



tubeworker

a regular bulletin by tubeworkers for tubeworkers <><><> 26 July 2005

AFTER THE BOMBS: FIGHT RACISM

Dear Tubeworker

I have been travelling around the Underground system for the last three days. The general topic of conversation - whether it is our staff or the travelling public - is of course the bombs.

Most of the comments that I overheard on the trains have been a sensible analysis of the situation or people making light of it. On the stations, most staff were taking a philosophical view of the events and carrying on as usual.

The worrying factor was the increase in racist remarks and ill-informed statements that I picked up from people's conversations.

On several trains, I heard talk of interning all Muslims and even sending them all "back home", wherever that might be - Surrey, Sussex, Essex maybe?

"They did it to the Germans during the war and the Irish when they kicked off", one elderly couple was heard to say.

"Kill five of theirs for every one of ours. It worked for the Germans," was a particularly nasty comment that I picked up in conversation between youths on a Central Line train.

The funny thing is that neither course of action actually works.

When the Catholic youth of Northern Ireland were interned in the H-Blocks, it made them more militant. The H-Blocks were the recruitment centres of the IRA.

The German reprisal shootings during the Second World War only stiffened the population's resolve to beat them.

What we need to realise is that these fanatics want to divide us along racial and religious lines. The vast majority of the Muslim population is vehemently against the terrorists. If, on the other hand, they become the target of a race-hate campaign, it could push some - especially the youth - into joining the more fundamentalist sections, where the murderers recruit from.

We must stand together as a class and as a people against these murdering thugs.

The IRA spent decades trying to bomb their way into a united Ireland. Unlike the jihadis they mostly chose military and economic targets - but Ireland is still a divided country. Terrorism against civilians, regardless of the rights or wrongs of the cause, is wrong. It does not work: it only allows the victim state to beef up its anti-terrorism laws, which they then use against their trade unions and labour organisations. It demoralises and atomises; it does not mobilise.

The population of a country under attack from terrorists is hardly likely to embrace the ideals of those that are killing their friends and relatives. The bombers distance themselves from the general population. They are anathema to ordinary working people.

Moreover, in the case of the Islamists, their goals are wrong as well as their tactics. They are not simply retaliating for the Iraq war, they are pursuing a jihad - a holy war aimed at establishing an undemocratic, repressive, religious state.

We should refuse to be divided by race or religion. Standing together against this murderous scum is the only way to beat them. Their ranting is just as offensive as that of the BNP and other hate groups. It is racism and it must be opposed by trade union members worldwide.

VOLUNTARY SEVERANCE

The progress of service control restructuring is glacially slow, and it is now clear that milestone one, when all rosters should be agreed and everyone should be mapped into their new positions, will not be achieved at the end of July. Some rosters are not agreed (generally those which cut staff), and voluntary severance counselling is proceeding very slowly.

Guess why? Because the department which runs the counselling is being restructured, so the availability of people to do the one-to-one sessions is limited!

CAREER PLANS

Information and application forms for the promotional positions (closed-listed for service control staff only) have still not been sent out. It's now two months since people received letters telling them they are 'at risk' of being displaced, allegedly so that they can modify their future career plans.

The packs have not been sent out because there has been a disagreement between unions and management about the job descriptions. Why can't the current ones be used? Presumably, jobs such as line controller will not be changing drastically. Nobody can 'modify their future career plans' if the jobs are not available!

Many people are unhappy with the way that both the unions and management have handled the restructuring - the whole thing seems to be a shambles, with a lack of information to the staff on the ground ie. those of us whose jobs are actually affected.

HIDE THAT BODY

Staff at Holborn recently had to deal with a one under. Normally, you would wait for paramedics to move the body. But not this time - we hear that a Performance Manager came up with the bright idea of putting the corpse behind some whiteboards.

Anything to get the station open and the service up and running.

PAY CUT STOPPED

Track workers based at Ruislip stopped a pay cut by staging an unofficial walkout. Balfour Beatty, working on the Metronet contract, tried to impose new rosters which could have cut wages.

UCATT and RMT muscled in, and management withdrew the rosters. Victory to the workers

SAFETY FIRST

The official response to the Tube bombs is that "London can take it", we must get on with our normal lives and not be scared. That's fine in theory, but it becomes a problem when politicians are prepared to compromise our safety in order to make their point.

In the face of this, we have to stand firm for basic safety standards. We need guards back on trains. And if there is no train radio, then there should be no train service.

NO PROBLEM

Mike Brown came out with a classic line in his circular, saying that neither the police nor LUL have any problem with unstaffed stations because the alleged bombers came through the busiest interchange on the system.

OK, let's imagine just for one moment how all those people could have been evacuated quickly, safely and without injury if Brown had succeeded in getting rid of minimum staff levels under section 12 - or if he had got rid of the 2000 proposed jobs he maintains are necessary to facilitate our 35-hour deal. Enough said, we think.

AMBER ALERT

On 21 July, when devices went off half-cocked at Warren Street, Oval and Shepherd's Bush, LUL suspended the lines concerned, but kept the others running. But with the ERU and the emergency services tied up at these three sites (and the bus in Hackney), who would have responded if a bomb had gone off anywhere else?

Knowing this, and unconvinced of their safety, drivers on the Bakerloo and Piccadilly lines refused to drive. Quite right too. In future, if we have amber alert, the job should be completely shut down.

SHORT SHIFTS

Many of us have had to take up some alternative duty over the last couple of



Tubeworker is produced by tubeworkers in the Alliance for Workers' Liberty, an organisation fighting as part

of the labour movement 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.

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

Got a story for Tubeworker? We welcome & will publish reports & 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.

Contact Workers' Liberty, PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA 020-7207-3997
email: office@workersliberty.org
Website www.workersliberty.org/tubeworker

Subscribe to Tubeworker by email. Send a message to tubeworker-list-subscribe@workersliberty.org

Tubeworker p&p S. Matgamna

weeks. Tubeworker has no problem with this, and we applaud the way everyone has coped with the current situation. Some managers, though, seem to feel that if your station is not open then they can send you off to work wherever they like.

On some groups, unions reps have secured shorter shifts so you can travel in the company's time not your own. It's hard enough getting to and from work at the moment, especially if you've been shifted to the other side of the city. We have proved our worth as a workforce and deserve respect and support - rather than being made to feel guilty because we don't want to spend two hours a day on a bus.

DEFEND SECTION 12

It is truly shocking that in the light of the bombings, the government has not dropped plans to review Section 12 regulations. The unions - and the few Labour MPs who support us - fought off an attempt to weaken these vital safety laws last year. Now it looks like we'll have to do it again.

KEEP CALM

One very worrying aspect of the explosion at Warren Street and the shooting at Stockwell is the reports of panicking by passengers. Some eye witnesses talked of people "treading over each other's backs" in the scramble to get out. We face the prospect of people being trampled to death even if the bombers don't get them. Remember, the worst death toll in Tube history - at Bethnal Green during World War 2 - was caused by trampling during a false alarm.

Passengers' panic is understandable. There is only one thing that will keep them calm in this situation - the visible presence of plenty of uniformed staff.

GRAFFITI ARTISTS

Security at Metronet's Ruislip depot is so bad that even after the 7/7 attacks, people got in and graffiti'd trains.

Good job they were only carrying spray cans, not bombs.

BIG BROTHER?

It leaves a bad taste in our mouths when Blair et al use the events on 7/7 to force through a raft of 'anti-terror' laws including ID cards, phone tapping, and even

imprisoning people who haven't committed any crime.

The democracy that Blair claims to protect is rapidly becoming anything but democratic, with CCTV on every street corner. The state can already trace your movements by your mobile, your bank, your workplace. LUL can track you all over the network through your Oyster card.

Call us paranoid, but it seems to Tubeworker that the measures the government wants to use to fight the terrorists will impinge dramatically on our own democratic way of life. And not one of these things would have prevented the attacks on London.

NOT RELEASED

RMT health & safety reps met up to discuss the security situation last week ... except for TubeLines reps, as the company refused to release them. Don't mind us, we only work here.

These reps had better be released next time there is a meeting - and the union should put more pressure on to make sure that they are.

ROUGH JUSTICE

Everyone wants potential killers to be stopped. But the police have to do this without intimidating people innocently going about their job of work. Which is not what happened on the day that they shot an innocent man at Stockwell - when a copper held a gun to the head of the train driver.

We will probably see more police, more tooled up, around the job. It is vital that they are held accountable for their actions - starting with an enquiry into the Stockwell incident.

The new edition of **off the rails** - a platform for rank and file rail workers - is out now for 30p for more information or to buy a copy,

contact off the rails,
PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA
07748 185553
office@workersliberty.org

