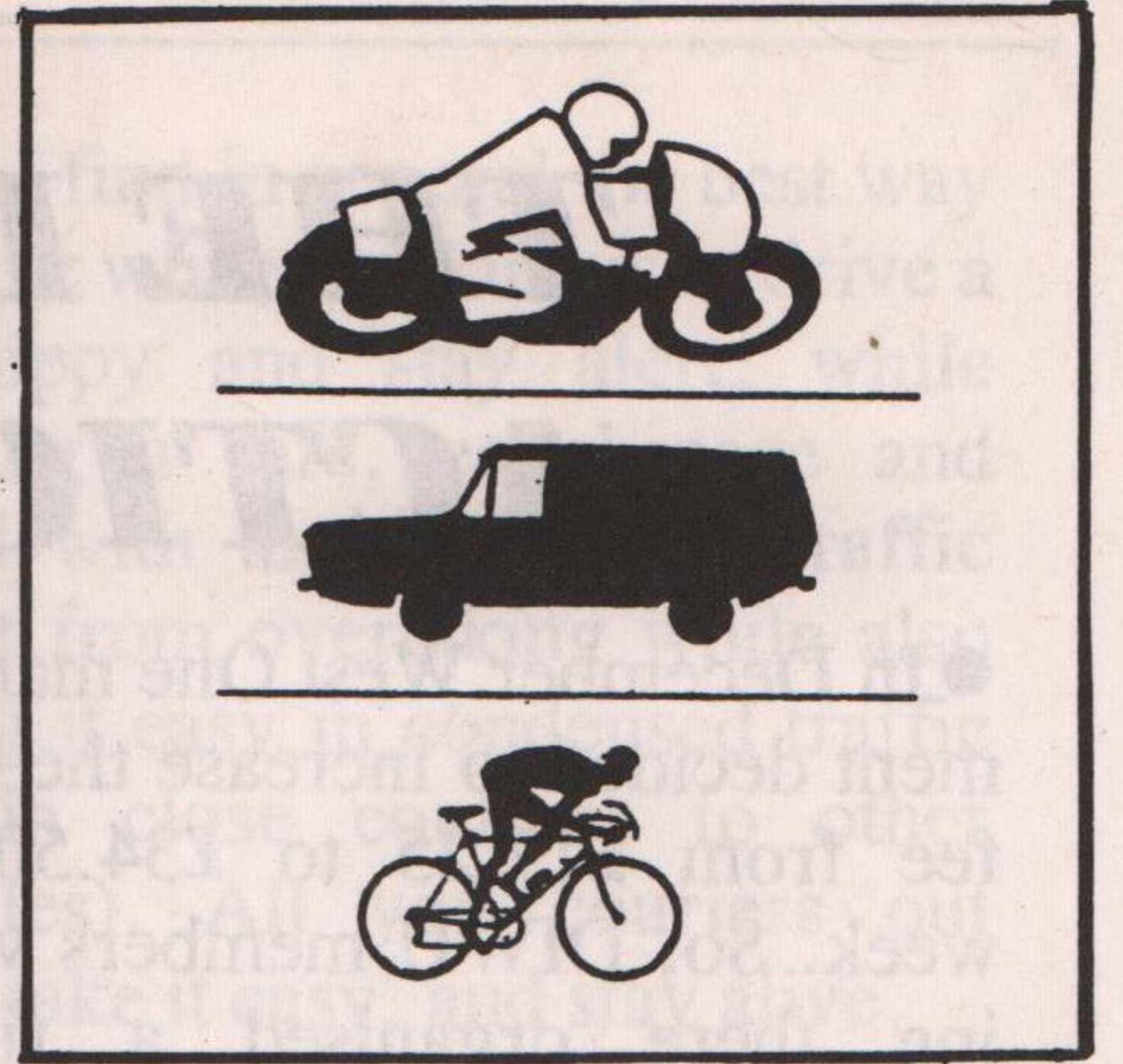


DESPATCHIES

Issue No.3 February 1990



DON'T GET MAD, GET EVEN

MOVING ON AGAIN?

Some workers, and all the bosses, in the despatch industry say that if you don't like it you can always move on to another firm or another industry.

But each time you move you have to learn the accounts so you are on crap money for a while. And when you leave a firm they

most of us enjoy (to a certain extent) the freedom of cycling, motor-cycling or driving. Then we have to invest hundreds or thousands of pounds in our vehicles and protective clothing. Also, for many of us with no other trade this is the only job we are good at.

Most importantly, why the hell should we be driven away from any particular job by some demen-

WHAT THE PAPERS SAID ABOUT US...

Ride Magazine: '... contentious lefty claptrap...'

City Limits: '...entirely grass-roots based organisation got together by the bikers themselves and keen to maintain its independence...'

Moving Target Magazine: '...it would be a pity if after years of apathy and begrudging acceptance of the status quo which leans heavily in favour of the bosses, if couriers failed to grasp the opportunity (to join the Union) and improve their generally appalling conditions of service...'

Transport Review: '...DIWU decision making is decentralised, delegates are highly accountable, and can be recalled by members at any time... if strike action is decided (in the despatch industry) it will be very effective because a company would suffer severe financial difficulties with a loss of clients in a very short time...'

Sunday Sport: '...Terry Waite is alive and well and working as a despatch rider, and he's a member of the DIWU, and he's an alien, and he's the Loch Ness monster...'



invariably rip you off for some money that you are owed.

Then again, the massive firms like TNT, UPS, DHL and Fed Ex are gradually dominating the market and putting the small firms out of business so there will be less companies for you to choose from.

As to leaving the industry, well it is not that easy. For one thing

ted greedy boss. Each one of us has just as much (or more) right to a good living as the boss does. They are no better than us.

So next time your boss pulls a fast one, like reducing the rates, don't think 'fuck this I'm leaving'. Instead think 'I'm going to stand up for my rights here and start a Union Branch'. And that is where the DIWU can help you...



THE DIWU IN ACTION

● In December West One management decided to increase the radio fee from £17.25 to £34.50 per week. So, DIWU members working there organised a riders/drivers meeting at Queen Square to decide what to do about it. One of the bosses, Jeffrey Ritterband, showed up uninvited and we all made it clear to him that a £34.50 fee would cause more aggro than it was worth to him. Jeffrey gave in and agreed to stay at the old price. You can be certain that this would

the job. Eventually the job was given to a new employee who was unaware of what was going on. The others started back for a normal afternoon's work. The rider who took the job admitted regretting it later and said she would not do it again because she only made about £8 and wasted the whole afternoon. The issue of single long-distance jobs is still a problem at First Courier and yet to be resolved. Watch this space...

● On the weekend of 9-10 December the DIWU was invited to send a delegate to an international conference in Paris for postal, telecommunications and despatch workers. Delegates came from Germany, France, Spain and Britain. The conference was very good and an international network for mutual aid and solidarity was set up, of which the DIWU is a part. This will become more important after 1992. Also the DIWU has had links with the Independent Couriers Association for about six months which is a militant Union in New York and San Francisco.



● The DIWU will soon be starting a short course on basic First Aid. The course is free to Union members or £6 to non-members. If you are interested write to the address on the back page.

● A handy guide to income tax and National Insurance for the self-employed has just been published by the DIWU. It is not our place or wish to tell you to pay any tax but this booklet, by providing the facts on the matter, will help you make up your own mind on how much you can get away with. For a mere £2.50 (free to Union members) you could save yourself a small fortune. Every despatch rider/driver should possess a copy. Send cheques or postal orders payable to the DIWU to the address on the back page.

● If there is any group of workers who really needs a good Ambulance Service it is despatch riders. The DIWU has twinned up with Poplar Ambulance Station in Harford Street. If you want to donate cheques or postal orders to the ambulance men and women via the DIWU please send them to the address on the back page payable to: Gary Bowyer c/o Poplar Station.

● December 9th saw the DIWU Social/Benefit in Mile End which was a reet good laff. About 110 people came, plus two Ambulance men who gave a talk then collected over £90. Special thanks to the musicians, particularly Martin, whose rendition of 'Wild Thing' brought the house down.

● The DIWU has started a Research Service to get the low-down on all the companies. Our aim is to collate all the customer rates and rider/driver rates for all the companies, plus to get the facts on each company's profits. At the same time we are gathering information on the various assurance



and insurance packages available to riders and drivers. Also there is a mine of information waiting to be unearthed on the cowboys who run this industry, and a lot of it is not very pretty.

JOIN THE PROFESSIONALS
CALL LLOYD NOW ON 01 251 5411

FORGET ABOUT FRANCE.
WE'VE GOT SOME REVOLUTIONARY IDEAS OF OUR OWN.
STRIKE A BLOW FOR RIDERS' RIGHTS - JOIN US.

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You say you want a revolution?

not have happened if all us lot had not stood up for ourselves. Now begins the wait to see if West One management can be trusted to keep their word.

● A dispute occurred at First Courier at the end of last year when a cyclist was given a job outside of his normal range. He refused it because it would be too time consuming for the amount of money to be made. He was then told that he *had* to do it 'because the controller tells the riders what to do, not the other way around'. So much for being self-employed! The cyclist, a DIWU member, still refused and was told he would get no more jobs. The next cyclist on the plot was told that *he* had to do the job, but he also refused, and so on until four cyclists had refused

SITUATIONS VACANT

I am a courier on my way to work driving down the Camden Road, riding carefully as it is raining. I'm in the middle of the right lane, about 60 feet behind a Yamaha 125 rider, when a red car came down the left lane and cut in front of me forcing me to brake and drop back slightly. He then pulled back into the left lane. I did not show any objection, passed him again, and carried on my way. A few seconds later a bus that is parked in the left lane suddenly starts moving and swerves half way into the right lane causing the Yamaha rider in front of me to panic brake resulting in a dangerous skid, first to the right, swinging into a left slide before gaining control.

So the bike rider drew alongside the bus to launch a protest and and protested but not excessively so. In return the bus driver screamed and



hurled abuse quite loudly, and in return the bike rider turned up the volume of his bollocking of the bus driver. By now the bus driver has reloaded with fresh lungfulls of air to send forth the loudest bollocking I've ever heard. So the bike rider decides to have the last

words and then shoots off into the distance. At this point the aforementioned red car that had cut me up earlier draws up alongside me and the driver starts shouting 'get his number, get his number, I will be a witness'. He was obviously appalled by the bus driver's behaviour to such an extent that he wanted to report him to the police. But I did not quite see the sense in it all as no accident had taken place and felt quite silly in the situation to the extent that I would rather be somewhere else. So I banged the throttle open and disappeared into the distance. I would much rather the situation remained vacant, ie., did not exist at all, was unfilled by anyone.

This situation shows that couriers are not so guilty of bad road conduct as people may believe, and that the problems and accidents encountered on our roads is a varied problem shared by all who use them. Couriers driving for a living who use the roads for forty hours a week are probably less guilty per mile or hour than anyone else. A survey conducted by Westminster City Council about three years ago, amid much controversy and alarm of rising accident statistics, found that the majority of motorcyclists in their area involved in accidents and injury were in fact commuters and not couriers. As more commuters are now using motorcycles as a means of beating London's traffic snarl-ups this seemed to put a stop to the general criticism that couriers were attracting at the time. After the 'shock' findings of Westminster City Council's survey most opportunities for slagging off our couriers became vacant which I feel was a much better situation.

Unless anyone knows better and wants to do the job themselves and drive in London's traffic for forty-odd hours a week I suggest they shut it and mind their own busi-

ness. I find in general the best way to drive while working is to drive a bit nippy and stay alert, while keeping a safe, equal pace and speed with the rest of the traffic (apart from overtaking while also taking it easy in condensed traffic and in close confines to other vehicles). All you couriers out there take it easy, and stay alive.

C.K.

DEEWOO Promotions in conjunction with Frank Warren, Frank Spencer and Frank Thomas proudly presents a:



Cabaret, Bar, Disco, Barsnacks and Free Raffle.

Saturday, 3rd March 1990
8pm.

Duke of York,
156 Clerkenwell Road, EC1.
Nearest tube: Farringdon

Admission £2 on door.

All despatch riders, drivers, cyclists and office workers welcome.

All bosses, scabs and grasses unwelcome.

KEEPING DOWN THE STANDARDS

Last year the *Evening Standard* ran a derogatory article full of venom and lies on London's taxi drivers. All the cab drivers got together and decided to boycott the Derry Street rag. Anybody who got in a cab and asked to go to the *Evening Standard* was told to walk. The boycott was so effective that the Standard printed an apology to the taxi drivers. (Source: *Private Eye*)

A DESPATCH RIDER BULLSHITS

In every *Despatches* a well-known despatch rider bullshits about a recent job. Here is Dave from Chingford:

'Last week I got this job going to Berlin, smashing up a piece of the wall and bringing it back to the City. They gave me the sledgehammer this end, so I got it on a wait and return. Anyway, when I

got the old MZ on those Autobahns I really opened it up and the round trip only took four hours — including four stops for petrol. Well, three stops for petrol and one for the diesel I put in by mistake. If I didn't have to strip the engine down and flush it out I reckon I could have made it in just over the hour. Anyway I saw on the news that the wall is full of asbestos, so I went to the doc's and he told me I had myxomatosis! I once picked up a dose of the clap from a toilet seat in the Stock Exchange.'



ENTERPRISE ALLOWANCE

If this industry was really run on proper self-employment we could all claim Enterprise Allowance, which is a £40 weekly State hand-out, during our first year despatching. But the government says you cannot claim for EA if you work

for one firm for all or most of the time. So there is the rub. Our employers say we *are* self-employed so that they can duck out of paying us sickness and holiday pay while the government says we *are not* self-employed so that they can duck out of paying us Enterprise Allowance. Ever been had?

Want to find out more?

Please send me more information about the Despatch Industry Workers Union.

NAME.....Tel:.....

ADDRESS:.....

..... COMPANY

Post to : D.I.W.U.
P.O. Box 574
Brockley
London, SE4 1DL

DIWU

CONSTITUTION

1 — The Despatch Industry Workers Union is a democratic organisation run by and for riders, drivers, mechanics and office staff. It is not open to employers, managers or persons acting on their behalf.

2 — In the short term this Union aims to improve pay and conditions. But behind our efforts to get these lies the demand for justice, individual freedom and human dignity. So, in the long-term this Union aims to abolish exploitation and wage-slavery, and organise the despatch industry for the benefit of the workers not the bosses.

3 — To achieve its aims the DIWU uses direct action such as strikes, boycotts and any other tactics deemed to be effective. Solidarity between workers is the key to victory.

4 — Union members should never cross picket lines, unless the strikers consent.

5 — The DIWU is opposed to racism and sexism.

6 — Workplace meetings elect delegates for a limited tenure. They are unpaid, accountable and recallable. Members of political parties cannot be delegates. By organising in this way we are forming the structure of a new, fair society within the shell of the present, unjust one.

7 — Members should accept this Constitution and pay their dues.