

RMT union moves to end all UK industrial action: Fight the betrayal, form rank-and-file committees!

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General Secretary Mick Lynch and the National Executive of the Rail, Maritime and Transport union (RMT) are determined to impose a final sell-out of the year-long dispute of rail workers.

The RMT has called just one more strike for this year, for September 2, involving 20,000 members at 14 train operating companies in England.

No action is planned for the rest of the year before a report on a Conservative government consultation process on plans by the Rail Delivery Group to close almost all ticket offices in the UK, with the loss of 2,300 jobs.

The RMT are proposing that all disputes until then are dealt with through a “resolution process” in return for nothing more than a promise of no “compulsory redundancies”.

This is also a fraud. Several TOCs have already started issuing redundancy notices to ticket office staff. But the RMT hopes the government and rail firms will calculate they can get the thousands of redundancies required as older workers decide to leave the industry voluntarily, having drawn the conclusion that the RMT will do nothing to defend them.

The union has dropped any concrete pay demand, even the 9 percent over two years deal it agreed with the Tory government in April but was unable to sell to its membership. Instead, it calls only for “a 1-year pay proposal for all companies covering the year 2022-2023, with an underpin, backdated to the relevant anniversary dates in 2022.” It will then move on to begin “pay negotiations for the year 2023–2024” that “will commence from 1st December 2023.”

In June, Lynch spoke at the RMT’s annual general meeting and inadvertently made clear the scale of the betrayal imposed by the executive. He began, “When I spoke last year, we had embarked on one of the biggest

waves of industrial action in our union’s history, with 53,000 members across Network Rail, the 14 train operators and London Underground all involved.

“That is 65 percent of our membership taking action all at once.”

He boasted that “by the actions of our members, we have led the labour movement.... Where we lead, others follow.”

Workers should ask Lynch, “What is the result of that campaign 14 months on?”

Joint action by the RMT’s network maintenance, onboard and station staff and London Underground membership has been systematically ground into the dust.

The RMT held five days of strikes against London Underground job losses and pension attacks last year, with an additional strike against 600 job cuts. There was only one day’s strike in March this year. Then, in July, a four day strike was called off after the RMT claimed it had made progress in a deal that proved to be a lie.

Last November, the RMT sold out its members at ScotRail with a deal consisting of a below-inflation basic 5 percent increase and a one-off £750 payment—in return for accepting the use of mobile devices for checking and selling tickets by conductors and ticket examiners.

This and a similar agreement last December with Transport for Wales and the Labour Party-controlled Welsh Assembly—consisting of a below inflation deal of between 4.5 and 6.5 percent with productivity strings—were hailed as a model for the Tory government and train operators in England to follow in order to end the national rail strike.

In March, the RMT pushed through another rotten below-inflation 9 percent pay deal over two years at Network Rail, betraying 20,000 maintenance workers and vastly weakening the rail strike. This allows Network Rail

to implement its plans to cull thousands of jobs, including 1,900 maintenance workers. Network Rail is so arrogant, courtesy of the RMT, that it is now withholding a £300 bonus to any worker who took part in the strike.

These agreements meant that a national rail strike, including London Underground workers, that had the potential to shut the economy down has been whittled down to just the 20,000 workers employed at train companies operating in England. This is the final target for the RMT's sabotage.

The union's "Save Our Ticket Offices" campaign has been exposed as nothing more than a cover for the betrayal of the entire rail dispute. Lynch and his Stalinist backers such as Eddie Dempsey are claiming that the campaign to halt ticket closures is a tremendous success because the government's "consultation" exercise has solicited "half a million responses with the overwhelming majority showing support for RMT's campaign."

But these protests will be ignored, and Lynch knows this. The closures decided by the train companies and the government based on commercial considerations will be imposed.

Last week, Lynch claimed the employers needed more time to work out their "Workforce Reform proposals". But the Rail Delivery Group have not only made plans for their Great British Railways re-privatisation project, they have been implementing them ever since the start of the COVID pandemic.

Thursday's rally appealing to Prime Minister Rishi Sunak at his "front door" in Downing Street will be the last hurrah for Lynch's pleading with the Tories for a change of heart. Rather than a U-turn, the government's Strikes (Minimum Service Levels) Act passed in July will be used to prevent effective strikes by around 5 million workers in sectors deemed "essential", including on the rail network, by requiring workers to provide services during any industrial action. This will be met with only more hot air from Lynch and company.

Network Rail, the train companies and the Tories have the real measure of the RMT. And all Lynch can offer as an alternative is the prospect of a Labour government led by Sir Keir Starmer.

As leader of the Enough is Enough campaign last summer, Lynch counterposed a future Labour government to popular demands for a general strike to bring down the Tories. In his AGM speech, he again insisted, "It is fully clear that it is in our class interest and the direct interests of our members to get rid of this Tory government and replace it with a Labour government. It will be Tory or

Labour—that is the simple truth."

This is no choice at all. Starmer and his closest supporters such as Shadow Chancellor Rachel Reeves have made clear that there will be no move away from Tory austerity and warmongering by the party of "sound finances" and "of NATO."

Rail workers must confront the reality that the trade unions do not act to defend their interests but as instruments of the corporations that will betray their members at the first opportunity. Whether their leaders are proclaimed as "lefts" like Lynch makes no difference.

This is the experience of the working class internationally. This week, Germany's Railway and Transport Workers' Union (EVG) succeeded in imposing a real-terms pay cut on its members at Deutsche Bahn. Workers in Germany have responded by setting up the Railworkers' Rank-and-File Committee, declaring that they "are no longer willing to accept the domination of the EVG rail union apparatus."

Action committees are being formed all over the world, including at Royal Mail here in the UK, united in the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC). To prevent the defeat of their struggle RMT members must establish their own fighting leadership, acting independently of their enemies in the RMT bureaucracy and the Labour Party, to take on and defeat the employers and the Tory government.

Contact us on the form below to begin the discussion on the way forward and to set up a rank-and-file committee.



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