

# STATEMENT FROM THE RMT TAXIS BRANCH LONDON *By Eddie Lambert*

## RECENT ALLEGATIONS MADE IN TAXI NEWSPAPER (PUBLISHED BY THE LTDA)

These allegations are in the hands of our legal advisers and we, the Branch, will take their advice as to whether to take legal action on this matter.

However, in the meantime, as Branch Chairman I would like to spell out our actual position on the issues raised.

Following the two recent demonstrations at Penton Street regarding the situation whereby a man with a serious medical condition was accepted onto the Knowledge, it was decided that this incident appeared to be part of a pattern of decisions made over the last few years that reflected badly on the integrity and worldwide reputation of London's taxi drivers. With this in mind, it was decided to try and find out what was going on at the PCO and the only way this could be done in a manner that would reveal all the workings of the PCO would be a PUBLIC ENQUIRY.



### WHAT IS GOING WRONG

A press statement to this effect was issued. Following this statement, I was contacted by Terrance Flanagan, a National Organiser of the General, Municipal and Boilermaker's Union (GMB) about this. The GMB position is that they too are very concerned about this issue and fully support OUR call for a Public Enquiry. They have a series of issues they want raising and listed some of them.

The RMT position is that we have our issues pertaining to the Hackney Trade and they have theirs regarding the Private Hire Trade, but by us both supporting a call for a public enquiry and utilising our respective political contacts, we would have a much greater chance of success in the matter. If both sides of the trade-divide in London are calling for this enquiry then most people would realise that there must indeed be something going wrong in the PCO.



### MASSIVE CALL FOR SUPPORT

Make no mistake, this call is a MASSIVE CALL and we will need every political end available to us to get this accepted.

The last thing Terry Flanagan said to me was "I know we will have a fight to the death with you over the Bus Lanes issue but that is a different issue for another day. Lets get the PCO sorted out first."

### "THE RMT SELLS OUT TO PEDICABS"

It is true that the RMT Taxis London Branch do seek to sabotage the bill currently going through Parliament. We are opposing clause 19 which seeks to introduce a "Voluntary Registration" - I will say that again A Voluntary Registration Scheme. Two of the nine pedicab operators in London have indicated they may be prepared to take part. Not sure that the riders of these things will be very keen to line themselves up for Road Traffic Act violation tickets. It would be a case of the turkeys voting for Christmas. All the riders will just change to the companies that are not part of the voluntary scheme, leaving the scheme yet another piece of useless legislation.

At the end of the last century the Hackney trade was talked into allowing a Bill to pass through Parliament that would licence minicabs and so bring them under control, and by raising vehicle and driver standards reduce their numbers. Well, we have seen the result of that and we are not falling for that 3 card trick again.

Any scheme which gives any sort of credibility to the Pedicabs (at least on paper) will make it much harder to clear these death traps off the streets.

Once clause 19 is defeated, and have NO DOUBT it will be, the RMT will seek cooperation of our members in the Underground, and on the buses, the Fire Brigade Union, Unison (ambulance drivers) and other interested parties to clear these vehicles off the highways and into the parks where they can operate safely and without being a major root cause of traffic pollution.

### NO TALKS WITH PEDICAB COMPANIES

Let me just add here that the RMT has not had any talks or any other form of communication with any member/s of the Rickshaw/pedicab community. If they do happen to also wish to defeat clause 19 then that is coincidental.

## ED THOMPSON THANKS RETIRING CAB DRIVERS

A group of taxi drivers who have now handed back their bill and badge to the licensing authority after many years of service as licensed taxi drivers in the Capital were invited to an afternoon tea at the PCO last month. The drivers were met by staff including the former Director of the PCO, Ed Thompson, Luke Howard, Dave Stock and Mary Dowdye. Although many of them had heard of Ed Thompson as Director of Taxi & Private Hire, they had not all met him or any other members of the PCO team. Following a short introduction and welcome, a lively conversation was



Ed Thompson talks to Richard Forester soon underway as the drivers told Ed what they thought about some of the most recent events to have hit the news headlines involving taxis. Ed then asked the drivers for stories

from their years as drivers. Things have certainly changed since some of these drivers passed their KoL more than 40 years ago. Vehicles used as taxis today are definitely warmer and drier but it is clear that the camaraderie of the cab trade has always been there.

The drivers were also introduced to Mary Dowdye and Dave Stock. The drivers asked what their roles were at the PCO and again raised debate over some of the things which have happened within the taxi trade of late.

Both Mary and Dave were interested to meet some of these

long standing drivers – one even asked if he could possibly have his badge back as retirement was not as rosy as he had thought it would be and he missed meeting the public! The drivers were thanked by Ed on behalf of TfL for their long service in providing such a good taxi service to the public.

