



tubeworker

www.workersliberty.org/tubeworker <> tubeworker@btopenworld.com

A GREAT TWO DAYS OUT

Our strike was a big success, with management unable to get services running until well into the morning, and then only token shuttles for PR reasons.

The day we started striking, RMT and management reached a deal at ACAS, only for management to 'get a phone call' and pull it. Was this BoJo trying to make the whole thing serve the interests of himself and the Tory Party?! This 'deal' may not even be that great, but management showed their true colours: claiming to want a deal then backing out when one was on the cards.

Perhaps management hoped that staff would listen to their anti-strike propaganda and that ASLEF could deliver them a service through their disgraceful letter to members telling them to break the strike. Sadly for LUL, most staff know when they are being spun a line and not all ASLEF members do as their leaders tell them: many respected picket lines and helped keep the action strong.

Pickets were in most cases well-organised and lively. Sure there was some scabbing, but there almost always is. We can not let a handful of people who can not see past their next pay packet drag the rest of us down.

This action has put a final nail in the coffin of the 24-hour gesture strikes of the past. Support was as strong as past 24-hour strikes, but at 48 hours, we came across as much more serious.

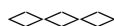


Talks seemed to slow down to a snail's pace when industrial action is finished and no further action is yet called. In the couple of days running up to our strike, management sat

down with union negotiators for so many hours each day it would break any Framework Agreement, but now it is over, they are much more elusive!

It is fair enough for the union to give time for talks before naming more action, but that can't go on indefinitely.

Management need to know that if they can't be bothered to have meaningful negotiations, then Tube (and TfL) workers are ready and willing to take action again.



The 5-year pay offer - which was always just LUL trying it on - has been cut to 2 years. But the amount of money matters as well as the length of the offer, and 1% remains a real-terms pay cut, whether it is the first year of a 2-year or a 5-year deal. Managers continue to mistreat staff, and the company is still refusing to accept its policy of 'no compulsory redundancies' even though it is in black-and-white print.

Having gone into dispute on three issues (wisely or not), we need a win on all three, not just a small step on one. Multiple issues cause confusion, so RMT must keep explaining them.

DEFEND TONY CRUMP!

LUL has summarily dismissed Earls Court signaller Tony Crump, for a mistake at work. Until recently, if you made a mistake, even a serious one, you could expect a punishment, retraining, maybe an alternative job. But this London Underground management regime simply boots you out of the door. We saw it with Carl Campbell, and now Tony Crump - who, despite 20 years on the job, is kicked onto the dole without even so much as a notice period.

This shows just how harsh and tyrannical our management have become. And it shows why we have no choice but to stand up to them by pursuing our current dispute until we win.

THE RHYME OF THE ANCIENT SCAB

(with a nod to the Rhyme of the Ancient Mariner)

As I stood on the picket line
A woman spoke to me
Saying 'I was not always the woman
The woman you now see'
Yes once I had a happy life
Yes once my life was fine
Until I made that fateful choice
And crossed the picket line

Six pickets standing in a row
They really made me cross
But those pickets soon became
My private albatross
My former comrades ignore me now
It is an awful fate
And every place that I do walk
Their eyes are full of hate
Their eyes are full of hate you see
This is my private hell
And everybody that I meet
My tale I have to tell
And I would do it differently
If I could relive my time
So one thing I would really advise
Don't cross the picket line

Sapdog

Tubeworker is produced by Tube workers and published by 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.

Letter from an ASLEF member

As an ASLEF member I was disgusted to see that my union had written to its members advising them to cross RMT picket lines and go to work during the recent 48-hour strike. Our traditional stance has always been to remind members to act in accordance with the best traditions of the labour movement - effectively getting as close as we can to telling people to respect picket lines without suffering the full force of the anti-union laws. At the very least it is a principled position. Yes, RMT doesn't always act the way we would like, but in this case ASLEF has crossed the line.

A trade union's primary concern has to be beating the bosses. How does the disgraceful spectacle of ASLEF reps organising strike breaking against the RMT help this? In the short term it might make us feel better but in the long term does it help if a sister trade union is defeated by Boris Johnson? If the answer is yes then blind, self-defeating chauvinism stands in the place where solidarity and self preservation should be. In effect you have become an ally of those right wing Tory MPs who have gleefully invited ASLEF to assist with scabbing operations during future RMT strikes? Which side are you on?

Now is always the best time to re-build bonds of mutual support amongst workers, whatever union we are in. I hope that ASLEF members will fight our rotten leadership on this and forcefully remind them: United We Stand, Divided We Fall.

Tubeworker's weblog - daily updates
www.workersliberty.org/twblog

HERE COME THE CUTS

London Underground is to slash its spending on maintaining the ex-Metronet lines: £26+m from track and signals; £19m from trains; £18.5m from stations; Total: £60m

LUL has claimed that it can achieve these cuts without compromising safety. Excuse us while we roll round the floor laughing.

With the big chunk of expenditure on these areas being wages - and with fat-cat salaries undoubtedly safe - then job cuts will be on the cards. Safety will also be compromised as skilled workers leave and corners are cut with inspections, materials, etc.

These shocking figures underline why we have to keep up our dispute until we win.

BARE-FACED CHEEK

Fresh from implying that we are 'greedy' for not wanting our pay cut, Boris Johnson has been embarrassed by a deputy caught abusing the City Hall credit card for his own comforts.

He seems less embarrassed by his own £78 per hour salary and his Chief Exec's 11% pay rise.

And the 123 senior LUL/TfL managers on £100k+ per year has gone up to 163! And that does not even include Metronet and Crossrail.

In the face of such hypocrisy, we should not have to accept a real-terms pay cut, even if it is for two years rather than five. We are not the greedy ones.

The Press & The Strike

The daily papers, from free sheets to 'serious' broadsheets, portrayed our strike negatively and largely put across management's case (usually while trying to maintain a veneer of objectivity).

The *London Paper's* front page on Strike Day 1, after some cliches about 'travel hell' etc, quotes Boris Johnson attacking 'union officials for failing to agree a deal over pay and conditions' and telling us that 'two thirds of [RMT] members did not vote for' the strike. This gives the impression that 65%+ voted against, whereas in fact 85%+ voted for! On BoJo's logic, we could call for him to be sacked on the grounds that almost four-fifths of Londoners did not vote for him, as the turnout in the 2008 mayoral election was only 45%.

Inside the *London Paper*, Peter Hendy tells us that 'only 14 per cent of Tube workers voted for a strike', again implying falsely that 86% voted against. Of course, without the anti-union laws which Johnson, Hendy et al support and have used in this dispute, we would not have to have low-turnout postal ballots and could instead have more democratic workplace ballots.

Hendy also tells us that 'three of the four Tube unions neither have a dispute nor a strike ballot', ignoring the fact that RMT represents more workers than the rest put together, that Unite had declared a dispute, and that members of other unions refused to cross picket lines.

In both the *London Paper* and the *Guardian*, advice on how to get around London during the strike is entitled 'How to beat the strike', effectively inciting commuters against the union.

ITV's local news bulletin on Tuesday evening began its report with the words 'The RMT is once again holding Londoners to ransom' and described pickets at King's Cross 'accosting' other employees. Hardly objective reporting!

The *London Paper* also printed management lie that 'a deal to stop the planned Tube strike was torpedoed by unions demands for two sacked drivers to be reinstated'. The *Evening Standard*, which has stopped even pretending to be a newspaper and made itself a company mouthpiece, has also repeated this crap.

Management told this lie to encourage workers in other grades and on other lines to break the strike by suggesting that their dispute was only about two cases which were not their concern. The

truth is that the dispute is about jobs, pay and managers' mistreatment of staff, and that it was management, not the union, which pulled a possible deal.

The *Guardian* told us a CSA starts on £29k; we wish! BBC Radio 5 Live called the action a Tube drivers' strike, whereas all grades were involved. The press is full of these little inaccuracies.

The papers use quotes from angry travellers to attack the action, with very few supportive comments for balance.

There are comments that 'It's not fair: people are losing their jobs, I've taken a pay cut, why should these people get more?' Many workers think this, as they are not organised enough to fight bosses' attacks. Ruling-class ideas dominate society, so many people let themselves be incited against strikes like ours.

The argument is nonsense. If we let management get away with pay and job cuts, there will be more unemployment and misery, not less. But such views can quickly turn round: workers who are angry that we defend ourselves may soon be tempted to try fighting back - even more so if we win.

Why is the press so against the strike and the union? The papers are owned by big capitalist interests who shape 'the news' in the interests of their class. They report facts convenient to the bosses' case and distort others.

The 'free press' we have is better than the state-monopoly that exists under dictatorships. But it is not real 'freedom of the press', as it is mainly free speech for those who can afford to get their voice heard. In a socialist society, the facilities of the big media corporations would be taken into public ownership but *not* state control, with their resources allocated to political parties, unions, community groups, campaigns and so on the basis of their level of support, with guaranteed rights for minorities.

Right now, we need to rebuild a strong working-class and socialist press, with a wide circulation, as an alternative to the capitalist media and its lies.

Solidarity
& Workers' Liberty



Get a free copy of the socialist newspaper *Solidarity* with every new *Tubeworker* subscription.

Want to get every issue of *Tubeworker* (published at least monthly)? Send us seven quid (cheques payable to *WL Bulletins*) and your address!

Got a story for *Tubeworker*? We welcome reports & comments from all Tube workers.

Contact Workers' Liberty, PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA. 020-7207-3997

Subscribe to *Tubeworker* by e-mail: tubeworker-list-subscribe@workersliberty.org

Tubeworker p&p S. Matgamna