



# On the Trains



*The newsletter by and for train staff*

*August 2008*

## NEW THREAT TO JOBS AND SAFETY

### NEW VICTORIA TRAINS PERFECTLY SAFE – IN THEIR IMAGINATIONS!

The RMT has written to LUL to say we do not accept automatic doors. It is planned that the new Victoria Line trains are designed so that the doors can open on their own without any safety check from the driver. NO matter what is happening on the platform, the train would just open the doors. They assure us that even after several years this would be fail safe

technology and would never open the doors in the tunnel. How do they know that? Easy – the private manufacturers have told them so!

So where are they going with all this? The fact is that the same private manufacturers now claim technology has advanced far enough to get rid of train operators on the Underground. Despite our ancient system of curved

tracks jam packed to the gills with passengers, they are seriously toying with the idea for the future. Instead of thinking about getting rid of drivers they should think about bringing back the guard and having extra platform staff. The cold reality is that people have died that could have been saved if there had been a guard on the train.

### Casualisation Dispute: Victory for RMT!

Recent threats of strike action combined with public campaigning by the RMT caused management to re-think their plans to cut station staff. We pointed out that a safe railway must be properly staffed. Videos will never substitute for staff.

LUL have now dropped their plans to close dozens of ticket offices. Furthermore they dropped plans to do away with station supervisors during traffic hours – not everything we want but even that could not have been achieved without determined action from your union.

Management also dropped their plans to water down the existing policy of train drivers and other staff to refuse to work or keep a train in service if there are serious safety concerns. This shows the strength of an all Grades industrial Trade Union!

### THANKS AND GOODBYE!

*RMT has been challenging the redeployment procedures that mean that after 20 years service you can be kicked out of your job because your hearing, or something else, is below their standards – only to be replaced by someone with far less safety experience! We have also asked Management to allow staff in medical redeployment to apply for TfL jobs, which now includes Metronet. We believe all medically redeployed staff should be given the offer of at least one job.*

### Piccadilly Line Dust-Up

Senior RMT Officers and Piccadilly Line Trains reps met with Management a few weeks ago to demand an end to intimidation and for LUL to keep to their agreed policies on attendance and discipline. One of the key issues was that Instead of looking at each attendance case properly, Management started to dish out the maximum warnings on every occasion. We threatened to pack up on the Picc if this continued. A satisfactory agreement was reached and this will be reviewed in the near future.

### ATTENDANCE AT WORK - NEW PROCEDURE?

**We have been told that at many Depots, Management are re-interpreting the Attendance at work policy (which we never agreed or signed up to!), Full 26 /52 week cautions are being given, despite people trying to minimise their time off, and any mitigation is being ignored!**

**We are now being told that things such as Hospital treatment that would not normally be itemised are now going to be! In truth, this is the policy that certain people at the top wanted, and as usual the innocent will suffer, the RMT will do all we can to fight this injustice!**

# PARTY TIME ON THE TUBE!

Following on from the drunken chaos on the Underground on May 31<sup>st</sup> we eagerly await Boris's plans for December 31<sup>st</sup>. Past years have seen the Tube transformed into mobile bars on New Years Eve as revellers get in the party spirit before midnight; then transformed into rivers of beer and vomit as they go home again after midnight. Boris's alcohol ban is hardly likely to reduce this mayhem.

Especially if, as in previous years, free travel is sponsored by a drinks company!

Boris's decision, taken with absolutely no consultation with the Trade Unions, to ban alcohol from June 1<sup>st</sup> has been fraught with problems. Train operators and station staff who witnessed the assaults and abuse on the "last night for drinking" parties can only look on with

apprehension as LUL plan all-night running for NYE.

Your RMT members on the Trains Functional Council are aware of your concerns and are closely scrutinising plans for all-night working. Be assured we will consult with members and reps before giving the go-ahead.

## RMT FIGHTS FOR FAIR REPRESENTATION

### But LUL and ASLEF don't want to know

Some RMT driver members are having to make do without a local rep due to the collusion between LUL and Aslef to exclude RMT reps from Hammersmith, Barking (H&C), Stratford and Loughton. At Loughton, Aslef only have a dozen members and have a local rep, we have 42 members but no rep.

On the Functional Council the situation is even more extreme: Aslef have 6 members to the RMT's 3. At a recent Company Council, Aslef claimed to

have in excess of 2,000 drivers (which is an absurd overestimation) on the Underground but refused to produce figures. RMT produced figures showing we have over 47% of the drivers as members but were ignored by LUL.

All these years of "You scratch my back and I'll scratch yours" are clearly paying off for Aslef; nowadays even TSSA are more militant than Aslef, and their members are leaving them in droves.

The RMT are considering going to ACAS to seek their involvement in sorting out this anomaly; in the short term we will redress the imbalance between areas where we are over-represented and those where we have no representation. Our aim, as always, is to ensure that our members continue to have the very best representation.

### *Around the Depots...*

#### **Arnos Grove**

- Local reps have negotiated a **pool operators' rest day roster** to be introduced in early October.
- Local management had been denying **first aiders** the chance to update / refresh their certificates. Following discussions, local reps have now negotiated a u-turn by management; first aiders will now be given the opportunity to keep their first aid skills up to date.
- At a recent Local Disciplinary Interview, management counted an **accident at work** as an item of non-attendance. This contradicts the company's Attendance at Work policy which states that accidents at work should be discounted. There is no longer an accident book. However, an EIRF must now be generated after any accident at work. If you have an accident at work, please ensure that all the correct details have been recorded, and that a detailed and accurate account of what happened is included.
- Members are reminded that, if they are off sick for 28 days or more, they are entitled to union representation at any **sickness interview**. In certain cases, representation is allowed before 28 days. If in doubt, please contact one of your reps.

# DANGEROUS WAVES

## Connect Radio: The Risks to your Health and Safety

Most lines are now fitted with the all-singing, all-dancing, new shiny Connect radios; 8 years late and god know how much over budget! There are 2 concerns your Trains Health and Safety Council reps have about this system: one is the move to Phase 2, which will see drivers take authority to pass signals at danger over the radio, and the other is the TETRA waves associated with the radio system.

The problems with moving to Phase 2 of Connect are that there are still many concerns that have yet to be addressed. There is still the problem of cross traffic, when we somehow manage to pick up messages from other controllers on other lines. One Bakerloo Line rep, driving north at Embankment Station, picked up the Circle Line controller, calling a train with the same number and telling him to reverse at Edgware Rd. Of course, there is no such move on the Bakerloo Line! If this message had been to pass a signal at danger, as

Phase 2 wants us to do, accidents will happen! Anecdotes like this are numerous. We are just not ready for combine-wide Phase 2.

The more serious issue of TETRA waves that the Connect system functions on is also far more complex. The crucial question is this: *are these waves dangerous?* The answer appears to be that no-one is entirely sure. There are reports for and against the safety of this system. The only way we will get concrete answers is over a long period of time and in the meantime, we are the guinea pigs. LU will tell you that we operate within the National Radiological Protection Board's (NRPB) safety limits. Reassuring, you might think until you hear that the NRPB's safety limits are 3,300 units compared to Poland's 100 units and Russia's 10 units. Not so reassuring after all!

As a result of the concerns of your safety reps, Bob Crow has recently asked LU to release all our safety reps for a full discussion of the issues with experts in the field in attendance. *This request was denied by LU.* What do they have to hide? Our understanding is that the discussion will go ahead regardless and all reps are encouraged to attend.

Another concern is the sheer amount of radiation that drivers are now subjected to in a confined space over long periods of time. As well as Connect, we have CCTV and a raft of other equipment at close quarters. This cannot be safe! Copies of Connect studies will be forwarded to your local reps. If you wish to view these files, just ask for a copy, or email any member of the Safety Council for more information.

## Cross Track Projection (XTP) Fiasco

Members may have already heard of Cross Track Projection or XTP as they like to call it. If you haven't, you will soon. These are the large projector screens that have been installed, firstly on the Victoria Line, and now on the Bakerloo Line. They will be coming to a location near you soon.

The first we heard of LU's intention to place these large screens and projectors on our stations was at a presentation given to the Trains health and Safety Council almost 18 months ago. The concerns we raised at the time were that we felt these screens with projected images might be a distraction to a driver entering the platform; the Platform Train Interface (PTI) is widely regarded as the highest risk area of the job. Your safety reps also had concerns about the SPAD risk these distractions might cause. Our only other concern was

where these screens would be placed; we made it clear that access/egress points to the platform would be unacceptable as crowding near entry/exit points would offer an additional risk to drivers, station staff and passengers alike. Our concerns were alleviated when we were told that the projector would stop screening as the train approached the platform and would not come back on until after the train had departed. We were also given assurances about the positioning of screens.

You won't be surprised to hear that LU has managed to renege on every assurance given! On the Bakerloo Line, at first, the projector would stay on until the train was well inside the platform, and would only go off when the train was 15 metres from the screen. Many drivers complained about distraction so

an emergency safety meeting was called. We were informed at the meeting that, due to the curvature of the platform, this was the best they could do. Despite calls for the projections to be turned off until a solution could be found, our concerns were ignored. It got even worse: sometimes the thing stays on the whole time, as the train enters the platform, sits at the platform and departs. They even positioned them next to platform exits!

We have been told that commands have come from the highest level of LU to keep the screens working. A classic example of profit before safety. Your safety council reps have passed this matter to RMT Head Office to deal with as a matter of urgency. Remember, when they come to your line, don't believe a word they say!

# Instructor Operator Review

Management have recently given the union draft proposals to review and change the way Instructor operators are recruited and managed and have proposed some important changes to the role which the Union has made objections to. The key change is that they are suggesting a two tier structure going back to the road trainer idea and a "super I/O" who will be off the roster and no longer doing driving as their main job. This is not acceptable for a

number of reasons. A review of the role is long overdue with different lines doing different things and it was only the vigilance of your reps which recently stopped them introducing "Lead I/Ops" on the Northern Line where I/Ops were hand picked and given the job to "advise" other drivers on such issues as wearing the correct uniform and picking up on time etc, and incident management. Might as well take some bin liners and clean the

train while they were at it! Needless to say this has been stopped, but is an example of the kind of multi-grade on the cheap way LUL would like to see the railway run if the RMT wasn't there. Discussions are continuing with management on the I/Op grade and if you have strong views you are advised to contact a Trains Council rep or attend the next Train grades meeting.

## Competence Assurance?

Another component of the new rulebook (guidelines!) is the introduction of the Competence assurance programme. This is being introduced to phase out the TD1 and TD2 system and instead we are going to have competence assessor DMTs (I know - a contradiction in terms!) who roam the system anonymously making sure we can drive trains and assessing things like making announcements and braking properly, etc over a two year period. Sneaky, huh! As well as this, there will no longer be ATOR where you pass or fail but "continuous development". Reps had to recently intervene, however, when Victoria line management tried to make the 5 day block a 4 day one! The union position is that we should have 5 full days of proper training in order to do our jobs safely and not have days for "corporate events" where we are told how great the company is. We need to keep a close eye on how this pans out as we believe that the company is trying to "dumb down" our job and make it more like working in McDonalds where it is easy to hire and fire. Don't worry you will get a gold star!

## Train Big Brother

*Along with being followed around by our white shirted friends, management are talking about bringing in forward facing cameras in trains for "safety reasons". OK, then can we have cameras in interviews where management refuse you a rep to make sure they are doing their job safely? We all know who we would nominate for eviction!*

## LUL'S NEW IDEA TO SPEED UP SACKINGS

*LUL senior management have come up with another jolly wheeze to sack staff more quickly by using TfL human resource managers to sit on disciplinary panels, despite the fact that they have no operational experience on the railways. These PMAs are supposed to offer unbiased, impartial advice to managers and staff alike. They are supposed to assist and support staff who are having problems with ill health and so on. In reality, of course, it's very different and they are starting to show their true faces. For some staff it'll be a nasty shock as the kindly Granny's bonnet and glasses are removed to reveal the Big Bad Wolf underneath.*

*You have been warned!*

### Functional Reps' telephone:

|                |              |
|----------------|--------------|
| Bill O'Dowd    | 07739 834688 |
| Dean O'Hanlon  | 07889 089064 |
| Vaughan Thomas | 07889 093942 |

### Health & Safety Tier 2 Reps' telephone:

|                |               |
|----------------|---------------|
| Jim McDaid     | 07834 117 378 |
| Dave Rayfield  | 07753 878 933 |
| Garry Houghton | 07834 448 956 |

## Contributions to newsletter

If you have any comments, local reports or articles you would like to share with us, feel free to email them to:

**[onthetrains@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:onthetrains@tiscali.co.uk)**

**Train Grades Meeting – last Thursday of every month, 1500 hours at Unity House**