



Infrastructure & engineering news

Network Rail maintenance reorganisation special

February 2010

Defend safety, jobs and conditions Vote **YES** for strike action

Stand together to defend rail safety, jobs and conditions - for everyone's sake, urges RMT general secretary Bob Crow

NETWORK RAIL'S assault on maintenance jobs and conditions is part of a massive cost-cutting programme that threatens to undermine the safety of an already fragmented industry.

RMT has said from the moment it was announced that a 21 per cent cut in NR's budget over five years, on top of the 30 per cent cut over the previous five years could only result in an attack on jobs and safety standards.

The case against the cuts plan is unanswerable.

Time and again RMT has laid bare the reality of what these cuts will mean - and how deadly the consequences could be.

Already we know that maintenance teams are overstretched and under-resourced - and we know that cutting 1,500 jobs will only make another Hatfield, Potters Bar or Grayrigg disaster more likely.

We know that Network Rail's inspection regime was slated by the inquiry into the fatal Grayrigg disaster three years ago - and we



Bob Crow and Mick Cash join protests against NR cuts

know that inspection frequencies are under pressure everywhere.

We know that four RMT members lost their lives at Tebay in February 2004 because of Network Rail's reliance on one-man-and-his dog subcontractors - and we know that the cuts will result in more subbies, more fragmentation and more danger.

We know that imposing smaller S&T teams and other cost-cutting proposals like doing away with detonator warnings will increase risk to track workers.

We also know that the current level of unfilled vacancies has

already had a dramatic effect - the latest example being a prohibition notice on works in south Wales due to a shortage of key workers.

Time and again we have met Network Rail, time and again we have made the case and warned that if it didn't lift the threat to jobs and rail safety we would have no choice but to take action. Network Rail has ignored those warnings and has failed to give the assurances we sought.

Last year they appeared to shift and said you could 'stay as you are', and that turned out to be a lie.

Failing to get their do-what-you're-told-when-you're-told-for-as-long-as-you're-told-for contracts through the front door they are trying to squeeze them in through the back.

NR bosses have clearly been mesmerised by the telephone-number bonuses they get for delivering financial targets that undermine the safety of our industry.

Their minds need to be refocused on what matters most - and that is the safety of our industry, of our members and the travelling public. **E page 2**

RMT online — visit www.rmt.org.uk

Hundreds lobby MPs for safety



HUNDREDS OF RMT members piled the pressure on MPs in January, converging on parliament to demand an end to Network Rail's dangerous programme of cuts.

The union's campaign to defend rail safety and jobs is gaining widespread public support, and some 128 MPs have signed a commons motion tabled by Halifax Labour MP Linda Riordan (see text below).

The lobby presented to MPs a

dossier of first-hand accounts of safety failures and maintenance cuts to MPs after hundreds of rail workers contacted a confidential RMT email line to say lives could be put at risk.

The dossier highlighted the worst examples of where the

scaling back of work and changing standards in preparation for the job cuts are already leading to a serious deterioration in safety.

Examples include:

- I Reduced track safety inspections
- I Delaying the repair of faulty level crossings
- I Reduced safety checks on railway signals

“We are sending a clear message to MP's that the rail maintenance job cuts are a lethal gamble, creating the perfect conditions for another Hatfield, Potters Bar or Grayrigg railway tragedy,” RMT general secretary Bob Crow told MPs.

“The jobs threatened are those of workers responsible for inspecting and repairing the track, signals, level crossings and overhead lines.

“They work 365 days a year, day and night in all conditions to keep the railway safe and we are calling on MPs of all parties to join us in a campaign to stop these fatally flawed cuts from being bulldozed through.”

Vote **YES** for action

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A massive vote for industrial action will help do that, and will give your union the strength it needs to bring Network Rail back to its senses.

That is why your union is asking you to vote YES for strike action.

Together, united, we can win this dispute - and it is a dispute we need to win to put safety back at the top of the list of priorities, where it belongs.

Early Day Motion 80, Network Rail and Safety, tabled by Linda Riordan MP - has your MP signed yet?

That this House notes the decision of Network Rail to announce the loss of thousands of frontline maintenance jobs by spring 2010; believes that this will mean that in a matter of months there will be a drop of up to 20 per cent. in the number of rail workers carrying out essential inspection and maintenance work; further believes that these deep and rapid cuts raise genuine and urgent concerns as to whether Network Rail will be able to ensure the safe and efficient running of the railway, including the adequate inspection and repair of track, signals, overhead lines and other infrastructure; is deeply concerned that Network Rail is failing to consult the trade unions on the safety implications of the proposals; further notes that the cuts are in part due to the fact that the economic rail regulator, the Office of Rail Regulation (ORR), has asked Network Rail to make efficiency savings of 21 per cent. over the next five years; is further concerned that because the ORR is both the safety and economic regulator it will be difficult for an objective view to be taken as to whether the safety of passengers and workers will be put at risk; believes the cuts cannot be justified; and calls on the Government to use its power as the primary funder of Network Rail to intervene to ensure that Network Rail directors put safety first.

RMT FREEPHONE helpline - 0800 376 3706

Why we are in dispute with Network Rail

The union has sought a number of assurances from Network Rail around your future job security. Network Rail has:

I refused to give assurances about no redundancies beyond 2010.

I refused to place potentially redundant members in permanent jobs within the maintenance organisation thereby offering no future job security.

I failed to give guarantees about CAPEX work to be undertaken in future years by our maintenance members.

I failed to provide details of further changes being planned by the company that affect all our members in the Network Rail Maintenance organisation – despite your union receiving reports of a Telecoms reorganisation, changes to the road vehicles section and introduction of more new technology.

The company's proposals would still result in members being required to work 39 weeks of nights, 39 weekends and 65 weekend shifts.

The company is already trying to get rosters introduced based on its discredited proposals and the union's executive has instructed members not to agree any rosters outside current terms and conditions.

Recently an S&T member was required to work alone trackside on signalling equipment, a clear breach of safety, and an example of the company's plans for 'team size by task' - a posh name for cutting staffing to the bone, regardless of safety concerns.

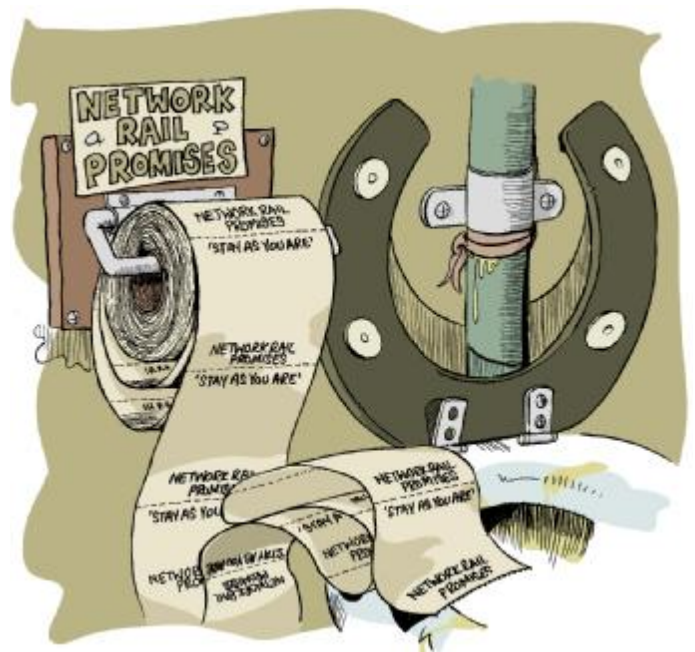
Already Network Rail is trying to introduce its new terms and conditions - so much for 'Stay as you are'.

RMT believes that the company has more up its sleeve and will not come clean on all its plans in order to make further piecemeal changes that affect your job security and terms and conditions in the future.

The company is also using all sorts of underhand tactics with the voluntary severance scheme.

Members of staff who had applied for voluntary severance were given commitments from managers on when their termination date was to be, only to have those commitments withdrawn.

Individuals involved took their annual leave and were told to clear their lockers - but were then told that they couldn't leave as the unions were not "playing ball".



To suggest that RMT has anything to do with individuals' arrangements for leaving the company is an absolute disgrace and shows the depths the company has sunk to in its attempts to divide and rule.

The truth was to be found in the content of an email from Mr Featherstone, Director of Infrastructure Maintenance, to managers: "If we are unable to secure the changes that we need then we may not be able to release these volunteers. We have therefore agreed that voluntary severance will be deferred until we have an agreement on phase 2B/C."

Featherstone confirmed that, far from helping to save jobs, the changes they want to make to terms and conditions will help the company cut 1,500 jobs.

As the company's proposals have been rejected by all three unions, RMT has asked NR to confirm that it will no longer be making any further job cuts and that it will instead be restoring posts.

It also makes sense for Network Rail to use the £50 million it had put aside for Phase 2B&C for a proper harmonisation of rates of pay and have everyone at the company being paid the same for carrying out the same duties.

The union has made it crystal clear that it is remains open to talks, but that we will not stand by and accept the imposition of job cuts and draconian changes to terms and conditions.

Join RMT online at www.rmt.org.uk

RMT renews call to halt jobs cull as NR is hit with Prohibition Notice

RMT renewed its call for a halt to NR's plans to axe 1,500 safety-critical maintenance jobs after it was revealed that the company has been served a Prohibition Notice by the Office of Rail Regulation over a shortage of lookouts to ensure safe track working in South Wales.

The Prohibition Notice, served by Dr Liesel von Metz, HM Inspector of Railways, says:

"I am of the opinion that there is an immediate risk of harm to the track-workers undertaking foot patrols on the railway line between Cardiff Central and Aberdare, Rhymney, Treherbert and Merthyr Tydfil. I have therefore served Prohibition Notice P/LVM/20100205/01 on Network Rail Infrastructure Ltd, requiring that the activity of crossing structures with no place of safety under RZ(Red Zone) conditions be ceased."

The union has repeatedly warned that the maintenance job cuts planned by Network Rail, which are already being



implemented by faili9ng to fill vacancies, would have lethal consequences.

The South Wales Prohibition Notice reinforces the union case, and RMT has gathered evidence of cuts in numbers and

frequencies of essential inspections and maintenance works the length and breadth of the country that mirror the situation in South Wales.

"The Inspectorate has given Network Rail a red card in South Wales and slapped the highest sanction it can on them other than dragging them into Court," Bob Crow said.

"That is how serious the shortage of staff has become, and we know from reports from our members that we are facing the same lethal cocktail of planned staff cuts and unfilled vacancies right across the country."

The recent severe cold snap also reinforced RMT's argument that if anything more staff are needed to cope with periods of pressure, and that if Network Rail gets away with its jobs massacre it will cause service disruption on a massive scale.

Five-star luxury for jobs-cull meeting

RMT members lobbied the NR board when it emerged that it would be discussing its cuts programme at the plush Langham Hotel in London.

The union blasted bosses for paying out wads of cash to enjoy what the hotel describes as 'impeccable five-star luxury' while discussing sacking 1,500 people.

What your gov'nor thinks of you

We already know about Iain Coucher's concern for NR's workforce when he talks about 'taking out heads'.

But if there was any doubt about Iain's contempt for NR's staff, this extract from an

interview in *Personnel Today* gives the game away:

'Asked about his staff, he says there are three distinct cultural groups within Network Rail: "There are 17,000 or so maintenance staff in orange jackets who tend to read *The Sun*; 9,000 signal box and control room staff wearing NR fleeces and jeans who may be *Telegraph* readers; and the professional services people who wear business attire and may get their opinions from *The Times*."

And just in case he hasn't made himself clear, he adds that he tries to "dress like them if we're going to meet up".

So next time you see Mr Coucher in an orange jacket, you know what he's up to.

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Sat 09:30-16:00
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Legal helpline: 0800 587 7516
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