CLIMATE CHANGE IS A CLASS ISSUE:

SUPPORT THE FIGHT AGAINST FRACKING

Fracking is a controversial and environmentally damaging means of extracting methane from shale rock.

This involves drilling down 3000 metres before continuing to drill horizontally. Water, sand, and toxic chemicals are then pumped down the hole at very high pressure in order to fracture the shale and release the gas.

The Tories and corporations tell us there’s nothing to worry about. But it is evident the industry is largely self-regulated and the Environment Agency, having been cut to the bone, is barely up to the task of ensuring corporations play by the rules. Oh, by the way - most of these fracking companies are registered in off shore tax havens.

FRACKING AND US
So, what does fracking, and the movement against it, have to do with us as transport workers?

Good old anti-trade union laws, for one. Several environmental activists have been charged under the Trade Union and Labour Relations Act 1992, Section 241. This is a law designed to criminalise picket lines, a law we could fall foul of in future strikes.

Our right to lawful assembly and peaceful protest are protected under Articles 10 and 11 of the European Convention of Human Rights. These principles are fundamental to our democracy. For example, Freedom of Association (Article 11) is what gives us the right to join a trade union!

It is evident that a heavily disproportionate police response is core to the government’s strategy of forcing fracking onto communities that don’t want it. This not only comes at great financial cost but it also creates tension between police and local communities.

Using the police as corporate enforcers, actively trying to suppress campaigns of non-violent direct action, should be a red flag to all trade unionists. A threat to one is a threat to all. Many of us on LU have experienced frustratingly slow police response times in our work places, so to see such vast police resources used against the anti-fracking community sticks in the throat.

PRIVATE FIRMS?
And if the Tories decide they need additional resources to police anti-fracking protests, will they turn to private firms?

As much as the collapse of Carillon should be a warning to our government about the dangers of privatisation, Tubeworker cannot help but wonder if this will lead to companies such as Serco and G4S being given the power of arrest. Oh and by the way Keith Cochrane Carillions interim Chief Executive is also non-executive Director of fracking company Third Energy. Definitely not corrupt then...

And finally, of course, those of us who are old enough to remember the miners’ strike will know that the police will be used in force against the labour movement if we ever get too powerful!

Sadly, there are some trade unions, which support fracking. This is largely to do with the fact they represent workers in the industry but Tubeworker would like to remind these unions that standing up for workers does not mean we have to turn a blind eye to the environmental impact of such industries.

Other unions, including RMT, oppose fracking but still fall short on having a robust ethical strategy on energy and the environment.

Tubeworker calls on all trade unionists to get involved with their unions and to actively involve themselves in improving their environmental policies, at workplace level and nationally.

The wider trade union movement should be campaigning for investment in renewable energies and a move away from fossil fuels. This must include the creation of climate jobs and transferable skills. Workers in frontline industries should lead the transition.

Unions should also stand up for environmental protestors on the frontline of the fight against fracking. The suppression of protest is a dangerous thing, and we should all be paying close attention.

Useful links

drillordrop.com (facts on fracking)
netpol.org (campaigning against police repression of protests)
Visit tinyurl.com/ya8gd83a to read Critical Perspectives: Will Jackson of Liverpool John Moores University on fracking and the policing of protest at Barton Moss community protection camp (the full co-authored report can be found at tinyurl.com/h3vd93y)
nationalsethebigsix.com (campaigning for public ownership of the “Big Six” energy firms)
workersclimateaction.wordpress.com (Workers’ Climate Action, a campaign involving trade unionists and environmental campaigners, active from 2007-2011 which still has many useful online resources)
SOUND AND FURY
Reps at Bank/Monument have been working on the issue of wheel screech on their platforms for many years.
Recent tests gave results of 91 decibels, well above the legal guidelines of 85.
If staff aren’t issued with proper safety equipment they shouldn’t work on those platforms.

PICC LINE DRIVERS CALL FOR DISPUTE
RMT drivers at the west end of the Picc have called for a dispute over management’s misapplication of the SPAD policy, after a long-serving driver was dipped to CSA2 after four SPADs.
Action plans were not exhausted, and the driver was not given the option of a move to an automatic line. The demotion to CSA2 could represent a pay-cut of nearly £30k.

NYE PAY SHAMBLES
Many station staff have been told they may have to wait until February to be paid for working New Year’s Eve.
To add insult to injury, managers and office staff who worked NYE shifts as “Ambassadors” have been paid... to the tune of £275!
Unions should bombard LU with grievances to make it cough up, immediately.

DON’T SACRIFICE THE FRAMEWORK!
Aslef have circulated a leaflet attacking RMT for opposing their “four-day week” plan.
Tubeworker agrees with RMT’s stance: this was a deal that involved selling terms and conditions, and would’ve seen drivers working longer.
Unions need to get together to fight for a genuinely reduced working week.

RENEGING ON ROSTERS
LU has reneged on commitments regarding rosters and staffing levels in at least three locations.
Rosters uploaded for District Centre, Victoria Centre, and Northern South do not reflect agreements made in the “325 jobs” consultation following last January’s strikes.
If LU doesn’t keep up its end of the deal, we need to consider a new dispute.

FALSE ALARMS?
The Department for Transport will issue new guidance on procedure for assessing suspicious items.
It will be mandatory to open bags; external inspection is no longer enough.
This is unacceptable. We should treat security seriously without putting ourselves at risk in the process.

GREAT TRAIN SALE
LU is planning to sell off trains for £875m in order to raise funds to buy new stock.
It will then rent the trains back from the private company it sold them to. Yep, makes sense to us too...

SAVE OUR CANTEEN!
Union reps at Harrow on the Hill are mobilising to save the staff canteen.
LU plans to close it to make way for new lifts. We’re all for improving accessibility at stations, but LU must do this without cutting staff facilities.
A petition is being circulated against the closure. Speak to your rep about getting involved with the fight.

AAW NOT AUTOMATIC
If a manager tells you your LDI, or warning, under the “Atendance At Work” policy is “automatic”, don’t stand for it.
There’s no such thing! Read the policy, know your rights.

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