THE FIGHT IS NOT OVER

Today’s reps’ meeting will hopefully hear updates from our senior reps and negotiators about precisely what progress has been made in ongoing talks with LU.

There is no suggestion that the company has made any new comprehensive offer that could resolve our issues. Therefore, whatever the outcome of discussions at today’s meeting, the position will be: the dispute is still on, the fight is not over.

We need today’s meeting to give us concrete, detailed information to take back to our workplaces. A general report that we are “making progress” in talks will not be good enough. Members want to know exactly where we are.

Members on stations will be waiting eagerly to see new draft rosters, expected to be circulated later this week. If they do not represent a significant improvement on the nightmare rosters we were “consulted” on in March, there is likely to be a renewed feeling of anger and discontent. The union should seize on that to name more action, beginning by reinstating the overtime ban in all functions and areas where it can be effective, with a few to calling further strikes as part of the “Every Job Matters” campaign. As key issues for drivers, including the demand for an additional rest day after night turns (rather than one “rest day” being the day on which we finish nights), remain unresolved, with other all-grades issues such as pay still outstanding, our all-grades ballot mandate should also be reactivated if further strikes are called.

It’s also essential, particularly given the new situation in the Labour Party (see box, right), that we revive political campaigning around the issues of ticket office closures and staffing cuts. Demonstrations should be called at stations where ticket offices remain open, calling on Sadiq Khan and Jeremy Corbyn to back us, and commit that Labour in office will reverse cuts and closures.

In general, Tubeworker believes that this dispute has highlighted several important issues of industrial strategy that we should discuss, examine, and learn from. These include:

- Strikes and other industrial action, not talks or negotiations, are what puts most pressure on the company. Negotiations should exist to articulate the demands of strikes; strikes are not simply bargaining chips to leverage negotiations.
- An informed membership is an empowered membership. RMT aspires to be “member-led”, so we must ensure that all members, in all functions, have the fullest, most up-to-date info from talks and negotiations to allow us to lead.
- Members should find out about the dispute from the union, not the media. The BBC reported the suspension of the 8-10 September strikes (which were, in fact, never officially named in the first place!) before members were notified by the union.
- We must not fall into a “Grand Old Union” mindset. This is a rank-and-file socialist union.

CELEBRATE, AND ORGANISE!

Jeremy Corbyn’s victory in the Labour leadership election is a political earthquake. It opens up immense new possibilities to refund a vehicle for genuine working-class political representation.

All four LU unions backed Corbyn’s campaign. RMT is not affiliated to the Labour Party, and members must now have a serious discussion, in branches and Regional Councils, about whether the union should reaffiliate to help Corbyn, John McDonnell, and others resist the inevitable attacks from the right of the party, and ensure Corbyn’s leadership keeps heading left.

RMT branches could call for a Special General Meeting to debate the issue. The time to act is now - don’t “let the dust settle”, let’s stir it up!

DEFY THE ANTI-UNION LAWS

As this special edition of Tubeworker goes to press, MPs are debating the Tories’ “Trade Union Bill”, which will further shackle unions’ rights to organise.

We need a mass campaign of direct action to stop the bill becoming law - but then, if it does, a campaign of industrial and political action to oppose, subvert, and, if necessary, defy the law.

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.

Email us at tubeworker@workersliberty.org

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