

Summer '88
No. 8.

COMMUNICATION WORKER

NEXT TEAM BRIEFING.

Agenda

- 1) Minimum wage of £200
- 2) 35-hour week
- 3) 8 weeks annual holiday
- 4) Free canteen meals
- 5) Sacking of management

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**IF ITS NOT LIKE THIS
ITS NOT WORTH GOING TO**

DROSS

By the time you receive this, you should have been balloted over the issue of payments to new recruits and we hope you voted in favour of taking industrial action.

The new PBIS bonus scheme is not paid to postal workers until they have finished their first probationary year. This ridiculous agreement has led management to think up a new way of creating divisions amongst us. In London and parts of the South-East, management say they are finding it hard to get new recruits, so they have now decided that in some of these places they are going to pay core bonus payments to new recruits. However, not only are they going to choose which offices these shall be paid in, but they are only going to pay it to selected recruits in those offices - those that get a good report from their Ped.

It doesn't take much imagination to realise the harmfulness of this new idea - divisions between areas, offices and workers; pressure to work harder and do-as-your-told to get the bonus. If we are to resist the attacks of management and/or go on the offensive to improve our working conditions, we need to be united. If the PO is finding it hard to get new recruits it's obvious how to remedy this - Higher wages, shorter hours, longer holidays and more fringe benefits might have some effect. Any bonus scheme should be paid to all new recruits!

If we are to win this dispute we need an all-out strike controlled by the rank-and-file. We left the Shorter Hours Campaign to the UCW bureaucracy and look what a mess they made of that. This time we shouldn't make the same mistake, by electing accountable strike committees and holding regular mass meetings we could control and win this dispute - we don't want some fudged-up union compromise, we want to win this one. We could tie it in with the campaign against privatisation and team briefings and beat the PO back on those. If we lose these campaigns we can only expect a further erosion of our working conditions. and then they'll probably get even fewer new recruits.

UNITY IS STRENGTH

...AND AS FOR OVERTIME.

The recent Remuneration Package [change in overtime rates], and the fact that the PO are slowly reducing the amount of overtime available all over the country has once again shown that relying on overtime to bring home a decent wage is a bad idea. This for some offices follows the reduction of bonus payments under the new PBIS scheme; making many postal workers worse off.

Relying on bonus payments and overtime has recently been shown to be foolish. What we should have is a decent wage that we can comfortably live on. Who really wants to spend over 40 hours a week working for the Post Office anyway? We should be aiming to reduce the working week-not increase it!!!

Overtime also has the added effect of creating unemployment. [However, it is highly unlikely that the PO has the unemployed in mind in decreasing the amount of overtime]. What it will mean is that we will have to work harder during the basic hours. In times of high unemployment, workers are less willing to fight the bosses and management are therefore able to keep wages down, therefore making things even worse us.

With the annual pay offer, we have the chance to increase our basic pay up to a reasonable level. An all out national strike controlled by the rank and file has the best chance of acheiving this. You never get anything for nothing under this system, therefore we are going to have to fight for everything we get. Don't leave any action to be run by the UCW, we don't want another repeat of the '71 farce. If we refuse to fight we will just see more and more attacks on our working conditions by management.

For Sale.

It has come as no surprise to hear the recent conclusions of the Mergers and Monopolies Commission report who, in their wisdom, see fit to praise the Post Office, using that well worn buzz word of the 80s efficiency; you know the one with two meanings. This report paves the way for the privatisation of counters and, of course, Girobank. Their idea being to reduce business costs and increase efficiency, in other words reduce staff levels and promote public relations propaganda.

The aim of the MMC, as with any business orientated body, is to generate a profit making concern. This particular aim is motivated by the 1986/7 £11 million loss. They intend to change this by regrading Crown offices and this effectively turns them into sub offices under a franchise system. Hence the words of the MMC report "we therefore commend counters' plans to merge or regrade 750 Crown offices but recommend that counters should consider regrading a much larger number". The first and most obvious effect of this heartless move would be job losses; this will mean a loss of 5,000 jobs.

So, what do we do? Firstly, we have to recognise and understand our predicament. We cannot rely on the UCW for they are mainly responsible for our present predicament. How can men who refer to themselves as generals and surround themselves with the status symbols of an elevated class identify with us who day in day out have to tolerate the drudgery of work. Clearly our only hope of improving our lot is to take control and make realistic demands. Nothing else will do. We can back them up with collective action, after all we literally hold all the power. It is worth bearing in mind that any negotiations (which incidentally have always been held in secret) have ended with us losing jobs, money whatever! We forever seem to be going backwards, its about time we started to move forwards. The only way we are going to do that is organise workers' strike committees and have an all out strike. Remember Parcels and Letters are next.

Sick of work ?



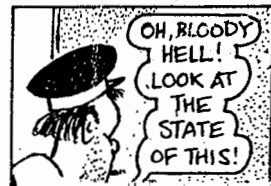
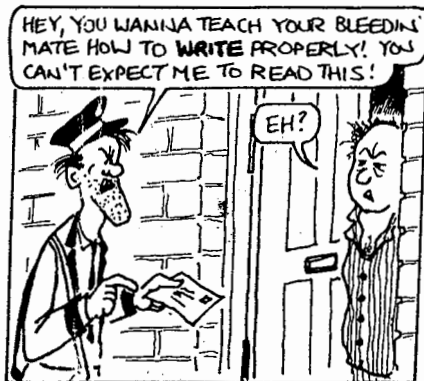
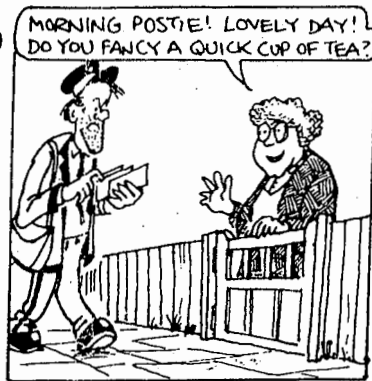
On the 18th April the Post Office introduced a new sick leave procedure. In future, when you hand in your doctor's note, or fill in the self certificate form, you will be interviewed by your immediate supervisor. This interview will consist of your governor trying to ascertain whether or not your illness was genuine! Management claim this is intended to encourage TEAM WORK.

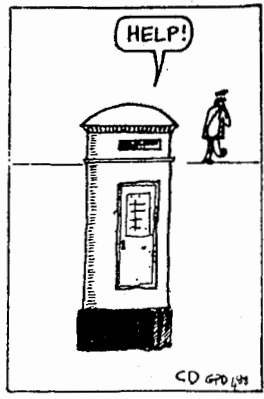
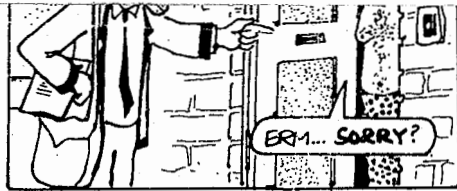
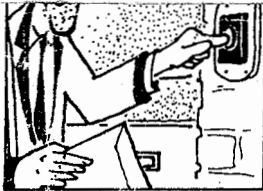
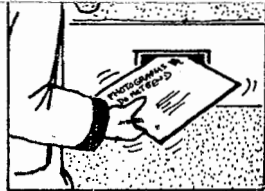
This interview is just one more attack upon our conditions. The Post Office's intimidation of workers who have gone sick is legendary. Only last year J H Curtis, Personnel and Industrial Relations Manager of Letters, said in a circular: 'There is one other misconception which some people have. They sometimes believe that if their absences are due to genuine illness, then no action will be taken against them. This is not so...' The hard work and stress that postal workers face every day can only be expected to lead to illness and absence. If the governors are sending people out with 45lbs on their backs what can they expect?

So what, you may ask, has been the Union's response to this latest attack? As usual the union has wasted no time in reaching a tough response, and have decided to, yes you guessed it, debate it at conference. Once again, it will be up to every postal worker to take whatever action is necessary to defend anyone who is victimised by this new procedure.

Postman Plod

The Miserable Bastard



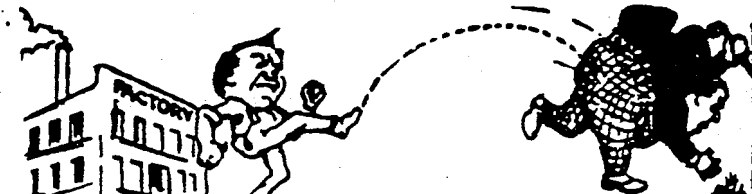


CD 670/99

EXCLUSIVE

BUG FOUND AT ROMFORD MLO

An electronic listening device was found by the PHG on duty in the reg. cage at Romford MLO recently. This represents a sinister development in the activities of the PO Investigation Branch. There was astonishment and anger when the bug was discovered, but the UCW failed to take any worthwhile action. There should have been an immediate walk out in protest-similar to the one after Christmas. This concerned a particularly mouthy governor who told a postie to do OPS sorting when he should have been setting his walk in. He refused, and was suspended. Romford Delivery Office and MLO struck for the day and the postie was fully reinstated. The governor responsible, Mark Fields, was moved to Ilford. Sorry Ilford.



NO GO, P&O! Seafarers Fight On

(Taken from leaflet by
Thames Valley Class Struggle Group)

Since 4th February, over 1000 Dover seafarers have been striking against P&O ferries. The strike started in response to P&O's plans to reduce manning levels and attack wages and working conditions, supposedly to make P&O more competitive in time for the Channel Tunnel. (It is always disgusting when the rich bosses of companies worth millions or billions sack workers to "save money". However P&O, which made £280 million profit last year intends to save £8 million in order to compete with Eurotunnel, which is being built by Bovis, a P&O subsidiary. Their cynicism is repulsive for this alone.)

The measures P&O are trying to impose are these:-

- * A wage cut of £25 to £45 per week
- * Crewing levels to be reduced by an average of 15 per ferry
- * Crew members to spend a minimum of 72 hours on board, working three 24 hour shifts (with rest periods of 6 hours aboard ship, during which workers can be recalled at anytime).
- * Crews retained for up to 4 weeks if relief crews fail to report.

When you consider that Townsend Thoreson, including the sister ships of the Herald of Free Enterprise are now operated under the name P&O European Ferries, the deterioration of safety standards caused by the above measures is even more appalling.

THE FIGHTBACK

At the time of writing the main methods of struggle are picketing P&O at Dover, and collecting money for the communal kitchens for the strikers. Both of these actions are important and without them there would not now be any dispute to speak of. However, these actions are far from adequate to win the struggle. The only way to victory is to spread the strike to other workers. Three times since February there has been national strike action on the ferries. If these strikes had continued they would have hit P&O harder than any blockade, boycott or blacking ever could. And more importantly they would have united all ferryworkers, who are all facing the same attacks. Each strike however was called off by the National Union of Seamen. The reason given by union leaders for calling off the strikes was in order to prevent sequestration of funds and so leave the union powerful enough to fight on. It would be amusing that the NUS were calling off strikes in order to fight effectively if not for the damage that the union's action has done to the seafarers' struggle. Sequestration is a red herring; it is continuing the strike that is important.

Out of the 3 instances where the NUS has called off national strikes, the first was the most damaging. This strike (in support of the Isle of Man ferryworkers) was called off on 11th February, the day before the unofficial walkout at the Ford Dagenham plant. It was at this time that the potential for spreading and unifying the strike was at its highest. This is because during February there were strikes not only by seafarers and Ford workers, but also by NHS staff, workers at Landrover and Vauxhall, and miners. In addition to these and other workers who struck in February, there were others facing similar attacks from the bosses and still others (e.g. Transport and Postal Workers) who actively supported the NHS dispute. With all these struggles raging at the same time it would have been perfectly possible to unite all the strikes around common demands (no redundancies, no changes in working practices, increased NHS funding, wage increases). But no union even attempted such a unification, and many (not least the NUS) took important measures to block such a development.

The way for workers to win struggles at present then, is for strikers to go en masse to other workers who are under attack and call for united strike action. Where other workers are already striking, join their picket lines and demonstrations and argue for effective action and for a unification of the demands and of the strikes. Spending time trying to get the union to organise effective action will be a waste of time and won't work — instead of wasting energy on that, workers should use it to unify and extend struggles themselves. These are the actions, broadly speaking, which the seafarers, and all strikers, must undertake to ensure victory.

Team Talks

WHAT A LOAD OF OLD BOLLOCKS!

Whatever they might say, no one (I hope) is going to fall for the idea that we and the bosses form a team. We are on opposite sides, they know that full well and this is just a (pathetic) attempt to fool us. On top of everything else do we also have to have our intelligence insulted every month? We are here to get as much money and free-time out of the Post Office as possible and management are there to get as much out of us as possible for as little as possible.

If "our business" is as successful as they say in their sickly circular (and it is) then why is it we don't get a decent basic wage - or perhaps that's a part of what makes "us" successful...

I'm not interested in "taking the competition to the cleaners" (do they wear grubby overalls?), only Nicholson and his cronies - after all, him and his type have been doing it to us for years.

It seems likely that the union bosses are more annoyed about the fact that management didn't consult them about the introduction of Team Talks than the fact of the Talks themselves. The union is being edged out of its role in PO management prior to the push for full privatisation.

More importantly, the UCW's real colours regarding industrial action are shown here again. Tuffin & Co. can't call for action because they will be fined (or sequestered) and they would lose all their lovely union money.

If we ever want to take effective action we must control it ourselves and not look to the UCW to organise it - they won't. The best they'll do is try to stop any action after a "brave struggle" in the courts. All unions in Britain are the same. At the dispute in Dover the seafarers union (NUS) has proved to be the most serious obstacle facing the strikers, who want to spread the struggle and win. When the union calls off actions ~~we must ignore them~~. When the courts threaten to take union money away we must ignore that too. Industrial action survives on our solidarity and the support of the community, not union money.

Team Talks are just one (minor) aspect of a growing management offensive (leading to privatisation, which will almost certainly mean even worse conditions for us - in the name of efficiency and even greater profit. In principle, however, it makes no difference to us whether we work for a "private" boss or a "nationalised" boss). It is a comprehensive offensive and our response must also be comprehensive.

BAD LUCK

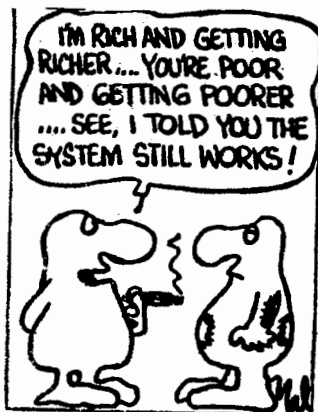
Earlier this year, it was announced by the Post Office that they are to shed 1400 jobs in management. We feel that this is a step in the right direction; however, we don't think they're going quite far enough - they should sack the whole fucking lot of them, and let the workforce take over!

WE NEED YOU...

If you would like to see copies of Communication Worker in your office on a regular basis you can help us by giving us your address so that we can send you each edition. At the moment we are finding it difficult to get CW all round the country - it takes a lot of time and work. In the future we hope to get CW into every office, but we can only do this if you help us.

... AND YOU

The Communication Worker Group is made up of ordinary postmen and women. We are open to all rank-and-file postal workers interested in encouraging a rank-and-file fight-back in the Post Office. If you want to get involved, why not drop us a line!



WHAT WE STAND FOR.

* We aim to build the strength of the rank and file. All struggles must be called and controlled by the rank and file.

* We are independant of all political parties and trade union bureaucracies.

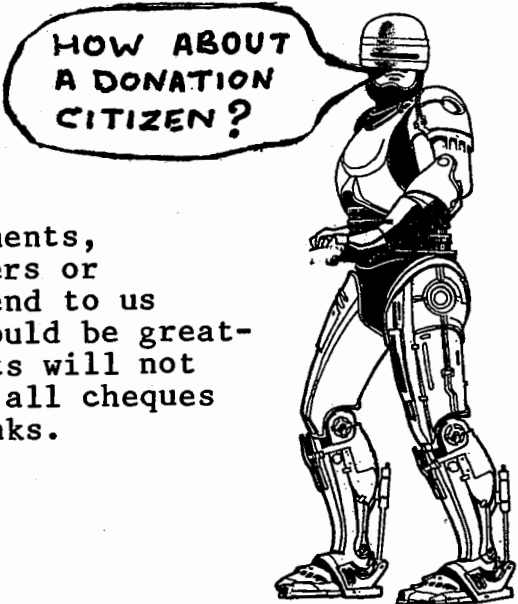
* We aim to build an organisation involving all communication workers.

* Our immediate aims are to improve the working conditions of all communication workers.

* Our long term aim is the creation of a classless, stateless society where everyone is free and equal, through the institution of worker's self management, and the destruction of the state.

* We beleive all struggles should be spread to as many sections of the working class as possible, and that solidarity is the key to winning any dispute.

* We are against all forms of discrimination (such as sexism and racism) that cause divisions within the working class.



HOW ABOUT
A DONATION
CITIZEN?

We would welcome any comments, articles, cartoons, letters or gossip you may wish to send to us. In addition, any money would be greatly received, large amounts will not embarass us. Please make all cheques payable to P. Blake. Thanks.

COMMUNICATION WORKER, BM BOX 3644, LONDON WC1N 3XX.