



## *Proposed changes are afoot*

We all know that there is a recession. We have witnessed it first hand with this year's pay cut and the sacking of our members just to reduce staffing numbers.

But not all companies necessarily view a recession as a bad thing. What LU are doing is hiding behind the recession and using it as a excuse to cut our pay, slash jobs and introduce unsafe working practices.

London Underground's Operational Standards Unit (OSU), the authors of our new rule book and the department responsible for all our rules and procedures, have been working overtime thinking up ways to get more train miles run with less staff.

Their latest brainstorm, the **Operational Effectiveness Programme** is a series of proposals designed to speed up recovery time even if they compromise our safety.

Discussions between LU and the Unions on these proposals began last week. It was agreed that all proposals would be discussed at Safety Council level and none of these would be implemented until the consultation process had been exhausted.

There are many aspects to this programme but just to give a flavour a few are detailed here:

**Notching back:** in the event that trains over run signals LU want to be able to notch the train, in reverse, back into the platform; drivers used to get sacked or dipped for this!

**Check signals and proceed: after a SPAD:** they are proposing that drivers go back into the cab, check the aspect and if it is green proceed! Drivers also used to get the sack for this. This is their second attempt at introducing this one; last year this proposal was kicked out by LU's very

own Director of Safety. It wouldn't be so bad but no doubt you will still get done for having a SPAD.

**PTI issues at unstaffed stations:** LU appears to be looking ahead to the future when they can leave stations unstaffed and run the job into the ground like they did on the old BR. When you have defective OPO they want the driver to check the platform themselves then proceed. Never mind what could happen in the time it takes you to get back to the cab!

**Connect radio:** LU have advised that they are looking at expanding the use of Connect radio and making changes to current procedures; no doubt this will involve running trains at some point even with defective radios. Remember the words of Tim O'Toole after the 7/7 bombings? *No radio no train!* Your union will expect LU to honour this promise.

Most of the procedures proposed appear to looking at aiding recovery without the need for station staff; you don't have to be a genius to work out that these proposals are the starter for a slash on station staffing numbers. Drivers need station staff to assist them; it's as simple as that. These are all line in the sand issues; it would appear that there are no more sacred cows with LU. If we let them away with these proposals they will go on to attack every last hard fought for safety measure that we have secured over the years.

Once they can cut staffing levels no further and they can't get any more train miles out of you they will be back for your 35 hour week, your staff pass, your pension and your annual leave.

# ***Ask not for whom the bell tolls, it tolls for thee!***

There's a common perception amongst Train Operators that cutting jobs is what happens to other grades. Indeed, the number of train operators on LUL has risen year on year for some time. But we live in extraordinary times - the deepest recession in a generation and falling passenger numbers has led to a massive black hole in the budget. No grades and no individuals are safe from management attacks on jobs and conditions.

The Trains 2009 Agreement, though designed to save jobs, is being used by Line Managers as a blue-print to cut T/Op positions. The number of rostered spare turns is being cut from 25% to 20% and LUL plan to do away with rostered Team Talk turns; each timetable change will result in drivers being removed from the roster to the pool. And pool numbers (which historically have been fixed at around 10% of the establishment at each depot) have been re-adjusted to 5% or 6%. This means that there will be little movement on the depot waiting lists until large numbers of drivers have been lost through "natural wastage."

But there is nothing "natural" about some of the "wastage." At every opportunity T/Ops are being sent for disciplinary hearings on charges of gross misconduct; and at every opportunity they are being summarily dismissed without so much as payment in lieu of notice - just being told to give back their passes and leave the premises.

How can managers get away with this? The answer is simple: there are too many drivers at some locations. There is currently an operational surplus of roughly 160 drivers combine-wide who were recruited to help with the Line upgrades programmes. With the huge budget deficit, the collapse of Metronet and the ongoing problems with Tubelines, the upgrades are years behind schedule. Drivers are no longer required in such numbers.

And what of those who remain? You will be working harder and longer in order to compensate for the fewer spare turns and smaller pools. You will experience a wage freeze in real terms over many years. You will be working in less safe conditions as more and more stations are left unstaffed due to cuts elsewhere in LUL. You will be expected to carry out unsafe practices, for which you could be currently dismissed, as LUL seek to cut corners and save money.

You will be getting grief from passengers angry at a worse service and managers intent on proving that they can make economies. You are facing Company Plan Mk II - your job will be almost unrecognisable from the way it is now. What is the answer? It is a fact of life that whatever job you do on

LUL and whichever union you are in, the only reason you currently enjoy today's pay and benefits is because of the previous struggles and arguments advanced by the RMT. Companies, including ours, don't pay any more than they have to. Some of the better deals that have been achieved in the past were gained when workers and unions stuck together.

So what of TSSA and ASLEF, and what are the chances of ever again working together? Every year the RMT writes to both unions and asks them to amalgamate with the RMT. The present divisions benefit management by allowing them to play one union off against another. We want to end these false divisions in the interests of all London Underground staff. Imagine what could be achieved by a single strong, united and democratic union, fighting for the very best terms and conditions commensurate with the hard work we all carry out. That should be the goal of any worker with an ounce of common sense. At the moment, the RMT is alone among the transport unions in striving towards this goal. To belong to the RMT is to be part of the answer; to belong elsewhere is to be part of the problem. We remain ready to work with the other unions when they support our approach and defend their members but we cannot rely on them.

Contact your local rep or branch officer for more information on how to get involved.

***Your job may depend on it.***

## **Contact Details**

The December election has given us two new reps to the Safety and Functional Councils: Nigel Eivers and Will Reid respectively. We'd like to thank Garry Houghton and Dean O'Hanlon for all their hard work over the past 3 years.

### **Safety Council:**

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