



tubeworker

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LU JOB CUTS BALLOT ON AT LAST:

VOTE YES!

At long last, we are to get our ballot papers to take action to stop London Underground's job cuts. The company is cutting around 800 stations jobs and cutting staff in service control. With 300 drivers more than it needs, LU seems to be trimming the 'excess' by sacking drivers for mistakes that would have got you a warning before now. And leaked documents have shown that plans are afoot to cut jobs in engineering and fleet, no doubt to pay off the price of the disastrous PPP.

David Cameron is fond of saying that 'We are all in this together' - while dumping workers, the poor and disabled far deeper in it than his rich mates.

But while workers and our bosses are not in it together, all grades of workers certainly are. None of our jobs is secure, and we can not afford the luxury of looking out only for ourselves. We are all in this fight together.

So it is good news that RMT's ballot includes all grades and is about all job cuts. We understand that TSSA's ballot is not far behind, but have yet to hear what ASLEF will be doing.

We need to think about the best strategy to win. Strikes can not just be one-off protest gestures designed to allow us to let off steam.

We need to show the employer that we are serious about stopping these job cuts: when the union names its first strike, it should name the second one too, so everyone is clear that if we don't win straightaway, we will not give up and go away.

We also need the unions to look at providing hardship payments to members who will struggle with lengthy action. Unite gave BA cabin crew £30 for each strike day.

And we need to use 'action short of strikes' in an imaginative way, to maintain momentum between strikes and involve more members.

Rank-and-file organisation is vital. We have seen with the ballot delay that union bureaucracies can be slow and unresponsive, and can be more concerned about staying in control than getting action organised.

Where they fail, we have to act. We all need to spread the word at work, giving each other confidence that we don't have to accept job cuts, that they are not inevitable, that we can fight them. Urge all your workmates to vote Yes in the ballot, give out union leaflets to counteract management propaganda.



The excellent 'SOS: Staff Our Stations' campaign has raised passengers' awareness of the attacks on stations jobs and ticket office opening hours, and has kept up the momentum of our campaign while we have waited an age for the union head offices to get the ballot ready. A public and political campaign should continue alongside our industrial fight.

We should also link with other public service workers and service users. Between ½ million and 1½ million public sector jobs could go as a result of the ConDems' bloodbath Budget. So we have plenty of potential allies in our fight to save jobs!

Our 'social wage' is under threat too - with benefits and tax credits being cut or frozen, and government departments having their budgets slashed by 25%, we could all soon see less money coming in and more going out.

TUBE LINES STRIKE

As Tube Lines' sad and frivolous attempt to get the strike banned failed to impress even the usually-compliant judiciary, the strike went full steam ahead for 48 hours last week.

Tube Lines workers were solid in their support for the strike. There was no Emergency Response Unit, as they were mostly on the picket line! The signals on the Jubilee, Northern and Piccadilly lines were rock solid too. Overnight engineering trains, track and signals inspections were cancelled. Pickets were well-organised and effective. The handful who came to work were mostly persuaded to turn back.

Tube Lines said that it could not guarantee jobs beyond TfL's takeover. But it could offer a three-year pay deal! We don't want to be tied into a 3-year pay deal, but we do want job security! Management also still want the right to impose anti-social rosters, including a big increase in weekend working.

The impact of the strike spread as LU staff used their right to refuse to work unsafely. Knightsbridge station closed. Picc Line drivers began to refuse to drive on Wednesday evening. By Thursday mid-morning, LU told passengers there was a 'signal failure' and part-suspension, as they did not have enough drivers to run a full service. 'Severe delays' saw 30-40 minute gaps in the service at times!

Some drivers on the Northern, Hammersmith and City, Victoria, Bakerloo, District, Met and Jubilee lines refused to work too. On the Northern Line, there were 5-10 minute gaps even in the peak, instead of a train every couple of minutes. There was a similar story on the Jubilee and H&C.

LU lost face, starting the day smugly asserting there would be a 'full service despite the RMT strike', but by the end of the day admitting on the TfL site that the strike was causing disruption and advising customers to check before travelling.

It has been inspiring to see workers artificially divided into different companies acting together and so maximising our impact. We need to learn from the depots where more drivers refused to work, and spread their confidence and organising methods to those where drivers were less confident. Station staff also need to be alert to safety issues and refuse to put themselves or passengers at risk.

It has also been a good example of large numbers of workers refusing to work on health and safety grounds. *Tubeworker* has long argued that this is the best safeguard when the company is careless about safety. Refusal to work en masse is not easy to achieve because it relies on individuals. But many have felt strongly enough to take this step.

It will hopefully be a taste of things to come, as LU pushes more unsafe practices onto us.

www.workersliberty.org/tubelines

Ideas for Freedom 2010

socialist discussion weekend, 9-11 July

Friday 9, evening: film showing at the Exmouth Arms, Starcross Street, Euston
Saturday 10 / Sunday 11: discussions at Highgate Newtown Community Centre, Archway

Debates include: ■ 'progressive' politics or class politics? ■ What openings for struggle in the Labour Party? ■ How do we make the workers' movement fight the Tories? ■ Is capitalism in decline? ■ Israel-Palestine: what should the left say?

Plus: ■ the economics of the crisis ■ class struggle against the Liberal-Tory coalition ... in the early 1920s ■ working-class environmentalism ■ Trotsky on fighting fascism ■ protest songs and working-class culture ■ women's oppression and liberation ■ the working class and the Eurozone crisis ■ and lots more

Creche and cheap food provided. Weekend ticket: £20; day ticket £12.

For more details, including timed agenda, and to book online:
www.workersliberty.org/ideas

PENNY PINCHING

The economic crisis is biting hard on London Underground, with all sorts of 'savings' being made. But rather than look in the more obvious places (eg. fat-cat salaries), managers seem to focus their 'savings' on marginal benefits to us.

So when the air conditioning failed in the Upton Park Supervisor's office, local management felt that twenty quid was far too excessive a sum to waste on a fan. Let the Supervisors work in a sauna! We all have to tighten our belts you know! (Well, some of us do, anyway.)

And when Arnos drivers had to work from Wood Green during weekend engineering works, management decided that providing sandwiches was also a profligate waste of the company's hard-earned dosh. But when drivers threatened to travel back to Arnos Grove for their grub, the sandwiches were promptly restored!

www.workersliberty.org/district

ARNOS DRIVERS REFUSE

Top marks from *Tubeworker* to Arnos Grove drivers, who refused to work on safety grounds during the Tube Lines strike in even greater numbers than at other depots.

Management were well and truly rattled, and tossed the rules out of the window in an unsuccessful attempt to bully drivers into taking trains out. They gave drivers false information that the ERU was available, interviewed drivers up to three times, denied them their right to a rep, and even kicked the reps off the premises!

Tubeworker's absolute favourite management ploy, though, was to make the refusing drivers watch SPAD mitigation videos in the training room for seven hours. That one may actually be within the rules, but it is surely a form of torture that should be outlawed by the United Nations.

www.workersliberty.org/piccadilly

CLEANERS WIN LONDON LIVING WAGE

From 1 July, all London Underground cleaners will be paid the London Living Wage, as ISS finally agreed to pay £7.85 per hour. Cleaning Supervisors will get £9.51 per hour.

This comes nearly 2 years after RMT-organised cleaners went on strike for a living wage. That strike ended unsatisfactorily: cleaners on Metronet contracts won the living wage, but Tube Lines, and ISS beneath them, dodged their promise.

So this pay rise is really 2 years overdue. But it is still a victory. Without the strike and the public campaign, multinational giant ISS would have continued squeezing the cleaners for the poverty-pay minimum wage.

This is an encouraging story of how when workers get organised, we have power. There is still a long way to go. The companies are looking into putting money towards Oyster cards for the cleaners. And we still have demands for a decent pension, 28 days holiday, and more.

www.workersliberty.org/tubecleaners

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.

STATIONS SLAUGHTERED BY LACK OF COVERAGE

Management's preparations for job cuts are seeing station duties uncovered left, right and centre. Staff are run off our feet, doing our own job and someone else's, unable to provide all the services customers need, unsafe and overworked.

Here are just a few examples:

- Knightsbridge, on a day when it had the Harrods sale and a Paul McCartney gig in Hyde Park, had two CSA duties uncovered.
- At Holborn, management left the CSA duty that does SATS uncovered, then bent the Supervisor's ear for not ensuring that SATS was provided!
- On East Ham group, management seem to think that they can treat rostered staff as though they are reserves, making them work at other stations just to cover their own deliberate de-staffing.
- On Victoria group, a ticket office had to close for four days as SAMFs had to do CSA duties (no doubt management will then notice a drop in ticket office sales and claim that ticket office opening hours should be cut!)
- In the middle of the morning peak at Euston, one member of staff had to cover both Way In and Way Out gates alone because other duties were not covered.
- Chaos ensued at Loughton on Saturday morning when the ticket office was closed due to uncovered duties. The multi-fare ticket machine inevitably failed due to overuse and both gateline staff and Supervisor were tied up dealing with irate passengers unable to access correct ticketing advice and full ticket-issuing facilities.

At surface station such as the east end of the District Line, like other places, understaffing is hitting. In the peak, one CSA can not queue-bust, deal with VIPs and school parties at the same time. The SS can not always assist on the gateline due to constant changes in PAs, meal break coverage etc.

'Babysitting' (ie. expecting a CSA to look after a station without a Supervisor on duty) is a problem as a CSA can not shut a station even in an emergency under the rule books. So in an incident, how can a 'babysitting' CSA deal with a one-under if a DSM or SS can not get there from another station?!

Things like this are happening all over the job. We need to get organised at a rank-and-file level to give each other support and confidence to resist this.

And because this is all part and parcel of cutting jobs, we need our unions to lead an effective fight to stop the job cuts.

www.workersliberty.org/staffinglevels

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