



London Calling

News and views from RMT's London Transport Regional Council

www.rmtlondoncalling.org.uk

April 2009

Vote Yes (again)



80+ people have posted messages of support on our website.

"Good luck! You do a fantastic job

on the Underground, makes travelling through London fun, easy and exciting. I love you and you deserve better treatment!"

Lucy

"I rely on the stations and services you provide but, as long as RMT members have issues with their bosses, I am in solidarity with you. For the duration of any strike, I will gladly make alternative travel plans without a grain of resentment towards unionised workers, for I know it is the bosses and the great rail operators that are the cause of your conflict."

Eren Panesar, daily Tube passenger

"If we have a shabbily-treated public transport workforce we're going to have a shabby public transport service. We need a well-rewarded, high morale, high skills workforce. And a management that can move beyond picking pointless fights."

Gordon Nardell, Southwark Labour Councillor

"We welcome this stand by workers against yet another attempt by the bosses to make us suffer as a result of their mess. The attack facing transport workers is rooted in the same rationale that drives environmental damage: that bosses' profit at all costs should be the basis of society."

Climate Camp London

"Keep up the good work people, never EVER give in management bullying."

Fraser O'Shaughnessy, Prison Officers' Association Branch Chair, HMP Bronzefield

More: www.rmtlondoncalling.org.uk/supportus

RMT members have voted by a giant 13:1 majority to take action to defend jobs, pay and justice at work. Our employers - whether London Underground (LUL) or Transport for London (TfL) - can no longer pretend that staff accept their policies or do not have the will to fight them.

But, having failed to persuade us of their draconian policies, LUL has chosen to threaten and silence us instead. The company has had its lawyers find spurious legal loopholes to deny Underground workers our right to take action.

RMT will not be silenced, and will now re-ballot members. Sorry, but we will all need to vote Yes all over again! The best possible result would be if even more of us do so in the re-ballot than first time round.

Under Britain's anti-trade-union laws, an employer can have a strike banned for tiny errors, even if they have no effect on the ballot's outcome. In this case, the matrix that RMT sent to LUL setting out members' workplaces and grades contained some errors, which is almost inevitable given the amount of staff employed by LUL and the rate at which they move grade and location.

"Our members have given their overwhelming verdict on LUL's plans to cut jobs and pay, but Tube bosses have used anti-union laws to thwart their democratic will. LUL can be under no illusion about your strength of feeling and the need to negotiate sensibly, as I am sure the result of the re-ballot will be even more impressive."

Bob Crow RMT General Secretary

The issues remain exactly the same:

JOBS: LUL is axing 1,000 jobs; TfL plans to axe thousands more; LUL is denying its 'no compulsory redundancies' policy so that it can sack even more staff in the future.

PAY: LUL wants to cut your standard of living through its five-year, 1%-then-nothing pay 'offer'. TfL will not even discuss pay, even though your pay rise is already overdue!

JUSTICE: Managers are bullying staff through a brutal clampdown on discipline and attendance.

VOTE YES TO BOTH STRIKES AND ACTION SHORT OF STRIKES!



Q1 Are you prepared to take strike action?

LUL: Yes 3,165

No 619

Majority = 83.6%, or 5:1

TfL: Yes 71

No 15

Majority = 82.6%, or 5:1

Q2 Are you prepared to take industrial action short of a strike?

LUL: Yes 3,495

No 266

Majority = 92.9%, or 13:1

TfL: Yes 76

No 9

Majority = 89.4%, or 8:1

HOW YOU VOTED



LUL Pay Talks Report: No Movement From Management

On 2 April, RMT and other unions' representatives met with London Underground to discuss your pay:

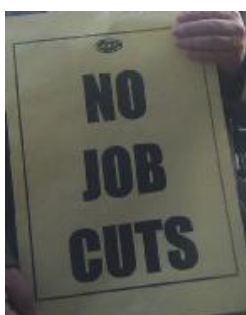
- LUL did not revise its offer at all.
- With February's RPI at 0%, LUL's offer is 1% this year, followed by RPI only for the next four years.
- All the unions rejected this.
- RMT and TSSA insisted on a one-year deal only.
- RMT gave evidence that the real rate of inflation as it affects members is much higher than RPI, and argued that CPI (now at 3.2%) is currently a better indicator, and that the figure of 5% we gave in our claim would be a good point from which to start negotiations.

- LUL invited us to revise our pay claim, but we saw no reason to do so.

- We asked for the company to open their books and allow us full access to their financial information; they refused, offering instead a presentation on finance at the next meeting.

LUL is willing to see your standard of living steadily deteriorate over the next five years, despite your hard work delivering improvements and day-to-day running of the railway.

This unproductive meeting simply re-affirmed our view that we need to take industrial action to make management see sense.



London Underground is cutting 1,000 jobs, and TfL could cut thousands more over the next 18 months.

The company is making a lot of the fact that these staff are non-operational. But a worker is a worker, and losing your job in a recession is terrible whatever grade you are in. RMT is an all-grades union, and will defend all grades.

In any case, these job cuts will not stop in the offices. LUL has a worked-out strategy for driving custom away from its ticket offices so that it can do away with jobs. It has ideas for cutting jobs on service control, stations, trains, engineering and fleet too. None of us is safe.

This is why LUL is refusing to honour our 'no compulsory redundancies' agreement, which all grades won by striking together in 2001.

Are We Acting Too Soon?

Perhaps RMT should allow talks to continue before taking industrial action?

This has how things have happened in the past. But we know that staff are sick of seeing pay talks drag on for months, often lasting until nearly Christmas, or even into the following year!

Your pay rise was due on 1 April. Now we are past that date, LUL/TfL owe you money. RMT is no longer prepared to allow your employer to withhold the money it owes you while they drag out talks. Banks are loathe to lend money these days, so we don't see why staff should be forced to lend your pay rise to your employer!

Anyway, experience tells us that nothing gets management talking more than the threat of industrial action!

Why RPI Is Not Nearly Enough

An RMT member writes ...

I wrongly thought there was only one 'rate of inflation', the RPI, and I also wrongly thought that as long as I'm getting a pay rise equal to or greater than that rate I'd be better off.

Then I read an article on the BBC website: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/business/7844962.stm>. It helps explain that the RPI gives a misleading impression about the state of the economy and the true cost of inflation, whilst the CPI (the government's preferred measure) is a much higher rate of inflation and gives a more accurate portrayal of the cost of living.



Therefore, any pay deal lower than the CPI is worse than a pay freeze, it's the equivalent of a pay cut.

I'm hoping you will share this information and web-link with the rest of the membership, so that we can all know what we're striking for.

Latest figures: the real rate of inflation

FOOD
12.5%



EGGS
11.2%



VEGETABLES
9%



FRUIT
16%



ELECTRICITY
18%



GAS
33.1%



YOUR PAY RISE?
1%



Food price rises January 2008-January 2009
fuel price rises February 2008-February 2009
Source: Office of National Statistics

How Management Are Attacking Your Sickness Rights

Here are the Top 20 techniques management are using to crack down on non-attendance ie. to pressure sick staff back to work:

- 1 Disciplinary action when a manager sees a 'pattern' in what is in reality a coincidence.
- 2 Issuing a 52-week written warning for a first breach of the policy, contradicting the policy of a maximum 26-week oral warning.
- 3 Counting items towards a warning that have been used towards a previous warning.
- 4 Sending nearly every case to LDI, despite policy that the "often the right word at the right time is all that's needed".
- 5 Hardly any LDIs resulting in any outcome other than the maximum warning.
- 6 Holding 'fact-finding' interviews with staff, which resemble disciplinary interviews except for the absence of a union rep!
- 7 Calling staff in for a meeting before they have been off for 28 days as required by the policy.
- 8 Refusing union representation at meetings to sick staff.
- 9 Calling in staff for sickness reviews who are not off sick.
- 10 Sending staff to LUOH on their return to work, even if s/he feels there is no need.
- 11 Imposing 'local sickness reporting procedures' which contradict company policy.
- 12 Contacting staff off sick unreasonably often.
- 13 Significantly narrowing the range of items that are not counted against you. eg. counting invasive surgery and accidents to and from work.
- 14 Stopping Company Sick Pay on very weak pretexts.
- 15 Stopping Company Sick Pay when the staff member follows his/her GP's advice and stays off sick when LUOH says that s/he can return to work.
- 16 Unannounced visits to sick staff's homes by managers - managers even asking neighbours about your whereabouts.
- 17 Stopping sick pay to staff with medical certification from an overseas doctor.
- 18 Forcing staff who are sick to take their annual leave when still signed off.
- 19 Sacking staff on medical grounds without offering redeployment.
- 20 Including family leave and dependants' leave as items to issue warnings.

Each of these is an attack on staffs' rights. Together, they are a concerted drive by management to bully sick staff to work. Maybe management have a crusading think-tank coming up with a new idea to oppress staff every week. They will doubtless add to this list for as long as we let them.

Gerry Duffy, LU's Director of Employee Relations claims that RMT has "no proof" of LU's abuse of policies. Here's proof for you, Gerry!

A senior Human Resources manager sent the email below to other managers. It shows that LUL is disregarding its own policy that warnings should be "up to" 26/52 weeks and that managers have discretion to issue lesser warnings.



For the avoidance of doubt I thought I should once again confirm that all Oral Warnings which are issued for infringements of the AAW Procedure should be of 26 weeks in length. There should be no reduction of this under any circumstances.

Equally, Written Warnings should be 52 weeks in length with no reduction.

I appreciate that most of you know this (having heard it 1,000 times), but it does seem to have slipped by the odd 1 or 2 of you (no names mentioned - you'll have to buy me a beer on Friday first!). Can you please ensure that all your DMTs/Service Managers are once again advised of this.

Stop Victimising Elaine!



RMT has demanded that London Underground stop its victimisation of Waterloo station staff representative Elaine Holness (pictured).

LUL has stood Elaine down from duties pending an investigation into allegations that she 'racially harassed' a manager. What had she done to warrant this? She had given evidence at an Employment Tribunal in support of sacked RMT member Mo Makhboul which included criticising a manager.

This action against Elaine is the latest in a series of discriminatory acts against her. Others include docking her pay for attending a doctor's appointment and preventing her attending a TUC conference.

RMT believe that Elaine is the target of a management plan to:

- prevent her from carrying out her duty to appear as a witness at an Employment Tribunal for another sacked RMT member, Gyles Henry.
- remove a very effective representative from her workplace.
- tarnish her reputation by turning the truth on its head. Elaine has a history of opposing racism but being accused of racial harassment.

Elaine Holness has been targeted because of her trade union activities and her stance of actively opposing racism.

Elaine has received awards for her charitable work and is an outstanding example of good citizenship. If London Underground believe they can victimise this woman, no-one is safe and no-one can give evidence in Tribunals.

RMT Regional Organiser Steve Hedley has written to LUL that "the allegations made against Elaine are of a malicious and vexatious nature" and that the manager who accused Elaine did so only because she gave evidence against him in the Employment Tribunal. Steve has appealed to senior LUL management "to see this case for exactly what it is".

Willesden Green Strike Report

Industrial action by Willesden Green group station staff against management bullying on 8 and 9 April was a success.

Particular thanks go to the many managers who somehow found time in their "busy and demanding schedules" to keep seats warm at various stations. This freed staff taking industrial action to hand out thousands of leaflets to customers informing them of the harassment, intimidation and bullying to which staff on the Willesden Green Group are subject.

Staff received a very positive and inspiring response from all but one of the customers who received leaflets. Local organisations invited RMT representatives to their meetings to explain how Willesden Green staff have been mistreated.

All participating staff engaged in a happy and positive picket outside Willesden Green station.

The Evening Standard highlighted the action in an article that reminded all of London that what is happening on the Willesden Green Group today was happening at North Greenwich Traincrew Depot in 2004.



Section 12 Victory

A massive campaign, led by RMT, has forced the government to drop its plans to scrap Section 12 regulations.

The government wanted to replace Section 12 - standards imposed in the wake of the 1987 King's Cross fire, which claimed 31 lives - with the less specific 2005 'Fire Safety Order'.

But RMT organised protests and lobbying, and our Parliamentary group, led by John McDonnell MP, pressed the issue. The government postponed scrapping Section 12 and has now incorporated its key provisions into the new Fire Precautions (sub-surface railway stations) England Regulations, which should come into force in October.

RMT Demands Snow Day Pay

Despite assurances, London Underground managers are insisting on deducting pay or leave from staff who could not get to work on the day of heavy snow in early February. RMT is not going to tolerate this, and will not - as LUL seems to expect us to - let the issue go.

RMT has written to LUL, pointing out that the Mayor and TfL gave public pledges at the time that anyone who was genuinely unable to attend work would not be penalised. Despite this, many managers are refusing to even consider paid special leave for staff, however genuine their inability to attend work, and are insisting that the staff take either unpaid or annual leave. Some of our members spent several hours trying to reach

work only to be forced to turn back, but despite this, have had pay or leave docked. TfL cancelled the buses, and the Mayor advised people not to travel to work.

RMT has insisted that LUL urgently advise managers that they do have the discretion to give paid special leave. If RMT members continue to have their pay and leave deducted in such a grossly unfair manner, the union will approach the Mayor and the media to press the case for just treatment of our members.

If you have had pay or leave docked, please submit a grievance. Your RMT rep can help you, and you can find a model grievance letter, and more information about this issue, here: www.rmtplatform.org.uk/weather.

Victoria Line Drivers To Strike

RMT members at Seven Sisters depot have voted 82-17 to strike, and will do so for 24 hours starting with the night turns on Tuesday 21 April. The strike is to demand:

- The reinstatement of sacked driver Carl Campbell
- An end to managers' misuse of attendance and disciplinary procedures
- Proper installation of Correct Side Door Enable equipment as on all other lines
- An end to the victimisation of RMT activist Glenroy Watson

Join

- Get an application form from your local RMT rep
- By phone: 0800-376-3706
- Join online:

www.rmt.org.uk/join

www.rmtlondoncalling.org.uk

Check out our website for information, news, materials to download, reports from RMT in your grade and company, a diary of events and much much more. To make the most of the website, register for an account and log in whenever you visit.

RMT's London Transport Regional Council meets on the last Thursday of every month except June and December, 4.30-6.30pm at Somers Town Community Centre, Ossulston Street, near Euston / St. Pancras stations. All members are welcome to attend.

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