

THE LITTLE RED

BLUE BOOK



-
- **NO POLITICS
WITHOUT INQUIRY**

 - **HANDY HINTS FOR THE
SUCCESSFUL STRIKER**

 - **REBELLION AT LSE**

 - **LONG LOST RELATIVES**

VOLUME 2

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This pamphlet is the result of research conducted by Seth Wheeler during his residency at the Mayday Rooms, London. The Mayday Rooms exists to archive and safeguard the ephemera and documentation of radical social movements, seeking to connect these historical materials with todays struggles. From his research, Seth has drawn a loose history of an anglo-speaking 'Class Compostional' tendency, whose ideas and practices, in order to provide useful tools for contemporary activists.

This pamphlet contains theory, historical examples of this tendencies interventions, contemporary workplace inquiries and a series of workers bulletins representing a combatative 'rank and file perspective' whose history and lineage has remained partial in the domestic context.

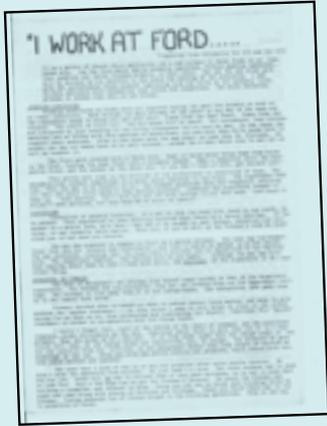
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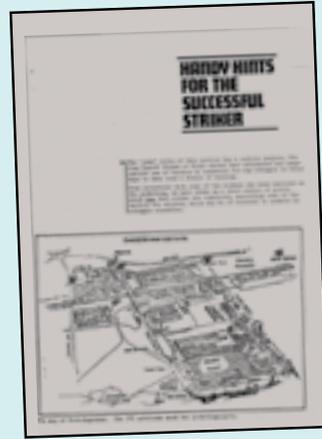
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The following key will help guide the reader through the different types of material in this pamphlet. The items in this publication do not follow a linear chronology so we have opted for a colour key to help to reader locate themselves. By presenting material in this manner, jumping between the past and the present, it is hoped that different interpretations, fresh connections or alternate readings of this material can be established, which an authoritative and linear account would exclude.



Archival Material



Bulletins



Interventions



Inquiry

'It is never safe to assume that any of our history is altogether dead. It is more often lying there, as a form of stored cultural energy. The instant daily energy of the contingent dazzles us with its brightness. What passes on the daily screen is so distracting, the presence of the status quo is so palpable, that it is difficult to believe that any other form of energy exists. But this instant energy must be reproduced every moment as it is consumed; it can never be held in store. Let the power be cut off for a while, then we become aware of other and older reserves of energy glowing all around us, just as, when the street-lights are dowsed, we become aware of the stars.'

- EP Thompson

Long Lost Relatives Seth Wheeler

What you hold in your hands is the conclusion of an initial wave of archival research conducted at the Mayday Rooms, a repository for the literature and ephemera of radical social movements based on London's Fleet Street. In both its content and its form this pamphlet pays homage to a revolutionary tendency active within the UK, whose history remains both partial and obscured. It is hoped this small offering may play some role in redressing this shortcoming.

While undertaking research in the archives, a pressing question occurred regarding the use and purpose of 'radical' archives. Namely, to what extent could such an archive escape the concerns of historians, and instead provide contemporary militants with effective tools for struggle? For a historian, the utility of an archive is only measured by its capacity to provide a repository of past material, from which convincing stories regarding the motivations and concerns of historical actors can later be constructed. For communist militants however, unburdened by the historian's fixation with the past alone, an archive can also provide a useful means to assess the present state of our movement, in terms of its strengths and weaknesses.

While many of the tactics and ideas established in the past have been abandoned by activists, assessed as no longer 'fit for purpose' when held against contemporary conditions, theory and strategies can also slip out of use for no other reason than that the group or tendency in which they once 'found a life' suddenly dissolves. With no one left to advocate for them, these insights and practices can disappear from a movement's tactical repertoire, laying dormant in the unread minutes and publications of organisations past.

In conjunction with the Mayday rooms mission statement, 'to connect the ephemera of past movements to present day struggle,' this project undertook a new direction, seeking to excavate ideas that contained prescient lessons for current organising. This task was undertaken in line with my own predilections and partisan interests as a member of the Class Inquiry Group, namely to 'ground revolutionary politics in the perspective of the working class; to help circulate and develop workers struggles through clear and accessible prose, and to

build workers' confidence to take action by and for themselves.'

The Class Inquiry Group had formed during and alongside my period of research at Mayday, providing those of us who make up this small group with proof of what we had long suspected but had found scant evidence for; namely the existence of a broad coalition of activists, who had once shared our interest with the insights and organisational modalities of an Italian variant of Marxism known as operaismo (workerism). My desire to present the history of this milieu needed to address the problematics of undertaking a specialist history, while avoiding creating a tight linear history that risked ironing out the different interpretations, connections or possible readings of this material, while simultaneously giving voice to what I considered to be its useful lessons for the present.

Operaismo itself was broad and heterogeneous, emanating from the Italian workers movement of the late 1950s/60s. Central to its sensibilities and understandings were two interrelated 'tools of analysis', that wind their way through the historical publications contained in this pamphlet.

The first of these tools is the 'workers' inquiry.' Workers' inquiry is an approach to knowledge production that combines research with organising. It attempts to create useful knowledge about work, exploitation, class relations, and capitalism from the perspective of workers themselves. Ostensibly there are two forms of workers' inquiry. The first is the inquiry 'from above,' involving the use of traditional research methods to gain access to the workplace. The second is the inquiry 'from below,' a method that involves 'co-research,' in which workers themselves are involved in leading the production of knowledge. If conditions existed under which it was possible, the inquiry 'from below' was always clearly favourable. The knowledge that was produced from these forms of inquiry, workerists argued, was not only useful for understanding capitalism, but also for organising against it.

There are two reasons why this particular focus on work remains essential. Firstly, it is central to the development of a revolutionary working-class perspective.

From the perspective of an individual worker, it is difficult to see how our own work recreates capitalism. Collectively, however, workers perform vital functions at different points of production and circulation. Through the process of coming together to our shared knowledge of our conditions, the working class can develop a shared revolutionary viewpoint. These perspectives reveal the direct experience of capitalist exploitation, while also pointing towards the kind of struggle that may help to destroy it.

Secondly, capitalism is totally reliant upon work. Without work, there is no new value produced, and no capitalist mode of production. The relationship between classes expressed at work is fundamental to understanding society. But understanding capitalism demands more than an understanding of class relations alone. Work is the only relationship in which the workers produce surplus value, but it is not the only one in which people experience oppression.

The second analytical tool in the Italian workerist tradition is the concept of 'Class Composition.' This is predicated on a recognition that capitalist exploitation is not merely an abstract idea, but always takes material forms. To express the thesis of class composition in its simplest terms, one could say: through the process of class struggle capitalism changes itself and develops its new technologies of production and its work processes. These transformations involve the movement of people and capital to new parts of the world and creating new industries. The terrain of class struggle changes, along with the working class itself. By analysing the transformations on this terrain, an assessment of where capital is weak and where workers are strong can be made. Therefore, when attuned to the concept of class composition, workers' inquiry does not just uncover the changing forms of work, but the changing forms of struggle.

The Italian workerists divided class composition into two parts. The first is 'technical composition.' This is the specific material organisation of labour-power into a working class through the social relations of work. It is shaped by factors like the use of technology, management techniques, and the overall design of the labour process. The second is 'political composition,' which

follows from technical composition. It is the self-organisation of the working class into a force for class struggle. This includes factors like the tactics employed by worker resistance, forms of worker organisation, and the expression of class struggle in politics. Technical composition sets the basis for political composition, although the movement from one to the other is neither mechanical nor predictable. Instead, it is an internal development and political growth, which leads to a leap forward. For the workerists this leap ultimately defines the working class political viewpoint.

My archival research has focused on 'workers' writing,' in line with the above innovations, and has focused on inquiries and interventions levelled in the worker's voice; unmediated by either official union structures, union orthodoxies or party-political interference. This focus provided a key to read the MayDay Rooms archive, establishing a provisional cartography of groups and individuals once influenced by Italian workerism.

One of the most important examples of this tendency is Red Notes, a series of irregular pamphlets detailing workers' struggles, workers' culture and 'class compositional' analysis, produced by Ed Emery during the 1970s/80s. Beyond its approachable writing style, which meticulously detailed workplace resistance, Red Notes is credited with introducing socialists based in the UK to translations of key Italian 'workerist' texts. This helped to define the sensibilities of a generation of militants within the libertarian left. From the archive I have chosen to reproduce 'Handy Hints For The Successful Striker,' which collated tips drawn from interviews conducted with workers engaged in the Ford Layoff strikes at their Dagenham plant in June 1977. This serves as a good example of the emphasis Red Notes placed on co-research for providing the grounding for subsequent action; it's also funny and engaging.

Red Notes also provides the aesthetic inspiration for this pamphlet, which directly mirrors the design of Red Notes' 'The Little Red Blue Book' that 'Handy Hints' was originally published in. I hope this will stand as a fitting tribute to the tireless efforts Ed Emery made (and continues to make) in regard to the dissemination of a class compositional politics. I also include 'No

Politics without Inquiry' an essay authored by Emery, originally published in Common Sense, No. 18, December 1995. This essay lays clear the continued necessity for class compositional research, and provided the inspiration for the Class Inquiry Group's foundation.

Functioning alongside Red Notes, and sharing many of its enthusiasms, existed Big Flame, an organisation of libertarian socialists active between the years of 1970-85. Big Flame emerged out of the urgency of student unrest associated with the global events of 1968. As Max Farrar, a former militant within the organisation, has suggested, Big Flame provided an outward facing and organised expression for the concerns of a wider 'left libertarian' milieu. Like Red Notes, Big Flame were keen to incorporate the insights and lessons drawn from the Italian workers' movement, establishing a series of 'base groups' around factories and communities through which they organised. Bulletins and inquiries were a regular feature of Big Flame's work, and I include examples drawn from their ongoing work in and around Ford motor plants as another example of accessible, strategic and combative writing.

While the incorporation of Italian workerism links the above two projects together, other influences that drew similar political conclusions to those of the Italian workerists also helped to guide this tendency. Of importance to the developing sensibilities of this milieu were the writings of the libertarian socialist organisation Solidarity, active in the UK between 1960-1990. Inspired by the French Socialisme ou Barbarie group and its intellectual leader Cornelius Castoriadis, Solidarity's militants busied themselves producing intervention papers addressing workers in struggle, in line with their own beliefs in workers' self-organisation and their radical anti-Leninism. While a marginal voice on the revolutionary left, when held against the larger Trotskyist organisations of the 1960s, Solidarity's emphasis on the 'workers point of view' found resonances with those looking toward the Italian working class for inspiration. I include an extract from a Solidarity publication 'Why I work at

Ford' that was later reproduced by Big Flame. This stands as an example of the continuity of ideas and approaches permeating the European radical left during the long 1960s.

While Big Flame would eventually dissolve during the Thatcherite assault on organised labour in the 1980s, base militancy continued to exert a revolutionary pressure throughout the decade. 'Picket,' a regular bulletin that ran throughout the Wapping print-workers dispute of 1987 attests to the maintenance of a rank and file militancy unmediated by official union orthodoxy. Produced by rank and file workers, Picket is an example of a combative and an 'on the offensive' workers writing, sadly absent from the struggles of the present.

Alongside historical material I have chosen to reproduce two inquiries undertaken by the Class Inquiry Group and a selection of bulletins we have recently produced with workers, which register the continuity of approaches and styles between the past and the present. This includes a full run of the 'University Worker,' a bulletin we produced and distributed during the UCU pension dispute of 2018. This played a significant role in holding together rank and file militancy during the dispute and served to convince us of the continuing radical potential of the workplace bulletin.

A key has been provided to help the reader distinguish between past and present materials. Nevertheless, the articles and bulletins produced within this pamphlet do not follow a linear chronology in their presentation. By presenting material in this manner, jumping between the past and the present, it is hoped that different interpretations, fresh connections or alternate readings of this material can be established, which an authoritative and linear account would exclude. It is hoped that the prescient lessons contained within this tendency's history remain as discernible and as concrete as the lessons that could be drawn from a linear narrative.

"I WORK AT FORD....."

[Reprinted from Solidarity Vol 2/9 and Vol 3/5]

It is a matter of chance which particular job a new entrant to Ford's finds he is lumbered with. Say the firm wants twenty assembly operators, fifteen machine operators, four janitors and twelve foundry workers, in that order. The job the new bloke gets will be decided by his position in the queue the morning of the interview. A man with RMC certificates finds himself tightening nuts and bolts on the assembly lines. Ex-farm labourers find themselves time clerks and inspectors. The whole selection process is rather like that in the forces.

WORKING CONDITIONS

Working conditions at Ford's have not improved during the past few decades as much as in other industries. Walk through the main doorway of the plant on any day of the week and the atmosphere seems to knock you off your feet. Pumes from the Beat Treat. Pumes from the foundry. The stench of burnt oil. The air seems full of swarf. Oil everywhere. Your clothes are blackened by just standing in the filthy atmosphere for an hour or two. In the lines the machines are so filthy with this mixture of metal-dust, oil and dirt that Ford's never have to repaint their machines. After a few hours work the men start to look like the fixtures. No wonder the tea and cakes have to be well covered...unless the worker would like to eat oil as well as breathe it.

The floor gets covered with a thick film. When it rains water drips down from holes in the roof, turning the same floor into a slippery hazard. Make a complaint about the dangerous floor, and the answer is the usual one: 'I: you don't like it here, get another job!'

This pretty well sums up the attitude of the authorities to conditions of work. One assembly-line steward complained of a metal plate fastened to the floor. The supervisor told him: 'Tell the men to be careful of it!' The steward persisted with his complaint, pointing out that the plate could cause a very serious accident. Suddenly the supervisor seemed to wake up. 'Good heavens! Can't have any men off work through injury this week. Last week it wouldn't have mattered, but this week we're short on labour.'

DISCIPLINE

Discipline is harshly enforced. If a man is late for work five times in any month, he is sacked. This regulation is less strictly enforced when there is a labour shortage. If the worker is a minute late, he's late - whether it be caused by rail delays, cancelled bus services, or any normally valid excuse. Mind you, if you're well up the foreman's arse he might clock you in and save you trouble.

One man was summoned to appear in Court as a police witness. The next day his supervisor told him his 'absence was inexcusable', and that it would be marked up on his record. The man protested, claiming that the supervisor's attitude was in opposition to the Factory Acts. The supervisor replied: 'The Factory Acts do not apply.' Although the man may have been arguing about laws he didn't know much about, the attitude of the supervisor is the important thing.

HIERARCHY OF COMMAND

The face of management the average Ford worker comes across is that of the department supervisor. The foremen are his disciples: they get the rockets from him for department failings. The foremen in turn pass them on to the charge-hands. The chargehands then pass them on to the common herd below.

Foremen decided when to speed-up, when to reduce labour (norm system) and when to give workers the 'psycho treatment'....By this latter I mean he will watch or stare at one chosen victim for an hour or so, thus un-nerving and humiliating his object. Sometimes this 'psycho' treatment is worked in co-operation with the charge hands.

I mustn't forget that, right at the bottom of the chain of command, are the arse-hole crawlers, known universally as the ACs. Sometimes where there is more than one AC to a department, they are known as AC1, AC2 etc. It is from these types that the charge hands of the future will come, as old charge hands are transferred, die, or resign. The promoted AC gets his new position from his 'attitude' to the management rather than from length of service or knowledge of the job. Often men with ten months service are promoted, while others with fifteen years service are ignored!

One case that I knew of was an AC who was promoted after seven months service. He didn't know one operation from another. He just hadn't a clue. The other workers had to show him his job. After all, he had to bollock them if they made mistakes, so he had to know what to look for! Only a few knew how he got the foreman's favours. He heard the foreman was building a bungalow, and offered to help. Using his old van he would raid building sites by night and come along with plenty of fixtures and fittings. These all found their way to the foreman. During weekends our AC friend helped in the building operations. This is one way to promotion at Ford's.

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SPEED-UP

All the time there is a continual battle between men and management, the latter trying to get more and more work out of the former, who in turn resist the increasing demands put on them. Thus a sub-assembly line may have 11 men producing 50 units an hour. Production is speeded up to 60 an hour, but only one extra man is added. If the schedule falls to 55 an hour, the man is taken away. If it falls to the original 50, another man goes! So the line is reduced to 10 men at 50 units an hour. In time, if the management gets its way, the line will be reduced to 8 men working at breakneck speed producing 70 units an hour.

.....although the drive for greater productivity comes continuously from above, whenever the militant shop steward has a bash about it, the answer he gets is: 'We don't cover our costing! We are well below what we should be producing now! We are well overstaffed as it is! This department is running at a loss!'

It's very funny! No department ever seems to cover its costing, yet at the end of the year there always seems to be a handsome profit overall. It was calculated one year that the management could comfortably pay all the workers double wages, and still show £10m clear profit.

UNITY AGAINST THE SPEED-UP

Here's an example of the men's resistance to speed-up. On an assembly line the men were scheduled to produce 96 engines, although they only had the men to produce 90. Management brought pressure to bear, the lines started going faster. Production leapt to 106 an hour, until this increase was noted by one of the workers, whereupon he stopped the line. The charge hand remonstrated: 'What's wrong? Why has the line stopped?' The man told him: 'The speed. We're making up to 110 per hour.' 'Up to the office', said the charge hand (prelude to suspension and sack). As they walked towards the office, the charge hand noticed that the whole section (minus a few company men and ACs) were following. 'All right, forget it,' he said, 'Back to work.'

MERIT MONEY

One of the schemes used by the management to extract that 'little extra' is the awarding of merit money. In theory this is an additional copper or two on the hourly rate (basic rate 7/4 $\frac{1}{2}$ per hour) awarded for good time-keeping, co-operation etc.

In theory, the worker should be granted it automatically, on merit. In practice he has to beg and scrape. First he asks the charge-hand: 'What about a penny? I've been here 18 months, and I haven't had one yet.' The charge hand probably says that he'll consider it. After 3 or 4 months the worker might approach the foreman, then the supervisor. Then, maybe, he gets it. Making it difficult to get in this way, and at the same time using it as a bait to be begged for, all help psychologically to adapt the worker to understand where he belongs in the Ford society.

Dagenham

Because of the lack of strong, effective shop organisation, the company is able to treat Ford workers like trained bears.

One worker I know wanted Friday off to attend his sister's wedding. Being a simple soul he just asked the foreman for permission to take the day off - without pay, of course. The next month he had a day off work (his son was injured and taken to hospital). Next day he was called to account. He explained to the supervisor his reason for not coming to work. 'You'll have to do better than that,' the supervisor snapped. 'You had 3 days off last month.' The worker protested: 'I only had one. I had permission for it - my sister's wedding.' 'It was still absence,' said the super, and since the line was running Saturday and Sunday, your absence for those days has been marked on your record card. Be sure it doesn't happen again! The worker was still shook up some days after. Of course, he didn't expect any help from his union, which has promised 'full co-operation to ensure overtime working.'

Not only do the company try to frighten the worker: they also try to humiliate him. All around the plant are signs and notices with slogans like 'Quality is your business'. But if a conscientious worker stops to test his work, or calls over an inspector to check a part, the foreman jumps right on his back: 'Stop fucking about!'

The cry of 'Stop fucking about' could be the theme song at Ford's. I once saw a man stop work to blow his nose. While he fumbled for his handkerchief, the charge hand rushed up. 'What's wrong....has the machine broken?'

'No, I'm just blowing my nose,' the new man replied.

'Well, you're not paid to blow your nose,' screamed the charge-hand. 'You're paid to work. Don't let me see you fucking about again!'

[1962/4]

No Politics Without Inquiry! (1995) by Ed Emery

A Proposal for a Class Composition Inquiry Project 1996-7. Initially published in Common Sense, No. 18, December 1995.

This article is a direct appeal for like-minded people to come together in a project of shared political work. The idea is: to muster all available forces to work on a militant class-composition study project. This is to inform, and to be the basis of, possible future political organisation.

Prelude

A small group of friends. We celebrate Mayday each year. We look forward to the day when everyone makes May 1st a day off-work-day, to celebrate struggles past and present - to meet, to eat and drink, to sing and dance.. [Incidentally, Mayday 1996 is a Wednesday. Don't just let it pass. Celebrate it. Mayday as a time for reflection. Look at the past. Plan for the future. So what happened this year?

Mayday 1995: Friends reported that the TGWU branch at the Ford-Dagenham Assembly Plant voted explicitly against taking the day off work on Mayday. For fear of being "in breach of contract". That is how things have changed.

Mayday 1995: A hundred thousand workers marched in Turkey to celebrate Mayday, despite the massive presence of armed Turkish police, who had killed people on previous marches. That is how things have changed.

Mayday 1995: For our part, we ran up the red flag in the back yard. We marched with the Turks and Kurds (as usual, just about the only people marching in London). A few friends round for supper in the evening. And we sang the old songs of struggle and resistance.

But absolutely, categorically not enough. Some of us feeling an urgency. A drive for a particular kind of work. A deep-seated wanting. A need to know what is happening. Because something is stirring, all around.

Twenty years, perhaps, since class power was last winning. We've lived the years of defeat. Years of impotence. Years of anger. The rich getting richer and life's been shit for the rest of us. The foundations of working class power systematically destroyed. No doubt. We've been on the losing side. But in some vaguely definable way, class power is on the move again. We're picking ourselves up out

of the wreckage. And the question is: how do we regroup, gather strength, mobilise social forces for a project of winning rather than losing?

A Small Proposition

The old class forces have been taken apart. World-wide. "Decomposed". New class forces are emerging. New configurations. This is what we call a "new class composition". Nick Witheford offers definitions, and their history, elsewhere in this issue of Common Sense.

The new class composition is more or less a mystery to us (and to capital, and to itself) because it is still in the process of formation. Eternally in flux, of course, but periodically consolidating nodes of class power.

Before we can make politics, we have to understand that class composition. This requires us to study it. Analyse it. We do this through a process of inquiry. Hence: No Politics Without Inquiry.

The Proposition Stated in Other Terms

Relations between capital and labour have been radically restructured during the past two decades, in favour of capital. Labour is being recomposed into new circuits, cycles and patterns of production. A new class composition is being formed, world-wide. In time, this class composition will begin to assert its interests - in its own new circuits, cycles and patterns - of opposition, of struggle. At that point, mere technical class composition turns into political class composition. It becomes real power, political power. The enemy constantly studies class composition in order to fracture it, break it, disperse it, permanently dissipate its strength. We, for our part, study class composition in order to strengthen it, consolidate it, turn it into a real basis of power.

The old compositions and their associated bastions of class power (miners, auto workers, dockers, steel workers etc) have been broken down. New class compositions (information industries, services etc) are being built up. Before we can be active in building the class power of these new compositions, we have to know who they are, where they are, what are their conditions of work and life, and around what issues, slogans, struggles they will

mobilise during the coming years.

And at the moment we know just about fuck-all.

So: an invitation to comrades far and wide to join in a process of INQUIRY.

The Conference of Socialist Economists as a Possible Base

After the 1994 Conference a group of us in the CSE set up a "Working Group on Work". Our interest has been in the changes taking place in work, and struggles arising from these developments. Similar work has developed previously in CSE.

For example, in the lead-up to the 1976 "Labour Process" conference. This analytical work was particularly strong around the motor industry, and led to useful organising activity in that industry.

CSE Conference provides one useful forum for mobilising these kinds of collective energies. There are people who could build a base for a serious project of class composition analysis. Each contributing some small part of the overall inquiry.

Thus part of my purpose is to propose a "class composition" theme for a future CSE Conference. Perhaps for 1996. Left to find a title for it, I would propose:

"Class composition: Studies of changing relations between capital and labour. Global restructuring and the rebuilding of class power."

We might all, each in our own way, undertake to make small contributions of insights, towards building a pool of knowledge in these areas.

Need for a Network of Research and Action

However, the project needs a far wider base.

I could pretend to speak for a group, an organisation, a world political perspective. I am none of these things. I speak merely for myself, and for the particular baggage of historical and political experience that I carry with me.

I am convinced that serious revolutionary politics is impossible without a committed, detailed, daily work of analysing and understanding class composition, in all its varied and changing forms. This work needs to be undertaken by large numbers of people, and its methods and results need to be coordinated by a process of regular bulletins and regular meetings. It is only lack of political imagination, a sense of defeatism, and basic human laziness that stand in the way of our doing it.

A Momentary Diversion: My Envy of the Scientists

In recent months I've been reading physics books. Atoms, particles, astronomy, cosmology, that sort of thing. A new wave of popularisation in science. Exhilarating to ride this wave. Huge and wonderful discoveries. Old ways of thought turned on their heads. A lot of nonsense thrown out of the window. The whole essence of "being human" is being challenged, redefined.

I watch these scientists working. They have teams of researchers. Networks of international contact and cooperation. Extraordinary machines for observation and analysis. Confidence and enthusiasm. Reaching out to audiences that are not familiar with their language. Creating new public languages. And in the process you find them celebrating and documenting the development of the intellectual history of their discipline.

I am deeply envious.

Once there used to be a "science of class struggle". After all, class struggle is as available to scientific analysis as any area of the physical world. But the science of class struggle got itself a very bad name when it transmuted into "scientific socialism" and Stalinism.

The science of class struggle never recovered from that. It had a brief and glorious resurgence in the Italian revolutionary Left, as *scienza operaia* ("working-class science"), but the prevailing anti-scientism of the post-1968 Left sank any notion that the class struggle could be approached scientifically.

I hold to that idea of a scientific approach.

Another Momentary Diversion: The Rhetoric of War

The miserable debacle of state socialism in the "communist" world has deprived us of great chunks of our language. Who are we? What are we? How do we describe ourselves? What is our politics?

Where do we choose the words with which to name our politics. Communism? Socialism? Revolution? Redistribution of wealth? Social reform? Working-class autonomy? Class war? There is a problem here. These names are all variously tainted by previous associations.

So at this time I prefer to give the project no name.

Except that I believe that we must see it in terms of war.

War is being waged on us. Class war. (Sometimes literally, by military means.) We would do well to respond in the language of war. The rhetoric of earlier communist and anarchist movements always had a strong military flavour to it. But the notion of war is less than fashionable nowadays.

When I say “respond in the language of war”, of course I don’t mean rushing round killing people. I mean that we begin to speak (once again) the language of tactics, strategy, fields of battle, mobilising of forces, application of technologies, and a theory of war.

I find that the joining of these elements provides me with the bones of an operating system. On the one hand, a notion of a “science” of the class struggle. And on the other, a notion of the class struggle as a “war” within which we have a part to play. Plus, as a basic foundation, the conviction that if you’re not part of the solution then you’re part of the problem.

Moments of Crisis and Dislocation: No Politics Without Inquiry

You might object to the notion of a somehow “objective” science.

You might object to the notion of “war” and its associations of militarism.

You might object to the notion of disembodied intervention in the body politic.

You might say that the very notion of an “Inquiry” is a nonsense without a prior questioning of the self-stance of the “Inquirer”.

I agree. All these notions are deeply problematic.

In answer to the objections, I say let us take these notions and problematise them. Frankly. Enthusiastically. Without fear. Then see where we go from there.

So this article proposes an Inquiry, in the hopes of generating small amounts of discussion, and perhaps also generating practical activity.

To this end, we might look briefly at earlier instances of the Inquiry, to see whether they offer insights regarding method, content, ways of approaching knowledge etc.

A note, here. We are not starting from a basis of nothing at all. Even a minimal

glance at the literature makes it clear that the Inquiry has a strong and substantive intellectual pedigree.

For example: Marx.. Lenin.. Luxemburg.. Mao.. Not to mention the US National Commission on Civil Disorders (1968).

Over the years I have done amounts of work on class composition analysis. Some of this work has appeared in Common Sense [Sergio Bologna on “The Historiography of the Mass Worker” in CS 11 and 12, and his work on “Nazism and the Working Class”, CS 16]. During this period books and pamphlets have accumulated on my shelves.

During the years of defeat my view of my books and pamphlets has oscillated (daily) between seeing them as a precious historical resource for the furtherance of struggle, and as useless mounds of paper taking up space.

Anyway, in preparing this article I went fishing in my library. I pulled down volumes fat and thin. Dusted them off. To see what they had to offer, as regards class composition analysis and the possibilities of a new communist project.

What I found was that, at each major point of crisis and dislocation in the development of capitalist society, various kinds of people have instituted mass social inquiries. Their intention has been to document and research the attitudes and conditions of life of the oppressed masses. As a political project.

Studies that ranged from Chinese peasants labouring under feudal despotism to the Black proletariat of the racist ghettos of Newark and Detroit. Studies of various kinds. London housewives. FIAT car workers. The shifting masses of migrant labour toiling across whole continents. The collective flux of intellectual labour energies concentrated on the Internet.

In short, at certain points in history people have felt the urge to ask: Who are we? What is happening? How have things changed? Hence the Inquiry.

It is generally at points of fracture, crisis, restructuring, dislocation of capitalist development etc that these Inquiries come about. And the Inquiries see themselves as a prelude, a precursor and a precondition of politics.

We are living such a period right now. And the need for an Inquiry is urgent. It is not an optional extra. It is fundamental. In short: No Politics Without Inquiry.

Contained Excitement

I offer below a small list of some of the material I found on my shelves. The list

is not comprehensive. It is indicative. It indicates the kinds of treasures that are in store when one begins researching previous exemplars of the Inquiry. Source materials for a science of class struggle. Method. Content. Theoretical framework. Epistemological basis.

The class struggle Inquiry is a scientific discipline unto itself. Related to other disciplines, but with a peculiar fire all its own. Extraordinarily exciting. Ill-considered trifles, a marginal field of human knowledge, lost and buried chapters from forgotten books, but at the same time the very basis of a political project. An incitement to action.

It would be good to produce an annotated bibliography of the Inquiry, together with a commentary on its intellectual history. The antecedents, the past practices, reflecting on future possibilities. Given time and energy, I might do this during the coming year. For the moment I shall contain the excitement sparked by these texts. I offer a few bits and pieces from examples of the Inquiry as conducted in the past 150 years. Very brief.

Some Previous Examples of "THE INQUIRY"

The Inquiry has its own typology. It has varieties of genres, varieties of intention. Some are produced by the state. Others are produced by political organisations, by way of external intervention. Others are produced from within the ranks of organised labour. Yet others are the product of people's observation of their own condition. Earlier examples include:

Karl Marx: The Workers' Inquiry

In the later years of his life, Marx prepared a comprehensive questionnaire designed to elicit the conditions of life and work of the labouring classes. [It was republished in Detroit in the early 1970s, with a view to promoting this kind of militant research in the auto industry. And again, only last year, in Italy.] Here Marx outlines the project:

Not a single government.. has yet ventured to undertake a serious inquiry into the position of the French working class. But what a number of investigations have been undertaken into crises - agricultural, financial, industrial, commercial, political!

We (shall organise) a far-reaching investigation into facts and crimes of capitalist exploitation; we shall attempt to initiate an inquiry of this kind with those poor resources which are now at our disposal.

We hope to meet in this work with the

support of all workers in town and country who understand that they alone can describe with full knowledge the misfortunes from which they suffer, and that only they, and not saviours sent by Providence, can energetically apply the healing remedies from the social ills to which they are a prey.

We also rely upon socialists of all schools who, being wishful for social reform, must wish for an exact and positive knowledge of the conditions in which the working class - the class to whom the future belongs - works and moves." (Marx 1973, p. 4)

Inevitably this brings to mind the fifteen pages at the start of The Communist Manifesto that provide the classic statement of the class-composition analysis ("Bourgeois and Proletarians") that led into the organising project of communism:

The essential condition for the existence and for the sway of the bourgeois class is the formation and augmentation of capital; the condition for capital is wage labour. Wage labour rests exclusively on competition between the labourers. The advance of industry, whose involuntary promoter is the bourgeoisie, replaces the isolation of the labourers, due to competition, by their revolutionary combination, due to association. The development of modern industry, therefore, cuts from under its feet the very foundation on which the bourgeoisie produces and appropriates products. What the bourgeoisie therefore produces, above all, are its own grave-diggers. Its fall and the victory of the proletariat are equally inevitable.

And, in among all this, we also have to consider Engels' The Condition of the Working Class in England in 1844, the precursor of Charles Booth's Life and Labour of the People of London (1902) and Henry Mayhew's London Labour and the London Poor (1861). Not to mention, in our own time, Gareth Stedman Jones' Outcast London: A Study in the Relationship Between Classes in Victorian Society (1971).

Lenin and Luxemburg

Lenin. The Development of Capitalism in Russia (1898). A huge work - the bibliography alone runs to some 500 titles, begged, borrowed and perused both in prison and on the road into exile. Three years of work to provide the analytical grounding of the Bolshevik project. Detailed work on the composition of the labouring classes in Russia. And the potential for politics:

The increase in the number of peasants

thrown into the ranks of the industrial and rural proletariat.. The population of this 'corner' - ie the proletariat, is, in the literal sense of the word, the vanguard of the whole mass of toilers and exploited.

Rosa Luxemburg. The Mass Strike, the Party and the Trade Unions. Rosa, released from prison and recuperating in Finland. Extending the analysis of the proletariat and its real movements and interests.

We have attempted.. to sketch the history of the mass strike in Russia in a few strokes. Even a fleeting glance at this history shows us a picture.. Instead of the rigid and hollow scheme of an arid political action carried out by the decision of the highest committees and furnished with a plan and panorama, we see a bit of pulsating life of flesh and blood, which cannot be cut out of the large frame of the revolution but is connected with all parts of the revolution by a thousand veins. (Luxemburg 1970, p. 43)

US Riot Commission Report

An example of a state-sponsored class composition analysis. In 1967, in the wake of the riots in Newark, Detroit and other cities, President Johnson instituted a commission of social inquiry, whose report was published under the title "What Happened? Why Did It Happen? What Can Be Done?" This documented in large detail the experience of the Black proletariat living in the urban ghettos. A comprehensive analysis of the newly-formed class composition that had rioted in the streets. A state initiative. Framed in a rhetoric of social reform and repressive control. Over 600 pages, in the popular edition.

Its Introduction reads:

..An extraordinary document. We are not likely to get a better view of socially directed violence - what underlies it, what sets it off, how it runs its course, what follows. There are novels here, hidden in the Commission's understated prose; there are a thousand doctoral theses germinating in its statistics, its interviews, its anecdotes and 'profiles'." The report represents a beginning "on a task that beggars any other planned social evolution known to human history. (National Advisory Commission 1978, p. ix)

[From our side, the Report had its counterpart in the seminal *Regulating the Poor: The Functions of Public Welfare* by Fox Piven and Cloward, which uses a similar class composition approach to document the imposition of social control in both the New

Deal (1930s) and the Great Society Programme (1960s). The state project unmasked.]

Mao Tse Tung

And Mao, too. A huge work of wide-ranging class Inquiry. And hints as to method. For instance, the article "Oppose Book Worship", of May 1930. Uneasy with the authoritarian tone, but the man has a point.

No Investigation, No Right to Speak. Unless you have investigated a problem, you will be deprived of the right to speak on it. Isn't that too harsh? Not in the least. When you have not probed into a problem, into the present facts and its past history, and know nothing of its essentials, whatever you say about it will undoubtedly be nonsense. Talking nonsense solves no problems, as everyone knows, so why is it unjust to deprive you of the right to speak? Quite a few comrades always keep their eyes shut and talk nonsense, and for a Communist that is disgraceful. How can a Communist keep his eyes shut and talk nonsense?

It won't do!

It won't do!

You must investigate!

You must not talk nonsense!"

The Italians

To all this we have to add the mass of documentation produced by the Italian revolutionary Left movement throughout the period of the 1960s-80s. Detailed, committed, militant research and analysis of the everyday conditions of living labour. And here was a departure. This is not the "denunciatory" style of Marx's "far-reaching investigation into facts and crimes of capitalist exploitation". Rather, the analysis is part and parcel of an everyday, capillary process of militant intervention and organisation. Leafletting, meeting, discussion, reworking of analysis, consolidation at new levels. Here we have the work of Quaderni Rossi, Potere Operaio, Autonomia, Lotta Continua etc. Buried, for the most part, in Italian-language texts that are too rarely translated.

Photography.. Song..

And while we're at it, why stop at the printed word? We could include song. Woody Guthrie, singing the lives and times of the migrant workers of Dust Bowl USA. Alan Lomax, collecting blues and prison work songs. Pete Seeger and Bob Reiser with their *Carry It On: A History in Song and Picture of the Working Men and Women of America*:

Beware! This is a book of history. With songs and pictures, we try to tell how the

Ed Emery

working people of this country - women and men; old and young; people of various skin shades, various religions, languages, and national backgrounds - have tried to better their own lives and work towards a world of peace, freedom, jobs, and justice for all.

And photography. For example, Sebastiao Salgado's incredible *Workers: An Archaeology of the Industrial Age*, which he defines as a work of "militant photography".

And Jo Spence, in *Putting Myself in the Picture*, where, among other things, she charts the process (a labour process, in the arena of reproduction) of her own death from cancer. Bringing the Inquiry right home into the front room, into the family:

Photography can only attempt certain things compared with other media, but its radicality lies in the fact that we can produce, possess and circulate snapshots by ourselves, for ourselves and among ourselves. It is there.. that the future of photography lies for me. If we truly want to democratise how meanings are produced in images.. we could start by telling our stories in different ways..

bulletins produced by Counter Information and others, drawing together class struggle information from across the board.

All of these provide useful pointers. For us the project would probably be along the lines of what Wildcat is doing in Germany: To set up an intercommunicating network of militants doing more or less detailed work on class composition in their local areas; to meet as and when appropriate; and to circulate the results of our collective work.

I am happy to act as coordinator in the initial stages of any such project. At some point a national meeting should be called. If you would like to be involved in developing the idea, write to me:

Ed Emery, c/o Common Sense, P.O. Box 311,
Southern District Office, Edinburgh EH9
1SF.

We are in Good Company

Elsewhere in the world there are active examples of this kind of militant Inquiry activity.

In Germany, for instance, there is a network of militants in various cities, connected by computer links, and producing a monthly national bulletin, *Wildcat-Zirkular*, which gives detailed reports on struggles in the various localities.

In Italy, in November last year, the group *Collegamenti* organised a conference in Turin, under the title *Inchiesta, conricerca, comunicazione diretta ieri e oggi. Per una coscienza sociale e un intervento politico di base ("Inquiry, Co-Research and Direct Communication. For Social Awareness and Grassroots Political Intervention")*. This conference dealt with the history and present practice of the Inquiry in Italy and Germany.

In France, a group of comrades around the journal *Futur Anterieur* have been holding regular seminars and producing materials on the changing class realities in France and Italy (see my paper for CSE Conference 1994).

In the USA, *Collective Action Notes*, published out of Maryland, documents struggles worldwide, and aims to build an international network of contacts.

And in Britain there are the regular

THE SUPERMARKET WORKER

Organising across the supermarket sector

What is The Supermarket Worker?

This is a union by ballot, created by a cross-section of people working in different supermarkets. We are sick of our low wages, and the measure and hyper-competitive nature of work in our sector. We've seen from the experiences of other workers that when people get organised management can no longer ignore our concerns. The only way out of this situation is to learn to support each other, trust one another and to stand up and get organised. Breaking the silence about the conditions of our work is the first step towards that. You are welcome to join.

Can't you just "The Supermarket Worker"?

The Supermarket Worker to minimize by malektyn zylbowary i zozograjat placowan kuz stony maje dole i akaj wyzag ndze A, nrepszat ego zstac orientai wyzysku w i asytm socjaliz. We try to get together and try to do it better together. We are going to be together and we are going to be together. We are going to be together and we are going to be together.

Too Lidl, Too Late

As of March the at this year Lidl will be rolling out a payrise for 16,000 of its employees. The UK's 'low cost' supermarket said that it would be increasing entry level wages from a meagre £8.45 to an equally paltry £8.75 per hour outside of London and £9.75 to £10.25 within the M25, in line with the increase in living wage announced last year. Despite the obvious 'pass taking' nature of a 3p per hour pay hike, it raises the question why, as USDAW - the union legally representing the interests of all workers in our sector - doing *Why for example haven't they sent to extend these pay rises across the entire sector for the millions of us struggling to make ends meet in the UK's food supply chain?*

The simple answer is USDAW are a 'partnership union' - in plain speak they're a 'cosset' union' and while they are there to represent you on some level, they actively seek to mediate any struggle between workers and their employers - usually in the interests of the company's productivity. We've all seen the USDAW training videos for example - when a worker makes a complaint about the inefficiency of some aspect of their job, they talk to their USDAW rep and they insist the problem gets resolved and the new job gets done quicker! This obviously isn't in our interests - we don't need quicker tasks! The from it we need work to slow down or we need a fighting union that's going to slow the pace of work, increase our wages and make our working conditions better not better worse. If USDAW can't do this, we are going to have to do this ourselves. If you work in a supermarket outside of the Lidl chain, why not raise the news of the Lidl pay increase with your fellow workers and your USDAW rep? Who are Tesco, Sainsbury, Morrison, ASDA, Sainsbury Asda and all the others going to step up to the plate and pay us what we all know we deserve? If USDAW won't negotiate for us, then we are going to have to take matters into our own hands. *Time to get organised.*

Are there any unions that actually win?

So USBAW are useless. Some supermarket workers are members of GMB, and they don't seem to be doing much better. What can we do about it? We've got three options:

1. Give up.
2. Change the unions from the inside.
3. Join another union - one that actually wins.

We reckon option 3 is the best.

There are a couple of unions in London that have been organising workers in similar precarious conditions. The United Voices of the World and the Independent Workers of Great Britain have both had big successes winning wage increases and better conditions for members. They're unions that aren't afraid to take the fight to the bosses. If we could start to organise like they do, we're more likely to be able to develop our own power.

<https://www.uvw.org.uk>

<https://iwgb.org.uk>

Help Out & Contact Us

Print and distribute the Supermarket worker. Hand it out around your work place, give it to friends in other shops. We can send you paper copies if you get in touch.

Contact us at: organiser.usa@icloud.com

Supported by the Clearing Party Group.

XMAS at Tesco

I was recently employed to work at Tesco by an agency over the Christmas period. I was employed as part of the night team at a supermarket, 'assisting' (ambiguous goods) from 10pm until 6am in the morning. My job involved dragging cages of stock from the warehouse to the appropriate aisles (often using trolleys that were broken and dangerous) being out the goods from their designated shelving, moving the stock so the new stock was at the back of the display, putting the new stock onto the shelves and finally 'fronting up' the products so they faced out and only to the customers.

Work was rarely relentless there - and while I was told I would only have to work a night a week the evenings I was required to work were not I had not declared the lower wages in Christmas. No one felt they could refuse the extra hours, as all the agency staff were made to feel we would not be asked back if we did. In compliance with these demands, also, many believed there was the possibility for our contracts to be extended if we showed willing (something management told us themselves). Some of us were even given an extended contract. We were often work through our holiday breaks in order to get the shop ready in the morning and when promises to cover our loss of time made up to us, were made, none of these were met. We were totally run down, there seemed to be no distinction between the agency staff or the permanent team in this regard.

Most of the team directly employed by Tesco also looked bullied and harassed by management and the pace of their jobs. Many complained workers complained of health issues, directly related to their jobs: lots of bad backs, necks, knee problems, poor sleep patterns and chronic cases of fatigue! and also bullying from the management team and poor wages. The night team also felt segregated from the wider Tesco family and were not invited to Christmas parties or staff parties, leaving morale very low. One agency worker was also crushing berries during the day as his wages were so low (something management knew). However he didn't call himself or someone else a berry and me. There was no regard for his welfare at all. I didn't have a lot of interaction with the day staff, but those I did speak to complained of shortening hours and a lack of job security and unfair and discriminatory dress practices. I hated a month and a half before I was finally let go. In that time, I met and lots of people disgruntled with their wages, hours and conditions but no one felt powerful enough to challenge them. What was needed was union representation to represent the workers and I believe that we would support each other with our concerns on. Journals - USBAW were obviously not doing this - no one I spoke to thought they were even worth paying a subscription to. It was clear that Tesco workers need to come together and discuss their shared problems and honestly they need a new union, and they need it fast.

The wave of worker resistance in European food platforms 2016-17

Callum Cant

Has a wave of conflict between food platform workers and bosses spread across Europe?

Militant research into food platforms matters for two reasons. First, the segment of the capitalist class that owns these platforms have been early adopters of algorithmic management technology, which has transformed the labour process of traditional food delivery through the automation of supervision. Second, platform workers have resisted the conditions created by this reorganisation of the labour process, leading to a widespread series of skirmishes between workers and bosses.

Despite this combination of technical and political importance, most militants have a limited understanding of the actual dynamics of worker resistance in food platforms. Either it is seen as catch-all case study of worker resistance in fast-changing technological conditions, or as a confusing marginal phenomena. Both of these misunderstandings have been challenged by the emergence of a current of workers inquiries into food platforms. These inquiries have developed serious insights into the reorganisation of the labour process and resulting worker resistance. Because of that research we can understand the preliminary outline of the class composition of food platforms. Now we have an opportunity to go further.

Worker resistance on food platforms is spreading between countries. Back in August, I first argued that we were seeing a transnational wave of action and organisation. In the months since, strikes and protests have spread to the Netherlands and Belgium. But so far this wave of worker resistance has been difficult to analyse. The lack of hard evidence about the quantity, location and intensity of strikes and protests has proved to be a serious barrier. This article attempts to get past the problem. To do so, it presents the results of a small research project which aimed to collect the hard evidence we are missing.

Data From Below

Before workers get organised, they

need to understand their own situation. This kind of research is not a specialised academic function, it is a basic part of all class struggle. This is the first step in a workers' inquiry. This article presents the results of a workers inquiry project to collect data on strike action and protests by food platform workers. It aims to allow workers and their supporters to understand their own situation, and then to act on it.

Official strike statistics do not sufficiently describe worker resistance in food platforms. The workers have irregular employment status, and they tend to use informal strikes and protest tactics. This makes data collection based on formal trade unionism ineffective. We can assume that the bosses of food platforms are collecting private statistics of some kind, but these are not accessible to workers. As a result, working class knowledge of the scale of resistance has, so far, remained both local and partial. But a process of worker-to-worker communication can overcome this isolation. Lots of different local areas of knowledge can be collectively developed into a big picture.

This research project aimed to facilitate that communication. The participants were all workers and supporters involved in a European food platform network covering seven countries: the UK, Netherlands, Germany, Spain, Belgium, France and Italy. The members of this network were asked to report their own strikes and protests. These reports had three elements: a description, an estimate of the number of workers involved, and links to media coverage or discussion by participants. The reports were then added to a collectively-edited timeline, which provided the information for an independent dataset on worker resistance.

This methodology has some clear limitations. The European network has a varying level of connection with workers across different countries. We will inevitably have missed out some strikes or protests. This incompleteness is not helped by the form worker resistance in food platforms usually takes. Its common features include distributed leadership, disconnection from trade unions, and

The wave of worker resistance in European food platforms 2016-17

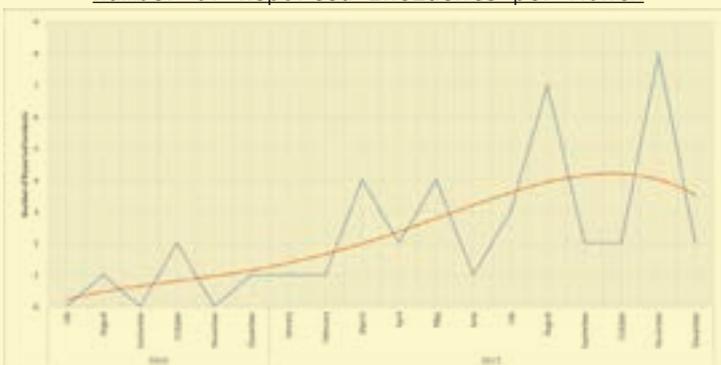
spontaneous mobilisation in response to working conditions - all of which make data collection more difficult.

The metric I have used in my analysis of the dataset is the total number of workers mobilised per month. It has its own flaws. There are two instances of multi-day mobilisation: the August 2016 London strike and the March 2017 Marseilles strike. In both these cases, workers kept on striking for days at a time. But this metric records them as if they were only on strike for a day. The metric also collapses the distinction between strikes and protests. Strikes and protests are different forms of action, but every worker mobilised counts for the same amount. These flaws are frustrating, but also somewhat unavoidable. Data from below is never going to be perfect. What matters is if it is good enough to contribute to the expansion and development of worker resistance within food platforms.

Intensity and Synchronicity

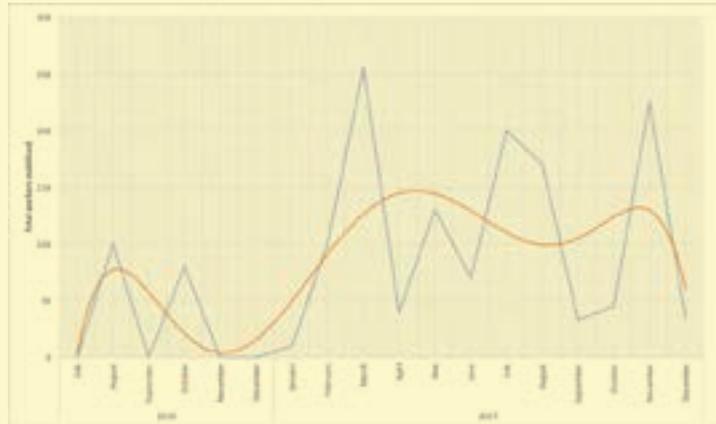
Altogether, the dataset covers 41 incidents across 18 months in 7 countries involving an estimated 1493 workers.

Figure 1.
Number of Reported Incidents per Month



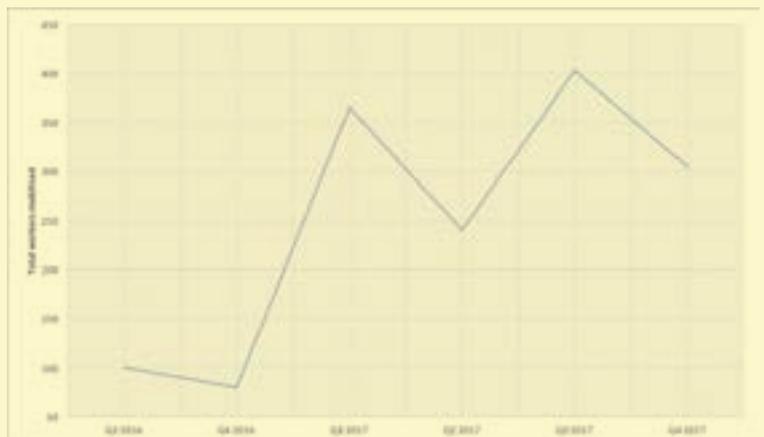
From July 2016 to December 2017 there was a clear upward trend in strike or protest incidents per month. But the trend in overall intensity of these incidents is less clear. When we look at the estimated number of workers mobilised per month, the sporadic nature of worker resistance becomes more evident.

Figure 2. Total Workers Mobilised Per Month



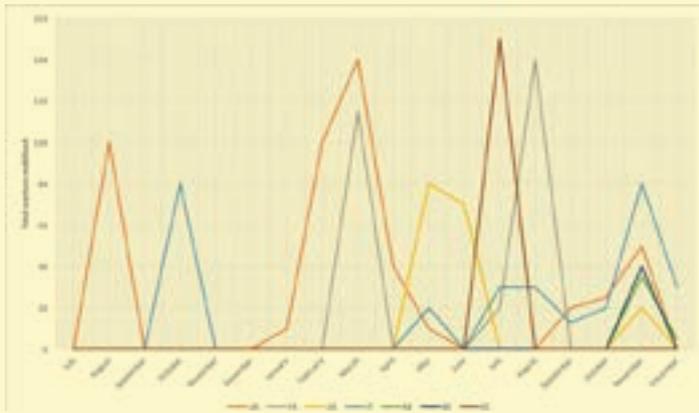
The last 18 months have seen three sporadic peaks of mobilisation, even as the overall number of incidents trends upwards. The first is summer 2016, the second is spring 2017, and the third is winter 2017. Taken as a whole, we can see for the first time the scale and dimensions of the food platform workers' movement on a transnational scale. When we analyse the number of workers mobilised quarter by quarter to iron out some of the variation, the trend becomes clear.

Figure 3. Total Workers Mobilised Per Quarter



This upwards trend in incidence and intensity of food platform worker resistance wasn't flat across all seven countries. The big picture is made up of specific local movements, with their own cycles and trends.

Figure 4. Total Workers Mobilised Per Country Per Month



With this national data, the peaks mentioned above become easier to understand: they are the result of coinciding local movements.

The first peak is a result of the first UK (London) and Italy (Turin) strikes. It is followed by a total decline in mobilisation in November and December 2016.

The second peak is the result of a second wave of UK mobilisations (Leeds and Brighton) and French mobilisations (Marseilles and Paris). This time, however, it was followed by mobilisation in Germany (Berlin), Spain (Barcelona, Valencia, Madrid) and again in France (Paris, Bordeaux, Lyon).

The third peak is of lower intensity but remarkable synchronicity. Mobilisations in Brighton, Amsterdam, Brussels, Bologna, Turin and Berlin all occur in the same month, November 2017. No single country experienced a noticeably large mobilisation, but combined, the effect was just below that of the UK and French mobilisations in March 2017 (see fig 2).

The locations of all 41 incidents have also been mapped by French workers.

Figure 5. Map of Total Reported Incidents



This data allows us to answer the initial question posed by the project: has a wave of worker resistance taken place? A ‘wave’ describes a number of interconnected instances of worker resistance. This independent dataset shows three trends. First is an increase in incidents over time. Second is a sporadic month by month but consistent quarterly increase in the total number of workers mobilised. Third is an increase in the synchronicity of mobilisation across all seven countries. Together these trends confirm that a transnational wave of worker resistance has taken place. However, this confirmation does not provide any guarantees about the future. Will the wave continue? That question that can only be answered by the self-organisation of food platform workers.

Strike proneness, migration, and restructuring from above

Food platforms rely on a specific organisation of the labour process in order to exploit labour-power for profit. They have their own technical class composition. This composition includes one key element: algorithmic management. The digitisation and automation of labour supervision is the defining feature of the terrain of class struggle in the sector. But algorithmic management is spreading across many more sectors of capitalist economies. Hermes van drivers, supermarket night workers, and Amazon warehouse agency workers all share a similar form of management. Algorithmic management costs significantly less than employing human supervisors. This means that despite losses in efficiency and the potential for increased worker resistance, food platforms still extract a greater amount of surplus value extraction per unit of capital.

This means that struggles in sectors already defined by algorithmic management have additional significance. Future avenues for the development of worker resistance are being tested in these laboratories of massification and class struggle. Recent strikes in Amazon and the food platform wave of worker resistance have to be understood with this in mind. In Belgium and Italy, food platform workers from Deliveroo, Foodora and Givo deliberately struck on Black Friday at the same time as Amazon workers. They wanted to bring together the struggles of workers at the coal face of the 21st century.

NAME

An analysis of the transnational circulation of struggle challenges technologically determined pessimism. The assumption that increased technical control of the labour process by bosses will inevitably lead to a reduction worker resistance is unfounded. The level of class struggle has always been, in the final instance, determined by politics. The transition from technical to political composition is understood as a leap for just this reason.

The example of the assembly line is instructive. As this new organisation of the labour process was developed throughout the early 20th century, many in the workers' movement predicted their own irrelevance. The deskilling of manufacturing was a direct attack on the working class and their ability to organise. And yet, the assembly line did not resolve the class struggle in the favour of the bourgeoisie. Worker resistance found a new form, and by the 1970s capital was scrambling to abolish a class composition that had given rise to global working class militancy.

Strike proneness in the UK is a useful indicator of the comparative potential for worker resistance in food platforms. A rough estimation suggests that approximately 42% more working days were lost to strike action per worker in Deliveroo than in the total UK workforce over the period from September 2016 to August 2017. This kind of initial speculation suggest that in fact algorithmically managed workers can, in

some contexts, be more strike prone than their human-managed counterparts. Further research on this front is essential before we draw conclusions, of course, and worker resistance takes more forms than just the strike. But the possibility is there.

Research is also necessary on the specifics of migration and food platform struggle. In the UK, migrant moped riders have been at the forefront of the largest strikes in London, Bristol and Brighton. Similarly to the Italian logistics sector, migrants forced into low waged, insecure work have taken the lead in the struggle. Further nationally-bounded research on the relationship between platform work, migration and urban unemployment is necessary before we can fully understand this leadership.

Conclusion

The very first day of 2018 saw a Deliveroo strike in Haarlem, the Netherlands. The strike was scheduled to start at 5pm, but by lunchtime so many workers had already signed out that the app ground to a halt. January has also seen strikes and protests in Belgium and France.

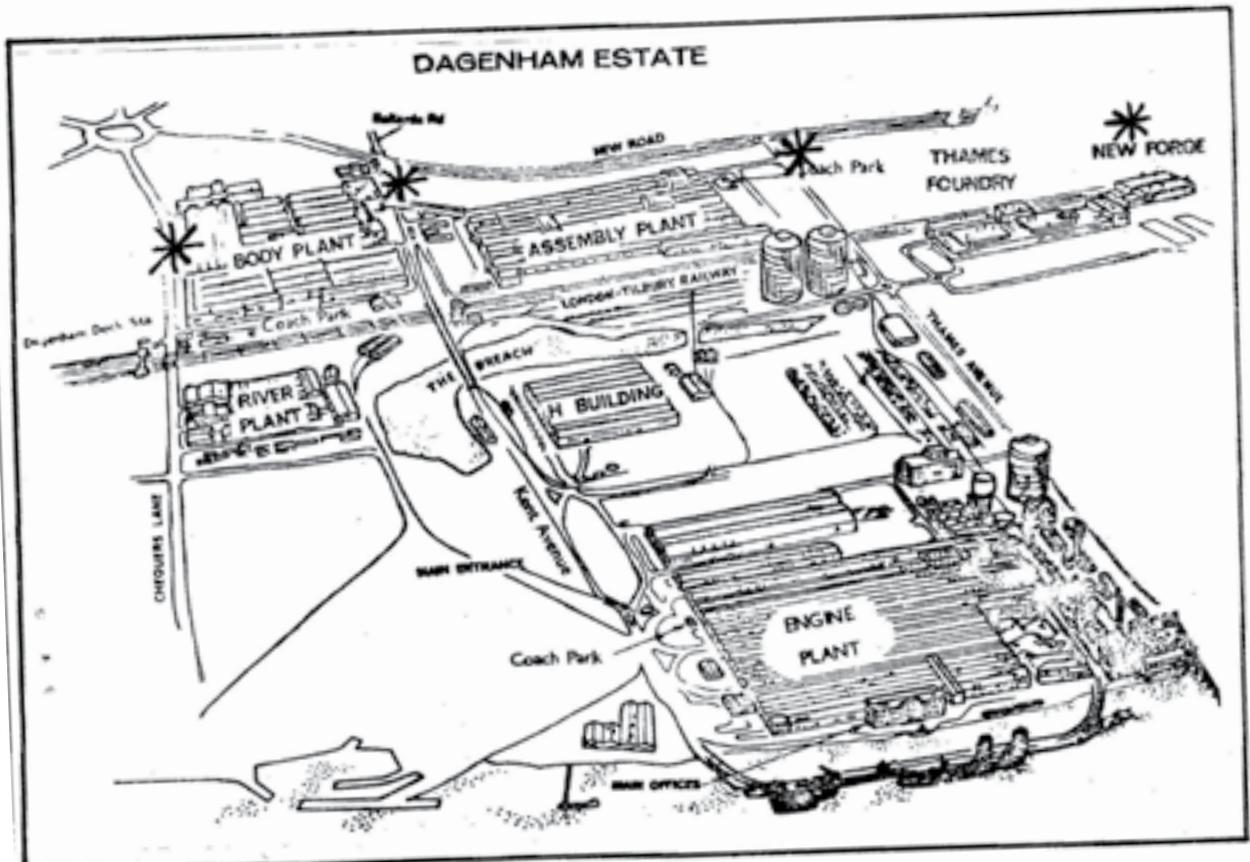
Worker resistance in food platforms is unlikely to continue in a linear fashion. Conflict is always, by definition, unstable. However, it seems at least possible that this transnational wave of resistance amongst precarious labour will continue. In order for that to be possible, further development of transnational worker coordination and organisation will be an essential step.



HANDY HINTS FOR THE SUCCESSFUL STRIKER

• The 'joke' title of this section has a serious purpose. The June Layoff Strike at Fords showed that determined and imaginative use of tactics is essential for any struggle in these days to have even a chance of winning.

From interviews with some of the workers who were involved in the picketing, we have drawn up a short series of points about how that strike was organized, describing some of the tactics etc adopted, which may be of interest to workers in struggle elsewhere.



• A map of Ford-Dagenham. The (*) asterisks mark the picketing-spots.

○ Stopping the Lorries



"The most important part of our strike was to try and paralyse the mighty Ford Empire. Since Ford's production is spread out between so many plants, all depending on each other, a dispute in one can stop the lot. Getting the support of the Toleman's delivery drivers was highly important. At first the Toleman's drivers (like many other firms) wanted official confirmation of the dispute from our Convener. Once they got this, they gave us 100% support right up to the end of our strike.

Within a couple of weeks our Flying Pickets had brought production more or less to a standstill at Dagenham, and plants as far afield as Cologne and Valencia were threatened."

The pickets got a good thing going with Ford's own drivers too - and that in itself would have been almost enough to paralyse Ford. "The Ford drivers supported us completely in the first 2 days. But then, somehow, under the influence of Johnny Davies (Engine Plant Deputy Convener) they were persuaded that our dispute was not real. The Right-wingers tried to get the Ford drivers to smash our picket lines. That was when we had to get a fair number of men out onto a mass picket on the third day of the dispute, so as to stop a big convoy of Ford lorries getting through. After that, though, they didn't cross any more."

As regards other lorries (outside firms etc), you've got to have your picket across the road. The police will try and limit the picket to only a few people....and your job is to stop all incoming lorries.

"The picket here did not have to be a mass picket, like at Grunwicks during the same period. Why not? Because of the history of trade unionism. It's not numbers that matter, but the fact that brother supports brother. Here it wasn't a matter of physical strength."

There were lorries turning back after coming all the way from Scotland. The few Flash Harries who thought they'd try and get through - they were told that if they crossed the picket line they'd go on the Cherry Blossom list, for blacking all over the country. And of course, a little gentle persuasion (out of earshot of the police) may also be useful. (In one case it was in fact a policeman who went over and told a scab driver to F*** Off out of it!!)

Some lorries that slipped through were blacked by workers in other areas. For instance, on the third day of the dispute, a container lorry left Dagenham straight away after the Ford-drivers mass meeting. It went down to Tilbury Docks. But the dockers knew that there was a dispute on at Dagenham, so they blacked it.

But Ford management is always up to its little tricks:

"You get to recognise the Company's cars after a while. And when they look suspicious, turning up 3 in a convoy, you can check them for smuggled goods. People in the Engine Plant were telling us: "Look, they're unloading things from private cars".....oil pumps, small things of high value. So we stopped several of these cars. We put our pickets across the road and asked to see what was in the boots. They refused to let us, and drove away. Once they tried to drive past, but a little "friendly persuasion" through the car window soon put an end to that."

And on other occasions Ford was doing dirty tricks like phoning up the lorry companies and telling them that the strike was off, and that the picketing was over. In that situation it was very important to keep in contact with the shop stewards at the haulage firms - and also to have a leaflet available every day, explaining the facts of the dispute.

Handy Hints

○ Picket Huts



"Would you believe it! The middle of June! When we were out picketing it was raining, and when it wasn't raining it was bleedin' cold!"

Any dispute, even in Flaming June, can get a bit chilly - so Be Prepared! The first thing the pickets did (having examined the possibility of camping in the security guards' huts) was to set up a shelter by the main gates and picket points. This is the answer! Spare no effort! Better a little hard work than a dose of the flu. Scour the factory for wood, polythene, ropes, railings etc. Make yourself a home-from-

home. Get a radio (for general entertainment and for news of latest developments), get a couple of beds (for the night shift pickets), get a gas stove and a kettle for tea-making, get a few good books to read, and above all, provide yourself with HEAT. In this case, a couple of oil drums with holes in; plus a goodly supply of coke from the Blast Furnaces kept everyone roasting-warm through the chilly nights.

○ The Occupation



If you're picketing a place, it's worth turning it into an Occupation Centre as well. In a place like Ford's this doesn't mean much - after all, how can a couple of hundred men on shifts picket and occupy a plant that spreads over 3 miles! But an occupation can be useful. For a start, it means that you've got the run of the place, and can use all the facilities.

"During our dispute, the Body Plant lads occupied their bit of the factory. This meant several things: it meant that we had toilets, wash facilities and phones at our disposal. It

also meant that we had the Canteen - and this was even more useful. The Canteen ladies were terrific. They let us have cups of tea, to keep warm. We could sit in there and keep warm, waiting for the picket rota to come round."

FILM SHOW AND SING-SONG

What is an Occupation? It's a way of breaking down the walls of a factory. It's a way of letting the outside world look in and see what's going on. And it's a means for workers to start taking over their place of work....even just in little ways.

That's what started happening during the June dispute. The strikers brought their friends and families down to the factory and showed them what was going on. And for a short while the picket lines were a sharp focus of Socialist discussion, ideas, arguments etc.

For the first time in a Dagenham occupation, some entertainment was organised inside the Plant. After all, sitting around at 2:00am can get a bit boring. So, one night a film show was organised in the Body Plant canteen, with films about workers' struggles in other parts of the world. Then, another night, a few people went down with guitars, and there was a good old sing-song round the coke-burners. Not very often that the walls of Ford-Dagenham ring with the sound of Socialist songs!

○ Flying Pickets



Communication of the struggle is an absolute necessity. You can never tell when scabs are going to try and bust through the picket lines, when the police might come down making trouble etc etc. All pickets should avail themselves of the best possible means of communication. For example, Ford Motor Co's phone system provides an excellent means of link-up.

Another means of communication is the Flying Picket, equipped with motorbikes, cars, bicycles etc (skateboards and Pogo sticks may also be useful), who can shoot round instantly to any potential trouble points and keep everyone informed about what's going on. Instant mobility is essential, to make a picket line really effective.

○ Leaflets



As the strike went on and the days went by, the question of information and communication became more and more important. The Company was telling lies, the Press and TV were telling lies, and the Union officials were also telling lies!

"One day, Fred Blake (the TGWU official) tried to confuse the rest of the Dagenham workforce, by saying that our pickets would turn into a "Grunwick-type situation" - mass violence etc. He later denied that he ever said this (he's a liar, and I just wish we'd had someone tape-recording the radio that day!) Anyway, a lot

of blokes were worried there would be a fight there. So the only way the stewards could counteract Fred's lies was to put out their own leaflet. But that only showed up our weakness, in some ways."

In the old days, before 1962, the PTA shop stewards Committee used to have £20,000 in the bank, and they used to support and finance strikes of other workers all over the country. But nowadays they don't even have their own duplicator! So most of the shop stewards leaflets had to be produced by the Ford Workers' Group, usually at very short notice. This shows that a number of things need to be arranged in a dispute like this:-

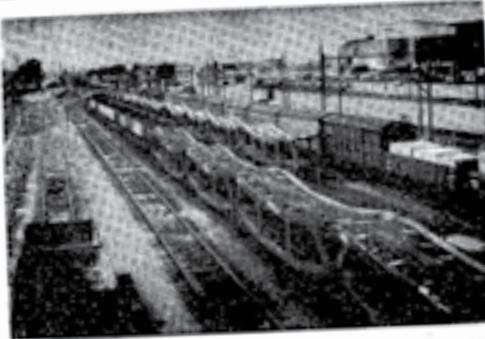
- a) access to a duplicator and supplies of paper which are directly under workers' control (so that no bureaucrat can go censoring leaflets etc)
- b) access to a typewriter (office staff in the plant can often help here)
- c) knowing what you want to say; keeping it short and to the point.

The best way to do leaflets is to print them every day. If you've got a small committee of workers and shop stewards, the job is easy. That way, NOBODY is kept in the dark about the progress of negotiations etc.

Also, as the pickets found out, it's always useful to have a short leaflet explaining the causes of the struggle to lorry drivers, other workers etc, so that they know what's going on. This brings support.

Handy Hints

○ Railways



Any factory is served by very many service routes. These include the postal service, water, telex and telephone, computer links, gas and electricity, road access, and the railways and waterways. These services are often vulnerable (like when the postmen blocked George Ward's mail in the Grunwick strike).

In the June layoff dispute the pickets made a mistake. During the 1972 Miners' Strike, the miners had Flying Pickets on boats going down the river. However, the Ford pickets forgot to organise their Navy....So Ford was able to ship

in supplies down the River. But there was more success on the rail front. One dark night a few hardy souls crept out and banged a fork-lift truck across an important section of Ford's rail link out of the Press Shop. The forklift, which ever-so-slightly dislodged the rails, was also accompanied by other assorted items of old garbage.

As it happened, Ford eventually cleared the lines....but it was of no use to them. The pickets had talked to the British Rail depot workers, and had assurances from them that they would black any wagons that came out of Fords by that line. This was a powerful weapon.

○ Solidarity



In any dispute, contact with other groups of workers is a vital source of strength and support - especially nowadays when the Trade Union leaders and officials are scabbing on almost every strike there is.

In the case of the June layoff dispute, the workers at the Gaedor Chloride plant down the road had been occupying their factory for 7 weeks, with barricades etc. So, one day some of the lads from the Body Plant armed themselves with a megaphone and set off down the road to visit the Chloride workers. They arrived there, and held a short solidarity meeting in the

road, with speeches of solidarity being made from both sides of the Chloride gates.

○ Getting the Message

There's a thousand ways to spread a message. When the Union officials control the platform at a mass meeting and you can't make yourself heard over the loud-speakers, the simple application of pen and paper can be very useful.

We locked up "Quisling" in the TUC's Trade Unionists Handbook of Useful Insults and we found this: Quisling - a scab, dirty rat, vile person, traitor, specialising in sell-outs.



○ Photographs



In case you didn't know it, it's almost impossible to take photographs inside Fords. The worker who took the photo on the left, showing the Body Plant assembly lines at a standstill during the picketing, was arrested by security guards inside the plant and accused of being an "industrial spy".

All car manufacturers seem to be paranoid about exposing the conditions in their plants. In 1975 for instance, Jack Sprung - a long-time militant at BLMC-Canley - was sacked because he had invited a Socialist film crew into the factory

during an Occupation. But Ford is the most paranoid of all. In the USA the Unions have signed Health & Safety agreements with the motor manufacturers allowing shop steward safety reps to take photos of accidents, hazards etc. But Ford refused to sign that clause. What are they so scared of!?

"Ford management aren't worried about taking photos themselves, though. During the Body Plant occupation we saw them taking photos from an upstairs window. And in the PTA, a member of PTA management who was trying to take pictures of the Sit-In across the lines had an "unfortunate accident" with his little camera - eg dropping onto the floor and being unusable afterwards. That's the way we sought to deal with spies and informers!"

During the dispute a lot of photos were also taken by workers and by socialist photographers. That's where some of the pictures in this pamphlet come from. It's always worth having a camera along with you, during a dispute. It can serve several purposes. First, a camera can record the struggle as it's going on - something to show the grandchildren! Second, a camera is useful in the event of police provocation, aggravation from scabs etc, to provide evidence. And third, a good photo might earn a few bob for the strike fund by selling it to the Press.

Also, there are a lot of sympathetic Left-wing photographers and even film-makers, who will gladly offer their services to record a struggle for the workers involved. One group is called Report - a group of photographers who take photographs for the labour movement. They ask all workers to phone them and tell them of their struggles (411 Oxford Street, London W.1. Tel: 01-493-7737)

○ The Newspapers



"It's worth having a Press Officer, always on the ball, to put the strikers' case. Our Convenor was the Press Officer in this case. He gave an incredible number of interviews. But usually they print more of the Company's side. You can't control it. Also, although the reporters are always very KIND (!) when they come down to talk to you, they're usually two-faced bastards, and they'll print a savage story about you, if they get the chance. And they're also stupid! They wouldn't know a layoff from the back end of a bus!

The Press also completely distorted our dispute. They said that it was because of a man who had damaged his wrist, and the strike was costing Fords millions. But in fact that dispute was only a little part of the whole issue. And also, when they interview people, they get people like foremen, scabs etc - not the real, fighting workers." (A Ford Picket)

○ The Police



Every picketer has to face the problem of the police. In general they are no friends of the striker - Grunwicks showed this. But there's a difference between the riot-trained thugs of the Special Patrol Group (who need their weekly diet of red blood and busted heads to keep going) and PC Flatfoot from the local nick. The police, after all, have their own problems. That nasty Mr McKee wanting to cut their overtime...and they don't even have the right to strike...and nobody ever told them the difference between a worker and a scab.... The poor devils really suffer -

and one day (as you can see from our photo) they even came down to the picket line and held their own demonstration!

Somebody asked: why was it that thousands and thousands of police were turning out to bash heads at a small, isolated photo factory in North London (ie Grunwicks), and meantime, Ford workers who were bringing to a standstill millions and millions of pounds of capital and machinery, only deserved 2 flatfoot bobbies on the beat! There's many answers to that - but one reason why Fords don't want the police intervening at their factory gates was summed up by a FIAT worker during the blockade of FIAT-Mirafiori in 1973:

"This plant is like a jungle. If they tried to chase us in there, we know our way around. A lot of damage might get done... and they wouldn't like that."

There was one incident, on the 3rd day of the dispute, when there were about 80-90 people on the picket line. One of the pickets was arrested on Kent Avenue, and the police had him up against a wall, hurting him. The pickets were angry. The word went round that stewards were being arrested off the picket line. People started coming out of the Body Plant to see what was going on. The police were so nervous by then that the Superintendent of Essex police came, in person, and the troublesome constable was removed from the area of Ford-Dagenham. And from then on, the police kept their distance, and sometimes even helped the pickets! Not at all like Grunwicks!

It seems that at the moment Fords don't need the police to act against strikers. They've got much better policemen in the shape of the Trade Union officials:-

"Mick Murphy went into the JWC meeting on the Monday. He said that within 3 days he would recommend to the TGMU Executive that our strike be made official. But then, on the Friday, he came in and denied that he'd ever said that - denied it 100%. And from that moment on, he did everything in his power to sell us out. And Fred Blake was just as bad."



← Nice policeman, on the Ford picket line. Reading "Socialist Worker". June 1978.



→ Not-so-nice policeman, on the Grunwicks picket line. Beating up pickets. June 1978.

○ Boot Hill



Question: What wins strikes? Answer: Workers' creativity and imagination.

Problem: As every striker knows, when you're in dispute, you've got to bring your problem to the public's attention. But how do you do it? The Establishment is dead-set against you, and the Press and TV are either telling lies, or just ignoring you. But, when all's said and done, they'll do anything for a good story.

Solution: Some of the pickets were standing watch at Sandy Lane. It's an important point, strateg-

ically because it's Ford's back door...but it's a backyard dump, and they were getting BORED just sitting around. So they decided to have some fun. They laid out a row of mock graves. Some of them were for Ford Management - Mesars Fisher, Hitchcock, Drury etc. Others were for the Union officials who tried to sell out the strike - eg Mick Murphy, TCWU. And Johnny Davies. And there was one, humble, undecorated grave dedicated to the Unknown Ford Worker. Also, in a tribute to Ford's wonderful industrial relations procedure, they erected a Gallows with "Ford Disciplinary Procedure - Stage 6" written under it (there are only 5 stages, officially)

Well, the Press (hungry for a story) went down and photographed this Strikers' Boot Hill, and the next day it was splashed all over the national newspapers. A little bit of imagination paid off! And the next day workers at Ford-Langley (who were also picketing against layoffs) built some graves outside their own plant.

(Next time, by the way, the Gallows will be for real. And it appears that Ford management are already being measured up for their own, personal, made-to-measure graves!)



● Negotiations are currently under way to add a 6th Stage to the 5-stage Disciplinary Procedure which exists at Fords.....

○ Outsiders

During the build-up of the layoff campaign, the local Press were making a big noise about "outsiders" being involved on the picket lines. Well, the picketers had adopted a policy on this. Anybody who can assist and strengthen the working class struggle is welcome on the picket (although decision-making and stopping of lorries would only be done by Ford workers). As one picket said: "I suppose you could say that, by that definition, it's the Union officials who should have been thrown off the picket line. They're the real outsiders. They only ever come here to destroy our fight."

Also, another important point: wives and girlfriends were welcome on the picket line, because they too are part of the struggle. The 2 articles on this page sum it up - both of them are contributions from wives of Ford workers: one went round the plant on a duplicated leaflet; the other was printed in the Ford Workers' Group's "Fraud News".

Just a Wife

*Shame on Ford! Another Strike?
Someone fighting for his right?
The men involved mean no harm,
But they have felt "Ford strong arm!"
While other sections strike for gain
The PTA's laid off again!
Hasn't anyone got soul?
The PTA live off the dole.
If they enjoyed being in that queue
They would never have worked for you.
This week again, just three days pay.
What do we do, just hope, or -- pray?
I'll write a list and perhaps you will
Assist me with my grocery bill.
Our men ask nothing, not a quirk,
They only want the right to work!
Management say they understand your dismay
How long will they expect you to suffer this way?
So along to the dole queue, what a cheek!
The unemployed get full money each week!
You selected and employed these men
But what you didn't tell them then
Was the inevitable that laid ahead,
"You've got no rights, lay off's ahead".
You tell them now to work -- not stop.
Allow you to talk -- about what?
Aha, your answer is already known.
At the first meeting you told them so,
Please listen to what they have voted
They never chose to be unemployed.
So, for you, they'll work relentlessly
In return they want security!
I'll quieter now, I've told their plight
For after all, I'm just a wife.*

'It's the women who bear the brunt'



We both work for Ford's...

'You're laid off without pay until further notice.' This is the bane of lineworkers in all the Ford assembly plants. And it's the wives and girlfriends - the women - who bear the brunt of it. They have to scrimp and save on social security. They are often forced to take a temporary job in addition to the housework they do already.

The last layoff which affected Dagenham, Southampton and Langley Ford assembly plants was in mid-June. The Dagenham plant took strike action to get layoff pay, fighting for 'Eighty per cent now!'

At Langley the blokes on the picket line were joined by a couple of wives and girlfriends of the men laid off. We talked to one of the women on the picket line. Julie Gungi is married, with two children and one on the way - she is seven months pregnant. It was her first time on a picket line.

What did you think about your husband being laid off because of a dispute at Dagenham?

I didn't think it was fair. They are two different plants. The men at Langley are always being laid off through no fault of their own.

What was the reaction of other wives?

When I was on the picket line I talked to a lot of men, either on picket duty or picking up their one or two day's pay. I found that many of the wives supported our action - it got quite a lot of publicity in the local paper.

I think it's time Henry Ford realised that we have enough on our plates at the moment - looking after our children and families with inflation like it is - without putting our men out of work just when it suits him.

Ford refuses to guarantee a week's pay every week. But Massey-Ferguson in Coventry gives this guarantee - so why not Fords?

Did anyone object to you being on the picket line?

Yes, the deputy convenor. I was accused of not being a Ford worker, but a university student! I am a full time housewife with two children and one on the way - but it was flattering. But I see myself as a Ford worker.

My husband works at Fords and brings home the money. I get him up and make sure he gets to work on time. I make it possible for him to work by looking after the kids and washing his filthy work clothes. The deputy convenor was objecting to the picket itself - because it was unofficial. He asked me if I worked for Fords. I said, 'Yes'. He said, 'Which department?' I replied, 'At home'.

You are a member of the Ford Langley Action Committee?

Yes, I am chairperson. FLAC

came about on the picket line. It is trying to make the union fight for what the ordinary blokes on the line and their wives and girlfriends want. There are two other women involved in FLAC and that is very important.

What are your plans?

First, I am trying to get a group of wives together - like if there is a strike. Then we are circulating a petition to wives and girlfriends about the importance of the guaranteed week in this wage claim. We are not objecting to the unions - it is just that they don't seem to think about the position of the wives.

I would support a strike called just to win the guaranteed week. A lot of women should support that, and they should look into the changes coming up in the pension plan. Before, a wife who was widowed would get 2 years wages - about £6,000. But now she will only get one year's wages plus a pension.

If she is young when her bloke dies, then she will get almost nothing each week. This new plan would make her much worse off in that situation. I think that's what the plan involves. It is very complicated. It looks as though the young widow would get much less and the older widow a bit more.

What was the reaction from wives, blokes and truck drivers when you went on the picket line?

The truck drivers were very sympathetic, and most turned away. The whole experience was very interesting. The blokes didn't seem at all put out. They were just pleased I was there.

Some of the wives were a little hesitant. They didn't think they could do it. They say 'Not me, I have kids'. But I have kids too, and I am pregnant. If we all pull together, we can do these things.

○ Social Security

In theory, when you are laid off from Fords, it is your right to claim Social Security for the period you're laid off. At least you should be able to claim hardship money for your family. But things are never that simple. The State's layoff benefit scheme works in the same penalising way as Ford's own scheme. In other words, if the Social Security manager decides, at his "discretion" that you are supporting the strike, directly or indirectly, then he feels entitled to refuse you benefit. Supporting the strike can mean something as simple as belonging to the same Union as the workers on strike.

NEVER MEET THE SS ALONE!



THEY NEVER MEET YOU ALONE!

The stinking thing about this arrangement is that Social Security usually take it on Ford's say-so, whether you are involved in the dispute or not. In other words, it's up to Ford's discretion whether you get paid or not!

Experience has shown that the only way to get your Social Security in the event of being laid off, is to get organised. Shop stewards should prepare a basic Social Security leaflet, to be ready for any eventuality. And then they should be prepared to lead hundreds of workers down to "visit" the manager of the Social Security, refusing to go home until they are paid their rightful money. Since payment is generally at the Manager's discretion, this approach generally pays results. And above all, "Never Meet the SS Alone!"

○ Penal Clauses

Leyland deal to deter wildcat strikes

By R. W. Shakespeare

More than 100,000 workers in Leyland car plants are covered by a new shopfloor deal which gives them much improved layoff pay when work stops because of reasons outside their control, but imposes a stiff "penalty clause" on those who take part in unconstitutional strikes.

The deal has emerged from Leyland's new central negotiating body, and represents the last major achievement of Mr Geoffrey Whalen, industrial relations director of Leyland Cars before his resignation.

Signed by all car unions, the agreement is an attempt to maintain the earnings of workers at an average level when they are made idle by disputes either outside the company or in other Leyland supplying companies. But at the same time it seeks to deter unofficial strikes by disqualifying those who take part in them

from the layoff guarantees for three months.

Last year alone Leyland car plants lost well over three million man hours and the production of some 200,000 cars because of layoffs due to "external" disputes.

Under the deal, men laid off because of strikes outside the company will get a guaranteed 15 days' pay in each quarter on full basic rate. When the layoffs results from disputes in other Leyland sectors the guarantee is seven days in each quarter at 80 per cent of normal basic rate.

Previous layoff agreements, which had been negotiated on a plant-by-plant basis, gave seven days' pay for external disputes and five days for internal disputes, both at 80 per cent of basic rate.

The tough penalty clause will mean that any workers taking part in what the company describes as "unconstitutional disputes"—as opposed to unofficial stoppages, which can sometimes be "constitutional"—

will forfeit all entitlement to layoff pay during the following quarter.

The agreement is being backdated to November, and from March 1 this year there will be other clauses that will give fresh guarantees on pay for workers absent because of bereavement, hospital attendance, civic duties and certain other reasons.

A Leyland spokesman has described the deal as "one of the most advanced in the industry".

A refreshingly honest article from the Times newspaper shows clearly the anti-worker nature of most lay-off agreements. They are not designed to protect workers. They are designed to penalise workers, and to protect the employers. (Times, Feb. 7th 1978)

25 January 2018

PRECARIOUS NOTES

What is Precarious Notes?

Precarious Notes is a monthly bulletin put together by workers and trade unionists to connect workers across London who are struggling for dignity and respect!

Can you help with distribution or have something you want in the next bulletin? Email us at:

precariousoctet@protonmail.com

STRIKE in the City!

THIS IS A STRIKE THAT SHOWS YOUR SOLIDARITY AT LEE FEECH LARRISON.

Latin American workers have voted 100% to strike for the £10.20 per hour London Living Wage. They clean the plush offices of the City of London firm which houses bosses Lew and Amanda (poorwife) their workmates.

The cleaning contractor responded by illegally terminating the minimum wage cleaners with dismissal for standing up for a living wage and organising.

The United Voices union members have shown the courage to fight - demonstrating and picketing at the front door of the skyscraper - before going in to work.

As Rosa, one of the workers said, 'At first I was scared, but we are grateful to see other workers and supporters stand with us and this gives us the confidence to fight.'

The picket goes on to the street on Friday 26 January. The picket line is between 4pm and 7pm. 55 Gresham Street, EC3N 1AA.

LSE cleaners in-house from 5th of March!

After 10 months of struggle, 7 days of striking and two occupations, the LSE cleaners are going to be employed directly by LSE!

However, the outstanding demands, including independent cleaners have got two of the bosses sacked, and five cleaners reinstated.

SOAS: A Promise is no Guarantee

Enough is enough. Our job needs to be treated as a humanising, with fair sick pay, holiday pay and pensions, dignity and respect. Working through these outsourcing companies we are never going to get that, because they are not there in the end to only for one specific thing: to make profit, money. And they are only making it through us.

When it was all put into pressure through direct action, SOAS has agreed to directly hire all its outsourced workers - cleaners, catering, porters, security, maintenance - and not to contract with Buggym and others. So we are still campaigning for the university to maintain its promises, since it has lied to us before. There are many issues we have to defend: over terms and conditions, hours and overtime, and special taxes for cleaners. We are serious - these issues management say they will be resolved next September when we are brought in-house. Then what is the point of having a project board, a working group now?

'These are our challenges. That's why the campaign still needs to put up the pressure.' Leon Escudero, Justice for the social activist and LSE cleaner representative.

Outsourced workers at University of London inching towards a historic victory

Outsourced workers at the University of London are a step closer to victory after the university announced this week that it was considering bringing some of its contracts in-house for services back in-house.

The announcement comes four months after the Independent Workers Union of Great Britain (IWGB) launched the 'Back in House' campaign, which demands:

- End the university and outsourcing contracts with multiple agencies
- Implement pay rises it had promised our failed to deliver

Last November, 500 people held a protest outside Senate House with drums and banners. The union also has several honorary trade unionist officers: receptionists, cleaners and porters - will be back with an even bigger strike and picket line on 15 January.

We need a union or employer on their word. So the striking will not stop until all workers are brought in-house.

Ministry of (In)Justice

Portuguese and Spanish speaking migrant workers at the Ministry of Justice's Solicitors building in the heart of Westminster are demanding the living wage and a 40% real wage rise with the 10 servants who work in the building.

The United Voices union members are prepared to strike, and as Eduardo says, 'we cleaners' solidarity from the other workers and unions, especially at the Ministry, to fight back against abuses, salaries and to organise to resist work and poverty say: 'We need a living wage now!'

Rebellion at the LSE: a cleaning sector inquiry

by Achille Marotta, Lydia Hughes

Notes on an inquiry of the cleaning sector in London and grassroots resistance

Introduction

The cleaners' struggle at the London School of Economics (LSE) had a resounding effect on the radical and trade union left. How could it not? The cleaners seemed to reverse history, beating the tide of precarity and outsourcing 'at a time of stigmatization of migrant workers and weakening of trade unions'.¹ After ten months of campaigning with United Voices of the World (UVW) - including seven strike days, several demonstrations, and two occupations - the cleaners not only achieved their demands of equal terms and conditions with in-house staff, but forced the LSE to employ them directly.

The struggle was spectacular, in every sense of the word. Black, migrant, precarious workers rebelled against exploitation and invisibility in the belly of the neoliberal beast. It was their turn to speak - and they did so outside of Unison and the official trade union recognition agreement. The student-run Justice for Cleaners campaign helped to organise this spectacle, which publicly shamed the university and disrupted its day-to-day functioning. This was the winning tactic. But however many solidarity breakfasts we organised, however long we spent on the picket line, we maintained a feeling of cluelessness. This turned into an awareness that the picket line - the spectacle - was only half of the story.

We decided to inquire into a world which remains unknown and of not much interest to the Left: the world of the cleaner in the workplace. Next to none of the coverage of the strike deemed this world significant. We insist this should be our starting point, however routine or banal it might seem to both cleaners and other activists. Because here lies not only the production of clean space, but of rebel workers.

We tried to see the workplace from the viewpoint of militant cleaners. The premises for this article were given to us by B. when she first spoke at an open meeting: "We are in slavery. The only thing they have not done to us is shackle us and whip us. But by words we are whipped, by tools we use we are whipped."

The first two parts of the article deal with these whips and shackles.

The result was these scraps of inquiry, based on long interviews with three militant UVW members. We know that they are not reflective of the entire workforce. However, we hope these notes can be the starting point for a wider process of co-research with London cleaners, who at least since the beginning of this century have formed some of the city's most tenacious and far-reaching waves of working class insubordination.³ We want to document the entire cycle of these waves, looking beyond their crests and crashes to those deep swells which were generated far from here - in Colombia or Jamaica - gathering energy underwater, only to reemerge with a spray that drenches the highest and mightiest of institutions. The final part of the article is therefore dedicated to resistance, starting from the self-organised refusal to comply, which we believe to be present in any office or university.

Exploitation: Work intensity

The system of outsourced cleaning is based on competition over the client's contract, in this case the LSE. Outsourcing companies vie over the provision of the cheapest service, while at the same time maintaining their own profit margins. The real 'competitiveness' of firms therefore hinges on two factors: the immiseration of workers and the squeezing of their labour. The first is the payment of poverty wages,⁴ the second is compulsion to work harder. Outsourcing companies race to provide the most clean space in the fewest possible hours, for the least amount of money. The enforcement of this low pay and high work rhythm is often achieved by violent 'extra-economic' means, which we will deal with later.

At the level of work organisation, the



basic methods of increasing the work intensity (the rate of exploitation) are the following: 1) the expansion of space to be cleaned by the same number of workers; 2) the reduction of the number of workers tasked to clean the same space; and 3) the reduction of time in which workers must clean the space.

One worker we spoke to began working in the library for the outsourcing company ISS in June 2009, along with three others. Within three months, the library workforce was reduced from four to two. This 100% increase in work intensity eventually forced him to take several months off due to physical and mental exhaustion: "I could not sip even water for the 8 hour shift I was doing".

When the LSE did not renew the contract with ISS and went into 'partnership' with Resource Group, the library staff was increased again and this exhaustion was diminished. But work was intensified in other ways. Whereas before specialised deep cleaning - such as unblocking toilets - was done by external, trained ISS staff, now the LSE and Resource expected cleaners to do it. In other parts of the campus, work intensity as a whole was increased through all the methods mentioned above. Within a few months, cleaners organised in the IWW cleaners' branch - a precursor to UUV - staged a protest with the following demands:

- **Stop the LSE from reducing the cleaner's working hours**
- **Stop the LSE from intensifying the cleaner's working day**
- **Stop the LSE from giving with one hand and taking with the other**
- **Stop the LSE from treating the cleaners like second-class employees**

Publicly expose Resource's management's inveterate practice of racist bullying

The characteristics of this protest - including a disruptive samba band and chanting, as well as direct confrontations with management - had many similarities with the struggle that would shake the campus five years later. While a few of its participants would also play a role in the 2017 strike,

only Latin American cleaners joined the IWW, and not the Caribbean and African migrants who would come to head the UUV strike. While the 2017 campaign focused primarily on achieving equal terms and conditions with in-house staff, one of its demands was also a review of workers' workload and the disciplinary procedures used to enforce it.

Throughout the past years, cleaners also witnessed a growing work intensity through the university's increase in student numbers: more people, more dirt, more work. Added to this was the use of university space for catered commercial and academic events as well as 'customer service' facilities. This, combined with the ceaseless redevelopment projects, expanded the space to be cleaned.⁶ All of these are examples of the 'neoliberalisation' of the university, a process that could potentially create common demands between cleaners, students, and teaching staff.⁷

Health effects

The greater work intensity is well-known to consume the bodies of cleaners with a whole host of physical ailments. Until the recent victory, these issues were worsened by the deadly Statutory Sick Pay of only £89.35 a week, which is received only after the third day of illness. The campaign particularly emphasised the case of M., who was hospitalised after injuring her knee in the library whilst working. After taking four days off, she was forced to come back to work to support her family, causing her knee to swell. And as if this was not enough, during a five minute rest to cope with the pain, M. was photographed by a manager and given a disciplinary.

These kinds of health problems caused directly by the work and the paltry sick pay can be found across the city's whole cleaning workforce. The low wages and high costs of living in London - rent above all - mean that workers simply cannot afford to take days off sick. Permanently disabling and even fatal cases have been made known to us, and when it comes to mental health issues, the conditions are equally appalling. One could write a whole study of how such progressive institutions as the LSE expend the bodies and minds of the working class in London.

Division and discipline

Compared to say, a factory assembly line, cleaning work can allow for a degree of mobility around the workplace which escapes

the levels of monitoring sought by management. This is particularly the case on a larger and more scattered structures like the LSE. The most militant cleaners used this to their advantage to organise the strike: discussing in person or through WhatsApp, convincing colleagues, and distributing union membership forms were all possible during work hours.

But this relative independence varied widely according to the shift and building, even on the same campus. In other cases, it became clear to us that these techniques of exploitation did not just consume workers in the direct sense, but divided them politically, decomposing them as a workforce. Cleaners that are isolated, overworked, and dispersed around the campus are good for management. This busy loneliness prevents the everyday correspondence which forms the basis of workers' power. Inversely, defeating work intensity gives workers more freedom to organise during working hours.

As conspiratorial as it might sound from the outside, this is a tendency that workers recognise. From the cleaner's viewpoint, each form of work organisation appears not as a neutral fact but a political technique of discipline and division. Take, for example, the system according to which the day shift begins only an hour after the morning shift ends: a cleaner who works the former described this to us as "another propaganda of not letting the people come together and know how to get to talk and discuss things". It took the strike for workers to finally meet each other, after years of cleaning the same building. Despite our attempts through solidarity breakfasts, we were equally unable to engage many cleaners who worked this 6am-8am morning shift, in part because they literally ran to other jobs.

To this we should also add the use of overtime and cover shifts. Because contract hours are relatively low, workers often depend on the assignment of extra hours, which are granted at the discretion of the bosses. This can create competition between workers, forcing them to stay in favour with management. In practice, this system has same effect as zero hour contracts by creating dependency,

leaving workers vulnerable to abuse and fearful of speaking out.

A similar example is the use of touchscreen tablets, on which cleaners have to check off tasks as they complete them. One cleaner suggested that its function was for discipline, and that they could always use the microphone or camera to spy on workers. Yet - to the chagrin of our interest in "computerised Taylorism" - everyone dismissed the relevance of these tablets. No one knew how they worked or who



looked at the data. Nothing seemed to have ever come out of this supposedly disciplinary technique. Management didn't even train cleaners to use them properly, and cleaners made all sorts of technological blunders, intentional or not. We can only guess, but perhaps the tablets are simply a way to extort more money out of the School, fooling them that the provided service is more rationalised than it really is. At least for now, they have not replaced the necessity of radios as a tool for organisation and supervision.

Oppression

So far we have limited ourselves to the realm of economic competition: competition in the squeezing of human labour. Already this legal system of outsourced work organisation elicits the harshest criticism from the workers: "it is an embarrassment for LSE to keep having slave masters in the 21st century". These are the fundamental whips and shackles. But the system is also a breeding ground for 'extra-economic' means of coercion which are themselves instrumental to exploitation.

Bullying, racism, sexism and homophobia fester in the system, reproducing themselves by their own logic.

Racism, clientelism and documents

All UK universities exhibit a clear racial division of labour. While tenured professors are overwhelmingly white, further down the wage scale the workforce becomes more likely to be migrant and of colour. This is particularly clear with the in-house/outsourced divide, which LSE cleaners continually described as nothing less than segregation, a two tier workforce. This can be seen in the video, shot by the UVW secretary, in which black cleaners described being unable to use the very cafeteria they clean: [view it here](#).

National and ethnic divisions are also felt within the cleaning workforce itself. Lower-level managers - who in recent years have all been Nigerian - tend to hire workers from their own 'community' and favour them over others in the assignment of hours. These workers tended to be absent from the UVW picket lines. Workers we talked to explained this through the relationship of patronage/clientelism the Nigerians had with their managers, a relation which begins outside of the workplace, through family and other community relations. There is a story that goes around the workforce about the recruitment process: "at the sessions at church, [the manager] would stand up in the end and say 'anybody who wants a job, come to LSE'. And she's most probably vetting them first to see if they're legit, and if they aren't, yes come in."

The clientelism is particularly strong for these 'not legit' workers, those with irregular documents. It was repeatedly claimed that managers were taking money from workers as a guarantee that they would maintain their hours and job. We were told about cases of workers who worked long hours and still struggled for money, while those who refused to pay were summarily laid off.

Outsourcing companies may formally be against corrupt managers taking money from

undocumented workers for their personal gain, but as long as it divides and disciplines the cleaners, it benefits the multinational. The blackmail of being reported keeps workers docile, while favouritism keeps them dependent on the boss, dividing the workforce along lines of ethnicity, language, and kinship.

We therefore have to reject the idea that this is a problem of the backwardness of African migrants in an otherwise rational and meritocratic European institution. It is the poverty of London life which forces people into these relations of dependency. Without all this, outsourcing companies' profits would be significantly lower. Ultimately it is Noonan who gains the most from this system, and the LSE did everything possible to protect it.

Homophobia and sexual harassment

The same argument has to be made with regards to other forms of abuse. It is convenient for the company to explain sexism or homophobia in terms of the national culture of migrant workers. When Daniel - a leader of the strike and himself a Kenyan migrant - was suffering heavy homophobic abuse at the hands of his coworkers, Noonan's account manager



just told him: "it's in their culture".

This disregard of abuse is financially motivated: if a grievance was upheld, the company could be found liable for thousands of pounds. Thus, while the company was comfortable with sacking three cleaners who left work an hour early,⁸ Daniel's abusers were left untouched. The low sick pay and annual leave meant that Daniel was unable to take time off to recover from the mental health issues

inflicted from this abuse. Instead, he was offered to move to another Noonan site.

But Daniel decided to stay and struggle. The collective victory at the LSE laid down the conditions for his battle: thanks to the newly won sick pay, Daniel was able to take time off to recover. He took Noonan to court with the demand to have the bullies sacked. His tribunal ended on the 18th of January 2018 and we will know the verdict in a month - after the publication of this piece.

Management's tolerance of abuse, together with the conditions of the contract, also put women in a particularly vulnerable position. Cleaners explained to us that sexual harassment was routine and embedded into the shift system. Workers' dependence on managers' assignment of hours left them particularly vulnerable to these individuals. Abusers would assign women to particular buildings and assault them at times when they knew they would be alone. One of the many reasons why women were on the frontline in denouncing the entire structure.

Rebellion

In such a system, it should be no surprise that struggle existed prior to UFW. Even alongside all the divisions, workers resisted management on a daily level: standing up to management's bullying, refusing to carry out extra tasks, working slower so as to not be assigned more work. These everyday forms of resistance may be short-lived, confined to few workers, but they exist as a result of direct experiences in the workplace, and tempered those fighters who would come to lead the strike.

At the same time, more powerful struggles circulate throughout the working class. One kind of these is the union struggle in London. When three LSE workers were fired for leaving work an hour early, one of them contacted an organisation they had heard good things about. After a few months, UFW had the 'LSE 3' reinstated. This success story spread like wildfire through the workforce. UFW was known to be a fighting union and LSE cleaners joined in their dozens.

Another kind of struggle is the kind which circulates internationally, brought across the world by migrant workers. The movement of London cleaners, now spanning two decades and several union organisations, would probably not have been possible without the experiences migrants had in their home countries. As an example, we briefly discuss

the life experiences of struggle of B., one of the leaders of the LSE cleaners' strike.

The making of a militant

B was born in Jamaica, where her family's land was bought out by an American Bauxite mining corporation. Looking for work, she migrated to the Dutch territory of St. Martin in the Antilles, where she joined UFA, a militant union led by Willy Haize. Haize became a workers' leader in the 1969 Curaçao revolt, which began when outsourced workers at Shell Oil demanded equal wages with in-house staff.⁹ In 2007, B. organised workers into UFA in a building supplies store she worked at. When management tried to frame her by suspending her for using a cell phone, she organised an immediate wildcat strike with all of her 14 colleagues. They did not walk back in until they had secured the right for workers to communicate by phone during work hours.



B. on the picket line with Willy Haize

In 2008, she began working for ISS at LSE, and immediately began struggling against the bosses. She spoke up and refused to comply, and paid for this by not receiving cover shifts. Everybody knew her face, and regardless of their nationality they would seek her out for advice:

"Sometimes I would just encourage them. Or I would just tell them you need to write this, you need to do this. Or sometimes I even wrote to the managers myself. And I said "Listen, what is happening in this university

is unlawful.' I even go on the website, I check with ACAS. I go to the Citizens Advice Bureau to get legal answers. And I come back and I say look at this. This is it."

After two years away from the LSE, B. began working for Resource in 2012. She joined Unite with a group of other cleaners, including Daniel, but failed to get anything off the ground. Unfortunately they were unaware of their Latin American colleagues organising in the IWW at the same time.

In 2013, independent of any union, B. won 12 days extra holiday pay for cleaners working weekend shifts, after discovering they were only receiving leave for weekday work. She explained: "This is it. You can't take away my rights. Honestly. When it comes to my right I will die for that." In 2016 - after her friend and two other laid off cleaners (the "LSE 3") were reinstated thanks to UVW - she met Petros Elia (the General Secretary of UVW) and they drank in the Shakespeare's Head (a pub near LSE) to celebrate their victory:

"I went over there was I said Petros let me tell you something. I can't applaud you much more. Wonderful job. I said as of today I, [B.], am going to join your union. [...] And I am going to organise. Watch. You is going to become the main one in here, to represent us [...] you will see, I am going to recruit."

Indeed, the recruitment was not led by the union, but by B. and others like her. The victory of the LSE 3 provided a powerful example to convince people to join. From then on, UVW provided a space to bring together a group of militant cleaners, holding regular meetings to organise for industrial action.

Workers and unions

When B., Daniel and others went to Unite in 2012, they were told that they needed 20% of the workforce to join the union for them to take any action. Such procedures lagged behind the more militant workers, and fail to engage those who have doubts. B. simply said 'I wasn't impressed.'

Meanwhile, the LSE Unison branch was loathed by the most militant cleaners. It was dismissed as being part of management, and cursed in the same breath as Noonan and the LSE. Many had never heard of Unison before the dispute, while those who had were not wooed by them.

As the struggle proceeded, Unison assumed the role of mediator between LSE/Noonan and the cleaners, of which they represented only a handful. They established a 'formal three-way partnership working arrangement'¹¹ to

negotiate the ending of a dispute they had no control over. The rage of the cleaners was never channelled through Unison, only towards them. The cleaners refused to accept Unison's role and actively rebelled against it, interrupting branch meetings and holding signs on the picket lines denouncing them.

What explains the failure of the recognised unions on campus? We can first of all note that they began from above. Their starting point was the negotiation table, for which workers' activity was only a pawn. At the end of the day, they believed that workers did not have power, that they could not win. This was revealed by the fact Unison members were spreading information among workers that they could lose their jobs if they joined the picket line, effectively placing them on the same side as management.

Meanwhile, UVW began from below: from the perspective that workers can immediately struggle for their rights and win through direct action. It unconditionally supported and encouraged the initiative of cleaners, even if they were in a minority. The strategy of moving straight to direct action tactics such as strikes, protests, and occupations gave strength and confidence to workers, bringing them into direct confrontation with their bosses rather than mediating between the two. Negotiations only dealt with the question of when, not whether, their demands would be met. This confidence in struggle until victory could be seen from the most militant cleaners, who did not fixate their slogans and speeches on the particularities of terms and conditions but on the more radical demand of 'equality'.

In fact, improved terms and conditions were only a part of what mobilised cleaners. Central to UVW's discourse and culture is the reclaiming of dignity and respect which - in a workplace and sector where bullying and discrimination are endemic - struck a chord with the daily experience of cleaners. To this we can add UVW's main slogan - "No longer invisible!" - which resonated with the alienation that cleaners experience from the product of their labour: not just clean space, but the people who use it. Despite the fact that teaching, studying, and researching would not be possible without hours and hours of cleaning work (a fact that cleaners are fully aware of), cleaners are treated as ghosts. This alienation was compounded by the racial division of labour. Thus UVW meetings, protests, and pickets became not only sites of organisation and struggle, but places where workers could, for once, make themselves visible and make their voices heard.

Moving forward

This struggle for a voice, dignity, and respect is more revolutionary than any demand for better pay or terms and conditions. A wage rise can be negotiated and conceded, but real dignity and respect would require a complete revolution in how the university - and ultimately society - is structured.

The demands and actions of the cleaners contained the seed of workers' power. It is the recognition of this striving for power which gives UMW and other militant union organisations such an appeal to outsourced migrant workers across the city. Our task today is to take workers' will to power and make it permanent. We need to create direct coordinations of workers which can concentrate and spread this offensive struggle to other workplaces and sectors of the workforce.

To this end, we have been working on a monthly bulletin called Precarious Notes for outsourced and precarious workers. We hope it can be used as a medium to circulate struggles across the class, and reflect on tactics and organisation.

But we also hope that research can be returned to working class organisation as a guide to action. We see these scraps of inquiry as the beginning of a larger project to understand the political economy of the cleaning sector, the changes it has undergone since the early days of outsourcing and the various kinds of struggles cleaners have waged, ever since the Cleaners Action Group in the 1970s.¹² To this end we have compiled a questionnaire for the cleaning sector (found below), focused initially on universities, adapted from those of our comrades in the Angry Workers collective.¹³ We provide it below as an initial framework for anyone who wishes to take up this proposal for inquiry into cleaning work, and urge you to get in touch with us to plan this out.

Footnotes

1. Acciari, Louisa and Davide Però, 2017. On the Frontline: Confronting precariousness, outsourcing and exploitation - lessons from the LSE cleaners.
2. As a partial exception, we can cite

Virginia Moreno Molina's three-part series on The Prisma (see especially Cleaners in struggle: Where are their rights? and Cleaners: the 21st century slaves?) for their longer interviews with several striking cleaners. In addition to these articles, we recommend our friend Joe Hayns's chronicles of the picket lines in Novara Media and Jacobin Magazine.

3. A history of this wave of struggle from the perspective present article will have to be saved for the future. For an introduction, we recommend Richard B's excellent Crisis in the Cleaning Sector (2013).
4. In the 'wage' we also include that portion beyond the hourly rate, i.e.: sick pay, holiday pay, pension and maternity/paternity/adoption leave. The LSE struggle broke out over these 'terms and conditions' - which were all at the legal minimum - in spite of the university's London Living Wage policy.
5. IWW, 2012. URGENT PROTEST!!! Justice for the #IWW #Cleaners at #LSE! Weds 13, 1PM. See also Peter Marshall, 2012. LSE Cleaners Protest.
6. One militant worker who cleans the library cited to us the recent transformation of the majority of the Ground floor into the "LSE LIFE" centre, a "pioneering facility dedicated to students' academic, personal and professional development" which has had over 200,000 visitors in its first 9 months, and therefore takes significantly more work to clean than the bookshelves which previously took up the space but for which no more time is allotted for cleaning. <http://www.lse.ac.uk/News/Latest-news-from-LSE/2017/06-June-2017/TEF>
7. As public funding has been cut, UK universities have sought to rebalance their budgets by increasing the proportion of international students forced to pay exorbitant fees (now 70%

of the LSE student population) and investing into infrastructure which can be capitalised, or capitalising existing infrastructure (consider the use of halls as hotels over the holidays). The cuts are particularly significant for the LSE, due to the low level of funds available to the social sciences and the university's student satisfaction rate, one of the lowest in the country. Last summer, it received the lowest classification of "bronze" in the government's Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF). If its classification does not go up, the LSE will not be able to charge undergraduates more than £9,000 a year. It is in this context that we have to see its recent decision to opt out of the TEF . A bad reputation risks jeopardising its most valuable asset: international and postgraduate students who attend the School for the marketability of its degrees in the business and financial world. In other words, the LSE risks a crisis which they may seek to offset through the diminution of the pay and conditions of its staff, a process from which the status of 'direct employee' does not provide protection, as precarious teaching staff know all too well. The key point is that this process can provide the basis for the mobilisation of other university workers and students, if these groups can learn to replicate the effective political behaviours of cleaners. The upcoming UCU strikes, for example, could make much use of loud, militant picket lines which bring in different groups and truly disrupt the day-to-day functioning of the university.

8. UVW, 2016. Breaking News: "LSE 3" Reinstated
9. Mark Kilian, 2012. Curaçao 1969: eiland in opstand . See also Joseph H. Lake Jr., 2004. Friendly Anger: The rise of the labour movement in St. Martin.
10. The Daily Herald. Wednesday, May 23 2007. Front page.

11. Young, Andrew. 2016. Dispute between LSE cleaning staff and external contractor Noonan.
12. See May Hobbs, 1973. Born to Struggle; and Sheila Rowbotham, 2006. Cleaners' Organizing in Britain from the 1970s: A Personal Account.
13. Angry Workers, Questionnaire for workplace reports II

BIG FLAME

No 6

HALEWOOD BULLETIN



contents : HALEWOOD NO LET UP.
CAR INDUSTRY ROUND UP/DAGENHAM OCCUPATION
RYDER REPORT/CHRYSLER/FORD COLOGNE
INDC · CHINA/WOMENS RIGHT TO CHOOSE/G.E.C.
ODDS & SODS.

2p

BIG FLAME IS A REVOLUTIONARY SOCIALIST ORGANISATION WITH GROUPS IN WEST LONDON ,EAST LONDON BIRMINGHAM & MERSEYSIDE .

On Merseyside we are organising around Ford ,Plessey ,the Dockside area ,Tower Hill (Kirkby) ,Hospitals and Colleges .

The FOM Halewood Big Flame group consists partly of Fordworkers and partly of 'external' militants who meet regularly to discuss the situation at Ford ,how to organise ,as well as wider topics and prepare leaflets etc.

Fordworkers are always kept in the dark ,divided and manipulated . We have to find our own voice....leaflets the monthly newspaper,the bulletin ,help to create that voice .We feel that what we do around Fords is necessary because hte union is not capable nor interested enough to fight the bosses .This does not mean that we are anti-union ;we support the union as long as it acts in the interests of the workers .When it doesn't there has to be an alternative organisation on the shop floor that can fight for what it wants itself as well as put pressure on the union to do what the members want and not what the bureaucrats say is best .The existence of the Big Flame Ford Group is achance for isolated militants and groups to get together and develop a strategy of action inside the plant as well as a better understanding of how society works against us . After all Henry II has hundreds of personnell officers,foremen etc thinking of nothing else but how to screw more money out of us....we have to be more prepared than they are !

This bulletin is open to all contributions from carworkers, so if you think youve got something to say and youwant other militants to here about it then write to us or get in touch .

There are Big Flame groups who work around Dagenham ,Langley,and the BMC plants at Longbridge .



CAR INDUSTRY ROUNDUP

- FORD - HALLOWOOD --- After Easter Management announces manning cuts. Their attack is concentrated on the Body Plant. Door hangers welders and metal finishers resist and go on strike. Management lays-off everybody for 10 days. A mass meeting of the Body (both shifts) decides to take over. The occupation lasts 5 days (April 29th - May 1st). Then it's called off, but the Body goes on strike. The strike action is still going on.
- Swansea --- On April 24th about 2,000 workers occupy the plant. Lorries are driven across the gates. Management is shut out of the factory. Food and other supplies are organised. The occupation is part of the fight against cost-cutting and speed-ups. In particular it is a reaction against disciplinary measures taken by the Company against 6 men for failing to "attain work standards". The occupation ends with a total victory.
- Leamington --- Management locks out the entire workforce following strike by the shipping desk against 3 scales.
(Foundry)
- Halwood --- Management complains about the low productivity of the plants. They say they would like almost twice as much production. The shop-floor knows what that means and the answer is clear.
(Body & P.T.A.)
- Coventry- (Sunday 27th April). Meeting of Ford shop stewards from all the U.K. plants calls for the nationalisation of the car industry. (The Halwood Body Plant stewards are absent. The ITA & Transmission, about 20 altogether arrive late. Not long ago the Halwood stewards were the national leadership).
- CHRYSLER - Stoke -- 4,000 men are currently on strike for a £15 interim pay rise. This is their answer to so called 'workers participation': more cash. There is an attempt by the Right and the media to use once again some of the wives to scab on the strike (like in Cowley last year). But this attempt seems destined to fail: only 10 picketed the steward meeting and were confronted by as many wives who support the strike. One banner of the latter group reads: "WE ARE NOT BEHIND THE MEN ON STRIKE, WE ARE BEHIND THEM."
- Ryton -- A claim is submitted for 30% more money, 35 hour (Assembly) week, indefinite lay-off pay.
- DUNLOP - Coventry - 700 clerical workers continue their strike over pay. An offer of increases ranging from £7.35 to £8.51 for males and £7.00 for women, is turned down because "it discriminates against women". British Leyland stops production at Cowley, & lay-off people at Longbridge, Triumph (Coventry & Speke) as a "result of the dispute".

The Ryder Report and Chrysler Report have been published and a meeting of shop stewards from the 4 major car firms has passed a resolution calling for the nationalisation of the car industry.

CAR INDUSTRY ROUND-UP^{CONT}

These are hot times. Both the workers and the bosses know it. The confrontation sharpens. Especially at Ford. What's at stake is whether the bosses are able to break shop floor organisation or not. Whether they succeed in making the working class pay for the capitalist crisis or not. Whether the workers will resist manning cuts, increased discipline, mobility, short time and redundancies or will accept them. In the end whether the balance of class forces will shift in favour of the working class or the working class.

The unions are caught in the middle. And so is Bern and his team. Their solutions don't satisfy either the bosses or the workers. But now the capitalist class wants and needs an all out battle and victory over the working class. Bern doesn't. That's why they are scared of him and want him out. Because they know that the working class will be given a boost in its struggle by Bern's measures. The working class will use the spaces created by Bern and his team. When they scream 'Sack Bern' they mean 'Sack the working class'. Because that's whom they really fear: the workers.

And so they should. Because despite all their tricks and tactics, we are not prepared to bow down. The occupations at Synnes and Dagenham mark a great victory. There were limitations on both occasions; at Dagenham the involvement was poor. But those two take-overs show that the working class at Ford is strong and prepared to fight against the company's policy of rationalisation, cuts in manning levels, mobility. The bosses thought that they had found a winning trump when they started to introduce short time working. But the lessons of defeats like Vauxhall are being learnt fast by all other workers.

More and more fights are starting all over the country. Not only in the car industry. And this scares the hell out of them. Did you see their angry, ugly faces at Newmarket, when the stable men were 'disrupting' their leisure time? There was an act of desperation and defeat, just like President Ford's bombing of the Cambodian ships. It's the desperation of those who see the world changing, and their fat profits threatened.

More and more people are getting involved. Against inflation, against unemployment, against the Social Contract. Against redundancies and short time. Towards socialism.

HALEWOOD ^{CONT}

The company may threaten to take Escort production elsewhere but they haven't got anywhere to take it without spending millions. The Union is perfectly correct to put the company's claim of underproduction down to mechanical failures, stock shortages etc, but again it's only half the story. The shop floor is resisting the higher scores, re-tining and speed-ups; they might be pulling 40 an hour on the Tris, but with a lot of gaps and stoppages. People are doing this because for one thing they are not prepared to work harder for an ever depreciating wage, and for another they realise that if they give in on any small thing, management will take it as sign of weakness and throw the lot at us - speed-up, mobility, labour pool, short time redundancy.

This struggle is not something to apologise for or pretend it doesn't happen - it should be a coordinated and deliberate policy by the union. A mistake that the unions in the car factories and industries badly affected by the crisis is that they are only prepared to fight when it comes to redundancies not realising that by then management will have got their foot firmly in the door and won't stop until the shop-floor is smashed and there's nothing left to fight back with.



OCCUPATION DAGENHAM

THESE NOTES WERE TAKEN BY THE BIG FLAME DAGENHAM FORD GROUP FROM CONVERSATIONS DURING THE OCCUPATION AT DAGENHAM .

April 29th 1975 .

This is the second week when Ford is going to try and take men out of sections .They tried it last week on the 'B' shift in the Body Plant .This led to the door-hangers going on strike .Ford's response was to lay-off the rest of the 'B' shift until May 6th . In reply to this a mass meeting of the Body voted (Thursday April 24th) to come into the factory on the following Tuesday (April 29th) so as to hold a joint mass meeting of both Body shifts, to decide on what policy to take . In the meantime the occupation of Swansea had taken place ,and obviously there was a possibility that this could happen at Dagenham too .

At first the action was taking place at purely section level .The Union appeared to want to keep it like this and not allow any escalation to a mass meeting. They seemed as confused as anyone as to what to do .So ,there was a meeting of the doorhangers section ,protesting at Ford's attempt to take men out of that section . There was also a meeting of welders . The line was put at the door hangers meeting by the steward that we dont accept these manning cuts;that we strike ;but we dont go home....we stick around and see what further action develops .

During the morning ,the Union approached management and asked for 'reasonable negotiations'.This was rejected by Ford ,who reaffirmed their intention to begin the manning cuts,and continue them through every section of the Body Plant .They also said that in the light of the doorhangers strike,they intended to lay the 'A' shift from 12 noon .This finally was the signal for the mass meeting .

The Mass Meeting

There were about 600 Body workers there .When Conner made his speech ,he spelled out the position as regards the moves being made by the company (how men from the labour pool had been used to try and scab on the doorhangers;how the doorhangers had an agreement that went back many years and was now being broken ;how the company was being intransigent and to refusing to compromise or talk .)He then said he disagreed with the lefts leaflets but felt this time there had to be a stand....a strike but not go home; in other words an occupation .

Our feeling was he spelled this out very hastily .He was hard to hear and many people were not listening .The message did not sink in .And we felt he was spelling it out in such a way that he hoped ,half, that a vote would go against an occupation .Two votes were taken , but on a count on the second vote it showed that 120 men had voted for an occupation and a few less against.....the rest in confusion obtained .

The Occupation starts

Pickets were put on each Body Plant gate . This was a good feeling..... stopping cars or vans from coming in or out .This time there was not the strength to kick out the management ,as had happened at Swansea ,or to stop the other sections of the Body Plant from working (door line ,fenders ,wheels.)It later turned out that the Wheels didn't know what was going on . Other plants (PTA & Press Shop) were forced to stop work later ,anyway, when they were sent home by management . A West Indian worker thought it would be a good to get a band down to play in the canteen - and he knew a group that needed somewhere to practice anyway ! Big Flame also suggested that films could be brought down, and film shows held in the canteen.

There was not enough men to man the gates properly . By 5.00pm at least one gate had only one bloke manning it . He had a nice time ,building barricades all by himself ,dragging out stuff to blockade the gates,and working on building a hut to keep the rain off

Pickets on the Gates

On the gates the first instruction had been to let in any worker who wanted to work, but to exclude all foremen and supervisory staff .Some people accepted this , and when they were turned away from the gates simply went. But there were some angry scenes as well .Foremen would turn up and see a small group on the gates

DAGENHAM 'NO-GO' CONTINUED

mainly young, black and white, demanding to see their identity cards, and then turning them away because they were foreign. They would come up, not knowing what was going on (only a little sign on the gate saying that there was an occupation), and would be told that their services were not required today. This was the usual procedure then, and it was several cases of physical aggression.

.. All the gates were locked at 11.00pm and a bicycle patrol was sent round the gate at intervals to keep a check. By this time, things were beginning to get a bit more organized. Loads had been found, people had found themselves places to sleep in the plant etc. And there were some good games of football going on at the gates.

Wednesday April 30th

Small and determined band of workers marched into the 45-acre (Warehousing) and set up a picket on that as well, since Ford management were sending goods to the 45-acre through a tunnel from the Press Shop, and then loading them on lorries and preparing to drive them off. The pickets marched in through the gate, past security into the plant. They went up and set up a blockade across the tunnel, and put a blockade on the main gate as well. There was some little hostility from 45-acre workers, who were more anxious to defend their jobs, but an initial possibility of aggression was prevented by the presence of about 50 pickets, ready and willing for a fight with any scabs. One nice moment on this gate was when a lorry driver arrived outside the 45-acre with his arse, all the way from Kings Lynn, saw the picket line, and just turned his lorry round and went back home.

All in all, by Wednesday evening, we felt that the important thing was to work out what further tactics could be developed in the present situation, since it's pretty obvious that not many people want to stay in the plant. And we wondered whether there was any likelihood of anything happening at the plant to celebrate Mayday, or the liberation of Saigon...not that we thought there was.....

The occupation finished on May Day but the strike of the Deanshangers continued (see other article on the recent fights in the car industry/..)

'RYDING' ROUGH SHOD OVER BLMC. CONTINUED:

Both the Ryder team and ourselves have recognised the power of the stewards on the shop-floor. After all we went to some expense to conclude an agreement with the shop stewards in a hotel to keep the shop-floor in the dark. These committees provide an ideal opportunity to divorce stewards, particularly senior stewards, from the shop-floor and try to use them as managers to pass on mobility, manning changes, and 'rationalisations'. We feel that your exploitation will be easier to stomach if you and your representatives participate. In short, although the Ryder Report does not put the blame "on a workaholic and strike-prone workforce", employers will be forced to pay for putting British Leyland on the road to profitability. By 1982 it is hoped that natural wastage, voluntary redundancy, mobility and short time and increased discipline will have shaken out jobs, increased productivity (i.e. work loads), so that the "19% profit rate" forecast will be achieved.

Finally a word of thanks to all the workers. Although you've been my downfall I am most grateful for the £200,000 golden handshake which was provided by your sweat and blood. It is of course a sum most of you would never have seen in your lifetime, especially now that it is in my pocket, and not buying new machinery.

Yours etc.
ex-managing director

BIG FLAME HALEWOOD BULLETIN



CONTENTS

No 9

HEALTH & SAFETY. WHITE LINES SUSPENSION.
CHILE 'KU PUBLICA' MEETING. HAPPY ANNIVERSARY
CAR INDUSTRY - UNEMPLOYMENT. IMPORT CONTROLS.

CAR INDUSTRY, IMPORT CONTROLS, UNEMPLOYMENT

This is a very important period for the working class of this country & the car workers in particular. The £6 limit is more and more, to the eyes of most, a direct attack to our living standards. Inflation is still soaring and the effects of the recent oil price increases won't be felt for a while. Just think of the bus fares gone up this week. Unemployment is reaching the highest figures ever: millions of working class people without income. Unemployment is one of those things that the bosses talk about as if they were talking about irrelevancies: "...regrettably our policies will mean an increase of several hundred thousands unemployed..." But they know well that unemployment is their favourite weapon, against our organisations, our will to fight, our aspirations to a different society.

Chrysler once again threatens to close all its operations in the U.K. B.L.M.C. are going through with the massive reduction in the workforce which is just the best example of what 'workers participation' in a capitalist society mean. Vauxhall (G.M.) have already cut their workforce by almost half. And now to add insult to injury, G.M. will launch massively in this country an Opel model, which just ridicules the pathetic calls by the government to industry to try to boost exports.

Ford, having used the big slump in the British car market to deal a decisive defeat to the Dagenham workforce, will use those plants to launch the new Cortina and the Bobcat. In Halewood, after an early attempt by management to cut the size of the workforce by using the new model, which was resisted by the shop-floor with some success, and after a short while on 3-days for the Transmission Plant, the threat of unemployment has not had as much effect.

ONCE AGAIN WE SAY THAT THE MAIN BATTLE AGAINST UNEMPLOYMENT IS BEING FOUGHT ON THE SHOP FLOOR. Others try to say that we should fight to demand import controls. We think that this is wrong for several reasons. Firstly we should never try to save our jobs at the expense of others', even if of different nationalities. Secondly if Britain has import controls, other nations will and so British exports will decrease, thus decreasing the number of jobs. Thirdly if there are import controls on cheaper goods, that will mean a further increase in the rate of inflation.

But, most important of all, we think that a battle to pressurise the Government to impose import controls as the best solution to unemployment, would move the battlefield from where it is: the shopfloor. AND THAT'S WHERE WE KNOW OUR POWER AND WE KNOW THAT WE CAN WIN. It's no coincidence that the same union officials who allow "natural wastage", or accept managements arguments about 'overmanning', then make token noises about import controls.

We say that on the shop-floor, there is the possibility to unite our needs to those of the unemployed; there we have the chance of avoiding future unemployment - that is by following the slogan 'Less workload for us, more jobs for others'. That's why we've campaigning consistently for a 35hr week without loss of pay (see last bulletin). That's why we say that 'natural wastage' must not be allowed; the dale quees must not grow. LIKE THEY DO AT DUNLOPS - SEEKE, WHERE EVERY MAN WHO LEAVES IS AUTOMATICALLY REPLACED.

That's why we've payed so much attention to manning cuts and speed ups. Because to accept a cut in manning levels is to accept a bigger workload for ourselves and to accept an increase in unemployment. And in particular we've talked a lot about what was going on in the White Lines: because we identified them as one of the central battlefields on the questions of manning and the bastion of working class resistance inside Halewood. The place where not one job has been allowed to be lost.

That's why on this bulletin we start a regular series on safety and health. Because safety is at risk if the speed of the line is high or manning is inadequate. Because our health suffers from the environment, if relief is not adequate; our nerves suffer if the number of men on the job is cut down, and an extra little job is added to the already boring, repetitive exhausting job that we perform. Once again on health, as on everything else, we can take up one fight which unites us to the unemployed, which guarantees us from future unemployment. We've said time and time again: "WORK SLOWLY": it will help your health and protect your job.

HA

SOMETHING WORTH CELEBRATING

Halewood operation manager Albert Caspers was among the group attending a celebration lunch to mark 40 years service by Body Construction Manager Mr Bill (Ugly) Bowerbank. Stepping Plant Manager Mr. Stan Deason presented Bill with an illuminated address (whatever that is) signed by colleagues and friends". (Henry Ford, Adolf Hitler etc.)

We the Big Flame Halewood Ford Group join management in wishing him many happy returns. Without him and his mates we would have very little to put in our leaflets. We hope that he has another 40 years in Fords (IN THE LEAD BOOTH!).

STEWARD LEAVES.

John Pinder, steward of the White Lines, 'A' shift, has left the job. Despite some political differences, we've always considered John a good trade unionist and a very good steward. He always respected the will of the men and lead them to victory after victory against management. We consider his departure a sad blow to the movement.



FROM THE BIG FLAME LONGBRIDGE (S.M.C.) BULLETIN.

HAZARDS AT WORK.



" Health is a state of complete physical ,mental and social well-being ,not merely an absence of disease and infirmity "

(World Health Organisee .)

" BY THIS ENTIRELY REASONABLE DEFINITION MILLIONS OF WORKERS ARE NOT ENJOYING GOOD HEALTH . THEY WILL NOT BE ABLE TO ACHIEVE IT UNTIL A MASSIVE CONCERTED ATTACK IS MADE ON THE CONDITIONS OF WORK THAT CAUSE NOT ONLY DISEASE BUT ALSO IN- CREATING MENTAL STRESS AND DISRUPTION TO SOCIAL AND FAMILY LIFE ."

That passage is taken from 'THE HAZARDS OF WORK:HOW TO FIGHT THEM .' by Patrick Kinnersley . In this Bulletin we have tried to say a few things about health and safety at work (which is something that effects us all ...not just the poor sods in the lead booths .)

Its particularly relevant now because of the long standing demands of the solderers in the Body & White as regards preparation time and money .

SOLDERERS

Background

As we reported in the last leaflet the solderers claim for 1/2 hour clean up and lead handling allowance has been going on for 12 months . It was shelved along with other similar claims with the agreement of October 1974

" A complete economic and grading standstill during the agreement.

In particular, this standstill to cover all preparation and clean-up arrangements ." (Company Requirements for Agreement.)

The lads played it by the book at the time and allowed it to go thru' procedure . But somewhere along the line the claim got lost ; apparently being raised once at the NWC but nothing more . Management certainly weren't prepared to entertain the idea especially as the union wasn 't really interested anyway . Things simmered away and before the shut-down in a meeting of the White Lines area (B Shift.)the solderers were given unanimous backing in their fight . Since then the 'dispute'has continued and action has been taken like knocking the mini shift off .

Recently

" The solderers had the medical staff from FORDS analyse their claim . The TOC doctor was not available ,reason being ; he had a more pressing engagement .

The medical jargon ,namely the result of the analysing of the solder application ,was that the job in their opinion was not in anyway detrimental to health . The figures were :

0.71 below the recognised safety level .

Comparisons as regards blood count :

42 pc solderer .

54 pc lead discer .

The lead discer has all the protective clothing etc whereas the solderer is open to the elements .

Additional hazards to the solderers health is that there is a quantity of arsenic in the tin that has to be melted . Also the fumes from the grease ,the odious of cloth burning whilst wiping clean the joint and the fact that we stand on grids for the nine hour shift"

Solderer (B-shift):

SOLDERERS CONTINUED. 3.

With the help of the Kingery book we looked more into the matter

For a start apart from arsenic, in some solder there can be amounts of cadmium, described as having "more lethal possibilities than any of the metals." A plumber died from cadmium fumes while he was soldering some pipes, because of an unusually high cadmium content in the solder.

On the general subject of lead

"One of the oldest of industries toxic hazards it remains the single biggest cause of poison at work while arousing increasing concern as a community health risk."

"Its possible to accumulate more than 40 micrograms of lead in every 100 millilitres of blood, just by living in a town or city. (Speke has the highest in L'Pool.) You only have to double this to be on the threshold of serious poisoning." Which means to say that for some one who works with lead he not only gets tanked up with the stuff at work he takes it in while he's walking down the street as well.

"One of the first effects is to poison your bone marrow, which interferes with the production of red cells and makes you anaemic. It also attacks your nervous system causing localised weakness. Long before this sign appears alot of people will have undergone subtle behaviour changes caused by effects of the poison on the brain itself."

The details could go on and on but the point is to avoid the poison, and get money and protection if you have to work in a lead environment. At the moment the lead discers get protective gear etc. on the basis of official testing, Official consent blah, blah ... Others in the area get nothing because the 'powers that be' have cooked up a story that the level isn't high enough. But its all done on their terms; their quacks and chemists, their jargon. Official analysis is based on the TLV, THRESHOLD LIMIT VALUE. This accepts industrys economic (profit making) assumption that its alright to expose workers to contamination.

The TLV figure is based on a 7-8 hrs shift, 40 hrs per week. Solderers in FORDS work 9hrs shifts for start

"10hrs overtime increases the dose by 25 pc."

Recent analysis of the job involved tests for only short periods. The results can bear no relationship to ones taken over a full shift. The whole of the TLV system is based on managements needs - efficiency and profit - "At no stage are workers asked what limits they would find acceptable; even from the point of view of discomfort, let alone risk."

Its probably also worth pointing out that lead is at its most dangerous when heated (giving off fumes); which is precisely the job of the solderer.

THE METAL FINISHERS, STAGE 1, A SHIFT HAVE DEMANDED NOT LONG AGO A TEA AREA. MANAGEMENT HAVE REFUSED ON THE GROUND THAT IT IS LEAD ENVIRONMENT.

CAR PAINTERS 30

We were recently given a document headed: "The neurological and Psychic effects of solvents on car painters."

It is a document full of scientific jargon, hardly recognisable as English, but nevertheless, its findings are clear enough - LONG TERM EXPOSURE TO SOLVENTS USED IN CAR PAINTING HAS SERIOUS EFFECTS ON THE BRAIN AND NERVOUS SYSTEM!

The document starts by saying that hardly anything is known about the "adverse effects of solvents on spray painters", This is presumably because nobody has given a damn in the past anyway. A group of 106 car painters exposed from 1 to 40 years were matched off against people of same ages, sex etc. from the Finnish State Railways(?). The age of the men varied from 20 to 62 years.

"Car painters are exposed to a mixture of organic solvents. The most important components of the mixtures are toluene, xylene, butylacet and white spirit."

Exposure from this garbage was measured from the air in the breathing area of the painters. The figures they came up with were 31.7% of current finnish Threshold limit value (TLV) - but if the swedish TLV figure was used instead of the finnish one, the corresponding figure is 56%. In other words these 'levels' are arbitrary - if you are concerned for the worker they are low, if you are concerned for the bosses they are high.

The car painters were substantially more prone to absent mindedness, unusual tiredness, daydreaming at home, feeling unwell, feeling drunk, dizziness and breathlessness, nausea and itching than were railway workers.

Car painters were found to be less sensitive to light, pain and vibration - due to the effects of solvents on the nervous system. The same was also found as regards the use of limbs and other body functions - SEVEN CAR PAINTERS FELL INTO THE "ABNORMAL" CATEGORY - NONE OF THE RAILWAYMEN DID.

"Car painters had weaker results on all intellectual and memory tests." This doesn't mean that car painters are thick as two short planks, simply that the chemicals on the job have serious effects on the brain.

HEALTH & SAFETY SCHOOL

40

The Speke Area Trade Union Committee, in conjunction with the National Rank & File Organising Committee, are holding a one-day school on Health and Safety at Work. The school will centre around Pat Kinnersley's book The Hazards of Work.

The school will be a departure from the usual trade union schools on this subject. Instead of concentrating on the legal aspects, social benefits and Factory Acts as subjects we are proposing to present a more down-to-earth and practical agenda. We are hoping to present a comprehensive background to the dangers from noise, dust, shift work, and chemicals. This school will introduce methods of identifying dangerous substances, how to take samples, measure noise, etc. Delegates attending the school will be shown how to use the equipment to do this.

(From a Speke Area Trade Union Committee Leaflet).

THE SCHOOL WILL TAKE PLACE ON SATURDAY 29 NOVEMBER, 11.00-5.30 p.m. IN THE A.U.E.W. HALL, MOUNT PLEASANT, LIVERPOOL.
For further information contact: BRO T. HEALEY, SECRETARY, SPEKE AREA TRADE UNION COMMITTEE, 14 RANFURLY ROAD, LIVERPOOL 19.

The following pages are a selection of bulletins which ran for the entire length of an industrial dispute. This includes a full run of the 'University Worker' a bulletin we produced and distributed during the UCU pension dispute of 2018 and a selection of Picket,' a regular bulletin that ran throughout the Wapping print-workers dispute of 1986.

THE UNIVERSITY WORKER

Rank and File Strike Bulletin: Week 1

What is this?

The University Worker is a rank and file bulletin produced by academic workers. This strike is the biggest in the history of HE - we need to win!

Help us distribute!

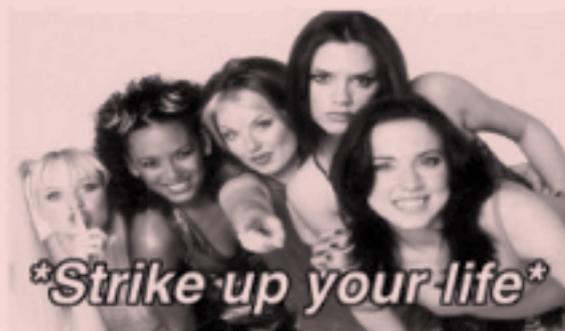
There will be 6 picket lines across the country. We want to be one of them. Download the PDF from rdaction.org and print some out.

PICKETING IS LEGAL

It's illegal to have more than 6 people on a picket line. So, to be legal it's wrong. The rule comes from a government written set of guidelines for picketing which are not legally binding. The rules of over 6 people aren't legal unless they're likely to endanger safety of people and property.

Anyone can take to a support demonstration event, including students. We want firm uni university student support, do not let other universities without breaking the law. We're not flying pickets, we're doing the pickets.

Mob the picket lines!



What is the strike about?

The pensions scheme (USP) is going to be gambled on the stock market. The average loss for a new starter is likely to be over £20,000, about 10% of the total amount.

This attack on our pension is an attempt by management to further cut staff costs and is part of a wider change in higher education towards marketisation.

University bosses are lying when they say the scheme is about to go bankrupt. At the moment the scheme receives more money than it pays out and runs a healthy surplus.

Our pay has already gone down by 5% in real terms since 2005. Now they're coming for our pensions. If we don't win this strike, they will attack again. Delay it's pensions. Tomorrow, it could be wages, holidays, contracts, anything.

How do we win?

The UCU (Universities and Colleges Union) have called a series of escalating strikes over the next four weeks on February 25-27, February 28-30, March 5-8 and March 12-14.

This strike will only be effective if we shut universities down. Our leverage comes from causing massive disruption.

That means we need strong picket lines which cut the two jobs: first, convince students and workers to support the strike, and second, seriously inhibit the functioning of the university.

Students Organising in Solidarity

Students across the country are getting organised in numbers we haven't seen in years.

Chacelets organising, which had been closed for a couple of years (due to health and safety issues), has sprung back to life. The numbers at meetings are at their highest since 2012/13.

Students at UCU joined up in passing a motion of no confidence in uni management by 92%. Students in Sussex organised 2000 strike letters in one day. Students across the country are preparing for demos during this strike.

Teach Out trials seem to have taken off all over the place: Kings, Goldsmiths, Warwick, UEA, every year. We're entering the 100th birthday year of all of the old.

Students, keep it going! You can see the scale of the anger that we don't (un) management have to face. Combined workers' movement and students' movement, they're in real trouble.

16 FE colleges join the strike

UCU membership in 16 colleges have voted by 92% or a 60% turnout to take part in a strike action next year. The employers have been notified that the first phase of action will be a one-day

Don't just let colleges cross the picket line. Working during the strike directly undermines everyone's pension. Even if someone crosses a picket line on day 1, that doesn't mean we can't convince them to strike on day 8. **Where possible we should coordinate disruption with students.** We have common interests in opposing the increasing exploitation of students and staff through low wages and tuition fees.

Precarious hourly paid tutors will find this strike really hard, but we have the most to lose. 90% of us are on insecure contracts, let's fight back!

Academic workers need to reach out to support workers. Library, cleaning, cafe, maintenance, admin, canteen staff, IT technician... We're all workers, and we're all getting screwed over by the same bosses. Where we can, we should all go on strike. Together we can shut down the university.

Where we can't all strike together, we will be talking to non-academic workers on our campuses and encouraging them to take part in a 'go slow'. That means deliberately slowing down your work in order to cause further disruption. For admin staff this might mean 'losing' some emails, for library workers it might mean taking an extra five minutes to scan some books, for cafe workers it might mean extending a break for ten minutes. Take it easy - the managers will have their hands full with students and pickets running around campus.

Let's follow the lead of support staff!

There have been a series of successful strikes by cleaners and other support staff at SOAS, LSE and the University of London. These campaigns have gone beyond defending conditions and have improved them drastically in a way that we haven't seen in years.

Support staff at the University of London are refusing to cross our picket lines. At SOAS, workers are taking their holidays on their days. This kind of solidarity is inspiring.

They have shown us how to fight. Their methods are simple: non-academic workers. If you want to win, you have to build big, disruptive strikes, combine them with demonstrations, make alliances with social movements, and organise the union through out-of-office organising.

UCU London Region Demo: Defend Education - March for Pensions and Pay

Midday, Malet Street, Wednesday 28th February

THE UNIVERSITY WORKER

Rank and File Strike Bulletin of the UCU dispute: Week 2

REPORTS FROM THE PICKET LINE

Cambridge management are instrumental to the J5's changes - explicitly desiring to undermine constituent institutions - so not surprisingly, support for the strike was high. An anti-racism students' society, the *Black and Asian Workers' banner* dropped around campus a long time before. By lunch time, over 1,000 staff and students joined in a vibrant yet militant rally, giving way to a procession in demonstration of our presence and our solidarity with the rest of the strike. Every time we'll be on the picket line!

On the 21st, over 500 Students, Faculty, administrators & education workers rallied in central **Glasgow** in support of the UCU strike, with solidarity expressed from other unions and campaign groups.

At **Sussex** we've had the largest medical sector in over 5 years. With 350 students out on campus buses were blocked from site in quadrants. We held multiple events, set up protest secure theatres as well as both occupied the management buildings. We have walk outs and even larger non-educational planned over the next few days. The only direction is forward.

The strike at **Goldsmiths** got off to an electrifying start. John McDonnell, Owen Jones and Andy Burnham spoke to a huge crowd. A number of organisers, students gathered outside the wardens' office to deliver signed complaints when a car was barred access by police officers.

At **Exeter**, the first two days of strike action saw a great show of strong front line picket lines across Exeter and Penryn campuses, and the start of our wash out programme. Turnout on our march and rally was outstanding - with representatives from students and other unions in solidarity - that the government couldn't squander our gains indeed. We're ready for the next line up on Monday morning.



What is this? The University Worker is a rank and file bulletin produced by academic workers. This is one of the biggest in the history of HE - we need to win!

Help us distribute! There will be 61 picket lines across the country. We want to be on all of them. Download the PDF from rankandfileworker.org and print some out.

The first two days of strike action have had a huge impact.

Up and down the country there were strong picket lines, student solidarity rallies, occupations of universities and UCU's head offices.

After just two days, UCU have invited UCU to the negotiating table, with talks set to take place Tuesday 27th of Feb. UCU have accepted to meet, while keeping up the planned strikes for Monday/Wednesday this

REPORTS FROM THE PICKET LINE

15 February 2016

At *Seneca House* the last 7 days of strike action have been a revelation – covering a revitalised JCU branch and unprecedented solidarity between unions, as UCU members both joined picket lines and stayed away on masses. Already there is talk of combining forces as the UCU seeds of the jobs in absence of the biggest outsourced worker strike in HE history.

On the first day of strike action, *RHUL* management contacted in security from the AM Security Division to ‘manage’ the picket lines. Staff were told that congregating in numbers larger than air around the main building was considered to be ‘trespassing’ and were asked to self-evacuate on their own. Students answered this call on the second day by demonstrating at the front gates and managed to turn on a way before marching through the campus in a defiant show of solidarity.

At *Warwick*, the first 2 days of picketing have been a resounding success. More than 50 workers, many of whom early on made staff or academic contracts, turned up on both days, with guest student support, and the rest of campus like a ghost town! The programme of two a day at the Two Unions of Warwick continues this week. This Monday, facilitated by UCU organisers through Warwick Area Casualisation are holding a the main day of picketing against academic to highlight connections between casualisation, precarisation and the role of Warwick and its social roles in driving casualisation in HE forward.

On the first day of the JSE at the UNISON members at *Birkbeck* Library in London refused to cross the picket line, causing the library to unexpectedly shut down for 2 hours early and further on shielding the wide support for the strike across the college.

The strike has been great, the last couple of days at *SOAS*. All university buildings have been picketed and we have had between 20 and 100 people on the picket lines throughout last night. It seems, however, that most students and staff are simply eating with their feet by staying away. The building has been virtually empty on both days. In addition, students who did attend, many across the picket lines have reported that colleagues who are not respecting the strike are considering cancelling their classes because of how few students have been turning up. On Friday, the Islamic Society also held its 4th annual prayer outside so as not to have to cross the picket line to access the prayer room. Colleagues have started to have discussions about the future of the strike on the pickets and raise concerns about the union calling the action off before a good deal is on the table.

week.

But what is on the table? UCU explained in a statement that ‘it is known and not re-open the Joint Negotiating Committee decision made on 23 January’. In short, this means that UCU are not prepared to discuss the major changes to the USS Pension Scheme. Time is running out to conclude national bargaining, which ends on the 30th of June. If there is no agreement, the national strike could fracture into local battles. This would break down our collective power.

Our response needs to be twofold.

Firstly, we need to continue to cross the picket lines despite the offer from UCU. Secondly, as academic workers, we are only prepared to negotiate our victory. We have voted for strike action to defeat the pensions changes, anything less is a failure. We will not accept UCU or UCU bargaining away our future in retirement.

As rank and file academic workers, we need to be prepared to challenge both UCU and UCU. To continue the discussions on the picket lines and the bulletin, we are planning to host a meeting to discuss the outcome of the strike. The meeting will be announced soon, via this bulletin and online.

UPCOMING: JOIN THE UCU DEMO IN LONDON ON THE 28TH

For more reports and to download the pdf, go to notesfrombelow.org/category/bulletins

2

THE UNIVERSITY WORKER

Rank and File Strike Bulletin: Week 3

What is this?

The University Worker is a rank and file bulletin produced by academic workers. This strike is the biggest in the history of UCU and we need to win.

Help us distribute!

There will be 60 picket lines across the country. We want to see a lot of them. Download the PDF from www.union.org.uk and print some out.

Open Letter to UCU Leadership

An open letter calling upon the UCU to join in strike action was released in advance of this week's talks and was signed by over 600 workers. This can be found here: bit.ly/2HNJW83.

Sample Branch Motion

This sample motion was passed by 100% vote, but lots of branches are passing similar motions (strikes, no meeting, UCU etc).

"This morning notes the strength and unity of the action and reminds to stay out until the employers commit to retaining the existing pension scheme."



5,000 workers and students marched in the strike in London on Wednesday, Week 2. UCU also marched in Sheffield.

What is the 'Rank and File'?

A trade union is only as strong as its membership is organised. This arrangement comes from the rank and file of the union - that is the membership exclusive of its leadership. We are the rank and file of the academic and administrative workers who have spent the week on picket lines in the snow.

The leadership and leaders may differ from us in terms of their function in the union, status, conditions, and importantly through their relationships with the employers. Unlike us, there is a preoccupation with organisational and financial stability of the union - something that is an existential risk during this dispute.

The current fight is one about the future of higher education, but also the future of our union. For the first time in years, the leadership have not shown that they are fighting.

Why are we negotiating and what might happen?

The leadership has decided to go into negotiations while keeping the strike action going. They are now acting as a mediator between the rank and file and the employers. Our power does not lie in the negotiating tables, but on the picket lines and in the streets.

We need to keep reminding the leaderships that the UCU Membership delegate conference in Winter 2017 established that the membership wanted the union to refuse to accept

Student Occupations at Southampton, Liverpool and UCL

Students have been organising in solidarity with the strikers in the states. But its been particularly encouraging to see students upping the ante and applying pressure to their UCs by occupying on campus spaces. Follow @occupation_uk on twitter to see how the movement grows.

International Solidarity

Solidarity messages have been sent from across the globe to UCU strikers. Including: Union of Egypt, United States workers union, United Steelworkers District 6, United Global Union, Die Linke, DGB (Germany), Casa del Pueblo San Martín in Bolivia (ITSA), GDM education union Kassel, Germany and from striking teachers in West Virginia.

West Virginia Teachers on Illegal strike

Teachers in West Virginia have been on strike near a year in the cost of health insurance for workers with families.

20,000 teachers and 13,000 school care employees have joined the picket lines. They've occupied the State Capitol building. It is illegal for teachers to strike in the state.

Workers have directly referenced the West Virginia Coal Wars, a series of industrial property strikes between 1912-21.

any negative changes at UCU/UCS.

Sally Hunt recently said 'No. We have a mandate from you to obtain a decent pension'. No Sally you have a mandate to maintain the USS pension as it is, no backing down. If anything, we now want to fight for much more than the current terms.

Negotiators have already proposed a significantly weakened form of defined benefit on Tuesday when off the strike, and now we're told we are going to ACAS. ACAS will demand further concessions from UCU leading to an even weaker form of defined benefit. But the fact that the union has gone back on the will of the membership and started negotiating a weak defined benefit isn't even the worst of it. They have actually gone and committed to further investigations of other options - including collective defined contribution. Why investigate collective defined contribution? The union and the work force don't. We want to maintain defined benefit. Rather than giving away more ground to the employers, we **should only be negotiating on the terms of our victory.**

How can we react?

We have been told for years that we just have to wait for the pensions fight. Now the fight is here, we are winning, and we need to keep the pressure up. Our negotiations can feel deeply disempowering, we do not know what is being discussed or why.

In a situation like this we need **more leverage**. We need to move from only picketing at work to really making the unions wince. **This means building for mass picket lines outside our buildings, pushing action short of a strike as far as possible, and talking seriously about escalating action.**

The union has previously proposed an exam boycott. We need to identify the points of maximum disruption in our work to shut down not only the buildings of the university but also its operation. **The time is now.**

One part of this is maintaining the pressure on the employer, but the other is on our leadership. **We need more motions from branches calling for further action, and more open letters that raise the confidence of the rank and file to put forward demands.**

Our leadership may have gone into negotiations, but it needs to be our actions that win this fight.

THE UNIVERSITY WORKER

Rank and File Strike Bulletin: Week 4

What is this?

The University Worker is a rank and file bulletin produced by academic workers. This strike is the biggest in the history of UK HE and we need to win.

Help us distribute!

There will be 60+ picket lines across the country. We want to spread the word. Download the PDF from www.universitiesandcolleges.org.uk and print some out.

Open Letter to UCU Leadership

An open letter calling upon the UCU to stop its strike action was released in advance of its meeting and was signed by over 600 academics. This can be found here: bit.ly/2HN2W3.

Sample Branch Motion

This sample motion was passed by 100% at the meeting of members who passed similar motions. It includes demands for UCU etc.

"This meeting notes the strength and unity of its action and resolves to step out until the employers commit to returning the existing pension scheme."



Victory is Within Sight!

We are now entering the fourth week of the strike. This week is a full five days. The strike up until now has been a resounding success, with mass demonstrations, strong picket lines, and student occupations.

Last week, the University of Oxford reversed its position on the USS scheme. In a survey by UUK, many universities voted for the risking of USS, which has led in part to the proposed move from defined benefit. Oxford, like Cambridge, was disproportionately over-represented due to colleges being counted individually.

The increasing numbers of vice-chancellors coming out against the changes show the employers are breaching. Victory is within sight. This is due to the success of the strikers so far. These have been led by male and female academic workers, including many on precarious contracts. Those who fear who are furthest from their positions have put themselves at greatest risk in this fight.

The question at the start of this week is what is going to happen next? The UCU announcement last week

"The union's higher education committee (HEC) has announced another 14 days of action, if necessary, designed to hit the exam and assessment periods between April and June. UCU said it would now gather information on which the systems of action would be most effective at different universities."

CUPE 3903 Start Indefinite Strike at York University

CUPE Local 3903 - the graduate teachers union at Toronto's York University - began an indefinite strike today. The union's 4,300 members will stay out until they negotiate a victory in their new round. They will seek to:

And they have a history of winning. CUPE 3903 has struck successfully before in 2001, 2003-4 and 2015. This time they have 20 demands, ranging from the return of 800 graduate assistant jobs, the bringing of PhD students on the "fellowship" model into colleges, bargaining stronger routes for contracted teaching staff to reach tenure, and the establishment of a union administered fund for victims of sexual violence.

York University has, in the face of a successful and militant coalition of campus workers, begun a union-busting strategy. At stake in this strike is not only the working conditions of staff, but also the future of collective bargaining. At its core, the struggle is over who has the right to control university as a whole.

Their picket lines are inspiring. On all 3 campuses to York campuses, there are 1500 pickets and seriously impeding all traffic and deliveries to shut campus down. They show that if you want to shut down campus you need to get serious. Disruption means disruption!

If you want to show some solidarity from the picket lines, it'll be up on Twitter: @cupes3903comms

We welcome more strike action, but we need to continue the momentum of this wave of strikes. Local branches and rank-and-file workers need to focus on getting the strikes called for the most effective days. This means planning seriously how we can shut down universities across the country. The new strike days need to be announced as soon as possible.

The next set of strikes are "designed to hit the exam and assessment periods." This is not officially a marking boycott (which we would totally get 100% pay deduction on anyway), but it can even greater effect than that would stop exams. For many of us, not marking (and assigning grades) provides powerful leverage over the employers. This means holding solidarity with students now.

Action Start Of a Strike (ASOS) has to continue, formally or informally, when the week of strikes ends. This means planning with other academic workers how ASOS can be most effectively carried out, continuing to keep the pressure up until the next strikes.

What happens next?

This week, we need to build for the toughest picket lines so far. This means taking picketing seriously, stopping deliveries, disrupting the university, and warning workers and students to join the dispute. **We need hard pickets.**

There are (at least) three large demonstrations this week:

Finding Stephen! All Out to End the Strike - Cambridge Defend Education, Thursday 12.30 @ Kings Parade, Wilton Green.

Defend Education - March for Pensions and Pay, UCU London Region, Wednesday 12.00 @ 30 Malet Street.

BreakUUK - End the Strikes! National Campaign Against Fees & Cuts - pickets - Thursday 1pm @ University of Sussex.



THE UNIVERSITY WORKER

Rank and File Strike Bulletin: Special Issue 13th March

What is this?

The University Worker is a rank and file bulletin produced by academic workers.

Help us distribute!

There are 67 sites all over the country. We want to see a lot of them. You need the PDF form [here](#) and we need your name and contact details.

Now Seven Universities are Occupied

Student occupations have now spread to Queen Mary, Bath, Exeter, Reading, Dundee, the SLADIC school of art and Cambridge. Students won't be leaving until a decent deal is made. At Sussex, fully paid pickets have shut down the usual administration building and during a case demonstration are now disrupting the functioning of the university by shutting down offices and departments.

Student leverage has to outweigh now that the union leadership are trying a sell out. **Shut it down!**



It's a Sell Out!

UUK and UCU agreed a sell out at ACAS on Monday 13th of March. The deal means that the union leadership has failed to defend the USS pension scheme - instead, they have negotiated to snatch a defeat from the jaws of victory.

On the 14th of March the Higher Education Committee will vote on the deal. It is currently dominated by the right wing of the union. Rank and file members will have no say.

Although the deal will keep a defined benefit, it comes at a high cost to academic workers. Member contributions will increase by 1.7% (with employers only increasing by 1.3%) meaning we have to accept a pay cut to keep defined benefit.

These increased contributions are only in place for the duration of the 3 year transitional arrangement. In the longer term, there is a 2.5% cap on pensions (and there is no way that inflation will stay near zero). This could mean a slow decline, rather than a sudden shift, but the end result will be the same.

The UCU has also decided to engage in meaningful discussions as soon as possible to explore real sharing alternatives (i.e. the particular Collective Defined Contributions (CDC)) We have no idea why the leadership has decided to discuss a further retreat in the future market.

Liverpool Statement

Following a meeting today of approximately 100 members Liverpool UCU roundly rejects this offer. Members on our branch and across the country do not join one of the most impressive shows of collective solidarity in the face of a restrictive new pension law for a compromise offer that does not guarantee them decency in retirement. The branch members should not be denied pay for taking action in a dispute that originated from the lack of due diligence carried out by universities UK in their actuarial calculations. Liverpool UCU call on all branches to reject this unacceptable offer and demand that UCU ensure a deal is brought about that is commensurate to the sacrifice of their members.

UCL Statement

This offer is hugely contrived and seems like a ploy to get going on strike. Our meeting was consulted on even better offers than this one today and rejected them outright - this is a dishonest and derisory offer. If UCU adopt this it will be the death of the union!

Student Occupations Statement

We stand with all staff and branches who chose to express opposition to the deal and urge UCU to reject this deal at the meeting tomorrow. Our staff deserve fair pensions!

Can defend our pensions right now.

Stay Out!

The sell out deal also agrees to suspend strike action from the end of today (Thursday) onwards. This is a huge mistake. Every day the strike has been growing in strength. New members are joining in numbers not going to a fair, and the bosses are on the back foot. But at this crucial moment, the leadership have backed off. As a friend said: 'Trade union bureaucrats have got so used to losing, they've forgotten how to win.'

After all that, the UCU leadership have the cheek "to encourage its members to prioritise the rescheduling of teaching in order to minimise the disruption to students." Strikes are meant to be disruptive. If we're not getting paid, we're not rescheduling.

The bureaucrats have said that this sell out Memorandum is a commitment by both parties to work together and avoid damaging disputes in the future. The damage in this dispute was done by UUK, and if we're treated nice, they might try it again. We've learnt how much power we have in this dispute - the game is out of the bottle. There is no going back.

Whatever happens, we need to stay organised. The rank and file have always been the ones with the power to win this dispute, not the UCU.

A Rank and File Strategy to Beat the Deal

1. We need to vote to stay out. **On every picket line, we should hold emergency meetings and vote to stay on strike past Wednesday** regardless of what the UCU leadership decide. **We're not going back to work for this worthless deal.** This means starting a wildcat strike - but what other option do we have?

2. A group of us from UCL need to get to **UCUHQ @ Carlow St., Camden, NW1 7LH at 10am** for a demonstration against the sell out. The bureaucrats need to feel us breathing down their necks.

3. We need everyone to sign the **'Open letter rejecting the UCU/UCU agreement at ACAS'** here:

<http://tiny.cc/ucureject>

THE UNIVERSITY WORKER

Rank and File Strike Bulletin: Special Issue 14th March

What is this?

The University Worker is a rank and file bulletin produced by academic workers.

Help us distribute!

There are 57 picket lines across the country. We want to meet a lot of them. How much are you doing? [See the PDF here](#) [reprints, non-excess and contact](#) [here](#) and [here](#).

Demonstrations/ meetings this week

Defend Education
March for Pensions and Pay, Wednesday, Market Street, Midday.

Break UUK- End the Strike, University of Sussex, Thursday, 1pm.

National rank and file activist meeting (for all branches), Friday, Goldsmiths, the Venue, the Student Union, Dixon Road, 2pm.

Student Worker Solidarity Summit, Sunday, JCU Institute of Education, 11-6pm.



We Beat the Deal! #NoCapitulation

Today we go back to the picket lines following **the most impressive rank and file mobilisation in academic workers' history**. Together, we defeated a leadership sell out deal in less than 24 hours.

It was a victory made possible by the following self-organisation tactics: Demonstration at UCU HQ, overwhelming anti-deal votes at branch level, a huge (74%) open letter against the deal, emails to UCU members and social media pressure.

By the time UCU was meeting yesterday morning to start discussing the deal, 50+ out of 64 striking branches had **declared themselves unanimously or overwhelmingly against the deal**. National wildcat action was being discussed as a very serious possibility if UCU decided to suspend the strikes. Hundreds were outside UCU HQ expressing their anger and disbelief at the actions of the union (and being threatened by union officials with the police being called for their efforts).

The fact that the UCU leadership even though there was a chance in hell of us quietly accepting a deal which some pensions experts said was actually worse than the initial UUK offer shows how far out touch they are with the experience of academic workers. Fortunately, this disconnect has coincided with a period of immense rank and file power. **We can, for the moment, set the direction of the union from the bottom up**. From now on, we have to hold the bureaucracy's feet to the fire every time they give the slightest indication of backing down.

Students, Keep up the Pressure!

At times, the interest of a national demo has led to management calling a 100% shutdown of all planned teaching and the closure of all campus academic buildings on Thursday. This morning in Sheffield, students have managed to occupy the entire rise and tower. This shows students can have power in this dispute too.

UJK HQ has been shut a few times over the strike by sit-ins and hard pickets. This doesn't need to stop when the strikes stop. We need to regularly mobilise in Broomsbury to maintain a disruptive picket.

Admin departments and buildings can be disrupted in order to further develop leverage against university managements. Keep up the occupations! Target high-coverage sites, where you cost the university a lot of money and hassle. We need VCs to be begging UJK to end the strike and allow campuses to return to normal.

Now We Strike to Win

Branch delegates voted for four weeks of further strike action starting immediately, but the UCU NEC only recommenced 14 days more of Action Short of a Strike (ASOS) before the 14 days of strikes already approved for some time, between April and June. The final decision will come next week. **Following an attempted sell out, the rank and file have shown we are in control. Now, we are only willing to negotiate a genuine victory.**

That means more action. **ASOS should continue every single day until we begin a second period of strikes.** Rather than just a vague April-June date range for 22 more strike days, we need to **push for an official announcement of a single date for the start of a indefinite strike, starting at the point of convergence of final exam periods.** It won't be nice to block our students' assessments, but our working conditions are their learning conditions, and this is the best leverage we've got.

As well as formal action, **we need to organise what we can ourselves.** The end of official strikes on Friday will give us a opening to do some deeper organising ahead of the second round of strikes. Staff/Student assemblies with all our college workers and conversations with key off-college people like Royal Mail, transport, and electricity workers can begin to **develop the links that will be vital for the second round.** Raising water demands as and when they fit, also makes sense for free education, against the HEB and REF, against Home Office monitoring and PREVENT, and so on.

Our Strength

The last four weeks have been a revelation. **We never knew how strong we were until we we started fighting.** This struggle has always been about more than pensions - since the start we've talked about this fight determining the future of collective bargaining and the balance of power in higher education. But we can now see that it's about even more than that. Lots of years have been shed discussing how it has felt to see **the university transformed from an alienating, surveilled, divided workplace into a collective source of genuine class power.** Now we need to use that power to win it in the material!

5 April 2016

THE UNIVERSITY WORKER

Rank and File Strike Bulletin

Vote “NO” to reject the UUK offer!

The UUK offer is going out to members in an online ballot. As we argued before, victory is in sight, but no deal yet. This means voting NO.

The offer has not been negotiated. We only have two options now: “YES” or “NO.” What do these mean in practice?

If we vote YES, we stop industrial action. The Joint Expert Panel starts re-evaluating U33. There are four possible outcomes from there: first, UUK’s original position at the start of the dispute (1X2). Second, “true 76.4 cost sharing”, the same benefits but contributions up 11% (35% by us). Third, the ACAS deal from March 12th. Fourth, a revised version of the ACAS deal, which would still be a failure.



The first two outcomes are unlikely as neither side would agree, the third we already rejected, and the fourth could end up being pushed onto us due to regulatory timeliness. So either we go back to industrial action or end up with a sell-out deal that we don't get to vote on.

If we vote NO, we continue industrial action. This means negotiating from a position of strength until we win. It also means we can strike alongside the IWGB and UNISON. The prospect of shutting down our campuses could then become a reality.

We started this strike action to defeat the changes to pensions, not to bargain them away. Sally Hunt tells us in her email to members that voting yes is a victory. We disagree.

5 April 2016

This would take our new-found collective power on the picket lines and place it in the hands of an "independent" Joint Expert Panel - half of which is made up from the employers side! We want to fight on our terms, not theirs.

Sally Hunt makes a number of points for why we should vote yes. She says that the "review and resubmit" option for "no detriment" has "a significant flaw as a strategy". Her main problem is with the demand that employers would have to pay up to keep the pension the same.

Apparently this is because "by its very nature the results of the independent joint expert panel are unknown". So instead we're being asked to gamble on the results. If the outcome is bad, we would have to pay more. This is a pay cut.

Before taking any advice from Sally Hunt, remember her record at UCU:

1. She has overseen a 6.6% real-term pay of almost 20% in a decade
2. Over half of all teaching is now delivered on precarious contracts
3. Neither the RCU, NUS, or TCF have been opposed
4. The final salary pension scheme was closed to new entrants - meaning she's sold our pensions out before

So how can we trust Sally and the so-called experts to win on our behalf? We should have the power to negotiate our victory. That's why we're calling for a NO vote.

As anyone in the rank and file would know, it's not "review and resubmit", as Sally stated, but "revise and resubmit." This deal should have been a "desk reject," and we need to build for the biggest NO vote possible. Then it's time to send Sally's failing record out to review by the rank and file too.

The online ballot closes at 2pm on Friday 13th of April - vote NO!

What is this?

The University Worker is a rank-and-file bulletin produced by academic workers. This strike is the biggest in the history of HE - we need to win.

Picket

no. 3

Wednesday 19th March 1986

First-hand reports by printworkers and pickets. Contributions welcome

PICKET NOW IN 54th DAY

Dogged pickets and tremendous vanworkers doing long hours for the first six weeks in freezing weather held the picket together until better weather built up to a march of 7000 on Saturday night. The collective experience of the pickets continues to grow. There's less onlookers. But while printers and supporters battle the strikebreakers, the TUC committees manoeuvre continually and throw up false issues to take attention away from the real business. They think picketing is a bargaining chip. It is neither conscience-stricken scabs or toothless consumer boycott campaigns that will win the strike, but picketing. All this fight for a few quid compensation? No, the issue remains entry into Wapping.

48th DAY OF THE PICKET

Wednesday evening 12th March about 3000 pickets staged a demonstration, organised by SOGAT, from Tower Hill. Approaching Thomas More the march paused. At Wellclose it stopped. A move began towards Virginia Street which was well loaded with a few hundred police and some horses. This movement was dissipated by an announcement from the platform in the park to come closer so that politicians could make speeches.

Meanwhile some pickets moved along The Highway towards Wapping Lane, where they spotted a coach and chase was given. The coach was bricked and reversed in retreat. A lorry coming the wrong way up The Highway had its windscreen smashed. This lorry then tried to turn down Wapping Lane but it was blocked up by police. Continuing down the Highway the lorry came to the large group of pickets at the top of Virginia Street, where it ploughed into the crowd and struck two SOGAT pickets. The lorry's windscreens were shattered. Later the police crowded the pickets off the road.

Best chant of the evening at the police strikebreakers -- "Get a job".

(One of the injured pickets received severe lacerations and bruising to his leg. He is now recovering. The scab driver has been identified, and the police are not going to charge him.)

Tenants demonstrate

On Saturday 15th at 6.30pm about 30 tenants of all ages assembled at the Stephen & Matilda Co-op and marched under its banner to News International. Chanting "lorries out of Wapping" the demo was accompanied by lots of police including two vanloads, plus perhaps a dozen journalists. Has any of them the integrity to break the veil of class censorship drawn over Wapping?

The march was planned to go up Thomas More Street, along the Highway, down Virginia to present a petition to NI at its main gates, and then along Pennington. At the top of Virginia the demo was halted by three rows of cops and behind them a number on horses. It became a more vivid demonstration of naked class rule than the protest the police felt unable to allow. Two tenants in wheelchairs were allowed to present the petition while several hundred printers across the street cheered the Wapping residents.

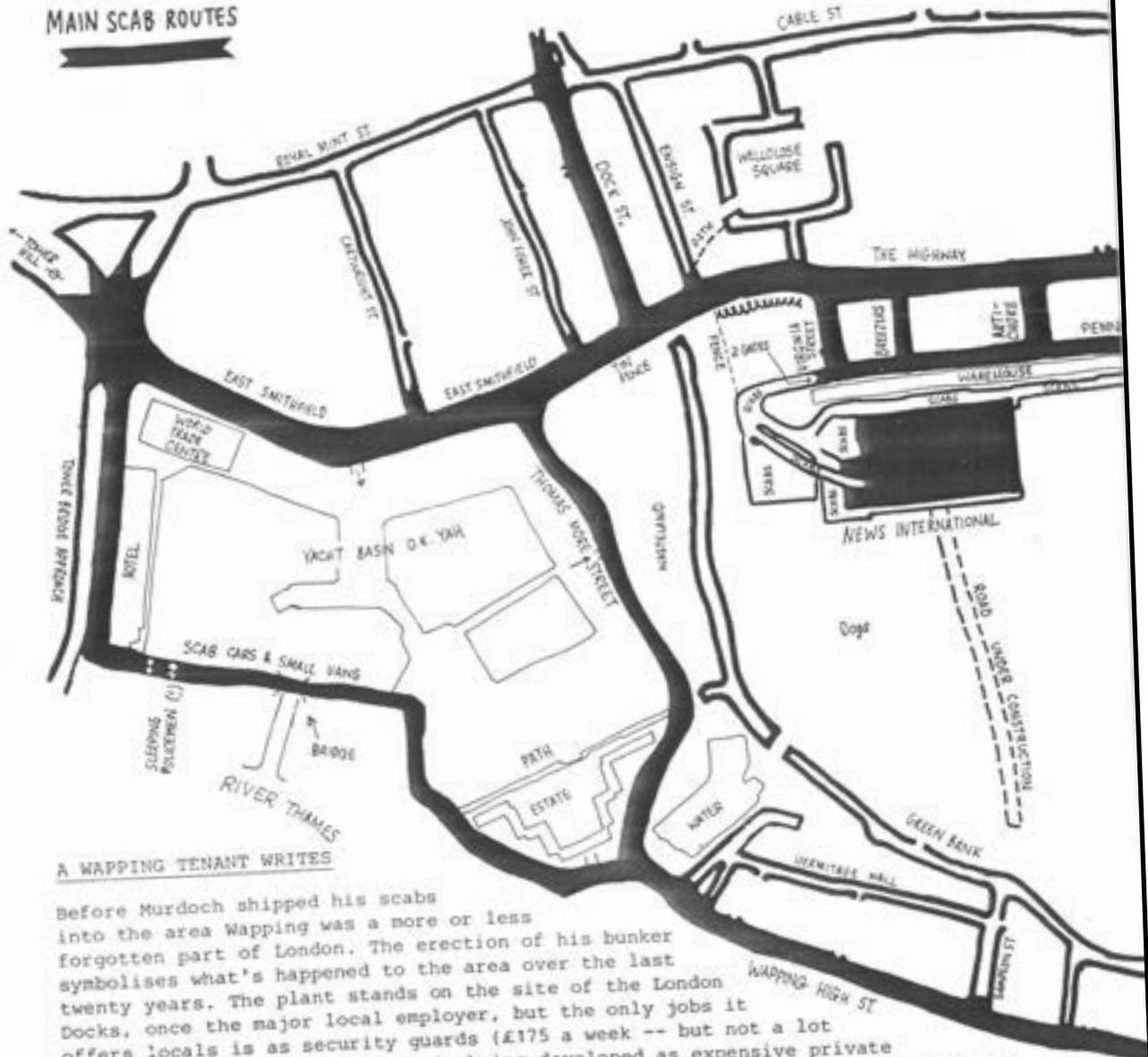
51st DAY OF THE PICKET

Saturday night, 15th March : the massive demonstration, the 14th to Wapping, organised by SOGAT moved slowly along East Smithfield from the Tower. Numbers detached themselves at each junction to block the roads, first at Thomas More, to be confronted by two rows of cops in the way of any push down into the Wapping area. Barricades made from piled-up crowd barriers were built at Thomas More, Cannon Street Road and Dellow.

As the march passed the plant pickets rocked the iron fence. It collapsed into the Highway, showing not less than six rows of razor wire which blocked progress. When some pickets tried to build a bridge over the wire with crowd barriers, riot police came quickly out into the road. A storming of the plant looked possible at one stage, but the crowd was eventually pushed back by strikebreaking cops in riot gear, backed up by cops on horses who made repeated charges into the pickets. At one point they came out

(continued on back page)

MAIN SCAB ROUTES



A WAPPING TENANT WRITES

Before Murdoch shipped his scabs into the area Wapping was a more or less forgotten part of London. The erection of his bunker symbolises what's happened to the area over the last twenty years. The plant stands on the site of the London Docks, once the major local employer, but the only jobs it offers locals is as security guards (£175 a week -- but not a lot of takers.) The area around it is being developed as expensive private housing, with luxury flats in old warehouses and the businessman/tourist complex around St Katharines Dock. All further isolating the locals. This is more keenly felt by Wapping residents because central Wapping is one of the few intact (albeit white) working class communities in the east end.

A fair number of the residents are sympathetic to the strikers. Of course not all are - Fleet Street printers have always been the objects of envy and resentment among less well organised workers (this hasn't been helped by a number of residents being called scabs and even having their cars rocked as they drive out of the area at night.) However from the first day the locals have joined the picket line and tried to offer support. People have provided facilities of various kinds, at the moment for example they're supplying food for the pickets during the day. Indeed chapel officials have sometimes been too busy to take up all the offers made. People would certainly be receptive to requests for other assistance if it was wanted.

The estates near the plant have complained about the noise. The nearest, South Quay estate, has started to take out an injunction against Murdoch. At a meeting with residents News International promised it was conducting a noise survey 'as a priority'.

Of concern to everyone in Wapping is that the success of the picketing on The Highway has led to the police ordering Murdoch to route his TNT trucks through Wapping's narrow streets. Two people were knocked down in the first couple of weeks. On top of this the police have been sealing off roads, demanding identification, refusing access to cars and saturating the area.



One comp's graffiti

**I WOULD RATHER BE A DOG TURD
 THAN BE ONE OF MURDOCH'S SCAB PRINTERS
 I WOULD RATHER BE A GREEN GILBERT
 THAN BE ONE OF MURDOCH'S SCAB JOURNALISTS
 I WOULD RATHER EAT SICK
 THAN BUY ONE OF MURDOCH'S SCAB NEWSPAPERS**

(continued from front page)

of Virginia Street at a gallop, through the crowd and up Wellclose, where they were almost cut off before regaining the main road. But the pickets held their ground superbly and The Highway was not cleared till the early hours of the morning. It is a safe guess that police photographers were busy trying to identify supposed leaders for future snatch squads.

Large numbers of pickets roamed up and down The Highway forming a roving picket. By about 2.30 in the morning the crowd had dwindled but spirits were high.

At Glamis Road, the far end of the picket (about 3/4 of a mile from Thomas More) was charged by the riot squad, smashing through pickets. They then brought out about 26 lorries in convoy. It is believed they had been queuing up all night behind the line of warehouses that runs parallel to Pennington Street, out of sight of the Virginia St. pickets, ready for a run from the plant, leaving through a previously unused exit onto Pennington Street (see map).

Shortly after 2.30 the other roads were cleared too. Murdoch did not succeed in getting any papers out until about 5 hours behind schedule.

MEANWHILE

In Scotland, Robert Maxwell (the "acceptable face of capitalism" to some) has done a Murdoch on 220 Daily Record journalists who walked out last week. SOGAT workers on the same paper were laid off when they refused to print Maxwell's lies. He demands the right say whatever he likes about them. Behind all this, he's after cutting 300 jobs, to go with the 2,300 he got for Christmas.

Back in London, Associated Newspapers (Mail) announces the unions have agreed to 1 in 5 redundancies--but says it wants a lot more by 1988. 12 NGA members at Clearview are still locked out, and still fighting after 4 months. They refused to operate dangerous machines.

The bosses are out for the kill. But, as one picket said, "If I'm going down, I want to take Murdoch with me".

EXCERPTS

"Sixty-two News International journalists have resigned or refused to go to Wapping since the dispute began" (Guardian 13/3/86).

"Bristol printworkers have achieved their first success ... mass picket was held at the regional TNT depot ... seventy pickets blocked the gates for nearly two hours"

"In Manchester last Sunday two major distribution centres were picketed ... Between 250 and 300 people assembled ... Two engineering works have blacked TNT lorries" (Socialist Worker 15/3/86)

"... 150 strong which picketed the Huddersfield warehouse of John Menzies ... a Menzies van stormed out of the warehouse ... This action angered the printworkers who then tried to stop further vans leaving ... two SOGAT members were hit by a van, but fortunately not badly hurt. Later the pickets were allowed to meet SOGAT workers in the warehouse"

"Meanwhile pickets gathered near Rotherham ... outside the Mellaby distribution centre ... (of) Murdoch ... the police had prevented pickets from talking to warehouse drivers" (Morning Star 15/3/86)

- Saturday 22nd March, march to Wapping from Tower Hill, organised by NGA, 8pm
- Sunday 6th April, TUC-announced march from Tower Hill to -- wait for it -- Trafalgar Square. We will be going the other way.

Written (except for resident's article), printed and paid for by print workers
Address: PICKET, 628 Tottenham High Road, N17

Picket no.14

Thursday 29th May 1986

HAVING READ THE PROPOSALS FROM THE COMPANY, ARE YOU IN FAVOUR OF ACCEPTING THEIR FINAL OFFER?

YES

NO

MAY 1986

"Stick your offer up your Arse"

Picketing printworkers are right now organising to defeat the current combined attempt by the company/police/officials to stop the picketing. The job remains to clear the scabs from Wapping, 100% entry to Wapping and to clear the police from the area. For that, reinforcements are needed. Fellow workers - the road to Wapping is the road to your freedom. Join us.



1984: South Wales miners receive Willis

Central Hall, Westminster

For this eagerly-awaited meeting, on Friday, 30th May - the 127th day of the strike - the London Machine Branch has officially hired the hall and invited all the sacked Sogat members from the Murdoch quartet. Brenda Dean has a full diary and has given notice she will be unable to attend. With a "no" vote on the ballot the individual Branches have promised support and full backing. The union has been less forthcoming. The Fleet Street levy will also continue, with word already from The Guardian and Mirror in particular that they are solidly behind the strikers. Bouverie Street has been left out of the latest talks. Murdoch plans to print extra News of the World there with scab labour. The unions may well win the unfair dismissal cases - it would be a pity if these actions were to be dropped. The London wholesalers, who are united behind the strike, are being left out in the cold. To cease picketing in London, Glasgow and the distribution depots, to end the boycott campaign and to end the fight for jobs at Wapping would be abject surrender. Cray's Inn Road has nothing to offer. The fight is not for redundancy payments. The NGA made this clear at Thursday's meeting with a massive rejection of the offer. We fight for jobs at Wapping.

Saturday 24th May, Wapping

This was Wales night. The march from Tower Hill was sponsored by Sogat Wales and SW England Branch and there were at least five coachloads of supporters from South Wales. They sang and led the 4,000-strong march from Tower Hill at 9.05pm. There was a carnival atmosphere, both on the march and in Wellclose Square, and the shop selling badges and mugs was doing well. There was also a balloon race. The atmosphere changed as the march arrived. There were many hundreds of police in evidence - contingents at Thomas More and Dock Streets and ten on horseback in Virginia Street behind the police lines near the main gate. Riot squads were visible in Artichoke Hill. The Highway was blocked by over 100 police and access to the eastern exits - Wapping Lane and Glamis Road - was frustrated. Contingents of pickets heading for these exits by way of the flats behind Wellclose were harassed in the side streets and turned back by police road blocks. There were even 20 police in the churchyard at St George's. Cable Street was blocked off at Ensign Street and Cannon Street Road with no one allowed through. The police tactics were successful in that many pickets were prevented from getting to the Glamis Road exit and The Highway here was cleared from 10.30pm. The first articles had left the plant at 7.30pm and another convoy headed out soon after 11pm. The police at the top of Wapping Lane kept the pickets moving away from the area, and even those shouting "scab" as coaches left were intimidated. At Cannon Street Road the group assembled there refused to budge and although isolated from much of the action held firm. At Thomas More and Virginia Streets the pickets also remained solid. The pickets opposite the plant were loud and vocal, and whenever anything moved inside the plant the noise was deafening. The numbers this night were up, and this was heartening especially as many printworkers had been drawn away elsewhere for a flying picket.

Saturday 24th May, Worthing and Brighton

At 9.45pm a flying picket left London for the Portobello Press in Worthing. There were 300-500 pickets, all in cars. On arrival at midnight the pickets were told that the plant had been shut down. The pickets had been expected and the police could not guarantee the safety of the lorries. There were twelve police on the estate guarding an empty plant. At 1.30am a meeting was held to decide on the next move - to head for Surrridge Dawson's or Hove distributors. S & D won, and at 2.30 pickets arrived in central Brighton to find 20 police at the entrance. The surrounding roads were sealed off. The pickets were told that nothing would be entering or leaving that night. The place seemed to be in darkness. Police allowed four pickets into the building and they were delighted to see piles of return copies of The Sun. A group stayed on just in case this was a ruse. One car left for Hove to investigate the situation there. At 4am another meeting was held and again the police promised that the place would remain closed. The pickets threatened to double their numbers if the distribution went ahead. Roads were sealed, with transit vans blocking access even for residents, but the police were less hostile than at Wapping. The pickets gradually dispersed after the meeting - and reckoned the night was a complete victory. Pickets were pleased with their effectiveness. There were no arrests and no hassle.

Letter from Occupied Wapping

They are out to smash us
 They are out to main
 From Peterloo to Wapping
 The struggle is the same
 When I see the police attack
 I sometimes get an awful dread
 That one day a picket
 Is going to end up dead
 The police can arrest the innocent
 They're free to commit assault
 The pigs who murdered Blair Peach
 Did not even go to court
 It's what's called British justice
 The boss wins ever time
 To take someone's job is legal
 To defend jobs is a crime
 They want to crush the unions
 The working class to lame
 It's the rich that get the profits
 And the workers get the blame
 Now the bosses' cops are deadly
 It's not a game of cricket
 But every union member
 Should join the Wapping picket

NEWS INTERNATIONAL DISPUTE

SATURDAY DEMONSTRATIONS

EACH SATURDAY EVENING THERE WILL BE A MAJOR DEMONSTRATION AT WAPPING IN SUPPORT OF THE PRINTWORKERS DISMISSED BY RUPERT MURDOCH.

MARCHES BEGIN AT 8-30 PM AT TOWER HILL

Sunday 25th May, Wapping

It was quiet during the afternoon. There were about 50 pickets on duty. And every scab was greeted with shouts like "low life ... filth". Morale was good. The advertisement for The Mirror was still on the railings. As the leaflet "Murdoch is scum (part two)" said: "A capitalist is a capitalist is a capitalist". One local resident/picket was complaining how the local Labour Party in Tower Hamlets has had their fingertips in Murdoch's till the whole time. A Coliseum Co coach from Southampton, full of scabs, went in at 5.30pm. It is sobering to see that it has no armour.

Bank Holiday Monday, 26th May, Wapping

Seventy pickets were in front of the plant all afternoon. Many cars passing by tooted their horns in support. Very few scabs-in-uniform were visible but every so often a vanload would cruise by. More of these thugs are being recruited to suppress the unemployed. These soft cops are working overtime this Bank Holiday, not to support the strike, but to contain, isolate, strait-jacket and smash the pickets. At 6pm the magnificent vanworkers on duty heard on the radio of Brenda Dean's plotting in secret behind the backs of the strikers with Murdoch and the TUC5. The members sacrifice and risk their lives: the leaders collude.

Pre-march picket

Wednesday 4th June, 7pm

Aldgate East Underground

Picket a scab picking-up point

Organised by Sogat strikers.

Wednesday 28th May, Wapping - early-morning picket

Eighty pickets gathered behind the barriers at the top of Virginia Street from 7.30am. An almost continuous stream of traffic in and out of the plant was loudly heckled and abused. One enterprising picket managed to "stall" his car on Virginia Street and block the entrance for a good five minutes.

Wednesday 28th May, Fleet Street - afternoon lobby

Over a hundred printworkers took part in a lobby of the Press Association in an attempt to stop scab copy being sent to Wapping. Pickets feel disgust for the NGA/Sogat members here who are strikebreaking (even though officials at the beginning of the strike did not issue a blacking order). Pickets standing on both sides of the entrance were an inspiration to Fleet Street day workers many of whom formed part of the lobby. After two hours outside the main entrance a short march was held around the corner and past the pickets at the old Sun building in Bouverie Street. Police blocked the march in Tudor Street. More pickets less meetings.

Wednesday 28th May, Wapping - march and rally

At 9.15pm 1,500 pickets left Tower Hill for the march to Wapping. At the Thomas More Street exit the march halted briefly and sang "Overtime" in front of the police lines. The Highway was blocked by lines of police at Virginia Street with ten horses behind. The rally sang "Rupert Murdoch stick your money up your arse". A Sun clerical striker was arrested at 10.05 for sitting on a barrier. Pickets piled in but were unable to rescue him. This stirred up the crowd. Police and vehicles leaving the plant were loudly abused. At 10.30 a small section gathered in nearby Swedenborg Gardens and 100 pickets marched behind the Sogat Machine Casual Banner round to The Highway from the east. This threw the police and helped to maintain the momentum of the picket. The police lines were stretched and it was 20 minutes before the pickets were corralled. Police brought one van and a car through the crowd at 10.50. A second march of 70 pickets began at 11.05 in the Gardens and wound its way along Cable Street to King David Lane ending up at The Highway east of the Wapping Lane exit. Here a scab artic and coach appeared driving east at speed. They were surprised and jeered by the march. During the march transit vans full of police were taken by surprise in the side streets - it was a good jaunt. The Highway was opened to traffic at 11.30 and the march returned to Wellclose Square. Strikers from the mass NGA meeting swelled the picket. Morale was solid. This was the fortieth march from Tower Hill.

Notes:

- Friday 30th May, 7-11pm, unemployed/unwaged night at Wapping, organised by the Federation of Claimants Unions.
- Pickets assemble every night at West Horndon INT depot. Last week, when a flying picket bolstered the usual numbers (about 30), one scab suddenly saw the clarity of class issues in all their theoretical, ideological and historical perspectives and drove into a cop car.
- Pickets in Liverpool are having uneven success. A small number is being stopped from going into the large Bemrose plant which does colour supplement work for Murdoch.
- Pickets were pleased to learn of support from a minder in the General Trade who refused to print an insert for The Sunday Times and was sacked.



Quote: "Fifty million?
That's alright for ten
of us, but what about
the rest?"

Two Phototec scabs at Wapping:

Mick Gell, 10 Robins Avenue, Lenham, Maidstone, Kent (0622 858282) has applied for a union card from the NUJ. Happily they have seen through his lies and put the block on.
Brian Carmichael, 49 Bramerton Road, Beckenham, Kent (ex-directory), an ex-FOC is now a manager at Wapping.

Income: £1, £1, 40p, 20p London Machine Branch; £1 5 Times "Natsopa"; £2 Sogat members; £1.45 picket; £2 Sun Machine chapel; £5, £5 Guardian Multi-trades chapel; 50p, 35p Times Graphical chapel; £1 Sun Publishing; £2 Sogat striker; £1.20 W H Smith Peckham; £3, £2, £1 misc; £10 NGA machine minder; £5 Times RIRMA; £1 SWP printworker; £1 working Sogat machine member.

Donations are most welcome and necessary.

Picket: published by NGA/Sogat pickets.

Murder on The Highway (1830)

'Tis of a Dreadful Deed of Blood to you I will unfold,
The slaughter of a waterman; 'Twill make your blood run cold.
On Thursday eve, at Ratcliffe Highway, at the White Hart he drank so free,
But little did he think that night would prove his destiny.

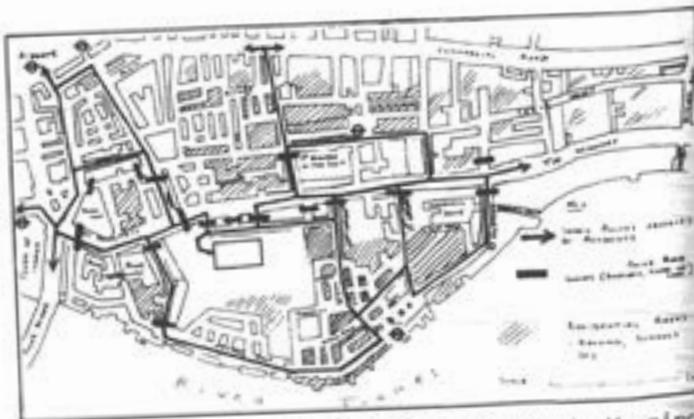
The policemen came into the house the people for to clear;
Seeing John Wood intoxicated, to his they were severe.
They dragged him over to the door without any fear or dread.
On the stones there he was dashed, and with truncheons they split his head.

After they had ill-used this man with their arbitrary power,
They dragged him to the station house, they were above an hour.
Oh, had you but heard his moans, would have grieved your heart full sore.
When they took him to the station, he lied weltering on the floor.

Then to add to the Cruelty, most dreadful for to tell,
All in his Crimson Gore he was confined in a Dismal Cell.
No surgical assistance for him they got, until the next day.
But the next day was too late, Death had summoned him away.

The Skull before the Inquest was brought, and on the table placed,
While Grief and Consternation was painted on each face.
The policemen must answer for this crime, all on a future day,
For the killing of a waterman in Ratcliffe Highway.

So far as is known the police never paid for the killing of that waterman - and they have carried on unchecked to the present day. This song was written in 1830 - one year after Sir Robert Peel's "New Police" had been introduced into East London (the Pealers). The new police were much hated. The reasons why were clear. In the inquest on John Wood, a witness said: "The deceased was taken to the police station house on the back of a coal whipper. There were 5 or 6 policemen with him. Having laid him down on the ground they dragged him towards the cell with his head trailing along the ground ...". He died of a fractured skull.



Based on two maps in NCCL's "No way in Wapping"

Picket no. 23

Wednesday 20th August

Fifteen local authorities from London to Bradford have banned the stocking of Murdoch's titles in the libraries ... Meanwhile amongst Chapels in Fleet St. Murdoch's titles continue to be handled in one form or another. In some cases they are distributed by our members; our members cut and file the titles for reference in libraries; journalists refer to and quote News International copy which is then set and printed by our members; and from News Agencies copy is relayed to Fortress Wapping ... now is the time for you all to act to eliminate this.
(from Clerical chapel leaflet)

MURDOCH IS**BAD NEWS****DON'T
HANDLE****The Sun****NEWS OF
THE WORLD**THE ~~4~~ TIMES

THE SUNDAY TIMES

Saturday night, 9th August, Wapping

The residents led off first. A very brave march of 75 was held starting at Glamis Rd and going west to Garnet, then south to come back up north along Wapping Lane, a well-known scab-terror route. At Pennington St the march attempted to continue east through a police line being reinforced up to thirty or forty. Only scabs/police have freedom of the Highway in Wapping and police waded into the pickets, arresting two or three, punching and pushing anything in their way, particularly incensing the pickets by molesting a young child in a pram. The march was driven up to The Highway where it continued its way westward being pushed about by ever greater numbers of bullies in uniform. What motivates this lot is to get paid to vent their hatred of workers - with impunity - and brass buttons thrown in.

The march continued westward and passed thru - to cheers - a large demonstration in the area just past the top of Virginia St where the residents would attempt to hand in a petition. On being told only a small delegation could approach the gates the petition was set alight in style.

From Tower Hill a large procession of several thousand had marched slowly to just past the Virginia St entrance to the scab plant. Speeches were made here in The Highway. Pickets left by the thousand.

But several hundred had made it out to Glamis, through police road blocks, there to greet a determined returning residents march about 11 or 11.30pm. A march began north on Glamis. Just as it got up 75 feet north on Glamis some scab lorries were making their run past on The Highway. The march went up to Commercial Rd and then west past Lemn St to the roundabout at Aldgate and then went round the roundabout past Commercial St where most scab traffic passes through all the time.

The march continued round and then east along Commercial Rd. No lorries were sighted. They had been re-routed up Burdette Rd. At Sutton St a line of police strikebreakers in the road forced the march south and it returned via Cable St to Wellclose about 1.30am.

Wednesday night, 13th August, Wapping

About 700 marched from Tower Hill. Arrived just before Virginia St where police were prepared to marshal it off Highway. Instead reversed immediately and marched up Dock/Lemn St past police station and up to roundabout at Aldgate, around and past Commercial St, the major scab route, then round to Commercial Rd where one scab juggernaut rushed past at speed on its way into the plant. The march moved forward but police strikebreakers kept a way clear for the scabs. The march continued with one empty scab coach passing by to jeers. When the march reached Sutton St a line of police were in the road ordering it to go onto the pavement. Instead it very swiftly moved into Sutton St and reassembled there, back through side streets where some local supporters joined in the march. Then back to Commercial Rd and then to Wellclose via Back Church Lane.

Thursday afternoon, 14th August

About 2000 marched from opposite the Mirror building. Just prior 50 Sogat Casual Machine had marched from Blackfriars to join up, on the way scabbing off Fleet House as sirens screeched up. Also present was a contingent from the Purnells strike in Bristol. The products the Purnells workers printed were Readers Digest, Womans Realm, Woman, Radio Times, Thomsons Catalogues etc. Scab work is being done at Carlisle Web Offset, Carlisle; Petties, Leeds; Cromer Works, Nottingham and Sun/Odhams, Watford. Strikers are bitter. Strikers blame Dubbins for the strikebreaking at Maxwell's plants.



Picture STEVE McTAGGART

Activists on the march were also mindful of the role of the Mirror building in smashing the recent strike at the People. So far Maxwell has repeatedly succeeded in playing one section of print union members off against another. There were shouts of you're next as the scheduled shutting of the Mirror building soon will mean another massive loss of jobs.

The march went down to Fleet St then out to Wapping. On the way a new chant could be heard, "Call the generals out on strike". The march paused several times to jeer someone reading a copy of the scab Sun in an office building or construction site until it was torn up.

Saturday night, 16th August, Wapping

2000 marched from Tower Hill. New song to the tune of I'd rather be a picket, "We want 40,000 coppers on the dole X4. We'll see how they like it on the dole X4." Police again moved their roadblock up this time, to just past Virginia. The Highway was cleared early.

Later in the night, several small marches converged into Commercial St near Sutton. To the west an armoured scab coach was bricked. To the east another scab coach was caught, unable to reverse. Pickets ran forward rapidly. Moving faster than anyone else was one young picket. Uniformed



strikebreakers tried to push her away but she wasn't having any of it and continued her way. Pickets were all over, in the road, both sides, foot paths, thinking, acting as one. The coach was trapped for a while until it got away. Several hundred pickets began a march west on Commercial Rd but large police reinforcements pushed it off the road, arresting six.

Monday, 18th August, Gray's Inn Rd

Five hundred pickets rallied at the old Times building. Not only is the printers' strike the best show, it is the only show.

Pickets shouted scab at the strikebreakers for an hour or two then assembled en masse in the road for a march. This assembly was the best part. The march went down to Fleet St and out to Wapping, chanting and singing, spirits good despite the rain. The march took three to three and a half hours, as strikers continue to defy everything thrown against them.

- Scab has moved: Brian Smith, News of the World Machine Room Manager
old address: Ferndale Crescent, Canvey Island, Essex
new address: 10 Hadleigh View, Canvey Island, Essex
- Not a scab as stated in Picket no. 22: Tony Atkinson, Thornhill
- Journalists scabs: Bill Anslow, subeditor, 0449 740226
Nick Pitt, sports correspondent, 01 8744046
Bob Smith, artwork department head, 0322 20819
Bob Spivey, was deputy POC, 07073 32810
- Scab journalist Sue Cook (letters lady) engaged to Mr. Rudy, owner of Gloriette Patisserie in Fleet St acquired country cottage in Whatlington, near Battle, Sussex
- Bouverie St scab: Harry House, 67 Trent Rd, New Southgate N14 449 6174
- Lee Rodwell, freelance journalist regularly scabs in Wapping, 28 Holnden Rd, North Finchley, London N12, 445 4648
- Coliseum coach scab drivers, Morry Rayner or Martin Wilkinson
- Parks of Hamilton, Scotland is the company supplying armoured-wire coaches, serviced at Wahl Coaches Ltd. at yard in 145 Coldharbour Lane, Camberwell, London SE5, .733 1124.

OTHER KNOWN SOUTHAMPTON SCABS

K. Clayton, A. Anderson, W. Chandler, D. McInnes, B. King, T. Jenkins, D. Blaker, M. Enright, R. James, J. Campbell (Fareham), A. Firman, R. Gillman, J. Dunnings, T. Foreman, G. Lloyd (Portsmouth), M. Downey, S. Mottram, P. Ricketts, P. Dowell, B. Linnington, P. King (Eastleigh British Rail AUEW member), T. House, G. Child, J. Thompson, J. Hewitt, A. Tracey, R. Veal, R. Eam, J. Gibson, K. Bowers & Mrs. Bowers, I. Bushel, D. Cooper, J.D. Fry, I. Hardman, G. Highmore, A. Kennedy, A. Marshall, S. Mott, G. Osborne, A. Fry, E. Hale, N. Kingston, A. Marchant, R. Robinson, M. Shone, J.B. Williams, K. Addis, D. Boreham, S. Brown, M. Robinson, R. Smith, I.H. Thomas, R. Whitfield, M. Cummins, P. Elday, P. Jones, G. McNie, M. Coultas, S. Cross, K. Felix, R. Thompson, G. Pingree, M. Etherington, D. Sanger, J. Gosden, M. Stuart, H.G. Bishop, M. Folland, P. Reading, A. Brown, N. Connolly, D. Janaway, S. Johnson, M. Beckett, P. Mintram, D. Jones, W. Murray, P. Barnard, M. Thomas, S. & A. Bevis, G. Gale, P. Clayton, A.W. Perdue, G. Rayner, T. Gebbett, P. Betteridge, G. Brown, S. Durman, Sandra Gooding* A. Kochanowski, A. Durman, G. Hedgeman, P. Thomas, P. Newton, D. Smith, P. Noyce, M. Sparshott, A. Price, J. Waugh, R. Cooper, R. Avery, S. Carroll, A. Edwards, P. Witt, D. Hollins, A.G. Lacy, Clare Ostler, Tanya Seaman, G. Sanders, S. Shaw, M. Revie, M. Gallup, Mr. & Mrs. M. Frecknall, G. Beresford.

(*dark-room manageress)

- TUC will support Brenda Dean. It doesn't matter what the empty resolution says, the TUC will support the bosses. Anything else is a lie.
- Congratulations to the "Thetford Brigade" on a job well done. The majority of the Exec are advocating no picketing, peacefull this and peacefull that, but Ghandi is dead and he did not get his settlement through his peacefull actions alone. It was the violence that he tried to stop that brought about his settlement, but in all honesty who will give a damn if all that is done is stand somewhere peacefully, causing no disruption to production, hindering nothing. The only time anyone of the bourgeois media has given this dispute a mention is through force either by the police or by the pickets.
- Experience: Picketing printers came into the strike largely without real picketing experience. During the miners' strike most activists were sucked into the fund-raising circuit. This robbed activists of essential picketing experience. Not so with the bosses and their hirelings. They come into this strike with all the experience of fighting picketing and a whole lifetime of rule. Experience in the strike has shown that it is only the most hardened and determined pickets who can be trusted to command.



The Printer

He made a good living.
 Above all the rest
 And through strength in numbers
 His job was the best,
 The rest of the work force.
 Who should have been glad
 But they envied the good things
 The bold Printers Had.
 They led by example, by threat
 and by might
 To get a standard of living
 That is ours by right.
 But the rest of the work force
 They all just stood still
 And watched as this standard
 Went quickly down Hill.
 The bosses connived and schemed
 of a way
 To get rid of the Printers
 or lessen their Pay
 But the bold Printer fights them,
 And fights all the way.
 But the rest of the Work force
 They still stop away
 Oh wake up you dreamers
 Come down Wapping way
 And fight with the Printers
 For a much better day
 For if they are defeated,
 They won't be the last
 The bosses will get you
 The Die will be cast.



Income: £1 printer; £2 picket; £2 cabbie; 50p Sun publishing; £10 Sogat Machine Casual Chapel; £1 Sogat machine; £3, 50p, £5 NGA machine; £20 print anonymous; £2, 20p misc.; £1 Times Day machine; £1.50 Workers Press; £1 inky; £2 policeman's son.

Concise written reports necessary

Publ. by picketing print union members
 c/o Housmans, 5 Caledonian Rd, N1 9DX

Contributors

Seth Wheeler
Class Inquiry Group
Ed Emery
MayDay Rooms

Design
Rowan Powell

Archival Material
Big Flame
Solidarity
Picket
Red Notes

Bulletins
Precarious Worker
Supermarket Worker
University Worker

Class Inquiry Group
Callum Cant
Lydia Hughes
Achille Marotta
Jessica Thorne
Seth Wheeler
Jamie Woodcock

Striking printers seen here rioting outside News International's new print works in Wapping, January 1987

