

# RMT's sellout pay deal on London Underground rammed through without a vote

Tony Robson  
23 February 2024

The Rail, Maritime and Transport (RMT) union has rammed through a sellout pay deal against its 10,000 members on London Underground without a ballot.

The union's February 15 press release boasts "RMT win[s] pay rise" with General Secretary Mick Lynch claiming, "Strong organised trades unionism where members are prepared to take action gets results."

The reality is a below-inflation pay deal accepted by RMT officials and reps that differs from London Underground's "full and final" offer of 5 percent for 2023/4 only on a few additional payments spread unevenly among tube workers.

The RMT leadership has reneged on its own demand for an RPI+ increase across the board and its claim to represent "all grades", with workers on lower pay grades left with an effective pay cut and engineers and other workers on the highest pay grades forced to accept a divisive cap on consolidated earnings.

London Underground workers began a week of rolling strikes from January 5, with 90 percent vote mandate, demanding an overdue cost-of-living increase from April last year. RMT officials pulled the plug three days into the strikes, just as 10,000 tube workers were preparing to walk out collectively.

The RMT executive called off the strikes after a sudden announcement by London Mayor Sadiq Khan that an additional £30 million had been "discovered" in Transport for London's (TfL) budget to resolve the dispute.

Tube workers were sent back to work before any detailed offer had been made. Lynch described the intervention by the Labour Mayor as a "fresh approach" which would "enable a more constructive negotiation."

Jared Wood, a member of the pseudo-left Socialist Party who is the RMT's London Transport regional

organiser played a direct role in the sellout. *Socialist Worker* provided its usual apologetics.

Wood did most of the heavy lifting for the RMT executive. On January 11 he claimed that Khan had provided "a significant increase that will allow us to address the key issues raised by RMT. We will now seek to conclude negotiations as soon as possible."

The warnings published by the *World Socialist Web Site* that the RMT's backroom talks with Khan were a sellout in the making have been confirmed.

The terms of the negotiated pay award were announced by Wood in a "special pay bulletin" ahead of a meeting of RMT officials and reps on February 8 convened to rubberstamp the deal.

Wood claimed the crumbs Khan offered were "a huge achievement".

RMT members will in fact receive an additional £1000 consolidated payment on top of the 5 percent to get their strikes off the table. Those on the lowest pay grade (under £35,000 per annum) will receive an additional £400 consolidated, with an additional £200 for those paid between £35,000 and £40,000 per annum.

In percentage terms this means Train Maintainers and Train Operators will receive a 6.6 percent increase and Technical Officers/CSM1s 6.3 percent. Among frontline Customer Service Assistants, CSA2s will receive a 9.6 percent pay rise and CSA1s and storemen just over 8 percent. The RPI inflation rate in April 2023 (the period when the pay award was due) was 11.4 percent.

Other key aspects of the pay dispute have been kicked into the long grass. On the major issue of ending the freeze on pay bands, Wood conceded, "management has not accepted our call for all pay bands to rise in line with the full % offer but RMT is continuing to seek

improvements to the treatment of bands.”

The deal freezes pay bands for workers at the top pay bands. They will receive a part lump sum increase instead, with consolidated pay capped. This divisive outcome sets a precedent that TfL will seek to press against all grades.

Tube workers’ demands for enhanced travel facilities on national rail have been stonewalled. They will be “reviewed” with the “aim” of implementing them by April 2025.

The RMT’s deal with Khan was pushed through by Wood on February 8. On February 15, the RMT executive announced the deal as a win.

The most striking aspect of the pay deal was the method used to impose it. The membership was never consulted. No ballot was held on the revised pay deal and members had no control over the dispute’s outcome. Instead, the RMT executive relied on regional officials and reps to provide a veneer of endorsement, led by members of the SP and Socialist Workers Party who pushed it through.

The Socialist Party published an article by former RMT executive member John Reid proclaiming an “RMT London Underground victory”.

In a February 13 report in *Socialist Worker*, an “RMT Tube worker” indicated opposition to aspects of the deal by some reps who attended the February 8 meeting, having “expected the meeting to be celebratory.” Wood’s report to the meeting was described as “nuanced”, citing his statement that “the union can’t make a habit of accepting below-inflation offers”.

The commentary is delivered in the style of a passive bystander. Noting the deal’s negative outcomes, including a “real terms pay cut”, the author does not state whether he or she voted for, or against, the agreement, Bemoaning the loss of the RMT’s militant credentials, the SWP’s correspondent writes of its mythical boast of opposing below-inflation pay offers, “They won’t be able to say that anymore.”

The SWP’s “tube worker” then blames workers for the deal’s outcome—quite a feat seeing as workers had no say—writing, “I think there’s sometimes a lack of confidence about what we can achieve and about members willingness to fight”.

Wood and the SWP act as vital props for the bureaucracy, *against* the rank-and-file. While the SWP

offers its criticisms of the bureaucracy, they oppose any fight by workers to break free from its grip.

The gap between rhetoric and reality is becoming clearer to RMT members, and not only on London Underground. Below-inflation pay deals at Network Rail and at the train operating companies have paved the way for mass job losses and brutal restructuring.

Throughout 2022-23, with a wave of strikes threatened, Lynch used his reputation as a “militant” to demobilise a movement that threatened to bring down the Tory government. Suppressing and dividing strikes, he fronted the protest campaign Enough is Enough that promoted various “left” MPs to corral the working class behind the election of a Labour government.

January’s strike cancellation is the third time the RMT has clamped down on action on the London Underground since March 2023. In July, four days of strikes were vetoed as Lynch reported “progress” in arbitration talks over pensions, pay and conditions. In October, two days of strike action were cancelled over another supposed victory in relation to the slashing of station staff jobs by 10 percent. This involved the reinstatement of 213 jobs while RMT leaders accepted the elimination of another 300 jobs unilaterally imposed.

As TfL prepares to impose swingeing cuts across the transport network, including mass redundancies, attacks on conditions and the gutting of pensions, workers must prepare. Rank-and-file committees must be established at every station and depot to take control of the fight. Against the RMT’s backroom deals with Khan and the government, workers need to formulate their own demands in opposition to the profit gouging and austerity being demanded by the Conservative government and London’s Labour Mayor.



To contact the WSW and the  
Socialist Equality Party visit:

**[wsws.org/contact](https://www.wsws.org/contact)**