



tubeworker

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CASUALISATION AND DE-STAFFING:

DRIVERS: THIS IS OUR FIGHT TOO

The votes are in and the result is a YES for industrial action against the company's latest plans to cut costs by attacking the terms and conditions of its workforce. RMT now joins the TSSA who have also voted overwhelmingly for strike action over the same issues. Yes, you read that right – even the TSSA, a union which last went on strike in 1926, are prepared to take action to defend working conditions. That tells you how big this latest threat really is. The two unions have called a 72-hour strike starting 6th April. We should all support it.

WHAT'S IT GOT TO DO WITH US?

Some drivers seem to be of the opinion that the company's latest plans have nothing to do with us: 'Oh, it won't affect me!' If you believe that, then you need to pull your head out of the sand and have a good look at what's going on, because it *will* affect us. Read on and find out why.

CUTS IN STAFFING LEVELS

When guards were phased out and OPO train operation brought in, the company promised us that staffing levels on stations would be kept at a level that would ensure safe operation of the service. After the bombings of 7/7/2005, they promised us *more* staff. Yet, despite these promises, LUL is now proposing to significantly *cut* staffing levels on stations by closing ticket offices and reducing the opening hours of those which are spared the axe.

Some outlying stations only have a multi-functional supervisor to start with – if these staff are dispensed with, who is going to provide assistance to us in the event of an emergency at that location?

MOBILE SUPERVISORS

Another thinly-disguised plan of the company is to introduce mobile supervisors. So, instead of a supervisor at every station, as there is at present, one supervisor would be expected to cover a number of stations. This should save the company a lot of money, but only at the expense of our safety.

Imagine you have an emergency situation at a station: what if the supervisor is at a different station? You could be on your own for a long time, especially if the supervisor happens to be at a station in the rear and can only get to you by taxi. Are you happy with that? We're not.

AGENCY STAFF

Since the transfer of ex-Silverlink stations into LUL last year, the company has been looking at how these stations operate using agency staff and private security guards, none of whom have been trained to LUL standards.

It is no secret that LUL would like to extend the use of such staff throughout the combine, thus creating a two-tier workforce and grievously undermining the collectively-agreed terms and conditions of permanent LUL staff. If the company was allowed to get their way on this issue, it would have grave safety implications for drivers as well as station staff.



**time to get our heads
out of the sand**

REFUSAL TO WORK ON GROUNDS OF SAFETY

LUL has put forward a policy change on how you go about refusing to work on grounds of safety. At present, you can refuse to work if *you* believe there is a threat to your (or your passengers') safety. The company wants to change things so that in future, you have to report your fears to a manager who will then decide whether or not *they* think there is a danger.

Do you honestly trust a manager to put your safety before the demands of keeping the service running? If in doubt about the answer to that question, cast your mind back to late 2005 when it was discovered that the tripcocks on Northern line 95 stock could not be relied upon to stop the train in

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CAN'T AFFORD TO STRIKE?

The prospect of a three-day strike may seem daunting. But we know from bitter experience that one-day strikes win nothing: we may as well just throw our day's wages away. With more sustained action, we have a much better chance of winning, and the sacrifice we make will not be in vain.

Don't just think about the short-term dent in

the event of a SPAD. What was management's initial response when drivers began to refuse to work on grounds of safety? To try to bully the drivers back onto the trains and, rather petulantly, to cancel all the staff taxis for the dead late crews. Only, and *only*, after all drivers on the Northern line refused to pick up trains did the company belatedly turn to Alstom and force them to rectify the problem.

CHANGES TO EMERGENCY PLANS

Another great money-saving idea from the company is to alter Section 4.2 of the Congestion Control and Emergency Plan by removing minimum numbers of each grade of station staff on duty at any time. RMT and TSSA have fought to prevent this unilateral change, so far without success. Again, this watering down of a safety regulation has the potential to affect you.

WHAT DOES THE FUTURE HOLD?

LUL's current plans appear to affect station staff to a greater degree than train staff. But don't be fooled by appearances. If we sit around and allow LUL to impose these changes, they *will* affect our jobs as drivers by creating a more dangerous working environment than we have at present.

And that's just in the short term. In the longer term, the company will seek to directly attack drivers' conditions of service, especially as automatic train operation is rolled out throughout the combine.

Make no mistake, what is happening is an attempt by the company to casualise the workforce piece by piece, in order to undermine the only thing that fights for decent pay and conditions and a safe place of work – our collective strength. If we lose today's battle, then future battles will be far harder for us to win.

That's why, as drivers, we owe it to our colleagues on stations, *and to ourselves*, to say NO to the company's plans and show we mean it through strike action. If we don't deliver, we will all pay a heavy price.

your pay - think about what we stand to lose or win in the longer run. If we don't stand up to management over casualisation this year, we will have no chance of winning a decent pay rise next year when our current deal comes to an end. And less chance of defending ourselves when management try to replace *us* with agency drivers.

Tubeworker thinks that unions should make hardship payments to members who strike. This would recognise the reality of our lives - mortgages, bills etc - and make it easier to stomach the loss of pay. But whether we succeed in persuading the union to do this or not, drivers and other grades still need to stand firm and make the action as solid as possible.

NAFFED OFF WITH THE UNION?

RMT has not run this dispute perfectly. But at least it is putting up a fight, unlike ASLEF, which seems content to side with management, continuing to spread the lie that station staffing doesn't affect drivers and that other grades are some kind of separate species from drivers. Most drivers came from station side - remember that when you worked on a barrier, ASLEF thought you weren't good enough for their union. Even if they say that they care about you now, they are actually damaging drivers' interests by trying to cut us off from other grades.

Tubeworker knows that many ASLEF members know better than to swallow the sectarianism and chauvinism of ASLEF leaders. You can be part of the fight against casualisation by respecting RMT picket lines and raising the issue within the Society.

Yes, RMT has made mistakes. It hasn't got enough information out quickly enough. It was slow out of the blocks. It is not always clear how and why it makes its decisions. But its fight is now off the ground, and there can only be two outcomes - victory for management or victory for the union. A massive extension of casualisation, cuts in the workforce and attacks on our rights - or effective action to stop this.

We all need to be part of that fightback. **Support the strikes! Unity is strength.**

LOOK BACK IN ANGER

Remember dynamic risk assessments? That's where management - in the person of a Rostered Duty Officer - makes an on-the-spot decision to assess that a particular procedure is 'safe' even if it's outside the rules. That's bad enough, but management have now adopted the notion of *retrospective* dynamic risk assessments!

There was an incident on the Northern line at the start of the month involving a dual aspect signal failure in front of a set of points. You'd think that the points would be secured and the driver authorised to proceed under the appropriate rule, yes? Er, no, that takes up far too much time. The DMT reckoned it was 'safe' to instruct the driver to drive across the unsecured points, and when the train managed not to derail, there was your proof!

Tubeworker wonders what would have happened if the train had derailed. Our money's on an appointment at the dole office for the unfortunate driver.

So there we have it. Managers can tell you what to do, however unsafe. If they get away with it and no-one's hurt, then all praise to the quick-thinking manager refusing to be hamstrung by boring old safety rules. And if they don't - well, your head can roll instead.

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We want one democratic, fighting union for all railworkers. We reject artificial divisions between workers of different grades. We oppose racism, sexism, homophobia and all prejudice that divides us. Only our bosses benefit from a divided workforce.