

# SETTING THE RECORD STRAIGHT

## by John Kennedy

It seems in the end common sense coupled with media attention and the pressure the public brought to bear after two excellent demonstrations held by the taxi trade paid off and the internal review held by Transport for London made the right decision and removed an individual from the Knowledge of London. However, the corridors of power at Windsor house and I'm afraid to say Woodfield Road seem rattled by the emergence of a bona fide trade union called the RMT.

We should all remember that it was the RMT who commented first on this story which hit the Evening Standard. The London taxi branch swung into action and held a demonstration on the 4th of September; we managed a well orchestrated media campaign to highlight the concerns not only of taxi-cab drivers but our customers who just happen to be members of the public. We produced effective leaflets that informed drivers, media and the public of the concerns and failings of the present managers at Transport for London and the Public Carriage Office, whilst behind the scenes lobbying of many politicians at City Hall who thankfully helped our collective cause. I must mention a number of these politicians, for it is important because sometimes we only ever knock when things go wrong. But on this occasion cross party support was asked for and gained by the RMT London taxi branch. Councillor Caroline Pidgeon AM Liberal Democrat and chair of the Transport committee was quick to acknowledge the plight of the taxi trade and contacted the Mayor Boris Johnson via letter, Andrew Boff AM Conservative who was vocal and went to print stating what a crazy decision this was in the first place. Andrew did his best to raise this issue at Mayors question time. Jenette Arnold AM and Valerie Shawcross AM, both Labour, both supported our plight and tried to raise this issue at Mayors question time to. Can I take this opportunity to thank all the members of the London Assembly who decided to stand shoulder to shoulder not just with taxi-cab drivers, but the wider public and common sense.

You see no one group led to this issue being solved, but the RMT specialist transport union led the way with decisive action, effective management of the media bringing about the right forms of pressure to bear down on those who had made the most disastrous of decisions. This issue isn't over for we still need that public inquiry into the failings at the PCO and TFL for you and I plus the travelling members of the public need to know what is going on behind closed doors and Penton Street and Windsor House. It seems that all is not transparent and systems that were in place to protect the public either failed or were amended for whatever reason. Only an independent public inquiry with a remit to search far and wide will get to the bottom of the problems created at Penton Street.

I must though mention two (or three) great men within the London taxi

trade for they have had the courage and conviction (along with others) to set up the RMT London taxi branch and I'm convinced without them this trade would be a much lesser place, Eddie Lambert Chairman and the Branch Secretary David Vidgen both long time trade unionists. In fact how can I not mention George "get off that truck" Vyse, yes he jumped on the back of a truck waving an RMT flag for the world and media to film before a Met Police Officer asked him kindly to step down, George did comply reluctantly.

Today the taxi trade is a better place for many reasons but the emergence of the RMT London taxi branch is a positive step for the plight of hard working drivers who have had enough of propaganda and spin. In our jobs we spend many hours sitting down so now join a real union that will always stand up for you, log on to [www.rmt.org.uk](http://www.rmt.org.uk)



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