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News & Views from RMT's London Transport Regional Council

33 RMT Members Sacked by Agency

Members with Years on the Job told they Fail to Meet the Standard

- By Eamonn Lynch and Trainpeople members

On the 19th December 2012, all 33 Trainpeople agency staff working on the Wembley Central group received an early Christmas present. Trainpeople informed them that their contract with London Underground would be terminated on the 16th January, with no further work on the stations after that. This allowed them only four weeks to find new jobs over Christmas, some had worked on stations for over five years.



RMT members working for Trainpeople on the Wembley Central Group

"Agency staff should be brought back in house and paid the rate for the job. It is intolerable that staff wearing LU uniform and doing the same job as other staff on the network have not got identical terms and conditions. We must rid our industry of the exploitative agency companies". John Reid LTRC Secretary.

Agency workers employed on the Wembley Central group, suspicions were first aroused when a circulated memo announced that fifteen new London Underground (LU) employed station staff would be joining the group in December.

Agency workers, who have only ever been entitled to receive their shifts on a weekly basis, and, are never guaranteed a set amount of hours per week, were understandably concerned that the arrival of new LU staff would inevitably lead to fewer hours for them to work. After demanding answers from both Trainpeople and LU management, a reply email from Trainpeople, informed of the impending job cuts in four weeks' time.

These unethical practices are the latest setback created by LU management allowing employment agencies to dictate employment terms and conditions on the underground.

RMT had envisaged in 2008, after LU took control of stations north of Queens Park, that the casualisation of the job, particularly with the use of agency workers would be a contentious issue. When it inevitably led to a dispute, LU assured RMT that the use of agency staff was temporary, lasting for a maximum of six months.

Despite the company so clearly and blatantly breaching the assurance it had given, RMT since 2008, insisted that all agency staff on the Wembley Central group be brought back in-house and that Trainpeople are no longer used on LU.

However, even when so-called vacancies appeared, agency workers were initially prevented from applying, under LU's claim that it would breach anti-poaching rules. Later when they did apply to a LU recruitment campaign, they were rejected en masse in favour of people who have never done the job before.

Since receiving the job termination letters on the 19th, the agency workers immediately contacted RMT, who organised an emergency meeting for the 21st December.

The meeting attended by more than forty RMT members, allowed the agency staff to explain the situation. Assistant General Secretary Steve Hedley insisted he will demand that LU's Gerry Duffy answers our concerns.

RMT's requests are simple. All LU trained station staff working for Trainpeople agency should be transferred over to LU without having to apply for the job. LU has announced that it plans further CSA recruitment campaigns this year. Who better for the job than workers who already wear the uniform and are trained to do the job?

While we wait a response, RMT will be organising a company-wide campaign to ensure our demands are met. RMT's position is clear, despite LU having reneged on the 2008 agreement, LU are morally obliged to employ all agency staff currently working north of Queens Park, with immediate effect.

CLEANERS STRIKE

On the 31st December and 1st January Cleaners took strike action to demand:

- £12.50 per hour
- Decent pensions
- Sick pay
- Free travel and dignity at work.

The bosses, in an attempt to break the strike, offered agency staff £12.45 per hour, which highlights that the cleaning companies, Initial and ISS, who make huge profits CAN afford to pay our cleaners £12.50 per hour.

As with the Trainpeople we demand that all jobs be brought back 'in-house' with an end to the use of agency staff. Current agency staff to be employed within LU, thus opening up promotion structures to our cleaners.

