

## RAIB shows crucial guards' role

**A** Rail Accident Investigation Board report has again highlighted the vital safety function of the guard.

On 2 March 2018, a train halted ten metres short of Lewisham station in icy conditions. After an hour with no food, drink or toilets, passengers got out onto the track. The third rail was live and lines open. It was a further three minutes before current was isolated.

This was a packed ten-coach evening peak train, Driver-Only Operated, the driver responsible for communicating with the signaller and managing the passengers. The driver made regular announcements but was confined to the cab in order to stay in radio contact with the signaller. Ultimately a voice over the PA was insufficient to persuade passengers of the dangers of leaving.

A guard could have ensured better flow of information to passengers, talking to people face-to-face. The report notes passengers' helpless feeling as a key reason for their frustration. Absence of visible staff exacerbates this, making people feel that no-one is coming to help, and no-one cares what you do.

A Guard could have placed devices on the track to turn signals to danger and

short out the traction current. The driver did this five minutes after the passengers began to leave. Their first priority was to inform the signaller. Two safety-critical staff can perform crucial tasks quicker in an emergency, when delays can be disastrous.

**I**n 2017, a London Overground train failed outside Peckham Rye station.

After an hour, a route controller authorised the train to be evacuated, thinking it was in the platform. The signaller, unaware of this, did not shut the lines or switch off the current.

The driver did not challenge the call to evacuate. RAIB suggested that working alone in a tough situation for a long time had caused 'cognitive overload', reducing decision-making capability. Result: scores of passengers walking on live lines in the dark, only halted when Peckham Rye's station manager intervened - the only other safety-critical member of staff nearby.

Cutting guards' jobs risks safety, but the industry considers those risks to be acceptable. Let's campaign not just to keep existing guards' jobs re they are threatened, but to reinstitute guards where they have already been cut.

## London overground ticket offices saved

**T**ransport for London has backed down on plans to close London Overground ticket offices, after an active campaign by RMT and by local Labour Party branches. Reps and activists made the case that ticket offices are vital for people to safely access the network and for protecting jobs.

But this win has a sting in its tail: management plan to cut opening times to just three hours in the weekday morning peak. This is inadequate to meet passengers' needs,, and a step towards another go



at closing them in the future. Once people see closed ticket offices 21 hours a day, they stop using them, and once the Mayor's election is out of the way next year, we can expect a new move to shut them.

RMT activists will fight the opening hours cut. While celebrating their victory in stopping full closure, they know that the battle goes

on. We hope that the union leadership is as determined, but the fact that the union's press release did not mention the cut in hours is not a good sign.

[www.workersliberty.org.uk/blogs/rails](http://www.workersliberty.org.uk/blogs/rails)

Northern Rail drivers' offer - ASLEF branch supports Love Socialism Hate Brexit - motions to RMT Annual General Meeting - and more!

## network rail pay: no two-tier deal

**A**fter nearly five months of delay, Network Rail management and RMT have met again over the 2019 pay claim for Operations and Engineering Grades.

After the union firmly rejected an initial offer, the company has given assurances that any changes would be applied mainly to new employees, and will require much greater flexibility, reduction in financial support for displaced staff, and cuts in allowances in the south east - while not answering any of the union's demands.

It would be very wrong for the union to sell its future members down the river. Full details remain sketchy as we go to press. Check our blog for updates.

guest columnist



sugar daddy

People often say, 'Alan, when did you last get the train?' and I say, 'It's Lord Sugar actually and none of your bloody business.'

That information is private, I don't want it out in public. Same goes for the railways. Keep them in the hands of those who know what they're doing. People with knighthoods.

Me use trains? Have you seen the state of them?! Overcrowded, scruffy, full of people. Think how bad they'd be if you couldn't even turn a profit on them!

So I tweet about it and a load of train users give me grief. People say it's not 'communism' if Corbyn renationalises the railway, but tell that to people like Richard who have worked hard for their money. He doesn't even have access to trains where he lives! Yet he offers to run them, at great expense to himself while making a measly £306m in the last 22 years. It'll barely cover the repairs to his private island.

And if they tax high earners at 70%, no-one will work hard, will they? So I tweet about that and these bloody communists say I don't understand.

Some of you say that the people who really keep the railway running are the staff who work there. Next you will say that Amstrad would have been better being run by staff rather than me! If I had listened to them we wouldn't have had the

E-m@iler so be careful what you wish for!



Lord Sugar @Lord\_Sugar · Apr 11

Shut up you Communist idiot . People like @richardbranson made the railways work and are good for the UK economy and create jobs. Your stupid idea to nationalise will take us back 50 years . Can't you get this idiot out @UKLabour

Jeremy Corbyn @jeremycorbyn

Let's run our railways for passengers not profiteers.

## off the rails

- is written by railway workers
- **is for all railworkers, whatever your job, employer or union**
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## off the rails

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# Keep Up the Fight to Save the Guard!

**R**MT's fight against driver-only operation has scored significant victories, but seems to have gone quiet of late. Guards are increasingly frustrated by not being told what is going on in talks.

**A**rriva Rail North guards have told us of their disappointment, as RMT's eventual update stated nothing more substantial than that 'significant progress is being made around operation modes and that these are now being explored in further detail'.

Guards on **South Western Railway** are also feeling left in the dark. They know that management will try to negotiate exceptions and that any agreement to run any trains without guards will be the thin end of a thick wedge.

**Merseyrail** seems intent on cutting cleaners' jobs to retain guards' jobs. Since RMT dialled down its action, Merseyrail has made two settlement offers, both rejected by the union.

Rank-and-file workers need to know what's going on: we want to guide our negotiators and judge the progress of talks from a position of knowledge.

There are two models of trade unionism on offer. One is a bureaucratic model that sees workers as a stage army whose action can be used as a bargaining chip in talks between bosses and union leaders. The other is a model based on workers' direct action, which sees strikes themselves as the mechanism for change, and talks as the place where the unions articulate the strikes' demands.

Members' meetings must urgently discuss returning to action. It is possible to talk and strike at the same time!

We can still win, but we must stand firm.

## stand firm to win!