

# RMT up front



*The newsletter for London Underground drivers*

Issue 2, March 2010

## Train drivers face no hope of justice in LUL's campaign of sackings

It's no secret that there's a huge gap in the LUL budget. Gordon Brown, when he was Chancellor, was warned by everyone that his plans for PPP would be disastrous, and so it has proved. TfL is currently seeking to bridge a 4.1 billion pound black hole with no assistance from the Government. Now that he is Prime Minister, Brown is pumping hundreds of billions into the banking and financial sectors; but he won't stump up a penny to sort out the mess that he caused on the Tube in the first place. What does this have to do with drivers? Well, quite a lot as it happens. The most effective way of saving money in a labour-intensive industry is to shed jobs, and that's exactly

**“ Well, they can't afford to offer early retirement or voluntary redundancy so they're doing the next best thing – sacking us for relatively minor disciplinary offences. ”**

what LUL are planning to do. They are already looking to de-staff stations and close ticket offices; this of course is a disaster for station staff, even if they keep their jobs they face a long wait for promotion. It is also a problem for drivers whose safety will be compromised by driving trains



Alan sugar has nothing on London Underground

through empty stations late at night with no support.

But a more urgent problem is that LUL have an excess of drivers. They employed extra drivers to cope with the upgrades on several of the lines which, since the Metronet collapse, have been put back time and again. And it doesn't stop there; the 2009 Agreement will result in the loss of 20% of rostered spare turns across the combine, and up to 50% of pool drivers. They also want to do away with rostered team talk duties – another 35 drivers' jobs. The result is almost 200 drivers above requirements.

How are LUL dealing with this? Well, they can't afford to offer early retirement or voluntary redundancy so they're doing the next best thing – sacking us for relatively minor disciplinary offences. Things that in the past would have been dealt with locally as a CAP or LDI are being referred to CDI for gross misconduct

charges. It's happening on every line and in every depot - we've all heard of someone being summarily dismissed for no good reason. And it's likely to get worse: it's early days yet, but LUL have started talking about changing the disciplinary policy to include indefinite final warnings. This could mean that you have an exemplary record for 10 years but still end up getting sacked because of a live caution that never disappears! Make no mistake about it – LUL are out for the mother of all battles. They want to change your working conditions so much that you may think the drivers who get sacked are the lucky ones. If you want to protect your job, your wages, your conditions you need to get involved with the RMT. Other unions are only concerned about defending their members on National Rail, the RMT is the only union prepared to fight for workers on the Underground.

**One union for drivers - All grades united**

# Shot at from both sides



“Train 222, Beirut northbound to control”

The expression ‘front line staff’ took on a whole new meaning for Bakerloo Line drivers recently!

Local safety reps were astonished to hear about an incident that happened in the run up to Xmas. It appears that a ‘sniper’ had taken up position in a flat opposite Queen’s Park Station; as trains departed southbound, the sniper was taking pot shots with an air-rifle at Bakerloo Line trains resulting in 3 broken windows on 3 separate trains.

You would think that the Bakerloo Line management team might suspend the

service until the culprit had been apprehended, wouldn’t you? Well you’d be wrong! Services ran as normal. Although, reassuringly, the investigating manager claimed that if there had been a further incident he would have considered this option! Cheers mate.

You’d think that the Bakerloo Line management would at least inform the drivers departing Queen’s Park that they were under fire and at risk of being shot at, wouldn’t you? Again, you’d be wrong! There was no information given to drivers at all.

You’d think that the BTP, given the seriousness of this incident would be on the scene straight away, wouldn’t you? Again, you’d be wrong! It took them 85 minutes to arrive!

Drivers departing Queen’s Park at this time were at serious risk of being shot at; this could have easily resulted in blindness, or worse, yet no information was given. This is totally unacceptable. We know there are mad men out there, that’s a fact of life. But we at least expect some protection from our managers, not to be shot at from both sides!

## Door safety concerns on the Picc

A recent door irregularity on the Picc Line has raised serious safety concerns: a train departing Arnos Grove, eastbound, was two cars out of the station when the train lost its pilot light and ground to a halt; it turns out that 3 doors opened on the wrong side, of their own accord. The sequence of events that followed would have put the Keystone Cops to shame!

Station Staff assisted the driver and closed the doors via the porter buttons, so far so good; then it went pear shaped: for some bizarre reason this train remained in service. So casual were management about this dangerous occurrence that local safety reps were not even informed until 10 days later.

It was finally determined that the problem was caused by dust on a single door valve that was preventing normal door operation. Reps have demanded

that the checking regime of these valves is improved, a point conceded by management.

The issue here is not so much the problem it’s self but how the incident was dealt with procedurally by LU; disregard for safety appears to happening all too often across the combine these days.

A Big Up for the hard work of the local reps who have secured a Formal Investigation Report (FIR) into this dangerous occurrence.

A post-script to this incident is that it has been confirmed by LU Engineers that the same failing valve appears on 4 other stocks: A Stock, D Stock 72 and 67 Stocks. The Safety Council have asked LU for an emergency ad-hoc meeting for assurances about the safety of our fleet. We will keep you posted.

## Cross track projection

Many of you will be familiar with the Cross Track Projector advertising system (XTP) being rolled out across the combine. Your Tier 2 safety reps were first briefed on this new system over two year ago.

At the time we had no concerns as guarantees were given that the sensors would detect approaching trains and the projector would be switched off before the flashing screen would be able to distract the driver. As the system was rolled out it became apparent that this was not the case.

At many locations the sensors don’t work meaning that the projector switches off late or not at all. Your Train’s Safety Council were then informed that in some cases it was technically too difficult to get sensors that actually worked.

We have also had procedural problems with the system: when it did fail, instead of turning it off until repaired, management were more inclined to leave the system running, all the time, even with trains approaching.

Our concern here is that the system is a blatant distraction to our drivers. We have raised objections at every level of the health and safety machinery only to be stonewalled by management. Mike Strezlecki, LU Director of Safety, does not think it offers a risk.

Our last hope was the Office of Rail Regulation (ORR). One of their representatives had already written to LU raising concerns about the distraction of this system to our drivers, so were hopeful of some sympathy; we were dreaming! After deliberating for over two years the ORR have finally concluded that this system does not offer a significant distraction to drivers. It should have been expected really.

We are considering where now to take this issue.

In the meantime, drivers are encouraged to report all faults with this system immediately. Demand that when defective, the system is turned off until it is repaired.

### Trains Functional Reps

Will Reid 07983 958429

Bill O’Dowd 07956 573197

Vaughan Thomas 07720 297657

### Trains Safety Council Reps

Jim McDaid 07917 131692

Nigel Eivers 07961 141924

Dave Rayfield 07753 87933

### 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)

# One union for drivers - All grades united