



tubeworker

a regular bulletin by tubeworkers for tubeworkers ♦♦♦ 30 January 2003

STOP THIS MADNESS ... BEFORE PEOPLE GET KILLED

♦ stand up for safety ♦ scrap PPP now ♦ LUL must shut on FBU strike days ♦

THE CHANCERY LANE CRASH should ring like a deafening alarm bell to the Government and LUL: **stop putting lives at risk in your attacks on working people.** We can only be thankful that this alarm call has not involved anyone being killed, because next time it might.

This time it could well have done worse damage. It was lucky that this westbound Central Line train was at Chancery Lane, where the platforms are pretty empty at 2pm on Saturday, rather than at any of the next four stations – Holborn, Tottenham Court Road, Oxford Circus or Bond Street – where the platforms could have been packed with Saturday shoppers.

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IT SEEMS THAT LUL was already aware of the fault. And the driver had reported unusual noises on this train, but had been told by the Controller to keep it in service. We want to know **what kind of regime keeps a train running when it is at risk?** The answer may lie in the business-ethos world of LUL under Shadow Running, where delays incur penalties and checks are made less often than they need to be.

PPP should be scrapped now – or at least suspended while this crash is investigated. Only a Government that does not care if people die will let it go ahead.

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LUL CLAIMS that drivers have every right to refuse to drive when they think it is unsafe to do so. But they sent home 20 people who refused to work on firefighters' strike days because they knew that it was unsafe. *Tubeworker* said at the time that this would undermine every Underground worker's confidence in refusing unsafe work. Looks like we've been proved right.

Don't let management bully you! **If you think the job is unsafe, stop it.** Call your union.



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THIS INCIDENT ALSO CALLS INTO QUESTION LUL's method of assessing risk. They base it on the 'likelihood' of something disastrous happening, so if they can conjure a statistic that appears to show something is unlikely, then they take the risk. When staff expressed concerns about dealing with derailments without the Fire Brigade, we were told that the likelihood was tiny, so not to worry about it. **We don't need statistical tricks, we need a safe system of working.**

The London Fire Brigade's attendance at the Chancery Lane crash (pictured) was vital. Imagine the second-rate 'help' that we would have got from the army (assuming their ageing Green Goddess would have reached the station before the weekend was out)!

The crash was only a whisker away from trapping the passengers. Then the Fire Brigade's attendance could have saved serious injuries or even lives. **It is not safe to run the Tube during FBU strikes.** Our unions should demand that management immediately get round the table to discuss urgent safety measures – or shutting the job altogether.

NO TO WAR! NO TO SADDAM!

SADDAM HUSSEIN IS A TYRANT who has committed genocidal atrocities within his own country and neighbouring territories. **We believe that he should be removed from power, most of all for the good of his own people.**

However, we oppose the impending US-led war with Iraq, which threatens to inflict vast suffering on millions of innocent and already persecuted Iraqi people. We believe that it is up to the Iraqi people to kick out Saddam, dismantle his dictatorial regime and democratise their country.

The proposed conflict will not bring democracy to Iraq. **Rather, this is all about US political, military and economic control of the biggest oil fields in the world.** The US may have the capability to destroy Saddam, but war on Iraq will not put an end to any threat from terrorist cells like Al-Qaeda. On the contrary, it can only add to the ranks of terrorist Islamist groups.

Join the movement to stop this war. Get your union branch to pass a resolution condemning it, and get yourself, your mates and your union banners onto the demonstration on 15 February.

Workers' Liberty will be marching with Iraqi and Iranian socialists under banners making clear our opposition to Saddam Hussein and to Islamic fundamentalism as well as to the US war drive. *Join us from 11am at Temple tube station.*

Workers' Liberty London Forum

“The USA as hyperpower”

Speakers: Peter Gowan and Martin Thomas.

Wednesday 19 February 7.30pm,
University of London Union,
Malet St, London WC1.

GOOD NIGHT (FOR SOME)

LUL has decided that DSMs are so useful (or maybe not) that we need only one of them to cover the whole of the Bakerloo and Victoria lines at night. So now DSMs will do only one or two weeks of nights each year. It's alright for some.

When the company tried to cut Supervisor night cover, it would have meant losing jobs. In this case, it doesn't. Strange, that.

MULTI-FUNCTIONAL?

Because of ‘business needs’ (whatever they are), Arnos Grove group managers have deemed it necessary to cover evening meal reliefs in Ticket Offices to stop them being closed for half an hour.

On the one hand, we welcome extra staff. However, staff rostered at one station are now being asked to cover several other stations for meal breaks. *Tubeworker* believes this is the thin end of the wedge and will only lead to further weakenings in our rostering agreements. Most staff have rejected the proposals outright.

WINDFALL?

The government has tightened the purse strings for the East London Line Extension, so the Mayor is thinking about charging a ‘windfall tax’ on people who live along the route. Thus pushing house prices and rents even higher.

Is there no end to the creative ways that politicians will find to make working-class people pay for everything? How about making the fat cats pay instead?

BREATH TAKING

Eighteen months ago, three trains were left stranded in the pipe near

Highbury, and 600 people had to be treated for heat exhaustion. Now, LUL has finally admitted what we suspected all along - that managers were at fault, not operational staff. Command and control procedures failed, and when frontline staff asked for help, they didn't get it.

The company has also admitted that the PPP contracts do not provide for improving ventilation and air cooling on the Vic or the other deep Tube lines.

Here at *Tubeworker*, we reckon that the workers would make a much better job of running the railway than the managers responsible for this fiasco.

STOP THE DRIVE TO WAR

Three cheers from *Tubeworker* to the drivers in Scotland who refused to help the ‘war effort’. On 8 January, two EWS drivers, based in Motherwell, refused to drive a trainload of ammunition to Glen Douglas, the largest NATO weapons store in Europe.

Quite right too. As railway workers - whether passenger or freight - our job is to provide a public service, moving people and goods, not to be an auxiliary wing of the armed forces. If we don't want to have our hands bloodied with complicity in this rotten war, then we shouldn't have to. We look forward to more action like this.

“HELLO TUBELINES”

... As they say now when the Fault Reporting Centre answers the phone on the JNP.

Beware, though. If your broken light bulb, handrail, drain, safety equipment - or whatever - is not on their ‘Asset Audit’, then you will probably have to fix it yourself. Because the newly-privatised FRC won't.

TSS - 'EY?

Amazingly, after a mere three years of management blunders, LUL now wants the Train Service Supervisor's job up and running at Arnos Grove.

Great, you might think. But the Piccadilly Line ‘team leader’ has other ideas: he wants to cut the number of Supervisor's duties from nine to seven or less. The only way that roster will work is



***Tubeworker* is produced by tubeworkers in the Alliance for Workers' Liberty, an organisation fighting in the unions, the Socialist Alliance and the Labour**

Party for a socialist alternative to both capitalism and Stalinism, based on common ownership and democracy.

We want one democratic, fighting union for all railworkers. We reject artificial divisions between workers of different grades. We oppose racism, sexism, homophobia and all prejudice that divides us. Only our bosses benefit from a divided workforce.

by not covering the TSS duty at weekends. Guess what? Arnos Grove gets the most complaints about the train service at weekends.

Anyone would think that LUL didn't mean what it says about ‘putting the customer first’!

NO SMOKE WITHOUT FIRE?

Three times in recent months, Piccadilly line passengers have had to be derailed because of smoke pouring out from under the train. The axle box overheats, rubber melts, acrid smoke, and hence the risk of fire or even possible derailment.

You might think that with their commitment to safety under scrutiny following Chancery Lane, LUL senior managers might take the prudent step of withdrawing the fleet for checks. But it seems not. Their reply when the media asked them why not? “It's being managed.” Oh, that's alright then.

CONGESTION

The Congestion Charge is approaching more rapidly than a car ever moves in central London. But it seems that in all the arguments about whether it is a Good Thing or a Bad Thing, one question is rarely asked: why is London so congested to start with? Could it be because the Tube is over-priced, unreliable, and doesn't reach all the parts that it should? And why is this? Could it be because of chronic under-investment for decades? We think it might be!

In the next issue of *Tubeworker*, we will be printing views from readers both for and against the charge. Send us your opinions.

Want to get every issue of *Tubeworker* (published twice a month) sent to you? Send us a fiver (cheques payable to *WL Bulletins*) - and your address!

Got a story for *Tubeworker*? We welcome and will publish reports and comments from all Tube workers. Also get in touch if you want to come to our regular readers' meetings, or to get involved in action about any of the issues we've covered.

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