

tubeworker

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BRING ON THE NEW YEAR!

2009 will be a big year for London Underground workers. We could take huge steps forward if we successfully fight the battles ahead.

The big thing this year will be the battle over pay in the five companies included in RMT's pay claim: LUL, TfL, Alstom, Metronet and EDF Powerlink. Management are not negotiating properly so far and are talking of a five-year deal. We need to be prepared to fight to the bitter end over pay this year, as management will refuse our pay rise and try to silence us until after 2012. By building unity now across companies and grades, importantly between drivers and station staff, we will be ready to take on management sooner rather than later, with a strategy confident of winning. A good campaign and a victory will give us confidence to see off management's dodgy plans in the run-up to 2012.

Other battles include threats of redundancies on TfL and TubeLines, the uncertainties of the Metronet transfer to LUL and the living wage to win for all cleaners.

We face these challenges in a climate of deepening recession. But if the unions fight effectively, it will debunk the management myth that wage and job cuts are inevitable in times like these.

There is no such thing as an inevitable job cut if we are prepared to fight it. And we have every reason to fight: the same management that make our lives hell on a daily basis do not suddenly become our friends in a recession and we do not have to sacrifice our jobs to save theirs.

Steve Hedley, elected to the position of Regional Organiser for RMT's London Transport Region, will take office in January. As the Regional Organiser looks after negotiations and industrial strategy in all companies across the Underground, we will all feel the benefit of his election. It will give us a leadership on fights like pay that will take a stand and not settle short of our interests. The fact that the majority of voting RMT members opted for Steve shows that they want a democratic, fighting union that unites all grades.

Getting the right people elected to union posts is only part of the story, as we also need strong rank-and-file organisation, and we need the right policies and the confidence to fight for them. But with Steve's election, we have a new impetus to build up the union's organisation, encouraging all members to get involved, so RMT's forces are strong on the ground. We can build a strategy for this year and up to 2012, so we can start taking a direction, rather than bouncing around from one dispute to the next.

A determined campaign against management based on the most democratic methods of organising should focus people's minds away from apolitical in-fighting amongst some union activists that has hindered us recently. **Bring on the New Year!**

STOP ISRAEL'S BOMBING OF GAZA

Israeli peace group Gush Shalom, which has held protests in Israel against the bombing of Gaza, says:

Bloodshed and suffering on both sides of the border could have been avoided.

It is possible to return immediately to the ceasefire, make it stronger and firmer.



The war in Gaza, the bloodshed, killing, destruction and suffering on both sides of the border are the vicious folly of a bankrupt government. A government which let itself be dragged by adventurous officers and cheap nationalist demagoguery, dragged into a destructive and unnecessary war which will bring no solution to any problem – neither to the communities of southern Israel under the rain of missiles nor to the terrible poverty and suffering of besieged Gaza.

On the day after the war the same problems will remain; with the addition of many bereaved families, wounded people crippled for life, and piles of rubble and destruction.

The escalation towards war could and should have been avoided. It was the State of Israel which broke the truce, in the 'ticking tunnel' raid on the night of the US elections two months ago. Since then the army went on stoking the fires of escalation with calculated raids and killings, whenever the shooting of missiles on Israel decreased.

The cycle of bloodshed could and should be broken. The ceasefire can be restored immediately, and on firmer foundations. It is the right of Israel to demand a complete end to shooting on its territory and citizens – but it must stop all attacks from its side, and completely the siege and starvation of Gaza's million and half inhabitants, and stop interfering with the Palestinians' right to choose their own leaders.

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DEFEND BRENDAN JUDGE!

Poster company CBS Outdoor has sacked RMT rep Brendan Judge. Brendan was key to organising last summer's successful strike and management have been victimising him ever since. Management put him on a new shift that made life really difficult for him, then when he put in a grievance, they trumped up charges against him.

This is a clear case of victimisation of an effective trade union rep. Work needs to start now on organising a strike to get Brendan's job back. Every union member should support this campaign as union organisation in CBSO is an inspiration to us all. If CBSO get away with picking it apart in this way, it is an attack on the union as a whole.

www.workersliberty.org/cbs-outdoor

A VOICE FOR WORKERS?

RMT is hosting a conference on the crisis in working-class political representation on Saturday 10 January. Given the virtual absence of a workers' voice in politics, and the pro-employer consensus amongst the main political parties, this is a very welcome initiative.

But the publicity for the event has come late in the day, and there seems little clear idea from RMT's leadership as to what might come out of it.

We could just turn up, find that the attendees are the 'usual suspects' who go to such events, then listen to speeches about what a crap state politics is in, then go home having got it off our chests. But that would be a waste.

Instead, there ought to be constructive and democratic discussion about the issues, and there should be a framework for making sure that discussions - and action - continue beyond a half-day conference.

www.workersliberty.org/tubeunionspolitics

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.

LUL's Department of Daft Ideas

COLLECTING CASH ON THE GATELINE

LUL wants CSAs to collect fares from passengers who arrive without a ticket, by getting them to pay their money onto an Oyster card via a POM. LUL seem to be overlooking the potential for assault, or that the ticketless traveller may not co-operate with their scheme.

LUL says that if people are willing to hand over dosh for their journey, then we should accept it. Quite right. So make sure that there is an open ticket office! Ah, but why pay multi-functional staff when you can get CSAs to do the job for less money?!

This daft idea is due to 'trial' at Charing Cross early next year, but none of the staff are going to touch it with the proverbial bargepole.

TOP-UP TROUBLE

LUL's Department of Daft Ideas wants to impose a £5 minimum on customers topping up their Oysters at the window. So, after the customer has queued to put £3 on their card, the SAMF has to explain that they can not do that; they have to either put a fiver on their Oyster or top it up on the POM instead. It's highly unlikely that this person will happily accept the situation, thank you for your time and be on their merry way. More likely, either the SAMF or the CSA in the ticket hall will get the brunt of their justified annoyance.

This is yet another attempt by LUL to drive its own customers away from its ticket offices. No doubt LUL will come back and say "There are fewer transactions at the ticket office windows, so we are going to close them." So, not just a daft idea, but a dangerous one too.

www.workersliberty.org/fares

TROUBLE AT MARYLEBONE

Dodgy practices are happening on Marylebone group: staff doing more than one double shift in a 28-day period; working several 12-hour shifts in a row with minimum rest; working split night turns; overtime above the 30% maximum. All with management's OK. And when a system called the 'L-Drive' looked like it was going to sort things out, management withdrew it!

Similar practices were rampant at Green Park until recently. The unions exposed and put a stop to this, and demanded an audit so that it wouldn't happen again. Management refused, making it almost certain that it would happen again. And now it has.

www.workersliberty.org/bakerloo

NO STAFF FOR CHRISTMAS

On the Saturday that Oxford Street was pedestrianised for Christmas shoppers (one of the busiest days of the year) there were only two CSAs working at Tottenham Court Road until 5pm. The station is staffed to the bare bones at weekends: the 'business needs' are more bothered about getting commuters to the city Monday-Friday and don't show that a station like TCR is as busy at weekends.

With staffing levels like this, sickness becomes a crisis. And the SRT were nowhere to be seen. Not that they should be substituting for regular staff, but you'd think that pedestrianising Oxford Street would be a 'special requirement'.

www.workersliberty.org/northern

DON'T GET SICK AT XMAS!

Some managers sent out helpful advice for the festive period ... Live healthily! Don't eat or drink too much! Don't enjoy yourself too much, even when you're not here! Are they doing this for our well-being? No: they are panicking about sickness levels.

Some managers demanded medical certs from staff even for single days of absence over Christmas. This is outside LUL's policy, which usually allows a week to self-certificate, and where certificates can only be requested for bank holidays from staff with a pattern of sickness on those days.

www.workersliberty.org/sickssystem

KX7 - WASTING TIME?

LUL are dragging the King's Cross 7 (SAMFs who walked out of the ticket office for 40 minutes when the SRT was used to cover a rostered duty) through a disciplinary process which is taking many hours of company time. They are being 'tried' individually, but all are getting a one-year warning. When one clearly had no case to answer, the DSM said that all seven were collectively guilty, so gave her the warning anyway!

To LUL, this is about more than 40 minutes' window closures: it is about telling us all that insubordination will not be tolerated, that we need to know our place, that we shouldn't have opinions.

www.workersliberty.org/handc

NEW YEAR: NO BOOZE

New Year's Eve looms, the first where passengers are banned from boozing. LUL expects us to be the party poopers, demanding our 'customers' dispose of their bevvies before entering the station. No doubt, Boris Johnson will not be on the gateline taking the grief. On the day the ban came in, he was on a yacht off Turkey.

We recall LUL's lack of preparation for that night, and see little evidence they are better prepared for Thursday. *Tubeworker's* advice is ... Don't put yourself in danger of a thump by trying to separate a reveller from his or her tipple; and remember your right to refuse work on safety grounds.

www.workersliberty.org/boozeban