

tubeworker

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DEFEND MIGRANT WORKERS

ISS cleaning company is checking cleaners' National Insurance numbers, aiming to root out those working without the correct papers. Cleaners who have worked and paid taxes for up to ten years could face instant dismissal.

ISS did not bother about correct paperwork when it employed people on rock-bottom wages. It has benefited for years from knowingly employing people with immigration problems who would be less willing to speak out against horrendous pay and treatment.

But RMT has unionised cleaners and will soon strike for £7.20 per hour. Cleaners are no longer afraid to speak out, so ISS is turning on them, using a strategy handed to them by a viciously anti-migrant government. Perhaps they feel they can replace the current cleaners with legal migrants from eastern Europe who may be easier to exploit.

The government introduced a new law last month to increase the burden on employers to take on 'native' workers as a priority – part of a raft of anti-migrant measures introduced by this government to pander to racism and avoid confronting their own failures.

The problem of abuses to workers is not because we need to crack down harder on illegal working, but because there is 'illegal' working at all!

No worker should be illegal. Every worker should have the right to earn a living wherever they are willing to work. Workers are only illegal because immigration law makes them illegal. To fight fully for their rights, workers need to be able to fight openly. Punishing employers for illegal employment will only push workers out of their current jobs into more abusive employment.

RMT cleaners are trying to resist the national insurance number checks. A trade union has to defend peoples' jobs and it would feel like a failure if we let employers – with government law on their side – get away with this.

www.workersliberty.org/tubecleaners

Tubeworker's weblog
 - daily updates! -
www.workersliberty.org/twblog

MAYOR ELECTION: WHO SPEAKS FOR US?

Ken or Boris for Mayor? We face a grim choice on May 1st.

Despite the cuddly image he cultivates, the prospect of Tory Boris Johnson's victory is terrifying. This man has no experience of working-class London life. Educated at Eton then Oxford, he is the product of a public school system that boosts the elite and fails the majority. When he says he's 'spent his whole working life in London', he means he's spent all his days in the corridors of Westminster, as MP for boating constituency Henley-on-Thames, one of the poshest places on the planet.



VS.



means of working-class people.

Ken is not a humble public servant putting a check on the abuses of the profit system. His salary is £137,579. The GLA has 'embassies' in Brussels, Beijing and Shanghai. Ken has styled himself as some kind of head of state, with London as his prosperous Kingdom. His state-like bureaucracy oversees and promotes capitalism in London.

We remember him urging us to cross picket lines, his ticket office closure plan and Metronet's battle for public ownership. And if he opposes PPP, why has he pursued the same agenda by privatising the East London Line?!

Democracy should be about more than choosing between people who harm our interests! *Tubeworker* and other socialists proposed that RMT stood candidates (with others) for the GLA, but RMT's leaders stalled this plan. It would have given working-class people a chance to vote positively for someone who represents us.

Oh, and don't delude yourself that voting LibDem is in your interests. Their policy is to privatise the whole Tube!

ASLEF and TSSA are affiliated to Labour, but we have seen little campaigning from them for Labour's candidate. RMT is not affiliated to Labour and seems to have lost political direction. It is campaigning against the BNP getting seats on the GLA. But the best way to beat the anti-working class, racist BNP is to provide an alternative that addresses the real concerns of working-class voters.

Tubeworker recommends voting for the Left List's Lindsey German no.1 for Mayor, and Livingstone no.2 – not because of his record, but because the Labour Party still has links with the trade unions that give some form of representation for working-class people – and because if Ken is a bad dream, then Boris is a nightmare.

www.workersliberty.org/tubeunionspolitics

In this city with huge divisions between rich and poor, his policies favour only the rich. And having described black people as 'picanninies' with 'watermelon smiles', he is hardly the best champion of an ethnically-diverse city. He has a vision of returning to an age of crimelessness, based on nostalgia for his privileged upbringing. But how? By cracking down on working-class youth while offering no solutions to social problems he cannot understand. He has pledged to remove under 18s' right to free travel to punish bad behaviour; his only answer to complex issues behind gun and knife crime is to increase searching at stations.

His pledge of a no-strike deal on the Tube marks him out as our enemy. He wants to kill the principle that workers have the right to stand up for what is ours, whether that's pay or safe conditions. It is a political mission to make sure that big business and people of his social class can rule without any other force to contend with.

Ken too has run London in the interests of the rich. He has courted international investment, making £370k worth of trips abroad. Ken should know from his days as a socialist that having a few wealthy investors around doesn't mean that everyone in the city becomes wealthy! Not when the City's super-rich push the average house price up to over £400k, well above the

DANGLING THE CARROT

When LUL released the Customer Satisfaction Survey result, we missed the target of 78, hitting an so-near-but-so-far score of 77. But the managing director is so 'impressed and proud of our efforts' that we will get the (taxable) £250 bonus anyway.

Great, eh? But we did not get this bonus for the first 2 years of the 3-year deal. There are factors in the bonus beyond our control, eg. infracos constantly failing to deliver.

With the next pay talks on the horizon, management are trying to manipulate us by awarding the bonus so they can add another target-related bonus in the next pay deal.

If LUL is so proud of our work, then it will have no problem rewarding us with annual pay deals in future, not tying us down with another multi-year deal!

www.workersliberty.org/pay

INFRACOS BEWARE

RMT will strike on Metronet for 48 hours from Monday 28 April, after a whopping 81.5% voted for strikes.

Talks have been useless, Metronet denying that it has the power to meet our demands! We are sick of platitudes about 'intentions' to possibly, maybe give us free travel, a decent pension and not to be sold like slaves to another company. We want the passes in our pockets.

LUL trade unionists are supporting the strike and promising to refuse to work if they are under imminent danger. Sadly, RMT's ballot of its TubeLines members about back pay closes on 23 April – too late for synchronised action.

Reports suggest that TfL have put their own people into Metronet to stir up trouble with the union. "If the bosses want a war to crush the RMT, they can have one", said one worker.

Workers have also looked at unofficial overtime bans and wildcat action. A union activist said, "Last September was fantastic, but this one will be better. They won't run a train for a week."

Strange that Metronet cannot sort out passes and pensions for workers yet can spend millions on accountants for the continuing administration. Or TubeLines can make massive profits yet not sort out pay issues from two years ago.

www.workersliberty.org/metronet

Tubeworker is produced by tubeworkers in the Alliance for Workers' Liberty, an organisation fighting as part of the labour movement 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.

TARGETING TICKET OFFICES

On Greenford group, and maybe elsewhere – management have altered the targets for revenue activity. A new target, the Ticket Selling Index, cuts the credit for ticket sales (even Oyster!), and gives big Brownie points for telling customers how to get tickets elsewhere. Is company policy to drive our customers away and do ourselves out of a job?!

LUL claims to have shelved its ticket office closures, but this is just more proof that they intend to bring them back.

www.workersliberty.org/ticketoffices

MIND THE AUTOMATIC DOORS

The new Victoria line 09 stock has fully automated doors. The PTI is already the most dangerous place on the Tube: does LUL want to make it even more so? This will lead to more incidents with passengers and doors, maybe serious injuries or deaths.

Judging the right moment to close and open doors used to be a guard's role, then was dumped on drivers. Then LUL had to bring in SATS. Now there is an automated system that does it better? We doubt it.

This could threaten both station staff's and drivers' jobs. The Vic has long been in management's sights of for 'NoPO' (No-Person-Operation), and now they are taking a step forward. Stand by to fight back.

www.workersliberty.org/victoria

LOOKING OUTSIDE

LUL said it would try to fill all posts with internal applicants. But it is recruiting duty managers external.

Tubeworker doesn't recommend anyone cross over to the dark side and become a manager. But at least our current crop of duty managers have done a bit of time working on the operational railway before taking up the post. Now, we will be ordered around and bullied by people who don't even know work we do.

It's enough to make you suspect that LUL views 'management' as a bossing-around role rather than a railway role.

www.workersliberty.org/promotion

LADIES AND GENTS

Female staff at Euston have been kicked out of their toilets to make way for the men, while the male toilets get refurbished. Women now have to use the ticket office toilet while the gents use the ladies!

Asked why the women had to bear the inconvenience of the men's toilet refurb, a DSM told us, 'Because more men than women work here'. In fact, on the day the new arrangements came in, women far outnumbered men on duty. But in any case,

that sounds suspiciously like discrimination.

Women staff wrote a memo to the DSM. He accepted that, for dignity and privacy, we are entitled to a female-only toilet. Trouble is, he has done this by barring men from the ticket office loo. Simple solution: let the female staff use the female toilets!

www.workersliberty.org/LTequalities

DON'T SAY A WORD

Some managers reckon they do not have to allow reps to speak at LDIs. Isn't the whole point of a union rep to argue the member's case? No – according to the GSMs pioneering this, the rep may only utter a few words at the end, and the manager doesn't need to take any notice.

LUL used to issue local warnings with no reps involved at all, til an RMT legal case forced them to allow representation. Are they now trying to claw back a right that workers have won from them?

www.workersliberty.org/sickssystem

AFTER THE DISPUTE: WHAT NEXT?

Several issues from our recent dispute are now with 'working parties' between unions and management ie. kicked into the long grass. And LUL has set up another forum to talk about their plans for even nastier attendance and discipline policies.

Rather than sit back and wait for the outcome – probably further attacks – we need to ensure that we are combing through the long grass, then mowing it down!

Union reps need to go to the talks with a mandate, and report regularly to members. We need negotiations to be backed up with campaigning, alerting staff and the public of the dangers of cutting night-time station supervision, closing ticket offices, messing up the internal promotion system, cracking down on discipline and other issues.

The unions need to learn from mistakes made during the dispute. Let's start by getting this right.

www.workersliberty.org/casualise

DEAR TUBEWORKER,

I read the report in your last issue where detrainment staff explained why they were unhappy with management's offer to 'resolve' their dispute. Shouldn't it be up to these workers themselves to decide whether management's offer is acceptable? Surely the union should not accept it if the workers don't agree.

As a principle, decisions about strikes should be made by the strikers themselves. But especially in this case - seven days of strike action earns you the right to decide when your dispute is over.

Yours, Liza Radley

Want to get every issue of Tubeworker (published at least every three weeks)?

Send us a fiver (cheques payable to WL Bulletins) and your address!

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

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