



# On Guard

**strike special**

## **MAKE THE UNIONS FIGHT TOGETHER. ORGANISE THE RANK AND FILE!**

**O**n *Guard* supports all workers on strike or respecting picket lines today, in the biggest and most widespread action yet in the fight to maintain the job of Guard on Britain's railways.

The RMT union is calling its Guard and Driver members out today at Northern, as well as Merseyrail and Southern. This is a very significant in the development of this dispute, as the disruption this is likely to cause at Northern and Merseyrail should be bigger in comparison to that at Southern, where many services already operated under Driver Only Operation (DOO) when the dispute there began.

### **Scab failure**

Arriva has published an extensive 'scab timetable' of Northern services it plans to run today. On Guard hopes that this turns out to be a failure, despite the training up of managers and even the enlisting of scabs from other franchises.

### **No secrecy**

Meanwhile the other union involved, Drivers' union ASLEF, continues in talks with GTR/Southern after its members rejected the proposed sell-out settlement that was brokered by TUC General Secretary Frances O'Grady and recommended to them by its leadership. As with the TUC negotiations, no information is being released as these talks go on, raising concerns that whatever new proposal comes out of them will just be a 'tweaked' version of the same sell-out.

### **Unity**

At Merseyrail and Northern, ASLEF is at the moment sitting out the fight when they could play a decisive role in the defeat of DOO by ensuring that no trains can run at all, even with managers and scabs available to operate the

doors. Despite the statement released by the leaderships of both unions at the back end of 2015, it is clear that the two unions are not currently working together to fight on the issue of DOO. To have the best chance of winning this fight, and winning it comprehensively, this needs to change.

### **Leadership**

The ASLEF leadership has clearly done immense damage to the prospects for genuine unity by its recent actions on Southern but RMT leaders must share blame for the lack of proper communication and co-ordination before and since. In the absence of a single industrial union for the rail industry, the two unions should act as one on this issue, for the sake of rail workers and passengers alike, and look to build and spread the fight against DOO.

### **Tories**

The push to introduce this method of operation comes primarily from the Tory government and is really about smashing organised labour in the rail industry, one of the last strongholds of trade unionism in the UK. Attempts to introduce driver-only trains are at various stages across huge parts of the network. Plans are afoot to introduce it at London Midland, Great Western Railway and Virgin East Coast, for example.

### **National Strike**

A near-national rail strike could and should be built in response, with the potential to inflict a huge defeat on the government and take a major step forward for the whole labour movement. To make this happen, rank-and-file workers in all grades and in both unions, should organise together to put pressure on their unions and seek to take control of the dispute for themselves. It's our future - we can use the democratic structures in our unions to make sure our leaders get the settlement we want.

**NO DOO! NO DCO! NO COMPROMISE!**

## Calling ASLEF Drivers! Know Your Rights!

The majority of Drivers at Northern (and Merseyrail and Southern too!) will support today's strike by RMT Drivers and Guards against Driver Only Operation. ASLEF members will be asking all sorts of questions about the situation created by the strike and the picket lines that come with it. Many will be reluctant to come into work even though their own union is not currently in dispute with the company.

### Scab guards

They will be aware that the company has a reduced timetable planned and has been recruiting scabs and managers from all over the Arriva group, giving them minimal training, and certifying them as Guards to operate these services.

Some 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, meaning that 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.

### Ask yourself

So this raises other questions for ASLEF members:

- Do you support the Guards and RMT Drivers?
- Do you want them to win quickly and decisively?
- Do you want to make it harder for ASLEF leaders to keep dragging their feet on joining the dispute?
- Do you want to avoid having to work trains with a scab or a hastily-trained manager you can't trust?
- Do you want to kick the idea of DOO into the dustbin where it belongs?

**If the answer to any or all of these questions is yes, don't cross the picket line!**

### I'm not a Driver or a Guard, what about me?

You can stay out too! We know most RPAs, TCS, Co-ordinators, Cleaners, Fitters, Fuellers, Shunters and everyone else in the RMT and other unions will support their colleagues. The legal protection of the picket line extends to everyone induced to turn back. The company can't sack you and the union will support you if you are disciplined. If all workers stand together, the dispute will be won more quickly.

## 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](mailto: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.