

Striking bus staff hit out over 'silence'

DUBLIN Bus drivers are accusing management of a 'deafening silence' as they press ahead with strikes this week that will once again cause chaos in the capital.

As well as 400,000 commuters being affected by the industrial action tomorrow and on Friday, the second day of action will also clash with Culture Night which up to 370,000 people are to attend.

However the Arts Minister Heather Humphreys said the event will not take a hit even though Dublin Bus has confirmed its planned free shuttle service for the festival will not run.

Just like last week, ahead of the two-day strike, the last buses will be leaving at 9pm tonight. Ahead

By Chai Brady

of the commuter bedlam, the drivers' unions have criticised the company for declining to discuss their pay demands.

SIPTU organiser John Murphy said: 'The complete intransigence shown by Dublin Bus, the Department and the Minister for Transport in response to our members' need for an acceptable pay rise has created real anger and frustration.'

'It has also strengthened our members' resolve to implement further industrial action.'

For Culture Night, which sees a host of events take place all over the capital, Dublin Bus had agreed

to provide four routes free to the public between 6pm and 11pm - to ferry revellers between events. Now these have been cut due to the dispute.

Fianna Fáil's transport spokesman, Robert Troy, yesterday hit out at the Government handling of the situation and questioned whether Ms Humphreys had spoken to Transport Minister Shane Ross about the strike.

He suggested she should 'pick up the phone' and talk to her ministerial colleagues instead of 'issuing press releases'.

Dublin Bus released a statement last night apologising to customers and defending its pay offer to striking staff.

Dr Mark Dooley



MORAL MATTERS

It's September, pause and see the world alter before our eyes

SEPTEMBER is what I call the 'bridging month'. It is the bridge between seasons, a transitional time between summer and autumn. It is neither bright nor dark, hot nor cold, short nor long.

In September, the world grows weary, yawning more with each day. It is heading towards hibernation, the sleep of peace that serves as a prelude to a new year. Like an old man shuffling towards home, the days are in retreat as the drapes slowly fall across the sky.

Shadows take longer to subside in the morning and appear earlier each evening. Despite the lingering sun, there is a nip in the air whose bite reminds us that all things are passing. Exhausted now, the trees are preparing to let go of their leaves.

September points towards the end. It is nature's elegy for the times that were, for those memorable moments in the sun. It is a month for gathering and preparing for those long hours in the homestead.

'The nights are drawing in', they say, lamenting the fact that our seemingly endless days are all but over. Soon, it shall be the season of sleep, the season when venturing outside will feel like a burden. Last things are always hardest to handle.

September is the month of last things: the last rose of summer, the last stroll by the sea after supper, the last of the morning symphonies before the great migration southwards. Everything gets ready to say 'goodbye', to sleep, to die. Everything is on the move - going or coming before night finally conquers day.

The garden is holding its own, but just about. Like an elderly relation who smiles through the wrinkles and strain, you can see the last glimmer of life. Content to sit and simply be, the trees and shrubs have nothing left to do, nothing left to prove. Their time in the sun is at an end and now, as they prepare for the silence, they do so with dignity and grace.

One petal at a time, the odd leaf, the brittle branch that lies lifeless on the grass. Time has taken its toll but it cannot rush the process. Even when in decline, everything seems to have a purpose.

We look at the landscape to see that the yearning of youth has given way to the ripeness of old age. The sap of life lies dormant as the face of the earth assumes a rusty hue. Like a wanderer who has seen one too many days, its skin is weather-beaten but no less beautiful.

September teaches us to see beauty in a fading world. Death is on the horizon but life cannot be denied. Things are getting old, preparing for a final bow, yet it is as though they are content to remain awhile. The

beauty of old things is that they majestically linger until the final hour. They do not hurry but proceed at their own pace. They have a story to tell and, in listening, we become recipients of their gentle wisdom.

Things are tired but not dead. Things are drained but still full of life. The world is preparing to sleep but not just yet.

The sun takes longer to rise and the moon is anxious to stay. There is no more early dawn, and dusk seems to arrive too early. Not quite awake and not quite asleep, we are in that place of dreams where life is tinged with tears.

The lonely petal is still full of scent. It is still yellow and feels like silk, but it has let go. It clings no longer to what will soon be no more.

Such is the point of a life that has been lived well. Our purpose is to shine with light, to beam like the sun and to bloom with beauty. And then, when the summer of life fades and we finally reach our own September, we should start to let go.

Neither leaf nor petal cling to life. They grow old with grace and, as autumn approaches, they appear even more spectacular. They smile with love on a world too weary to stay awake.

Last things are beautiful, soft and kind. They give comfort to those who cannot cope with the dying of the light. The crimson colours and low sun ease us gently into the night.

There will be time for tears, time for mourning our sacred memories of past seasons. That time is not now, for this is a month to smile back at a world which has blossomed so that we might live more abundantly.

It is heavy with age, and getting ready for the end, but it has left the best until last.

WE cannot hold on forever. We cannot delay the inevitable, the time when we too must bridge the seasons. We cannot oppose the darkness as it slowly descends. What we can do is recognise that, even in the dark, this life can glow with inner glory.

In summer, we miss the dawn, but in September we see the magic of a morning sun that cannot be contained below the skyline. In summer, everything is green, but in September everything has its own unique colour and texture. In summer, the beauty of the night is rarely visible, but now we can catch sight of the stars.

Last things cannot be delayed, but neither can they disguise the wonder of our world. Age and decline only enhance its splendour.

Such, indeed, are the magical secrets of this special month we know simply as September.

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