

Victory!

Wildcat Traffic Wardens Reinstated

After a four month battle against bosses over their sacking for wildcat action, 28 traffic wardens in Belfast have won their fight against the bosses. In an interview with The Leveller, an NCP worker involved in the dispute elaborated on the deal they had won, and how they fought their bosses.

Traffic wardens this week expressed joy at finally winning their demands in their struggle against their employer NCP. The workers were engaged in an almost daily protest from April after 28 were sacked for taking part in wildcat industrial action over working conditions and sick-pay. On Friday, after a four-month battle, they were informed that they would all have the option of reinstatement or a substantial redundancy package.

The wardens had taken the wildcat action at the start of April over pay and conditions, including their rotas and sick-pay. They were initially suspended by bosses, but on 20th April were sacked. Those involved made up one-third of Belfast's traffic wardens.

One of the sacked workers (who wished to remain nameless) who had been involved in the protests spoke to The Leveller shortly after telling people the news about the deal, and gave some background to the dispute.

"On the 4th April after umpteen times going to management about severe working conditions, i.e. one urinal between 50-odd workers... being harassed by management,



we decided to have a half-day protest. Four hours, walkin' out and then coming back to your shift the next day. When we returned for our shift the next day we were met by management who then gave us a letter of suspension. We were suspended initially for two weeks, and then brought into a 'kangaroo court' type situation and ALL sacked."

When news of the sackings emerged, the employer NCP responded to the press and at the time said they *"have a very good relationship with Trades Unions in Northern Ireland and will continue to work with unions representing their members - but we cannot support illegal action of this kind."*

The NCP worker we spoke to described the initial reaction of the sacked workers, *"in the beginning we were shocked, it went from shock to anger, and from anger*

then, to action."

The traffic attendants began protesting everyday, with their chief aim now being reinstatement. Initially they picketed the NCP offices in May Street, and then Calendar Street when the offices moved. The sacked workers received support from their fellow traffic wardens, members of Organise!, the Socialist Party and various other political groups in Belfast. Northern Ireland Public Service Alliance (Nipsa) was giving the sacked workers strike-pay during the dispute.

In the intervening months, NCP had replaced the sacked staff with full-time replacements, but it was clear that the new staff were very much in support of their sacked colleagues, *"the new workers supported us wholeheartedly... we asked them for their support in*

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