

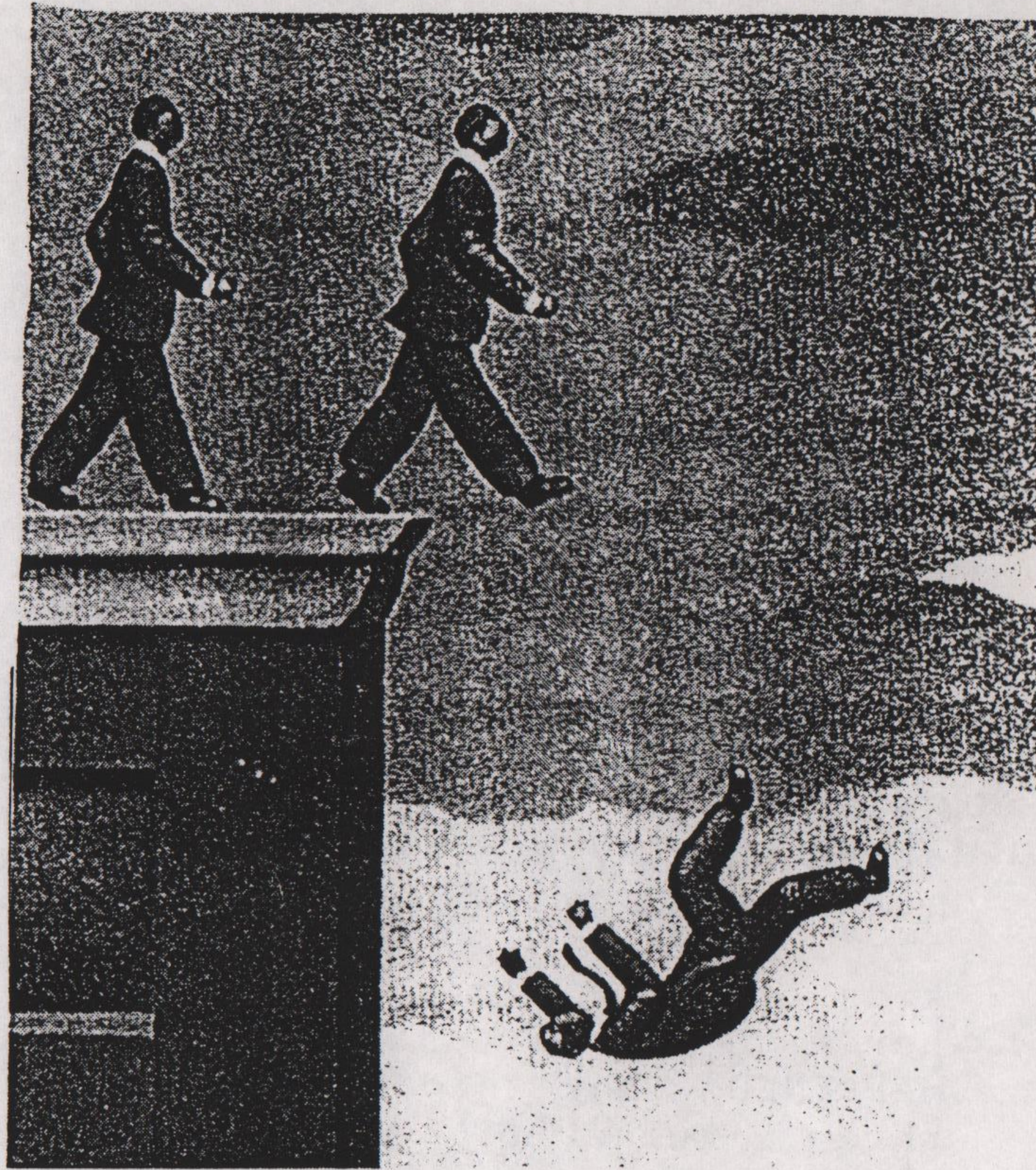
The dispute was declared official almost immediately by the TGWU and has been supported by the Wirral Trades Council. The other factory workers started an overtime ban in solidarity with the sacked eight and the Trades Council started a public campaign that has been a credit to them.

We have converted the picket to a community picket, which gets round some of the legal problems. It has been well supported; there have been some public events including a march of about 600 people. We have been trying to get a product boycott going. Spillers make mainly dog food at that factory but also manufacture Golden Wonder products and Pot Noodles (no problem boycotting them!) There was a picket-cum-bar-b-que last week when the management of Tesco were due to visit the factory to line up a deal. All in all rank-and-file support has been excellent and some officials have also been ok.

There have been some problems. The workers themselves have been slow to publicise their cause mainly due to lack of experience; it took ages to get a leaflet out and they have become reliant on local Labour Councillors and officials (so far not a problem, but these leaders of the proletariat have happily cut jobs in past years.

The company have invoked the law against the pickets, with little success. However, they have taken out an injunction against our product boycott, claiming that it is in restraint of trade to ask people not to buy certain items in support of an industrial dispute. The chairperson of the Trades Council has thus been barred from speaking in public about this dispute. Even if we win in the courts the government will probably change the law anyway.

A further problem is the attitude of the people who control the Birkenhead Docks regeneration scheme, who want the pickets' shack pulled down "because it makes the area look scruffy". We have told them not to be so bloody daft.



The most worrying aspect of this dispute is the fact that the workers in the factory are also members of the T&G. At first they implemented an overtime ban, but this was quickly stopped, for highly dubious reasons. They have been very wary of the product boycott. At a recent rally their rep. voiced his support but didn't commit himself to any real action. Ultimately this could be a real danger to the dispute. If national officials are called in, they are sure to sell the cleaners out.

The prospect for these cleaners is very uncertain. At a local level they have been well supported, and have taught us all a lesson about fighting: they may lack experience but they certainly make up for it with nerve. The main worry is that the T&G may take a decision at national level to give up the fight. At present their indifference is an advantage.

I have been involved in disputes since 1964, but this one is bringing home to me just how vicious the bosses are today. They feel strong and have no need to put on a caring face any more.

J Bishop

Liverpool

TRADE UNION NEWS

P.O. Box 128. Hull. NO 21

Hull & District Trades Union Council



Photo S SAMUEL

BURNSALLS

MIDDLEBROOKS

TIMEX

TYLERS

NUM

SPILLERS

ANNIE HALL

PEOPLE WHO SAY

ENOUGH IS

ENOUGH.

FRIDAY OCTOBER 15th
7.30 P.M.

HULL TRADES & LABOUR CLUB

HULL & DISTRICT TRADES COUNCIL
PRESENTS...

Arthur Scargill

(President of the National Union
of Mineworkers). Followed by a gig
(Bands to be confirmed).

Welcome to this rather
late edition of Trade
Union News.

Middlebrooks, Timex, Burnsalls,
Spillers, the Miners. This is an
edition dedicated to the thousands
of men and women currently fighting
the bosses offensive.

Our people have been in action
giving support at the picket lines
and protests at all of the above
this month (save Spillers, anyone
fancy a trip to Liverpool?) All
these disputes show that workers
must look to themselves and each
other if we are to win. No-one else
can do it for us. Our trades council
is part of that activist tradition
of Solidarity Trade Unionism, it's
unquenchable and all those who have
locked horns with us in the past
have come off worst. To our friends
we offer support and to our enemies
implacable opposition.

Thankyou to Sue Samuel, Guy
Cheverton, Paul Hampton, John
Bishop, the Burnsalls, Timex and
Middlebrooks strikers for making
this edition possible.

Send money and articles to Trade
Union News, P.O. Box 128, Hull by
the 23rd July. Fax (0482) 492388,
Tel (0482) 41648 (G. Cheverton).

HULL TRADE UNION NEWS seems to go
down rather well, and not just in
Hull. CAROL PASS, Secretary of
Doncaster TC reproduced parts of
our May Day edition for their own
new publication. Bradford TC's
Secretary, calling for a similar
bulletin to be formed, said in his
last mailing, "Hull Trade Union
News shows what can be achieved."
Ta very much.

REVIEW: THE VANISHING
ODEON HULL

This rivetting thriller uses
everyone's most shattering night-
mare -- the unexplained disappear-
ance of a loved one -- to explore
two men's obsessions: Jeff
(Kieffer Sutherland) cannot
abandon his search for Truth,
while apparently normal school-
teacher and family man Barney has
embarked on a quest to transcend
the limits of Good and Evil. The
involvement of feisty heroine
Rita (played with verve by Nancy
Travis) eventually leave s us in
no doubt as to which is the more
destructive, but not before
questioning this point with some
deliberation.

At least, that's one justification
for seeing yet another movie
about killing people for no
apparent reason. This one contains
a few echoes of the Texas Chainsaw
Massacre (though it's less grisly
-- or should that be gristle-y?)
and John Fowles' unpleasant book
"The Collector", though its
female victim is carefully offset
by a tough resourceful heroine
who won't give up.

A pretentious film; the last
sixty seconds or so are especially
piquant.

S Samuel



POLISH TRADE UNIONISTS SPEAK OUT

The following is an edited transcript an interview in Hull between Paul Hampton and three Polish trade unionists from Wroclaw. Kristyna is the president of the factory commission of an electricity supplier, Wieslaw is an engineer on the national committee of trade union Solidarnosz's agricultural branch and Wojtek is also an engineer at the same plant as Wieslaw, a member of the factory council and the translator for them all. Also present was Dave Green, an AEEU member from Northampton, who had helped organise the tour and driven the three around. The three trade unionists are all unpaid lay officials in Solidarnosz trade union and have spoken at the TCJCC Conference, as well as at trades councils (eg Hull & District) and at workplace meetings (eg British Aerospace, Brough).

Q. What was the purpose of your visit?

A. Our main purpose was to meet with British trade unionists and talk about privatisation. The model for privatisation in Poland is the Thatcher model and we hope to learn some lessons for opposing it. Also, we want to know more about co-ops as we think that they are an alternative to privatisation.

Q. What is the extent of privatisation in Poland at present?

A. Currently about 20% of firms have been privatised, which is quite small. Many firms are still state-owned and hence in May the government passed another privatisation act in parliament. The electricity supply is due to be privatised in the next few weeks - but trade unionists do not accept the proposed privatisations.

Q. So what are the differences between Solidarnosz and the government? Many people here think that they are the same.

A. Trade union Solidarnosz is still an independent union, with no links and no support for the government. Many of the people in government came from the union, but the power changed them. But you can see the differences today, now that the govt. has fallen (this was on the news on the day of the interview). It was the Solidarnosz deputies in the parliament that moved the vote of no confidence.

In this way we hope that the government will express the needs of workers. The trade union has the power to force its demands - but we are not seeking to take power in a revolutionary way.

Q. Are you saying the union is not sure what it wants? In the 1970's we used to say that British unions were organisationally strong, often very militant, but still politically and ideologically weak. Could you say the same about the trade union Solidarnosz?

A. The problem in Poland is the legacy of the inefficient Stalinist system and also the debt. The

working class is totally against privatisation, because we know it will mean unemployment, attacks on the health service and corruption, but we face the problem of what to do with the 'real estate' (factories). That's why we're interested in co-ops.

Q. In Britain we would see many dangers in co-ops, in-house bids and management take-overs. A co-op in a sea of capitalism would be subject to the same competitive pressures as a capitalist firm and might be forced to sack workers, cut wages etc despite its good intentions. Isn't this also likely in Poland.

A. We have to make use of the wealth, hence the idea of co-ops. Some co-ops already exist, but there is no overall framework to develop them. Trade union Solidarnosz wants the workers to have a full share of the company. The works councils in the factories are already strong. Our model is the works councils in 1980-81, which began to link up regionally and nationally. These co-ops would operate in parallel to the government. The conditions in Poland today are different to those in Britain. We think that our ideas are a third way between capitalism and the old Stalinism in Poland.

Q. How can British socialists and trade unionists help in your struggle against privatisation?

Firstly, we need more discussions of ideas. We are trying to establish a workers hostel or club near our factory, where trade unionists from overseas can come and stay and talk with us. We also need money and equipment, especially for printing materials. We would like to organise exchange visits for our kids and British children, especially to help them learn English (though there are some financial obstacles to this). Most of all we want to exchange concrete experiences, especially with workers at factory level who are also fighting in Britain. We want to know what they think, not just the opinions of officials.

Paul Hampton, NUT

KOMISJA ZAKŁADOWA
przy
"Agromet - Pilmet"
FMR

Solidarność

NIEZALEŻNY SAMORZĄDNY ZWIĄZEK ZAWODOWY

A SONG OF WHO WE ARE

The weather during the 1993 Yorkshire Miners' Gala seemed to match the mood of the occasion pretty well, switching as it did between balmy June sunshine and a miserable grey drizzle. At times it felt like a real celebration, but there were moments when a certain chilly irony could have escaped no-one.

Being twinned with Hatfield Main (near Doncaster) NUM, the Trades Council was invited to march around the pit villages there before the Gala proper in Wakefield. It was a very small procession indeed which, after the Miners' Hymn was played, followed the colliery band through the early-morning streets of Stainforth and Dunscoft. Curtains twitched and people paused in their doorways to watch us pass; I wondered if the VICTORY TO THE MINERS slogan on the Hull banner struck them as ironic, or just sad.



streets as flashy shopfronts and competing in-store pop channels never do.

The afternoon of the Gala is a rare combination of politics and a good time -- unusual because there's no attempt at pill-sugaring: speeches by Arthur Scargill and Denis Skinner were listened to attentively and got enthusiastic applause; later the audience was entertained at the club just round the corner or by the various rides and spectacles provided to amuse parents and kids. There were plenty of youngsters around -- the NUM perhaps more than most have reason to recognise that whatever the politically-correct may say, the family can be a huge source of strength to workers -- and lots of free treats so no-one felt left out.

That evening Hatfield NUM rounded off the day by holding a social. Banners from their own branch, Markham Main WAPC and our Trades Council were displayed proudly, speakers from WAPC and the UMWA

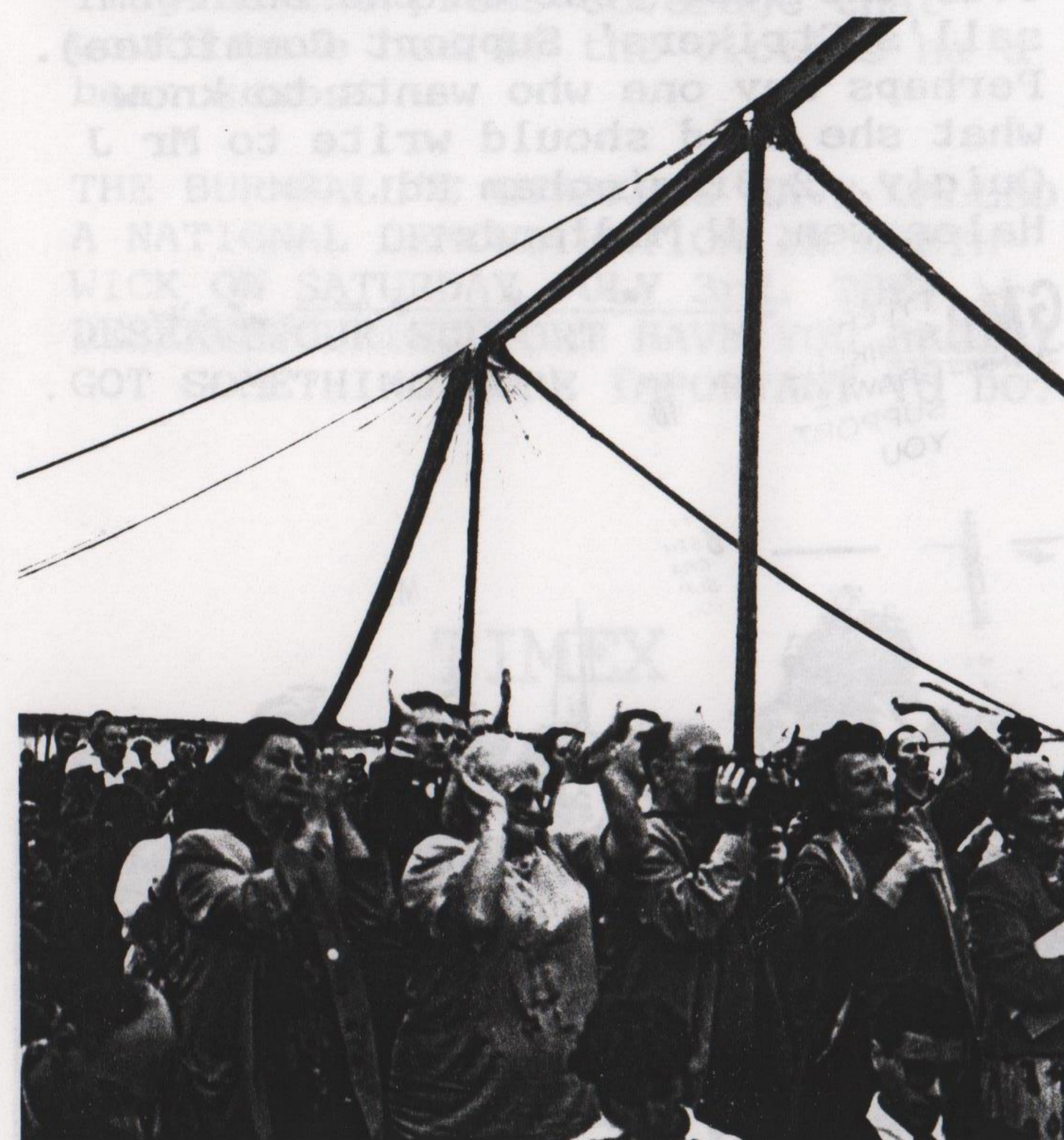


Later though there was the big march through Wakefield, where colourful NUM banners from all over Yorkshire made a grand sight, and with several bands, livened up the

** Lyrics: Ray Heenan.*

(currently on strike) addressed us briefly, we all shared an enormous buffet and everyone joined in with the singing.

And it genuinely didn't matter if someone didn't quite reach a high note or slowed up on the guitar accompaniment (and I'm not saying the performances were anything but excellent) because there was a real feeling that these songs, whoever had written or sung them, belonged to all of us, and we were singing them together, whether it was "Where do you go to Mr Heseltine, when you're alone in your bed/Show me the guilt that surrounds you, cause I want to smash open your head/with a brick/Yes I do" or some of the Durham miners' and Irish songs going back a couple of hundred years. It finished off with a moving and unanimous rendition of "Geordie miners, stand together".



A standing ovation for Arthur Scargill

The whole day was a look into a tenacious and vital culture; and although over the last couple of decades a nasty mixture of deprivation and hollow affluence has eaten away at it, some of it still survives, though whether it can withstand the physical break-up of whole communities, as the pits they once surrounded are closed, is far from certain (for example, this year's Durham Gala is likely to be



Brenda Nixon speaks at the Hatfield social

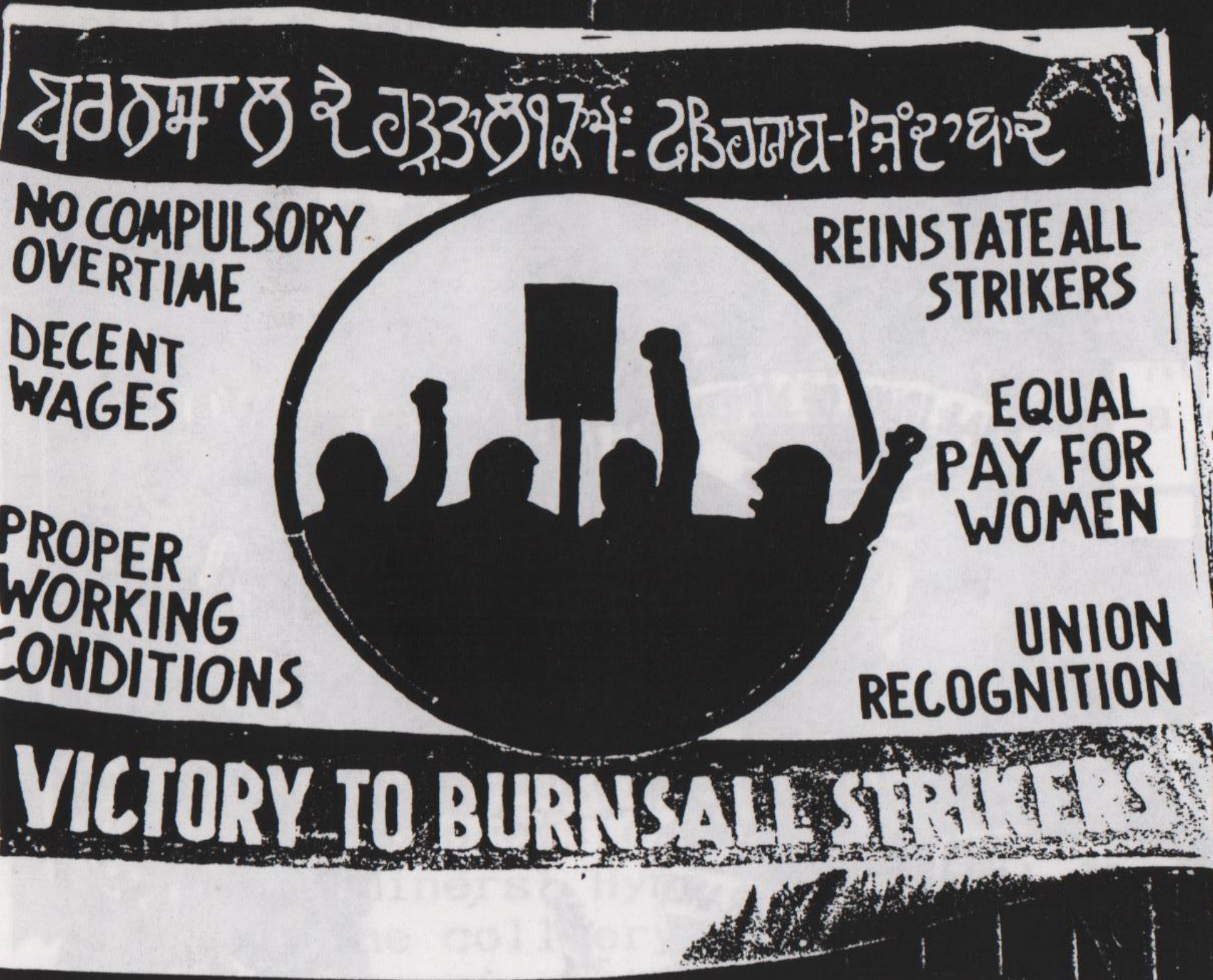
the last since only one pit remains in that area).

People joined together to remember their traditions, demonstrate their continuing solidarity, and show they still care about their future. All this and have fun too? No wonder the Tories are so scared of the miners they can't wait to get them all on the dole and safely plugged-in to 24-hour plastic brain-death TV.

But it hasn't happened yet. And until it does, it will be an honour to help celebrate the solidarity and fighting spirit of the Yorkshire miners.



Miners stand together



**BURNSALL'S:
WOMEN FIGHTING
BACK**

On tuesday june 15th, the 19 Burn-sall's strikers had been out for exactly one year. Mostly Asian, mostly women, the strikers are demanding:

- * Equal pay: in spite of doing equal work, women employed at Burnsall's were paid £20-30 per week less than men;
- * Decent hygiene, health and safety: basic things like clean toilets, adequate masks and gloves when handling dangerous chemicals, permission to seek medical attention when needed;
- * Fair hours: instead of excessive and compulsory overtime on pain of sacking or docked wages;
- * Reinstatement and union recognition: they are all members of the GMB.

On june 15th this year they invited workers from around Britain to come and show their support by attending the picket line at 10 Downing St Smethwick. Around 200 people attended, including fellow GMB members from the Crawley Binworkers' dispute. Another conspicuous group were a number of stout middle-aged men in grey suits with GMB ties. Regular supporters of the picket greeted their presence as something of a novelty.

A left-wing MP and some musicians were also there to entertain the protestors, but it does seem sadly

emblematic that while the Labour Party man was addressing the crowd, who had their backs to the factory as a result, some scabs emerged and managed to leave unchallenged.

Of the other speeches two were of note. One was from a member of Trentham WAPC who pointed out that Burnsall's could not survive if workers in other factories refused to handle goods treated there.

The other was from Darshan, one of the strikers. I have no idea what she said, as she spoke -- very urgently and enthusiastically -- in Punjabi. The GMB full-timers, despite a unanimous vote to the contrary, refused to allow Darshan's words to be translated, on the grounds that they distrusted the interpreter (who has been active over the last year on the Burn-sall's Strikers' Support Committee). Perhaps any one who wants to know what she said should write to Mr J Quigly, 2 Birmingham Rd Halesowen, W Midlands.



Striking binmen from Crawley show their support

The occasion was heavily policed and the only people even to try to approach a scab lorry making a delivery were a video operator and sound assistant.

However the picket line isn't always so quiet. On may 25th scabs leaving the factory, armed with an iron bar and a knife, carried out a murderous attack in which one



Two handy phone numbers

person received head injuries and another, thanks to emergency surgery, narrowly missed losing the fingers of one hand.

Imagine the press coverage that would have had if the victims had been scabs!

THE BURNSALL'S STRIKERS HAVE CALLED A NATIONAL DEMONSTRATION IN SMETHWICK ON SATURDAY JULY 3rd. THEY DESERVE OUR SUPPORT HAVE YOU REALLY GOT SOMETHING MORE IMPORTANT TO DO?

TIMEX

On Saturday June 19th a minibus full of our people went up to Dundee to support the picket line. Whilst the Trades Council has launched a boycott campaign of Timex products in Hull. Earlier this month "Trade Union News" interviewed workers from this important strike at the Middlebrook Mushrooms picket line.

Q. Can you tell us something about the company behind Timex?

A. They are an American multi-national. The chief executive is Fred Olsen, a Norwegian. Their headquarters are on 2 Fred Olsen St, Oslo. They've been called a slash and burn company with factories in Taiwan, Philippines and Connecticut.

Q. Have you had any solidarity from abroad?

A. Yes, Norways L.O. Union Federation have pledged their total support, we have an Oslo Timex support group who have picketed the Timex H.Q. and we have spoken at the L.O. congress.

Q. What about support from the British Trade Union movement?

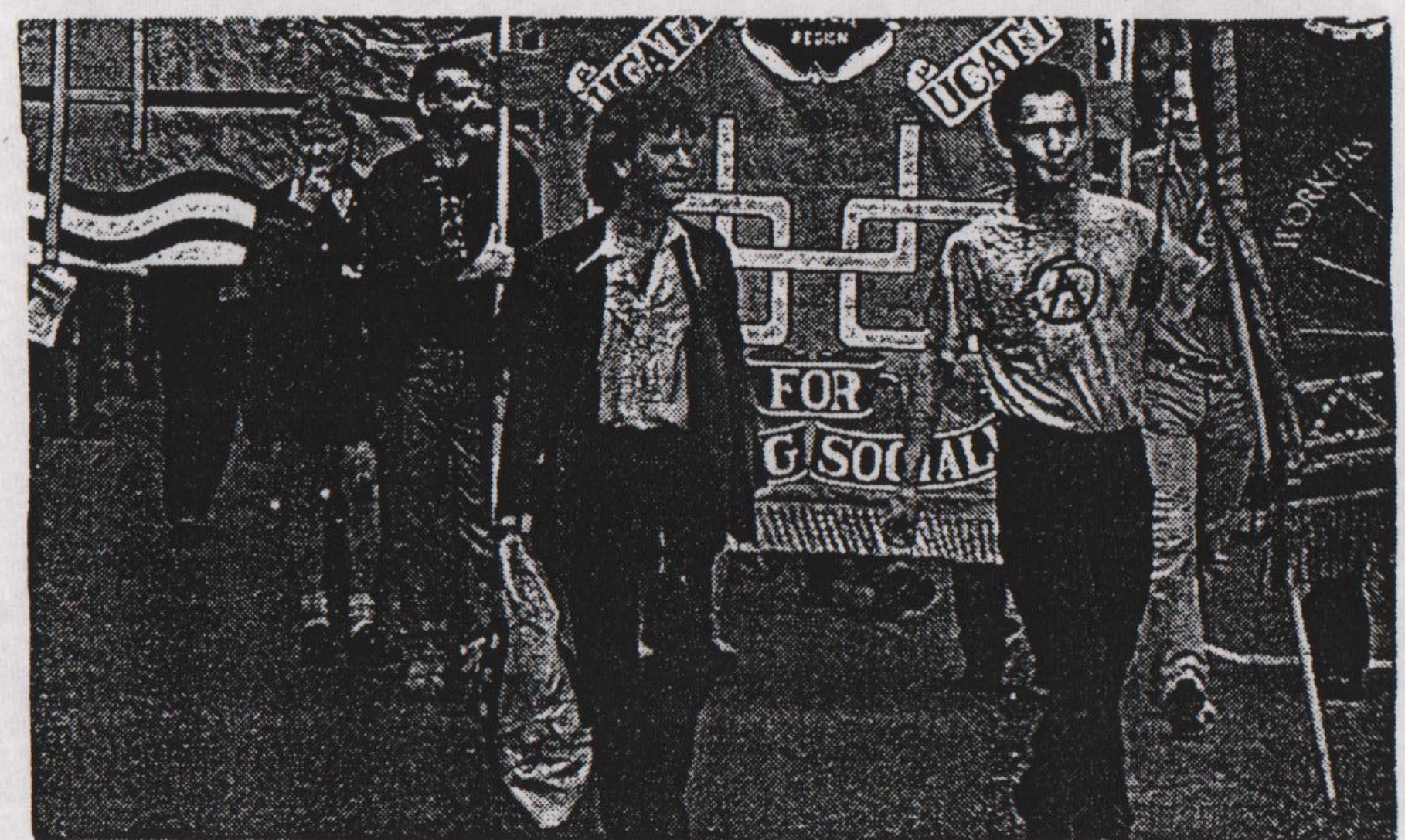
A. Everyone supports us! All the trades councils, union branches, the local council. 85% of the strikers are women and on International Womens' Day, Women Against Pit Closures from Parkside and Middlebrooks Mushroom women came to a rally in Dundee.

In Liverpool, the boycott campaign is getting results and in Swansea H.Samuels have stopped selling Timex.

For 47 years we had no real problems with Timex then Peter Hall turns up. He is a Thatcherite, his heads on the block!

This dispute is important for the whole T.U. movement, morale is high. We have a picket, I mean demonstration, every Monday and most people take part. Scabs are very difficult to track down as the company busses them in.

At this point Middlebrooks Scabmobile started to load up and the interview terminated....



HULL TRADES COUNCIL ON THE MARCH left to right: STU EMMS (UCATT): DAVE DOUGLASS (NUM) GUY CHEVERTON;

MIDDLEBROOKS

Talking Mushrooms

The following interview took place at the 12th June Mass Picket with Cynthia, Maggie, Linda and others.

Q. How did the dispute begin?

A. Middlebrooks brought in casual labour at weekends, we said that they should get the same as us. They had no rights or holidays. It was divide and rule as they were doing our work.

They attacked our conditions posting us back new contracts which included compulsory overtime and rostered Sundays. This package of threats was only for the full-timers. We responded with an overtime ban. One Friday 6 months ago we were all called into the canteen and sacked for not working to contract.

Q. What kind of support have you received from your union, the T&G?

A. We've been in the T&G for 20 years. We balloted for the overtime ban and when we were sacked we had an emergency meeting.

The T&G said we must work within the law, there's this myth that the union can give you protection. When we started Bill Morris pledged us all the support that we could want. 6 months later we have some official picket placards and armbands, the officials stay away, we just get on with it.

The T&G are backing the scabs, in June they elected a new shop steward from the scabs and the T&G recognized her.

Q. What about the wider union movement?

A. We've had fantastic support, Selby NUM gave us £2,000, Yorkshire NUM, Women Against Pit Closures, Timex, Annie Hall ex-employees, they've all been great. Selby, York, Hull and Doncaster Trades Councils have given support. There was also the day that you came over with the Solidarnosc people from Poland. NALGO and NUPE have been good to us. The most moving donation we got was £1 from an unemployed ex-shop steward. We need more bodies on the picket line and a support group should be set up in each city.



Q. Can you tell us about Bookers, the multi-national behind Middlebrook Mushrooms?

A. Sir Michael Caine's, the owner, he's Emma Nicholson's husband. It's a huge multi-national they own Booker Fitch cash and carry, scores of food processing companies, they are a giant. Pete Brothers and Michael Davies of the T&G have been talking to Caine even though they deny it.

We won't give up, Denise was arrested at 7 a.m. in the morning. The police took her away at 8.30 a.m. after she'd got the kids off to school they charged her with common assault. WHAT HAPPENED? They said that she threw a bucket of water over a scab!

Q. What is the aim of the dispute now?

A. Shut them down!

MIDDLEBROOKS

Winning the Dispute

Booker employ over 1,000 workers in Hull. 2 Booker Cash and Carries, Freebooter Seafoods, Ross Seafoods, Huttons of Hull - Britain's largest ship chandler and a transport depot. Bookers sinister boast is that they "provide key links in the food chain from genetics to distribution!" We have contacted GMB members at Ross foods and USDAW at the cash and carries to try and organise solidarity and that's how the fight can be won.

- * By identifying the mushroom outlets and picketing.
- * By taking on Booker as a group.
- * By hitting the scabs hard.

ANNIE HALL DISPUTE

The Annie Hall dispute will finally have an industrial tribunal hearing on July 22nd. There will be pickets at the York Annie Hall shop on Saturday July 10th and at the Beverley shop on Saturday July 17th. Phone Carol Hudson on (0377) 217376 for more details.

SUPPORT THIS LOCAL DISPUTE
THAT MEANS YOU!



SPILLERS DISPUTE

The dispute started on 4th December 1992 when eight female cleaners were sacked. Spillers decided to put the work out to private contract with lower wages and new workers if the existing ones, who were asked to stay on, turned down the new contracts. They all rejected the new conditions and decided to fight the bosses over the sackings and wage cuts. They were all dismissed immediately and a picket was established at the factory on Birkenhead docks.

Spillers started to bus in one scab cleaner all the way from Manchester; he is provided with a police escort. Clearly this one scab could not clean a large factory and office complex alone: two or three cleaners are now being bussed in. Spillers had claimed that the job could be done in fewer hours than the original cleaners were allocated, but now admit that they were wrong and are in effect paying a small number of scab cleaners to work long hours.