2p

Nottingham Voice

Number 70 - 30 August 1977

OVER HALF of the workers from a small Langley Mill company are continuing to picket the factory. And local trades unionists say the dispute is like the one at the notorious Grunwick company in London.

Members of the Furniture, Timber and Allied Trades Union walked out of the factory three weeks ago because the company, E.H.Architectural Products, refused to recognise their union.

The company then dismissed them so they took their case to an industrial tribunal in Nottingham on 25th August. But the tribunal refused to consider the case because of a loophole in employment legislation which excludes the dismissal of strikers. (Exactly the same happened when 137 strikers dismissed by Grunwick took their case to a tribunal last year.)

This follows five months of negotiations by ACAS, the government conciliation body which failed to persuade the Grunwick management to recognise the clerical union APEX.

According to union sources the problem arose because the company wanted to use the union for their own ends and did not want it to properly represent its members. It was the company which invited the union to recruit in the factory in 1972 because of labour problems.

And in 1975 the union agreed to some of its members being put on a lower pay scale. This was because they had been subject to a building trade agreement and the company said they should be in the furniture trade agreement which would mean lower pay for some members. The union eventually conceded that this should be brought in gradually with members receiving only 50% of any increase until they came into line with the lower rates. This was reluctantly accepted by the members.

But more recently problems arose

33 MANSFIELD RD, NOTTM. TEL. 411676

because the union said that the company wasn't giving proper recognition to the shop steward and union officials. The company replied by withdrawing recognition from the union altogether and ACAS was called in to conciliate.

The employers eventually agreed without a ballot that they would have to recognise the union since eighteen out of the thirty two employees were in the union. But after several months ACAS had still not got an agreement with them so the union members went on strike.

The union is still adopting a conciliatory attitude and has not even called on other trades unionists to assist with the picket.

A spokesman for the company told us that they intend to carry on with only fourteen people including two company directors and will not be recruiting any more workers. But this is difficult to believe because even though there is a slump in the industry union sources tell us that only about six of the people left are production workers and the company has just built a large extension factory.

Nottingham Trades Council vice-president Brian Simister visited the picket line recently and gave a report to the last Council meeting. He said the case was similar to the Grunwick dispute and showed the attitude that many small employers have towards unions. And he said that at Grunwick ACAS had been shown to be a toothless body so employers knew they had nothing to fear from them and could safely ignore them.

The union could have a long hard battle on its hands.

THE NATIONAL FRONT will not be allowed to meet at the Beechdale Hotel in Bilborough in future.

This decision by the landlord follows a picket organised by the local anti-fascist committee at the last meeting of the Front at the pub. About forty anti-fascists handed leaflets to people in the area and chanted slogans including "The National Front is a Nazi Front; smash the National Front"

The Front was banned some time ago by the Willoughby Arms in Wollaton after that was picketted.

A few days later the local Trades Council passed a motion from Calverton NUM calling for the Council to set up an anti-racist committee and intensify the campaign against the National Front and other racists and fascists. But they voted against physical opposition to attempts by the Front and similar organisations to march in Nottingham or elsewhere. This was in spite of the Calverton delegate Steve Abbott telling the Council that a previous march by the Front in Nottingham had been prevented from getting to the Square because left groups had physically blocked the road.

The Trades Council Executive had already arranged to meet ethnic minorities in September to discuss this issue. And chairman Don Devine reminded the Council that they had mounted a campaign last August and made two attempts already to form an anti-racist committee.

○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

6% OF WORKERS in the Nottingham area are unemployed. 15,761 people are out of work - 11,973 men (7.6%) and 3,788 women (3.6%).

The figure includes 1,801 under the age of 18. And that includes 1,000 of this year's school leavers from within the city boundary, 600 boys and 400 girls.

Nationally 1,635,950 people are out of work. Nearly one in every twelve male workers and over one in twenty female workers are signing unemployed.

Industrial output has fallen back to the level of 1970, 7% down on 1973 output.

In the first ten months of Phase 2 retail prices went up 16% while take-home pay rose 11%. The real value of earnings went down 4.4%.

But while the workers are getting poorer the capitalists are getting richer.

The average annual profit increase for industrial companies in the first quarter of 1977 was 34.8% and in the second quarter 48.7%.

And the average increase in dividends declared in the first quarter was 23.7% and in the second quarter 17.6% (in spite of a government limit of 10%).

☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆

REAL ALE has been going down very well in Newark since August

10th when the Old King's Arms re-opened.

Landlord Chris Holmes, former chairman of the Campaign for Real Ale and one time contributor to the Voice, told us that he has had difficulty keeping up with the demand and has been running out of some of the beers. But he hasn't run out of beer altogether!

There are four different real ales - Kimberley, Marstons, Sam Smiths and Ruddles - as well as Mansfield which is a keg beer. There will be another real ale - West Crown - as soon as it is available.

It is a welcome change in Newark where Courage have a virtual monopoly with their gassed-up keg beers. They closed down the Old King's Arms in 1972.

But it wasn't won without a fight. When Chris applied to the Newark Magistrates for a licence to sell traditional draught beers they rejected the application on the grounds of "no need". So he appealed to Nottingham Crown Court where the judge referred to the "Courage monopoly not acting in the public interest" and granted a licence.

With any luck the judgment will be used as a precedent to break the big brewers' monopolies in other towns.

Dear Sir, - I refer to your current issue No. 69 and to your statement on page 10 that the Director of Housing, Mr Lee, spent the whole of the July Policy and Resources Committee meeting reading a golfing magazine. As you well know, that is completely untrue and can only have been written with the intention of discrediting Mr Lee in the eyes of your readers. While local government officers, as public servants, are prepared to accept public criticism of their actions, they are entitled to be protected from derogatory remarks not founded on fact.

I suggest you immediately apologise to Mr Lee and inform your readers that there was no truth in your statement about him.

Yours faithfully,
M.J.Hammond
Chief Executive
City of Nottingham.

(Eds - We accept Mr Hammond's assurance that Mr Campbell-Lee was not reading the magazine during the whole of the Policy and Resources meeting. We apologise for any distress this may have caused to Mr Campbell-Lee.)

A CAMPAIGN to inform low-paid workers about minimum wages and holiday entitlement has been launched by the People's Centre, Nottingham's independent advice centre.

This is for workers covered by Wages Councils including those working in pubs, cafes and many shops.

A leaflet produced by the

Centre quotes the Government as saying "Where deliberate underpayment is discovered, that is stealing from the workers" and "All employers who underpay are breaking the law". (But the real attitude of the Government can be seen from the fact quoted in Voice 69 that last year none of the 8,993 employers found illegally paying low wages were prosecuted. And the law is so complicated that it is almost impossible to tell what you are entitled to.)

Further details: People's Centre, 412269, or Wages Inspectors, 51944.

☐Grunwick Strike support meeting with two speakers from the strike committee. Wed 31st Aug, 7.30, International Community Centre, 61B Mansfield Road.
☐"Right to Work" march from Liverpool to the TUC conference at Blackpool, 2nd - 5th Sep ending in a lobby of the TUC on Mon 5th.
☐Labour Abortion Rights Campaign - National Planning meeting, Sat 10th Sep, 2-5pm, Room 4, Albert Hall Institute, Maid Marian Way. Open to all Labour party members. Creche provided.
☐Alternative Paths to Planning - one day conference, Mon 12th Sep, 10.30-4.30, Chaucer Bldg, Trent Poly. Tickets £5 (students £2): Philip Brachi, Dept of Town and Country Planning (48248 ext 2591).
☐Demonstration against rent increases, Sat 24th Sep. Assemble Forest, 10.30, to march to city centre. Organised by Top Valley Tenants Association. Backed by Federation of Tenants Associations and Trades Council.

A FULL REPORT on what the City Council and County Council have been up to over the summer will be included in the next Voice.

This will include an account of the recent City Council climbdown on their house sales policy (as predicted in Voice 66) and the further cuts in bus subsidies announced by the County Council.

THE NEXT ISSUE of Nottingham Voice will appear at the beginning of October. It will be much larger and will cost 10p, a price increase of only 400% (and worth every penny - Eds). The workers will, of course, continue to be paid absolutely nothing (Directors' note: "We must all make sacrifices to help maintain the profitability of the enterprise").

The Voice will be attempting to concentrate much more on industrial matters, an area which we have neglected in the past. And, since we never do anything by halves, half of the present issue is concerned with giving brief details of five of the largest employers in the Nottingham area - Boots, Raleigh, Players, Plessey and Courtaulds. They are all owned by large national or multinational concerns and between them employ over 30,000 people in the area - a third of the manufacturing jobs. Three of them - Plessey, Courtaulds and Players - accounted for a loss of about 5,000 jobs over the last ten years and may account for the loss of another 5,000 in the next five years.

Industry is a difficult area to get information on and many of the figures are approximations. The reason is that private firms are not democratically accountable and as a result they give out the absolute minimum of information to the public and to their workers. And even their shareholders are only told what the companies have to tell them by law - and that is not much more than how much profit they have made.

This means that decisions of great importance to local communities such as what a firm's plans are for investment and employment in the area are not published and are not open for public debate.

And the government is not much better when it becomes involved in running industry. The recently announced closure of Chilwell Ordnance Depot with the loss of 1300 jobs is a good example of how a united local community has been unable to prevent a closure. And the rapid loss of jobs at Plessey is partly due to drastic cuts made by the Post Office in spite of massive profits.

An excellent study of industrial decline, "The Costs of Industrial Change", appeared earlier this year and we include a summary of it at the end of our report on the large Nottingham employers as it puts into perspective the loss of manufacturing industry locally.

(Much of the following employment information has been prepared for a report to be published shortly by the Political Economy of Nottingham Group.)

○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

11,000 MANUFACTURING jobs were lost in the Greater Nottingham area between 1966 and 1973, most of them in the inner city area, according to information prepared for the County Structure Plan. Over half of these jobs were in the textile and clothing industry affecting mainly women. There was also a loss of 3,000 jobs in construction and 3,000 jobs in mining affecting mainly men.

But there was an increase of 9,500 service jobs, over 8,000 of these for women. The result was that total male employment dropped by 7,000 while female employment rose very slightly though there was a large shift from textiles to clerical work.

In the county as a whole the

main source of male employment, mining, is steadily declining with a loss of 11,000 jobs from 1966 to 1973. And the main source of female employment, textiles, is also declining with a loss of 4,000 jobs from 1966 to 1973.

According to a City Council report on Industrial Relocation, Nottingham has lost manufacturing jobs at nearly four times the rate of Great Britain as a whole over the last ten years while service employment increased at less than half the national rate.

☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆

BOOTS are the largest employer in the Nottingham area. They employ about 10,500 people in manufacturing and administration on their sites in the city centre and at Beeston and they employ about 500 more in their shops in the Nottingham area.

The number employed has been fairly constant and there is no indication of any significant change in the near future.

Imports and exports do not account for a very large part of Boots' operations. But they have started to buy up chemical firms and chemists shops all over the world. Overseas business already accounts for 28% of profits. Recently Boots has bought a chain of 93 shops in Canada, a 70% share in a West German chemical firm, and a 49% share in a Yugoslav firm.

They intend to invest £250 million in the next four years, about a third of this on the manufacturing side. At least £7½ million will be spent at Beeston and probably a lot more. This seems to be the only significant commitment to invest in productive industry in the Nottingham area - as far as we are aware no other firms are planning any investment on this scale. But in spite of all the investment at home and abroad the number of people employed in this area is likely to remain about the same.

Boots managed to increase sales by 20% over the past year which represented a small increase after taking into account 17% inflation. Pre-tax profits were up 26% while their total UK wage bill went up by only 14% but they kept the dividend increase to 12%.

○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

RALEIGH employ about 7,000 people in Nottingham and this figure has probably been fairly stable over the last few years. The firm is continuing to recruit about 30 people a week to replace people leaving according to Les Chapman the Works Convenor. Raleigh's sales, including exports, are increasing as are the profits.

Raleigh were bought by Tube Investments in 1960 to establish a virtual 100% monopoly in the British cycle market. Previously there had been fierce competition between the two groups.

An independent group, Social Audit, compiled a report on TI in 1973. It showed that TI declared some 10,000 redundancies between 1967 and 1973 after spending about £60 million on buying up other companies (this was made possible because the government gave them £54 million in compensation for nationalising their unprofitable steel interests). But in spite of this rationalisation they remained a relatively inefficient company with a lower than average return on investment.

Social Audit criticised TI for being very secretive (the Voice has similarly found it impossible to get any information from Raleigh management). And they criticised Raleigh's attitude to black people. Although a large proportion of Raleigh's production force is black very few are in skilled work and none were in supervisory roles in 1973. Raleigh refused to sign an advert in the Evening Post in 1972 endorsing the local Community Relations Council's policy which said that "the engagement and promotion of employees in all grades should be on the basis of merit and equality of opportunity, regardless of race, colour or creed". The statement was signed by twenty four major Nottingham employers including Boots and Players.

TI recently announced plans to invest in new plant at Raleigh in Nottingham. It remains to be seen whether this will cause any reduction or increase in the workforce.

The main criticism of Raleigh locally by the unions is that they pay low wages while maintaining a high tempo of production.

In 1976 TI gave £2500 to the Economic League, the organisation which compiles information on militant trades unionists, and £1000 to the right wing Tory Centre for Policy Studies.

PLAYERS employ about 6,000 people in Nottingham - 3,500 at Radford and 2,500 at their new Horizon factory by the Trent opened five years ago with two-shift working.

Peter Featherstone of the Tobacco Workers Union told us that there has been a steady decline in the work force achieved by cutting down on recruitment. He estimated the workforce ten years ago as 8,000. And he expects to see a steady decline in the number over the next five years. There is no recruitment at the moment.

He pointed out that the Imperial Group which owns Players had a drop in sales of 11% over the last year and sales of cigarettes are dropping generally. Recently Players have been maintaining sales by increasing their share of the market but that is unlikely to last. (Players' cigar factory at Ipswich has not done as well - they were on four day working for a time earlier this year.)

Peter Featherstone thinks that new machinery may be introduced shortly as has been done at some other cigarette factories. He says this should not cause redundancies though it may mean a further reduction in the workforce.

Last year the Imperial Group gave £5,000 to the Economic League.

PLESSEY at Beeston now employ less than 5,000 people compared to 7,000 in 1974 and 7,500 in 1970. Brian Harrison, chairman of ASTMS at Plessey, expects the number to be down to 2,000 within five years. The reduction has been achieved so far by natural wastage and voluntary redundancy. But there is no comparable work in the area so most of the workforce will have to move away or take different work, probably lower paid.

The Beeston plant was part of Ericsson Telephones until they were taken over in 1961. It is now part of the Plessey Telecommunications Group which also has factories in the North West around Liverpool and in the North East around Sunderland. The cuts have been concentrated in the other two areas where unemployment is already very high. Earlier in the year Plessey announced 4,800 redundancies and three factory closures in those areas.

The main reason for the cuts is the introduction of new technology. The change from electromechanical telephone switchgear to fully electronic systems will involve a massive reduction in the industry's workforce. The President of the Telecommunications Engineering Manufacturing Association, Ken Garfield, recently said that eventually only 4% of the original workforce would be needed.

But the loss of jobs has been greatly accelerated by recent cuts made by the Post Office. The PO has provided a protected highly profitable market for domestic telecoms producers and about half of Plessey's telecoms production has gone to the PO.

In 1973 the PO announced a ten year changeover to new electronic equipment which would have meant an orderly run-down of the workforce. But they then made further large cuts in orders in 1974, 1975, and 1976. And they have refused to reduce prices to customers to encourage more sales. (One result has been that, before adjustments, the PO made a £900 million profit last year making it probably the country's most profitable company.)

Plessey continue to be a highly profitable company with rising profits and a record order book. It is a multinational operating in 136 countries with a third of its operations entirely outside the UK accounting for nearly half the profit.

But it has been suggested that Plessey are short of capital for investment and are therefore ripe for takeover or merger. That could mean an even greater rationalisation of the industry and a larger loss of jobs.

□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □

ABOUT 20,000 people in the Nottingham area are employed in the textile and clothing industry, the vast majority of them women. According to the County Draft Structure Plan there was a loss of 7,500 jobs in this sector in the Greater Nottingham area between 1966 and 1973 including the loss of 6,000 jobs for women.

And George Marshall, District Secretary of the National Union of Hosiery and Knitwear Workers told us that there was a further reduction about two years ago due to the impact of low cost imports though the effect of this was subsequently reduced by import quotas agreed within the Common Market. Because of a high turnover of labour the reduction has been achieved by natural wastage.

Courtaulds are probably the largest employer in textiles in this area employing about a quarter of the workers. They own the two large factories Meridian and Bairns-Wear and over twenty others in the area

They have a monopoly in Britain in rayon production and in the 60s after fighting a take-over bid from ICI moved into other fibres, particularly nylon, and as well as buying up a large number of mills particularly in Lancashire (many of which they closed down) they bought whole-salers and clothing manufacturers like Meridian and Bairns-Wear to get guaranteed outlets for their fibres (otherwise they would not have been able to withstand comp-etition especially from nylon produced by ICI).

This move towards monopoly was backed by government aid and Courtaulds are now one of the largest British companies and have continued to expand while employment in the textile industry is steadily declining around the country.

▲▲▲▲▲▲▲▲▲▲▲

The Costs of Industrial Change

This report was published earlier this year by the Community Devel-opment Project team. (Community Development Projects (CDPs) were set up in twelve "deprived areas" by the Home Office. They were supposed to find solutions based on self-help by the poor in these areas. But the CDPs' experience led to rejecting the assumptions behind this thinking. They found that the problems were firmly tied to much more basic structural problems in society and have produced a number of reports on various aspects of their work.)

"The Costs of Industrial Change" shows that "pockets of deprivation" are useful and even necessary to the normal opera-tions of the economy and capital-ist development will always tend to produce such areas.

The development and decline of five areas are looked at in detail: Batley, West Yorkshire (heavy woollens); Benwell, Newcastle-upon-Tyne (arms and heavy engineering); Canning Town, East London (docks and port industries); North Shields, Tyne-side (shipbuilding and ship repair) and Saltley, Birmingham (vehicle production).

All were at one time major centres of production but the basic industries on which they grew have declined and industrial investment has been moved into newer and more profitable areas leaving the working class comm-unities to bear the costs of phys-ical and social dereliction.

The report predicts that this could happen in the future to any of today's "successful" industrial areas.

The general pattern of devel-opment was that firms located on relatively cheap greenfield sites providing housing, normally of poor quality, for a new population of workers to move in. But then a new generation of investment grew up on further greenfield sites financed partly by the profits from the original industry. Eventually the traditional sector declined leaving empty factories and a population in run-down houses. The population started to move out especially the younger people and skilled workers. Many people had to travel much further to find work. The availability of cheap, old factories and a pool of unemployed unskilled workers attracted small-scale low-wage low-productivity industry.

As the older industries decline they adopt a number of tactics to try and maintain profits such as increasing productivity by making some workers produce more while laying others off, shiftworking, employing immigrants to keep wages down, mergers, closures, reinvesting in other parts of the country (or abroad), and speculating with the land no longer used for production.

Government regional incentives to encourage industry to go to the depressed regions are very expensive compared to the number of extra jobs created. There is very little mobile industry meaning a lot of competitive bidding by different regional development agencies. This means that firms can dictate where they go which still forces the unemployed workers in the declining areas to move around the region or travel a long way to work. And where large firms have factories in development areas these are the first to be cut back in a recession because the subsidies mean that these factories don't need to run at full capacity.

It is estimated that British industry has been closing down at an average rate of $2\frac{1}{2}\%$ a year since 1970 with only a third of lost capacity being replaced. Increasingly industry is controlled by large national and multinational firms who are able to place factories where wages are lower and working class organisation is weaker. They can shift production from one plant to another which gives them a powerful weapon in disputes. And they can arrange that British subsidiaries can buy goods at high prices from subsidiaries abroad thus reducing British profits and reducing the tax paid in this country. In this way multinationals can play off one government against another.

The report concludes: "The most relevant measures are not to be found in tinkering with housing or labour markets... Until policies are implemented which seriously challenge the rights of industry and capital to move freely about the country (not to mention the world) without regard for the welfare of workers and existing communities - who end up carrying the costs under the present system - the problems and inequalities generated by uneven capitalist development will persist".

* The Costs of Industrial Change, 80p from Mushroom, Heathcoat Street (582506).