

Picket no.18

12483
Saturday, 28th June 1986

Thursday 19th June, Snodland

This was a flying picket which was 100% successful. It was well organised and effective. Three distinct groups of pickets left London from 9pm and it was accurately timed. The first few dozen pickets to arrive at this distribution depot had the element of surprise and managed to pull down the fence. Another 100 arrived at 10.30. The police were also arriving in numbers by this time, but they were more interested in keeping the dual carriageway clear of accidents than in helping to distribute scab newspapers. These police were a change from the Wapping lot. The pickets were allowed to maintain their blockade of the main gate. From 11pm another group arrived, mainly engineers, and they marched in very impressively in formation. The police didn't believe that more pickets would arrive at this time. And they kept a low profile. The 250 pickets sealed off the depot. It was totally effective.

Friday 20th June, Wapping - early-morning picket

From 8am 200 pickets collected at the top of Wellclose, but there was no attempt to take the main gate. The police were obviously expecting something, and there were four transit van-loads of police and six horses in evidence. Most of the pickets were clerical strikers - down for a 10am meeting at the Wapping Sports Centre. At 9.45 a march began, the pickets attempting to get to the Centre by way of Wapping Lane. But the police blocked the march and it was forced to reverse. The strikers followed their banner back to the top of Virginia Street and then on to Thomas More Street. The police were hostile and there was plenty of verbal and a lot of pushing and shoving. Police accompanied the march all the way to the Centre and constantly tried to get the strikers on the pavement. A scab on foot was caught at the top of Thomas More Street. According to one picket he was "one frightened person. We could have killed him". Once the march had formed the police were confused and blocked the top of Virginia Street. They were caught out when a few pickets stayed in the area. They moved about. When the police were in evidence they moved back. When the police moved back then the pickets returned. A few others walked up to Dock Street, shouting abuse at the scab coaches and cars. Then it was back to the tea wagons. The police were thoroughly confused. And the pickets enjoyed keeping them on their toes. The pickets never got involved with arguments/fights with the police. They were simply ignored. By blocking off the top of Virginia Street even scabs had to make a detour. They were redirected via Wapping Lane. Although the meeting started at 10am quite a few of the clericals did not get there till noon. There was too much going on. Many strikers returned to the picket line after the meeting.

Saturday 21st June, Wapping - march and rally

One picket was arrested as the march assembled, in order to intimidate the rest. Over 4,000 marched, organised by the NGA. The Highway was not initially blocked off by the police because of the number of pickets. This increase in the numbers was a good pick-up. As the march proceeded along The Highway groups stationed themselves at key junctions (except Wapping Lane) from Thomas More Street to Glamis Road. Two lorries came round the back of Wapping and stopped in Glamis Road till 11.20. The Highway stayed closed till 11.30 when scabs in uniform and on horses cleared East Smithfield at Thomas More Street in order for four lorries plus scab cars to go out to Tower Hill.

One march round the back via Dock St cleared its way through a small line of police to arrive on the other side of the police lines at Thomas More, and was then pushed through the lines back into the main crowd. During the march there was one arrested. He was beaten bloody in the cop van.

Another march later came through the side streets to arrive at the same place but dissipated due to decreased numbers. Scabs continued to exit at Thomas More.

By 4am there were only a handful of pickets left, and by 5am scabs were leaving through Virginia Street with no pickets at Wellclose. By 8am there were three pickets in Wellclose.

Monday 23rd June, Wapping - early-morning picket

Over 300 assembled for this surprise picket. It was not the sentiment to take the main gate. Pickets spread out along The Highway jeering the strikebreakers. Marches went both east and west along The Highway, blocking traffic for a couple of hours. Pickets went into the road standing in front of cars and lorries.

Tuesday 24th June, Luton

This was another very successful flying picket. It comprised mainly wholesale members, about 200 in all, arriving at the depot from 10.45pm. A number arrived early and sealed the gates with a strong steel chain. There were only four policemen at this time. Later, when the bulk of the pickets arrived, the fence was ripped down. The police just stood about - hopelessly outnumbered. Pickets entered the plant. A number of cars were damaged. Also, 12 white vans had smashed windscreens. TNT drivers in their huts hid under tables and chairs. A wheelbarrow was used to some effect. More pickets arrived from 11.30 - engineers and clerical among them. Many of these are regular pickets. Police had meanwhile blocked the fence and it was a quite amicable stalemate. Later, some TNT drivers attempted to get into the depot. They were prevented from entering, but there was one arrest. There were more police reinforcements. But no papers were distributed. The lights in the building went off and it was all shut down at 1.30-2am.

Wednesday 25th June, Wapping - afternoon picket

NGA strikers arranged to have one of their weekly meetings at Wapping instead of the usual local hall. They arrived individually and in groups and were told by their officials to disperse until 4.15pm. They did not want to draw attention to a large group of pickets. At 4.15 there were 250 present, mainly TNL Graphical, and the police were out in force. There were six mounted police near the gate and the entry to Virginia Street was blocked by police vans. It was impossible to get to the main gate. The pickets marched east along The Highway to Artichoke Hill and sat down in the road for half an hour. Traffic in both directions was held up. Later there was a march down to Dock Street. Here the pickets were hemmed in by the police and there was much pushing and shoving. There were 35 arrests, mainly for obstruction. The pickets then headed off for a 6.30 meeting. The feeling after was that this was "a marvellous operation - more successful than the meeting".

Wednesday 25th June, Wapping - march and rally

About 500 marched from Tower Hill at 9.15pm. Earlier the barriers at Wellclose had been pulled back behind the police line. One picket had brought his little boy down. The boy could run fast enough to get away from his dad and shout "caaa..." through the railings. The strikebreakers in blue were embarrassed. Police sealed off Thomas More, Dock and Ensign Streets to prevent the excursions into the back streets that have taken place on previous Wednesdays. As the marchers appeared on the horizon at 9.50 mounted goons formed up across Virginia Street and a single diagonal line blocked the road opposite the main gate so as to channel the marchers up towards Wellclose. Pickets stood around chatting and kept a gap between themselves and the police, although a few pickets were seen in a friendly conversation with three senior cops at the bottom of Ensign Street.

A police photographer was present behind police lines. The Highway was cleared after 11pm and the barriers put back into place.

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Tuesday 10th June, Walworth, SE17 - eviction

Murdoch's paper boys were found performing a new early-morning round - delivering eviction notices to make 50 people homeless on the Pullens Estate, near the Elephant and Castle. In a 6am raid, 150 police, some in riot gear, with 150 more in reserve, descended on this community, to be confronted on the street by over 400 local tenants and supporters. It took them, council officials and bailiffs, over six hours to smash their way into 26 flats, the whole time being subjected to a torrent of abuse, water, flour and paint bombs. Taunts of "scab" and "scum" followed them wherever they went.

This was no Tory council, but a left-wing Labour one, prepared to use the police in the same way that Murdoch has done. Approach roads were sealed to prevent supporters reaching the estate. The tactics of Wapping are now being used in other working-class areas. The paid thugs protect and carry out the orders of the boss class, be it the likes of Murdoch or Labour councillors. The housebreakers in blue, obviously confused by having to defend orange Godfrey Davis hire vans, used by scab bailiffs instead of the usual white ones, left them unattended. The opportunity to let down tyres was not missed. Feelings of the homeless and tenants were a mixture of contempt and anger. A Labour party which denounces riot police at Wapping is prepared to use them against other working people. The day was won by people standing their ground and fighting back, not by the leaders chasing camera crews and press teams and pleading a moral or legal case. No struggle is active unless it is linking up with others. You can see the parallels.

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Friday 27th June, Wapping, 155th day of the strike, early-morning picket

Two hundred clericals assembled at Wellclose opposite the plant to shout "Scab" at the strikebreakers. There was good spirit as pickets are determined to enjoy a good summer of working class activism. There was one arrest.

Friday 27th June, Wapping - afternoon picket

At 3pm several hundred pickets congregated at the back of Wellclose Square prepared to move on the main gate. At 3.06 three transit vans full of cops arrived at Virginia Street. Pickets crossed the street attempting to get to the main gate, but this was unsuccessful. Instead they blocked The Highway. A police helicopter hovering overhead had a clear view of the traffic building up. Sympathetic drivers in The Highway switched off their ignitions. Police lines were stretched for the next two hours as groups of pickets marched in all directions. Traffic in The Highway, Pennington Street, Dock Street and Wapping Lane was held up. And there were at least ten arrests. In the inevitable ups and downs of the strike this afternoon picket was an up.

Letter (shortened)


I am not a printer, but a Ford assembly line worker that has supported the Wapping picketing. I am particularly concerned that since the ballot there is now an absence of leadership in the dispute. The decisive question is the London leadership. It must now take the initiative and call action to extend the dispute. It should call action in Fleet Street of printers who are threatened if Murdoch wins.

Picket reply: The pickets are the leadership in the strike. The pickets are the guts of the working class struggle. For twenty-two weeks of picketing printers and supporters have stood up to a vicious cop strikebreaking assault, and fought back without much support. Extending the strike will be done by picketing, not as you outline it. And it is necessary to link the strike to other workers. Ours is a common struggle.



June 1984: angry march through Fleet Street

**NEWS INTERNATIONAL
DISPUTE**



WEDNESDAY DEMONSTRATIONS

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

MARCHES BEGIN AT 8-30^{PM} AT TOWER HILL

**NEWS INTERNATIONAL
DISPUTE**



SATURDAY DEMONSTRATIONS

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

MARCHES BEGIN AT 8-30^{PM} AT TOWER HILL

NEW FORM FOR SWEARING IN CONSTABLES

"Dost thou accept the old creed of coercion
In England, as in Ireland, tried and true?
Dost thou regard all freedom with aversion,
And hate her name?"

"I DO."

"Wilt thou respect, court, venerate the classes,
Whate're they seek to compass - good or ill?
Wilt thou molest and vilify the masses
In word and deed?"

"I WILL."

"Swear'st thou to wield thy truncheon for the Tory;
To smite and curse, and wound, and overbear?
Then seize and persecute with lying story
Some injured wretch?"

"I SWEAR."

Written by Henry Salt, after the Trafalgar Square riots of 1886.

Calendar:

Picket Wapping 24 hours a day, seven days a week. And don't forget Gray's Inn Road and Bouverie Street. There seems to be a lot going on at Bouverie Street at the moment.

Wednesday, 2nd July, 8.30pm Tower Hill, march to Wapping.

Saturday, 5th July, 8.30pm, Tower Hill, march to Wapping.

Notes:

Last Saturday night at Wapping Tony Mulhearn and his mate attempted to molest a Picket distributor. They claimed that Mulhearn had never crossed the picket line at Bemrose's in Liverpool. When the distributor tried to explain that pickets who had stood on the line at Bemrose's said that Mulhearn had stopped for two hours, then went in, Mulhearn and his mate continued to intimidate the picket. The cops began to arrive and the distributor left.

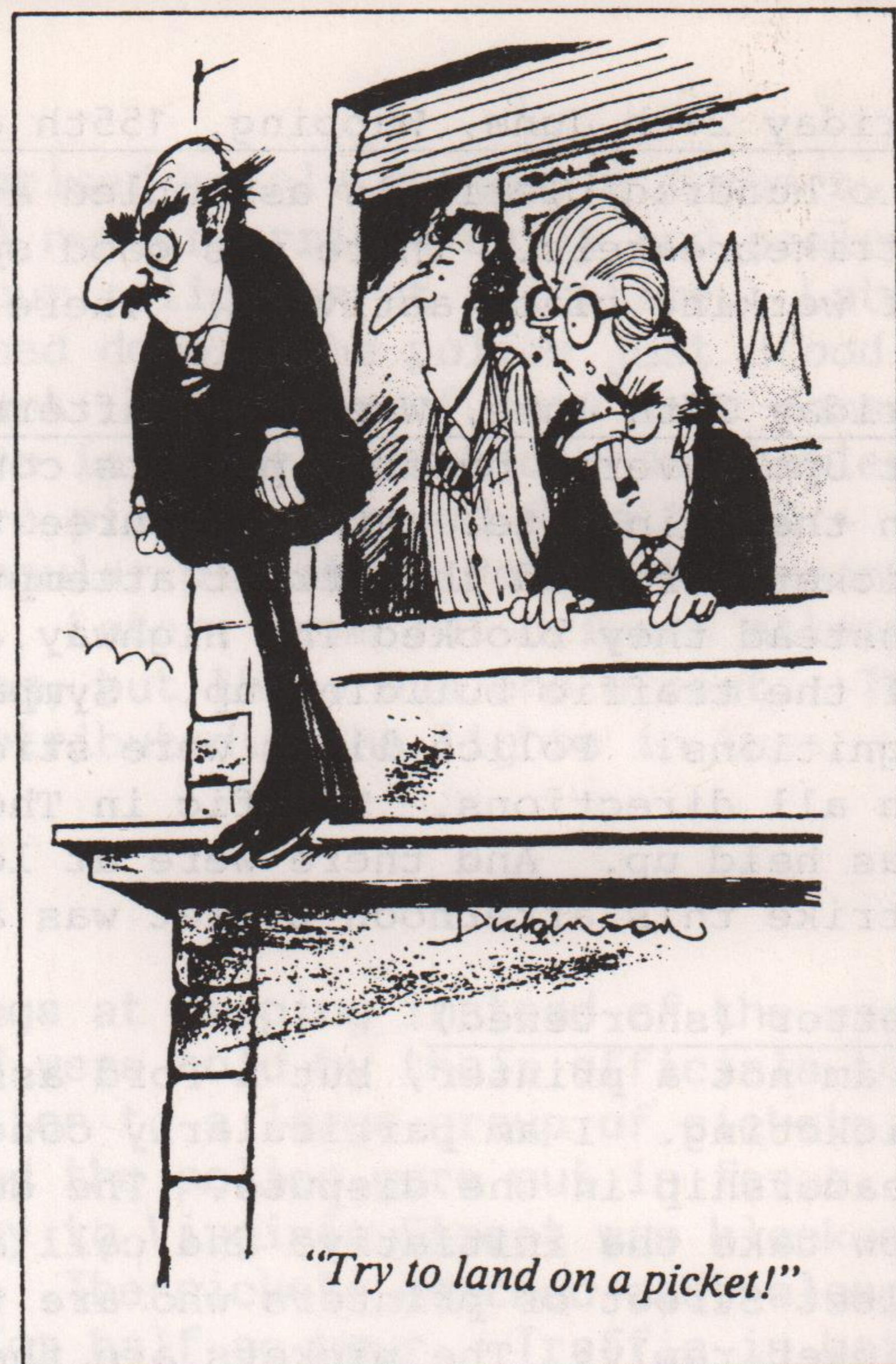
Michael Doherty, a sacked News of the World proofreader, has been jailed for four months (12 months, eight months suspended) for attacking a Sun journalist outside the Wapping plant. The case has been widely reported, notably in The Guardian, Telegraph, Murdoch's papers and the East London Advertiser. Journalists protect their own.

The Snake's Embrace

"TUC supports Wapping picketing" - Morning Star headline, 26th June.

"The Wapping dispute has won fresh official backing from Neil Kinnock ... Norman Willis has made a formal request to the electricians' union ... to use their best endeavours ... Tony Dubbins ... 'This is a positive step'" - Wapping Post, 21st June.

Income: £1 ST picket; 20p, 10p misc; 70p Times clerical; £2 Times Revisers and Copy-readers; 50p TNL Striker; £2.57 Guardian Reading Room; £2, £1 Guardian timehands; £10 Sun NGA comps; £2.50 shop donation; £1 picket; £5 German visitor; 50p lady cleaner; 40p NoW picket; 50p Times striker; £1 misc; £1 convict; £1 Sun Machine; £10 ST NGA Machine; £5 London Branch officer; £1 minder; £1 deadbeat; 30p, 25p, 60p, £1 pickets; £30 Sogat Sun Night Machine chapel.



Address: Picket, c/o Housmans Bookshop, 5 Caledonian Road, London N1 9DX

Available: -- Picket Part 1 (24th January to 31st March). Notes towards book on strike, £1.00 in stamps.

-- Full set of Picket, £1.00 in stamps to above address.