

tubeworker

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LU PAY TALKS: ALL GRADES, UNITE AND FIGHT!

London Underground workers are due a pay rise in April when our current deal runs out. Talks between LU and unions started in late January. LU got its tiny violin out about the “difficult financial climate”, cautioning us not to get our hopes up.

We deserve a pay rise to match the increased cost of living— energy bills, housing, household goods. *Tubeworker* is pleased that the RMT has asked for a flat rate rise for the lowest waged, who are more likely to be renting at extortionate London prices. For many years *Tubeworker* has argued for a flat rate, rather than a percentage, pay rise to close the gap between the highest and lowest paid grades.

We also deserve better conditions. Both RMT and ASLEF are pushing for a shorter working week. A four day week for drivers is standard in train companies – including Southern, South West Trains, First Great Western and the new Crossrail contract.

MONEY FOR SOME

LU says there's no money. But what about...

- * The £134 million LU is spending on closing ticket offices
- * The £4.2 million LU paid to external company Interact to deliver “training”, i.e. propaganda on Fit for the Future
- * Multiplying managers: 100 new stations “Area Managers” on around £70,000 a year.
- * The 328 managers paid over £100,000 a year (2012/13). If LU capped pay to £100,000 maximum, it would save £15 million a year.
- * Tfl Commissioner Peter Hendy's pay packet – more than four times what the Prime Minister is paid.



Our bosses tell us there's no money, but in fact we live in a society of immense wealth. The problem is who controls it. See column, right, for some radical solutions!

A shorter week would improve our health and reduce the fatigue from shift work.

Tubeworker welcomes RMT's claim for free travel for contractors. Through layers of sub-contracting, LU might think it has washed its hands of responsibility for cleaners and other contractors.

The unions need remind LU of its obligations to its whole workforce.

It is important that we stand together and campaign for the best possible deal for all grades.



ASSAULTS ON STAFF SKYROCKET

Assaults on LU staff are up 44%. Any verbal or physical

assault is one too many.

Our bosses have talked down our roles in the media. Peter Hendy said ticket offices were a good place for staff to read a novel; Boris says we don't need drivers. They talk about us as if we're worthless. Is it any wonder that the public respects us so little that we're attacked more each year?

Since new yellow uniforms were introduced for cleaning staff, assaults on cleaners have increased too.

A snobby attitude about cleaners' “low status” means cleaners get treated like the dirt we clean.

THE ANSWER TO AUSTERITY: EXPROPRIATE THE BANKS!



So LU says we shouldn't expect a pay rise because there is no money?

In fact, there is enough money in our society to guarantee a life of relative luxury for everyone. The problem is: it's in the hands of the rich.

Britain's richest 100 people own the same wealth as 30% of UK households. Globally, 85 people have the same amount as the world's poorest 50%.

The HSBC bank is currently under fire for stashing about £80 billion in bank accounts of a Swiss subsidiary that was facilitating tax avoidance and money-laundering. That's the equivalent of £3,000 for each household in the UK.

Bosses of the top 350 companies average £1.9 million a year each in pay and bonuses. Top 100 company bosses average £2.8 million.

If any of this money was taxed at a high rate, society would be visibly better off.

In this system, while most of us work to keep going, trying to make ends meet on a living wage, we're creating ever-more-dizzying wealth for a tiny minority.

Massive wealth inequality in our society is part of the context for understanding where we're at with the pay claim, low pay and cuts.

Unions should argue for seizing the wealth of the banks and using it to pay for public services and working-class living standards. It might not be an “immediate” claim to submit as part of the pay talks! But unions should work together to build a working-class political campaign to highlight and combat inequality. LU is a publicly-owned organisation.

In a wealthy society, the government should make funds available for public transport – and public transport workers.

STOP PRESS: LU WORKER SACKED FOR HAVING A DISABILITY. COMPANY'S COMMITMENTS TO PROTECT MEDICALLY-RESTRICTED STAFF EXPOSED AS LIES. REINSTATE KAREN GUYOTT NOW! MORE: BIT.LY/REINSTATE-KAREN-NOW

KEEP UP THE FIGHT FOR ALEX AND NOEL

RMT drivers voted yes in a strike ballot to reinstate Alex McGuigan, unfairly sacked after failing a breathalyser test which was not correctly administered.

Reps worked hard for the yes vote against hostile company propaganda. The vote was close, as ballots to reinstate sacked members often are. *Tubeworker* supporters argued that we should use it to put on creative strikes, e.g. several 12-hour strikes across one week: maximum impact for minimal action.

At a reps' meeting, reps decided to wait for the outcome of the employment tribunal in March before putting significant action on. The plan is to pressure LU if the employment tribunal concludes he was unfairly dismissed. There is a danger that this strategy lets tribunal judges (not our friends) decide whether we strike.

If the delay until the tribunal is simply a delay, then this will demobilise the campaign and waste the hard work that produced the ballot result. But we can use the time until March to keep building the campaign. Let's remind people that breathalysers can show false positives for people with diabetes, and that LU broke its procedure by junking instead of testing Alex's urine sample.

The goal now is to build on the support shown so far from ASLEF and RMT members so that we're ready to strike, whatever the tribunal decides.

Noel Roberts, a CSA on the East Ham group, was sacked on the basis of past non-attendance due to a heart complaint, even though he was certified fully fit by LUOH and he was not on an attendance warning.

It's excellent that, after a slow start, East Ham RMT branch is running a campaign to win Noel's reinstatement – visiting branches and workplaces and building towards an industrial action ballot. RMT should put on industrial action at the earliest opportunity.

This campaign can be integrated into the campaign to reinstate Alex McGuigan; we can work towards an all-grades ballot over the abuse of procedure in both cases because if LU sacks people on this basis, then none of us is safe.

Our unions cannot leave Noel and Alex behind!

FAREWELL HIS HOLNESS

JNP Operations Director Nigel Holness is leaving LU.

His anti-union vitriol has got worse and worse, peaking when he suggested we're "unprofessional" if we vote to strike to reinstate unfairly sacked workers.

Sadly he's remaining a boss within the transport industry. Crossrail workers need to be cautious.

CUSTOMER DISSERVICE

POMs have been re-programmed to keep money, or charge punters' bank accounts, in the event of a "failed sale".

If a customer takes too long buying a ticket, machines "time out" and keep the money.

In the future, stations with single staffing and no ticket office will struggle to issue refunds when this happens to disgruntled passengers. Stop ticket office closures now!

IN THE DARK OVER NIGHT TUBE

"Twas 6 months before Night Tube
And right across LU
There's not even a murmur
On what we may have to do!"

That's how it seems anyway. We want some update on what's happening. What does LU want from us? What strategy do our reps have? We need to get onto our unions to say we feel in the dark!

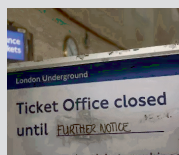
UNIFORM APPEAL

Following the new LU uniform trial, the uniform will be thickened up, the roundels will shrink and the garish bright will be toned down.

LU could have saved a load of money if it had listened when we told them this in the first place.

Meanwhile, LU is running existing uniform stocks down so new CSAs are coming out of the training school without coats and other essentials.

Spending millions on a corporate re-brand while station staff freeze? Typical!



EVERY JOB STILL MATTERS: PREPARE FOR MORE ACTION!

RMT and TSSA started well, but since last year, we have lost our advantage in the battle to save stations jobs and ticket offices. We're running out of time!

LU is phasing its new management structure in. LU has already closed several ticket offices. Consultation over rosters is happening from March.

It's time to take more industrial action. What's the sense in going through "consultation" without industrial action in our back pocket to make LU listen to what we're saying? The consultation is our chance to put more jobs back into the future rosters, to save jobs. More jobs means more weekends off, fewer anti-social shifts. We should not waste this opportunity.

Several RMT branches have called for more action, but RMT does not seem to be listening. RMT – and all unions – need to act fast.

UNIONS CAN FORCE LABOUR PARTY TO SHIFT

Labour's Shadow Transport Secretary Michael Dugher stated recently that he would like to "put the current franchising system in the bin" and that under a Labour Government "the public sector will be running sections of our rail network as soon as we can do that".

We need to push Labour much further, but the shift shows they are susceptible to pressure. Two of the three main rail unions (ASLEF and TSSA) are affiliated to Labour; they should use that link to force more policy commitments from Labour in the run-up to the election.

If Labour commits to reversing privatisation on the mainline, we'll be much better placed to stave it off on LU.

CLEANERS' COLUMN

LU has brought in new a computer-based test for contractors to get their LUCAS card (the contractor access card needed to work on LU premises).

The tests only allow 20 minutes to read 16 questions. Some cleaners who have worked on LU for years have failed and are now sat at home without pay, waiting for a re-test. LU needs to re-think whether this new format discriminates against people without English as first language or without computer literacy.

Biometric finger print machines are messing up. ISS cleaners' wages are short. It's telling us we've used all our holiday when we've had no time off! This proves the technology was never intended to improve the accuracy of pay records.

It was always an immigration tool for ISS and the Home Office to police its workforce.

DISABLED WORKERS ORGANISE

Tubeworker is pleased to hear that disabled members of the RMT are meeting at 10.30 on 9 March at Unity House (RMT HQ, Chalton Street, near Euston) to discuss setting up a committee for disabled members within the union.

If you are an RMT member with a disability (including diabetes, autism, dyslexia), come along.

People with disabilities face potential discrimination in promotion, reorganisation, and employment, as well as social discrimination. Please come along to tell RMT we need our union to defend us on disabilities issues.

Members of other unions should push their unions into taking up disabled members' struggles too.

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

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