

tubeworker

www.workersliberty.org/tubeworker • tubeworker@workersliberty.org

Train prep, LU pay/conditions, Transformation: FIGHT TO WIN!

London Underground workers face three major disputes - over management's plan to extend train preparation schedules from 24 hours to much longer; over pay, terms, and conditions; and over the latest phase of the "Transformation" job cuts plan. Here, *Tubeworker* sets out our view on how we should approach these disputes. We also believe it's vital that disputes are democratically controlled by those involved in them. Unions should convene regular reps' meetings and strike committees to decide the direction of the dispute, debate and decide on forms of action, and plan political campaigning in alliance with community groups.

Train prep

Fleet maintainers have voted overwhelming for industrial action against management's plan to cut the frequency of train preparation.

A combination of strength of feeling about the issue and a solid organising effort by RMT activists saw nearly two-thirds of ballot papers returned, nearly ninety per cent of them voting Yes to strikes and even more than that for action short.

RMT has called action from 2 May, instructing members not to undertake training for any work outside their usual role. Further action will be needed. This needs to be serious, with a programme of strikes and other actions that shows the company that it can not just ride out one walkout and expect the issue to go away.

Moreover, this is an issue that affects all of us. Reduced train prep frequency will result in more breakdowns, causing grief for engineers, drivers, station staff and service control.

If the company does not back down in the face of action from fleet staff, then all-grades industrial action is our next step.

LU pay/ conditions

LU's offer to our unions, after five days of "negotiations", was a joke: a 2.5% pay increase for one year, conditional on us dropping all our other demands, around hours, etc.

Our new deal should have been implemented in April. As usual, we're now behind schedule. We need to set the pace by immediately declaring a dispute with LU and balloting all members for strikes.

This can't be campaign where we haggle over a few percentage points. We need to remember that key demands that formed the core of all unions' claims:

- a minimum flat-rate pay increase for the lowest paid
- a 32-hour week for full-time staff
- equalisation of staff travel benefits (including "Priv" for all)

This dispute can be a positive fight for demands that would make a real difference to us at work.

Unions should carpet workplaces with propaganda highlighting the demands, and showing what a reduced working week would look like.

Transformation

Management has announced possible job cuts in Track Access Control, Power Control, Service Control, LUCC, Skills Development, Waste, Pumps, Stations Building & Civils, and Signals Incidents.

Workers who play a vital role in maintaining the safe running of the Tube could see their jobs deleted and find themselves redeployed or forced out of the door.

Unions were hampered in fighting the previous stage of "Transformation", that saw stations admin jobs slashed, partially due to a low density of membership but partially also due to a sluggishness in terms of mobilising a campaign on the shopfloor beyond the negotiations.

We need to learn from that this time. Union density in the affected areas this time is higher, which should put us in a better position to fight back. The cuts have been announced; we must ballot for strikes now!

Our demand has to be: not a single job cut. Cutting jobs via natural wastage and voluntary severance schemes is still cutting jobs.

These disputes have common roots in the bosses' decision to pass on Tory austerity policies, which have seen TfL's central government subsidy abolished, to frontline staff and passengers in the form of cuts. Our unions need to mount a serious political campaign to demand the reinstatement of the subsidy. Fight for a properly funded Tube!

CLEANERS' COLUMN

TIME TO STRIKE?

The Finsbury Park branch of RMT recently passed a motion, written and proposed by cleaner reps, calling for the union to ballot all ABM members for strikes.

RMT is still in the process of negotiating a collective bargaining agreement with ABM, but with those negotiations dragging on, cleaners can't wait for ever to take action to press our demands.

Same activists have concerns that RMT should build up its members before launching a dispute and ballot. Of course we should always be looking to get more people into the union, but the union is likely to grow fastest when we're fighting. A dispute and potential strike will be our best recruiting tool.

Winning industrial action ballots is always a challenge, but recent experiences from LU Fleet and the Central Line show that it can be done with hard work. A solid strike by even a minority of the ABM workforce would have a real impact on the service at stations and depots, especially if drivers refused to drive trains that hadn't been properly cleaned.

RMT's demands for cleaners are for travel passes, company sick pay, and better holiday and pension arrangements, as well as direct employment and an end to outsourcing.

As other RMT branches discuss the Finsbury Park motion, *Tubeworker* says: it's time to build for strikes.

SYSTEM CHANGE, NOT CLIMATE CHANGE!

We've been wearing our hi-vis, on alert for Extinction Rebellion (ExR) causing chaos on the Tube. *Tubeworker* agrees with ExR that stopping climate change is urgent. We applaud the disruptive direct action that has cost the economy and grabbed attention.

In many ways we act, in the same spirit when we strike, hitting the capitalist class directly. Without our work, nothing moves, other workers can't work; the capitalists struggle to make a profit.

If we are to stop climate change we need to dent the power of capitalism, which destroys the planet in pursuit of profit. 71% of greenhouse gas emissions since 1988 have come from just 100 companies. We must take political and economic power out of the hands of the exploiters so that society is organised democratically and production is planned for human need, not profit.

ExR is right, the situation is serious. It is serious enough that we need to imagine a radically better basis for organising society: socialism.

Nae Pasaran: the incredible true story of the workers who defied Pinochet

A film showing and social to celebrate May Day, hosted by the *Clarion* magazine and the Free Our Unions campaign



Thursday 2 May
19:00-22:00 at The Bread & Roses
@ The Chapel, 308-312 Gray's Inn
Road, WC1X 8DP

TICKET OFFICES SAVED

A fantastic campaign by RMT activists and local Labour Party branches has succeeded in forcing TfL to back down from plans to close London Overground ticket offices.

It's not a total victory, as management still plan to cut their opening hours, mostly to just three hours in the weekday morning peak.

Fortunately, RMT reps and activists on London Overground are determined to keep up the fight against any cut in opening hours. While celebrating their victory in preventing full closure, they know that the battle goes on.

We hope that the union's leadership is equally determined: the fact that the union's press release did not even mention the cut in hours is not a good sign though.



BOSSES CALLING?

Outside a genuine emergency, no one needs their manager contacting them outside of work. The survey being conducted by Aslef as to whether managers can call us to offer duties we didn't request has a very easy answer: NO!

Duties should not be given out on the basis of who is friendly with any particular manager. Reports that some managers have been doing this will soon highlight who is and who isn't flavour of the month. We don't want a set of us that managers favour and some of us (and we know which of us this will be) that they don't.

The real issues at stake here are driver numbers. We need more jobs, and fewer shortcuts.

AGENCY WORKERS EXPLOITED ON THE BAKERLOO?

Network Rail has provided agency workers to work as suicide-prevention security staff on stations at the north end of the Bakerloo Line for some time.

A new agency, Servo, has recently taken over the contract, and appears to be paying workers less - around £8 an hour.

Local reps for the LU unions are on the case and are looking into the matter, as well as trying to help the agency staff organise.

There's a more fundamental issue here too: if Network Rail and LU accept there's a need for staff presence on the platforms, why shouldn't this be done by fully-trained LU staff?

We say: kick Servo off the contract, train the agency staff up as CSAs, and create more jobs on stations!

A YEAR OF UNSTAFFED STATIONS

A recent Freedom of Information request lodged by the RMT revealed that Tube stations were left unstaffed for a cumulative total of 7,500 hours across the whole network in 2018, the equivalent of 312 days.

LU's now infamous claim that "all stations will be staffed, from first to last trains" lies in absolute tatters.

Tube users don't want to use or travel through unstaffed stations, where there's no-one to ask for help and no-one to assist in an incident.

They should support Tube workers in our industrial and political campaigns for a reversal of job cuts, better funding, and fully-staffed Tube.

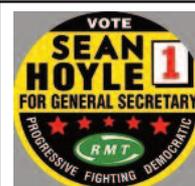
CENTRAL LINE DRIVERS VOTE FOR STRIKES

Forced to re-ballot due to the stipulations of the anti-union laws, RMT drivers on the Central Line have smashed the thresholds required by those laws and delivered another massive vote for strikes.

West Ruislip depot led the way in percentage terms, with 96% of drivers voting for strikes on a 96% turnout!

The dispute is over what the union calls "a breakdown in industrial relations". In other words, that means an out-of-control management arbitrarily wielding petty discipline and managing drivers in an unnecessarily heavy-handed way.

Following this new vote, those bosses can be in no doubt of the strength of feeling in the depot. And they certainly won't be when drivers strike and stop the job.



SEAN HOYLE FOR RMT GS!

Tubeworker supports Sean Hoyle's campaign to become the next RMT general secretary. Sean stands fighting industrial disputes to win, with rank-and-file members calling the shots through democratic structures.

Nominate Sean in your RMT branch!



SH4RMTGS

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

Tubeworker's blog — daily updates — workersliberty.org/twblog

Add "*Tubeworker* Bulletin" on Facebook, follow @Tube_Worker on Twitter

Subscribe!

Want to get every issue of *Tubeworker* (published at least monthly)? Send us your address along with a tenner (cheques payable to WL Bulletins)

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

Contact us: Workers' Liberty, 20E Tower Workshops, Riley Road, London SE1 3DG, tubeworker@workersliberty.org