

# Central Line East

 **unity is strength** 

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## March 15 Strike

We do not want to have to go on strike!

“During the Covid pandemic, the world held its breath when key workers kept society running. Rail workers on the front line died. We were afforded the status of ‘key workers’. We were deemed indispensable and even afforded hero-like status. We are not heroes but members of the working class, who are highly trained. We keep London moving and contribute to the great wealth generated in London. Were it not for our efforts, and the efforts of other workers, the business of our city would cease.

Passengers on the London Underground deserve the highest levels of safety, and workers deserve a decent wage and pension, which is in fact deferred wages paid on retirement.. A working life that is dedicated in large part to unsocial hours, which has been proven to shorten life expectancy.

As a reward, rail workers have been awarded a series of attacks on our terms and conditions. These attacks have taken place throughout our industry, including on London Underground.

The station grades have seen an initial 600 job cuts. The travelling public was told that the closure of ticket offices would result in more visible and accessible staff, but these staffing numbers have now been slashed.

Far from the ‘king’s ransom’ the bosses report our pension to be, at present it will enable workers to retire without being in dire straits. Now workers risk seeing the rug being pulled from under their feet, potentially contributing more for much less upon retirement.

Workers who previously crossed picket lines have had enough of the attacks on pensions and terms and conditions. At the time of writing, Aslef craft union has called strike action on 15 March as well.

**We have no option but to strike. See you on the picket line!**

The cuts to jobs on London Underground are part of what has been referred to as a ‘managed decline’. The network is at risk of descending back to the 1970s, when a feeling of danger was synonymous with a trip on the tube – customers took their chances after rush hour!

Friends and Family who are disabled by barriers in society will have less staff to assist, with the only comfort being a ‘help point’ with a member of staff in a distant location. Less staff available to escort visually-impaired persons to the platform. Less staff to assist with ramps onto trains for people with wheelchairs. Passengers who have difficulty purchasing a ticket will find no ticket office and less staff to help. If you do not have an Oyster or bank card you are out of luck.

The job cuts have meant a rise in lone working. Some staff now cover two or more stations. As well as a depletion of customer care, there is a potentially disastrous consequence on operational matters. Welfare checks on drivers following a safety incident will be delayed. Issues with drivers not seeing the platform cameras and station staff being unavailable has been an issue.! These developments will lead to an environment which is less safe for staff. Where staff used to be paid extra to open and close more than one station in the dead of night, this practice is now seen as a part of the working day, with financial penalties for not complying with this potentially hazardous instruction. One female colleague was reportedly told that she was exaggerating after she was cat-called by a group of men at 02.30am. It is much harder to retreat to a place of safety when you are the only person on the station and are outnumbered at this late hour.

These station job cuts will impact train drivers. Flash and Dash must be resisted. Station staff were previously tasked with ensuring all passengers exited the train, before the train went into a siding or depot. Instead, the threat of implementing ‘flash and dash’, whereby drivers are to flash the lights multiple times and tell passengers via the Public Address system that they .....

## March 15 Strike continued

must all change. If passengers do not hear or see this, or are too slow to exit the train, then they face being carried into a siding or depot. This practice is not new and was abandoned previously after a fatality. We now find the penny-pinchers risking the safety of the public and staff again. We do not wish to be in a siding with an irate member of the public!

What are we to do, faced with these huge cuts, changes to our working practices and attacks on our pensions?

We could roll over and accept the unilateral imposition to our terms and conditions. However, we in the RMT are a **Industrial Trade Union!** We have been on strike at least six times in the last year. 2022 saw a year of activity on the picket lines, with Socialist Party, Labour Party and various Trade Councils in attendance supporting the lines, selling papers, and discussing well-received ideas.

Someone recently approached a RMT Representative and said that it was "wonderful" that Aslef and the RMT were striking at the same time on 15 March. The response was that we as workers do not want to strike. We do not wish to breach our contracts of employment and lose money. This is not West Ham vs Millwall or Celtic v Rangers this is workers vs Tories. We are facing an attack on the working class, with the Tories attempting to normalise poverty.

**We have no option but to strike. See you on the picket line!**

## Station Specific issues

On the Leytonstone/Mile End areas, where staffing levels are already skeleton, the roster changes will bring a negative impact on our work life balance. The removal of detrainment duties at Woodford alone has had a detrimental effect on staffing levels, with the company disregarding the three platforms, two entrances with ticket halls etc, suggesting the current staff levels were purely there for detrainment, with the new roster having only one CSA during morning peaks. Section 12 stations like Mile End Area are working on minimum numbers throughout the day leaving no room for variance, resulting in Leytonstone cover staff working off their area on a regular basis, whilst also increasing lone working on Leytonstone area.

Specific SATS shifts/duties are being removed in the new roster with no changes to existing SATS requirements. This will increase pressure on staff to carry out SATs duties with the change in schematics.

Along with all that, the audacity of senior management to introduce 'Gate line Integrity' expecting staff to highlight when and why's every time gate line is left uncovered.

Procedures are being introduced with zero training, i.e. the "Not Lost app", just thrust upon staff with just a leaflet and video to watch, the complexities of handling lost property ignored. Over the years how many colleagues have lost their job because of procedure surrounding lost property, still drastic changes are introduced overnight prematurely.

Local issue such as drugs and buskers are ignored by both senior management and police alike. There have been reports of CCTV not working in some areas. This is concerning late at night as some of our staff are tasked with lone working. Body worn cameras are not always recording when required.

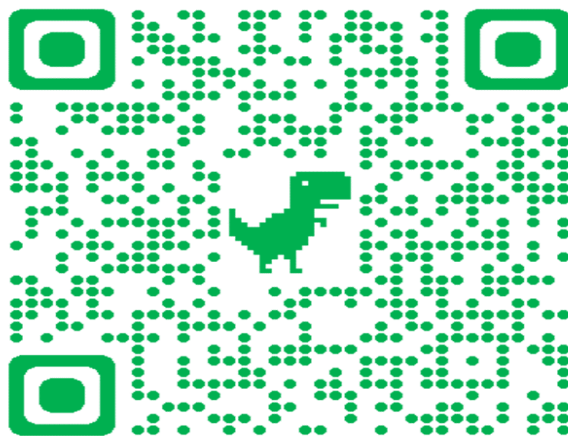
Station toilets have keys that are freely available on the internet making the concept of 'locking' the toilets for anti-social behaviour a thing of the past. Toilets are regularly abused and left in a less than satisfactory condition. The lack of support and absence from BTP is appalling!

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**Branch Meetings to take place on the 2nd Thursday of the Month at 1600. Contact your local Representative for details.**