ABERDEEN PAPER MILLS

STRIKE at FORD genk

furniture WORKERS fight

VOLUME 5 NUMBER 6
Once again (remember devaluation?) the working people of this country are called upon to tighten their belts another notch in order to save "the economy" from collapse. By whom? By a "Socialist" government. Some Socialism.

"Raise the tax on beer, cigarettes, petrol and let everybody have an equal share in the burden"; what could be more egalitarian? Yet, the majority of the "everybodies" only earn £20 p.w. or less, and feel the pinch of every penny rise in price. Whereas, for the minority of capitalist "everybodies" the rise in the price of beer and fags is hardly noticed. Indirect taxation is, in fact, a very direct weapon. It is a financial weapon directed against the majority of the consumers of daily goods, i.e. the working class. It does not distinguish between rich and poor, wage earner and speculator; those who earn £100 p.w. and those who earn £10 p.w. It distinguishes only between those who have a couple of pints a day and those who don't. Indirect taxation is, in fact, direct, and it is always directed against the majority of the population, i.e. the wage earners, the workers. Why then did Wilson, Jenkins, and Co. decide to embark on such a policy? Precisely because it is directed against the working people. They want to prove to the Capitalists in Europe and the U.S.A. their loyalty to the capitalist system, their readiness to defend it, and their ability to do so. In this way, they hope to regain the confidence of World Capitalism in the British "economy", i.e. i.e. British capitalism. (Make it a rule: wherever the government says "the economy" read "the capitalist economy".)

These measures are supposed to have been caused by De Gaulle's nationalism. The last time it was the "Gnomes of Zurich", so hated by the Labour Left. However, Jenkins had already planned these measures. The French events merely provided a convenient occasion to announce them, and at the same time pass the buck. However, the show that the Labour Government presents on the stage of History is not without its comic elements.

Was it not the aim of the whole economic exercise which culminated in devaluation to restore confidence in Sterling, so that it enjoyed the same confidence as the French Franc? Was it not the aim of the Labour policy to enter that wonderland, the European Common Market? Look at those ideals now, what happened to the Franc, and what happens in the Common Market? Why is there no confidence in the Franc any more? What destroyed that confidence?

The social system in the industrialized West has bred a continuous series of financial and economic crises. These crises need not lead inevitably to a total breakdown. The system has not stopped breeding them, but it has coped with them. The recent crisis was caused by the remediable inadequacies of the international monetary system. These derive from the post-war ascendancy of the International Monetary Fund, and the accompanying belief, shared by most Western governments, that a change in the currency exchange rate represents a national defeat. Hence, it is only to be considered in a crisis situation, and even then, as did De Gaulle, it may be rejected. Such adjustments would have less traumatic effects if the exchange rates were more flexible, but this could only be achieved if a new artificial reserve currency was created. If this were done, the amount of currency available could be automatically increased with the
expansion in world trade; hence there would be greater potential for expanding markets and the competition would not necessarily be so fierce as it is at present. But this all depends on reform, while the immediate effect of the recent events will be a contraction in world trade due to the deflationary policies pursued by the different governments, and hence even keener competition. Inevitably for Britain this will increase the hardship.

To say that Capitalism can resolve these particular problems is not to say that it can resolve the basic contradiction between the realisable productive capacity of modern industry and the limited market. Necessarily limited because of the exploitative relationship with the rest of the world. But over-production has not, as yet, precipitated a crisis and, in fact, this may never be realised as such. The American war economy is one way of squandering excess capacity. In Britain, where such arms expenditure has rather caused under-investment, the distribution of resources, and the inflationary growth of non-productive man-power, has achieved the same result.

But the one crisis that cannot be resolved, by either East or West, is the social crisis. The breakdown of man's attitude to his work, and to that society which produces that breakdown. For Capitalist Economic Theory considers the capacity of the human beings to produce commodities (goods for exchange) and to consume them, to be man's most significant, and fundamental, feature. It has no interest in such aspects as the satisfaction, creativity, or self-realization of man in his interaction with nature which has been prostituted in our society in that institution called work. The rejection of this capitalist caricature is becoming increasingly associated with the struggles involving bread-and-butter issues, and we must give all working class struggles our support.

But the next few months will see the main burden for the capitalists' own problems placed on the shoulders of the working class. The fierce struggles in the months ahead will be made still fiercer through the State's intervention using its Prices and Incomes Policy. In doing so the essential class nature of the State will manifest itself; and the artificial distinction between political and economic struggles will increasingly break down. When this happens, the need for a total assault on the society will become more and more evident.

It is the duty of all revolutionaries to help push the system that has outlived its day from the stage of history, and replace it by one that is based on the self-realization of man through his creative, rather than through his producing/consuming, activity.

Just out:
Rosa Luxemburg's pamphlet *Leninism or Marxism*.
Price 1/- . Bulk orders 9/- per dozen, from:
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Socialist Society, Student Union,
The University, MANCHESTER 13.
In the paper mills of Aberdeen labourers earn a basic rate of £10.15.2 for a 40-hour week and machine hands £14 for a 44-hour week on shift work. (In both cases there is a fixed bonus - which varies from mill to mill - of from 6d to 1/6 an hour.) Workers make up their wages by working a lot of overtime, some of it voluntary, but some of it compulsory. It has been known for workers to enter a mill at 6 am and not to leave before 10 pm. Women workers are on piecework.

**INTRODUCTION**

The paper industry is the most important one in Aberdeen: over 4,500 workers are employed in the four paper-mills (Culter, Stoneywood, Mugiemoss, and Donside) which all lie on the outskirts of the city. Ancillary industries (such as envelope manufacture, the making of paper sacks, toilet paper and school notebooks) bring the total number of workers employed in paper-making and manufacture to over 6,000.

From the point of view of industrial militancy the Mills have presented a depressingly uneventful picture as long as can be remembered. Up till this year it had been 40 years since the last strike at Stoneywood and Culter, and 30 years at Mugiemoss. But an examination of the industry suggests that it is likely to be the scene of many struggles in the years to come.

To explain this let us look at the place of the industry in modern capitalism. The paper industry is a vital one. Vast amounts of paper are needed for industrial purposes and for the administration of society. It is inconceivable that modern industry could run for a day without the products of the paper-mills. Hence the workers' bargaining position (the threat to disrupt production) is as great as, for example, that of the car workers. The workers are mostly unaware of their crucial position in the economic structure, and it is one of the tasks of revolutionaries in the area to inform them.

The type of work performed in the Mills is conducive to militancy. Skilled paperworkers and labourers are gradually being squeezed out by automation. The bulk of paper-workers are now semi-skilled machinists, performing a specific task in an almost assembly-line manner. The inter-locking of the different sections means that a breakdown or stoppage in one section, or the fact that a particular chemical or constituent has failed to appear, can cause the whole mill practically to grind to a halt. These two factors (the increasing importance of the industry and changed nature of the work) are irreversible and likely to be the motivation for struggles ahead.
MODERNIZATION

Until the end of the war Aberdeen's Mills were run on almost feudal lines. They were all owned by Army Colonels, who ruled as paternalistic dictators. In return for loyalty they gave various 'concessions' to the workers. Geddes of Culter and Pirie of Stoneywood were men of this kind, who would instantly sack any worker found idling, but who continued the tied-cottage system of cheap mill housing, and even (in Geddes' case, at any rate) issued workers with free firewood.

All these feudal relics are disappearing under the impact of extensive modernization which has to be paid for out of the workers' conditions, bad as they are. On the one hand we have mergers and take-overs. Stoneywood was swallowed up in the early 50's by Wiggins Teape, Mugiemoss by British Plaster and Board, and Culter amalgamated with a Fife company to form a new £8 million combine. The incentive for the old feudal loyalty is fast disappearing. On the other hand we have increasing investment and diversification of products. Donside spent £1½ million on new machinery in 1967, Stoneywood over £1 million, while at Mugiemoss the new No 5 machine cost over £2 million, and needs only 5 men to operate it.

The machine-house in Culter has been completely stripped and replaced with much faster machines in the last few years.

We mentioned diversification of products, here is a partial list:

**Stoneywood** (1,800 workers) Produces banknote-paper and industrial papers for the car and electrical industries.

**Culter** (700 workers) Produces paper for cigarette packets and coated papers for advertising, magazines, etc.

**Mugiemoss** (1,100 workers) Makes coarse wrapping papers and sack papers. Also highly expensive and profitable waterproof paper.

**Donside** (800 workers) Newsprint and industrial papers.

All the money necessary for this expansion and diversification means that over the next few years the bosses will be extremely unwilling to grant any pay increases that are not strictly tied to productivity agreements. Indeed the first such agreement in the Mills has just been concluded between representatives of SOGAT and the management of Stoneywood, whose parent company (Wiggins Teape) have introduced productivity deals, work study and work measurement widely in their other concerns. In this context another task faces revolutionaries: that of trying to set up some elementary links between workers who belong to different Mills in the various combines. We have made a modest attempt in this direction by getting leaflets given out both at Culter Mill, and at its partner Guard Bridge, in Fife.
CONDITIONS AND ORGANIZATION IN THE MILLS

Conditions in the Mills could soberly be described as atrocious. Wages are low, facilities appalling and safety conditions inadequate (except at Stoneywood). Instead of going into this at great length here, I would recommend to readers the detailed pamphlet The Aberdeen Paperworker*, produced by libertarian socialists and rank-and-file paperworkers early this year. Apart from producing this pamphlet which sold well and was enthusiastically received by the workers, we have maintained fairly consistent leafletting, and pamphlet-selling, in the Mills since that time.

However one looks at it, the workers in the Mills are, as yet, badly organized. Firstly the Unions: although Culter is a closed-shop and Stoneywood almost so, it is still true that only 40% of Donside workers and 10% of Mugiemoss workers are in SOGAT (the paperworkers' union). Although SOGAT is supposed to be the most 'left-wing' union it is quite unable or unwilling to do anything to improve the paperworkers' conditions. You will never hear a good word said on behalf of the Union in any of the Mills. All that the unions concern themselves with is dues-collecting and recruiting one or two members here and there.

There is an almost total absence of Communist Party members in the Mills. This is surprising when one recalls that the Trades' Council is CP-controlled and that in most other large industrial units in Aberdeen the dead hand of the CP is apparent. In Donside there's a couple of aged Stalinists who always tear up our leaflets shouting "anarchists". They tell us we are too young to remember the invasion of Czechoslovakia. In Culter, the SOGAT branch secretary is a CP-member, J.Snav. He is a genial sort of lad, who justifies our general secretary Bringinshaw's £4,000 a year salary with the words "Ah, well, lads. You must remember that if he went into industry a man of his calibre would get much more."

These factors simplify our position somewhat. We do not need to demolish illusions about the CP, and we don't arouse hostility when we say what's what about the Unions.

At the shop-floor level, organization is also bad. It is amazing that in industrial units of this size there are no shop stewards at all. This means that when disputes or grievances arise there is no-one to take them to, unless by chance the branch secretary happens to be working the same shift as you. Even then you have to leave your work-place, a difficult thing to do. Grievances are consequently allowed to slide and forgotten. The right of shop-steward representation is one we have advocated both in our pamphlet and in leaflets.

A final factor leading to weakness is that some of the workers, incredible as it may seem, think that they are well off. These are the country workers, who constitute about 70% of the workers at Culter, 30% at Stoneywood, 20% at Mugiemoss, and less than 5% at Donside. Hearing them talk of what they had to endure as farm labourers you can see their point. However, the younger country workers, who have never known anything but mill-life, are much more discontented.

* Obtainable from M. Dey, 142 Walker Road, Aberdeen. Price 6d. (10d. post free.)
THE EMERGENCE OF MILITANCY IN THE MILLS

Over the past few months things have been happening in Aberdeen's papermills which have never been known before. To those accustomed to speak of struggles at Ford's or in the docks, what I am about to describe may seem unimportant, almost laughable. But, in the context of how things have been here for so long, we believe that they have great significance.

In Donside there was a work-to-rule last summer. Following on our sales of the Aberdeen Paperworker, a delegation was sent to the management about allocation of overtime. One worker, a labourer, who was prominent in this also sold our pamphlet inside the Mill. Following the announcement of a loss of over £500,000 for 1967 (due mainly to new machinery repeatedly breaking down) all the workers in the Mill were subjected to increasing speed-up. The workers resisted this. In September over 60 were summarily sacked for "persistent malingering", and refused redundancy money. Among those sacked was the militant labourer mentioned above.

In Cultcr little things have been happening. Recently in the machinehouse two workers who had been working continually on a machine for 7½ hours, stopped for a drink. The foreman told them to get back to work, and when they refused, suspended them. Whereupon they threw down their tools and walked out. This incident caused a great impression in the Mill, as its like has never occurred before. Some time ago labourers who have to fill sacks with china clay were issued with a bundle of sacks of larger size than the usual 2 cwt bags. One worker took out a knife and ripped them all. No more large bags appeared. The girls in the finishing section prevented one of their mates being sacked for fighting (mill quines are a terrifying lot) by threatening to strike.

Stonevwood Mill is the one in which bureaucratic tendencies have progressed furthest. At the beginning of the year there was talk of a strike over a bonus cut. Recent rumours that a four-shift system was to be introduced have also increased unrest. Finally, following on a productivity deal, 50 workers in the dispatch department walked out in late September over a bonus dispute: the first strike in the Mill for 40 years. They were out one day and returned while talks between SGMT officials and the management took place. Following on the dispute a new system of bonus payments was introduced in the Mill, giving all workers 1/6 an hour to replace the old graded system which varied according to the work done and how long a person had been in the Mill. This change represented a real wage rise for most workers in the Mill of from 3/- to 10/- a week. It gives Stonevwood workers an average of £1 a week more than workers in other Mills in the region. In Cultcr the bonus is 1/02d, and in Mugiemoss for some workers as low as 1ld.
CONCLUSION

In the struggles opening up in Aberdeen’s Mills, I believe that the libertarians can play some part in the absence of the CP and weakness of the unions. One of the first tasks facing us is the calling of a meeting of rank-and-file paperworkers, and the setting up of an organization to disseminate information and co-ordinate aid in struggles, which will link everyday problems to the demand for workers’ management of production. We invite paperworkers interested in this to get in contact with us at the address shown on the back page.

Aberdeen "Solidarity" Group.
One of the most encouraging aspects of the present unrest among students, in Britain, is the obligation felt by many of the militants to describe and analyse the events in which they have been involved. This is encouraging because it ought to lead to the development of a clearer and more coherent strategy for radical action in British universities and the other institutions of higher education. Last year, when some members of the German S.D.S. criticised British left-wing students for their lack of theory they were correct. But this was inevitable, since one of the main prerequisites for the formulation of an adequate theory, namely the involvement in, and the reflection upon, action was not present. One can learn only so much from the writings of students in other countries, where conditions are very different. By now, however, a large number of British students in many different institutions - art schools, technical colleges and universities - have been involved in confrontations with the authorities. The theory as well as the organisational basis necessary for meaningful radical action is emerging.

In the paragraph above I have used the term 'radical' where perhaps I could have used 'revolutionary'. I have done this because, from reading the two pamphlets listed above as well as many others, it seems to me that one of the most important points in this emergent theory is a recognition that the revolution will not and cannot be achieved through action within the university alone. Students are not a class in themselves and certainly ought not to be considered as a revolutionary one. Action within the university or whatever can only lead to the politicisation of the students involved, and perhaps the broadening of the debate on 'self-management', for that is one of the other main points in their theory, within the larger society. In the present situation, the role of socialist students must be to relate the difficulties that the student body in general encounters, in its efforts to democratise its work-situation, to the structure of capitalist society, and to pose the question as to how this struggle may be linked with that of the working-class. Without the involvement of the latter, any structural transformation is necessarily impossible.

The Leeds sit-in may be seen as essentially an assertion of student autonomy, of student rejection of a 'community' in which it was felt necessary to employ an officer whose duty it was to "assure himself of the fidelity of
INTRODUCTION

Among the most important aspects of the modern European motor industry are its tendencies towards rationalization, international division of labour, standardization and interchangeability. While this is going on, contacts and exchange of information between rank-and-file workers remain virtually non-existent.

This article is about a major strike involving 7,000 workers at the Ford works at Genk, in the province of Limbourg, in Belgium. The struggle has many parallels and many lessons for workers at Dagenham and Halewood in England as well as for motor workers generally. It clearly poses the urgent need for establishing rank-and-file links on a continental basis, so that information can be exchanged and real support provided. The time is rapidly approaching, if it's not already here, when resistance in one country will be bypassed by big firms by increasing their production elsewhere.

Ford's is leading the way in this process. In June, 1967, Ford's of Europe was launched with the aim of coordinating activities. By the end of the first seven months of 1968 the firm had established itself as the second largest combine in Europe with a 12% share of the total European market for cars.

This article is based on one written specially for us by a comrade of the Dutch group Thought and Action, and on information sent to us by sympathisers in Belgium. We have made a number of additions and brought it up to date. We appeal to our readers to get it into the hands of as many Ford workers as possible. (Extra copies can be ordered from us.)

THE GENK FACTORY

The five-year old factory is situated in the middle of the countryside, some way beyond the small industrial town of Genk. The first impression one gets is of a prison. It has no outside windows and is surrounded by two high barbed wire fences. Its history will be depressingly familiar to workers in development areas in Britain.

In the early sixties, Belgian coalmining was in decline. As it formed the backbone of economic activity in the province of Limbourg, especially in the area around Genk, there was large-scale unemployment. Both the provincial authorities and trade unions constantly pressed the Government for other forms of employment and for new investments.
The Ford Company welcomed this situation. It provided them with a suitable chance to make really big profits. The company informed the parties involved that it was prepared to erect a new factory, but only on its own terms. These resembled those accepted earlier in Liverpool by the trade unions: a running period in this instance of five years with lower wages than were paid in the other Ford plant in the country. (In this case at Antwerp.) The Belgian trade unions signed the proposed agreement while the factory was still being built.

The 1963 agreement accepted a differential in wages between Genk and Antwerp of 12 Belgian francs an hour (1) on the minimum wages, and of 17 francs on the maximum. This differential has increased in the last five years to 19 and 22 francs respectively (2). A production operator at Genk receives 44.85 francs an hour, compared with 64.20 francs at Antwerp. (Compare this with 8/9p an hour at Ford's, in England, which is the lowest rate in the British car industry.) The 1963 agreement accepted a working week of 44 hours (compared with 40 at Antwerp). For working 196 hours per year more than workers at Antwerp the Genk worker received about 50,000 francs per year less in his wage packet (3). There are constant disputes about overtime, the company using every kind of pressure to get the workers to accept it. There are also disputes about the speed of the line. Even the office workers feel oppressed. The labour turn-over is fantastic - over 9,000 people have 'been through' Ford's (Genk) since the factory started.

The 'temporary' agreement was only meant to last for 5 years. But at the end of this period the Ford plant, although a big one, remained one of the few factories to have been built in the region. The economic and social situation in the Limbourg area remained one of the worst in Belgium. This explains why the company has hardly increased wages at all. It also explains why it refused to alter the agreement when the running period expired, on October 1, 1968.

THE STRIKE

Even the patience with which trade union officials are accustomed to meet company demands sometimes comes to an end. During the first three weeks of October the officials continued to negotiate with the Ford management in the hope that they would be granted some sort of sop to take back to their members, and be freed from the burden of a struggle which they clearly did not want. But faced with a 'hard' attitude on the part of the company, the strike became a certainty.

On October 21, the 7,000 workers at Genk struck. From the onset the strike was totally in the control of the Socialist and Catholic trade union Federations, who adopted a very conciliatory attitude towards the company. One of the first actions of the officials was to give permission to the staff to continue working. A fortnight later, at a demonstration 'in support' of the strike held at Hasselt (the provincial capital) I heard an official complain bitterly that the company had not shown the slightest gratitude for that decision. The company had, in fact, increased the number of office workers and staff and had even used them to do workers' jobs. The officials said nothing about what they intended to do about a situation to which they had agreed.

(1) £1.0.0. = 120 Belgian francs.
(2) Drapeau Rouge, October 25, 1968. (Moscow-orientated)
(3) La Gauche, October 19, 1968. (Trotskyist: Mandel tendency)
from the very onset. For these 'representatives' of the workers, to count on the 'gratitude' of a capitalist management seemed more 'natural' and 'reasonable' than to count on the militancy and self-activity of the workers themselves.

In fact, what else could have been expected? Over the years the attitude of these officials towards the workers had been typically paternalistic. Going as far as telling them to 'keep out of the pubs' and 'not to drink too much beer'.

The strike call to production workers has been fairly widely followed, but little attempt has been made to harness the initiative of the workers, to promote mass picketing, to extend the dispute or to deal with blacklegs. Proposals to occupy the factory have been turned down by the officials. Demonstrations of support have been called by various student groups. On October 24 more than a thousand people assembled in a hall at Louvain, at the call of various Action Committees. They heard reports from Genk. A decision to show films of the French events of May, 1968, was enthusiastically accepted - but was immediately countered by a police decree forbidding the public showing of films by unauthorised persons (4). Peking and Moscow-oriented 'communists' distributed leaflets pointing out that American investment in Belgium amounted to over 50,000 million Belgian francs and demanding 'national independence'.

THE HASSELT DEMONSTRATION

On the afternoon of November 2 standing on the pavement in front of the town hall at Hasselt and listening to the demagogic speeches of five big bosses of the Belgian unions I couldn't prevent myself comparing the Ford (Genk) struggle with another I had witnessed some years previously, in the same district.

Early in 1966, at Zwartberg (2 miles north of Genk), miners had made a desperate effort to defend their jobs against the menace of pit closures. Spontaneously, they had occupied the colliery and stood firm against the police. They had even been 'successful' in a violent battle in the streets of Zwartberg, just outside the coalmine. The trade unions had then given them a hesitant and meek 'support', while waiting patiently for an opportunity to head off their action and to restore 'law and order' and the status quo. (After all, these are the preconditions for their continued existence.)

The November 2 demonstration at Hasselt was nothing more than a bad joke. An agreement between T.U. officials and local shop keepers had stipulated that the march would not pass through the central shopping area of Hasselt, packed because of a local festival. Of the 7,000 strikers only a few hundred marched. The rest of the 2,000 demonstrators consisted of officials and of delegations from other factories, representing local or more distant industries. Among them was a delegation of the German Ford works at Cologne. The Communist Party paper (Drapeau Rouge) in its issue of November 8, 1968, boasted of the 'large contingent of Communist youth from Antwerp, led by National Secretary Koen Calliauw', and of the presence of many other 'important officials'.

(4) Clarté, November 14, 1968. (Orthodox Maoist).
The presence of German trade union officials at the Hasselt demonstration gave the Belgian union bosses an opportunity to stress their 'internationalism'. Mr Louis van Moulde, secretary for Ling of the Christian Trade Unions, declared that as the result of a talk with his brother officials, he was now absolutely convinced of the 'complete solidarity of German workers' who had been fully informed about what was going on in Genk. A German Ford worker, however, was at my side all the time I walked with the demonstrators through the suburbs of Hasselt. He told me that the Journal of the German Metalworkers' Union (I.G. Metall) had not so far printed a single word on the Belgian Ford dispute. The Union had only distributed some leaflets on the issue, at the Cologne works.

It wasn't Cologne, however, but Halewood that was to prove the main talking point of the union bosses on the Hasselt Town Hall steps. Mr Gerard Heirmans, National Secretary of the Christian Trade Union Federation, told his audience that at Halewood the Ford Company had tried to act as it was now acting at Genk, and that the Liverpool Ford workers had 'broken the plans' of the Company (5) by resorting to industrial action. 'Within 24 hours' he shouted triumphantly, 'the Company decided to pay the same wage for the same work. This is what you too are striking for. 'Victory will certainly be ours'. Another official went so far as to say that the strike at Genk was already won! In the general atmosphere of euphoria it was even announced that 'Ford workers throughout Europe - from Antwerp, Cologne, and Dagenham - had made arrangements to assist those at Genk. No further German workers would be transferred to Belgium, and the British and German Ford factories would start a work to rule. (6) Most of this was so much eye-wash. Ford workers at Dagenham, for instance, haven't even been informed, let alone asked to help.

What Mr Heirmans didn't mention was that the struggle at Halewood had been entirely 'unofficial'. Nor could he explain why the Ford management at Genk was standing firm and why after 2 weeks they had not shown the least inclination to 'arrange matters' in an 'acceptable' way. If he had tried to explain this, Mr Heirmans would have had to reveal the real weakness of disputes controlled by union officials, compared with actions decided and led by the workers themselves.

The Belgian trade union officials have repeatedly emphasised that the strike at Genk is 'the most historic labour dispute in Belgium since the end of the Second World War'. (They seem to have forgotten the Belgian General Strike of 1960!) They call their contacts with their fellow officials in Germany and Britain 'a new and decisive international solidarity'. It is true that visits were made by Belgian officials to Cologne, Dagenham and Halewood. The only result of these visits (paid for out of the members' subscriptions) were telegrams expressing support. Ford workers in Britain still know next to nothing about the dispute. 'K.D.' parts (knocked-down components) were still being shipped off merrily to Belgium throughout the period of the strike.

(5) For information on the Halewood struggle see 'The Halewood Story' (Solidarity II, 9) and 'Two can Play' (Solidarity II, 10).

(6) Drapeau Rouge, November 8, 1968.
If the strike at Genk has lessons for us it is not so much because of the 'international activity' shown by the trade union bureaucracy. What stands out is the absence of any real international contacts. Genk is a classical example of how so-called working class leaders can thwart the workers' fighting spirit.

Belgian officials certainly went to London and to Cologne to meet their foreign colleagues. But they didn't even propose a sympathy strike by the Ford workers at Antwerp. All they are saying about the international ramifications of the Genk struggle, while true, is just so much bluff aimed at diverting attention away from their real role in Belgium. For instance, their moral indignation concerning blacklegs rings hollow when they propose nothing about how to get rid of the scabs in Genk itself.

STOP PRESS

The Genk strike ended on November 21st. The full ramifications of the settlement have been kept secret, but they include a small wage increase on the one hand and an acceptance by the Unions of the wage differential in relation to Antwerp on the other. Although the union officials have as usual claimed a great victory, it is clear that this is not the case. We can only hope that Genk workers will draw their own conclusions from the struggle and build up their own organization and establish direct contact with other Ford workers.

REVIEW (continued from p. 8)

members of the university to the institution". The Leicester sit-in revolved around the demand for participation, and led to the same rejection of the idea of the university as a community. The Leicester pamphlet contains a particularly good discussion of this notion of community. The authors distinguish between the conservative and liberal variations of this idea, and attempt an account of the processes that have led to the present ascendancy of the latter. They describe the liberal notion as particularly invidious, since it provides an example of the 'repressive tolerance' that appears to make modern capitalism so secure. Such tolerance must be seen as an attempt to forestall any attempt to challenge the system's legitimacy.

Both of these pamphlets are obtainable from the R.S.S.F. groups concerned, and are recommended to all those interested in the present state of the student movement.

T.W.

The article on The Revolt at Brentford Nylons in our last issue was written by Ron Bailey as well as Ernie Stanton. We apologise to all concerned.
LIBERTARIAN LEFT V REGINA

On October 31st the trial of Tom Hillier began at the Old-Bailey. He would be imprisoned if the charges against him were proved. They were:

1. Incitement to riot: Sect. 5, Public Order Act 1936 as substituted by the Race Relations Act 1965.
2. Using threatening words in a public place: ditto.
3. Assaulting a police officer in the execution of his duty.
4. Inciting others to assault a police officer.

These offences were reputed to have taken place during the May 26th demonstration of solidarity with the French workers and students. The police claimed that the defendant was one of the leaders of the demonstration and rested this claim, in large part, on the claim that he was the only one to use a megaphone. Their evidence was shown to be untrue when Jones (Special Branch) admitted that six people in fact used it. They also claimed that he advocated the use of violence, including "lifting paving stones". Tom pointed out that this was unlikely, since they weighed some eighty pounds each! Moreover, they emphatically denied his claim that he had told people of the futility of fighting the police. Their faces were a picture after they, together with the jury, had seen an I.T.N. newsreel which showed Tom making such a speech.

One disturbing factor in the trial was that the press and public were not allowed to be present because this political trial was held in a small temporary court. But even worse, despite the supporting evidence the defence counsel and the solicitor advised Tom to plead guilty. But he refused to do so. Lawyers, even left-wing ones, are trapped in a framework that allows them no scope. They must play by the rules imposed by the class state. When it comes to the crunch their solutions differ little from those of any other lawyer. It was only by using unorthodox methods that Tom had a chance of winning. He rejected the proffered deal, bullied the prosecution and used witnesses that were considered hopeless by his barrister.

Most importantly, he emphasized the political nature of the trial. The following statement, made by Tom and first read at the earlier committee stage of the trial, was read out again on November 4th:

"It is my considered opinion that the charges against me arise out of a political decision; they are based on fabricated and distorted evidence, the purpose being to stifle radical forms of protest and demonstration."

The Judge, Christmas Humphries (well-known Buddhist and supporter of Amnesty International) asked Tom to either delete some words or withdraw it altogether, but he refused. Under cross-examination he was asked why he thought "all these high-ranking officers (including two superintendents and two chief inspectors) were saying these things about him if they weren't true?" He replied: "They were either gravely mistaken or deliberately lying". Both of these statements were referred to during the summing up, and the jury were warned that a verdict of not guilty would mean that they thought senior police officers to be liars.

And yet, even after the judge's vicious summing up, the Jury found him not guilty on the three major charges, 1, 3, and 4, and guilty only of the charge of using threatening words in a public place. For this trivial offence the judge gave him not the usual 30/- fine, but a nine-month suspended sentence, and bound him over for a year. Despite all the odds against him, after six months of tension on November 6th Tom Hillier walked out of No. 4 Court a free man.
What is basically wrong with capitalism? Ask a number of socialists and you will get a number of different answers. These will depend on their vision of what socialism might be like and on their ideas as to what political action is all about. Revolutionary libertarian socialists see these things very differently from the trad 'left'. This article is not an attempt to counterpose two conceptions of socialism and of political action. It is an attempt to stress a facet of socialist thought that is in danger of being forgotten.

When one scratces beneath the surface, 'progressive' capitalists, liberals, labour reformists, 'communist' macro-bureaucrats and Trotskyist mini-bureaucrats all see the evils of capitalism in much the same way. They all see them as primarily economic ills, flowing from a particular pattern of ownership of the means of production. When Krushchev equated socialism with 'more goulash for everyone' he was voicing a widespread view. Innumerable quotations could be found to substantiate this assertion.

If you don't believe that traditional socialists think in this way try suggesting to one of them that modern capitalism is beginning to solve some economic problems. He will immediately denounce you as having 'given up the struggle for socialism'. He cannot grasp that slumps were a feature of societies that state capitalism had not sufficiently permeated and that they are not intrinsic features of capitalist society. 'No economic crisis' is, for the traditional socialist, tantamount to 'no crises'. It is synonymous with 'capitalism has solved its problems'. The traditional socialist feels insecure, as a socialist, if told that capitalism can solve this kind of problem, because for him this is the problem, par excellence, affecting capitalist society.

The traditional 'left' today has a crude vision of man, of his aspirations and of his needs, a vision moulded by the rotten society in which we live. It has a narrow concept of class consciousness. For them class consciousness is primarily an awareness of 'non-ownership'. They see the 'social problem' being solved as the majority of the population gain access to material wealth. All would be well, they say or imply, if as a result of their capture of state power (and of their particular brand of planning) the masses could only be ensured a higher level of consumption. 'Socialism' is equated with full bellies. The filling of these bellies is seen as the fundamental task of the socialist revolution.

Intimately related to this concept of man as essentially a producing and consuming machine is the whole traditional 'left' critique of laissez-faire capitalism. Many on the 'left' continue to think we live under this kind of capitalism and continue to criticize it because it is
inefficient (in the domain of production). The whole of John Strachey's writings prior to World War II were dominated by these concepts. His 'Why You Should Be a Socialist' sold nearly a million copies - and yet the ideas of freedom or self-management do not appear in it, as part of the socialist objective. Many of the leaders of today's 'left' graduated at his school; including the so-called revolutionaries. Even the usual vision of communism 'from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs' usually relates, in the minds of 'marxists', to the division of the cake and not at all to the relations of man with man and between man and his environment.

For the traditional socialist 'raising the standard of living' is the main purpose of social change. Capitalism allegedly cannot any longer develop production. (Anyone ever caught in a traffic jam, or in a working class shopping area on a Saturday afternoon, will find this a strange proposition.) It seems to be of secondary importance to this kind of socialist that under modern capitalism people are brutalised at work, manipulated in consumption and in leisure, their intellectual capacity stunted or their taste corrupted by a commercial culture. One must be 'soft', it is implied, if one considers the systematic destruction of human beings to be worth a big song and dance. Those who talk of socialist objectives as being freedom in production (as well as out of it) are dismissed as 'Utopians'.

Were it not that misrepresentation is now an established way of life on the 'left', it would seem unnecessary to stress that as long as millions of the world's population have insufficient food and clothing, the satisfaction of basic material needs must be an essential part of the socialist programme (and in fact of any social programme whatsoever, which does not extol the virtues of poverty). The point is that by concentrating entirely on this aspect of the critique of capitalism the propaganda of the traditional 'left' deprives itself of one of the most telling weapons of socialist criticism, namely an exposure of what capitalism does to people, particularly in countries where basic needs have by and large been met. And whether our Guevarist or Maoist friends like it or not, it is in these countries, where there is a proletariat, that the socialist future of mankind will be decided.

This particular emphasis in the propaganda of the traditional organizations is not accidental. When they talk of increasing production in order to increase consumption, reformists and bureaucrats of one kind or another feel on fairly safe ground. Despite the nonsense talked by many 'marxists' about 'stagnation of the productive forces', bureaucratic capitalism (of both Eastern and Western types) can develop the means of production, has done so and is still doing so on a gigantic scale. It can provide (and historically has provided) a gradual increase in the standard of living - at the cost of intensified exploitation during the working day. It can provide a fairly steady level of employment. So can a well-run gaol. But on the ground of the subjection of man to institutions which are not of his choice, the socialist critiques of capitalism and of bureaucratic society retain all their validity. In fact, their validity increases as modern society simultaneously solves the problem of mass poverty and becomes increasingly bureaucratic and totalitarian.
It will probably be objected that some off-beat trends in the 'marxist' movement do indulge in this wider kind of critique and in a sense this is true. Yet whatever the institutions criticized, their critique usually hinges, ultimately, on the notion of the unequal distribution of wealth. It consists in variations on the theme of the corrupting influence of money. When they talk for instance of the sexual problem or of the family, they talk of the economic barriers to sexual emancipation, of hunger pushing women to prostitution, of the poor young girl sold to the wealthy old man, of the domestic tragedies resulting from poverty. When they denounce what capitalism does to culture they will do so in terms of the obstacles that economic need puts in the way of talent, or they will talk of the venality of artists. All this is undoubtedly of great importance. But it is only the surface of the problem. Those socialists who can only speak in these terms see man in much less than his full stature. They see him as the bourgeoisie does, as a consumer (of food, of wealth, of culture, etc.). The essential, however, for man is to fulfil himself. Socialism must give man an opportunity to create, not only in the economic field but in all fields of human endeavour. Let the cynics smile and pretend that all this is petty-bourgeois utopianism. 'The problem' Marx said, 'is to organize the world in such a manner that man experiences in it the truly human, becomes accustomed to experience himself as a man, to assert his true individuality.'

Conflicts in class society do not simply result from inequalities of distribution, or flow from a given division of the surplus value, itself the result of a given pattern of ownership of the means of production. Exploitation does not only result in a limitation of consumption for the many and financial enrichment for the few. This is but one aspect of the problem. Equally important are the attempts by both private and bureaucratic capitalism to limit - and finally to suppress altogether - the human role of man in the productive process. Man is increasingly expropriated from the very management of his own acts. He is increasingly alienated during all his activities, whether individual or collective. By subjecting man to the machine - and through the machine to an abstract and hostile will - class society deprives man of the real purpose of human endeavour, which is the constant, conscious transformation of the world around him. That men resist this process (and that their resistance implicitly raises the question of self-management) is as much a driving force in the class struggle as the conflict over the distribution of the surplus. Marx doubtless had these ideas in mind when he wrote 'that the proletariat regards its independence and sense of personal dignity as more essential than its daily bread'.

Class society profoundly inhibits the natural tendency of man to fulfil himself in the objects of his activity. In every country of the world this state of affairs is experienced day after day by the working class as an absolute misfortune, as a permanent mutilation. It results in a constant struggle at the most fundamental level of production: that of conscious, willing participation. The producers utterly reject (and quite rightly so) a system of production which is imposed upon them from above and in which they are mere cogs. Their inventiveness, their creative
ability, their ingenuity, their initiative may be shown in their own lives, but are certainly not shown in production. In the factory these aptitudes may be used, but to quite different and 'non-productive' ends! They manifest themselves in a resistance to production. This results in a constant and fantastic waste compared with which the wastage resulting from capitalist crises or capitalist wars is really quite trivial.

Alienation in capitalist society is not simply economic. It manifests itself in many other ways. The conflict in production does not 'create' or 'determine' secondary conflicts in other fields. Class domination manifests itself in all fields, at one and the same time. Its effects could not otherwise be understood. Exploitation, for instance, can only occur if the producers are expropriated from the management of production. But this presupposes that they are partly expropriated at least from the capacities of management - in other words from culture. And this cultural expropriation in turn reinforces those in command of the productive machine. Similarly a society in which relations between people are based on domination will maintain authoritarian attitudes in relation to sex and to education, attitudes creating deep inhibitions, frustrations and much unhappiness. The conflicts engendered by class society take place in every one of us. A social structure containing deep antagonisms reproduces these antagonisms in variable degrees in each of the individuals comprising it.

There is a profound dialectical inter-relationship between the social structure of a society and the attitudes and behaviour of its members. The dominant ideas of each epoch are the ideas of its ruling class, whatever modern sociologists may think. Class society can only exist to the extent that it succeeds in imposing a widespread acceptance of its norms. From his earliest days man is subjected to constant pressures designed to mould his views in relation to work, to culture, to leisure, to thought itself. These pressures tend to deprive him of the natural enjoyment of his activity and even to make him accept this deprivation as something intrinsically good. In the past this job was assisted by religion. Today the same role is played by 'socialist' and 'communist' ideologies. But man is not infinitely malleable. This is why the bureaucratic project will come unstuck. Its objectives are in conflict with fundamental human aspirations.

We mention all this not only to underline the essential identity of relations of domination - whether they manifest themselves in the capitalist factory, in the patriarchal family, in the authoritarian upbringing of children or in 'aristocratic' cultural traditions. We also mention these facts to show that the socialist revolution will have to take all these fields within its compass, and immediately, not in some far distant future. The revolution must of course start with the overthrow of the exploiting class and with the institution of workers' management of production. But it will immediately have to tackle the reconstruction of social life in all its aspects. If it does not, it will surely die.

Maurice Brinton.
The Sheffield Cabinet Co. (Wembley) is "one big happy family" according to Basil Nyman, the managing director. 1967 saw an overall profit of £270,000. This year promises to be just as happy for shareholders. The Sun newspaper's financial column printed the following (November 6th): "Londall Holdings an industrial holding co. with interests in furniture and electrical wholesaling are currently at a 1968 peak of 2/3d for a yield of 5.3% and a P/E of 14½. But look for a minimum of 25% increase in profits at the end of this week which more than justify the present share price." (S.C.Co. accounts for 50% of Londall Holdings.) The management intends introducing 30 new machin units over a five-year period to increase production by 50%. This 'rationalization' is already under way.

The firm employs 150 men manufacturing bedroom suite furniture (trade-name 'Limelight') for sale at large stores - G. Plan, Times Furnishing, etc.). A third of the force are non-skilled labourers - fund fodder for the union (National Union of Furniture Trade Operatives). They are predominantly West Indian and Asian; the skilled workers predominantly white.

CONDITIONS AND COMPLAINTS

Labourers work as porters and platform stackers, one or two being assigned to each machine in the sawmill. The work is inevitably soul-destroying and more or less exhausting depending on how the machinist's bonus points stand at any one time. The machinist feeds the wood in; the labourer receives and stacks it. Lapses in concentration mean a shove across the shop floor with a plank in the gut, or bruised fingers and submergence under a pile of wood. The labourer's pace, rests and toilet breaks, are dictated by the machinist.

In a circulated manifesto (October 14th)* the labourers put their case, and their demands. Unlike the skilled worker the labourer is not included in the production bonus scheme. He sweats for another man's bonus and goes home with half his pay. Basically they objected to the 'disproportionate extent' of the wage differential and demanded: (a) inclusion in the production bonus scheme; or (b) failing this, a rise of 1/- in the labourer's hourly rate. The average labourer's wage of £15 is £10 below that of the average machinist.

Forced as they were to work at a speed dictated by the impetus of bonus pay they determined to influence the rate of pay at which they would give their services. I work at this place as a labourer. What follows is an account of our struggle against management and union stooges.

* Reprinted at the end of this article.
"HAPPY FAMILIES" - UNION STYLE

Being naive we expected results. The Union promised to put our case to the management. A month later Bert Segal, our union official (and secretary for Wembley branch 136 of N.U.F.T.O) concocted a 'management' reply at a progress report meeting demanded by us. "In view of the general union-negotiated rise in the pipeline for January '69, etc. . . . . the management refuse to consider your demands". Subsequently this reply was seen to be a peace-keeping fantasy of Segal's own initiative. He was content to leave it at that. He said he was very glad we now had 'articulate speakers' and could we please pay up our union arrears.

COMMIES IN THE WOODPILE

We were not content to leave it there. On the 14th October I circulated 40 copies of a labourer manifesto. It gave profits; outlined the labourer case; presented our demands, and asked the union to declare its position. One of our demands, the fruit of the previous month's experience was "the participation in negotiations with management by elected labourer representatives". Segal thought it "a very professional job" and asked for the author. He wasn't told. That evening the personnel and production managers were seen going through selected lockers. The following morning I was sacked on trumped-up charges. This provoked a spontaneous meeting of the whole shop and "gestapo methods" were denounced. Strike action was threatened and we seized the opportunity to elect a labourer shop steward and advisory committee. Within 30 minutes I was reinstated and the management had driven the skilled workers into our camp. Segal did nothing about the locker search and mumbled that management were probably looking for 'political literature' - this seemed to excuse their action.

WHO NEEDS OVERTIME ANYWAY?

At a labourer meeting attended by most of the shop we voted the banning of overtime as a device to get management to negotiate with us. The shop stewards persuaded their men to ban it in sympathy. Segal gave his "unofficial" support while denying rumours that certain labourers were 'political plants' in the factory and/or "out for a giggle". As no one had ever suggested this, his two-edged declaration of faith in us was an abortive attempt at smear campaigning.

"Unofficial" labourer pickets watched chargehands and management go into work at 8.00 a.m. on Saturday morning to clear up the mountains (literally) of waste wood in the factory.

OUT OF ORDER

With the management on the ground we decided to "put the boot in". A labourer meeting called to escalate the struggle voted unanimously in favour of "a one-day walkout some time within the next week". The skilled guys were largely sympathetic, but this was to be solely a labourer action. Segal declared the meeting 'out of order' and in a stand-up row we analysed his conception of "order", 
asking to whose advantage it was geared. First he had attempted to suffocate our pay rise demand. He had taken no action over the locker searches. He had consciously relayed management lies concerning labourer rates of pay in 'competitive' factories.

To the amusement of the audience we concluded that he was a management stooge.

THE WALKOUT

Segal the great diplomat rather than inform the management (as we asked him to) tries to contain the situation. This was unfortunate (for him- as the day earmarked for the walkout is the very next - Wednesday, November 6th.

Wednesday, 8.10 a.m.: The labourer committee spreads the word - it's on. By 8.30 a.m. the labourers know what to do.

8.50 a.m.: the managing director and production manager are walking round the mill.

9.10 a.m.: a third of the labour force have queued up, clocked out, and wait outside the factory.

Segal is hysterical and angry - we leave him to explain to the management. (Cheers from the machinists - it's a great circus!) Outside the gate we vow strike action in the event of any victimisation sacking as a result of the day's action. We all go home on holiday. Three blacklegs lock themselves in the veneer shop, but are sent home by the skilled workers.

OCCUPATION OR NOT?

Midday Thursday and management still refuse to negotiate. A talk-in begins. The 'pros and cons' of occupation of the office and canteen areas are chewed over, and the skilled guys offer advice. Segal asks us to wait for a day until W.Zak the N.U.F.T.O. area organiser has had a chance to 'persuade' the management. (Zak, a member of the Communist Party, was a N.U.F.T.O. delegate to the '68 T.U.C.) We decide to wait one day for Zak.

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 8th

The personnel manager plays into our hands. While engaged in a toilet patrol (The Sheffield Nappy Service) he sacks one of eight men caught 'hanging about'. The victim happens to be a hardline exponent of the occupation thesis. Labourer shop steward Paddy Jenker accuses Spicer of victimization. Work stops and the shop ends up in the canteen.

Segal once more misjudges the mood of the men, but is pressurised into offering the management the alternative of reinstatement or a walkout by the whole
shop. Zak now arrives, not having seen the shop so militant in "eighteen years". We take the opportunity to demand labourer participation in the negotiations we sense to be imminent.

(Meanwhile the office staff are terrified by rumours of a strike and their own imminent redundancy.)

Eventually our steward and myself end up in the management's office. Thirty minutes talk is followed by a break for the two sides to have a "think". Negotiations are recommenced with the management denying the victimization charge but withdrawing the sacking to demonstrate their "goodwill". Suitably impressed by Segal's refusal "to take responsibility for what happens on the floor if these men don't come out with something solid", the management agree to commence pay-rise negotiations.

AFTERMATH AND CONCLUSIONS

The dispute is now over. Failing a production bonus, we have squeezed a basic rate increase of 8d per hour out of the management - a 10% rise in our pay. In a series of talks we forced them up from 3d to 6d, to 8d 'with strings', to finally 8d without strings.

Segal, amazed when the management upped their 3d to 6d was dumbfounded when the labourers (in the face of well-intentioned advice from the shop) rejected it. We settled on 8d not wishing to split the shop, and appended a threat of further unspecified militant action if the management refused to cooperate. The union was reduced to the status of messenger boy as we dictated this final demand from the shop floor. Within 45 minutes the management capitulated completely.

Some interesting conclusions emerge from the action. Having taken a conscious decision to act on our own behalf we have emerged as the strongest sector on the shop floor. Eleven weeks previously we were the most apathetic. In a series of escalating confrontations the union has been entirely discredited and reduced to irrelevancy, its objectives revealed as altogether incompatible with those of skilled workers. From the time of Segal's first concocted management reply we have worked to take our affairs out of his hands. We are now confident in our ability to act on our own behalf.

On the question of wage negotiations we have demonstrated the fallacy of the union's "wisdom of compromise" methods. It took us eleven weeks to persuade the management to give us a rise of 8d per hour. Left to the union we would have waited until January '69 for a rise of 2d that would do nothing to bridge the differential between skilled and non-skilled workers. The real nature of the official channels' jargon has been revealed to skilled and non-skilled alike. Such channels are devices for the perpetuation of the status quo (in our case, Segal's power monopoly at S.C.Co.).

The skilled workers readily admit that the management have been humiliated by labourers in a way they never envisaged:
Toilet patrols are now defunct.

After an initiative by labourer steward Paddy Jenner, chargehands no longer swear at coloured workers. (Paddy suggested that Segal have a word with the chargehands in question, since he had heard that Alf, a Biafran labourer, had threatened to knock a hole through the head of the next one that swore at him.)

Instantaneous dismissal for 'industrial misconduct' is a two-edged weapon. The management have been forced to back down three times recently. A month ago, a new foreman dismissed a West Indian labourer of eight-and-a-half-year's standing, for refusing to obey him (in the labourer's opinion the command was ludicrous and time-wasting). At the threat of a labourer walkout the guy was reinstated and the management 'apologised for the foreman's inexperience'.

Before the dispute the shop's attitude to the labourers was one of disapproval - "They don't pay their dues; they are lazy, and the coloured ones are even more lazy".

As a result of the dispute the skilled workers are now solidly united with the labourers against the management. Six days ago they voted overwhelmingly in favour of using the shop fund to give all labourers involved in the walkout £1 compensation pay.

Mike French.

OCTOBER 14th LABOURER DEMANDS

We object to the disproportionate extent of the wage differential operating in the factory.

We consider the management's reply to our pay rise demand of mid-September totally unacceptable and completely irrelevant, in that it attempts to fob us off with the news of a possible general union negotiated rise (Jan '69) which was common knowledge before we presented our own demand.

More important, such a rise would do nothing to curb the ludicrous differential whereby the labourer sweats for another man's bonus and goes home Friday with half his pay.

"The labourer rate of pay is marginally higher at S.C.C. than that paid outside" - such a defence of the 'status quo' overlooks the fact that S.C.C. labourers are not often allowed to work at labourer pay speed, since the production line is geared to the speed of the skilled workers with the impetus of bonus pay. Often the labourer works at bonus speed without bonus pay!

We are asking for our union's help and support in the following demands.

(i) A rise of 1/- in the basic labourer/packer rates (£2 per week).
(ii) Such a rise to be all-embracing and non-discriminatory since labourer/packer jobs are theoretically interchangeable and any individual might be moved onto a machine or into a group operating at bonus speed.

(iii) Such a rise to be independent of, and not an alternative to, any other generally negotiated rise by N.U.F.T.O.

(iv) Participation in negotiations with management by elected labourer/packer representatives.

WILL THE UNION HELP US?

FACTS AND FIGURES

(i) Profits last year rumoured (not challenged so probably a pretty precise estimate) between £250 - 270,000, an increase of £8,000 on previous year (and this with men on short time).

(ii) Average labourer/packer wage £15.
    Average skilled worker wage £25, rising to over £30 in some cases, as a result of the inconsistencies and quirks in the application of time and motion studies to particular jobs.

(iii) Management can afford outlay of £6,500 for 'veneering/trimming' machine without bothering to consult shop floor as to its manning. Result - £6,500 of machinery stands idle. (Labourers and packers support the shop floor stance against management.)

(iv) Does management intend buying more 'stacking' machinery to replace labourers in wholesale 'rationalisation' of production line, to increase productivity by 50%? If so will our union back us to the same extent it backs skilled labour?

(v) The 35-40 labourer/packers constitute one third total labour force. A strong position in relation to the production process.

I WOULD LIKE:

(a) to know more about SOLIDARITY, its aims and activities ( )
(b) to be notified of public meetings ( )
(c) to help in the distribution of the paper ( )
(d) to become a member of the SOLIDARITY group ( )

NAME ........................................ UNION ................. TEL ........................
ADDRESS ................................................

Please send to SOLIDARITY, as below.

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