



tubeworker

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SIGNALS VICTORY

Signals maintenance workers have won their fight against imposed weekend working.

This has been achieved by one thing: solid industrial action. Rather than roll over and accept the imposition of new rosters that would mess up their lives, signals workers demanded that RMT ballot them, then called not just a token one- or two-day strike, but over a dozen days of action, and 'action short of strikes' too. Because of this, management knew that they were serious.

This message was underlined on the first strike, when there was 100% support - no scabbing - and workers from other grades refused to cross the lively and well-organised picket lines. It was really inspiring to see workers, including young workers, resist pressure and management threats, and stand by the trade union principle of respecting picket lines.

This solidarity cost the company dearly as it had to cancel weekend engineering work and could not restore the services on several lines when signal failures went unrepaired.

Management have now withdrawn their threat to impose the rosters, and will talk to the union to agree a process by which roster changes must be negotiated in future. They have also explicitly recognised that many staff currently work Monday-to-Friday.

However, management may come back in a new attempt to bring in anti-social rosters in the future. While celebrating our win, we must not rest on our laurels; instead, we need to use this breathing space to build union strength and prepare for future attacks.

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

We can all learn from this victory, and feel more confident in our ability to fight and win. Other grades, although organising in different circumstances, can win too - as we saw two years ago when we successfully defeated LUL's plans to cut and close ticket offices.

One problem is the signals dispute was a disappointing lack of action from London Underground operational staff refusing to work in unsafe conditions during the strike. Hearty congrats to those who did refuse, but in some locations, workers had neither the information nor the lead from local reps.

RMT's head office was supposed to produce a 'know your rights' booklet about refusal to work on safety grounds following an AGM mandate to do so back in 2008. Instead, it has produced a legalistic document which is unlikely to inspire anyone to exercise their rights. Next time, we need safety briefings out in good time, and reps on site, and on the picket line, making it clear to workers in that location that if they take a stand, they will get full support.

www.workersliberty.org/metronet

FIGHT THE FASCISTS

The BNP began in the National Front, a noisy and sometimes violent group. As shown by this recent comment online, little has changed: "For an ALL WHITE homeland to occur then your mixed race children will have to leave, or will you allow them to further pollute the gene pool." posted on a BNP forum. It sickens us to see posts like this, but to know the extent of sewage one sometimes has to wade waist deep in shit.

Wherever fascist organisations are active, racist violence and harassment rise dramatically.

Support for far-right ideas is growing. One reason is disillusionment with mainstream political parties and increased sympathy for racist and nationalist ideas, which are no longer seen as taboo in some parts of the media.

Extreme-right organisations are now electorally credible on a limited basis, but have the potential to do much better. We now have Nazi Nick running in Barking & Dagenham, but we can put a stop to this slide into insanity. Local activists have delivered anti-fascist leaflets to every home in several wards. The NUT teachers union supported the day of action by hiring an ad-van to tour Barking & Dagenham with a billboard urging people to vote against the fascist BNP.

We need to fight BNP lies and prejudice, and to build upon what we have learned in the past. We need a socialist alternative to the mainstream parties, as people have become disillusioned with them and will vote BNP as a protest not knowing what they are getting themselves into.

But most of all we need to let the British people know exactly what the BNP plans are, what the 'White Pride' movement say about the people who don't agree with them and what the acceptance of 'non-whites' into the BNP is really about: a ploy to become more socially acceptable whilst remaining the same.

At times, when the BNP and the NF have grown in strength, pulled the political agenda to the right, and threatened some sort of breakthrough, anti-fascists have been able to transform the situation.

We also need to beware of the offshoots: Combat 18 (formed 1982 from BNP security wing), EDL (2009), White Knights Of The Burning Cross, British KKK and others.

The study of anti-fascism is interesting and relevant: the several different ways that generations of anti-fascists have sought to combine these two enduring themes: the message of internationalism, and the politics that looks to the working class as the key agent of change.

Saturday 27 March - conference in Nottingham for a working-class strategy to beat the fascists - contact Tubeworker for details

Tubeworker is produced by Tube workers and published by 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.

A Fiver or More?

“Yes, of course I’ll top up your Oyster for £2.50, because ...

- **“You’ve only got £2.50 on you.”**
- **“You only need £2.50 to make the journey you want to make.”**
- **“I’m worried you’ll be in danger if you have to leave the station to get a top-up elsewhere.”**
- **“I’m worried that you will become abusive or violent.”**
- **“I believe in providing a world-class customer service.”**
- **“That POM is unreliable/broken/empty/has a long queue.”**
- **“I’m anticipating that you may have a negative balance on your card.”**
- **“You look like you’re about to cry.”**
- **“You seem a decent sort of person.”**
- **“You’re a child (or you used to be).”**
- **“It’s a rubbish policy anyway.”**

Staff have sold thousands of top-ups of less than a fiver since LUL imposed this job-cutting £5 minimum policy on 2 January. *No-one has been disciplined.*

JEZZA WILL FIX IT

It’s all fun in Travel Information land because we are getting very interesting calls about the minimum £5 top up charge at booking offices.

One caller thought that you could only top up £5, £10, £15 etc. Another thought the £5 was to enter a draw to win a monthly Travel Card!

An on-the-ball pensioner said that although she got a Freedom Pass some of her out-of-town friends did not. This was an excuse to close booking offices and make people like her feel unsafe in what she called a friendless, soulless station. She said London Underground would lose many of their older travellers.

But our favourite was the lady who said the £5 top up was wrong, but it did not matter as Jeremy Corbyn was her MP and he would fix it.

www.workersliberty.org/fares

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WOT NO EXTRA STAFF?

The East London Line is due to reopen soon, newly-privatised and rebranded as London Overground.

This will lead to a rise in passengers using Whitechapel station, which you might think would lead to a rise in its staffing level. But the companies say there will be no extra staff; Whitechapel will have to manage with its existing staffing level, and minimum numbers of just one Supervisor and one other.

Tubeworker reckons that if a station saw a service withdrawn and passenger numbers fall, management would be quick enough to cut staffing. While we prepare to fight the coming job cuts, we should proactively demand additional staff where they are needed - and Whitechapel is just one case in point. www.workersliberty.org/staffinglevels

DRIVERS OFF ROSTER

Drivers are feeling the effects of the woeful 2009 Agreement as management come after jobs.

At Barking, 8 drivers have been forced off the roster and into the pool. They now find themselves having to work out of Acton Town sometimes several times a week!

It seems that ASLEF, keen to get a ‘minimum numbers’ agreement that would impress their colleagues on the national railway, have signed up to an agreement that sees minimum numbers set below existing numbers and so gives management the green light to cut jobs and turn some drivers’ working lives upside down.

www.workersliberty.org/staffinglevels

ALL CHANGE, PLEASE

Loughton station has a hoarding along the length of platform 3, so terminators now have to open their doors on the opposite side from the one drivers are used to, and the correct-side door opening kit can not prevent this. There is clear potential for wrong side door opening, and with LUL sacking staff for errors that until recently would have got them a warning, drivers and station staff are nervous.

Managers have pledged extra station staff, but they seem slow to appear. The common-sense solution would be for terminators to tip out at Buckhurst Hill and run empty to Loughton. But ‘common sense’ and ‘management’s actions’ are not always the same thing. www.workersliberty.org/central

NIGHT TIME NOISE

Loughton residents are having trouble sleeping at night because of the mega-decibel drilling. They are complaining in big numbers.

Tubeworker sympathises, and shares their astonishment that

London Underground can’t find a quieter and more reasonable way to carry out the work.

www.workersliberty.org/refurbs

BANG!

The reaction to unattended packages on our trains has hit explosive new levels. Mid-afternoon on 28 January, the Metropolitan police bomb squad carried out a controlled explosion on a District line train at Wimbledon.

The station had been evacuated, but with the official terror alert recently raised, we should all be concerned about such actions; the least we should expect is an explanation. We wouldn’t like to think that LUL would play down the security threat in case it exposes its de-staffing of station, would we?

The train was returned to service after a DMT saw no damage to the car in a visual inspection. Very reassuring.

www.workersliberty.org/security

INFLATION UP

Some people are getting excited about the rapidly-increasing inflation figures. After all, if the February RPI figure (published next month) is, say, 3.5%, then we will get a 4% pay rise.

Tubeworker hates to pour on cold water, but if RPI is 3.5%, prices are rising fast. So even if we get more money in, it will go out faster! And if RPI keeps rising, then the 0.5% extra will soon be wiped out.

The only solution is to ensure our next pay fight is more effective than the last few. A good start would be for the unions’ pay claims to specify the rise we want, rather than use the vague phrase ‘a substantial pay rise’.

www.workersliberty.org/pay

SIS: SINISTER AGENDA?

Strong union representation has reined in some of the worst abuses of the SIS / mystery snooper survey. So, sticking up reports on noticeboards or emailing them to all and sundry is no longer permitted. If it happens at your location, report it to your rep.

On Liverpool Street group recently, an SIS visitor advised CSAs that they would score only 50% for telling a customer how to get to where they wanted to! To get top marks, CSAs would have to also give the punter a map and explain the option of checking the route online before setting out.

Perhaps LUL thinks that if we train customers to use maps and websites, there will no longer be any need for human beings to help them, and so they can cut CSA jobs. But that would mean CSAs being brow-beaten by surveys into collaborating with the future abolition of their own jobs. Surely not.

www.workersliberty.org/handc