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ENOUGH IS ENOUGH!

On 5th February at 2pm a drive in demonstration will take place for the capitals taxi drivers at Trafalgar Square. The three major driver trade associations have come together to organise this event.

Unite's Cab Section the LTDA and the LCDC have all agreed that the difficulties drivers face every day of their working lives has now come to the point where something has to be done to bring the situation to the attention of the Mayor and Transport for London.

The feeling amongst taxi drivers is that whatever the official line is, the satellite minicab office in Leicester Square and the minicabs waiting on a suspended bus stand in Whitcomb Street is a rank. The PCO have been adamant in saying that it isn't, but it's hard to argue with the scene as witnessed by taxi drivers every night, that 'Whitcomb Street' is nothing more than a rank. The Unite Cab Section says: 'ENOUGH IS ENOUGH!'

It is not only Whitcomb St that is the problem; the whole of Charing Cross Road, with double yellow lines throughout, has minicabs constantly parked up waiting for work all through the night, even to the point of utilising the existing licensed taxi rank in Charing Cross Road.

There is clearly a minicab lobby within the PCO that wants to give them whatever they ask for. The taxi trade see's it time and time again. Minicab signage was rejected twice by the previous Mayor, but the PCO kept going back and eventually wore the Mayor down into accepting what they wanted."

Steve McNamara of the LTDA has said: "This is a totally united action supported by the LTDA, Unite Cab Section and the LCDC. It's all to do with the PCO approving along with Westminster Council minicab ranks. They say they're not,

but we say a line of minicabs legally exempted from parking regulations waiting to be hired is a rank! This is along with the proliferation of 'Satellite' minicab offices allowed to open everywhere since the requirement for planning permission was removed by the PCO. It's a major problem with all these licensed clipboard Johnnies working the streets running a rank of cars that is now being extended to hotels. The PCO when asked by the Mayor to warn Minicab drivers that one strike and you are out for touting actually wrote to taxi drivers !!!!! Despite the fact that we are allowed to ply for hire. This one letter caused anger and resentment like I have never seen in this trade, and despite meetings with the PCO they have still not issued a retraction or apology. I think the turn out on the 5th will show how strongly drivers feel about these issues."

As I have said in my column in Cab Trade News: "Now is the time for all taxi drivers to show Westminster Council, the PCO and Mayor Boris that we want change. Unite, the LTDA and the LCDC are asking all drivers to attend the demonstration at 2pm on the 5th February starting at Trafalgar Square. The taxi trade has shown its strength before; help make this the biggest taxi demonstration the capital has seen. Unite activists do not receive stand-down money during this time so like you we will be giving our time freely. These issues affect day and night drivers, the inequality that the PCO promotes needs to be challenged, make sure that you are at Trafalgar Square making your voice heard. 'ENOUGH IS ENOUGH!'

Peter J Rose.

Organisation & Recruitment 1/230 branch Unite the Union.

UNINSURED DRIVERS LEFT WITH NOWHERE TO HIDE BY NEW CRACKDOWN

Illegal touting and illegal minicabs have resulted in passengers in the vehicles not being insured. Operations to combat the problem have been carried out across the country but still the problem of illegal journeys remains. Now tough new powers have been set out by Road Safety Minister Jim Fitzpatrick to tackle the selfish minority of uninsured drivers who cost law-abiding motorists £400m each year. The new measures will make it an offence to keep an uninsured vehicle – rather than just to drive when uninsured – making it easier to catch uninsured drivers and keep these vehicles and

their drivers off the roads. Jim Fitzpatrick said: "The selfish minority of drivers who refuse to insure their cars push up premiums for other motorists and kill or injure thousands of people each year. Increased police powers already mean more than 400 uninsured vehicles are seized every day but these tough new measures will leave uninsured drivers with nowhere to hide."

Under the new system, the DVLA will work in partnership with the insurance industry to identify uninsured vehicles. Motorists will receive a letter telling them that their vehicle appears to be uninsured and warning them that they will be fined unless they insure it within a set period; if the keeper fails to insure the vehicle they will be given a £100 fine. If the vehicle remains uninsured - regardless of whether the fine is paid - it could then be seized and destroyed.

Uninsured driving adds around £30 a year to every motorist's insurance premium - amounting to more than £400m a year in additional premiums. It is also estimated that uninsured and untraced drivers kill 160 people and injure 23,000 every year. The Government has already given the police powers to seize and destroy vehicles being driven uninsured, along with improved access to the Motor Insurance Database to enhance their capability to detect uninsured driving by using Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) equipment. Police removed around 150,000 vehicles in 2007 - more than 400 a day. Last year a new offence of causing death by driving while unlicensed, disqualified or uninsured was introduced.

AVOIDING PENALTY POINTS

City of London Police has a new initiative to clamp down on drivers who try and avoid penalty points by claiming someone else was driving their vehicle. On a working day more than 100,000 vehicles enter the City of London; a growing number of car owners claim their vehicle was being driven by a foreign resident at the time it was caught committing a traffic offence in the City. Officers from the Force's Camera Enforcement Section are highlighting the need for foreign drivers to be insured when driving a UK vehicle.

Detective Sergeant Mark Lilley said: "People do not always appreciate that letting a friend or relative use their vehicle makes them liable for prosecution if no insurance cover is held. UK

registered cars must be insured by a company that is a member of the Motor Insurers' Bureau. In simple terms, a UK car must have UK insurance."

When a driver states that a foreign visitor was driving their vehicle, City of London Police ask for details of the insurance cover held by that driver. If it becomes apparent that no insurance was held, prosecutions are being pursued for 'permitting no insurance'. On conviction, this offence can result in a fine of more than £200 and six penalty points. If police discover that the owner was in fact driving the car all along and lied to avoid picking up penalty points, then he or she risks prosecution for 'perverting the course of justice'.

