

RMT*news*

A CHARTER FOR STARTERS!



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www.rmt.org.uk

WORKING FOR YOU



Use the QR code to join to get help at work and save 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. This policy is underwritten by Stonebridge International Insurance Ltd.
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

EMPLOYMENT TRIBUNAL

Assistance for members with their potential employment tribunal claim offered through the RMT's In-house Legal Department.

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EDITORIAL



UNITED WE STAND

I am delighted and privileged to become your eighteenth general secretary since our predecessors founded our union in 1872.

The fact that an overwhelming majority of branches nominated me is very humbling, but it also shows a unity of purpose that this union has displayed since coming out of two and a half years of a national rail dispute.

You have sent a message to the employers that this union will not step back from its industrial and political strategy of defending our members with all means at our disposal.

This determination has also been on show at our organising conferences, including the young members meeting in Canterbury who enjoyed a record-breaking attendance. Among other important matters, they launched an apprentice charter which lays out what they want in terms of training to prepare them to become transport workers of the future.

Our health and safety conference in York also witnessed a healthy attendance for training sessions and debates including how we defend members at work under this Labour government. Ultimately, health and safety are at the core of everything we do as a trade union.

Transport workers play a vital role in keeping our communities moving. However, many still face unacceptable risks, including workplace violence and hazardous conditions. RMT is committed to ensuring that all transport staff can work safely and with dignity, and we believe that stronger protections are needed to achieve this.

RMT women members meeting in Birmingham also addressed some serious issues including tackling sexism and misogyny at work.

Finally, I want to pay tribute to the outgoing general secretary Mick Lynch. I think I speak for the whole union when I say that he made an outstanding contribution not only to this union, but to the entire trade union and labour movement.

Under his leadership we took on the Tories as they attempted to decimate the rail network and to strip out more trade union rights. His media appearances have become the stuff of legend which inspired a generation of workers to stand up and fight, sometimes for the first time.

That resolve and spirit of resistance went a long way to sweeping away a rotten Tory government. Despite this, we didn't win everything and the pain and anger of the immoral and illegal sacking of hundreds of P&O workers while the government stood by and did nothing should never be forgotten.

Mick Lynch will be a hard act to follow but I have confidence in the thousands of RMT members up and down the country who, day-in and day-out, fight for our members tooth and nail.

We must always remember that governments may come and go but we, as trade unionists, remain and must always be ready to stand shoulder to shoulder in unity to defend our members and our class.

Eddie Dempsey

DEFEND TICKET OFFICES!

Union calls for government to protect ticket offices across the country



New RMT analysis has revealed that Southeastern, the rail operator owned by the Department for Transport (DfT), is routinely failing to meet its obligations to keep ticket offices open during advertised hours.

RMT also demanded the Scottish government halts ScotRail's proposed cuts at up to 100 ticket offices.

In a joint letter with campaigning organisations, the union outlined how these plans will worsen accessibility, safety, and service for passengers across Scotland.

ScotRail is pushing ahead with these cuts despite 98 per cent of public consultation respondents opposing them.

The move would remove the guarantee of station staffing, leaving many passengers—particularly

disabled and elderly travellers—without vital assistance. Women's safety will also be compromised, as Scottish government research confirms that passengers feel safer at staffed stations.

RMT general secretary Eddie Dempsey said that ScotRail's reckless plan would cut off vital support for passengers, particularly disabled and vulnerable travellers.

"Ticket offices are more than just places to buy tickets—they are lifelines for accessibility, safety, and service quality," he said.

SOUTHEASTERN

Data obtained through a Freedom of Information (FOI) request revealed that over an eight-month period (June 2024 to January 2025),

Southeastern's ticket offices were closed for around 70,000 hours when they should have been open, equivalent to approximately 2,900 days. As a result:

- At five stations, ticket offices were open for only one per cent or fewer of their advertised hours.
- 17 ticket offices in total were closed for at least 50 per cent of their scheduled hours.
- 46 ticket offices were shut for at least a third of their advertised hours.

The union believes that these failings were part of a deliberate attempt to reduce reliance on ticket offices, despite the unprecedented opposition to proposed closures during the 2023 consultation.

The closures disproportionately affect disabled and elderly passengers, as well as those who depend on staffed ticket offices to travel safely.

Eddie Dempsey said that the findings revealed a shocking picture of failing to open ticket offices as advertised which was a clear breach of Southeastern's obligations.

"Passengers, particularly those who are elderly, disabled, or less able to navigate unstaffed stations, are being left without the support they need and will potentially be put off from using the railway altogether.

"The government must step in now to protect ticket offices and ensure Southeastern is held to account," he said. ■

OPEN ACCESS HITTING THE BUFFERS?

Open access rail services, such as Lumo and Grand Central, are run by private operators outside of any contractual relationship with the government with the sole intention of making profits.

As rail renationalisation gathers pace under the proposals to create Great British Railways (GBR), private open access operators such as First Group and Arriva have ramped up their lobbying. Recent months have seen an influx of applications to the rail regulator ORR for new open

access rail services. Currently the ORR decides on open access applications.

Unlike government contracted operators, open access operators benefit from a large indirect subsidy in the form of low to no fixed track access charges, meaning that they do not contribute to the long-term maintenance of the railway.

They also abstract significant amounts of money from the publicly funded operations, 'cherry pick' profitable routes, and increase the fragmentation

and profiteering that the government has been seeking to do away with.

The government seems to share some of these concerns as recently the Secretary of State wrote to the ORR regarding open access applications stating that "we need to be mindful of the impacts of open access such as the level of revenue they can abstract from contracted services and the associated implications for passengers and taxpayers".

The Department for Transport has since formally



objected to eight of the nine open access applications sitting with the ORR awaiting a decision. This is a notable shift from the previous government's position which had sought to expand the role of open access.

You can read RMT's full briefing on why open access is incompatible with the government's rail policy using the QR code above. ■

TUBE PENSION VICTORY



LU members successfully defend scheme following seven ballots and six days of strike action

RMT members on London Underground have won a major victory in the fight to protect the Transport for London (TfL) Pension Fund.

After years of government pressure to cut pension benefits, LU members successfully defended the scheme with no reduction in benefits and no increase in employee contributions.

This victory is the direct result of collective action and through seven ballots and six days of strike action, the union forced TfL to back down and abandon plans to weaken pensions.

The attack on pensions began in 2017 when TfL's operational subsidy was scrapped. By 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic pushed TfL's finances into crisis, and

ministers demanded pension 'reform' as part of bailout agreements.

Their goal was to cut pension costs by up to £182 million a year, with proposals to switch to an inferior Local Government Pension Scheme or a career-average model. However, RMT members stood firm in defence of what are, in effect, deferred wages.

In June 2022, over 50,000 RMT members took strike action across London Underground and the national rail network, launching the first national rail shutdown in decades.

This action gave confidence to other workers, sparking further strikes across multiple industries, including postal workers, teachers, nurses, and civil servants. With momentum

building, the employer was forced to step back.

TfL was unable to implement any pension changes before September 2026 and agreed to begin a formal consultation on transferring to an inferior scheme by mid-2024.

However, as the strike wave continued, in February 2025, London Underground confirmed that no changes would be made to the pension scheme, and the pension review management team was disbanded.

This has meant that the final salary scheme remains protected, pensions will continue to increase in line with RPI, workers can still retire at 60 with no penalty, and any funding shortfall must be met by the employer rather than

employees.

RMT general secretary Eddie Dempsey said that the union was told that these cuts were inevitable, but our members determination has ensured that these attacks on pensions have been thwarted.

"This win proves that when workers are organised and willing to take strike action, they can defeat even the most determined attacks on their rights and living standards.

"While this is a significant win, the fight is far from over as TfL and LUL remain committed to cutting costs, and further attacks on jobs and agreements are likely.

The strength and determination of RMT members have proven that when we stand together, we win," he said. ■

AVANTI WEST COAST WIN



Union wins deal to ending rest day working dispute following several days of action

RMT has called off planned industrial action on Avanti West Coast after members overwhelmingly voted to accept a negotiated settlement in the rest working dispute.

The agreement, secured after several days of strike action, delivers significant improvements for Train Managers, including backdated pay rates increasing to time plus a quarter, and time plus a half for Saturdays and Sundays.

The minimum shift payment rises from six hours to seven and a half hours and a fairer 'Order of Call' process,

ensuring Train Managers are prioritised for rest day and spare shifts before senior management is called upon.

There is also a commitment from company to review the impact of such changes ahead of the December 2025

timetable and make further improvements if needed.

RMT general secretary Eddie Dempsey said that members had stood firm, taking significant industrial action, and had won a deal that delivers real

improvements to pay, and working conditions.

"This result shows through a strong industrial campaign and robust negotiation we can and do win improvements at work for our members," he said. ■



PAY WIN FOR RAIL GOURMET WORKERS ON TPE

RMT members at Rail Gourmet working on the TransPennine Express contract have overwhelmingly voted to accept a 10 per cent pay rise, securing a major victory in their fight for fair wages.

With over 75 per cent

voting in favour, the deal includes the pay increase for Customer Hosts, Customer Service Assistants, and Team Leaders, backdated to November with no conditions. There will also be a set pay anniversary date of April 1

each year.

RMT general secretary Eddie Dempsey welcomed the win and praised members for their steadfast determination to achieve such a significant deal.

"This result proves that the

power of collective action yields results, securing a well-earned 10 per cent no strings attached pay deal.

"RMT will always fight for fair pay and conditions across the industry at all grades," he said. ■



RMT WELCOMES OFFSHORE SKILLS PASSPORT

Union calls for clear guarantees on jobs, pay, and conditions for offshore workers

RMT welcomed the launch of the new skills passport and wider policies aimed at creating jobs in the clean energy sector.

The union also welcomed the Climate Change Committee's (CCC) report on decarbonisation, calling for clear guarantees on jobs, pay, and conditions for workers in offshore energy and transport.

RMT general secretary Eddie Dempsey said that while decarbonisation was essential, workers cannot be left behind especially in offshore oil and gas.

"There must also be a greater emphasis on investment to encourage a transition towards public transport, rail freight, and coastal shipping.

"Workers need a guarantee that in the new de-carbonised economy the UK maintains an industrial base that can build that economy supporting jobs and incomes, instead of abandoning working-class communities to the international market," he said.

The incoming general secretary also welcomed joining the Steering Group tasked with developing and expanding the skills passport for offshore workers, including seafarers in the energy supply chain.

"It is positive that offshore workers now have some guidance on pathways into the offshore wind sector. However, our members have concerns over pay disparities and the duplication of qualifications, particularly in the drilling sector.

"RMT will work with the UK, Scottish, and Welsh governments on the next steps for a just transition and the union will be pursuing collectively bargained terms and conditions across the entire offshore sector. as a top priority," he said.

A spokesperson for the Offshore Co-ordinating Group (OCG) of trade unions welcomed the introduction of digital offshore skills passport after a lengthy process with employers and training bodies.

When fully developed, it has the potential to make it easier for workers to move between sectors, but on its own the skills passport is not going to achieve a Just Transition for offshore oil and gas workers. Urgent action is needed to protect offshore workers and supply chain jobs currently at risk from decommissioning

"There needs to be a clear plan to safeguard incomes, trade union rights, and safety standards.

"By engaging with UK and Scottish governments, our aim is to maximise the benefits of the GB Energy Bill's planning and public ownership powers to support workers facing increasing pressures from multinationals and contractors during the energy transition.

"Too often, transitions like this are used as an excuse to slash and export jobs, cut pay, and replace skilled, unionised workers with casualised labour on worse conditions.

"We will not accept a race to the bottom in the name of

climate action," he said.

Over 2,000 redundancies have hit offshore oil and gas in the past year, with the livelihoods of 1,800 catering jobs under the North Sea Confederation of Offshore Trade Association (COTA) agreement at particular risk.

Seafarers, divers, and Remotely Operated Vehicles (ROV) technicians must be protected through funded skills passporting and stronger employment rights.

Only around 12 per cent of UK seafarer jobs are held by UK-resident workers, a result of P&O-style employment practices and widespread Flags of Convenience.

In offshore wind, low pay and exploitative shift patterns are common, with the minimum wage not applying beyond 12 miles from the shoreline.

RMT is demanding an enforceable transition plan that guarantees secure jobs, fair wages, and full collective bargaining rights across transport and energy sectors. ■



RMT women's conference calls out misogyny and sexism in the workplace

RMT women's conference meeting in Birmingham declared in one voice for sexism and misogyny to be rooted out in the workplace.

Several delegates shared stories of instances of sexual harassment of women transport staff and expressed frustration that often victims were seen as problems by bosses rather than the male perpetrators.

Delegates also raised the fact that the union and wider movement must do more to deal with sexist attitudes and create a culture where women trade unionists feel safe and secure.

RMT national executive committee member Primrose Jeanton said that such treatment of women and a refusal of some company bosses to deal with it properly was wholly unacceptable.

"Harassment of women is an all-too-common experience

for our members. And rail companies have a duty of care to stamp it out.

"The union too must be a no-go area for sexists, and we must re-double our efforts to make sure sisters in our ranks are empowered through their branches and our equalities structures," she said.

She added part of dealing with misogyny in the workplace was the union's campaign on insourcing - something which the Labour government has pledged to implement and the union "will hold ministers to account on their promises".

In one of the key presentations at conference, Bakerloo Line delegate and a recent RMT representative at Women's TUC, Mel Mullings spoke about black women's experience of sexual harassment and the double-edged prejudice of sexism and racism they face, known as "

misogynoir".

She pointed out the first ever Black MP Diane Abbott had been suffering from that double edged abuse for decades, citing negative stereotypes of "the aggressive black woman" as a way of delegitimising concerns of those who suffer racism and sexism in the workplace.

"Sexual harassment cases are through the roof and male perpetrators are being kept in their workplaces, whereas women victims are being moved on as if they are the problem," she added

RMT assistant general secretary John Leach gave a wide-ranging speech praising women members for their steadfast determination on recent picket lines and praised those who have become more active in their workplace and branch.

He also sent a strong message against

discrimination and harassment urging male members to do more, saying: "Men must call out sexism within the union as it has no place in our movement".

Guest speaker Coventry MP Zarah Sultana told delegates via a zoom link that the fight for women's emancipation was one that transcended national borders and that it was dangerous for the Labour government to try to adopt Reform Party tropes to give itself a boost in the polls.

Conference also passed several motions including, calls for menopause training workplace reps, greater workplace protections for breastfeeding, a review of body-worn camera safety, and for RMT to support the campaign seeking justice for women affected by state pension age changes - the WASPI women.

Katy Philips, Hull Rail



Zarah Sultana addresses conference

highlighted how menopausal and peri-menopausal symptoms were affecting a growing number of women in the transport sector, sometimes leading to disciplinary action due to a lack of understanding in the workplace.

Some employers have menopause policies, however, delegates noted that these were often underused or ignored. To address this, the union needed to push for specialist training for workplace reps—like existing courses on autism, neurodiversity, and disability—to ensure women members receive the support they needed.

Seconding the motion, Claudia Ritchie, East London

Rail urged everyone to take the course adding: “Do men really know and understand the struggle, with menopause? So, pop them on that course”.

Delegates also demanded greater workplace protections for breastfeeding and called on RMT to push for mandatory provisions, including breaks to express milk, a clean and private space (not a toilet), secure storage for expressed milk, and flexible working arrangements.

Marie Harrington, Piccadilly & District West said: “I think it is somewhat of an anomaly that although we know there are certain legal necessities to allow reasonable adjustments for certain things, certain conditions, breastfeeding in

the workplace is not one of those”.

She pointed out that different companies have different policies some very vague and that meant women transport workers were subject to varying levels of reasonable

adjustment regimes in the workplace.

“We want a campaign from the union and to lobby for a law change,” she said.

A motion on the risks of body-worn cameras was also passed, following concerns that train operating companies (TOCs) are pressuring staff to wear them without proper risk assessments.

Sue Gazzard, Hastings & Tonbridge Area said that members had a range of views on whether to wear cameras for safety reasons while others worry, they can be used by unscrupulous bosses to discipline staff.



RMT NEC member Primrose Jeanton addressed conference

WOMEN IN SCOTLAND

RMT's Scotland regional council held a meeting to give women in Scotland the opportunity to come along and get involved in the activities of the union.

Newly elected woman's steward for Scotland, Mary Jane Herbison gave a brief outline on promoting women's involvement in the union as did RMT regional organiser Ann Joss.

RMT political officer Ann Henderson provided a useful a breakdown across all sectors of the number of women members in RMT and there was a clear need from these statistics to make changes.



Pictured from left to right: Janet Cassidy, Marie Lou Fox, Eileen Gilfillan, Tracey Yeates, Lynsey Wight, Ann Henderson, Ann Joss, Mary Jane Herbison, Ann Henderson and RMT regional council secretary Jim Gray.

Katy Clark MSP gave a very good account of what politicians working on our behalf do and the council is planning a future visit to the Scottish Parliament.

The aims and aspirations of the group included:

- Encouraging more women to get actively involved in the union
- What women in Scotland would like to see happening
- How to grow women membership and support women workers
- What organising tools can be used such as on-line meetings and WhatsApp groups to encourage women to attend and take up RMT positions
- How to update the RMT women's charter



DEMAND HEALTH AND SAFETY AT WORK

RMT health and safety conference pays tribute to RMT member killed on duty, Jorge Ortega

Over 200 delegates attended RMT's health and safety conference in York which opened with a sombre and moving speech of remembrance from Christine Willett whose long-time colleague, Jorge Ortega, was killed at work at Ilford Station in December.

Jorge was investigating a noise on the platform when he was fatally assaulted. Christine spoke of her 'dear friend' and told of how so many people had been moved to come and pay their respects to Jorge, one of whom had remarked

that it "feels like Ilford has lost its heart".

There followed a minute's silence for Jorge and for all workers who had been assaulted in the line of their work.

In the light of the tragedy, Paddington No. 1 and Piccadilly and District Line West branches called for the union to launch a campaign urging employers to adopt a minimum set of safety standards for the duty of care of transport staff.

Rotimi Ajayi, Paddington

spoke about the increasing number of threats, harassment, abuse and assaults that members are facing and explained the need for an end to lone working.

He called for a place of safety for workers, for perpetrators to be barred from using public transport and for the mandatory sentencing of people convicted of assaulting transport workers.

Ross Marshall, Central Line West recalled violent incidents at Harrow-on-the-Hill and Baker Street and told of how members are being assessed for PTSD following assaults at

work.

He said that the issue was getting worse due to cuts in staffing and the number of BTP personnel.

"This has exacerbated the situation and further planned staffing cuts will lead to the Night Tube no longer meeting its minimum policing requirements," he said.

Many members added their experiences of assault or abuse to the debate, and it was clear that there was a groundswell of opinion that, as Ross Marshall put it, 'enough is enough'.

RMT general secretary Eddie Dempsey said that often when members were assaulted, employers respond and by disciplining staff.

"We must deliver a single message that if members are dismissed, we will not tolerate it," he said.

He said that during the recent national dispute workers were often described as lazy and work shy.

"This kind of language leads directly to this behaviour, but we have to stand firm and say that our members cannot be used as punchbags.

"We've had more battles over the past year than any other trade union in Britain and at the heart of it all has been you the health and safety reps, the backbone of the union," he said.

He outlined recent extreme weather events but pointed out that Network Rail did not have

a standard on such events that mentions the safety of staff.

"The Office of Rail and Road has no policy on working in extreme weather. We saw dithering from Network Rail when the red weather warnings are issued.

It was only through the work of our safety reps that nobody was killed during this event", he added.

Conference welcomed Doug Russell, national health and safety officer for shop workers' union USDAW, to share his experiences of their Freedom from Fear campaign launched to reduce violence against shop workers.

Delegates also heard included contributions from Lord John Hendy KC and Janet Newsham from the Hazards campaign on the theme of 'health and safety under a Labour government'.

Delegate Ian Jones, Cardiff

Rail won backing for a motion calling for a campaign for automated external defibrillators (AEDs) to be installed onboard all railway rolling stock and buses.

He said that there was overwhelming evidence of the life-saving benefits of AEDs and how they provide an essential safety feature for transport workers and the public.

WORKSHOPS

There were also popular workshops which included key findings such as prevention is key, how ending lone-working would require more staff, how risk-assessments need to be dynamic, how buses should have route risk assessments and that bus workers are by default lone-workers.

There was also agreement around the need to bring agency workers in-house as

they are often actively encouraged not to report abuse and assaults, that CCTV and body-worn cameras were not panaceas and how incident reporting must be made as easy as possible and how security staff must be correctly trained and have adequate PPI.

Conference also presented the newly named Willie Strang RMT safety representative of the year award to two delegates. Willie was a steadfast health and safety rep and campaigner as well as a former NEC member and who sadly passed away last year.

This year's runner-up was Michael Theodore whilst the well-deserved winner was Ben Waller. Ben gave a moving and off-the-cuff acceptance speech in which he expressed his delight in receiving this award and paid tribute to Willie Strang, "one of the legends of our union" ■



REMEMBER: A minute's silence for Jorge



SAFETY AWARD: Ben Waller with Eddie Dempsey



Delegate Daniel Udoakh



WOMEN: Women delegates to conference

BRINGING IT ALL BACK HOME



Returning passenger rail services back into public ownership would save £150 million a year

Following the introduction of Passenger Rail Services (Public Ownership) Act by the government in December, a programme has been launched to 'transition passenger rail services currently operated by privately-owned operators into public ownership'.

The first three franchises to come into public ownership would be c2c, South-Western and then Greater Anglia.

It is further expected that a franchise would come into public ownership every three months according to the expiry of their contracts or core terms.

As the Transport Secretary Heidi Alexander noted in Parliament this would create immediate savings from management fees paid to private train operators: "At the moment, we pay roughly

about £150 million pounds in management fees to the train operating companies".

Under the previous government private contractors turned these fees into dividends with the agreement of the Secretary of State and, not surprisingly, they were particularly hostile to Labour's plans to nationalise passenger operations.

One vocal critic has been Dominic Booth, the CEO of Transport UK which runs the Greater Anglia franchise, which will be transferred to public ownership in the Autumn.

During the passage of the Act, Transport UK lobbied for amendments that would have wrecked Labour's carefully worked out timetable for public ownership. This is perhaps understandable as Mr Booth has a lot to lose. Transport UK's four franchises

made bumper dividend payments last year, totalling a record £90 million.

Transport UK was formed in March 2023, following a management buyout of Abellio occasioned by the decision by the Dutch state operator Nederlandse Spoorwegen to divest itself of foreign transport subsidiaries. Transport UK controls four UK franchises: Greater Anglia, East Midlands, West Midlands and Merseyrail. (table 1)

Transport UK and its four English rail franchises are now owned directly by Dominic Booth and two companies, Grosvenor Walker Investments and Norton Green Investments, one of which is owned by one Dominic Booth.

PRIVATE DIVIDENDS UP

While the scale of Transport UK's value extraction may be

eye-catching, the fact is that private sector dividend payments are up across the board. Between them, private sector train operators paid out £246 million in the year to March 2024, the largest figure since 2018-19. Over the period from 2016, they paid out dividends worth £1.8 billion (Table 2).

Particularly interesting for hard-pressed passengers and rail workers will be the dividend payments made by failing franchises Cross Country (£7.3 million) and Avanti (£8.1 million).

However, the year also saw some alarmingly large payouts from other franchises such as Thameslink, Southern and Great Northern's £62 million, Greater Anglia's £43 million and Merseyrail's £42 million.

This largesse toward their shareholders is more

impressive as there are fewer private sector TOCs than there were in 2016. In real terms, dividend payments per franchise are effectively back to where they were before the pandemic.

The same dividend payments can be viewed from the perspective of the owning groups who collect them from their franchises.

As Table 3 shows, every owning group operating on the UK railways received more in dividend payments from their rail franchises in 2023-4 than the previous year, though none managed the level of excess of Transport UK.

The owning groups left on the railway have done nicely out of privatisation. Just these seven companies have made £1.3 billion in dividend

payments since 2016/17.

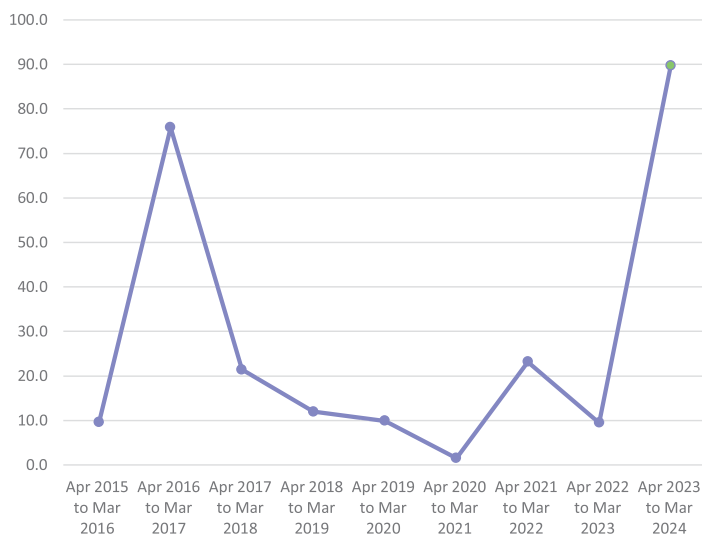
The front runner is FirstGroup, with Go-Ahead Group and Transport UK second and third respectively. Since 2015/16, FirstGroup franchises have made more than £400 million in dividend payments to their parent company.

BRING THEM BACK IN-HOUSE

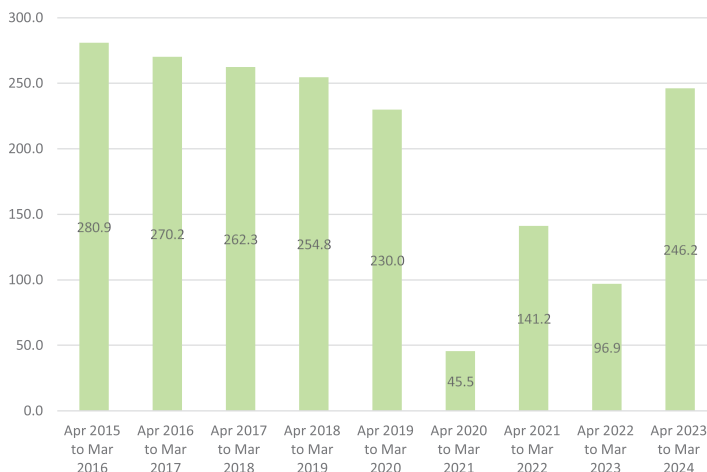
RMT has consistently argued that the private train operating companies have always been parasitic.

As Lord Hendy observed, during the Lords Committee Stage debates on the Passenger Rail Services (Public ownership) Act, 'examples of private investment in our railway infrastructure have been fairly thin on the ground in the privatisation era....

Transport UK - total dividend payouts (£m) for Greater Anglia, East Midlands, West Midlands, Merseyrail, 2016-24



Dividends paid by private TOCs 2016-24



TOTAL DIVIDEND BY OWNING GROUPS 2016-24 IN MILLIONS

Owning Group	Total dividends 2016-24
Arriva	152.8
Transport UK	252.6
FirstGroup	417.2
Go Ahead	275.5
Trenitalia	109.7
MTR	65.2
Keolis	27.7
Total	1300.6

even 100 per cent private sector ownership of train operating companies under franchising has not resulted in large investments being funded by those companies'.

The TOCs were always shielded from bearing the costs of the railways as this was the only way the appearance of a profitable industry could be generated. As far back as 2012, the ORR noted that 'the industry as a whole remains heavily subsidised...if Network Rail were to cease to receive [network grant] and instead rely on revenue generated by track access charges then all TOCs would require a positive, significant subsidy'.

The train operating companies always like to stress how small their profit margins are. Before the pandemic and the changes in contracts, they liked to estimate their returns at three per cent.

Now, under the variety of emergency contracts and National Rail contracts they've signed with the government, the TOCs stress their 'two per cent' return. This is measured as 'Return on Sales (ROS), profits as a proportion of revenue.

But matters look very different if we look at the rate of profit measured against the

capital they put up. Investors use the measure of Return on Capital Employed (ROCE) to measure the return against the 'risk' taken by businesses in investing capital. ROCE is measured by dividing the profits before tax by long-term capital invested, or 'capital employed'. Capital employed is calculated by subtracting current liabilities (money the company owes within one year) from the company's total assets.

As one academic study has argued: 'like many other outsourcing businesses, train operating requires very little capital investment, so that a modest return on sales turns into a starry ROCE'.

RMT has calculated that the average ROCE of a train operating company for the period between 2013 and 2022, was 126 per cent. Now, with their chronic mishandling of the railway resulting in cancellations and poor performance, and with the prospect of public ownership looming, it appears that the TOCs are ratcheting up this already-parasitic value extraction, ramping up their dividend payments to sweat the railways for every possible penny before their contracts expire. ■



RMT YOUTH DEMAND REAL TRAINING AND INSOURCING

Conference launches Apprentice Charter and demands improved training programmes

A packed young members conference meeting in Canterbury launched the union's Apprentice Charter aimed at improving wages, working conditions, and training standards for transport apprentices across the country.

RMT apprentice campaigner Rhys Harmer of LU Fleet branch introduced the charter as a tool to improve training for young people.

"This Charter lays out bold demands to ensure apprenticeships are no longer treated as low-paid, insecure, and substandard roles, but as a respected and vital investment in the future of the transport industry.

"Apprenticeships should be a gateway to highly skilled, secure jobs, but instead, too many young workers are trapped in low pay, poor training, and dead-end

contracts.

"Our Apprentice Charter sets out a clear plan to fix this broken system, with better pay, guaranteed jobs, and high-quality, in-house training.

"The government and employers must invest in the next generation of transport workers to help grow the economy and provide secure skilled employment for the long term," he said.

RMT general secretary Eddie Dempsey welcomed the charter and outlined the need for industrial trade unionism in the transport sector to encourage and develop real training.

"As an industrial union we organise all grades and all ages of transport worker on the basis of our motto Unity is Strength," he said.

He said that apprenticeships were in decline across the country and

that had to be reversed in the transport sector.

He pointed out that the incoming Great British Railways (GBR) project needed to reverse the fragmentation of the network and address poor training programmes and insource workers that have been outsourced with poor conditions.

"We need to create a pathway for young people to progress in the rail industry," he said.

He said that the government was changing the law to allow local authorities to run bus services was an opportunity to defend and extend workers rights and improve training and pay.

Apprentice James Braithwaite, LU Fleet called on the union to campaign for the Labour government to introduce a rail industry training scheme aimed at

enrolling young workers in vocational training including continuing further education and preparing them for a railway career.

"This scheme should incorporate the best elements of Network Rail's award-winning apprenticeship scheme but also cover operational and clerical roles so that young workers experience the whole range of opportunities in the rail industry.

"The union must insist that trade unionism is embedded in vocational education with candidates afforded time within courses to help them understand the role trade unions play," he said.

INSOURCE NOW

Delegates welcomed the government bringing train operating companies (TOCs) under public control as an

CHARTER:
Rhys Harmer
launches RMT's
Apprentice
Charter



opportunity to rebuild the industry and bring outsourced workers back in-house.

RMT regional organiser Steve Shaw outlined how to improve these outsourced workers' pay and conditions and win recognition agreements.

"After fighting tooth and nail at outsourced rail contractor Carlisle for a long time we won nationwide recognition that covers over 3,000 workers.

"We must make outsourced workers to feel welcome in our union, build their confidence and stand up to bully bosses and win recognition rights and better pay.

"We need to start challenging procurement agreements that ignore workers conditions, pay, pensions, sick pay and other basic rights," he said.

Ben Leeson, Manchester South said that companies like TransPennine and Northern Rail including dispatch were using sub-contracted staff in safety-critical roles that should be undertaken by in house staff.

"These workers are on worse pay, terms and conditions, less sick pay and weak or non-existent collective bargaining agreements.

"With the looming skills shortage, it is vital that rail jobs entice people of all ages to work in a unionised rail

industry instead of trapping them in precarious, low-paid employment with few opportunities for progression," he said.

Ben Joyce, LU Fleet said that the rail industry should offer young people a career for life with good pay, terms and conditions, opportunity for progression and union recognition.

"The only way this can happen is bringing these jobs back in-house," he said.

FREE PALESTINE

Palestine Solidarity Campaign (PSC) representative Lewis Backon outlined how Israel's genocidal assault on

Palestinians in Gaza had killed tens of thousands of Palestinians and displaced over 90 per cent of the population.

"Due to Israel's blockade, and its targeting of life-sustaining infrastructure, Palestinians in Gaza are facing imminent famine.

"Israel can only carry out its devastating attacks on Palestinians because of the support provided by corporations and financial institutions," he said.

He outlined the PSC's disinvestment campaigns to urge banks, local government pension funds, and for universities to withdraw

investments from companies that help sustain Israel's genocide and apartheid.

"This includes companies that supply weapons and military technology to Israel and provide infrastructure for Israel's illegal military occupation of Palestinian land," he said.

FIGHTING INEQUALITY

Former city trader, youtuber (GarysEconomics) and author of the bestselling book *The Trading Game*, Gary Stevenson spoke to delegates about how the City of London works for the rich.

He left the city as he saw inequalities increase for working class people while the rich were getting richer by the day. He warned that this massive transfer of wealth was economically unsustainable and there needed to be a change in government policy and in society.

"We need to take control of resources, and this idea may have fallen out of fashion, but we need to talk about taxation and how unfair the economy is. We need working class people to start talking about the economy, and about how it is getting worse.

"We need to be taxing the superrich, that means taxing wealth, not work," he said. ■



FIGHTING INEQUALITY: Eddie Dempsey and writer and economist Gary Stevenson discuss the failure of neoliberalism



A CHARTER FOR STARTERS!

RMT young members chair Sarah Cundy outlines the need to address the crisis in transport apprenticeships

The young members advisory conference meeting Canterbury was proud to launch the RMT apprentice charter recently.

The document comes at a critical time and outlines a comprehensive plan to address current challenges faced by apprentices, improve the quality of apprenticeships, and ensure the future sustainability of our transport sector.

It calls on politicians and employers to take decisive action to support and invest in apprentices, particularly in rail which faces a looming retirement crisis.

At present, the rail industry is at a crossroads. According to the National Skills Academy for Rail (NSAR), over 50,000 rail employees are set to retire in the next five years. This retirement wave, combined

with a skills shortage, means the industry needs an additional 153,000 workers to bridge the gap and maintain resilience.

As a result, incoming rail nationalisation presents an opportunity for us to shape what the rail industry will look like for generations to come.

Apprenticeships should be a key solution to the crisis, but the current system is failing to deliver. The RMT's Apprentice Charter is a direct response to this need and opportunity, calling for immediate action to address the systemic issues plaguing apprenticeships and secure the future of the rail industry.

At the conference, we heard young members' share their experiences of apprentices in the transport industry. Delegates shared harrowing stories of poor and

outsourced training, bad planning, and a lack of progression opportunities.

Many also highlighted how insecure fixed term contracts meant employers could intimidate them. Some members had been threatened with dismissal if they got involved in the union or raised concerns about unsafe conditions or inadequate training. Other delegates even raised illegal practices they

encountered on private, third-party training programmes.

These experiences highlight the disjointed and incoherent nature of apprentice training across the railway industry today—a stark contrast to some systems that existed under British Rail which were permanent jobs and provided in-house training at dedicated schools.

This investment in training was seen as a key part of

WHAT WE WANT FOR TRANSPORT APPRENTICES:

- Better pay and terms and conditions in private sector apprenticeships
- An end to fixed term contracts
- Insourcing of apprentice training and education
- More skilled apprenticeships in our industries (growth in railway)
- A New Apprentice Training scheme under Great British Railways (GBR)



modernising Britain's railways in the past. But now, in the public sector, apprenticeships often lack quality, structure, and job security. In the private sector, the situation is even worse, with apprenticeships being fragmented, poorly paid, and lacking standardisation.

In some operators, 'bogus apprenticeships' in customer service or catering mean workers are exploited as cheap labour without the full employment rights enjoyed by other workers.

But this isn't solely a railway issue. In the maritime sector we find that the industry is not doing enough to foster the next generation of UK Ratings. On buses, we regularly find training on maintenance apprenticeships is provided by a third party and not delivered in house.

The RMT's Apprentice Charter sets out a series of urgent demands to address the crisis. The charter calls for:

- **Better Pay and Terms and Conditions:** The scandal of low pay for apprentices, particularly in the private sector, must end. The RMT is demanding standardised pay above the national living wage and national collective bargaining for private engineering companies.
- **An End to Fixed-Term Contracts:** Many

apprenticeships are offered on fixed-term contracts, leaving apprentices with no job security. The RMT is calling for a job guarantee for all apprentices who successfully complete their qualifications, as well as permanent contracts and full workers' rights from day one.

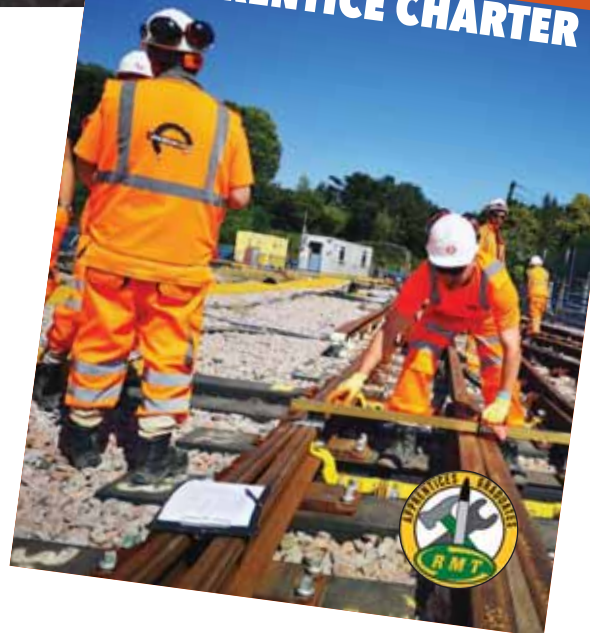
- **Insourcing of Apprentice Training and Education:**

The fragmentation of the rail industry has led to the outsourcing of training, often to the lowest bidder, resulting in substandard facilities and teaching. The RMT is demanding a return to dedicated in-house training facilities that provide high-quality education for apprentices.

- **More Skilled Apprenticeships:** The NSAR estimates that the rail industry needs at least 5,000 new apprentices each year to address the skills gap and avoid a retirement cliff edge. The RMT is calling on the Department for Transport to develop an ambitious, fully funded apprenticeship strategy with specific growth targets to address skills shortages.

- **A New Apprentice Training Scheme Under Great British Railways (GBR):** The government must use the opportunity of

THE RMT APPRENTICE CHARTER



establishing Great British Railways to create a centralised, fully funded apprentice training scheme. This scheme should provide a clear pathway for uniformed, overalled, and back-office apprenticeships, ensuring a consistent and high standard of training across the industry.

This important charter is part of a wider campaign and programme of work being organised by the young members' section of the union with subject matter experts and officers of the union.

The apprentice charter is not just a plan—it is a lifeline for the next generation of transport workers and the future of our union and industry.

The launch of the charter was just one highlight of a great conference weekend with over 50 delegates present from across the country and the transport sector. It was followed by inspiring motions from branches, highlighting the widespread support for these demands among RMT members and proposing ideas for other campaigns.

The young members' section is an active and organised section of our union. As such, I would like to encourage all members under 31 to get involved. For more information about upcoming events, campaigning days, training courses and our annual conference, please get in touch at YMChair@RMT.org.uk. ■



FATIGUE AND FERRY WORKERS

Report finds fatigue is a major problem, requiring long-term procedural, cultural and operational improvements

The workers responsible for keeping Britain's maritime industry moving are facing dangerous levels of overwork, jeopardising their long-term health, safety and lives potentially their lives according to a new report.

Seafarers—the men and women tasked with transporting goods and passengers safely across the seas—are grappling with severe fatigue, as evidenced by alarming new statistics. More than half admit to feeling dangerously sleepy on duty, and almost one in five have fallen asleep while working.

These workers are

operating under extreme conditions. Long hours, unpredictable shifts, and subpar working environments leave them exhausted and prone to errors. Government data indicates that fatigue has been a contributing factor in nearly half of all maritime accidents over the past decade. This situation is a disaster waiting to happen.

The recent report commissioned by the UK Department for Transport, entitled *Understanding Seafarer Fatigue in Ferry Operations*, underscores these dangers, highlighting the severe impact of exhaustion on the industry.

59 per cent of seafarer's report battling sleepiness at work at least once a month, while 18 per cent have fallen asleep on duty in the past year. Even more alarming, 41 per cent say they have experienced a fatigue-related workplace incident in the past decade—yet 85 per cent believe their employer was unaware that fatigue was a factor.

The report identifies several causes of this crisis, including irregular work schedules, excessive overtime, and poor sleep environments caused by noise and vibration. Those in customer-facing roles, such as stewards and service crew,

suffer the worst, experiencing daily sleepiness and poor sleep quality.

However, fatigue risk management remains inconsistent across the industry, and formal training is rarely provided.

A GLOBAL CRISIS

The issue of seafarer fatigue is not confined to the UK. A 2023 updated report by the World Maritime University (WMU) reinforced the scale of the problem across the global shipping industry:

- Fatigue perception: Seafarers overwhelmingly identify fatigue as a serious

risk to their safety, health, and well-being.

- **Excessive working hours:** The average seafarer works 11.5 hours a day and nearly 75 hours per week. In the offshore supply sector, five-week continuous tours are common.
- **Lack of weekly rest:** 78.3 per cent of seafarers do not have a single full day off during their entire contract period, violating the Maritime Labour Convention Standard A2.3.3. P&O Ferries has been accused of implementing this exploitative practice.
- **Widespread non-compliance:** 88.3 per cent of seafarers admit to exceeding work/rest limits at least once a month, with a well-established practice of falsifying work records to meet legal minimums.
- **Chronic understaffing:** 87.6 per cent of seafarer's report that there is an imbalance between work demand and crewing levels, leading to

excessive workloads.

These figures expose an industry operating beyond safe limits. Seafarers worldwide are facing an impossible situation where they are forced to work beyond exhaustion with little rest. The UK must take the lead in tackling this issue before more lives are lost.

REGULATE WORKING HOURS

France has demonstrated that better conditions are possible, implementing strict regulations on working hours and providing improved pay and conditions for maritime workers. In contrast, UK seafarers continue to await meaningful change.

The report indicates that industry needs solutions, including structured napping opportunities, improved shift scheduling, and comprehensive fatigue risk management programs. However, without proper enforcement, these measures will remain ineffective.

A MANDATORY SEAFARERS' CHARTER

Only a mandatory Seafarers' Charter can protect workers from exploitation, begin to lay the framework for a safe industry where adequate rest is essential.

Such a Charter would ensure fair treatment, adequate rest, and safe working conditions. This initiative is not solely about safeguarding seafarers—it's about ensuring the safety of passengers and the public.

Imagine trying to stay alert after a 12-hour shift or attempting to sleep in a cabin that shakes and rattles all night. For too many seafarers, this is their daily reality. When exhaustion takes over, mistakes happen, and those mistakes can lead to tragedies.

This issue extends beyond the seafarers themselves—it's a safety concern for everyone who relies on them. From ferries to cruise ships to cargo vessels, we all depend on these workers to perform their duties safely. They are fulfilling their responsibilities; now, the

government must step in.

The solution is straightforward: a mandatory Seafarers' Charter that prevents companies from pushing workers to the brink. This Charter should include:

- Strict enforcement of working hour limits to prevent excessive shifts.
- Mandatory fatigue risk management programs to improve monitoring and reporting.
- Enhanced living and rest conditions onboard ships to ensure seafarers can obtain adequate sleep.
- Clear consequences for companies that violate safety standards, including financial penalties and operational restrictions.

RMT national secretary Darren Procter said that fatigue was not just a moral issue but a matter of public safety.

"Seafarers are the ones keeping this country moving. It's time we provided them with the respect, protection, and working conditions they deserve," he said. ■

AGROUND: The ferry Alfred foundered due to fatigue according to the MAIB



Fatigue is a recognised risk factor for incidents in seafaring, as it is in other transport

sectors such as rail and aviation. Investigations into high profile incidents over the last 40 years have found common underlying fatigue triggers including long hours, shift work,

missed sleep, and nighttime operations: all of these can be present throughout the maritime sector.

Fatigue can lead to crew being cognitively impaired, making errors of judgement and unable to communicate effectively. In some cases, multiple crew members

were fatigued at the same time, compounding the difficulties. Similar incidents have occurred in the ferry sector, a recent example being the Alfred, a roll-on/roll-off passenger ferry which ran aground on the east coast of Swona Island, Pentland Firth, in Scotland on July 5, 2022, causing 41

injuries.

Fatigue was found to be the primary cause of the incident, with the master falling asleep for around 70 seconds whilst navigating the vessel close to shore according to a Marine Accident Investigation Branch (MAIB) 2024 report. ■

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protect ✓
working with RMT



CREATING SAFE WORKPLACES AT C2C

Union calls for cleaning to be taken back in-house under Great British Railways

RMT Bidvest Noonan health and safety reps at c2c in Essex met at Unity House recently to plan a programme of workplace visits to ensure safe workplaces for our Cleaners who work across the c2c contract.

Together with RMT regional organiser for London and Anglia Kathy Mazur, health and safety reps Robert Aungier, Sarah Cottis, Albena Deniska and Diyan Dinev met to review issues to raise with the company and to plan workplace visits.

Kathy Mazur said that these visits were vital to ensure that members can complete their work safely and with the appropriate PPE, equipment and materials to carry out work.

"Workplace visits are also an opportunity to identify potential hazards and for members to report any complaints they might have and need to with the employer by reps.

"Our team reviewed data reports and a map of the c2c contract route's workplaces with the number of members and plan to conduct workplace

visits and inspections at each workplace to ensure members had appropriate PPE and proper uniforms from the employer.

"We want to ensure a working environment free of hazards as well as clean and hygienic mess rooms with the facilities to make hot drinks and heat meals to ensure breaks could be taken properly," she said.

The Labour Party made an election manifesto pledge for a publicly owned railway and has been moving forward with that pledge. The union sees this as an opportunity for cleaning taken back in-house

and the abolition of the contracting-out route of public money going into the private pocket of contractors.

The railway must become a single publicly owned entity with direct responsibility for the cleaning function and an end to the 'contract management' model which rewards the private contractor with public money for every cost saving they can make.

This is particularly relevant for c2c which is being taken back in-house later this year as part of government plans for the railway.

Kathy Mazur said that cleaning grades were an

integral part of the union and RMT policy must reflect their needs and wellbeing which includes bringing cleaning in-house for the good of workers and passengers alike.

"Rail income should be for the railway, not dividends for private shareholders and insourced cleaning with our health and safety and industrial representatives having a direct relationship with a publicly owned railway would be both more cost-effective and effective in providing a clean and pleasant journey for passengers," Kathy said.



Bidvest Noonan safety representatives' Sarah Cottis, Diyan Dinev, Albena Deniska and Robert Aungier with outgoing RMT general secretary Mick Lynch

STRIKING BACK ACROSS THE EMPIRE

Jim Jump looks back at the global seafarers' strike one hundred years ago

This year marks 100 years since a dispute described by one historian as the 'first shot of the General Strike of 1926', a landmark event in British labour history.

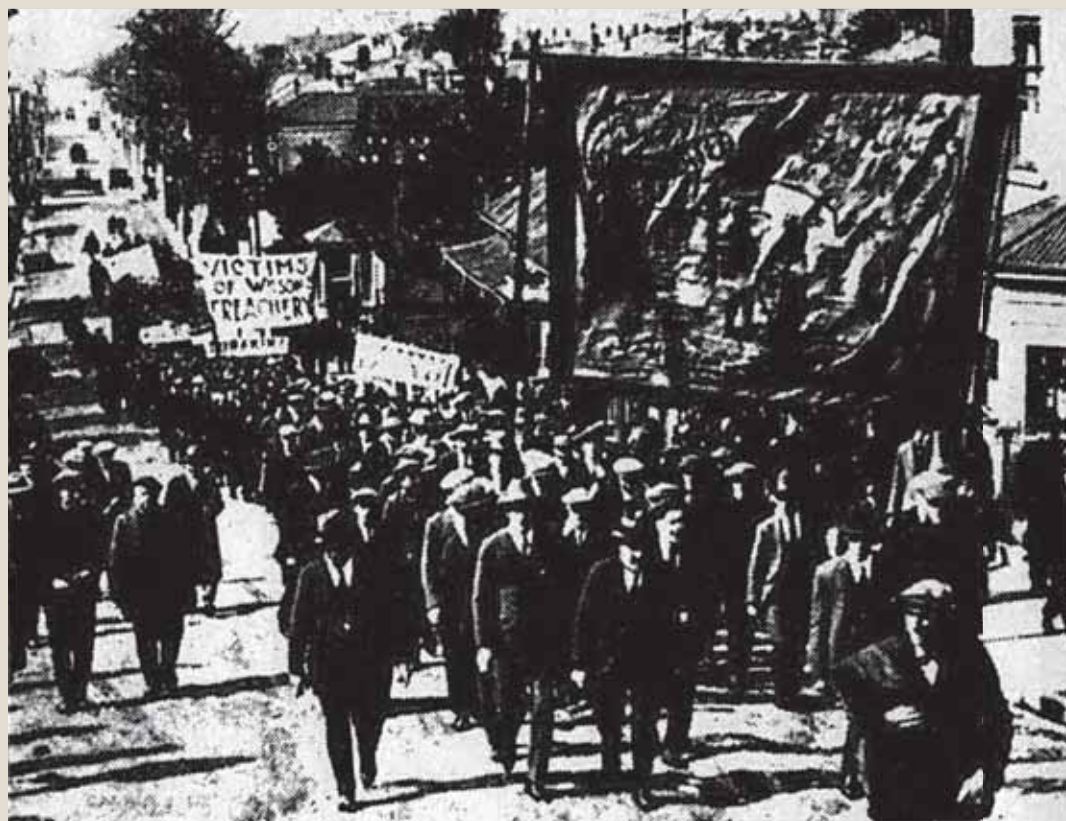
The 1925 seafarers' strike lasted 10 weeks, spreading worldwide to Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa. Tens of thousands of union members took part and scores of ships were tied up.

This was a time when Britain had the world's biggest merchant fleet, and the British Empire depended on it to move goods and people around. Striking crews brought much of that trade to a standstill.

The spark for the action was a £1 monthly pay cut – a massive 10 per cent reduction.

Crews went back empty-handed after 10 weeks, though there were no further wage cuts – a victory of sorts as bosses in other industries slashed pay during an economic slump.

But the scale of the strike shook government ministers, shipowners and union leaders alike. The main seafaring union at the time was the



14 September 1925, Wellington, New Zealand: 86 strikers among the crew of the *Arawa*, who had been sentenced to six weeks behind bars after they refused to set sail for Southampton, marched to their prison along with 500 sympathisers. Their banners included the messages 'Victims of Wilson's treachery' and 'We prefer jail to starvation wages'.

National Sailors' and Firemen's Union (NSFU). It later became the National Union of Seamen (NUS), one of the founding unions of RMT.

Strikers were angry that the NSFU's controversial leader, Joseph Havelock Wilson, had unilaterally proposed the pay cut to shipowners. The strike

therefore targeted both the union's leadership and the employers.

Wilson's defenders said that his offer had pre-empted even



bigger sacrifices being demanded by the shipowners.

Critics said that the once highly effective union organiser and firebrand had long ago given up standing up for his members. Now he was more interested in pleasing the bosses and defending the Empire. Challenges to his authority were invariably dismissed as a communist conspiracy.

But as a leader of the rival Amalgamated Marine Workers' Union (AMWU), James Cannon, put it: 'There is no "Red" plot. It is a bread and butter plot.'

Conditions in the industry were grim. A bulletin put out by strikers in New Zealand described how they worked 70 to 80 hours weekly, living in dark, poorly ventilated quarters and earning £2.5s [£2.25p] weekly – out of which they bought their own utensils, bedding and soap.

Discontent directed at the union hierarchy was already high, especially since 1922 when the NSFU began to control access to jobs through the hated PC5 certificate.

Backed by the shipowners and the Board of Trade, the system required the PC5 to be stamped by a union official to be valid. This allowed the NSFU to exclude 'troublemakers' – and enforce a 'colour bar'.

The AMWU condemned the arrangement as a form of slavery, particularly at a time when jobs were scarce. Some 30,000 seafarers were out of work and 800 ships were idle.

The £1 wage cut was the final straw in a series of concessions made by the NSFU. A £2 cut was enforced in 1922 and another £1 in the following year, though this was soon restored.

The strike started on August 1 in the London docks,

when seafarers refused to sign articles. A strike committee was formed and about 2,500 protesters marched through the streets of Poplar behind a banner saying 'Seamen and firemen are fighting for bread for the kiddies'.

The action soon spread. But this was a bad moment to go on strike. With NSFU help, the shipowners were able to bring in some 17,000 'scabs' from the large pool of unemployed.

After three weeks, the strike seemed to be petering out. But then it ignited in Australia, where the militant Australian Seamen's Union gave support, and stoppages also began in New Zealand and South Africa.

'The battle was on' wrote one of the strike committee leaders, George Hardy. 'It was a fine example of international unity in action.'

The *Times* reported that 42 vessels were laid up in Australia alone. There were also 22 idle in South Africa in Durban, Cape Town and East London.

The strike caused substantial losses for shipowners. But, abandoned by a hostile NSFU and with men being sent to prison in Australia and New Zealand, the action crumbled and was eventually called off by the London strike committee and a mass meeting of 1,500 seafarers.

Predictably, Havelock Wilson saw the 'red hand' of the Communist Party behind these events. And within a few months he was blaming communists for the decision taken by the TUC on May 1, 1926 to back a general strike in support of miners resisting pay cuts.

The strike was called, said Wilson, in order to 'bring off, if they could, a world-wide revolution in the British Empire'.

It was no surprise that the only union not to back the General Strike was the NSFU. Worse still, Wilson gave money to the scab union, the Miners' Industrial Union, and in

1928 the NSFU was expelled from the TUC.

When Wilson died a few months later in the following year, King George V sent a letter of sympathy to his widow. By contrast, an editorial in *The Miner* said: 'Havelock Wilson will go down in history as one of the tragedies of the twentieth century working class movement in Britain.' ■

Jim Jump is a former editor of *The Seaman* magazine published by the NUS.

THE SEAMEN'S STRIKE

Trades Hall Support

Long Struggle Expected

Strikers to go into Camp

Manifesto by Waterside Workers

MELBOURNE, September 17. The Melbourne Trades-hall Council by resolution to-night definitely pledged itself to moral and financial support of the British seamen on strike. The Victorian delegates who returned from the Commonwealth Labour Council meeting in Sydney stated that the conference had found ways of continuing the defence of Messrs. Walsh and Johnson at the cost of £100 per day, and also of supporting the seamen on strike.

The decision reached in Melbourne to-day by the seamen's strike committee, after consultation, it is believed, with union leaders in Sydney and Melbourne, to concentrate all British seamen on strike in Australia at a canvas camp in the vicinity of Melbourne, is taken to indicate that a long fight is expected. It is anticipated that, for a start, the camp will comprise 5,000 men, and this scheme for meeting the accommodation question is regarded as an economical one.

In an official statement issued by the committee to-day, it is stated that it is expected that the expense of bringing the men to Melbourne will not be great, and that the Labour Governments of all the States, other than Victoria, will make arrangements for their conveyance. It is suggested that the camp will be located at Altona, a seaside resort outside Melbourne. If the proposal is adopted nothing will be done for a fortnight, by which time the weather will be more settled.

AUSTRALIAN RATES DEMAND.

The Melbourne strike committee has communicated with the committees in other States asking them to change their objective from the demand for £1 a month, to one for Australian rates of pay. The crew of the *Euripides*, whose terms expire on Sunday, will be released on Saturday morning, and brought to the city by special train, which have been arranged for. A telegram from Mr. P. Considine was received to-day, stating that £500 had been sent to Melbourne for relief.

REFERENCES IN PARLIAMENT

Degradation of Seamen

MELBOURNE, September 17. In the House of Representatives to-day, Mr. Riley (N.S.W.) drew attention to the hundreds of warrants being issued for the arrest of British seamen, and asked whether the Government would take steps to prevent the degradation of such men.

Report in the Australian newspaper *The Mercury* on 18 September 1925.

NEW MARITIME BRANCH FOR HARWICH



The union has been organising meetings at the port of Harwich across companies in which RMT has recognition with a view to launching a new branch covering all grades working for Harwich international Port, OCS and Stena Brittanica.

RMT national secretary Darren Procter said that the union had agreed to the principle of having a single branch responsible in Harwich for organising all workers which would include seafarers, port workers and security staff.

Darren has been joined by regional organiser Kathy Mazur for discussions at the port where there is a high

density of membership and the potential for more.

"Issues discussed include health and safety, agreement documentation and working practices and, perhaps, a lack of visibility by the union over recent years.

"However, I believe we have an energised membership and a refocused mindset on the role of the union and what it can do for members," he said.

He said that the union must have a regular presence and offer support for reps to improve organisational structures and activity to create an organised workplace.

"I recently met with the HR

Business partner of OCS who has recently taken over and TUPED across members previously employed by Profile security.

"I believe that there is an intent by the employer to eradicate all zero-hour contracts within the port and it was agreed that RMT can hold regular surgery days for these employees.

"The other growth areas include the new HIP BCP terminal, CSA staff at Stena Line and the site which deals with duty free which is a covered by RMT's collective bargaining agreement and the port is now regularly used by the UKRI vessel *Sir David Attenborough*.

STENA

Darren visited members onboard the Stena Brittanica and held discussions with reps and Stuart Morrison who is an rep onboard and branch secretary of Harwich Shipping branch.

"This is not just a matter of moving members between branches but to take ownership of the port, progress an agenda of organising and encouraging activism whilst having support mechanisms in place with resources for to benefit members and the union as a whole," he said.



STENA: Stena reps recently visited Unity House for discussions around organising. (left to right) Stena rep and Harwich Shipping branch secretary Stuart Morrison, rep Peter Martin, Mick Lynch, and Stena full time convenor Michael Hobson and Darren Procter.

FORELAND VISIT



RMT national secretary Darren Procter made a visit to members on the Foreland shipping vessel Anvil Point visiting members in the port of Marchwood recently to discuss pay and improving engagement with RMT deep-sea members.

ORGANISING ON THE MEDWAY

Kent activists meet members and encourage others to sign up to protect their jobs

RMT activists in Kent took part in a two-day campaign on the High Speed One route London Bridge, Cannon Street, Charing Cross and Victoria, to recruit new members and connect with current members.

Newly elected regional council membership officer Paul Dennis joined up with Medway and District branch membership officer Dave Reid and regional council executive member, John Johnstone, NEC member Dan Gibbons, RMT regional council president Ivor Riddell and local Rep Amanda Butcher and Chiltern branch secretary Jon Lamb.

The first day involved visiting High Speed One



TEAM: Amanda Butcher, Dave Reid, Paul Dennis and Dan Gibbons.

stations Ebbsfleet, Stratford and St Pancras as well as dropping into Unity House whilst around the corner.

Ivor Riddell said that the group spoke to over 30 people, many already

members about their issues and explained the process to get support from their reps. Such diverse issues as rostering, heating for barrier staff and emergency carers leave.

"There was some resistance to joining the union, but we made good arguments and broke down some myths and lies about the union," he said.

Paul Dennis also said that there were visits to London Bridge, Cannon Street, Charing Cross and Victoria, focusing on cleaners and catching up with Southeastern Trains members and Network Rail staff.

"There was a good reception, but management were out and about making sure that cleaner grades didn't get a chance to chat with the union, but we did make inroads and signed a couple up and left others to think about.

"This is just the beginning really; we plan to revisit next month and pick up on the conversations and start to chat to them about taking up rep positions and building local networks and member density.

"There is nothing like boots on the ground to make things happen," he said.



TALKING: Engaging with rail workers



LEGAL

LEGAL VICTORIES

RMT members enjoy full representation in compensation cases without legal fees

An RMT member who sustained multiple injuries whilst walking through a porter cabin has received a compensation settlement of £36,000.

The incident occurred when the member made his way to another cabin to collect equipment. Whilst walking, the floor beneath him gave way, causing his left leg to fall through. The injuries sustained included a fracture to the left knee with significant pain, swelling, and restricted movement; pain and bruising to the left shoulder and arm; and pain to the left side of his head, which led to headaches, nausea, dizziness, tinnitus, and reduced short-term memory. The member also reported feelings of stress and anxiety following the accident.

Following his ordeal, the member turned to workplace injury experts at Thompsons Solicitors, who brought a claim against the responsible party. Following detailed negotiations with the defendant's insurers, liability was accepted, and a settlement was secured. This was paid in full to the member without deductions, thanks to his union membership.

SPOUSE

The wife of an RMT member who suffered injuries after stepping onto a broken drain gate has received a compensation settlement of £6,757.77p following the fall.

She was injured when she stepped onto a broken drain gate which caused her to lose balance and fall forward,

resulting in bruising and grazing to her left knee, left elbow, and left hand.

Following her ordeal, personal injury experts at Thompsons Solicitors were instructed to pursue a claim for compensation through her husband's access to RMT's legal services. After detailed negotiations with the other side's insurers, it was possible to secure a satisfactory settlement without the need for court proceedings.

FARE EVADER INCIDENT

An RMT member who suffered a broken ligament to the middle finger on her right hand has received compensation following her ordeal. The injury occurred when a fare evader forced open the ticket barrier she was

staffing, overstretching her middle finger, causing significant damage.

The RMT member instructed workplace injury experts at Thompsons Solicitors to bring a claim for compensation. Through detailed negotiations and correspondence with the other side's insurers, it was possible to negotiate a satisfactory settlement without the need for court proceedings. The insurers accepted responsibility for the incident, and the member received an out-of-court settlement of £10,924.75, reflecting the severity of her injury and its impact on her personal and professional life. It is hoped that this outcome will assist Health and Safety Representatives in the

LEGAL SUPPORT FOR RMT MEMBERS AT EMPLOYMENT TRIBUNALS

If you are experiencing difficulties in the workplace and need advice regarding a potential employment tribunal claim contact the union.

In the first instance, ensure that you contact your local RMT Representatives or Regional Organiser. Then complete an L2 – Request for Legal Assistance (available on-line) and send it to your Regional Office with all supporting documentation.

RMT's legal department deals with virtually all cases from assessment to the case's conclusion at a tribunal for members across England and Wales. The legal department has also submitted claims to Employment Appeal Tribunals.

The in-house legal department is now firmly established and employs four solicitors and continues to advise and support

members in their work-related criminal cases in the Magistrates Court.

This often involves defending members against false allegations made by the public of assault, false allegations of theft and alleged driving offences. Furthermore, it continues to offer tailored advice and support for bus and taxi drivers, in respect of their licensing issues, licensing appeals before the Magistrates Court, driving offences, and in respect of appearances before Traffic Commissioners.

The In-house legal department continues to strive to deliver a first-class service to all of members. They are committed to provide a strong service to assist the union through the ever-changing legal landscape and their successes have grown yearly.

Your Free legal service covers:

- **Employment Law** – provided by the RMT Legal Department
- **Access to Personal Injury Lawyers** – where 100 per cent of compensation is kept by members.
- **Access to a basic will service.**
- **Access to special terms for conveyancing, probate, powers of attorney.**
- **Access to special terms for family law related matters.**

The contact number for the legal department is **020 7084 7260** or go on-line to rmt.org.uk/about/legal-services/

workplace and help prevent similar accidents in the future.

DISABILITY DISCRIMINATION

An RMT member has received a substantial sum in respect of injury to feelings, loss of earnings and interest in a successful disability discrimination claim.

The long-standing member worked as a Customer Host Gateline Assistant. His disability affecting his right knee became increasingly painful. He attended Occupational Health who said that his knee condition caused him difficulty with prolonged standing and walking, he was deemed fit to work with

adjustments. However, he was placed on sick leave, pending a risk assessment with regards to the use of a stool. The manager also raised concerns about the member wearing leg braces even though none of the Occupational Health advisors had stated that it was an issue.

The employer's safety officer subsequently informed the union that he was happy with the revisions and that the only remaining issue was the provision of a stool which would need to be agreed with Network Rail.

However, the member was informed that his return to work was not possible as they

had not agreed a risk assessment with Network Rail over the use of the stool and they had no other sitting position available pending the issue over the stool being resolved.

The member had surgery and remained off sick after the procedure. He was then informed by payroll that his entitlement to full sick pay would expire and he would go on to half pay. The union presented a grievance alleging disability discrimination and breach of TUPE (relating to sick pay).

Successful claims were submitted at the London Central Employment Tribunal

for the failure to make reasonable adjustments and discrimination arising from disability. The employer resisted the claims and did not accept that our member was disabled for the purposes of the Equality Act 2010.

The member was supported throughout this process by the union, local RMT reps and the RMT in-house Legal Department and he remains in his role with the stool in place to assist him.

All these cases highlight the importance of RMT's legal services in supporting members and spouses who are injured in the workplace.

President's Column

WORKING TOGETHER

I'd like to open my column by paying tribute to the outgoing general secretary Mick Lynch and welcoming the incoming one Eddie Dempsey. Mick has been an outstanding leader of this union with a now legendary line in curmudgeonly responses to stupidity and a hostile media.

On behalf of union, I would like to wish Mick a long and happy retirement following a lifetime of struggle and playing such an important role in building our working-class movement. He will indeed be a hard act to follow but I believe Eddie Dempsey can do that after working beside Mick over these last crucial years.

Eddie has already got around a lot of our spring organising conferences which are such a crucial part of democratic and campaigning structures, providing a platform for members to discuss key issues and shape the policies that will guide us going forward.

The first conference was the health and safety in York with over 200 delegates. Conference was a blend of traditional discussions, updates and essential training for our representatives, reinforcing

their role as the backbone of our union.

No employer or company has ever introduced meaningful safety measures simply out of goodwill—every improvement has been won through the struggle and persistence of trade unionists.

Without the tireless efforts of workers, campaigners, and activists, the rights and protections we have today would not exist. That is why it is imperative that we remain vigilant and reject calls to cut so-called 'red tape.' Conference made it clear that our representatives are more determined than ever to push back against unsafe practices and fight for stronger protections.

The well-attended young members' conference meeting in Canterbury also provided delegates with a vital opportunity to discuss the challenges they face and the future they want to build.

The passion and commitment of our young members was evident, demonstrating that the future of our union is in safe hands. Their willingness and enthusiasm to engage with and address key issues shows a

deep understanding of the challenges ahead. This crucial conference is an investment in the future of our movement, ensuring that new generations are prepared to fight for workers' rights.

The women's advisory conference in Birmingham in another important gathering to discuss the issues and priorities of women in our union. Women in the transport and maritime industries face unique challenges, and this conference provides a dedicated space to discuss the concerns that matter most to them.

From fighting workplace discrimination to addressing the gender pay gap and improving working conditions, this conference plays a vital role in shaping policy and ensuring that gender equality remains a central focus of our union's work.

All the advisory and grades conferences taking place form the foundation of our union's democratic structure. They allow members to come together, exchange ideas, and directly influence RMT policies. Attending and participating in these conferences is a



fundamental way for members to have their voices heard and contribute to the direction of the union.

If you want to be more involved in shaping the future of our union, attending a conference is one of the best ways to do so. Whether you are passionate about workplace safety, young workers' rights, equality or another key issue, there is a conference for you. If you would like to be considered for attendance or want to learn more, speak to your branch secretary.

Our union is only as strong as its members and by engaging in these conferences, we ensure that our collective voice remains powerful and effective. The fight for workers' rights never stops and we must reaffirm our commitment to working together in defence of and improving conditions for all RMT members.

George Welch

GLASGOW AWARD



RMT regional organiser Gordon Martin presents Paul Boyle, who currently

works at Babcock Rail, of Glasgow Engineering branch with his 40-year badge. ■

HASTINGS AWARDS



Outgoing RMT general secretary Mick Lynch dropped in on Hastings branch to present 140 years of membership awards including a 25 year badge to Steven Childs (far left) a retired Network Rail Infrastructure worker.

Standing next to Mick's left

is retired Southeastern ticket office worker Graham White who received a 50-year award. On Mick's left is Volkier Rail worker Graham Cox who received his 40-year award and next to him is Southeastern Conductor Dominic Freeman who received a 25 year award

■



PRESENTATION: Standing at back of the picture are RMT Midlands regional organiser John Watson and Mick Lynch. Standing at the front are Linda Richard, Amanda Birch, branch chair Shakeel Goulthorp, Ted Woodley and Mick Turner.

COVENTRY AWARDS

Coventry 1 branch recently held long service awards for members presented by outgoing general secretary Mick Lynch. The awards presentation began with

branch secretary Amanda Birch welcoming everyone and Mick spoke about the dispute with the train operating companies and the Rail Delivery Group and the

importance of being part of the trade union movement.

Mick presented the awards to: Linda Richard (Network Rail) 10 years, Ted Woodley (West Midlands Trains) 10

years, Shakeel Goulthorp (West Midlands Trains) 25 years, Mick Turner (West Midlands Trains) 25 years.

■

NEASDEN AWARDS



Mick Lynch presented awards to (above: left to right) Stephen Mahon 40 years, Brandon Geary 10 years, Paolo Neri 25 years, Andrew Quill 25 years and Kayode Jimoh 10 years. Mick Lynch presents 10 year award to Jason Moore (right). ■



BRUM AWARDS



RMT Pat Collins presented a 10-year badge to Phil Atkins (above) and a 25-year service badge to Paul Tunney (right). ■



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Promote your branch, region and the union - call Pellacraft on 01623 636 602 if you have any queries.



NEW UNION PUBLICATION!

THEY SHALL NOT PASS

The seafarers and rail workers who fought fascism

A new full-illustrated joint publication by RMT and the International Brigade Memorial Trust (IBMT) tells the untold story of the union's historical fight against the rise of fascism in the 20th Century.

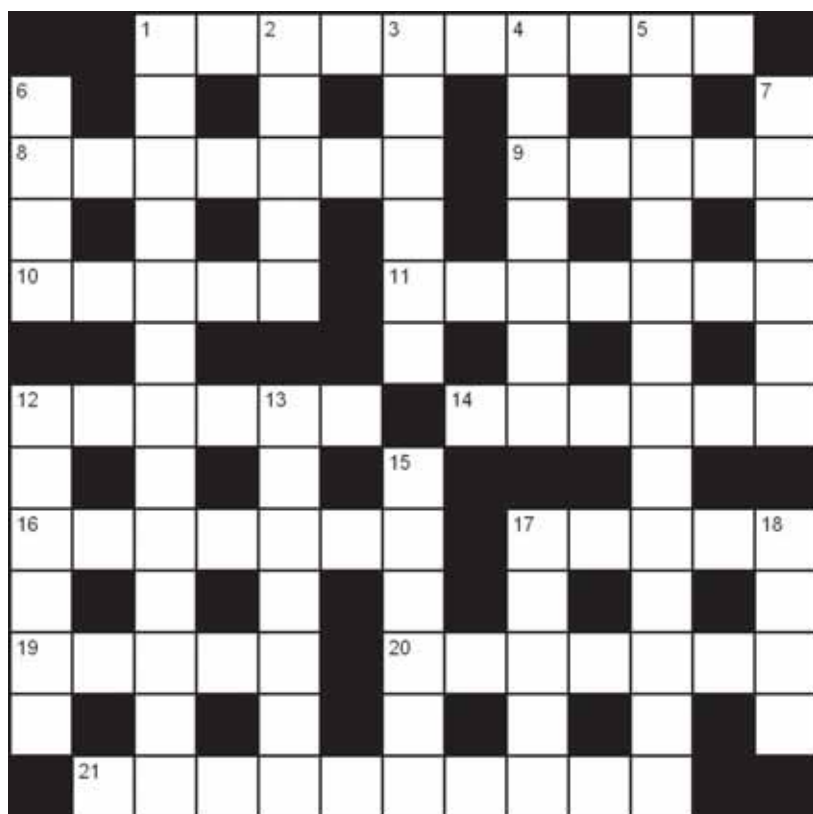
Using archive material held by RMT and the IBMT this latest union pamphlet reveals the full extent of the involvement of transport workers in the fight against Oswald Mosley's Blackshirts in Britain and the struggle against fascism in Spain.

Many more workers also fought the fascists on the streets of Britain and NUR general secretary John Marchbank even took on Mosley in the courts and humiliated him.

Over 100 seafarers and rail workers volunteered to fight in the legendary International Brigades that fought Nazi-backed forces in Spain while European governments looked the other way in the hope of a fascist victory.



£100 PRIZE CROSSWORD



Last month's solution...



Send entries to Prize Crossword, RMT, Unity House, 39 Chalton Street, London NW1 1JD by April 28, 2025, with your name and address.

Last month's Winner is Sam Huffelman, York.

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

ACROSS

- 1 Slightly (10)
- 8 Cleanliness (7)
- 9 Later than (5)
- 10 Banishment (5)
- 11 Continuing forever (7)
- 12 Careless (6)
- 14 Treeless plain (6)
- 16 Compress (7)
- 17 Large artery (5)
- 19 Ray (5)
- 20 Oriental (7)
- 21 Indignation (10)

DOWN

- 1 Pomposity (10)
- 2 Pass a rope through (5)
- 3 Professional killer (6)
- 4 Metrical unit (7)
- 5 Correct to the last detail (6,7)
- 6 Footwear (4)
- 7 Fish (6)
- 12 Oil-rich seeds (6)
- 13 Introduction (7)
- 15 Warm again (6)
- 17 Passageway (5)
- 18 (4) Common skin condition

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"Membership benefits that work hard for hard-working members"

With household finances under mounting pressure from the current cost of living crisis, we wanted to remind you that your RMT membership is there for you both in and out of work.

Over 68,000 RMT members have benefited from membership services which offer a variety of savings, as well as legal and financial support from our trusted partners.

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Keep your RMT membership details up-to-date

In the light of draconian anti-trade union laws that have been used against the union, members should keep their personal data up to date. It is also important to note that in order to keep members informed your union requires your mobile telephone number and email address.

Members can do this via the RMT website, telephone the RMT helpline above, or writing to the membership department at RMT head office, Chalton Street, London NW1 1JD.

