

Why Opt-Out

There were 2 drivers at Nottingham I used not to talk to because they came to work during a strike. I started speaking to one of them yesterday after he told me he was an outie, other drivers have told me that the second of the two is also an outie. If that is true and that driver wants to talk to me I'll be happy to now because whatever their motivation for opting out the effect of it if this gets in will be to not get the money that opting in drivers will get. They are putting their money where their mouth is and taking a risk that could lose them money but could also possibly help to sink opt-in/out. I respect that.

Now you may think that this is all a bit too warm and fluffy, but that is the way working to defend the principle of trade union unity makes me feel. It is also why I'm a dual member with the RMT, because I believe in unity amongst rail workers and a member of the Labour party because I believe in unity amongst all workers. I believe that if workers stick together we can achieve great things.

About a week ago a driver remarked on seeing me arguing for unity and against the divisive opt-in/out that I was really enjoying myself. I said I was because for me it was like playtime, the opt-out case is so easy to make as it is the only possible choice for the many drivers who want to stop the innies shitting on TU principle. And then these innies have the gall to tell us that ASLEF will still be strong after all this is over. Yes, I know, we've always done it by majority vote they say but can't we just make an exception this time, I'm retiring soon and it would boost my pension pot a little. Right; and after you've taken the money and gone we'd be left with a split grade and a reduced ability to defend ourselves. You've burst the bottom of the barrel when it comes to special pleading and blatant self-interest with that one! And it may not just be splitting the grade, there are some drivers talking about leaving ASLEF as they are rightly disgusted with how the leadership has handled this whole sorry episode. My only question to those outies thinking of leaving would be this: why do you feel that you have to leave the union, you've done nothing wrong the fact is that it is the leadership and the opt-inners who should be considering leaving because it is obvious that they don't know the meaning of the word union.

The leadership tell us that we are getting an option rather than a vote so that we can protect all those who strongly object to working Sundays but clearly they've never spoke to any opt-out drivers. All of those I've met have said they can live with the deal if that's what the majority want, because you know, that's the unwritten but universally understood way in the union: to preserve unity and hence a strong face to management we give up the right to make an individual choice about matters that affect all of us at work. Some people seem to have forgotten that.

Or maybe they haven't and it is just temporary amnesia induced by desperation to get this deal in. The thinking would go something like this. Well, we lost that last vote heavily, how can we induce more drivers to vote for the deal? How about we invent an option based decision making process instead where everybody is atomised. This will get drivers to think about the deal in a purely individualistic way, it's like shit, if I don't accept this deal then I'll get left behind. I'm sure this was the reason the DFC and EC forced us to go down this route. They desperately want to implement the charter, Sundays in the working week, and they are quite happy to throw trade union principle to the dogs if it means they can deliver on it. They knew it was not going to happen with another straw poll after the paltry improvement to the deal, which wouldn't have moved many people away from the 72% in the first one so they needed a mechanism to shorten their odds; playing on people's fear of being left behind was their solution. The DFC reps don't represent the members, they represent the charter.

It is also despicable how the union leadership has used the plight of unemployed freight drivers to try and make EMT drivers feel guilty about not accepting the deal. I hope it is clear from what I've written above

that I do care about the situation of every worker and that being the case I'm proposing here and now that the union sets up a nationwide levy on all members to provide a fund to keep those freight drivers going until EMT drivers, in their own good time have made the right decision for EMT drivers after which we'd be happy to welcome any new driver.

How can the leadership be so cynical about all of this? Well maybe the next point might help us understand. Talking recently with a DFC rep at one of the forums I happened to mention something that had happened at the AAD and how bad I thought it was. Ok, I know, what happens at the AAD is a bit remote but bear with me, it is relevant to the case I'm trying to make. So, I mentioned the incident at AAD and the DFC rep scoffed and said, "Ha, the AAD, the one week of the year when the lunatics are in charge of the asylum." For those of you not completely up on the workings of the union I should just mention here that when the AAD is in session it is the supreme governing body of the union when ordinary members get together and decide what the union is going to do for the rest of the year: the EC gets its power from acting as a substitute for the AAD the other 51 weeks of the year. I told him how shocked I was by his statement and he just said it again, amused with his own words. I said to him that I was going to write it down because drivers needed to know how at least one of the people strongly pushing opt-in/out decision making felt about the admittedly flawed but still supreme decision making body of our union.

I think this is indicative of the same mentality that disregards the result of a properly constituted vote and seeks to divide us with the travesty of opt-in/out.

I hope this has convinced you to opt-out. Don't worry if it has but you've already returned the option form; a quick search on google reveals that you have 7 days in which to change your mind, 'cool off', so you'd best get that opt-out letter to EMT by registered post, as soon as, make it first class. Of course it being google I could be wrong so for the avoidance of doubt consult a solicitor or maybe ask the union.

If people want a company wide indication of how the exercising your option process is going please send an email to outcampaignemt@gmail.com telling me where you're at at the moment with regards to in, out or on the fence. Don't forget to tell me your name and depot otherwise your preference won't be counted.

Latest from Nottingham, 65 out, 4 on the fence and 7 in.

Opt Out to defend Trade Union Principles