

WORKERS'



LIBERTY

tubeworker

a regular bulletin by tubeworkers for tube workers ♦♦♦ 1 october 2002

SOLIDARITY CAN WIN

♦ link up with firefighters and local government ♦ build public sector alliance ♦

FOR THE first time in years, the strike action taken by the RMT and ASLEF on 24-25 September prevented London Underground Limited from running even one single train. Even by management's own figures, only 14 drivers out of 600 booked in for duty, and thousands of station staff stayed at home or stood on picket lines in protest at the imposition by LUL of the 3% pay rise and their refusal to go to ACAS to discuss the harmonisation of staff pensions, travel facilities and the shorter working week.

Despite the lies and bad press from management and the Evening Standard, there was loads of support from the public on the picket lines. The dispute, however, is clearly not going to be resolved lightly.

If LUL does not move after Wednesday, the best next step will be two 24-hour strikes in the same week. That will have more impact than two strikes separated by a week. The strikes should be timed to fit in with other disputes, especially the firefighters', so that our action best strengthens theirs and theirs best strengthens ours.

Cross-union unity

ALONDON Public Sector Alliance was set up by union leaderships in London some months ago.

Unfortunately not much has been heard from it in our dispute, the local government workers' action, or the firefighters'. But exactly that sort of Alliance is needed now. We should press our union leaders for the Public Sector Alliance to become active, start calling meetings, and start coordinating action.

The union head offices should also call a joint London-wide RMT and ASLEF reps' meeting, so that we can have full discussion on where we go with this dispute, how we link up with other disputes, and how we connect the pay dispute with PPP.

The way to take forward both fights over pay and over PPP safety, is to strike over both at the same time. It would be stupid and pointless to strike one day over one, then another day over the other. It would be irresponsible to let the ballot

mandate for action over PPP safety just lie unused. In fact, the reason why management have refused us a decent pay offer is that the Treasury is holding the purse strings in preparation for PPP.

Reject divide-and-rule

IN THE days preceding the strike last week, management sank to yet another all-time low in their bid to curtail the action. Staff were threatened with disciplinary action through the I and A procedure if they did not report for duty. Memos were circulated from Bob Mason which were conveniently not signed. As LUL knows very well, such a practice is completely illegal, and their behaviour amounts to nothing more than bullying and intimidation, especially of new recruits and probationers.

LUL are claiming that about 50% of station staff reported for duty. It is fair to say that a few hundred scabbed, but this figure has been largely inflated. Reports from the clothing store confirm that management have been collecting operational uniform to make it look as if as many station staff as possible came in.

As always with LUL, they are more concerned with public perception than with actual reality.

Of course management's tactics are simple and naive. They want the train operators to believe that station staff are getting a free ride while they lose a day's money. On the other hand, they want the station staff to think that the drivers are in dispute just for their own pay packets, and once they've offered the drivers alone a decent pay rise then the strike will be over.

It's the age-old tactic of divide and rule. That is why it is so important to get staff from all grades on picket lines, not only at depots but at stations as well, where we can put our argument to all grades of staff and to the public.

Intimidation

WHAT OF the few hundred "heroes" who bravely came in (scabbed) last week? We at

Tubeworker feel that scabs can be categorised.

First, and possibly the most common excuse, is that they can't afford to lose a day's pay. Well, most of us can't afford it, but we would rather lose the money than sacrifice our integrity.

If you are genuinely struggling, then the union can help through its strike pay or hardship funds. Nine times out of ten, however, you'll find it is the overtime kings and queens who all of a sudden haven't got two farthings to rub together.

Those people are parasites and must be confronted. The only reason we are relatively well paid at the moment is because of strike action taken in recent years.

Second, there are TSSA members. TSSA members should be screaming at their Executive to ballot over pay and conditions, but as we all know many of them chose that union exactly because they never strike.

Third are the people who feel intimidated by management, especially after their threats last week. Once again, we must confront these people, and get them to stand up to the bastards.

Remember, a bully will only push you around as long as you let them. RMT and ASLEF will never settle a dispute while their members are being victimised.

Keep up the pressure!

WE MUST link up with the local government workers and show our support. They are facing attacks through PFI projects and contracting-out.

It is the same issue as the reason why LUL is digging in its heels over pay — they want the strike to crumble so that they can deliver a railway to the privateers with a cowed and weakened trade union.

Bob Mason may see himself as the Ian MacGregor of the Tube dispute, but we're pretty sure we'll be here this time next year whereas he will probably be busy screwing up some NHS Trust somewhere.

Let's keep up the pressure on LUL and the Government!

Falling Standards

Howdy! Much Hatings here, editor of London's most popular — only, actually — daily evening newspaper. As we are committed to unbiased, balanced journalism, we would just like to say that WE HATE TUBE WORKERS. After all, I have my profits — I mean my readers — to think of.

When Tube workers strike, we sell fewer newspapers — ergo, the aforementioned pathological hatred. Oh, and we are a multi-million-pound capitalist enterprise, so any sign of the great unwashed workers standing up for themselves has to be condemned in the most strident tones.

In times like these, the truth is a luxury we can ill afford. We do not want everyone else getting ideas now, do we? If Tube workers get a decent pay rise, everyone else will want one. Maybe even the people who print *Falling Standards*, maybe even my butler. Heavens, no.

We have this spifing line at the moment about Underground strikers being aggressive and intimidating. We do not even need any evidence — they are such emotive words that if we print them often enough, people will start to believe them. LUL management think it is a great spin, and are more than happy to help us out by calling the coppers to picket lines for no good reason.

Good front page on the strike day, don't you think? We took 300 pics of Brother Crow and printed the most hideous, the one where he looks like Les Dawson. Then, in the scoop of the year, we managed to find one nurse in the whole of London prepared to slag off the Tube strike.

We made out how much we love nurses, but if they go on strike, we will hate them too! Finally, I hope you enjoy our supplement about posh restaurants and riverside loft apartments. Just remember, that is for the likes of me, not the likes of you!

Tally ho!

No safety, no work

Why do we need to ballot over supporting the firefighters? We are already losing money over our dispute. If it's not safe to

Tubeworker is produced by Tube 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 a tiffical division between workers of different grades. We oppose racism, sexism, homophobia and all prejudice that divides us. Only our bosses benefit from a divided workforce.

“Building on the rank and file revolt”

A trade-union day school organised by *Solidarity* and *Workers' Liberty*, with speakers including Mark Serwotka (general secretary, PCS) and Steve Godward (Birmingham firefighter), both in a personal capacity. Saturday 26 October, 11 to 5.30, University of London Union, Malet St, London WC1. To register to attend, please phone 020 7207 3997 or email office@workersliberty.org.

“Imperialism: what it is, how it has changed, how to fight it”

London Solidarity/ Workers' Liberty forum. Wednesday 16 October, 7.30pm. University of London Union, Malet St, London WC1, near Euston.

run trains or open stations without proper fire cover then we can all refuse to work on the grounds of safety. LUL have a procedure laid down covering this. We don't need to ballot or lose money — but we would need a clear lead from union head offices and Health and Safety reps.

Pink Ken? Yellow New Labour

We hardly expected it would be our job to defend Ken Livingstone. But against the disgusting moves by New Labour to censure him for his support for our pay dispute, not-so-red Ken is entirely in the right. It shows how low New Labour has fallen, and how far it has moved away from any form of representing the working class.

Ken Livingstone has said that when his Mayor's office takes over the Underground, he will go for a three-year pay deal. Good or bad? It all depends on the detail. In principle the greater security of a three-year deal might be good, but we have had our fingers burned in the past with the drivers' 35 hour week deal, which locked us in to three years of minimal pay rises.

“No regard for truth”

Greg Tucker, RMT Branch Secretary at Waterloo, has won his case at an Employment Tribunal against being downgraded from driver to ticket collector.

According to the Tribunal, the chief management witnesses showed “no regard for truth”.

“In circumstances where no other coherent explanation suggests itself, the excessive form of punishment, the absence of any credible explanation for it and the

numerous unsatisfactory features of the Respondents' (i.e., South West Trains') case combine to point very clearly, in our view, to the Applicant's past trade union activities and the prospect of his engaging in such activities in the future as being the true cause.”

Of the manager who took the original disciplinary hearing they comment: “The mental processes which Mr Cook claimed to have followed disclose as clear a case of unfair dismissal as one could imagine. We found him a deeply unimpressive witness who appeared to give his evidence without regard for truth and solely with an eye to where the advantage lay. We found much of his evidence implausible, and even absurd.”

South West Trains now has twenty-eight days to come up with an agreeable form of restitution. The union will continue to press for Greg Tucker's full reinstatement as a driver, and thanks all who supported Greg.

No war on Iraq!

The march to stop Bush's and Blair's war on Iraq, in London last Saturday, 28th, was the biggest anti-war protest in Britain for many years. There were large trade union contingents, and ten trade unions, including RMT and ASLEF, officially supported the march.

Tubeworker says: Saddam's regime is poisonous, but the antidote of US war is even more poisonous. The USA would replace Saddam by another Saddam, different only in that he would fit in more with US wishes. The USA's real motive is *oil*, not human rights.

The next anti-war action planned is on 31 October — a day of local meetings, protests, rallies, and civil disobedience.

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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 have covered.

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