

Picket

no. 40

Thursday 1st January 1987

Thursday 18th December. Kent: Over 150 sacked printworkers and their supporters demonstrated outside the main gates of the EETPU's headquarters "Hayes Court", in West Common Road, Hayes, Kent, with the theme "11 months in struggle - but you'll never beat the printworkers with your scabbing."

The demo was no secret, and the scab officials at Hayes Court were worried enough to send the staff home early in order that they would not hear from us first hand just what we thought of their union bosses. An unknown member of the Hayes Court staff came out to tell us that there was no point in our staying there as all the staff had been sent home early and only "half a dozen officials were left in the place". We said that these officials were the very people that we wanted to see, to let them know of our contempt and disgust at the way in which Hammond and Rice had connived with Murdoch to steal our jobs. Where was Hammond? This deceitful hypocritical liar had taken the day off.

By the time the Inspector had called up reinforcements, a Transit pulled up complete with riot gear. The scab officials were lining up their cars and it was obvious that they were preparing to come out in Convoy, Wapping-style. One of the officials was Ira Walters, a local Labour councillor, who despite several invites, refused to come out and talk to us. He turned away and got into his car, ready for the race. Of the 16 in the cars, none would talk to us.

In the convoy was Tom Rice, chief fixer for Hammond and Murdoch. The gates were closed and locked and the demonstrators left, a number deciding to march to Tom Rice's home at 14 Hayes Gardens, Hayes. On arrival, we gave him a few choruses of "I'd rather be a picket..." etc. He didn't appreciate this much and ran from his front window to the hall to phone the police, but we left, promising to return.

Tuesday 23rd December. Wapping: One thousand did the regular Wednesday march from Tower Hill on a Tuesday. Once cleared from the Highway, a large body of pickets stood facing a line of police who did not want to know the truth which was shouted at them again and again: "Strikebreakers", "Pork Pies", "Scum", "Scabs in Blue", "Paper Boys", etc.

Xmas Day. Wapping: 10.00am in the morning, a small party of 12 or so was assembling at Tower Hill for a spontaneous march to Wapping. We raised the banners and prepared to march, moving off at 10.30am. By the time we reached the Highway, the group led by the Evening Standard Outside Chapel banner and the W.H. Smith (Peckham) banner had grown to 19 or so. The quietness of the Highway was broken by the happy singing of "Rupert Murdoch stick your money up your arse" and calls for Michael Hicks' release.

On reaching Wellclose, to the cheers of the pickets on duty, the march turned sharp right into Virginia, straight to the gates. Security hurriedly chained and locked the gates, to cries of "Scabs". Our proud banners were rested against the gates, as more Plod hurriedly poured out of the Popemobile. One asked a picket who he was, and received the reply "Mike Hicks", which seemed to satisfy him.

The group posed for photos, chatted with the pickets and marched to Wellclose, where a table was laid out with cake, pies, wine, sherry, whiskey and champagne. The cake was the "Don't Buy the Sun" cake won by one of the marchers, and it occupied pride of place on the table. An Xmas card was signed by all pickets in attendance and will be sent to one of the jailed printers.

More photos were taken of the festivities, and greetings were exchanged. As one picket remarked: "That was the most satisfying thing I have ever done in my life and it has made my Xmas very happy."

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Second report: At 10.30am, 20 marchers moved off in the direction of Murdoch's scab fortress for the 129th strike march to Wapping. Spontaneously broke into singing "Here we go". This set the mood, with the marchers in good voice and spirit with much chanting and singing along the entire route.

More supporters were there to greet the march at Wellclose Square. About a dozen paperboys with bewildered



expressions raced from their van, intent on stopping us reaching the gates. But, to rousing cheers from printers on picket duty, the marchers strode onward and forward. Murdoch's scabs in blue tried to move the marchers away from the gate. Among them, 2 infamous paperboys were recognised - one, a sergeant, being well-known for elbowing pickets in the back.

Again the paperboys tried to get the march to move away. "Not until we've had our photographs taken and press interviews completed". After the formalities had been completed, the march re-assembled and, to much waving, cheering and applause, marched proudly back to Wellclose Square.

Saturday 27th December, 6pm Wapping. We arrived at 5.30pm. No plods to be seen. So a group of about 200 pickets managed to get down to the gate of the scab plant in Pennington Street. Still no paper boys but within about fifteen minutes they've drawn up. The atmosphere was good everybody singing, holding the gate. This went on for 45 minutes then the pigs got heavy and moved the popemobile in but you couldn't hear anything because of the singing. They tried moving us on but we stayed solid. They then picked a few of us out and arrested us after which the rest left the gate.



Saturday Night 27th December, Wapping: Fifteen hundred marched from Tower Hill. As the march broke up, about two hundred made their way back to Tower Hill for another try, but when set to move out, police in numbers blocked all exits save into the tube. So into the tube it was, to emerge at Aldgate East, to start marching there. Numerous attempts by the police to block the road resulted in the march reversing itself each time to march the other way. Finally ended up in Commercial Road, where two police vans opened up to charge the crowd and arrest the first four pickets they came to, which broke up the march.

Sunday Night/Monday Morning 3.00am 28th December: Turned up at Wapping to find the police were waiting in force at the gate. About 400 went across Swedenborg Gardens and then ran down Artichoke Hill into Pennington Street. Blocked Pennington for about 45 minutes, and built a few barricades across the street with available materials. Cops turned up in riot helmets and with shields, so marched back up the Highway, then to Wellclose, and then back again across the Gardens and left onto the Highway. By now the scab white mice were coming out and about 30 of us ran down and threw the few crowd barriers into the road in Pennington and a couple of scabs got out of the van trying to look heavy. Fortunately more pickets came back, so it ended up with the scabs on the receiving end till the police strikebreakers turned up again. Then everyone marched up the Highway until police pulled out of vans and nicked people, over 30 in all, including one whole group of 18 up in Commercial Road.

Release Shirfield and Hicks

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● Recently, two unaware TNT drivers stopped for tea at a service station on the Motorway, only to find when they emerged that there were holes in their fuel tanks etc. and vehicles unmoveable. Merry Xmas and a Happy New Year to come.

● **Evening Echo 30 December:** A printer who crashed into a set of traffic lights was apprehended by a minicab driver. Frederick Dye of Grosvenor Court, Westcliffe, was seen driving out of control in Whitechapel Road, Bow, on his way from an Xmas party at his work - News International, Wapping, December 14th. Dye was fined £500 and banned from driving for 3 years.

● **Let's make 24th January a night to remember. ONE YEAR AT WAPPING.** Bring your wives, girlfriends, sisters, fathers, kids, friends and neighbours. Everyone should make an effort to harass the officials to support the picketing. We could have 30,000 on the march. So come along. Attend on January 24th for a great night out. Let's show Murdoch and his Muppets that our numbers are growing. We are not going to go away. We won't be intimidated. And we mean business in 1987 - The Year of the Picket.

Income: £2 clerical striker; £1 supporter; 30p Robin of Wapping; £3 NGA Mirror; £1 NUJ striker; £2 EETPU member; 20p. 20p NGA clerks; £5 Central Branch officer; £1 Wednesday night; £18.96 NGA strikers; £5 NGA unemployed; £1.80 Glasgow; £2 friend.

