



tubeworker

a regular bulletin by tubeworkers for tubeworkers <><><> 21 July 2004

PAY AND HOURS DISPUTE:

KEEP UP THE FIGHT

<> effective strike <> solidarity in action <> needed: rank-and-file control

Our strike on 29-30 June was solid - probably the most effective Tube strike by just one union. As well as RMT members, it also got wide support from other unions' members.

Management could only run a few trains up and down between a couple of stations as a PR exercise. An unprecedented number of stations closed, and LUL were only able to open some by bussing in hordes of managers. Many drivers were delighted that the station staff had shut so many stations. Everyone who took part in the strike should feel well proud of ourselves.

Don't let the odd scab here and there get you down.

The support for the strike is no surprise! We voted by 80% to take action, after years of frustration on pay and hours. LUL's offer is miles short of what we want and deserve.

And at the same time, LUL continues to hold the threat of 800 stations job losses over us, and a demand for so much 'flexibility' you could tie yourself in knots.

PICKETING IS THE KEY

Spirits were high on the picket. Wherever there was a picket, Tube workers were persuaded to turn round and go home.

RMT picketed more stations than usual, with notable success. Finsbury Park was shut first thing in the morning and picketed all day; Green Park was picketed for the first time. Pickets even signed up new members to the RMT. Many depots were nearly all-out, with just a few ASLEF drivers going in.

The few weak spots can be dealt with by better picketing. For example, Seven Sisters is hard to picket because it has so many exits. The response of the local branch is to organise many more pickets next time.

WHAT NEXT?

The week after the strike, there was a big reps' meeting. Everyone was clear that if management do not significantly up their offer, we should strike again. Reps reflected the overwhelming feeling of pickets and branch meetings - step up the action and stop messing around with 24-hour stoppages.

Then RMT head office said it would name more strikes if there was no progress by 16 July. That date has come and gone, and as we write, everything has gone quiet.

This is ominous. We would love to think

that our negotiators are walking all over management and will emerge victorious, but it is equally likely that they are cooking up a deal which will be hailed as a victory but actually contain little improvement on the shabby 'offer' which we struck against.

Surrender is not an option for Tube workers. If we give in, we are inviting management to hold back our pay, hold up our hours, and come after our conditions.

STAND FIRM

We should stand firm, fight for a better deal, and put on more action if we do not get it. RMT should ask the labour movement and general public for support - take on the arguments, and produce a leaflet to give to passengers.

ASLEF and TSSA should quit doing management's dirty work and join the action - plenty of their members did, so it's time their head offices followed suit.

Rank-and-file union members need to be in control of the action. Keep holding regular reps' and activists' meetings so we can hear report-backs from negotiators, and so the rank-and-file can tell the union Executive exactly what we want.

METRONET: VOTE NO

Under pressure of the strike, Metronet has upped its offer. But not by much, and with plenty of strings. The pay rise is 3.2%, plus an extra 4% for woefully-paid signalling support fitters. The 35-hour week will come in by January 2006, but will be 'self-financing'.

Some pay rates in the workshops will be harmonised. Apprentices get travel concessions, but as they qualify for young persons' discount already, it is worth little to them and costs little to the company.

The offer contains clauses which could see attacks on conditions. It commits the union to 'co-operation on future changes', and suggests re-writing the frameworks.

It could usher in the return of Appendix A, which includes loss of Annual Leave entitlement during sick leave, loss of grade (or even job) if you fail relicensing tests three times, and cutting shift lengths so you have to work six nights to fulfil your weekly hours.

So *Tubeworker* is alarmed to see RMT head office calling this deal a great victory, and recommending members vote for it. (The other Metronet unions - TSSA, BTOG and Amicus - rolled over long ago.)

The strike was strong at Lillie Bridge, on the signals and depots. It could have been better on the P-Way, but another strike could have forced Metronet to improve the offer and back down on the strings.

Voting down this deal will make them rethink, and at the very least, a significant No vote will put the brakes on Metronet's attacks.



NEW from Workers' Liberty

TUNNEL VISION: London Underground's Public-Private Partnership and the fight against it

Telling the full story of the five-year-long fight against privatisation assessing its strengths and weaknesses, and looking to the future.

68 pages for £2 - Send a cheque (payable to 'WL Bulletins') to Workers' Liberty, PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA

Strike Shorts

ON PROBATION?

Reports abound of managers trying to intimidate probationers to scab on the strike. So please be reassured: despite what they say, it is not 'illegal' for probationers to strike, neither can it be held against you when your probation is assessed. Quite the opposite: being an active member of a strong union is going to make management think twice about picking on you.

What do you call someone who tries to frighten people they think are vulnerable? A bully. And what is the best way to deal with a bully? Stand up to them.

BOYCOTT?

There is a tiny group of right-wing passengers calling for a boycott of the Tube in protest at SAs (yes, SAs!) being "overpaid". Despite there being only 20 of them, they are getting loads of media coverage.

It's another media distortion, designed to demoralise us. Don't take any notice - this little band does not represent the majority of passengers, many of whom support us.

SAFETY FIRST?

As usual, management played fast and loose with safety on the strike day. RMT heard reports of stations open unstaffed; an unlicensed manager pulling points at Upminster depot; and trains let out even though they were not properly checked.

So when they say that their job cuts and 'flexibility' won't affect safety standards, do you believe them?!

SPOT THE COPPER

Odd that. Call the BTP because a member of staff has been assaulted, and they might stroll along half an hour later when the assailant is long gone. But they seem to be able to get to a picket line in a flash. Anyone would think they were there to serve the bosses, rather than to protect people.



Tubeworker is produced by Underground workers 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.

Want to get every issue of Tubeworker (published monthly) sent to you? Send us a fiver (cheques payable to WL Bulletins) - and your address! Got a story for Tubeworker? We welcome & will publish reports & 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.
Contact Workers' Liberty, PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA 020-7207-3997
Tubeworker p&p S. Matgamna

ON THE WEB

www.workersliberty.org

www.workersliberty.org/tubeworker
issues of Tubeworker going back to 2002
www.workersliberty.org/railunions
the latest stories on issues for rail workers
www.workersliberty.org/railunionsindex
over 100 articles on rail workers' issues
www.workersliberty.org/unions
reports from other unions, and analysis of the big issues facing trade unionists today.

e-mail us: office@workersliberty.org

Subscribe to Tubeworker by e-mail:

Send a message to
tubeworker-list-subscribe@workersliberty.org

Not-Even-Pale-Pink Ken

Ken Livingstone's comment that he would cross a picket line galvanised the strike, rather than putting anyone off! We are not going to take that from someone on a salary of £100k+, who was re-elected with the support of our unions.

Livingstone was not just criticising the RMT's tactics or urging us to accept the offer. He was urging RMT members to scab. This goes against the most ABC principle that every union member should hold dear - the 11th commandment: *you do not cross a picket line.*

Ken's perception of his job is to serve big business and stuff ordinary people in London. As Mayor he has allied with City financiers and big business to press for more office skyscrapers and run a joint campaign for British entry into the euro. He appointed Tory Steve Norris, Director of Jarvis, to the board of TfL.

Livingstone has a long record of talking left and selling out. As leader of the old GLC, he introduced OPO and blocked our pay claim. He blustered about fighting the Tories and saving the GLC, but did not put up a real fight.

Before their reconciliation, Blair's main objection to Livingstone was that he opposed PPP. But all Ken did was launch hopeless court cases, rather than run a campaign or support our strikes.

Tubeworker has said it before: 'Red Ken' is a self-serving career politician, no kind of principled socialist or any kind of decent political choice for working people. Some people called us 'sectarian' for telling the truth about Livingstone.

But we think that his latest despicable action has proved that we were right.

Having Doubts?

"But we're paid quite well ..."

Compared to, erm, really badly-paid people? Funny how the papers compare our wages to nurses and cleaners, not to, say, high court judges, or Bob Kiley!

If we are paid OK, it's because we have fought for it. If we don't keep up this fine tradition, our pay will soon slip back.

We work hard, anti-social hours, we have bills and mortgages to pay, we deserve some quality of life. Don't under-value yourself: that's management's job.

"But nurses and cleaners are more deserving of a pay rise than us."

And if we win, they are more likely to get one. If we lose, less likely.

The same newspapers and politicians who cry these crocodile tears are the first to attack nurses or other low-paid workers when they strike for a pay rise. Look at what they did to the firefighters. Don't let them divide workers against each other.

"If they agree to our pay demand, fares will have to go up. That's not right."

Fares don't have to go up. The government could tax the rich and big business to fund our pay rise, lower fares, and better public services all round.

This is Scab Livingstone's argument. His belief in pay restraint and low fares did not stop him paying Bob Kiley up to £5m per year.

"The 4-day week is a pipe dream."

No it's not. Some mainline drivers already have it. Anyway, it's what we need. Two days off like most workers, and another one to rest from the effects of shift work. We need quality time away from the job. We are human beings, not robots.

"Why should drivers strike to defend station jobs?!"

Because if management get away with attacking station staff, they will come for drivers next. You might think there is no more productivity you can give, but they will find some. Some mainline drivers now check tickets, clean trains and do platform duties.

In any case, if there are fewer station staff, then it is less likely that anyone will be on hand to lamp out the last train, or help you with a defect, an assault or a one-under.