

Picket

no.8

Sunday 20th April 1986

All written contributions welcomed

It is horrifying that the National Executive Council is even discussing whether to purge its contempt in a futile attempt to end the sequestration order. Feelings are running high in striking chapels that an order to end the blacking on titles would be a stab in the back. Pressure from provincial branches to end the blacking order is very heavy. It is necessary to assail the officials to make them do what you want them to do.

Sunday 13th April

Departed from London at midnight. Arrived at Bemrose in Liverpool which is producing colour supplements. Fifty pickets Sogat (RIRMA and machine branches) saw Tony Mulhearne (leader of Liverpool City Council) who works at Bemrose. Also the Sogat FOC was very much in evidence. These were critical of the lobby/picket because the plant was having a scab ballot. The picket decided to go ahead. A clear majority of scab bastards at the plant were not prepared to walk out (both Sogat and NGA). Excuses of unemployment and recession in Liverpool. 3pm shift lobbied too with the same results. 4.30pm visited the printers marching for jobs in Preston, which was much more uplifting.

Monday morning

Forty pickets lobbied in Watford at printworks early in the morning. Met a mixed reaction from blacklegs doing supplements for Murdoch. Odham's/Sun printers is owned by Maxwell. Pickets find comments like "You never supported us." Whatever the case, there is no excuse for scabbing.

Three to four hundred actively picketed the old Times printworks in Gray's Inn Rd. A number of scabs operate out of this building. Pickets stretched out police lines up and down road, repeatedly surging into the road at the entrance when scabs appeared. Again the pickets showed a marked development of experience and confidence coming out of past strikes. Groups also stationed themselves on the entrance side of the road at each corner so that as scabs passed they would have to go through the contempt of their former workmates.

Wednesday night, 83rd day of picket

Sogat Central Branch (distribution/warehouse) showed clearly why no ballot was needed here to give unstinting support to the strike. About 1500 in all turned out on the night. Also present were banners of AUEW strikers and it was good to see the ever-present London Press Branch EEPTU.

A march was held from Tower Hill to Wapping. En route a TNT despatch rider tried to ride through, but was surrounded and fled on foot. One picket was arrested, but other attempts to nick people were repulsed as the pickets closed ranks. A banner was rescued.

The picket stayed in the road at the Virginia St entrance till later when police strikebreakers began to try to clear the road. Immediately a march of several hundred was organised behind the warehouse banners. This march went down The Highway chanting and singing way past Glamis Road (the most easterly scab exit route). Contingents of police strikebreakers blocked every road south from The Highway. Perhaps 700-800 police were present, including reserves and patrolling vans.

As the procession passed Wapping Lane, about halfway on its route, a scab TNT lorry approached. It was surrounded for a while as pickets sought to express their wrath for these thieves. There was at least one arrest here as lines became intermixed and individuals momentarily isolated. But again many arrests were prevented by the quick reaction of the picket as a whole. This went on for a while.

A delighted march then proceeded. Essential experience is being gained on the streets at Wapping. On the return journey pickets sang lullabies to local residents, but also stopped at each junction to wake up vanloads of sleeping police and tell them what they thought of their scabby efforts.

Thursday night

Thursday's picket of the Luton TNT depot was the most successful to date. Local TU members plus 150 Sogat and NGA pickets blocked the main entrance from midnight till 6am. 35 vans were trapped inside and no newspapers were distributed. At 3am the scab drivers asked to go home. The managers at the depot refused the drivers' request -- if the men left early then they wouldn't get paid for the night. The TNT drivers had meetings through the night and watched amazed as the police attempted to push back the pickets. The line held all night. There was plenty of pushing and shoving, but no violence. At 5am the scabs left the depot to go home

and were given a police escort. 20 pickets stayed on to check there wouldn't even be minimal distribution. An interesting aside -- the TNT scabs talked of organising their own day of action. It's a bit late -- about 3 months too late.

Friday morning

About 60 printers and Lewisham Support Group picketed Convoy's wharf at Kings St, Deptford. There was some contact with drivers but not much, due to the hostility of T&G stewards. Some delay was caused. Again next week, 6.30am.

Friday night

There were 30 unemployed people from groups in London, Birmingham, Plymouth and Sheffield who came to support your picket tonight (150 all told?). A dozen of us stayed all night (10 hours), sustained by the marvellous vanworkers. Thanks! We shared experiences and ideas.

The cops began to gang up nearby and then grabbed one of us -- about 20 people dived in and another bloke was nicked. This only made us more determined to stay. Later a local resident, angry at being refused entry into Wellclose Square in his car, slagged off the cops who chased him up the road. They smashed all his windows, dragged him out and beat him up, till pickets approached. The cops then tried to refuse entry to a food van but gave in after a barrage of insults. What a bunch of mindless fascists!

Scabs are being recruited from the desperate unemployed at suburban job centres -- our movement aims to make people think before taking any job (wages, conditions, alternatives etc.) and to fight for our basic needs. We support you. Waged/unwaged -- solidarity! (Tottenham Claimant)

Saturday night

About 3,000 pickets marched down to Wapping from Tower Hill on a miserable wet night. They included warehouse, comps, clericals, machine etc. plus a welcome contingent from the Lesbian & Gay printworkers support group who picket regularly. Large groups stayed at the top of Thomas More and Glamis Road while smaller ones blocked Cannon Street Rd and King David Lane at its north end. Large numbers of pickets roamed around the area, sensing perhaps that moving groups of pickets are harder to police than stationary ones.

The rain increased steadily through the late evening, and the first lot of four or five artics came out of Glamis Road around 11pm after a fight during which some of them were bricked. Pickets from Thomas More came up, but the police brought in reinforcements including horses and riot squads, and cleared the road. Pickets then returned in large numbers to Cannon Street Rd, where a scab car was mobbed and arrests were resisted physically. Another larger convoy left the scab plant around 1.30am. Saturday night picketing is still recovering from TUC's sabotage by having a Sunday afternoon thing two weeks ago.

--Additional notes on Saturday night, 12th April: Later in the night we were confronted by about 200 scab-lovers in blue led by 30 or 40 on horseback spread across The Highway. They ushered everybody back to Cannon Street Rd, men, women and children regardless. We jumped over the railings. The horses came right up and we were met with a barrage of abuse. The cops arrested a picket on the pavement but he was grabbed back from the police, a short tug-of-war with fists and feet flying; we won. The poor chap was hurt, but it was a victory. When the scab convoy came out it was brought to a standstill at Cannon Street Road and had to sit there for several minutes with the crowd round about. It must have given them a lot of confidence in these escorts. Two lorries returned shortly after for windscreen repairs. The sooner all pickets realise that under the shield and the vizor there is a yellow coward, only brave in numbers, the better for beating him to it by increasing our numbers. Later, the police strikebreakers held parades of horses and vans up and down The Highway, revelling in their strikebreaking role. But no-one should say we were beaten on Saturday. The mere fact that the police have to adopt these tactics makes a victory for us.

- Wednesday 23rd April 8.30pm march, Tower Hill to Wapping organised by Sogat London Central
- Saturday 26th April 8.30pm march, Tower Hill to Wapping organised by NGA/Sogat/AUEW strikers
- Thursday 1st May 8pm march, Tower Hill to Wapping organised by SERTUC
- Saturday, 3rd May 7.30pm Printworkers march for Jobs arrives. March from Embankment, organised by Sogat/NGA/AUEW strikers.

--News of the World NGA scabs:

- E. Garrod, 6 Virginia Close, South Benfleet, Essex. 03745-51653
- M. Attewell, 89b Longlands Rd, Sidcup, Kent. 300-3219
- B. Smith, 68 Lullingstone Avenue, Swanley, Kent. 0322-69422
- B. Warner, 36 Hawkhurst Way, West Wickham, Kent. 777-2487
- D. Pettitt, 2 Middle Boy, Abridge, Essex. 849-2492

Published by Sogat/NGA pickets.

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