

## RAIL

## Bakerloo strike over lone working

FOLLOWING a 94.5% yes vote to take strike action, drivers and detrainment workers on the Bakerloo line will be out this Friday to force management to withdraw their plans for 'lone-working'.

Detrainment staff, who check that trains are empty of passengers at the end of their route, currently work in groups of at least two in order to ensure their and passengers' safety — and yet, at Harrow & Wealdstone and Willesden Junction stations, in an area where violent crime is 40% above the national average, security is being cut back.

Detrainment work at these stations is suitable for medically restricted staff who cannot work at other locations — but it is these vulnerable staff who are now to be left alone. The service is being cut back in spite of a passenger fatality at the sidings at Liverpool Street under the previous shoddy regimen, to the detriment of workers and the people who use the Tube. That drivers will be expected to help to deal with detrainment is no substitute for overall safety.

While management would do well to recognize the determination of workers to win this dispute — and maintain current arrangements — the RMT should co-ordinate the strike action that is likely to take place on the part of Silverlink workers, over pay, with Bakerloo line staff.

## NUT

## Halifax anti-academy campaign

BY PAT MURPHY, NUT EXECUTIVE (PC)

IN Halifax on Wednesday July 11th Calderdale NUT organised a public meeting to launch their anti-Academies campaign. There are no Academies so far in Calderdale but there is a proposal to close the Ridings School and replace it with one in North Halifax. The Ridings hit the national media a few years back when it was labelled a school out of control by press and government. What was less well publicised was the fact that there are selective grammar schools in the area which leaves the local comprehensives to be, in effect, secondary modern schools, teaching the most disadvantaged and most challenging young people.

An official parents consultation meeting attracted 40 people earlier in the week. Sue McMahon, Calderdale branch secretary told me she was a bit worried that she hadn't been able to book a room with a capacity smaller than 70 and hoped the turnout at the NUT meeting wasn't made to look worse by this. On turning up I found that the room was packed.

There must have been around 100 people there including parents, governors, local councillors from all three parties and teachers. Speakers from the floor included all of these groups. A parent from the campaign to stop the establishment of an Academy at Rhodesway school in Bradford was the main speaker, but former Labour MP Alice Mahon also spoke from the floor as did Ian Murch, NUT national officer and Hazel Danson and myself from the NUT National Executive. It was a tremendous start to the campaign, everyone left with petitions and pledged to build the campaign against an Academy.

## PUBLIC SECTOR

## Public sector pay rally in Leeds

A LARGE and successful public rally to oppose Gordon Brown's public sector pay freeze was held in Leeds on Thursday July 12th. Over 100 people attended the rally, held at the Metropole Hotel and sponsored by at least five local union branches. The meeting was organised by a local public sector pay campaign set up in June after discussions between the NUT and Unison Local Government. This united local campaign has

## TGWU meets for last time

BY A CONFERENCE DELEGATE

MEMBERS of the TGWU gathered in Brighton at the beginning of July for the last ever T&G Biennial Delegates' Conference.

The first day of the conference started with an opening address from newly elected chair Brenda Sanders. This is the first time in the history of the T&G that there has been a woman chair.

Debates were held on manufacturing, food and agriculture, public services and an emergency motion on Land Rover/Jaguar.

The afternoon saw General Secretary Tony Woodley give his keynote speech. He started by laying out his vision for the new union Unite which he argued would be a "fighting back" union. His speech was actually a decent left wing speech where he argued that there is a class war going on across the world with wealth and power being sucked up towards the already wealthy and powerful.

"A world in which the share of labour in the wealth that working people themselves produce is falling, and the share of capital is rising. Where we are told we can't tax private equity vultures properly in case they leave the country."

Tuesday morning saw debates on transport and anti-trade union laws. Derek Simpson, joint General Secretary of Unite, addressed delegates

laying out his vision of Unite being an international union that could fight back against global capital.

Delegates heard from agency workers including those involved in a current dispute in Salford. Striking Salford Council refuse workers fighting to close a £2 an hour gap between agency and permanent staff took centre stage in the debate on equal rights. Tony Woodley criticised the government for blocking the Private Member's Bill on temporary and agency workers.

One of the only controversial debates of conference was around the tactics of fighting the anti-trade union laws. The GEC argued against a motion that called for a rank and file shop stewards conference and that argued that the T&G should "support any T&G member or fellow trade union threatened with legal action for resisting the legislation, for example by refusing to issue repudiation letters if their members take so called unofficial industrial action". The GEC argued against this claiming that illegal action could result in the sequestration of funds and bankrupt the union. Some members of the Broad Left spoke against it, with patronising sound-bites that delegates should think with "their heads not their hearts". The mover of the motion replied by explaining that the union's key assets were its members and they should be mobilised to fight off the attacks if the law was used against the

union. Despite the obvious mobilisation by the GEC the vote was only carried by two-to-one showing that there are many members that want to show the government that the unions are serious about fighting to repeal the anti-union laws.

Another controversial debate was on the calls for a boycott of Israeli goods (see below). Conference also called for an immediate withdrawal from Iraq and the ruling out of military engagement in Iran and Syria. Further debates were held on pensions and social justice.

The final day saw debates on equality including debates on ending women's poverty, union equality representatives as well as on changing the face of the union.

The final controversial debate was on the Labour Party. The GEC wanted to remove the motions around the Labour Party to replace it with a GEC executive statement. The GEC statement was weaker than the motions and failed to deal with the issue of the T&G failing to nominate John McDonnell for the leadership of the Labour Party. It even congratulated Gordon Brown on his appointment! Delegates criticised the GEC for stalling on the issue and failing to lead the trade union movement by nominating a socialist candidate.

The first conference of Unite will be in 2009. Let's hope that by then the trade union movement has organised a strong and successful fightback against the anti-union laws.

## Delegates denied debate on Israel boycott

THE T&G has joined the growing number of unions voting to support a boycott of Israel in some form. The Biennial Delegate Conference voted on 4 July to "support a boycott of Israeli products and goods" — in very strange circumstances.

This decision follows the recent passing of pro-boycott motions by NUJ, UCU and Unison. Those votes, though in no case did they represent likely majority opinion among the membership, were carried out properly after a fairly extensive debate from the floor. At the T&G conference, however, pro-boycott activists manoeuvred successfully to avoid a debate.

Two motions on Israel-Palestine were submitted to the conference. One, number 169, combined platitudes about Palestinian rights with support for the Enough! coalition's activities: not ideal, but relatively unobjectionable. The other, number 170, from the Birmingham Vehicle Builders' District Committee, committed the union to support for a boycott.

At the T&G Broad Left's pre-conference caucus on 30 June, following a number of anti-boycott speeches including from Workers' Liberty, activists voted overwhelmingly to oppose motion 170 and asked Andy Erlam from ACTS 1/524 branch, who would be representing motion 169 at compositing the next

day, to ensure that the two motions remained separate.

At the compositing meeting, however, Erlam mysteriously went missing at the crucial point, with the result that 170 and 169 were composited into a single motion. Thus delegates were denied the right to vote on the boycott proposal separately, and faced with having to support a boycott in order to pass any pro-Palestinian policy at all.

Thus, despite the clear indication at the Broad Left pre-meeting that at large swathe of activists wanted to show solidarity with the Palestinians but were opposed to a boycott, a cynical manoeuvre meant that delegates got no clear vote on the issue.

Matters were made worse when, at the conference itself, following a proposing speech which compared Israel to Nazi Germany, the chair cut short the discussion allegedly due to lack of time — but then allowed Barry Camfield of the GEC half an hour to summate! The result is that hardly any speeches on the issue were taken, and the many delegates who wished to put the case against the composited motion were denied the right to do so. Thus the boycott was passed, bizarrely, without a fight.

This is a triumph for the Stalinist fake left in the union, represented par excellence by Camfield, who combine an abject industrial

quickly attracted support from the PCS, Unison Health, the CWU and FBU. In some cases this is official branch support in other cases it is the involvement of some activists and lay officers. The public meeting the first major event backed by the campaign and was in effect the public launch. It was very quickly organised and we had the usual anxieties about turnout. In fact the over-filled room was more than most of the committee expected and fully vindicated the decision to go for a major launch event before the summer holidays.

The meeting was addressed by the local CWU postal branch secretary who reported on the solid support for the strike that day. The platform also included victimised health worker Karen Reissman from Unison Health NEC, Bill Greensheils, NUT National Vice-President and Sue Bond of PCS. There was a good mix of workers from local government, health, civil service and schools and some posties. It was a very upbeat meeting which clearly boosted and enthused the people who came and it should

consolidate and expand the local unity committee that we have established.

The test for the local campaign will be whether it can play a role in fighting for co-ordination of industrial action and combatting the divide and rule tactics that we are likely to see around public sector pay in the months ahead. A good start would be to organise workplace collection sheets for the postal workers for use in all local workplaces.

## POST

## Crown Post Offices strike

WORKERS at 465 Crown Post Offices across Britain were readied to take a third day of strike action on 19 July against cutbacks and

record with leftist posturing on international issues — taking positions on the latter which, as in this case, are actually not very left-wing at all. An important element in this camp is the faction of the Communist Party of Britain/*Morning Star* which supports a boycott and currently seems to be in the ascendant within the CPB.

The issue will not be discussed again until the first unified Unite policy conference in a couple of years' time — when we may see a clash between pro-boycott sections of the T&G left and the pro-Israeli right in Amicus. Socialists in both unions should begin building support for a rational, internationalist pro-Palestinian position and campaign.

Whatever the circumstances, the vote at T&G conference is a major victory for the pro-boycott campaigners. The boycott campaign is clearly gathering pace. Activists in every union, but particularly those which now have pro-boycott policy, need to get organised to ensure that the voice of sanity is heard loudly and clearly. Trade Unionists for Two States, growing out of the policy passed by the CWU in 2002, is a vehicle to do that. We urge comrades to get involved.

• Trade Unionists for Two States: see [www.links-not-boycott.org.uk](http://www.links-not-boycott.org.uk) for more info

privatisation of the postal service. Royal Mail's plans will see 85 of the country's largest Post Offices put into the hands of WHSmith, in changes which will see 1,500 redundancies and pay cuts for those lucky enough to cling on to their jobs. The CWU says that the majority of Post Office workers can expect a pay cut (relative to inflation) of over £5,000 by 2010.

Much like other postworkers, Post Office staff organised by the CWU have been mounting one-day stoppages in protest at dismemberment of the postal service, having struck on the morning of 2 July and on 16 July. However, although these workers are subjected to the same cuts agenda, their dispute is being led as if separate from the struggle of posties, with little co-ordination of actions. More unity and the concrete threat of further strikes are needed to ensure a real fightback, as management refuse to negotiate with the union.