

OVER...NEVER!



Police push back pickets outside Liverpool's Copperas Hill Mechanised Letter Office.

Since the return to work Post Office management have been using the collapse of the strike to their advantage. The national agreement is being used to prove they are boss. Casuals are being forced into offices and conditions are generally attacked.

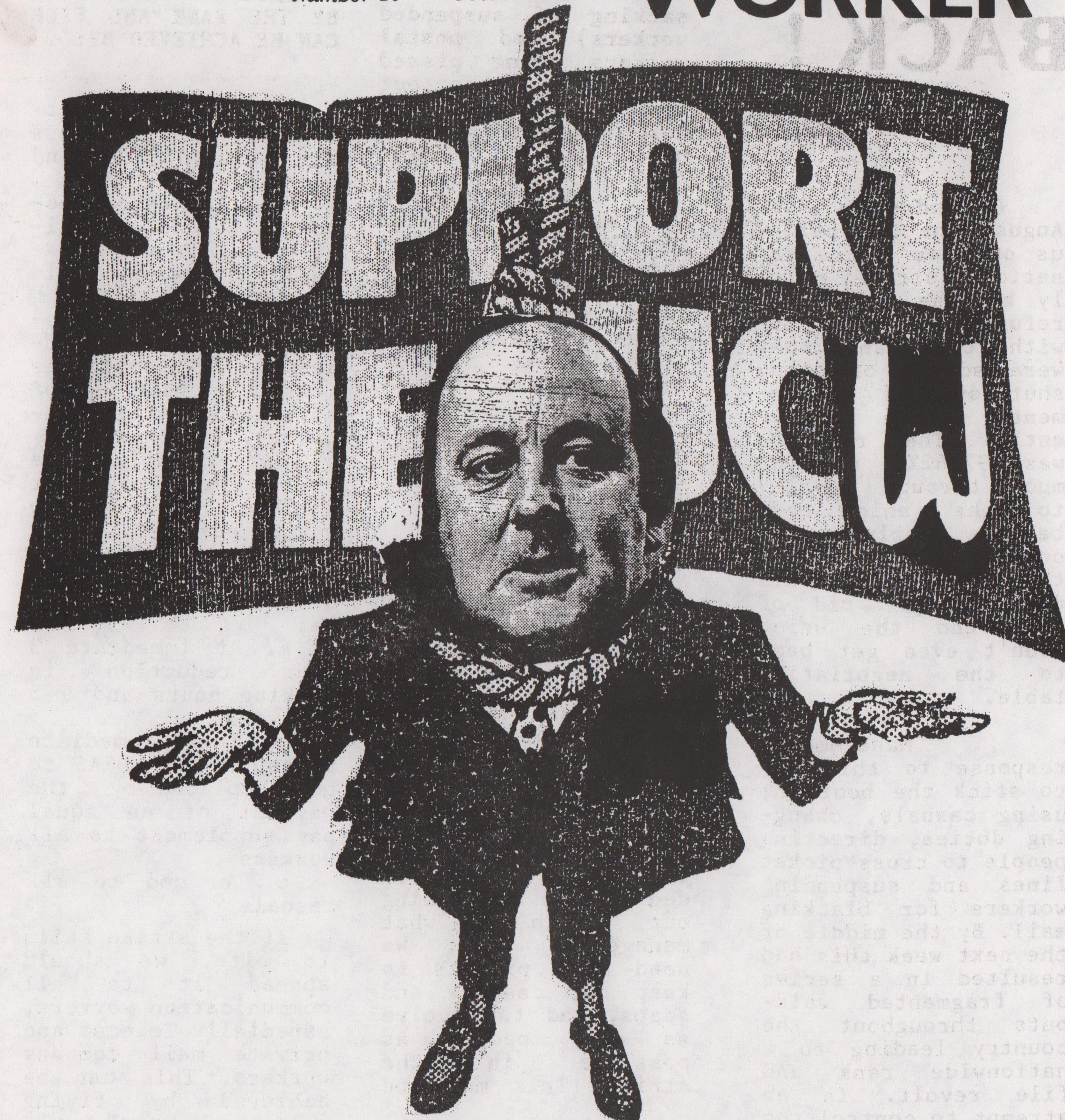
The first response to this came at Streatham on Thursday 29th September. District management asked for volunteers for scheduled attendance overtime and a kitchen meeting that morning decided that nobody was volunteering. Management then decided to take revenge and stick the boot in. While workers were setting their second delivery they were told that when they were finished they would not be going on a second delivery but would prepare the rebate for 45 usefully employees to deliver the following morning. At 11.20 the first workers to refuse to do this, were suspended so provoking an immediate wilkout.

As soon as this happened the management rang the LDC and Colin Savage (LDC3 committee member) proceeded to tell the Streatham Branch Sec that they were out of order to refuse scheduled overtime and that they had accepted it at his office (wimbeldon). Masnagement at Tooting, obviously fearing an extension of the strike, didn't send their drivers to work at Streatham that afternoon as they usually do. Later on in the same day Audbry Beyer (UCW London District Organiser) also said that they couldn't refuse scheduled attendences. However the deal that was finally agreed to included no scheduled attendences. and the office overtime was more than doubled. Delivery officers were to be paid an hour and a half on Friday and two hours on Saturday which well makes up for the lost pay Some usefully employees would be used to deliver rebate only (the management, originally wanted to use them for 'the first and second class as well) but will only be staying for a limited period and not taking away all overtime.

Although this was only a small short strike there are two significant points to be made, firstly that the national strike may be over but the struggle for wages and conditions will continue. Secondly it again demonstrates the complicity of the LDC in attacks on postal workers, and that to win we will have to confront them as well as management.

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JUST LIKE THEY SUPPORT OUR STRIKES

FIGHT BACK!

On Wednesday 31st August the UCW called us out for a one day national strike, mainly because management refused to negotiate with them and they were scared of being shut out of managements office permanently. The response was 97.62%, not so much through loyalty to the union but because nearly everyone is pissed off with the job. However, this did not get rid of DRAS and the union didn't even get back to the negotiating table.

Managements response to this was to stick the boot in; using casuals, changing duties, directing people to cross picket lines and suspending workers for blacking mail. By the middle of the next week this had resulted in a series of fragmented walk-outs throughout the country leading to a nationwide rank and file revolt. In an attempt to control the strike the UCW executive made the strike official and then attempted to stitch up the minimum possible deal to get us back to work and then back to the negotiating table.

This was achieved by Monday 11th, deals were held up by management trying to impose unacceptable conditions (eg. continued use of casuals, sacking of suspended workers) and postal workers being pissed off that we'd been out for a fortnight and were returning with nothing.

The result of all this is that we've achieved nothing or less than nothing. It showed the futility of having one-day strikes - managements response created an all-out strike anyway. Thousands of postal workers are still pissed off.

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

We have to counter managements offensive by going on our own offensive. Management will probably try to force us out again. Our response to this is crucial. We need a solid all-out rank and file controlled strike. Flying pickets should be sent to any office that has not come out. We must not let ourselves be divided by not all coming out, which is what management want. We need mass pickets to keep out casuals and scabs, and to involve as many people as possible in the strike. This must be

done by ourselves, as the union will not try to spread the strike and will be negotiating a return to work as soon as we walk out the gate. The strike

should be spread to all workers in the post office - counter, clerical, engineering and catering.

CONTROL OF THE STRIKE
BY THE RANK AND FILE
CAN BE ACHIEVED BY:

1. Regular mass meetings of all strikers in each office and district.
2. Election of an accountable and recallable strike committee (NOT just the same old shop stewards).
3. The election of regional strike coordinating committees (Possibly made up of strike committee delegates).
4. Street collections to raise money for strikers, as we get no strike pay.
5. Issue our own demands as a counter-offensive. These could be;
 - a. An immediate 3 hour reduction in working hours and a 5 day week
 - b. The immediate scrapping of DRAS to be replaced by the payment of an equal pay supplement to all workers
 - c. An end to all casuals

If the strike fails to bite, we should spread it to all communication workers, especially Telecom and private mail company workers. This can be achieved by flying pickets. We should link up with other workers in struggle eg nurses, seafarers and civil servants.

THE BEST FORM OF
DEFENCE IS ATTACK

STITCH UP

After Alan Tuffin's agreement with the post office, that restored the union's negotiating rights and began the unions' new offensive against the workers, the local reps began negotiating the return to work. The London District Council (LDC) had said on Tuesday that London would remain solid until all of London had an acceptable deal and any return to work would be together or not at all. What they really meant was that the LDC3 committee would remain as united as ever against the postman.

The following day out of the 18 London districts, 7 were still to get a deal (West Central, East Central, Paddington, North West, South West, Battersea, Romford and Croydon). The LDC3 committee instructed the districts to be reasonable. How can you be reasonable when district postmasters are saying that "You've been naughty boys and girls, and you are going to get punished for it." Reasonable is a word that the union uses to mean "take whatever shit they give you".

After Mike Hogan's personal intervention in the negotiations (read stitch ups), he

gave the order for a return to work. ECDO were being forced to accept casuals despite 80 vacancies and despite not having had them for 20 years. Croydon still has workers on frozen suspensions. North West district still had two postman threatened with discipline after being arrested on the picket line. And Romford were still on strike!

So much for an honourable return to work and London sticking together!

Why should union officials like Mike Hogan care about postmen being disciplined or offices accepting casuals? He has no worries about being suspended and casuals do not threaten his working conditions. While the union is back in its cosy negotiating position with management, the workers have lost money and are seeing casuals in their offices.

What happened had happened before. We cannot trust union officials to negotiate for us. They stitch us up with the minimum deal. Don't let it happen again. The return to work for a massacre but it is only first blood.

Notes.

1. K.E.B. - King Edwards Buildings are the meeting place of the London District Council.
2. Mike Hogan is one of the London District Organisers for the UCW.

solidarity

"One of our members was suspended because he wouldn't repair a machine used by imposed casual labour. When management refused to back down we decided to come out rather than face more suspensions. The whole of Manchester, Oldham and Stockport (over 300 engineers) were out." A Manchester Engineer.

This is brilliant! But why weren't all the engineers supporting us? We should have insisted they didn't cross our picket lines. One engineer said, while crossing the picket line, "Good luck lads, if you lose we're fucked". If he realised that, why was he crossing?

The engineers are in the NCU (National Communications Union) but should we let a little piece of plastic divide us from our fellow workers? COMMUNICATION WORKER is a magazine for all postal workers (Postmen/women, PHG's, Engineers, Catering Staff, Cleaners, Doormen, PO's and PA's). We should all support each other.

COUNTING^the

CUTS

The Post Office board has made a decision to close down half of the Crown Office network, the counter staff have made a decision to fight this with industrial action. The Post Office plans to close down up to 750 Crown Offices, this will lead to the loss of up to 5000 jobs. They want to end the P.O./P.A. incentive scheme replacing it with office by office incentive schemes. They want to end restrictive practises, practises that restrict their profits such as decent meal breaks and they want to introduce more part timers especially in London, where this has been fiercely resisted.

JOB'S AND WAGES BEFORE SERVICES

The union is always talking about defending the service "The Crown Office network is ours - we work in it - we sustain it - we cherish it". This is a joke. Counter staff are badly paid for working long hours, most of them don't care one bit about the service and why should they! Over the last few years conditions at work

have deteriorated dramatically, anyone who can turn now turn round and say "I feel betrayed by the management" is either blind or stupid for trusting them in the first place.

The so called service to the public is pretty poor as well - how can we try to persuade other workers to support us by whinging about how the PO are attacking the service. Tell them that and they'll think about half hour queues and laugh at you. The fight is about management attacks on jobs and wages, which is something all workers can relate to.

FUCK THE WORKERS-BUT ONLY WITH UCW PERMISSION

The union is upset not by the actual cuts, but the fact that the managements refusal to negotiate with them (just like they wouldn't over DRAS). If you don't believe that the union doesn't want the cuts look at what they have done for counter staff in the last 5 years. In 1983 the 'Postal Officers and Postal Assistants Incentive Scheme' was introduced resulting with the loss of 1500 jobs over the next 18 months. In

1986 the Revised Counter and Writing staff agreement resulted in the introduction of 1500 part time staff. As a result of these agreements the Post Office has saved £125 million in just 5 years. That's £1000 per PO/PA per year for the last half decade. Also adding insult to job losses counter staff weren't given a reduction in the working week after the farce last Christmas. The unions main concern is that it will be locked out of the management office for good and lose the cosy relationship with the PO. But if you look at what they got for us when they are in there, we should have stopped them negotiating for us long ago.

MAKING LINKS TO SMASH THE CHAINS

The chain of defeats that have been inflicted on postal workers by the union and management can be broken by only one thing - active solidarity. This means counter staff making links with other grades. This stupid "you didn't support us, so we won't support you" mentality is pathetic, working together we can easily win. Remember if it's

counters first, then its parcels and letters next.

UNITING OUTSIDE THE UNION

The union will not fight the PO for us, if we leave it to them we'll just be moaning in our offices about whatever shit deal they come up with. Any effective action has to be organised by ourselves. Counter staff should set up truly accountable strike committees in their offices to organise the fight. When they strike they should send flying pickets to bring out sorting offices, it wouldn't take many people to do and it doesn't need permission from UCW House. There are many things that can be done only it requires imagination.

Breaking down the barriers between us, which have been set up by the union is not easy. But what have we got to lose, apart from 5000 jobs?

RETURN OF THE

GUVNORS column

This issue we're concentrating on Mr. John Berry, the district postmaster of Croydon. But as last time we were threatened with an injunction when we slagged off that bastard Chapman, we're going to let him speak for himself. Can't be fairer than that can we?

BERRY: I'm going to take away your pool tables when you come back as a punishment.

DON(Union Branch Secretary): What's this about me being suspended for being off the floor from 9.30 to 11.00?

BERRY: You were absent from the floor.

DON: I was in a meeting with you.

BERRY: Yes you were absent from the floor.

(One of the suspensions is for calling a meeting without permission).

DON: If I would have asked permission would you have given it?

BERRY: No

DON: So then I would have been suspended for disobeying orders as well.

BERRY: Yes.

DON: Why are you the only postmaster in London who's continuing with these sort of suspensions?

BERRY: Because I'm the only one who's right. (When pressed on the issue, he answered)

BERRY: Because you wouldn't come into IWM.

Enough said, hopefully next issue we'll be able to print his address and phone number.

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READERS MEETING 8pm TUE 25th OCT

southwark trade union resource centre

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