

Victimised London bus driver David O'Sullivan supports call for October 1 school strike

Our reporters
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London bus driver David O'Sullivan, sacked for defending his colleagues' right to a safe workplace during the COVID-19 pandemic, has sent a message of support for Lisa Diaz's call for a school strike this Friday. O'Sullivan is currently waging a campaign for his reinstatement, in a test case for the rights of workers everywhere. He told the *World Socialist Web Site*:

"I fully endorse the call by Lisa Diaz for a school strike this Friday October 1. Lisa's call speaks for all of us, not only those of us who have children going to school but all who refuse to see children used in a herd immunity experiment that has already killed more than 160,000 people across the UK.

"We have been told ad nauseum that schools are safe and that children are healthy enough to withstand COVID-19. Lisa and other parents are fighting to expose the terrible truth—that 59,000 children were infected with COVID-19 in the first weeks of the new school year.

"The fact that 88 children have died from COVID-19 as a result of the Johnson government's reckless school reopening policy gives Friday's parents' strike an enormous importance. Not a single major party is opposing the government's policy of deliberately infecting children. The Labour Party and the teaching unions support keeping schools open at any cost, so that parents can be sent to work to make money for the corporations and the rich.

"As a bus driver who ferries children to and from school every day, I know the risks of keeping schools open. When schools returned last September, limits on the number of children boarding school buses were lifted. Our vehicles had to be filled to the maximum. We were told that children were safe and could not

spread the disease.

"The outcome was a disaster, with more London bus workers dying in the second wave of the pandemic than the first—69 of my colleagues are dead. We cannot accept this. Scientists have shown it is possible to eradicate COVID-19. It is up to workers to take the necessary collective action, based on science, to achieve this outcome.

"In January 2021, as infections spread at Cricklewood, London bus garage, I sought to alert my co-workers and inform them of their rights to a safe workplace under Section 44 of the Employment Rights Act. As a parent myself, with my oldest daughter having a heart condition making her potentially more susceptible to COVID, I was victimised and sacked with the support of Unite the union. This only shows that we have to unite together and create new organisations that are prepared to fight.

"It is clear the pandemic is not just a medical emergency. It requires a political solution that can only be provided by the mass entry of the working class into struggle. Friday's school strike deserves the support of workers in every country and as a member of the London Bus Rank-and-File Committee I support your strike call as a life-saving act and a courageous stand."

Other workers have spoken to the WSWs to express their own solidarity with the October 1 strike.

Christopher Sully, a caretaker, told reporters, "I work within an accommodation environment at a well-known university carrying out maintenance for the student residents daily.

"I, as well as my colleague, have to work in a building containing 200+ students as well as staff.

Throughout the entire pandemic the building has not had a trained Health and Safety officer on site.

“And all mitigating measures regarding the safe movement of staff and students that had been implemented at 'the height' of the pandemic have been removed. So there is no longer a one-way system for the flow of people coming in or out of the building, canteen areas have been restored to full capacity and there is not one person on site to implement rules on distancing or mask wearing. Token measures are in place. For example, signage asking people to be responsible and hand gel dispensers being made available.

“It is not a safe environment for the full reopening of this residential building, with tight corridors and small lifts that have had the ‘one person only’ warning signs removed.

“I am in full support of the actions that Lisa Diaz is calling for as the cases of children being struck down with COVID are frightening.

“It is immoral. What sort of society do we live in that places children, students and workers lives at risk of the pandemic. Particularly in education, it is left up to us, front line staff, even if I am not considered as such, to work with what safety measures we can implement. Increasingly the authorities within the university campus turn a blind eye and work from the safety of their own home.

“Lisa Diaz’s statement is powerful and should be urgently acted on as children and students, just like workers like me, are at the sharp end of the government’s policy of herd immunity. Education is very important, but this is done though an environment of information, truth, science and knowledge, not the suppression of science and the knowledge of what is taking place in relation to the pandemic. We need the truth, and we need more Lisa Diaz’s.”

Helena, a civil servant and parent, said, “I wholeheartedly support Lisa Diaz’s call to action. I hope that by giving parents the opportunity to demonstrate their opposition to this government’s disgraceful lack of COVID safety in schools, leaders will begin to take this issue seriously.”

Mohammed, from Wakefield, said he thought Lisa’s call for a parents’ strike was “a great inspiration and must go ahead. We must go forward and carry out these strikes.

“The other day I was telling my family in Pakistan not to send their kids to school as they will get COVID. This has to be stopped.

“It’s genocide what is being carried out—the governments are carrying out mass murder, they don’t care about the working class. They are thinking of their own profits.

“I don’t care what people think and I am going to say to parents and schools what I want to say. Online and the media are full of lies. The only thing that speaks the truth is the WSWs.

“A lot of parents listen to what I am saying. My grandkids go to school, and I have been on a Parents Teachers Association board for 15 years and talk to a lot of parents in the area whose kids go to schools, and they believe in what I say. They were initially taken in by the lies that kids can’t get it, but in Wakefield there have been increases in cases among children, their parents and teachers.

“Not all teachers will listen to me, but some are saying, ‘AJ what you are saying is the truth.’ People are scared about the fines for non-attendance. I say if we can get people together, we can push them back.

“Council leaders don’t listen and are more concerned about the government. They have tried to get me to stand for the council as I speak up for people. The only message I believe is the message of the WSWs.

“In schools, with the easing of the lockdown, no one wears a mask so the virus is spreading in schools. The Delta variant is airborne so there should have been no easing of restrictions. They are just trying to get rid of us and our voices. Lisa’s not afraid to say what is and neither am I. People have to know the truth and something must be done.”



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