

UK educators support the campaign to defend David O’Sullivan

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A meeting of the Educators Rank-and-File Safety Committee (UK) has unanimously supported a resolution in defence of victimised London bus driver David O’Sullivan. Many of the meeting’s participants had read Monday’s appeal published on the *World Socialist Web Site* and had already donated to the crowdfund appeal, distributing it on social media and among colleagues.

The fight taken up by O’Sullivan resonated with educators at Tuesday night’s meeting. Education staff have repeatedly been forced into unsafe schools as part of the government’s drive to end all lockdown measures.

Despite schools serving as a key vector for the transmission of coronavirus, the Johnson government has insisted they remain open as the linchpin of efforts to force parents back to work, producing profits for business. The education unions, including the National Education Union, have fully collaborated with these efforts. Dozens of educators have been victimised for opposing the unsafe reopening of schools, but they have received no support from the education unions.

The meeting passed the following resolution:

This meeting of the Educators Rank-and-File Safety Committee (UK) calls for the reinstatement of bus driver David O’Sullivan, sacked for upholding workers’ rights to health and safety during a pandemic that has claimed the lives of more than 60 bus workers in London.

O’Sullivan, 57, was sacked on February 3, after he sounded the alarm over the spread of infections at Cricklewood bus garage. The rate of fatalities among London bus drivers is three times the national average, with the families of those killed demanding answers.

That a bus driver has been sacked for upholding his colleagues’ rights to a safe and secure workplace under Section 44 of the Employment Rights Act (1996) is a serious assault on the democratic and social rights of the working class.

We stand in solidarity with London bus drivers and key

workers everywhere whose safety has been sacrificed to protect the profits of the corporations, their shareholders and the super-rich. We condemn the actions of Unite the union in colluding with the bus companies and Transport for London, presiding over a hostile environment in which illness, death and victimisation is stalking workers on a daily basis.

O’Sullivan’s experience will resonate with educators across the UK who have been forced to work in crowded schools with little protection under conditions where children were significant vectors for the spread of the virus. Some 570 educators have died—a fact the unions colluded with the government in covering up for months. Teachers have been victimised for raising safety concerns. The ending of mask wearing in classes in the face of a surge of the new Indian variant of the virus is placing workers at even graver risk of serious illness and death.

O’Sullivan’s sacking is a test case for the rights of workers everywhere. We call on working people to donate to his legal appeal, send messages of support and pass resolutions in your workplace or community group.

An injury to one is an injury to all! We pledge to do all we can to alert educators to this decisive campaign.

Educators told the WSWs why they support the fight for David’s reinstatement.

Colin, an early years teacher said: “I stand with David O’Sullivan and have donated to his case. This goes far beyond just an unfair dismissal, and touches core issues about who/what is expendable at the cost of operation.

“The pandemic has made it abundantly clear who has paid the dearest. The virus knows no discrimination, but the vast disparity of those who it has affected the most shines a harsh light on the discrimination of humankind, most of all from the top.

“We are expendable fodder, to call for our rights to safety is to rise above our station. Any dissent must be quashed to ensure murderous compliance to callous

policy. David O'Sullivan is bravely taking this head on. And is fighting for what is rightly all of ours.

"There is no doubt in my mind this will be fought hard by the bus companies (and the lot), hoping litigation can be squashed by deep pockets. But these fights are so important, because a public inquiry will give no justice. Empty platitudes and lessons learned are of little solace to the real harm many have had to endure.

"Why should it be the role of key workers to risk it all? Why should speaking up for your legally protected rights end in termination? Why should we sit by and take blow after blow?

"Enough is enough. I stand with David O'Sullivan because it is the right thing to do, and I stand for the many in the world who can't. Please take the time to consider pledging to his case and spreading the word."

Helen, a primary school teacher, said: "As an educator, I know that so many workers have lost their lives or their health to this disease and been forced into dangerous workplaces, either needlessly or without adequate protection. In my area, a fellow union member has died of COVID-19 contracted in the workplace.

"As a victimised union rep myself, I know that many people like David, who have been brave enough to take action on these matters in order to protect the lives and health of their colleagues and families have been victimised as a result. In a number of cases this victimisation has resulted in dismissal.

"This is a calculated campaign by managers and employers to crush the unions and put an end to workers' rights. People may read this and imagine that people in David's situation must have done something wrong that we are not being told about. I can assure you that they have not and that these cases are happening up and down the country. This victimisation needs to stop, and this is an important test case in the fight for workers' right to speak out, to organise, and, more importantly, their basic right to a safe workplace."

Brian, a supply teacher from Merseyside, said: "I'm in full support of Dave O'Sullivan and the brave stance he has taken to protect his fellow workers from the deadly effects of COVID-19. It's shocking to read how Dave and his fellow bus workers have been forced to transport non-essential workers, throughout the pandemic, with minimal protection from virus and no support from his employer or the union.

"I have donated to the fund to provide support to Dave and encourage other workers to do so as well."

Frankie, a university tutor said: "I support the

campaign for the reinstatement of David O'Sullivan because his decision to exercise his basic rights at work was right and necessary to protect lives from the pandemic. The 'reopening' risks another deadly wave of the pandemic.

"Students have been told to once again travel across the country to their campuses, and social distancing on buses is quickly becoming a dead letter, as companies pack in as many passengers as possible to maximise profits. It's transport workers like David who are on the front line of this dangerous situation and we all must support their right to safe working conditions, and to refuse to work when it endangers them and the community.

"I'd encourage everyone who wants to defend workers' rights and prevent the uncontrolled spread of the coronavirus to join me in supporting his crowdfunding campaign to appeal his dismissal and share the case widely on social media."

What you can do:

Donate to the crowdfund

<https://www.crowdjustice.com/case/test-case-for-key-worker-rights-during-pandemic/>

Send a message of support

<https://wsws.org/en/topics/campaigns/defend-david-osullivan#comment>

Pass a resolution at your workplace

<https://wsws.org/en/topics/campaigns/defend-david-osullivan#resolution>

Complete the bus workers' COVID-19 survey

<https://form.jotform.com/210722972144048>

Visit the campaign page

<https://wsws.org/defend-osullivan>



To contact the WSWs and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact