

# Reject the Rail Maritime and Transport Union's call to accept latest London Underground sell-out contract!

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*The following statement is being distributed among London Underground and other rail workers.*

Claiming a breakthrough in negotiations over ticket office closures, 24-hour Night Tube on set lines and a meagre pay offer, a 24-hour strike by London Underground (LU) members of the Rail, Maritime and Transport union (RMT) set for January 26-27 was cancelled only hours before it was due to start. This follows the other three LU unions, ASLEF, TSSA and Unite, calling off their joint action after more than six months of secret negotiations with the government conciliation service ACAS.

The strike would have coincided with a planned two-day junior doctors' strike, which was also called off by the British Medical Association.

Rail workers, like doctors and so many others, have seen the trade unions isolate, divide and sabotage every struggle waged against the Conservative government since 2010.

The RMT called off the strikes after a "mass" meeting of LU union representatives. The RMT are now recommending a "yes" vote to accept the latest deal negotiated with the company behind the backs of workers. The ballot is due to commence February 11. ASLEF, the train drivers' union, has said they are "likely" to follow suit. The RMT are rallying the majority of their officials to force through the deal, giving workers only days to consider its implications.

RMT members must vote "no" on this rotten deal.

Yesterday the RMT called off a planned 48-hour strike due to begin today as part of the RMT's campaign against changes to working practices in a restructured station grades jobs. The RMT cited "significant progress ... which has enabled us to now

suspend all industrial action."

This comes after the abject betrayal of ticket office staff through the RMT's phony "Every Job Matters" campaign. It was launched by the RMT soon after London Underground Limited (LUL) announced the closure of all 260 ticket offices at the same time as proposals for a 24-hour Night Tube. All ticket offices are now closed, with around 1,000 staff either waiting to leave after taking redundancy or dispersed within the company.

The unions brag of achieving an above inflation pay increase. It is a four-year deal that amounts to hovering just above inflation rate from a 2 percent pay rise in year one, RPI (retail price index) inflation or 1 percent (whichever is greater) in years two and three, and RPI plus 0.25 percent or 1 percent (whichever is greater) in year four. The small pay increase is a minimal price LUL were willing to pay for the commencement of Night Tube and the union's acquiescence with mass ticket office closures.

Conservative Mayor of London Boris Johnson's demand for a Night Tube has been supported from the outset by the trade unions, despite initially expressing concerns over the threat to track cleaning and maintenance. The demand for a night service is being driven by big business and London's financial elite. It is part of a broader economic strategy to raise billions for the city and associated businesses from increased exploitation of workers, not only in transport but throughout all enterprises.

The strike ballot was initiated as LUL threatened to impose the Night Tube without agreement with the RMT by recruiting a new workforce to operate it. The unions feared their role as industrial policemen was

being bypassed. They have used strikes and strike threats not to oppose the measures, but to safeguard their own lucrative role in enforcing the employer's demands.

Workers should treat the unions claim to have negotiated a good work/life balance with contempt. Once Night Tube is trialled on a small number of lines and spread throughout the network, it will have a devastating impact on workers' health, well-being and family life. There is a vast body of research available to anyone making even a cursory search on the destructive impact of night working.

The claims of the pseudo-left Socialist Party and Socialist Workers Party (SWP) that only through the trade unions can workers fight has received the latest in an unending series of shattering blows.

LUL and Johnson have not been driven back, but are escalating their attacks on workers' jobs and democratic rights. The 700 staff recruited to help run Night Tube now have the same terms and conditions as the rest of the workforce. This is described as an achievement by the SWP! In reality a large number are part-time, anticipating an expansion of part-time jobs on LU itself. The aim in undermining workers and conditions is abundantly clear.

The *London Evening Standard*, for example, stated baldly, "LU is hiring hundreds of part-time staff, including drivers besides other grades, both to run the Night Tube and break the stranglehold of the unions."

What it refers to as the "stranglehold of the unions" means rather an end to well-paid and protected jobs.

There are no proposals from the RMT to oppose job losses. Rather, emboldened by the unions' collaboration with the closure of 260 ticket offices, Johnson and LUL are preparing the introduction of driverless trains—threatening thousands of train operators' jobs. The cuts programme of Transport for London (TfL) so far only amounts to 6 percent of the proposed £7.6 billion in targeted budget cuts for London Transport. The unions are preparing the ground for the attacks still to come.

If the new Trade Union Bill becomes law, the government, supported by the new Conservative Mayoral candidate Zac Goldsmith, says it will place LU (and others) into the "important services" category. Initially, this will mean a higher ballot threshold for strikes to be legal, but this is only a step toward

enforcing "minimum service" requirement during any strike to be set by government. If a strike goes ahead, workers by law have to provide a service—making strikes totally ineffective. It is a mechanism for the de facto illegalisation of strikes.

Mick Cash, RMT general secretary, described the Trade Union Bill as banning strikes "through the back door". Labour Party mayoral candidate for this May's election, Sadiq Khan, described the threats of the Tories as a "ploy" to derail ongoing negotiations over Night Tube. Khan tweeted on January 11: "tube strikes doubled under you & @zacgoldsmith will be just as bad. We need a Labour Mayor to reduce strikes."

When the LU unions first called off powerful strikes last summer, the WSWS warned on August 29:

"The threat of walkouts was being used to pressure LU management and safeguard the unions' own role as industrial policemen. All four unions are now working out the formula with which to force 24-hour work upon their members. ... The key lesson that emerges once again from the London Underground conflict is that any struggle to defend jobs, wages and conditions and democratic rights can only proceed independently of, and in opposition to, the trade unions. These are organisations that have long been integrated into the structures of corporate management, staffed by an upper-middle-class layer hostile to the most minimal efforts of workers to defend themselves."

Rank-and-file rail-workers must now act on the basis of that understanding and begin to organise independently of and in opposition to the trade union bureaucracy.



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Socialist Equality Party visit:

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