

# News from the past

## Scene at Mortlake Garage Bus Driver Charged

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An unfortunate case, arising out of the general strike, was heard at Mortlake police court on Wednesday. The prisoner, Sidney Robert Skinner, aged 32, bus driver, of Eleanor-grove, Barnes, was charged with using insulting language and behaviour likely to cause a breach of the peace, and further with using words and behaviour likely to cause disaffection amongst His Majesty's Forces. Mr. Cresswell appeared for the defence.

Police-sergeant George Sandle said that on Tuesday afternoon at 2.20 he was on duty in Avondale-road, Mortlake, when four bus loads of volunteers escorted by two armoured cars manned by soldiers arrived to take the buses from Mortlake Garage to Chiswick. When they pulled up at the garage, prisoner shouted to a soldier in the rear armoured car, "You had better come down, you —. You are only blacklegs for the Government." He then made a rush at the car. Witness told him to stand back, but he shouted to the soldiers, "It will be your turn next, and if you don't come down we shall fetch you." When charged prisoner said "Can't you let me go? I only lost myself for a moment." Cross-examined, the witness said the convoy came along Mortlake High-street. There was a very large crowd about at the time, and there was a good deal of cheering and a good deal of booing. Prisoner was standing on the pavement on the opposite side of the road to the garage, and witness was standing just outside the garage. He did not see a soldier put his fingers up to his nose directed at the crowd, and neither did he see prisoner speaking to Police-sergeant Jones. Witness had known prisoner for about seven years, and he was a very good and hard-working man. He was very surprised to hear prisoner utter such words.

Acting-sergeant Walter Stevens, of the Special Constabulary, also gave evidence.

Prisoner, in evidence, said he had been a driver for over seven years. He was talking to Sergeant Jones for about twenty minutes before he was arrested. He went there purely out of curiosity. He saw a soldier put his fingers up to his nose, and, thinking that it was directed at himself personally, he said, "It will be your turn next," and the next moment he was arrested. He meant nothing. He was due to receive a medal from the Lord Mayor this year for seven years' continuous service with the L.G.O.C. without any complaints being made against him. This was the first time he had ever met with any trouble, and also the first time he had been in a police court. He handed up to the Bench several diplomas awarded him by the L.G.O.C., and characters from army officers and quartermaster-sergeants, and the head master of his school. He served throughout the great war, and previous to that was a regular soldier in South Africa.

Cross-examined witness said he thought the police must have made a mistake.

Evidence was given for the prisoner by James Humphries and Frederick Farrant, bus conductors; Walter Joseph Clark, a Metropolitan Railway porter; Elizabeth Fielding, and Ernest Charles Fenson, a bus driver. None of them heard prisoner use any insulting language.

George Henry Pullin gave further evidence to the good character of the prisoner.

After the magistrates had deliberated, the chairman (Mr A. Spurrier) said they thought the police had made a mistake with regard to the language. They thought the words complained of were spoken in haste, but they had to deal with such cases firmly, and a fine of £5 would be imposed.