

54th DAY OF THE PICKET

2.30 am, Tuesday 18th March : on a wet freezing cold night around 75 pickets, all but a dozen from London, gathered outside the TNT depot in Eastleigh, Southampton.

Rupert's familiar white vans were inside, 14 in all. Their drivers were inside the depot. Some of them reported for work wearing balaclavas. The artic with the scab papers aboard had not arrived from Wapping. It seemed some kind of contingency plans were being arranged.

The police numbers were swelled and everyone guessed what was to come. The vans were escorted out of the depot, and the presence of fifty policemen kept the pickets' anger under control. The breakfast tables of Southampton will once again be graced by the presence of the Sun, thanks to the British Bobby.

57th DAY OF THE PICKET

Friday 21st March Wapping residents organised a march to the gates of News International. The 400 demonstrators showed the depth of hostility in the area to Murdoch. The march, largely women, started near the chip shop in Wapping Lane. Chanting "here we go" it proceeded up the Lane and along the Highway to Virginia Street where a petition of opposition was handed in. The fact of the march itself, clearly representing the cross-section of working class Wapping, was encouraging. And it shows the feasibility of militant picketing in the Wapping area with the support of tenants.

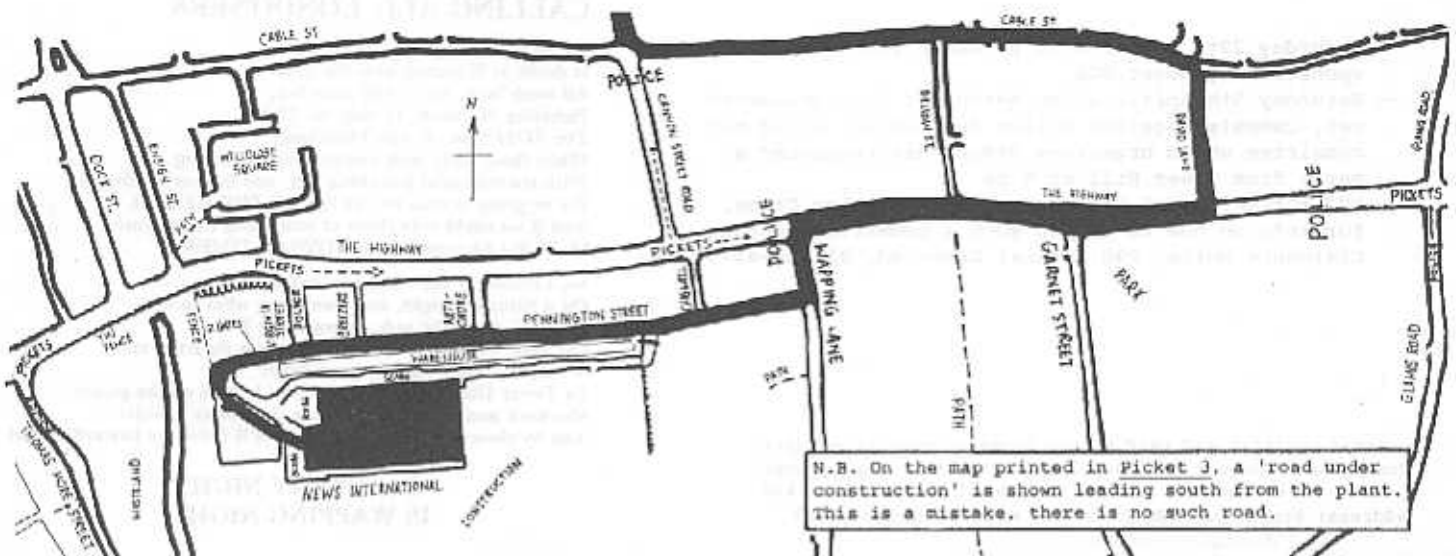
Along the route and concentrated at the top of Virginia Street 1000 printers cheered the procession. The night before a good meeting (sponsored by Tele SOGAT Federated) of around 200 residents was held at the Wapping Sports Centre.

Two coaches left London at 7.30 pm. Their mission was to picket a TNT depot in Cardiff. We arrived at the industrial-estate, the home of the depot, around midnight. Once again the rain welcomed us, and also a large police presence to keep us company. LMB pickets were joined by miners and the local left wing parties to bring the size of the picket to 300.

The police made an attempt to clear the road of pickets, but failed due to lack of numbers. All the time the police ranks were being strengthened and eventually the pickets were moved. At 3 am two scab artics from Wapping entered the depot, their safety ensured by the now massive police presence. 45 minutes later 10 white vans were escorted out of the depot to go about their business. Two LMB members were arrested and charged with obstruction.

58th DAY OF THE PICKET

Saturday night (22nd) began with a march from Lower Thames St, past the Tower and down East Smithfield towards the plant. The march and picket were as large as the week before but was predominantly NGA (do we really only go on our 'own' demonstrations?) The front half of the march went to the top of Glamis Road and large pickets stayed at Thomas More and Virginia, with smaller ones at Wapping Lane, Cannon St and King David Lane. Early on the mood was quiet. There was no attempt to get into the plant through the Virginia St exit or pull down the railings again (they had been replaced and strengthened early



in the week.) Nor did the pickets try to block the road with their own barricades.

Around 1 am police with horses and snatch squads laid into the crowd at the top of Glamis Rd and shortly after cleared a way through about 150 pickets at the top of Wapping Lane. Pickets were scattered along the Highway and tried to make barricades. The police were blocking the Highway to the west of Glamis Rd with a line of horses and riot cops with truncheons, stopping pickets there from joining up with the others.

A large convoy came right out of the top of Wapping Lane, then doubled back along Cable Street via King David Lane. Three lorries had their windscreens smashed. Pickets tried to intercept them at the lights on Cannon Street Road. By now it was 1.30, and a few minutes later three lorries and a coach returned to the scab plant, possibly the ones that got bricked earlier.

Many pickets stayed. Glamis Road and Thomas More Street remained blocked for another hour. A large crowd of angry, mainly young people gathered around the bottom of Cannon Street Road to tell the police what they thought of them.

Pickets walking back to Tower Hill found some small vans had been ambushed, and piles of Sunday Times all over the ground.

The papers had come out an hour earlier than the previous week, but they were still 3 hours late. For most of the night before 1 am the police had lain in wait, but later they made most of the 53 arrests (as opposed to 26 the week before). There seems to be a high turnover of pickets on Saturdays, partly depending on which union organises the march beforehand. If they all went down to Wapping at the same time we could shut Murdoch down for whole nights.

62nd DAY OF THE PICKET

Wednesday morning an anti-scab rally of a few hundred was held at the top of Virginia Street. Mainly boisterous women clerical strikers greeted day scabs with shouts of derision, often in unison. Scabs could be seen on the coaches peering out from behind the curtains to hide their faces. The effect of the larger picket on walking scabs was good. At the gate one picket was seized by the strikebreakers in uniform and bundled off under a charge of obstruction. The truth is that the police are obstructing labour. Truth is on the workers side.

DISPUTE GOES ON

Step by step the heart of the strike, the daily pickets, the real leaders, build the picket. New skills are learned. The printers advantage is the growth of picketing in confidence, experience and numbers. That is the real change that has taken place over the last nine weeks.

The TUC 5 fear the picketing. This is why after failing to stage a march away from Wapping for Sunday 6th April they now want a boring meeting followed by a long march from Trafalgar Square which they hope will tire the pickets out. The TUC 5 have worked overtime to contain the strike, stop it spreading and then sink it. They want to get control over the growing picketing movement in order to demobilise it as soon as they can.

The strike is now 63 days old. The more it goes on the more the workers (especially the womens') hatred of the bosses and the foremen/police screws comes out into the open. The bosses try to make out that they are all powerful. They are not. They are a tiny minority. These parasites can be overthrown. Great battles are in store.

Many activists have been drawn into meetings around the boycott theme. Overwhelmingly these are a trap which uses up good energy. The strike will be won through picketing. And the strike is very winnable.

CALLING ALL LONDONERS

On Saturday night, the place to be
Is down at Wapping with the SPG.
All week long, we've had such fun,
Picketing Murdoch, to stop the *SUN*.
The *TIMES* too, it won't last long,
When those dirty scab vultures hear our song.
With ten thousand marching feet, and banners unfurled,
We're going to stop the *NEWS OF THE WORLD*.
And if we could only think of something that rhymes,
We'll also be stopping the *SUNDAY TIMES*.

So, Londoners all, when you're feeling blue
On a Saturday night, and wond'ring what to do,
Don't sit down the pub, or watching TV!
Get your walking boots on, and take a tip from me.
A couple of bob will buy your ticket
To Tower Hill station, and you can join us on the picket.
Murdoch and his scabs will hear our voices thunder,
And by sheer weight of numbers, we'll drive the bastard under!

printed, written and paid for by machine sections members
donations: minders; £5, £8.50, £5, £2. natty; 95p. jobber
collection; £4.26. Tele Sogat Day Machine; £28
address: Picket c/o 620 Tottenham High Rd, London N 17

**SATURDAY NIGHT
IS WAPPING NIGHT!**