

WORKERS!



LIBERTY

tubeworker

a regular bulletin by tubeworkers for tubeworkers τ τ τ 25 february 2003

NO TO WAR NO TO SADDAM

τ saddam is a butcher τ millions oppose war for oil τ needed: workplace action τ

FRANKLY, I WOULDN'T P*** ON SADDAM HUSSEIN IF HE WAS ON FIRE. **Our union was passing resolutions condemning him for torturing trade unionists 15 years ago, while the British and American governments were doing business with him.** So said Bob Crow. Quite right too.

Saddam is a butcher, who oppresses and enslaves the peoples of Iraq. We offer our solidarity to those people in their struggle to get rid of him.

But Bush's and Blair's war is not about liberating the Iraqi peoples. Even if it does topple Saddam, it will replace him with a leader who will be little better, but more compliant to the USA.

It is not about freedom, it's about oil. A river of innocent blood will be spilled for the profits of the big oil companies. And it's about US power - the USA asserting itself as 'globocop', anyone who crosses it to be crushed.

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THE RECENT DEMONSTRATIONS proved dramatically how deeply unpopular this war is. Some two million people marched in London, Belfast and Glasgow on Saturday 15, and millions more around the world.

Yet Blair arrogantly declares that he will take no notice. **The issue of the war has shown up how flimsy and inadequate Britain's 'democracy' is.** There should be a referendum before any war.

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WE WILL HAVE TO FORCE THE GOVERNMENT to listen to the popular opposition to the war. The best way to do that is to keep building the movement that took to the streets a couple of weeks ago.

The labour movement needs to put

himself in the leadership of this movement. The TUC should recall its congress, and the unions should force the Labour Party to re-convene its conference too - Mick Rix has already demanded this.

The anti-war movement is calling for everyone to gather in Trafalgar Square at 6pm on the day that war starts. As many of us as possible should be there.

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THE GOVERNMENT MAY THINK that it can face down a few demonstrations, but it will have a serious problem if we can pull off some protest action at work. To quote Bob Crow again: **"If they go ahead with an illegal war, we should take illegal industrial action."**

We should make him stick to his words, as this kind of thing really needs leadership from the unions. They should call a stoppage of work for the full day after the war starts; and a two-minute stoppage at 11am on every day the war goes on.

With or without a lead from the unions, Tube workers should take a stand at work. The FBU have covered themselves, their engines and their stations with posters and stickers for their pay claim. **We should wear badges, and decorate every station and train with anti-war publicity.**

NO STRIKE - NO WAY!

SO AFTER ALL THIS TIME, Ken and Kiley are soon to take over. Ken has already said he wants to see some kind of longer-term pay deal.

Many drivers remembering the 35-hour-week deal would say "never again". However, it should be remembered that that deal was a management/ASLEF stitch up courtesy of the unlamented Kevin Rose, the ASLEF District Officer at the time.

If there was a multi-year deal worth serious money plus improvements in conditions, then it would be worth looking at. What about a four-day week with some reduction in hours? That would be something worthwhile, wouldn't it?

However, there is one thing that we must never accept: a no-strike deal.

Our strength lies in our ability to take action to defend ourselves - any no strike deal would destroy that.

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Got a story for *Tubeworker*? We welcome and will publish reports and comments from all Tube workers. Also get in touch if you want to come to our regular readers' meetings, or to get involved in action about any of the issues we've covered.

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NUTS AND BOLTS

The Central Line bolts situation goes from farce to scandal. Management well and truly embarrassed themselves by putting the Drain back into action, only to suspend it again when they discovered the bolts had only been tightened with that high-tech device, the finger. Meanwhile, station staff are shivering out on the street, directing the none-too-happy passengers.

It is absolute madness that privatisation can still go ahead in this chaos. It is clear to everyone that PPP will more - and worse - repeats of this. So where is the last-ditch attempt to stop it? There might be talk from the unions, but where is the action?

WHAT DOES PTOA MEAN?

As in the 'professional train operators agreement'? As far as our unions are concerned, not much to worry about. That's OK then - except that as far as LUL is concerned, it's another story.

The word is that management will look to extend maximum driving time and ban putting trains away after 4 hours 15, all under the cover of this 'professional' agreement. 4 hours 15 is too long as it is, never mind an increase.

We need to be ready to kick this rubbish out. The way to reduce trains being stabled after 4 hours 15 is to reduce the number of turns that run so close to the rostering parameters. Ask any driver, 'professional' or not.

BUSINESS NEEDS

Every so often, LUL dreams up some new device to get us to do more for less. This time it is Business Needs Schematics. They get the stats for how many tickets go through your gates then determine how many staff you need on your station. *Tubeworker* suspects that we won't see many staffing increases, but stand by to be told that your station does not need you.

The calculations take no account of interchanging, how many passengers need help, passengers going through the manual gate, the dangers facing SAs working alone, or loads of other local factors. But that's what comes of having decisions made by formulae, rather than by looking at reality. How about Railway Needs Staff Schematics instead?

HITTING BACK

Violence against staff is a severe problem at the east end of the District line. ASLEF has told LUL: act to protect the drivers or we will ballot to strike. RMT should join them.

It is management's responsibility to provide a safe system of working. We need more staff on stations, extra staff

on trains, and whatever other measures are necessary to deal with this problem.

FAMILY UNFRIENDLY

LUL managers are like limbo dancers. Just when you thought they couldn't go any lower, they take it down another notch.

A driver had her childcare arrangements go to pot at short notice, so she had to miss the back half of her shift two days running. Guess what LUL did? Sacked her!

Fortunately, sense (and good union representation) prevailed at the Appeal and she was reinstated. But LUL is going to have to do a lot better than this before we believe their guff about 'work-life balance' and 'family-friendly policies'.

BACK TO WORK

Also saved from the sack – an SA on the Picc, fired after having the cheek to have a leg ulcer operated on whilst on probation.

His RMT branch geared itself up, flexed its muscles to management, and now the SA concerned is back at work.

BACK TO THE TABLE

Bakerloo management tried to impose new rosters at Marylebone without proper consultation with the staff. Instead of just moaning, station staff organised through the RMT to refuse to work the new rosters and stick to the old ones.

Result? Management withdrew the rosters, and went back to the negotiating table. There's a lesson there for all of us.

FALLING STANDARDS

As if the horrible McDonald's ads weren't bad enough, now we are getting Evening Standard adverts on the gatelines. So they can write all sorts of insulting, abusive lies about us, but we still have our stations turned into billboards for their nasty little rag.

Apparently, if gateline advertising is damaged or defaced, it has to be completely removed.

NASTY SHOCK

Recently, an SA at Old Street got an electric shock from the UTS gates. Old Street's gates are out of service until the cause is thoroughly investigated. But *Tubeworker* thinks that all gates of that type (air-operated) should be taken out. Still, that would need management to care more about staff safety than about revenue.



Tubeworker is produced by tubeworkers in the Alliance for Workers' Liberty, an organisation fighting in the unions, the Socialist Alliance and the Labour Party 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.

Meanwhile, anyone powering the gates down for their own safety should be well within their rights and should get their union's backing.

ALAS SMITH AND JONES

Think you have the right to have a pseudonym on your name badge? Think again. Now, you have to plead your case with management and prove that you've got a really really good reason.

Since there is a record of who is using what name, it should not matter one bit whether or why you want an alias. This new policy can only have been dreamed up by people who do not take abuse and threats on the frontline. And by a management that wants to own us body and soul and does not care if that means compromising our safety.

MEET THE NEW BOSS

Ken Livingstone has appointed our new boss. Bye bye Paul Godier (pass round the hankies - not), hello Tim O'Toole. He was previously president of Conrail in America until it was split and sold off. No change there then.

We can not confirm rumours that Tim's previous rail company didn't actually carry any passengers. Instead, apparently, it transported cattle - which would at least mean that he has the necessary experience to provide London commuters with the comfort to which they are accustomed.

Tim says "we want to make London Underground the best transport system in the world". Starting with his wage packet: one of the best in the country!

What should you do if you see a Central Line train?
Make a bolt for it!