

# Picket

## No.6

Tuesday 8th April 1986

Organise, Organise

At chapel meetings of both Times nights and Sunday Times machine room chapels, both reaffirmed their commitment to their brothers and sisters in the Sun and News of the World that they would not do any deal in Grays Inn Road until everybody was reinstated and those brothers and sisters were in their rightful place at Wapping.

### Wednesday

The Wapping picket lines were brought up to a strength of 500 by striking Sogat warehouse, who made their way from Tower Hill to demonstrate their determination. A series of warehouse marches (all pickets welcome) is planned.

### Wednesday 9 April 9pm Tower Hill to Wapping

### Thursday night

600 largely NGA pickets swelled the ranks on Thursday evening at Wapping. Also included were ten supporters from London Greenpeace. The increased frequency of mass pickets is a mark of the development of the picketing. In evidence was the determination of the strikers to keep on until there is a breakthrough.

### Friday morning

100 cleaners and clericals rallied to confront daytime scabs at Wapping. High in confidence about the justness of this strike, and nurtured by years of exploitation at the hands of a greedy employer, the pickets—confident that union entry belongs to them by right of labour—denounced the strikebreakers who peered out from the windows of their coaches.

The Wapping building was built on the backs of the Sun/Times workers labour. It is a product of the workers' exploitation.

Old friendships were renewed when over 100 Sogat machine pickets lobbied the TGWU offices at Smith Square, SW1. The picket left a corridor for TNT shop stewards at the entrance. Ron Todd came out and addressed the lobby before the meeting and again afterwards. He also issued a written statement but on Friday night they are still crossing the picket lines. So much for the brotherhood of the TUC.

### Friday night

A flying picket of almost 30 was organised to Armthorpe. Leafletting was done in Doncaster. A successful party was held at a TNT depot with miners from the area in the early hours of the morning.

### Saturday night

Over 2000 pickets gathered at Wapping during the evening, anticipating the regular Saturday night march and picket. Because of the TUC diversion on Sunday afternoon, News International's Sunday titles had their least delay (if any) in many weeks. The Saturday march and picket is ground gained and ground worth defending.

In the event a small march did take place. As one of the printers who marched in the road, a Sunday Times (machine) striker remarked, "I came here to go on a march, and I bloody well went on a march".

This was organised by the Campaign Against Police Repression (CAPR) who had come along to take part in the regular Saturday march. At Tower Hill there was confusion as pickets either thought no march would happen, or else were put off by an unofficial one. But around 8.30 groups of marchers moved into the road by Tower Bridge, led reluctantly by the CAPR banner. Another 200 print pickets went along cautiously, staying mostly on the pavement, half in and half out of the march.

At Wellclose well over one thousand pickets applauded as the small march arrived at Virginia Street. At this point a vanload of police screeched up and hustled them off the road.

The thousands of pickets who were arriving at all different times, quickly melted away.

### Sunday

Maybe fifteen or twenty thousand marched in a TUC-sponsored demo. The picket was alright despite the fact that the march was deliberately held to kill off Saturday night and was held in the afternoon, so as to be too early to affect scab production which went out on schedule at 9.30. It was still the largest Sunday picket ever and it did

afford the pickets a chance to pause and think.

The march took place under the effects of drenching rain and speeches. Willis was jeered when he wanted to give 'serious consideration' to Murdoch's offer of a toy paper as a bribe to break up the picketing. The pickets are not interested in trading-off moral gestures. Full entry into Wapping. Scabs out. It is the pickets who lead not the self-important 'leaders'. The heart and soul of the strike is the essential twenty-four hour pickets at Wapping, Grays Inn Road, Bouverie Street and Kinning Park.

The march finally reached Wapping well early in the evening. As it passed the corrugated iron fence before Virginia Street, pickets began to tear it down to open up a way to the scab plant, and a gaping hole appeared much to everyone's delight except for a small contingent of police strikebreakers behind the fence in New Road, who moved up very hesitantly to try to guard it.

Once again the cowardice and bankruptcy of the left wing groups was demonstrated. It is the workers who are the revolutionaries, not the paper-selling gauntlet.

By 9:30pm when the first of the scab lorries began their run from the main gate, through Pennington Street and up Wapping Lane, there were only about 1000 pickets. As the lorries came out of the main gate, pickets ran east down the Highway and met them at the top of Wapping Lane. A large number of mounted strikebreakers made a space for the lorries. After the scab run a number of riot squads and snatch squads descended on the crowd of pickets between Wapping Lane and Cannon Street Road, beating pickets with truncheons. One brave picket walked out into the road in front of the line of mounted police and denounced them for beating a small girl, shouting 'this is what you're about!'. Numerous arrests were made as repeated police charges sought to break up the picket in their vicious hatred of the working class.

Shortly after this a reinforced crowd of pickets were pushed out of the Highway at Virginia Street.

## Thursday 10 April 8pm Tower Hill to Wapping

organised by NGA, Sogat, AUEW strikers

The letter below is reprinted from the March/April issue of *Pitwatch*. It deserves printers attention.

You have all heard about the attacks the NCB are making on our union and its members, and the continuing poverty and worry about bills that the miners are still enduring one year after the end of the strike. I would like to try to tell you about what it is like to be a miner in prison.

In my mining community our doors are open to anybody in need and we would never see one of our comrades without. This attitude was the one I brought into prison with me and I shared whatever I had with whoever needed it. But these people in here are not the same as us and certainly do not have the same outlook on life. It was some months before I realized that I had been persistently robbed, by both word and deed, of nearly all I possessed. With my eyes open I started to see clearly the environment I was in and become more selective in the company I kept.

Since making that decision I have had a succession of four 'friends'. All have taken advantage of my friendship and called me 'a mug' behind my back. Now I shun anybody who tries to be friendly and gain my trust. Friendship means nothing in here, it's treated with contempt and is seen as a weakness. I live in a world of continual

lies and mistrust which, because of my isolation from people of my own kind, is starting to manifest itself in myself. To survive I have had to become selfish and deceitful and I hate myself for it. I've found myself doubting even what my wife and friends tell me at times.

The physical hardships are nothing compared with what I've just described. The dirt, the stench, the cockroaches crawling on your bed, the rats running in the dining hall, pissing and shitting in a bucket, listening to the rattle of keys on the other side of a locked iron door, trips to the local hospital in handcuffs — all this I can contend with. But to attempt to destroy the trust I have in my fellow man is something I will never forgive them for.

As far as the staff are concerned, I'm treated with a great deal of mistrust and suspicion. This stems from my four and a half month stay at Wandsworth prison where they caught me smuggling letters out to my wife. For this heinous crime I lost ten days remission and spent three days in the punishment cells. When I tell you that I was given one letter a week and one 30 minute visit per month I hope you will understand why I did it. Unfortunately the

authorities have never been able to comprehend just how much I love my wife and have labelled me as a subversive for daring to write to her more than the regulations allow. Working at the pit for twenty years taught me that you only obey sensible, worthwhile rules. That is the way I have led my life, and that is the way I intend to continue leading it.

Yes, it's hard being a miner in prison. We don't seem to fit into the regime on either side of the fence and our isolation is all the more pronounced. But every so often I get a letter from a child thanking me for fighting for a future for them, and then it all becomes worthwhile and I know they can't beat me. The governor here thinks I'm stand-offish, what he doesn't realise is that it is contempt I'm showing for him and his staff. I am a miner, a productive worker, and that puts me and my comrades head and shoulders above them all. My message to all British miners is simply this: *Fight or perish, the choice is yours.*

**T.S. French**  
Maidstone Prison  
9th February 1986