The settlement that has come out of the talks between ASLEF and Southern at the TUC represents possibly the worst sell-out of workers in recent memory.

Many of us were fearing the worst - given that RMT was excluded from the talks and that the TUC's track record in intervening in disputes is dismal - but what has emerged from two weeks of secretive talks is mind-bogglingly awful.

The agreement includes a commitment to 'explore the scope and feasibility of an indemnity scheme for drivers'.

But there is no way an employer can indemnify an employee from prosecution. If the driver closes the doors and goes and someone is hurt and killed as a result, nothing GTR says or does can protect them - it will be for the courts to decide whether they are culpable.

Dispatch responsibilities are transferred to the driver, with OBS assisting with train dispatch only in 'degraded' situations and only where they are both present on the service in question and hold the required safety competency.

This agreement goes back on everything ASLEF has been saying about safe train dispatch.

More details overleaf.
The rest of this shoddy agreement is promises of Jam Tomorrow and/or Pie in the Sky:

**Appendix D - 'Technology improvement'** contains an agreement that GTR and ASLEF will 'work together to develop improved safe systems of work'. There is little detail about exactly what these improvements will be, but the agreement subjects them to the 'exigencies of service' and does not commit to fully introduce them until autumn 2020! How many drivers will be prosecuted for PTI safety incidents between now and then?

There is an agreement that Southern will offer drivers' vacancies to redundant freight drivers. This is a favourite of the ASLEF leadership and has recently been used as a reason to browbeat its members into accepting changes to terms and conditions that they otherwise would not. This agreement is no better than what many other TOCs already offer and any redundant freight driver will still have to pass a job interview with GTR. Freight drivers support workers on Southern and oppose D.O.O. as much as any other rail worker. These drivers do need jobs but they also need a union that fights - against the running-down of the rail freight industry as well as against the spread of D.O.O. This 'deal' is unacceptable.

**Appendix F - 'Restoration of positive relationships'** contains plans to sign a new 'Drivers Agreement' that will replace the current DRI, but has no detail on what this will look like and how it will be any better. Neither is there any guarantee that it will not be worse. GTR and ASLEF will apparently 'jointly work to develop effective part time working, family friendly and employment practices', and there will be 'Discussion on Drivers Establishment and resourcing'.

ASLEF has settled disputes on the back of such vague commitments before, such as at Northern Rail where the Society settled a pay dispute with a paltry increase to the company's previous offer and promises of future talks on a 'retention package' to follow. What happened? Almost nothing came out of those talks.

**Employers can not be trusted. Disputes can not be settled on promises for the future.**

We took strike action so that we can continue driving the train while the guard keeps the train safe. THIS 'DEAL' IS NOT WHAT WE TOOK STRIKE ACTION FOR.

**Off the Rails says:**

- Our strikes have been effective! Morale was high, the service was shut down. **This fight can still be won!**
- **Vote No to this shoddy sell-out** and demand that the ASLEF leadership regains its backbone and reaffirms commitment to working with RMT to push back D.O.O.
- ** Reject any attempts to browbeat members** into acceptance with doom-and-gloom arguments or guilt-trips about redundant freight drivers.
- Demand the union immediately **announce further strikes.**
- **Demand strike pay.** The union has been appealing for and receiving payments into its fighting fund. It's time this was stepped up and it's time they started paying out!

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*off the rails*

- is written by railway workers - all our reports are from the front line.
- is for all rail workers, whatever your grade, location or employer, whatever trade union you are in.
- aims to provide information to rail workers, support to our struggles, and a forum to discuss strategies.
- welcomes and will publish reports, comments and opinions from all rail workers.
- is fiercely pro-union, but is independent of the union head offices, so is not chauvinist about any particular union, and is free to criticise the unions' leadership when we feel it is necessary.
- is published by the socialist group Workers' Liberty, but aims to be a platform and an organising tool for all activists who share our outlook.

Contact Off The Rails
20E Tower Workshops, Riley Road, London SE1 3DG
www.workersliberty.org/otrblog
www.workersliberty.org/offtherails
offtherails@workersliberty.org