

"The cost cutting agenda posed by these plans, represents a threat to safety

standards, our members wellbeing and to the travelling public.

"What we need is investment and a clean industry that looks after the passengers and the environment," he said.

He also spoke about the current national rail dispute explaining that "people are fearful about the future" and how the union has launched the re-ballot campaign - "if we have our people with us, we can move mountains".

"I hope that we win on behalf of all our members and on behalf of all working people in this country." he said.

Delegates focused on the theme of fatigue and current figures suggest that just 41 per cent of workers were getting six hours of sleep, or less

when working days but that this figure rose dramatically to 63 per cent for those who work at night.

Shelly Asquith from the TUC dealt with what made workers fatigued and what are the risks. Nicola Healey from the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) spoke about how fatigue impacted on safety.

Next up ORR Chief Inspector of Railways Ian Prosser addressed delegates about the history of the ORR and explained its role and function.

"As a health and safety regulator they can only act in a reasonable extent if they believe there's a law break and we check legal compliance on control of risk every day by businesses," he said.

In a lengthy session Mr

Prosser took questions from the floor. Carlo Pezzulo, Carlisle asked about the 'modernising maintenance' agenda.

"Do you think that any part of these proposals are any safer than what we've currently got? Can we have a representative sit in on the consultation process?"

The response from Ian Prosser was: "Changes must be implemented safely and we are going to get more involved".

Michael Stanton, Liverpool No. 5 said that Mr Prosser had said that Britain was one of the safest railway networks in the world.

"When are you going to let Network Rail know that staff are the reason for this?"

"On fatigue management why not stop workers from being pushed into more nights as it is causing more problems for physical and mental health?" he asked.

To which Mr Prosser replied: "I think what's going to be important is that risk assessments will be done at a local level and that the hazards and risks will be put to the local and regional teams to assess the situation".

Delegate Neil Sanders asked: "how can you rubber stamp these proposals in any way when in all probability there will be a major tragedy?"

Ian Prosser responded that one of things he had asked for was the justification for changing the mode of working.

"If we think there is anything wrong then we will step in," he said.

John Pencott, Doncaster noted that the culture around fatigue was quite poor and there was little capability to adequately make risk assessments.

"How can you manage fatigue when the culture is to move all day work to nights?" He asked.

Mr Prosser replied: "We've put some of those questions to Network Rail, if they're expecting to have risk analysis then we will monitor it".

Regarding London

Underground stations Ross Marshall, Camden No 3 asked a question with regard to lack of staff.

"A Driver had to deal with a one-under on his own as there were no station staff. I've seen no fatigue indexing and how do we can cope with another disaster situation.

We have sent a dossier of information to the Mayor of London. Will you sit in a room with unions and LUL directors and let them consider this evidence?"

Mr Prosser asked if this dossier had been shared with his inspectors and it had.

Delegate Tony White asked about an increasing problem with units entering service with no working toilets. The answer was: "There is a consumer focus group that we can refer to this too".

Willy Strang, Edinburgh No. 1 asked what was happening about the growing mass of evidence of mistakes whilst contingency staff had been working. The answer was: "we will talk to the duty holder about these cases".

Conference chair Ann Joss asked about the competencies of the contingency signallers allowed to work on strike days given their lack of training and about level crossing incidents, "incidents are up, but we can't implement technology to improve the safety of crossings".

The reply was that "contingency signallers were deemed to be acceptable. Level crossings cases must be based on reasonable change".

Melanie Wright, Leeds asked: "With the plan to make all station staff do all roles, would we not lose our competencies?" The answer was: "We'll have to look at what's been proposed but we haven't seen all the details".

Delegates hoped that raising safety concerns with the ORR would lead to the organisation to embed its inspectors further within the safety consultation process.

■



Ann Joss in the chair



Dan Leong



Ian Prosser



Mick Lynch



Adebusola Adebisi





FLEXIBLE WORKING

Key industrial issue at women's conference was making flexible working a priority

RMT women took up the issue of flexible working at their annual conference in Newcastle in March.

During passionate exchanges in the resolution debate, delegates unanimously agreed to heap pressure on transport employers to make flexible working the default.

Moving the motion, Neasden branch delegate Luminita Nicolae said that currently mothers have the right to request flexible working, but the employer can easily reject it because it is not in their business interests.

"There is a huge list for permissible reasons to refuse an application so it's very easy

to say no.

"The union needs to remind employers to make flexible working the default," she said.

Supporting the motion Piccadilly & District West Branch delegate Marie Harrington said: "What we've got to do...is to keep this issue at forefront at people's minds. "We can't rely on the legislation - it is down to us".

Other delegates shared testimony about how they had suffered from being refused flexible working for childcare purposes, causing them ill health and harm.

Conference agreed that there was a need for male union reps and colleagues to have greater awareness of

equalities issues particularly women going through menopause or excessive bleeding from periods.

It was acknowledged that the union had made progress over the years but that more women should be in leading positions within the union.

Newly elected North East regional council member Jessica Robinson said that the union had in some ways the image of "pale, male and stale" but that the women active in the union were here to change that.

One of those young women activists Bella Fashola has been a key part of the union's Justice for Cleaners campaign.

In the first national strike of

its type last year, the union is demanding £15 an hour, company sick pay, decent holidays and good pensions from contractors who are raking in profits worth millions of pounds.

Speaking to RMT News in Newcastle, Bella said: "Our campaign is one of the most important in the union's recent history.

"Many of the cleaning grades are exploited women from a variety of heritages. It is important the union wins the dispute and keeps the pressure on these ruthless contractors in 2023," she said.

A range of guest speakers addressed delegates including Huffy from West End Women

and Girls centre, People's Assembly National Secretary Laura Pidcock and RMT assistant general secretary John Leach.

Huffty spoke of creating supportive spaces for women of all backgrounds and bring communities together across racial and geographical lines.

"Everything we do comes from the express needs of our local community. Where we are based is the most diverse ward in Newcastle so we families from all over the world.

"Originally [in the 80s] the

centre was very white, but we went knocking on doors in the local area.

"We have the biggest Bengali population in Newcastle living on our doorstep asking them to come," she said.

RMT assistant general secretary John Leach said that he was there to "listen" to the concerns and priorities of women in the union.

"This year has been the most vibrant and active in RMT's history and led by the rank and file which includes women members.

"We have been in forefront of the fightback of our class against the onslaught of the bosses agenda".

Mr Leach acknowledged the great work done by the three female NEC members currently in post but said the union must do more to increase the ratio of women representation across the RMT's structures.

Closing conference Laura Pidcock from the People's Assembly praised RMT for being at the 'vanguard' of unions resisting the attacks on wages and living standards.

She said that women in the movement not only had the pressures of union activity but often caring responsibilities as well.

"Of course, there are exceptions to this experience but very often our heads are down metaphorically with what we have to do in the home and what we have to do at work.

"As striking women, you also have the added pressure of wanting to change things and that takes incredible resolve," she said.

■

CLOSE THE GENDER PAY GAP

New TUC analysis has revealed that the day when the average woman stops working for free compared to the average man was February 23 last month. This means that the average woman in paid employment effectively works for free for nearly two months of the year compared to the average man in paid employment.

In parts of the country and in some industries where the gender pay gap is wider, women effectively work for free for even longer.

As a result, the TUC has called on the government to boost rights to flexible working and for a cash injection for childcare sector.

The TUC analysis shows that the gender pay gap is widest for older women, so they have to wait even longer for their 'Women's Pay Day'.

Women aged between 50 and 59 have the highest pay gap (20.8 per cent) and work the equivalent of 76 days for free, until March 16 2023.

The gender pay gap widens once a woman becomes a mum and older women take a financial hit for balancing work alongside caring for older relatives as well as children and grandchildren, according to the TUC.



Despite the introduction of gender pay gap reporting back in 2017, TUC analysis reveals that there were still big gender pay gaps in many industries.

Even in jobs that tend to be dominated by female workers like education and healthcare the gender pay gap persists. In these sectors women get paid much less per hour on average than men, both because they are more likely to be in part-time jobs or are in lower-paid roles.

TUC general secretary Paul Nowak said that that working women deserve equal pay but at current rates of progress it will take more than 20 years to close the gender pay gap.

"That's just not good enough. We can't consign yet another generation of women to pay inequality.

"It's clear that just

publishing gender pay gaps isn't working. Companies must be required to publish action plans to explain what steps they'll take to close their pay gaps. And bosses who don't comply with the law should be fined.

"The pandemic highlighted that we can do more to help women balance their caring responsibilities and work. Flexible working is key to keeping mums in jobs and is our best way of closing the gender pay gap.

"We should change the law so that all jobs are advertised with all the possible flexible options clearly stated. And all workers must have the legal right to work flexibly from their first day in a job."

On childcare and parental leave, Paul added: "It's clear that the gender pay gap widens dramatically once

women become mums. We need ministers to fund childcare from the end of maternity leave to support working parents – along with better wages and recognition for childcare workers.

"And both parents need to be able to share responsibility for caring for their kids. Dads and partners need better rights to well-paid leave that they can take in their own right. Otherwise, mums will continue to take on the bulk of caring responsibilities – and continue to take the financial hit," he said.

The overall gender pay gap is calculated using all median hourly pay, excluding overtime, for all male and female employees using the latest Office for National Statistics (ONS) Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE) data. ■



RMT YOUNG MEMBERS LEAD THE WAY

RMT young members gathered in Hastings for their annual conference

Young RMT members set out their stall for the future at a well-attended annual conference in Hastings last month.

The jam-packed two-day event saw over 50 delegates debate motions from the floor, take part in interactive workshops on health and safety and neo-liberalism and hear speeches from the senior RMT leadership.

Outgoing RMT young members chair Rupert Pickering told RMT News: "This has been one of our best conferences with a big attendance, a high level of participation and a real thirst

among young members to make a contribution industrially to the union.

"Many of our ranks have been out on strike during the national dispute and we are encouraging them to become reps in their workplaces and get active in their branches as they are the future of the union.

"I say that we are the present, in the here and now, playing a crucial role now in our union's continuing struggles today," he said.

RMT general secretary Mick Lynch praised organisers for growing the conference and making it an accessible avenue

for young members.

"This conference ten years ago was tiny and we had around a dozen people attending so congratulations to all of you who have turned it into a viable part of our union.

"It is vital you are here, vital you have your say and that you make a contribution".

Turning his attention to the national dispute, Mr Lynch said that RMT had rekindled "the fire of trades unionism" through its strikes and pickets beginning in May last year.

"It is important what we are doing for society and for the country and we have to keep

going.

"I'm really proud to be a general secretary of a union like ours - at the forefront.

"The people that are against us - the ruling class, the media, the commentators - hate us. And the reason they hate us is because we are the opposition.

"There is a false consensus in politics at this time - that the world can't change, and we have to continue with the structures handed down from the past," he said.

Referring to the East Sussex branch banner behind him, he pointed to embroidered image of socialist author Robert



Tressell and said: "He was a painter and decorator who was self-educated.

"What he was saying in his book *The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists* to his fellow workers is that the world can be changed. In that time, the Victorian time, there was no welfare state and people were dying phenomenally early.

"There was no care or education for working people. The labour movement here and around the world has changed that, despite wars and economic crisis.

"We have to be vigilant that they don't take it away from us," he said.

He went on to explain that unions must combat "individualism" in society through collective action to win change.

"If you have ideas that the world is wrongly structured, that it is unfair, that it is stacked against poor people... the only way to achieve change is through organisation.

"That is why we come together in a trade union and, while we struggle with our employers and the government in the short term.

We have got to be long term and have philosophical beliefs and outlooks that keep us going through the hard times.

"There are hard times, all the time in my experience, and occasionally you get breakthroughs".

He pointed that the union won improved conditions, collective agreements and health and safety legislation sometimes at great cost over 150 years.

Recalling previous strikes by the NUR - a predecessor union to RMT, Mr Lynch highlighted the violence against members at that time from troops who attacked striking workers - sometimes referred to as the Llanelli riots of 1911.

"The strikes in 1911 when the grenadier guards shot down our people in the streets of Llanelli, all while we were trying to get union recognition.

"In 1919 when we had a generalised transport strike which was massive and caused the government to bring tanks out on to the street in this country".

He urged all members to fight in order to avoid railway workers becoming part of the "gig economy," with poor rates of pay, bad conditions and no employment security.

"This is the fight of our lives and a turning point for us as a working-class movement.

"We have motivated tens of thousands of our members, numbers we haven't seen since the 1960s and 70s.

"So, if you value sick pay, holiday agreements, your overtime rates...anything that comes with your contracts of employment including your

rates of pay, then we have to stick with this dispute," he said to applause.

New conference vice chair Sarah Cundy said: "Being in the union is about your conditions and pay at work but it is also about protecting the railways we have built in this country as a public service".

Conference also agreed an unanimously backed motion to fight for the end of exploitation of railway apprentices on the network.

LU Fleet branch delegate James Braithwaite said that the union needed to mount a campaign to bring all rail company apprentice education in-house and end the vast waste created by outsourcing.

■



SIGNALLING GRADES MEET



Signallers discuss the battle for justice at work, re-grading and safety

The 89th national organising conference for signalling and operations grades meeting in Newcastle last month discussed the fight to defend members wages, terms and conditions.

RMT assistant general secretary Eddie Dempsey said that the government had clearly planned to deal with the cost-of-living crisis by suppressing wages for all workers.

"By taking strike action over the last year RMT members have led the way where other sectors have followed by resisting effective pay cuts," he said.

He outlined the fact that the union needed to pull together as an all-grades union in order to defend the interests of the membership.

"We have seen a government committed to

banning strike action by introducing minimum service levels.

"However, for signal workers you either withdraw your labour or you do not it's as simple as that," he said.

He said that the coming battles were about defending the very existence of the union in the rail industry.

"We need to retain our membership in the signalling grades in order to prevent the employers from continually attacking your pay and your terms and conditions.

"We need to stick together and fight together," he said to a standing ovation.

Steve Shaw of national executive committee said that the union had been through the largest ever consultation of the membership regarding the current national dispute.

He called for members who

work for Network Rail to think about standing for the national executive committee in order for your voice to be heard.

Mark Bellenie gave a full report of the work of the National Operations Council including the fact that it had negotiated record numbers of regrading cases which had led to an uplift in wages.

Bob Cross, Stockport and District gave a report of the organising committee focusing on retention and mapping exercises for workers covered by the conference.

"This exercise needs to be carried out in even the most organised areas as well as attending inductions at signalling schools," he said.

Conference also called for the union to negotiate a payment for training new and promoted signallers in the workplace.

Mark Beresford, Bedlington said that it was not just about money as Network Rail needed to take training seriously.

Steve Loeber, Colchester and District warned that T3 Possessions were being converted at short notice into Line Blockages allowing trains to pass through.

"This practice is putting signal staff under undue pressure and the issue should be raised as a health and safety matter," he said.

AJ Yates of the National Health and Safety Council reported that there was currently no common process for T3 Possessions and trials were taking place.

Delegates also called for the re-establishment of first aiders in signalling locations.

Paul Kemp, Surrey and Hants warned that first aid

training which used to standard was now non-existent.

"I remember taking the training course years ago not thinking I would need it, however, I was called upon to give assistance just last year and it could well have saved a life," he said.

HAPPY RETIREMENT TO MICK KNOX

Conference wished Mick Knox a happy retirement after leaving the industry. He was dismissed in February 2022 and the union has been fighting for justice for him including strike action. His colleagues at Didcot TVSC held two days of strike action last November and a tribunal date has been set for November 2024.

Mick started work in 1995 at St James Deeping on the Peterborough to Spalding line and subsequently worked around the country in various grades.

"I am proud of my record and as I joined after the 1994 dispute and before the current dispute my own battle was the only strike I was involved in," he said.

PAUL KEMP LEAVES THE STAGE

Paul Kemp, who has been a well-known face at the signallers conference for many years, has decided to retire from the railway in May after 43 years' service to the industry and the union.

Paul started work as a 'Signal Box lad' at Gloucester Road junction in 1980 and said that the industry had changed beyond all recognition since then.

He has served as a union rep for 41 years and represented a countless number of NUR/RMT members.

"I always enjoyed serving as a trade union rep and I often wonder where the years went.

"Although this is my last conference as a delegate I will be back as a proud retired member.

"I would also encourage signallers and operations workers young and old to come to conference and share their experiences," he said.

NEWCASTLE STALWART

A stalwart of the Newcastle Rail and Catering branch, signaller Alan Rogerson announced his retirement from the industry at conference.

He joined the industry in January 1976 as a crossing keeper at Peth Lane before becoming a signal worker. He has served the union in many roles including branch secretary and attended every signalling grades conference since 1984.

"I have enjoyed my trade union career and I could not have done it without the support of my wife Lynn.

"I know the union is in good hands and I wish you all the best for the future," he said.

NEW NATIONAL OPERATIONS COUNCIL

A new Network Rail National Operations Council has been elected for three years to represent signallers within the company. The council includes Ian McKellar representing Scotland and Matt Bentley, Janna Jensen and Mark Bellenie representing England and Wales.

Their role includes organising rep structures and dispute resolution forums from local through to national level. There are also discussions on automated signalling, workstation sizing, collective bargaining and the development of a PTRR guide for re-signalling schemes.

Mark Bellenie said that it was a very varied role.

"We interact with many different disciplines from signallers and supervisors through to timetable planners and administrators.

"We also deal with complex welfare, disciplinary and grievance cases where we deal with traumatised members who need support," he said. ■



Eddie Dempsey and Mick Knox



The new Network Rail National Operations Council



Eddie Dempsey and Paul Kemp



Mark Bellenie



Eddie Dempsey with Alan Rogerson and outgoing conference president Chris Knibb

2023 RMT AWARD FOR HEALTH & SAFETY REP

Health and safety conference in York launches new award for union reps in the workplace

The first ever RMT Award for Health and Safety Rep of the Year was presented to Jon Mortimer of East London Rail branch at this year's annual health and safety conference in York.

The new annual award is designed to acknowledge the tremendous work undertaken by RMT safety representatives in keeping RMT members safe.

The criteria for the award is for safety reps that have been outstandingly effective in their role as a health and safety rep and made things better for RMT members.

Jon was nominated for his work on Arriva Rail London as he has consistently worked to ensure that fatigue levels of staff are monitored. He was instrumental in creating new safety structures in the company and provides guidance and help to all reps on health and safety matters.

Presenting the award Wayne Moore of the national executive committee said that Jon was a credit to the union.

Runners-up were Neil Sutherland of Berwick Rail branch and Stuart Evans of Swansea No 1 branch.



Jon Mortimer and Wayne Moore

Neil was commended for his "great drive, passion, commitment and conducts himself in the most professional manner at all meetings". Stuart was nominated for work carried out particularly during the pandemic where he played an active part in risk assessments along with supporting members.

Wayne Moore said that it had been a difficult to choose

a winner as all the candidates had been effective campaigners, carrying out more than basic safety rep work and had made a difference by their campaigning.

"They are an inspiration to us all and I am proud to make these awards on behalf of the union on what will be an important annual part of the health and safety conference going forward," he said. ■

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TAKE ACTION TO SAVE RAIL TICKET OFFICES

RMT launches campaign for members to take part in public consultations on planned ticket office closures

RMT is asking members and the public to take action now to oppose the government and train companies' plans for closing all ticket offices.

Currently any proposals from the train companies are subject to public consultation overseen by the passenger watchdogs Transport Focus and London Travelwatch and run for three weeks. At the end of the public consultation, the watchdogs either accept or object the train companies' proposals. If they object, and agreement cannot be reached with the train company, it is referred to the government to adjudicate.

The government has now cynically changed its guidance to remove the 'busy' threshold (averaging over 12 transactions an hour), effectively paving the way for widespread ticket office closures.

It has also said that it's not going to hold a public consultation on the changes to its guidance, despite the significant ramifications for passengers.

It is not known if the 14 train companies managed by the Department of Transport will stagger their applications for ticket office closures or whether they will be submitted at the same time.

One of the key concerns about ticket office closures is the impact of the accessibility of the railway. RMT has been working with a wide range of groups representing disabled, deaf and older people to oppose these closures on the

grounds that it will represent a worsening in the accessibility of the railway.

A roundtable meeting with RMT ticket office reps and disabled members from the train companies has also been convened to draw on the expertise and knowledge of members in fighting these cynical and short-sighted cuts.

The union will soon be publicising model responses to the public consultations, which members will be asked to submit and share widely with colleagues and the public.

It is vital that when the train companies submit proposals

for ticket office closures that as many responses as possible are submitted to the Transport Focus/London Travelwatch public consultations objecting to the closures and.

What can you do now to protect our ticket offices?

- Ticket office members should think about the reasons why closing ticket offices is bad for passengers in terms of service, range of rail products, safety, accessibility etc and feed these into your reps.
- Build local contacts, including with groups



representing disabled and older people.

- Write to your MP, and local councillors, asking them to support their ticket offices staying open.
- Speak to passengers, they may not realise their ticket office is under threat.
- Sign and share RMT's petition - <https://www.megaphone.org.uk/petitions/cut-their-profits-not-our-ticket-offices>
- Be ready to respond to and mobilise around the public consultation when your train company does put in its proposals for ticket office closures.
- Make sure we have your up-to-date contact details
- If any of your ticket office colleagues are not in the union, encourage them to join. They can do so online here – <https://www.rmt.org.uk/about/join-rmt/>
- Request ticket office campaign materials by emailing s.ward@rmt.org.uk





RMT CONDEMNS AVANTI WEST COAST CONTRACT EXTENSION

Union joins calls from MPs and regional mayors for company to be stripped of franchise

RMT has condemned the decision to extend the Avanti West Coast contract by yet another six months.

RMT has already revealed that the vast majority of Avanti West Coast cancellations are down to staff shortages and called for the company to be stripped of its franchise.

On top of this failing service the disgraced train operator plans to scrap at seat service catering from May which will mean standard class passengers will not have the option of an at seat service, serving sandwiches, snacks and drinks.

The company also plans to reduce catering services for first class passengers by removing the full breakfast option at weekends.

RMT general secretary Mick Lynch said that this was a case of reward for failure which will mean that Avanti owners First Group can continue to make profits on what even Ministers have today admitted is still a

substandard service.

"The government is keeping privatisation afloat regardless of the cost to the rail passengers, rail workers and the taxpayer and the service itself.

"The public should be put out of their misery and the West Coast should now be placed within the publicly owned Operator of Last Resort.

"Ultimately there will be no solution to the problems on Britain's railways until the whole model of rail privatisation is abolished in favour of direct public ownership," he said.

Avanti has already been granted a temporary six-month extension to its franchise following high levels of cancellations and multiple industrial disputes with its staff.

Updated Office for Rail and Road (ORR) data has revealed that Avanti West Coast has cancelled on average 17 per

cent of its planned trains since it brought in its new timetable last December.

These figures represent cancellations on non-strike days and so in no way can they be attributed to industrial action.

The ORR data show that 60 per cent of cancellations are attributed to the responsibility of Avanti under the category 'Train Fault' but RMT data, collected from Avanti's own internal communications, show that since December 11 the vast majority of these shortages were attributed by the company itself to shortages of staff.

This is in line with an RMT survey held around the same time which showed that Avanti staff had no confidence that the new timetable could be delivered because the company was so short-staffed.

Between December 11 and January 8, Avanti cancelled 22 per cent of their planned

trains. Between January 9 and February 5, they cancelled 12 per cent, almost three times the average for Great Britain in the same period.

Avanti is still running fewer trains than they did before August 2022 and cancelling nearly as many as they did before their reduced timetable was brought in.

RMT and MPs and metro mayors have all been calling for the company to be stripped of its franchise.

Labour's Shadow Transport Secretary Louise Haigh MP said that Avanti had literally broken records over the last six months for delays and cancellations, and the Conservatives' answer is to reward failure with millions more in taxpayer cash.

"If this is what success looks like to ministers, it shows that under the Conservatives our broken railways are here to stay," she said.

■

RMT 50+ Personal Accident Plan



Winter brings unpredictable weather and with that comes an increased risk of slips and falls. If we could predict accidents, we could stop them happening. They are, by their nature unexpected and unplanned events and more likely to happen the older we get.

That's where the RMT 50+ Personal Accident Plan could help. For just under £4 per week, the plan pays out £6,000 for accidental injuries helping tide you over a difficult period, plus a £20,000 accidental death benefit cash payout.

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THE WAY WE LIVE NOW

STRIKE: workers blockaded the locomotive engines at Martinsburg, West Virginia, 1877



150 years ago railway speculation led to global depression, growing racism, pay cuts and strike action by US rail workers

Following the great economic crash of 1873, the author Anthony Trollope wrote a biting satirical novel *The Way We Live Now* exposing the scandals, greed and speculation on railway construction that led to the devastating financial collapse.

Trollope had just returned to England from Australia and was appalled by the overriding avarice and dishonesty that pervaded commercial, political, moral and intellectual life.

The central figure in the book is the financier Augustus Melmotte said to be loosely based on 'King' Hudson an enormously wealthy railway speculator in the 1840s who had died abroad in disgrace in 1871.

Melmotte sets up his office in the City of London and woos rich and powerful investors along with US

entrepreneur, Hamilton K. Fiskier, to float a company to construct a new railway line running from Salt Lake City in the United States to Mexico.

Melmotte's goal was to ramp up the share price without paying any of his own money into the scheme itself, thus further enriching himself, regardless of whether the line was built or not...sound familiar? This seemingly risk-proof racket lures in greedy and gullible investors. It does not end well for Melmotte but not before he becomes MP for Westminster and immensely rich.

The book accurately reveals the basis for the great depression which began when the stock market slumped in Europe. As a result, investors began to sell off investments they had in US railway projects. But railway companies had borrowed

using bonds, which were debt securities specifying how much a company was borrowing and how much interest it would pay.

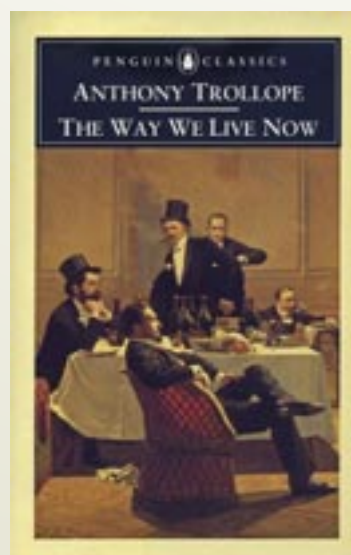
When Europeans started offloading their rail bonds there were soon more bonds for sale than anyone wanted and rail companies could no longer find anyone who would lend them cash resulting in many investors and banks going bankrupt.

When one of the biggest banks in New York City involved in rail construction Jay Cooke & Company went bust people ran to their banks demanding their money back.

The panic spread to banks in Washington, Pennsylvania, New York, Virginia and Georgia, as well as to banks in the Midwest, including those in Indiana, Illinois, and Ohio. Nationwide, at least 100 banks failed. This collapse was

disastrous for the economy and 89 of the country's 364 railways crashed into bankruptcy. A total of 18,000 businesses failed within two years. By 1876, unemployment had ballooned to over 14 per cent.

This so-called long depression sparked the



MASSACRE: Sixth Maryland Regiment opened fire on rail workers in Baltimore



resurgence of White supremacist organisations like the Ku Klux Klan, which had been suppressed since the end of the civil war, who were regaining control in the South through the Democratic Party. Powerful industrialists were also demanding huge pay cuts particularly for rail workers in order to maintain profits.

These continual and vicious attacks on rail workers led to what became known as the Great Railroad Strike of 1877, a series of rail strikes across the US.

The first strike was sparked by deep pay cuts announced by the Baltimore and Ohio (B&O) Railroad—its second cut in eight months. Railway work was already poorly paid and dangerous and rail companies were taking advantage of the economic crisis to break nascent trade unions that had formed after the Civil War.

On July 16, 1877, workers at the B&O station at Martinsburg, West Virginia, responded to a 10 per cent wage cut by uncoupling the locomotives and declaring that no trains would leave Martinsburg unless the cut was rescinded.

West Virginia Governor Henry M. Mathews dispatched the militia when police were unable to break up crowds that had gathered. When the

militia proved incapable of freeing the 600 or so stranded trains - mainly because the militiamen were themselves rail workers sympathetic to the strike - Mathews called in federal troops.

But the strike had spread along the mainline of the B&O all the way to Chicago, Pittsburgh and the Pennsylvania Railroad. On July 19 flagman Gus Harris refused to work on a 'double-header', a train hauled by two engines, and the rest of the crew joined him. The strike was joined by workers from the nearby iron mills and factories. Elsewhere,

on July 20 militiamen were sent to Cumberland, Maryland, where strikers had halted trains and at least 10 people were killed.

Back in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania Governor John F. Hartranft called in guardsmen from Philadelphia. On July 21, the troops made a bayonet charge killing up to 20 people. As anger swelled crowds set fire to engines, cars, and buildings and a general strike ensued in the city, with iron and steel workers, miners, and labourers joining the action.

In Harrisburg, factories and

stores were closed. In Lebanon, a National Guard company mutinied and in Reading workers tore up tracks, derailed cars and set fires.

Rail strikes spread throughout the Northeast to cities such as Albany and Buffalo in New York and to Midwestern cities such as Newark, in Ohio, and Chicago but the actions were largely suppressed by the police and the National Guard.

Only in St. Louis was there an organised effort to take control, but at the end of July the strikes had collapsed as soldiers violently suppressed the revolt. The strikes also collapsed because, despite the fears of the industrialists and the government, they were spontaneous outbursts.

More than 100,000 workers participated in the strike and over half of the freight on the country's tracks had come to a halt. By the time the strikes were crushed about 1,000 people had gone to jail and some 100 had been killed. Even though industrialists continued to attack wages, the strike marked one of the first national trade union events in United States history and served as a turning point for the US labour movement ■



JUSTICE: 1873 political cartoon about the overbilling for the construction of the Union Pacific Railway. Justice points in accusation to several government men who took bribes, including Vice President Schuyler Colfax, future president James Garfield, and the second Vice President Henry Wilson.

GREECE RISES UP

RMT sends solidarity to Greek rail workers following a devastating head-on collision which killed 60 people

Rail workers in Greece took part in strike action and mass protests across the country this month amid growing public anger following a devastating head-on high speed train crash in northern Greece which killed around 60 people.

A passenger service carrying some 350 people crashed into a freight train on the same track on the Athens-Thessaloniki line shortly after leaving the city of Larissa just before midnight late last month.

Rail workers have long reported the fact that there have been long-running problems with the electronic systems that were supposed to warn drivers of danger ahead.

"Nothing works. Everything happens manually throughout the Athens-Thessaloniki network. Neither the indicators, nor the traffic

lights, nor the electronic traffic control work," said train drivers' union PEPE president Kostas Genidounias.

Despite these technical failures, an unnamed Greek stationmaster has been jailed pending trial over the train crash and now faces a life sentence for an event which unions insist was the direct result of decades of disinvestment, fragmentation and privatisation.

The Troika of the European Union, European Central Bank and International Monetary Fund demanded the privatisation and break-up of the Greek rail network in 2013 as part of harsh neo-liberal conditions applied to the austerity bailouts.

As a result, Athens had been trying to sell the Greek rail operator Trainose under the threat of the government being forced to return more than 700 million euros in

illegal state aid under European Union rules.

It was finally sold off in 2017 as part of an orgy of privatisation demanded by the EU. It attracted only one bid, from the Italian state-owned group Ferrovie dello Stato Italiane, which also with First Group runs Avanti in the UK through its Trenitalia subsidiary.

The track and infrastructure remained with the state Hellenic Railways Organisation (OSE) but continued to be chronically underfunded. In 2019 OSE was ordered by the European Commission to return £2.1 million due to problems in the signalling and telecommand project of the Athens-Thessaloniki line.

As a result, Greece's rail safety record has been the worst in the EU for over the past decade, according to statistics from the EU railway agency and a high proportion

of deaths have been track workers.

Safety systems installed on parts of the network either worked only for a few years and then were abandoned or never worked at all. Those include the ETCS (European Train Control System) which makes it possible to transmit information to the driver but also to check compliance with the permitted speed. Remote control light signalling systems, which were installed around 2003, worked until 2008 and then stopped.

RMT has written to the Panhellenic Union of Railways (POS) expressing its deepest condolences and solidarity.

"Our thoughts are with the families, colleagues and friends of those who have lost their lives in this tragedy and our union offers our full support and solidarity in your fight for safe railways everywhere," the letter said.■



PROTESTS: Tens of thousands of people marched in many major Greek cities to protest the deaths and the serious safety deficiencies the country's worst train disaster has exposed.

President's column

THIS IS WHAT DEMOCRACY LOOKS LIKE

As we leave winter behind, RMT's spring conference season has already begun.

In advance of International Women's Day on March 8, RMT's National Women's Conference met in the grand surroundings of the former Cooperative Wholesale Society offices at Newcastle's Discovery Museum.

Fifty-seven RMT women delegates from across Britain came together to hear reports from RMT assistant general secretary, John Leach, NEC representative, Millie Apedo-Amah and guest speaker, Laura Pidcock from the People's Assembly.

RMT women called for flexible working to become the default for workers across the transport industries. Workers should not have to plead with employers for flexible working, and 'business needs' should not be an excuse to fail to accommodate workers' needs for flexible working to fulfil family and caring responsibilities.

RMT Women's Conference elected Jess Robinson of Darlington branch as chair of the women's advisory committee for the coming year and accepted an invitation from Dorset Rail branch to host RMT Women's Conference in Bournemouth in 2024.

In past weeks RMT members have come together in record breaking numbers to debate issues of importance to our members at depots, stations, ships and ports across Britain. Last month, 170 delegates at RMT's Health & Safety Advisory Conference in York gave the Chief Inspector of Railways, Ian Prosser a grilling

that he will remember for a long time.

When he admitted he hadn't even seen Rail Delivery Group proposals for generic station staff roles, Adebisola Adebisi of Reading branch, RMT Health & Safety representative for GWR Station staff at Slough told him bluntly, "Your answer was not acceptable. This is happening now. You need to be on top of this. I love my job. It's a really important job. You need to know what is going on and the impact on passenger safety".

Fifty delegates attended RMT's Young Members' conference in Hastings last month to debate, learn and build friendships and solidarity. They set themselves an ambitious target of 100 delegates to their Young Members conference in Wigan in 2024.

RMT's many equalities and industrial organising conferences held each spring are evidence of a healthy union whose members of every conceivable background and working experience are building a culture of union democracy.

This is in contrast to recent revelations from the TSSA union of gross misconduct by some officers and a complete lack of democratic accountability to their elected executive committee.

There is no need to recount the details of the independent report by Baroness Helena Kennedy KC into sexual harassment within the TSSA. Her findings reflect not just on individual acts of harassment and bullying, but a culture that has been able to develop within a union with an absence of



democratic accountability and a culture of arrogance and impunity among officers.

I am pleased TSSA members - who work alongside RMT members - are now finding their voices and have called a Special Delegate Conference to debate their union's future. That is a matter for them, but the reality is that their union may not survive.

In response to TSSA's merger talks with the GMB union, RMT's executive committee instructed general secretary Mick Lynch to meet TSSA's interim president and make clear RMT's rules require that we "secure complete organisation of all workers employed by any board, company or authority in connection with rail, sea and other transport and ancillary undertakings".

Trade unions are primary defensive organisations for workers - never more so than today. RMT is a growing trade union with a vibrant democratic culture and a record of accountability to members.

We will continue to build industrial democracy through our structures and our culture and we look forward to more and more workers joining with us in 2023.

Alex Gordon

BELGIAN SOLIDARITY

Belgian transport workers' union, BTB (Belgische Transportbond) paid a visit to Unity House earlier this month. BTB is part of ABVV, Belgium's socialist trade union confederation, representing transport workers across the private sector industries in Belgium. The Belgian delegation was led by BTB President, Frank Moreels, who is also President of the European Transport Workers'

Federation (ETF).

BTB represents dockers in Ghent, Zeebrugge and Antwerp as well as seafarers on Belgian flagged vessels and inland waterway workers, road freight workers, taxi and bus drivers throughout Belgium.

The BTM delegation met RMT President Alex Gordon, National Secretary, Darren Procter, Senior AGS Eddie Dempsey and Davie Douglas



and Carlos Barros from RMT's national executive committee and had a wide-ranging

discussion on the situation facing transport workers in Britain and Belgium.

ELECTIONS

ELECTION OF RELIEF REGIONAL ORGANISER (SOUTH)

Nominations have closed. Ballot papers will be issued to relevant members during the week commencing Monday 27th March. The election will close on Tuesday 2nd May.

SKELLY, Steven (Bridgend Llantrisant & District)

Nominations: Ashford No. 1; Bakerloo Line; Bletchley & Northampton; Bridgend Llantrisant & District; Bridgwater Bus; Camborne Bus; Cambridge; Camden No. 3; Cardiff No. 7; Cardiff Rail; Carmarthen; Central Line West; Colchester; Chiltern Line; Croydon No. 1; Dartford & District; Deptford; Docklands Light Railway; Dorset Rail; East Kent; East Sussex Coastway; European Passenger Services; Euston No. 1; Exeter Rail; Exeter No. 2; Feltham; Finsbury Park; Fishguard & Goodwick; Gloucester; Great Northern Rail; Hammersmith & City; Hastings & Tonbridge Area; Ipswich; Jubilee South; Kings Cross; Leominster & Hereford; London & Orient Engineering; LU Engineering; LU Fleet; March & District; Medway & District General Grades; Mid Cornwall Rail; Morden & Oval; Neasden; Neath No. 2; Newport; North Devon Bus; North Thames LT&S; Norwich; Paddington No. 1; Penzance No. 1; Peterborough; Piccadilly & District West; Plymouth No. 1; Poole & District Bus; Ramsgate Workshops; Reading; Rhondda; Southall, Ealing & Slough; Southampton Shipping; South Devon Bus; South East Essex; South Hants & Eastleigh Workshops; South London Rail; South West & South Wales Shipping; St Pancras; Swansea No. 1; Swindon Rail; Transport for Cornwall; Upper Rhymney Valley; Waltham Cross & District; Waterloo; Watford

WHITE, Robin (Bristol Branch)

Nominations: Bristol; Dover Shipping; East London Rail; Portsmouth; Wimbledon

ELECTION OF NATIONAL SECRETARY

Nominations have closed. Ballot papers will be issued to relevant members during the week commencing Monday 27th March. The election will close on Tuesday 2nd May.

PROCTER, Darren (Southampton Shipping)

Nominations: Aberdeen Shipping; Belfast Shipping; Dover Shipping; Eire Shipping; Harwich Shipping; Liverpool Shipping; North East Shipping; RMT OILC

STUBBS, Mick (Southampton Shipping)

Nominations: Douglas Shipping; Southampton Shipping; South West & South Wales Shipping

ELECTION OF REGIONAL ORGANISER – REGIONS 2 & 3

(Manchester & North West England/North West England & North Wales)

Nominations close on Wednesday 12th April.

NOTT, Steve (Barrow-in-Furness No. 1)

Nominations: Barrow-in-Furness No. 1; Blackpool & Fylde Coast; East Lancashire; Manchester South; Preston No. 1; Workington

SHAW, Steve (Wigan Branch)

Nominations: Cambrian; Central & North Mersey; Chester; North Staffs; North Wales Coast; Stockport & District; Wigan

ELECTION OF REGIONAL ORGANISER – REGION 1 (SCOTLAND)

Nominations have closed and ballot papers issued to relevant members. The election will close on Tuesday 11th April.

AGNEW, Scott (RMT OILC Branch)

Nominations: Belfast Shipping; RMT OILC

JOSS, Ann (Aberdeen No. 1 Branch)

Nominations: Aberdeen No. 1; Dumfries & Lockerbie; Fife & District; Glasgow & District Engineering; Glasgow No. 5; Glasgow Shipping; Wishaw & Motherwell

POLLOCK, Gary (Stirling No. 1 Branch)

Nominations: Edinburgh No. 1 & Portobello District; North Clyde; Stirling No. 1

FREE LEGAL SUPPORT FOR RMT MEMBERS



For legal advice that helps you read between the lines, contact Thompsons Solicitors

As a member of RMT, you and your family have access to specialist legal advice and representation from the UK's leading law firm for trade union members.

Thompsons Solicitors has been securing life-changing compensation for injured trade union members since 1921. Our trusted lawyers are committed to making sure you have the protection you need if you or a member of your family is injured.

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- Special terms for conveyancing, probate and powers of attorney
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- Special terms for wills, conveyancing, probate and powers of attorney.

Keep 100% of your compensation

If you make your legal claim through RMT, you're guaranteed access to experts who, on principle, will only act for those who have been injured, and never for those who cause injury.

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YEARS
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RMT solidarity with Cuba Help break the US blockade

"Your branch can help break the inhumane US blockade of Cuba by affiliating to the Cuba Solidarity Campaign and supporting the Braille machine appeal. The RMT has a proud history of internationalism and our solidarity can make a real difference to the Cuban people who are suffering shortages caused by more than six decades of cruel sanctions."

Mick Lynch, RMT General Secretary



Why international solidarity is more important than ever

The Cuban people have suffered under the US blockade for more than 60 years. It has cost their economy more than \$1.3 trillion and causes severe shortages in basic necessities including food, fuel and medicines which impact on the most vulnerable in society.

In November 2022, the world voted overwhelmingly (185-2) at the United Nations to end the blockade. Yet it remains in place. President Biden has failed to reverse the majority of Donald Trump's 243 extra punitive sanctions, which tightened the blockade to unprecedented levels. As the island recovers from the impact of COVID-19, international solidarity is now more important than ever.

Break the blockade support the Braille machines for Cuba appeal

Although Cuba has a world renowned, free education system and an excellent network of schools for blind and visually impaired children, the US blockade hinders their development. Materials and equipment often have to be sourced via third countries at inflated costs.

This appeal provides Braille machines which can make a huge difference to a child's life. They are purchased refurbished from the Royal National College for the Blind and distributed to schools across Cuba.



**Show your solidarity by affiliating your branch
and supporting the Braille machine appeal today**



Special offer for RMT branches

A free Cuban flag and a bag of Cuban coffee for your next branch meeting when you affiliate using this leaflet!

Affiliated branches also receive CubaSí magazine four times a year, AGM voting rights, advice on tours, speakers and invites to events and conferences. Let us know if you would like a CSC speaker for your next meeting.



Despite enduring over 60 years of an illegal blockade, Cuba continues to inspire with its achievements, from building world-class healthcare and education to its many acts of international solidarity. Despite this progress, the blockade has a real, damaging impact on Cuba and her people. **Help us bring about an end to this inhumane policy.**



"For over a year, these sanctions have represented a real obstacle to the procurement of mechanical ventilators, face masks, diagnostic kits, reagents, vaccination syringes, and other necessary materials to address COVID-19."

Oxfam report, 2021.

2 hours of blockade = all the Braille machines for blind and partially sighted people in Cuba



£350 will buy one refurbished Braille machine, including the cost of shipping to Cuba

Please show your opposition to the US blockade by affiliating your branch and donating to the Braille machine appeal if you can

RMT branch/region	Address:
Position: Secretary/Chair/Treasurer/other	
Name:	Postcode:
Phone:	Email:

We would like to affiliate to the CSC: Annual affiliation ☐ £40 branch ☐ £50 region

We would also like to donate to the Braille machine appeal:

Here is our donation of ☐ £100 ☐ £250 ☐ £350 ☐ Other **Total amount: £**

Please return to the address below.

To make a credit card or other form of payment please contact us on campaigns@cuba-solidarity.org.uk or call 0207 490 5715.

The Braille Machine for Cuba Appeal is a joint initiative of the RMT, the Cuba Solidarity Campaign and the Music Fund for Cuba.

Cuba Solidarity Campaign 33-37 Moreland St London, EC1V 8BB

T. +44 (0) 20 7490 5715 E. office@cuba-solidarity.org.uk www.cuba-solidarity.org.uk

[f](#) Cuba Solidarity Campaign [t](#) [i](#) [y](#) CubaSolidarity



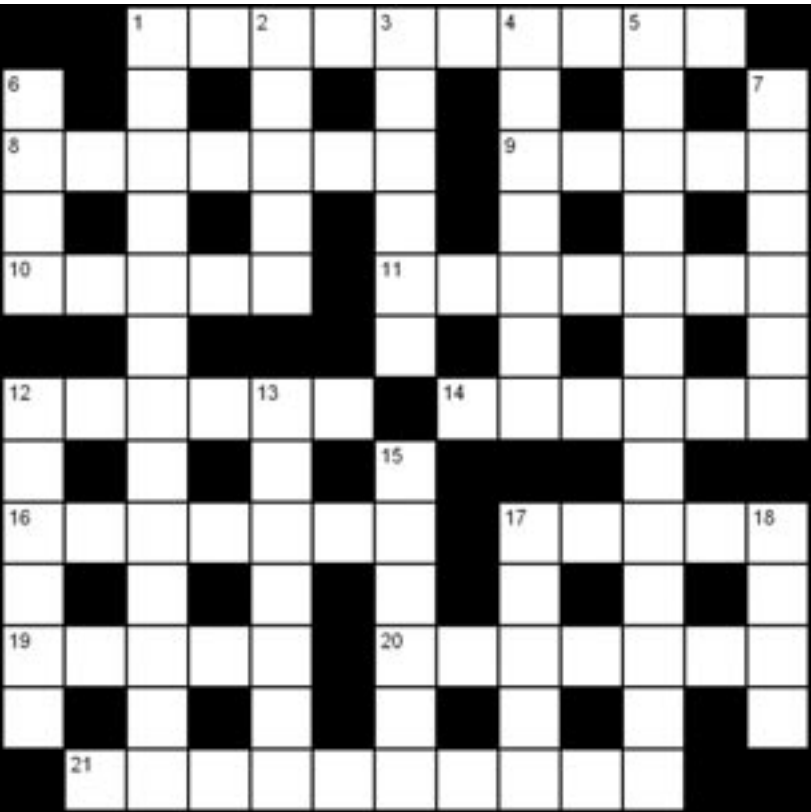
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£50 PRIZE CROSSWORD



Last month's solution...



Send entries to Prize Crossword, RMT, Unity House, 39 Chalton Street, London NW1 1JD by April 16, 2023 with your name and address.

Last month's winner is Mr Tagg, Cardiff

Please supply bank account details and sort code to receive your prize quickly.

ACROSS

- 1 Terribly (10)
- 8 Offensive (7)
- 9 Surpass (5)
- 10 Station (5)
- 11 Oriental (7)
- 12 Take revenge (6)
- 14 Nearly (6)
- 16 Emerge (7)
- 17 Beam (5)
- 19 Doctrine (6)
- 20 Ask (7)
- 21 Sternness (10)

DOWN

- 1 Vanishing (13)
- 2 Choose (5)
- 3 Fuel (6)
- 4 Implement (7)
- 5 Debauchery (13)
- 6 Empty (4)
- 7 Celestial body (6)
- 12 Property (6)
- 13 Endowment recipient (7)
- 15 Withdraw (6)
- 17 Graceful (5)
- 18 Pace (4)

BRANCH AND REGIONAL COUNCIL SECRETARIES GUIDE

ORDERING MERCHANDISE

FROM THE RMT WEB SHOP



RMT has moved all of its merchandising to a new supplier called Pellacraft Limited. All stock is now advertised on the RMT homepage accessible at www.rmt.org.uk and new items and sales are updated regularly.

Before you make an order

Depending on whether your branch has electronic banking with Unity Trust Bank or just uses a cheque book or makes bank transfers you will need to create a branch account with Pellacraft. This Pellacraft account is totally separate from your RMT Members log in to the RMT homepage.

There are several ways to get a Pellacraft account, firstly if your branch has electronic banking then you can click on the "Official RMT Branded Merchandise" banner at the top of the RMT homepage. You will then be taken to the Merchandise Shop, where you can register your details and create an account, or go to <https://www.rmt-shop.org.uk/customer/account/create> / once the Pellacraft account has been created you will need to contact Pellacraft to activate it.

If your branch uses a cheque book or you want to pay via a bank transfer you will need to make contact with Pellacraft before you can make an order. To set up a Pellacraft account you can follow the above guidance or this can be done either by Email at shop@rmt-shop.org.uk or by telephone at 01623 636602. Just explain that your branch uses a cheque book or you want to order via a bank transfer and they will set up your account for you and send you a login and password.

Making an Order

Log in to your Pellacraft account on the Merchandise Shop page, you will see at the top of the page the following selections; **SALE, BOOKS, GADGETS, FLAGS, NEW, BADGES, BAGS, CLOTHING, CONFERENCES & EVENTS, DRINKWARE, GIFTS, UMBRELLAS and PENS**, select the items your branch wishes to purchase and add them to your basket.

- When you are ready to purchase the items click on "proceed to checkout".
- Select your delivery address.
- Select your delivery method, (This is dependant on what and how much you order).
- Select Payment method. If you are going to pay through PayPal, select the PayPal option and follow the instructions. If you are paying with a branch cheque you will need to select the "Purchase Order" box and write in NA. Then select "Place Order".
- You will receive an invoice to the email address you gave when setting up the Pellacraft account, and then you should send the branch cheque for the total amount on the invoice.
- Cheques should be made out to PELLACRAFT LIMITED, and sent to:

Pellacraft Ltd., Hermitage House,
Hermitage Way, Mansfield,
Nottinghamshire NG18 5ES



Please note, as Branch Secretary you are responsible for ensuring there are enough funds in your BMF to cover the cost of purchases, if branches order items without enough funds then your branch account could be suspended and the General Secretary will be notified for possible further action.

Return to
RMT
Unity House
39 Chalton Street
London
NW1 1JD

Delivered by



FIGHTING AUSTERITY

NATIONAL UNION OF RAIL, MARITIME & TRANSPORT WORKERS

Changing address? Let your union know by phoning the Freephone helpline.

Remember the RMT freephone helpline open six days a week 0800 376 3706



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