After RMT ballot result:

Strike to defend jobs, conditions, pensions

Since RMT’s industrial action ballot returned a 95% majority in favour of taking action, discussion has been ongoing about the next steps.

This is an essential; whatever action we eventually take will be much stronger and more effective if it has been decided upon via a process of genuine democratic deliberation.

**Tubeworker believes we need to take action as soon as possible.**

With Covid infections now falling, we can expect to see an uptick in passengers numbers. As footfall rises, our leverage increases. With the latest round of bailout funding from the government expiring on 4 February, any subsequent bailout is likely to have further strings attached. Striking around the time of any new settlement could have a positive effect on its content, as well as showing our own bosses and the Department for Transport know that further punitive conditions on funding will be met with ongoing resistance.

Some workmates argue for a more cautious strategy, waiting until after the current phase of the pensions review concludes on 31 March. They argue that, as all of LU’s proposed cuts and attacks are just maybes and potentials; workers will be more prepared to strike when they know we are facing a concrete threat.

The problem with this is that, by the time the threat becomes “concrete”, it’s too late. Waiting will leave us striking to oppose something that is already on the point of implementation, or even something that has already happened.

And for many of us, the threats are already concrete. LU has already announced cuts on stations, overhauling the SRT and revenue frameworks to increase “flexibility”, and announcing up to 400 jobs to go. But these cuts are not a “stations issue”. If they are not stopped, they will spread. All RMT members on LU, wherever they work, have an interest in stopping them.

Workers are also debating what form of action we should take. Some argue for an all-out 24-hour strike as an opening salvo, followed by a wait-and-see period to gauge the company’s response.

**PROGRAMME OF ACTION**

Others, including Tubeworker, believe we need to announce an ongoing programme of action rather than a one-off strike. A 24-hour strike on its own will be a token gesture.

There are challenges. We haven’t had LU-wide strikes since 2016. There is a whole generation of workers on the job now who’ve never been on strike. In that context, it would be naïve to imagine we could just announce a lengthy strike straight away. The confidence to take that kind of action needs to be built up.

Announcing an ongoing programme of action is a good way to do that, as it makes clear to management and each other that we’re in this for the long haul if necessary. A programme of action over several months could include inbuilt escalation, with strikes lengthening from month to month. It could also involve selective action, with different groups of workers striking at different times, as a way to maintain pressure between all-out strikes.

Whatever your view on the next steps, it’s vital we don’t approach this dispute passively, waiting for “the union”, conceived of as some external body, to “tell us” what to do. We are the union, and it’s up to us to decide what strategy we think will be most effective.

**Speak to your reps, attend your branch meeting and regional meetings, and have your say.**

**Why Tube workers should join the fight to kill the bills**

Two bills currently before Parliament, the Policing, Crime, Courts, and Sentencing Bill (known as the “Police Bill”), and the Nationality and Borders Bill, would have significantly detrimental impacts on working-class people, especially migrant workers and people of colour.

The Police Bill aims to reduce the right to protest. We could find ourselves arrested for protesting outside TfL offices or City Hall. The bill will also impact workers’ ability to picket during strikes.

Votes in the House of Lords have pushed back some of the worst elements, but the government could bring those back in new bills. Other elements, including further criminalisation of Traveller communities, remain. There will be further protests against the bill; we urge you to attend.

The Nationalities and Borders Bill would give the government expanded powers to revoke British citizenship if someone commits certain crimes. This applies an additional punishment to migrant-background people that will not be applied to others. LU has always had a large migrant contingent amongst our workforce; we must resist laws that create further discrimination against migrants.

The government also plans to introduce compulsory photo ID for voting. Once again it will be the people who are already marginalised who will find it harder to get the ID they need in order to vote.

**Don’t let the Tories divide us. We have more interests in common with each other as workers than with bosses and the rich who happen to share our national background or skin colour.**

*More: bit.ly/TW-KTB*
NEASDEN DRIVERS VOTE FOR STRIKES
RMT drivers at Neasden depot have voted overwhelmingly for strikes following the imposition of a new timetable in September 2021.

With a lack of consultation on changes to walking time, an imbalance of turns and an increase in poor work/life balance drivers voted to take action. Strikes were called for 20-21 January, but were suspended after LU made concessions on walking time, timetable adjustments to reduce late running, and committed to rebalance rosters.

Action must be reinstated if progress stalls or if LU reneges on its commitments. If strikes take place, Tubeworker urges supporters to join the pickets and calls on Aslef members to refuse to cross and support the dispute.

GREEN PARK/EUSTON: ENOUGH IS ENOUGH!
RMT will soon be balloting station staff across Green Park and Euston, as members say "enough is enough!" to the overzealous and heavy-handed management culture across the area.

Issues include probationers being sacked on spurious grounds, with one being told they were too proactive, and established existing staff demoralised by a culture within local management that has suffocated them for too long.

Morale is on the floor across the area, across all grades, and the mantra is definitely that "enough is enough". Staff are overwhelmed by the bullying and distinct and separate forms of micromanagement style they face on a daily basis.

The local RMT reps and branch have been inundated with never-ending negative reports coming from these stations, and recognise that the only choice is to resort to a local ballot to highlight the numerous concerns and demand change.

Enough is enough!

CLEANERS WIN BACK WAGES
At the start of the pandemic, RMT insisted ABM pay full wages to cleaners sick or isolating due to Covid.

ABM agreed - and didn’t even have to stump up, as TFL gave them the money.

And yet, in November and December, cleaners who found that their pay packets were light because ABM was not honouring this pledge. Persistent representation by RMT cleaner reps is ensuring that everyone is now getting their money, but it goes to show that we can’t take our eyes off these cowboy employers for a second.

STATION JOB CUTS ANNOUNCED
Bosses plan to reduce the “welcome function” (i.e., CSAs in ticket halls) at 28 stations. Management is also targeting detainment duties at 11 stations. SATS duties could also be cut, leading to more job losses.

Up to 600 jobs could go. Cuts will mean increased workload for staff and a worse and less safe service for passengers.

Cuts will likely mean displacements, particularly of part-time staff. Given part-time roles often have higher concentrations of women workers and workers with caring responsibilities, these cuts could have a discriminatory impact.

In 2016, LU justified closing ticket offices by saying it would allow staff to be more visible. We knew it was a sham, given reducing staffing levels is hardly a way to make us “more visible”. But even on LU’s terms, it is now reneging on those claims, by abolishing many of the ticket hall duties they claimed were a “more visible” alternative to ticket office positions.

If LU achieves these cuts, they will move on to other functions to look for vacancies they can delete.

That’s why RMT must use its ballot mandate and call combine-wide action as soon as possible, to stop these cuts in their tracks.

STEP UP NIGHT TUBE STRIKES
RMT drivers on the Central and Victoria lines are continuing Night Tube strikes every Friday and Saturday.

Strikers are braving cold weather to maintain pickets at depots, and big gaps in the service, especially on the Central line, show strikes are having an impact.

Action is scheduled through June, the full six-month life of the current industrial action ballot. The determination of the strikers is evident. But it seems like the company is digging in; even though the strikes have now cost them more than meeting RMT’s demand to withdraw imposed night working, LU clearly believes giving in to the union over this issue would set a dangerous precedent given the wider fights over jobs and pensions.

Continuing to do the same thing if it’s not making progress is not a good strategy. The two 24-hour strikes that bookended that last round of Night Tube action had a massive impact; further 24 or 48-hour strikes must be called, across all Night Tube lines (not only the two currently running it).

Now RMT has a combine-wide ballot mandate, that could be done in parallel with the wider dispute.

RETURN OF THE FLASH-AND-DASH?
Remember the Flash and Dash?

Instead of physically checking that all passengers are off the train before driving it into a depot or sidings, management wanted drivers to flash the lights and make a PA. It seems that it may be making an unwelcome return, this time at Barking - and probably other stations on the target list of scrapping detainment staff.

Management should remember that the reason that physical checks were introduced was because a passenger was killed in the sidings at Liverpool Street. And if they can’t - or choose not to - remember, it will be down to us to remind them.

NO TO PUNITIVE AAW
Tubeworker is pro-vaccine and urges workmates to get their jabs.

But we oppose LU’s decision to differentiate between jabbed and unjabbed staff under the Attendance At Work policy. Presumably LU thinks treating Covid-related absence as an “item” under the AAW for unvaccinated staff will incentivise them to get jabs. In reality, it’s just as likely to incentivise them to come to work when they shouldn’t to avoid getting disciplined, putting themselves and others at risk.

In fact, all disciplinary sanctions for being ill should go!

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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