



tubeworker

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Strikes suspended as management backs down: keep up the pressure!

RMT and TSSA have suspended this weeks strike after management agreed some concessions.

The *Daily Mail*'s website headlined, "48-hour Tube strike is called off as London Underground caves to militants and agrees not to close all ticket offices."

The agreement commits management to putting the implementation of Fit For The Future — Stations on hold, including HR1 and Section 188 notices that carried the threat of redundancies. Those concessions are real and positive. However, there are no definite, specific commitments to back down on the proposals — so what we do next is crucial.

LUL have committed to a station-by-station review of ticket office closures, with the explicit proviso that this may result in some of them remaining open.

TWO-MONTH

A two-month discussion period, ending on 4 April, has been announced, and the terms of the deal specify that the proposals could be subject to change during that time.

That too is significant: before the strike, Tube bosses and Boris Johnson were talking about the cuts plans as a fait accompli that couldn't possibly, under any circumstances, be changed — and, unfortunately but understandably, many Tube workers believed that too. The Mayor and the management have been forced to back down from that intransigence by the solid strike last week,



and the confidence of the workforce has received a big boost. The Mayor repeatedly called the strike "pointless"; and the company's mantra was "striking achieves nothing". That has been dramatically disproved.

TSSA was more eager to settle than the RMT, and some activists in the RMT felt that members would not have been prepared to take further, sustained action once a deal representing progress had been offered. Keeping the strikes on with this deal on the table would certainly have been a risk.

However, suspending the action is risky too. The danger now is that over the two-month period, the pressure comes off management, the issue falls out of the headlines, management have time to recover the ground they lost through the 4-6 February strike. Unions may stop communicating with their members, and officers and activists may retreat into "business as usual" mode.

To make the most of the concessions forced from management, our unions must take some immediate concrete steps:

- declare now that we will strike for three (or more) days in early April — talks only bring progress when the threat of strikes looms, and announcing April strikes would signal to both members and management that if the talks do not yield meaningful progress, action will restart and escalate

- declare some bottom lines in the talks, such as no reduction in staffing levels, no

introduction of a two-tier workforce through re-grading, and keeping a trained supervisor on every station

- be open and spread the word about what is happening in talks: make daily reports to members and show us all documentation.

- working with campaigns like Hands off London Transport, mobilise Londoners to defend their station staff and ticket offices, using the "station-by-station review" as an opportunity to get service users to demand their ticket offices stay open.

- systematically visit every workplace and speak to every member of staff

- hold branch meetings as often as they have been over the last six weeks

- build hardship funds to sustain serious action in April, both in branches and in the national union

- bring other TfL companies into dispute — particularly Tube Lines, where management have revealed their intention to pay for equal pensions and passes with job cuts.

The suspension of the action is not a sell out, but whether it has bought unions time to push for greater concessions from management depends very much on what unions do now.

This is not the end of the dispute, just the end of the beginning! The stakes remain high, and victory remains possible.

What is *Tubeworker*?

Tubeworker is a rank-and-file socialist bulletin, published at least monthly, written by Tube workers, for Tube workers. It is published by the socialist group Workers' Liberty, but is produced in editorial meetings open to all workers. Supporters from outside London Underground can help with public distribution. Email us at tubeworker@workersliberty.org

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Sponsored by Workers' Liberty and the Independent Workers' union of Great Britain (IWGB) University of London branch

workersliberty.org/newunions

DEFEND MARK HARDING!

Mark Harding, secretary of the Hammersmith & City branch of the RMT, is being victimised for his union activities.

He was outrageously arrested on a picket line by Hammersmith police after a strikebreaking staff member got upset at being asked not to cross a picket line.

Mark's bail conditions prevent him from "being involved in RMT or any other union associated with LUL/TfL or to be in attendance at any organised industrial action". The arrest and the bail conditions are part of an ongoing attack on basic democratic rights.

Defend Mark Harding, drop the charges!

facebook.com/defendmarkharding

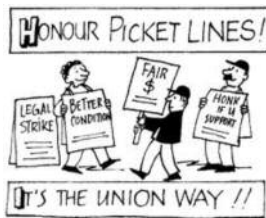
OUR FANTASY STRIKE COMMITTEE

A good strike committee should...

- Represent members of all unions, all grades and work locations — drivers, signals, stations, engineers, and more.
- Be democratic — our representatives on the strike committee should be elected; they should listen and report back to the people they represent.
- Encourage participation — everyone should feel confident to contribute in meetings. Beware big meetings where only a handful talk and the rest are silent! A clear agenda and good chairing can help.
- Allow disagreement — unpopular views should not be shouted down.
- Everyone should be listened to, which will encourage honest discussion.
- Be more than a talking shop — it should organise and carry out practical tasks for building action.
- Be used as a basis for our unions' decisions — honest, representative discussions about strategy should be fed up to our union leaders. If we're taking action, we should get to decide how, where and when it happens.

The picket lines were lively, diverse and full of discussion. Now our unions' decision-making needs to be opened up to

incorporate these voices. First step: build up up the strike committee.



THE PENNY HAS DROPPED...

Many areas reported bigger picket lines than in many previous disputes. Not just die-hard union activists on pickets, but huge chunks of rank and file workers. Spirits were high.

Service Control workers got behind the strike action to a greater extent than we've known in recent years, notably on the Bakerloo. Someone commented, "It's like the penny has dropped".

The big picture seemed pretty formidable before the strike. London Underground's long term vision for all grades was no joke, being driven by the government's demands for £8.8 billion of TfL cuts by 2021. But two days of action by us has rocked the bosses' eight year plan.

A strong stand, taken at this critical first stage, has already helped to protect the future of every London Underground and TfL worker.

UNITE UNITES...

Tubeworker hears that Unite texted its fleet and engineering members on Tuesday advising them to respect RMT picket lines — and that it is now preparing to ballot to join in the action officially.

Great news. This kind of solidarity — and expansion of our action — can help us win.

ASLEF: are you listening?

TORIES CONSIDER NEW ANTI-UNION OFFENSIVE

The Tories are considering committing to new anti-union laws in their next manifesto.

The right-wing clamour for new anti-union laws shows the immense power we still have. On the one hand, right-wingers try to claim unions are irrelevant, but at the same time they're demanding the state makes it illegal for us to act!

Looks like we're not "irrelevant" after all...

STRIKEBREAKING THREATENS SAFETY

The 4-6 February strike was less than an hour old when one of the company's strike-breakers routed two trains into a near-collision at Northumberland Park depot.

We all know that using managers who are not properly trained is a safety liability. The unions have said it over and over again. But that matters not to management when they have a war to win.

Undermining the strike in order to force through their job cuts is worth any risk to them.

BUILD THE "REVENUE ACTION"

Tubeworker noticed this comment from an Aussie on social media: "In Sydney when the tube/bus/trains have an issue with their management, they run all the services but refuse to check tickets or take fares. All the barriers are open. Guess how quick their issues are resolved?"

A letter outlining the precise nature of the action was finally sent to each individual station and revenue member of the RMT (but not by TSSA!) — better late than never!

If we are to enlist and maintain the support of the travelling public we must be ready to adopt new methods such as the revenue strike.

Union activists and officers must support and build them!

TfL STRIKES TOO

Amid all the attention (rightly) going to the London Underground strike, let us not forget that RMT members have struck on Transport for London too.

Believe it or not, TfL proposes to freeze workers' pensionable pay at their current wage rate, so that all future rises are lump sums and non-pensionable — oh, and "performance-related".

Thinking that TfL staff have less industrial muscle than Underground staff, management like to try out ideas for attacking our rights in TfL before rolling them out across the Tube. So it is in all our interests to see this appalling proposal scrunched up and thrown in the bin.

Unfortunately, it is so far on RMT striking on TfL, and it is a minority union in the company. But news is reaching *Tubeworker* that at least some of the others may be ready to bite the bullet and ballot. It seems that TSSA and Unite are moving towards action and maybe PCS too.

PCS officials have made a lot of noise about "supporting" RMT and TSSA's fight on the Underground, so it would be good to see them put their words into action, even if they have been a little slow off the mark.

Plundering London Underground

Janine Booth's new book tells the story of Tube workers' fight against the PPP privatisation deal
More details: bit.ly/plun-lu

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