



On Guard

strike special 2. 8th April 2017

Build strike committees! Spread the action!

On Guard welcomes the news that ASLEF members on Southern have once again voted to reject a sell-out deal recommended by their leadership. Although the margin was narrower, it is worth noting that this is mainly due to higher turnout and that the number of 'No' votes only diminished by 2. Members at Southern appear to be resolute and not prepared to give in to their leaders' strategy of doing the employer's dirty work for them by demoralising and browbeating their own members into accepting a bad deal. Let's hope that they can organise together to bring more of the 'Yes' voters on side to knock back any further unsatisfactory offers with bigger majorities.

No change in approach from ASLEF leaders

ASLEF leaders have told the media that they are 'not surprised' that the proposed settlement has been rejected because their members don't trust the company to deliver on any of its promises. If they're not surprised by the result why did they recommend it in the first place? Furthermore, there are as yet no signs of any change in approach by ASLEF leaders. Members have simply been told that more talks will be sought but that these will be delayed due to negotiators being on leave.

Restart the action

We congratulate all ASLEF members at Southern on this second rejection and hope that they can bring pressure to bear on the union's leadership to restart industrial action to strengthen the union's position in any further talks with the bosses, and to force them to concede.

Grand National Day

Meanwhile, RMT Guard and Driver members at Northern and Merseyrail will join those at Southern and take their second day's strike action today. There are a couple of things that make this day different to the first held on 13th March: holding it on a weekend will mean affecting leisure passengers instead of commuters and the choice of date means that the Northern and Merseyrail strikes will severely impact travel to and from Aintree racecourse for

Grand National day, especially considering the totally solid support on Merseyrail by ASLEF members who will not cross RMT picket lines. Timing action to disrupt a major event in the sporting calendar represents an escalation of the dispute by the union, turning the screw on the employers.

Escalate

Escalation of action is an important part of winning a dispute. Sporadic short periods of action drawn out over months is not an effective approach. The employers have time to learn lessons about how to make the best of whatever skeleton staff they have available to them, time to train managers and scabs to cover the jobs of striking workers. The workers themselves can lose faith in their leaders, become demoralised and start drifting back to work. Upping the ante to force the employers onto the defensive and back around the table is by far the best way to win disputes like this one decisively. Industrial action is not about merely 'protesting' an injustice perpetrated by an employer, it is about forcing them to back down or to make concessions.

Rank and file control

As the current situation in ASLEF on Southern shows, unions would be much stronger and more united if the members participating in industrial action had real control over their own disputes. Rank and file strike committees - elected by and open to all workers involved in a dispute - who meet regularly, discuss progress and formulate plans for furthering the dispute, can apply enormous pressure on leaders and negotiators to direct the dispute according to members' wishes and to resist temptation to sell them out. Even where they have no formal place in a union's structures, a meeting of members that has debated and voted on policies and resolutions cannot easily be ignored by leaders who want to keep their positions! Rail workers will already be discussing all sorts of different ideas about the DOO dispute and how best to win it. A strike committee is an excellent way of developing these ideas and ensuring they influence the dispute for the better.

strike news

"I wish the two unions would get together and work together. It's ridiculous one out and the other in. We can't win that way". Northern Guard

Calling ASLEF Drivers!

Some ASLEF drivers may be wondering if they really have to cross onto Arriva's side of the picket line. They don't!

RMT has balloted its Guard and Driver members. The legal protection conferred by the successful ballot for industrial action extends to all workers in the grades involved, not just members of the union calling the action.

Even if it didn't, all workers are protected from dismissal if they are induced to turn back at a picket line by members of a recognised trade union picketing lawfully in connection with a trade dispute.



"In my opinion, these strikes are too soon. We don't know what the negotiations will bring. We should wait till we know what we are fighting over". ASLEF driver

NB. On Guard does not agree. We think that we **do** know what is in store for us if the companies get their way. We should show a united front now to make it clear to them what they are in for if they try to impose DOO. **What do you think? Have your say!**

Other workers fighting back

The workers at Ritzy and Hackney Picturehouse cinemas in London are on strike for the Living Wage, sick pay and maternity pay entitlements, and union recognition.

Cineworld

This group of low-paid workers are going up against the Cineworld cinema empire, with hundreds of cinemas across nine countries. They made £83.8m in 2015. When Brixton's Ritzy Picturehouse workers struck for better pay in 2014, they shook the industry by winning a 26% pay increase (but still falling short of the London Living Wage) after 13 days of strike action.

Ballot

The Picturehouse dispute is important: if these low-paid, insecurely-employed, sorely-exploited workers can beat Cineworld, they will likely embolden many other workers in the private sector to organise. Already staff at several additional Picturehouse cinemas are getting ready to join the dispute. They have now balloted for industrial action across five Picturehouse sites and achieved a 96% yes vote in London and 100% yes vote in Brighton.

Send a message of support and contribute to the strike fund by emailing:

ritzylivingwage@gmail.com

"One day strikes here and there is no good. Either the union needs to escalate or the company needs to impose DOO. Either way, something needs to happen to resolve this dispute". Northern Guard

What is On Guard?

On Guard is a monthly socialist bulletin by and for rank and file workers at Northern. It is published by socialist group Workers' Liberty.

We will be featuring a lot of updates and articles on Driver Only Operation, but welcome content on any issue from Northern workers themselves.

Got a story for On Guard?

We welcome reports and comments from all rail workers.

Contact us:

onguard.bulletin@gmail.com

Who are The Alliance for Workers' Liberty?

Workers' Liberty aims to build a movement which can replace capitalism, the current economic and social system based on class division and exploitation, with a new society based on consistent democracy, collective ownership and solidarity – socialism.

We are involved in many movements, struggles and campaigns. Our central focus is the organised labour movement – including trade unions and the Labour Party. Our organisation exists to educate and organise socialists so we can transform the labour movement into a force capable of liberating the working class, and humanity, by overthrowing capitalism.