



# THE DROP

OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF LONDON COURIER'S NETWORK

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## Introducing The Drop

Uber cheats, Slaveroo steals — these companies only think about their profits. Every driver knows this fact. The owners lower pay, and we have to speed through the city to make enough deliveries. They get rich off our backs, but they don't care if we fall off our bikes, or if we fall into debt when our bikes get stolen. To make the companies hear our voice, we have to hit them where it hurts: in their wallet. This too, is a well-known truth. The Drop is a instrument for London drivers to come together and plan a strategy in this fight. We need to organise a city and nation-wide network to struggle against the low pay, low boost and terminations. Contact us to tell us about your area, your fight, and what you think we should do, and we can write it in the next issue. If we are organised and united, we can beat the companies!

## UberEats Strikes: What's Next?

This autumn saw the biggest and most militant delivery strikes in London's history.

On September 19th hundreds of drivers across London refused to work after Uber announced plans to cut pay per drop from £4.26 to £2.82. They demanded £5 per drop, + £1 per mile, after the UberEats fee. The strike lasted three days across the city, and in some parts up to five days. Picket lines were organised in front of McDonalds shops where drivers prevented scabs from strike-breaking. There was also a major rally at Uber HQ, with a mass of drivers blockading the road to protest the changes.

Managers attempted to kill off the protest by asking to talk to drivers individually and giving out a letter claiming they had consulted hundreds of drivers about the changes. The workers said they would only negotiate as a group and ripped up the letter. While there was some lack of unity across nationalities in certain areas, overall there was strong participation across national lines - including Brazilian, Algerian, Pakistani and other drivers.

During the September strike, riders approached the IWW union and asked for help. The IWW organises food delivery workers across the UK in its Couriers Network, and on the back of the September action the network called for a national courier strike, choosing October 4th to support striking McDonalds, TGI Fridays and Weatherspoons workers. IWW activists spent the next 10 days visiting as many McDonalds as possible, from Wembley to Dartford, Walthamstowe and Surbiton. Activists across the country also mobilised, which led to drivers joining the strike in Bristol, Cardiff, Glasgow,



Southampton and Portsmouth.

On October 4th hundreds of drivers across London went on strike from 5–9 PM. There was good unity across nationalities and we know of around 20 McDonalds that had picket lines, which were very effective at stopping scabs. However, in other places striking workers just decided to go home or worked through another app. Where this happened, there was no one to prevent scabs from undermining the strike.

So what have these strikes achieved? On the one hand, Uber has ignored the drivers' demands. This may seem like a defeat, and some drivers have expressed their frustration by saying the strikes were pointless or by blaming the lack of unity from other nationalities. However, Uber is a multibillion-pound company that hates unions. Deliveroo is the same. It was always going to take a long campaign of strikes and actions to win change, and these companies won't negotiate until they are forced to. This can happen if we make ignoring drivers more costly than listening to drivers. In Cardiff, riders forced Uber management to speak



different countries left behind the fear of getting in trouble and went on strike, blockaded roads, cornered managers and stood against scabs. This was itself a huge step forward. The drivers showed they know how to fight and how to stick together. Uber and Deliveroo will remember that and think twice before making a big pay cut in the future.

The question now is how do we communicate between the thousands of drivers in London? Whatsapp groups can be useful to get information out but they are not a good platform for talking or making decisions. Should the union organise local meetings between drivers from 3-4 McDonalds? Do we need to get representatives from different areas to sit down and make a plan? Can we use this newsletter to spread information and communicate? We need your ideas and your help. The drivers have shown what they can do without preparation. Now we need them to show what they can do when they are organised, united and strong.

to them after they blockaded the local Uber office. In Paris, drivers forced management to negotiate after blockading a Deliveroo Editions. If we put the work in and stick together, then we can force these companies to talk. What the strikes did achieve was to bring together thousands of workers who are treated like shit by these companies. Migrant workers from

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## French courier strikes force Deliveroo to meet workers.

In 2016, French couriers were paid €7.50 per hour and €2/3/4 per drop depending on how long they'd been working for. They'd get a €50 bonus for working on Fri/Sat/Sun and €15/hr for working in the rain. Then the hourly pay and bonuses disappeared and they started being paid €5/drop. In some cities couriers on the old contracts were fired straight away. Some of them decided to join a trade union and organised a wave of strikes across France in 2017, leading management to accept a first round of unconditional talks. The couriers were positively inspired by the London Deliveroo strikes in September 2016.

After each strike, the French couriers would organise general assemblies to avoid losing



momentum and plan their next moves. In October 2018, they blockaded a number of restaurants and had them turn off the Deliveroo app. Restaurant owners decided to support their struggle. On that night Deliveroo was off all over Paris. After another round of blockades and strikes, the couriers were contacted for a second meeting.

These French couriers are part of the Transnational Federation of Couriers, a coalition of food app workers from 12 European states and 34 organisations, including the IWW and IWGB, that was founded in Brussels in October. This federation will lead a coordinated fight for better conditions in the sector across Europe. What role can London drivers play in this?



## Why strike?

Striking is never easy, and there will always be people who will argue against it. But it's the most powerful tool we have as workers. Here are some common things you might hear from other drivers, and things you can say in response.

### **We went on strike once and it did nothing.**

After the strikes in September to protest against getting rid of the minimum drop charge, Uber added more boost and additional payments. This worked a bit to buy drivers off but it has now stopped again. To secure proper wages and rights one strike is not enough as UberEats will just reduce the money again when drivers take the pressure off.

**But other drivers will just work more.** On 4th October, and in the strikes in September, no deliveries could happen when workers stood in front of McDonalds. They stopped anyone who was trying to work during the strike and persuaded most people not to work.

UberEats say drivers are not employees and this is why they don't get sick pay or pay for the time they are waiting for orders. Laws about strikes in the UK apply to pickets (stopping others working), like not being allowed to have more than 6 people, or people who don't work there. UberEats drivers are not employees according to the company, meaning those laws don't apply.

**We're tired from the last strike and we need money.** People gave everything they had last time with some people on strike for weeks. Planning for a series of strikes is more



achievable, as drivers can get really disappointed when a strike doesn't work straightaway. It usually takes a long time to get companies to listen, for example it took cleaners at LSE university almost a year of regular strikes to get living wage and the same rights as other workers. They had fundraisers and a strike fund to help people keep going.

**UberEats is too big to fight.** Big companies like Uber use similar tactics in different places, so we can also use ways to fight back that have been used in other places. We heard about how in France they blockaded 'dark kitchens'; places where chefs from different restaurants all make food only for UberEats delivery.

**If you don't like it you can get another job.** But the problems of low pay will be the same in other similar jobs. Deliveroo is the same and new apps will be the same because they pay as little as they can get away with, to make as much money as possible. If one company (the biggest one) pays more the others will have to, or people won't work for them.

## Immigration Raids

Immigration Enforcement has been actively targeting Couriers in London, with recent raids in Islington and South London. If you are being harassed by Immigration Enforcement we can support you. Contact us at [london@iww.org.uk](mailto:london@iww.org.uk) or call 07775 102697.

Anti Raids Network is a good source of advice and information. Check out their site at

<http://antiraid.net/>

<https://www.facebook.com/antiraid>

@AntiRaids

### **What to do if you see a raid**

<http://antiraid.net/what-to-do-if-you-see-a-raid/>

**Immigration Checks:** know your rights

<http://antiraid.net/immigration-checks-know-your-rights/>

(Info available in 25 different languages)

## Have Your Say

Are you a courier working in London? Have something to say about your job, or something that we have written about? Then please get in touch by emailing [London@iww.org.uk](mailto:London@iww.org.uk), and putting 'The Drop' in the subject line. We will be in touch with you from there.

## What is the IWW – Industrial Workers of the World?

The IWW is a revolutionary global union, fighting for better working conditions today and economic democracy tomorrow. We use powerful organising methods, direct-action and direct-democracy to put power in the hands of workers.

We believe that ordinary people can lead and create change, both at work and in society. We put our members in charge, training them to build and lead their workplace unions, organise their own campaigns and take the action that wins.

We're an active fighting union. We know solidarity is strength, and we prove it by looking after each other.

We are people of diverse races, genders and ages, from every area and country. We have diverse backgrounds and a multitude of different skills, but we have the same goal – to win better conditions at work, and a fairer world tomorrow.

<https://iww.org.uk>



## What can the IWW offer?

By joining the IWW, you get:

- Advice and support
- Representation
- Training
- Translation
- A democratic decision-making structure
- Solidarity from fellow workers.

But Couriers need to keep speaking to each other, sharing ideas and planning actions. We're not here to provide a service; we're here to build a movement, winning bigger and better victories for Couriers as our movement grows in strength and confidence.

## The IWW Couriers Network

Our Couriers Network connects drivers from across the UK so they can share information, support each other, and take action. The Couriers Network is continuing to put pressure on Uber Eats and Deliveroo to win better pay and security.

Find out more at <https://iww.org.uk/iww-couriers-network>

Your union is your future. Get involved. Join the IWW.

<https://iww.org.uk/join>