



tubeworker

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

CLEANERS: VOTE YES FOR STRIKES!

RMT is balloting ABM cleaners for strikes. Ballot papers will be sent out from Monday 28 October, and the vote closes on 19 November.

This ballot has been a long time coming. It's taken months of preparation, which has involved building up union membership and auditing membership lists to ensure they're ready to ballot. This could be the first network-wide strike of cleaners for years. Strikes in 2007-8 won the London Living Wage; there were further cleaners strikes in 2012, and a localised strike and subsequent lock-out on the JNP contract in 2014, then held by ISS, when the contractor wanted to bring in biometric fingerprinting machines.

The demands of the current dispute are for free travel passes, company sick pay, and improved holiday entitlements. Ultimately RMT's policy is for cleaners to be directly employed by LU, but winning these immediate demands will be a step towards greater parity with directly-employed staff, at least in terms of travel passes.

The first challenge is to clear the thresholds of the anti-trade union laws. These require that at least 50% of all those balloted must return their ballot papers, and at least 40% of all those balloted must vote yes (as well as a simple majority of ballot papers returned). This means a meticulous campaign ensuring that cleaners are spoken to individually and encouraged



to vote. The Communication Workers Union (CWU) has just cleared the thresholds in a national ballot of over 100,000 workers, using a combination of workplace meetings and an effective social media campaign to ensure maximum engagement. We can learn from their approach.

If we get the result we need, we also need to discuss how to make any strikes as effective and impactful as possible. A one-day strike is unlikely to have much impact, so we need to plan for sustained and escalating action. As cleaners are some of the lowest-paid workers on the Tube, they are perhaps least able to make big financial sacrifices. This means the RMT needs to finance their dispute. The Public

and Commercial Services union (PCS), recently provided substantial strike pay for its outsourced members in the Department for Business, Energy, and Industrial Strategy, who launched indefinite strikes against their employers, Aramark and ISS. These strikes were ultimately victorious and have secured the London Living Wage for these workers. RMT needs to provide the same level of financial support for ABM cleaners. Tubeworker is pleased to see that the RMT Bakerloo Line branch recently passed a resolution calling on the union to provide strike pay as close as possible to cleaners' full wages. RMT should also solicit donations from other unions - in the first place, Aslef, TSSA, and Unite - for the cleaners' strike fund.

Strikes must be accompanied by political pressure, including demonstrations and lobbies at City Hall and Mayor's Question Time, making clear that we hold Sadiq Khan responsible for the exploitation of migrant cleaning workers on the transport system his office administers.

And workers in other grades also have a role to play in supporting the cleaners' strike (see box). An injury to one is an injury to all!

What can other Tube workers do to support the cleaners?

The anti-trade union laws prevent one group of workers from taking action in support of another. That means LU staff can't officially strike in support of ABM cleaners' demands.

But there's still plenty we can do to support our cleaner colleagues. And, as an unofficial rank-and-file bulletin, Tubeworker is less inhibited in terms of what we can call for than our unions are.

Wear your support

Whatever job we do and whatever union we're in, all workers should wear one of RMT's "Justice for Cleaners" badges on our uniform or workwear. This is an easy visual way of demonstrating our support.

Shut the station if necessary

If cleaners strike, this will lead to significant build-ups of rubbish in stations, especially on platforms and around escalators. This could lead to serious safety issues. CSSs and CSMs need to be prepared to close stations or non-stop trains if build up of newspapers and other rubbish makes escalators or platforms unsafe.

Is your train safe?

Drivers rely on knowing that your train has been properly cleaned and litter-picked by a trained member of ABM staff. If you can't be confident this has been done, you need to make a decision about whether it's safe to take your train into service.

BALLOT PAPERS WILL ARRIVE AT YOUR HOME ADDRESS FROM 28 OCTOBER. YOU MUST RETURN THEM BY 18 NOVEMBER.

VOTE YES FOR STRIKES!

IF YOUR BALLOT PAPER DOES NOT ARRIVE, SPEAK TO AN RMT REP OR RING THE UNION ON 0800 376 3706

EXTINCTION REBELLION ON THE TUBE



Some members of Extinction Rebellion (ExR), which organises direct action to highlight the issue of climate change, recently disrupted the Tube service

by standing on top of a Jubilee Line train at Canning Town.

Passengers reacted angrily, attacking the protesters. LU staff were caught up in the incident and did very well in an attempt to maintain the safety of all involved.

We support direct action against climate change. We've highlighted this many times and have drawn attention to the central role that workers' action has to play in fighting for a transition to a sustainable economy.

While we have criticisms of ExR, particularly in terms of what we feel is their naive attitude to the police and state power generally, they have played an undeniably important role in raising the profile of this issue.

Two of our unions, RMT and Aslef, have made statements condemning the protests. We won't join in with such straightforward condemnation, nor will we simply bemoan "disruption". We know what it's like to be attacked for being "disruptive" or "causing inconvenience."

We stand in solidarity with ExR against repressive policing and defend their right to protest, even if it has a "disruptive" impact.

Having said this, we can't endorse members of the public taking actions that put themselves and other passengers in significant danger. We want to see the service shut down via workers taking industrial action, not by passengers putting themselves in harm's way. We also feel that public transport is a strange target for climate protests when public transport is so central to the protection of the environment from the pollution produced by private transport.

We'd appeal to all ExR members/supporters, and any other climate activists, to discuss with us how we can build a working-class climate movement that strikes at the root cause of the climate crisis: capitalism.

We also stand in solidarity with our colleagues on trains and stations who've been responding on the ground, often in very difficult circumstances, having to deal with the public whilst managing difficult safety incidents.

It reinforces the need for a properly-staffed Tube!

LU PAY/CONDITIONS: BALLOT NOW!

LU is now offering a four-year deal, with RPI + 0.2%, or £750 (whichever is higher), in year one, 1.4% plus a 30-minute reduction in the working week in year two, RPI + 0.2% in year three, and 1.4% plus a 30-minute reduction in the working week in year four.

The bosses calculate that this reduction in the working week would equate to six additional banked rest days.

Remember: our demand is for a 32-hour week. We should be aiming for something more like an additional rest day every week, not one every two months! We also can't accept pay increases of 1.4% which are likely to be below inflation.

Tubeworker has been arguing for some time that our unions should have launched ballots for action. If we want to win a better deal, we have to take action. It's a simple as that.

FIFTH CROSSRAIL COLLEAGUE DIES

Workers on the Crossrail site at Bond Street have lost five of their workmates in the last six months.

They have not been killed at work, but nonetheless have met early deaths in their sleep unexpected in relatively young, healthy people.

Five deaths in half a year is too many to be a coincidence. From a workforce of five to six hundred, one per cent have died. Working conditions are unpleasant and unhealthy, with dust, poor air quality, no daylight, anti-social hours, and management inaction.

The companies must act to improve workplace safety.

"20 ADDITIONAL COLLEAGUES"?

An LU Employee Bulletin announces that, to combat workplace violence and antisocial behaviour on the east end of the District Line, LU will be providing "20 additional colleagues".

Good news, you might think. An acknowledgement that lone working and understaffing are the fundamental problems. But alas, the reality is not so encouraging.

These "colleagues" aren't additional LU station staff, but staff drafted in from TfL's Surface Transport department - workers who deal with taxi enforcement and revenue issues on buses. They are not trained or licensed to work on LU stations.

It's time for action. We need strikes to win a safe staffing level.

SUPPORT THE PROTESTS IN CHILE!

***Tubeworker* supports the protests in Chile which started on 4 October following President Sebastián Piñera announcing a 30p rise in transport tickets in the capital, Santiago.**

Despite the declaration of a "state of emergency", protests have continued alongside general strikes on 21, 23, and 24 October. These have helped spread the protests across the country.

The fare rise has been revoked but the protests have continued calling for an end to the state of emergency, taking the army from the streets, the resignation of the president and a new constituent assembly. Workers and students in Chile have said this is not about a 30p rise in the metro but about 30 years of injustice and inequality.

Perhaps when the fare freeze ends on LU we can look to Chile for inspiration.

JUBILEE LINE UP THE WALL

The Jubilee Line went up the wall recently after a fault was identified across some of the fleet.

Problems were identified with the couplers on several trains, which were found to have large cracks in them! The faulty stock was entirely withdrawn from service.

Let's remember that, until recently, LU was planning to radically reduce the frequency of checks designed to catch these kinds of faults. If the threat of strikes hadn't forced them to back down, might these faulty trains have been put into service?



Tubeworker supports Jayesh Patel for RMT National Executive Committee

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

Tubeworker's blog — daily updates — workersliberty.org/twblog

Add "Tubeworker Bulletin" on Facebook, follow @Tube_Worker on Twitter

Subscribe!

Want to get every issue of *Tubeworker* (published at least monthly)? Send us your addresss along with a tenner (cheques payable to WL Bulletins)

Got a story for *Tubeworker*? We welcome reports and comments from all Tube workers.

Contact us: Workers' Liberty, 20E Tower Workshops, Riley Road, London SE1 3DG, tubeworker@workersliberty.org