

WSWS exposure of Unite's betrayal of Go North West strike in UK provokes hysterical denunciations by pseudo-left

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18 May 2021

The outcome of the Go North West (GNW) bus drivers dispute has vindicated the warnings made by the Socialist Equality Party (SEP) and *World Socialist Web Site* (WSWS) that the Unite union would betray. It underscores the significance of the conflict which arose with Ian Allinson, industrial action co-ordinator for the local Manchester Trades Union Council (MTUC) and a member of the RS21 pseudo-left group, on the Facebook page of Manchester Left-Wing Forum last week.

On May 12, a reader of the WSWS, JP Oldham, posted the article, "UK: Claim of strike "victory" at Go North West unravels as Unite refuses to disclose its rotten deal" on the Facebook page of the Manchester Left-Wing Forum. The page for "left-wing activists in the Greater Manchester area" has 632 members.

On April 30, Go North West strikers picketing at the Queens Road depot were told by union officials that the company had withdrawn its threat to impose "fire and rehire contracts", including a 10 percent pay cut of up to £2,500 a year and a reduction in sick pay of 67 percent, stating that victory was imminent.

The May 11 WSWS article noted that almost two weeks later, "the rotten deal negotiated is being kept secret." It cited Allinson writing in a May 10 email, "Unite reps are still negotiating with local management to get a written offer which can be put to members."

He insisted, "The strike continues to keep up the pressure for a deal" and announced a solidarity rally for Thursday May 13. In the event of no-deal being reached, he added, "Unite is expected to issue a new notice of action to trigger a second 12-week protected period from 27 May."

If this were true, the WSWS noted, then the *Manchester Evening News* was misreporting on May 8 two days of negotiations in London between Unite and GNW parent company Go-Ahead, resulting in an agreement to end the strike signed by Unite General Secretary Len McCluskey and Go-Ahead CE David Brown. The agreement reportedly included "the cancellation of the second strike ballot, and an undertaking by Unite to conduct a ballot on the deal with a recommendation

to its members to accept."

The local Unite reps spoken of by Allinson were said to be only discussing "The timetable for implementation" of the agreed deal, according to Go-Ahead managing director Nigel Featham.

The WSWS commented, "Someone is lying through their teeth, and on this occasion, until McCluskey issues a formal denial, it is most likely not Go Ahead management but the trades council and the local reps."

The WSWS also noted Allinson's admission in a May 6 article on the RS21 website that "substantial concessions" offered by Unite "are included in the deal" which he still portrayed as "a significant victory if the pressure can be maintained." Unite had offered up to £1.3 million of cost savings.

The response to the WSWS article being posted was apoplectic. A supporter of Allinson described it as "libelous garbage". Allinson claimed that it was "the usual wildly inaccurate garbage" and that the WSWS "aren't part of the workers' movement as far as I'm concerned." For good measure, he added, "But life's too short to waste time with these scabs."

At no stage during the exchanges which followed was he, or anyone who came to his defence, able to refute the contents of the article. Oldham replied, "There is an objective measure. Is the report in the May 8 edition of the *Manchester Evening News* true?" If so, "then Allinson owes Go North West drivers an explanation of why he is deliberately concealing a betrayal of their struggle."

This led to further splenetic outbursts, including that Oldham had "chosen to believe known anti-unionist Nigel Featham over Ian," that the WSWS was "siding with the bosses", etc.

However, by 6.45pm that day Allinson had sent an email on behalf of MTUC to cancel the solidarity protest the next day. It contained a one paragraph explanation reading, "The protest planned for 5pm Thursday 13 May at the striking Go NW Queen's Road bus depot has been cancelled because the strikers will be busy tomorrow considering documents from the company."

The last-minute cancellation was to make way for workers to “study”, in private rather than on a picket line with their fellow strikers, the sell-out deal agreed by McCluskey and Go-Ahead.

Allinson was aware that he was dangerously exposed, along with the Unite bureaucracy. He had therefore already opened a second thread, campaigning for Oldham and anyone posting comment from the WSWS to be blocked from the Facebook page. He wrote, “This group is getting dominated by crappy posts of stuff from WSWS. I assume they have their own social media spaces for those who are interested and I’m concerned it will reduce engagement with this group. Should we stop this?”

This “debate” proceeded even as Allinson’s lies were exposed. Oldham commented, “Ian Allinson calls the Socialist Equality Party ‘scabs’ the day he proposes an end to the Go North West strike. He is now calling for the SEP to be banned from posting on this site to silence dissent... Dictionary definition of a scab: A worker who refuses to strike, or who takes the place of a striking worker. Ian Allinson’s definition: Someone who advocates strike action, calls for its extension in defiance of anti-strike laws, and is not an apologist for Unite’s betrayals.”

Later Oldham noted that amid all the comments denouncing the WSWS and defending Allinson, “no one addresses the issues facing Go North West strikers. What is in this proposed deal? When is it going to be made public?”

To which Allinson replied, “For the avoidance of doubt, yes I am calling the SEP scabs. They undermine strikes and make up lies about those who strike or support strikes. They believe employers over strikers.”

Oldham replied, “For the avoidance of confusion, Ian Allinson is not a striker. It is Ian Allinson that the SEP does not believe.”

Allinson’s proposal to censor the WSWS met with opposition from several posters, including John Pearson, who posted, “That would be censorship and I will have no truck with it. I will instantly stand down as an Admin if Comrade Allinson uses his position as an Admin to block postings from WSWS.” Others asked Allinson to explain what concessions were made by Unite and how could it be claimed as a victory. One asked, “Why not actually respond to their well-grounded critique of local union leaders?”

Oldham, responding to one of Allinson’s defenders, commented, “You ask for a ‘masterplan’ on how to bring out other garages. This should begin by telling workers the truth and not spouting apologies for Unite, organising drivers independently of Unite in a rank-and-file committee, and appealing to other bus workers, over the heads of Unite, for solidarity action. It is called the class struggle, and it cannot be waged outside of a political fight against Len McCluskey, et al.

“For many workers this is becoming a self-evident truth. But for you, Unite’s house-trained ‘critics’ and foot-soldiers, it is a foreign language.”

The WSWS has detailed Allinson’s latest efforts to

apologise for Unite’s betrayal of the Go North West dispute in today’s accompanying article. His weasel formulations are linked to a Unite press release, which states, “The deal was struck following high-level negotiations led by Unite general secretary Len McCluskey with senior company representatives at Go North West’s parent company, Go Ahead Group.”

This is precisely what was reported initially by the *Manchester Evening News* on May 8 and then denounced as “libellous” by Allinson and others of a similar persuasion when reported by the WSWS.

Allinson’s is not the first time the pseudo-left groups and their members active in the trade unions have sought to silence the criticism made by the WSWS of Unite, for fear that it is striking a chord bus drivers angry at its betrayals. Similar acts of censorship were taken against the London Bus Rank-and-File Committee, initiated by the SEP and WSWS last September in order to fight for safe workplaces against the collusion of Unite with the private operators.

The WSWS coverage of the disputes at Go North West in Manchester, RATP in London and elsewhere is aimed at clearing a path for a genuine united offensive of bus workers against the isolation of these struggles and the union’s sabotage and imposition of sell-out deals.

This is the essential significance of Allinson’s “redefinition” of the term “scab” to designate anyone who does not toe the line dictated by Unite at Go North West, or whatever union happens to be in the forefront of betraying the struggles waged by its members.

What is the logic of such a position at a time when bus workers in London are leaving Unite in droves out of disgust? It is not that anyone today, especially those with years of political activity behind them such as Allinson, can genuinely believe that the trade unions serve the interests of their members. Decades of betrayals testify to the fact that the trade unions have been wholly integrated into the structures of management and the state, whose sole role when strike action cannot be prevented is to contain it like a plague while they prepare the ground for a sell-out.

That is what Allinson et al did at Go North West—silence all criticism, while Unite convinced the company that it could get what it wanted without resorting to “fire-and-rehire” by working with them. The entire apparatus of Unite, from its general secretary down to the local reps in Manchester, rely on Allinson and the pseudo-left to patrol the political perimeter fence behind which Unite cordons its members. When Allinson and the pseudo-left wax lyrically about “solidarity”, workers should always expect a knife in the back.



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