

Labour joins call to keep £1 billion Royal Navy support ship order



Big victory for GMB and UK shipbuilding

Government's decision to offer up lucrative and sensitive contracts to build new ships overseas is as 'ludicrous as it is reckless'.

GMB, the union for shipbuilding workers, is celebrating after Labour joined the campaign to keep a crucial £1 billion order for three new military support ships in the UK. During a speech in Govan, Glasgow today Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn will insist three new Royal Fleet Auxiliary vessels must be built in British shipyards.



New Fleet Solid Support ships are needed to service the UK's £6.3 billion Queen Elizabeth-class aircraft carriers and their strikeforce of new F-35 fighter planes. Quoting GMB's Turning the Tide report into the Royal Fleet Auxiliary (RFA) contract published last month, Mr Corbyn will point out securing this £1 billion investment for the UK's shipyards would create around 6,500 jobs and also support other British industries, including steel.

“ Shipbuilding isn't just part of our proud heritage, it could and should provide a proud future for manufacturing across the UK.

That's why Labour's announcement today is so welcome - they have showed strength and political will to support our shipbuilding industry by joining calls to see these ships built in UK shipyards.

If the contracts are awarded to overseas companies it will be a missed opportunity that our shipbuilding and steel industry cannot afford.

The Conservative government's decision to offer up lucrative and sensitive contracts to build these three new ships to companies overseas is as ludicrous as it is reckless.

These are jobs worth fighting for. The next generation of workers in our shipyards deserve a bright future to look forward to - as well as a proud past.

Tim Roache, GMB General Secretary

The union estimates that £285 million would also be returned to the taxpayer through income tax, national insurance contributions and lower welfare payments. The Government's current policy is to build all Royal Navy warships in the UK but orders for RFA ships are put out to international tender.

But Ministers are not bound by normal EU rules on competitive tendering when it comes to military ships. Shipbuilding and ship repair employment in Great Britain has fallen from an estimated 122,200 in 1981 to under 32,000 in 2016 - threatening the UK's sovereign defence manufacturing capability.

“ We are delighted that Jeremy Corbyn has thrown his weight behind this campaign and there is now a growing cross-party consensus forming around the need for the RFA contracts to be awarded to British yards.



What would the RFAs mean for places like Port Glasgow or Roysth? It would mean jobs growth, modern apprenticeship opportunities, prosperity and redistribution of wealth into local communities – the prize is massive.

Gary Smith, GMB Scotland Secretary

Press office

079859 1525698

press.office@gmb.org.uk

Member requiring help?

Click to contact your local GMB Region

info@gmb.org.uk

