

# THE GREAT BANK ROBBERY

## WHY OUR BOSSES ARE OUT TO CRUSH US

Imagine you are walking along, minding your own business, when you are accosted by some thieves. Under threat, you hand them your wallet, mobile and other valuables. The thieves race away in a car. The car crashes, but the thieves survive and flee on foot. When the police finally arrive, they tell you that, not only will the thieves be allowed to keep their loot, but you will be billed for their hospital fees and for the repair of their getaway car. Crazy? Well a similar thing has just taken place, only on a massively bigger scale.

Even before the general election was over there was scarcely a day when we were not bombarded with warnings of dark days ahead: public services will have to be cut, jobs will have to go and workers will have to do more work in harsher conditions. The only difference between the main political parties was over how deep the cuts should be and how quickly they should be implemented. Anyone might think that these cuts, the greatest

since the end of World War 2 and possibly the greatest ever, were necessary for the country's salvation. *But wait a minute; let's remind ourselves of how we got into this mess.*



**The government says there are hard times ahead for everyone - well not quite everyone, it would seem**

First of all, some of the richest banks in the world decided that it would be a great idea to lend huge sums of money to people who were unlikely ever to be able to repay it. They then began a market in selling these 'toxic' debts to each other in what are known as 'derivatives'. Governments, and particularly our government, were complicit

in the reckless behaviour of the bankers, totally failing to regulate their activities and, in effect, giving them the green light to act with impunity. There were two reasons for the government's lack of action: first, they were afraid to upset the power brokers in the banking system for fear of being labelled 'socialist' and, second, they were quite happy to coin it in while the economy was doing 'well' (in fact it was sitting atop a giant bubble which was ready to explode). We know what happened next: financial meltdown, the inevitable conclusion to this orgy of greed and stupidity.

## Bail-out for rich - but we pay for it

What was the government's response to the near collapse of the world economy? To hand over hundreds of billions of pounds of tax-payers' money to the very people who caused it, of course! As a consequence, there is now a

huge hole in the public finances, as government ministers never tire of telling us. Strangely, however, ministers now seem to be suffering from a kind of collective amnesia. Not only have they forgotten that they supported the bankers' reckless actions in the first place, but they've also forgotten that their bail-out is what caused the public debt. The poor souls now seem to think that excessive spending on public services is the cause of the debt!

How convenient. By this sleight of hand they are able to tell everyone how public spending will have to be slashed in order to reduce the debt. Our 'social wage' is to be butchered in

order to pay for the bail-out. Meanwhile, the culprits are free to climb back aboard the gravy train and continue with business as usual.



If this doesn't make you angry, well it should. LUL's job cuts, unfair sackings, attacks on working conditions, lowering of safety standards, and the rest - all are driven by the public debt. Likewise the government's

planned cuts in public services, services which you've paid for through taxation and which are there to ensure that we live in a civilized society which values us as human beings and not merely as economic units to be left to the tender mercies of the 'market'. Aided and abetted by the government, the rich are about to enact the greatest robbery in history - and we are their intended victims.

It's Robin Hood in reverse. We need to ignore the liars and fraudsters in parliament and get ready to resist the onslaught. We need each other and our union more than ever right now. *United we stand, divided we fall.*

## **TUBELINES STRIKES – Safety Advice for Drivers**

By a huge majority, Tubelines staff have voted for strike action over their management's refusal to give guarantees on job security and over their attempt to impose an inferior pay rise. Unless there is movement by Tubelines management, two 2-day strikes will take place as follows:

**From 1900 hrs on Wednesday 23<sup>rd</sup> June to 1900 hrs on 25<sup>th</sup> June**

**From 1900 hrs on Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> July to 1900 hrs on 16<sup>th</sup> July**

Tubelines are responsible for train and track maintenance on the Piccadilly line and carry out a range of safety related tasks. Drivers need to consider whether they think it safe to operate trains during the strike by Tubelines staff.

*First, there will be no Emergency Response Unit in the event of a serious incident on the line.*

*Second, it has become quite clear that there is a problem with the track: there have been numerous broken rails, temporary speed restrictions and a derailment in the last few months.*

Of course, it is up to you as a driver to decide if you think the company is providing a safe place of work. As a driver, you have the legal right to refuse to work on grounds of safety and it is up to the company to explain to you what they have done to make your workplace safe. Don't be bullied into driving if you feel it is no longer safe to do so - you will be doing yourself and your passengers a disservice. Please contact one of your safety reps if you require further advice.

# Around the Branch...

## Victoria Group

Things on the Victoria Group are much like everywhere else on the combine at the moment, but a few recent events stand out as examples of the direction in which the company is heading:

- DSMs on the group have been told by the GSM to issue warnings for *everything*;
- A member was issued an item after being absent for a vasectomy;
- Another member was given an item despite being off with the contagious disease chickenpox – the GSM's argument was that chickenpox is only contagious during the first stage of the illness!
- Staff cuts recently caused a ticket office to close for four days as ticket office staff were forced to cover CSA duties;
- Lack of minimum staff numbers forced a DSM to come from another station to help keep Victoria open.

It's enough to make you weep. *Instead of weeping, get ready to vote for strike action so that we can put an end to this lunacy.*

## Arnos Grove Depot

Apart from the usual management strong-arm tactics, the following issues are ongoing:

- The fixed link roster voted for by drivers will be introduced in December to coincide with the next Piccadilly line timetable;
- The pool operators' rest day roster is being withdrawn by management but, following pressure from local reps, will be replaced by a system which should still ensure that pool operators can plan their rest days well ahead;
- Payments for remote booking on/off at Oakwood are to be retained until there is a definite plan to reopen Oakwood as a trainstaff depot. Management had previously announced a unilateral ceasing of the payments but were forced to backtrack by our local reps;
- A driver was recently injured at Oakwood depot when boarding a train which had not been berthed properly. An accident at work? Not according to management who promptly issued the driver with an item for absence and used it to call him to an LDI where he received the maximum 26-week caution;
- In an act of breath-taking penny-pinching, management proposed to renege on a local agreement to provide sandwiches to drivers during weekend engineering works when drivers were working from Wood Green station. This followed the removal of the taxi service between Arnos Grove and Wood Green and its replacement by a people carrier driven by a DMT! Drivers threatened to travel to Arnos Grove for meal reliefs if the sandwiches were removed, causing severe problems for the train service. The sandwiches stayed!

## Finsbury Park Group

The GSM imposed a new CCEP on 16<sup>th</sup> May which reduces the minimum staff numbers required for Arsenal match days and special events sometimes held at Finsbury Park. Local health and safety reps are opposed to this potentially dangerous development and have told the GSM that they want the old CCEP restored pending a proper consultation with the unions. The GSM has so far declined to bring back the old CCEP. Staff are reminded of their legal right to refuse to work should they feel that they are in imminent danger in their workplace. The branch has agreed to design a proforma for use by staff in the event that the new minimum staff numbers put staff in danger. See your local reps for further information.

## **RMT secures ill-health pensions**

As you may recall, back in 2006 LUL attempted to push through a change to the rules regarding ill-health pensions. The proposed change would have meant that members forced to leave their job through ill health could have been denied an ill-health pension if they were able to do any other type of work for any other employer. The rules at the time were that a member was entitled to an ill-health pension if they no longer had the capacity to do their own job. This fundamental change was opposed only by RMT. Thanks to the stance taken by our union, the TfL Pensions Fund has agreed to revised guidelines which are acceptable to our union. A shortened version of the guidelines will be issued to reps.

**Members suffering career-ending accidents or illness can now sleep easier thanks to the principled efforts of the RMT.**

**Got an article for monthly news or want to bring a matter to the attention of the branch?**

**Email in full confidence to:-  
*FinsburyPark@rmt.org.uk***

## **Support the BA workers**

Cabin crews at British Airways are currently fighting to defend their working conditions against an all-out assault by their employer. British Airways has been prepared to use every means at its disposal to crush its staff, including the intimidation and dismissal of union reps, using the anti-union laws to get the strikes banned, and the removal of all travel perks. Despite the onslaught, the majority of BA cabin crews have maintained their resolve and are continuing the series of strikes that they have been forced to resort to.



The strikers have lost a lot of pay during this dispute and need your support to help them continue to a successful conclusion. You can help them by contributing to their strike fund. Please send cheques to:

### **'BASSA 2000 Strike Fund'**

**BASSA  
Unite House  
99 New Road  
Harlington  
UB3 5BQ**

## **We are next...**

Like 'British Airways', London Underground has plans to destroy our hard-won conditions, as do employers elsewhere as ordinary people are forced to pay for the banking crisis. A victory for BA workers would be a shot in the arm for all of us who are prepared to fight back.

## **Next Branch Meetings**

**Twelve Pins Public House (near Finsbury Park Stn)**

**July 1<sup>st</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup>**

**Starting at 1600 hrs**