



notts

offtherails

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Strike! We Can Win!

Our action this week will be the first national rail strike since 1994 and on Tuesday we'll be going out with LU workers, the first time since 1989. The impact will be massive. The national strikes and those on LU have dominated media discourse since they were announced. Much of the conversation has focused on the inconvenience strikes will cause to passengers, with the Tories threatening new laws to restrict our right to strike to prevent our action from having as much impact. Whilst none of us relish causing inconvenience to passengers, shutting the job down is our primary form of leverage and we should not apologise for using it. We have a right to withdraw our labour and hopefully it will also act as a call to action and example for all other workers who are suffering the cost of living crisis as we are. It may have inspired workers on Hull trains who have just returned a 100% Yes vote to become the 14th Train Operating Company where RMT members have successfully balloted. Aslef had already announced that its train driver members working for Hull Trains will strike on 26 June.

Victory to the workers!

FREE THE BELARUS "RAILWAY 11"

Russia used Belarus as a staging post and base for its invasion of Ukraine. The invasion reactivated opposition networks from 2020 in defence of Ukraine. Despite tremendous repression, activists in Belarus disrupted the Russian invasion by sabotaging the railway network. 11 men were arrested in February and March 2022 and face extremely serious charges, including terrorism.

The Railway 11 are: Siarhei Hlebka, Dzmitryi Ravich, Aleh Malchanau, Dzianis Dzikun, Siarhei Kanavalau, Aliaksei Shyshkavets, Siarhei Pleshkun, Yuryi Selvich, Yauhen Minkevich, Dzmitryi Klimau, and Uladzimir Aurasau. Some of these men face up to 20 years in jail.

They are accused of various acts to snarl up the Russian war effort, including destroying signal boxes. Five attacks in the days after 26 February brought rail traffic to a halt, according to Sergey Voitekhovich, a rail worker now in exile in Poland.

An exiled Belarusian trade unionist, Yury Ravavoi, said: "We didn't want to kill any Russian army or Belarusian train drivers. We used a peaceful way to stop them." The Railway 11 are heroes and we express our solidarity with them and their families.

ASLEF Drivers

Are still talking about pay, one of the three key issues in RMT's dispute. In most cases pay increases are going to depend on the success of this dispute. It is in the driver's interest, the interest of all workers in the industry and the future strength of trade unionism, that this dispute is concluded decisively in workers' favour. Not crossing RMT picket lines would really help to bring that about. Read on for answers to some common arguments against.

1. "It's not our fight"

This argument has never been more wrong than it is now. It is in all our interests that rail employers understand that they will not be allowed to make workers pay for any shortfalls in revenue, or dividends for profiteers. If there's a fight for fair pay, it's a driver's fight too. This is just an excuse that stems from ASLEF's current position in law in relation to the dispute, but Margaret Thatcher's anti-union laws do not override what is right and wrong. If drivers need a proper pay increase then fighting for one is the right thing to do, and undermining any such fight must surely be wrong.

2. "When ASLEF calls me out on strike, I'll strike"

Taking this attitude will

inevitably mean time spent undermining a dispute we are gearing up to join later. Crossing the picket line to move trains with managers or scabs working the back end weakens the strike, and reduces the pressure on employers to make all of us a decent pay offer. If you want a decent payrise, it is in your interests to back this campaign from day one.

3. "RMT have triggered these disputes too soon"

ASLEF drivers are entitled to their opinions about RMT's tactics and strategy. But solidarity is not conditional on agreeing with every aspect of another union's approach. There has been a woeful lack of co-ordination in calling these disputes, as evidenced by the weeks of difference in the timetable for strike ballots. All rail unions should be working closely together and fighting together. Let's not undermine the struggle because the union's respective leaderships haven't got their act together.

4. "ASLEF's advice is to work as normal."

Which advice? The union issues advice to all its members on their rights if asked to respect a picket line by members of another union. It's on a page in the ASLEF diary headed "Picket

Lines". It's in there every year. It says: "It has long been the tradition in ASLEF to respect picket lines whether they are our own or those of fellow trade unionists." This is a core value of the union to which we all signed up and pay subs.

The union also issues circulars to branches advising members to work normally. It does this to protect its legal position in the event that its members do choose not to cross picket lines.

TSSA, Unite and Non

Most of the above applies to you too, especially TSSA members who are also balloting on EMR.

For government advice on how non-union workers can take strike action visit:

<https://bit.ly/3beNhaQ>

What is Notts Off The Rails?

Notts Off The Rails is a rank and file socialist bulletin, published monthly and written by rail workers, for rail workers. It is published by the socialist group Workers' Liberty, but is produced in editorial meetings open to all rail workers.

Got a story for us?

We welcome reports and comments from all rail workers. Email us at: notr@workersliberty.org