



tubeworker

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STOP JOB CUTS: STEP UP THE ACTION!

The next step in our fight against the jobs carnage is our fourth 24-hour strike on 28/29 November. It is essential that we make it as solid as possible.

We have management on the back foot after three strikes, each more solid than the previous. But we haven't tipped them over yet. So let's make this the most effective yet.

We may have an even better chance of shutting down London. After all, many of the managers who the company relied on to run its minimal, PR-motivated strike-day 'service' have now taken voluntary severance and sailed off into the sunset.

We need to talk to all our workmates, organise well-staffed picket lines, and take a solid stand again. And we should invite our supporters and other trade unions to come and swell the pickets into sizeable protests.

But while pretty much all Tube workers are still up for fighting to defend jobs, many are asking where the dispute is going and how we are going to win.

Many had hoped to see progress from talks by now, but there is little definite news. Tube workers are anxious to know what moves forward we are getting for the money we are losing. If union members feel cut out of what is going on, demoralisation will set in.

LU is pressing ahead with the job-cutting plan, having reorganised the management of the stations groups and declared the roster consultation complete despite not responding to the numerous objections in the collective grievances submitted by staff and reps.

It looks like LU plans to ride out our one-day strikes until February, when it finalises the jobs cull. So we can not just tick over with monthly 24-hour strikes, as that will be unlikely to save any significant number of jobs. Then people will conclude that they have lost money for nothing, and not only will these jobs be lost, but it will be harder to persuade workers to fight in future.

So we face a choice: give up or step up. Giving up is not an option. If we let LU take these jobs, we will be slaughtered on stations, with a knock-on effect on other grades. And we would give LU the green light to come for even more - the 800 already in the firing line in the 'support services' review, and

more after that. No grade will be safe. We need to beware of some union leaders preparing for a deal that sells us well short.

Instead, we need to step it up. LU has dealt with the one-day strikes by getting managers to work for up to 24 hours on the strike day then get some kip afterwards. They could not do this for a 48-hour strike. We would shut down London, and management would be under more pressure to back down.

The unions should call a strike for longer than 24 hours, perhaps striking from noon to noon, giving three days' disruption for the price of two. They should provide hardship payments to strikers, acknowledging that the financial hit is tough for some. If some people do not feel up for a longer strike yet, union reps and officials should go out round the workplaces and win the argument for it.

We should also mobilise a big political campaign. We have won the argument for decent staffing levels - every poll shows Londoners oppose the job cuts, and the GLA has voted to condemn them. We need to make this count, cranking up the pressure on Mayor BoJo to pull the job cuts. The unions should call protest demonstrations alongside the industrial action.

Particularly since October's announcement of drastic public spending cuts, a movement is growing to defend jobs and public services. Firefighters and BBC journalists have already been out on strike. Students have taken to the streets to protest against university tuition fees. Campaigners have set up anti-cuts committees in pretty much every London borough and across the country.

We are not alone. If we co-ordinate with others, our different struggles can become a powerful, united movement.

STUDENTS FIGHT FEES

On 10 November, 50,000 students marched in London against the government's plans to cut university teaching budgets by 75% and raise student fees to £9,000 a year, thus closing the doors to higher education for students from working-class families.

This is not an issue just for 'middle-class students', but a fight to defend the rights of workers and our kids to get into higher education and stop it returning to being a privilege of the rich.

Student activist group the National Campaign Against Fees and Cuts says: 'The demonstration featured many banners, placards and chants condemning all cuts, advocating student-worker unity and demanding free education - and not just among organised left activists by any means.'

'The size of the demonstration and its militant tone seem to have taken both the National Union of Students and the police by surprise. There were very big contingents from most universities, but also significant ones from many Further Education colleges and even schools - with school students organising walkouts to join the demo.'

'We participated in the protest at Conservative Party HQ, and we salute the great bulk of the demonstrators there for their militancy, courage and good sense. Comments condemning the action are disgraceful - we should be condemning the Tories, not students for protesting against them.'

The fightback against fees has only just started. The National Campaign Against Fees and Cuts will be gathering in Trafalgar Square at noon as part of a day of student protests on 24 November.

RMT Executive election:

VOTE JANINE BOOTH

■ a voice for rank-and-file workers ■ an effective fight to defend jobs ■ winning strategies that members support ■ strike pay where appropriate ■ more democracy, less bureaucracy ■ more effort to win public support ■ support equality, oppose discrimination

Tubeworker's weblog - daily updates -
www.workersliberty.org/twblog
And we're on Facebook too!
<http://www.facebook.com/tubeworker>

TfL: ASSETS FOR SALE?

TfL's Board meeting at the start of November discussed proposing new legislation to Parliament to give it some new rights. If successful, TfL could get the legal right to flog off land without getting government permission.

The suggested Transport for London Bill 2010 proposes to amend the London devolution settlement, including:

The procedure which applies to the sale of operational land: The current requirement that Secretary of State consent be obtained to sell TfL operational land is proposed to be amended to apply no longer to TfL.

Along with that is another excerpt that makes it look like TfL wants to pursue partnerships with the private sector.

Formation of limited partnerships: TfL is seeking to extend its power to form bodies corporate so as to enable TfL to become a partner of a limited partnership or to promote and assist, or join with other persons in promoting or assisting, a limited partnership in order to carry on any activities which TfL has power to carry on. Limited partnerships are used in the private sector as an investment vehicle.

You might think that after the PPP debacle, TfL wouldn't want to touch public-private partnerships with a bargepole.



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OVERCROWDED

What happened in central London on Saturday 13th November? The Victoria and Jubilee lines were closed, the Lord Mayor's Show, a rugby game at Twickenham, Xmas shopping ... nothing the Tube should not be able to cope with.

But Embankment, Tottenham Court Road, Piccadilly Circus, Oxford Circus and Holborn closed due to overcrowding. The Northern Line was non-stopping at Bank. There had been heavy crowd control all day at King's Cross. Getting round central London was a nightmare.

Central London stations are straining to capacity with current staffing levels. Weekend staffing levels are already too low, and LU plans to cut them further (though they lied to us, saying staff would be moved to weekends).

www.workersliberty.org/staffinglevels

JUSTICE FOR EAMONN?

Good news from the Employment Tribunal, as RMT lands a punch back on London Underground management, winning the interim relief application for Eamonn Lynch.

Bakerloo driver and RMT health & safety rep Eamonn was sacked for a driving error, even though drivers making similar errors had got warnings. The ET judge agreed with RMT that Eamonn was likely to win the full Tribunal alleging unfair dismissal and discrimination on the grounds of trade union activity. LU now has to pay Eamonn his wages until the full Tribunal. Or, the company could swallow its pride, admit defeat, and give Eamonn his job back.

www.workersliberty.org/bakerloo

HANDS OFF OUR PASSES

Tory Gareth Bacon is after our staff passes! He reckons that during these tight financial times, 'the taxpayer' (as if Tube workers were not taxpayers!) should not pay for our travel around London.

Let's leave aside how much 'the taxpayer' pays for Mr Bacon's expenses and the inflated salaries and expenses of his fellow Tories. Let's even leave aside the sums that 'the taxpayer' pays to the pack of TfL/LU senior managers on £100k+ salaries, and the wads of public money siphoned off from London's transport by private companies.

The fact is that we earn our staff passes (and our nominee passes). Why should we pay to travel around the system that we keep running?! Loss of the staff pass would be an attack on our living standards equivalent to a significant cut in pay.

Rather than attack our staff passes, London's politicians should extend this facility to those Tube workers who do not currently have it eg. cleaners and other contractors.

www.workersliberty.org/pay

TICKETS PLEASE!

LU management trundles on with it various ways of tempting business away from ticket office windows. To spot the latest, look at TRU no.45 p.15.

NR Ticket Range Improved on POMs
From November 12, you can now buy anything from discounted railcard to advanced and super saver tickets from POMs.

But what if the POM is out of service, or empty of change, or you'd just rather buy your ticket from a human being?!

www.workersliberty.org/fares

EXTRA-SENSITIVE

The new Victoria line stock has sensitive doors, designed to enhance safety by preventing the train from moving if anything is trapped in the doors.

But they are so sensitive that pressure on the doors causes the train to remain stationary for several minutes - and in the sardine-tin conditions in which passengers pack into the trains particularly during the peak, that is happening quite frequently.

Management's best idea of a 'solution' so far is that drivers should hold down the button that overrides the sensitive door kit as they pull out of stations. Excuse us, but doesn't that override the whole idea?! And doesn't it leave passengers vulnerable to being trapped in doors and dragged along the platform - and drivers vulnerable to getting the blame?!

Perhaps the real solution is to have station staff on the platform!

www.workersliberty.org/victoria

MORE STAFF PLEASE

When the Vic Line mucks up due to faulty doors, we need more than station staff on the platform. The faults usually happen in the peaks, as people trying to board rammed trains are strain at the doors as they are closing, and even a 2-minute delay means dangerous overcrowding on the platforms.

We need staff throughout the station to implement crowd control: from the entrance to the station, to the entry gates, the tops of escalators, etc. LU needs to increase staffing levels, in contrast to the savage cull they are proposing.

www.workersliberty.org/stop-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.