



London Calling

News and views from RMT's London Transport Regional Council

www.rmtlondoncalling.org.uk

13 July 2009

National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers

The fight goes on

by Janine Booth, RMT Regional Council Secretary



Young RMT members lead the picket at Leyton signals depot

RMT's strike action last month has won some steps forward in our fight for jobs, pay and justice – but these steps are not enough, and we may well need to strike again.

On Monday 6 July, around 200 RMT reps and members met to discuss the dispute. They unanimously agreed to reject LUL's stance, and to renew efforts to explain the issues. This special issue of 'RMT London Calling' aims to do that.

The issues

RMT is campaigning for:

- Jobs – not just those currently under threat, but the job security of everyone who works on London Underground and TfL.
- Pay – for a better deal than the real-terms pay cut currently on offer; and for improvements in working conditions.
- Justice – an end to the regime of management bullying of staff which is blighting our working lives.

Our strike

RMT's 2-day strike in June was very effective – despite management propaganda otherwise. Not only did the strike cause massive disruption to services, it also forced concessions from management:

- The original 5-year pay offer is down to 2 years
- The money on offer has gone up a little
- LUL has agreed to stick by one aspect of its Attendance policy and give maximum 26-week warnings for first breaches of the policy.

But we still have a way to go. As this issue of 'RMT London Calling' explains, your job security is still under threat, the pay offer still falls short of what you deserve, and managers still mistreat staff.

We are not alone

THE media would have you believe that everyone hates us for striking. But we have received hundreds of messages of support. A recent Metro opinion poll found that 60% of the public supports the right of Tube workers to strike.

The Unite union is now balloting its London Underground members over pay.

Other workers are battling over similar issues. Oil refinery workers have won an important fight to defend their jobs and the agreement which sets out their conditions of work. Postal workers have forced the government to withdraw its plan to privatise Royal Mail, and are taking strike action over pay and conditions.

Talking is not enough

RMT wants to settle, not to strike. We want to resolve these issues through talking, but LUL and TfL management are stalling talks and refusing to discuss the issues at all seriously.

LUL allowed months to pass between pay talks; TfL did not even make a pay offer until after our strike. As we write, no new talks are scheduled, although RMT is ready to talk at any time.

"This dispute is about jobs, pay and justice. It is also about whether we allow management to walk all over us."

**Oliver New,
RMT National Executive**

For months before our strike, the employers either refused to talk, or came to talks empty-handed. Then just before our strike, and just after, management made concessions. Since then, nothing again.

Management have proved to us that they only take our demands seriously when they know we intend to strike. So if they do not start negotiating seriously, we will call more strikes.

We do not do so lightly, but because we know that everything our members have, we have won through RMT taking action. Many reps report that strike action will be even stronger next time as the issues become clearer and organisation better.

You may feel that you can't afford to strike – but if you read this newsletter, you will realise that you can't afford not to. ■

Keep yourself informed

We know that some aspects of these issues can seem confusing. We also know that management and the media put out propaganda designed to undermine our action, and have even stooped to circulating lies.

- talk to your RMT rep
- read RMT newsletters and leaflets
- come to RMT meetings
- read our website:
www.rmtlondoncalling.org.uk

All grades united for workers' rights and public transport

Jobs

LONDON UNDERGROUND is shedding 1,000 jobs, and is considering making compulsory redundancies. Around 70 staff are still under threat of being forcibly sacked.

The company's action directly breaches our 'no compulsory redundancies' agreement (see box for details). If LUL gets away with breaching this agreement for this group of staff – who are in administrative and management grades – then it will try the same for other staff too. **Your job and your grade could be next.**

Admin now, other grades next

THIS time, LUL wants to sack admin staff and managers – so it has come up with a spurious claim that the 'no compulsory redundancies' policy does not apply to admin staff and managers. Next time, it may want to sack ticket sellers, or drivers – then it will come up with another spurious claim that the 'no compulsory redundancies' policy does not apply to ticket sellers, or drivers.

So RMT's current dispute is not just about defending the 70 admin staff and managers currently under threat, but about defending every job and every worker on London Underground and TfL.

RMT has calculated that the total financial black hole facing TfL/LUL is pushing £6 billion with 3,000 jobs at risk. This may get even higher with the impending collapse of TubeLines. We have already exposed £60 million of maintenance cuts on former Metronet lines.

How do you think that the company will achieve these financial cuts? By coming for your job, your wages, your conditions.

"We never ask our members to sacrifice their hard-earned money lightly. But neither can we let your job be sacrificed by a management and a Mayor determined to push through compulsory redundancies to pay for the £6 billion debt run up by the disastrous privatisations of Metronet and TubeLines.

"Our motto as a union is 'unity is strength'. If we allow them to pick us off one grade at a time we will all be losers in the end. That's why we must stand together to defend all our jobs."

***Steve Hedley,
RMT Regional Organiser***



RMT members picket Queen's Park depot

No grade is safe

- New technology enables 'driverless trains'.
- LUL is working hard to drive business away from ticket office windows in order to cut ticket office jobs in the near future.
- The company is 'reviewing' station staffing levels ie. planning to cut them.
- Service control has already lost jobs through restructuring – more could face the chop.
- LUL/TfL are refusing to fill vacancies – for example, in revenue control and on stations – as a precursor to scrapping these jobs.
- TfL has an 'Organisational Change Process' which could see thousands of jobs cut across all departments.
- If LUL breaks this agreement, it will break others too – then any of us could find ourselves stripped of our rights, or sacked for the smallest error.

The best way to defend these jobs is to defend the 'Jobs for Life' deal now. If we wait for each round of job cuts, then we will be divided and weak. When it comes round to your job and your grade, there may be no-one left to fight for you.

Just talking isn't working

RMT has held many meetings over many months with management trying to get them to abide by their own agreement. We have talked to management face-to-face and through ACAS. They simply refuse to accept that words mean what they say.

London Underground Ltd has ignored straightforward words, ignored your union's clearly-argued case, and has even ignored former Mayor Ken Livingstone's confirmation that the 'Jobs for Life' deal applies to all staff.

Experience tells us that only industrial action makes them listen. ■

The 'Jobs for Life' deal

IN 2001, RMT and ASLEF took strike action to defend members from the potential effects of the Public-Private Partnership. The dispute concluded with a settlement that the press labelled the 'Jobs for Life deal'.

You can read the agreement in full here:

www.rmtlondoncalling.org.uk/jobs4life

It states that:

- "no compulsory redundancies will take place"
- "This agreement applies to all staff employed by LUL, the Infracos and their subsidiaries."
- "It will pass to new employers as part of any future transfer arrangements"
- A staff member whose job is made redundant "will remain employed and be 'used to best advantage', until a suitable alternative job can be offered."
- The Code of Practice which reflects this agreement is "contractually binding" on London Underground and "successive employers".

These commitments are crystal clear. And yet London Underground Ltd is insisting that these words do not mean what they say – that the agreement does not apply to all staff and that the company can make compulsory redundancies.

Pay

■ London Underground's current pay offer is 1.5% this year then RPI+0.5% next year (minimum 0.5%).

■ Transport for London finally made a pay offer nearly three months after the pay rise was due! It is a 4-year offer: 1.5% Year 1, then RPI+0.5% years 2, 3 and 4 (minimum 0.5%).

Both these offers are unacceptable. RPI seriously underestimates real inflation as it affects working people, as the figures on this page show. So these 'offers' cut your pay in real terms.

Even the Evening Standard described the money on offer as 'meagre'.

Moreover, both companies have refused RMT's claims for improved conditions eg.

a guaranteed alternative job for anyone who becomes medically unfit for their post; more family-friendly policies; improvements to staff travel facilities. ■



Real inflation

- Food and non-alcoholic beverages: up 7.8%.
- fuel and light: up 9.7%
- gas: up 23.5%
- electricity: up 6.8%.
- leisure services: up 5.6%

Some prices have gone down eg. new cars. However, while you might be able to economise by not buying a car this year, you can not do without food and fuel!

Are other workers taking low pay settlements?

RECENT pay settlements put London Underground's and TfL's current offers in perspective:

- HBOS: 4.25%
- Lloyds TSB: 4%
- Stagecoach South West: up to 4.5%
- Hitachi: 4.2% from 1 January 2009, plus 3% from 1 April 2009

Some people's pay is ok!

WHILE your employer refuses to put more money in your pocket, some people's pockets are being generously lined:

- TfL has paid out over £15 million to consultants in one section alone - congestion charging and traffic enforcement.
- Consultant Deloitte's partners (ie. individual consultants) charge TfL £2,761 a day.
- TfL and London Underground pay 231 senior managers over £100,000 a year; 13 more than £200,000; and 5 receive more than quarter of a million pounds per year.
- The top boss is on £540,000-£549,999

RMT says: LUL and TfL should open their books and let us find the money to save jobs and pay decent wages to workers.



The people paid **THIS** much think that the people paid **THIS** much should have their pay cut in real terms.

Justice

The mistreatment that RMT is trying to stop

LUL management run a regime of fear and injustice against staff. Through our action so far, we have forced the company to stop issuing warnings over 26 weeks for first breaches of attendance standards. But there is still a litany of abuses that we need to stop, including:

- Managers rarely dealing with sickness absence informally, as the policy allows them to.
- Managers rarely showing discretion and giving lower than maximum warnings.
- Unfair use of 'patterning'.

- Calling staff in for meetings after just a few days off sick.
- Denying sick staff their right to union representation.
- Excessive contact with staff off sick.
- Stopping Company Sick Pay to 'starve you back to work'.
- Unannounced visits to sick staff's homes by duty managers.

This regime does not just target 'skivers', but affects all of us. It puts unbearable pressure on hard-working staff who are genuinely too sick to attend work, and forces people to come to work when they should be at home recovering. ■

Victimisation cases

RMT has highlighted to LUL management the cases of seven RMT members who have been unjustly disciplined. Three are stations reps currently suspended from work on spurious grounds. Others are drivers.

We offered to have the cases referred to binding arbitration by ACAS - but LUL refused!

Sadly, this is typical of the company's frustration of RMT's efforts to resolve this dispute through talking.

Paying out to aggrieved employees

SHOCKING figures show that TfL and LUL spent at least £4,330,052.68 fighting Employment Tribunal claims between April 2006 and December 2008 - which amounts to more than £130,000 per month; or £4,300+ per day!

This illustrates the extent of employee grievances, vindicating RMT's allegations of systematic mistreatment of staff. It also shows the amount of public money being spent to prop up the companies' oppressive management regime at a time when they say that they 'can not afford' a decent pay rise.

RMT demands a living wage for tube cleaners



ON Wednesday 17 June, RMT protested outside Mayor's Question Time against Tube cleaners' poverty pay. Protesters demanded that Mayor Boris Johnson

keep his promise that everyone working for the GLA or in its areas of responsibility would receive the London Living Wage, recently updated to £7.60 an hour.

Several cleaners addressed the protest, outlining the appalling conditions under which they work, and calling for improved health and safety, sick pay and better holidays, as well as improved pay.

Two members of RMT's Parliamentary group - MPs Jeremy Corbyn and John McDonnell - also addressed the gathering, before going in to City Hall to present a letter to the Mayor demanding the London Living Wage for Tube cleaners.

Cleaners' supporters went into the public gallery for Mayor's Question Time, but were ejected after shouting out demands for a living wage for cleaners.

Where's our snow day pay?



RMT's protest also called on Boris to fulfil another promise: that no member of staff would be penalised for being unable to make it to work on 2 February

due to the heavy snowfall on that day. A snowman took part in the protest and RMT delivered a letter to GLA members drawing their attention to the fact that London Underground management has denied over 500 of its staff paid special leave for the day. ■



RMT members joined this year's Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender (LGBT) Pride parade on Saturday 4 July, showing the union's commitment to fighting prejudice. If you would like to get involved in campaigning for LGBT rights, please email our regional LGBT Officer, Brian Haughian: lgbt@rmtlondoncalling.org.uk

RMT ramblers want your support

RMT reps Jim McDaid, Garry Houghton, Den Fitzpatrick and Dave Rayfield are taking part in the 3 Peaks challenge (which involves climbing Snowdon, Scafell Pike and Ben Nevis one after the other) on 17 September to raise money for The Railway Children charity and they would appreciate your support.

It's easy to donate online with a credit or debit card - just go to:

www.justgiving.com/thermtrambler

JustGiving sends your donation straight to The Railway Children and automatically reclaims Gift Aid if you're a UK taxpayer, so your donation is worth even more. ■

TubeLines to collapse?

RMT has warned of another potential privatisation collapse on the Tube as a £2 billion funding row broke out between TubeLines and Transport for London which could put essential works and thousands of jobs at risk.

TubeLines has tried to hack £2 billion from its estimated costs of £7.2 billion on the work programme for the next seven-and-half years with a significant scaling back of the scope of the planned works.

Bob Crow, RMT General Secretary, said:

"This row all stems from the botched PPP privatisation of the Tube and it is not out of the question that we could see another failure similar to Metronet with Londoners left to pick up the pieces.

"Our advice to Boris Johnson and TfL is to seize this opportunity to get rid of TubeLines, take these works back into direct public control and work out a funding programme which protects jobs and the upgrade programme in the run-up to 2012 and beyond." ■

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