

tubeworker

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WORKERS NEED A POLITICAL VOICE

At last month's Labour Party conference, Gordon Brown took away trade unions' (and local Labour Parties') right to submit resolutions to future conferences. Or rather, the unions gave away their rights - voting for Brown's proposal to gag themselves!

Labour conference has passed some union resolutions in recent years, criticising the Party leadership over issues such as including council housing, privatisation and trade union rights. But rather than build on those successes with a renewed fight for Labour to turn back towards socialist policies and genuine support for working-class issues, the union leaders voted to give up their right to submit anything at all!

And the rail unions? RMT was chucked out of the Labour Party for backing socialist candidates against Labour, so didn't have a vote at the conference. ASLEF apparently couldn't get into the conference hall because their chairs had been taken away to make room for press photographers (you couldn't make this up!). TSSA voted for the resolutions ban. Many Tube workers already reckon that TSSA stands for Too Scared for Strike Action; should we now rename them Too Scared to Submit Anything?

It's hard to believe that trade unions could so willingly chuck in their right to be heard. It is as though they accept that the working class has no right to a voice in politics.

Tubeworker thinks that working-class people need a political voice as a class. Choosing between parties who serve our employers is not good enough. Over a hundred years ago, socialist trade unionists rejected the non-choice between the Liberals and the Tories and set up the Labour Party to provide a direct voice for workers in politics. Now we need to reassert that idea.

The decision to remove unions' right to submit resolutions to Labour Party conference is due to be reviewed in 2009. ASLEF and TSSA members should demand that their unions fight to restore their democratic voice. But we should fight outside the Labour Party too - and in particular, should rally round the moves in RMT to stand - and invite others to join - a broad slate of candidates in next year's Greater London Authority election.

www.workersliberty.org/tubeunionspolitics

FIGHT CASUALISATION

Management have revealed their plan for the transfer of staff when LUL takes over parts of the Bakerloo, District and Victoria lines from Silverlink - an attempt to cut and casualise the workforce.

Management have a ruse to delay levelling up transferring staff's pay and conditions - holding back the pay rise until they pass medical exams and operational training.

And there's more bad news. LUL plans to use **agency staff** and **security guards** to work on the transferring stations. These staff are employed by agencies, not by LUL, with less job security, pay and rights, making the workforce more fragmented and unequal.

Security jobs have already been advertised by the agency (Capes UK) paying £7.50 per hour and working a 48-hour week. Agency staff will be doing station checks, gateline duties and ticket office turns; security guards will be reporting incidents, dealing with disorder, and opening and closing stations.

On top of all that, LUL plans to staff these stations not with resident station supervisors, but with **'mobile supervision'** - a Station Supervisor floats around several stations, with CSAs left unsupervised, secure in the knowledge that they can call the Supervisor on the phone should a problem arise!

What should be a welcome return of a small bit of the private mainline railway to public ownership is instead being used as a cloak under which to smuggle in some of the dodgy practices that have helped to casualise and fragment the mainline.

That's why the unions must not give an inch on this. No matter how 'time limited' or



'only under special circumstances', the use of agency work is not acceptable. This issues affects not just the transferring Silverlink stations - it affects every single one of us, whatever grade or location we work in. For years, LUL has looked for opportunities for using agency staff, knowing that if they can get away with it once, they can spread it across the whole combine. Before you know it, agency staff will be supplementing LUL staff on a routine basis.

RMT and TSSA have said No to management on the issues of mobile supervision, agency staff and security guards. They should soon be saying No on several other issues too. This issue has been around for about a year, but the unions only seem to have leapt into action over the last few weeks. Better late than never.

www.workersliberty.org/silverlink

Tubeworker's weblog
 - daily updates! -
www.workersliberty.org/twblog

THAMESLINK TRANSFER

There's another transfer in the offing too - King's Cross Thameslink station is coming over to LUL on 9th December. Can we trust management to ensure adequate staffing levels? Their apparent unwillingness to even discuss it with union reps suggests not.

WEST BROMPTON: MORE STAFF PLEASE

As part of the Silverlink transfer, LUL stations Highbury & Islington, Blackhorse Road and West Brompton are to take on the Silverlink platforms. This will entail extra inspections, extra fault reporting - and, you'd think, extra staff, and perhaps a notch-up of the station's complexity rating (giving a pay rise to the Supervisors). But LUL says that West Brompton will get no uprating and no more staff, despite gaining platforms and lifts. Union reps have insisted on a site visit with management, and should make an unanswerable case for more staff and a higher rating.

cleaners' news

ROSTERS VICTORY

Morden depot cleaners stopped their bosses imposing anti-social rosters.

The cleaners refused to work the new roster; ISS threatened to send them home. But the cleaners stood their ground, and RMT activists from other grades turned up at their book-on time to offer support.

ISS management were rattled both by the cleaners' self-assertion, and by the support from other Tube workers. The company withdrew its roster and agreed to create four new jobs!

UNSAFE ORDERS

In Queen's Park depot, managers felt they could order cleaners to do chemical graffiti cleaning in area B, with live juice, rather than in safe area A.

Queen's Park cleaners have been standing up to management's requests, despite intimidation from supervisors. Their union, RMT, must support any cleaners who refuse to do unsafe work.

CLEANERS' MESS ROOMS

Upminster cleaners' mess room is cold and has no facilities. Ealing Broadway's is like a cupboard where you can't even stand up straight. At Euston, the room is so hot and airless you can't breathe. At other stations, cleaners have no mess room at all!

This affects welfare, health and safety at work. Even if cleaning companies say that they will provide facilities, LUL has to provide the space. Local LUL union reps can help: raise the issue with local management and put the pressure on for decent mess rooms. Show that members of all grades will support the lowest-paid.

www.workersliberty.org/tubecleaners



London Socialist Feminist discussion group

- monthly discussions about struggles for women's rights past, present and future

More info: *Sofie* 07815-490837

Tubeworker is produced by tubeworkers in the Alliance for Workers' Liberty, an organisation fighting as part of the labour movement for a socialist alternative to both capitalism and Stalinism, based on common ownership and democracy.

We want one democratic, fighting union for all railworkers. We reject artificial divisions between workers of different grades. We oppose racism, sexism, homophobia and all prejudice that divides us. Only our bosses benefit from a divided workforce.

TICKET OFFICES

When LUL decided to delay the ticket office closures, RMT's Executive responded by suspending its dispute (TSSA couldn't even say the word 'dispute').

RMT's move was a mistake. The date for implementation has been put back - a favour to Livingstone's re-election - but the plan is still there. RMT's ultimatum was 'withdraw the plan or we are in dispute'. LUL has not withdrawn it, so we should be in dispute!

This need not mean an immediate strike ballot (last year, RMT was in dispute with LUL over pay for five months before we got a sniff of a ballot!), but it would give a clear message: "This is an attack and we will fight it." Not being in dispute suggests instead, "Interesting idea - let's talk."

www.workersliberty.org/ticketoffices

DETRAINMENT STRIKE

Bakerloo line detrainment staff are to strike again on Friday 26th October - postponed from 22nd after an admin cock-up by RMT.

They deserve full solidarity for their efforts to defeat lone working. As they have shown such resolve in continuing the fight, drivers should think seriously about rejoining the action. After all, lone working is a potential threat to all grades.

www.workersliberty.org/detrain

NO DEADMAN, NO DRIVER

Last month, drivers stopped the Circle, H&C and part of the District, refusing to go along with LUL's wish to run trains that may be fatally unsafe. On several 'C' Stock units, the driver was able to reset the deadman whilst in a motoring position.

Management saw no reason to act, nor even agree to meet union reps! It fell to us to defend safety by refusing to drive. Then managers found themselves available to meet reps after all, and to check the fleet. Amazing how flexible they become under pressure of workers taking action.

www.workersliberty.org/handc

LICENCES EXPIRED (AGAIN)

Some Control Room staff at Neasden have been working with expired safety-critical licensing. Management's explanation: a failure of the 'systemised management system'. Brilliant: a systemised system. What next? Safe safety? A licence to license?

If *Tubeworker* was about to drive a train through the areas covered by Neasden Control Room, we would check that everyone was properly licensed first.

www.workersliberty.org/servicecontrol

ROAD CRASH WARNING

Note to Buckhurst Hill management. If one of your staff has a motorbike crash on the way to work, in uniform, and goes to hospital in an ambulance, you should offer him support - not an attendance warning. A warning is against LUL's own policy, as well as against any standard of decent humane behaviour ('duty of care', anyone?).

Otherwise, you might find a furious workforce talking about industrial action.

www.workersliberty.org/sickssystem

FAMILIAR AT LAST

LUL's failure to ensure Station Supervisors are track familiar has led to many cases of service disruption and distress to staff. Finally, management have agreed to union demands to organise track familiarisation. It'll take six months(!), but hey, it's a victory.

www.workersliberty.org/training

GOLDEN HELLO

The PPP Arbiter (who elected you?!) has ruled that TfL must give £1b to whoever wins Metronet's contract, making it far more attractive to the private sector.

Mayor Ken tried to kid Metronet workers they didn't need to strike because TfL was bidding for the contract so we could expect a return to public ownership. That assurance now looks hollow. The Metronet strike may be over, but the need to fight for a return to public ownership is as urgent as ever.

www.workersliberty.org/metronet

SAFETY SHOCK

A Bakerloo driver went to hospital after getting an electric shock from the Train Ready to Start Plunger in Harrow & Wealdstone Sidings.

But management decided we could keep on using it, despite similar incidents having happened before. Five days later, a Service Control Manager saw sense and decommissioned the plunger pending further tests.

www.workersliberty.org/bakerloo

DEFECTIVE INFRACO

Tip to TubeLines. When replacing a defective position detector on a set of points, make sure that you do not replace it with one that is also defective.

Otherwise, you might get a situation like you did the other day - the north end of the Jubilee line suspended not just once but twice, when TubeLines attended to number 18 points and replaced one broken bit with another broken bit. You couldn't make it up.

www.workersliberty.org/tubelines

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Send us a fiver (cheques payable to WL Bulletins) and your address!

Got a story for *Tubeworker*? We welcome reports & comments from all Tube workers.

Contact Workers' Liberty, PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA. 020-7207-3997

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