

TRANSPORT WORKER

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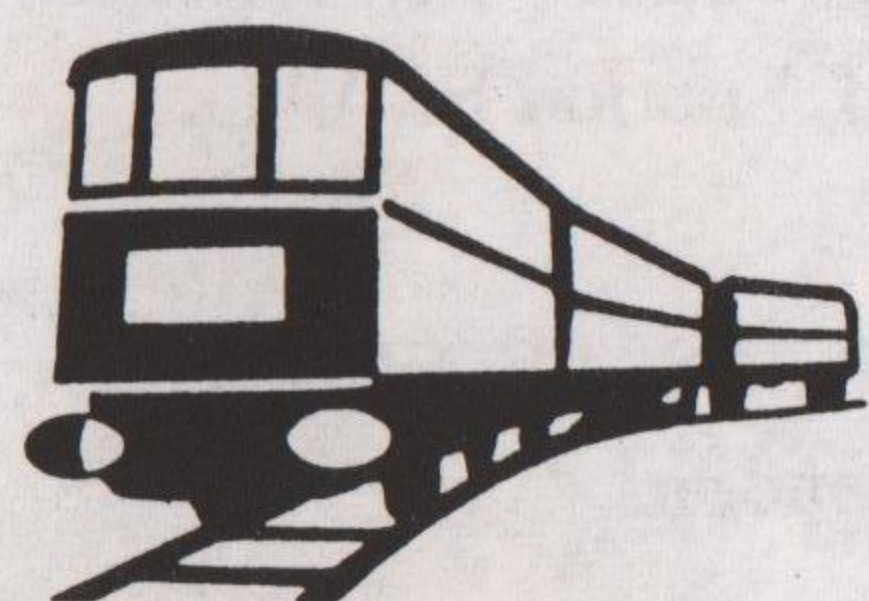
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YET again railworkers have been saddled with a measly pathetic 4.5% pay increase. This comes against a background of ever-rising rents and mortgages coupled with a dramatic fall in overtime available in many areas leaving many railworkers and their families in dire financial straits. It is time that the issue of low pay on the railways was taken seriously. Each year the unions put in a claim for a substantial increase in pay and a big reduction in working hours; the BRB respond by offering a couple of per cent; the unions meet and negotiate a half a per cent increase on the original offer and claim a victory. Is this endless charade really the way forward?

Next year's pay campaign should start now. Money should be raised to form a fighting fund ready to finance decent strike pay. The unions should start to get propaganda into the workplace stating that this time they are serious about winning a major pay increase for railworkers and that they have every intention of fighting for it. Perhaps it would be a good idea if Knapp, full time officers and the National Executive were to announce that they would only accept railworkers' average earnings and donate the rest of their inflated salary to the fighting fund. If they and their families had to live on our meagre pay for a year perhaps they would start to take low pay seriously.

BREAKING THE MOULD

Created to gain higher wages and a shorter working week, trade unionism achieved these and found itself at a dead end. In the long run what is the point of wage increases in the face of inflation? The trade unions have no intention nor the design to do anything beyond selling our labour power to the bosses, a road littered with compromises with the philosophy of management. The more butchering the transport industry suffers, the more compromises and surrenders without a fight, going so far as to threaten and sabotage our attempts to fight in any effective and principled way.

The mould of trade unionism doesn't need to be tinkered with, but to be broken. A transport workers network will work on the basis meaningful action, to build an organisation that is workplace based, open to all grades of workers, based on solidarity and direct action and decision-making on an open and democratic basis. We reject the need for union bureaucrats and full-timers who excel in stitching us up; any specific tasks should be by recallable delegates, directly elected by regular, mass meetings and holding office only for limited period.

What we propose is not new nor is it unsuccessful, in other industries workers are organising along the same lines, in many other countries workers' organisations have and are functioning very successfully with similar aims and principles. Whether it be called revolutionary unionism, anarcho syndicalism or otherwise, it amounts to workers taking charge of their own affairs in challenging a system that organises society into two classes whose interests are directly opposed.

Equally we see no role for any form of marxism, which only results in a new form of dictatorship and greater misery and exploitation for the working class. Join us in the fight to reclaim what is ours - our lives and the wealth we create, to prepare through taking control of our own struggles, for the day when we take control of our own industries for the benefit of the community as a whole, based on need not profit.

TRANSPORT WORKER

No. 3. SUMMER '92

FREE

RAILWAY MACHINERY



THE futility of looking for a Labour victory to solve all workers' problems has again been exposed. Both the RMT and ASLEF, instead of confronting the government's plans to privatise the railways head-on, devoted all their energies into working for a Labour government. Indeed, in the run-up to the election the BRB served notice that they were unilaterally withdrawing from the machinery of negotiation without giving the required period of notice. In a further act of provocation they hired Price Waterhouse to ballot Senior Conductors again blatantly disregarding the machinery.

This is what should be done now. There is little point in sitting down at ACAS to try and negotiate a way out of our trouble. It is obvious that the BRB are intent on scrapping the current machinery of negotiation - they have already totally re-organised management structures through 'Organising For Quality' which, as far as they are concerned, make the current machinery redundant. In any case how can you have a national negotiating structure when they intend to break up the railway through privatisation.

While all this was going on the RMT Executive and officers, instead of organising a campaign in readiness for the ballot - the only response possible to such actions - were stood down to go out campaigning for a Labour victory. Now that Labour has failed to form a government for the fourth successive time union leaders seem shell-shocked and in disarray. This would not have happened if the unions had responded to the government and BRB plans as we did in 1989 with the use of industrial action.

The fight for a new machinery should start right now with a campaign leading to a ballot for strike action. Nor should the machinery be seen in isolation - it should form part of the wider campaign against privatisation. The rail unions should join with other workers facing the threat of privatisation such as miners and London bus workers to form a united front against the government.

CONTINUED OVER

LONDON UNDERGROUND

FIGHTING THE COMPANY PLAN

The following article is from the Tube Workers Action Group bulletin, formed by rank and file tube workers working for strike action against LUL's Company Plan.



STRAKER WAR DECLARES

In an article in the "Evening Standard" on Monday 13 April, LUL personnel director, Roger Straker said that if a strike took place "there will be corpses". He said, "We have said throughout our endeavours that we wish to achieve changes without leaving the battlefield littered with corpses. If the unions go down this path there will be more corpses."

CONTINUED OVER

By Transport Workers - For Transport Workers

This Statement is a declaration of war, there is no pretence anymore, no crap about how this management respect and care about their workforce. Their real attitude to us has been exposed, they consider us the enemy to be slaughtered and our bodies thrown into a mass grave.

This management, or should I say scum, must be fought every inch of the way, this is the time for all LUL workers to stand together regardless of union loyalties, it does not matter to management what union badge you wear, you are an LUL worker and therefore you are their enemy. Don't let the unions divide us, the RMT has called a ballot for strike action, if the RMT are defeated it will not just be a defeat for the RMT members, it will be a defeat for every worker on the underground. We must not become unwitting allies of Straker.

Any thoughts that anyone may hold that we can negotiate with these people must surely now be gone. This management hold us in utter contempt. We cannot trust them an inch. After the dispute of 1989 and the cuts of last year management agreed at ACAS to set up joint working parties to discuss issues of productivity, etc. All of these ACAS agreements have been torn up by management and thrown in the bin. No, there can be no compromising with this scum, I hope none of the union leaders who did a Neville Chamberlain, and came back from ACAS with a document signed by Herr Tunnicliffe stating he would never go to war with the workforce, think that a new document signed by the fuhrer will be worth anymore than it was in 89 or 91. No! Straker's comments in the "Standard" make it quite simple. There will be no deals, there will be no compromises. We are going to crush the workforce on this job and the unions with them. There is only one way for us the workforce to deal with these people and that is to fight and make sure that we win, and the only way to win is through total unity. The union head offices have gone their separate ways, lets make sure that we don't do the same. **STAND TOGETHER - DEFEAT THE PLAN**

A strike by tube workers will need and deserve the maximum of solidarity, both in terms of supportive action and financially. We must not let the trade unions, as is their habit, stand back and allow another section of the working class be hammered by the bosses. Neither the laws of the rich designed to throttle workers' organisation nor intimidation can be allowed to stand in our way. 'An injury to one, is an injury to all', might be a hackneyed saying when

coming from Norman Willis and his chums, but unless taken to heart and put into practice, we are nothing but dead meat on the bosses' slabs...

The plan will mean 5,000 redundancies (almost a quarter of the workforce), the introduction of individual contracts, merging grades, wage cuts, performance related pay and the introduction of private contractors. Tube workers have voted two to one for strike action, but at the present moment the RMT is doing it's best to negotiate and compromise out of the showdown that would tell management where to stick their plan.

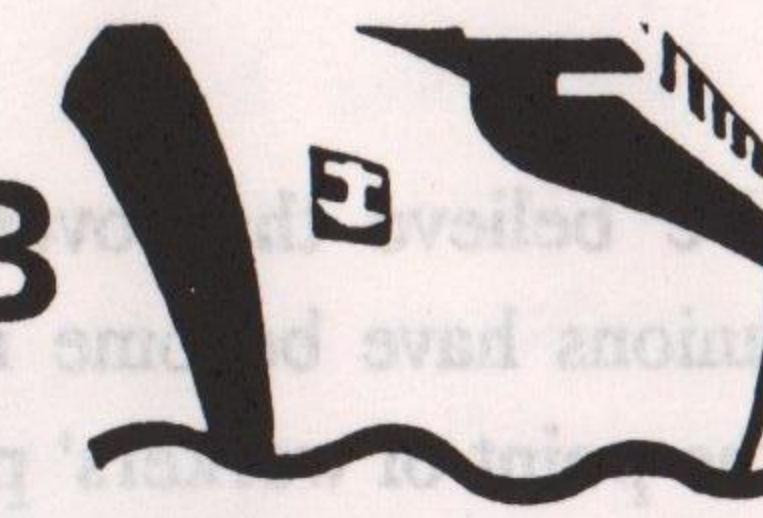


BR FROM FRONT PAGE -

A new machinery should be drawn up by the rail unions to build the campaign around. This should include the retention of the PT&R which provides the very basis of the protection of our conditions and is not even mentioned in the current BRB proposals. The basis of that new machinery should be the retention of LDC's, extending their powers, making them fully fledged shop stewards. The LDC's are based in the workplace and are the only part of the union that workers relate to on a day to day basis. So by putting LDC's at the forefront, not only will it help win the campaign, but it will also help begin the rebuilding of workplace organisation and militancy which is desperately needed to make progress.

In the long term workers will have to realise that they cannot depend on any political party to solve their problems. Even if the Labour Party had been elected do we really think there would have been any massive improvement in pay and conditions given their history in government. Workers' power lies not in parliament but in the workplace - that is where our economic muscle is and it is only by building militant trade unions that we can begin to flex that muscle.

ON THE JOB



It seems that bosses are still not happy with the ludicrously unsafe manning levels on ships. A new navigational aid to keep up 24 hour productivity has been installed on 3 ships owned by Hapag-Lloyd, the large German ship owners. A transparent toilet giving panoramic views of both port and starboard has been installed on their bridges. The new toilet will allow the present requirement of at least 2 people on look-out at any time to be cut to one.

This will mean that the crew will now be cut to 13 on the 30,000 ton container ships. German unions have stated that they fear for safety with just one person on duty at night on the long Atlantic crossings. Perhaps the position was better summed up by an experienced ship's pilot in a letter of protest to the German transport minister. He wrote: "To me this is an expression of utter contempt for human beings. It seems productivity must be kept up even when shitting."

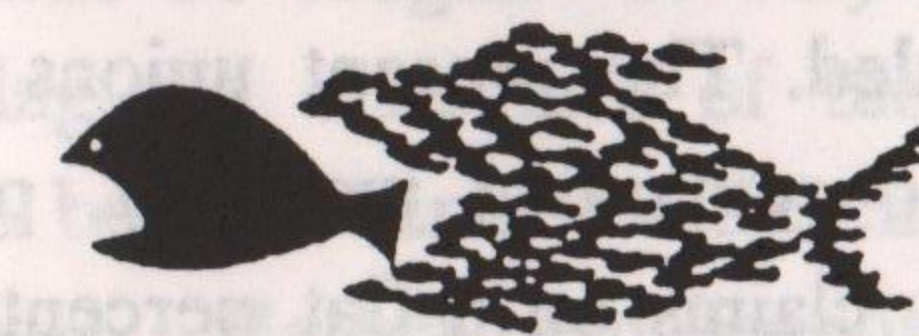
GLASGOW UNDERGROUND

Following managements failure to improve on a pathetic 4% pay offer, workers are planning to increase action in their most serious strike ever. As we go to print there have been two half day strikes, involving 300 workers, with further one day strikes planned.

SOLIDARITY



IS NOT A LUXURY
BUT A NECESSITY



Many of these articles were sent in to Transport Worker. We welcome any such contributions as this is the only way ordinary workers get to hear what's going, on as the unions seem to have the same attitude to us as gardeners do to mushrooms - keep us in the dark and feed us on shit!

WEST MIDLANDS TRAVEL BUS

Bus drivers are on strike against a paltry 2% pay offer and for payment for unsocial hours. Effective picketing has ensured that of the thousands on strike, the numbers of scabs have been cut from 90 to around 20. Further food for thought for scabs is canteen staff's refusal to serve them.

There is a possibility of escalating action from Saturday strikes to hard-hitting weekday strikes to push the point home to management, who are offering to subsidise other firms prepared to run extra services.

Public support is there for the strikers, with hundreds signing a petition.



A Boss is like a diaper...
Always on your ass and
usually full of shit.

DRIVERS FOR SAFETY

The first meeting of a new group, 'Drivers For Safety', took place on April 5th in Manchester. The group hopes to put across lorry drivers' views on safety on the roads and at work. They hope to highlight that the long hours currently worked by drivers are unsafe and that the laws are drafted for the benefit of the shipping companies and not the safety of drivers and the general public. Contact TGWU branch 6/72 or us here at Transport Worker for more information.

HGV drivers may like to know that fees for medicals for HGV licence renewal are reclaimable. Contact your tax office, shop steward or union rep or drop us a line here at TW.

CRISIS? WHAT CRISIS?

THE British trade union movement is in a financial and ideological crisis which can only worsen with the election of a Tory government for a fourth successive term. These 2 facts are closely linked. Since Thatcher was elected in 1979 trade union membership has fallen markedly and continues to do so. The TUC's latest annual report shows that membership has almost halved since the Tories came to power with only 6 million now entitled to vote in union elections.

This has also had a dramatic effect on the TUC's and individual unions' incomes. Many unions are now in debt and have been forced to borrow money to keep going. As a result, according to TUC figures, a massive 10% of dues goes towards the repayment of debt, in other words our hard-earned money goes straight to bankers and their rich friends. This has forced a rash of amalgamations over the past few years, the latest of which is the merger of the AEU and EEPTU to form the second largest union in the country, with NALGO, NUPE and COHSE soon to follow to form a new union of 1.5 million members.

Here at Transport Worker we would welcome these new super-unions if their main aim was to increase the industrial strength of workers. However, the current amalgamations are inspired only by financial viability and the desire of union bureaucrats to retain their power and well-paid jobs. Whilst the merging of unions along industrial lines - for example, an RMT-ASLEF merger - would be of immense benefit to workers in their fight against management, little or no thought is given to that in any of the recent or proposed mergers. What is now occurring is the formation of a number of general unions or mini-TUC's which will accept anyone as members and indeed compete with each other for members, often trying to win single-union sweetheart deals with management.

Coupled with this merger-madness is the move away from workplace militancy to more of an American-style business union mentality. Unions increasingly see themselves as pressure groups who will be able to influence government by the use of professional negotiators elegantly expressing their views without the need of strike action. More and more they see their members as clients who pay dues in return for services - hence the growing emphasis on mortgages, credit cards, insurance and even membership of BUPA in the case of the old EEPTU.

We believe that over the last 20 years the trade unions have become more and more divorced from the point of workers' power - the workplace - and the move towards super unions will only increase that trend. This can only lead to unions being alienated from their members and therefore of little value to ordinary working people.

There is a need to build workplace organisations that will concentrate on improving pay and conditions while constantly stressing the need to change the whole capitalist system which is the ultimate source of misery and oppression. We at Transport Worker will be part of that movement believing that the future lies in working class organisation based on the workplace and not "super unions" who measure success in terms of a balanced bank book and the number of credit cards issued to members.

TIME TO FIGHT THE BOSSES

LOW PAY & COMPETITION ON THE BUSES

A 4.25% pay rise this spring at Eastern Counties buses gave little cause for celebration, especially in the context of recent rises, never more than a point or two off the going rate of inflation. In real terms, our wages have at best stood still...funny how managements' rises vary from 10 to as high as 60%, and more, whilst we're told to "tighten our belts" in a recession - no more than a ploy by the bosses to guarantee they maintain their luxurious lifestyles at our expense.

Low pay in the bus industry, and issues such as the disparities between minibus and conventional drivers must be tackled. The present unions condemn the lower paid to remaining just that, particularly by operating pay claims on a flat percentage basis - in real terms widening the pay differentials between workers. Low pay only benefits the bosses - as a tool to stave off competition from other outfits and expand their operations. It's long overdue for a change in the rules of the game. Too often cons and minibus drivers are divided, arguing who will lose out, at pay rounds. Our only concern should be that workers win and the bosses lose.



We reject the view often put by trade union officials that increases for the lower paid are to the detriment of those on better pay. Rather than let management paint us into a corner, where our pay demands compete against each other from the pot they make available, we have to directly attack the parasitic bosses who take the lions' share of the wealth that we create. It is here that the trade unions are neither willing or able to do the business - challenging managements' "right to manage" or for that matter their "right" to sponge off working people. The bosses' tool in pegging down our pay and maintaining their gravy train, has been to play one outfit's workforce off against another, playing on fears that if our wages are too high then we'll be unable to compete and end up being made redundant as we lose passengers and routes. The lower the wages in one firm, the more the other will keep their workers' wages down, so that the bosses can maintain maximum profits. To the unions' shame it's a system they go along with all the way. As a matter of urgency this must be fought. It only benefits the bosses in getting the maximum of the wealth we create and pits bus workers of different companies against each other. Rather than continuing to allow ourselves be divided as a class, every effort must be made to organise industry-wide in order to coordinate pay demands to raise wages to the highest common denominator and beyond. United against the competitiveness of our bosses we can confront as a class the bosses' division of profits at our cost and start making real gains.

ANTI-UNION LAWS - THE NEXT ROUND

THE UK has the most anti-union legislation - and the most repressive - than any other EC state. Nevertheless the Tories are pressing ahead with plans for yet more. The latest plans unveiled in last year's green paper, entitled 'Industrial Relations in the 1990's', include the following:

- * postal ballots for strikes - these would replace workplace ballots for all but the smallest disputes;
- * strike notice - a minimum of 7 days notice after declaration of the strike ballot result;
- * notice to employers - obliging unions to notify employers if a ballot was due to be held; to supply employers with sample copies of the ballot paper and the scrutineer's report;
- * public right to sue strikers - any members of the public gains a right to sue public service workers taking 'unlawful' industrial action;
- * periodic renewal of the 'check-off' - workers having to renew their agreement to deduction of union subscriptions from pay at least every 3 years.

It now looks that one of the proposals in the green paper has now been dropped by the government - legally enforceable collective agreements. This is because these were overwhelmingly opposed by employers who, as the most frequent contract-breakers, had the most to lose! The draconian nature of this latest round of union legislation can be judged by the fact that they only received a lukewarm reception from the employers. The engineering employers federation stated that they did not believe postal ballots were necessary. The Institute of Personnel Management stated that it was satisfied that workplace ballots were generally conducted fairly and pointed out that they had a higher return rate and the CBI again stated that they felt that postal ballots were not as representative as workplace ballots.

There is little doubt that this legislation has only 2 aims - to further weaken the right to strike, and another step in the Tories' long term aim of breaking the unions. While it is true to say that there is much to condemn about the current trade unions they are all workers have to defend their pay and conditions and while there is a crying need to build an alternative workers should organise to defend the unions against this blatant anti-working class legislation.

STRIKES IN GERMANY

For nearly 2 weeks, from Monday 27th of April, more than 300,000 public employees, members of the public service union, the OTV, were on strike, paralysing the main industrial parts of Germany. Public transport, railway, post and refuse workers, as well as hospital clerical staff were involved. Scenes of blocked motorways, idle trains and mountains of undelivered mail were testament to the effectiveness of the strike. The problems of unification have led to massive tax and VAT increases and, as ever, it is the workers who are expected to pay. The government wished to impose a 5% ceiling on pay rises, and were offering a measly 4.8% to public employees. To do this, however, the government had to take on the power of the organised working class. Public opinion was behind the strikers while the 3.9 million strong IG Metall union came out in solidarity. This resulted in the government going back to the negotiating table to accept the 5.4% negotiated by arbitration before the strike.

There has now been a return to work despite public employees' demands for 9.5% and the feeling that 5.4% is a sell-out. This comes as no surprise, however, given the involvement of reformist trade unions with overpaid bureaucrats and careerists. Nothing in the nature of the capitalist system will change. We still have to pay for economic disasters, resulting in increasing misery and more exploitation

rights, less hours, jobs for everybody, improved health and safety conditions. We can only get these conditions in direct participation of all workers in assemblies - this is direct democracy.

PUBLIC TRANSPORT STRIKE IN MADRID

On the 15th of January a mass meeting of workers at EMT (the Madrid public transport company) called a 24 hour strike against this year's pay agreement, a 40% increase in fares in the run-up to privatisation. They also demanded the withdrawal of court-imposed sanctions handed out for previous industrial action. The company replied by sacking 27 workers. This prompted the workers to call an all-out strike from February 3rd. The strike was supported by the CNT-AIT, a revolutionary trade union in Spain. It was run democratically with daily assemblies (mass meetings), a daily bulletin, leaflets, posters, graffiti, etc. As the strike escalated so did the demands - re-instatement of sacked workers, the dropping of plans for privatisation, and for the basic right to strike.

After 29 days, with the state and the employers still refusing to concede the workers' demands, the CNT proposed that due to the financial hardship being suffered, that workers should return to work but to refuse to collect fares. This tactic proved highly effective with the company forced to refer the dispute back to the courts where 19 of the dismissed workers were re-instated. Throughout the dispute, not only did the company and government try to break the strike but the 2 main trade union confederations, the communist CCOO and the socialist UGT did all they could to undermine the workers' efforts. The Madrid transport workers had to face not only constant police surveillance and harrassment but the CCOO and UGT organising scabs. This has led to widespread dismay among ordinary members of the CCOO and UGT and yet again shown that when workers take action to defend themselves the 2 main Spanish unions will side with the government and their repressive labour laws to further their own interests.

Meanwhile the dispute continues in a positive way with workers running their own dispute through the use of mass assemblies despite all the manipulations of the main official trade union movement.

for the working people. to pay for a system that is directly opposed to our needs, for a system that is based on corruption, quick profit for the few and poverty for the majority many.

Only revolutionary unions independent of all political parties and state institutions can win more than only a 9.5% pay rise for us. We want labour and union



NETWORKS

Workers in other industries are organising along similar lines to ourselves. In the future we hope to federate, with a view to creating a revolutionary union run by workers for workers, to fight for a world based on production for need not profit, to the benefit of workers and communities as a whole.

*COUNCIL WORKERS NETWORK PO Box 29, South West PDO, Manchester, M15 5HW.

*DESPATCH INDUSTRY WORKERS UNION 489 Kingsland Road, London E8 4AU.

*HEALTH WORKERS FEDERATION, PO Box 761, Camberwell, London.

*INDEPENDANT EDUCATION NETWORK, PO Box 29, South West PDO, Manchester. M15 5HW.

