

# RMT up front



The newsletter for London Underground drivers

Issue 1, August 2009

## “Proud to be union”

by Vaughan Thomas, RMT Regional Council President

**The RMT dispute has already had a beneficial effect on the talks with LUL: the threatened imposition of a 5 year deal has been withdrawn and we have achieved movement on the issues of compulsory redundancies, the breaking of agreements and the bullying of staff. However, the job is only half done and the struggle continues.**

Despite what management claim, the 2 days strike was extremely effective. As can be seen in the bar chart, the number of trains running was around 25% and a lot of these were shuttles on the outskirts of the city.

The only reason that we haven't achieved all our aims is that we have, once again, failed to achieve unity between unions. Imagine what we could achieve if all the unions on the Underground were to stick together. At the moment the RMT is in dispute, as is Unite; meanwhile TSSA is carrying out an indicative ballot of its membership. The only people currently neither in dispute nor threatening dispute are the members of the drivers' organisation "Aslef".

Can it be possible that Aslef members are content with the offer of a 2% increase over 2 years, when effectively this means a wage cut in real terms? And is it credible that Aslef members are content to see the agreements they signed up to in past years torn up by LUL? Are Aslef members not aware of the ongoing campaign of bullying against their workmates in all grades? It's hardly likely to be the case because many hundreds of Aslef members took the principled position of refusing to cross picket lines.

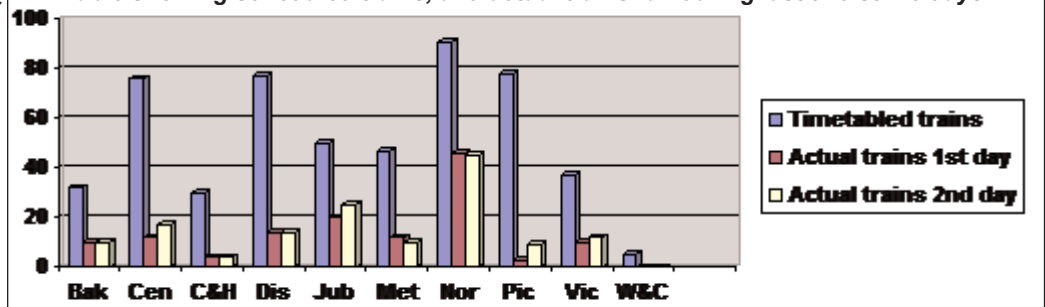
So why is the Aslef leadership refusing to get involved in one of the most important disputes in a generation? In fact, not only not getting involved but actively en-

couraging their members to cross picket lines? Why are they failing to learn the lessons of history that show that unity amongst grades and amongst unions achieves victory for working people?

Sadly the answer to those questions is unlikely to be any sort of principled position. The answer is that, on the Under-

ground, Aslef is seeing its membership (and its influence) decrease on a yearly basis. The line of promotion for T/Op is via the station grades who are overwhelmingly RMT members. There is no reason why these people should switch to Aslef when they receive superior representation at half the cost from RMT train reps. So, on the Underground, Aslef portray themselves as an anti-strike pro-management organisation in an attempt to recruit train operators who are unwilling to take strike action. Many of their long-standing members no doubt regret this misguided and ultimately self-defeating stance.

Table showing scheduled trains, and actual trains ran during last two strike days



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We don't have to go too far back to remember when RMT and Aslef, working together, achieved such benefits for T/Ops as the SPAD policy, the PTOA and a 5.7% pay increase.

Going back further, the early history of Trade Unionism in the railway industry reveals that when the various grades

Society of Railway Servants – the precursor of the RMT - that things began to change for the better. This is a quote from The Times of September 15th 1871:

**“We are not among those who would desire to stimulate or befriend trade combinations or strikes, but we confess that a great part of the excessive labour extracted from railway workers might have been avoided or mitigated if railway servants, like other skilled workmen, had known how to combine for the purposes of striking a bargain with their employers.”**

Surely, 140 years later, we haven't got to the position where we again allow employers to exploit our differences in order to worsen our conditions. We have far more in common as train operators than we will ever have with our employers. We need to stick together, now more than ever, to achieve decent pay, jobs and justice. **UNITY IS STRENGTH.**

## One union for drivers - All grades united

# Bakerloo drivers being balloted over sacked workmate

Drivers on the Bakerloo Line are angry at the sacking of their workmate, Kevin Dobinson. Kevin had an aggravated SPAD at the end of April and was summarily dismissed at the CDI. All drivers agree that aggravated SPADS are a bad thing however the summary dismissal of Kevin was a sacking too far.

Bakerloo train staff are all too aware of drivers on the Line who have committed similar offences and are still driving trains or were reduced in grade.

Comparable cases on the Bakerloo Line include not informing the Line Controller after passing a signal at danger in the wrong direction across a crossover at Paddington; another driver had a SPAD at Regents Park N/B and cut out the front trip and reversed the train back into the platform. One driver recently was disciplined for reading a newspaper while in operation of a train; another was disciplined for driving 33 miles an hour in a 20 mile an hour zone.

On the underground as a whole 21 drivers had aggravated SPADS the year before and 18 were still driving trains.

So why was Kevin sacked? Is this because management have too many drivers on the combine and Kevin was expendable? Is it because management on the line want to make an example of Kevin so that everyone else is under pressure to toe the line? Is it because this ties in with management's behaviour across LUL with maximum sanctions and bullying behaviour?

Whatever the answer, management clearly had no idea on the strength of feeling in both depots. In the run up to the Appeal over 160 drivers signed a petition demanding his re-instatement. Even 6 DMT's wrote testimonials for Kevin. But the Appeal duo of Rob Smith, Trains Performance Manager, and Warren McVeigh People Management Advisor (a misnomer if ever there was one) upheld the wrongful sacking of Kevin Dobinson. The consensus on the Line is that drivers are not having it. All Bakerloo train staff are aware that, if management get away with this, no one is safe.

**Bakerloo train staff: vote YES!**

## LUL bully boys

As the article above highlights, London Underground management are increasingly taking a ruthless approach to disciplinary issues and are taking advantage of the economic climate to reduce train staff numbers and try to intimidate us.

It is a reminder that now more than ever it is important to be in a union that stands up to management and defends your rights, your job and agreements. Some examples of where the RMT is leading the fight around the combine are...

On the Victoria Line management have just opened up Brixton Depot and have introduced 5 rounder turns in breach of a previous agreement limiting maximum rounders to 4 and the members who have already taken 4 days industrial action in defence of two sacked colleagues

are preparing to be balloted to defend this agreement.

On the Piccadilly Line RMT reps are vigorously defending agreements which management are breaching. For example sending drivers to case conferences after 3 SPADs where the policy clearly states that it is 4 and management are also blatantly breaching the attendance at work policy on the line. Anger against management on the line is so high that most drivers of both unions respected the picket lines on the last strike bringing the line to an almost complete standstill.

On the Hammersmith and City line RMT reps are defending that most basic of rights to be able to take a PNR without being intimidated. Now that really is taking the P\*\*\*!

## 90 day agreement

As history and common sense dictate train staff achieve more when we stick together.

Along with the 5.7% pay rise that we achieved in one year (that would take the best part of 6 years with the current offer on the table!) the Professional Train Operator Agreement (PTOA) also has a clause which allows drivers to request time away from driving trains if domestic problems affect their working life.

This normally lasts up to 90 days if agreed by management. It is important that if you are experiencing problems (e.g divorce or bereavement, or health problems) that you contact your RMT rep who can then help you negotiate such a facility. This can take the pressure off you and could ultimately save your job if you are finding it difficult to concentrate at work.

## Who is this man?



During the two days of strike action this man appeared on TV. It was the first time anyone had come across this loser. He was on television to speak against the strike and was portrayed as some kind of "expert on railway matters".

Yet no one had ever seen him before. Do you know who he is?

Rumours from Northern Line train staff suggest he is often spotted in pubs in the Hampstead area.

Any answers on a postcard...

## Trains Functional Reps

Dean O'Hanlon 07956 342235

Bill O'Dowd 07956 573197

Vaughan Thomas 07720 297657

## Get involved

The RMT train grades committee meets on the last Thursday of the month. Come to the meeting:

14:30 - 16:00 hours, Unity House, 39 Chalton St, London NW1. Near Euston station.

## Join RMT

online at [www.rmt.org.uk/join](http://www.rmt.org.uk/join)  
phone 0800 376 3706

Regional Council website:  
[www.rmtlondoncalling.org.uk](http://www.rmtlondoncalling.org.uk)

email: [drivers@rmtlondoncalling.org.uk](mailto:drivers@rmtlondoncalling.org.uk)

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