Red Notes is not an organization. It's a small group of people publishing pamphlets which we hope will prove useful to revolutionaries and militants involved in building working class organisation.

Our first pamphlet is about the Ford Motor Company. It was originally written by Fruccolo Gambino, a comrade active in the Italian movement (who is also corresponding editor of the US journal "Zerowork", and who is also a member of any particular "Italian" school of Marxism). He wants to emphasise that this pamphlet would not have been possible without the generous and unconditional help of the late Bob Lovell, a militant of long standing, and ABSU official at Basgennex from 1943 to 1955.

The translation of the article is ours. Since it is a complex document, we have added explanatory notes here and there. The text of the article is printed on the right-hand pages, and on the left-hand pages we have printed illustrative material about the history and development of Ford. Much of this was gathered during the activities of the Big Plans group at Ford Basgennex, 1973-75.

We have also added Appendix 1, explaining some of the terms used in the text, and Appendix 2, giving a framework for a new political understanding of the present capitalist crisis. And, to end with, we have prepared a reading list of the main books, pamphlets etc., which deal with the history of struggles at Ford-BG.

We shall be doing more work on the motor industry, as well as work on other areas of the struggle. If you have criticisms or contributions that you would like to make, feel free to contact us, as below:

Red Notes,
 c/o 154 Swaton Road,
 London E.3.

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1976: Books and pamphlets are rolling off the Left-wing press, about "the crisis". But somehow the working class gets left out of the picture. The working class is usually stuck in a footnote somewhere, as a passive spectator, while academics and experts debate the role of "market forces", "objective contradictions" etc in bringing about the crisis of capitalism.

Many people will not accept that the working class is strong -- let alone admit that working class power has brought about the crisis. They point to a lack of "class consciousness"...and they say the crisis is a result of blind, irrational forces. But we would point out, first, the growth of revolutionary, communist movements all over the world; and second, the inability of individual employers and government to reassert their class control over a working class power that might now be "political" with a capital P, but is still a huge block to capitalist accumulation.

Our pamphlets intend to build up a way of understanding this class power.

We say that the present crisis can only be understood starting from the working class. We say that the post-War working class, raised on Keynesianism and Social Democracy, has struggled and created itself as a political power against the capitalist system. This post-War working class has attacked capitalist conditions of life and work, fighting for higher wages, for less work, for better work conditions...and has built up a system of needs and expectations -- but especially a political behaviour -- which have now undermined the entire post-War capitalist strategy of trying to integrate working class demands. The international working class has undermined the whole capitalist structure.

So, with this brief analysis of pamphlets, we intend to establish the truth of the matter: namely that this PROLONGED CRISIS IS A POLITICAL MECHANISM WHICH WILL BE USED BY THE CAPITALIST CLASS AND BY THE STATE IN ORDER TO TRY TO DESTROY THE STRENGTH AND POWER THAT THE WORKING CLASS HAS BUILT UP, INTERNATIONALLY, OVER 20 YEARS OF STRUGGLE.

This pamphlet analyses the nature of the battle between capital and the working class, inside a particular sector of industry -- inside the Ford Motor Company, the vanguard of motor industry capitalism. It provides us with the tools, the method to understand what we mean by "the power of the working class" in this period (the power that the capitalists and their state are now trying to destroy). And, it puts the working class in the middle of the struggle, instead of a footnote or an appendix.

In short, the present attacks on the working class (rationalisation, cutting jobs, demolishing the Welfare State, the wars, fascism etc) are not just "accidental". They are to destroy the power of that working class whose development our pamphlet describes. They have developed over the past 20 years, and will continue for as long as is needed to fulfil this purpose, or until the working class forces are able to re-gather strength and organisation and overthrow this system. Without being sectarian, we would say that very rarely have Left-wing publications in Britain come close to a working class view of what power means in the daily struggle against capitalism...and unless we understand that, we will find it hard to make the next step, which is to arrive at a new definition of the political means, of the kind of revolutionary organisation capable of destroying capitalism.

June 1976
FORD'S IMPACT IN THE EARLY DAYS OF THE UK CAR INDUSTRY

About two thirds of any car made in Britain today is made up of parts supplied by an outside component company (Lucas, Dunlop, Filding etc). This is a very high percentage compared with the international figure, where outside component suppliers provide only 20-30% of the finished motor car [Note 1].

In other words, compared with the motor industry worldwide, UK motor manufacturers have a relatively low level of vertical integration: they don't have so much of the final product under their direct control [App. 3].

The reason why Britain is so different is because, unlike other industrial countries, in Britain the internal combustion engine was developed as a means of production (industrial machinery, marine engines, pumps etc) for a long period, whereas elsewhere it was already expanding as a means of consumption (App. 3), and was being developed as part of the mass production of cars for the mass market [Note 2].

In other countries, especially in America, the two types of production developed with much less of a time-lag. Some people say that the reason for the secondary position of the motor car production in the UK was that British capitalists were slow to see the potential of the mass-production of cars. But it was also because it was much harder for British capital to get workers to transfer from the production of internal combustion engines to the mass production of cars as a consumer product – since most of these workers were skilled men, and the change-over would mean a process of widespread de-skilling in the engineering sector as a whole [App. 1].

Before the manufacture of cars as a mass consumer product could take over from the manufacture of engines as a means of production, there would have to be changes in the existing labour force: it meant that a new and much larger supply of suitable unskilled labour had to be made available, and this had to be organised at a social level, as well as inside the factory (including providing schools, health services etc).

So, in the early days, right up to the end of the 1930s, a combination of workers’ defiance of their skills and a lack of capitalist initiative meant that the production of motor cars was secondary to the production of internal combustion engines. The latter therefore was less of a driving force in the economy than elsewhere (eg America).

However, after the Second World War things began to change. Far more people were buying cars, and the motor car was beginning to be used within a framework of capitalist policies aimed to promote consumer spending-power (Keynes). This meant that the car industry began to come to the fore.

It was only at this point that Ford (who had pioneered the spread of the motor car in America, and was now introducing a similar distribution in Britain), together with Vauxhall, part of the US General Motors combine, became part of the leadership of the British employing class - although they never saw completely eye to eye with the big manufacturers in other key sectors, let alone other motor manufacturers.

This happened at a time when the working class at Ford had already
taken a certain political leadership in the struggle, in a direction which the rest of the working class in Britain would later follow.

Ford in Britain was out of line with other manufacturers, but also pointed the way for them in two respects: first, Ford's investment levels were high in comparison to the low level of organic composition (App. 2) in the British motor industry as a whole; and secondly, they began to affect State policy on investment (traditionally the State had been unwilling to provide the infrastructures that are needed for new investment).

The secondary position of the manufacture of motor cars over a long period in Britain had many effects. For instance, it was American, not British firms that emerged as the driving force in the car industry. It also explains why there were so few British companies that combined the production of means of production with the production of means of consumption within a single firm. For instance, Pressed Steel Fisher - a producer of sheet steel - did not come under the control of the motor manufacturers (MMO) until the mid-1960s.

After 1945 Ford began taking over as the political leadership in the vehicles industry, and this was achieved partly by their use of the State. Ford's recruitment policies follow a pattern: they look for places where there are already large concentrations of labour available - but they leave it up to the State to organise this, and only then step in to take control themselves. Ford made it clear, both at Dagenham in the mid-1920s and at Halewood in the late 1950s, that unless this workforce was available, there was no question of Ford investing.

From the moment that Ford began producing in Britain in the 1920s, they made it clear that they were not willing to operate with the low levels of capital investment (organic composition) and vertical integration that were typical of the UK motor industry: from a working class point of view, low integration and low investment result from workers' resistance to the process of de-skilling represented by Ford's way of producing cars (the Ford Assembly Line: App. 1).

This meant that Ford UK linked directly with the high levels of organic composition and vertical integration typical of Ford's production in America, and therefore that Ford struggles in Britain tended to take a similar form to workers' struggles in America. It also meant that Ford workers were having to fight harder than workers in other Big UK motor manufacturers and their suppliers - because their struggle stemmed from a process of drastic change in the structure and composition of the work-force (class composition: App. 1), brought about by the higher levels of capital investment at Ford, and which in turn led to further investments and still further changes in the work-force.

However, in the longer term, the extent to which Ford invested in fixed capital (machinery etc.) and integrated their cycle of production (App. 3) in Britain and America was brought about by the pressure of workers' struggles within Ford's international operations, and not vice-versa: it's workers' struggles that provided the spur to investment.
4. Motor Industry Suppliers

A table of the industries which feed the motor industry.

[The figures are from 1963 and 1968, the most recent available. They give the value of commodities, in millions of £. The headings are classified according to the 1958 Standard Industrial Classification.]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1958-59 SRC</th>
<th>COMMODITY GROUP</th>
<th>SALES TO VEHICLE GROUP (£k)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>101</td>
<td>Coal mining</td>
<td>1965 £5.6, 1968 £7.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>262-3</td>
<td>Mineral oil refining</td>
<td>1965 £3.8, 1968 £3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>274</td>
<td>Paint &amp; printing ink</td>
<td>1965 £11.5, 1968 £12.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>261</td>
<td>Coke ovens</td>
<td>1965 £0.2, 1968 £0.6</td>
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<tr>
<td>276</td>
<td>Synthetic resins &amp; plastics</td>
<td>1965 £4.2, 1968 £2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>271/5/7</td>
<td>Other chemicals &amp; allied industry</td>
<td>1965 £1.9, 1968 £1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>311-3</td>
<td>Iron &amp; Steel</td>
<td>1965 £203.0, 1968 £295.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>312</td>
<td>Light Metals</td>
<td>1965 £25.8, 1968 £40.2</td>
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<tr>
<td>320</td>
<td>Other non-ferrous metals</td>
<td>1965 £32.0, 1968 £26.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>333</td>
<td>Machine tools</td>
<td>1965 £6.7, 1968 £5.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>833</td>
<td>Engineers' small tools</td>
<td>1965 £2.2, 1968 £2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>274</td>
<td>Industrial engines</td>
<td>1965 £0.5, 1968 £0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>277-9</td>
<td>Other non-electrical machinery</td>
<td>1965 £8.5, 1968 £2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>341</td>
<td>Industrial plant &amp; steelwork</td>
<td>1965 £6.6, 1968 £2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>342-9</td>
<td>Other mechanical engineering</td>
<td>1965 £0.8, 1968 £3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>351-2</td>
<td>Scientific instruments</td>
<td>1965 £2.1, 1968 £3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>356</td>
<td>Electrical machinery</td>
<td>1965 £7.7, 1968 £13.6</td>
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<tr>
<td>356-9</td>
<td>Radios &amp; telecommunications</td>
<td>1965 £1.1, 1968 £2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>360-9</td>
<td>Other electrical goods</td>
<td>1965 £0.5, 1968 £0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>370-4/6-9</td>
<td>Other metal goods</td>
<td>1965 £166.2, 1968 £178.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>381</td>
<td>Motor vehicles</td>
<td>1965 £345.4, 1968 £502.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>382-6-9</td>
<td>Other vehicles</td>
<td>1965 £16.1, 1968 £22.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>412-3</td>
<td>Cotton, weaving, spinning</td>
<td>1965 £1.0, 1968 £3.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>414</td>
<td>Wool</td>
<td>1965 £1.0, 1968 £0.6</td>
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<tr>
<td>415/6/9/21-2/9</td>
<td>Other textiles</td>
<td>1965 £16.5, 1968 £12.4</td>
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<tr>
<td>431-3</td>
<td>Leather, fur etc</td>
<td>1965 £2.9, 1968 £2.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>461-9</td>
<td>Other building materials etc</td>
<td>1965 £1.0, 1968 £4.0</td>
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<td>472-3</td>
<td>Furniture etc</td>
<td>1965 £16.8, 1968 £21.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>474-4/5-9</td>
<td>Timber etc</td>
<td>1965 £3.8, 1968 £11.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>481</td>
<td>Paper &amp; board</td>
<td>1965 £2.3, 1968 £2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>482-3</td>
<td>Paper products</td>
<td>1965 £4.6, 1968 £3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>483-9</td>
<td>Printing &amp; publishing</td>
<td>1965 £2.7, 1968 £3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>491</td>
<td>Rubber</td>
<td>1965 £25.5, 1968 £75.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>492-6/9</td>
<td>Other manufacturing</td>
<td>1965 £14.9, 1968 £25.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>500</td>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>1965 £3.9, 1968 £5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>501</td>
<td>Glass</td>
<td>1965 £3.7, 1968 £4.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>602</td>
<td>Electricity</td>
<td>1965 £13.0, 1968 £20.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>603</td>
<td>Water supply</td>
<td>1965 £2.1, 1968 £1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>701-3</td>
<td>Road &amp; rail transport</td>
<td>1965 £3.1, 1968 £9.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>704-6/9</td>
<td>Other transport</td>
<td>1965 £3.1, 1968 £3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>707</td>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>1965 £4.0, 1968 £5.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>810/20/31/2</td>
<td>Distributive trades</td>
<td>1965 £35.8, 1968 £35.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>830-90</td>
<td>Miscellaneous services</td>
<td>1965 £92.1, 1968 £95.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>496</td>
<td>Plastic products &amp; allied</td>
<td>1965 £2, 1968 £1.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Total 1965: £1,248.2, 1968: £1,289.2

red to a minimum, unlike the present situation in metal-working, which requires constant manual intervention by workers in a series of separate operations. Plastic would iron out this discontinuity.

WORKERS' INSUBORDINATION AND CLASS AUTONOMY

Insubordination is the ability of the working class to organise the struggle against work. It's always there among workers, but in organised to a greater or lesser degree according to the state of the class struggle in a particular period. As class autonomy [App. 4] grows, this insubordination comes more and more into the open, and the technological collaborations so much loved by the employers' control collapses. An entire section of industry goes into crisis (compare the Seamen's Plant at Pressed Steel-Linwood in 1965 with the attempts of 'anarchy' made by NP Porteous against Halwood workers in 1971).

At Ford the majority of workers are indifferent to the suggestions box. This is usually the case in situations of strong workers' autonomy, partly because people aren't concerned to increase the employers' profits, and partly because they know that 'increased efficiency' might end up putting workers out of work. If capitalists need the support of the working class in order to increase productivity, they only get this support in the objective form of workers' struggles, forcing them to re-organise production.

This passive attitude of non-cooperation is widespread among workers at Ford. Of course, when a new machine comes into operation workers cooperate to a certain extent to get it working, on the orders of foremen etc. But apart from that, workers are not inclined to apply their intelligence to the needs of capital.

In situations of less workers' autonomy (Langley compared with Dagenham), any tendencies towards cooperation are directly linked with the individual worker's hopes of up-grading and promotion. But in general, Ford has never managed to solve the problem of how to use the "intelligent potential" of assembly line workers.

THE MANUFACTURE AND SUPPLY OF FORD COMPONENTS

Ford has gone much further than the other 3 major car manufacturers (GMK, Nash and Chrysler) in re-organising their supply of component parts and sub-assemblies. The company was driven by the wage struggles that were hitting its component and sub-assembly suppliers, into continuously re-organising its own vertical integration (bringing the supply of more and more basic components under the Ford umbrella). This process of concentration has been accelerating since Ford America took over total control of Ford-UK in 1950. Ford policy was increasingly to have at least 2 suppliers of any component - with the exception of the few components supplied by companies directly controlled by Ford. This policy was an anti-strike measure.

From some points of view it might be an advantage to have a lot of the manufacture of components carried out by companies outside the
3. Plastics in the Motor Industry

Since this was published, the Oil Crisis has raised the price of plastics. However, for various historical reasons, Body Plant workers continue to be a key political bottleneck. The cost of their struggles might make the higher cost of plastic car bodies seem cheap at the price.

Advantages:
In their application to car components and accessories, plastics are at an advantage compared with other materials, in that they are:
1. Light without sacrificing strength;
2. Corrosion and rot-proof;
3. Easily moulded into complex shapes;
4. Inexpensive per unit volume.

Current Applications:
These advantages, together with improved production techniques, have led to a rapid increase in the use of plastic in the modern British car. In the last 5 years, for example, the average quantity of plastics per car has doubled. At present plastics are used specifically for:
1. Seat fabrics, headlining and floor coverings;
2. Steering wheels and steering column housings;
3. Miscellaneous small items such as horn buttons, door lock wedges, brake and clutch pedal bushes, handbrake grips, gearshift and instrument knobs;
4. Instrument cluster housings;
5. Fuel lines, windscreen fluid containers and tubing;
6. Distributor caps and voltage regulator housings;
7. Heater bodies;
8. Rear light housings (metallised plastic);
9. Heater fans;
10. Various decorative items.

Modern paints, such as acrylics, also have an important plastic content.

New Applications:
In addition, research is in progress into the possible use of plastics for engine members and carburettors; engine fans; petrol tanks; more metallised plastics for wing mirrors, hub caps etc.; brake and clutch fluid reservoirs.

Reinforced Plastic Bodies
In spite of the use of plastics, plastic represent no more than 2% of the modern British car by weight, and total usage of c.30,000 tons a year. If the industry chose production of reinforced plastic bodies, however, the results would rise dramatically. Is this a possibility?

Reinforced plastic bodies would be about half the weight of steel bodies, enabling lighter and smaller engines and other mechanical components to be used, cutting costs and fuel consumption. Their strength and resistance to corrosion would also be adequate.

On the production side, RP entails much lower tooling costs and could cut design and production time by two thirds. The outstanding weldability of plastics would also permit drastic reductions in the number of body parts (possibly down to 10-12) with obvious potential economies.

The major disadvantage is that there is no RP equivalent to steel's high-level production techniques. At present moulding cycles for RP parts are at least 90 seconds long, and do not compare with current steel stamping technique. RP production also requires more labour than does steel, and material costs are higher, partly because an RP body has to be 3 times as thick as steel to give equivalent strength. This makes it a doubtful option at present.

However, if plastic prices fall and steel costs rise, and if equivalent large scale production techniques can be developed, the time could arrive when the steel motor body becomes a thing of the past.

FORD’S CHOICE AND SUPPLY OF RAW MATERIALS

When we turn from fixed capital (machinery etc.) to circulating capital (raw materials, fuels etc.), we see that Ford's operations unite workers in the "developed" countries with workers in the "under-developed" countries into one vast cooperative network. They're still trying to involve workers in the "socialist" countries as well (Kama River project, Romania etc.).

The way that Ford chooses and obtains their raw materials is also dictated by the state of the class struggle-

Energy: For supplying energy, Ford has their own power sources (eg the electrical power station at Dagenham). But they still depend on the State to provide coal from the nationalised coal mines. The change-over from coal to more labour-saving forms of energy (nuclear etc) is being left for the long-term, although in the United States the decisive shift is planned for the end of the 1970s.

Metals: Unlike the other UK motor manufacturers, for the last 40 years Ford has processed a fair amount of its own metals, after having imported them from Africa. Most of their steel supplies are produced in the UK, particularly in South Wales (Port Talbot), but they also have an anti-strike policy of keeping open alternative supplies from EPTA and the Common Market countries as a self-protecting measure against possible 'shortages' resulting from the frequent strikes in the UK steel sector.

Rubber: The production of rubber is still one of the strong points within the car production cycle as a whole. As the Times 'Rubber Report' (10th March 1965) said: "Industrial relations in the rubber industry are remarkably good". [Note 3]. The national Rubber Industry Agreement in 1965, which was based on a productivity deal, was the starting point for a complete re-structuring of the industry. It aimed to eliminate the 'hottch-potch of men, materials and plant' which characterised the industry, and claimed that the present large numbers of workers in the industry would soon be a thing of the past. This was to be achieved by maximum efficiency at all stages of production, which of course means maximum exploitation of the labour force.

The rubber sector supplies more than 300 parts for the average car, and the tendency internationally is for natural rubber to be replaced by synthetic rubbers. In 1966 one tenth of the rubber used in world-wide production of cars was synthetic - by 1968 it was two thirds. But in the UK the position is different - 34% synthetic rubber, as opposed to 60% natural. This is despite the strong position of American companies within the UK rubber industry, and is largely due to supplies coming from Britain's ex-imperialism presence in South-East Asia.

Plastics: As with other UK motor manufacturers, the percentage of plastic in Ford care is still low (2% in 1968) [Note 5]. Ford might consider using plastics for car bodies - but only if they did, it would be in response to workers' demands [Appendix 4] - as a result of workers in the Press Shops and the early stages of the Body Plants refusing to produce, even if this was only expressed by the fact that these workers physically couldn't keep up the number of operations required as the rest of the plant speeds up. Ford, in such a situation, might turn to a determination of the work process by means of plastic; this would mean that manual handling is
5. Role of Outside Suppliers

Cross-section of a Triumph GT6. These photographs illustrate the dependence of the motor industry on its component suppliers. This key will show you the large number of different component manufacturers involved in assembling a car, with the help of both I.M. and Siemen. You can see the locations of suppliers to the Coventry works of Standard Triumph, and you can see the problems of transportation and organisation which face motor assembly lines.

- **Body**: S.T.I.
- **Glass**: Triplex
- **Distributor**: A/C Delco
- **Wiper motors**: Lucas
- **Heater**: Sonnen
- **Starter motor**: Lucas
- **Carburettor**: Stromberg
- **Water pump**: S.T.I.
- **Oil pump**: Holborn Eaton Bolts, nuts etc.: G.K.N.
- **Lighting**: Lucas
- **Spark plugs**: Champion
- **Battery**: Exide
- ** Dynamo**: Lucas
- **Cool**: Lucas
- **Instruments**: Smiths
- **Radiator**: Cooper/Coventry
- **Thermostats**: Lucas
- **Cylinder block**: Beaune (S.T.I.)
- **Cylinder head**: Beaune (S.T.I.)
- **Engine shaft**: Garringtons
- **Timing chain**: Reynolds (Coventry)
- **Gearbox casing**: Beaune (S.T.I.)
- **Gears**: S.T.I.
- **Clutch assembly**: Laycock
- **Pistons**: Howpar and Grandage
- **Rings**: Howpar and Grandage
- **Valves**: Valves Ltd (Coventry)
- **Valve Spring**: Temperamental Springs
- **Carnell**: Garringtons
- **Steering gear**: Burmans

WHO LOSES WHAT

The following British companies or assembly plants are key to the manufacture of the Triumph GT6:
- Production cycle of the big motor companies is only the supplier companies are in a position to make the economies of scale that would reduce the costs of research and production of components (eg supplying all manufacturers with one standardised product; Lucas, Pilkington etc.).

But this is really an admission of the difficulty that British firms face with international competition. In order to keep an edge on international suppliers in the components field, British car producers are in danger of following a defensive line of expanding the supplier firms in the UK, in the short term, rather than vertically integrating their production. This would mean that they were relying on their components suppliers in order to keep technically ahead of their foreign competitors, rather than having this capacity within themselves.

For a while this independence of the supplier firms was a useful line of defense for the UK car manufacturers, but it was slowly eroded by the wage struggles of the 1950s and 1960s [app. 5]. Then a process of concentration started among supplier firms, which merely paved the way for them to be taken over by the bigger motor manufacturers. In any event, the future of each of the bigger companies supplying transmissions and electrical parts is more dependent on the motor manufacturers than vice versa. For instance, over the past few years, Ford has broken the "monopoly" that existed in the UK supply of gear units, by beginning to supply 95% of their own needs [Note 6]. This process was also under way in other sections of the industry, and which a whole to reduce their dependence on component suppliers with a "monopoly" position in the market.

But it wasn't the capitalists of those particular supplier companies that decided whether or not the monopoly would continue; it was the working class. When workers in a particular supplier company use the rigidity of the production process (refuse flexibility, mobility of labour, wage structure against the wage structure etc.) as a weapon against the company to the point that the company has to step in and break the workers' stranglehold at that point in the production cycle. This was the case, for instance, with Briggs Bodies, when Ford took over in 1955.

This means that it will become increasingly rare for a strike in one of the component or sub-assembly companies to bring the whole UK motor industry to a standstill. It will be even harder now that the motor companies are setting up coordination at an international level, which in essence of strike action in the UK will bring in parts from other parts of Europe.

The level of integration in the UK motor industry was too low in the 1950s and 1960s, and this made the flow of production very vulnerable to stoppages in the supplier companies. Ford saw this, and learned the lesson early. They saw the dangers of struggles by workers who were in a "monopoly" position, and pre-empted these struggles by setting up an international reserve pool for components and sub-assemblies. This is something that is worth studying in greater detail - but at the same time it should be said that the increasing integration of big companies also makes them even more vulnerable to the actions of workers.

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WHEN IT COMES to the research, design and introduction of the heavy machinery that makes up the primary assembly lines and the auxiliaries...
6. Fighting Mobility

SOME POSSIBLE WAYS OF FIGHTING MOBILITY IN THE PLANT

"Here is something that I wrote a while ago, on mobility and how to fight it (which is the obvious next step).

Mobility hits job organization - movement of artisans, breaking up good sections, destroying relationships and morale. It enables the Company to introduce higher line speeds, more jobs per man, disposal of artisans, higher production (even if the terrible jobs are fully manned, through forced mobility). Oldies go to bad jobs, new ones go to good ones - to make them stay longer than they might otherwise. (Mobility also has good points - militants move around, get info, spread struggles etc.)

DAYS OF FIGHTING MOBILITY

Ford's intention is to isolate, smash, speed-up.

A] Before you are moved

Keep the conversation on mobility, bring up examples, arguments against it - spread the struggle by stressing the need for a permanent job.

Find other areas in the plant where mobility is used. Exchange information. Adopt a deliberate strategy - of non-cooperation and permanent resistance - making it as unprofitable as possible for the Company to move people about.

Ideal situation: if you are taken off because of a drop in production, get the lads to say that too - that it is put back on when production increases again.

If your line is to be closed down, insist on a deal. Recent example: Ford tried to shut a section. Workers asked: "You can move us only if it is to jobs in similar conditions. The Company was frightened and left them on their old jobs.

In the case of meaningless, non-organic mobility, be definite. Stop work, get the steward, stay on the job if suspended (not letting the system win it). Or go slow if the issue is unresolved. A solid front frightens Ford, but make sure that you have a solid front, because you will have played your full hand - nothing up your sleeve, all out in the open. Do not allow new starts on jobs that men have been moved off (gut! worse ones). Insist on having the old man back. Stick together.

B] If you have to move

However, there are times when being moved is unavoidable, especially under present circumstances (crisis). So, after creating a stir, you find yourself out of your usual environment, unaware of work standards and practices. So! - find out those which are relevant. Like numbers, reliefs, who is the steward, what is the exact job consist of etc.

Then get down to the business of screwing them good and proper. The usual ways - you have an IQ of 10, are hard of hearing, cannot speak English, are crippled with headaches, rheumatism, gassy leg, flu etc., you have a car before, have bladder trouble/constipation/diarrhoea, don't know how to tell the time (so don't know that you have taken half an hour relief instead of 10 minutes), fall asleep, can't count, read, or understand anything, can't stand noise/physical exertion/fumes etc.

The thing you know is your clock, when you've got paid!

Got the idea? You haven't? Make it totally useless and downright unprofitable for them to move you. At the same time, use that movement to establish new contacts. Try not to isolate yourself from the new steward - he is the only buffer you have in an unfamiliar section (although he could also be a real right-wing bastard who is liable to cut the ground from under you.)

lacy lines in the factory, it's obvious that Ford UK depends heavily on Ford in America and its associates [Note 7]. Investment-per-employee in Ford's UK plants is higher than the average for Ford plants outside America [Note 4]. In Britain, compared with the other manufacturers, in 1945 Ford had a level of fixed capital [App. 2] which was slightly below Vauxhall's and double that of BMC [Note 9].

So, Ford UK is located somewhere between the 'American' level of organic composition, and what I shall call the 'BMC level'. The BMC level - was typical of the motor companies in the Midlands, until the second half of the 1960s, when it was plunged into crisis by the continued pressure of Ford and Vauxhall. This went hand in hand with a crisis in the workers' 'control' relationship to production, which for a long time was the basic bond between workers and shop stewards in the Midlands [Note 10]. This relationship could be called 'piecemeal discipline' [App. 6]: under the piecework system, each steward acted as a policeman to ensure the productivity of his own group of workers. It partly explains why British Leyland could achieve surprisingly high levels of productivity, even though their fixed capital investment was lower than Ford's [Note 11].

In the Midlands plants, the fact that workers were willing to produce meant that employers could continue to operate with levels of organic composition that were lower than in other sectors of the motor industry - at least, until wage drift [App. 6] eroded the productivity of the piecework system. There were about two factors that undermined the workers' willingness to work: on the one hand the wage drives which had been continuous in the Midlands ever since 1954, and on the other hand the fact that, during the 1950s, Ford workers had begun demanding parity with the Midlands wage levels.

The Midlands level of capital investment (organic composition) placed shops' shop stewards in a critical role. In wage negotiations, first the Unions and the Engineering Employers' Federation (of which Ford and Vauxhall have never become a part) defined a general framework for national settlements. Then the shop stewards came into the picture: it's the stewards themselves who negotiate real wages under piecework, and through them piecework discipline is imposed [Note 12]. The Engineering Employers were very interested in this subject, and in their statement to the Donovan Commission (1965) they said the following:

"For those firms in the motor industry where the piecework system is operated, negotiations at national level are much less important than they used to be. With the continuous full employment, impatient customers, and ever-increasing capital investment, management are forced, or disposed, to bargain with shop stewards to keep their plants in full operation. Although no official statistics are available, BMC knows that about 1500 items are dealt with yearly as part of the negotiation procedure above foreman level. This, together with the effects of technological change, has meant that the engineering industry's procedure is now used to an extent undreamed of in the past. A further consequence of the increase in plant bargaining is the greater drift - the gap between earnings and nationally negotiated rates. The containment of this gap, which is largely unrelated either to the economic circumstances of the country generally, to the productivity of the firm in particular, is difficult to achieve when our present system of bargaining has no positive link between national and plant levels...In this part of the motor industry it has been found that the existence of a"
7. Struggles under MDW

With Measured Day Work, the struggle over wage levels is increasingly removed to the national level. The struggle in the plant becomes a political question of our power against theirs. Manning levels and cooperation are a crucial area of battle.

Fraud

OVERMANNING FOR STRENGTH

by Eddie Tomlinson, Sheetmetalworkers Union

Four years ago Measured Day Work came in at the Coventry Chrysler plants. The attempts to enforce this new method of measuring the shop floor are the real background to the current dispute. And with the pay claim due to end on 30 June there is a clear connection.

Despite all the waffle about earnings, the real impact of the deal has been simple. Average earnings have slipped from 6th to 18th in the district. The effect on productivity has been spectacular. In the first year of MDW Chrysler managed to turn a £10m loss into a profit of £8m, followed by profits of £19m million last year.

The men accepted, but management couldn’t get the cars into rotation. The result was chaos. Two door cars were coming down the line with doors for two door cars hanging on seven inches too short. Doors for four door cars were being hung on the back of estates, estate doors were being smashed into position on whatever car turned up next.

Ord came tearing down the line and begged the men to revert to their own patterns, but the men insisted on working to man assignment for the rest of the shift.

The result of this was an investigation into the Industrial Engineering Department. After this management allowed us to work to our own patterns. They lied to us.

The situation is the same today; they simply can’t get the rotas sorted out. In fact at times when there’s industrial peace in the plant, if it wasn’t for us MDW couldn’t work at all. It’s our co-operation which keeps the place going at all. But now management is making us the scapegoats for their own useless confusion.

Chrysler now take the foreman off for an hour’s training each week to try and lessen the confusion.

In fact we make the place work in spite of the management and the foremen. If there’s sabotage at Ryton it doesn’t come from the shop floor.

well-organised shop stewards committee, fully representative of trade union membership in the factory, can assist greatly in overcoming the pressure of back-logged wage claims, and also inter-union friction, demoralisation, etc., and in controlling their more militant members. (Note 15)

Wages drive in the Midlands was organized jointly by the shop stewards in negotiations by shop stewards. It got to the point where wage increases for outstripped increases in productivity: the balance of the plant was beginning to tip against the employer. The result of hard-fought attempts by British Leyland to introduce Measured Day Work was a sign the company was trying to restore the balance in their favour. They’re aiming to wipe out the position of BMW workers as the leaders of this wage drive that has affected the car and engineering plants where wages are based on piecework.

With Ford, however, the position is different. They have maintained lower average levels of constant capital investment (Appendix 2) than the average for British motor manufacturing, and have combined this with a system of hourly pay based on the Ford organisation of work (Appendix 1). The Ford assembly line, which controls rigidly and constantly the productivity of the labour force, has enabled Ford to be the first British motor company to free itself from the workers’ use of the incentive system (ie using incentives to push up wages without correspondingly increasing productivity), and to make speed-up independent of corresponding increases in wages.

Relative exploitation (Note 14 and Appendix 2) is higher at Ford than at BMW. Part of the difference between the two is negotiated - ie the fact that Ford negotiates wage levels that are lower than the other motor companies, but the other part is not negotiated - ie the rate of work (speed-up etc) which is imposed on workers by the Ford assembly line, in which they have little say.

The organisation of work at Ford partly explains the fact that, for a long time, Ford shop stewards were very close to the interests of Ford line workers. At first, in the 1930s, the factory organisation wanted to establish, because Ford, like Vauxhall, were prepared to concede wage increases. Then, after the 2nd World War, union bargaining made company planning of wage levels a very precarious and temporary affair, and at the same time, shop stewards were put in a position to negotiate, by the fact that there was a strong rank-and-file drive against work speeds and conditions of work in general.

As a rule, with the Ford organisation of work, not that flow production is introduced, and the assembly line in “fluidified”, smoothing out the bottlenecks and discontinuities that are typical of the ‘neck’ engineering industry, the less room there is for anyone to negotiate the particular conditions of any one group of workers. At this point, either the shop steward “rejoins the workforce” instead of fulfilling his role as a go-between in relations between the shop floor and management, or he comes closer to the Union, and tries to use it and his presence felt in the negotiation of money wages.

The fact that Ford’s day wage has been so much lower than wages in the other motor manufacturers has been the main driving force of struggles throughout as late 1960s and early 1970s - the demand for parity (Note 15). As this campaign starts to develop, the motor manufacturers will start to coordinate a double strategy on wages: on the one hand they aim to stop the
8. Ford on Absenteeism

Supervisors Bulletin

Halewood Operations  No. 216  21. 7. 72

New regulations covering hourly paid personnel with effect from August 1972 concerning absenteeism

Sickness
This is no longer an excuse. We will no longer accept a Doctor's statement as proof as we believe that if an operative is able to go to the Doctor's surgery he is able to go to work.

death (other than your own) This is no excuse. There is nothing you can do for them and we are sure that some one else with a less valid reason can attend to the arrangements. However, if the funeral can be held during your lunch hour, or in the late afternoon, and providing that your work is ahead enough to keep that job going in your absence, we will be glad to let you off.

leave of absence (for an operation) we are no longer allowing this practice. We wish to discourage any thought that you may need an operation as we believe that an long as you are an employee here you will need all of whatever you have, and you should not consider having anything removed. We hired you as you are and to have anything removed would certainly make you less than we bargained for. Anyone having an operation will be fired.

death (your own) This will be accepted as an excuse. We would, however, like two week's notice. We also feel it is your duty to teach someone else your job before you go.

Toilet
Entirely too much time is being spent in the toilets to the detriment of vital work production. In the future we will follow the practice of going in alphabetical order. For instance, those whose names begin with the letter 'A' will go from 09.00-09.15 hrs; those whose names begin with 'B' will go from 09.15-09.30 hrs. If you are unable to do so at your appointed time it will be necessary for you to wait until the next shift when your turn again comes round.

Industrial relations
Halewood Operations

wage drive which has developed, based on the Midlands piecework system (as EMO), and on the other hand they aim to take the wind out of the Ford workers' struggle for parity.

Ford leads the way in shop-floor control

Because production at Ford is in more tightly coordinated than other motor manufacturers, a company has to maintain a much tighter discipline at shop-floor level. Every time a small group of workers causes a hold-up, the whole flow of production is threatened. Ford know this, and in the company agreement of March 1969 they introduced their 'Penalty Package'. This aimed to modify the Labour Government's anti-strike legislation (Barbara Castle's "In Place of Strife") (Note 10), and bring it into line with the needs of a big company whose concern was to keep strikes at its UK plants within the average level for its plants internationally. The Government was planning a 28-day "cooling-off" period for "unconstitutional" strikes (Note 17), but the Penalty Clauses proposed by Ford went further. They were designed to play on and exploit the isolation of single groups of workers - which is the other side of the dilemma of small groups of workers to plunge the whole of Ford's production process into crisis.

If one small group of workers somewhere along the line is in a position to organize a stoppage that will seriously threaten production, then management must exploit the smallness of that group of workers, and use the fact that they are a minority, so as to break any possibility of support and sympathetic action from the rest of the work-force: i.e. isolate them from the masses of workers. The Company aimed to ensure that the mass of workers would, in the short term, lose more than they would gain from the action of small groups of workers. For this reason Ford went further than the Government's proposals, and once again paved the way for future action by the State. The Government proposals on the "Penalty Package", the management side declared that they would be willing to abandon all the proposed penalties - if the Unions were prepared to accept lower wage increases. But at this point the Minister for Employment stepped in and blocked this move, and managed to get the principles of penalties accepted in the final agreement (Note 16).

The clauses introduced in the "Penalty Package" threatened that in the event of an unofficial strike in a given Plant, workers in that Plant would lose lay-off pay, the yearly holiday bonus, and sick pay benefits for a six-month period. This would apply to all workers in the Plant where "unconstitutional" action occurred; the definition of "unconstitutional" was extended to include all forms of action - strikes, overtime bans, even go-slow and working-to-rule - in anything which stood in the way of the Company achieving "flexibility of operation" and "efficient utilization of plants".

The fact that Ford concentrated on penalising forms of struggle inside the plant implied that they had plans for still further concentration of production.

This "Penalty" experiment was being tried in a key sector of British industry, and the State followed it with eagle eye. The fact that it failed was another factor that led to the far more vicious clauses in the 1970 Industrial Relations Bill. The original penalties
9. The Creation of the Fordised Worker

The text below is taken from the writings of the Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci, imprisoned under the Fascist Mussolini. The article, "Fordism and Fordism in America" looks at the Ford method of production, and asks whether it could be developed as a progressive force. He also examines Europe's archaic society with the "rational demographic structure" of America that brought about the capitalist leap forward in the organisation of production.

"Fordism" was a new way of making motor cars - the Assembly Line. But as Gramsci points out, it also broke the power of the old skilled working class by creating a new type of worker who was to be constrained and remoulded inside a system termed "Fordism" or the "Fordy" suited jacket. The typical Ford worker would be an ignorant, poorly paid worker, fairly young, not very smart, generally quite crude, and highly "moral." This "morality" was imposed at Ford's through the introduction of a bonus-incentive scheme (the "5-Dollar Day" in 1912) by which each worker was graded into 4 grades according to whether or not the Ford investigators thought he was morally worthy to receive the bonus payment.

Taylor is in fact expressing with brutal cynicism the purpose of American society - developing in the worker the highest degree of automatic and mechanical ability to break up the human nature of the worker, the art of technical work, by reducing productive operations exclusively to the mechanical, purely manual process. The"Fordy" is not original or novel; they represent simply the most recent phase of a long process which begins with industrialism itself. This phase is more intense because the methods and means are in their crudest form, but it is a phase which will itself be superceded by the creation of a new vocational category, a new human stereotype, fitting in peaceful and ordinary life.

The Ford system would result in the elimination of the old skilled work, which would be significantly eliminated from the industry, and thus the Ford system would be the first step in the elimination of the skilled workman, and those of other strata of the population.

Prohibition has already given examples of this gap. Those who drink the alcohol brought into the United States by the bootleggers. Alcohol became a luxury product and even the highest wages were not enough to enable it to be consumed by large areas of the working class. Someone who works for a wage, with fixed hours, does not have time to dedicate himself in the pursuit of drink or to spend enough money in the pursuit of drink. The same observation can be made about security. "Homecoming," "return of the worker," is a social metaphor, regardless of what type of a population is in a certain area, and in a certain area, it is impossible to separate the worker, and the city in which he is employed, and the city in which he is employed, either by a new form of society, with appropriate social and economic methods.

American industrialists are concerned to maintain the continuity of the physical and moral efficiency of the worker. It is in its interests to have a skilled, stable labour force, a permanently dependent mass of workers, which can be manipulated by the managers for their own purposes. The Ford system of work also featured an increased role for managers within the industry, as they were able to exert greater control over the production process. Managers could now more easily intervene in the production process, ensuring that the work was done to their satisfaction. The increased role of managers also led to a greater degree of worker alienation, as workers were no longer able to have a direct say in the production process. The Ford system also led to the development of new techniques of production, such as the assembly line, which allowed for greater efficiency in the production process. However, these changes also had negative consequences for workers, as they were subjected to greater levels of control and surveillance. The Ford system also had a significant impact on the workforce, as it led to the development of new forms of work, such as the "Fordy" suited jacket, which became a symbol of the new treatment of workers under the Ford system. The Ford system also had a significant impact on society as a whole, as it led to the development of new forms of leisure, such as the "5-Dollar Day," which allowed workers to spend more time with their families and friends. However, the Ford system also had negative consequences for workers, as it led to the development of new forms of exploitation, such as the bonus-incentive scheme, which forced workers to work longer hours in order to receive a bonus.

Workers' struggles and the 'Fordisation' of work

When we look at the part played in Ford production by workers at the Dagenham and Langley plants, we see that there is a permanent underlying tension, which accumulates at shop floor level in the struggles of small groups of workers, and thus finds an outlet in the periodic strike confrontations with the company and the State. Both Ford and the State accept this structure of "industrial relations" (in fact they encourage it - as in the new "American-style" 1971 Agreement, aimed at a long-term contract, ending in a set-piece confrontation every 3-5 years), and when the confrontation comes, they are able to keep all the pressures possible within the balance of class power at that time [Note 20].

Throughout the 1950s, Ford were integrating their production at Dagenham (bringing in Briggs Bodies etc), and this process accelerated after Ford-America took over total control of the company in 1960. The fact that there were a number of Ford plants concentrated round Dagenham, all within a few miles of each other, meant that it was possible for workers to establish immediate contact and common action (political consciousness). In America, where Ford plants are more decentralised, this kind of contact and common action is only really possible when a given struggle has been going for some time.

The Dagenham factory is fed by a number of smaller factories producing parts and accessories around the main factory, and in the same way Dagenham also acts as a feeder for the Ford factories in the "developed" and "underdeveloped" countries of the world (supplying components, knock-down parts etc). The process of transportation brings into close contact two strategic sectors of the British economy - the motor industry and the shipbuilding industry - by creating a link (a link that is also political) between Ford workers and the large numbers of dockers working at Tilbury - a dock that is in the process of being containerised. Ford have their own ships coming into Tilbury. As the dockers are in the same Federation of British Industries, these are the same lines to the port of Liverpool, to the port of Glasgow, to the port of South Shields, to the port of Hull, to the port of London, to the port of Grimsby, to the port of Sunderland, to the port of Middlesbrough, and to the port of Fleetwood. This means that West Indian and African workers - who at this moment are about 20% of the 22,000 workers at Dagenham - are preparing material and working on the manufacture of knock-down parts for export and final assembly in South Africa, which, along with Holland, is the biggest overseas market for Ford in Europe. Needless to say, if they were working in South Africa, they would undergo intense racial discrimination.

Dagenham produces all the engines for Ford cars made in Britain, while Halewood, the other big Ford plant with car final Assembly Lines, sends out transmission units. The link between Halewood and Dagenham is by rail/freightliner, yet another intervention by the State in coordi-
"Look, if you've never seen it, then you're never going to understand it. If you've seen Chaos organised in a car plant, then you've really seen something! And this is the way to win! Because instead of you going to the man with your cap in your hand, you create the conditions where he has got to come to you and say: 'Look, turn it in, will you?...' And you tell him to get knotted...and you tell him that what he's offering is not enough...and you want a bit more.

"What's happening now is that Ford is able to produce his marketable goods in half the time. So he can afford to have a strike, every year. And he can afford to wait the lads out, and they'll go back demoralised after the strike. And it'll take them a long time to recover... It's not just Fordy. It's a lot of other industries as well, which have reached the same position. The struggle now has got to take place inside the plant, and has got to be disruption. Because it hurts."

"I mean...organised Chaos...you just imagine a big plant with 15,000 people...they're all timed to the point of a minute...everything depends on the next fellow...and you just start disrupting it. I mean, it only needs a few people and things start...going wrong. Like leaving something off a car. The next block can't continue. You twist the electrical system about a little bit, and it starts shorting off...the next block puts the next thing in and...bang bang.

"In the old days, when the stewards reached 'failure to agree' on timings, they would say: 'Right. We're on a go-slow.' But they never called it a go-slow. They called it 'management-organised Chaos.' The Company had given the blokes too much work to do, with all the blocks going on it, and everyone working out of his space. If you start going down the line, you're going to fall further and further down the line. Your stock is back up the line. So you've got to walk. And the further you walk, the further your car goes down the line. And sometime or other you fall off the edge. And when you fall off the edge, the car goes onto a transfer line, where there's another group of men, who are following on. Where there, where the car has got off. If half the jobs are not done, it can't continue. So it goes straight through the process, from one line to another, and it finally finishes up in Final Assembly with half the gear left off...Ford loses all their profit on the car. They're hurt... and they come back to you and say: 'Well, look, we're prepared to give you such-and-such.' And it's up to you.

"I mean, they're terribly vulnerable. For instance, after a line settles down - is when they've put men on it and now they've got a 'stable' labour force - they'll get a big bloke, a great big bloke, to work on the electronics. And he's got a squeegee inside the car and work bent double. Which means he's slower. They'll gradually tumble to it that a smaller bloke would do the job better. So then they'll get the right-sized bloke, so that he can nip in and out of the cars and do the job. And they'll keep speeding him up and up, and the more he does the harder he works, until in the end he gets demoralised, and starts taking days off. And when he takes the day off, they have to get three men to do the job that he was doing. And then, after a while, he might decide to leave Ford. And it'll take them months to build another man into the job, to train him so that he can maintain that speed."

An Ex-Ford Worker: 1971.

"In the event of strike action, the main bottleneck in the Dagenham estate is the Engine Plant. If the old capitalist dream came true and the Engine Plant was working full shifts, 168 hours a week every day of the year, it could be producing 1,000,000 vehicles a year. As it is, productive output from the Plant is no more than half that number, and it's a typical case of the capitalist problem of "fulfil utilisation of plant and manpower", which is the opposite of the workers' point of view that social life is more important than Ford's needs. (Note: since this article was written, Ford's Dagenham Engine Plant production has in fact passed the million mark - October 1972).

The 5,500 workers in the Engine Plant have a leading position in setting long-term goals for the whole factory, and therefore this plant has been the main target for Ford's attempts to eliminate the non-producing time (dead time), using computers and cybernetics. Since the section has not suffered defeats, not even following the 1962 strike, and since Ford has needed to increase productivity (relative exploitation: app.) in the Plant, they introduced a system of computerised control of the flow of production, and managed a considerable reduction in dead time. This key position of the Engine Plant also explains why Ford are so worried when these 5,500 begin stoppages or overtime bans, especially when stoppages here are organised to alternate with similar action by the Workers in the Foundry and Final Assembly.

The Foundry and Final Assembly are two other bottlenecks within the whole Ford Process. In the Foundry workers have used the fact that the operation of off-line work was more flexible and have managed through their struggles to reduce the number of Graders, which had been very marked in the Plant previously [Note 21]. In the second case, it has been the Final Assembly, which has borne the full brunt of the strikes in the component and sub-assembly manufacturers, which have been struck more frequent in the last 10 years. This is also the section where workers have been least willing to buy Ford's "job evaluation" scheme, and where the strike came up for back-dated lay-off pay after the layoffs in 1960 [Note 22].

On the one hand, the workers' demand for full pay in the event of layoffs is very damaging to Ford: it tends to lead to long, drawn-out overtime bans, which can then lead into equally long strikes. But on the other hand, its main proposals as far as the interests of British capital are concerned, came up again in the Industrial Relations Bill. Tory critics of "In Place of Strife" criticised it, not because it went too far, but because, given the balance of class forces at that time, it didn't go far enough. It was for this reason that Ford felt it necessary to accompany the Industrial Relations Bill with another law - the Immigration Act, to limit the basic civil rights of those sections of workers to the not yet part of the settled population - is immigrant workers from Britain's ex-colonies. This means the 700,000 West Indian
workers, the 300,000 Indians and Pakistanis (not to mention countless Irish workers) who were brought to the UK at a time when unemployment here was low, and the "underdevelopment" of these ex-colonies made them go back to the "mother" countries [Note 23].

At the end of the 1950s, the capitalist class began a counter-attack, which among other things included ways of punishing "passive solidarity action" between plants (ie anything short of strike action) and introducing a new wage hierarchy by means of job evaluation. Ford was a leading force in both these attacks. As regards job evaluation, Ford took on Uweck Orr & Co as consultants to set up a new wage structure.

If we want to understand how they arrived at the "relevant" gradings for each job, we would have to look at the relative strength of the different sections of the factory at that time. There was little "scientific" about the evaluations. The highest gradings were given to the smallest sections. In general, Ford used the "smallestness" of a work-group as a basis for calculating the "worth" of that group of workers.

Thus, it's company policy to oppose any upward alteration of the grading system when it's a matter of upgrading hundreds of workers: but when it's only a matter of 10 or 20, they're more willing to agree. So, although Ford claimed that the evaluations were made on the basis of "ability" etc, in fact they were made by taking into account only the cost of labour, and of course, any increase that threatens the stability of the factory wage hierarchy is avoided like the plague [Note 24]. As it happened, the workers' response to the introduction of this artificial job hierarchy was to use grading grievances as a way of advancing their claim, and for this reason Ford imposed a standstill in grading alterations for the 2-year duration of the 1971 Agreement.

FLEXIBILITY, LABOUR MOBILITY AND THE STRUGGLE AGAINST WORK

"The management of Britain's big motor manufacturers have one overriding interest in common: they see constantly realising the State's need for flexibility of labour as the key to their business. They are very clear in the Report that they prepared for the Donovan Commission [Note 25]:

"The 1964 TUC Annual Conference called for the 35-hour week, and similarly the Conference of the International Metalworkers' Federation in 1965 expected European carworkers to follow the United Automobile Workers of America in demanding the 35-hour week. This ambition, however, could only be realised with the greater utilisation of automated machinery, and the latter can only be achieved if it is to run for the optimum length of time. This clearly requires flexibility in shift working and staggered rota. Thus, if the Trade Unions wish to press for shorter hours, their claims need to be qualified by a corresponding willingness to accept work on a regular basis at times which are now regarded as overtime, outside the traditional Monday-to-Friday 40-hour week. The idea that scheduled overtime might vary in length between winter and summer, and the weekend and the evening and night shifts can form part of the standard work-time, will require increasing attention."

The employee's point of view was presented in the Ford Motor Company's evidence to the Jack O' Connell Inquiry in April 1963.

[850 Com 1935]
Sabotage at Lordstown — how General Motors' bright star was dimmed

Labor relations at the Vega plant of General Motors in Lordstown, Ohio, are nothing if not tense. They are everywhere in the United States, and not exactly trouble-free.

Mr. Whalen, the Vega plant manager, has complained on numerous occasions that he has had sabotage and there are no indications that this is not the case. He said examples of this sabotage are: cars being covered with mud, covering of tools, scratching of paint, breaking of equipment, and the like. These actions are said to be deliberate and to have an impact on the production process.

However, there are no actions a company in normal circumstances would draw to the attention of potential buyers of its product. The main thrust of this problem is the main thrust of its counter-strike. It does not seem to be a factor in the United States.

But the situation at the Vega plant is a reflection of a much wider problem. It is not an isolated case. It is not an isolated case.

The main reason for this bad state of affairs is probably the youthfulness of the workforce. Most of the workers are young people under 20. Many of them are in poor health, but their youth motivates them to do good work. In general, they are not motivated by their employment contracts, but by their youth and their expectations of a better life. They are not motivated by their employment contracts, but by their youth and their expectations of a better life.

The company first moved into the Lordstown area in the middle of the 1960s, in an attempt to expand its operations. It was from the traditionally hostile relations between labor and management in the area to the town's concentrated manufacturing industry. Pontiac, Firebird and large Cameo plants, until General Motors decided to build the Vega plant in the area in the 1970s. "It will be a complete plant," according to the spokesman. "It will be a complete plant,

The company worked with great care to create an assembly line in the history of the company. The line was designed to run 24 hours a day, 6 days a week, with a production capacity of 60 cars an hour, 500 cars an hour, and 1,200 cars an hour.

GM's main priority was to produce cars as quickly as possible, and this priority was achieved with great success. The Vega was a great success, and it quickly proved its excellence. The Vega was a great success, and it quickly proved its excellence.

Then someone took a good look at the balance sheet. The Vega was not making a large enough profit, and General Motors and the assembly division division, famed for its ruthless cost cutting, increasing efficiency, was sent in last October to take over the management and boost profits.

The GMD4 proudly rationalized the assembly line. The experts gave some workers bonuses and others were sent to the back of the 70% to 90% assembly line. A number of workers who had been laid off were rehired, according to General Motors.

But they have not been doing very well since GM had to begin sending home workers on the line after only three months' work. They had already generated some work for the repair department to keep the repair department away for the shift.

In mid-February, the end of the January assembly line production, General Motors lost 43,000 GM and 4,000 trucks valued at about $500,000. The complaints were made that some workers were not always doing the work that made GM a gold mine, said the company.

Several workers at the Vega plant reported that they had been told they were being worked to death. In one instance, a worker was said to have been working on the line for over 30 years. In another instance, a worker was said to have been working on the line for over 30 years.

This highlights the real dilemma of the auto industry. How do you keep the workers? How do you keep the workers?

The introduction of black and white workers is a necessity, because as well as paying for food, housing, and clothing, the workers are also expected to pay for the cost of coming to Britain in the first place -- and this can take months or years.

Also, many black workers travel in from London, staying in hotels, and pay the overtime to cover travelling expenses. Foremen exploit this situation in order to make life hard for the militant: anybody who is not prepared to toe the Ford line suddenly finds that he's not getting the overtime. Inevitably, bad feeling over the allocation of overtime led to certain attitudes about the Union:

"The vast majority is split, one side saying that it is better to be with the Union, and the other side saying: 'The Unions are no help anyway'...the result of this is that even though 90% of the people are in the Union, the active support comes from a minority of around 25%, even on issues of major importance, like the present (1965) wage dispute.

However, more recently, the gap between workers and the Union/shop steward structure has narrowed. This has happened through the recent shop-floor pressure on the Federation of the Midlands, but also through a consolidation of shop-floor organisation. In this work, the workers have fought, and have improved conditions. This has lowered the level of labour turnover (mobility), which, in turn seems that groups of workers have managed to forge management to respect their rights within the terms.
13. Working at Langley

"If I was at Langley, you had a situation where the workers were something between 70-75% black. Of which I would say, in those days, 80% of black workers weren't in the Union. They weren't in the Union because they were anti-union, but because they found the Union anti-them.

"You had a situation where the men used to settle their problems with the supervisor, you go with anybody, outside of the Union. You know, a word and a blow, and that's it. It's not unusual to be at one end of the line and see a man running the foreman up with a couple of spanners or a couple of bolts in his hand...

"Mind you, there's a lot of people don't stick it. In Langley, for instance, if you think you'll find that there's an actual quarter turnover. A very high percentage of people just leave. People don't stay too long; they come, they go; they stay a week, they stay a month... they stay 2 months and that's it.

"Mind you, there's all sorts of tricks that Ford plays to keep you in line. According to our line foreman, after you've been there for about 3 weeks, the period of intimidation sets in. Either they break you, and see which side of the fence you'll fall on, or you're an outcast for ever. But there are ways of not letting yourself be provoked. I mean, the first day I started at Ponds I was a bolt up, just tightening an axle bolt, and there were some punches going in here and there. I would say if you did what I did..."

"Anyway, one of the supervisors came up to me and asked me if I saw what was happening. And I said: 'I couldn't see because the incident was over my head, and anyway I don't understand Cochrane accents. Because I wasn't going to get involved. I wasn't going to go any talking, because the black was a worker and he's on my side."

"Sometimes in the middle of the day you hear a rumble coming from down the line, and you know that some foreman has got his axe out...

"Against speed-up you've got very little choice. Of course, you can fight it, but you don't do it too consistently, because if you're all by yourself, you isolate yourself. There are some jobs, where you're in a very good position against speed-up. For instance, if you're shifting trucks from one line to another - if you're working on a transfer line rather than a full circular line - you're supposed to keep a limited gap. You're supposed to drop the trucks on the line 30 feet apart. But if it's less than that, then you're in trouble - or rather they are. You're supposed to use your discretion, see. So, if you want to start an argument at a point that is convenient to you, all you've got to do is drop one truck 6 inches behind the other, which means that they have got to stop the line, and shift it back.

"That is just one tactic that you can use against speed-up. The other tactic is that when they speed up the line, you take the most difficult bolt to do up, and just leave it undone. So that when it gets done to the drag line, you've got 50 or 60 trucks for the inspector to go over, and the line definitely has to slow up, because the trucks start piling up. And that's got other advantages, because it provides overtime for the men on Saturdays and Sundays. That's just another of the tricks of the trade."

West Indian Ex-Ford Worker: 1971

of the accepted custom and practice. This means resisting transfers unless they have been mutually agreed between foremen and stewards, limiting speed-ups, and insisting on certain safety conditions, which Ford always tries to erode with the continual introduction of new machines and methods. This shop-floor struggle has given the stewards a certain base from which to operate.

When a new starter enters Langley, he's not yet part of an established group. The foreman makes a point of putting the screws on him, by intimidating him. But very soon a group of workers will take him in hand, to make sure that he's not left isolated, and will make him part of the informal network that exists to look after new workers. The fact that new men are forced to make a decision, right from the start, whether they're going to be "hard" or "docile" has a lot to do with the labour turnover: high mobility breeds weak organisation.

For many young West Indians, the question of organisation is made even harder by the fact that many of them have a long way to travel between the factory and their homes, unlike the 'old' Langley working class, made up mainly of immigrant Irish workers, who live close to the factory, and who don't seem worried by the fact that it's hard for many black workers to attend branch meetings: "The Union continues to hold branch meetings in the Slough area, after work, instead of pressing the firm for permission to hold them on the premises."

Up until 1967 not one of the 75% black union members at Langley had ever been elected shop steward. Then there were the drive for 'proportional representation', which led to the election of a few West Indian stewards, who took on, life at Langley became very tough. And the harder it became, the more new recruits flocked to get out of the "hell" of the lower-grade jobs. This took many forms - like playing up to the foreman so as to get yourself upgraded - but in general it was a losing battle.

The manual labour force at Ford is organised, nationally, fairly rigidly into a wage hierarchy of 5 grades, and the first crisis of a new recruit at Langley usually comes when he tries to challenge this hierarchy. Before he comes to a position of challenging Ford's organisation of work, he starts by accepting it and trying to better his position within the factory. The foreman begins to smell a rat when a man's eager to show that he can work harder than his workmates, and begins to become a threat to the factory hierarchy. Sometimes, for instance, a worker who is trying to improve his position manages to get overtime on a job which - though usually white - but for him - should carry a higher grading. His first mistake will be to go along to management and ask for a higher grading for the job. The first reply is usually a simple "No!". So he goes away and comes back with his shop steward. The personnel manager simply ignores the steward, and merely refers to the agreement signed by the worker, which offers a choice: either he can work overtime, or he can be upgraded - but not both. He knows that upgrading will mean an extra £2 a week, but the overtime is worth £8 or £9. He abandons his demand for upgrading, but by now he has lost out on both counts, since by making a fuss, he's probably forfeited overtime in the future. He's been defeated, and from now on it's in the hands of other workers who have not bothered about their position, and others who, after a period of absence, return to find that they've been transferred or downgraded as part of the policy of continual change and that management manoeuvres in order to avoid giving higher grades to workers.

When the individual solution fails, the worker moves towards fighting Ford's organisation of work, and this is usually based on
14. Mobility of Labour

- Who controls mobility of labour - the capitalist and the State, or the working class - is a basic question of class power. This article shows how Ford used mobility against Dagenham Engine Plant workers.

"Right from the early days in Detroit, Ford has been skilled in the use and exploitation of immigrant and migrant workers as a way of enforcing speed-up and keeping down wages. Scots and Irish at Halwood; West Indians, Irish and Asians at Dagenham; Turks and Yugoslavs at Cologne etc. at Dagenham recently we have been seeing a dirty policy in the Engine Plant - and that means employing coloured workers, bringing them into the factory attracted by the so-called high wages, and then moving them around from job to job so that they cannot resist or organise.

"Everyone knows that Ford can't get workers for love nor money, those days are long gone. Only 70 workers joined the Body Plant, and one week later 60 men left. Conditions are that disgusting, and most lineworkers never see that magical £47. White workers will hardly touch Ford's now. Most new starters are black, and very many are Asians. Any Asian worker and in the Engine Plant,...and Ford plays tricks on them.

"New starters arriving in the Engine Plant are put in the Machine Shop where there's plenty of overtime, and where you're not so tied to an assembly line. This is so as to get them to stay. But when they've settled in, Ford takes them off these jobs, and puts them onto the Commercial Line or the OSC Line where there's plenty of overtime, only permanent days. In other words, a wage of about £15 for some people. And the Unions do nothing about it.

"Ford has a tremendous power when the Unions do nothing. We have been trying to put up a fight, but see no hope of help from the Unions. Ford has never been all the one's been against them. Ford's main weapon is mobility of labour. The high turnover acts to prevent organisation, because people drop out of Ford's like flies and don't stay long enough to build the fight. Also, not only does that give new starters around. They also use mobility to move around and militate, whether black or white, so as to make sure that no one militant stays in one section for long enough to build a strong section.

"There are hundreds of cases like this. Immigrants are being threatened and intimidated by Ford and by this use of mobility. Anyone who makes the slightest resistance is dragged up to personnel. It happens every day. You're told you're not working hard enough, you must work harder. You are threatened. Personnel is always trying to push more production out of you.

"I went to see a friend. He was sitting there, crying, at home with his wife and kids. He didn't know where to turn. He said: 'FORD knows what I'm doing, I'm so much terrified by the personnel. They push you all the time, even push you by hand to make you work. I don't know what to do. I can't carry on like this.' That's what's happening to Asian brothers in the Engine Plant.

"This is the terror by Ford management. It's no accident that this is happening in the Engine Plant, which is hidden right at the heart of the Dagenham complex, like in the rest of Dagenham, so that mobility all around, because the Engine Plant is vital to Ford's production and is highly profitable.

"The trouble is that Ford management tries to split us. Each department has its own informers, and they spy on us to pick out anybody who wants to make the plant work properly. We are all split by nationalities. You've got all sorts of people here - Greeks, Pakistanis, Singaporeans, West Indians, white blokes. If all these people could only unite Ford would be really scared."

From the Big Flame Dagenham Bulletin July 1974.

Collective awareness. His point of reference is no longer the shop steward, but the group of workers who are the real power behind the steward. Class unity begins to emerge when workers start forming informal groups (political recreation: App. 1) to resist the organisation of work, and to oppose those who exist to make it work (foremen, chargehands etc.). The more the resistance grows and becomes conscious, the more the reward joins the lads' instead of becoming separated from the group and spending all his time on negotiation. This means that instead of refusing work by the individual solution of all always negotiating conditions of work for others, he begins to fight for his own material interests, together with other workers. It's these workers' groups that are beginning to form an organisation in a situation where high line-speeds mean a constant massive turnover of workers, so it's these groups that make sure that new recruits abide by the 'custom and practice' which has already been won in the factory.

It's on the assembly lines that workers' mobility is at its highest, and it's here that Ford has been least able to create a job-hierarchy to divide workers. When Ford introduced "job evaluation" with the Grading Agreement in 1957, despite the fact that more than 2,000 jobs were "evaluated" at a very high cost (Ford spoke of £5m), and despite the secrecy that surrounded the weightings that were given to each job, somehow the mass of assembly-line workers (50,000 out of 40,000 workers) all ended up in the fourth out of 5 Grades (3 Grade).

This system creates a mass of workers with a collective consciousness (which is quite different from the attitude in piecework factories), which means that the management cannot use the same collective action in the overtime ban.

What an overtime ban does is to unify sections of workers who are usually divided and separated by large differences in wages. It means that those workers who don't fit into management's plans for a flexible labour force (i.e. those who are not periodically transferred and upgraded, or those who don't get overtime) are joined by workers who have taken a voluntary wage-cut by refusing to cooperate with management's need for overtime to be done. Management knows that when an overtime ban starts, they can expect strike action in some part of the Plant: when it means a small group of workers taking action independently, they know they have to act fast, and usually do this either by reorganising the Job, or by dispersing the trouble-makers round the factory (interplant mobility).

So, since overtime is used by management to divide workers among themselves, so the overtime ban is a way of creating class unity and breaking down the wage hierarchy. But it's also an attack on the factory plan, in the following way:

In any factory there is always insubordination and a refusal to cooperate at the individual level, by the individual worker. For instance, when new machinery is being brought into operation, and a section of the Plant is speeded-up, workers respond by sending half-finished cars down the line and refusing to cooperate in the speed-up or in getting the machine to work properly. Langley is not built around one single assembly line, but around a number of lines for all the different models the factory produces, and this fact makes disruption easier - whether deliberate or not. By creating bottlenecks or disrupting the line, workers know that they are creating lines, and from a workers' point of view this is a way of fighting unemployment and guaranteeing overtime during periods of slack production. To a certain
15. Mobility of Capital

It looked like a remake of the film Bienvenido Mr Marshall, but it was for real. Workmen sweated to unload the sacks containing 75,000 letters from the banner-bedecked lorry parked in front of the American Embassy in Madrid, as two bemused diplomats wondered what to do about Henry Ford. The truckload of letters, addressed to Mr Ford, care of the Embassy, was sent by the mayor of the Western Spanish town of Talavera de la Reina, rich in history but poor in industry. The letters were all from the inhabitants of the town, but the one assembly written by 5-year old Pepa Lopez probably summed things up best:

"Please sir, my papa has to work in Germany and I do not see him very much. If you come to my town, my papa can work for you. He works very hard, and will be able to come home every day to play with me."

Since it was first reported last month that Ford had indicated to the Spanish Government its interest in setting up a manufacturing plant in Spain, the mayors of dozens of towns and villages in Spain - even the "senorial" old port of Sanlucar de Barrameda in the sherry wine district - have made offers of free land and other benefits in the hopes of enticing the Ford Motor Company to build their projected $100m factory in their town.

Note: the plant was finally built in Valencia, 230 miles away.

FORD'S USE OF INVESTMENT AND THE LABOUR MARKET

Ford's recruitment policies, right through their history, have followed a regular pattern: on the one hand they locate their factories in 'undeveloped' areas (Yugoslavia, Chile, Senegal, Botswana, etc), and on the other hand they use immigrant labour from 'undeveloped' countries, on the assembly lines. This was the pattern in the early days of Ford Detroit, when 70% of their workers could not speak English. It has also been the pattern in the UK, where Ford have passed from Irish immigrant labour to West Indian and then Asian. And it's the pattern in Europe, where Renault, Chrysler, Volkswagen, FIAT and the other companies use immigrant labour from the Mediterranean and North Africa. This policy of labour mobility at an international level is Ford's reaction to workers' mobility - it is the simple fact that workers won't put up with Ford assembly lines for long, and Ford have to look further and further abroad to get workers willing to work for them.

Capital plans development and underdevelopment, and exploits the one against the other. Ford's operations fit completely into this pattern: on the one hand geocentric mobility of labour (brining in labour from 'undeveloped' countries), and on the other mobility of investment (investment in 'undeveloped' regions). However, the workers' response to this manipulation in mobility of their own - a refusal to work for Ford.

The Trade Unions are waking up to the fact that this puts them in a tricky position. Sear since the "Ford Revolution" and the introduction of the new assembly line in the UK, workers' mobility has been the main form of struggle in the motor industry. The more that workers' wages are tied directly to productivity, the more the unions' existence as a bargaining agent is threatened, because increased speed-up means an increase in labour turnover; high labour turnover (workers' mobility) is a form of struggle over which the Unions have very little control. It also tends to work against the Union itself as a form of struggle.

The precondition for any Union-led struggle against Ford's manipulation of the labour market, and towards international parity within the Company, would be a stable labour force, organised as trade unionists. This would be needed for any co-ordinated campaign at an international level - but needless to say, these preconditions don't exist, and it's not the Unions that are going to bring it about.

[End of Section 1.]

166
1. Restructuring of UK Industry - 1930s

The Depression of the 1930s saw a deep restructuring of British industry. The coal, iron & steel, shipbuilding and textile employers inflicted defeats on their workers, and in the crisis capital began to shift to other parts of the country. It was followed by a mass migration of unemployed workers, out of the 'distressed' areas.

Newer industries expanded rapidly in this period. The main areas of expansion were London; some smaller towns in the South East (Reading, Slough, Luton) and the West Midlands (particularly around Birmingham and Coventry). These centres of expanding industry were themselves in flux, with population moving outwards from the old, congested central areas. Thus the West Midlands industrial belt, the North London belt, and the Dagenham area. Thus, much new industry (aircraft, cars, electronics etc) was being set up in the outer London suburbs.

Housing development was also spreading outwards, in great suburban housing developments of both private and municipal housing. In London there was no planned connection between housing and jobs, and the new municipal estates were referred to as 'domitory estates' precisely because you could sleep in them and nothing else. It was only as an afterthought that Ford came to settle at Dagenham. Also, the extension and electrification of London's underground railways, together with more bus services, made it possible for people to live farther from their work than they had ever done in earlier decades - but it meant large amounts of travelling. It added anything from 1-2 hours to the working day, exhausting hours of stop-and-go in tube or buses. By 1937, when overtime was common, many workers were spending 12 hours a day away from home, and the average family's expenditure on fares was 8% of the average income of working class families.

There was a great immigration into London in the 1930s. The workers who had migrated here from one of the older industrial areas found a social pattern quite different from home. In the mining village or milltown or port, the workers had lived close to their workplace, probably going home to dinner. Workers pursued leisure-time pursuits with people they met at work. A whole street would have a common interest in a game of cards or a strike. Much of the work would have been skilled, and the workers had a strong interest in maintaining wage rates, since they expected to remain with the same trade until they retired. It was a life in which solidarity and organisation flourished.

This sense of community was lacking in the expanding areas of London. Workers in the same street increasingly had little in common, travelling to jobs all over London. Many of them were not tied to one workplace, or even one area. For the new industries offered a wide range of semi- or unskilled jobs, usually with little training. Workers expected to change jobs quite frequently, and tended to move from one light industry to another as employment offered.

All this entailed problems of organization for the trade union movement, traditionally based on separate crafts or skills, and organized in branches meeting in the evenings. Going to a meeting for many workers meant missing their supper, or their bus home. The trade union structure was poorly adapted to the new industrial conditions, and for many years the new industries remained un-unionized, except for a handful of skilled toolmakers or maintenance men.

The new 'communities' were also soulless places, with higher expenses, few roots, bad services, a few, far-distant shops, and few centres of communal organizing. The new estates were not built to make a humane life, but to house workers for the night so that they could work again for capital during the day.

SECTION TWO:
NOTES FOR A HISTORY OF FORD IN BRITAIN

Ford's penetration into Britain follows the successive phases of imperialist expansion with text-book regularity: first exporting finished components into Britain; then exporting part-Fordified engines, together with the initial capital for developing production in Britain; and finally exporting capital, which was added to profits accumulated in Britain, in order to develop productive capacity in Britain to the point where the UK itself could become a launching-pad for further investments overseas.

Trafalgar Park

As Ford's penetration began to develop in Britain, there was an unusual absence of tension between existing British capital and this incoming American capital, and Ford was allowed a remarkably stable and secure development. This was due more to the fact that for a long time British capital had little interest in the production of the motor car as a mass consumer product, rather than any common cause between English and American imperial interests. Because of the Ford organization of the work process, which had been developed in the USA, and because of the remarkable freedom of movement that they were allowed, Ford-UK was able to take the lead as a 'driving motor' in the British motor industry, increasing the rate of relative exploitation [Page 2] in motor manufacturing as a whole from 1911 onwards.

Ford started production in Britain with the Trafalgar Park factory, opened in 1911 on the outskirts of Manchester. This was an assembly plant for knock-down parts imported from Michigan. This took Ford a step beyond the phase of simply importing finished products, which they had started 8 years previously. The factory employed a labour force that was already well suited to the work, since the workers already had experience in the manufacturing industries and methods of transportation in the Manchester area. In fact, the group of workers who started the first phase of struggles at Ford were precisely the coal-workers employed in the body section [Note 27].

The shift from simple assembly of knock-down parts manufactured by Ford-USA, through increasing manufacture of parts in the UK, to the full manufacture of the model was Ford, took place between 1911 and 1912. The factory line was introduced at Trafalgar Park again, after the period of struggle, but the Ford workers were still the most skilled in the industry [Note 27].

The move to Dagenham

The next major development in Ford's penetration into the UK came in 1932-33. At that time, in America as in the whole of the Western world, capitalism's margins of manoeuvre were expanding again, after the period of intense class conflict from 1917-1920 [Note 26]. At that time, plans were being prepared for the building of Ford-Cologne, which began production in 1931, at the same time as the new Dagenham plant was being opened in Britain. From 1933, the year in which the Ford Motor Company was formally established, Ford of Britain was made the centre of all Ford's European operations; up until 1950 Ford-UK remained the majority shareholder in Ford-Europe, the controlling company for Ford's European operations, General Motors [Note 29]. Ford-UK was
2. 1932: Barricades in Birkenhead & Belfast

The defeat of the working class vanguards of the 1910s and 1920s in Britain was accompanied by a re-location of capitalist production out of the traditional areas of working class strength and into new areas, like the London suburbs. Ford Dagenham was a good example of this. In order to understand the general political climate for the working class in the period, we need no better source than Wal Hannington’s book “My Life and Struggle among the Unemployed” (Lawrence and Wishart, 1936). His story is far different from the pathetic pictures of rain-soaked hunger-marchers so much loved by the bourgeoisie.

In 1932, there were demonstrations and riots up and down the country, for the abolition of the means test and the benefit cuts. Hannington describes that movement. He tells how the police beat up demonstrators and invaded working class areas in Birkenhead. Abd he tells of what happened in Belfast when the unemployed fought for their homes on the streets.

On October 9th 1932, 2,000 Belfast unemployed went on strike. They were being employed on relief work in exchange for a poor relief pitance. The Mayor of Belfast offered terms designed to divide the strikers, but these were refused and demonstrations were organised. The Strike Committee called for a rent strike and a school strike, and demanded an increase in relief rates.

Bonfires were lit in the workers’ quarters, and round them gathered thousands of workers who were addressed by the unemployed leaders. The city of Belfast became an armed camp, with thousands of police being imported, patrolling the streets in armoured cars. But the movement only gained strength. On October 10th a special mass demonstration of women was held, pledging solidarity with the men in their fight. The next day crowds gathered to discuss and organise, and the police charged them. When the first shots were fired, some men, some women, some steel helmets, and a series of fierce battles broke out. Armoured cars were called out and drove into the crowds wherever they gathered. Squados of workers rushed to the sites of the relief work jobs and seized the tools with which they had been compelled to clave for a pitance; armed with these they returned to the demonstrations and fought with the police.

In the Falls and Shankhill, very fierce hand-to-hand battles saw workers using pick-shafts and other weapons, and the police opening fire with rifles and revolvers. Five workers were wounded — and the workers responded by setting up barricades against mounted police and armoured cars; bravely fighting behind these barricades they repeatedly repulsed the attacks of the police.

On October 12th the fighting continued. British troops now came into action against the unemployed and the workers. Seven lorryloads of the Royal Infirmary Dublin equipped with machine guns were drafted into the city. Barricades appeared in the working class areas, where lorries conveyed forces of police into the storm areas. In the Falls, workers tore up flagstones and dug trenches across the streets. Before the day’s fighting was over, more than 50 workers had gunshot wounds, while hundreds of others had been injured by truncheons etc. The police injuries are not recorded. And in the meantime, 4 of the wounded had died.

The murderous action of the police and Army in Belfast provoked solidarity demonstrations throughout Britain and Ireland, and the Northern Ireland Government was forced to grant considerable concessions on pay rates and the character of relief work.

These events coincided with the Hunger Marches to Parliament, and this was also the time that production at Ford-Dagenham was getting into full swing.

able to take on this function of de facto management of Ford’s operations in Europe (Note 30). During this period, British engineering companies were still dubious about Ford’s mass production for the consumer market, and continued to emphasise the production of engines as a means of production.

The spot chosen for the future expansion of Ford’s production was Dagenham, near London—thence following the general shift of the centre of gravity of British Industry from Manchester to the South-East. Already in the years preceding the General Strike of 1926, the outskirts of London had seen the growth of a considerable concentration of industry, which had moved there to take advantage of a vast concentration of mass labour brought together by production for the war effort (Note 31). Ford’s plan to double Dagenham was part of a new kind of capitalist development in the UK, in which the State and the local authorities had an important part to play in creating the infrastructures for these new developments—ranging from the draining of Dagenham’s marshlands to the building of houses for the first few thousand workers who were brought to Dagenham.

The announcement by Ford that they had chosen Dagenham for their new site (in 1924) was decisive in speeding up the building of this town—the first of the English New Towns. Ford decided that there should be a supply of suitable labour ready and available before the factory building programme was started, and this meant making use of the large numbers of Irish immigrants, together with the first wave of workers from London’s Docklands. The main period of building in Dagenham came between Ford’s closure of Dagenham in 1924, and the beginning of building operations on the factory itself, in 1929 (Note 32).

The “New Deal” at Dagenham began at the moment of deepest economic crisis for British capitalism, and coincided with the first signs of a political recovery by British capital. Dagenham began production in 1931. Ford was then joined by two other associated Detroit-based companies— Briggs, for the building of bodies, and Kelsey Hayes for the production of wheels (Note 33).

The availability of such a large labour reserve in the Dagenham area was exceptional by British standards, due to the economic crisis and the unemployment that accompanied it. Ford was well aware of this situation when he set about trying to use the crisis in a characteristic Ford manner. Namely, between 1932 and 1935 Ford began to prepare a drastic reduction of the mass of workers at Dagenham. Ford claimed that these wage cuts were necessary “because of the crisis”, but in fact they should be seen as a preparation for the launching of the “1000 car” in 1935.

Wage Cuts in America & Britain

During the period immediately preceding the wage cuts in 1933, the first organised nucleus of factory militants at Dagenham was beginning to build up, around Communists who had emigrated from the factory at Trafford Park, and who were especially numerous among the skilled workers in the Toolroom. They were members of the Amalgamated Engineering Union, a union which allowed for a broader political outlook on the part of its members, and partly as a result of this tended to include numbers of Communist Party members (Note 34). So, it was not only the management of Ford-UK which passed from Trafford Park to Dagenham that was also a group of workers who began the 1933 strike, and who continued the process of factory organisation after the strike had ended.

At the beginning of 1933, Ford announced their wage cuts, and began
3. USA: The Sit-down Strikes—Akron Rubber Workers 1933–6

with the passing of the NRA [Note 57], one month after the law was passed, the workers of Akron—posed into the Union (50,000 in 1935 alone), but the union did little to organize the local workers and when union officials agreed to a "cooling off" of the 1935 strike, the rubber workers went on strike alone.

Dissatisfied with trade unions and the union leadership, workers in Akron developed a new tactic—the sit-down—which they knew they could not control without the help of outside leaders. When Louis Adamic visited Akron to find out how the sit-downs had begun, he was told that the first had occurred not in a rubber factory but at a baseball game. Players from two factories refused to play a scheduled game because the umpire, whom they disliked, was not a union man. They simply sat on the diamond, while the crowd for a lack cheered the NRA and yelled for an umpire who was a union man, until the non-union umpire was replaced.

Not long after, a dispute developed between a down town men's store and a rubber company. A new executive was seated in the store, who was out to sell the workers a "singles store". The store workers were on the verge of giving in when the supervisor insulted them and, one of them said, "Aw, you all talk too much, let's sit down." The dozen workers turned off their machines and sat down. Within a few minutes the carefully organized plan of production through the plant began to jam up as department after department ground to a halt. Thousands of workers sat down, some because they wanted to, some because everything was stopping anyway. What had happened, workers wanted to know? There was a sit-down at each and every department. A sit-down you ask? As a sit-down is to look for a down town job is you, right? ! Like what happened at the ball game the other day.

Adamic describes the response:

Sitting by their machines, caucusing, bolstering, and work breaks, they talked and sang. Some sat down for the first time in their lives as some of them could do so if some departments six could do it. The active rank and file, warmed through the various sections of the plant, took the initiative in saying, "We've got to stick with it!" And they stood with them, union and non-union men alike, and they were not in vain. Some were reported afraid to stick. Others arrived. There was much laughter through the works. Oh boy, oh boy! just like at the ball game, no kidding! There the crowd had stuck with the players and they got an umpire who was a member of a labor union. Here everybody stuck with the twelve guys who first sat down, and the factory management was scared itself. Supplemental, foremen, and store bosses were drinking alcohol. This rubber suspension lasted for a few days—on the promise of losing heads of dollars every month... in less than an hour the strike was ended—full victory for the men.

Between 1933 and 1935, this tactic gradually became a tradition in Akron, with scores of sit-downs—the majority probably not instigated even by rank-and-file union organizers, and Akron itself quickly became the focal point of such movements. It became the understood principle that when one group of workers stopped work, other workers would follow without a fight.

The sit-downs had the advantage of the sit-down strike. It was easy for them to close down a department in a rubber plant. For instance, the men tore the compound rubber from the mills, they filled building or covering trees the leaves being held or cut, so that work was naturally ended. Tearing the same precautions during a sit-down as they do in a production, this did not involve in departments where leisure is seen. There is no sitting. This discipline... in instruction.

Sit-downs are effective, short, and free from violence.

There are no strikes, no violence in the majority of instances; the factory management does not dare to go against. and try to drive the sitting men out and replace them with other workers. For such violence would only present the public to the employer and the police, and might cause trouble to the machinery. In a sit-down there are no picks lines outside the fence, where police and company guards have great advantage when a fight starts. The sit-down action occurs wholly inside the plant, where the workers, know the details of the interior, have obvious advantage. The sit-downs organize their own "police squad," armed in rubber—with comrades in无法 recall to pay open wages in which there existcontract. These workmen pay off the bath, buy for public uses and stand guard near the doors. In a few instances when city police and company men entered a factory, they were bewildered, frighten, and driven out by the "sitting" workers with no difficulty whatsoever.

The initiative, conduct, and control of the sit-down came directly from the men involved.

More workers distant—more consciously, more unceremoniously—sstitial officials and strikers held down the workers, and they themselves have elected them. The bustle of the sit-down or the sit-down is that there are a few members who are in front of the sit-down and do not want to be there. Each single procedure is strike action is hopelessly obsolete when workers force them to leave, stop their machines, and sit down better than it.

Finally, the sit-down counters the boredom, degradation, and solution of the factory.

Work is members of the department of a rubber factory or any other kind of mass-production factory is drudgery of the worst sort—mechanical and monotonous, incessant and requiring no imagination; and any interruption is welcomed by workers, even if only subconsciously. The conscious part of their mind may worry about the loss of pay, their subconsciously, however, does not care a whit about that. The minimum is a disruption, shortening, the average worker in a mass-production plant is full of grievances and the way of getting rid of them is well

The sit-down is a social affair. Sitting workers talk. They get acquainted. And talk like that. In a regular strike it is impossible to bring together the group. The workers are divided into sections, only for a meeting, where they are told who will see another. But here is speakers. A sit-down holds under the same conditions, and it is possible to talk, to hear a fellow worker, to hear his story. At a sit-down everyone talks, anyone may talk. They all talk. At a sit-down, everyone has something to say...

Late in 1935, Goodyear announced that it was shifting from the site to the site, to six a day, admission, that 1,300 men would be laid off and that other companies would soon follow. The announcement created shock in Akron—unemployment was still high and six months under speed-up conditions were already so exhausting that rubberworkers complained. "When I get home I'm so tired I can't even sleep with my wife." As the companies began "releasing" price rates in preparation for introducing the eight-hour day, a wave of spontaneous work stoppages by nonunion employees forced a slowing of production.

On January 29th, 1936, the truck builders at Firestone sat down against a reduction in rates and the firing of a union commissi...
4. Organising among London Engineering Workers: 1937

Since the early 1930s, the Engineering Workers' Union had been active in London, especially in the aviation industry. They had fought for better wages and working conditions, and had demonstrated against the use of slave labour. In 1937, they continued to organise among the workers, especially in the aircraft and automobile industries.

The union had established a network of local branches, and had been successful in increasing membership. They had also been able to negotiate better wages and conditions for their members. However, they faced opposition from management, who tried to break the union through blacklisting and other tactics.

The union also had to deal with the effects of the Great Depression, which had led to a decline in demand for their products. This had resulted in layoffs and wage cuts for the workers. The union had to fight hard to keep their members employed and to prevent further layoffs.

The union was also involved in political activities, advocating for socialist principles and supporting the Labour Party. They were actively involved in the General Strike of 1926, and had demonstrated against the Conservative government's policies.

The union had been successful in organizing among the workers, and had been able to negotiate better wages and conditions for their members. They had also been active in political activities, advocating for socialist principles and supporting the Labour Party. Despite the challenges they faced, the union continued to organise among the workers and to fight for their rights.

Ford tightens up at Dagenham

Ford made use of the high labour turnover and the tight economic situation, to weaken the level of organisation that had been won during the strike. On the one hand they intensified speed-up and launched a seasonal slash-off on working conditions, which resulted in a breakdown of mobility and labour turnover. This went together with a policy of attacking the most militant workers in the factory, in the regular process of layoffs that accompanied each seasonal slump in the car market. [Note 42]

Although Ford had not attacked the actual wage packet, the basic wage for a 40-hour week was not sufficient to cover the costs of workers who were moving in and settling in the area. A lot of people started to do overtime [Note 43]. Only overtime worked between 7 and 8 in the morning was paid at overtime rates (time and a half). Also, Ford offered very little by way of indirect wages; neither holidays nor sick leave were paid. In the 1930s at Dagenham it was customary to give overtime only to the lowest-paid workers, both at Briggs and Kelsey Hayes, and to deny it to those workers who "coast". [Note 44]: this was also linked with the high labour mobility of that period.

Wage differentials at Dagenham were not altered by the 1933 strike, nor by the subsequent workers' actions: "Workers with the same work and with the same job: hourly pay differ by 3 pence an hour". [Note 45].

In 1933 the wages of line workers and labourers were lower than those of skilled workers by 30% and 50% respectively [Note 46]. This difference between skilled and unskilled, between high and low wages, was one factor which, along with the layoffs due to seasonal booms and slumps, accelerated labour turnover, particularly in the lower-paid jobs.

The total number of workers employed fluctuated between 12,000 and 24,000, according to the time of year and the demand for production. [Note 47: At Briggs the figure fluctuated between 9,000 and 13,000, and at Kelsey Hayes between 3,000 and 8,000].