



tubeworker

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Women Tube workers organise:

Safety yes, sexism no

The murder of Sarah Everard has drawn public attention and protests against the violence and harassment endured by women.

Over two hundred women are killed each year in Britain. Unlike Sarah, most are killed by men they know, and many of them – perhaps especially those who are not white professionals – do not gain much media attention.

Action for Safety

For Tube workers, this is an everyday issue. On stations in particular, we help the targets of harassment and abuse. At work – and travelling to and from work – we may be the targets of it ourselves.

While management seem to think that the WAASB app and body-worn cameras keep us safe, we need more definite and effective action, such as:

- staff taxis taking us from a safe place at work to the front door of our home
- an end to lone working
- personal attack alarms for all
- safe parking (and no congestion charge) for those who need to drive to work

Not All Men?

Of course, both men and women get harassed and assaulted. But men attack and abuse women far more often – and more severely – than women attack and abuse men.

If your response to women mobilising against violence is to say ‘not all men are like that’, then you may be missing the point. You



wouldn't respond to a campaign that said 'careless driving kills' by saying 'not all drivers are careless', would you? – even though that would be factually correct.

Of course, not every man has raped or murdered a woman, but one is too many. And in any case, men don't wear labels telling women whether they are one of the good guys or one of the bad guys!

Speaking Out

To make matters worse, when women report abuse, they often receive a woefully inadequate response.

We know of managers telling women staff who have been sexually harassed that they should be grateful for the attention – and of a manager who told a woman that if she didn't want to be harassed, she shouldn't come to work looking so nice. Women who have reported abuse to the police tell of inadequate, even humiliating, treatment from them.

These sexist, dismissive responses make it so much harder for women to speak out.

Moreover, everyday sexist behaviour at work can wear away at women's confidence and underpin a culture in which some men feel entitled to go further. A woman may

laugh along with mess room banter, or not say she objects to 'harmless' sexual comments or 'friendly' touching. But inside, it may make her uncomfortable and upset.

Fighting for Change

Specific actions by management, such as those listed above, would help. So would a further change in workplace culture.

We know things have got better since, say, 50 years ago, but there is still a long way to go. The company could start by holding its own managers to account for how they handle these issues.

They will probably prefer blogs and online sessions, though. These are fine in themselves, but a long way short of the radical action we need.

That action will only happen if our unions take up this fight, which will involve some change in their own culture too.

KILL THE BILL

The heavy-handed police response to the Sarah Everard vigil is a taste of things to come if the Tories' proposed Police Bill becomes law. More powers for the police to suppress dissent will make women less safe, not more.

We support this statement, initiated by Sisters Uncut, opposing the bill: bit.ly/killthebillstatement

RMT's International
Workers' Memorial
Day event:
**Safety, Equality
Solidarity**

Wednesday 28 April, 5pm
More: bit.ly/iwmd21



CLEANERS' COLUMN

PAY UP 0.92%, TRAVEL COSTS UP 2.6%!

Strikes by Tube cleaners in 2007-8 won an agreement that cleaners' wages, regardless of which company held the outsourced cleaning contract, would be pegged to the London Living Wage.

The 2019/20 LLW calculation was £10.75. That's due to rise to £10.85 in April 2021.

But a 10p/hour increase won't go far. Many living costs are increasing, including travel. TfL fares went up on 1 March, by an average of 2.6%.

An annual travelcard for a cleaner living in Zone 4 and working in Zone 1 now costs £2,128. If they live in Zone 5, it's £2,532. Depending on hours, that could be more than 10% of a cleaners' salary.

The issue also highlights the injustice that cleaners – who are part of the Tube's permanent, core workforce – have to pay to use the system their labour helps to run, while directly-employed workmates have staff travel passes.

MAKE TESTING AVAILABLE TO ALL

TfL is currently participating in a trial offering rapid Covid tests to directly-employed staff and some external staff, such as British Transport Police.

The trial must be expanded to be accessible to outsourced workers such as ABM cleaners, Interserve security officers, and Sodexo canteen staff. Testing is flawed if it excludes a section of the workforce.



CENTRAL LINE DRIVERS: VOTE FOR ACTION TO WIN REINSTATEMENT FOR GARY CARNEY

Central Line drivers in RMT are balloting for industrial action to win reinstatement for unjustly sacked rep Gary Carney.

Gary was sacked for allegedly avoiding a Drugs & Alcohol test he was never informed about. The ballot opened on 15 March, and closes on 13 April.

Tubeworker encourages all Central line drivers to vote yes. Gary never failed a D&A test; he legitimately booked off sick, as any of us would if we were unwell.

It is outrageous to sack someone for "avoiding" a test they had no knowledge of.

BAKERLOO BALLOT UNDERWAY

Drivers in RMT at Queen's Park depot have commenced their ballot for industrial action to stop job cuts. LU wants to slash the workforce at by more than 10%.

RMT's ballot closes on 8 April. A strong yes vote will show the bosses workers are serious about the fight. If LU doesn't back down, that will need to be followed up with action.

SERVICE CONTROL WORKERS FIGHT ON

Hammersmith Service Control staff are forced to work in a building that's unfit for purpose.

They're battling short staffing, unworkable rosters, and LU's use of temporary staff on zero-hours contracts.

RMT has rightly declared a dispute. Any goodwill towards the company has understandably dried up. LU might soon find that coming back to bite them.

DISTRICT SMA3: WOT NO ACTION?

District line drivers were due to start industrial action recently, as LU imposes ATO (SMA3) without adequate support or training.

But RMT called off the action after the company threatened to seek a court injunction against it.

Britain's trade union law is all about stopping workers taking action. We must step up our campaigning against these laws, alongside other unions and the Free Our Unions campaign.

But *Tubeworker* has a further concern. No court banned this action. RMT called it off on the basis of a threat that the company would ask a court to ban it. Even if that was the right call in this case, this cannot become the default response to all threats from employers.

ASLEF DRIVERS VOTE FOR ACTION

Aslef drivers have voted by a 97.3% majority for action to protect terms and conditions.

With LU's financial future in doubt, the bosses have our terms and conditions, especially pensions, in their sights.

Aslef has done the right thing by balloting "pre-emptively", meaning they can announce action at two weeks' notice any time over the next six months. Other unions should follow suit, and Aslef should use its mandate, rather than sitting on it.

4LM DEPOTS/SIDINGS: NO TO ATO

LU wants to impose automatic train operation (ATO) even in the largest and most complex depots and sidings.

Depots and sidings contain extra hazards. Although ATO is already used in depots and sidings on some lines, the company is now imposing it in even the largest 4LM (sub-surface lines) depots and sidings.

These locations are simply too unpredictable for automatic train operation. To be safe, to avoid causing accidents, a train must be driven by a driver.

JOHN LEACH FOR RMT GS



There's still time for RMT members to vote in the union's general secretary election.

Tubeworker encourages readers to vote #1 for John Leach. Post your ballot paper by 30 April to ensure it's counted.

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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.

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