Relations between the British Transport Police and LU station staff have been somewhat strained of late.

This was exacerbated by the news, reported in Tubeworker last month, that BTP officers conducted a covert operation at Piccadilly Circus, where they effectively spied on staff and undertook acts of antisocial behaviour in order to “gauge staff reaction”.

Meanwhile, mainline train companies have been trialling wearable body cameras for station staff, in an effort to reduce assaults. There have previously been body-camera trials for LU staff too, including revenue inspectors and station staff at a few locations.

What to make of all of this? Are camera and more cops the answer to antisocial behaviour?

Tubeworker urges caution. As the Piccadilly Circus incident shows, the BTP can hardly be trusted to help us out, even when they are present. The police aren’t reliable allies. The police as an institution has a specific social role; when we strike, it’s the police that come to restrict our ability to picket effectively. They’re there to protect property far more than people. We do want the police to respond quickly when called, and process our reports seriously and efficiently. But flooding our stations with cops will create a nervy, tense atmosphere for passengers and staff. If anything it could lead to more antisocial behaviour.

LU tells us it’s our responsibility to de-escalate situations that could lead to assaults. Fine, but in that case we need to be supported in doing that by our employer - not via tokenistic workshops, but by improving our terms and conditions.

We’ll be much more level-headed if we’re not fatigued from constant extreme shifts and lone working. The mixed messages from the company are starting to grate: they, rightly, tell us not to intervene with fare evaders, but are also now insisting we shepherd customers with Code 36s on their Oysters over to the POMs to top up, thereby potentially putting ourselves in danger. And remember, LU has consistently cut the number of Revenue Control Inspectors (RCIs).

Bodycams are a big risk, too. We’re railway workers, not bouncers. And do we want to expand a surveillance culture where all interactions are monitored and recorded? Issuing staff with wearable cameras would normalise assaults as part of the job. It says to staff, “you should expect to get assaulted; at least you can record it while it’s happening”.

We believe the key thing we need to reduce staff assaults is more staff. Having an increased staff presence makes us all safer, improves customer services (so the passengers are less pissed off!), and would reduce or eliminate lone working.

---

COPS AND CAMS ARE NOT THE ANSWER

A police officer attacks a journalist during the 1984/5 miners’ strike. The police as an institution is hostile to workers’ struggle.

STRIKES DUE ON CENTRAL AND PICC LINES

Aslef and RMT drivers on the Central Line, and RMT drivers on the Picc, are due to strike on 7 November.

RMT’s Central Line strike will demand reinstatement for Paul Bailey, a driver sacked after “failing” a D&A test. In fact, legal hemp supplements caused Paul to test positive for cannabinoid substances, but a second test of his B sample showed him well within the cut-off limit of 50-ng/mL. LU is yet to even release the result of his first test, simply maintaining, “he failed”. This is an injustice that must be reversed.

The strike will also raise issues around what the union calls a “breakdown industrial relations”. This phrase is jargon; we should be clearer on what our strikes are about, and on what their demands are. In this case, it’s a strike against management bullying and authoritarian application of the attendance policy.

There are similar ongoing issues on the Picc. Meetings of reps, ideally from both unions on both lines, would be useful forums for discussing ongoing strategy. Unions also need to consider how to build localised disputes into coordinated fightbacks that not only respond to local issues, but address the big issues in the background.

These include the abolition of TfL’s operating subsidy, and management’s ongoing stated aim of moving towards driverless technology.
REINSTATE ANTHONY CODD!
Track Access Control members of the RMT have voted for strikes to defend Anthony Codd, sacked for doing his job during an LDI.

Anthony was sacked, following a shoddy procedure, for refusing to give the maximum sanction. RMT members in his department believe he is being targeted for standing up to safety abuses.

Strike dates will be announced soon.

SIGNAL OPERATORS BITE BACK
When fleas infested Rickmansworth signal cabin, operators refused to work in there.

Faced with this defiance, management soon got the problem cleaned up.

A fine example to us all. Remember your right to refuse!

SILENCE IS GOLDEN
Tubeworker is pleased to hear that London Underground Ltd has apparently seen sense over its disastrous plan to allow adverts to be broadcast over station PAs.

We will stay alert, though, as the withdrawal of government funding to the Tube will push management into more and more ludicrous money-raising ideas.

LONDON OVERGROUND PLANS TICKET OFFICE CLOSURES
London Overground is planning its own “Fit for the Future”, with ticket offices set to close.

Support the RMT campaign against the cuts and closures by visiting bit.ly/lo-fight.

ACTION ON STATIONS
After 18 months of industrial peace, local disputes are brewing on stations.

Staff at Baker Street look set to ballot to demand the reinstatement of a sacked probationer (amongst other issues), and disputes on the Bakerloo North Group and the Bakerloo South Group, over non-covering of duties, seem likely too.

Solid action will hit the service, and could light the beacon for other station groups to launch disputes.