

# tubeworker

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## PAY: THE WAR OF WORDS BEGINS

The first round of pay talks is looming, and RMT has announced its claim:

- A substantial increase in rates of pay for all grades; a minimum salary of £26,000
- Improved travel facilities
- Reduction in hours without loss of pay
- A 'London Living Wage' as a starting wage for all contract staff
- A guaranteed job offer on medical redeployment
- Abolition of performance-related pay
- Progressive 'family-friendly' policies

The good news is that this claim has been submitted to several employers, so we might have a co-ordinated campaign and reduce differences between us; and that it demands bigger rises for lower-paid grades, and covers a range of issues that bother staff.

But it lacks specific demands. It is a long tradition for our unions to use the phrase 'substantial increase' in pay claims, but we should break that tradition and instead demand a definite sum. Staff want to know what 'substantial' means in hard cash.

Rather than a percentage, the figure should be a cash sum - say £3,000. Percentage rises mean higher pay rises for grades who are already better paid. With a flat-rate claim instead, we would call for the same actual rise for everyone, but a bigger proportion for the people who need it most.

There should be specific demands on the other issues too. Rather than the vague 'reduction in working hours', we should demand a 4-day, 32-hour week. And rather than the abstract 'Progressive family-friendly policies', we should demand workplace nurseries and paid special leave for family emergencies.

Performance-related bonuses should be consolidated rather than abolished. Instead

of, say, LUL operational staff getting £250 or £500 (or nothing) dependant on how commuters respond to a survey, the 'bonus' should be replaced by an across-the-board £500 pay rise. In grades that have pay bands, these should be replaced with a rate for the job, set at the top rate in the band.

And, although not mentioned in the claim, we must insist on a one-year deal. With the economic crisis, this is more vital than ever.

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The pay claim notes that September's retail price index was 5% and that a pay rise of less than this would be totally 'unacceptable'. It goes on to detail ways in which the cost of living has gone up more than 5% - food, fuel, etc. But why is the pay claim telling the companies what would be 'acceptable' before talks have even started?! That's not the way to get the most we can!

RMT has already begun its pay campaign by sending a leaflet to every member's home in September. So members expect the union to really go for a decent pay rise, and are prepared to fight for it in defiance of the government telling us to cope with less because of the economic crisis. Gordon Brown said that he had to bail out the banks because they are 'too valuable to fail'. Well, so is London's transport: and unlike the bankers, we haven't messed up! The union should not underestimate our determination to fight for something as vital as pay.

There is a feeling that union members should have had more input into the pay claim. Branches are asking for an emergency regional council to discuss the pay claim and how we will fight for it. This is a good idea, both to give members an input, and to make sure we're prepared for the fight in the New Year.

[www.workersliberty.org/pay](http://www.workersliberty.org/pay)

## METRONET: IT'S NOT OVER YET

We thought it was all over. Metronet workers are to return to the public sector, after defeating the privateers (several times) and helping their headlong rush to bankruptcy.

The transfer is due on 8 December but there seem to be several flies in the ointment. It has emerged that only the staff will go back to LUL but the contracts will stay with the defunct shell of what was Metronet!

RMT's legal advice reports that the 'good news' is that the transfer 'probably satisfies TUPE conditions' (which protect workers' terms and conditions when they are transferred between companies). This is despite Metronet already breaching TUPE by stopping paying treble time for New Year working, now paying only a flat rate without any consultation!

More worryingly, the solicitor says 'it is much more difficult to confirm staff would transfer with a contract' should contractors change. This opens up the prospect of mass redundancies if Metronet decides to withdraw work from LUL and go to, say, Balfour Beatty for maintenance contracts.

RMT's two engineering branches have sent resolutions to the union demanding a dispute if protection of jobs and conditions is not resolved. There has been little response from RMT head office. They have even put out a circular congratulating us on our return to LUL!

Metronet workers have won a victory in returning to the public sector, but we must now ensure that it does not become a pyrrhic one. The union must immediately seek the assurances that the branches demand and, if not received, ballot Metronet workers for strike action to prevent this travesty. It seems that one more dispute for the road is in the offing.

[www.workersliberty.org/metronet](http://www.workersliberty.org/metronet)

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Got a story for *Tubeworker*? We welcome reports & comments from all Tube workers.

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**Tubeworker's weblog**

- daily updates -

[www.workersliberty.org/twblog](http://www.workersliberty.org/twblog)

## SCROOGE!

**L**UL has made no money available for staff Christmas parties for two years. And to prove that this is the season for giving, memos have apparently circulated saying that there will be no more 'thanks to you' awards, as the company is in debt and needs to save every penny.

They spend millions on pointless management projects and pour millions into the coffers of private infracos, and the thing they look to cut is one of the few tokens that show staff some appreciation! And while we have to pay for our own Christmas socials, there are rumoured to be 17 Christmas parties at 55 Broadway this year. They are generous enough to look after themselves, but play Scrooge with the rest of us.

[www.workersliberty.org/tubefatcats](http://www.workersliberty.org/tubefatcats)

## DISPERSING DRIVERS

**I**t would seem that despite assurances during the transfer of drivers from the East London line that they could remain at whichever depot they nominated until such time as the ELL reopened, LUL is now determined to renege on the deal. Plans are afoot to disperse them wherever LUL like. Despite the fact that most are East end based, they could end up stationed anywhere on the combine. RMT is determined to fight this injustice and for a change ASLEF is on board too!

[www.workersliberty.org/ell](http://www.workersliberty.org/ell)

## DLR TO STRIKE?

**D**ocklands Light Railway control room staff are balloting for strikes against imposition of rosters. They have worked a 12-hour roster for 14 years, but are now being told to work 8-hour shifts, which will mean working an extra 24 weekends a year.

DLR management have not negotiated properly, even ignoring an alternative roster RMT put to them. Feeling is running very high. This is not about money, but quality of life. DLR staff suspect that management are picking off this group of workers to test them before bringing in similar things in elsewhere. But everyone on the DLR is right behind them. They've never had strike action before, so this should be a real chance to show management how strong and well organised RMT on the DLR is.

[www.workersliberty.org/dlr](http://www.workersliberty.org/dlr)

**Tubeworker is produced by tubeworkers in the Alliance for Workers' Liberty, an organisation fighting as part of the labour movement for a socialist alternative to both capitalism and Stalinism, based on common ownership and democracy.**

**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.**

## CENTRAL DUTY OF CARE?

**C**entral line managers have been told to interview all staff who are off sick with a view to forcing them back to work - including those who have had one-unders or have been in hospital.

At least one TOM has advised local reps to brush up on their knowledge because 'We will be coming for your members who are taking the piss'. All staff on the Central and elsewhere need to keep our nerve and fight these attacks. Management seem determined to stifle the unions (particularly the most effective one, RMT) prior to the pay talks.

[www.workersliberty.org/central](http://www.workersliberty.org/central)

## KING'S CROSS 7

**L**UL is disciplining the 'King's Cross 7', SAMFs who rightly walked out of the ticket office in protest at the deployment of an SRT Supervisor to cover a duty in breach of the Framework Agreement.

Management seem appalled by the idea that workers should have the temerity to stand up for ourselves and our rights. In their ideal world, we would know our place and do what we were told, no matter how unfair. Unfortunately for management, some staff insist on having opinions and knowing the importance of defending agreements.

Management think that they are firing a shot across the bows of any other workers thinking of sticking up for ourselves. So it is vital that we all stand up for our workmates at King's Cross.

[www.workersliberty.org/sickssystem](http://www.workersliberty.org/sickssystem)

## ROSTER REJECTED

**K**ing's Cross management wanted a new CSA roster, but staff objected because of issues including lack of decent rest periods. So managers drafted a new roster with so few changes you can barely notice them! What changes there are - such as moving a dead early to a middle turn - are not welcomed by the CSAs.

To management's chagrin, staff have not been fooled by the manoeuvre, and have rejected the roster again.

[www.workersliberty.org/handc](http://www.workersliberty.org/handc)

## SEASON OF GOODWILL?

**L**UL wants some of us to work on Christmas Day but are only offering us double pay and one poxy day off in lieu!

If there is work to be done, eg. booking on contractors, and no hint of running a service or making anyone work who doesn't want to, then fair enough - but this depends on the staff being paid properly and having facilities such as a door-to-door staff taxi.

But while this issue is still supposed to be subject to negotiation between management and the unions, several station groups have already circulated appeals for volunteers, stating that the pay rate *will be* double plus a day off in lieu. It's not good enough.

[www.workersliberty.org/pay](http://www.workersliberty.org/pay)

**Workers' Liberty London forum:**

## Why we need a workers' plan for the crisis and a workers' government

Thursday 11 December, 7:30pm, Calthorpe Arms, 252 Grays Inn Road, Kings Cross

As the bosses seek to make workers pay for their crisis through wage cuts, job losses, cuts in services and repossessions, how should the labour movement respond?

Speakers: **Maria Exall** (CWU national executive, pc), **Steve Hedley** (RMT London Transport Region secretary, pc), **Sacha Ismail** (Workers' Liberty) Chair: **Christine Hulme** (PCS DWP West London, Labour Representation Committee national committee, pc). All welcome

## ACTION TOWN SICK SYSTEM

**A**cton Town station staff have received 'local guidelines' on sick reporting which bear little resemblance to company policy. As if company policy were not strict enough, Acton Town management want to impose a 'regime' (their word, not ours), in which staff are told their contact arrangements rather than agreeing them, in which every sick person will be called in for a review after 14 days (LUL policy says 28), and in which we are told that we *will* sign a medical consent form at the meeting.

Fortunately, the local RMT rep is standing up to management over this, and staff are wisely not signing this ridiculous non-agreement.

[www.workersliberty.org/piccadilly](http://www.workersliberty.org/piccadilly)

## EDF STRIKE

**E**DF technicians, who take care of faults with the electricity that powers the Tube, took 36 hours of solid strike action recently. There was a strong picket line at their base at Tufnell Park and a demo outside EDF headquarters.

The strike is over rosters. They previously worked over their contracted 12-hour shifts, and were paid for their flexibility. The company then wanted them to stick to their 12-hour shifts, so they had to leave jobs unfinished to get to their booking off point in time. Now the company wants it both ways: they want the old flexibility back but are not willing to pay for it. EDF supply shift workers want the same allowance for flexibility as their day colleagues get.

The company says there is no money, but they have found enough to pay engineers overtime to cover the strikes - and even a security guard in case any angry workers did anything unruly on the picket line!

These workers have recently joined RMT, and this is the first time they have been on strike since 1972. Issues have been building up for years. The strike was a show of strength, so management can see they won't lie down and take the same old treatment anymore. Spirit like this should inspire the rest of us. More strikes are planned.

[www.workersliberty.org/disputes](http://www.workersliberty.org/disputes)