

Striking bus driver killed in Blackburn, England

A correspondent
17 December 1998

Striker Frank Dean, a 41-year-old bus driver, was crushed to death by a bus being driven by a scab Monday at the Stagecoach Ribble company's Blackburn depot in Lancashire. Dean was part of an official picket of six strikers who were attempting to speak to the drivers of a column of the vehicles as they returned to the depot. The first bus had stopped and, under police supervision, the pickets had appealed to the driver for support. A second bus drove straight through the entrance, killing Dean and injuring two others.

The buses were being driven by inspectors and drivers who had been brought from depots in the Midlands to break the strike. Approximately 45 other strikers were present at the gates, but were prevented by the police from blocking the entrance. Eyewitness reports said that the buses 'whizzed through'. Earlier in the day a striking bus driver was arrested on a picket line outside Blackburn bus station.

Stagecoach Ribble is part of the Stagecoach Group, which runs transport services in many different countries and controls part of the British railway industry. It is now one of the country's top seven companies, controlling more than 70 percent of the British bus industry.

The Blackburn strike was the first of three one-day strikes over a pay claim. The current wage rate of £4.60 per hour is the lowest in the Stagecoach Group. The drivers are full-time employees, who work under very stressful conditions. As well as driving in difficult traffic conditions they are also responsible for collecting fares. The workers voted 88 percent in favour of industrial action in support of a claim of £5 per hour.

The police have announced their intention to interview everyone who was present at the time. The Transport and General Workers' Union said that they

do not intend to hold a separate inquiry, and are awaiting reports from the police and the Health and Safety Executive. A union spokesman told the *World Socialist Web Site* that workers are frustrated and that this showdown has been coming for years, but he did not want to 'put fuel on the fire'.



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