

# Picket

no.9

Monday 28th April 1986

## Monday morning lobby, 21st April

Three hundred sacked printworkers held a successful lobby in fine style outside the TUC. It always seems to rain on these occasions and quite a few were still distinctly damp from the previous Saturday's Wapping picket.

The 300 were lobbying Sogat's leaders meeting to discuss withdrawing the blacking order on Murdoch's titles and thereby freeing the union's assets from the sequestrators. Feelings were running high that this was not the way forward and shouts of "No sellout" and "No surrender" greeted NEC members as they arrived. It was felt that the only purging at the TUC should be of Eric Hammond and his scabs not Sogat's High Court contempt. Brenda Dean disappointed the lobby by telling them to picket Wapping instead of TUC headquarters and by her refusal to meet a delegation of FoCs representing the sacked printworkers.

The meeting went on all day with no word from inside, and after several hours most of the demo filtered away. At 4.25pm a spokesman emerged from the building with a short statement that the situation was under review but that no decision had been made on the purging of contempt. The union was in a difficult position nationally. It was a short statement from what was obviously a very long meeting. Brenda Dean left later by a side exit.

## Tuesday/Wednesday Cannock Chase picket, 22/23rd April

Left London at 2pm. Arrived early evening at the TNT depot at Wimblebury in drenching rain. Started picketing immediately in a small road to the gate. Soon an artic came tearing out right through the middle of 400-500 greatly angered pickets who beat on the lorry's sides. Police strikebreakers who were all continually bringing in reinforcements tried unsuccessfully to clear the road for the scab lorries. Two lorries coming in were slowed down and acquainted with the ire of the staunch pickets. Arrests were made and there were tussles over prisoners. The next lorry to drive up thought better of it and turned away and almost all the police then withdrew.

Shortly after that the Printers March for Jobs arrived to great cheering. The marchers are our pride, decked out in smart yellow coats for protection. Along with them were small contingents of miners from North and South Staffs, a miners wives group, a Labour Party branch plus other workers and the unemployed. In all there were about 600 or so. Leaving some pickets on the gate most went off to Cannock social club where all had a good time. Miners and marchers sang the marchers' song and the Scargill song.

Later the body of pickets marched to another depot near Cannock where a number of scab white vans were parked. Large rubbish skips were pulled into the laneway. By 3am, not really knowing where we were, the entrance securely barricaded, 100 pickets wandered back to the nearby main road. Amazingly, at intervals, two TNT lorries (presumably en route to another depot) passed by and regretted it.

Work finished, the pickets marched back impressively to the miners welfare club. When it was realised that one picket was still held prisoner a march began to the police station to chants of "Let him go, let him go." However, the march fell apart, and when the coaches arrived at 4.30am all piled on exhausted and soaked. A few stayed behind to ensure the prisoner's well-being.

## Wednesday residents meeting, 23rd April

Yet another local residents meeting was very supportive. A local Printworkers Support Group held their meeting (about 60 people) almost on-site at The Highway Club, Dellow Street. The residents were obviously thinking more deeply about the dispute and the reasons behind the failure to secure major successes and victories.

One of the local residents asked before the meeting why miners had been asked to speak. The answer was soon given. The Kent miner spoke of the effects on communities as being the same in each dispute - of being under siege. Police tactics and harassment here in Wapping are nothing new. And miners too had the same problems with other unions and their lack of support. They were isolated by union leaders who were blinkered to major situations and issues. There has been picketing from Kent and every Kent miner is

**Thursday 1st May 8pm march from Tower Hill**

levied to help the printworkers (even though Sogat nationally has no levy). Even in Kent Tory heartlands many outside the dispute were radicalized by the experience of the strike. And it has heightened people's awareness of what is happening around them.

There were many practical suggestions to step up the picket. A march was mooted. There hasn't been a residents' march for five weeks now. Support groups are not doing their job if mid-week meetings are not closing with a trek to the picket line. The only effective way to support picketing is to picket. The next meeting is at 7pm on Tuesday, 29th April at 196 Cable Street. All are welcome.

#### Wednesday night, 23rd April

About 1,500 set off from Tower Hill for Wapping behind the Sogat London Central Branch banner to the strains of jolly music. Just before 10pm the marchers came face-to-face with two lines of police strikebreakers in chorus-line formation along The Highway, just west of the top of Wapping Lane. Ten yards behind them was a row of scabs on horseback. In an act of double confusion the chief steward urged the pickets to turn their banners round and march back the way they had come, while the chief policeman urged the 1,000-strong crowd to disperse or face arrest. The lorries were coming out of Wapping Lane and turning east into The Highway. The mood of the pickets was to stay put. It took about 15 minutes of official hectoring to wear down their resistance. The march returned to Virginia Street where police began hustling them off the road.

At about 10.45 the Grand Old Duke of York marched several hundred back towards Wapping Lane, accompanied by the oompah music. Within a hundred yards of a single line of foot-police he did a U-turn around a traffic island. Most people followed him back.

The pickets were told that they had made their point. The pickets are making their point 24-hours a day at Wapping, Gray's Inn Road and Bouverie Street, when they do not have the numbers to do more. The stewards treated Wednesday night like some sort of keep-fit exercise. Many pickets were disgruntled with the stewarding. It was a testimony to the pickets' tolerance of those who openly patronise and humiliate them in front of cops and scabs. It was a depressing evening but the spirit of the pickets should mean a quick recovery.

#### Thursday night, 24th April

The police outnumber the pickets all evening. They go by in vans and cars every few minutes. But there's a good crowd of stalwarts opposite the main gate - vocal as usual. Pickets shout "Scab, scab, scab", "Sca-ab", or just plain "Scab" depending on mood. Five NUR members from Liverpool Street Station have seen the May Day and 3rd May march and rally posters and are making their first visit to Wapping. They'll be back with more friends and colleagues, and spreading the word. The 24-hour pickets at all three sites are very important.

#### Friday morning, 25th April: Pickets hold the main gate for 30 minutes

From 6.30am numbers at Wellclose Street opposite the Wapping main gate started to increase. Word had got round that the scab journalists were to meet inside the plant later in the day. By 8am there were 500-600 pickets assembled behind the barriers - led by striking Sogat women. At 9.05 there was the realization in part of the crowd that the main gate was vulnerable. The cops were outnumbered. And there was a spontaneous surge across the road to the main gate. People were prepared to take risks. Marching past surprised police, the pickets blocked the entrance. Many of the pickets behind the barriers watched in amazement as the surge happened. Then their expressions changed to delight, and they too moved. Two-thirds of the pickets went forward to the gate. If only those who had stayed behind the barriers had taken the initiative like the Sogat women the gate could have been held for much longer. Nothing could enter or leave.

An armoured coach arrived bringing in scabs. It was unable to enter and had to turn away. Police and their scab friends in the coach could do nothing for a while as the crowd surrounded it - beating the sides and hurling abuse. It soon moved off down Pennington St. Fred Zimmerman, Murdoch's lapdog photographer, took photos from behind the razor wire.

For 30 minutes the gate was held. Rupert Murdoch's paper boys cleared a corridor at

**Saturday 3rd May 7.30pm Printers march for jobs arrives  
march from Embankment**

the side for a couple of scabs to crawl in. Then cop reinforcements arrived and an orderly retreat began. There was much pushing and shoving and a couple of punches were thrown but only three arrests. The cops punched one of our pickets in the back of the neck while two were holding his arms. The builders on the adjacent site cheered and clapped and it was a great feeling. An hour later the police were reduced to petty vengeance. A passing driver tooted. He was stopped and arrested - unnecessary sounding of a car horn is an offence.

#### Friday morning 25th April

From 6.30am the Lewisham support group picketed Convoys Deptford wharf. A constructive picket of 25 was held. Again next Friday.

#### Saturday 26th April

Another Saturday picket at Wapping continued the long struggle for victory. After the usual march from Tower Hill, the police solidly blocked any advance past Wapping Lane with a thick blue line and horses. And the cops' hostility was palpable. There seemed because of this enforced halt to be a great deal of confusion about what to do next. People could not get to Glamis Road. There were 4,000 on the march itself, but after the aggravation at Wapping Lane many drifted away early. The march proceeded to go up Cannon Street Road to the north. A small line of police blocking the road was pushed out of the way. Arrests were made and one young lad was bloodied badly. Confusion reigned as to whether to go north or stay so that there was a split for a while until the march was brought together in The Highway again. Artics came and left without interference at Wapping Lane. After midnight, spontaneous marches began (e.g., one behind the Times Graphical Chapel banner). About 35 pickets walked up Dock Street, turned right at Cable Street, on through the back streets attempting to get to Glamis Road. Police in force again blocked our heroes when they tried to get past Wapping Lane. This good-natured march was brought to a halt by double this number of cops. And this was a pity as our accompanying music on a cassette player (thanks ladies) was improving. It was surrealistic. We started on a dreadful low with Andy Williams and graduated on to the Beach Boys.

There was no delay to distribution. By 1am almost a thousand pickets were confined in the Wellclose Street area across the road from the main gate.

#### Letter from unemployed Sogat member (21.4.86)

Why are you so critical of the union leaders in this dispute? They need all our support and are doing their best. You are all Socialist Workers with your own axe to grind. Where does the money for Picket come from? And who are you anyway?

Picket reply: We criticise union leaders because their best is not good enough. The authors of Picket are not Socialist Workers Party members and have little sympathy with that group. As bona fide strikers and printworkers the few SWP supporters were among a number of people invited to contribute to Picket early in the dispute - but in fact they declined. See overleaf for finances. Picket is published by Sogat and NGA members.


#### Letter from an active striker

Being a little more actively involved in this dispute, I have come across a number of union officials outside the dispute who have taken offence at words written within these pages, which have attacked our union's leadership through this dispute and in the run up to this long and bitter dispute.

As one who has found out the hard way in more than one industrial action, no one person regardless of years of experience or

**★SOGAT★NGA★AUEW★NUJ★**

## NEWS INTERNATIONAL DISPUTE



**SATURDAY DEMONSTRATIONS**

**EACH SATURDAY EVENING THERE WILL  
BE A MAJOR DEMONSTRATION AT  
WAPPING IN SUPPORT OF THE  
PRINTWORKERS DISMISSED BY  
RUPERT MURDOCH.**

**ALL TRADE UNIONISTS AND SUPPORTERS  
ARE ASKED TO GIVE MAXIMUM SUPPORT.**

**MARCHES BEGIN AT 8-30<sup>PM</sup> AT TOWER HILL  
PLEASE BE THERE EVERY WEEK**

EDWIN GIBBIE

rank can ever get this or any other industrial action right. But at last the membership, the real union, is beginning to get their acts together better. As with the Union Leadership's actions, the membership's actions will result in damage, but the majority are no longer going to sit back and suffer in the name of any one union or political party.

Not forgetting that this publication is the only newsheet that has regularly appeared through this dispute, keeping all those involved in this dispute regardless of which union or section we belonged to, informed of what is happening on the front line against our leaderships' secret meetings between each other and our employer.

Income: Sogat machine section member £1; Sogat RIRMA strikers collections £6.50; NGA machine section members 60p, £1, £5, £7.50, 20p, £10; Sogat warehouse member £1; more sacked NGA/Sogat printers £4.20, 50p; Telegraph Sogat members £2; picketing friends £5, £5.10; Times Sogat RIRMA £20; NGA clerk £1; Times/S.T. GAs, engineers and cleaners £20; another Times RIRMA chapel £5.

### Southampton

Mick Scanlon, the scab Branch Secretary of Southampton EETPU, lives at 244 Bridge Road, Bursledon, Southampton and has three sons at Wapping. Bill Luffman, Deputy Secretary, has two scab sons inside. Scanlon's secretary (Vivian Seaman) has had her son employed there as Personnel Officer. Steve Seaman likes to drink at the Bedford, Bedford Place, just round the corner from the EETPU office. This EETPU office is in Henstead Road (0703 333178/223655).

There are some splendid scab pubs in Southampton. The Jolly Farmer, Fleet End Road, Warsash has a Sun polymer plate from Wapping featuring Samantha Fox proudly displayed in the bar. The Old Ship Inn, Bridge Road, Swanwick is opposite Mick Scanlon's house and is a convenient scab meeting place. Ask for Squeak. The Village Inn, Botley Road, Swanwick is very popular with scabs on Sunday lunchtimes. The Elm Tree on Swanwick Lane and the Talisman at the junction of Botley and Bridge Roads are conveniently located nearby and also popular with scab locals. Also the Silver Fern at Warsash where scab Andrew Beavers likes a tippie. He's fed up drinking there on his tod.

The Southampton scabs have three coach companies. There's Coliseum at Botley Road Garage in the West End (0703 472377) whose coaches are green. Their garage is a scab pick-up point. There's Marchwood at 200 Salisbury Road, Totton (0703 869033) whose coaches are red and cream. Finally there's Angela Coaches, 1 Oaktree Cottage, Lowford, Bursledon (042121 3170/3866).



### TIMES NGA scabs

E. Davenport, 99 Haynes Road, Ardleigh Green, Hornchurch, Essex, 49 55125  
R. Algar, Little Mascotte, Beach Drive, Kingwood, Surrey, 0717 2597  
D. Figg, 19 Sunderland Way, Manor Park, E12, 01-989 9057  
B. Service, 57 Meardale Avenue, Dartford, Kent, 0122 70208  
M. Cotts, 16 Abercomb Gardens, Chadwell Heath, Romford, 01-590 3786

### The hard cold facts

It is impossible to ignore the printing of Murdoch's full-page advertisements in the Mail, Mirror and Guardian this week. This is not support. Working members - who are supporting the strike - are being eased into the opposite by a systematic newspaper/TV campaign to ignore, censor and lie about the strike. The ads are a breach in the line but the battle is never won or lost until one side surrenders. The strike goes on.

What is exposed in these circumstances is the "Right of Reply" fraud. The only right here is to say No - to refuse to print the strikebreaking ad and to refuse to handle Murdoch's material. So what if there is a poxy letter buried somewhere in the next day's paper? Actually the letter is excellent but it is the ad which should be buried dead. Union leaders won't organise the ranks, the strikers will have to do it themselves. Through picketing the ranks gain confidence in their own powers.

Pickets are risking their lives, their income and their freedom. There is no shortage of courage at Wapping. Every picket has tales of heroism to tell. And these tales are true.

This newsheet is for the ordinary worker. Trod on, stomped on, left in the breach to print lies. Once awakened through picketing there is no greater power. For here there is welled up a loathing and contempt for the bosses and their hirelings and helpers that knows no bounds. Here there is the power to overthrow the bosses.

Address: Picket, c/o 62B Tottenham High Rd, N17.