

ACROSS THE TRACKS

RANK AND FILE PAPER
FOR RAIL AND TUBE WORKERS

LUL set to declare war on tube workers...

STOP THE JOBS SLAUGHTER!

The gloves are off...

Across the Tracks has seen the contents of a leaked LUL internal document headed: **“Minimum Staffing Levels”** which reveals their plan to axe jobs by the hundreds on 'Section 12' stations. It is essentially a declaration of war.

The document offers an example of how staffing levels will be cut by comparing London Bridge and Victoria Stations. At London Bridge the current minimum staffing levels are 4 all day. At Victoria during the morning peak they are 12. LUL plan to slash the numbers at Victoria to 4 – a two-thirds cut in staffing levels.

The aim is to *“standardise the approach for determining minimum staffing levels”* by which they mean cutting staffing levels to the bone. The document proposes a *“formula”* for 116 'Section 12' stations which reduces the minimum staffing numbers to 2 for 70 stations with the remaining 46 *“still to be assessed”*.

If this is what they propose for 'Section 12' stations, just imagine what they have in store for the open sections!

In fact, LUL has already started with this approach. At Oxford Circus station management have recently reduced minimum staffing levels at the weekend (on Sundays by 40% from 10 down to 6) without any consultation with the local safety reps.

Safety

When management attacked 'Section 12' previously, they said it was merely about modernising the railways and was nothing to do with job cuts. They lied. However, having lost that fight, they're now trying to make cuts as far as they can whilst still remaining within the legislative framework.

So far RMT has successfully defended the 'Section 12' Regulations which came into force after the tragic King's Cross fire in 1987 that claimed 31 lives. But, legally, the minimum numbers required are only 2 per sub-surface station. Additional numbers are accrued via risk assessments.

The proposed job cuts will have a devastating impact on passenger safety as well as our safety as a workforce.

Effective Emergency Response:

LUL plans to slash trained, licenced staff jobs can only lead to a deterioration of our and passenger safety



The document states that *“minimum staffing levels are about the requirements for a safe evacuation of the stations (other requirements should not increase them nor get mixed with it)”*.

Rubbish! Minimum staffing levels should not only be for safe evacuation but also for intervention in emergencies – both response and recovery. Whenever an emergency arises, from a one-under, to trains stuck in tunnels or to bombings as in July 2005, we will always be first on the scene to respond. We were hailed as *“heroes”* for precisely this intervention during the traumatic events on 7 July 2005. The speed of our response can be the difference between life and death.

At the time of the London bombings Mike Brown, who is set to rejoin us in March, explained: *“The phenomenon of the suicide bomber means any traditional means of detection and interception is likely to be ineffective. Here, effective response to an incident is the key”*. **Absolutely.** Any serious effective emergency plan must take the approach of: *Anticipation, Assessment, Prevention, Preparation, Response and Recovery*. The effectiveness of all aspects of this emergency plan are determined by the resources (primarily staff) at hand.

Let's make no bones about it. LUL don't give a damn about your safety or that of the traveling public.

Management strategy

LUL aim to take on one grade at a time as part of an overall strategy to restructure the job across the board. They thought they could weaken our engineering sector recently by taking on signals. They were given a whipping in that battle ... but they will be back. Now they're out for stations.

Management are trying to keep the train-side 'sweet' at the moment as well as signals/command and control (operational). However, the initial moves to also restructure here are already in place.

Further, these operational grades need to wake up to the threat posed by TBTC (Transmission-Based Traction Control). This is being hailed as a system that will allow trains to be run closer together in the tunnels so increasing the service on the Underground.

This claim is operationally dubious. More trains running closer together will lead to more people being stuck in tunnels when delays occur. Many of the calculations for increasing numbers of train journeys boil down to assuming that the trains will get in and out of stations more quickly - which does not factor in passenger actions and does not benefit passengers.

TBTC has an unstated ulterior purpose: it takes control of the train away from manual driving signalling, which will potentially allow the de-skilling of driving and signalling jobs.

The vision for *fully automatic* TBTC is that trains will only be driven manually to enter and exit depots: the remote system will be in control at all times on the line.

Drivers will, notionally, only be there to take control at the end of a journey, or in the event of an incident. TBTC is often compared to the ATO system that is used on Dockland's Light Rail where there is no driver, only an attendant who checks tickets and has limited vehicle control functions for emergencies. Although no plan to introduce a similar system on the Underground has been announced, we do know that part of the TBTC deployment will involve equipping drivers with a portable radio handset to replace the console radio interface that drivers currently have. Why would LU be interested in installing a hand-held radio if they intend for drivers to stay in the cab?

TBTC is also intended to make the existing *colour light* signals system entirely redundant which can only result in serious changes to the job of signalling.

United fight

We cannot fight LUL grade by grade as the attacks unfold. We need an industrial response across the entire combine and across all grades to stop the jobs slaughter. Furthermore, any strike action must be serious – not a token 24 hours. Workers under the Signals Framework Agreement and at Alstom have just clearly demonstrated that to us all securing victories this year with solid ballot results and announcements of serious continuous strike action. *During the Signals strike, management were petrified that the fight might generalise to incorporate the operational grades.*

We need to combine the fight on stations with the unfolding crisis on Tubelines and the inevitable resumption of hostilities in the old Metronet sector. Trains and signals (operational) need to understand that this is their fight too. Management's strategy is classic divide and conquer – they will be coming back for you!

We need to co-ordinate action within and outside our industry. Presently, we have a ballot (RMT/TSSA) underway for industrial action by rail maintenance workers across the country. We should also, where possible, co-ordinate with other

groups of workers planning to take action such as BA cabin crew workers who have just returned a massive 81% yes vote for strike action. We need a strategy to win.

What's this all about?

Firstly, the depth of the current recession means that although we've already bailed out the bankers with tax-payers money, we're now being targeted, across our class, to pay for the crisis again through job losses and massive cut backs.

Secondly, it doesn't stop at job losses. The profit-driven system in which we live cannot exist without workers completely so the aim is to have the remaining workforce work harder, longer and more unsociable hours to squeeze as much productivity out of us as possible. This is what is meant by flexibility - one person doing the job of three. Expect attacks on rosters, annual leave, and framework, attendance and disciplinary, negotiation and consultation agreements.

Thirdly, there will probably be a re-grading of staff into a smaller numbers of grades. This will fit the structural changes to the station groups and train depots – fewer, larger groups. It will also lead to fewer rostered staff and a greater pool of reserve staff covering entire lines or business units rather than the current restrictions to groups. Fourthly, there is a serious attempt to de-skill our job. This is what's actually behind the attempt to do away with safety critical licencing and bring in generalised competency. It's a simple means to casualise the job so that in the future agency staff can be brought in to do our jobs at a pittance of the pay and conditions we've secured over the years. This will also necessarily lead to a dilution of safety.

Fifth, they won't stop there ... our pensions are already being lined up for attack! Another, often missed, aspect of all this is the aim of weakening union organisation at ground level.

Prepare for battle – war has been declared!

STRIKE TO DEFEND JOBS

1) This is an industrial/political fight. We cannot fight it over legal interpretation. The successful RMT led campaign to defend Section 12 Regulations was extremely important but the Regulations only require 2 staff per sub-surface station. The additional staffing numbers were always accrued via site specific risk assessing. We need to defend these additional numbers we won over the years. Indeed, since the heightened security risks because of the criminal wars in Afghanistan and Iraq (possibly Iran next!), we have a sound case for additional, not reduced, staffing. Our fight is simple: strike to defend jobs.

2) While LUL plans are within safety legislative requirements the political arguments, i.e.. the impact of job cuts on passenger safety, must be raised. We don't only evacuate, we respond to emergencies and recover the service.

3) Management are split over this. The leaked document outlines one component part of an overall re-structure plan that is what some managers call the "brave" option. However, if the unions force them to back down from this option then we can't allow them to settle for a slightly milder version of the re-structure (after which they come back for more anyway).

4) Some of management want to engage the unions in helping them re-structure with the promises of no or minimal jobs lost. Firstly, we do not engage in partnership with management to screw over workers – regardless of grade. We organise and fight job cuts. Our job is not to help management manage their crisis. Secondly, we have to be honest, we're somewhat slow - the loss of positions through unfilled vacancies, sackings and natural wastage etc *are* job losses (one of the reasons why some managers smell blood). **RESIST!**

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