



tubeworker

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Tories plan new anti-union laws:

FIGHT FOR THE RIGHT TO STRIKE



From the Free Our Unions campaign:

In his government's first Queen's Speech, Boris Johnson has announced that he plans to introduce new laws to restrict strikes.

There could be little clearer indication of the class loyalties of his government than this. Despite his wildly hypocritical appeals to "anti-establishment" feeling, here his government shows its true colours, in attempting to further restrict the ability of working-class people to take action to improve our lives.

The law is designed to initially target the rail and transport industries, imposing a

Labour authorities must defy the law

If the law passes, Labour authorities must defy it wherever they are transport employers.

Labour is highly likely to win the 7 May GLA elections, meaning Transport for London, and LU, will continue to be administered by a Labour authority. Labour has policy from successive national conferences to oppose all anti-union laws; it's time for the party to put its money where its mouth is by refusing to collude in any new restrictions on strikes.

The simplest way to do this would be to commit, in advance, that Labour authorities will set the minimum service level at zero wherever they are a transport employer.

"minimum service requirement" which would effectively ban transport workers from taking all-out strike action. If the law is introduced and not quickly challenged, the Tories will undoubtedly propose extending it to other industries, such as the fire service, health, and education – all already designated as "essential services" requiring a double threshold under the terms of the 2016 Trade Union Act.

The entire labour movement, including the Labour Party, must respond immediately.

PROTEST

Unions should call meetings and protests at local and national levels, and the Labour Party and the TUC should call a national demonstration.

Free Our Unions is working with others in the labour movement, including Islington and Lambeth Trades Councils, to plan joint campaigning, including a meeting at Lambeth Union's offices in Brixton (First floor, Blue Star House, 244-234 Stockwell Rd, SW9 9SP) at 19:00 on 11 February.

Although the immediate struggle is necessarily defensive, a counteroffensive stance is also necessary. Resisting the new law should not mean an accommodation with the status quo, where our right to strike is severely curtailed by arbitrary balloting thresholds; the prohibition on workplace ballots; bans on solidarity action and strikes over political issues; and restrictions on effective picketing. A movement of resistance to the new law must also be a movement demanding the abolition of all anti-union laws.

If the law is imposed, we also need to confront that reality that, as with any unjust law, defeating it will require that it be broken. Against the backdrop of historically low levels of strikes, expecting mass unofficial action on a short-term timescale is unrealistic.

But conversations must be had in workplaces and union branches, in the first instance in the industries being targeted, about rebuilding the confidence and organisation necessary.

LU PAY/CONDITIONS: KEEP FIGHTING

LU's latest offer on pay/conditions remains wholly unsatisfactory.

It offers RPI+0.2% pay increases for four years (2019-2023), but no concessions on our other demands, including working hours. We should not settle for a deal that comes nowhere near meeting our claims.

More: bit.ly/LU-pay

JUSTICE FOR STATION STAFF!

Tubeworker is pleased to see RMT is balloting members in revenue control for action to resist the imposition of a two-tier workforce.

The union also plans a renewed campaign on wider stations issues, including lone working, equalisation of the CSA grade, and pay parity with drivers for Boxing Day working. The demands of the revenue dispute will also be taken up as part of this.

This campaign must be actively built and escalated towards an industrial action ballot as soon as possible.

Tubeworker supports the Free Our Unions campaign, a national grassroots campaign against anti-union laws, supported by three national trade unions (RMT, FBU, and IWGB) and over 60 union branches and committees.

For more from the campaign, see bit.ly/FreeOurUnions

Tubeworker readers/supporters meeting, including report from the general strike in France:



Thursday 20 February, 16:00, in the cafe/bar at The Chapel, 308-312 Grays Inn Rd, WC1X 8DP. All Tube workers welcome.

BOXING DAY? EQUAL PAY!

Tubeworker recently published an article on our blog, on ongoing negotiations between LU and drivers' reps over Boxing Day and NYE payments.

We argued that, if LU is paying bonuses for Boxing Day/NYE working, all workers who work those days should receive it. We suggested that RMT reps, as reps for an all-grades union, should make that argument in negotiations, and not agree to any deal until arrangements were in place for discussing its extension to other grades.

The article was siezed on by some Aslef reps and circulated as if it was an official RMT article, with sections deliberately misquoted to suggest RMT didn't want to improve drivers' terms and conditions.

We remind all readers that *Tubeworker* is *not* an RMT publication. We are an independent rank-and-file bulletin, published by a socialist group.

We believe passionately that all Tube workers have shared interests, and we will never apologise for advocating better, and equal, rights for all workers.

OVERGROUND TICKET OFFICE HOURS TO BE CUT

A strong campaign by RMT and local Labour Parties made London Overground drop its plans to close nearly all of its ticket offices.

But they now plan to cut opening hours. This will threaten jobs and services, and will have a knock-on effect on LU stations, which will have to deal with people arriving from LO stations without tickets or with the wrong ticket.

The campaign goes on.

GREEN PARK UNDER WATER

Green Park station staff found themselves wading to work on 15 January, after rainy weather and dodgy plumbing combined to leave the mess room and other areas flooded.

This left only one usable toilet, and came after several days of faulty plumbing causing unpleasant smells.

We should not have to work in dangerous and unsanitary conditions. If management won't close statons during incidents like this, *Tubeworker* recommends staff work elsewhere.

"UNSUSTAINABLE"?

In a variety of locations, disabled workers are being told the company can no longer "accommodate" or "sustain" them.

LU appears to see disabled workers as a burden and a drain on its budget. So much for a commitment to equality.

We need to fight back to demand equality, up to and including via industrial action.

CONCESSIONS WON IN BAKERLOO FIGHT

Following Bakerloo drivers' overwhelming vote for industrial action, bosses committed to a "no compulsory overtime" agreement.

They have also agreed to review incidents that have taken place under the current, universally despised, "Working Timetable 44".

Discussions on the implementation of a new timetable, which has been brought forward to March, are ongoing. If those discussions don't go well, drivers are rightly ready to take action.

KHAN BOASTS OF STRIKE FALL

Sadiq Khan's new campaign leaflet boasts that strikes on the Tube have fallen during his time in office.

That's not the sort of thing we want to see a Labour Mayor boasting about. Morevoer, the fall in strike days is largely a result of the 2016 Trade Union Act (which stopped LUL staff striking over the London Bridge 3 and cleaners striking over working conditiions), not of anything the Mayor has done.

Tubeworker would prefer to see Khan reelected than his Tory opponent, but he's going to have to do better than this to win transport workers' active support.

NOT-SO-GREAT NORTHERN Great Northern, which interchanges with various LU stations, is supposed to be closing mid-evening at weekends to allow for engineering works.

But on a seemingly random basis, management cancel this and run the service anyway. Cue confusion and irritated passengers - and the people responsible nowhere to be seen, while we get the grief.

It suggests that we have a management that finds it difficult to identify the difference between its backside and its elbow.

RAVENS COURT ROOF

On Tuesday 14 January, high winds dislodged a section of corrugated roofing at Ravenscourt Park station and sent it flying onto the track.

Thankfully no one was injured. A failure of asset maintenance over time left the roofing in such a poor condition that high winds were able to dislodge it. LUL have made cuts in all areas, including asset maintenance.

This is the result.

CLEANERS' FIGHT GOES ON

While it was crushingly disappointing to see the industrial action ballot miss the turnout threshold by just 11 votes, Tube cleaners' campaign must continue.

Activists are planning renewed campaigning, including demonstrations targeting Sadiq Khan's election events, demanding he commit to reversing outsourcing of Tube cleaning, and a renewed industrial campaign that takes up the issue of job cuts.

SUPPORT THE 14 FEBRUARY CLIMATE STRIKES

Youth activists have called another climate strike for 14 February.

Tubeworker supports the climate strikes and encourages all readers to get involved wherever possible. We'll be supporting a union bloc called by members of the PCS union, which assembles outside the Department for Business, Energy, and Industrial Strategy at 11:00 on the day.

More: bit.ly/14feb-bloc

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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