

CITIES OF LONDON & WESTMINSTER TRADES COUNCIL

NEWS AND EVENTS JULY 2008



Fair tips campaign



Unite campaign on tips and service charges - beware the deadly scams

Waiting staff in Unite want to eradicate some of the scams regularly applied by employers in restaurants and hotels when it comes to distributing tips left by customers. Join the Unite campaign to support restaurant and hotel workers get the tips they have rightfully earned.

What you can do:

Going to a restaurant, then look out for the following:

Employers taking a cut

Money left as a tip on a credit card or paid as service charge on a menu is legally the property of the employer to dispose of as they wish. Bad employers use this as an opportunity to take a cut of waiting staff tips and only pass on a proportion back to them. Unite says just because this is allowed it does not mean employers have to do it. Waiting staff should be entitled to all the tips left for them.

Charging a fee

As above, but in this case employers justify their actions by charging a so called administration fee for processing staff tips. This can be anything from 8 per cent to 15 per cent of the money received. Unite says there is no justification whatsoever for admin fees.

Weighting tips on a points system

Some employers pool tips and distribute them on a points system. Unfortunately in many schemes managers award themselves the highest points and receive the lion's share of tips while those doing

the hard work lose out. Unite says employers should pay managers a decent salary so they don't have to muscle in on staff tips.

Widening the pool

A growing number of employers are widening the number of staff receiving a share in the tips. Many restaurants have included low paid kitchen staff and bartenders. This is an attempt to lessen the impact of increases in the minimum wage. So every time the rate goes up waiting staff suffer a cut in income as their employer 'robs Peter to pay Paul'. This can engineer resentment and friction between waiting staff and their work colleagues.

Unite says all restaurant workers deserve a decent living wage paid directly by their employer and should not be manipulated into squabbling about who gets a share of customer tips.

Paying the price

On a busy shift all sorts of incidents can happen. Plates and glasses can get broken. Customers can walk out without paying the bill. Money in the till might not add at the end of the night.

Many employers expect waiting staff to pay for these shortages out of their tips. Unite says such deductions are immoral and should never be allowed to happen.

Unite's Fair Tips' charter

- Pay all employees at least the minimum wage with 100 per cent of tips added on top as a bonus with no hidden charges
- Reach agreement on how tips are shared with those staff directly affected
- Make no deductions from tips or salaries to cover breakages, till shortages or customer walk-outs
- Make all rules for the distribution of tips and service charges available in writing for staff and customers on request



from www.tgwu.org.uk



.Unions protest over privatisation of lorry checking

27 June 2008

Members of the Public and Commercial Services Union, Prospect and Unite protested today outside a board meeting of the Department for Transport in a bid to avert the privatisation of the Vehicle and Operator Services Agency.

Today's protest took place outside the headquarters of the DfT, Great Minster House, London, as the DfT board discussed whether to recommend the privatisation of VOSA to the secretary of state.

VOSA is responsible for checking the safety of heavy goods vehicles, public service vehicles and the monitoring of MOT garages. The unions fear that a move to outsource the functions of VOSA would threaten the integrity and independence of the inspection regime and go against the government's stated objectives on road safety.

VOSA's own estimates, based on its duty to monitor private garages undertaking MOT testing, show that 15% of all car MOTs delivered by the private sector each year are deficient – against a percentage of deficient lorry MOTs delivered by VOSA of 0.09 per cent, or 0.03 per cent for buses.

The unions, who represent up to 2,650 people working for VOSA, are urging the board of DfT to consider the whole of the business plan for the privatisation which they believe is seriously flawed and contradictory.

PCS general secretary Mark Serwotka said: "The plans to outsource work are flawed and will compromise road safety. Not only would these plans threaten the integrity and independence of the inspection regime, but they would also undermine the government's targets on road safety. The DfT board should take the chance to throw out these damaging proposals."

Prospect general secretary Paul Noon said: "After Railtrack and Metronet it seems inconceivable that anyone could still believe public-private partnerships and transport are a good mix. Yet some VOSA functions, including HGV and public service vehicle testing, remain under the threat of privatisation. Our members believe that the largest and heaviest vehicles on the road should be examined by an organisation focused purely on safety and without any restrictions imposed by the need to return a profit."

Unite regional officer Jerry Pickford said: "This is another example of the government's continuing policy of privatisation of the public sector. Expensive consultants have been brought in, not to look at how the agency can be improved, but to see how it can be handed over to the private sector, more interested in making profit than ensuring public safety."

from www.pcs.org.uk



Poverty wages indefensible says RMT as Tube cleaners prepare to strike tonight

Publication Date: June 26 2008

THE POVERTY wages paid to London Underground cleaners are indefensible, their union says today as 700 RMT members working for four cleaning subcontractors prepare to begin their first-ever strike at 18:50 tonight.

Attempts to kick-start talks at Acas last night came to nothing as the employers made no effort to negotiate.

The number of MPs signing a Commons motion supporting the cleaners, condemning the employers and urging the mayor to ensure that contract cleaners are paid the London living wage had risen to 24 this morning (text and list below).

After voting to strike by a landslide 125-one margin, RMT cleaners working for ISS, ITS, ICS and GBM will not book on for shifts that commence during the 24 hours between 18:50 tomorrow (June 26) and 18:49 on Friday June 27.

"Our members have been subjected to massive intimidation but tonight they will make history by striking for the first time ever for the living wage their fatcat employers have so far denied them," RMT general secretary Bob Crow said today.

"These bosses are making millions on the backs of workers who are paid at rates it is simply impossible to live on, and that is indefensible.

"Our AGM in Nottingham has pledged complete support for the Tube cleaners' campaign for a living wage, and the employers should now get around the table with us to negotiate a living wage," Bob Crow said. The cleaners' demands also include 28 days' holiday, sick pay, decent pensions and travel facilities, and an end to the barbaric practice of 'third-party sackings' in which cleaners can be dismissed, with no disciplinary hearing or right of appeal, at the behest parties other than the employer - a device used to get rid of union activists.

Early Day Motion 1872

CONDITIONS FOR CLEANERS EMPLOYED ON LONDON UNDERGROUND

Tabled by John McDonnell and signed by June 26 by Harry Cohen, Andrew Dismore, Neil Gerrard, Diane Abbot, Jeremy Corbyn, Mark Durkan, Andrew George, Linda Riordan, Lindsay Hoyle, Lynne Jones, Chris McCafferty, Alasdair McDonnell, Gregory Campbell, Ronnie Campbell, Ann Cryer, Janet Dean, Ian Gibson, John Battle, Peter Bottomley, Robert Wareing and Phil Willis

That this House fully supports the 700 cleaners on London Underground who are members of the RMT union, who have voted by a margin of 125-to-one to take strike action for the London living wage and improved working conditions, including decent sick pay, pensions, holiday entitlement and travel facilities; notes that the action also seeks to end the disgraceful practice of third-party sackings in which cleaners can be dismissed, with no disciplinary hearing or right of appeal, at the behest of parties other than the employer; is appalled that these vulnerable workers who do such an essential job for London must get by on rates of pay of little more than £5.50 an hour; believes that such exploitation brings shame on London as it prepares for the 2012 Olympics; further notes that the cleaners are employed by contractors ISS, ITS, ICS and GBM who are subcontracted to Metronet and Tube Lines to undertake cleaning for London Underground; therefore believes that Transport for London (TfL) has a clear responsibility to assist in resolving this dispute; calls on the Mayor of London to honour the pledge of the previous Mayor that cleaners on Metronet contracts would receive the London living wage as soon as they passed under TfL control, and to bring pressure on Tube Lines also to pay the living wage; condemns the intimidation of cleaners by employers in this dispute; and urges cleaning bosses instead to direct their energies to reaching a just, negotiated statement.

Put staff back on stations for a safer journey, says RMT

Publication Date: June 25 2008

THE COST-CUTTING removal of staff from railway stations by profit-hungry privateers is undermining safety for passengers and rail workers and must be reversed, the industry's biggest union says today.

Launching its **Safer Journey** campaign at its annual general meeting in Nottingham, RMT points out that just 10p in every £1 from the £300 million made each year by private train operators would fund the return of 1,000 staff to Britain's understaffed or understaffed stations.

The union is calling for a ban on any further de-staffing while a comprehensive review of station staffing levels is undertaken, with a view to ensuring that every station is staffed by at least two people throughout traffic hours.

Delegates in Nottingham also demanded that transport employers take seriously their duty of care towards staff – including ending lone working, ensuring that station staff are directly employed and properly trained and offering proper support to those who are assaulted at work rather than treating them as part of the problem.

"It is astonishing, but the ministers responsible for setting rail franchises and handing over £2 billion in subsidy have no idea how many stations have been left understaffed or understaffed since the industry was privatised," RMT general secretary Bob Crow said today (see notes).

"What we do know is that safety fears are one of the key factors putting people off using trains, particularly women traveling alone at night, and that far too many of our members are assaulted when they are left to work alone.

"We also know that just ten per cent of the £300 million of taxpayers' and fare-payers' money that the operators leech from the industry in profits would pay the wages of 1,000 extra station staff.

"As things stand the government is handing over public money to private franchisees and telling them that it is OK to put their profits before our members' and the public's safety.

"The people who work and travel on the railways want to see more staff on stations, not fewer, and a ban on any further de-staffing is now urgent as a first step towards ensuring that all stations are adequately staffed," Bob Crow said

from www.rmt.org.uk



SQUASH in the Cab

'SQUASH IN THE CAB' - is ASLEF's campaign to improve our members' working conditions within driving cabs. We've called the campaign 'SQUASH' because it reflects what many cabs are like today - and outlines our objectives.

ASLEF wants its members to work in cabs that are:

Safe

Quiet

User-friendly

Air-conditioned

Specially seated

Healthy

To expand on the slogan **OUR DEMANDS** are cabs that are:

SAFE

WE WANT cabs that have no hazards - such as water leaks that can reach electrical elements

QUIET

WE WANT cabs that conform to office standards - which means you should never be subjected to single high-volume noise or regular whines which can affect your hearing. Sound emissions must be muted.

Twenty years ago we didn't expect to be able to speak to the person next to us in our cars - but times have changed. It's time the railway caught up.

USER-FRIENDLY

WE WANT cabs with controls that we can reach with ease and don't involve leaning or stretching to operate. We need to be able to keep our eyes on the track and not be scrambling across the cab to find a button or a lever.

AIRED

WE WANT all UK cabs to be fitted with air conditioning.

This is no longer a luxury - the most basic motor-cars now have this fitted as standard. If we are to be alert and able to concentrate for long periods, air-con is not an extravagance, but a basic necessity. It is what we are used to in our cars and in our carriages. It must become the norm in the cab. Remember, there are few occupations in the land as safety-critical as our own.

SPECIALLY SEATED

WE WANT chairs that are ergonomically designed to maximise comfortable working and prevent back pain that distracts from concentration. Seating height from the floor, length from controls and back position should all be adjustable. In an office environment, this is standard: in our cabs it is often a sick joke.

HEALTHY

WE WANT cabs that protect our drivers and add to rail safety for passengers. That is why we demand train-driving specific mandatory temperature limits (both hot and cold) for cabs.

from www.aslef.org.uk



Council strikes confirmed

(27/06/08) UNISON's industrial action committee has today confirmed that local government strike action will go ahead on 16 and 17 July in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

"Throughout the union and across the country our members working in local government have given sustained strike action the green light," said UNISON general secretary Dave Prentis.

The action affects 600,000 of the union's local government members, including social workers, librarians, school meals workers, refuse collectors, surveyors and teaching assistants.

They will walk out to protest this year's below-inflation pay offer of 2.45%.

"This decision has not been taken lightly, but years of pay cuts and recent hikes in fuel, food and housing costs has left them with little choice," Mr Prentis continued.

"The employers must realise that we mean business. They must also understand they can resolve this dispute by coming up with a decent offer. Our members are loyal public service workers and our case for fair pay is strong."

The government's [Office of National Statistics](http://www.statistics.gov.uk)' own figures show that Retail Price Index inflation reached 4.3% in May. In the same month, the CPI measure of inflation, which the government uses to set its inflation target, hit 3.3%

- Local government workers in Scotland are being balloted in July on taking strike action after rejecting a three-year offer worth 2.5% in each year.

from www.unison.org.uk



25 July 2007

Two Weeks of Disruption Planned for all Postal Services

The Communication Workers' Union has announced an escalation of the level of strike action in Royal Mail. Although postal workers will individually take 2 days of strike action in the next two weeks, the strikes announced mean that there will be two weeks of continuous disruption to mail services. The strikes call out separate functions nationally on different days and the timing is aimed at maximising the impact on mail.

The clear escalation of the strike has been called because Royal Mail have made it clear they are unwilling to engage in any meaningful negotiations "We have contacted Royal Mail leaders on copious occasions, consistently asking for negotiations to find a resolution to the dispute. Royal Mail management continue to ignore the union and its' workforce. This is absolutely unacceptable", said Dave Ward, CWU Deputy General Secretary. General Secretary Billy Hayes added "stepping up strike action is the inevitable response to an employer that refuses to take the strike seriously. Again, we are calling on Royal Mail's business leaders to enter fresh and meaningful negotiations aimed at settling the dispute. The fact that they continue to refuse to do so is a failure to their workforce and the public".

In addition to strike action, the CWU are stepping up their campaign to make pressure groups and the public aware that postal workers are taking this action in an attempt to defend and protect postal services.

from www.cwu.org.uk

TRADES COUNCIL TO HOLD OPEN MEETING IN OCTOBER

The TC is planning to hold a second open meeting for the October TC.

The venue is proposed for the Civil Service Club and John McDonnell MP has agreed to speak at it. This follows on from the successful event in the same venue at the AGM in March this year.

ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF TRADE UNION COUNCILS HELD IN SHEFFIELD

On the second weekend in June the national TUC organized conference of Trade Union Councils and Trades Councils met in Sheffield, chaired by NUJ GS Jeremy Dear. The London motions were passed along with an amendment about treating local TCs as lead bodies in an area which originated from our Trades Council. When we get the written report we can give more information.