

tubeworker

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After “Tube drivers paid £100k” lies: WHY THE TORY PRESS ATTACKS US



The real fat cats on the Tube are the senior managers pocketing huge salaries and massive bonuses.

“London Tube drivers earning £100,000 a year” screamed the *Times* headline, suggesting that London Underground train drivers now earn a six figure sum.

In reality, full-time Train Operators earn £55,000. The “£100k” figure comes from taking the basic salary of just nine specialist Test Train Operators and adding other benefits to it. The vast majority of drivers, around 4,000 of us, earn nowhere near this amount.

Why does the media attack us?

As the old saying goes, “attack is the best form of defence”. When working-class people earn a decent wage, the bosses see it as a threat to their profit. The Tory press is the mouthpiece of the bosses, and so they seek to undermine and attack us to protect their own interests.

Just as they see us as a threat to them, their greatest fear is that other working people will look to us and recognise that being in a union means better wages and conditions. This is why the Tory press seek to divide us, to try and prevent us organising and unifying again them.

What about the nurses?

The Tory press often point to how much more Tube drivers earn than nurses. But do they ever actually argue that nurses should be paid more? What the bosses

want is all working people on a low wage so they can keep more of the wealth working people create as profit for themselves. Driving down the wage of public sector workers means the bosses get to pay less to have a functioning society even though it is essential for keeping them rich.

The solution to nurses' low pay is simple: pay nurses more! We just need to be in a position to make that decision. It all comes down to a choice; do we pay workers a fair wage or can bosses have all the money? At the moment the bosses are in charge and keep the fruits of our classes' labour for themselves, but if we organise we can change that.

What can we do within our unions?

Our unions should take the opportunity to be a part of this debate and highlight the reality of our uneven economy, which sees Tube workers such as cleaners and CSAs on a low wage, and Tube bosses earning bonuses of six figures.

The Tory press don't want to recognise these issues because they promote the political and economic interests of the people who benefit from this inequality.

Our unions can:

- Have a clear message, and use social media, newsletters, websites, interviews etc., to ensure our voices are heard.
- Be honest about drivers' wages, and at the same time highlight the wage of the lowest-paid workers on the Tube and the grotesque pay of our bosses.
- Educate members, and the public, about how the press functions as a mouthpiece for the interests of the bosses.
- Highlight the union principle of levelling-up, and explain how lower-paid workers can fight for better conditions by organising.
- Use the opportunity to highlight the low pay and mistreatment of many workers on LU such as cleaners and CSA2s, and ask why the Tory press isn't highlighting this.

STATIONS DISPUTES: SOLIDARITY IS WINNING

Station staff at Baker Street and the Bakerloo Line South Cover Group are finishing 2018 on a high after the threat of strikes forced concessions from management.

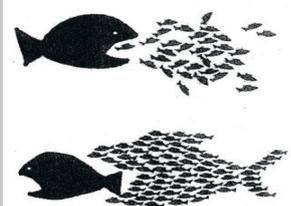
At Baker Street, an unjustly sacked probationer was reinstated, and trumped up disciplinary charges against two staff, including the local RMT rep, were dropped after workers returned a big majority for industrial action.

On the Bakerloo South Group, which includes Oxford Circus, Piccadilly Circus, Charing Cross, Lambeth North, and Elephant and Castle, workers have forced a 180° u-turn from management on the issue of short staffing.

Management had been operating a policy of refusing to cover uncovered duties, citing budgetary concerns. A massive vote for action and the threat of a strike on Boxing Day forced a total climb down, with management committing in writing to cover all duties.

A second strike is planned for 14 January, which remains on as workers see if management keep to their word. It's important reps and activists keep a keen eye on management make sure they're enacting their commitments. And even if they behave themselves over the next two weeks, allowing for a possible suspension of January's strike, any backsliding must be met with action. The ballot mandate lasts until July, remember.

Notwithstanding this need to keep the pressure on to ensure commitments are met, these are both great results for station workers. Spread the struggles!



TUBEWORKER WISHES ALL OUR READERS AND SUPPORTERS A VERY MERRY CHRISTMAS. HERE'S TO MANY MORE STRUGGLES IN 2019!

CSA MARIAH?

In what appears to be a personal contract across multiple cover groups, Mariah Carey is the newest member of station staff at Waterloo, Stratford, and London Bridge.

Sister Carey has taken over the safety announcements, reminding people to stand behind the yellow line and to hold on to the handrail. Oh, and she gets to plug her new album too.

Perhaps the Mayor can ask for some of her reported \$520m (earning only slightly less than a Train Op) to plug the central government funding gap.

Tubeworker hasn't yet spotted her on the gateline.

ANTHONY CODD REINSTATED: SOLIDARITY WINS

The threat of strikes among track workers has beaten the bosses sacking of Anthony Codd, sacked for following procedures in a disciplinary.

Tubeworker is pleased to report that the mere threat of strikes was enough to win his job back. When we stand together, we are more than a match for management.

TRAIN PREP FIGHT

RMT has now declared an official dispute with LU over its plans to cut train prep frequency from 24 hours.

The plan, which could see trains run for up to three days without having basic checks performed, threatens staff safety, passenger safety, and jobs, and must be resisted.

If LU doesn't back down from the planned cut, we must fight back industrially, and across all grades.

BARKING DRIVERS PLAN STRIKES

Aslef drivers at Barking depot on the Hammersmith and City Line will strike on 10 and 23 January, as yet another group of drivers encounters problems with depot management throwing their weight around and ignoring agreements.

Surely it's time for a combine-wide drivers' fight back against bullying bosses?

TICKETING TROUBLE

Arnos Grove station staff are shocked and angry that management have suspended a workmate for a minor ticket office discrepancy.

The company has thrown the book at him over a shortfall that may not even be his fault.

Staff are now reluctant to enter the ticket office / POM suite in case they find themselves accused. And they are asking RMT to prepare industrial action ballots both to protect the integrity of ticket office procedures and to stop the disciplinary action against their colleague. They know very well that an injury to one is an injury to all.

TRANSFORMATION TEETHING TROUBLE

Since stations admin was reorganised under "Transformation", various things have been going pear-shaped.

Staff have not been getting answers about leave, pay and other issues. And much though *Tubeworker* is not a fan of overtime, we do think that if you do it, it is only right that you get paid for it!

This is not the fault of the admin staff. They did not asked to be "Transformed". It is the fault of a change driven by penny-pinching and cutting staff.

Management will no doubt shrug off these problems as 'teething trouble' and assure us that it will all be alright in the end.

We do not share their faith, and urge staff to stand up for ourselves and aim our frustrations in the direction of the real source of the trouble.

WOT NO WINTER GEAR?

Despite promising cleaners warm winter fleeces, ABM has failed to deliver in many places.

This means cleaners are working in the cold without proper uniform.

LU's own uniform delivery services is also in a rather chaotic condition, meaning directly-employed and outsourced staff may be united by cold this winter.

If the situation continues, *Tubeworker* feels some impromptu sit-ins in mess rooms coming on...

CENTRAL LINE FIGHT MUST CONTINUE AND SPREAD

RMT suspended the strike of Central Line drivers planned for 21-22 December, which sought the reinstatement of sacked driver Paul Bailey, citing "new evidence" presented by management.

Whatever this "new evidence" is, it's something management have clearly been sitting on since the dispute began. Whether cock-up or conspiracy prevented them from releasing it until now, it's scandalous that they haven't done so. RMT has fought against a mismanaged procedure on the basis of the facts the union had available, and were entirely right to do so. Paul's case will now continue at Employment Tribunal, where those arguments about LU's woeful mishandling of the case can be pursued.

The strike also doubled up as action in a wider dispute about authoritarian management culture on the line. RMT reps says concessions on this have been secured, including a commitment from management to review ongoing attendance and disciplinary cases. Whether these are sufficient to have warranted the suspension of the strike is a difficult call, but it's important that this dispute is not allowed to fade away. We know from the experience of the Picc Line dispute that action may still be necessary to force management to keep to their commitments.

Our unions need to show some joined-up thinking and coordinate the trains side disputes.

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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