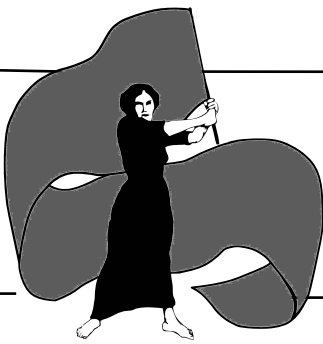




On Guard

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The Rain in Train Falls Mainly on us

RMT members at EMR struck on 1st, 8th and 15th of August.

Announcements at the station in the run up to the strikes and on the day informed the public of disruption caused by the RMT, but didn't mention that the strike is over the safety of passengers and rail workers.

The new 810 fleet has been running with what the RMT calls "a significant number of faults" and that EMR has been "sending trains into service that are likely to fail and require a full reset which leaves the train with no active safety systems including loss of communication between train drivers, dispatchers, and trackside". The trains seem shoddy in general – one recently well-published incident with faulty HVAC saw one passenger having to open her umbrella in her seat due to a leak from carriage ceiling.

Rail Magazine reports that "ASLEF has concerns about the fleet but has no strikes planned." On Guard would like to know why that is. What has reassured ASLEF that the situation is tolerable and why do RMT members feel otherwise?

The company's reckless attitude to safety puts workers and passengers at risk. The demands of the strike are simple: take the faulty trains out of service.

There have already been some movements as a result of the action – EMR have managed to lay their hands temporarily on some extra 222 units to use and have managed to restore some services back that were taken out for the emergency timetable. Clearly capacity exists on the network to address problems like this quickly if the will is there. We know that ScotRail are soon to introduce 222s there – perhaps this could be delayed a while and these units could be used at EMR while the 810s are made fit for purpose.

Perhaps there are barriers to this that we don't know about yet but one thing seems clear – these new units have only just begun to be brought into service – the 222s that were in use previously cannot all have vanished. This is a crisis, and returning to the previous rolling stock that all crews will still be competent to operate and familiar with

would be a safe way to plug the gap while the 810s are sorted out.



Rat Watch

Ratwatch recognises former EMR boss, Will Rogers, who stepped down in July after being in post for 6 ½ years. He resigned with no notice of his departure as the RMT prepared to strike over safety issues on some EMR trains. Rogers doesn't seem to have resigned over the company's handling of the safety issues, with the Northamptonshire Telegraph reporting that he intends to "spend some more time with his family". Neil Grabham is returning to EMR having worked as MD of Merseyrail for the last three years. Say hello to the new rat, same as the old rat.

TOCs (predictably) slow on uptake of Welfare Charter

Various TOCs are claiming that the full implications of endorsing the "Railway Welfare Facilities Charter" are only just being recognised by the bosses, who are not happy with them.

ASLEF made the right move by laying down a strategy in April to combat this predictable backslide. A union circular called for TOCs to supply Company Councils with diagrams for the December 2026 timetable change, including provision for allocated toilet breaks away from trains. Failure to do so would spark health and safety inspections of every location, thousands of them, wherever a driver can access suitable toilet facilities. ASLEF GS Dave Calfe said the union has no intention of backing down on this provision, including action short of strike consisting of drivers taking a ten-minute toilet break at the best available location before the four-hour mark in any shift.

On Guard is a little dismayed to report that on LUL ASLEF is championing a deal that allows a longer time between toilet breaks. They would no-doubt argue that this was a trade-off for the introduction of paid meal relief and an extra rest day. However, we believe the union's current flagship campaign is about dignity for workers – not something to trade away in return for something the rest of the industry already gets. In every instance we should

keep what we have and fight for more, not trade existing rights for other benefits.

TSSA Conference

TSSA conference in June played host to a new low in undemocratic shenanigans.

The union's Executive banned the President from chairing the conference even though it is their constitutional role. When President Adam Wilson attempted to chair the conference anyway he was shouted down by members of the TSSA leadership and ejected from conference. Even police were called. Adam has since been suspended from the Executive of TSSA.

This is a new step in TSSA leaders behaving undemocratically. The litany of shoddy behaviour so far also includes putting a branch into 'special measures' (something no one in TSSA has heard of before) and delegates being barred from the conference.

With at least one branch holding a special meeting about the crisis it seems that TSSA's rank and file are mounting opposition to the union's bureaucracy.

Merseyrail Workers Force 7.25% Offer: How?

The threat of strikes over the weekend of The Open golf championships forced concessions on pay from Merseyrail.

Workers rejected an initial 4% pay rise, and announced strikes for 18-20 July. The bosses quickly returned to the table with a

new offer, proposing a 7.25% backdated pay increase covering January 2026 to January 2028. The new offer also included a flat-rate minimum for lower-paid grades such as station assistant and on-board cleaners, as well as slight increases to the pay enhancement for Sunday working.

The settlement isn't perfect, but it's an improvement. It would not have been won without threatening strikes. With Merseyrail now coming into public ownership, workers can prepare to push for further improvements in the next pay round, from January onwards.



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

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

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