

Solidarity Network

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Solidarity with those in struggle!

SUPPORT THE PERGAMON STRIKERS!



Contents

Solidarity with Tilbury Dockers/Page 3
 Solidarity from a Tilbury Docker/Page 4
 Solidarity with the Bristol Dockers/Page 5
 Cowley against Closure/Page 5
 Maxwell on the Rampage/Page 6
 Sell-out of the Tube Strike/Page 7
 Sacked for opposing Apartheid/Page 8
 Eversure Dispute/Page 8
 Manifold Industries Lock-out/Page 9
 Victory for Hull CPSA/Page 9
 Report from Kirklees Solidarity Network/Page 10
 Stop the Poll Tax/Page 10

Kurdish Refugees need Support/Page 11
 Fords Victimize Mexican Workers/Page 12
 Out At Work/Page 13
 Socialist Movement T.U. Conference/Page 13
 Appeals from the NJMC/Page 14
 Des Warren/Page 14
 Solidarity Network Conference/Page 15
 NHS Demonstration/Page 16

What is the Solidarity Network?

The Solidarity Network was set up at a conference called in solidarity with workers in struggle and held in Leeds on November 1987. The conference sought to build on the kind of support movement organised for the miners and for the print workers at Wapping. Since then the Solidarity Network has met on a regular basis, has organised support for a number of disputes and helped to publicise their cases.

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Affiliation form

We invite your organisation to affiliate to the Network and strengthen this work. Organisations which affiliate will receive copies of the Bulletin and will receive up to date information on disputes. We also invite individuals to take out a subscription to the Bulletin, which would help the Network and provide regular information.

a) My organisation wishes to affiliate to the Solidarity Network

b) I wish to take out a subscription to the Solidarity Bulletin.....

Name/Organisation.....

Address.....

I therefore enclose fee

The affiliation fee for organisations is £10. Subscription fees for individuals are £6.00 waged and £3.00 unwaged. Please send to 74 Kingsland Rd, Plaistow London E13.

Solidarity with Tilbury Dockers

Several people who were to become active in the East London Dockers Support Group had been attending the meetings of the Solidarity Network held in different parts of the country.

At these meetings we were kept up to date by delegates from various areas, such as Hull, of the threat to the National Dock Labour Scheme and the dockers preparation to defend the scheme. These preparations included a series of mass meetings called by the National Port Shop stewards Committee. One such meeting, attended by 500 dockworkers, was held in Newham in the East End of London in January, and the foundations of what was to become the East London Dock Support Group began.

There were many rousing speeches from the dockers on that day, but one speech from a T&G official was particularly significant. He supported future action, but warned of the problems of breaking the law. This ruled out any hope of the T&G calling out the dockers at the non-scheme ports, a vital move if the dispute was to be successful.

The fear of the courts was seen immediately. The day after the abolition was announced, dockers from several ports walked out on strike. The T&G told them to return to work. Amongst those that had walked out were dockers at the key port of Southampton who, as the dispute progressed, were not to show the same level of commitment again.

The dockers returned to work and on April 11th the National Docks committee agreed to ballot for strike action, but Ron Todd immediately intervened to prevent a ballot taking place by announcing that he first wanted talks with the Port employers. This decision was ratified by the T&G executive on April 14th. Many angry dockers lobbied that meeting. The move away from confrontation had begun. Attempts by the T&G to turn the situation into a legal trade

dispute was seen as a sign of weakness by the government and the port employers who refused the attempts by the T&G to have ACAS intervene.

A strike ballot was eventually agreed to on April 20th. The Tilbury stewards pointed out to us that the ballot would not take place until after the local council elections and a by-election in Wales had taken place. There were strong feelings amongst them that the Labour Party leadership did not want a dock strike taking place at the same time as these elections.

The dockers eventually began to vote on strike action on the 10th May, some 34 days after many had first walked out on strike. The Port employers had been using this time to intimidate individual ports and build their propaganda.

On the day the ballot started, the Port employers announced that they were going to use the courts to have the ballot declared illegal—the ballot result was announced on May 19th with 75% in favour of strike action.

During this period of time the East London Dockers Support Group had begun to meet, but we still lacked a dispute to carry out practical solidarity work.

We were, however, able to prepare literature outlining the dockers' case and the reasons why they should be supported. A successful fund-raising social also took place in anticipation of the ballot result.

The ballot was declared legal by the high court on May 27th, but the Port employers immediately announced that they were to appeal against this decision. The T&G stated that they would stay within the law and so there was still no strike. Behind the scenes there were heated debates at the ports with fears of individual deals taking place to replace the scheme. The main arguments though centred on whether to toe the official line and remain within the law or to take immediate action. The official line held. The Appeal court judges announced

their decision on June 7th. They upheld the appeal on the grounds that a strike was not in the interest of the public, the employers, or the national interest. This decision basically meant that all strikes would be illegal. On that same day the Support Group held a public meeting with speakers from the docks, the London Underground, London Buses and the Passport Office strike. All of these groups of workers could be directly affected by the appeal court decision. The response from the well attended meeting, was a firm commitment of support for the dockers and all of the other struggles. This meeting drew in many new people to the Support Group.

The following day, 'unofficial' stoppages began at many ports including Tilbury, Bristol and Liverpool. Significantly, Hull and Southampton remained at work. The T&G called on the dockers to return to work and await for the next stage of the legal procedure—an appeal to the Law Lords. On the 10th of June the National Port shop stewards met and recommended all out action from Monday 12th June. The call for action was ignored by ports such as Hull and Southampton and by the middle of the week there were clear signs that the action was crumbling. No attempts were made to 'picket out' the larger ports. On the 19th June all dockers returned to work. The following day the Law Lords overturned the appeal court judges decision. Discussion at the Support Group suggested that this decision was inevitable as it would have led to official strikes being illegal and a rise in rank & file action thus taking strikes out of the hands of the union officials. This had been shown in the London Underground strike. The dockers had to re-ballot as the 28 day period for taking action after the first ballot had expired. The Support Group continued to carry out practical support with street collections, fund-raising events and leafletting. One of the weaknesses of the group was that a

dockworker was unable to attend our meetings on a regular basis. This meant that we were unable to obtain first hand information and that political discussion, as opposed to practical support, took place without the involvement of a docker.

This situation was also to reveal a weakness with the dispute at Tilbury when the strike eventually began. Vast amounts of speaking engagements and administrative work was required. This work fell on a few shop stewards who were to find themselves inundated and with very little back up from the rest of the rank & file who were not brought forward to take up some of the workload. This was later to leave hundreds of dockers inactive at a time when they needed to be involved to enhance their morale.

On July 3rd, the National Dock Labour Scheme was officially abolished. On July 7th the ballot result was announced with a 3 to 1 vote in favour of strike action. It was now 91 days since the dockers first came out on strike to defend the scheme. The strike began on July 11th with the Port Employers threatening sackings if the strike took place. Todd announced that if any

docker was sacked then the strike would continue until they were reinstated. This was a very frustrating time for the Support Group, with the Tilbury Stewards submerged in trip and meetings, there was so little direct feed-back from the strike.

At this stage one of the mistakes that the group made became evident. We did not organise ourselves to visit the picket line to meet other rank & file dockers. The strike ran into problems almost immediately with some ports pushing for local negotiations and a recall National Ports Delegate Conference. On 24th July Southampton and Hull voted to stay on strike pending the outcome of the conference. On 25th July the Tilbury stewards along with over 100 other dockers were sent new contracts and told they had to return to work within 2 days to a port that would no longer recognise the trade union. The previously solid workforce at Tilbury was split and the sacking threats succeeded with a strong drift back to work. Attempts to picket out Tilbury by Liverpool dockers met with limited success.

The recall conference voted by 51 to 12 to continue the strike with strong contributions being made by Todd. The

euphoria after that meeting was short-lived when the following day Southampton voted to return to work and Hull made the same decision the next day. By the 31st July the only major ports left on strike were at Liverpool, Bristol and Middlesborough. The T&G national executive met on August 1st and voted 18-12 to call off the strike.

Their refusal to break the law had led to a massive defeat for the labour movement with a once militant port deunionised, hundred of dockers sacked, with further attacks on all ports – not just those who had come under the dock labour scheme, yet to take place. There was unlimited support to be found for the dockers but the dispute was never allowed to escalate. One of the positive aspects of the strike is that Support Groups that were formed in East, North and South London have met and decided that they should continue on a permanent basis and link-up nationally with the Solidarity Network. One of the groups first tasks will be to support those dockers sacked at Tilbury and to add to the 60 individuals who attended the docks support group.

By an activist from the East London Dockers Support Group

Solidarity from a Tilbury Docker

Michael Fenn, Tilbury Shop Steward (Sacked)

I have recently been involved in two national dock strikes. I am one of the 16 shop stewards who were sacked by the Port of London Authority.

In the early part of the campaign to defend the National Dock Labour Scheme, I became involved with the solidarity group, in particular with the East London Dockers Support Group. I was asked to attend some of their meetings. I think I was only able to attend one. I was not particularly impressed. The meeting was very small, and I felt could do very little to assist us in our

struggle – I was very much mistaken.

This small group became vitally important to the Tilbury Shop Steward Committee, who had very little finances at the time, and who were about to embark on a major unofficial campaign. When we were eventually forced to call a major unofficial strike, it was East London group which supplied us with our placards and leaflets on the first day of the strike, at very short notice. From then on in, they constantly supplied us with finance. Money collected outside supermarkets etc, proved invaluable to the financial support of our pickets and our meetings.

What they did not offer was unsolicited guidance as to how to run our dispute, unlike some other left-wing groups whose only interest seemed to be in selling their papers, and telling us what we were doing wrong!

Now I am no longer employed as a steward in the docks, after literally being dumped by the Transport & General Workers Union, I intend to carry on as an individual working within the Solidarity movement.

Very little good came out of our strike. The only good which came out of it for me as an individual was my own involvement with other Solidarity members.

Solidarity with the Bristol Dockers

A report from the Bristol Dockers Solidarity Group

The lessons of the miners strike were not forgotten by supporters of the Solidarity Network, Bristol.

After a series of informal discussions a dockers' solidarity group was up and running from day one of the abolition of the national dock labour scheme. Open, democratic and accountable meetings held at the dockers headquarters, in Avonmouth. The numbers attending never dropped to less than 100 as secondary picketing, lobbies, report backs, and ways of intervening into the national conference of the TGWU were discussed. Speaking tours and links with other labour movement bodies were established. All hell broke loose when the local officials attempted to establish their own support group independent of the dockworkers! Supporters of Solidarity Network, alongside 110 dockers, lobbied the local Trades Union

Council calling on them to support the solidarity group.

Some delegates supporting the call by the dockers were not counted and the vote was inadvertently carried by 1 vote before the secretary declared the meeting over and made a hasty get-away from the hall.

A similar battle took place in the local labour parties and the reconvened AGM of the District Party. Local left councillors tried to ensure the Labour controlled Docks committee did not discuss the strike (In Bristol the local authority is the Docks employer). They were eventually defeated when the local authority Chief Officer called a special council meeting under section 114 of the Local Government Act. Letters that attempted to undermine the leadership of the dockers were authorised by the Docks Committee with the Labour right voting with the Tories.

For the duration of the strike the curtain was up on the local Labour movement and the tragic state of its leadership.

During the strike a local rally, a conference and a public meeting were organised by the Solidarity Group. Secondary picketing of Southampton Docks was agreed – just as the plug was pulled on the dockers by Ron Todd and the national leadership of the TGWU. After the defeat, the Solidarity Group called a public meeting to discuss the results. The dockworkers realised a major error occurred when a deal was struck at the TGWU Conference, to maintain 'unity'. This allowed Todd to go uncriticised and argue for his "within the law" speech. Sitting mute throughout the meeting were supporters of the local right wing of the TGWU taking notes. Clearly the mixed successes and failures of the dock workers solidarity group were being learnt by those who are hostile to the network. We anticipate that our future initiatives will be blocked and made all the more difficult, but that with the allies we have developed over the past five years a struggle to produce a fighting leadership in the Avon Labour movement is ensured. At the end of the strike the matter of affiliation to the National Solidarity Network and active participation in November T.U. Conference be taken up by individual branches of the TGWU in the Bristol area.

Cowley against Closure

by a Rover worker

For 13 months the senior stewards in the Rover car plants at Cowley Oxford, have managed to hold back any resistance to the company's closure plan.

In July of last year, Rover announced that at the end of Maestro and Montego production, these models would be replaced by models produced elsewhere. This would leave only the Rover 800 luxury car built at Cowley. It would mean the loss of 6-7,000 jobs in the car plants, probably a further 3,000 other connected jobs, and the closure of the South Works

The senior stewards argue that they can deal with the problem locally, they refuse to involve the Union nationally. They spent the first year talking to the company locally. At the same time they opposed the Oxford Trades Council policy of a public town campaign. Now they say they are in favour of a mass public campaign, because the company has made it clear they will not build a new model at Cowley. But they say this campaign must be legal, that protest action must involve ballots, etc. They have made it clear that they oppose such protest action anyway, and that any campaign will only be local. Some

stewards and members continue to argue for a national fight against Rover and their owners – British Aerospace. Meanwhile the town campaign, formed by the Trades Council, continues to meet monthly. It has produced badges and car stickers and as well as starting a petition, a series of meetings has been planned for the local estates. The loss of so many jobs is important, so the whole Labour movement needs to support the Oxford 'Cowley Against Closure' campaign. Send messages of support or requests for speaker to Roy Leach, Secretary, Oxford Trades Council, 27 Cavendish Road, Oxford OX2

Maxwell on the rampage

The Pergamon strike, now in its third month, has reached a critical stage in its fight against Labour Party & MSF member—Robert Maxwell. The breadth of solidarity with the strike has surprised the strikers themselves.

All over the country, Labour Parties, trade union branches and regional TUCs have responded with money and support.

There was even momentous support from some unexpected quarters, such as the National Executive of the Labour Party, which unanimously agreed a resolution proposed by Tony Benn – slapping Maxwell on the wrists and demanding that he reinstates the sacked 23. We have also received support from the General Council of the TUC and had a stall at TUC Conference.

Despite efforts to build a case, Maxwell's most illustrious lapdog, Peter Jay – ex British ambassador to the US and now "Chief of Staff" at Maxwell Communication Corporation – has failed. He insists that the strikers constitute only a small minority of the whole workforce at Pergamon and therefore the Union doesn't deserve to be recognised. What he doesn't say is that the Union can only recruit NUJ eligible staff – which in this case amount to no more than around 40 employees and that just before the strike when Union members were all under pressure, more than 60% of NUJ-eligible staff were in the Chapel (in some sections this even reached 90%). His second point in his reply to labour movement organisations was that, having warned NUJ members that they will be sacked if they go on strike, he feels exonerated of all blame. In other words if Maxwell wished to cut wages and holidays – as he is attempting to do at the Daily Mirror – his only obligation would be to write to his workers to soften the blow. That would be



sufficient to feel free to do anything he wants.

Finally he argued that there were no principles, socialist or otherwise – that compelled him to recognise a trade union. Murdoch, by comparison, sounds almost like an honest capitalist. As he doesn't tolerate trade unions he simply did away with them. Maxwell wants to have his cake and eat it. For fear of cutting himself from his labourite friends, he cannot afford to be seen as a union basher but at the same time doesn't want to be bound by any principle.

Maxwell's bully boy tactics in sacking the 23 are nothing less than the umpteenth repeat of the same ruthless scenario since the take over of BPCC eight years ago.

Having received the green light from print union leaders for his 'survival plan', Maxwell never hesitated to destroy any pockets of resistance. Some printers were quietly disposed of, others at Purnell in Bristol and Park Royal in London engaged him in bitter battles. But in all cases, it was the passivity of their leadership that let Maxwell get away with murder.

At Pergamon, Maxwell realised the danger of the growth of a militant chapel at a time when he is engaged in complicated mergers of his publishing companies since he acquired the giant US Macmillan.

Refusing to recognise the right of the

Union to represent all its members was the quickest and easiest mean to shackle the Union. In sacking 23 NUJ members for staging a one-day strike, he signalled to other workers, at MGN in particular, that he would not tolerate any resistance from any quarter to his new plans for individual contracts and general levelling down of terms and conditions. The Chapel has instigated a boycott campaign of Pergamon products. This was started at the NALGO conference when a boycott resolution was remitted to NALGO's NEC. This is now being followed by NALGO branches, especially those that organise librarians. The call for a boycott has also been extended to ACTSS members in bookshops and to NATFHE and AUT lecturers.

Maxwell's acquisition on US Macmillan and his plans for satellite television cannot be ignored and it is clear that any boycott will remain incomplete without an international campaign.

The strikers have already received support from the Brussels' based International Federation of Journalists and the Prague-based International Organisation of Journalists. This means that there is considerable mileage in harnessing the help of affiliates of both organisations in scores of countries. A request for help has already gone to Australian, Canadian and Scandinavian unions. A trip by a delegation to France has made enormous impact. The French

journalists and printers are concerned that Maxwell, with his access to Mitterand thanks to his Labourite credentials, is already plotting to extend his empire – a national print corporation and more television acquisitions. They see him as a sinister Murdoch-figure that will spearhead the worsening of terms and conditions in the whole of the industry. It is for these reasons that they welcomed with open arms a delegation from Pergamon Press.

Support for the strike was received from the SNJ-CGT (Journalists' section of the CGT), the USJF-CFDT (Journalists), the SURT-CFDT at TF1 television and the proofreaders' union (syndicat des correcteurs). The most important support has come from Filpac-CGT (NGA equivalent) who have taken a resolution to the International Graphical Federation in Geneva.

Unfortunately it has proved easier to obtain support from trade unions abroad than from print unions at home. They knowingly continue to typeset, print and transport scab work from Pergamon. The NGA leadership are not even prepared to discuss seriously the issues unless the NUJ goes to ACAS! Nevertheless a call for industrial action at the MGN will only be issued if the NUJ is willing to break the anti-trade Union laws.

Financial and political support is important and welcome. But most important would be pressure from supporters wherever they are on their leaderships. We need unequivocal support from the Labour Movement if the NUJ is to feel strong enough to break the law. If that support is not forthcoming then the voices in the NUJ, and also the NGA and SOGAT, who argue against secondary action will remain dominant. In the final analysis this can make the difference between victory or defeat.

Please send messages of support/donations or requests for speakers to Pergamon Press NUJ Chapel c/o 60 Cricket Road, Oxford OX4

Sell-out of the Tube Strike

by a London Underground Guard

London Underground train crews have had a resounding victory snatched from them.

Their four month long struggle which involved a series of fourteen one day strikes was sold out by the national negotiators of the two rail unions NUR and ASLEF on Tuesday 8th August at ACAS.

The claim had been £6.43 per hour for the drivers and £5.20 for the guards, without any strings, in settlement of a review of the rate of pay for the introduction of driver only trains which had been promised since 1985.

The negotiators have accepted £7 per week for the drivers and £6 per week for the Guards plus the incorporation into the basic rates of both grades of the introductory 7.5% allowance already being paid for One Person Operating. Although the offer is without strings, the incorporation exercise won't be completed until January 1990. The drivers are £57 short of the attainment of their full claim – the Guards are also proportionately short changed!

But what has really enraged the rank and file is that they were in no way consulted about the acceptability of the offer. Once again news of the settlement came over the mass media. It must be remembered that the first five strike days had been unofficial and that the whole struggle had been conducted through regular mass meetings and a broadly based network of up to 250 'co-ordinators' deeply rooted in the depots.

Due in no small part to this newly discovered strength and capacity for self-organisation, the traincrews do not feel defeated. On the contrary they are furiously angry with their union negotiators. Initial reports, which were given great play in the local London media, that traincrews were going to burn their union cards and set up a new union of their own, quickly evaporated to be replaced by a serious long term

perspective to replace the negotiators responsible and change the rule books of the Unions. Indeed the National Executive Committee member of the NUR, Martin Eady, has already tendered his resignation. This news was greeted with rapturous applause by the mass meetings called by the co-ordinators to discuss the deal. The following Monday the ASLEF NEC member, Bob Harris, however refused point-blank to resign. The meetings went on to reject the ACAS settlement but to call off further unofficial action for the time being.

Indications of this continuing capacity to fight had already been evident the previous Thursday, which had been the scheduled strike day. Although the strike was called off over 30% of traincrews took unofficial strike action in protest. The next morning when management at some depots demanded written explanations from crews before they could be booked on, workers started to walk off the job again before management backed down and allowed them to work without conditions.

The great danger now is that the union head offices take up the ACAS offer of further talks which would lead to more money – only on the basis of surrendering protective working practices which the new Thatcherite management team is desperate to destroy. The co-ordinators are going to continue to meet to fight this threat. Together with transport workers on BR, the LUL workers smashed through the governments unofficial 7% pay norm; together with all grades on the Underground they successfully beat off the management's attack on seniority and promotion and transfer arrangements free from favouritism and prejudice.

By sticking together irrespective of their union affiliation they remain confident of further advances in the future.

Sacked for opposing Apartheid

Report from Leicester Mercury

In the week that a rebel cricket team were seduced by large sums of money to tour South Africa, two Leicester men have made a stand against apartheid which has resulted in them losing their jobs.

Ross Galbraith and Gary Sherrif have 'parted company' with Granby Plastics, Thurmaston, after refusing to work on an order destined for South Africa. The two production workers have given up their £130 weekly pay packet on a point of principle. "We are taking a stand on this because of our opposition to what's going on in South Africa," they say. They claim that they were sacked, but the owner of Granby Plastics, Kerry Ball disagrees. "They have signed a paper to the effect that they have resigned," he said. Here, Mr Galbraith explains why his conscience would not allow him to work for South Africa. . . "We would like to make it known that not everybody is

prepared to accept blood money from South Africa. Unlike certain cricket and rugby players we are not prepared to accept money that is stained with the blood of black South Africans. We worked for a firm called Granby Plastics who have recently received an order from South Africa. When we found out we went to see the owner and told him that we were not going to do any work for that country because of our hatred of the apartheid system. His reply was that if we were not going to do whatever work he asked us then we had to leave his company. As a result of this we are now unemployed and without any income. We do not in any way regret our decision but we find it sickening that these groups of cricket and rugby players are prepared to accept blood money from the South African regime. As can be seen from the amounts of money they are prepared to pay sportspeople to go there, boycotting does hurt them. We would like everybody to aid this boycott by not

buying goods from South Africa, and also; for workers that are put in the same position as us to also refuse to handle any work from South Africa. It can work, as happened in Ireland where the refusal of a shop worker in Dunnes stores to handle South African produce has now led to the Irish government imposing a total ban on all imports from South Africa".

A letter from Leicester & District T.U.C. adds; the owners attitude to their stand is predictable as no black workers have ever been employed by the company - despite Leicester being a multi-racial city. Ross & Gary were merely taking a stand on behalf of the oppressed people of South Africa, now they are jobless, and because of their stand against apartheid cannot claim unemployment benefit for the next SIX MONTHS. Ross and Gary are now suffering great financial hardship due to their principled stand. If you or your organisation can make a donation it would be most welcome. Please make any cheques payable to 'Trades Council Defence Fund', this and messages of support should be sent to Leicester & District TUC, 138 Charles Street, Leicester LE1.

Eversure Dispute.

This is a strike at a small factory of 128, mostly women, workers who make fabric curtain goods for Sidar Wools.

They are in the TGWU Textile branch of Sheffield and are striking for Union recognition and defence of working conditions. They have received support from Kirklees Solidarity Network and also a little from their own T&G official, but this is weak. T&G are trying to keep outside support from the dispute - but to no avail. Sheffield Trade Union Council organised a demonstration for Eversure strikers which was addressed

by Arthur Scargill & Dennis Skinner. The Strikers are solid and picket every day and have formed a strike committee. Unfortunately they have been harassed by management; being photographed by strange people in grey suits. The strike caravan was burnt down one night. Management and police often visit the picket line to complain if more than 6 are there. These strikers are mainly women and are therefore very unorganised to stand up to this treatment. On the good side there is a high degree of solidarity amongst the women who still work at Eversure and the strikers. They therefore find out what's going on

in the factory. For example the parent company (SIRBAR) has abandoned Eversure and has not taken on their work, which is most helpful. The strikers have been contacted by Kirklees Soidarity Network and is now being funded by us. Please note that the BHS and Co-op and Gravons warehouse sell their curtains as their main products. Contact Christine Wilkinson, 61 Winchester Crescent Sheffield. This is a campaign we can win given enough support. **Melvyn Holesworth**
Kirklees Solidarity Network

Manifold Industries Lock-out.

45 engineering workers have been sacked for refusing to co-operate with a firm of management consultants who were not there!

For nearly a year management at Manifold Industries have been trying to force through wholesale changes in working practices and conditions that would lead to an intolerable situation. Following last year's wage negotiations, management engineered a situation where they gave the AEU six months' notice of ending recognition. They then handed out a statement showing the new terms and conditions that had to be accepted by the AEU. We were that our contracts would be terminated and we would be offered a new ones. If we refused this contract, notice of

termination would be given. The new contract demanded compulsory working of overtime, Bank Holidays, weekend working, new shift patterns with over nine-hour shifts and an evening shift that ended at twenty past twelve. Some changes have been accepted by the workforce, but management have refused to compromise. The crunch came when a team of management consultants were introduced. It had been previously agreed this would not be done without first fulfilling the last wage agreement. A decision was taken not to co-operate with these consultants until management had kept their part of the bargain. When the consultants arrived they were told by the Union that they would not co-operate. The consultants disappeared and later the management said they could not force anyone to co-operate, and it

was up to the individual whether they wanted to or not. This was immediately relayed to the shop floor and every individual decided not to co-operate! The following day the management, realising their mistake, changed their minds, telling stewards that anyone refusing to co-operate would be breaking their contract (the old one) and be subject to immediate dismissal. That was the last we ever saw of the consultants...but we were still sacked! The bulk of the AEU members are now on strike, though a few scabs are going in. One of these told a steward that he had rung his mother in Scotland telling her what he was doing. She shouted scab at him and slammed the phone down! We are now locked outside the gate. The picket is held every day and we intend to stay here till we get our jobs back.

Messages of support and donations to the lock-out fund should be sent to:
LOCK-OUT COMMITTEE
c/o 20 COOPERSALE ROAD
LONDON E9

J.Edwards AEU Shop Steward.

Victory for Hull CPSA A Branch report

In April this year the office compliment was cut from 256 to 246. Local CPSA reps predicted that this sudden cut in staff which management were determined to implement quickly would lead to chaos in a busy big city office.

Our predictions were very quickly proved correct. Desperate to appear to be doing something, management set out on a drive to reorganise the office and alter working practices. The result was to create even more outstanding work. CPSA AO grade members dealing with retirement pensions faced over 200 outstanding claims each! By 7th July CPSA AA grade members dealing with post-linking faced 1016 outstanding pieces of post. The changes were imposed without union agreement or proper consultation. Naturally, members' frustration turned into anger. On 23rd Jun CPSA members walked out for one day in protest. Yet despite local Trade Union Side attempts to negotiate improved staffing and working conditions, management began to run staffing levels down to below the allocated compliment of 246. Refusing to make plans to replace staff t, it soon became obvious to everyone that by the end of July,

the office would only have 241 staff left. But the situation had become unsolvable without prolonged strike action. On July 6 the CPSA Branch applied to CPSA HQ for all out strike. It was our intention to commence on 13th June, but such was the mood of our members that they voted to strike until mid-day on the 12th. Local negotiations again proved fruitless. Members again voted for further strike action until mid-day on the 14th. Through Regional negotiations, the members won with extra staff, effectively taking the office compliment to 249 - to be maintained as long as management and unions locally agree is necessary. Both reps and members regard this as a victory. Rep in DHSS will particularly understand the special significance of busting management's allocated budget and compliment. A united, strengthened membership returned to work on 17th June. By anybody's standards, getting management to provide 8 extra staff and put the office above compliment is a massive victory in a year when staffing levels are being cut. The numbers may be small but the principle is enormous. The credit belongs to the ordinary members at Hull West and to those NUCPS who refused to cross our picket lines.

Report from Kirklees Solidarity Network

The Importance of supporting workers

Involved in the current wave of industrial struggles has not been overlooked.

A fact easily demonstrated by both the rapid growth in affiliations to Kirklees

Solidarity Network and the amount of money raised through donations.

Though only a few weeks old, the Network has already raised more than £600, most of which had been donated to Hull Dockers. Kirklees NALGO and Liverpool Dockers. The list of affiliated organisations continues to grow and includes: Huddersfield CLP., Dewsbury Trades Council, Marsden LP, Birkby LP, Huddersfield Co-op Party, Huddersfield NUPE, Huddersfield Polytechnic Labour Party and Huddersfield Poly Students Union.

NALGO Strike

The response of Kirklees NALGO members to their unions first ever national strike was magnificent. With 95% of members employed in local government taking industrial action. An indication of the success of the 6 days of strike action was illustrated by the willingness of the employers' national negotiators to improve their 'final' 7% offer to 8.15%.

Docks Strike

Following the Rail leaders settling for a small victory, when a much larger one was possible, in their dispute with BR and the Tories, the dockers fight to retain jobs and reasonable terms and conditions of employment rightly became the main focus of our attention and support. It was recognised that what was happening on the docks, the removal by the Tories - at a stroke - of workers hard won rights and conditions, was a prelude to a major assault on the jobs, wages and terms and conditions of employment of workers in other industries. The Tory objective being to recreate 19th Century sweat shop conditions for workers, in order that the British industry remains competitive when the Single European Market is created come 1992. Given the importance, therefore, of the dock strike, the reasons for its collapse after only 3 weeks must be seriously examined by workers everywhere.

More specifically, the leadership of the TGWU are guilty for having half-heartedly led the dock strike for 3 weeks, to abandon sacked workers and those remaining on strike to their individual fate.

For more information contact:

**Kirklees Solidarity Network
c/o P.O.Box 20
Huddersfield HD1 1XS**

Stop the Poll Tax

A message from the London Federation of Anti-Poll Tax Groups.

The London Federation of Anti-Poll Tax Groups meet on a monthly basis. They are open to members of all groups actively campaigning against the Poll Tax. Decisions are made by a vote of APTG delegates.

So far, members and delegates from 40 APTGs have attended (18 groups at the last meeting representing Finchley, Barnet, Islington, Camden, Croydon, W.Ealing, Hackney, Hammersmith & Fulham, Lambeth, (APT.CRAPT), Mitcham, Lewisham, Southwark, Tower Hamlets, Waltham Forest, Brixton & Clapham, Hornsey & Wood Green, S.Hornsey, Tottenham, St.Pancras, High Holloway, Mildmay, Acton, Watford, Green Lanes, Greenwich, Wyndham & Comber, Hillingdon, Tooting, White Hart Lane area, Hackney North, Holmleigh Rd Estate, Vauxhall, Ashmole Estate, Ealing, E.Dulwich, Camden Teachers Assoc. London Students APT, Rotherhithe TA, Cambridge APT and Stirling APT.

The movement in London is growing fast, reflecting the massive refusal to register by initially 50% of the adult population (up to 75% in some working class inner city neighbourhoods). It is our opinion that mass non co-operation by residents and workers can make the Poll Tax unworkable. We aim to encourage effective and organised opposition in every street, estate, workplace, neighbourhood and borough. We salute all the Anti-Poll Tax Groups/Unions/Campaigns and Federations throughout the country. We are strengthened with the knowledge of similar struggles in all areas and regions, and we are particularly inspired by the mass resistance and protests in Scotland. Together, we are strong. . . and will win.

Kurdish refugees need support

On Saturday July 29th over 4,000 people in Hackney, East London marched under the slogans 'Kurdish Refugees: they're welcome here' and 'Stop Detentions, No Deportations'.

The demonstration, called by the Kurdish Refugees Support Group, was in support of the 3,700 workers and farmers who had fled to Britain from the Kurdish region of South East Turkey at the beginning of May. Its success augurs well for what will be a difficult battle against the Tory Government, who are determined to throw out all the refugees.

When 24 Kurdish refugees arrived at the tiny offices of the Kurdish Workers Association (KWA) in the early hours of May 3rd, there were few who could have envisaged what would happen over the next few weeks.

By the time the British Government closed the escape route, with its introduction, on June 24th, of visa regulations for anyone coming from Turkey to Britain, a highly successful network of support had been built up to feed and clothe the impoverished and penniless refugees.

The three local organisations which deserve the greatest praise are the KWA, the Union of Turkish Workers and Halkevi or Turkish Community Centre. In addition to the unstinting efforts of local churches and church people cannot be forgotten. (Sadly the churches did not want to support the demo because of its 'political' nature). Other local groups collected clothes and held collections in their organisations and workplaces.

Pressure applied by MP.'s, especially Jeremy Corbyn, obtained a guarantee

from the Home Office that they would re-imburse all expenses by local community groups and councils. Over £2 million has been set aside for this. This is possibly the first time ever that this Tory Government has been forced to concede that it has a responsibility to help refugees who flee to Britain. With over 20 million Kurdish people split between Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria - the Kurds remain the single biggest grouping of people without a nation-state. In this, Britain bears a very heavy responsibility because it was Britain in the 1920's that divided the region to suit their interests.

Since then the Kurds have been demanding independence and an opportunity to self-determination. In recent years the guerilla actions of the PKK have been defensive and unable to stop the actions of the Turkish, Iranian and Iraqi governments in their policies of genocide against the Kurds. Many people can recall hearing of the incident at Halabja in March 1988 when the Iraqi air-force dropped mustard gas on the towns population. Over 5,000 died short agonising deaths. However few know of the other frequent atrocities which have, and still are, occurring. The Kurdish Refugees Support Group has a very large task in front of it. We are demanding that all the refugees be allowed to stay and that they should have the rights to bring their families to join them. We also demand the release of the 150 who are being detained in the prisons of Gloucester, Winchester and Exeter.

One of the really disappointing events of the July 29 demo was the very low turnout of trade Unionists with their

Union banners. This was not for the want of trying, indeed we spoke at over 30 Trade Union branch meetings as part of our mobilising attempts.

We are looking to put the issue of Kurdish refugees on the political agenda. Furthermore we will also be raising the issue on behalf of the other 16 million refugees around the world as well as providing a general challenge to the existence of immigration controls. These controls of course suggest that it is because black people and immigrants live in Britain that we have a high level of unemployment, bad housing and decaying social services. We need to argue with trade unionists and other workers that it is the current capitalist system which is to blame not poor, impoverished refugees.

You can help in the following ways:

- Send for copies of our model resolutions and petitions. Use them at your workplace, branch meeting and/or in your local community.
- Send a letter to the Home Office demanding that all the refugees are allowed to stay and those in jail are released.
- Invite a speaker to your next branch meeting. If you are holding any demos, invite a speaker.
- Make a donation

The Kurdish refugees Support Group can be contacted on 01 249 6930, or by writing to KRSG, c/o Libert Hall, 489 Kingsland Road, London E8.

Mark Metcalf

Fords Victimize Mexican workers

Dave Kellaway

Marco Antonio Jimenez has been on hunger strike since August 11th. He is protesting against his sacking by the Mexican Ford management.

Had he sabotaged the plant, led a walkout or held meeting during work time?

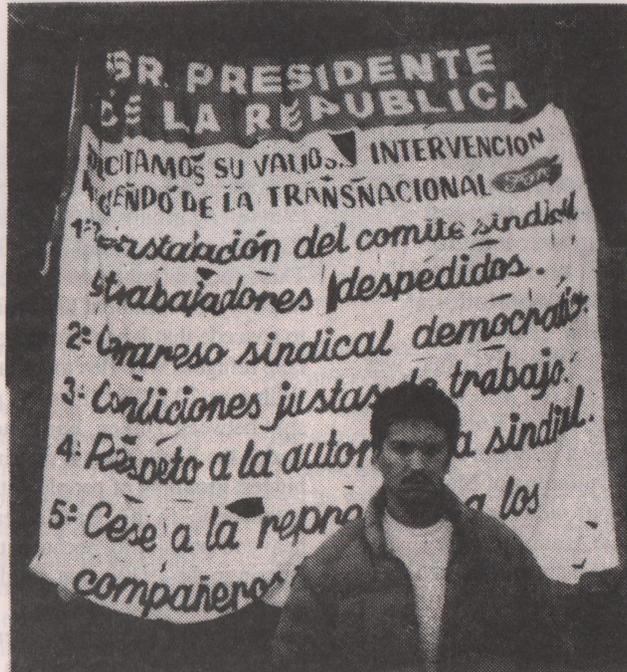
No. He had simply led 3,000 workers at the Fords Cuautitlan plant (30 minutes north of Mexico City) in a call for the democratic election of their national trade union leader and a democratic congress of the whole union.

Mexico operates like a Stalinist state on Union matters. Bosses, state, and Union bureaucrats work hand in glove.

Once Ford was informed of the union bureaucrats' displeasure, it sacked Marco and another nine leading shop stewards and conference delegates. Another sacked Ford Shop Steward, Juan Ramon Ramirez, joined the hunger strike on August 18th.

The hunger strike tactic was discussed and agreed by mass meetings. Juan pitched his hunger strike camp in front of the plant and Marco placed his foot at the Independence Monument in front of the Ford headquarters in Mexico City. On August 24th, 90% of the workers in the plant boycotted the canteen and fasted for a day in solidarity. On August 26th, thousands marched from the plant to the Independence monument.

Like Mick Gosling, the Dagenham Shop Steward sacked by Ford in Britain, Marco and Juan have been standing up to speed-up, dangerous conditions, and wage cuts.



Juan Ramon Ramirez in front of banner demanding: 1. Reinstatement of the sacked shop stewards; 2. A democratic trade union; 3. Just working conditions; 4. Respect for trade union autonomy; 5. End the repression against the comrades.

In July 1987 Ford Mexico closed Cuautitlan only to reopen it a few weeks later when it re-hired labour on lower wages and worse conditions.

The new radical plant leadership developed as a reaction to this sort of attack and to the union bureaucrats' collaboration.

On August 29th Marco was bearing up well after 18 days, but was experiencing gastric and kidney pains.

He was optimistic about the possibility of winning concessions from Ford and was already talking about the possibility of an overtime ban.

The case has been widely reported in the press and even forced the biggest bureaucrat of them all, Fidel Velasquez, 89 years old and 50 years the leader of the Mexican version of the TUC, to pay

a public visit to Marco.

Velasquez offered vague promises of legal help in exchange for an end to the hunger strike. "No deal" was the comrades' reply.

Many local union branches have sent delegations to the hunger strikers.

The hunger strikers have asked their struggle to be particularly publicised among Ford workers and other trade unionists in Britain.

The Mexican government is very sensitive to foreign pressure as it tries to carry through its 'transition to democracy'.

Send messages of support to Xola 181, Colonia Alamos, Mexico DF. Send messages of protest to: Ford Motor Company, Paseo de la Reforma 333, Mexico DF.

OUT AT WORK

OUT AT WORK;
CAMPAIGNING FOR LESBIAN
AND GAY RIGHTS.
Published by Trades Unionists
Against Section 28.
50 Pages, Price £2.50.

Trades Unionists Against Section 28 has published an information pack for promoting Lesbian and Gay rights at work. The pack is well designed and professionally produced with a practical pull-out format. Information is presented in a concise and readable way. This pack is long overdue. Its guiding ideas are "That trades unions must take up Lesbian and Gay rights as an issue, and defend their Lesbian and Gay members from discrimination and harassment; that this is central to the labour movement and not a side issue; Lesbians and Gay men should join and participate in their unions; that it is in the interests of all workers to stand together; fighting against racism, sexism, attacks on the welfare state and the ability of workers to organise effectively. Solidarity!"

This refreshing approach makes this pack a must for Lesbian and Gay workers, shop stewards, workplace activists and all those with an interest in campaigning for Lesbian and Gay rights and challenging bigotry.

The pack is divided into eleven sections covering coming out at work, the law, a short history of the Lesbian and Gay rights movement, Section 28, AIDS, education, trades unions policies, useful addresses and related publications. The section on solidarity provides a valuable insight into the workings of the Lesbian and Gay support groups that sprang up during the 1984-5 Miners Strike and the News International Wapping dispute. A colourful poster is also included.

Importantly, the pack provides a rank and file approach to Lesbian and Gay rights at work, with the emphasis on work place based campaigning, solidar-

ity, and collective action. The impetus for combining this material in booklet form came from the campaign against the notorious Section 28 of the Local Government Act.

To order a copy, send a cheque or postal order for £3 to:

TUAS 28, P.O. Box 1733,
London W9 3SH.

The pack is also available at radical bookshops. For further information about Trades Unionists against Section 28 write to the above address. TUAS 28 actively encourages the support and encouragement of all trades unionists. Affiliation rates are £5 for individuals, £15 for union branches.
MARTIN GOODSSELL.

Socialist Movement T.U. Conference Sheffield, November 11 & 12

We have received a letter from Sheila Cohen who has been one of the main figures in organising a major Trade Union Conference, on behalf of the Socialist Movement - sponsored by the Solidarity Network, which is taking place in November. Sheila is a strong supporter of the Network and is keen for us to play a major role in the Conference. At our meeting in Wolverhampton on September 9th it was agreed that we would organise a fringe meeting in the evening. The Conference offers the Network a good opportunity to 'spread the word' about the kind of work we have been carrying out.

Dear Solidarity Network supporter, You have probably either been on strike yourself or been involved in supporting a dispute. From this you will have learnt - like the rest of us - that solidarity from other workers is indispensable to winning such struggles. This, of course, is the thinking behind the Solidarity Network.

The socialist movement Trade Union Policy Group had been working alongside Solidarity Network for about two years now in order to promote solidarity and also to develop policies on closely related issues like fighting the vicious anti-trade union legislation. We are now calling a national conference, sponsored

by the Network, which will bring trade unionists from across the country (as well as from abroad) together in order to discuss tis and other issues which affect the progress of disputes.

The kind of topics to be discussed at the conference include - as well as solidarity and the anti-union laws, the "employers' offensive" in the workplace which attacks effective organisation at work, and "New Realist" policies in the unions which undermine the whole principle of collective trade union activity.

Trade unionists who meet at the conference will be discussing these problems and beginning to work out effective ways of dealing with them. But this conference will not just be a talking shop - it is seen as a working conference in which trade unionists from the same regions, campaigns etc can get together in order to build links for the future. We believe that the conference can supplement the vital work of Solidarity Network in bringing together an even wider range of trade unionists who want to look at why the defeats of the last few years have happened and how we can build on the victories.

As a supporter of Solidarity Network, we believe this conference can further your aims. Solidarity Network is supporting the conference - will you?

Appeals from the NJMC

Geoff Almond

The National Justice for Mineworkers Campaign were saddened to hear of the death in June 89 of victimised Kent miner Geoff Almond.

Geoff was killed at Betteshanger Colliery in Deal, Kent, during a cleaning operation on an underground conveyor belt at the bottom of a staple pit. A build up of slurry – coal and water – poured from an overhead bunker, crushing the machinery and suffocating him.

Geoff had been victimised during the 84/85 Miners strike and had only been back to work for two years after being sacked. John Moyle, President of the Kent Area NUM, and a victimised miner himself, has made the following comments in local newspapers:

'It is quite clear this incident should never have taken place. In 30 years experience I've never seen such a blatant disregard for safety with warnings consistently given – and, it appears, ignored by senior management. But still men were put in a place which has proved not only to be extremely dangerous, but has now been responsible for a loss of life'.

It is almost a year to the day that a man was killed at Murton Colliery, Durham, in very similar circumstances. Despite a call for a code of practice to govern these areas of work, but one which in fact only exists in the North Yorkshire Area, the Coal Board have refused point blank to implement one. If the North Yorkshire code of practice had been operating, Geoff would still be alive today.

We are both saddened and angered at what has happened to our comrade. In recent years pit death and accident rates have soared in the mad run-up to privatisation. Financial, and not safety considerations are paramount to British Coal and they don't care a damn how many lives are lost to achieve their aims.

The government are also preparing to scrap the 1944 Mining and Quarries Act in time for privatisation. What legislation we do have protecting men in the coal industry is being removed so that the new owners of the mines will not hinder them from making their profit at any cost.

The mines inspectorate are hardly neutral in matters of health and safety – they have never prosecuted colliery management under the act and all inspectors are ex-colliery managers anyway. But the Tories are scrapping even this scant protection, showing which side of the class divide their true interest lie.

The National Justice for Mineworkers Campaign is launching a financial appeal for Geoff's widow and three children. No money can make up for the loss of a human life, but it is a way of showing that we, and you, care about what's happened. Geoff and his family have been doubly victimised by British Coal – first with the loss of his livelihood for three years, and now with the loss of his life. He joins eleven more men who lost their lives during the strike, four of whom were killed on picket lines.

Make cheques etc. payable to the Kent Miners Benevolent Fund, and send to NJMC, c/o North East NUM, PO Box 6, Miners Hall, Red Hill, Durham, DH1 4BB

Des Warren

Dear Friends,

It is now 1 year since the Des Warren Trust Fund was established and we are pleased that it has received wide support in the Trade Union movement.

In our first letter we explained the severe problems faced by Des Warren. Des was jailed on a trumped up charge of conspiracy after the Building Workers Strike of 1972, and served a 3 year prison sentence.

He refused to accept that he was a criminal and refused to co-operate with the prison authorities.

While in prison he was administered a powerful tranquilliser, a procedure known as the 'liquid cosh'. The drug had the effect of producing Parkinsons Disease and had left Des severely addicted to valium.

After a long legal battle the Home Office finally paid him £3,000 in compensation. The Trust Fund was set up because Des requires 24 hours of attention to help him overcome addiction while suffering the effects of Parkinsons Disease, a

facility that a run down NHS will not provide.

Due to the help by the trust and the tremendous courage shown by Des, he has reduced his dependence from the 60 units he was taking at the height of the problem to 9 units. Anyone who has the experience knows that it is a long and painful process by itself, without the added complication of having Parkinsons Disease.

The progress Des has made so far is due to the tremendous response the trust has received from the Trade Union & Labour Movement. We are however, in danger of losing the effect of this good work if the response is not sustained. We are therefore making this appeal to your organisation to make a further contribution to this vital work.

Des Warren paid a terrible price for his Trade Union principles. It is our responsibility to see that he receives the care he requires.

Thank you in anticipation,

Yours Fraternally,

W.Etherington.

Please make cheques payable to 'National Justice for Mineworkers campaign', and send to the above address.

SOLIDARITY NETWORK

**Saturday
October 14th**
Mandela room
Sheffield Poly
(opposite BR station)
12.30 p.m.-5.00 p.m

AGM/CONFERENCE

Solidarity with those in struggle has never been more important. Not only is trade union solidarity illegal under the Tory anti-union laws but many struggles today are long and hard fought and end in victimisation. The sacking of strikers and the victimisation of militants is now a regular occurrence. There are also numerous campaigns taking place outside the organised labour movement.

The Solidarity Network was set up two years ago to address these issues and to organise practical support. The Network has done consistent work in many areas since its inception. At this year's AGM/Conference the Network aims to review its work so far and to look at its development as an organisation and its aims and objectives.

If you are interested in the work of the Solidarity Network and wish to take part in this year's conference please complete the form at the bottom of the page.

AGENDA:

12.00-12.30	Registration
12.30-1.45	Speakers from recent struggles — docks, rail, Tube, NALGO and others
1.45-2.15	Discussion
2.15-2.45	Report: Balance sheet of the last year's work
2.45-3.00	Break
3.00-4.30	Report and discussion: Development of the Network Report and discussion: Development of the Bulletin Socialist Movement TU Conference
5.00-5.15	Election of officers

a) My organisation wishes to send delegates to the conference

b) I wish to attend the Conference

Name/Organisation.....

Address.....

I therefore enclose £.....

Credentials are: £2.00 waged, £1.00 unwaged, strikers free.

Creche facilities available only if booked one week in advance.

Please return this slip to: John Lang, 74, Kingsland Road, Plaistow, London E13.