



tubeworker

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Action can beat cuts and win funding

As well as a loud “no” to any and all cuts that might be proposed by the ongoing KPMG-led audit, we also need a “yes” to a positive alternative.

We need to put forward our own vision of a publicly-funded, democratically-run, green public transport system, with all workers directly employed, funded by taxing the rich and business.

Sadly, we're unlikely to get that kind of vision from the “independent review” Sadiq Khan has commissioned to run in parallel to KPMG's audit, made up of bankers and bosses! That review is likely to recommend cuts too.

RMT has produced its own submission to the TfL reviews, making the case for public funding, public ownership, increased staffing levels, and the in-housing of all services.

It's a useful contribution to discussion, but needs to be connected to an active campaign with roots in workplaces to be meaningful.

We need to make bold demands for proper funding, that reject the argument that TfL needs to be “self-financing”. Public transport is a necessary service, a collective social good, that should be socially provided. Prior to the pandemic, 72% of TfL's income came from fare revenue, compared to just 38% for the New York Subway and Paris Metro.

Part of the Paris Metro's funding comes from a ring-fenced payroll tax on businesses and corporations that benefit from its operation. There's no reason why similar models couldn't work here.



It will take sustained political and industrial campaigning to force these concessions from government, which we can't conjure up at will. But we must turn our “defensive” battle against whatever cuts the KPMG-led audit recommends into an “offensive” fight for our own vision.

Step one is to stake out a clear position: **fight every single cut, resist any sell-off.**

Aslef has been quickest out of the traps, balloting its members from 26 August to 17 September. Their dispute is around the demand that LU abides by existing agreements and the “machinery of negotiation”, which, as far as demands go, is perhaps a little lacking in ambition. But the approach - of preparing for industrial action preemptively, rather than waiting for the bosses' assault and trying to it them off - is the right one. RMT, TSSA, and Unite should launch their own ballots.

Some argue that it'd be more effective to wait until the KPMG audit presents its final report in October, so we'll have a clearer idea of what's coming our way.

But delaying just gives the employer, and the accountants conducting the review, time to get their ducks in a row. Getting out in

front of whatever they propose will give us the best possible chance of resisting it.

There are significant challenges to building for, and taking, industrial action in the current context of the ongoing pandemic and profound economic uncertainty. But we can't accept the principle of social levelling-down; the fact that other workers are under attack and losing their jobs doesn't mean we have to take our “fair share” of the battering too. That won't benefit other workers. On the contrary, if we are able to mount resistance to our bosses' cuts, that could be a beacon for workers elsewhere to do likewise.

The campaign to get the vote out in industrial action ballots needs to be led from the workplace, with all of us taking responsibility to ensure our workmates vote. And the discussion about what action to take, and when, also needs to be bottom-up, based on democratic decisions taken by union branches.

We've kept London moving during a global pandemic. We must not accept that our reward for that is job cuts and attacks on our terms and conditions. Let's fight back.

• **Read RMT's “A Future for Public Transport in London” report at bit.ly/future-pubtrans**

ASLEF MEMBERS: VOTE YES FOR ACTION! BALLOT PAPERS SENT OUT FROM 25 AUGUST. SPEAK TO YOUR REP IF YOUR BALLOT PAPER HASN'T ARRIVED.

KHAN "CONSIDERING" IN-HOUSING?

Mayor Khan was questioned on LBC radio on 13 August about conditions for Tube cleaners, particularly their lack of staff travel benefits.

Khan claimed that, as there are lots of contractors working on TfL/LU, it would be unreasonable for them all to expect full staff travel passes.

But why? There are all sorts of different workers amongst directly-employed TfL/LU staff, but making the system run is a collective effort, so they all get the same staff travel pass. Why should the contribution of outsourced workers - who didn't ask for their work to be outsourced, and would be directly employed had it not been - be deemed less worthy?

But even on Khan's own terms, Tube cleaners are not "contractors" who only work on LU on an incidental, job-by-job basis, whilst also working for their private company's other clients, as some other contractors do.

Cleaners are part of the permanent LU workforce, with the same cleaners cleaning the same stations, offices, and depots every day. They should have the same conditions as their directly-employed workmates.

Perhaps more significantly, in the same interview, Khan said he would "consider" bringing the contract for cleaning on TfL in house when it comes up for expiry in 2022, but ruled out cancelling the contract before that. As far as *Tubeworker* is aware, this is the first time he has committed publicly to doing even so much as "considering" in-housing cleaning.

Khan's references to RMT's "lobbying" and "campaigning" makes clear that it's progress that has been achieved via the pressure of RMT cleaners and their supporters.

But we can't be complacent. The outsourced contract for catering has come up for renewal during Khan's mayoralty, and there was no sign of any intervention, or "consideration" of alternatives, from his office as LU went ahead and re-tendered the contract to Sodexo.

We should use Khan's comments as impetus to intensify our pressure on him, and step up our campaigning for equal staff travel benefits for all cleaners, and for in-housing.

2022 should be the latest, not the soonest!

NO CARD? NO TRIP!

Some drivers report finding the anti-viral cleaning confirmation cards that should be in every cab haven't been filled in.

When they ring a manager, they're simply given a verbal assurance that the cab has indeed been cleaned.

This isn't good enough. If the card hasn't been completed, we have to assume the cab hasn't been cleaned, and it's not safe to drive. Simple.

"HMP HAMMERSMITH"

Workers at Hammersmith Service Control Centre are fighting for improved workplace conditions.

The lack of adequate facilities has led workers to nickname the building "HMP Hammersmith".

As the RMT Service Control website puts it: "Staff are fed up and just don't want to be there anymore."

A dispute over the issue, put on hold when the pandemic hit, is now gearing back up.

GET YOUR OWN BACK?

A station AM recently asked for volunteers to work with local cops to help criminalise vulnerable passengers and target fare evaders.

Extra encouragement is provided, including suggesting that you might want to get involved to get back at a serial fare dodger.

Worst of all, it advises that being a part of this "fight back" will help you come up with new competencies for your CV and to get further in the company. *Tubeworker* declines the offer of attacking the vulnerable to help our "careers".

WARREN STREET ASSAULT

14 August saw a vicious assault by a member of the public against station staff at Warren Street.

The incident almost exactly mirrored an incident at West Ham in September 2019, where assailants attacked staff after kicking their way into the station control room.

LU has learned no lessons about the need for improved security on station doors, and workers have paid the price.

FOUR IN A LIFT?

Management continue to confuse workers and passengers alike with confused guidance on distancing.

Take the posters by lifts across the network. These are designed for stations without escalators, where the lift is the main way to and from platforms.

How the lifts in many stations can fit four people with social distancing, *Tubeworker* has not managed to work out...

VICTORY IN BATTLE OF EUSTON GLAP CHAIR

One of the demands in RMT's "Covid-19 Charter" is that station staff should work from behind glass as much as possible.

It's a simple enough demand, and an important one for maximising distance and minimising contact.

Clearly not every CSA at a large station can work behind glass. But GLAPS provide an opportunity for some to do so, on a rotating basis. How extremely petty, then, that management at Euston removed the chair from the main gateline GLAP.

Swift action from workers, via their safety rep, forced a u-turn from the bosses. So if your chair gets nicked, challenge it!

BRIXTON HEATWAVE

The air con in Brixton control room was on the blink during the recent heatwave.

Some staff refused to work in the overheated conditions, redirecting the calls to the CSM office and informing control that if an alarm goes off they'll evacuate the station.

That's the attitude to take if management won't fix the problem!

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.

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