

First-hand reports by printworkers and pickets. Contributions welcome

PICKET NOW IN 54th DAY

Dogged pickets and tremendous vanworkers doing long hours for the first six weeks in freezing weather held the picket together until better weather built up to a march of 7000 on Saturday night. The collective experience of the pickets continues to grow. There's less onlookers. But while printers and supporters battle the strikebreakers, the TUC committees manoeuvre continually and throw up false issues to take attention away from the real business. They think picketing is a bargaining chip. It is neither conscience-stricken scabs or toothless consumer boycott campaigns that will win the strike, but picketing. All this fight for a few quid compensation? No, the issue remains entry into Wapping.

48th DAY OF THE PICKET

Wednesday evening 12th March about 3000 pickets staged a demonstration, organised by SOGAT, from Tower Hill. Approaching Thomas More the march paused. At Wellclose it stopped. A move began towards Virginia Street which was well loaded with a few hundred police and some horses. This movement was dissipated by an announcement from the platform in the park to come closer so that politicians could make speeches.

Meanwhile some pickets moved along The Highway towards Wapping Lane, where they spotted a coach and chase was given. The coach was bricked and reversed in retreat. A lorry coming the wrong way up The Highway had its windscreen smashed. This lorry then tried to turn down Wapping Lane but it was blocked up by police. Continuing down the Highway the lorry came to the large group of pickets at the top of Virginia Street, where it ploughed into the crowd and struck two SOGAT pickets. The lorry's windscreens were shattered. Later the police crowded the pickets off the road.

Best chant of the evening at the police strikebreakers -- "Get a job".

(One of the injured pickets received severe lacerations and bruising to his leg. He is now recovering. The scab driver has been identified, and the police are not going to charge him.)

Tenants demonstrate

On Saturday 15th at 6.30pm about 30 tenants of all ages assembled at the Stephen & Matilda Co-op and marched under its banner to News International. Chanting "lorries out of Wapping" the demo was accompanied by lots of police including two vanloads, plus perhaps a dozen journalists. Has any of them the integrity to break the veil of class censorship drawn over Wapping?

The march was planned to go up Thomas More Street, along the Highway, down Virginia to present a petition to NI at its main gates, and then along Pennington. At the top of Virginia the demo was halted by three rows of cops and behind them a number on horses. It became a more vivid demonstration of naked class rule than the protest the police felt unable to allow. Two tenants in wheelchairs were allowed to present the petition while several hundred printers across the street cheered the Wapping residents.

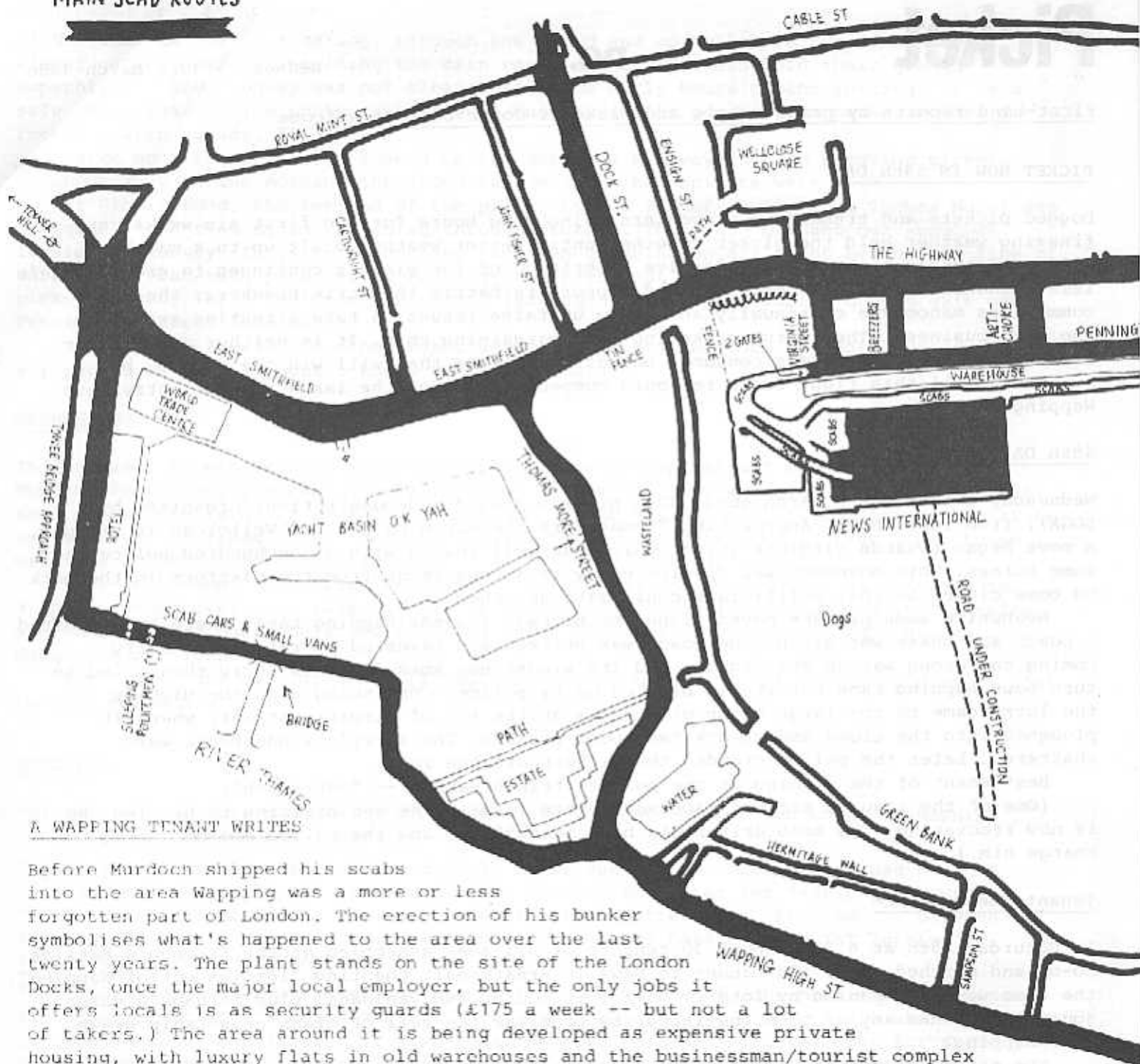
51st DAY OF THE PICKET

Saturday night, 15th March : the massive demonstration, the 14th to Wapping, organised by SOGAT moved slowly along East Smithfield from the Tower. Numbers detached themselves at each junction to block the roads, first at Thomas More, to be confronted by two rows of cops in the way of any push down into the Wapping area. Barricades made from piled-up crowd barriers were built at Thomas More, Cannon Street Road and Dellow.

As the march passed the plant pickets rocked the iron fence. It collapsed into the Highway, showing not less than six rows of razor wire which blocked progress. When some pickets tried to build a bridge over the wire with crowd barriers, riot police came quickly out into the road. A storming of the plant looked possible at one stage, but the crowd was eventually pushed back by strikebreaking cops in riot gear, backed up by cops on horses who made repeated charges into the pickets. At one point they came out

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MAIN SCAB ROUTES



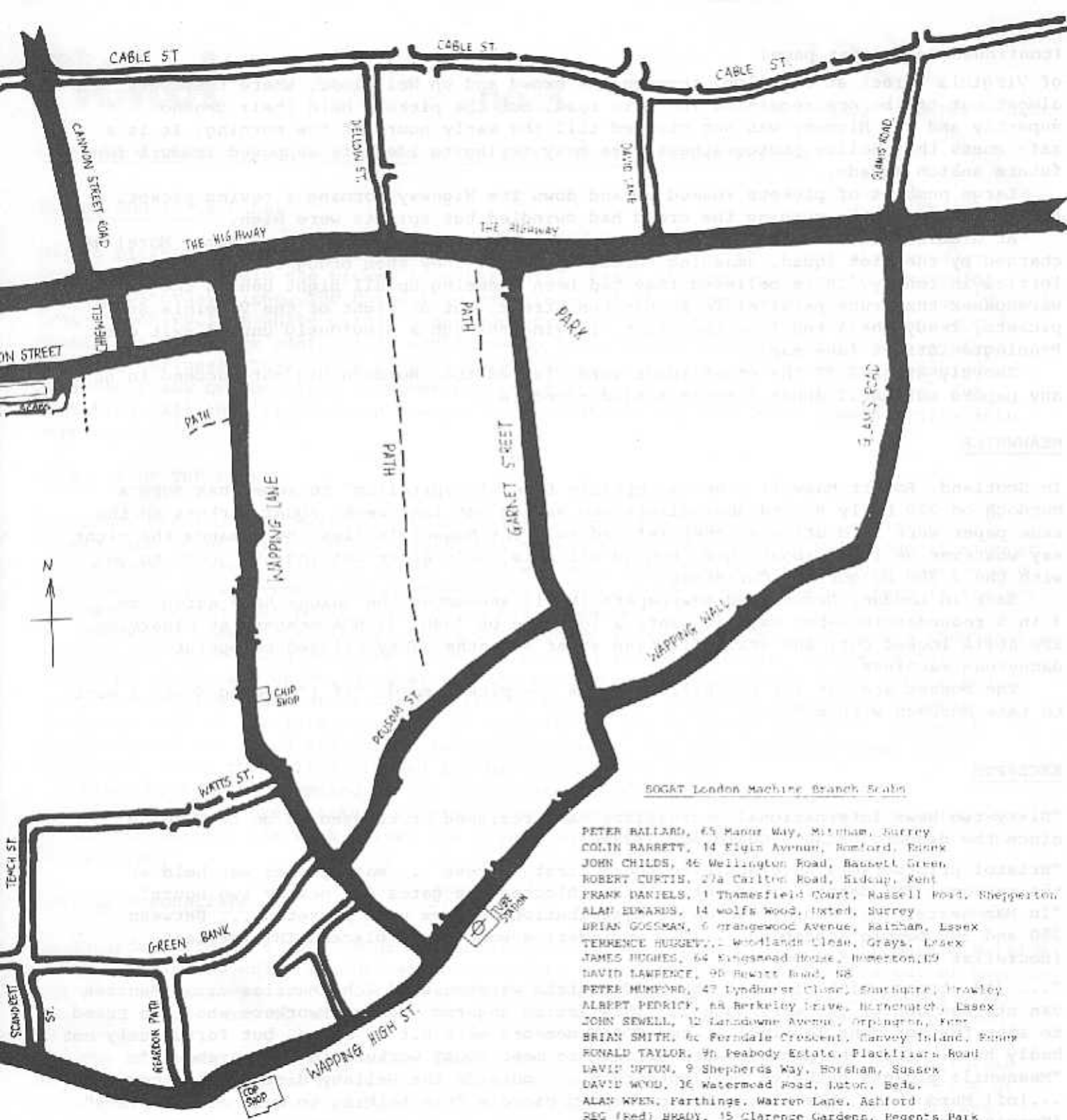
A WAPPING TENANT WRITES

Before Murdoch shipped his scabs into the area Wapping was a more or less forgotten part of London. The erection of his bunker symbolises what's happened to the area over the last twenty years. The plant stands on the site of the London Docks, once the major local employer, but the only jobs it offers locals is as security guards (£175 a week -- but not a lot of takers.) The area around it is being developed as expensive private housing, with luxury flats in old warehouses and the businessman/tourist complex around St Katharines Dock. All further isolating the locals. This is more keenly felt by Wapping residents because central Wapping is one of the few intact (albeit white) working class communities in the east end.

A fair number of the residents are sympathetic to the strikers. Of course not all are. Fleet Street printers have always been the objects of envy and resentment among less well organised workers (this hasn't been helped by a number of residents being called scabs and even having their cars rocked as they drive out of the area at night.) However from the first day the locals have joined the picket line and tried to offer support. People have provided facilities of various kinds, at the moment for example they're supplying food for the pickets during the day. Indeed chapel officials have sometimes been too busy to take up all the offers made. People would certainly be receptive to requests for other assistance if it was wanted.

The estates near the plant have complained about the noise. The nearest, South Quay estate, has started to take out an injunction against Murdoch. At a meeting with residents News International promised it was conducting a noise survey 'as a priority'.

Of concern to everyone in Wapping is that the success of the picketing on The Highway has led to the police ordering Murdoch to route his TNT trucks through Wapping's narrow streets. Two people were knocked down in the first couple of weeks. On top of this the police have been sealing off roads, demanding identification, refusing access to cars and saturating the area.



SOGAT London Machine Branch Scabs

- PETER BALLARD, 65 Manor Way, Mitcham, Surrey
- COLIN BARRETT, 14 Elgin Avenue, Romford, Essex
- JOHN CHILDS, 46 Wellington Road, Bassett Green
- ROBERT CURTIS, 27a Carlton Road, Sidcup, Kent
- FRANK DANIELS, 1 Thamesfield Court, Russell Road, Shepperton
- ALAN EDWARDS, 14 wolfs Wood, Hxted, Surrey
- BRIAN GOSSMAN, 6 Orangewood Avenue, Rainham, Essex
- TERRENCE HURSEY, Woodlands Close, Grays, Essex
- JAMES HUGHES, 64 Kingsmead House, Bamberston, ES
- DAVID LAWRENCE, 99 Bewitt Road, GB
- PETER MUMFORD, 47 Lyndhurst Close, Southgate, Hrowley
- ALBERT PEDRICK, 88 Berkeley Drive, Barnchurch, Essex
- JOHN SEWELL, 12 Sandown Avenue, Orpington, Kent
- BRIAN SMITH, 6c Ferndale Crescent, Garvey Island, Essex
- RONALD TAYLOR, 9b Peabody Estate, Plaickians Road
- DAVID UFTON, 9 Shepherds Way, Borsham, Sussex
- DAVID WOOD, 16 Watermead Road, Luton, Beds.
- ALAN WYEN, Farthings, Warren Lane, Ashford
- REG (Red) BRADY, 15 Clarence Gardens, Regents Park
- DAVID EARL, 46 Ambleside Gardens, Ashenvale, Seisdon

One comp's graffiti

**I WOULD RATHER BE A DOG TURD
THAN BE ONE OF MURDOCH'S SCAB PRINTERS**

**I WOULD RATHER BE A GREEN GILBERT
THAN BE ONE OF MURDOCH'S SCAB JOURNALISTS**

**I WOULD RATHER EAT SICK
THAN BUY ONE OF MURDOCH'S SCAB NEWSPAPERS**

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of Virginia Street at a gallop, through the crowd and up Wellclose, where they were almost cut off before regaining the main road. But the pickets held their ground superbly and The Highway was not cleared till the early hours of the morning. It is a safe guess that police photographers were busy trying to identify supposed leaders for future snatch squads.

Large numbers of pickets roamed up and down The Highway forming a roving picket. By about 2.30 in the morning the crowd had dwindled but spirits were high.

At Glamis Road, the far end of the picket (about 3/4 of a mile from Thomas More) was charged by the riot squad, smashing through pickets. They then brought out about 26 lorries in convoy. It is believed they had been queueing up all night behind the line of warehouses that runs parallel to Pennington Street, out of sight of the Virginia St. pickets, ready for a run from the plant, leaving through a previously unused exit onto Pennington Street (see map).

Shortly after 2.30 the other roads were cleared too. Murdoch did not succeed in getting any papers out until about 5 hours behind schedule.

MEANWHILE

In Scotland, Robert Maxwell (the "acceptable face of capitalism" to some) has done a Murdoch on 220 Daily Record journalists who walked out last week. SOGAT workers on the same paper were laid off when they refused to print Maxwell's lies. He demands the right say whatever he likes about them. Behind all this, he's after cutting 300 jobs, to go with the 2,300 he got for Christmas.

Back in London, Associated Newspapers (Mail) announces the unions have agreed to 1 in 5 redundancies--but says it wants a lot more by 1988. 12 NGA members at Clearview are still locked out, and still fighting after 4 months. They refused to operate dangerous machines.

The bosses are out for the kill. But, as one picket said, "If I'm going down, I want to take Murdoch with me".

EXCERPTS

"Sixty-two News International journalists have resigned or refused to go to Wapping since the dispute began" (Guardian 13/3/86).

"Bristol printworkers have achieved their first success ... mass picket was held at the regional TNT depot ... seventy pickets blocked the gates for nearly two hours"

"In Manchester last Sunday two major distribution centres were picketed ... Between 250 and 300 people assembled ... Two engineering works have blacked TNT lorries" (Socialist Worker 15/3/86)

"... 150 strong which picketed the Huddersfield warehouse of John Menzies ... a Menzies van stormed out of the warehouse ... This action angered the printworkers who then tried to stop further vans leaving ... two SOGAT memebtrs were hit by a van, but fortunately not badly hurt. Later the pickets were allowed to meet SOGAT workers in the warehouse"

"Meanwhile pickets gathered near Rotherham ... outside the Hellaby distribution centre ... (of) Murdoch ... the police had prevented pickets from talking to warehouse drivers" (Morning Star 15/3/86)

-- Saturday 22nd March, march to Wapping from Tower Hill, organised by NGA, 8pm

-- Sunday 6th April, TUC-announced march from Tower Hill to -- wait for it -- Trafalgar Square. We will be going the other way.

Written (except for resident's article), printed and paid for by print workers
Address: PICKET, 628 Tottenham High Road, N17