



tubeworker

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EU REFERENDUM:

VOTE IN, FIGHT FOR A WORKERS' EUORPE!

On 23 June, most of us will get to vote on whether the UK should stay in the European Union.

Some of us might be finding it hard to work out how to vote. Campaigners on both sides of are painting an exaggerated picture of the consequences if Britain votes to “leave”. In addition, the arguments we hear in the media focus on what is best for the profitability of British business, rather than what will improve our lives. Here, *Tubeworker* tries to pick through the exaggeration on both sides and looks at some arguments based on what is best for us as transport workers, and for working class people in general.

“Vote Leave” spin

RMT has argued that a vote to leave will “end privatisation”, “end attacks on workers”, and “end austerity”.

This gives the impression that a Britain outside the EU will automatically be kinder to workers.

In reality, Tory governments since 2010 have acted on their own wishes, not EU orders, by imposing attacks on our jobs and living standards to benefit the rich.

The post-referendum government could be even more anti-worker than it is now. There is no easier life waiting for us outside the EU. We can only improve our lives by fighting the bosses and their political representatives; voting to “leave” is no short-cut.

Some “leave” campaigners have blamed migrants for problems such as lack of housing and low pay. These problems are not the fault of migrant workers. They are the fault of British governments who have prioritised serving the rich. The housing shortage, for example, stems from the sell-off of council housing since the 1980s and the refusal of subsequent governments to build more. The fact that housing is increasingly owned by a small, wealthy group of private landlords, who have turned housing into an “investment”, has also driven housing costs up.

Similarly, low wages cannot be blamed on competition for jobs due to migration, but on government economic policy since the 2008 economic crisis that has

deliberately driven down wages in order to increase profitability for businesses.

We need to fight as part of a working-class political movement to put these problems right. Scapegoating migrants only increases racist hostility to foreigners while letting the people responsible for our problems off the hook.



Our rights

The EU brings some benefits for working-class people, but you won't hear David Cameron shouting about them because they relate to our rights as workers.

Many workers' rights, such as the maximum 48-hour working week, rights for agency workers, and maternity rights are part of British law because the EU requires it. Outside the EU, these rights would be vulnerable; a Tory government would relish the opportunity to scrap them to push down workers' conditions.

The right to work legally, as a result of free movement across the EU, gives workers security and confidence to join trade unions. This is good for all workers; it means we can stand together.

On London Underground a lot of cleaners are migrants from the EU or from Africa working on Italian or German passports.

When Bulgarian and Romanian workers gained the right to work legally in the UK in January 2014, many joined trade unions for the first time, which strengthened the campaign for cleaners' rights. The rights of our colleagues to stay here will be vulnerable if UK leaves the EU.

The Europe we want

The EU is founded on building cooperation between states and business across borders. To help business, it overwhelmingly promotes privatisation,

austerity and attacks on workers. Its institutions are far from democratic.

But the EU's breaking down of barriers between countries for the benefit of business can be good for us as well. The EU has made it easier to travel and exchange cultures, which has helped to erode hostility between people of different nationalities.

Co-operation between business means we are more likely to face similar struggles, and perhaps work for the same companies, whether we work in Britain, France, or Poland. Bus and train company Arriva is now a subsidiary of the German public rail company, Deutsche Bahn. This gives us more chance to link up our struggles with those of workers in Germany.

All this increases our potential for building solidarity across borders. We can fight alongside workers from Greece, Spain and other countries who are dissatisfied with the EU's pro-austerity policies. Ultimately, through Europe-wide solidarity, we have the chance to fight for governments that represent and serve working-class people.

Tubeworker believes in internationalism. We want to strengthen the workers' movement across the world, not just across Europe. We want the rights to freedom of movement that exist within the EU to be extended across the world. *Tubeworker* is critical of the way EU countries have excluded many migrants from outside Europe, so refugees from Syria and elsewhere risk unsafe travel into Europe or get stuck in refugee camps on its edges.

But for all the current limits of the EU, *Tubeworker* still recommends that we vote to remain in Europe. Leaving the EU will not provide any easy solutions to the problems we're facing. Many of our problems at work, in society and with the EU itself are shared by workers across Europe.

It's better to address these problems by building solidarity with workers across Europe who share our concerns. We can stay in Europe and fight to change it.

**FOR MORE, SEE: ANOTHEREUROPE.ORG
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CLEANERS' COLUMN

SUPER CONTRACT?

LU plans to hand all cleaning contracts over to a single company.

This could be better for cleaners: it will be easier for the union to put pressure on a single employer, especially if the union builds on its campaign to get all cleaners into the union.

LU wants to only deal with one company. So why not bring cleaners back into LU? This is an ideal opportunity.

The huge number of agency cleaners who currently work for ISS and Interserve are worried they will be thrown on the scrap heap when the new contract comes in. LU: get rid of the agencies and private cleaning companies, and take on all cleaners as permanent employees with free travel, pensions, and other rights.

MESSAGE TO THE MAYOR

Sadiq Khan: now you're Mayor, you have the chance to improve the lives of some of London's lowest paid, most exploited workers.

You have the chance to end the contracting-out of cleaning and all other services on London Underground. Bring us in house!

John McDonnell and others in the leadership of the Labour Party agree with us that you have the ideal opportunity. We want to meet with you, we want you to listen to us.

We will demonstrate and publicise our demands so you know that we cannot be ignored.

STAMP OUT SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Cases of unwanted sexual attention towards female Tube cleaners are on the rise.

There seems to be an endemic culture of sexual harassment, where vulnerable female workers are taken advantage of. Cleaning companies cannot turn a blind eye to these cases. The companies must take complaints seriously and work with unions to stamp out sexual harassment.

MILL HILL SPILLS

LU suspended the Northern Line's Mill Hill East branch because of "absence of station staff".

Note the choice of words: "absence" implies that it's our fault for not turning up, whereas, say, "shortage" might suggest the truth - that LU doesn't employ enough station staff to keep the job running.

"SICKNESS" OR SHORTAGE?

Since Fit for the Future, drivers have noticed more unstaffed stations and more occasions when there are no staff to see out the last trains.

Central Line management are telling drivers that the last trains only need to be dispatched at certain key stations. Management are spreading the malicious rumour to drivers that a conspiracy of co-ordinated mass sickness, orchestrated by the unions, is causing unstaffed stations.

Drivers, don't buy the lies about your colleagues!

NEW UNDERGROUND MD FROM DOWN UNDER

LU has a new managing Director from Australia. Mark Wild is leaving his current role as Special Advisor to the Minister and Secretary of The State Government of Victoria to take up the top job at LU.

Tubeworker expects battles with Mr Wild in future. Transport bosses all round the world are cut from pretty much the same cloth. When Mr Wild was head of public transport in Victoria, Australian unions called for him to be sacked. He allowed Victoria's Metro Trains to create a labour hire subsidiary company, Sunstone, and awarded it work without going to tender.

FULL-TIME, PART-TIME: EQUAL RIGHTS!

LU says only existing, full-time drivers should be entitled to the drivers' New Years' Eve bonus; new part-time Night Tube drivers won't get it.

Meanwhile, it has been suggested that pool drivers should work more weekends so rostered drivers work fewer.

This is wrong. Splitting ourselves into part timers, full timers, pool, rostered, and Night Tube drivers and applying more restrictions on one group than another is not the way to get improvements for drivers, or for any worker, in any grade or function on LU.

LU WITHDRAWS 24/7 STAFFING ON JLE

Since 16 April, station control rooms on the Jubilee Line extension (Stratford to Green Park) are no longer staffed 24/7.

LU says the agreement for round the clock staffing, made in 2001, no longer applies. Rail safety regulator, the ORR, has agreed with LU that control rooms can be unstaffed overnight. But work takes place on the Tube after traffic hours, which requires a dedicated staffing presence on stations and in control rooms.

LU's claimed that "Fit for the Future" would make staff "more visible". In many places, it's making them disappear.

WOT NO LEAVE SWAP?

Station staff whose roles are fully interchangeable and apply to swap leave are getting a big unreasonable No.

There is no (good) reason why you can not swap leave.

If this happens to you, don't accept it. Insist on your rights.

WOT NO FORMAL INVESTIGATION?

Tubeworker is beginning to wonder just how major an incident has to be before Central Line management will carry out a formal investigation.

Tree falling by the line and damaging trains? Nah. Tunnel roof falling in? Nah. Stabbing causing serious injuries? Nah.

Perhaps not investigating makes it easier for them to gloss over their own failings and blame staff?

1+1=ACCESSIBILITY?

Many lift stations now have bare minimum staffing (1 +1, i.e. one supervisor and one CSA).

When a Visually Impaired Person (VIP) needs assistance they now have to travel alone in the lift or walk with the staff down the emergency staircase. This is potentially unsafe and leaves VIPs feeling like an unwelcome burden. This shows us again that station staff cuts are bad for accessibility.

Reverse station staff cuts!



What is Tubeworker?

Tubeworker is a rank-and-file socialist bulletin, published at least monthly, written by Tube workers, for Tube workers. It is published by the socialist group Workers' Liberty, but is produced in editorial meetings open to all workers. Supporters from outside London Underground can help with public distribution.

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