



tubeworker

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RMT NATIONAL PRESIDENT ELECTION: VOTE MICHELLE RODGERS

Michelle Rodgers works for Arriva Rail North, where she is a local RMT rep. She sat on the union's National Executive Committee (NEC) from 2014-2017, and is the secretary of RMT Manchester South branch.

She is standing to be the union's next national president; *Tubeworker* is supporting her campaign. We spoke to Michelle about her approach to trade unionism and why London Underground workers should vote for her.

Q: How would you explain the role of the president?

A: The president is there to ensure the union is run democratically.

They are released from their job for a three-year term before going back to work. The president is a voice for the grassroots membership in the national leadership of the union, helping to ensure the union takes its direction from the wishes of the members.

PICC-ET LINE BULLETIN

As *Tubeworker* went to press, drivers' strikes were due to begin on the Piccadilly Line.

Strikes were planned for 11-14 July, but suspended after management offered a deal. They've since reneged, so strikes are back on.

The bosses can't be trusted. We need to remind them who actually makes the job run (i.e., workers, not bosses) to ensure real concessions.

If we train ourselves to expect strikes to be called off, eventually people will stop voting for them.

The model shouldn't be negotiators saying, "give us a deal and we'll suspend the strikes", it should be negotiators saying "these are our demands: will you meet them?", and if the company responds in the negative, we strike. Simple.

Q: What kind of president would you be?

A: I cut my teeth in a lengthy unofficial strike in 1993.

That taught me a lot. The key lesson I learnt was that as workers, our power ultimately comes from our ability to withdraw our labour.

I'm well aware of all the industrial issues LU workers are facing, across all grades, as well as the major political issue of the Tories' cuts to TfL funding, and the struggles of outsourced workers like cleaners.

Our best means of winning change on all of these is through coordinated industrial action.

RMT has a proud history of helping members organise to take action; as president, I'd ensure that any group of workers who wanted to take action to improve their conditions at work were supported and encouraged in doing that, rather than being dissuaded or held back.

Q: The workforce in many parts of London Underground, especially on stations and amongst cleaners, is very diverse; how will you ensure the full diversity of the unions' membership is represented?

A: I am the equalities candidate in this election. I'm a strong believer that all the equalities campaigns within the union – women members, LGBT members, BAME members, and disabled members – should be empowered. Those members are often under-represented in the union. They should be at the heart of what the union does.



Q: There is a growing conversation about mental health in society; how would you continue that conversation within the union?

A: As a local rep and branch officer, my door is always open. That would be my policy if elected as national president. My door would always be open to any member. We need to be open and honest with each other about pressures we're facing, and mental health issues we may be experiencing.

Q: There's sometimes a frustration that, when we pass resolutions through our RMT branches, they seem to get lost in union officialdom or knocked back for bureaucratic reasons. What would you do as president to improve that?

A: I will be in constant communication with your elected reps and officers at all levels, from workplace reps to branch officers to your National Executive member, to ensure that the resolutions you pass through your branches are responded to and acted on as swiftly as possible. I'm not afraid to stand up to national officers like the General Secretary and Assistant General Secretaries when necessary. The union must be led by the democratic decisions of our members. The president is there to ensure that happens.

This interview is abridged. To read the full version, go to bit.ly/vote-michelle

Ballot papers will be posted to RMT members' home addresses from 1 October. If you haven't received your ballot by 8 October, speak to your local rep.

CLEANERS' COLUMN

DIRECT EMPLOYMENT NOW

It's time to kick agencies like AGS People and Premier Work Services off the job, and ensure direct employment for all cleaners.

Rather than transferring agency cleaners onto direct contracts with ABM on the basis of how long they've been on the job, lists are going round that seem to be based on who managers and supervisors want to give the jobs to.

Meanwhile, agency cleaners continue to report short payment, with some receiving threats when they try to stand up for themselves.

SCRAP THE QR SIGN-ON

RMT has written to ABM to insist the shambolic QR code sign-on system be scrapped.

The sign-on system has to be functional, and the employer, not individual cleaners, need to be responsible for the technological hardware needed for any system.

It's also important the tech isn't used to spy on or track cleaners.

BREXIT THREATENS MIGRANTS' RIGHTS

There's ongoing uncertainty for migrant workers, both EU and non-EU, about how Britain's immigration laws might be reformed if Brexit goes ahead.

We already know that cleaning contractors use immigration controls to undermine workers' organisation; they have targeted union reps in ISS and shopped them to border police in the past.

If the immigration system is overhauled to make visa conditions more restrictive, or to force EU migrants to reapply for leave to remain, it could lead to cleaners having their right to work revoked or, worse, facing deportation.

Tubeworker believes closed borders help divide workers on the basis of national origin or immigration status. We believe free movement is a human right.

Whatever its position on borders, RMT must defend its migrant worker members and stand up for their right to remain amidst the Brexit chaos.

RIP RCT

The "Rostering and Coverage Tool", a semi-automated system for covering duties on stations, swapping duties and annual leave, etc., has been scrapped.

It was already years behind schedule. It clearly wasn't fit for purpose. It should've been abandoned long before now.

How much money has been wasted on this folly?

SECURITY=MORE STAFF

Aslef drivers have voted for strikes on cab security. We should remind ourselves that a technical fix is not enough

Real security requires adequate staffing levels. If drivers have incidents, they need station staff on hand to assist.

Let's demand increased staffing levels as well as more secure cabs.

AMBASSADOR, YOU ARE SPOILING US...

A post on Yammer reveals that "Ambassadors" working a shift on stations can get up £240 for a weekend or Bank Holiday shift.

This is way more than CSA1s or 2s get. What an insult!

If extra people are needed on stations, LU should hire and train more station staff, not plug gaps with "Ambassadors".

NEW SCHOOL VS. OLD SCHOOL?

LU is hiring more new starters from industries like retail, with little culture of union organisation.

It's part of their drive to create a culture where it's more common to love management than to join a union.

We need to resist management's attempt to divide "new school" vs. "old school". We might join with no experience of belonging to a union, but we soon learn that we need one!

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.

BTP SPIES ON STAFF

The job is in uproar after it was revealed that BTP had been conducting covert spying operations on staff at Picc Circus.

The intention, it seems, was to "prove" that we are responsible for antisocial behaviour and staff assaults because of our "poor customer service".

This is an outrage. If LU and BTP do not ensure this practise will end, we should strike.

DISPUTES ROUND-UP

Waterloo & City Line

RMT is now balloting station staff at Waterloo. The stage is set for a solid fightback to resist "flash and dash"! More: bit.ly/wc-flash

Central Line drivers

RMT has two dispute underway, demanding the reinstatement of Paul Bailey, and a dispute against Central Line management's authoritarian style. Aslef is also in dispute on the latter and plans strikes on 5 October and 7 November.

More: bit.ly/central-line-dispute

Bakerloo stations

RMT Bakerloo Line branch plans a dispute north of Queen's Park, over the issue of the ongoing non-staffing of stations, and a separate but related dispute on the South group (Oxo-Elephant) about management's failure to staff the stations properly.

More: bit.ly/staff-stations

What is Tubeworker?

Tubeworker is a rank-and-file socialist bulletin, published at least monthly, written by Tube workers, for Tube workers. It is published by the socialist group Workers' Liberty, but is produced in editorial meetings open to all workers.

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