



tubeworker

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LU pay/conditions:

Strikes can win a better deal!



Negotiations with LU over pay/conditions have taken us as far as we can go. To win a deal that brings us closer to our demands, we need industrial action.

Aslef has already committed to ballot its members. Its ballot begins on 28 February and closes on 9 March. *Tubeworker* encourages all readers who are Aslef members to vote yes for action.

RMT reps from across LU are meeting on 26 February to discuss next steps. RMT has chosen not to ballot up to now. We think that has been a mistake. The delay has allowed momentum to slip. But if RMT now launched a vibrant, assertive campaign around an immediate ballot, that momentum could be rebuilt. RMT should ballot its entire membership, in a single ballot, to maximise all-grades unity.

Some have argued that LU's latest offer, for an RPI+0.2% pay increase for four years, is adequate. We disagree. A 0.2% increase (the "RPI" element only keeps our pay in line with inflation) is hardly anything to get excited about, and the offer includes no concessions of any of our other demands, including a reduction in working hours. As LU has now accepted the principle that any reduction in the working week would be facilitated via additional banked rest days, we should ask any workmates still wavering on this issue: why *wouldn't* we want more time off work?

It's regrettable the talks have dragged this long, but simply wanting to get them

done is not a good reason to accept an inadequate offer.

LU's narrative is that we have a choice between two offers - the one it made in October, with 1.4% pay increases plus three additional banked rest days in years two and four of the deal, and the more recent "money only" offer. We say: we can win something better than both.

How many times have we heard LU say something is "full and final", or absolutely set in stone, only to find that industrial action, or the threat of it, pushes them back? The threat of action by drivers over excessive track noise led to the discovery of an additional £10 million for track work; the threat of strikes by fleet workers forces LU to scrap a "full and final" plan to cut train maintenance; and a 2017 strike by station staff forced the reversal of 325 job cuts.

LEVERAGE

With GLA and Mayoral elections due on 7 May, we have some additional leverage.

Mayor Khan will not want Tube strikes in the run up to this election, especially as he's boasting about having reduced them! This will create additional political pressure on our bosses to get a deal done.

For RMT to hit the thresholds required by the anti-union laws in a combine-wide ballot of its entire membership will be a challenge, but it can be done. In 2015, the last time RMT balloted combine-wide, both a 50%+ turnout and a 40%+ yes vote were achieved. Had the thresholds been imposed at that time, we would've cleared them.

Ultimately, we are faced with a choice between giving up, accepting our employers' disingenuous and hypocritical pleas of poverty (no money to fund a shorter working week, but enough money to pay senior bosses eye-watering salaries?), and take a deal that keeps our pay in line with inflation, but nothing more. Or, we can decide to fight, and at least give ourselves the possibility of winning something better.

We can win a substantially above-inflation pay rise, and a meaningful reduction in working hours, but we need to be prepared to fight for it. Let's do that.

French lessons

Our monthly Tubeworker editorial meeting on 20 February heard a report from a comrade who'd recently visited France during the mass strike wave, as part of a delegation organised by Workers' Liberty.

Workers in France have been striking against proposed pension reforms. We heard how strikes are organised via democratic assemblies in workplaces, which take decisions about whether to continue striking. We also discussed the effect of laws which require "minimum service levels" in industries like healthcare, and laws in other industries like transport aimed at reducing the ineffectiveness of strikes. Because French workers have a more militant culture, these laws are not as restrictive or effective as bosses would like them to be. This is a lesson for us, as the Tories attempt to impose similar laws here. Vigorous resistance can force the government to back down, or render the laws inoperable.

We also discussed some limitations of the movement in France, including its lack of a clear political alternative to the Macron government beyond the demand for the pension reforms to be scrapped.

Mass strikes around industrial demands can be immensely powerful, but if the workers' movement doesn't pose an alternative programme for how society should be organised, we're ultimately leaving the rule of profit unchallenged at the political level.

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

Class Struggle Environmentalism

A day school for socialists, labour movement activists, and climate activists



10:30-17:30, Saturday 14 March, Park View School, West Green Road, London N15 3QR. **More: bit.ly/14-3-20**

SHUTDOWN ON THE BAKERLOO

Strikes by RMT drivers on the Bakerloo, demanding a workable timetable, shut the service down repeatedly across 21-24 February.

There were lively pickets at Queen's Park and Elephant and Castle, with striking university workers from a nearby college joining the latter picket line.

"No service on the entire line, due to strike action", the official announcement went, confirming the words of the old labour movement hymn 'Solidarity Forever' that "without our brain and muscle, not a single wheel can turn."

RCIs VOTE FOR ACTION

Revenue Control Inspectors in RMT have voted to take industrial action to resist the imposition of a two-tier workforce in the revenue department.

There was a 100% vote for action short of a strike, and a 92% vote for strikes, on a 75% turnout.

RCI reps will now meet to discuss exactly what action to take and when. One possibility could be a joint strike alongside Unite members working in the revenue department at TfL, who are striking on the last Friday of every month until April.

A TALE OF TWO ASLEFS?

Another edition of *Tube Driver* bulletin has appeared.

Although this is an unofficial publication, it appears to be a version of *Tubeworker* produced by Aslef supporters. It called the Bakerloo drivers' strikes "unnecessary", implicitly encouraging people to scab.

On the other hand, the Twitter account of the Aslef West Brompton branch tweeted a reminder that workers can refuse to cross other unions' picket lines.

We hope Aslef members follow the latter sentiment!

THE BOSSES' DEVICES

ABM is issuing cleaners with mobile devices loaded with an app called "OnTime", which will be used to book on and off shift, and book holiday.

Worse still, ABM is pressuring cleaners to sign a document saying they, and not the company, are liable for the device itself.

While small numbers of individuals refusing to sign the documents risks exposing isolated groups of workers to disciplinary action, RMT must look to organise a collective response.

KEEP IT A MESS (ROOM)

Night Tube CSAs at Stockwell on Friday 14 February found contractors had turned their mess room into a pop-up office.

We have no problem sharing our mess room with contractors... as a mess room. Contractors can have a cup of tea and take their meal break with us. But the mess room shouldn't be used for working in.

EQUAL TREATMENT FOR PROBATIONERS

We've been hearing some horror stories of probationers on stations having their probation extended, or even terminated, for ridiculous reasons.

The point of probation is to assess people against objective LU standards, policies, and procedures.

If they wouldn't be sacked for it if they were post-probation, they shouldn't have their probation terminated for it.

FIGHTING FOR DIRECT EMPLOYMENT ON THE TRACK

Protection/possession work on LU is substantially outsourced, to companies like Cleshar and Morsons.

Many workers are classed as "self-employed". In late 2019, RMT held referenda amongst groups of "self-employed" members, returning substantial majorities for taking action to win better conditions and direct employment.

LU wants a new contract with a single labour supply agency to provide "self-employed" sub-contractors, paid per job. This is exploitative and unjust, and possibly illegal.

RMT plans to renew its campaign, demanding secure, direct employment for all protection/possession workers.

If you work for LU, you should be employed by LU, on LU terms and conditions. Simple.

NO DISPLACEMENTS ON STATIONS

"Roster reviews" at Bank, Victoria, and Chancery Lane/St. Paul's propose to delete positions, leading to displacements.

Any reduction in headcount must be firmly resisted. In reviews/reorganisation that (for example) create more full-time posts by converting part-time posts, part-timers whose positions are converted should stay at their current locations over-established rather than being forcibly displaced.

SODEXO PLANS CUTS

LU has re-tendered the staff canteens catering contract to Sodexo, on the basis that they'll make "efficiency savings".

Sodexo wants to cut 18 jobs. No canteen worker should lose their job, hours, or pay because of the exploitative outsourcing model. RMT is planning a fightback.

DRILL MUSIC

Staff at Old Street have demanded action on noise, as drilling from the construction project on the roundabout has become intolerable.

After pressure from union reps, it looks like an agreement has been secured to restrict the times of the drilling.

If the problem reoccurs, it may prove necessary to refuse to work on the grounds of health and safety.

FIGHT FIRE WITH FREQUENCY AND FUNDING

Twice recently, there have been fires in the pipe a short distance from the platform, raising concerns about the frequency of track cleaning.

The incidents took place at Finsbury Park and Westminster, where build-ups of rubbish and dust respectively led to fires.

Contractors, always driven by the desire to cut costs, like to cut corners, and often give their workers impossible work schedules.

Luckily, no-one was hurt in these incidents. Let them serve as a warning, and a call to bring maintenance and cleaning work in-house, properly funded and organised to ensure everyone's safety.

LILLIE BRIDGE WORKERS SAY: BALLOT NOW!

Some in RMT have cited the unwillingness of members in non-operational grades to ballot over pay/conditions as a reason for not balloting.

But that's certainly not the case at Lillie Bridge engineering depot in west London. A recent workplace meeting to discuss LU pay resulted in a strong consensus for a ballot.

So, rather than looking for reasons not to fight, let's try to generalise the spirit of the Lillie Bridge engineers!

ORGANISING IN SERVICE CONTROL

Service control workers on the Victoria Line, and in the Hammersmith Service Control Centre, are fighting back for better working conditions.

A raft of workplace issues at Osborne House, home to Vic Line SC, led to a strike ballot which returned a 100% majority for action in January. Reps are now due to go to Acas for negotiations with management in late February and early March. At Hammersmith, workers describe working conditions in the Service Control Centre as "appalling", with problems including not enough toilets and no mess room. There are also issues with training, and procedures related to the introduction of the new Communication Based Train Control system.

Fortunately RMT Service Control reps are planning a fight back.



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