

Meeting with Leon Daniels (Managing Director Surface Transport) 22/08/2012

At my meeting with Leon Daniels I was able to raise numerous points concerning the treatment of Surface Transport staff during the Olympic Period. I would like to thank all who contributed with items raised.

Background

As you may know all the trade unions in surface transport were in 'dispute' with TfL over Olympic terms and conditions and so-called 'bonus payments'. The only union that actually held meetings with their members to ask what action they would like to take over this matter was the RMT. At a branch meeting the members voted to request a ballot for industrial action over management's refusal to go to ACAS to discuss the Olympic period. This request was granted and, following continued intransigence by the TfL management, a ballot was held of RMT members in the 'recognised' areas of surface transport. The members voted for both strike action and action short of a strike. There followed a work to rule in these areas plus two days of strike action. The other unions in surface transport did nothing apart from put out a couple of leaflets, and it was this lack of fight from them that left us being treated as second-class in comparison to the rest of TfL and LU.

Following this I emailed Peter Hendy saying that management 'thank you' emails were not enough considering the amount of work and, in some areas, the disruption staff had had to cope with. Leon Daniels then contacted me requesting an informal meeting. After speaking to the RMT Assistant General Secretary elect I decided to accept the invite at face value.

Points discussed

Across surface transport, some areas were affected more than others. In some areas Olympic period rosters were imposed with resulting shift/attendance pattern changes, and there were also total blocks on annual leave. This obviously had a detrimental effect on the staff, especially during the school holidays for those with children. In certain areas staff were pressured into being 'Olympic Ambassadors' with resulting changes in shifts including weekend and night working in some cases. These staff felt so pressured to do this that they were too frightened to refuse, feeling that to do so would be detrimental to their future prospects and employment.

In reference to the Travel Information Centres (TICs) the whole of the Olympic Delivery Funding was diverted to privately run call centres in Scotland (Journeycall) and Northampton (Novacraft). These are temporary jobs on minimum wage. The management preferred to fund these private companies than to reward the loyal TfL staff.

I also raised the issue of the bonuses for the top seven TfL senior managers, payable if the Olympics ran smoothly, as shown in the TfL unaudited annual report. They would all have a share of £560,000. Mr Daniels believed this was absolutely fair and deserved for the extra work they had put in over the period.

I then went on to speak about RNC (Road Network Compliance) itself and the anger staff felt in being treated differently from other TfL staff concerning the 'we're all one big family' speeches heard at the 'Fit For London' sessions held earlier in the year from senior managers, including himself.

RNC has been vital to the smooth running of the Olympics; the importance of our role demonstrated by the limits placed on, and in some cases blocked annual leave. The amount of work processed over the period increased by over 800 incidents per day. This coincided with cuts to section manager numbers, who felt under pressure to stay late to complete workloads in some instances. When Nick Fairholme (Interim Director CC&TE) was questioned on a recent visit to Kings Buildings about why we were being treated differently in terms of bonus payments that other areas of TfL were receiving his answer was 'it's been talked about enough'. This is not true as management have refused to even enter talks about this subject with the unions and also refused to go to ACAS on the matter. Another comment from a certain senior manager was 'you're lucky to have jobs'! It's good to know how much respect we're held in.

I stated that all the different areas across TfL had come to an arrangement on bonuses/extra payments for the period including all LUL staff, DLR, Buses, Barclays Bikes and all the various contractors that work on the tube network. These were all areas that were willing to put up a fight, mainly with a high density of RMT membership.

On top of this there is also the matter of the management's refusal to enter into pay talks when our rise was due at the beginning of April and the pay submission from the RMT went in on time.

Mr Daniels' reply to all of this was that as workers in a transport industry we should all be willing to work in any area and at times when needed to show commitment even if it did not suit our lives or families. On the matter of bonuses/extra payments he stated that there was only a certain amount of money to go round.

When I asked if this was why only the staff willing to put up a fight for their terms and conditions got a payment he stated 'that's market forces for you'. This confirmed that the reasons the staff in surface transport were ignored are the low density of Trade Union membership, and the lack of fight put up by all the unions apart from the RMT who did at least show the management that staff were angry with their second-rate treatment. When holding a demonstration outside Windsor House several staff came out of the building to talk to us and took away RMT membership forms and literature as they were fed up with the lack of fight put up by their respective unions over this matter.

The meeting ended with Leon Daniels assuring me that he would take our views to Peter Hendy.

My own view of the meeting and the answers I received was that it proved that nothing was ever won by just asking. If surface transport staff wish to be treated on an equal footing with other parts of the TfL 'family' we all need to stand together by joining a TU that is willing to fight when the need arises.

Paul Rutland

Chair RMT TfL No.1 Branch