



tubeworker

a regular bulletin by tubeworkers for tubeworkers <><><> 27 august 2003

PAY, HOURS AND PRIVS: ENOUGH IS ENOUGH

<> decent pay, privs and workplace equality <> no giving up our right to strike <>

ENOUGH IS ENOUGH. How long are Tube workers supposed to wait for a decent pay rise and equality at work?! We have been kept waiting for far too long as it is – **our patience has run out and we are ready for a fight.**

We can no longer accept the inequalities in working hours, privs and pensions. Some of us work a 35-hour week (drivers), some 37½ (stations), some still 40 hours (track workers). Some of us (pre-1996) get priv passes for the mainline; everyone who has joined up in the last seven years does not. Some of us (pre-1989) have pensions guaranteed to rise with inflation; the rest of us have a pension capped to rise no more than 5% whatever the rise in the cost of living.

This is not just a two-tier workforce – it is multi-tiered! There is a fundamental principle at stake: **just because you are younger, or newer, you should not have fewer rights.**

LUL knows that the more divided we are, the easier we are to rule. **They believe in inequality: we believe in solidarity.**

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ON THE ISSUE OF PAY, we must not be ashamed to say that we deserve a decent rise. Management bulletins and the Evening Standard suggest that we are all rolling in it. Odd how they compare our wages to notoriously low-paid jobs such as nurses or shop workers, never to judges, or MPs, or company directors (or LUL managers or Standard journalists!).

Low pay is not confined to sweatshops and street sweepers. **Low pay exists on the Tube too.** Many of us find it hard to afford our bills and the high cost of living in London. And just because some grades live above the poverty line, it does not mean we should be grateful for our lot and not ask for more. We are not Oliver Twist!

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THE ACAS RESULT shows it was worth putting up a fight about pay last year. Although 0.75% is not a fortune, **it is better than the big fat zero we would**

have got if we had rolled over and allowed LUL to impose its paltry 3% without a murmur. That's what TSSA (Too Scared for Strike Action) would have had us do. So it's a good job that they are a fringe organisation and that RMT and ASLEF were made of sterner stuff.

But the pay rise falls well short, and mediation did nothing about hours, privs or pensions. As *Tubeworker* said at the time, **the unions put too much stress on the call for mediation.** Frank Burchill was hailed as the mediator who could grant our wishes, even though he was stitching up the firefighters at the time.

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THE MAYOR AND THE MANAGEMENT have said that after this year, they want a 3- or 4-year pay settlement and no-strike deal. But if they are not forthcoming over privs and pensions this year, **why should we play ball with their longer-term plans?**

A multi-year deal would have to be damn good to warrant our support. If our unions are to give up our chance to negotiate improvements in our pay and conditions each and every year, then management will have to make it really worth our while.

But a no-strike deal? No way! Even if we settled on pay, other issues could come

up which might need us to take action – safety, victimisation, job cuts, bullying ...

No union worth the name would even consider handing over the most powerful weapon in its armoury. No-strike 'unions' like TSSA might kid themselves that their seat at the negotiating table and a few stiffly-worded letters make any difference at all. But the rest of us know that **the ability to withdraw our labour is the only genuine power we have.**

Please Sir,
can I have
some more?
Oh sod it -
give me
more or I'm
going on
strike!



Tubeworker is produced by tubeworkers in the Alliance for Workers' Liberty, an organisation fighting in the unions, the Socialist Alliance and the Labour Party for a socialist alternative to both capitalism and Stalinism, based on common ownership and democracy.

We want one democratic, fighting union for all railworkers. We reject artificial divisions between workers of different grades. We oppose racism, sexism, homophobia and all prejudice that divides us. Only our bosses benefit from a divided workforce.

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Got a story for *Tubeworker*? We welcome and will publish reports and comments from all Tube workers. Also get in touch if you want to come to our regular readers' meetings, or to get involved in action about any of the issues we've covered.

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ASLEF: WHAT WENT WRONG?

An ASLEF member comments.

When Rix won last time it was as big a surprise as him losing this time was.

Last time Rix organised. This time he didn't and the right wing did, for example using a website. There were other factors too. Rix wanted to end rest day working on the mainline, which many members resented.

There was a backlash against union support for causes like Cuban solidarity and opposition to war in Iraq. Because ASLEF is a craft union, they tend to think the union should look after drivers, not be interested in politics. They can't see that you can do both. In RMT, where members do different jobs for different companies, politics can be a common ground that unites everyone.

ASLEF was right to expel the BNP member, but it was not really explained to the membership. When people don't understand why something was done, they easily get wound up against it.

Also Rix was seen as a bit of a dictator. And there was some discontent about the high subscription fees.

The turnout was less than 50%, the vote 4,475 to 3,299. Rix had 80+ branches backing him to Brady's 11, but some of these were a matter of a small, hastily-called meeting.

There are strong rumours that Brady is, shall we say, unenthusiastic about equality. Lew Adams said he thought the membership would be pleased with this vote. If Lew Adams has given Brady the thumbs up, he must be bad.

This result is bad news for the future relationship between RMT and ASLEF. During Rix's term in office, two unions whose members had previously crossed each other's picket lines began to work together and organise basic solidarity. This was a big step forward, and it is a tragedy that it may now step back.

The sooner we are all united in one all-grades union, the better.

HEAVY WEATHER

Hot weather can make some people lose all semblance of common sense.

NCC declares a combine-wide 'hot weather uniform standard', as if the conditions in Epping ticket hall are the same as on the platforms at Heathrow. How about some local discretion?

Three cheers to those union reps who won agreements taking account of their location; to everyone who took their tie off; to Seven Sisters drivers who won the right to wear shorts; and to King's Cross SAMFs who shut the ticket office when

the air conditioning did not work.

Bakerloo managers stood down a driver who kept a train out of passenger service because it had no ventilation. A week later, they backed down, having stressed out the driver and short-staffed the line.

Tubeworker looks forward to winter. Will LUL have us driving in cabs with no heat, standing in the freezing cold for hours, and sliding about on icy platforms? Probably: unless we do something about it.

LONG ARM OF THE LAW

Management on Plaistow group have responded to the rising tide of violence with revenue exercises. At Dagenham Heathway, these seem to be a success at keeping bad behaviour at bay. But we need to watch the long-term effect. What will happen when the police have gone? Is the problem being displaced?

The police are also using these exercises to stop and search. Are we encouraging breaches of human rights? We must protect staff from violence, but we must be careful how we do it. The issue here is not revenue, but safety.

DOUG'S LONG GOODBYE

Farewell to Doug's diatribes, as Brother Woulds gets the boot as TSSA branch chair. Members wised up to the fact that Doug's seaside postcards were just a tad embarrassing. If people wanted to read an odd stream of personal meanderings, they would nick someone's diary rather than look in a union newsletter.

The next step is for TSSA members to kick out the rest of their 'leaders' who enjoy strike-breaking and having their tummies tickled by management. Or, better still, leave TSSA and join a proper union.

PASS THE BUCK

Since TfL took over staff passes, they routinely refuse to accept reports of theft, even with a crime number, insisting that unless you keep it in a bomb-proof safe surrounded by barbed wire and guarded by rottweilers, it was your fault it was stolen.

But hang on. Now we have Oyster cards, and lost or stolen pass can be cancelled straight away, there is no need to punish anyone, is there?

SHORT-CHANGING STAFF

Some stations are still trying to get SAs to give change to customers. *Tubeworker* strongly recommends that you refuse.

It's not safe: you are a target for robbery. And if the POMs are running out of change, there should be an extra SAMF duty to keep the POMs floated. By getting SAs to give change, management are

saving money by getting you to do SAMF work on the cheap. They are short-changing both SAs and SAMFs.

WAR PATH

The recently-appointed GSM on the Leyton group appears to have got off on the wrong foot with the staff. Some people even go so far as to say that he is a bit heavy-handed and not too pleasant to work for. (*Tubeworker*, of course, could not possibly comment.)

Staff have been getting signatures on a petition of 'no confidence' and have held an emergency RMT meeting. Sounds like they are on the warpath.

SECRET AGENTS

LUL produces so much paper that you could easily miss some potentially nasty bits. Like their plans to use agency staff for queue-busting at Ticket Offices.

Work that is currently done by SAs (and could be done even better with more SAs) would be done by people who do not work for LUL, who can be hired and fired at will, and could be used to break strikes.

Management seem to be looking for any opportunity to introduce agency staff on the operational side. Once they have done it in one place, they will try to spread it. We have to draw a firm line. No casualisation: LUL jobs, not agency staff!

NEW YEAR'S EVE

LUL and the unions are still locked in talks about New Year's Eve. The Mayor wants an all-night service, but, judging by the six useless 'offers' they've made so far, LUL seem to think we should do this, and give up the biggest party night of the year, for a token little bonus.

We need to stick together on this, to make sure that everyone who has to work – including staff who don't work overnight but start early on New Year's Day – get proper compensation. LUL has to understand that if it wants special working, it has to pay for it.

LEAVE IT OUT

When the 37½-hour week came in for station staff, with six banked rest days, Annual Leave was re-arranged so summer leave was in a three-week block. But some staff have ended up with no leave during the real 'summer' at all – nothing between May and September. Many parents have had to work throughout school holidays.

Back to the negotiating table, we think. It is high time that Tube workers had more say over when we take our leave. There are not many industries in which the workers let management tell them when they can go on holiday.

Tube workers need a 4-day 32-hour week NOW!