

Brixton drivers' fury at anti-strike injunction: "The union is in cahoots with management"

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Bus drivers at Brixton garage have spoken angrily about being excluded from this week's strike, saying they "feel like scabs". They have been banned by a court injunction from joining industrial action by three other garages—Croydon, Norwood and Thornton Heath—over an insulting 3 percent pay offer that has Unite's de facto blessing.

A Brixton driver told the WSWS, "There's lots of rumours going around about what's really happened. We don't have access to any actual paperwork, so we have to go with whatever the [Unite] rep says. According to our rep we have to re-ballot all of the members to see who wants to go on strike.

"Obviously, the strikes been very successful today for the other garages taking part: Croydon, Norwood and Thornton Heath. That is very good today for them, well done. It's a shame Brixton is left out because we are the guys who are taking people into central London, so the strike would be much more impactful in this regard.

"Arriva's 3 percent pay offer is a slap in the face, because if you compare us with other bus companies working in London we are underpaid, and we've been underpaid for a very long time.

"Our senior drivers are on £14.31 an hour. A senior driver at Metrolink I think would be on £17 an hour, or something like that. I've heard there's people in London General that were on £18 an hour. The new starters get £11 an hour. For £11 an hour you may as well go and get a job at Lidl [supermarket]. At least if you work for Lidl, you don't have all that stress, and you have a company discount, so your shopping costs less. So why drive a bus at all?"

The driver was scathing about Unite's role in the strike, including advice by Unite's steward at Croydon

garage that its members there should not strike, "From what I've seen on WhatsApp today, Croydon's been very good and the strike there is very successful. There are no buses out there on the road. Fantastic. Superb! They know where they stand and that's very good."

At Brixton, he reported his colleagues were "Very, very, angry, because we feel like scabs—but it's not our fault. Unite is going along with everything, instead of standing on our side. We are still to hear from the legal department of Unite, which we pay enormously. They should come out and say what's really happened, but we have no clarity.

"We're not really happy with Arriva, but on the other hand we're not happy with Unite either and there's a lot of anger and disappointment that we are not on strike. We were expecting more from [General Secretary] Sharon Graham with the change of leadership. We were expecting more from Unite. But it looks like it's same old, same old."

Another driver from Brixton said the injunction was granted after Unite failed to include a date on certification papers submitted with the ballot results. He told WSWS that drivers at his garage are suspicious, "The union is in cahoots with the management." He continued, "Without Brixton, the strike will have much less of an impact. Most of the busy routes running into the city are all from Brixton garage. The 133, 59, 137, 319—all of them cross the bridge [from south London across the Thames]."

Brixton drivers were furious about being excluded from the strike, "We have been told we have to work because of the injunction. We have no choice. It's the same skulduggery from the union".

Yesterday, the *World Socialist Web Site* contacted

Arriva and Transport for London (TfL) requesting details about the court injunction. WSWs asked for a copy of the injunction and posed the following questions:

- On what basis was the injunction sought?
- On what legal basis was it granted?
- Who granted the injunction and on what date?
- Has Unite appealed the injunction?

Despite Arriva's website claiming that all media enquiries should be directed to TfL during business hours, TfL declined to provide a response. Arriva has not responded to our urgent request for information. In a carefully worded notice to drivers on March 16, the company merely stated that Brixton's ballot "did not meet legal requirements."



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