



The Truth About the Tube Dispute

There has been a tidal wave of media coverage of the 48 hour strike on TfL and LUL. Although that coverage is a reflection of just how successful the RMT action has been, it has also led to some incredible exaggeration, blatant political interference and in some cases sheer, barefaced lies.

The “Big Lie”

The Standard splash that the strike was all about two sacked drivers, picked up by other sections of the media and milked to the full by Boris Johnson, was without question “The Big Lie” in the dispute.

RMT is involved in a separate dispute over victimisation on the Victoria Line. One of the issues at the heart of the wider strike is the continued abuse of procedures and the bullying at staff but at no point were the two individual cases bowled in to the main negotiations. They were put in the public domain by managers, politicians and newspapers determined to shift the focus away from the real issues.

Pay

The 5% figure, widely misrepresented by a hostile press, came for a claim which management ASKED us to submit in November. They then stalled and stonewalled right through to February when they tried to ride roughshod over procedures by bulldozing through the five year deal with its link to deflation. This was deliberately provocative. TfL haven’t even had the decency to make any offer at all.

Management negotiators suggested they wouldn’t budge from the five year pay cut because they had no mandate – intimidating interference right from the very top. The fact is

that it took two ballots for strike action to drag them to the table and get involved in genuine talks. As a result we now have a two year offer which we can discuss with our members. On TfL we still have nothing.

Jobs

Former Mayor Ken Livingstone has nailed this one down for us. He's made it quite clear that the commitments given by both John Prescott in 2001 and himself in 2007 for no compulsory redundancies in the wake of the Metronet collapse were cast iron and cannot be reneged on. This issue could be easily settled and the Mayor has been all over the place when he's been asked about it.

Politics

Forty minutes before the strike was due to start a basis for an agreement had been thrashed out. We could have avoided a strike. But while the documents were being typed up by ACAS officials a call was made by the LUL negotiators to City Hall and the deal was spiked.

Labour MP Andrew Dismore hit the nail on his head when he said in the Commons that the Mayor's fingerprints were all over the sabotaging of the ACAS talks. It was that interference which provoked the strike. That kind of political grandstanding is no way to run industrial relations.

Bullying

While Management insist on their right to bully their own staff and provoke a dispute with their union, the media have been bullying the same people and their union, by printing lies and stirring up hatred against workers daring to stand up for themselves.

Already Britain has fallen far behind many countries in the rights that workers have. It seems the rich Mayor and his media friends think rights are there for those who want to privatise and exploit, but not for people working on the shop floor.

