



On Guard

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Macron robs the poor to pay the rich “Yellow Jackets” on the streets in France

What are they fighting for?

Huge protests started in Paris, and spread around the country, when the government introduced fuel tax increases a month ago. In early December, Macron’s government withdrew the planned fuel tax.

But it’s not just about fuel tax. Macron’s government has cut taxes on big business and the rich while heaping more taxes on the poor. The Yellow Jackets movement is carrying on to reverse these policies, calling Macron “the president of the rich”.

In UK and in France we need a workers’ government.

We in the UK should support the protests in France and learn from their determination and courage. But just protesting isn’t enough. If the French protesters force Macron to resign, the workers’ movement will need to form a government of its own. But the previous Socialist Party President Hollande was no better than Macron. So the protesters and the unions will need to build their own alternative.

Most of our trade unions are affiliated to the Labour Party which gives, at least potentially, a democratic voice to workers in Britain.

On Guard is in favour of a workers’ government: not a Labour government like the last one that carried out privatisations and left anti-union laws in place, but a government that fights as hard for our class as Macron and May fight for theirs. That means bringing some of the spirit of *Gilets Jaunes* into our unions and Labour.



People hold a banner which reads 'Yellow Vests - Railway workers from Saint-Lazare' as they demonstrate in a street [Piroschka van de Wouw/Reuters] From Al Jazeera.

Who are the Gilets Jaunes?

The protestors are working-class and self-employed people and small farmers, who will be hurt by a new fuel tax. They are named for their motorists’ “gilets jaunes” (yellow jackets).

They have no overall political leadership, so the demands vary widely. They have won their initial demand because it defines what they don’t want. But what they do want will vary from group to group involved. In some areas the far right have managed to be involved. In other areas, they have been thrown off the demonstrations.

French socialists are proposing demands that can unite all the disparate groups against Macron and the big business interests he serves.

Who Is Macron?

Macron, the French President and leader of *En Marche*, is a bourgeois populist politician saying anything that would get him elected: sometimes calling himself a socialist, sometimes nationalist, trying to please everybody. He was elected in May last year on promises of tax cuts for everyone, more jobs and a boost to the economy which would improve the lot of ordinary people. Most people voted for him to keep the fascist Marine Le Pen out of government, and because they were fed up with the austerity measures of the previous governments. Macron is no environmentalist. He has argued for fossil fuel rather than other sustainable forms of energy. As some protesters say that the tax does little to help the environment. Instead of attacking the living standards of working class, poor and struggling middle classes, they should tax the rich and global energy companies.

local roundup

RAT WATCH



Arriva Rail North management seem to have started a new fast-track management training scheme for graduates. Nothing unusual about that in the corporate world but it seems that near enough the first thing on the list for these new recruits to learn is how to work as scab guards on strike days.

Pity these poor graduates - they must have thought they were fortunate, in a tough jobs market, to get a leg up to a management position in an industry with a future. Imagine their dismay to find out that they are really only here to carry out a job so dirty that even the numbers of managers willing to do it are dwindling.

TSSA reps should seek these people out, recruit them to the union and make sure they know their rights in relation to the working of trains on strike days, especially Saturdays. There's got to be a better way to start a career than as scabs!

End the delays

We wrote in the last issue about the recent safety incidents at Sheffield - so what about the time it takes to get drivers through the investigation and development planning processes, into a DDP/CDP and back out driving? It sometimes seems like time off the road is used as an unofficial punishment for drivers who make mistakes, what with the practice of expecting them to come into work and sit in the mess room day after day to do nothing but answer the same questions from colleagues over and over, and worry about what their fate will be.

Drivers who have had incidents should be "processed" without delay and allowed back out, with appropriate support, to carry on learning the job, learning from their mistakes and gaining the necessary experience to prevent incidents in future.

Is the Northern Powerhouse infrastructure held up by Northern Rail?

The government's new body for delivering improvements in the railway structure in the North of England, Transport for the North (TfN), have called on Northern Rail to reverse the attempts to remove the guards from the trains and urged them to return to negotiations with the RMT. In a statement they said: "TfN does not support removing the second person from trains, particularly when a significant proportion of rail stations in the North of England are classed as inaccessible for disabled passengers".

TfN has delayed submitting its £35bn plans to the government until the New Year because they want to do some 'fine tuning'. *On Guard* is wondering whether the 'fine tuning' required is to the local management structure. Just a thought.

Sheffield

RMT Strike Solidarity Rally

You are invited to join us in supporting the RMT train guards on their 40th strike day!

15th of December 2018

11 AM to 12:30 PM

Sheffield Train Station Sheaf St

Speakers:

Louise Haigh MP

Disabled People Against Cuts Steve Hedley RMT

Sheffield Trades Council

(and more TBC)

This strike is about **YOUR** safety and **YOUR** access rights

Say NO to 'Driver Operated Only' trains

Keep the guard on the train!

What is On Guard?

On Guard is a monthly socialist bulletin by and for rank and file workers at Sheffield rail. 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 Sheffield rail workers, all grades and companies.

Got a story for On Guard?

Contact us:

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