

RMT RAIL STRIKE MOBILISE TO DEFEAT THE BOSSES AND TORIES!

This week, the RMT is taking three days of strike action across Britain's railways. These are scheduled to take place on 21, 23, and 25 June.

This follows on from a resounding ballot in favour of industrial action, with 89% voting to strike, on a 71% turnout.

This wave of strikes will see an estimated 50,000 workers walking out across 13 train operating companies (TOCs) and on Network Rail. In addition, these railway workers will be joined by RMT comrades on London Underground for the first day of action.

This mobilisation is therefore set to be the biggest strike action seen in Britain for decades.

Belligerent bosses

The demands of the strike – which rail bosses have so far rejected – are focussed on an inflation-matching pay deal, with no compulsory redundancies and no attacks on pensions.

As Mark Hawkins, an RMT member working for National Rail, told us: *"The focal demand is about pay, which everyone is worried about across the labour movement. But more people on the railway are worried about cuts and compulsory redundancies. They are trying to make our work ten times harder."*

As to be expected, the bosses – alongside their representatives in the media and in government – have responded belligerently and hysterically to this prospect of a national rail strike.

The Daily Mail, for example, described the action as a plan for 'midsummer misery' by a 'hard-left union'. Others in the gutter press and in Westminster have joined this red scare, attempting to turn the public against the RMT.

Menacingly, the Tories have even threatened to effectively outlaw strike action on the coun-

try's railways, in an attempt to intimidate and bully rail workers.

Similarly, the government has warned that it may change the law to allow rail bosses to hire temporary agency staff – i.e. scab labour – in order to undermine and break future strikes.

Resistance and defiance

The union leadership has risen to the challenge, however, responding that: *"Any attempt [...] to make effective strike action illegal on the railways will be met with the fiercest resistance from the RMT and the wider trade union movement."*

Similarly, RMT members replied to a hostile complaint on social media about Tube workers wearing communist badges by wryly asking: *"Were you expecting an old school tie and crest?"*

Rank-and-file union members, meanwhile,

remain defiant, refusing to be scared or subdued by the attacks of the Tories and their reactionary media mouthpieces.

"We should stand firm," stated Mark, reflecting the confidence and determination of RMT activists everywhere.

Cuts and profits

Network Rail CEO Andrew Haines has headed up the capitalist class' propaganda efforts, claiming that a rail strike would cost the network £30 million per day. This, he states, further undermines the potential for a real pay rise.

This is a tacit admission, however, that it is in fact rail workers who produce all the company's wealth. Without the permission of the workers, not a wheel would turn. Senior management, meanwhile, get to decide what 'fair share' they should receive, whilst the bosses cream off the profits.

According to RMT general secretary Mick Lynch: *"Rail companies are making at least £500 million a year in profits, whilst fat-cat rail bosses have been paid millions during the pandemic."*

The truth is that rail workers aren't the ones harming

the railways, or the working class more generally. The culprits are the Tories and rail bosses, with their agenda of cuts and profiteering.

Need for nationalisation

The real threat to passengers comes from the fact that the super-profits of the bosses have not been reinvested to improve infrastructure, services, and conditions over the years; and from the £2 billion in cuts proposed and imposed by the Tories.

These devastating cuts will not only lead to a less efficient railway network, but also a more dangerous one. Plans to reduce safety-critical maintenance schedules, for example, will increase the risk of derailment and other disastrous accidents.

It is therefore vital that the whole labour movement fights for full renationalisation of the industry, under the democratic control and management of rail workers themselves.

Only then, as part of a socialist economic plan, can we provide the investment needed to modernise the country's transport system, in order to provide affordable, safe travel for all.

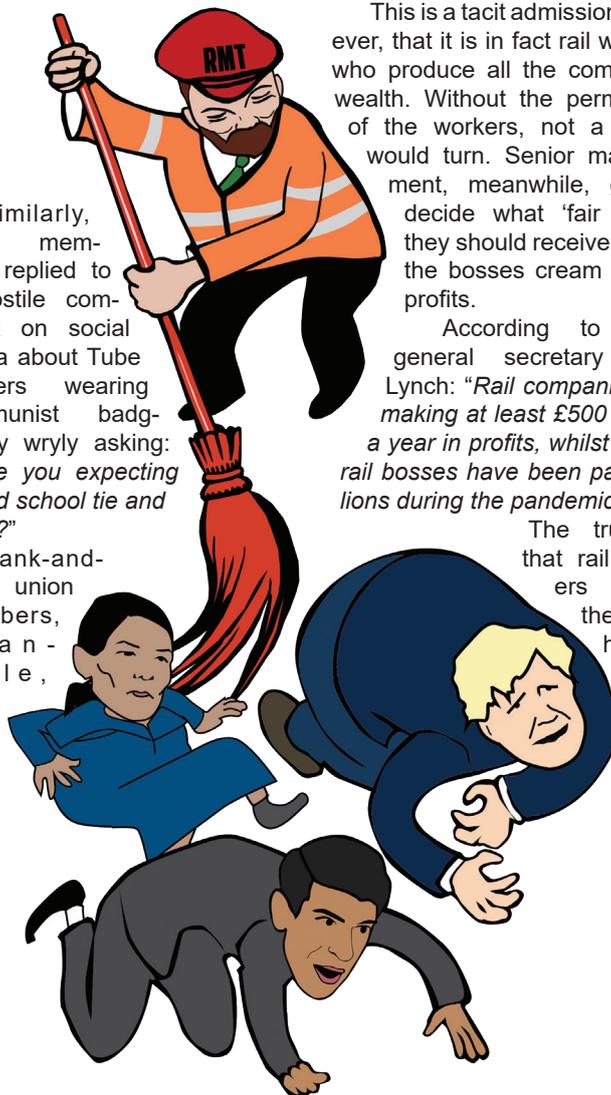
Divide and rule

The aggressive, intransigent attitude displayed by the Tories and rail bosses in response to this potential strike action shows that they are not prepared to seriously negotiate.

Instead, their aim is simply to set the public against RMT members, in order to divide the working class and weaken the movement.

It will therefore require a determined, militant struggle to force the bosses and the government to accept our union's demands, or anything close.

Our aim should not simply be to gain a seat at the negotiating table... (cont. on next page...)



(cont.) ble, but to boot the capitalists and their representatives out altogether, and to place the railways under public ownership and workers' control.

United action

Not only are the bosses scared of the damage to their profits, but the Tories are fearful of the reverberations that this national strike action could have across society, inspiring other unions and sections of workers to organise and strike.

This action will therefore, *de facto*, pose itself as a challenge to this decrepit Tory government. To win, we



need to mobilise our full forces.

The recent Tube strikes over the Jubilee weekend showed the way forward, shutting down services entirely on the vast majority of lines. This was the result of a large mobilisation on the picket lines, which were able to cover all key entrances.

Similarly, the success of the strike will depend upon the extent that rank-and-file union members are actively involved. This requires workplace discussions to be held in the coming weeks, with strike committees elected and picket duties assigned.

"We need to involve more members actively within the union," stated Mark, one of the grassroots RMT members we spoke to. *"As activists we should be talking to people who might not yet have been interested in the union, but now are thinking about it. Those members need to find out about their local strike committees and get involved with them."*

Only by engaging all our forc-

es – including dormant members, workers who have not yet joined the union, and the ranks of other rail unions – can a well-oiled fighting locomotive be built: one that is prepared to respond boldly to the attacks we will face from the bosses, Tories, and their press; and to mobilise support from the whole labour movement.

News that train drivers organised in ASLEF at three rail companies are also set to strike is therefore greatly welcomed, as are the plans for strike ballots of TSSA members working in other franchises.

These strikes must be coordinated and united at every level in order to win.

Militant struggle

In the process of this struggle, important lessons will be learned, and a new generation of class fighters will be consolidated.

This is a turning moment for the trade union movement, with union members representing civil servants, postal workers, and

teachers also set to ballot for national strike action in defence of jobs, pay, and conditions.

Ultimately, we are all fighting against the same attacks, within the public sector and beyond, whether these come in the form of inflation, worsening pensions and conditions, or lay-offs. We need a united, co-ordinated response.

The whole of the labour movement – including union branches, local Labour parties, and the TUC leaders – must therefore come out in active support of these rail strikes, using them to prepare the way for a tsunami of militant united action against the bosses, the Tories, and their bankrupt system.

■ **Solidarity with striking rail workers!**

■ **For mass mobilisation to defeat the bosses and Tories! For the election of strike committees, in-and-across workplaces!**

■ **Fight for nationalisation and workers' control! ■**

SOCIALIST★APPEAL WHO ARE WE? and WHAT ARE WE FIGHTING FOR?

The Tories are the political representatives of big business. As defenders of capitalism, they are the sworn enemies of the working class.

Neither do we have trust in Keir Starmer and the right-wing Labour leadership, who are taking the party back to Blairism.

The capitalist system is in a complete impasse. It cannot be reformed. It must be overthrown.

We are fighting for bold socialist policies to defend workers and challenge the capitalist system.

■ Answer the cost-of-living crisis with a £15 per hour minimum wage. For a sliding (rising) scale of wages, with increases in pay, pensions, and benefits automatically linked to prices.

■ If the bosses say they can't afford this, we say: Open up the books! Let the working class and the labour movement see the accounts! If firms plead bankruptcy, they should not be bailed out, but nationalised under workers' control.

■ For a fully publicly-owned and free health service, under workers' control and management. Reverse all privatisation and outsourcing. All private health and care services must be nationalised without compensation, and integrated into the NHS.

■ Fight the climate catastrophe and inflation with expropriation and socialist planning. Nationalise the energy monopolies, big supermarket chains, and distributors, without compensation.

■ Ban evictions and cancel housing debts. Give local authorities the power to cap rents at affordable levels. And bring empty properties and the assets of the big landlords and management companies under public control.

■ For a mass programme to build a million council houses a year. Nationalise the land, construction companies, and banks to provide the resources to accomplish this.

■ To fight job cuts and unemployment, work should be shared out without any loss of pay, in order to lower the hours of the working week.

■ Repeal the anti-trade union laws. No to class compromise. All union officials to be regularly elected, with the right of immediate recall by the membership. Officials to receive no more than the average wage of a skilled worker.

■ Fight for the real emancipation of women. Remove all barriers to women working: provide free nurseries, after-school childcare, and care for the elderly. End all forms of discrimination. Equal pay for work of equal value.

■ Abolish the relics of privilege and feudalism: the monarchy and the House of Lords. The assets of the parasitic landlord class and aristocracy should be expropriated for the public good.

■ Scrap tuition fees and student rents. Free education and full maintenance grants for all. End marketisation – kick the profiteers out of education. Put staff in control in schools and univer-

sities.

■ Many small businesses are faced with bankruptcy – squeezed not only by the banks, but by the big monopolies. By nationalising the banks we can supply these small businesses with the lifeline of guaranteed low-interest credit.

■ The financial resources required to fight the crisis must not come from increased taxes or more austerity, but through the nationalisation of the banks and finance houses. Rather than a 'wealth tax', we call for the expropriation of the monopolies.

■ Instead of building up the national debt through government borrowing, the money needed should be obtained entirely from expropriating the accumulated profits of big business and the billionaires.

■ No to austerity! Reverse the cuts! The working class must not pay for this crisis!

■ For a mass campaign to bring down this criminal Tory government and do away with this rotten system!

It is clear that the market has failed and capitalism is in a deep crisis. It is the anarchy of capitalism that prevents the rational planning of society's resources, in Britain and internationally.

■ We therefore stand for the nationalisation of the 100 biggest monopolies, banks, and insurance companies – under workers' control and management – without compensation. They have stolen enough from us already.

On this basis, the economy can be democratically planned in the interests of the majority, and not for the super-profits of a few billionaires.

■ As internationalists, we fight for a Socialist Federation of Britain linked to a Socialist United States of Europe and a World Socialist Federation, in order to plan resources internationally for the benefit of all. This would allow humanity to begin solving the urgent issues of climate change, disease, and poverty that face society and our planet.

There is, however, a crisis of leadership in the labour movement. Those who have attempted to patch-up capitalism have been found wanting.

It is therefore time to energetically build the forces of Marxism, embodied today in the International Marxist Tendency, which alone offers a revolutionary way out of this crisis. ■

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