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Rail workers' union strike threat over sacking of ticket examiners



Jody Harrison
Reporter

THE rail workers' union is considering calling its members out on strike and mounting other industrial action over the sacking of two Scottish workers.

The RMT union is balloting its members over the dismissal of ticket examiners Darren Brander and Karin McLean, who were fired after they got into an altercation with two passengers who they claim had subjected them to a campaign of abuse.

The union is demanding the "immediate reinstatement" of both workers, who they say only defended themselves against an unprovoked attack.

However, ScotRail said the pair's actions were "unacceptable and inexcusable" and their investigation suggests the case is different to what was described by the union.

RMT said the two workers have been "verbally and physically assaulted at work", "harassed" while off-duty and followed home.

A union spokesman said matters came to a head in June 2008 when the pair were accosted by their tormentors as they travelled on a train.

Both Mr Brander and Ms McLean had finished their shifts but were still wearing their uniforms when the incident took place.

Although they maintain that they were the victims, they were both sacked by ScotRail.

The union has now called for a ballot of all RMT ticket examiners in Airdrie, Bathgate, Dalmeir, Glasgow Central (Argyle Line), Helensburgh Central, Motherwell and Partick, with a vote due to take place today.

RMT general secretary Bob Crow said: "This dispute on ScotRail is over the most blatant travesty of justice, where two of our ticket examiner members have ended up sacked for simply defending themselves from a gang of thugs who have waged a two-year campaign of violence and intimidation against them, both at work and right up to their own front doors.

"We are determined to secure justice for Karin and Darren."

ScotRail said it stood by the summary dismissals on grounds of gross misconduct.

A spokesman said: "A full, proper and detailed investigation concluded that their conduct was unacceptable and inexcusable."

ScotRail insisted it was "never made aware of a so-called campaign against the staff members" before the incident which led to their dismissal.

The spokesman added: "We do not take decisions to dismiss lightly. The facts identified by the detailed investigation are very different from those described by the union.

"We are disappointed at the union's claims and the language used."

The train operator also insisted passenger journeys will not be disrupted if industrial action is taken.

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