

# RMT NEWS

## **LU quietly announced last week that our terms and conditions, framework agreements and pensions are under scrutiny:**

On 22 July, at an all union meeting LU management made clear they have entirely accepted the Tories' terms - that tube workers, and not the government must make up for the massive budget deficit caused by the pandemic. Not surprisingly, the emphasis was on "change" (cutting costs) and "our people" (we're paying for it) when they laid out their plans to "drive cost out of our business."

Despite LU being the only railway in the UK that has operated without taxpayers' subsidy, the Tories want TfL to redeem the billion quid in lost revenue and will not offer any assistance

protections they give us are too costly and should be abandoned so that we can all work harder and they can recruit less staff. Under the last "change" programme, FFS, management proposed a wholesale change to the stations framework. Top of their wish list was to implement shift changes with 24 hours notice, more cross cover and have the SRT cover jobs all over the combine. As a union we stopped the worst excesses of their plans but, predictably, here we are again, with the added pressure of vacancies that need covering already. With that number continuing to grow in the absence of any recruitment, so does the need to increase flexibility and the flexibility implied here simply means more weekends at work, more extreme shifts and less time with friends and family.

- **LU insists we must pay for budget deficit with cuts**
- **All policies and framework agreements in their sights**
- **Bosses aim to "permanently reduce recruitment", i.e., cut jobs**
  - **Review of pension scheme ongoing**
- **But: action can force the bosses back! Prepare to fight!**

until cuts are in place. The same is not true of the privatised rail companies who the Tories have not only subsidised without question but have also generously paid the profits that they would otherwise have lost. This isn't about the economy, 2021 is shaping up for the strongest economic growth in 80 years, the Tories usual excuse that cuts are an economic necessity doesn't wash. These cuts are about political ideology and the Tories are simply using the pandemic as cover for an attack on a Labour mayor and the last nationally owned and successful railway.

Under the guise of "reviewing everything we do" management swiftly identified our term and conditions as the first thing to be done and then set out to list the obstacles to the changes they see necessary to please Boris and his cronies.

**Our Framework Agreements were first up for the flexibility treatment,** meaning of course that the

**Fewer jobs, more casualisation was next on the to do list,** as was the enhanced use of contractors, something LU have been pushing for years. With no holiday or sick pay, national insurance or pension, outsourced labour is the aspiration of any employer as it typically costs half that of a directly employed member of staff. LU are also looking at how the company could "tightly control recruitment". Management wants to "achieve savings by permanently reducing the level of recruitment into the organisation." This can only mean cutting jobs. LU made a point of highlighting that they have been able to run the railway whilst carrying 450 vacancies, a clear indication that they believe the overall headcount is too high and cuts could be made. RMT's policy is to resist every job cut and our position is that all workers on TfL/LU should be directly employed, and we'll continue to fight for all outsourced work, including cleaning, catering, security, and track protection, to be brought back in house.

**Yet another attempt at changing the attendance policy** came next and whilst accepting our view that the existing policy is already too punitive, LU consider the way forward is to make it even more punitive, their excuse being the burden of

# STATIONS & REVENUE GRADES

absence on others. The reality of course is a policy which seeks to either force sick staff back to work or out the door and LU insist they will continue to support staff well being but only "at the appropriate levels."

RMT was the first union to respond to these planned attacks, making clear that any plans to deteriorate conditions or reduce staff will immediately trigger a dispute. LU tried to push back with a vague suggestion that nothing was concrete and these were simply talking points before going on to state that they have until September to give detailed plans to the government. Clearly LU know exactly how they want to go about change for our people and already have more than just a vague notion of what those changes are and the savings involved, which they will be in a "position to share" mid August.

Meanwhile, the company is already committed to a further review of our pension arrangements, which according to one Tory MP is outdated and too generous, despite MPs having the most generous pension possible. Additionally, a pay freeze already applied to centrally-employed TfL staff earning over £24,000 could be extended to LU when our company-specific pay deal expires in 2023.

However, the situation isn't doom and gloom. We have tremendous power as Tube workers and London's bosses are desperate to put the pandemic behind them and make money; if anything we are in pole position to keep what we've fought for and won over the years.

Obviously a few smart words or a dirty look across the negotiating table won't swing it. How much they're able to get away with depends substantially on the fight we're able to mount. Ultimately, we hold the power: we run the railway and if we don't come to work, stations don't open, trains don't run and it costs Boris's mates billions. The London Chamber of Commerce estimated that a single day's strike on the Tube "costs" the London economy over £300 million. In recent years, even the mere threat of industrial action forced the company to back off; when LU wanted to extend train maintenance schedules putting safety and jobs at risk, RMT train maintainers

balloted and forced the plans to be ditched, because LU knew they had the power and determination to shut the job down.

Recently even the threat of industrial action forced the company to back off; when LU wanted to extend train maintenance schedules putting safety and jobs at risk, RMT train maintainers balloted and forced the plans to be ditched. But, sometimes you have to strike, and it's not so long since station staff struck and (in the wake of the Fit for the Future job cuts) won 325 stations jobs back.



RMT exists to defend our members' jobs, pay and pensions and we know this will require an industrial and political campaign that demands that London's transport system remains publicly owned and centrally funded by government and that London's transport will not pay the alleged cost of the pandemic. If anything, we deserve improved conditions for the critical role we played.

Fighting and winning is already happening; Manchester bus workers have just beaten Go-Ahead's "fire & rehire" plans, Thurrock bin workers struck stopped massive pay cuts and teachers in Hertfordshire forced their employer to back off from scrapping their pensions. All three strikes were in the last couple of months, during the pandemic.

**The future remains unwritten; our actions will help write it. The only guarantee we have is that, if we do not fight, we will certainly lose. Share this newsletter with your workmates, get active in your union, and prepare to take action.**

**UNITY IS STRENGTH!!**