OVER 10,000 Tube workers will strike on 1 and 3 March, in the biggest strike on London Underground since 2015. A strong strike may force LU to reconsider cuts. But in all likelihood, the strikes on 1 and 3 March will not be sufficient to win the dispute. We will need further action.

The pensions review is due to report on 31 March. Striking now gives us a chance to shape its outcome by making it clear we won’t tolerate attacks on our pensions. Our strikes are “pre-emptive self-defence”. But if the review recommends detrimental changes which LU makes plans to implement, we will need to strike again. We should have action named in advance for late March/early April.

ESCALATE

We need to be prepared to step the action up. The simplest form of escalation is to strike for longer. That would mean striking for at least three days. That would be a financial hit, especially for lower-paid grades and part-time workers, so the union must organise hardship funds. We suggest a voluntary monthly levy, means-tested against income, that goes straight into a strike fund. We also recommend that those for whom strike days fall on rest days or annual leave donate some of their wages if they can.

With so many workers involved, and with many of them paid fairly well thanks to historic union power, paying full strike pay isn’t financially feasible. But funds should be accessible for those who really need them. If it makes the difference between a stronger strike and a weaker one, it’s worth it.

But there are also forms of escalation other than striking for more days. As well as all-out strikes, where all functions and grades strike together, we must consider rolling and selective action, with different functions striking at different times. This has the potential to maximise disruption whilst minimising the financial impact on members. If service controllers strike on Monday, that will have an impact on the service disproportionate to the number of workers involved. If train maintainers strike over Tuesday night, how many trains will run on Tuesday morning? If station staff strike on Wednesday, we know from our 2017 strike that the network will shut down. You get the picture. It’s not without possible complications, but models of selective action should at least be seriously considered.

A PUBLIC POLITICAL CAMPAIGN

Alongside our industrial action, the union must reach out to allies in the wider labour movement and working-class communities to launch a public campaign for the future of public transport. Unless regular, adequate funding for TfL is secured, then not only our jobs, terms, and conditions are at risk, but so is the very service we provide to the public.

When LU announced the “Fit for the Future” scheme in late 2013, with its plans to close all ticket offices and cut nearly 1,000 jobs, RMT launched the “Hands off London Transport” campaign to build alliances to resist. We need to relaunch that type of campaign now.

We need protests outside the Department of Transport, City Hall, and TfL/LU offices, demanding an end to cuts and adequate long-term funding for TfL.
LONDON UNDERGROUND IS LYING TO US
Company comms have repeatedly insisted that “there are no proposals to change terms and conditions".
This will come as a surprise to staff in the Special Requirements Team and Revenue Control department, who are facing the imposition of new framework agreements aimed at maximising “flexibility". LU's plans to cut SATS duties on stations, where station staff assist drivers in managing platforms, and detainment duties, where station staff ensure trains are fully empty at terminating stations, will also clearly impact drivers' conditions, by increasing their workloads and giving them additional responsibilities.

We can only conclude that our employers realise they cannot justify their proposals, so have resorted to pretending they’re not happening, in the hope that we won’t notice. Our bosses are lying to us. Despite repeatedly and patronisingly referring to staff as “our people", they clearly think we’re idiots.

We should show them how we feel about the contempt in which they hold people", they clearly think we’re idiots.

VOTE YES IN SOUTH HARROW SIDINGS BALLOT
Bosses continue to insist watching a training video is enough to get Picc line drivers up to speed with the expansion and change to South Harrow sidings.
Drivers have stuck two fingers up to this. RMT is balloting its members for action over the issue.

Tubeworker is arguing for a yes vote for strikes and action short. No one should consider driving in the area until they able to go there on a train, driving with an instructor. No shortcuts on safety!

LEAKS AND FAULTS
Picc line drivers are used to ageing trains and infrastructure, but recently the state of Bollo House is becoming more noticeable.
Leaks, mice, faulty window seals and poor vending machines are all becoming more of an issue. Management think because there are plans for a new building they can get away with poor facilities.
They can’t, and reps are getting all the faults recorded and dealt with regardless of how soon (or not) that a new depot is built.

TSSA MERGER: VOTE NO!
As Tubeworker goes to print, it’s the last few days for TSSA members to vote on whether to merge with a US boilermakers' union.
The merger makes no industrial or geographical sense. If TSSA is seeking a merger, its members should look across the mess room table rather than across the Atlantic Ocean. Vote no!

Principled TSSA reps should also challenge their union over its disgraceful scab-herding bulletin about the RMT strikes.

LEARN FROM THE CHURCHILL CLEANERS
Hundreds of cleaners employed by contractor Churchill on multiple train companies across the south east struck on 23 February.
They’re demanding £15/hour and full sick pay. Both their ballot and strike were impressively well organised with an assertive, spirit amongst workers.

Some RMT cleaners' reps from LU attended their strike rally in Parliament Square. We should discuss how we can support them, but we should also learn from them. They should provide inspiration to us - not only to LU cleaners, but to all grades of LU workers.

SOLIDARITY WITH UKRAINE: PUTIN OUT!
Russia’s invasion of Ukraine is an act of grubby imperialist warmongering.
Vladimir Putin has made it clear he sees Ukraine an an illegitimate entity that has no right to exist as an independent nation. He wants to reincorporate the territory into a “Greater Russia", effectively a modern empire, against the wishes of the majority of Ukraine's people. He is now using Russia’s military might to seek to further that aim.

Inter-imperialist rivalry between Putin and NATO member states is part of the general picture here, but Putin is not merely “reacting” to NATO. He is carrying out his own project, one that is thoroughly reactionary.
Trade unions are at their best when they stand up for consistent internationalism. In the current context, that means siding unequivocally with the people of Ukraine, and with brave anti-war dissidents in Russia facing down Putin’s authoritarian state.

Check out the Ukraine Solidarity Campaign, which seeks to support independent unions and left-wing movements in Ukraine: ukrainesolidaritycampaign.org