



# tubeworker

www.workersliberty.org/tubeworker • tubeworker@btopenworld.com

## THIS FIGHT BELONGS TO ALL OF US

**Stop press — TSSA strike  
ballot runs 17 January to  
27 January.**

**TSSA members:  
vote yes!**

It's positive that the RMT has announced two 48-hour strikes, for 4-6 and 11-13 February, to kick off the industrial fightback against management's cuts plan.

We remember from the 2010 strikes against the OSP that 24-hour strikes are simply not effective, so it's good that we're moving beyond those this time.

*Tubeworker* has always advocated ongoing programmes of industrial action, rather than just calling individual strikes (the implication being: “after that, we'll wait and see”). Announcing an ongoing, open-ended programme of action would signal to the bosses that we're serious about fighting for as long as it takes to win.

That programme should include creative forms of action short of strikes. Refusal to carry out revenue duties is a new and imaginative action, which many amongst both staff and the public will welcome. But because it's new, we need the union to explain how it will work, how it can be effective, and build up confidence.

There's still a lot of work to do to build up confidence and morale and make sure the strike is solid. That means

means reps and activists going round every workplace and talking to everyone, explaining the action, answering questions, signing up new members.

This is an all-grades dispute — not just because all grades should fight ticket office closures and stations job cuts, but because RMT's ballot is against all threats to jobs — including the company's preparations for driverless trains, the planned 160+ service control job losses, and management's recently-revealed list of nearly 500 engineering jobs it plans to axe.

### STRIKE COMMITTEE

**It's good that RMT's Regional Council is holding weekly meetings to discuss the direction of the campaign and organise the work that needs to be done.**

Those meetings must continue, and be built, so that they can become a genuinely representative strike committee, with representatives from all branches and grades.

TSSA is also balloting its members for strikes from Friday 17 January. Unity and co-ordinated action between the two unions will be hugely important, and there should be joint meetings of reps and activists.

Another essential step is the creation of strike funds. We know bosses aren't going to roll over, so we'll have to take prolonged action. Strike funds aren't about bribing people to go on strike, they're about



unions making sure their members can afford to take sustained action. Strike funds should be levied centrally but administered locally by branches, on picket lines, and targeted to make sure the lowest-paid and hardest-up workers get the biggest share of the fund.

Another big positive is the clear intention for an outwards-facing, public, political campaign.

The “Hands off London Transport” (HOLT) initiative, launching at a rally on 16 January and involving disability rights campaigners, pensioners' organisations, passenger advocacy groups, and others, will be vital if we're going to win.

Ultimately, only we as staff have the power to bring

London Underground to a standstill, so our industrial action is vital. But this issue goes way beyond the industrial — it's about the provision of transport in London. It's an issue for everyone who wants a safe, well-staffed, quality transport service. Leafleting, demonstrations, and other direct action by groups involved in HOLT will be essential supplements to our industrial action.

Our unions should also use their political links (TSSA's affiliation to the Labour Party and the RMT's Parliamentary Group) to make sure elected politicians, at council, GLA, and Parliamentary level, are raising the issue of cuts.

HOLT groups should be set up in as many areas as possible, and twinned with the nearest RMT and TSSA branches.

**This is not going to be an easy fight, but with a democratically-run dispute of ongoing and creative action, combined with a vibrant public political campaign, we can win.**

### What is *Tubeworker*?

*Tubeworker* is a rank-and-file socialist bulletin, published at least monthly, written by Tube workers, for Tube workers. It has been produced since 1991. It aims to provide a forum for workers to discuss experiences on the job and learn about the struggles and experiences of other grades of workers, in a way that company newsletters and official union publications don't. It also aims to be a voice for revolutionary socialist ideas amongst London Underground workers, arguing for a working-class alternative to capitalism and Stalinism based on common ownership and radical democracy. 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@btopenworld.com](mailto:tubeworker@btopenworld.com) to get in touch.

***Tubeworker's* blog — daily updates — [workersliberty.org/twblog](http://workersliberty.org/twblog)**

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## WHAT DO WE WANT?

**All station staff are outraged at the obvious injustice of closing all ticket offices and forcing ticket sellers to take almost-certain demotion.**

But there are a few elements of the current plans which superficially seem appealing, until you realise LU's cost-cutting and political rationale behind them.

This reminds us that as we fight to defend jobs, we should not fall into the trap of simply defending the way that stations are currently run. To some, LU's talk of making positive improvements could sound tempting if the unions' only demands are to defend the status quo.

For example, some people don't mind the idea of breaking down the distinction between rostered and reserve staff.

Currently stations are run by two groups: rostered staff have a fixed station and shift pattern; reserves cover their leave and sickness on inferior conditions, with 28 days' notice of duties and some last-minute changes. Reserves can end up covering all the worst shifts, doing consecutive weeks of nights, for example.

The new proposals would give all staff "cover weeks" within their rosters, i.e. sharing out the element of uncertainty between all staff.

This is not a bad proposal. The unions should be looking at ways that reorganisation can benefit our lives. But LU's current drive is to reduce the overall head count by nearly 1,000; it's decided it will be easier to employ fewer people by removing "reserves". We can't fall for this. An "improvement" that reduces staffing levels will only make us work harder and mean more anti-social shifts for all of us.

Another change that people are not wholly against is the idea of supervisors being more "visible" on the gateline, alongside CSAs. Stations, especially big, busy stations, are currently run in a very hierarchical way, with supervisors working largely inside offices and CSAs on the gateline, in the face of customers, freezing, taking abuse. The distinction between grades causes problems on the station, so it's not such a bad thing to break that down.

## Support the "3 Cosas" strike!

Outsourced cleaning, catering, and security workers at the University of London will strike from 27-29 January as part of their "3 Cosas" ("3 Things") campaign to win sick pay, holiday, and pensions equality. Their union, IWGB, has supported London Underground workers in the past. We should back them too! For more info, see [3cosascampaign.wordpress.com](http://3cosascampaign.wordpress.com)

But LU's proposals will actually bring MORE hierarchy onto stations. The supervisors are planned to become managers, with power to discipline staff. It will mean that staff on stations work less, not more, like a team. The new Customer Service Managers replacing supervisors might appear more equal because they're supposedly out helping customers, but their pay could be more than twice as much as a CSA on the new management pay scale. The new managerial grades on stations are part of LU's political agenda to change the "culture" of stations: i.e. make the people running stations into pro-management puppets and turn the lower grades into trembling balls of fear who can be easily manipulated by management.

Much better to challenge inequality and hierarchy on stations by raising the pay of the lowest-paid staff and allowing all grades more say in the way the station is run.

Even if the unions win, it is unlikely that everything will stay the same on the stations. There are some things we would want to change, given the opportunity. While maintaining current staffing levels, even increasing them, we can use the opportunity presented by reorganisation to put forward a positive vision of how we would want the stations to be run: as equal, comfortable and stress-free as possible.

**Our workplace is where we spend most of our active, conscious life; we should have control over it.**

## DLR AND TUBE: STRIKE TOGETHER!

**Balloting closes on Thursday for industrial action on the Docklands Light Railway — both for Serco Docklands staff and for cleaners and security guards employed by Carlisle.**

In other words, both the contractor and the contractor's contractor!

The Serco dispute is about a range of workplace problems, including the use of agency staff. The Carlisle dispute is about poverty pay levels. Different issues, but they both come from the same root — the employers trying to drive down costs to maximise profits while funding is cut.

**When the results come in — with a certain Yes majority — RMT should call action co-ordinated with that on London Underground and TfL. Together, we can make a massive impact. United, we can win.**

## WHAT HAS STRIKING EVER DONE FOR US?

**Interesting circular from management recently, asking what we have ever achieved by striking.**

Erm ... Our rates of pay, working hours, annual leave, reinstatement of sacked workmates, protection of health and safety, protection of pensions... need we go on?!

The answer is: pretty much everything decent about this job has come either directly from industrial action, or from management's knowledge that we are prepared to take industrial action. Or does anyone think management gave these things to us through the kindness of their hearts?!

If you are in any doubt about this, compare London Underground with similar jobs where there is no trade union, or where the trade union is not prepared to strike.

Funny thing is, our bosses either say we shouldn't strike because we've got decent jobs, pay and conditions; or that we shouldn't strike because striking never won decent jobs, pay and conditions. You can't have it both ways!

***Tubeworker* is strangely reminded of that scene from *The Life Of Brian* — What Have The Romans Ever Done For Us?!**

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