



On Guard

Issue no. 10 February 2018

Climate Change is a Class Issue

Support the fight against fracking!

Fracking is a controversial and environmentally damaging means of extracting methane from shale rock.

This involves drilling down 3000 metres before continuing to drill horizontally. Water, sand, and toxic chemicals are then pumped down the hole at very high pressure in order to fracture the shale and release the gas.

The Tories and corporations tell us there's nothing to worry about. But it is evident the industry is largely self-regulated and the Environment Agency, having been cut to the bone, is barely up to the task of ensuring corporations play by the rules. Oh, by the way - most of these fracking companies are registered in off shore tax havens.

FRACKING AND US

So, what does fracking, and the movement against it, have to do with us as transport workers?

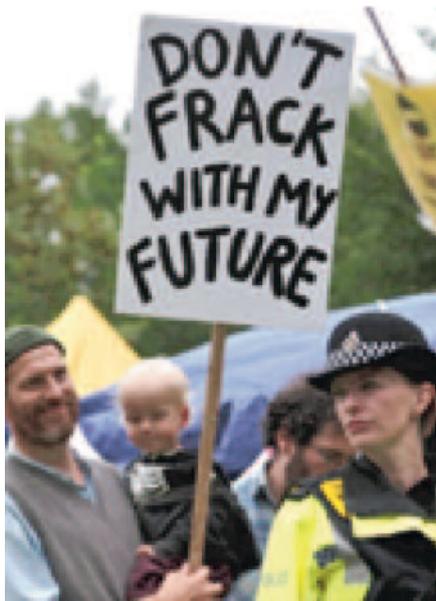
Good old anti-trade union laws, for one. Several environmental activists have been charged under the Trade Union and Labour Relations Act 1992, Section 241. This is a law designed to criminalise picket lines, a law we could fall foul of in future strikes.

Our right to lawful assembly and peaceful protest are protected under Articles 10 and 11 of the European Convention of Human Rights. These principles are fundamental to our democracy. For example, Freedom of Association (Article 11) is what gives us the right to join a trade union!

POLICE

It is evident that a heavily disproportionate police response is core to the government's strategy of forcing fracking onto communities that don't want it. This not only comes at great financial cost but it also creates tension between police and local communities.

Using the police as corporate enforcers, actively trying to suppress campaigns of non-violent direct action, should be a red flag to all trade unionists. A threat to one is a threat to all. Many of us on the rail have experienced frustratingly slow police response times in our work places, so to see such vast police resources used against the anti-fracking community sticks in the throat.



PRIVATE FIRMS?

And if the Tories decide they need additional resources to police anti-fracking protests, will they turn to private firms?

As much as the collapse of Carillon should be a warning to our government about the dangers of privatisation, On Guard cannot help but wonder if this will lead to companies such as Serco and G4S being given the power of arrest. Oh and by the way Keith Cochrane Carillions interim Chief Executive is also non-executive Director of fracking company Third Energy. Definitely not corrupt then....

And finally, of course, those of us who are old enough to remember the miners' strike will know that the police will

be used in force against the labour movement if we ever get too powerful!

THE UNIONS

Sadly, there are some trade unions, which support fracking. This is largely to do with the fact they represent workers in the industry but On Guard would like to remind these unions that standing up for workers does not mean we have to turn a blind eye to the environmental impact of such industries.

Other unions, including RMT, oppose fracking but still fall short on having a robust ethical strategy on energy and the environment.

UNION POLICY

On Guard calls on all trade unionists to get involved with their unions and to actively involve themselves in improving their environmental policies, at workplace level and nationally.

The wider trade union movement should be campaigning for investment in renewable energies and a move away from fossil fuels. This must include the creation of climate jobs and transferable skills. Workers in frontline industries should lead the transition.

SOLIDARITY

Unions should also stand up for environmental protestors on the frontline of the fight against fracking. The suppression of protest is a dangerous thing, and we should all be paying close attention.



local roundup



Workers Control

Arriva Rail North's performance and profit figures remain dire, and the speculation that the company wants to "hand the keys back" to the government just doesn't go away.

To add to their woes, they have had to delay their plans to introduce hundreds of new train services due to the hold-ups with the Bolton Corridor electrification and the knock-on effect that has had on DMU availability.

Then there was the division incident at Leeds West Junction when one of the new "refurbished" 150s decoupled. No surprise that this shoddy company can't be relied upon to put units back together properly after they've had their cut-price makeover but what confidence can we have as crews that we won't have the same problems?

How can they carry on arguing for DOO when crews have to deal with incidents like this, evacuating passengers across the tracks?

On Guard argues for our railways to be taken out of the hands of the shoddy parade of bean-counters and leeches in the TOCs and FOCs and put in the control of the workers themselves. We know what it takes to run trains safely - and to maintain them safely!

"The incident last week in Leeds raises serious questions about the safety culture at Arrive Rail North and Arrive Rail UK's division - Arriva Traincare"

"No-one should be in any doubt that the incident also puts the safety critical role of the guard in the spotlight..."

Mick Cash.

Solidarity Fund Open. Payouts to ASLEF Drivers Underway.

The Merseyrail Solidarity Fund has made its first payouts following the last round of DOO strikes. After donations from the RMT Guards and several North West Trade Union bodies, every ASLEF Driver who has refused to cross the RMT picket lines during the strike has been handed a cheque for £150, the same amount as the Guards themselves.

For most of the Drivers though, more important than the money will be what it represents. This is real solidarity in action - the kind of solidarity that can sustain strikers over prolonged disputes and help them win.

On Guard calls for this support to be extended to all those respecting picket lines in DOO disputes around the country.

Donations to:

Merseyrail Solidarity Fund
Unity Trust Bank
60-83-01
Acc No 20388537

New Logo Competition

Readers may remember our call in the last issue of *On Guard* for alternative logos to be stitched inside our jackets. Here are some of the responses:

"Proud to be in the union."

"Proud to be Yorkshire".

"Proud to strike for safety."

"Proud to be a picket not a scab".

"Proud to be a worker".



RAT WATCH

Number one rat award this month has to go to Ben Bradley, Conservative MP for Mansfield.

In true tory disregard for the truth or honesty, Mr. Bradley accused Jeremy Corbyn of passing state secrets to a "communist" spy. Under threat of legal action for slander he has had to apologise unreservedly and pay an undisclosed, but very large, sum to a charity of Corbyn's choice. The Mansfield food bank and a Mansfield homeless charity are to be the beneficiaries.

Very fitting. Bradley was the MP who, in 2012, suggested that unemployed people should have vasectomies as, he claimed, the country would be "drowning in a vast sea of unemployed wasters" if workless families keep on having children.

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:

onguard.bulletin@gmail.com