

Picket

no. 42

Wednesday 28th January 1987

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Telephone workers: Saturday 24th January. 6 of us picketed from 7.00am. British Telecom buildings have been picketed since Wednesday. We had reports that scabs were being used to do our work. Scabs were identified and lists were drawn up. Home addresses are easily accessible. One policeperson appeared about every half hour. At the moment they believe us not to pose any threat. **THAT IS THEIR MISTAKE.** The City of London, ie Banks, Stock Exchange, Insurance Companies, Building Societies and wealthy companies have to feel the pinch.

Until they start to crumble, we won't win. We cannot win it in isolation. The people involved have little experience. We have been threatened with mass sackings, scabs being bussed, and being starved back to work. We will resist all threats. Throughout London, several hundred BT buildings exist. We will be hard pressed to picket 24-hours, but the police force will be just as exhausted. We have been told to limit to 6 people. We have ignored this. Golding has tried to sell us out. The initiative for striking has come from grass roots level. We must win *and will win*. We need our own bulletin. **Tuesday 28th January:** About sixty on picket. Good spirit, happy. Engineers at one entrance, clericals at another, where some scabs are going in. Good picket line.

They Came in their Thousands on Saturday 24th January, from Yorkshire, Kent, Midlands, Miners, Firemen, Teachers, Engineers, from Glasgow, Dublin, Liverpool they came. Some never had money and could not be there, but they were there in spirit. Unemployed kids who knew that if the Dirty Digger is not opposed, then there will be no hope for them. They were not organised by any Executives (the Executive of SOGAT decided to circulate other Unions only two weeks before the Demo; we have no idea whether they kept to that). They came because as ordinary people they saw the justice of the fight of the sacked Printworkers, and deep in their hearts they admired the way we have fought on against all odds. By being there they gave us the heart to carry on for another year. Came there as free people - other side, paid uniforms, strikebreakers and scabs.

They laid dead the lie that we are a tiny isolated rump, that we are a bitter minority, who represent no-one except ourselves. This was one of the biggest Trade Union Demonstrations for a long time, and it was not helped along by the TUC, scab lovers and other backsliders; they were nowhere to be seen. So be it. On one night in January, we laid out all our strengths and weaknesses. Our strength is that there is still enormous and growing support for our struggle, that we have not used it, not channelled it into effective protest, that we have let the leadership have control of the dispute. How comes that these people from all over the country are not picketing wholesale warehouses who handle the NI titles? We have much to do in the next year.

The weakness is what it has always been - a matter of organisation. The facts of the matter are these: with that number of people we could stop Wapping and therefore we have to ask why it did not happen? And who organised it? - why, the leadership, of course. To say they organised nothing on the 24th would be wrong. Firstly, there was a stage at Wellclose, complete with lights and cover. Pickets may remember that we could not afford one of these for the Royal Wedding Alternative Day. There was also a Marquee. We have never seen one of these before. There were notices on the entrances saying "Speakers and Officials Only". Not for the pickets, who have spent a year in all weathers outside the scab joint. We have no reports of what went on in the tent. Cocktails, no doubt. That seems to be the thing that Officials organise best. When Brenda Dean started speaking, sections of the crowd were crying "Off!". This was when the police first charged that night. Meanwhile, scabs were leaving the plant behind the platform.

A few members of the Casual Chapel in the middle of the March tried several times to get people to follow them away from the route of the March, but people not being Printers or regulars on the Wapping Jaunt did not understand what was happening. On the residents' march there was a very good crowd indeed, 600 anyway. Started at Glamis, then south to Prusom. When we arrived at Wapping Lane, the Filth had blocked the road by the bridge. There were three lines of Police when we got there. It took at least 20 minutes before we got a push going, and by this time there were 6 rows of police. Anyway, the push started and we were nearly through, but not enough of us taking part to sustain it. Why are we there? Sightseeing or stopping the scabs? If we want to stop the scabs, we have to be more determined and take the opportunity when it arises.

When we did get to Wellclose, by a devious route involving ladders, fences and even walking on the pavement, it was obvious that we had arrived at the battle scene. Our people fought bravely, but don't they always, and needless to say, there was not a leader to be seen. The moral of the story is clear: if we want to do anything worthwhile, we have to do it ourselves, and we could do worse than look to the letter from the Oxford Supporters' Group..... (Who were the little bunch of scabs who cleared up the streets after the ruck at 4 in the morning...) (The police started spraying red paint over demonstrators... remember, they started it.)

The Residents' March blocked at Wapping Lane. Continued by going south on Wapping Lane, along Wapping High Street, then up through Thomas More to rejoin the main demo. Later, another march started from here, north on Dock and east on Cable. The main demo had sustained repeated police charges to break it up. Pickets brave beyond description. As police charged, they were met by a hail of debris to try to fend them off and giving as good as they got. As the police "sterile area" expanded, pickets fanned out and the battle went on for miles around the area. At 12.00 still 100 pickets across from plant.

Despite the atmosphere of fear built up by the snatch squads, the mounted scab charges and beatings, there were still hundreds of pickets around Wellclose at 2.00am. The cops had smashed the windows of the bus and the vans, and throughout the evening the caravan never stopped serving tea.

As we turned right out of Fleet Street, two coppers charged into the crowd to nick a bloke who was giving them stick. Well he got away, but not so one of the coppers, who fell over his own feet unconscious in the road. **7.00pm:** 50 people at Glamis. A few cops. **8.30pm:** 100 pickets at Glamis. Two scab coaches protected by line of police strikebreakers. **8.50pm:** Five scab trucks pass, to hail of insults. **9.00pm:** 800 pickets march down Glamis. **9.30pm:** 70 pickets overturned massive rubbish skip outside Caxton pub and debris strewn across scab route to prevent horse charges against others. Coppers then raced out of coaches and attacked anyone in sight. **10.00pm:** Demonstrators gradually gave ground, as riot cop thugs, banging their shields Zulu style, tried to clear the back of Wellclose and the Festival site. Despite obvious fear, with many people panicky, a constant barrage of stones at the police. Helped to slow up the attack. We were forced back

to the tower block and cops raced in to charge residents/demonstrators hanging about. About 400 of us regrouped in Cable St and an attempt was made to stem the evil blue tide. Some pickets got isolated, and were attacked, hit and nicked. We joined a group of about 500 in the Highway, blocked off from the main scab gate. **10.15pm:** One person, too slow to get away during the cop charge at the Festival field, got badly battered and after 15 minutes got carried away unconscious. **Cable St. 11.30-12.00pm:** People still trying to get back to Wellclose "where we belong". Hundreds of pickets around Cable St. discussing the war scenes.

A Few Things While It's Still Fresh in my Mind. For months we have taken stick from the police. On Saturday *we got one back*. Brilliant. They must've wondered what hit them, even the veterans of May 3rd. For hours they had to sit there and take it, the noise of concrete on perspex deafened us, what must it have been like for them? It was too dangerous for them to charge us as they'd have liked. Many thanks to all those people "unconnected with the dispute" who were right up there in the front, showing they know quite well what the police are about and what they deserve from working-class people. We need no excuses for hating the police. Thanks especially to the football supporters from Millwall, West Ham, Chelsea and Charlton. You were an inspiration.

They chased us all over, up as far as Tower Hill and Commercial Road, but we always came back at them. Intensive mass lobbying of police cars and wagons. Outrage on all sides. On Saturday *we raised the stakes*. We made it more expensive for them than ever to carry on trying to contain and kill off our fight. Next time they will try to call our bluff. Wynn Jones is on record as saying he is thinking of "escalating the police tactics". I'm ready.

Thursday 15th January: The gate at Murdoch's Grotty Grotto. The six pickets keeping the cold at bay had no such success with the scabs. A car pulls up, depositing a possible NUJ scab. Having been informed he was crossing a picket line, he still proceeded with his dirty money-grubbing deed. With this, Leman Street's finest gets out of his nice warm Noddy Van and tells the picket he is "too noisy" and "stop doing your picketing, get back to Wellclose". Polishing his three stripes like mad, he gets back into his van. One hour later (22.45pm), Chiswick's finest take over for some easy overtime. We know they are Chiswick because we are now keeping a log of where the Paperboys are being drafted from. One of them is spotted reading the "Buster". He is obviously the educated one. By this time the good guys at Wellclose had started the brazier going, as, surprise surprise, it had got very cold. What does the "Buster" reader and his mates do, because we haven't permission for the fire and it could be dangerous, they put it out, by *kicking it over*. Sleep softly in your beds, people of Chiswick... We will look after your Broadmoor rejects.

Monday 19th January. 8.00am: Start of week of action leading up to the year's anniversary. 75-100 RIRMA and clerical pickets gather in Wellclose and decide to start as we mean to go on. Road crossed, picket settles across junction of Pennington and Virginia. Electronic gates slam shut, then open again as cordon blue forms. Scab coaches run away at first, then chance their arm. About 9.00am reinforcements arrive, and pickets scatter greeting scab cars on arrival. One arrest made. Mass pickets every day of week.

Friday 23rd January. Kinning Park: 50 pickets appeared at the scab joint to celebrate the year anniversary of the strike. Union officials had clamped down on picketing since 6th December. Two coaches came down to London for the big demo.

The response from the Casual Chapel to the dispute has been magnificent, a hardening of resolve, a greater determination. Sure, one or two have dropped away, but the majority go on. The effort needed is monumental, but not beyond us. Indeed, our main problem is that at times we lose sight of what we are aiming at. This I believe is caused by the concentration that is needed to keep up with the twists and turns that News International make while they are trying to shake us loose. Even with the vast array of power we are still going on, still fighting.

The force that NI represents through their national newspapers see us as a threat to their strategies. The Tory Government and the Establishment want to have a cowered and docile workforce. Hence high unemployment, anti-Union Laws, the influence of the courts extended even further, and the power and numbers of the Police Force increased. All this to break our resistance, a resistance that we make not to improvements in High Technology, but to the domination by one class over the benefits of it. Where we seek a fair and just settlement, they seek domination; we seek jobs and good terms and conditions, they try to subject us to threats and intimidation. What we want is jobs. Jobs in a fair and just society under a planned economy. What we are fighting is prejudiced and evil. Resistance by working people to injustice and unfair treatment is timeless and like our forebears we won't give in. Every improvement, every social change has come through debate and struggle. If NI think they can beat us, they take on not just us, but our history.

Excerpt from Statement: Since the second month of the printers' strike, the Oxford Printworkers' Support Group has met, and decided early on that it was financially unsustainable to organise a coach to Wapping each week. Instead, they established a regular Saturday night picket of the local TNT depot at Didcot, which has been sending as many as 40 vans and lorries to Wapping to pick up newspapers. The picket has been maintained throughout the coldest months, interspersed with occasional visits to Wapping. Average pickets are between 20 and 30 persons, though they have been as high as 70, with assistance from NGA Sun Reading and Swindon supporters. Of course, it was never intended that the picket of TNT Didcot should take place in isolation. Regular picketing of TNT depots throughout the country would have been an effective way of mobilising against Murdoch's union-busting on a national scale. Unfortunately, apart from at Leicester, where regular pickets are also organised, no such development has occurred.

● **Scab has moved.** D. Lovett, formerly of 58 Browning Rd, Enfield, has moved.

● **All supporters welcome.** Regular printers' marches, Saturdays and Wednesdays, 9.00pm from Tower Hill.

● From leaflet **Six Workers Sacked from Morning Litho:** "We were sacked by so-called left-wing employers, claiming to defend workers' rights, who took advantage of the fact that we are unauthorised Turkish workers and therefore cannot claim our rights. The real reason for our dismissal was the introduction of piecework in the workplace, which was opposed by the finishers.

● **Income:** £1, 50p NGA clerks; £7.16 working SOGAT members; £1.00 clerical strikers; £7.42 Wednesday night; £15.20 NGA strikers; £50.00 'Here and Now' (Glasgow); £5.00 GCW SOGAT m/c chapel; £5.00 NGA minder; £65.00 Charlie Cherrill.

Published by picketing print union members. *Picket*, c/o Housman's 5 Caledonian Road, London N1 9DX.