The Little Red Blue Book

- No politics without inquiry
- Handy hints for the successful striker
- Rebellion at LSE
- Long lost relatives

Volume 2
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 today's struggles. From his research, Seth has drawn a loose history of an anglo-speaking ‘Class Compositional’ tendency, whose ideas and practices, in order to provide useful tools for contemporary activists.

This pamphlet contains theory, historical examples of this tendency’s 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.

1) Editorial
2) No Politics Without Inquiry
3) Supermarket worker bulletin
4) Wave of Workers Resistance in Europe
5) Precarious Workers Bulletin
6) LSE Inquiry
7) UCU dispute— the role of a rank and file bulletin.
‘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
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 problematic 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 share 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 inquires 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 N.R. 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 alone to knock you off your feet. Pumes from the Heat Treat. Pumes from the foundry. The stench of burnt oil. The air seems full of black oil everywhere. Your clothes are blackened by the 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 man starts 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 floor, turning the same floor into a slippery hazard. Make a complaint about the dangerous floor, and the answer in the usual one: 'If 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 worker complained of a metal plate fastened to the floor. The supervisor told him: 'Tell the men to be careful of it!' The worker 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 on the foreman's arm 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 sees across is that of the department supervisor. The foreman are his disciplers; they get the rockets from him for department failures. The foreman in turn pass them on to the charge hands. The charge hands then pass them on to the common herd below.

Foremen decide when to speed up, when to reduce labour (nora 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 up-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 one-hole screwdriver types universally as the A.C.'s. Sometimes there is more than one A.C. to a department, they are known as A.C.'s, A.C.'s 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 A.C. 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 A.C. 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 hold down the floor 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 used to work in a bungalow, and ofter 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 A.C. friends helped in the building operations. This is one way to promotion at Ford's.
I work at Ford

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 line 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.'

UNITY 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 7/4d 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 seeks 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 baton to be begged for, all help psychologically to adapt the worker to understand where he belongs in the Ford society.

Bosham

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

One worker I know worked 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.' This was still absence, said the super, and since the line was running Saturday and Sunday, you had 3 days off. The worker was still shockingly absent on 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. 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 you nose,' screamed the charge-hand, 'You're paid to work. Don't let me see you fucking about again!'

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 deepseated 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
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.

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 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.
Too Lidl, Too Late

As of March the 1st this year Lidl will be rolling out a payrise for 16,000 of its employees. The UK's largest supermarket will raise the minimum hourly wage from a mere £2.45 to a statutory salary of £2.75 per hour outside of London and £2.80 in London. This is their move in line with the recent rise in the living wage announced last year. Despite the increase in taking steps to improve their workplace. One of the questions that many of us ask ourselves is why have they done this? The reason is that the idea of a basic living wage is now being adopted by many employers in the sector. Why? Because it makes good business sense. A better working environment means better working conditions and a more productive workforce. The question then becomes: how can we make our working conditions better for all workers?

The Union answer is: USDAW. USDAW is the largest and most powerful union in the UK. We represent over a million workers across the country. Our members are the backbone of the supermarket industry. We work hard every day to make sure that our members are paid fairly and treated with respect. USDAW has a long history of representing the interests of workers in the supermarket sector. Why? Because we believe that all workers should be treated fairly and paid a living wage.

So what can you do to support the Supermarket Workers? Join USDAW! USDAW is the voice of the workers who keep our supermarkets running. Joining USDAW means that you have a say in how the supermarket industry is run. It means that you have a voice in the decisions that affect your working conditions. It means that you have a voice in the negotiations that determine your pay and conditions.

Join USDAW and be part of the fight for a better future for supermarket workers. Together we can make the supermarket sector a better place to work.
Are there any unions that actually win?

So, S&DI.W. The answer is yes. Some, we mean the workers in the mailrooms of GMB. 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's actually union.

We must all fight for the best.

There are a couple of unions and unions that have been organized against us in our workplace. The United Friends of the World and the Independent Workers Union of Great Britain have both had big successes winning wage increases and better conditions for their members. People need to understand that these victories are not automatic, that the road to victory is long and difficult. We must all work together to achieve them.

Help Out & Contact Us

Print and distribute the document where you work, give it to your local union. We can send you paper copies if you need them.

Contact us:

gbunion@gbunion.org.uk

Supported by the Chiswick Group.

XMAS at Tesco

I was recently employed in a supermarket by an agency over the Christmas period. The work was fast-paced, requiring quick thinking and strong teamwork. My job involved dragging cases of stock from one store to another in the early morning. My job involved dragging cases of stock from one store to another in the early morning. My job involved dragging cases of stock from one store to another in the early morning. My job involved dragging cases of stock from one store to another in the early morning. My job involved dragging cases of stock from one store to another in the early morning. My job involved dragging cases of stock from one store to another in the early morning. My job involved dragging cases of stock from one store to another in the early morning. My job involved dragging cases of stock from one store to another in the early morning. My job involved dragging cases of stock from one store to another in the early morning.

Work was very challenging and fast-paced. I was often required to work long hours, and the lack of communication and support from management made it even more difficult. We often worked through Christmas day, in order to get the work done as quickly as possible. The conditions were not always ideal, but we had to do it. The hard work paid off, and we were able to finish the job on time.

Most of the staff were directly employed by Tesco, but there were also several agency workers. Many of the agency workers were underpaid, overworked, and had little to no job security. The conditions were not always ideal, and the lack of communication from management made it even more challenging. The agency workers were often treated as second-class citizens, and their work was not always appreciated.

The merger of the agencies involved in the Tesco project was a new development. The merger brought together the agencies that had previously worked on the Tesco project, but it also brought new challenges. The new management team was not always well-versed in the workings of the new company, and there were some 불행한 사본들.

In conclusion, the project was a success, and the new supermarket is now open for business. The hard work of the staff, both employees and agency workers, paid off, and the new supermarket is now open for business. The hard work of the staff, both employees and agency workers, paid off, and the new supermarket is now open for business. The hard work of the staff, both employees and agency workers, paid off, and the new supermarket is now open for business. The hard work of the staff, both employees and agency workers, paid off, and the new supermarket is now open for business. The hard work of the staff, both employees and agency workers, paid off, and the new supermarket is now open for business. The hard work of the staff, both employees and agency workers, paid off, and the new supermarket is now open for business. The hard work of the staff, both employees and agency workers, paid off, and the new supermarket is now open for business. 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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
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 Synchonicity

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.

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

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 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 Giovo 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.
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 in 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 suggests 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 Ford 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 the strike was organised, describing some of the tactics etc adopted, which may be of interest to workers in struggle elsewhere.

*Dagenham Estate*

*An map of Ford-Dagenham. The (*) asterisks mark the picket spots.*
"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 Teleman's delivery drivers was highly important. At first the Teleman's drivers (like many other firms) waited 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 Cologan 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 policewoman who went over and told a scab driver to F**ck out of it!)

Some lorries that slipped through were blacked out 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 gooda. 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."
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 ladies 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 cannot tell others 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 picket-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.
Railways

Any factory is served by very many service routes. These include the postal service, water, telephones 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 bring the Navy... so Ford was able to ship in supplies down the River. But there was no success on the rail front. One dark night a few hardy souls crept out and hanged 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 line... 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 block any wagons that came out of Ford's 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 Gaedjer 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 loudspeakers, the simple application of pen and paper can be very useful.

We looked 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.
In case you didn’t know it, it’s almost impossible to take photographs inside Ford’s. 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 BMC-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 stewards 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 — egg dropping onto the floor and being unanswerable afterwards. That’s the way we ought 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)

"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 Ford 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)
Every picker 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 pint-trained thugs of the Special Patrol Group (who need their weekly diet of red blood and bashed heads to keep going) and PC Flatfoot from the local nick. The police, after all, have their own problems. That nasty Mr McNea wanting to cut their overtime...and nobody ever told them the difference between a worker and a scab.... The poor devil really suffers - 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 1 flatfoot bobbies on the beat? There's many answers to that - but one reason why Ford's 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 knew 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 60-90 people on the picket line. One of the pickets was arrested on Kent House, 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 nervous by then. The Superintendent of Basset 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 Ford's don't need the police to act against strikers. They've got much better policemen in the shape of Trade Union officials:

-Nick Murphy went into the JMC meeting on the Monday. He said that within 3 days he would recommend to the TGWU 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.

Some policemen, on the Ford picket line. Reading "Socialist Worker", June 1978.


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, strategically 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 - Messrs Fisher, Hitchcock, Drury etc. Others were for the union officials who tried to sell out the strike - eg Nick Murphy, TGWU. 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 3" 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.......

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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 "Fraid News".

\[\text{Handy Hints}\]

\[\text{Red Notes}\]
**Social Security**

In theory, when you are laid off from Ford, 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.

The stinking thing about this arrangement is that Social Security usually takes 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 lend 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!"

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**Penal Clauses**

**Leyland deal to deter wildcat strikes**

By R. W. Shakespeare

More than 100,000 workers in 11 companies were 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, emanated from Leyland's new central negotiating body and represents the last major achievement of Mr Geoffrey Whale, 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.

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, the union is trying to deter unofficial strikes by disciplining those who take part in them from the layoff guarantees for three months.

Last year alone Leyland car plants lost well over three billion 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 result 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 means that any workers taking part in what the company describes as "unconstitutional disputes" 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)
23 January 2016

Precarious Notes

What is Precarious Notes?

Precarious Notes is a campaign to bring together workers and trade unionists to campaign for better terms and conditions of work in London. We are working towards creating a dignified and respectful workplace.

If you wish to contact the campaign, please email:

precariousnotes@gmail.com

STRIKE in the City!

THIS IS A STRIKE THAT MIGHT HAVE SUSTAINED ITSELF AT LSE FEGI HARRISON.

But American workers have voted 600% to strike for the $15.00 per hour standard Living Wage. They are the union leaders of this city at the forefront of which reveals how to transform the country into a workplace for the community.

The cleaning contractor responsible for illegally undercutting the minimum wage was dismissed for standing up for his workers and taking a stand.

The United Voices when members have been there is not in support of the strike, and they have been informed that the contract is about to be terminated before going into effect.

As part of an agreement, the first time we were told, they are grateful to see other workers and supporters stand with us and this gives us the confidence to fight.

The campaign is being supported by Friday 26 January. The picket lines will be at South Street between 4pm and 7pm, 55 South Street, EC2M 1BS.

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.

Now that the university has announced a strong commitment to reform, it is imperative that all workers are treated with dignity and respect.

SOAS: A Promise is no Guarantee

Unfortunately, the successful strike by the cleaners at SOAS has not set a precedent for a fair deal. The cleaners are still at low pay, with few sick pay, holiday pay and pension contributions, and are forced to live through the most difficult conditions. The cleaners are determined to continue fighting for their rights.

Outsourced workers at University of London

The cleaners at the University of London are a step closer to victory after the university announced its agreement to introduce living wage for all workers under the Good Work Foundation.

The cleaners have been working for four months after the Independent Worker Union of Great Britain (IWGB) launched the "Fair in Practice" campaign, which demands that the university and outsourcers

- recognize the workers
- improve pay and conditions
- negotiate a new agreement

The university has agreed to these demands.

The cleaners have won a significant victory in the fight for a fair deal.

Ministry of (In)Justice

The cleaners at the University of London have won a significant victory after the university agreed to introduce the living wage for all workers under the Good Work Foundation. The cleaners have been working for four months after the Independent Worker Union of Great Britain (IWGB) launched the "Fair in Practice" campaign, which demands that the university and outsourcers

- recognize the workers
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The cleaners have won a significant victory in the fight for a fair deal.
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’. 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 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. 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, 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 UVW – 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 UVW 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. 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.

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.
Rebellion at the LSE: a cleaning sector inquiry

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 UVW. 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, UVW had the ‘LSE 3’ reinstated. This success story spread like wildfire through the workforce. UVW 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. 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

Rebellion

Cell phone ban sparks 6-hour strike at Builders Paradise

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“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
I wasn't impressed.' 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. Yous 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.
Rebellion at the LSE: a cleaning sector inquiry

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 UVW 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. 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. 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


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.

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).

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.

IWW, 2012. URGENT PROTEST!!! Justice for the #IWW #Cleaners at #LSE! Weds 13, 1PM. See also Peter Marshall, 2012. LSE Cleaners Protest.

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.


11. Young, Andrew. 2016. Dispute between LSE cleaning staff and external contractor Noonan.


13. Angry Workers, Questionnaire for workplace reports II.
BIG FLAME IS A REVOLUTIONARY SOCIALIST ORGANISATION WITH GROUPS IN
WEST LONDON , E .AST LONDON , BIRMINGHAM & MERSEYSIDE .

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

The Ford Halewood Big Flame group consists partly of Ford workers and
partly of 'external' militants who meet regularly to discuss the situa-
tion as Ford , how to organise , as well as wider topics and prepare
leaflets etc .

Ford workers 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 nec-
essary because the 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 schemes 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 IT has hundreds of personnel officers , foremen etc thinking of no-
thing 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 you've got something to say and want other militants to hear about
it then write to us or get in touch .

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

THE FRAUDS NOW IS EXPLOITING FOODS OF PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE AND
PENSIONERS IN A SICK-rFORD AND NO ONE IN THE GOVERNMENT OR FORD HAVE
A MIND . HE WOULD HELP IS CHAMPAGNE THE ROAD.
CAR INDUSTRY ROUNDUP

Ford - Dagenham

After Easter Management announces sacking cuts. Their attack is concentrated on the Body Plant. Door hangars, 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 3 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.

Lancashire - Management looks out the entire workforce following strike by the shipping dock against 3 scales.

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.

Coventry - (Monday 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 PTA & Transmission, about 20 altogether arrive late. Not long ago the Halwood stewards were the national leadership).

Chrysler - Stokes

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 next the media to take 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 pickets the steward meeting and were confronted by as many wives who support the strike. One banner of the latter group reads: "WE ARE NOT BRINGING THE MEN ON STRIKE; WE ARE BEHIND THEM."

Bristol - A claim is submitted for 30% more money, 35 hour (Assembly) weak, indefinite lay-off pay.

LESOP - Coventry - 750 clerical workers continue their strike over pay. An offer of increases ranging from £7.50 to £8.51 for males and £7.00 for women, is turned down as being "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 sharpened. Especially at Ford. What's at stake is whether the bosses are able to break shop floor organization or not. Whether they succeed in making the working class pay for the capitalist crisis or not. Whether the workers will resist coming 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 Bence 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. Bence 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 Bence's measures. The working class will use the spaces created by Bence and his team. When they scream 'ditch Bence' they mean 'ditch the working class'. Because that's what 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 Simms and Baglan show a great victory. There were limitations on both occasions, but Baglan's involvement was poor. But those two takeovers show that the working class at Ford is growing and prepared to fight against the company's policy of rationalisation, cuts in earnings, 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, but this breeze is spreading out of them. Did you see their angry, ugly faces at Nuneaton? 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 the 'nine to five'. 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 Unions are perfectly right 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-timing and speed-ups. People are staying 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 a sign of weakness and throw the lot at us - speed-up, mobility, redundancies, short time redundancies.

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.
Big Flame No. 6

OCCUPATION DAGENHAM

THese notes were taken by the big flame dagenham ford group from conversations during the occupation at dagenham.

April 25th 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 men. In reply to this a mass meeting of the Body Plant (April 24th) was called to come into the factory on the following Tuesday (April 29th) to decide on what policy to take 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 sparsely section level. The Union seemed to want it like this and not all any escalation to a mass meeting. It appeared to want to keep it like this and not all any escalation to a mass meeting. So, there was reticence of the stag...en to do anything. On the second section, one section...protesting at Ford's attempts to take men out of sections. There was also a meeting of the doorknobs. The line was put at the door hangers meeting by the steward that we don't accept these warning cuts and we strike. We stick around and see what further action develops.

In the morning, the Body Plant approached management and asked for 'reasoned negotiations'. This was rejected by Ford who reaffirmed their intention to begin the new year and continue then 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. Finally, this 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 many years the company was going to be in business and to refusing to compromise). He then said he disagreed with the 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 that he spelled this out very hastily. He was hard to hear and many people were not listening. The message did not sink in. And he 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 520 men had voted for an occupation and 500 against...the rest in confusion abstained.

The occupation starts

Tickets 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 the management, as had happened at Swansea, or to stop the other sections of the Body Plant from working (door line, renderers, gates). It later turned out that the gates were not what was going on. Other plants (MTA & Press Shop) were forced to stop work later, anyway, when they were sent away 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 plans 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.

Tickets on the gates

On the gates the first instruction had been to let in any worker who wanted to work, to stop all formen and supervisory staff. Some people accepted some passes as well. For some would turn up and see a small group on the gates
DAGENHAM "NO-10" CONTINUED

mainly young, clean and nice, demanding to see their identity cards, and then turning them away because they were someone. They would come up, not knowing what was going on (only a polite knock on the gates telling that there was an occupation), and would be told that their services were no longer required today. They had been made to aware of this, and there were several cases of physical aggression.

All the gates were locked at 11.00am and a bicycle token was sent round the gates. The gates were to be kept closed. By this time, things were beginning to get a little tense. People had found themselves plants to whose plants, etc. There were some good games of football going on at the park.

Wednesday, April 11th

A small and determined crowd of workmen marched into the 45-acre (Warhouse) and set up a picket on that as well, since yard management were sending goods to the 45-acre through a tunnel from the French 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 sent up and set up a blockade across the tunnel, and put a blockade on the rain gate as well. Yards met with little hostility from 45-acre workers, who were more than willing to defend their jobs, but an initial possibility of aggression was prevented by the presence of about 30 pickets, ready and willing for a fight with any scales.

One man on the gate at this stage was when a heavy dray arrived outside the 35-acre with his cargo. All the way from Kings Lynn, saw the pickets line, and just turned his heavy round and went back home.

All in all, by Wednesday evening, we felt that the situation was to work out what further steps could be developed in the present situation, since it is pretty clear what not many people want to stay in the plant. We wondered whether there was any likelihood of anything happening at the plant to celebrate today, or the liberation of Syria...not that we thought there was...

The occupation strike on May 5th and the strike of the machinists continued (see other articles in the recent reports of the car industry.)

"RIDING" ROUGH SHOP 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 us with ideal opportunity to discuss stewards, particularly those from the shop-floor and try to influence managers to pass on their needs to stewards. We believe that your mobility, including changes, and realisation of your exploitation will be easier to stomach if you and your representatives are aware of anything happening at the plant to celebrate today, or the liberation of Syria...not that we thought there was...

Finally a word of thanks to all the machinists. Although we’ve been seen as difficult, I am sure that the 200 members of the UMBM, who has provided us with your sweat and blood. It is of course a rare day you will ever have seen in your lifetime, especially now that it is in your pocket, and not buying new machinery.

Yours etc. ex-Managing Director
BIG FLAME

HALEWOOD

BULLETIN

CONTENTS

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

No. 9
This is a very important period for the working class of this country & the car workers in particular. The $5 limit is now 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 big cars 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 not 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 these plans to launch the new Cortina and the Robert. 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.** There 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, that it move the battlefield from where it is to: 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 management 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’re campaigning consistently for a 25hr week for all. That’s why we say that ‘natural wastage’ must not be allowed; the idle ones must not grow. LIKE THEY DO AT DUNLOPS - THERE, WHERE EVERY MAN WHO LEAVES IS AUTOMATICALLY REPLACED.

That’s why we’ve paid 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 West Indies; because we identified them as being of the central battlefields on the questions of manning and the ban on working class resistance inside Halewood. The places 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 meaning. Because our health suffers from the environment, if relief is inadequate. Because our health suffers from the environment, if relief is inadequate; 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, and everything exhausting job that we perform. Once again on health, which else we can take up one fight which unites us to the unemployed, which else: we can take up one fight which unites us to the unemployed, which else: we can take up one fight which unites us to the unemployed, which else: we can take up one fight which unites us to the unemployed. We've said time and time again: "WORK SLOWLY"; it will help your health and protect your job.

***************

SOMETHING WORTH CELEBRATING

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

We the Big Flame Haleswood Ford Group join management in wishing him many happy returns. Without him and his men we would have very little to put in our leaflets. We hope that he has another 40 years in Ford's 'in the same manner'.

***************

STEWARD LEAVES

John Finder, steward of the White Lines, 14 shift, has left the job. Despite some political differences, we've always considered John a good trade unionist and a very good steward. We 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 LONGRIDGE (SIDE) 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 Organization

"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 increasing mental stress and disruption to social and family life."

That passage is taken from "THE HAZARDS OF WORK" by Patrick Kinnearley. 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 lads in the lead booths.)

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

SOLDERERS

Background

As we reported in the last leaflet the soldiers claim for 3 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."

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 NWCC 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 (3 Shift) the soldiers were given a unanimous backing in their fight. Since then the dispute has continued and action has been taken like knocking the mini shift off...

Recently

"The soldiers had the medical staff from FODS analyse their claim.

The TDC doctor was not available, reason being he had a more pressing engagement.

The medical jargon, namely the result of the analysing of the soldier 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:

Comparison as regards blood count:

42 pc soldier

5% pc lead discer

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

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

Soldier | 3 shift |

Big Flame No. 9
SOLDERERS CONTINUED

With the help of the Kinseyly 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 aroused increasing concern as a community health risk."

"It's possible to accumulate more than 40 micrograms of lead in every 100 milliliters of blood, just by living in a town or city. (Speaks 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 talked 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 anemic. It also attacks your nervous system causing localized weakness."

Long before this sign appears a lot 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 smokers 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 it's all done on their terms; their quacks and chemists, their jargon. Official analysis is based on the TLV, Threshold Limit Value. This accepts industry's economic (profit making) assumption that its alright to expose workers to contamination.

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

"10 hrs overtime increases the dose by 25 per cent."

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 management 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."

It's 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 SHIP HAVE DEMANDED NOT LONG AGO A TEA AREA. MANAGEMENT HAVE EXPRESSED ON THE GROUND THAT IT IS LEAD ENVIRONMENT."
CAR PAINTERS

We were recently given a document headed: "The neurological and psychiatric 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 age, 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 these mixtures are toluene, xylene, butyl acetate and white spirit."

Exposure to this garbage was measured from the air in the breathing area of the painters. The figures they came up with were 3.7% of current Finnish Threshold Limit Value (TLV) — but if the meadish TLV is used instead of the finnish one, the corresponding figure is 26%. 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, abnormal 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

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 Kinslerley'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 promoting 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 works 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 hoe 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 I.U.E.W. HALL, MOUNT PLEASANT, LIVERPOOL.

For further information contact: ROD T. RIXTON, SECRETARY, SPEKE AREA TRADE UNION COMMITTEE, 14 RANFURLY ROAD, LIVERPOOL 4.
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 the strike about?

The pension scheme (UNISON) is going to be gambled on the
stock market. The average loss for a new entrant is likely to be
over £10,000, about 45% of the total amount.

This attack on our pension is a startlingly opportunistic
move by management to cut costs and is part of a wider charge on higher
education towards privatisation.

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

Our pay has already gone down 40% in real terms over a
decade. Now they’re coming for our pensions. If we don’t win
this strike, they will never again. Today, 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 3rd, February 10th, March 3rd and March 10th.
This strike will only be effective if we shut universities
down. Our leverage comes from causing maximum disruption.

That means we need strong picks in every single one of these two
photo meetings to convince students and workers to support
the strike, and second, to actually inhibit the functioning of the
university.
Students Organising in Solidarity

...Continued...

Dear colleague, 

Working during the strike is not a challenge. Even if someone crosses a picket line on day one, the union will ensure we can continue to strike on day 6. Where possible we should coordinate disruption with students. We have common interests in opposing the systematic exploitation of students and staff through low wages and unequal pay.

Precarious hourly paid workers will find this strike really hard, but we have the most to lose. 60% of us are on insecure contracts, let's fight back!

Academic workers need to reach out to support workers. Library, cleaning, cafe, maintenance, security, construction, IT, finance... 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 save our universities.

Where we can't all strike together, we will be talking to our colleagues in other companies, and encouraging them to take part in a 'go slower'. That means working harder and longer to do the same work in order to come to an agreement. We need staff to be able to speak up and be heard.

Students, keep it going! You can see the good results of disruption that we and our management have faced. Common workers are winning and students are not getting the support they need.

16 FE colleges join the strike

UCU has received Further Education college leaders have called the strike, and 63% turn out to take part in any strike this week. We must continue to disrupt our employers to get the best deals for our students.

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 UCU: we agree explicitly to undertakers to construction contracts as a matter of course, support for the strike was high. An underlying theme was, however, the view that the dispute is not just about pay and conditions for university workers, but also about the treatment of students and the quality of education.

On the 21st, over 500 students, faculty, and staff attended a demonstration in support of the UCU strike, which was primarily expressed from other union and campaign groups.

At Sussex we had two important events over Easter. With 300 students on an extended strike, the student-led demonstration on 3rd April aimed to highlight the impact of the strike on teaching and learning. The university management are committed to ensuring that students are not disadvantaged, but the strike has caused significant disruption.

The students at Goldsmiths agreed to an angry picket, and McDonald's, over a £10.50 per hour pay rise in the UK, led to protests by university workers. A number of organizing students gathered outside the university, calling for better conditions and higher wages. A number of students were also targeted by management.

At Exeter, the first two days of the strike have seen a major change in the way the university响应ed. The impact of the strike on teaching and learning has been significant, with widespread student protests and stoppages.

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

Jo and down the country there were strong picket lines, student solidarity rallies occupations in universities and UUK's head offices.

After just two days, UUK have invited UCU to the negotiating table, which is set to take place Tuesday 27th. The union have accepted to meet, while keeping up the planned strikes for Monday, Wednesday this
REPORTS FROM THE PICKET LINE

At Senate House the last days of the strike have been a revelation of a new-found confidence. UCU branch members have united in solidarity with each other, as the PCS members also joined pickets and stayed away from work. Already there is talk of combining the GMB and PCS branches of UCU in the future.

On the first day of the action, RHUL management contacted us in writing "to warn that picketing may be illegal". Staff were told that congregating in numbers larger than three outside the main building was illegal under the Police Act. They were told to stick to what they described as a "dialogue".

Students and staff alike were united in their determination not to give in, not to go to University House before marching through the streets in a show of solidarity.

At Warwick, the first days of picketing have been a resounding success. More than 50 workers, many of whom are part-time, are on the picket line each day. The programme of events at the University of Warwick continues this week. The University has agreed to host a conference on "The Future of Higher Education" on Saturday, which will bring together national and international experts to discuss the future of higher education. The strikes are expected to continue until the end of the week.

On the first day of the USS strike, UNISON members at Birkbeck Library in London held strike balloting to decide whether to strike. The balloting was carried out by an independent pollster. The results showed strong support for the strike, with 90% of members voting to strike.

The strike has been going well, with the last strike day at SOAS. All seven study halls have been occupied and students have held between 10 and 15 strikes in all the picketed branches. The UCU is confident that the strikes will continue and that the strike action will be successful.

But what is on the table? UCU explained that they have not yet opened the Joint Negotiation Committee meeting on 28 January. In short, this means that the union is not prepared to discuss the changes to the USS pension scheme. Time is running out to conciliate the national strike, which ends on the 30th January. Without an agreement, the strike could become a national strike, which would bring more local authorities and public services into the fray. This could break up our collective power.

Our response needs to be twofold. First, we need to continue to bring the strikes to the notice of the public. Second, as academic workers, we are only prepared to negotiate a victory. We have voted for strike action to defend our pensions and services, anything less is a failure. We will not accept UUCS or UCU continuing to use our future in retirement.

As rank and file academic workers, we need to be prepared to challenge both JNCC and UUCS. To continue our strikes and the discussions with the universities, we are planning to meet the following week to discuss the outcome of the strikes. 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 notesfromabov.org/category/bulletins
THE UNIVERSITY WORKER

Rank and File Strike Bulletin: Week 3

What is this?

The University Worker is a weekly bulletin and newsletter for academic and non-academic workers. This issue is the 11th in the history of UFWU and 23rd in its totality.

Help us distribute!

There will be 6 picker lines across the country. We want to ensure all staff, down to and including the picket line, receive copies and are able to access them.

Open Letter to UCU Leadership

An open letter is being planned for the UCU to sign in support of the campaign. It has been drafted in advance of this week’s talks and will be signed by over 600 academics and signed by over 300 more.

Sample Branch Motion

A sample branch motion was passed by UCU Wales, but our Academic and Non-Academic members across the country believe it should be passed.

"The UCU has a strong and effective role to play in stopping the employees’ contract to maintaining the teaching provision scheme."

What is the ‘Rank and File’?

A trade union is only as strong as its membership is organised. This applies to all unions, but it is particularly true for the UCU-UFWU. Our UCU allows all staff, including academic and administrative workers with just two weeks service, to join at our meeting.

The leadership are too busy distracting us in terms of their focus on the pay talks, conditions, and pressures through their relationships with the employers. Unlike us, there is a great amount of enthusiasm and financial stability of the union - something that is not sustained by current rank and file.

The current right is one about the future of higher education, but also about the future of our union. The future time of years, the leadership have to show that they are fighting.

Why are we negotiating and what might happen?

The leadership has decided to get into negotiations with us by 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 table, but on the picket lines and in the streets.

We need to keep in mind that the leadership that the UCU used to be a part of Winter 2017? 2018? that the membership wanted the union to refuse to accept.
Student Occupations at Southampton, Liverpool and UCL

Students have been organizing in solidarity with the strikes over the pension. But it’s been particularly encouraging to see students occupying the sites and applying pressure to the UCU by occupying occupancy squares. NuclearOccupation has committed to keep them running as how the movement grows.

International Solidarity

Solidarity messages have been sent from across the world to UCU winners, including; Unite & FBU, Unite Edu, United, Socialist, USSR, Independent Unions of North America, British Unite, Unite, Socialist, USSR, Independent Unions of North America, British Unite, and many other local unions across the UK and Europe. Solidarity messages have also been received from local unions across the UK and Europe.

West Virginia Teachers on Illegal Strike

Teachers in West Virginia have been on the picket line for the past week due to the lack of contract negotiations. We have won both sides.

23,000 teachers and 3,000 school staff are now on strike. They’ve occupied the State Capitol Building. It is illegal for teachers to strike in the state.

Workers have already overcome the West Virginia Coalition, a series of businesses that operate between 1912-21.

now negative changes at UCL, USS

Sally Hunt recently said that the strikes mean they will maintain a decent pension. But Sally, you have a mandate to maintain the USS pension as it is, no kicking down. If you want to negotiate a new pension, we will fight to keep as much as we can on the current terms.

Negotiators have already proposed a significantly weaker form of defined benefit. But on Tuesday we’ll be striking, and we’re off the UCU. AGW will demand the same concessions from UCU leading to an even weaker form of defined benefit. But the fact that the union has gone back on the terms of the membership and started negotiating a weaker benefit isn’t even the worst of it. We have actually been sanctioned by the government for the initial efforts of negotiating a weaker benefit.

We are still committed to further investigations of other options, including collective defined contributions. We have a mandate to negotiate and win.

West Virginia Teachers are doing exactly that. We are still on the picket line. We want to maintain defined benefits. Rather than giving way more ground to the strikers, we should only be negotiating on the terms of our victory.

How can we react?

We have been told far too often that we are here to stay for the pension fight. The fight is here, we are winning, and we need to keep the pressure up. The strike is a win. We want a deep and transparent commitment to further investigations of collective defined contributions. We have a mandate to negotiate and win.

In the larger context, this is our own leverage. We can’t ignore the strikes going on nationally and internationally. This means building for mass pickets 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 a new strategy. We need to identify the points of maximum disruption in our work to start down not only the buildings of the university but also its operation. The time is now.

Despite our commitment to putting pressure on the employer, but the other is our leadership. We need to organize branches calling for further action, and more press letters that raise the profile 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 dispute.
THE UNIVERSITY WORKER

Rank and File Strike Bulletin: Week 4

What is this?

The University Worker is a rank and file bulletin written by working class university workers. This strike is the biggest in the history of UPW and we need more people!

Help us distribute!

There will be 4 picket lines across the campus. We want a record of this. Don’t let down your union, they are depending on us!

Open Letter to UCU Leadership

An open letter from UCU members asking the UCU to stop being reactive and move to the offensive. We need to be a union that is both strong and high quality.

Victory is Within Sight!

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

Last week, the University of Oxford announced its joint decision on the USS scheme. In a joint letter from UCU members, the university is shown to be willing to make changes to the proposed new defined benefit scheme. Oxford, like other universities, 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 backing down. Victory is within sight. This is due to the success of the strike so far. These changes have been led by rank and file academic workers, including many on precarious contracts. These workers are our future and they are part of the problem.

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

“The union’s higher education committee (HEC) has continued to agree to days of action, if necessary, designed to hit the exam and assessment periods between April and June. UCU and ISU are in talks to gather information on which days of action would be most effective at different universities.”
CUPE 3903 Start Indefinite Strike at York University

CUPE local 3903 - the guild of non-teaching workers at Canada’s York University - began a indefinite strike yesterday. The union’s 1,500 members voted to walk out, and they are now a strategy in their own hands, they say.

And they have a history of winning. CUPE 3903 has won strikes successfully before in 2001, 2003, and 2015. This time they have 70,000 members, ramping up to a total of 80,000 graduate assistants in the coming years. Members of the CUPE 3903 research assistant unit have voted to strike.

The strike targets are the school’s contract teaching staff to each teacher, who are members of a management union and are paid less for their work than regular faculty members.

York University has its own plan, and the two sides are in a virtual stand-off. The school has begun a new hiring strategy, replacing the strike by paying faculty and professors to head overseas.

We welcome more strike action, but we need to continue the momentum of the 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 narrowly how we can shutdown 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 main and avoid most periods.” This is a point of view in the way we think we need to do "as good as possible," but it is an important issue to the union and members. For many of us, we are fighting to assign grades and protect the best interests of our students.

The Action Plan of a Strike (APOS) aims to continue, partially or otherwise, over the week of strikes until this means planning with other academic workers how ASOS can be most effectively carried out, continuing to build pressure until the next strike.

What happens next?

This week, we need to build the momentum, picket lines to win.

We mean sticking together, staying on strike, disrupting deliveries, disrupting the university, and working to disrupt the strike.

There are far fewer than I expected. This week:

Finding Stephen! All Out to End the Strike Cambridge, Defend Education. Thursday 15th at Kings Parade, Wilmslow Green.


Break UUK - End the Strikers: National Campaign Against Fees & Cuts - diese. Thursday against University of Sussex.
THE UNIVERSITY WORKER

Rank and File Strike Bulletin: Special Issue 13th March

It's a Sell Out!

UCC and UUK agreed a sell out at ACAS on Monday 11th of March. The deal means that the union leadership has failed to defend the USS pension scheme instead, they have negotiated to win a battle at the cost of victory.

On the 1st 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 2.5% (with employers only increasing by 1%).

The increase in contributions are only implied 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 this will be met in 2021). It could mean a slower drain on, rather than a sudden shift, but the end result will be the same.

The UCU has also decided to engage in a month long discussion on as many as possible to consider examining alternatives... or partial Collective Defined Contributions (CDD) so we have no idea why the leadership has decided to discuss a further retreat in the future under...
Liverpool Statement

Following a meeting today of approximately 75 members in Liverpool, UCU broadly notes this offer. Members in our branch and across the country are not in one of the most oppressed shows or collective solidarity in the face of this offensive made up on hands on a package offer that does not guarantee them decency in any terms. The branch members should not be asked to pay for taking action in a dispute that originated from the lack of due diligence carried out by universities in the UK or for financial calculations. Liverpool UCU calls 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 strike is largely unprecedented and seems like a punishment for young people. Our meeting was called on an area better utilised than this one today and referred to as being a diagnosis and short-sell this a diagnosis and short-term offer. If UCL adopt this it will be the start of the end.

Student Occupations Statement

We stand with all staff and students who chose to express opposition to this deal and urge UCU to reject this deal at the meeting tomorrow. Our staff deserve long-term paid.
**THE UNIVERSITY WORKER**

*Rank and File Strike Bulletin: Special Issue 14th March*

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**What is this?**

The University Worker is a union newsletter produced by academic workers.

**Help us distribute!**

There are 4打击 lines across the country. We want to spread the message far and wide for the strike to have maximum impact.

**Demonstrations/meetings this week**

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<th>Event</th>
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<td>Defend Education March for Pensions and Pay, Weds, Market Street,</td>
<td>Monday</td>
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<td>Break UUK and the Strike University of Sussex, Thurs, 1pm</td>
<td>Thursday</td>
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<td>National rank and file activist meeting (for all branches), Fri,</td>
<td>Friday</td>
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<td>Goldsmiths, the Venue, the Student Union, Dixon Road, 2pm</td>
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<td>Student Worker Solidarity Summit, Sun, JCU Institute of Education, 16pm</td>
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**We Beat the Deal! No Capitulation**

Today was a day of hope following the most impressive rank and file mobilisation in academic workers' history. Together, we defeated the plan to sell our deal down the drain.

It was a victory made possible by the following self-organisation tactics: Demonstrations at LCU, UUK, overancing action on social media at branch level, a huge joint open letter against the deal, emails to UUK members and social media pressure.

By the time UCU was meeting yesterday morning to start discussing the deal, 35 out of 64 striking branches had declared themselves unanimously or overwhelmingly against the deal. National union action was being discussed as a very serious possibility at UCU National Executive to support the strikes. Hundreds were outside UCU HQ expressing their anger and disbelief at the actions of the union leadership being threatened by union officials with disciplinary action.

The fact that the LCU leadership seems to have thrown in the towel is another indication of the growing discontent among academic workers. Fortunately, this disillusionment coincides with a period of increased 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 bureaucrat's feet to the fire every time they give the slightest indication of buckling down.
Students, Keep up the Pressure!

At Sussex, the threat of a nation-wide strike has led to management calling a 100% shutdown of planned teaching and the closure of all campus academic buildings on Thursday. This morning in Sheffield, students have managed to occupy the entire first floor of the tower. This shows students can have power in this dispute too.

UK HE has been shrug 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 Bournemouth to maintain a destructive picket.

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

Now We Strike to Win

Branch members voted for four weeks of further strike action starting immediately, but the UCU still only recommends 14 days more of Action Short of a Strike (ASOS) before the 15 days of strike activity sponsored for some time between April and June. The final decision will come next week. Following an attempted mallout, the rank and file have shown us 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 shutdown, further strikes says 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 the opportunity to organise the second round of strikes. Staffed by the students with a higher education workers and students union’s presence, people like key mail, cleaners, and security workers can begin to develop the links that will be vital for the second round. Raising their demands as fast as they can. The need to save higher education, against the 14% and 9% against Home Office monitoring and PREVENT, and we...

Our Strength

The last six weeks have seen a revolution. We never knew how strong we were until we started fighting. This struggle has always been about more than pay but given the scope of the strike, we’re talking about the future of collective bargaining and the nature of power in higher education. But we can now see that it’s your own hands that end strikes. Lots of us have been at this for months and weeks, and we’ve had to see the university transformed from an alienating, surveilled, divided workplace into a collective source of genuine union power. Now we need to use that power to win a bigger cause!
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 UUK. There are four possible outcomes from here: UUK's original position at the start of the dispute (X1). Second, a 76.4% cost-sharing, the same benefits but contributions up 12% (35% by us). Third, the ACAS deal from March 12th, i.e., 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 timelines. So either we go back in 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 arise alongside the IWGB and UNISON. The prospect of shutting down our campuses would then become a reality.

We started this strike action to deliver 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.
This would take the new-found collective power of 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 statement has "significant flaws 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 is very nature the results of the independent joint expert panel are unknown." So instead we’re being asked to gamble on the result. 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 UCU real-terms pay of almost 20% in a decade
2. Over half of all teaching is now delivered on precarious contracts
3. Neither the RCT nor TEF have been opposed
4. The final salary pension scheme was closed to new entrants and any accrued pensions are cut before.

So how can we trust Sally and the so-called experts to win on our behalf? We should not have any 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 said, but "review and resubmit". This deal should have been a "desk rejig," and we need to build on the biggest NO vote ever. 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.

2
Picket no. 3

Wednesday 19th March 1986

First-hand reports by printworkers and pickets. Contributions welcome

PICKET NOW IN 54TH DAY

Dug in 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 manouevre 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.

54TH 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. 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 windscreeng smashed. This lorry then tried to turn down Wapping Lane but it was blocked 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".

(Two 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 New 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 the 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 Pellow.

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...
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 (£75 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 Katharine's 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 TST 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.
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 snitch 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 to 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" (Socialist Worker 15/3/86).

"... 150 strong which picketed the Suddersfield warehouse of John Mexies ... a Mexie's van stormed out of the warehouse ... This action angered the printworkers who then had 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" (Morning Star 15/3/86).

"Meanwhile pickets gathered near Rotherham ... outside the Hellaby 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
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.

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
ley will also continue, with word already from The Guardian and Mirror in particular that
they are solidly behind the strikers. Bouvierie 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.
This was Wales night. The march from Tower Hill was sponsored by Scogt 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 Wellesco 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 Clamis Road - was frustrated. Contingents of pickets heading for these exits by way of the flats behind Wellesco 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 Clamis Road exit and the highway here was cleared from 10.30pm. The first attempt 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 picked 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 Surridge Dawson's or Hove distributors. S and D von, 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. Picketted 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 win
From Petrolco 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 be up dead

The police can arrest the innocent
They're free to commit assault
The pigs who murdered Glass 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 job is a crime

They want to crush the unions
The working class to tear
It's the rich that get the profits
And the workers get the blame

Now the bosses' cows are deadly
It's not a game of cricket
But every union member
Should join the Wapping picket
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 ... filthy". Morale was good. The advertisement for the Mirror was still on the railings. As the leaflet "Murdock 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 had had their fingertips in Murdoch's till the whole time. A Coliseum to 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 passed by, but they didn't sound their horns in response. 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, stuff-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 TUC. The members sacrifice and risk their lives: the leaders collude.

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 match 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 TNU 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 Benrose 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.

Murder on the Highways (1890)

"I've been ordered to tell you that the office of a newspaper boy will be closed this evening. He's been found dead in the street."

The policemen came into the house the people for to view
Saying the man was shot but he was alive
They dragged him to the door and without any fear of death
On the stones there he was danced, and with unchangeable eyes he held 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, you would have grieved your heart full sore.
When they took him to the station, he lied wailing 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 gave, 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 Chief and Constable were painted on each face.
The policemen must answer for this crime, all on a future day.
For the killing of a man in Scull Lane.

So far as is known the police never paid for the killing of a man -
and they have carried on unchecked to the present day. This song was written in 1891 - one year after Sir Robert Peel's "New Police" had been introduced into East London (the Peeler). The new police were much hated.
The reasons why were clear. In the Inquest on John Wood, a witness noted:
"The deceased was taken to the police station house in the back of a coal truck. There were 5 or 6 million on 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.

Two Photocetc scabs at Wapping:

Mark Coats, 10 Robins Avenue, Lenham, Maidstone, Kent (0672 958282) has applied for a union card from the NUJ. Happily they have been seen through his lies and put the block on. Brian Carneil, 49 Gromerton Road, Beckenham, Kent (ex-director), an ex-FoA, is now a manager at Wapping.

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

Donations are most welcome and necessary.

Picket published by NCA/Sogat pickets.
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)

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 Carnet, 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 went past Leman St to the roundabout at Aldgate and then round the roundabout past Commercial St were 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 marshall it off Highway. Instead reversed immediately and marched up Dock/Leman 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, 16th August

About 2000 marched from opposite the Mirror building. Just prior to Sogat Casual Machine had marched from Blackfriars to join up, on the way scabbing off Fleet House as sirens screamed up. Also present was a contingent from the Furnells strike in Bristol. The products the Furnells workers printed were Readers Digest, Woman's Realm, Woman, Radio Times, Thosasons 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 Dumbins for the strikebreaking at Maxwell’s plants.

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, footpaths, thinking 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 scab: Bill Analeto, subeditor, 0419 740326
  Nick Pitt, sports correspondent, 01 8744046
  Bob Smith, artwork department head, 0322 20619
  Bob Spivey, was deputy FOC, 07073 32810
- Scab journalist Sue Cook (letters lady) engaged to Mr. Rudy, owner of Cloriette Patisserie in Fleet St acquired country cottage in Whaltington, 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 Hol- den Rd, North Finchley, London N12, 449 4618
- Coliseum coach scab drivers, Morry Rayner or Martin Wilkinson
- Parks of Hamilton, Scotland is the company supplying armoured-wire coaches, serviced at Wall Coaches Ltd, at yard in 143 Coldharbour Lane, Camberwell, London SE5, 733 1124.

OTHER KNOWN SOUTHAMPTON SCABS

K. Clayton, A. Anderson, W. Chandler, D. McNee, B. King, T. Jeakins,
D. Blaker, N. Ehrlich, R. James, J. Campbell (Hareham), A. Pirman,
R. Gillman, J. Dunninga, T. Foreman, G. Lloyd (Portsmouth), N. Downey,
S. Kottlam, P. Ricketts, P. Dowell, B. Linnington, F. King (Eastleigh
British Rail AUEW member), T. House, G. Child, J. Thompson, J. Hewitt,
A. Tracey, R. Veal, R. Ems, J. Gibson, K. Bowers & Mrs. Bowers, I. Bushel,
D. Cooper, J.D. Fry, I. Hardman, G. Hightmore, A. Kennedy, A. Marshall,
S. Mott, G. Osborne, A. Fry, E. Hale, N. Kingston, A. Marrant,
R. Robinson, M. Stone, J.B. Williams, K. Addis, D. Berham, S. Brown,
M. Robinson, R. Smith, I.H. Thomas, R. Whitfield, A. Cunings, P. Eday,
P. Jones, G. McNe, M. Coutlas, S. Cross, K. Felix, R. Thompson,
G. Fingree, K. Etherington, D. Smager, J. Oden, M. Stuart, R.G. Bishop,
M. Polland, F. Reading, A. Brown, N. Connolly, D. Janaway, S. Johnson,
M. Beckett, P. Minram, D. Jones, W. Murray, F. Bamard, M. Thomas,
S. & A. Bevis, G. Gale, F. Clayton, A.W. Perdue, G. Rayner, T. Gebbett,
P. Betteridge, G. Brown, S. Darman, Sandra Gooding, A. Kochanowski,
A. Durman, G. Hedgeman, R. Thomas, R. Newton, B. Smith, P. Noyce,
M. Sparshott, A. Price, J. Waugh, R. Cooper, R. Avery, S. Carroll,
A. Edwards, P. Witt, D. Collins, A.G. Lacy, Clare Catsler, Tanya Seaman,
G. Sanders, S. Shaw, R. Revie, H. Gallup, Mr. & Mrs. M. Frecknall,
G. Beresford.

(*dark-room manageress*)
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
On 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 cabbies; 50p Sun publishing; £10 Sogat Machine; Casual Chapel; £1 Sogat machine; £1, 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 Hoosmans, 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.