



tubeworker

www.workersliberty.org/tubeworker <> tubeworker@btopenworld.com

'YES' VOTE: IT'S TIME TO FIGHT

The RMT and TSSA ballot results - each getting a three-quarters Yes vote for strikes - open up the prospect of a strike that could close LU stations across the capital.

It's a solid vote for action. Given the bureaucratic cock-ups and delays to the ballots, given that other grades were told that this dispute is only about station staff and not about them (not true), and given that with the ConDems' savage cuts, we are all feeling under the cosh, this is a good result.

Predictably, LU says it is not. The usual stuff: Only 30% voted for strike, etc. That's more than voted for the government!

Management have a bare-faced cheek preaching democracy! Their plans have been cooked up by managers in closed committees. They have not let elected union reps negotiate on the job cuts. The new Business Needs Schematics have been drawn up without consultation with unions or staff, although we know better than anyone how many staff our stations need.

They have cut the workforce out of decisions that affect our future employment and the service we deliver for the public. *Does that sound democratic to you?*

When they say the strike is undemocratic with 'only' 4,000 votes in favour, remind them that *no-one* voted for these job cuts. Striking, taking action to influence decisions about our own future, is the most democratic thing we can do.

Inter-union division normally hampers the effectiveness of strikes, so this time, with both unions voting for action, all station staff will hopefully be able to stand together. It is heartening that there is a real chance that all station staff will be involved in the fight.

We need to make sure the current unity is transferred into unity in action. Both unions need to be ready to strike and fight together. We need to beware of management attempts to play the unions off against each other. Most of all, we need TSSA and RMT members on the ground to work together. Whatever the leaderships do, unity on the ground will deliver the results.

Some RMT members fear TSSA will jump ship. We need to keep going together as far as possible, and if TSSA jumps, continue anyway, urging their better members to stay on board.

Maybe station staff feel more animated by the issues at present than drivers, engineers or signals. But if station staff transfer

that feeling into action, then for sure the other grades will follow. Drivers poisoned by propaganda that station staff never fight for themselves and expect drivers to do it for them will see a very solid dispute from station staff.

We can turn this result into serious, effective action. When the unions name the first dates, they should also name the second (at least).

Any doubts about striking are better tackled by confidence from our leaders than procrastination. Members are a bit bruised from last year, but this doesn't mean they are reluctant to strike; they are wary of starting a fight and not seeing it through.

This may be a long fight. But let's not have our own unions' decisions make it longer than it needs to be. We need to go in strong, keep morale high with effective action short of strike, and keep going until we win. We can't afford another phoney war. Dragging out a dispute unnecessarily will not help boost the mood; it will only weaken it further, as we saw last year.

We need rank-and-file members steering this dispute. Ominously, TSSA's press release on the day of its ballot result said that General Secretaries Bob Crow and Gerry Doherty would be meeting up a week later to decide on action. It is dispiriting enough when the unions' national executives take decisions over the heads of the rank and file. Are we now seeing General Secretaries taking decisions over the heads of the national executives?! We need to ensure that things are done more democratically than this.

Let's start planning a strategy to win. How to maximise effectiveness and coordinate between ourselves. Let's not just plan for the first set of days but the ones after that. Set up local hardship funds, press our unions to make hardship payments. If this is to be a long fight, we need to be prepared in every way.

After a year of being worked into the ground, staff are pig sick and ready for a fight. This affects the whole combine and we can win if we fight effectively.

RUNAWAY TRAIN

On Friday 13th, at 0640 at Finchley, an engineering train being towed north on the Northern Line's southbound road became de-coupled and travelled four miles, only stopping when the gradient of the track became uphill at Warren Street.

A train in passenger service had to be told to drive and keep driving, without stopping at stations, until it got to Kennington, to save it from being hit. The runaway train came just 650 yards (40 seconds) away from colliding with a train in passenger service. Only the actions of service control staff prevented a catastrophe.

Thanks once again to Tube Lines. They are really earning TfL's £300m buy-out. Will we see a proper enquiry or another whitewash?

London Underground can think again about getting rid of all those 'superfluous' station staff. Who would have evacuated the platforms with their proposed early-turn staffing levels? The service was a nightmare throughout the day; staff needed to be there.

ASLEF's Steve Grant rightly told the Evening Standard that, 'If ever there was a case against the proposals to cut hundreds of jobs on the Tube then this is it.' Which begs the question: when will ASLEF join RMT and TSSA in taking industrial action against those job cuts?

Tubeworker is produced by Tube workers and published by 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.

A Chance to Change our Union

How many times have you said that RMT should do things better and differently?

In the coming election for London Transport Region's Executive member, you will get a chance to vote for someone with an imaginative vision for improving our union. We can make it more democratic for ordinary members. We can be more effective in how we fight disputes. We can do more to win public support. We can do more to bring all grades in RMT together.

Janine Booth is standing to be our Executive member.

For years Janine has championed more democratic say for the ordinary reps and members. Janine's manifesto says, 'I will only propose to the Executive that a strike is put on, or called off, or a new policy agreed with an employer, following discussion and agreement by reps, branches and members.'

Janine believes in putting decision-making power in our hands, not taking decisions above our heads. If she wins, she sees her role as representing our views to the leadership and carrying our wishes into the union's boardroom.

We never want a re-run of last year's pay dispute: dragged out til Xmas then settled over our heads the day after a 'yes' vote to strike. This humiliating experience left a lot of good reps and activists feeling disempowered and confused.

Janine has consistently argued that we need to fight disputes more effectively and strategically. This is urgent when we face employers and a government determined to milk the economic crisis to take away our hard-won jobs, conditions and rights. We need to meet this with our full strength. Let's not be afraid to try new tactics: action short of strike is no substitute for striking, but it could add weight to our campaigns.

We need to focus on taking the action that is necessary to win disputes, not token actions, while making all decisions democratically.

Janine has pushed the public 'SOS: Staff Our Stations' campaign, knowing that passengers and staff often have the same interests. Public opinion alone cannot win our battles, but we should do all we can not to let the right-wing press turn us into public enemy number one.

Janine stands for bringing all grades together. Drivers, cleaners, station staff, signals, engineers are all stronger if we act together.

Janine is committed to giving equalities issues greater priority on the union's executive, as a committed anti-racist and campaigner for women's and LGBT rights.

Janine knows that our union cannot fight its campaigns in isolation. We need to reach out to other unions. We need to fight politically as well as industrially.

Tubeworker has been arguing for these things for years, so it is good to see a candidate come forward who shares our views.

If you would like to help with Janine's campaign, please contact Tubeworker.

TORY WALKOUT

Labour and LibDem members tabled a motion to the GLA opposing the Tube job cuts. The Greens also supported the motion, and it was about to be passed. So what did the Tories do? Walked out, leaving the meeting inquisitorial!

Not only does this show up the Tories for the undemocratic creeps that they are, it also gives us reason to believe that we can stop the job cuts - they can't walk out of every meeting! Political campaigning is not an alternative to industrial action, but if we run both together, we may yet force the GLA to vote to scrap the cuts.

www.workersliberty.org/tubeunionspolitics

TIPPING OUT ALONE

Early one morning last month, a driver had to tip out a train alone after it stalled at Croxley. Where were the station staff?

Once again, management had failed to arrange cover for station duties. This time, they had left the night turns at both Croxley and Chorleywood uncovered. A helpful DSM opened the stations then left them unstaffed, depositing the keys at Rickmansworth and texting the early turn Supervisors!

www.workersliberty.org.uk/metropolitan

SMOKE AND MIRRORS

July's fire at Euston saw smoke come out of the escalator and flames visible through the gaps between the steps. The fire alarm did not go off; the smoke detector did not detect the smoke.

The contractor who maintains the smoke alarms said it was 'white smoke', which can't be picked up by the detectors: it was the wrong kind of smoke!

You'd expect a thorough investigation. But LU left it to Tube Lines, who carried out a 'technical investigation' instead of a formal investigation involving union reps. The findings? Everything was within regulations; all the right kit was present. No change needed ... A whitewash.

Anybody would think Tube Lines has a vested interest in minimising safety and not investing in its assets. Oh, it does! Despite TfL's £300m buy-out of Tube Lines, PPP with its profit-motive and lack of accountability, still reigns.

The same Tube Lines plans to cut the number of checks on the dust trays under escalators from twice a week to once. Dirt in the escalator caused this fire, the King's Cross fire ... How many more?

www.workersliberty.org.uk/tubelines

IT'S THE PITS

LU has come up with another daft scheme to save money with scant regard to safety - this time, on the Met line.

At present, if a train wheel develops a pit (dent) wider than 15mm, it is unfit to stay in service.

But management now say it is safe to continue with pits up to 45mm. That's the UN standard for the size of a lemon! This risks the wheel's stability, and causes noise and vibration.

www.workersliberty.org.uk/LTsafety

ENVELOPE AMNESTY

A Northern Line manager has come up with a great cost-saving plan.

It seems that a major contributor to LU's £2.5bn black hole is not the bail-out of the Infracos, but excessive envelope use. Seriously. An e-mail calls for an 'envelope amnesty'. And Peter Hendy (income: a third of a million quid) has told us all not to use first-class post or colour ink without explicit permission.

Tubeworker is all for recycling and an end to waste. But let's have some perspective! Even if we re-used every envelope, LU would still be in the red due to the political decision to let private firms make money out of LU contracts.

LU's only 'solution' to a financial crisis created by profiteers is staff cuts of the lowest-paid.

www.workersliberty.org.uk/northern

THE ROAD TO DAMASCUS

One Monday, St. Paul's station was left with duties uncovered due to LU's deliberate running-down of staffing levels to prepare for job cuts.

Mid-afternoon, there was just one SS, one SAMF and one CSA on duty, trying to do a million things at once.

Staff had to let some people travel without tickets and advise NOC of a reduced ticket-issuing facility at the station. St. Paul had a revelation on the road to Damascus - will LUL now have a revelation that cutting staff to save money might just be a false economy?!

www.workersliberty.org.uk/central

THE NEW LU YES-MEN

The new list of GSMs, TOMs and SCMs has been published. Some have been promoted, some demoted and some moved sideways.

Maybe some managers, had they stayed put, might have resisted change, knowing some cuts are unworkable. So LU has sent them a message that they must play along. Their loyalties will lie with LU.

LU has set up a class battle. It really is bosses against workers.

Subscribe!

Want to get every issue of *Tubeworker* (published at least monthly)? Send us £7 (cheques payable to WL Bulletins) and your address!

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

Contact Workers' Liberty, PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA. 020-7207-3997

Subscribe to *Tubeworker* by e-mail:

tubeworker-subscribe@workersliberty.org

Tubeworker p&p S.Matgamna