

Beer essential

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Beer really is an “essential service”

[Ray Weaver](#)

Lithuanian court reaffirms something many of us already knew



Probably the most essential service in the world (Photo: Carlsberg)

In a ruling designed to prevent brewery workers from striking over pay and working conditions, lawyers representing the Carlsberg brewery in Lithuania have managed to convince a court in that country to classify beer as an “essential service”. Workers classified as essential are banned by law from striking.

Employees of the Danish beer giant’s brewery in Lithuania had voted to strike but were prevented from doing so after the court ruled that beer is an essential service in the same category as medical supplies and water.

The decision rendered the strike vote invalid and made the work stoppage illegal.

In an obvious play on Carlsberg’s “Probably the best beer in the world” tagline, a union leader representing the workers called the ruling “probably the most ridiculous decision in the world.”

“Beer is great,” Jenny Formby, the spokesperson for the UK brewery workers’ union, told the Telegraph. “But it does not save lives.”

Carlsberg argued that a strike should not be allowed to happen during what it calls its “high season”, so court ordered the walk-out to be suspended for at least 30 days.

Following the court’s decision, nine workers that had joined picket lines were fired over “lost production”. They were later rehired on temporary contracts.

Jens Bekke, a spokesperson from Carlsberg’s headquarters in Copenhagen, insisted that Carlsberg has never called beer an essential service.

“Carlsberg has never claimed that beer is an essential service,” said Bekke. “That phrase was used by a judge when employees were attempting to block access to the building, which could have created an explosion risk in tanks where yeast was fermenting.”

The Lithuanian workers are angry that Carlsberg intends on freezing wages for three years. The company, however, claims that their pay is well above the market rate.

The brewery workers’ union has launched an appeal to a higher court in the hope of overturning the decision.

[Copenhagen Post](#)

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