

# GLOBAL NEWS



## French Cabbies Riot At Charles De Gaulle Airport

We know that the French are far more ready to stop work and demonstrate – should the need arise – than we are. But Parisian taxi drivers went one step further recently when a bland demo turned into a riot. A small number of cabbies were demonstrating against what they termed as police interference in their jobs. They were concerned at a sudden rash of police checks on them. Then as police worldwide sometimes do, le Gendarmes decided that the cab drivers should quieten down so they pulled aside one driver and arrested him for what they claimed was the failure to pay his rent to the cab owner. Whether that was true, Global News does not know. If it was, then we disagree with any driver who deliberately fails to pay their cab rental. The question was whether that was the right time to do it, because it led to a riot that closed terminal three for several hours.

Police fired rubber flash balls to try to restore order as the incident turned violent. Other taxi drivers then got involved with punches thrown on both sides. According to Interior Minister Brice Hortefeux, an enquiry should be called for after the situation worsened. “Projectiles were thrown at the police,” he said, “they had to defend themselves.”

A driver said that the police stopped them doing everything while waiting for fares at the airport. “Now we cannot smoke, play cards or even pray. No wonder we do not get along.” Driver Tarek Moktad added that the drivers wanted government officials to go to Charles de Gaulle and see the situation for themselves. “We’re fed up with being treated like second class citizens,” said Tarek before deciding that he needed to get back to the airport for another job...

## RTG OWNER GOING GAS...

Brian McBride is better known in London as the majority shareholder in the Radio Taxis Group, but for many years prior to entering the London cab business, Mr McBride and his family have been involved with cabs in Cleveland, Ohio and is still the owner of Cleveland Yellow Cab. But that name may have to soon become Cleveland Green after he converted 39 of the company’s 160 cabs to run on gas.

Converting the cars and adding a propane garage is expected to cost nearly around \$800,000, with \$225,000 in extra government supported ‘stimulus funding’.

Mr McBride said: “We’re interested in anything that makes sense for the environment and makes sense economically. Certainly many cab companies in Canada already use propane.”

Another Cleveland cab company, Cleveland Ace Taxis, are also converting part of their fleet and putting up a propane gas filling station. A spokesperson for the State’s non-profit making Clean Fuels Ohio, Sam Spofforth, told us that they had applied for the ‘stimulus money’ to help plant the seeds for additional projects in Ohio. “We spread this around to cover multiple fuels and technologies to jump-start Ohio markets,” he said, adding the various projects would help develop markets for cleaner transportation technologies, which would also help Ohio’s economy.

So will Brian McBride be converting Radio Taxis? We wait to see, however, if Dallas is anything to go by, it might not be too simple with Dallas Mayor, Tom Leppert, seeking support for a plan to change over the city’s petrol taxi fleet to compressed natural gas. So far so good, but he then decided to incentivise cab drivers by proposing that converted taxis be authorised to jump to the head of the queue

at Dallas/Fort Worth International Airport! Needless to say, non-converted cabbies don’t like that idea and have threatened industrial action should the Mayor go ahead with the idea. Jim McGoohan, a cab driver for 10 years in Dallas told us that the gas cabs would have to drive over the rest of them to get to the front of the queue!

A prototype cab, capable of running 250 miles fully fuelled, will go into production early next year...

## MIDLAND TAXI DRIVER’S BIZARRE TESTS SCRAPPED!

We may have lived through some weird PCO decisions over the years, but none so barmy as a test that was put to Midland taxi drivers. Some of the questions were:

If you are well-groomed, will your passengers have (a) a sense of security, (b) think you must be gay, (c) assume you will over-charge them or (d) feel inferior to you? Other questions, which cost drivers £120 to take, asked if they could charge more if a customer had a wet guide dog! The multiple-choice examination, ordered by council bosses in Loughborough, boasts 40 questions, many verging on the bizarre. Another asks if it is good customer care to tell a passenger struggling with luggage to “lift it yourself!” Another asks if passengers should use the bus instead? And cabbies were told to consider whether they regard fatigue as one of the perks of the job?

But when three taxi drivers refused to cough up cash for the compulsory 12-week BTEC course and test, they were suspended. Now, Zaher Zamani, Pyrali Zamani and Martin Thornber have taken Charnwood Borough Council to court and won! The drivers, who all work for Charnwood Taxis, had their licences suspended for refusing to take the course after the council made it mandatory for its 400-plus licensed drivers in February this year. Under current rules imposed by the council, all cabbies in Charnwood must pay £120 to attend 12 weeks of evening classes, which finish with the multiple-choice test for a level 2 BTEC qualification.

But at a hearing at Loughborough Magistrates’ Court on July 16, a judge ruled that suspending the drivers for refusing to take the course was unreasonable and ordered the council to pay the trio £5,713 in costs. “The judge found there wasn’t a reasonable cause for us to be suspended,” said Mr Thornber. “As drivers, all we ask is that we are treated fairly by the licensing department – but we don’t feel we have been.” Zaher Zamani added: “We’re sorry that it came to this. It wasted a lot of time and taxpayers’ money for something that just was not necessary. Being experienced taxi drivers for more than 30 years, there is nothing in the course that would make us better people. The £120 would have been a waste of money.”

Solicitor David Leigh, who represented the drivers, ridiculed the multiple choice questions on the course, adding: “There was an entire evening on the carriage of parcels by taxi, something that could be taught in all of 30 seconds. One has to wonder what the council was thinking. I don’t think they bothered to even look at what was being taught. One might speculate that the only people to gain anything out of it were the course organisers,” he said. A spokesman for Charnwood Borough Council said: “The council’s policy is for all Hackney Carriage and PH drivers to obtain the BTEC prior to the renewal of their three-year licence. The council is considering the implications of this case in relation to administration of the policy. But the policy itself was not questioned by the court.”

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