



# tubeworker

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## 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.*

### **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.**

### **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.**

## CLEANERS' COLUMN

### ABM PLANS JOBS CULL: CLEANERS MUST STRIKE!



ABM, always on the lookout to feather its financial nest, reckons it can carry out the cleaning contract with significantly fewer cleaners than it currently has.

In fact, it plans to cull up to a third of its cleaning staff! Is this some kind of joke, you ask? After all, ABM employs too few cleaners as it is, leaving them over-stretched and hard-pressed to keep our busy and constantly messy Tube system clean.

In fact, ABM has so few cleaners employed that station cleaners on the District Junction group have to clean local bus garages, which ABM also has the contract for, as part of their shifts! This is an unacceptable workload that the local RMT branch has rightly called for a ballot over.

Presumably, ABM thinks that a bit more whip-cracking will produce the desired results. Of course, their desired results are not clean trains, stations and workplaces, but more profits for their bosses.

If there is one thing worse than working in a low-paid, super-exploited, insecure and unpleasant job, it is losing that job.

If cleaners fight back through the union - and if they get the full and active support of all of us - then we can stop this outrageous jobs cull.

It's time for action. A ballot of cleaners from the RMT is needed, which would undoubtedly be a catalyst to greater unionisation of cleaners.

**People join unions when they fight, so let's tell ABM, and LU, that cleaners won't stand for exploitation and job losses any longer.**

### 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](http://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.

### ACTION BRINGS MANAGEMENT TO THE TABLE... WHAT NEXT?

The Piccadilly Line strike on 26-28 September was rock solid at all depots.

Management are clearly worried and have returned to Acas for further talks. Aslef members respecting pickets, and the involvement of the Night Tube workers for the first time show there is appetite from drivers to pile on the pressure.

It's good that RMT has named another strike on the Picc for 7 November (see front). But this shouldn't be a token action merely to leverage negotiations, with the expectation the strike won't go ahead. Further action, especially in coordination with the Central Line, could win further concessions. The bosses are on the ropes, don't let them get up!

We should always remember that the point of striking isn't to get management to talk to us, but to get them to meet our demands and make changes in the workplace.

**The reps' and activists' meeting organised by the two RMT branches covering the Piccadilly Line was a good step, and should be repeated in other areas.**

### 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.

Supporters from outside London Underground can help with public distribution.

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