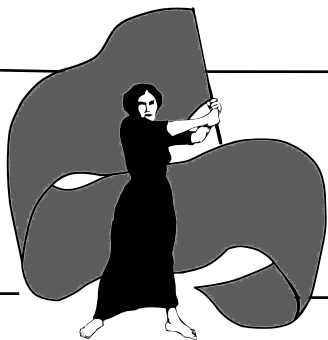




On Guard

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Trump's a crook — and a problem for everyone

Trump's rampage in the USA is also a threat to workers, labour movements, and democracy across the world, not just in the USA (and not just in Gaza).

By direct threats, by declaring tariffs which they suggest they'll revoke if the target government meets their wishes, and by boosting movements like the AfD in Germany and Reform in Britain, the Trumpists are pushing politics to the right.

Britain's Labour government, like many "centre-left" governments across the world, responds with wretched gestures of appeasement. Peter Mandelson, now UK ambassador to the USA, says he would not "necessarily" agree with "every detail" but pledges to "respect.. his mandate".

His own past criticisms of Trump were "ill-judged and wrong", and, Mandelson claims, Keir Starmer has a "very warm personal relationship" with Trump.

The government has responded to the opinion-poll surge of Reform — now 1% ahead of Labour in one poll — by boasting of raids to pick up and deport undocumented immigrants. Someone in the Labour hierarchy has told the Times and the Guardian that Labour will drop its pledge to improve the Gender

Recognition Act. ("Border Security" minister Angela Eagle claims the pledge is still good).

Demonstrations against Trump in Britain have been smaller than in 2017, when Trump's right-wing drive was scrappier and more ineffectual.

We can't make protests bigger at will, but we can explain the urgency. History tells us that if a far-right government succeeds with "shock and awe" in its early days, the sequel is usually not a slow-burning revolt, but spreading defeatism and compliance.

Javier Milei, "the crazy one", became president of Argentina on 10 December 2023. His position is much weaker than Trump's. He is far right but does not have a big, long-brewed far-right political movement behind him as Trump does.

Argentina's unions organised general strikes against Milei's policies on 24 January 2024 (12 hours) and 10 May 2024 (24 hours), but they were too short to stop him. With big cuts in social provision and jobs, Milei has pushed 53% of Argentina's population below the official poverty line. And nevertheless his approval ratings improved over 2024.

If he curbs inflation — and for now it has gone down — even at great social cost, he could solidify his position.

Margaret Thatcher's attack on the unions and on social provision after 1979 was mild and gradualist by Trump's standards, but epoch-defining at the time. The response of our forerunner Workers' Action included calls for a general strike to stop the Tories.

But the labour movement held back, for example, from decisive solidarity with the steelworkers' strike of January-April 1980. Our big fightback came only in 1984-5, with the miners' strike. But by then retreats had already much eroded morale and solidarity.

- Don't appease Trump! Don't appease Reform!
- Don't give Starmer a free pass by walking away from the Labour Party
- Workers' unity, local and migrant! Free movement, open borders, equal rights
- Tax the rich!
- Public ownership and democratic social control of high finance
- Labour movement unity against the far right. Activist-left unity in action where we agree, open debate where we disagree.

Solidarity with Hull Trains Drivers

Hull Trains Drivers have voted to strike over the sacking of a colleague who had raised safety concerns about fatigue. The union has rightly notified significant action from the get-go, calling strikes every Friday and Saturday between 7th March and 26th April. As much as there is an argument for announcing a more sustained period from the beginning, especially at a tiny operator like HT where it would be more feasible to pay strike pay early on in the dispute, this is still among the most serious action ASLEF has called in recent memory, other examples being the extra action called at LNER when they attempted to use the Tories' Minimum Service Levels legislation, and the dispute over breach of agreements and managers driving trains, also at LNER. On Guard would like to express our solidarity with ASLEF members at Hull Trains.

Resist DOO on Hull Trains

Speaking of Hull Trains, rumours abound that RMT may also end up in dispute with the operator. It seems that the poor practices at one of First's other rail ventures, Lumo, are threatening to bleed over into Hull Trains. Lumo is a DOO operation, and word reaches us that clauses from its safety case are now appearing in altered versions of HT's, allowing for the possibility of HT attempting to introduce DOO in the future. There is also talk that the planned new daily

service from Sheffield to King's Cross via Retford may now be operated by Lumo and not HT, which would see the first DOO service operating to or from Sheffield station in living memory. At On Guard, we say that if this is the state of things at Hull Trains now, it would make sense for RMT members to demonstrate their will to resist this now by refusing to cross ASLEF's picket lines in their upcoming action. We would argue for this anyway, this should be the norm in our industry and others, but this situation makes the need for a return to basic trade unionism all the more pressing.

Uniform Farce

Northern management have thrown a notice up at Sheffield about non-standard issue uniform. It seems they have bees in their bonnets about some of us, for various reasons, choosing to supplement the uniform we are issued with items of our own. Someone should tell them that it would be easier for us to avoid this if they provided a wider variety of items and didn't make accessing them a laborious process of form filling, justifying top-up requests, and waiting ridiculous lengths of time for new or top-up kit to be issued. As long as we've got the right safety shoes, hi-vis vests and all the standard safety equipment with us, they should just let us get on with the job in the clothes we need to wear to keep warm and comfortable. None of us would choose to use our own clothes for work if the ones we were issued were adequate and easy to access.

Stop the funding cuts!

Labour have got off to as poor a start in our industry as they have everywhere else. Although they did more or less immediately make serious offers to settle the pay disputes (albeit poor, below-inflation ones!), since then the only tangible changes they have made has been Chancellor Rachel Reeves' cancellation of various infrastructure projects. Although they may argue that they were not 'affordable' or that in some cases they were merely unfunded Tory campaign pledges, the fact remains that Labour have gained power and immediately cut funding to our industry. ASLEF is still formally affiliated to Labour and RMT has recently been increasingly close to the party. This is hardly the reciprocation we would have hoped for.

Got a story you want to share? Write in! All contributions anonymous

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What is On Guard?

On Guard is a rank-and-file socialist bulletin, published regularly, written by rail workers, for rail workers, of all grades, and all unions. It is published by the socialist group Workers' Liberty, but is produced in editorial meetings open to all workers. Supporters from outside the rails can help with public distribution. workersliberty.org