

TAXI RANK AND FILE COALITION

THE HOT SEAT

THE REAL TAXI DRIVER'S VOICE

NUMBER 22

10 CENTS

APRIL 1973

LEGAL BATTLE ON

On Thursday, April 5, the Rank & File Coalition filed suit against the union in the Federal District Court of New York, charging Harry Van Arsdale and the union's officers with violation of union membership rights. We specifically charged the union with denying our constitutional right to vote on any contract negotiated for us and asked that the contract be declared null and void unless it is voted on and ratified by taxi workers.

The union has avoided putting the contract to a vote because they know drivers would reject the sellout they've signed. To get around that they claim ratification is unnecessary and say a vote taken at the October 11 general membership meeting empowered them to accept binding arbitration. Any driver at that meeting knows that vote was only in response to Van Arsdale's request for authority to call a strike. You'll probably also remember that the meeting was advertised specifically as not being a contract ratification meeting which, according to our constitution, is necessary for a vote on arbitration.

We filed our suit after having exhausted all remedies within the union and the AFL-CIO. We began preparing our action as



soon as we found out what the union had up its sleeve. Around 100 drivers signed petitions authorizing our suit and many more gave contributions to help finance it. We planned to do the actual filing much earlier but ran into problems when a lawyer we had lined up withdrew and we had to locate others. Sorry to keep you waiting for news.



R&F Member Announces Suit At Press Conference

Our decision to take legal action was based on several reasons. Although it is no solution in itself, invalidating this sellout they call a contract is an essential step to a decent contract. If we throw this one out, we can begin our real fight for a contract which improves the conditions we work under and emphasizes worker's rights instead of bosses' rights.

But maybe even more important than that, it is necessary to confront the arrogance of Van Arsdale and the union officers. We must let them know that taxi workers are the union, that union officials only represent us and must answer to us. If we let them deny our right to have a final say over this contract, there's no reason why they'll do any differently in November with our next contract.

APRIL MEETING ... WHAT ELSE IS NEW

It's the middle of April and it's time again for one of those semi-annual charades that our 'leaders' call a general membership meeting.

This time, they've come up with a new twist - an amendment to our constitution to be voted on. They want to increase the number of people on the union's Executive Council. It seems to be pretty ridiculous but who knows what they're up to.

We are going to go to the meeting and we are going to try to get something accomplished. But we realize that we're up against a brick wall. The way they run the meetings, there's no guarantee that we'll be able to say or do anything. The union officials decide what gets talked about and who does the talking.

Only when the rank and file workers in this industry are organized and determined will we be able to have a meeting where we can actually talk about what's what.

The Taxi Rank & File Coalition is trying to build towards that point on a day to day basis. Regardless of what happens at this meeting, we're going to keep on doing what we have to.

If you've reached the point that you'd like to become part of an effort to rid ourselves of traitorous bureaucrats and to fight the fleet owners, join us.

IN THIS ISSUE

On April 5th, the Taxi Rank & File Coalition took the union to court over the new contract. You can find out just how and why in the article on this page.

We talked with a gypsy driver about his job and the struggle of non-medallion drivers. You'll find the interview on pages 6-7.

Militant Indians seized control of Wounded Knee in South Dakota on February 27th and later declared the independence of their nation. We have an article on the history and significance of Wounded Knee. See page 3.

Then there's an interesting report on an audit of the Taxi Commission on page 4.

Also, a few people have written about some possible solutions to the worsening conditions drivers are forced to work under. They're not necessarily the opinions of Rank & File but are presented with the intention of starting discussion. Turn to pages 4 and 5.

We have to remind you that the only way we can continue to publish is through your contributions. So if you can spare it, send us a contribution.

WHAT WE THINK

FORCED SCABBING

People on welfare aren't working, mainly because there are no jobs. The size of the shape-ups in our garages is all the proof we need to see that the job market is about as useful to working people as the meat market. Thousands of laid off workers from other industries are now hacking and 4.5 million workers are unemployed while corporate profits are at an all time high.

Because there are no jobs, people have been forced onto welfare to support their families. The Nixon regime is now using these same people as scab laborers under the governments "Public Works Project". To continue receiving checks, all "able bodied" welfare recipients are forced to work in federal and state agencies, replacing full time workers not on the welfare rolls. The catch--the welfare workers don't get union scale or even minimum wage. They just get their welfare checks. In the meantime other unemployed workers aren't getting a chance at these jobs. It seems the jobs "aren't available" for them.

The bosses (hospitals, parks dept., etc.) are happy to employ people who must work for less

than union wage, who have no rights, no grievance procedure, no way at all to protect themselves from the management.

Once again we see bosses trying to divide working people (Remember the racist "gypsy" propaganda?). In order to defeat these attempts to divide us, we have to see that unemployed workers are our allies in the fight for a better future for all.



ON THE CONTRACT

The fundamental need of every taxi driver and inside worker is a decent standard of living.

The present sellout contract guarantees that only by working very long and difficult hours will we earn what we need. It's a contract that preserves the bosses' rights and the union officials' privileges - at our expense.

We want a contract that guarantees the advances we have made while we prepare to fight for the next step.

The demands that we think are essential in this regard are:

- 1) end the 43% commission; 60% for all drivers.
- 2) end the dime rip-off; owners to pay all benefits.
- 3) \$150 minimum for all inside workers.
- 4) \$300 a month pension after 20 non-consecutive years.
- 5) proportional benefits for part-timers.
- 6) no productivity clause
- 7) retroactive payment on the above to 11/16/70.

Obviously, that's not all we need. It's just a bare minimum. We also have to have guarantees of decent working conditions. And one final thing, we need the right to defend ourselves collectively - the right to strike whenever we've been unfairly treated.

LETTERS

LEGAL SUIT A MISTAKE?

To the Editor:

I think the Rank & File plan to challenge the contract in court is a mistake. If you win, 42%-ers who have received raises will have their new salaries cut by the bosses, and possibly be made to repay the bosses for raise-mones already received. This will cause worker antagonism toward the Rank & File movement and hamper further progressive efforts within the union. Also, if the contract is voided, our tottering union, which is all that stands between us and the bosses, will be dealt a heavy blow. I agree there are dangerous precedents in this contract of betrayal, but I think you have chosen a perilous battlefield.

Instead of fighting in courtrooms, why not bring the battle into the garages where it must be fought ultimately anyway? The greatest obstacle to a decent contract is not the bosses, whose class interests compel them to fight us tooth and claw, nor the union bureaucrats, who

the bosses, but taxi drivers themselves who will not fight for their basic rights as human beings and workers. Nothing good for workers ever came out of a courtroom; our disastrous arbitration showed that. Taxi drivers must understand that victories can be won only by themselves in determined pitched struggle against bosses and union bureaucrats. Translated into action this means the election of union officials who will press hard for taxi drivers' rights, and the readiness of taxi drivers to use their ultimate weapon against the bosses, the Strike.

The mobilization of taxi drivers on the grass roots level is the principal task and greatest challenge to a Rank & File movement within the Taxi Drivers' Union.

L.L.

IN REPLY

We agree with the brother that our primary task is to mobilize taxi drivers on a grass roots level. However, we felt that, since the contract is a citywide issue, it would be difficult to fight on a

garage level. Because Van Arsdale will not allow a vote on the contract, (and avoiding a vote on the contract would set a dangerous precedent) we see no alternative to going to court.

Although defeating the sellout would be a significant victory for Rank and File, it would only set the stage for a fight for a decent contract. That fight could only be won by taxi drivers organized to struggle for control of our union, and by our willingness to strike against the bosses.

We are aware that we are risking the 1% gain in bookings but we feel that it is a necessary risk in the struggle for a contract which will enable us to survive.

**WE'D LIKE TO
HEAR FROM YOU--
WRITE US!**

TAXI RANK & FILE COALITION
360 West 28th Street
New York, N.Y. 10001

WOUNDED KNEE

On February 27, 1973 several hundred Indians seized the town of Wounded Knee on the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota. The three demands that they raised have remained the same:

- 1) that the Committee on Inter-governmental Relations, chaired by Senator Kennedy, investigate the Bureau of Indian Affairs,
- 2) that the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, chaired by Fulbright, look into the status of over 371 treaties between the U.S. government, and various Indian tribes, and
- 3) that tribes be allowed to elect their own officials.

These demands were the basis of the Indian's next step- their declaration of independence. On March 11, the Indians of Pine Ridge Reservation declared themselves an independent nation: the New Oglala Sioux Nation of Wounded Knee.

But Wounded Knee began long before these events. It started when the first Indians were slaughtered and forced off their

land to make way for Europeans. It continued through the Indian wars of the 19th century, culminating in the slaughter of 200 unarmed Indians at Wounded Knee in 1890 by American troops. Today the Indians are confronting the Federal government on the site of the massacre.

The immediate event which preceded the takeover was a meeting of leaders from the Reservation. They had met to discuss the conduct of their tribal chairman, Richard Wilson, who had been accused of: 1) misuse of funds, 2) nepotism, and 3) being agreeable to whatever the Federal government wanted to do for the Indians.

But Wilson is only one manifestation of the basic problem facing the Indians. They are struggling to regain the independence that they lost by the 1924 Indian Reorganization Act. Prior to 1924, Indians were treated as a separate people whose relations with the U.S. were governed by treaties. After 1924, the Indians lost their treaty rights, and became wards of the government. To put it simply, the Indians have lost control over their own lives.

The Oglala Sioux at Wounded Knee see complete independence from the Federal government as a precondition for the solution of their problems. They have many serious problems: unemployment as high as 65%, per capita income averaging \$800 a year,



rental of their grazing lands to white ranchers at ridiculously low rates (as little as \$1 a year per acre) and strip mining of coal resources on Indian land with government aid, but without the consent of the Indians.

It is clear that the roots of the Indians' problems have been exploitation by white businessmen and federal bureaucrats. The violence perpetrated against the Indian people and their land over many years has produced drastic visible results: alarmingly high rates of suicide attempts, alcoholism, and high school drop-out rates. Given all this, extreme solutions are going to be necessary to solve these problems.

As we go to press an agreement is being signed, ending the occupation. We do not know the details yet, but the government has agreed to some of the demands concerning civil rights and investigations of broken treaties. Only the militancy and determination shown in the last 37 days will force the government to keep the treaty this time.



SLAVERY ON LONG ISLAND

There aren't many jobs harder on your self respect than cab driving, but migrant farm work is one of them.

If you are a farm worker in Suffolk County, you make \$26 per week...if they let you work all week. Of course, that's only if you don't lose your thumb in a potato grader, or if you don't end up owing the company store.

You pay \$5 a week to live with 17 other people in a one room, unheated shack with one toilet, maybe. (Like living in a shape-up room)

Before you start work you have to do down-time. That's working while you shape up.

No, you don't get paid for it --like taking your cab to the car wash or the precinct.)

142 members of the Eastern Farmworkers Association have struck three camps to change some of these "ifs" and win back some control over their lives. They are demanding \$2.89 per hour (+10¢ benefits), no down-time, no rent if no work, and a guaranteed 40 hour week.



They've already been evicted and moved back in. A scab car ran over 2 pickets. And now there are hints that welfare people may be forced to take strikers' jobs.

The EFW is holding on, but isolation makes it hard. A support bus is going out on April 21. Call us if you want to go.

DRIVER TERMINALATED

Dave Nickerson, a driver at Terminal garage in Manhattan, was fired a couple of weeks ago. He was fired after he helped collect several hundred signatures on a petition demanding a garage meeting. The meeting was supposed to give Terminal drivers a chance to reject the sellout contract.

On the day before the petitions were to be given to the garage chairman, Carl Knispel, a committeeman started an argument with Nickerson. The boss used this as an excuse to fire Nickerson; nothing happened to the committeeman, Vernon Dayson. No one from the union is fighting for Dave's job.

The petitions were presented anyway and some drivers are determined to have the meeting.

Nickerson belongs to Drivers and Mechanics for a Decent Contract, a group with which the Rank & File Coalition has serious differences. But Rank & File believes that no taxi worker should be fired for his activities in the union; and no worker should be the victim of collusion between the bosses and the union.

QUESTIONS?

CALL US

BROOKLYN.....675-6467
 BRONX.....643-1591
 MANHATTAN.....473-4625
 QUEENS.....383-2604

Driver Proposes End To Cruising

To the Hotseat:

Competing for fares is one of the worst parts of driving a cab. The article, Cabbie vs. Cabbie, in the last HOT SEAT correctly sees the cause of the problem in the commission system. It also sees the final solution as an hourly wage for

chers, not on us. The work would be distributed evenly to all, eliminating the need to compete for fares. If business was bad, the bosses could no longer call us lazy. But, in general, since two-way radio dispatch is more efficient than cruising, we would all be making more money.

The end of cruising would be a big change in the industry. There would be many practical problems to solve. For instance, during rush-hours in Manhattan, hack stands would have to back up the radios. But the benefits to our jobs and our lives far outweigh the problems.

And besides, cruising may be on the way out anyway. In the last few months, there have been public hearings all around the city on a controversial city--state plan to clean up our city's air. This plan proposes to ban all private cars from mid-town



all drivers. But the article leaves out one important step. Before taxi drivers win an hourly wage, we will first have to get rid of cruising.

To some drivers cruising means freedom but in reality, it makes us slaves to the bosses. As long as we are individually responsible for finding our own fares, we are at the mercy of all the ups and downs of business, and we are wide open to individual productivity attacks by our bosses. Instead of killing ourselves individually every day to keep up our bookings, we must force the bosses to provide us all with work.

If all cabs in the city were equipped with two-way radios, then the responsibility for good bookings would be on our dispat-



during the day and to cut in half the number of legal parking spaces in Manhattan. More im-

HACK

The following articles pose possibly very real problems cab drivers presently represent the opinions of Rank 8 in direct opposition to what most of us want that taxi workers themselves take and discussing solutions to problems forced to react to the bosses' proposals.

These articles are presented here for discussion of workers' solutions. Taxi workers who have other proposals

important for us, it also proposes to eliminate cruising taxis in mid-town Manhattan, to one degree or another. The plan must go into effect by 1975 at the latest. Our bosses have already attacked the plan publicly, but it may be the best thing to happen to taxi drivers in a long time.

There seems to be a lot of interest in two-way radios these days. Our new contract provides for the creation of a joint labor-management board to study the possibility of installing radios in all fleet cabs. And some fleets have already gone ahead with the idea. Scull's Angels and Medallion are just two fleets that already have radios. Drivers for these fleets have told me of booking 60 to 70 dollars on week days. And they say that the boss isn't breathing down their necks any more than before.

Check it out for yourself. Radios are where it's at.



POEMS, PICTURES, ART
THEM TO US:

TAXI RANK 8
360 W 28th St
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FLAG-UP AT 87 BEAVER STREET

The first audit of Lazar's Taxi Commission was released by Abraham Beame, the City Controller, on December 30, 1972. Beame charged the Commission with "improper, and excessive expenditures."

For most cab drivers, this comes as no surprise. We've known for a long time that Lazar and the rest of his crew are nothing more than a bunch of political scoundrels.

But the limited facts and figures are informative. As drivers affected daily by Lazar's frame-ups, we should be aware that there is evidence to support our gut feelings of outrage at the Commission.

For example, over \$1.1 million was collected in fines (our money!) over a three month period. But the money was never

deposited in regular interest-bearing accounts, managed by the City Finance Administrator. Instead, the money collected was placed by Commission personnel in other non-interest bearing accounts. A million dollars is a lot of money to have in the wrong account.

A \$702,500 account, which had been budgeted for inspections, was used by the Commission to provide salaries and salary increases, totalling \$41,820.

Commission members and top officials spent a total of \$1,289 for a reception, an office party, lunches in the office, and dinners with the press.

There were 6,000 loose stamps worth \$500 in Commission offices, despite the fact that they also have a postage meter.

Over \$1,000 was spent on gasoline and parking fees for both private and official cars. There was no indication of whether they were used in connection with official Commission business.

Two television sets were purchased, supposedly for receiving news. Many purchases were even made without competitive bidding.

So Lazar enjoys his fancy parties and TV sets, while handing out illegal salary increases, and somehow puts over a million dollars in the wrong bank account. Cab drivers continue to be harassed and fined by this same Commission, which claims the right to "regulate."

Maybe, we should begin "regulating" the Taxi Commission - they could sure use it!

STAND

ible long-range solutions to the ntly face. They do not necessar- File and in some cases, are in feel. But we feel it is impor- ke the initiative in advancing in their work instead of being sals.

re as part of an ongoing forum to these problems. We invite s to send them to the HOT SEAT.

Municipalization: Our Next Step?

Dear Hotseat committee;

Year after year, the problems that taxi workers face get worse and worse: long hours and unsafe cabs, robberies and runouts, taxi commission harassment about writing in pencil and boss harassment about mileage, dime tips and skunks, etc., etc. . .

Well, you say, that's the way it is. There's nothing you can do about it. Well, we say you're wrong. The bosses want us to think we're helpless to change the way things are. They don't want us to think about what things could be like. It's about time that we started thinking about what we need and how we're going to get it.

What do we need? We need a guaranteed job. We need a decent standard of living for ourselves and our families. We need a safe and comfortable cab.

We need good working conditions. But, like everyone else who lives in the city, we also need good cab service.

As it is now, we hardly have anything we need. And the biggest reason that we don't is that the taxi industry is operated not for our needs and not for the needs of the people in the city. Instead, it is operated for the needs of a small bunch of bosses. And they don't care about the needs of us or anyone else. They only care about their profits.

Their profit-making stops us from having what we need. It seems then, that if we got rid of the profit, we'd be getting rid of a major stumbling block between what we have now and what we should have.

One way to get rid of this stumbling block is for the city to take over the taxi industry--MUNICIPALIZATION. But that alone would not be enough. For the city, under whatever administra-

inside workers, have to control the industry. Without control, we might get better paid for killing ourselves. With control, we'll get better paid for living ourselves.

Think, for a few moments, about the possibilities that municipalization would open up. If the city ran the whole industry, it could eliminate the distinctions between the medallion and gypsy cabs. We could survey



the taxi needs of the entire city and come up with a reasonable number of cabs to take care of those needs. Hopefully, this could be the first step towards guaranteeing cab service to every neighborhood.

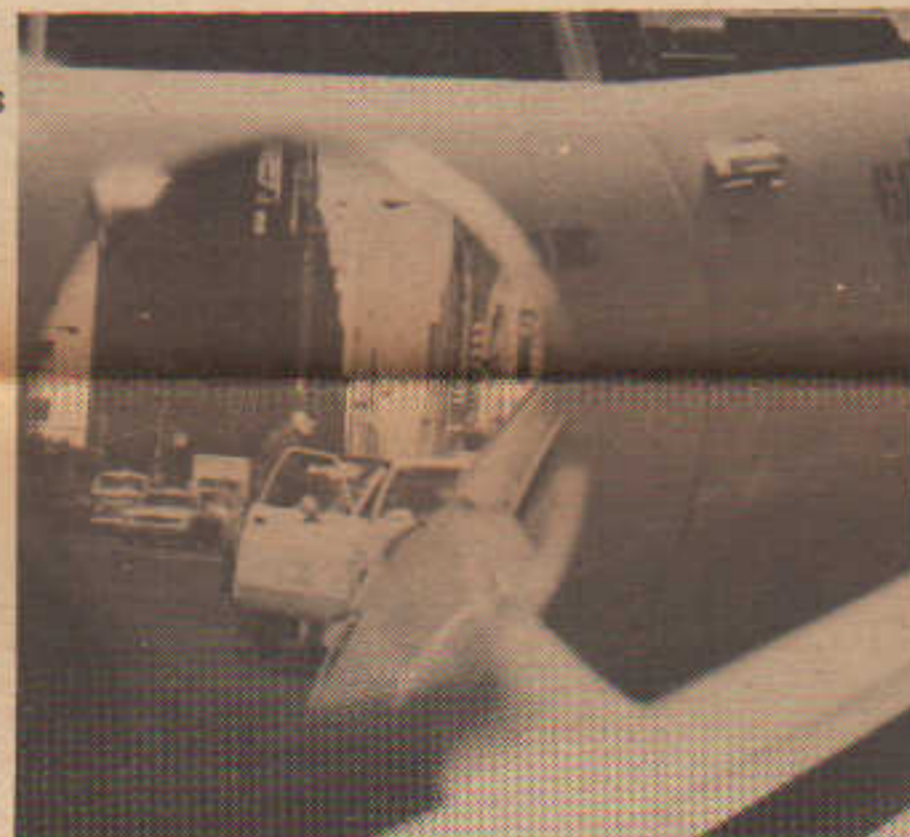
We Need A Base Wage

If, in addition to this, we fought for and got a decent daily minimum, we wouldn't have to worry about killing ourselves in the Manhattan traffic. A lot of us could spend our working days in the outlying boroughs. Furthermore, everyone who now drives a cab of any kind for a living could be guaranteed a job. Possibly, we wouldn't need as many actual cab drivers as there are now. Then, some of us could become employed in some related field --maybe driving mini-buses or jitneys.

There's another important area that municipaliation would affect--the Taxi Commission. As it is now, the Taxi Commission is an agency of the bosses and politicians. Under municipalization, we could propose and fight for a driver and passenger controlled commission.

Obviously, this would involve a lot of changes in areas outside of the taxi industry. And some of the changes might sound as if they're a long way off. Maybe they are. We should remember that 60 years ago, the subways were privately owned.

But we can't afford to not try to think about these changes and to propose over-all solutions. If we don't, the bosses and the politicians will come up with one scheme after another to keep us and our fellow citizens as far away as possible from getting what we need.



tion, would still be a boss and would try to keep us in our place. Therefore, we, the drivers and

ARTICLES, SEND

RIDE ON!



A TAXI SONG

Keep Your Eye Upon The Dime
(Tune: Miner's Life)

Let me tell you all a story,
Of the bosses and their crimes.
Of the taxi drivers struggles,
As the bosses stole the dimes.
How we work 12 hours daily,
Never get no overtime.
So keep your flag up on the meter
And your eyes upon the dime.

Chorus:

Taxi drivers stand together,
Heed no operators slime.
Keep your flag up on the meter,
And your eye upon the dime.

After 60 years of slavery,
Back in 1965.
Taxi drivers built a union,
Just to keep ourselves alive.
We won that fight against
the bosses.
Put our lives upon the line.
etc.

(Chorus)

We've had our union 7 years now
Now it's 1973.
What have we to show for working
They're getting fat off you & me.
For all the money that they pay
us,
We could be working in a mine.
etc.

(Chorus)

We have to fight to smash the
bosses,
And to make our union strong.
We will raise up our commission
We will make right every wrong.
We need a union that works for us
We need a union that will fight.
So, keep your flag up on the
meter,
As you're driving through the
night.

(Chorus)

The following is an interview with Tati Cruz, a gypsy driver and founding member of the Association of Non-Medallioned Drivers. He drives out of Basa Libre, a base in the Bronx, and owns five of the cars himself.

While we don't agree with everything that Tati says, and while we think that the growth of the gypsies has caused some problems for yellow drivers, we also know that Van Arsdale and the bosses have used the gypsies as scapegoats for their own crimes for too long. We don't pretend to have a real solution yet. But we think that the only way a real solution is going to be found is by medallioned and non-medallioned drivers getting together and struggling out their differences. This interview is an attempt at opening up a dialogue among all taxi drivers.

Q. How long have you been driving a gypsy?

A. Well, I've been in the industry for three years now. Before that, I used to drive a yellow.

Q. Do you say gypsy or non-medallioned cab?

A. Well, the reason we say gypsy is because that's the name Lazar has given us. Our name is supposed to be non-medallioned taxi or private car. Lazar gave us that name to put us down; because in Webster's Dictionary, the word gyp means to steal, to get something from somebody without a struggle. So he just baptized us with that name. We don't care. We know we're not stealing anything from anybody - just giving a decent service to the people, and also making a living for our families.

Q. How did the Non-Medallioned Taxi Association get started? How does it work?

A. It started in October when Lazar started making those statements about taking the gypsies off the streets and they killed Gallardo*. He wasn't a gypsy driver; he was a worker. And we all got together and had a big rally. We mobilized about 7,000 from the community and marched from 143rd St. to Longwood Ave. We marched and we got together and had a few meetings and we made the association. The association now has about 500 members. We have legal defense plans and we have hospitalization for the drivers and we have a liability plan. If a driver gets sick, he gets \$50 a week for his house and his family. It's a young association. We just started to build and it's working very good.

Q. Do people own their own cars in the base?

A. Yes.

Q. Do you have people working here who don't own cabs?

A. Yes.

*Jorge Gallardo was a man who died during a gypsy demonstration in the Bronx. He was apparently thrown off the roof of a nearby building by policemen.

INTERVIEW WITH A GYPSY

Q. What's the arrangement for that?

A. They can make all they want a week. They just got to pay daily, \$15-\$20 a day, and they keep their car 24 hours. They get Saturdays off or Sundays. It's not like in the yellow companies. If you are a new guy, you're supposed to work on Sundays; that's what they used to tell me. If you don't come on Sunday, you don't come on Monday. So I say I can't take it.

Q. Do drivers have to pay for gas?

A. They pay for the gas and oil, that's all. The owner pays for flats and getting the car fixed.

Q. Do drivers get held up alot?

A. Yes, like late at night, especially on weekends.

Q. What happens if you call the police?

A. The police don't pay any attention to the gypsy. If they call the police, they probably get arrested themselves, because there's so much harassment. They don't give us any support.

Q. Do drivers get hassled by the cops alot?

A. Every day some members get tickets for unlicensed taxi and amber light, and different kinds of summonses they give us just because we're gypsies.

Q. Do you think that the cops are under orders from Lazar to step up harassment?

A. Yeah.

Q. Why?

A. Well, I think that one of the reasons is because he wants to control the industry for himself. If you have 20,000 gypsies out there, that's 20,000 times a hundred dollars. That amounts to \$2,000,000. Where is that going?

Q. What do you think about the industry growing so large? Do you think there should be some kind of regulation?

A. Well, you know why I don't think there should be some kind of regulation at this time? Because there are no jobs in the city. If you go to the employment office and they give you a decent job with a decent salary, it would be okay; but there's no jobs right now. What are we going to do if they take the gypsies away from us? Work for \$80 a week?

Q. Don't you think, though, that there'll be a point where there are more gypsies than passengers?

A. Well, for the future, I think it's going to have to be controlled, but not at this time.

Q. Who do you think should do the controlling when it does have to be controlled?

A. Well, first of all, they should have a spanish and black commissioner in there. Right now, in the commission, there is not a spanish guy and that makes a racist commission, cause the industry is mostly black and spanish. I don't see how a white guy is going to feel what you want. So I think they should set up a spanish and black commission(er) in there and not just a white commission. But a commission that is only composed of drivers who feel the struggle in the streets.

Q. How do you feel things should work out between the yellow cab drivers and the gypsies?

A. I think the yellow industry is also getting a little hassled or something. I think we should unite to fight this commissioner. He's a racist commissioner.



Q. What about the fears of yellow cab drivers that gypsies are going to take their jobs?

A. I don't think that's going to happen. We think that the yellows don't come to our communities because they are afraid. So we say, if they don't want to come to our communities and give service to our people, it's okay. Before, anybody could go into the street crying for a cab and they'd never see a cab going around. Now the people say, we don't need the yellows anymore in our communities. So they can stay downtown in Manhattan, wherever they want to work, right? We'll stay in our ghettos. I see alot of cabs in the Bronx, the South Bronx, and they work; they go by us, we don't bother them, they don't bother us. We just treat them like workers, that's all. And I think somehow, sooner or later, the workers have to unite. No matter how you look at it, we have to unite somehow.

Q. Do you think yellow cab drivers and gypsy drivers should be in the same union?

A. Well, as long as we all form like a front to work for a decent union. But this union, the one Van Arsdale is controlling right now, I don't think it's right even for the yellow drivers.



La siguiente es un entrevista con Tati Cruz, chofer de taxi gitano y miembro organizador de la Asociación de Choferes sin Medallón. Trabaja desde Base Libre, una base en el Bronx y es dueño de 5 taxis.

Aunque no estamos de acuerdo con todo lo que Tati dice, y aunque somos de opinión de que el crecimiento de los taxis gitanos ha causado algunos problemas a los choferes de taxis amarillos, también sabemos que Van Arsdale y los patrones han usado a los gitanos como victimiñas para sus crímenes por mucho tiempo.

No pretendemos tener una solución todana. Pero creemos que de la única manera que se va a conseguir una solución verdadera es que los choferes con medallón y los choferes sin medallón se reúnan y discutan sus diferencias. Esta entrevista es un intento de abrir un diálogo entre todos los choferes de taxi.



P. ¿Cuánto tiempo hace que usted guía un taxi gitano?

R. Bueno, he estado en la industria cerca de 3 años. Antes quiofa un taxi amarillo.

P. ¿Usted dice gitano o taxi sin medallón?

R. Bueno, la razón por la cual decimos gitano es porque ese es el nombre que Lazar nos ha dado. Se supone que nuestro nombre sea taxi sin medallón o carro privado. Lazar nos dio ese nombre (gitano) para rebajarnos; porque en el diccionario Webster la palabra gitano quiere decir robar, obtener algo de alguien sin ganárselo. Por eso nos puso ese nombre. A nosotros no nos importa. Nosotros sabemos que no estamos robando de nadie - solamente estamos dando un servicio decente a la gente, y ganándonos las habichuelos para nuestras familias.

P. ¿Cómo se organizó la Asociación de Taxis sin Medallón? ¿Cómo trabaja?

R. Empezo en octubre, cuando Lazar empezo a hacer esas declaraciones de que iba a terminar con los taxis gitanos y cuando mataron a Gallardo.* El no era chofer de taxi; era un trabajador y nosotros nos reunimos y celebramos una gran reunion. Mobilizamos alrededor de 7000 de la comunidad y desde la 143 hasta la Avenida Longwood. Marchamos y nos reunimos y celebramos varias reuniones y formamos la organizacion. La asociacion tiene ahora como 500 miembros. Tenemos planes para la defensa legal y tenhospitalización para los choferes y tenemos plan de seguro. Si un chofer se enferma recibe \$50 a la semana para sucasa y su familia. Es un asociacion joven. Hace poco que empezamos a organizarnos y esta trabajando lo más bien.

P. ¿En esta base los choferes son dueños de sus taxis?

R. Si.

* Jorge Gallardo fue un puertorriqueno que murió durante una demostracion de choferes gitanos en el Bronx. Apparently fue lanzado desde una azotea por la policía.

ENTREVISTA CON UN GITANO

P. ¿Tienen también ustedes choferes que no son dueños de sus taxis?

R. Si.

P. ¿Cuál es el arreglo para eso?

R. Ellos pueden hacer todo lo que quieran. Solamente tienen que pagar \$15 o \$20 diarios y se pueden quedar con el carro 24 horas. Tienen el sábado o el domingo libre. No es como en la compañía de los taxis amarillos. Si usted es un trabajador nuevo está supuesto a trabajar los domingos, eso era lo que me decían a mi. Si usted no viene el domingo, no venga el lunes. De manera que yo dije que no lo acepto.

P. ¿Tienen los choferes que pagan por el gas y el aceite?

R. Ellos pagan por el gas y el aceite, solamente. El dueño paga por las gomas vacías y por arreglar el carro.

P. ¿Son atacados los choferes mucho?

R. Si, tarde en la noche, especialmente los fines de semana.

P. ¿Qué pasa si ustedes llaman la policía?

R. La policía no le presta ninguna atención a los gitanos. Si llaman la policía, lo más seguro lo que nos arresten a ellos mismos porque hoy tanta persecución. No nos dan ningún apoyo.

P. ¿La policía molestan a los choferes todas las noches?

R. Todos los días algunos miembros reciben citaciones por quitar taxis sin licencia o quitar con luz amarillas, y diferentes clases de citaciones que nos dan simplemente por ser gitanos.

P. ¿Cree usted que los policías tienen ordenes de Lazar para aumentar la persecución?

R. Si.

P. ¿Por qué?

R. Bueno, creo que una de las razones es que el quiere contrar la industria para si mismo. Si hay 20,000 taxis gitanos en la calle, eso quiere decir 20,000 veces \$100. Eso equivale a 2 millones de dolares. Adonde va ese dinero?



"GITANOS" PROTESTAN

P. ¿Quién cree usted que debe controlar cuando llegue ese momento?

R. Bueno, primero que nada, debía tener un comisionado latino y otro comisionado negro. Ahora mismo en la comisión no hay ni un hispano, y eso la hace una comisión racista. Porque la mayor parte de los que trabajan en la industria son negros e hispanos, no se como un blanco va a saber lo que nosotros queremos. De manera que mi opinión es que deben establecer una comisión negro e hispana y no simplemente una comisión blanca. Pero que sea una comisión que esté compuesta por choferes que sientan la lucha en los calles.

P. ¿Qué opina usted sobre el crecimiento de la industria? ¿Cree usted que haber alguna clase de regulación?

R. Bueno, sabe usted por qué yo creo que no debe haber ninguna regulación por ahora? Porque no hay trabajos en la ciudad. Si uno fuera a la oficina de desempleo y le dieran un trabajo decente, estaría bien, pero no hay trabajo. ¿Qué vamos a hacer si nos quitan los taxis gitanos. Trabajar por \$80 a la semana?

P. Pero no crea usted que llegará el punto en que habrá mas gitanos que pasajeros?

R. Bueno, para el futuro creo que se debe controlar, pero no por el momento.



P. ¿Como cree usted que los amarillos y los gitanos deben arreglar los cosas?

R. Yo creo que la industria amarilla está siendo hostigada también. Creo que debemos unirnos para pelear este comisionado que es un racista.

P. ¿Y qué del temor que tienen los choferes de los taxis amarillos de que los choferes gitanos le están quitando los trabajos?

R. Yo creo que eso no va suceder. Pensar que los choferes de los taxis amarillos no vuelvan a nuestras comunidades porque tienen miedo nosotros decimos, si no quieren venir a nuestras comunidades y darle servicio a nuestra gente, está bien. Antes cualquiera salía a la calle gritando por un taxi y no se encontraba uno. Ahora la gente dice, no necesitamos mas los taxis amarillos en nuestras comunidades. De manera que se pueden quedar en Manhattan, donde quieran trabajar nosotros nos quedamos en nuestros arables. Yo veo un montón de taxis en el Bronx, el sur de Bronx y ellos trabajan, nos pasan por el lado, nosotros no los molestamos y ellos no nos molestan a nosotros. Los tratamos como trabajadores, nada mas. Y yo creo que de alguna manera tarde o temprano nosotros trabajadores tenemos que unirnos. De cualquiera manera tenemos que unirnos.

P. ¿Cree usted que los choferes de los taxis amarillos y los gitanos deben estar en la misma unión?

R. Bueno siempre y cuando que formemos como un frente para luchar por una unión decente. Pero esta unión, la que Van Arsdale controla ahora, yo no creo que esa unión sea buena aun para los choferes de taxis

SECCIÓN EN ESPAÑOL

LA LUCHA LEGAL

El lero de abril, miembros en coalición señalaron una demanda en contra de Van Arsdale y otros oficiales de la unión por razón de violar los derechos de los miembros de la unión. Nosotros acusamos a la dirección de la unión de violar nuestros derechos constitucionales del derecho al voto en materias del contrato ya negociado, el cual no tuvimos el derecho a votar. Nosotros pedimos que el contrato se anule, al menos que se ratifique por los miembros de la unión.

La unión no se atreve llevar a voto el contrato porque saben que la mayoría está en contra de un contrato vendido. Ellos dicen que un nuevo voto no es necesario, ya que en la asamblea general del 11 de octubre nosotros le dimos el derecho a aceptar un contrato por arbitraje controlada. Cualquier chofer sabe que el propósito de ese voto fue solamente para darle la autoridad a Van Arsdale para llamar a huelga. Ustedes se deben acordar también de que la asamblea fue llamada específicamente para no ratificar un contrato, cosa que es necesaria para aprobar contratos, de acuerdo con nuestra constitución.

Nosotros estamos demandando después de haber exhaustado todos los recursos dentro de la unión y la AFL-CIO. Nosotros nos empezamos a preparar tan pronto cuando nos dimos cuenta de lo que la unión tenía entre manos. Conseguimos 100 choferes que firmaron la petición para poder demandar, y muchos otros nos dieron contribuciones para financiarlo. Tuvimos contratiempos ya que el primer abo-



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gado rechazó el caso y tuvimos que conseguir otro. Sentimos mucho no haberles informado todo esto antes.

Nuestra decisión de tomar acción legal esta basada en varias razones. Aunque el invalidar el lero contrato no nos da la solución, al menos nos da la oportunidad de desarrollar uno nuevo que nos favorezca. Si ganamos y podemos eliminar este contrato, podemos diseñar un contrato que favorezca los derechos de los trabajadores y no uno que defiende los derechos de la empresa.

Quizás aún más importante será el confrontar la arrogancia de Van Arsdale y los oficiales de la unión. Hay que dejarles saber que los choferes de taxi son la unión y los oficiales son nuestros representantes por lo cual tienen que consultar con nosotros. Si le dejamos que nos nieguen este derecho al voto para ratificar este contrato, sabemos que en noviembre, harán lo mismo.

LA REUNIÓN DE ABRIL

Ya estamos a mediados de abril, y es tiempo ya de tener una asamblea general de miembros de la unión.

Esta vez el "liderato" de la unión tiene un nuevo "ángulo" - votar para una nueva enmienda a la constitución. Ellos quieren aumentar los miembros del Comité Ejecutivo. Nos parece ridículo, pero ya veremos.

Vamos a ir a la asamblea a ver si se consigue algo. Pero estamos ya advertidos que tenemos una pared sólida de frente nuestro. En la manera que se conducen estas asambleas no sabemos si podemos decir nada. El "liderato" siempre decide qué se dice y quien lo dice.

Sólo cuando los trabajadores estemos organizados podremos decidir nosotros mismos lo que se diga en estas asambleas y que se hable claro.

El Taxi Rank & File Coalición está tratando de conseguir este nivel de poder cada día de lucha. No importa lo que pase en la asamblea; nosotros tenemos que seguir trabajando en lo que debemos hacer.

Si tus se sienten igual que nosotros, y quieren unirse en la lucha en contra de los burócratas traidores y las empresas de taxi; UNETE.

**UNA ENTREVISTA CON UN GITANO
VEA LA PAGINA 7**

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