



PICCADILLY BOSSES TRIAL 'OPEN DOORS' POLICY!

A train departing Piccadilly Circus Eastbound on the evening of March 31st lost its pilot light within station limits. The driver immediately stopped the train and established that doors were open in the last car. He made a PA to ask passengers to pull the PEA if they could see any doors open, but no alarm was pulled. The driver went back to car 6 and found one single leaf and a double set of doors open on the platform side. Amazingly, despite the carriage being full of passengers, none had been bothered to pull a PEA to inform the driver of this dangerous door irregularity. The driver detrained and took the train out of service to Cockfosters depot, where it remains pending the results

of an ongoing investigation.

Is it a secret?

The driver should be commended for dealing with the incident in a highly professional manner. Unfortunately, the same cannot be said of management's response to this potentially lethal event. Despite being aware of a new and dangerous defect, management made no attempt whatsoever to alert drivers on the line about it. In fact, it was not until the middle of the following day that news about the incident spread through the grapevine and a good number of drivers from both depots refused to pick up trains, that managers finally put out a notice admitting what had happened. It's a sad day when the only way to get

company representatives to share important safety information is by threatening to shut down the service. It's funny how quickly managers put threatening letters into the pigeonholes of drivers who take longer than 30 seconds to make a PA on their train but, when the same bosses have important safety information, they take nearly a day to share it with their staff, and then only under pressure. So much for management's open-door policy; 'open doors', more like!

If it happens to you...

At the time of writing, the cause of the door irregularity has not been established, though extensive testing continues to take place in the depot. What if it happens again? If you have a suspected

door irregularity on your train, **do not remove the control key** – this is to help preserve evidence. **Do not close any of the doors which have opened** (use a member of staff to guard those doors) and **do not open any other doors** – detrain passengers through the failed doors. Take the train straight to the depot. Also, **please alert one of your RMT safety reps as soon as possible**, as it is quite clear that we cannot rely on management to inform our members of what is going on.

The rule book

Section 23 of rule book 7 says that if you lose your pilot light between stations, you must stop the train. If the pilot light does not return, even after asking

passengers to stand away from the doors, you must make a PA asking passengers to pull the PEA if they are aware of a door being open. If no alarm is pulled, you are supposed to continue slowly to the next station. The recent incident at Picc Circus has shown this rule to be unsafe, as no-one in the affected car bothered to respond to the driver's request. Of course, we knew all along that this rule was unsafe, as are others in the new rule book which seems to be more concerned with keeping the service moving than with the safety of staff and passengers. In a rare concession to common sense, management has now agreed to rescind this rule. **You are now advised to go back and check for open doors if**

and whenever you cannot get a pilot light.

Safety and the Job Cuts

This whole episode demonstrates management's cavalier attitude towards safety in this new era of job cuts, minimal station staffing levels, dumbed down and shorter refresher training, reduced track inspection regimes and the rest. That's why we need to be in a union which fights for every job and which will not lie down and let the bean counters cut costs by diluting all the safety gains that have been made over the years, especially since the King's Cross disaster. There is much still to fight for; **let's stay vigilant, united and strong.**

DEFEND ARWYN AND EAMONN – VOTE YES

At the time of writing, Train Operators and Instructor Operators across the combine will be receiving ballot papers concerning strike action in support of our two driver members sacked by LUL for their union activities. Following two separate incidents, Arwyn Thomas from Morden depot and Eamonn Lynch from Elephant and Castle, were sacked by the company. Both dismissals were grossly unfair, to the extent that two employment judges agreed that the men had most likely been sacked

for trade union activity and so forced the company to pay their wages (legally known as 'interim relief') until their employment tribunals are concluded.

Our union has been in the forefront of resistance to the cuts programme driven by TfL and Nightmare Johnson, so the company is using any opportunity to try and weaken us. It is against this background that Arwyn and Eamonn have been deprived of their livelihoods by a vindictive and callous management. They want to get rid of effective reps and

frighten would-be reps from taking on the job.

It is likely that both Arwyn and Eamonn will win their employment tribunal cases. However, even if the tribunals order reinstatement, the company can still refuse and this seems likely given their disregard for justice and the tribunal process so far. That is why the union is calling on all drivers to vote YES for strike action in support of our sacked colleagues. Management might be able to stick two

fingers up to the employment judges, but do they really want a total shutdown of the system? This is an issue about justice and the future strength of the union, its ability to continue to fight effectively for the interests of all members. We cannot afford to let the company get away with these sackings. **SUPPORT ARWYN AND EAMONN.** Stand up to the management bullies and **VOTE YES!** The balloting period ends on 27th April.

COMPANY OFFERS PAY CUT

LUL was recently named 'Metro of the Year' by an international panel which clearly didn't assess our system on a Saturday or Sunday! Despite the fact that it was the hard work of staff across the grades which earned this award, the company's reward to us is...*a cut in pay*. The company has offered a 5-year deal worth 4% in year one and RPI + 0.25% in each of the next 4 years. RPI is currently at 5.3%, down from 5.5% in February, which means that, overall, we are being offered a pay cut at a time of increased workload caused by record passenger numbers and LU's determination to slash jobs. Our branch has rejected this insulting offer which also failed to give any consideration to other parts of our claim, including a 4-day week which is now standard for staff in many train operating companies. The question is: *what are we going to do about it?*

Earl's Court Derailment Report Shows Safety Failures

The investigation report into the derailed engineers' train at Earls Court has finally been published. The report makes interesting and worrying reading. Track faults in the area had been reported on numerous occasions by our track patrollers but, due to a number of vacancies in the management team, the faults were not dealt with. There was also an issue with the amount of time our track patrollers had available to complete thorough inspections, so it is possible a number of faults were not picked up anyway. The track recording vehicle had also flagged up problems with the gauge of the track on two occasions immediately prior to the derailment, but no corrective

action was taken on the information provided. Taking into account the problems with track faults, your trains H & S Reps were astonished to hear recently that the frequency of track patrols was going to be watered down against the wishes of the track patrollers themselves. Your trains reps made Picc Managers aware that drivers would not be happy with any relaxation of patrolling of the track their trains were running over at full line speed. Thankfully any changes to track patrols have been put on hold for now. Yet again, the benefits of an all-grades union comes to the fore and all drivers should wake up and smell the coffee!

500,000 SAY 'KILL THE CUTS!'

The TUC-organised anti-cuts march which took place on 26th March was an outstanding success, bringing together trade unions, community groups, students – in short, a representative sample of the millions who will or are already suffering as a result of the government’s vicious attacks on jobs, services and welfare.



Members of our branch begin to gather outside Finsbury Park station

As usual, the mainstream media tended to focus upon the tiny minority who broke away from the main march in order to indulge in some slightly more ‘direct’ forms of action, but the fact remains that 99.9% of those present made the point loudly but peaceably that these cuts were unfair, unnecessary and will cause misery to large sections of the population.



Marchers gathering for the start at Embankment (below, left)

RMT made up one of the largest contingents on the march, with Finsbury Park branch adding between 40 and 50 marchers from our own ranks. This was the largest march through London since the million-strong march against the Iraq war in 2003, and showed the depth of feeling against this unholy and undemocratic ‘coalition’ government of the rich. Will they get the message?



Bob Crow (centre, wearing red cap) spells out our message to the government

There is clearly anger amongst many at the way in which ordinary people are being forced to pay for a crisis created by the rich who continue to amass wealth with impunity whilst the rest of us face ‘austerity’. The march directed that anger into something positive, but this is only a start.

‘Never in the field of human history has so much been taken from so many by so few’



The Finsbury Park branch banner gets another outing

The march should be seen as the opening shot in a huge campaign of resistance to what the government is trying to push through. We need to build upon this great start by ensuring that we fight to defend

every job and every service. Employment, public services, welfare – these are the basic units of a civilized society and we must do all we can to save them or future generations will judge us harshly.



A brass band plays for the crowd



Never mind the ConDem coalition - this is the kind of coalition we need: a coalition of resistance.

(All photos by Darrell Clark)

Next Stop for the banner is the May Day March – Join us for March and regional social



MAY DAY 2011
**THE NEXT STAGE
OF THE BATTLE
AGAINST CUTS
& JOB LOSSES**

SUNDAY MAY 1ST MARCH & RALLY
ASSEMBLE 12 NOON
CLERKENWELL GREEN LONDON EC1
(NEAREST TUBE – FARRINGDON)
MARCH TO TRAFALGAR SQUARE 1300

LONDON MAY DAY ORGANISING COMMITTEE
www.londonmayday.org

As always the branch will be out for the May Day March with details of assembly above. This year there will be a regional social at the Bell and Compass Public House on Villiers Street near Trafalgar Square where the March ends starting around 1600. There will be long service award presentations among which this year include 25 year award members **Arthur Russell**(Driver at Arnos Grove), **Orville Thomas**(Supervisor at Brixton), **Rudolph Hoyte**(Driver at Seven Sisters), **Rolston Ryan**(CSA at Highbury), **Terrence Fletcher**(Driver at Arnos Grove) and **Michael McClinton**(Driver at Arnos Grove). Also a 40 year service medallion is awarded to **Judy Thompson**(Supervisor Finsbury Park). All these members will be invited so come and join them and enjoy a free buffet and limited free bar on what is normally a good day out.

HELP US DEFEND OUR REPS

An open letter to our ASLEF colleagues

As you will know, RMT is balloting its driver members across the combine for industrial action over the company's shameful attempt to get rid of two RMT activists. Arwyn Thomas, a driver based at Morden, was sacked because he had a heated exchange with a Tubelines manager who was helping keep a station open during a strike day last year. The company used this incident as the basis of a disciplinary hearing at which Arwyn was summarily dismissed. Eamonn Lynch, a driver at Elephant and Castle, was sacked because he carried out an instruction from a line controller. The controller's instruction was incorrect from a safety-critical point of view, yet he received no punishment at all, whilst other drivers have been treated more leniently for similar errors.

Arwyn Thomas - sacked for having a heated discussion!

Victimised

So why were Arwyn and Eamonn sacked? Here's a clue: Eamonn is an effective Health and Safety rep and Arwyn is an RMT activist of 30 years who has represented our members and held numerous positions within our union. These two stalwarts of our union have been sacked purely because of their records of union activism, because of their efforts in fighting for us. That's not just our opinion; it is also the opinion of two separate employment judges who have ruled that the dismissals were, in all likelihood, the result of anti-union victimisation and have ordered the company to pay the men's wages until the full Employment Tribunal hearings are finished.

Eamonn Lynch - sacked for following an instruction!

Why not wait for Tribunals to finish?

In an ideal world, we would never have to go on strike. Sadly, we don't live in an ideal world. Even if, as seems likely, Arwyn and Eamonn win their cases and the Tribunal judges make reinstatement orders, there is no compulsion on the company to abide by the decision. They could ignore it and just pay out a few thousand pounds' compensation. We cannot and will not allow that to happen. That's why we are balloting now: we want to send a strong message to company managers that we will not sit idle whilst they display an arrogant disregard for justice and for the Tribunal process, as they have done so far.

But I'm in ASLEF – is it really an issue for me?

Arwyn and Eamonn are RMT activists, but their dismissals should not be seen as an attack specifically on the RMT: it is an attack upon trade unionism in general. The company has plans to radically change the way we work, plans which will involve job losses, dilution of safety standards, ripping up of agreements, and a general move towards running the system on the cheap. This is something we all have to resist, regardless of which union we are in. We might be in different unions, but we're all in the same boat - we need to pull together if we want to keep the terms and conditions we have, conditions which only exist because of the collective efforts of previous union activists.

The company's interests, by contrast, are the exact opposite: it wants to soften the unions so that we are no longer strong enough to resist their plans. One of the ways it can soften us up is by getting rid of as many reps and activists as it can, the very people who organise, represent and fight for our members. An attack on the reps of either union is an attack upon every one of us.

We need to work together

The battle to get Arwyn and Eamonn reinstated is a crucial test of strength. If the company is allowed to get away with these grotesque travesties, it will feel encouraged to look for further victims in order to strengthen its hand. That would be a disaster for our unions and therefore a disaster for all of us. If we have to take strike action, please show your support by respecting our picket lines. Yes, it will mean losing some pay in the short term, but the consequences of losing this battle in the longer term simply do not bear thinking about.

Who do you turn to when you have a problem at work? Now imagine a workplace where the best reps have been sacked or silenced and no-one else has the neck to take on a rep's position for fear of the consequences. That's what the company wants. We want strong, healthy unions able to defend the interests of our members. What do you want?

Message from Regional Organiser, Steve Hedley

“You may have read a completely false story about me in the Evening Standard. The story is this. I was at Mile End station and was aware that three trains had dropped off passengers at a station that was supposed to be closed. I went to question a manager as to why he was keeping the station open with fewer staff than the minimum number required and, in so doing, breaking the law (Section 12, brought in after the Kings Cross disaster).

The manager leaned towards me in an aggressive way, only inches from my face, and I put my hand on his shoulder to prevent him head-butting me. Three independent witnesses, including a prosecution witness, confirmed my story; the manager had no witnesses. Despite this, the boss’s court could not resist the opportunity to have a political stab at the RMT, and fined me £200 plus £500 costs. I am, of course, appealing.

<http://guy-smallman-photos.photoshelter.com/gallery/RMT-metronet-strike-protest-4-9-07/G0000akR8mUC3Xac>

Ironically during the last Metronet strike I saved a standard photographer from a management thug who attacked him (see link). Of course, this did not get reported in the Standard or any other paper. One law for them, another for us.”

Banned by LUL

Since his fine by the court, LUL has taken it upon themselves to ban Steve from all LUL property, in a blatant attempt to prevent him from speaking to the very members who elected him to represent us as Regional Organiser. We will not allow LUL managers to dictate who represents us on some flimsy pretext concerning ‘violence in the workplace’, especially when there are two local managers at Arnos Grove who remain in charge of drivers despite having committed more serious acts of violence than that alleged against Steve.

Need a rep for a disciplinary? Ask for Steve!

We are asking members who have forthcoming disciplinary hearings to request Steve Hedley as their rep of choice. Under the law, the company is obliged to allow a member to choose who represents them. If management refuses to allow Steve to represent a member, then the member will automatically have a case for Employment Tribunal.

Next Branch Meetings

***Twelve Pins Public House (near Finsbury Park Stn)
Thursdays 5th and 12th May at 1600hrs***