Tories threaten new anti-strike laws

It’s our right to strike!

RMT members working for Network Rail and 13 mainline Train Operating Companies have voted overwhelmingly for strikes and action-short-of-strikes to win a pay rise and to stop threatened job cuts and changes to terms and conditions.

Mainline rail workers are into the third year of a pay freeze, with 2,500 Network Rail jobs, as well as jobs on mainline stations, under threat. It is important that rank-and-file members have maximum control over the direction of the dispute, so that the action is as effective as possible.

In response, transport secretary Grant Shapps has reminded the world that the Tories have a manifesto commitment, from 2019, to impose new laws to restrict transport workers’ strikes by imposing “minimum service” requirements.

Any new anti-strike laws would impact our strikes as well. Where “minimum service” laws exist in other countries, transport unions to designate a proportion of their membership as exempt from striking, in order to provide the legally-mandated “minimum service”. They force unions to be administrators of scabbing.

At RMT’s 2021 AGM, the union passed a motion committing it to a policy of non-compliance with such laws, should they be imposed. That would be a major step for a union to take: it will need a mass movement throughout the whole labour movement to defend it from potential attacks, and RMT’s officials will need to be put under pressure from below to stick to the policy.

Unite, TUC, and GMB also have policy to resist existing and proposed anti-strike laws, including by calling demonstrations against them. It’s time to enact those policies. Working with grassroots campaigns like Free Our Unions can help reps and activists lay the groundwork for defiance.

• More: freeourunions.org

VOTE YES FOR ACTION

RMT is re-balloting driver members in the Night Tube dispute (closing 7 June), and the entire LU membership in the jobs, pensions, and conditions dispute (closing 24 June). Use your vote, vote yes/yes for strikes and action short!

Station staff: all out on 6 June!

RMT has called a strike on London Underground stations for Monday 6 June, and an overtime ban from 3 June-10 July.

It’s part of the dispute to stop pension cuts, job cuts, and detrimental changes to terms and conditions. Stations are currently on the frontline in terms of job cuts and the imposition of new frameworks. 600 jobs are due to be cut on stations, with some stations, such as King’s Cross and Victoria, due to lose around 1/3 of their CSA workforce. Cuts will also impact the quality and accessibility of the service.

Staff in the Revenue and SRT departments also face the imposition of new frameworks, aimed at maximising “flexibility”.

We know from our January 2017 strike that stations-only action can have a major impact on the service. The expiry of TfL’s latest financial bailout from the government, on 24 June, should be a target for our next all-out strike, coordinating with RMT action on Network Rail and mainline Train Operating Companies.

In the meantime, all efforts on stations must be focused on building the strongest possible strike on 6 June. Remember: TSSA members and even non-union members can join the strike. See you on the picket lines!

STOP PRESS: Green Park/Euston strike on 3 June called off after management agreed to a meaningful review into bullying bosses. If the review doesn’t lead to change, strikes must be reinstated!
**NO PENSION CHANGES FOR “SEVERAL YEARS”?**

We keep hearing, for example in the latest edition of On the Move, that there will be no pension changes for “several years”.

Sounds okay, until, if you're 40 or under, you remember that you won't be retiring for at least 20 years... plenty of time for changes to made made!

And for those retiring in the next few years, don’t forget it will be your pension pot potentially diminished too, something which is a threat to all of us, working or retired.

This threat hasn’t gone away and we can’t take our eye off the ball. TfL’s current funding bailout from the government expires on 24 June, and it’s entirely possible - we’d say even likely - that the Department for Transport will insist on accelerated pension reform as a condition of any further funding.

If we want to protect our pensions, which RMT has suggested could be cut by a third depending on which option for reform is chosen, we need to be organised and ready to take sustained action. Some have suggested that, because some major changes to our pension would require new legislation, and because implementing new legislation will take time, we can essentially have a breather. But we can’t wait for the law to be changed allowing our pension to be ripped up before we act. There have been no positive changes to employment laws since the Tories took over, let’s not kid ourselves that they will hang about if given the chance to rip up our pension agreements!

Be ready to proactively defend our pensions. If LU suggested they were working on plans to cut a third of our wage in “several years”, would we hang around and let them prepare to attack us?

**UNITE VOTES FOR ACTION**

Unite has secured an industrial action mandate across LU and most of TfL.

Their ballot was over pension cuts and the pay freeze for centrally-employed TfL staff.

The result opens the way to coordination with RMT for strikes in later June.

**BEGGING LETTERS?**

All-staff emails from various stations begging for people to cover duties on overtime are a common occurrence.

They expose the reality of existing under-staffing. When RMT's overtime ban kicks in from 3 June, stations may start to close.

LU needs more station staff, not fewer.

**THE NIGHT TUBE DISPUTE STILL MATTERS**

If you believe that management should be held to their promises (i.e., the agreement made in 2016 that no existing driver will have to work Night Tube unless they choose), and if you value work/life balance, it is imperative to get behind this dispute.

If RMT loses the current NT ballot, many more drivers will be forced to work shifts that we were promised we would never have to work back in 2016. Legacy NT drivers need to look at what has been done to them too. They don’t even get the bonus. How is that fair?

**ASLEF RENEW MANDATE**

Aslef have won their third reballot, for action if management try to “push through changes without agreement”.

The increased turnout of 68.3% and 98.5% in favour is welcome.

But having now had a live ballot since November 2021 and with no action, Aslef members should be pushing their reps and leadership into take strike action and coordinating with the other unions to use the mandate rather than allowing RMT to fight alone.

**WIN ON DOMESTIC VIOLENCE POLICY**

Nearly ten years after our unions first asked it to, TfL/LUL is finally adopting a policy on domestic abuse - though you would think from its self-congratulatory fanfare that it was the company’s idea all along.

However, it initially refused to commit to making absence due to domestic abuse exempt from being an “item” under the AAW. In other words, it wanted to retain the option of disciplining staff for being abused. This is stomach-turning and wholly unacceptable.

After strong pressure from union reps, management backed down - a major win!