



# tubeworker

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- ▶ **Suspending strikes is a misstep**
- ▶ **We need concrete concessions**

## Keep up grade consolidation fight

**RMT suspended drivers' strikes against Night Tube grade consolidation, planned for 3-5 August. Whilst we respect the views of comrades who argued for suspension, we believe this decision is wrong.**

LU has paused implementation of its plan, and has committed to further negotiations to consider an RMT proposal for staffing Night Tube via voluntary links in depots. These are important steps, but as things stand, grade consolidation is only paused, not abandoned.

### STRIKE TO WIN CONCESSIONS

**Some argue that, since LU has agreed to further talks, it would somehow be unreasonable to strike.**

We believe this misunderstands what strikes are for. The aim of strikes is to win improvements to working conditions, not simply to secure further talks. We do not only strike when management has refused negotiations.

Because LU has paused implementation and committed to consider and respond to a concrete proposal from RMT, the talks will have a specific and focused agenda. But they are, ultimately, still just talks. Management could easily say "we've considered your proposal, and decided we don't like it. Sorry. We're now resuming implementation."

Those defending suspension say: "in that case, we can strike later in the month." RMT does have further strikes planned on 24-25 and 26-27 August, and *Tubeworker* has no doubt that, should management stonewall us in the further talks, reps and activists will do the work to ensure those strikes are solid. But calling off the first strikes makes their job much harder.

### DEFEND JOBS

**Although RMT's proposal for the voluntary staffing of Night Tube is preferable to drivers being compelled to work night duties, it would still entail the abolition of the existing Night Tube driver grade.**

This would delete a number of part-time jobs and close off a line of promotion for part-time station staff. RMT is demanding the jobs are replaced with an equivalent number of full-time posts. This would be an improvement, but *Tubeworker* believes part-time jobs should be retained.

Aslef has played a grubby role on this issue so far, initially opposing grade consolidation before becoming its loudest advocates. Full-time Aslef reps, some of whom haven't worked a shift in decades, colluded with management to cook up a rotten deal over the heads of their own members, and the large proportion of drivers who are members of RMT. We know many rank-and-file Aslef members oppose grade consolidation and the imposed increase in night working it would entail, and we have no doubt many would have respected RMT picket lines – and still will, if the next set of strikes go ahead. Joint action by members of both unions can force LU back.

*Tubeworker* encourages drivers who disagree with suspending strikes to get involved in their union branches to ensure their views are heard. This is best done alongside workmates who feel similarly, and, whatever happens with this dispute, more people getting active in their union is a positive thing in itself.

**If the talks don't lead to LU backing down, the next strikes must go ahead.**

### Stay solid



**Since strikes dates were announced, trains reps and activists have been building for action across the combine.**

We can't squander the good work already done by letting the suspension of strikes drain our momentum. We need to build our resolve and keep focused on the next strike dates, 24-25 and 26-27 August.

We cannot give the company the impression our dispute is fizzling out. Our demands cannot shift in further talks, and, as negotiations progress, we need any apparent concessions to be laid out clearly in front of members so we can make informed decisions about the direction of the dispute.

Concerns from reps on non-Night Tube lines about the ability to sustain action need to be addressed. The "mood in the depots" is not fixed. It's down to us to speak to workmates and persuade them strikes can not only win, but will set a marker as we head into the incoming battles over pensions and cuts.

The members meeting on 2 August should be the start of a series of further meetings in the run up to the next strikes. Reps should continue to produce local bulletins to keep this on the agenda in every single depot.

**These strikes are not a last resort, but the way we can win this fight.**

## PENSION CUTS ARE COMING: PREPARE TO FIGHT!

**TfL has announced the timetable and terms of reference for a review of our pension scheme. We'll know the options they're considering by 31 October, and there'll be "implementation plan" by 31 March 2022.**

The scheme is not being targeted because it is in any sort of financial trouble. On the contrary, the scheme is in good shape, with high valuation and successful investments. It's being targeted because it's an easy place for the bosses to make cuts, in order to make up for budget deficits elsewhere, caused by the abolition of the government grant in 2018 and the collapse of fare revenue during the pandemic. The message is clear: workers have to pay for a crisis we didn't create with detrimental changes to our terms and conditions.

LU unions must ballot for industrial action to defend our pensions. The most effective timetable for those ballots and industrial actions will be discussed in union branches, in workplaces, on the pages of this blog, and elsewhere. One thing is clear, though: if we wait until March 2022 for the review to finalise the "implementation plan" for the favoured option, that'll be far too late. Preparing to launch a ballot in the autumn is a better timescale to work on.

A laughable postscript is that the review is being co-headed by Sir Brendan Barber, the former (unelected) leader of the Trades Union Congress, who now earns a handsome living as a professional consultant who will, in this case, advise employers on how best to impose worse conditions on members of the unions he used to represent.

**We'd say this was the act of a turncoat, but Sir Brendan was pretty good at pushing the bosses' agenda even when he was a union leader, so not much has really changed...**

## FLEET: VOTE YES FOR ACTION AGAINST CASUALISATION

**Management are showing how they intend to achieve the "savings" and "efficiencies" they are desperate to find - by attacking our job security.**

LU has revealed its plan to extend the use of fixed-term contracts and non-permanent labour (commonly known as temporary workers). LU plans to over three hundred of these in fleet depots and workshops. These workers are entitled to secure, permanent work, not to be picked up when management want them and dropped when they don't. And the permanent workforce are entitled to secure jobs without the incursion of casualisation into the workplace. It is essential that we defend every job and our overall staffing levels.

RMT is balloting its LU fleet members for strike action and action short of strikes. Vote YES and YES!

## YAMMER SPAMMER

**Management have been spewing out propaganda against RMT industrial action, on Yammer, the corporate social media platform.**

Where drivers have commented and explained their feelings, these have been deleted. Management speak is in abundance on Yammer, and in a recent video we are told that putting Night Tube operation onto the main roster is the fairest thing for "our people".

Is there anything worse than having a senior manager who doesn't drive trains, doesn't work nights, and doesn't work weekends telling you that it is fairest for us "all" to do more of it?

## WE ARE NOT THE DIRT WE CLEAN

**ABM cleaners were on the frontline cleaning up after boisterous (and then jubilant/despondent - delete as appropriate) football fans enjoying the Euro 2020/1 final.**

They had to deal with spills, bodily fluids, and heaps of discarded food and drinks packaging.

This is after a period in which they've played a vital role in keeping our transport system as safe as possible during the pandemic.

It's nothing short of a scandal that TfL, LU, and the Mayor continue to refuse to employ them directly, or even extend staff travel passes to them.

## BAKERLOO: OFF AGAIN, ON AGAIN...

**On Euros final day, the company announced that the Bakerloo would finish at 19:00, due to "a shortage of control centre staff who are having to self-isolate".**

The more fundamental issue is LU's failure to maintain proper staffing levels in service control. There have been several vacancies on the Bakerloo for years, which the company has simply refused to fill.

A few hours later it was reported that cover had been found, with enough staff agreeing to cover the shifts on OT.

The episode highlights how LU's insistence on cutting staffing levels to the bone in numerous departments will lead to crises. The solution can't be a desperate scramble to find takers for overtime; it must be to increase staffing levels.

## 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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