



tubeworker

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

Cuts are not inevitable

Compared to many other workers, directly-employed LU staff have good pay, pension arrangements, and working conditions.

This is because we have fought to win these things and, over decades, resisted attempts to erode them.

That could all change. The Tory government systematically underfunded TfL by removing its grant, meaning that, when fare revenue collapsed during the pandemic, TfL was plunged into financial crisis. The Tories' bailouts came with strings, and now our bosses are carrying out Tory demands to attack our pay pensions, and other conditions.

Pay

We have consistently won above-inflation pay rises, meaning our wages stay ahead of the cost of living.

Already, TfL has imposed a pay freeze on all non-LU staff earning above £24k/year. They could attempt to extend that to LU staff once our pay deal expires next year.

We should not apologise for continuing to demand this. The cost of living continues to rise, with London rents and house prices amongst the most expensive in the world. The service we provide is worth billions for the London and national economies.



Pensions

Many of us will give 20 years or more of our lives to London Underground, perhaps spending a lot of that waking up at 3am for an early start, or coming home long after the service has stopped running.

But part of the deal is the pension we get to keep us going through our retirement. We need to make our pension better, not let senior bosses and Tory ministers, who will not have to worry about their own living conditions in retirement, take it away.

The company's pensions review is due to publish its first set of outcomes in early November. It may recommend closing the scheme to new starters, and hope that the apparent protection for existing staff will be enough to undermine resistance. We must stand firm. We have to fight for the conditions of both current and future workers.

Terms and conditions

The company says it is reviewing all Framework Agreements, policies, and procedures.

This means policies like our sick

pay entitlement could be under threat. The Attendance at Work policy could be changed to make it even more punitive. As well as fighting to defend what we have, we must also fight for improvements, such as a four-day, 32-hour week for full-time staff.

Our existing Framework Agreements mean management don't have free reign to send us wherever they wish, or have us book on at different times without a set notice period.

The important thing to remember about all these rights is that none were handed down out of the goodness of the bosses' hearts. We only have any of them because of the battles we have fought and the unity and strength we have as union members.

Getting organised

We have to now be organised and on the front foot, ready to fight not only to defend what we have, but to win improvements.

Our unions must work together wherever possible, building the campaign at grassroots in workplaces and at branch meetings. Bosses claim that financial constraints mean they have to make cuts; we must mount a strong enough campaign to convince them that the consequences of attempting to make cuts will be worse than the consequences of telling the Tories cuts are unviable.

Start by speaking to your workmates about the need to prepare for action, and get active in your union!

“IMPROVE” THE AAW?

An Employee Bulletin circulated to all LU staff today announces that the company intends to redraft the Attendance At Work (AAW) policy.

It says the policy needs a “refresh” in order to “fully support our people and ensure we can offer the best service to London.”

There’s plenty about the AAW we’d like to change. For example, the basic fact that it treats sickness punitively - making two periods of absence within six months a potential disciplinary matter, even if you were signed off by a doctor both times - is an outrage. People who are not well should not be dragging themselves into work for fear of a disciplinary warning. We’d also like to see an end to the AAW being used to manage people out of a job via case conferences and the delightfully named process of “medical termination.”

But something tells us these aren’t the changes the company has in mind. Our guess is that the company wants to make the policy even more punitive and restrictive, in the mistaken belief that this will deter people from taking time off sick, thus saving them money on the overtime bill. The bulletin says LU “can’t afford not to” overhaul the policy, and that “a better policy on supporting people back to work will help us meet our financial challenges and run a better service.”

We should also be on the lookout for an attack on the sick pay policy, which currently entitles us to 39 or 24 weeks’ full sick pay, depending on length of service.

NIGHT TUBE AND WOMEN’S SAFETY

Night Tube will resume on two lines from 27 November, in a move promoted as ensuring safety for women. The reality is more complex; women’s safety requires increased Night Tube staffing.

Around 150,000 people signed a petition for Night Tube to resume. It is understandable women will feel safer travelling on the Tube rather than on night buses, waiting for taxis or walking. However, Night Tube is not the haven for women’s safety that some want to believe.

I worked on Night Tube before its lockdown suspension. Most nights, I dealt with at least one incident of a woman passenger being harassed, followed, intimidated, or even assaulted. Workers faced similar, with every female respondent to an RMT survey of Night Tube staff stating that they had been sexually harassed or assaulted on duty at least once.

Not every Night Tube station has

enough staff to ensure safety, and London Underground is currently in dispute with one of its drivers’ unions about how Night Tube will be staffed.

It is right to demand safe public transport at night. But for Night Tube to be that safe public transport, it needs improved staffing.

Finally, please note that women do not use Night Tube just to get home. Many use it to get to early-morning jobs, in health, social care, cleaning, hospitality and other sectors where low-paid, gendered work predominates. They too deserve to be safe.

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

NO MORE CLEANING CUTS!

Word reaches *Tubeworker* HQ that ABM has been salami-slicing its staffing levels at a number of stations... again.

At Oxford Circus, for example, the contractor wants to have just two cleaners on the 07:00-15:00 shift, a ludicrous proposition given the size of the station and the workload involved.

ABM is able to attempt these kinds of cuts because it has an “output” contract with TfL. There’s no fixed staffing level (i.e., “input”) it needs to provide, it just commits to getting the cleaning done (i.e., the “output”). So if ABM bosses decide they can manage with fewer cleaners, it can cut jobs.

RMT resistance has pushed back job cuts in the past, but ABM usually has another go every year. At Oxford Circus, workers at the station and union reps are pushing back, letting the LU manager who oversees the contract know that the cut isn’t acceptable.

Ultimately the only solution is to bring cleaning in-house, so LU can oversee staffing levels directly and cleaners have the same rights and conditions as the directly-employed staff they work alongside every day.

TENSA IS TURTLE-Y INADEQUATE!

Management seem to think filmsy Tensa barriers will be sufficient to separate platforms at stations like Finsbury Park, where only one line is resuming Night Tube.

We respectfully disagree. We need proper, secure barriers such as turtle gates.

We trust that union objections will ensure that management see the wisdom of this.



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