

# **solidarity**

**FOR WORKERS' POWER**

**VOLUME 3 NUMBER 11**

**6<sup>D</sup>**

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## ABOUT OURSELVES

Since our last issue we have produced two new pamphlets. Solidarity Pamphlet No. 19 'The Labour Government versus the Dockers' is a detailed exposure of the industrial record of the 1945-1951 Labour Government. It reprints an article which first appeared in Solidarity vol.III, No.4 and contains an introduction dealing with the Devlin Report. Solidarity Pamphlet No. 20 'Vietnam' by Bob Potter deals in detail with the background to the present war. It brings to light a mass of well documented 'dirt' previously swept under the carpet by the White House, the Quai d'Orsay and Hanoi. Did you know how the Americans at one stage partly supported Ho Chi Min, in order to cut the French down to size? Do you know what the Labour Government did in 1945 to help French imperialism regain its old colony? Did you know when and how often the French Communists voted Military Appropriations for the Expeditionary Corps in Indochina? Did you know that the playboy Bao Dai had been 'used' by the Japanese, the Vietminh and the French ... in sordid (political) succession? The Vietnam pamphlet contains facts that everybody would like to forget. It is essential reading these days when most of what one gets about Vietnam consists of State Department hand-outs or loud growls from the 'paper tigers' in Peking.

There was a good response to our appeal to readers for help in increasing circulation. This will, we hope, ensure that our change-over to offset-litho printing will be an economic proposition.

We need still much more help however. We want many more subscribers, in particular a big increase in people taking bulk supplies, for sale amongst their friends and work-mates. We feel there is a lot of room for expansion in our sales in industry. Only people in sympathy with our ideas can help us here.

If you think we are doing a useful job, why not put in a bulk order?

It might interest readers to know about sales of some of our previous pamphlets. We publish below figures for fully paid up sales of some of our past material. (In the case of jointly produced pamphlets the figures refer exclusively to our own sales).

Busmen, What Next?	2628
The 100 Versus the State	2414
The RSGs 1919-1963	1948
Students in Revolt	1887
Homeless	1740
Meaning of Socialism	1545
Glasgow Busmen in Action	1417
Resistance Shall Grow	1363
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If you haven't paid up yet, how about it?

# HANDS OFF THE HOMELESS

This is the text of a leaflet produced by some Kent Solidarists and widely distributed in Dartford, at G.E.C. in Erith and in Bromley, Tonbridge, Tunbridge Wells, West Malling and Maidstone. On October 9, a joint demonstration of King Hill families and Kent Solidarists took place in the streets of Maidstone. It included picketing of the County Hall and the distribution of nearly 2,000 leaflets in the shopping centre. Further activities are planned.

At the weekend a leaflet—stating that it was published on behalf of the Kent Solidarity Group, by C. Fetter care of 4 Linden Park, Tunbridge Wells—was left at the KENT MESSENGER offices in Week Street, Maidstone.

Part of the pamphlet bears these words: "We say to the Kent councillors: Stop smashing up families! If you can't help rehouse them, keep your heavy hands off. We call on all working people to make these facts as widely known as possible. These families are human beings, not things to be moved according to bureaucratic rules and regulations."

'Kent County Council to evict about 80 homeless mothers and children from West Malling half-way house'.

'High Court injunction enables K.C.C. to force separation of 14 husbands from their wives and children'.

What do these headlines mean? At West Malling, in the heart of Kent, is a collection of dilapidated wooden huts, surrounded by a high wire fence. It looks like a Nazi forced labour camp. The Kent County Council call it King Hill Hostel. Many years ago this place was a workhouse. The living conditions then could not have been much worse than they are now. On entering, it's hard to believe that it's 1965 and not 1865. Yet the 43 mothers and over 100 children who are cooped up in the small partitioned sections of these huts are desperate to stay. They are homeless. They have nowhere else to go. This miserable misfortune enables the worthy Kent councillors to get from the families a signed acceptance of a degrading list of rules and conditions before being admitted.

No intoxicants. No animals. The communal toilet facilities and the large corridors must be scrubbed (no mops allowed) and polished every day. Uniformed staff inspect whenever they like. Some enter a family's living section without knocking. There is no privacy. If a mother or one of her children is ill, the 'Officer-in-Charge' decides whether a doctor is necessary. This 'O.C.' has no medical qualifications. Another rule is that a family must move after 3 months although the councillors will not help to find anywhere else for them to live. Many families have overstayed this 3-months limit. The councillors are taking court proceedings to turn them onto the streets. Much exalted 'British Justice' then goes a step further. The children are taken from their mother as 'being in need of care and protection'.

This alone is a good reason why husbands should break the rule which only allows them to visit during certain times at weekends. Although the penalty for disobeying is eviction of the whole family, 14 husbands recently moved in and are determined to stay. There are other good reasons. Their wives fear the 'prowlers' who knock on the windows at night. They have to pay the K.C.C. for their wives and children and also for their own digs. They have to pay fares to visit their families. They can't get work in the area - local bosses tell the employment exchange not to send anyone from the half-way house.

But how do families get into this apparently hopeless situation? The immediate reason is the greed of landlords who have evicted them. But they are really the victims of a rotten society. The bosses of the political parties all agree about spending £2,000 million on means for waging war. Shareholders make fantastic profits out of it. While thousands are homeless, millions of pounds are spent on luxury flats and houses, and gigantic office blocks. While all this continues apace, the homeless at West Malling must suffer the intimidation and blackmail of the local and County authorities. Take the case of Stan Daniels and his family.

They lived at 6, Sandford Road, Bromley, Kent. Earlier this year, the house was sold. On May 5, they were evicted by the new owner. Now homeless, they went to Bromley Council for help. All they got was an offer of temporary accommodation over 20 miles away at West Malling for Mrs. Joan Daniels and the 4 children only. They refused. They didn't want to be split up. Stan Daniels was then threatened with prosecution for not properly caring for his children - because they were homeless! King Hill half-way house with all its militaristic rules and conditions was accepted and Stan Daniels dejectedly sought digs elsewhere.

By the end of the 3 months, neither Stan nor Joan Daniels had been able to find anywhere else to live although they were prepared to pay a reasonable rent. Now Stan fought back. The family did not move out. Stan moved in.

On August 31, officials of the K.C.C. arrived to evict the Daniels. They barricaded themselves in. Intimidation was used. The water supply to all huts was cut off. Other residents in the Daniels' hut were told to leave so as to isolate them. Mrs. Carol Dore says she was given 3 days' notice to quit when she refused, although she had been there only 2 weeks. A council official, Mr. H. Brown, said that 'thirty women and eighty children crowded into the corridor in a solid mass... and the entrance to the hostel had been barricaded by dustbins'. Mr. Brown concluded that efforts to force the Daniels out therefore had to be abandoned. With the solidarity of the other residents, Stan and Joan Daniels won the first round.

Thirteen other husbands moved in. In the High Court on Monday, October 4, the Kent councillors got an interim injunction which enables them to use force to separate the 14 husbands from their wives and children if they are still there after midday on Friday, October 8.

Appeals for help sent to the 'authorities' have been worse than useless. They have appealed to the Kent councillors. These gentlemen replied with threats and court action. MPs have no power and some have no desire to give positive help. The Labour Government's Minister of Housing, the Right Hon. R.H.S. Crossman, has not even replied to a letter sent to him weeks ago. Nor has the Tory Chairman of Bromley Housing Committee, Cllr. R.G. Foster, although many of the King Hill homeless come from that area. Through their distress the homeless in West Malling have learnt something of the political meaning of 'do-it-yourself'. But they urgently need YOUR help too!

We say to the Kent councillors: STOP SMASHING UP FAMILIES! IF YOU CAN'T HELP REHOUSE THEM, KEEP YOUR HEAVY HANDS OFF!

We call on all working people to make these facts as widely known as possible. These families are human beings, not things to be moved according to bureaucratic rules and regulations.

Show your solidarity. Hold collections at work. Help them in their defence and other costs (proceeds should be sent to Stan Daniels, King Hill Reception Centre, West Malling, Kent). What can YOU do to help?

Will the Labour Government send bailiffs and hordes of police (as the Tories did in St. Pancras in 1960) to evict working people from their miserable accommodation?  
WILL YOU LET THEM ?



# MOTORS MANAGEMENT AND MODERN CAPITALISM

'In the first 6 months of 1965 more than 6 million man hours have been lost due to strikes in the motor car industry compared with 1.6 million in the same period last year.... Out of 400 or 500 strikes only about 4 had been official'. The speaker: Lord Rootes, Managing Director of the Rootes Group. The date: October 2, 1965. The occasion: a press conference to comment on a meeting at the Ministry of Labour between the said Lord Rootes and one Sir William Carron, President of the AEU.

This particular little gathering was euphemistically described by the press as 'representing both sides of the industry'. But if Lord Rootes' facts are reliable - and we have no reason to doubt them - they point to a very different conclusion. This had not been a get together of 'both sides of the industry'. Lord Rootes had wasted an afternoon talking to a ghost. If 99% of the strikes in the motor industry are 'un-official' where does the worthy Sir William come in? Who, but himself, does he 'represent'? He has no more control over the shop floor decisions of the members of 'his' union than he has over the weather. And, between ourselves, a good thing too.

There is a curious and widespread misconception about union officials, shared by employers and 'traditional marxists' alike. The employers see the full time officials as important, meaningful, significant people, whom they can wine and dine, invite to productivity conferences, give lectures to on the 'national' interest, and with whom they can haggle, compromise, and sign agreements. The employers think the officials 'represent' the men. The union leaders of course, as interested parties, participate in this mystification. The dictates of pride and pocket coincide to a nicety.

But the 'left' also sees the union hierarchy as representing the working class in some 'distorted', very distorted', or 'extremely distorted' manner. Most of their political schemas and much of their industrial work are based on this premise. The two misconceptions interlock and mutually reinforce one another at every possible level.

Now if anything stands out in the events of the last few months, it is the increasing irrelevance of the union top brass wherever the defence of job conditions is at stake and the increasing relevance for politically conscious militants of the assimilation and integration of the top union apparatus into the structure of the State itself. The employers recognize quite clearly what is taking place. Mr. Richard O'Brien, BMC Industrial Relations Director, told a recent conference in Birmingham: 'While communications "down the line" are obviously faulty, communication between leaders of trade unions and leaders of industry - and between either of these groups and the Government - are probably better than they have ever been'. (The Guardian, June 14, 1965). When Mr. O'Brien speaks of 'communications' he doesn't only mean opportunities for yapping. He means links of a more binding and intimate nature. It is essential that working people realise what lies hidden in these words.

Both the TUC and the Labour Party Conference have now endorsed, by substantial majorities, the principle of state legislation to enforce the compulsory notification of wage claims. From here to compulsory arbitration and then to the determination of wages by the State itself there are but narrow steps. Once such legislation is on the statute book, legal action could easily be taken against rank and file workers who dared challenge agreements entered into 'on their behalf' by the trade union leaders.

The Tories are already promising to introduce such legislation. Some of them, such as Sir Patrick Hennessy, Ford Chief and this year's President of the Society of Motor Manufacturers, are even arrogantly predicting that a Labour Government may do the dirty work for them. At a pre-Motor Show Conference in London this worthy gent stated: 'It is my conviction, following the latest moves - the cooperative action between the industry, the Trade Unions and the Labour Government - that it may not be long before we see action to prevent un-official stoppages'. (Evening Standard, October 12, 1965). The climate for anti-working class legislation is being steadily prepared. The foundations of a totalitarian set up in industry are being laid at an alarming pace...

These basic trends have been obvious for a long time. But under a Labour Government they have gained considerable momentum. Let us look closer at some of the main pointers:

Early in September Messrs. Wilson and Gunter met motor car employers and union leaders at 10 Downing Street. The car bosses were asked to make trade union membership a condition of employment in their plants. Most of the tough employers present are said to have been converted to the old working class principle of the closed shop ... but they insisted that 'in exchange' the union leaders would have to impose tighter discipline on the rank and file. In a scene reminiscent of Alice in Wonderland, Mr. Gunter told the employers that the only way to make the disciplinary powers of the unions more effective would be to accept 100% trade unionism. Unofficial strikers would then risk not only expulsion from their unions, but also loss of their jobs'. (Daily Telegraph, September 13, 1965) To date no firm decisions have been taken but the writing is clearly on the wall.

What we have described in relation to motors is an increasingly widespread managerial attitude under the conditions of modern capitalism. Although by no means universal (some employers - just as some 'revolutionaries' - still live in the 19th century) it is becoming very prevalent. Taking industry by and large the unions are not being fought tooth and nail by employers as they were only a few decades ago. On the contrary. Employers and union leaders are working hand in hand 1) to 'increase productivity' (i.e. to increase the rate of exploitation) in the 'national' (i.e. the employers') interest; 2) to maintain 'discipline' in the factories or work places (i.e. to prevent workers from challenging aspects of the production process such as job manning, the introduction of new machinery, motion study, speed-up, etc., which both employers and union leaders 'agree' to be in the realm of managerial prerogatives. As we have repeatedly pointed out the union leaders are quite prepared to trade away hard won working class rights in production (tea breaks, etc.) in exchange for wage increases, usually quite small, and which the employers are not infrequently quite prepared to grant anyway.

This is the face of modern capitalism which revolutionaries should study if they are not to tilt at windmills. There is no greater mistake, in a war, than to underestimate one's enemy. There is no more pathetic figure than the warrior perpetually fighting yesterday's battle. Modern capitalism isn't Martell and his scab print shop, scab buses and scab postal delivery service. It isn't a last-ditch fight (with cops, and beaks, and even troops) to prevent the union getting a foothold in the

plant. These antics, which occasional dinosaurs of the capitalist class admittedly still indulge in, are not worthy of front page coverage in any serious revolutionary journal. They are not the essence of modern capitalism. Modern capitalism isn't 'Keep the unions out of my plant'. It isn't 'keep the unions divided so that we can play the one against the other'. It isn't even 'fight the terrible menace of industrial unionism'.

Modern capitalism is something more pernicious and much more subtle. It is: 'grant the union officials more status. Give them more power. Pay them better. Make their position more stable. Don't let them have to submit to election too often. Integrate them'. Sir Miles Thomas, former vice-Chairman of Morris Motors (and now Chairman of the Development Corporation for Wales) recently 'praised the ability and intelligent approach of union leaders in general. He pointed out that the outlawing of unofficial strikes would greatly strengthen their hand' (Daily Telegraph, August 26, 1965). Modern capitalism is for cooperation between unions and management, wherever possible. Under modern capitalism the employers - whether of nationalised or private concerns - collect union dues at source, deducting them from the men's wages. (This situation, which would make the union fathers turn in their graves, already pertains for many hundreds of thousands of workers in this country).

Even 'industrial unionism' has won converts among the bureaucratic and managerial strata. Desmond Donnelly, that noted subversive, can write: 'The extreme multiplicity of unions must go. While rapid amalgamations must take place, I believe that the pattern of industrial unions adopted in certain countries - one union, one factory - must be the aim wherever practicable'. He adds, significantly: 'Only in this way can the union official be brought closer to the shop floor and invested with his proper status' (Sunday Telegraph, August 29, 1965). Even Sir Edward Beddington Behrens, ex-Chairman of Fisher and Ludlow, is now an advocate of industrial unionism. He points out that 'Unions organized on an industrial basis can obtain excellent terms for their members... but they can also impose discipline. A few hundred recalcitrant workers cannot so easily impose their will, American trade union officials are paid the equivalent high salaries of their employer counterparts and deserve them', etc, etc. (Daily Telegraph, September 8, 1965). For militants to speak of 'industrial unionism' without further elaboration (branches based on the workshop, eligibility and revocability of all officials, officials to be paid the average wage in the industry, complete control from below, at all levels) only adds to the confusion.

If shop stewards and militants in industry are to resist this subtle challenge to their very existence they should first of all seek to understand what is happening. They should recognize the peculiar disguises in which the threat to job organization is now likely to appear. They should see that part of the danger comes from people they still, somehow, consider as 'on their side'. They should recognize the social roots of the trade union bureaucracy and shed all illusions about being able to 'democratize' it - or to 'reform' the Labour Party, which is largely based on this bureaucracy.

Within the unions, militants should oppose all measures that tend to shift more power into the hands of the hierarchy or that seek to limit the role of the shop stewards or of shop floor organization. Militants should oppose differentials between the wages of union officials and the wages of those they claim to represent. They should oppose all measures tending to extend the tenure of office of these officials. They should oppose the constant trend towards increasing the number of appointed (i.e. non-elected) officials. They should seek to keep the union officials OUT of the plant, particularly during disputes, insisting on direct negotiations between the management and shop organization. They should do all this because it is necessary in the defence of their class interests, not because they think that in so doing they are 'making the unions more democratic'.

Militants should also seek to build solid links between workers at rank and file level, to strengthen job organization, to develop contacts and communications between factories in a given region and between regions. They should do this within the structure of the established unions wherever possible - but outside that structure if necessary. They should seek systematically to break down the barriers which divide workers, barriers which are today solidly reinforced by the very existence of a multiplicity of unions and by their increasingly bureaucratic structure.

Finally, militants should differentiate between objectives which are by and large obtainable through the union machinery (namely the small annual wage increase) and other objectives which can usually only be achieved in direct struggle at the point of production (and often in the face of bitter opposition by the trade union leaders). Among this latter group are job bonus and all other payments above the 'official' rate but also all those other objectives which broadly speaking come under the heading of 'conditions of work'.

On issues of this last type the union leaders cannot move. They cannot support

the men, however much 'pressure' is brought to bear on them, for they are tied to the employers by innumerable signed agreements, recognizing that certain areas in industry, namely the organization of the job itself and the disposal of the workers' time, are the prerogative of the boss and of the boss alone. Fortunately there are signs that workers are beginning to understand the distinction between these two groups of objectives. They rely on the union leaders for the first kind, on themselves alone for the second.

On August 27 forty workers at the Coventry Felt Company (which produces 20 miles of felt a week for cars) downed tools because a 19 year old girl had been sacked. The management alleged she had been spending too much time in the lavatory. The strike brought about her prompt reinstatement. Now unions just cannot negotiate on issues of this kind. You can't have it laid down by statute that employees of x years seniority can spend y minutes in the bogs, whereas new recruits... etc, etc. Only a united show of strength in the shop can win disputes of this kind.

On a different scale, the dockers at the Royal Group in London achieved the 5 day week earlier this year... by just staying in bed on Saturday mornings and refusing to work 5 days and a half. The union leaders did their nut... but the dockers still stayed in bed. In July, workers at the Standard Triumph and Jaguar works in Coventry themselves decided when they'd take their summer holidays. Most of them left the factory a full week before the 'official' holiday, negotiated between the management and the union officials, whose joint screams they coldly ignored.

On August 17 night shift workers at the BMC Morris Motors factory at Coventry launched what may well become a national movement. They decided that they preferred to work their 40 hour week as 4 shifts of 10 hours (with 3 nights off) rather than work shorter shifts and have to clock in on Fridays. One fine evening 600 men just didn't turn up. They were supported by 3,000 men on the day shift. The practice has gradually spread to many other car firms and even to other engineering establishments. The 'fait accompli' has even had to be recognized by the leaders of the Confed, who initially did everything they could to denounce and oppose the movement. This is the thin end of a wedge: we sincerely hope day shifts will soon follow suit.

Both sides seem to be limbering up for the big struggles that lie ahead. On whose back will the 'modernization' of Britain be carried? Just now the employers and trade union bureaucrats appear far more conscious of their interests than do working people. But the appearances are deceptive. Still waters run deep and things could change very rapidly.



# I COMPAGNI

'Let's reason this out'. Scab train intercepted

## THE ORGANISER



Films about strikes in this country usually take their subject as a jumping off point for a comedy version ('I'm allright, Jack') or a faintly sensational/violent treatment like 'The Angry Silence' which whitewashed a blackleg. The causes of the strike in these two pictures were hardly mentioned.

The English distributors of 'The Organizer' (now showing at the Jacey, Marble Arch) have given it a box office title making capital out of Mastroianni's part in it, but a fairer rendering of the Italian title and of the film's intentions would be 'The Comrades' or even 'Solidarity'. Here is a straightforward but complex account of a strike (in a textile mill, in Turin, in the 1890's) triggered by a worker losing a hand in a machine through fatigue. The object of the strike was a reduction in the working day from 14 to 13 hours.

Monicelli has achieved a most convincing realism in the settings. The pictures

of the mill, the homes of the workers, Turin itself all look as though they had been photographed at the time. The camera with restraint and economy, shows each scene only as long as is necessary: there is no straining for effect, nothing theatrical. The characters too attain an individual existence which intensifies rather than detracts from the larger issues Monicelli is pointing out - the divisions among the workers (local Piedmontese against Sicilian immigrants, striking Turin workers against unemployed workers from Saluzzo, discrimination against women, amount of illiteracy), the results of the system (prostitution, one fifth of mill workers maimed, the unity of bourgeois society - employers, shopkeepers, police and militia combining against the strikers once they realize their interests are threatened).

None of these themes is dogmatically stated. Eisenstein might have realized them in sweeping dramatic set-pieces as in 'Strike'; here they emerge indirectly, implied from the characterizations.



Professor Sinigaglia, a militant socialist on the run from the police in Genoa, is a schoolteacher whose background and habits apparently set him apart from the strikers. He succeeds by his experience of disputes, his sympathy and his oratory in persuading the workers to strike in the first place, and later to attempt to take over the mill although it seems hopeless. This is shown not as foolish bravado, but as a part of a historical process which was not inevitable until a catalyst emerged. The development of Raul Bertone from politically unaware roughneck to potential agitator of some maturity is sensitively done, as is the selling out of Martinetti who is won over to the employers' arguments through his own anxiety and the trust he puts in the under-manager. The employers' side is not left to caricature, indeed the one flash of violence (where the mill-owner canes a girl at his party) is more disturbing than anything shown in the domestic scenes on the other side of the class fence. In the negotiations the manager is able to raise embarrassed smiles by reason only of his knowledge of the individual weaknesses of the Strike Committee.

The whole texture of the film is rich, shot through with internal references. For instance, when Sinigaglia is surprised on the point of eating an abandoned lunch sandwich its owner returns, and there is a moment of suspense while the worker is hesitant to ask for it back, the professor overcomes his hunger and embarrassment, wondering if he will still be trusted after this, and finally returns the sandwich. On the blackboard behind him is written 'the bread is fresh' recalling the earlier inscriptions made by the local teacher (rather inappropriately) 'the butterfly is graceful' 'the rose is fragrant'. The teacher is also the link between two related incidents where he is asked how a student is getting on; in each case he replies: 'he's not stupid, but he won't study'. This really seems to be addressed to the audience. Although at the end of the film the workers return to work empty-handed, there is an optimistic air, largely engendered by a splendidly robust and vulgar version of 'Bandiera Rossa' which is heard at climactic points throughout the film.

I.J.H.

## BUILDING WORKERS

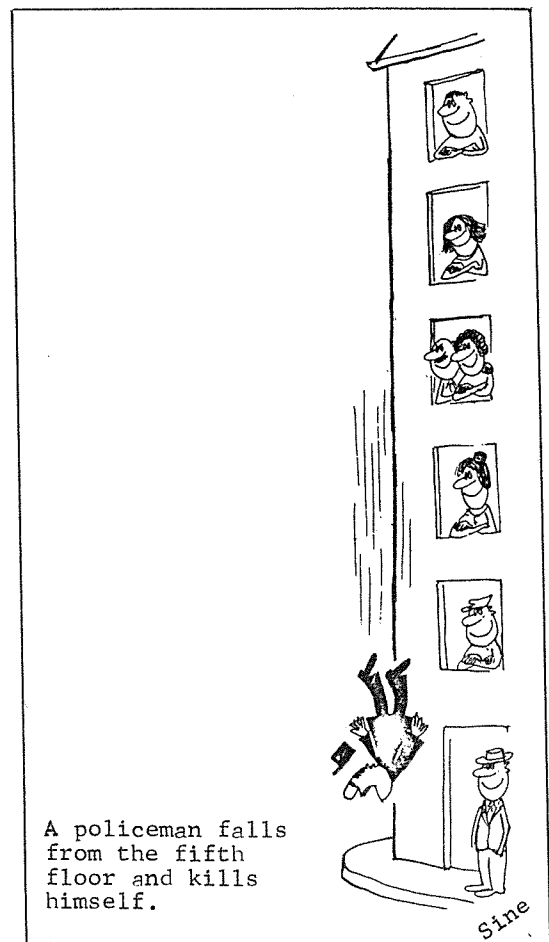
33, Kelvingrove St.,  
Glasgow C.3.

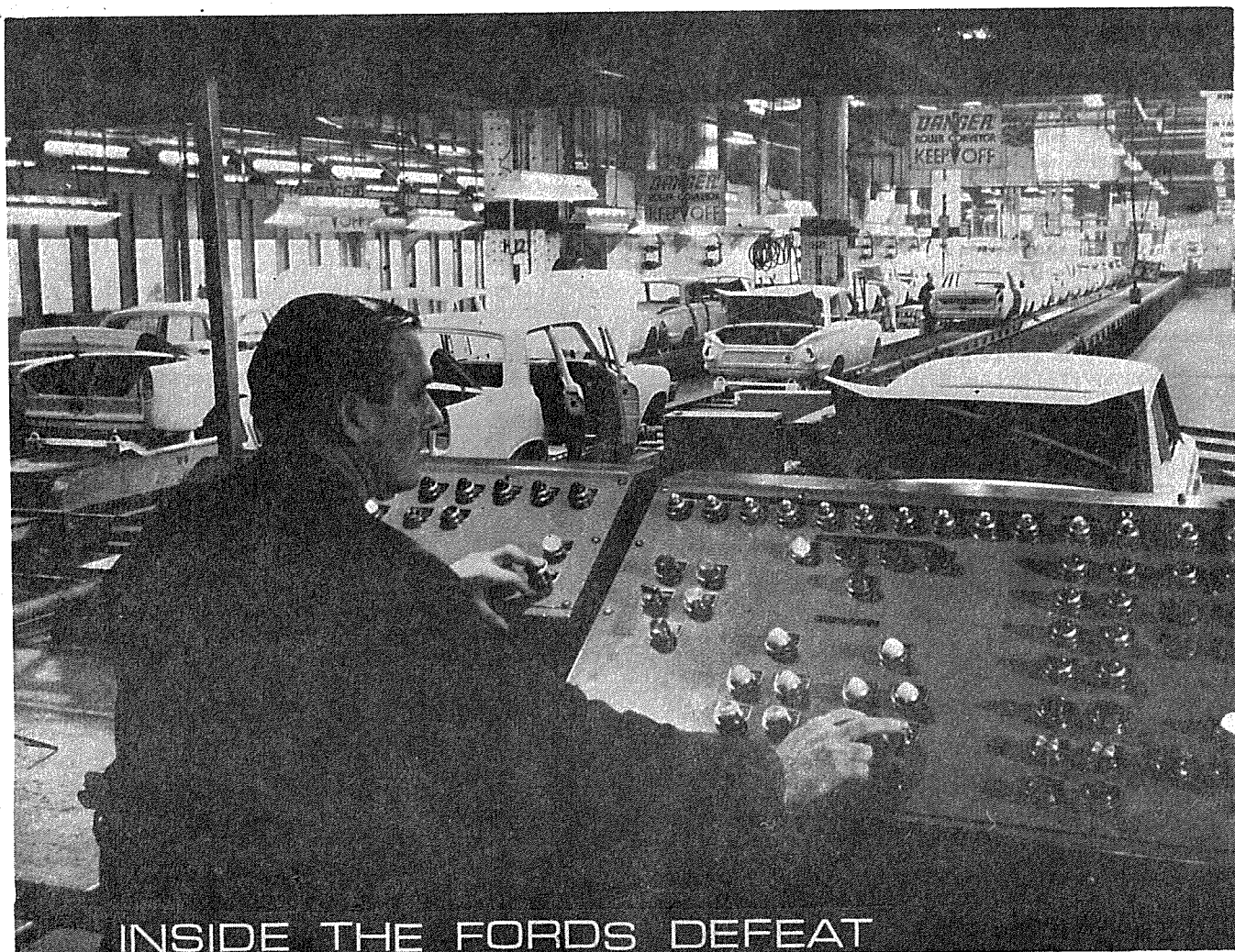
Several people in the building industry in the Glasgow and Edinburgh areas, among them joiners, bricklayers, architects and terrazzo workers have been discussing the ideas of workers' control in the building industry, with a view to setting up an informal grouping in Britain to further the case for workers' control among our fellows in the industry.

We are therefore extremely anxious to contact building workers throughout Britain who are keen on the idea.

Would any tradesmen, labourers, estimators, clerks, technicians, civil engineers, quantity surveyors, architects and town planners, who are interested please contact me at the above address.

George Williamson.





## INSIDE THE FORDS DEFEAT

This is the fourth consecutive issue of *SOLIDARITY* to contain substantial material devoted to Fords. We make no apology. What happened at Fords has been used as a blueprint of what needs to be done in the motor industry by employers, Government and the trade union leaders alike.

For example the Executive Committee of the ETU at its meeting on September 19 called for a system of settling disputes in the motor industry based on the set-up at Fords, described in the last issue. This would place all factory negotiations in the hands of the national officials, and take them away from the shop floor.

The Communist Party is now engaged in a campaign to recreate a national shop stewards committee for the motor industry. We welcome all attempts to develop contacts between workers, but the record of the Communist Party, as a party, in the industry is clear. It subordinated industrial struggle to the interests of the Party. This role is amply exposed in the article we publish in this issue by Eddie Stanton, who as well as being one of the victimised militants at Fords and an NUVB steward, was also an active member of the Dagenham factory branch of the Communist Party..

What happened at Fords is still of utmost importance. Militants must know what happened there, to prevent it happening again. We still welcome contributions on this subject. We are particularly interested in material describing the situation at Fords now.

## BACKGROUND

To understand what happened at Ford's in the autumn of 1962 we must go back at least a year.

At the beginning of 1961 the Company were preparing for entry into the Common Market. Stewards were shown films and lectured on the Company's plans. According to Ford's Market Research Department ten European motor manufacturers would have to go out of the industry within the next ten years so that the rest might survive. The Company asked all stewards to "co-operate in achieving maximum efficiency". The Ford Motor Company clearly had to be one of the survivors.

It was about this time that the American take-over bid occurred. Almost immediately the Company began to re-organise the Paint, Trim and Assembly (P T A) plant. Department superintendents, previously allowed considerable authority in resolving local problems, suddenly found that they could no longer negotiate with shop stewards. The Company began to merge departments while at the same time retaining Departmental Superintendents. Most of the Higher Supervision began taking trips to America and to Cologne. They would come back with all sorts of ideas on how to speed the job up.

By 1962 the speed-up had resulted in creating a large labour pool and an increased rate of absenteeism. The Labour Pool was used in two ways: (a) to fill in for absentees, and (b) to bring pressure for further speed-up. When the Company wanted to speed-up a line the charge hand would approach workers individually and tell them that the Department Superintendant had been looking into their particular jobs. If a small operation was taken away and a bigger one put in its place it might be better for all concerned if the member protested that he already had too much. He would be approached in the same way two or three times more. Then the Foreman would pay him a visit. This time he would be told that he only had to try the new job. If the member accepted his new target on this basis

he soon found that if he didn't succeed he would be hauled up before the line desk, confronted by the Charge Hand, Foreman and Superintendent, and told that he was "disrupting the whole line" and that if he didn't make the extra effort they would have to sack him or put him in the Labour Pool (which meant a different job every day).

The Company refused to discuss the speed-up with shop stewards or with District Officials. And National Officials were always 'too busy'. They would only put in an occasional appearance when strikes took place as a result of the speed-up. They would then recommend "a return to work to allow negotiations to proceed".

After months of delay the F N J N C (1) would meet. The problem would be raised. The Company would claim the "right of management to function as it pleased" and there the problem would remain.

During the five years that I worked at Ford's my branch (Dag. 3 N U V B) sent resolutions every year to National Officials, to the National Executive, and to the National Conference demanding that an agreement be drawn up with the Ford Motor Company on the question of time study and that a formula be devised with which Ford Workers and Union Officials could determine what constituted "a day's work".

The N U V B Officials assured us that they "agreed in principle", but complained that other Unions were not interested. Reports from other Unions suggested that there too the Officials "would have liked to have done something about the speed-up", but would give the same excuse: "my union is alright - it's the others".

Early in 1962 the P T A Shop Stewards' Committee adopted the following resolution on speed-up:

"This Committee is opposed to speeding up our members and recommends the following policy:  
1. Don't agree to timings.(2)  
They are not acceptable.

- (1) Ford National Joint Negotiating Council.
- (2) That is the use of the stop watch on jobs.

2. Operate on the basis of a fair day's work with a decent standard of quality, with the following alternatives.

(a) Don't do the number if there isn't adequate labour.

(b) Go down the line to prove the job isn't workable.

3. Collective approach, i.e. ratio of number of jobs to number of men to be held.

4. If the Company threatens workers, insist on the operation of the status quo (3) either

(a) on the original basis of jobs and men, or

(b) on men going down the line. This to operate while the problem goes through procedure.

This policy could operate. But if there is any victimisation of any member, we will recommend members to go into dispute because the Company would not operate procedure to the full before taking action."

This resolution was proposed by Kevin Halpin, Convenor and member of the Communist Party. It could have been effective had he any intentions of implementing it. In fact most of the time he worked against it.

## THE GARAGE DISPUTE

On July 30, 1962, the Management informed the Steward and Convenor that they intended to re-organise the Garage Department. At 8 a.m. the next day 27 men were taken off the lines. At 10 a.m. another 18 men were taken off making a total of 45 out of 179. No prior discussions had been held.

The Works Committee received a flat refusal when they asked the Company to put the labour back in to allow negotiations to commence. The Management even refused to accept a failure to agree.

At 3.15 p.m. the Garage Department walked out in dispute and the rest of the Plant were sent home. The following morning the men refused to start work unless the Company returned the men. The Company refused. The Garage went into dispute, the rest of the Plant being sent home again. At the same time District Officials recorded a failure to agree.

After a week National Officials, such as Les Kealey (T G W U) manager to get their members back to work "to allow negotiations to take place". But before the men returned to work the Company made it quite clear that they intended the Garage Department to operate with 45 men short of the original labour force, and that they would still expect the original amount of work. They warned that if there was any restriction of effort resulting in a blockage on the assembly lines they would send the whole plant home (some 7,000 workers).

When the men of the Garage Department returned to work the Company, drunk with victory, carried out a general speed-up throughout the plant. This defeat laid the groundwork for the latter struggle.

The F N J N C met a month later. The Trade Union side raised the Garage Dispute. The Management refused to discuss it and it was simply "noted" in the minutes. The Management then raised another issue concerning guarantees they had given in relation to the three-shift working in the Body Group.

The Company had asked these particular workers to work three shifts for a trial period of six months stating that if the Company or the members concerned were not satisfied after the trial period they could return to the original day work. The men had made it clear both to the Company and the Officials that they did not intend to continue the three-shift working. Despite this the Company stated that, due to Britain's failure to gain entry into the Common Market they could not honour their Guarantees. It would be necessary to continue the three-shift working. The Union Officials, always ready to co-operate, signed an agreement for a further (indefinite) period.

(3) That is the situation to remain as it was before the dispute started.

It is clear from these examples that the 22 Trade Union Officials never acted in the interests of the members they "represented". It would be difficult to understand in whose interests they were working, unless it were their own.

This was the pattern set after the first year of the American Administration:

1. Continuous speed-up;
2. Refusal of Management to honour past agreements, ignoring custom and practice;
3. Refusing to use Procedure, claiming the absolute right to decide on all questions of managerial functions;
4. Ignoring District Officials;
5. Reliance on completely subservient National Officials.

## THE COMMUNIST PARTY

The Communist Party have been active in Dagenham for 25 years. At the time of the dispute they had a branch in Ford's of 110 members. Of these about 50 were stewards and held various union positions, i.e. Branch Secretaries, Trades' Council delegates, members of Branch Committee, members of Shop Committee, etc.

The Party branch met once a week with about 20 members attending. The Party had a District Office at Ley Street, Ilford. This was the centre of operations for some 2,000 members in the South East Essex area, about 75% being industrial members.

Kevin Halpin was the Ford Communist Party branch secretary, Prospective Parliamentary candidate, member of the District Committee, and of the District Secretariat. Many members thought that their discussions and their conclusions were genuinely reached by the Party branch, and that the facts would be sent to the District and Executive. In fact, it was the opposite. The "line" would be handed down from the Executive to the District Committee, then to the Branch. Certain stewards were informed by hand-delivered letter, others by the Group Cadre.

Group meetings in the Factory were always encouraged. A Cadre would be delegated to ensure that the members toed the Party "line". This was also the method of distributing literature and Party propaganda. Members were also encouraged to distribute leaflets and copies of the "Daily Worker" outside the various plants. Because of the tremendous amount of propaganda distributed in and around Ford's most Ford workers believed that the Communist Party had many more members than they had. This belief even existed on the Shop Stewards' Committee. Of course the Communist Party never discouraged this myth.

All Party members would be summoned to the Branch, during shop stewards' elections. The Party would decide who they would nominate. Many Party stewards, who did not attend the Branch throughout the year, would suddenly find time to attend a couple of meetings. The Party always made it quite clear that members could not automatically expect the backing of the Branch. But these members were always forgiven providing they were willing to toe the "line"

At the same time the influence of the Communist Party on the shop stewards' committee cannot be underestimated. Over many years they had always been well-represented on the various committees in Dagenham (always taking care never to gain complete control of any one committee, even if this meant supporting people associated with the right-wing. The logic of this was that they could always put forward militant policies, without any responsibility for carrying them out. The failures could always be blamed on the right-wing.

The P T A Works Committee consisted of three Party members, three "right-wingers" and one "left". Kevin Halpin convened 60 shop stewards. If a given department decided to take action in keeping with the Policy on "speed-up" Kevin Halpin would sometimes do his best to confine the action to that department and even to a particular shift. For example when the Garage dispute took place the A shift was out on strike for a week, while the B shift continued to work. The Garage Steward was also a Party member. He had the embarrassing experience of opposing the Party Convenors' recommendation to return to work.

Some stewards would attempt to solve all their problems through the official procedure. Others used the Procedure in a limited way, i.e. at Works Committee level. Some used the Procedure and took Direct Action at the same time, regardless of what Halpin or the Officials said or did. As a result a number of Departments became very militant and were a constant source of embarrassment to the Ford Motor Company. But the Company was covered by the Procedure Agreement, i.e. Mobility of Labour (4).

## THE NEGOTIATING COUNCIL

There is an uneasy atmosphere at Ford's when a F N J N C meeting is pending. Through various sources members are advised not to take part in any activities which might prejudice negotiations.

Officially there are two National meetings per year. In fact Ford Motor Company and the Officials hold about four meetings per year, usually coinciding with the holiday periods. They feel that Workers are reluctant to take action near holiday times.

As was pointed out in Solidarity (5) the 22 officials were always ready to trade away hard won conditions in exchange for small wage increases. At the same time they ignore all resolutions and instructions that have been put through the various branches during the course of the year.

The Ford Motor Company publishes its version the day following these meetings. A copy is put up on all the notice boards, near the time clocks. The terms are always straight and to the point.

About a month later the branches receive a report from their officials. Although the terms are the same, there is usually a conflicting report as to the spirit and intention of the agreement.

Let me give an example: An Agreement was signed in 1961 for the 40 hour week (6). This bargained away our afternoon "tea break". The Ford

Motor Company tried to implement the new "agreement" the following week. The Ford workers used various methods to maintain their tea break. Some just stopped work at tea-time. Others went slow and wandered out of their working positions causing chaos with uncompleted jobs going down the lines. They had to stop the lines for longer periods in order to maintain continuity, because if one operation was incomplete other operators would not be able to complete theirs. After a month Ford Motor Company gave in and admitted defeat. The Union officials then issued the report on the F N J N C meeting . . . held a month earlier. Their report stated that they had agreed in principle that with the 40 hour week it would be possible for some areas of the factory to do without a tea break. They had not discussed which areas would be affected. At about the same time as the Company's admission of defeat, the officials said that it was the intention of the agreement that the Ford Motor Company would allow a reasonable time to lapse before abolishing the tea break in order that the workers could condition their minds to giving up their tea break voluntarily!!

## BILL FRANCIS SACKED

During October, 1962, the Ford Motor Company informed the steward in the Trim Shop (P T A) that a number of his members would be transferred. Due to a mistake in the office some of the work normally carried out in this shop had been contracted out to another firm, contrary to the agreement. The steward asked for an assurance that the members transferred would get first opportunity to come back to the Department when work was available.

- (4) This agreement was signed on August 14, 1958, see "The Defeat at Ford's: some Lessons". (Solidarity, Vol III, No 8, p. 22)
- (5) *ibid.*
- (6) See Solidarity, Vol II, No 3, p. 3.

The Management refused. The steward held a meeting, and it was decided to implement an over-time ban and one day token strikes until the Management gave some assurance that the members would be transferred on a "first in, last out" basis and that those who went out would have first opportunity to come back when normal schedules were resumed.

The first token stoppage was due to take place on October 13, 1962. On the 12th the Convenor and Deputy Convenor were attending a lobby of the F N J N C. The Management sent for Bill Francis and told him to call off the proposed over-time ban and the token stoppages. Francis refused, saying that it was not his Department and that the Management had admitted that the mistake was theirs. The Management then agreed to all the Trim Shop terms. They then asked Francis to hold a meeting in the dinner hour to call the strike off. Francis did this and made himself unpopular in the process. Little did he know that at that very time the F N J N C were signing another agreement which would enable the Ford Motor Company to sack him for holding meetings during the dinner hour!

The following week the Management informed the steward on B shift that they intended to speed up the Door Glass section on the 109 Consul Classic. The steward reminded the Departmental Superintendent that 12 months previously there had been a dispute on this job, and that the Management and District Officials had agreed that this job would not be speeded up while it remained in production. The Department Superintendent replied that A shift wanted the job re-organised and he intended to see that it was. Consultation with Bill Francis, A shift shop steward, proved that they had not approached the Management.

On Monday October 15 the men on A shift were informed that the Ford Company intended to re-organise the job. One man was taken off the line. This resulted in an immediate drift down the line. The foreman replaced the man, and Bill Francis was called to the Office.

The Deputy Superintendent explained that he intended to re-organise the job, but was meeting resistance from three of the eight men left on the job. He then told Francis that he intended to replace these three men. Francis advised against this reminding him that these men had been employed on the work for 14 years and had never been in trouble.

No further changes were made on the Tuesday. On Wednesday morning, at 8 a.m., the Charge Hand took the three men out and replaced them with another two. There was an immediate drift down the line which resulted in a stoppage. Bill Francis was called in again and told to get the men back to work.

Bill Francis and his co-steward said that they could not recommend a return to work in those conditions. They were prepared to start work if the management were prepared to negotiate. The Company agreed. Work started again, with the original 9 men. While the stewards were in the Office the foreman took a man out again. This resulted in another stoppage. Again Bill Francis got the men back to work "pending negotiations".

By 11 a.m. the stewards had secured an agreement with the Department Superintendent. They were about to leave his office when the Personnel Manager walked in, wanting to know what agreements had been reached. When informed he refused to honour them and told the stewards that they could tell their members that if they could not meet with the Company's new requirements they could get out. The job would be run with eight men instead of nine. By midday the men had drifted down the line again and it was obvious that after dinner there would be another stoppage. Bill Francis and his co-steward were informed that when this stoppage took place the Company would send the whole Department home.

At 12.50 pm Bill Francis and two other stewards called a meeting and informed the men of the Company's threats.

The men of the 105 Department were also in attendance. They proposed that if any members of 109 Department were sent home or victimized they would immediately withdraw their labour. The Ford Motor Company were not prepared for this, as these members were employed on the new Cortina. After dinner the Door Glass Section continued with Charge Hands working on the line to keep the job in position.

At 4.30 am Francis was sent for the Personnel Department. He picked up Kevin Halpin, on the way. Bill Francis was then told he was sacked for holding a meeting on the Company's premises. His cards and monies were made up and he was asked to sign for them. He refused. Halpin asked for the District Officials to be brought in as per agreement. This was refused. Ten minutes after leaving the Office the whole plant walked out on strike.



# PARTY MILITANTS AND PARTY BUREAUCRATS

At the time of the Bill Francis dispute the Party had three convenors and one deputy convenor : Halpin, PTA; Jack Mitchell, Body Group; Jimmy Laurie, Chassis Group; Allan Abbott, River Plant.

On October 19, 1962, the Fords Branch of the Communist Party held its biggest meeting ever. Just about every member was in attendance. The subject was the sacking of Bill Francis.

Halpin and Francis reported the facts. Halpin recommended strike action on behalf of the PTA; 7,000 members would be involved. Jimmy Laurie, who was attending for the first time in three years, recommended a complete shut-down in all plants, his own employing 22,000 workers. Jack Mitchell who was busy campaigning for District Secretary of the AEU said he agreed in principle but could not be sure how his members (11,000 men) would react. Allan Abbott was also non-committal. He said this was due to the craft status of his members (a few hundred). All Party members were finally committed to fighting for a complete withdrawal of labour immediately, on the basis of the lessons learnt on the Johnny MacLoughlin dispute. It was felt that the officials could not be trusted to get Francis reinstated unless there was a complete shut-down.

Members went into the PTA that same night. Stewards and ordinary workers held meetings all over the plant. Fords Service Men showed some out of the factory but they reentered and went to other departments to get the men out. The whole plant was in chaos. There was an immediate response, and by 10.30 pm that night the PTA was shut down.

Things were even more chaotic in the Body Group. Certain departments which depended on the PTA to absorb completed work, held meetings. By 12.30 am roughly half the Body Group came out.

The party stewards and members were in total confusion. Some held meetings and recommended support for the strike. They were successful. But many had hidden themselves. One member of 25 years standing who had dominated shop meetings for years and had always moralized to the workers about their lack of militancy, suddenly forgot all of his principles at the meeting.

The steward of this particular department, a noted 'right-winger', failed to get the Department to support the strike but walked out with those of his members who on their own did support the strike, leaving the 'militant' in. Jack Mitchell also failed to take his Department out, but came out on his own. Other leading Party stewards remained in and did not even hold meetings.

The following morning a hurried meeting was convened amongst Works' Committee members and shop stewards. It was decided that the PTA would hold its own meeting at Leys Hall, Dagenham. Members would be required to produce their Ford identity card. This was done to keep out the Press and others who had invaded the last big open meeting during the 40 hour week struggle. At the meeting the PTA members expressed their determination to stay out until Bill Francis was reinstated. The voting was 5,317 to 6.

The Chassis Group had not yet moved. A shop stewards' meeting voted in favour of supporting their brothers in the PTA. However, they were reluctant to stick their necks out and hold a meeting.

The day the meeting was convened Halpin said he had received a telephone call from Jimmy Laurie (Communist Party) explaining that the senior stewards, himself amongst them, had been threatened by the Ford Motor Company that if they held the meeting some of them would join Bill Francis. He asked Halpin to say that the PTA members had expressed the wish to go it alone for the time being, and to call the meeting off.

We will never know the truth about this phone call, but the meeting was called off, despite the fact that a couple of thousand night workers turned up for it.

The District Officials (Fred Blake, NUVB; Harry Lyle, AEU; Harry Kendrick, TGWU; Jock Milne, NUGMW) attended a mass PTA meeting the following Tuesday. They reported that they had approached the management to seek a basis for a return to work. The management had indicated that they intended to correct the situation in the plant, which they said was '30% off standard'. They would not require the same labour force as before. In view of this the officials said they could not recommend a return to work. The voting was 5,801 to 79.

On Friday, October 25, the stewards attended a lobby of the FNJNC at Transport House. The Party branch felt it was imperative that Halpin attend. One member was left behind to attend a Communist Party District Secretariat meeting.

The Transport House meeting was attended by 15 Union Officials. During this meeting Brother O'Hagan and Brother Kealey made their famous telephone call to Mr. L. Blake-man. Mr. Blakeman is supposed to have as-sured them that there would be a phased resumption of work with all members back within a week, and that the AEU would be left to deal with Francis, 'on a domestic basis'.

The voting to accept the Ford Motor Com-pany's terms was 10 officials for, 5 against. Harry Matthews, NUGMW, was elected to put the recommendation to the PTA members the following morning.

## HALPIN SAYS: GO BACK

The Communist Party District Secreta-riat met that night at Ley Street, Ilford. Here it was decided to maintain and extend the strike to the Chassis Group. A member was delegated to inform Halpin the next morning, before the shop stewards' meeting.

The following morning, 26 October, the member handed Halpin the message "maintain and extend the strike". Halpin called a meeting of the Works Committee members. He ignored the Party line and recommended that the Works Committee support the recommen-dation of the Officials to return to work. Bearing in mind that the Works Committee consisted of three right-wingers, who were always ready to return to work, and Bill Francis, who had been hounded night and day by the Press and was in no condition to take any more decisions at that time, the recommendation was accepted by 6 votes to 1.

When Halpin put the recommendation to the Shop Stewards' Committee, the Hall was in uproar. Stewards pointed out the number of times the Trade Union Officials had sold Ford Workers out. Many were of the opinion that it was only a matter of a week before the Chassis Group would be forced to sup-port us or be laid off. Nevertheless Halpin won by 4 votes.

Later that morning we attended a mass meeting at Leys Hall. Harry Mathews put the Official recommendation to return to work to the members. It was pouring with rain and Harry took an hour to explain how they intended to get Francis back his job. He was met with jeers and cries of "traitor". It was only the intervention of a Shop Steward that stopped Harry from being

dropped into the swimming pool, which was empty at the time. Answering the state-ment in the District Officials' report that the Ford Motor Company intended to make some workers redundant, Harry replied that only the night before, the Ford Motor Company had guaranteed the FNJNC that there would be a phased resumption with all men back within a week. He said that he had met the Ford Motor Company personally that very morning, where he had been assured once again that there was no question of redundancy. He pointed out, moreover, that leaving the question of Bill Francis as a domestic issue with the AEU did not mean we were abandoning the case. If at anytime in the future the AEU required the assistance of the other Unions, they would get it.

Halpin then played his ace. He announced that Francis would address the meeting. When Bill got on the Box there were cheers for the first time that morning. Bill said that he had been an active member of the AEU for fifteen years. His District Committee was supporting his case. He was confident that his Executive would support him. The members were confused by the fact that the Shop Stewards' Committee seemed to be supporting the Officials. When it was put to the vote there were still a couple of thousand voting to stay out until Bill Francis returned or grass grew over the PTA. But the recommendation to return to work was accepted.

## THE PURGE STARTS

That afternoon the National Press re-ported a Ford Motor Company statement that Mathews must have misunderstood the terms of the return to work. There would be 'some redundancy'. By Monday about 600 Ford workers had received letters advising them that they would be required to 'co-operate with the Company' and to 'abandon all restrictive practices'. Those who agreed were instructed to sign the letter and bring it with them.

Officials were informed of these let-ters. They expressed their "indignation"... but advised members to sign, saying that they would make it quite clear to the Com-pany that the letters were not binding as they were signed under duress.

As the members reported for work they were met by Ford's Service men on the gates. First they had to show their signed

letters. They were then allowed in and told to report to the line desk. Here they were lined up and the foreman, after giving the old pep talk ("Work Standards", "Co-operation", "Restrictive Practices", "The Sack") decided who he was going to keep and who would be transferred. Most of the first 600 to apply were people who were known for their co-operation. As the week went on more members drifted back. They were required to produce the signed letters. If they proved 'co-operative' they received a pass allowing them to come to work the next day !

By the end of the week about 2,000 workers were re-employed (but not one Shop Steward). By the end of the second week about 2,000 more had returned (amongst them some 20 Stewards). This was after a complaint by Officials that no Stewards had been employed. It had become clear that returning workers were being transferred all over the plant.

It is impossible to say how many members did not qualify for their gate pass to return to work the following day. We know the figure ran into hundreds. Many became so frustrated by the continuous speed-up and pressure from Supervision that they just smacked the Charge Hands or Foreman and walked out. There was so much of this that Ford Motor Company complained to the Officials, who suggested as a solution that more Stewards should be taken back.

Those workers still out had received letters stating that if they were required they would be sent for. Members did not even know if they were redundant or not. Most of them continued to treat the situation as an ordinary strike.

The Trade Union side of the FNJNC met at Transport House on 31 October. Shop Stewards met Brothers O'Hagan (NUBF), Les Kealey (TGWU) and Alf Robert (NUVB). O'Hagan said that as far as the Officials were concerned Fords 'had gone too far this time,' in going back on their word that all would be back within a week and that there would be no redundancy. He said it was a challenge to his good name. When asked what he was going to do about the proposed redundancy, he replied that the Officials would be meeting the Ford Motor Company on the following day to clarify the terms agreed on for the resumption of work and to demand the return of all members with cuts in overtime rather than redundancy'. Any redundancy would be negotiated on a 'first in, last out' basis. Brother O'Hagan then said that he would not go into any further details, as the Press were outside and a 'mis-quote could forewarn the enemy'. The Stewards, he boasted, could expect that when the Officials met the Ford Motor Company the 'gloves would be off' !

## DOUBLE TALK

All through this period Halpin was insisting in the Party Branch that Party members in the Body and Chassis Groups should hold meetings and seek to extend the strike. In answer to questions as to why he had recommended a return to work, when the Secretariat had instructed him to maintain and extend the strike, he said that during the meeting at Transport House he had learnt of developments of which the Secretariat was not aware. He asked that out of personal loyalty to him he should not be called on to go into details.

Many Party members who had returned to work in the PTA were very bitter at the lack of support coming from leading Party members. They were already threatening to resign. Because of this Halpin then started convening Party meetings without telling the militants. This meant that he would only have the members he wanted at meetings, thereby guaranteeing results.

From the beginning of the 1962 dispute a small number of stewards from PTA met everyday, first producing leaflets, later collecting addresses of union branches and shop stewards' committees from all over the country. As our position changed we kept the whole trade union movement informed by leaflet. The victimised workers were kept permanently employed, addressing envelopes.

As time dragged on with the stewards from the Chassis and Body groups coming into the office everyday, the victimised workers began to ask when the organization was going to do something. Sometimes the discussion became heated. It was about this time that Halpin began to appeal to the victimised workers not to allow themselves to become isolated. Although our very position isolated us he pointed out that as members of the PTA we were very much the poor relation as far as 'the office' was concerned. The Chassis Group paid half the rent and the Body group the other. Halpin then elected himself to act as liaison between the victimised men and the Works Committee.

He pointed out to the victimised workers that as we had very little money in our fund, and no legal right to use the stewards' office or the duplicators, it would be in our interests to propose to

the next Joint Shop Stewards' Committee meeting that we continue to struggle in the name of the Fords Joint Shop Stewards Committee and that we would share expenses bearing in mind the state of our funds compared to the enormous funds held by the Chassis and Body groups. Little did we know what this would mean to us, as victimised workers, later on. After this all leaflets went out in the name of Fords Joint Shop Stewards Committee, 'Convenor Jimmy Laurie'. 'Speakers available' it said on the bottom of the leaflets.

Immediately we ran into trouble. The victimised workers distributing leaflets both outside the factory and by post expressed the opinion that the leaflets should be written in much stronger terms explaining to members the treachery of the union officials. Halpin, who wrote the leaflets, said that he felt we should 'strive for maximum unity'. The other stewards would only accept leaflets which gave support to the officials. As he was the only one to meet the Works Committee we had to accept the position for the time.

## A FURTHER STRIKE ?

On November 5, 1962, the FNJNC met at the Piccadilly Hotel. It was agreed that due to purchase tax cuts on cars the Company was prepared to take back 530 men, but not 70 others who were described as 'trouble-makers' and had proved 'un-cooperative'. The officials then asked that the 70 be included with the 530 and that then, there should be a redundancy on the basis of last in first out, all things being equal.

The Company refused. An 'official' 7 day strike notice was put in, to start on November 11. Immediately two stewards (Party members and victimised workers) were sent as contacts to Liverpool. Their terms of reference were to gain moral and financial support. No payments had yet been received from any source.

The first contacts made in Liverpool were at Party Headquarters, Mount Pleasant. From there contact was made with the Halewood workers and Standard Triumph stewards.

From there we went to St. Helens, where we met the Lancashire and Cheshire miners.

After that we went to Manchester where we met the comrades in Rusholme Road. Here it was arranged to meet dozens of shop stewards committees. Everyone expressed support.

As soon as we heard of the proposed TUC meeting on November 14 we returned home. When we arrived at TUC headquarters, most of the Ford shop stewards were already there. They attempted to lobby their respective officials as they arrived but without much success. Bill Carron told Bill Francis he was photogenic. As Claude Berridge arrived a half-hearted cheer went up from the loyal Party members. This was met by an even louder jeer of 'Fuck him, he's come to sell us out, same as the others'. Frank Cousins arrived in his Humber. When the officials emerged from the meeting the decision was to 'defer the strike to allow common sense to prevail'. As Frank Cousins stepped in front of the television cameras, surrounded by his members, he stated that under no circumstances would he accept any form of discrimination against his members.

The union side of the FNJNC met immediately afterwards and arranged to meet the Company on November 19. As the officials left this meeting they calmed their members by stating that they would be attending this meeting with full powers to call strike action for the first time.

## WEST END DEMO

The victimised workers proposed that instead of the usual lobby the November 19 meeting should have a demonstration outside the Cafe Royal in Regent Street.

Halpin was against this. He argued that if it was poorly attended it would destroy the Fords Shop Steward image and give the officials a way out. We pointed out that we had supporters all over the country who had been pressing us for a demonstration. We also felt that we should call a mass meeting of our members in Dagenham, as we knew that the PTA members were still loyal to their stewards. Also there was growing unrest in the Chassis plant. Halpin opposed this for the same reasons.

## VICTIMISED WORKERS COMMITTEE

At a later meeting with the Works Committee it was agreed not to support a demonstration. Despite this members went ahead arranging for the demonstration. The Works Committee then deferred the next joint shop stewards' meeting to the day before the FNJNC meeting was due to take place and piously recommended that 'any night shift workers who wished to attend would be welcome'. It refused, however, to welcome any of our supporters from other organizations claiming that this might encourage the officials to call off the meeting.

About 200 members attended the demonstration. The police forced those carrying placards to keep walking round and round Regent Street.

As the officials began to leave the meeting members surged forward. They had been waiting for about 6 hours. It was reported that the Ford Motor Company was now prepared to take another 40 men back, leaving out 35.

One member asked Joe O'Hagan what had happened to his Executive powers and why hadn't he called the strike. O'Hagan pointed out it was too near Christmas, and that he had thousands of members to think about. The member then asked what they had been up to for the past 6 hours. Did he smell brandy on O'Hagan's breath? Were all the officials pissed?

Alf Roberts, NUVB, refused to meet delegations of stewards, stating 'you people got yourselves into this mess. It's in our hands now. We'll decide what's best for our members in Dagenham'. These were the first words he had spoken since the dispute.

Claude Berridge left. We met him as had been pre-arranged in the 'Leicester Arms'. As soon as Claude reported the results, Halpin asked him why he hadn't proposed strike action. Poor old Claude did his usual act, pointing out that he was on his own on the AEU Executive. He couldn't afford to upset Mr. Carron. And anyway he would have been outvoted. Halpin then began to quote Lenin. But Claude knew other bits of Lenin and quoted back.

Claude told Halpin that there are 'casualties in every battle' and that he had 'better face up to the facts'. At this stage Halpin threatened to punch Claude and Claude threatened to punch him back. Jimmy Laurie pointed out that there was a reporter listening. Halpin left, threatening to expose Claude in the Party and to withdraw support in future elections.

On November 20 the Ford Joint Shop Stewards Committee decided to write a pamphlet as an exposure. Halpin was put in charge. Another committee was also set up to organize support for the victimised men, made up of Works Committee members.

These members organized a full meeting and having thoroughly discussed their position elected a new committee. For the first time in Dagenham, things went wrong. A committee was elected almost entirely comprised of rank and file Communist Party members. Some members expressed the opinion that the case was no longer worth fighting. They intended to leave while the going was good. Halpin assured these members that as trade unionists it was their duty to stay and that we were sure of winning the day.

The average day of this seven man committee was spent addressing envelopes in the morning, having been out at 7.0 am distributing leaflets. Meetings would then be held to assess what could be paid out to our members from the Appeal Fund, and to decide what could be done next. In the evenings speakers would go to union branches to put our case. Victimized workers travelled all over the country doing this. Not one of the employed stewards even went to another branch to speak on our behalf. During this time Sid Harroway, Body group steward and Industrial Organizer for the Communist Party was canvassing the AEU branches in the area to support Jack Mitchell as District Secretary. (Mitchell had been re-employed when the victimization list had dropped from 70 to 35).

Halpin found it increasingly difficult to control the victimised workers' committee. He kept trying to appeal to them on the basis of Party loyalty. He would then go to the Party branch and get endorsement for his proposals, which had already been outvoted by the victimised workers' committee itself.

In desperation he tried to work out the terms of reference under which this committee should work. He wanted to confine them to distributing leaflets. He even resorted to the threat of taking the Appeal Fund out of the hands of the victimised workers' committee pointing out that the FSSC were the custodians of the Appeal and that we had no legal rights at all.

Arising from this the victimised workers committee decided that in future we would not recommend our members to distribute leaflets that in any way supported the officials. We also decided that in future Halpin would no longer be allowed to act as a liaison between the Works Committee and us, as victimised workers. They could either meet the whole Committee or none..

Early in December the British Motor Corporation shop stewards' committee invited the Ford shop stewards' committee to send delegates to Digbeth Hall, Birmingham. The idea was to find some more practical way of helping. the FSSC found that they were all 'too busy' that Sunday. No one could attend. So some of us victimised stewards went.

As we arrived at the Hall we were met by a chap selling 'The Newsletter'. He advised us that the Communist Party had boycotted the meeting from that end. Halpin told us not to take any notice of this bloke as he was a 'Trot'.

When we got into the meeting we found Dick Etheridge in the Chair and about 150 delegates present. But apart from him, Communist Party members were conspicuous by their absence. After we gave our report, many delegates expressed solidarity with the Ford workers and suggested one day to-ken stoppages in the area. Halpin and Etheridge quickly squashed this. 'It might be necessary in the future but at this stage we must give the officials yet another chance'.

As Christmas approached it became quite clear that the victimised workers were going to have a rough time of it. Because a strike had been called for November 14 we had abandoned our Appeal. We now had to re-appeal and it took time to get a response.

Bill Jones, the London busmen's delegate who had received over £2,000 from Ford workers in response to an appeal during the 1951 Bus Strike, made arrangements for some of our members to stand outside the garages with collecting boxes!! Our appeal was well received. People donated from all over the country. Some old people were sending 2/6 from their old age pensions. Some shop stewards' committees were sending £25 per week. Our members were able to have a reasonable Christmas.

Unfortunately, the Ford Motor Company even blacklisted the children of the victimised men. It refused them permission to attend the annual children's party, held in the canteen, even though our members had paid into a fund for this purpose.

During December the Party branch continued to be in turmoil. The District Committee complained of the lack of organization in the branch resulting in no dues being paid. No District quotas had been paid either since the dispute.

By some strange coincidence the Communist Party at this stage circulated draft resolutions for their 28th National Congress, to be held in April 1963. Tucked away in the middle the technique of sell-out had been given a firm theoretical basis: under the title 'Building More Powerful Unions', it was stated: 'There is however, a danger of shop stewards' committees which have in the past obtained useful concessions outside of district or national negotiations, adopting an attitude of "go it alone", ignoring the importance of trade union pressure at a district and a national level and the importance of improved national agreements. Shop stewards committees should discourage such tendencies'.

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# DOWN AT THE DEVON COAST



## AWAY FROM IT ALL

We thought we'd get away from London and the rat-race, the Bomb and politics, and take a quiet job by the sea for the summer.

The Devon Coast County Club sounded ideal: 'WAITERS wanted', £7 a week, full board (worth about £3 or £4) plus tips (£5 or £6) - heated swimming pool, tennis, ballroom. Almost too good to be true... and of course it was. We soon found out that we'd been conned.

## THE CLUB

The first sneaking suspicion came when my mate and I saw the rows of wooden chalets. Yes, it was a holiday camp, taking up to 650 'Club members', all paying through the nose for the privilege of membership. In this business there is no end product. To increase profits you simply increase bookings while keeping the overheads (mostly staff wages) down or, for example, skimping on staff accommodation. We had a tiny room and a double bunk in 'Y' block, a dilapidated wooden shed shared by 15 other waiters. The walls between each room resembled something just a little stronger than Kleenex (the scouse lads' favourite pastime was punching holes through them). The lot of us shared one bath, one W.C., and two wash-basins. The food was lousy.

## ROUND ONE

The dining room staff had little in common with each other: fellow malcontents from the cities, Aussies and Kiwis bumming their way round Europe, one or two professionals and some students on vacation.

The divisions became apparent the day we learnt that the Head Waiter collected 10/- a week 'rent' from each waiter. The students and the 'pros' said yes - the rest were dubious. In the end, after a 'gather round, boys, it's tradition and part of my wages' speech by the Head Waiter (and mostly because we were divided) we all bunged him his ten bob. Obviously something had to be done before the next round.

By July the situation had altered. Living, working and getting pissed together had given us a strong sense of fraternity. With the political discussions we had initiated came a general awareness of the reasons and causes for the conditions we were working under.

At the peak of the holiday season the 'Club' was fully booked. This meant two sittings for every meal with about 30 minutes between to clear away and get ready for the next. A fantastic rush, impossible in fact.

The first walk-out was spontaneous and unorganized. The demand was not for more money but for more staff and facilities that would, in fact, make the job possible. We had them the very next morning (1) plus a shower attachment for the 'Y' Block as an extra bonus!



## THE PLOT THICKENS

This demonstration of the value of united action wasn't lost - we now began to take our time between sittings. Hungry 'Club Members' on second sitting were calmly ignored as they beat on the doors to be let in on time. The second sitting began to start later and later each day.

The management retaliated by enforcing a load of petty restrictions on the staff - like no sitting down in the ballroom, no swimming before 4.30 pm and so on. One night in August the Manager and Housekeeper came round the Staff quarters enforcing the sex segregation rule by bursting into the rooms with their master keys. Of course there were fellows jumping out of windows and birds hanging from the roof by their fingernails. A slight contempt for the management turned into an overwhelming hatred.

The next morning one militant was dismissed. A walk-out was threatened and after some haggling, he was reinstated.

This is when we made our first mistake. We did nothing to use the feeling of solidarity and hatred of the Management (or to control the feeling of victory which came from the reinstatement) to press for higher wages or better food and accommodation. That night we had an enormous piss up and all rolled down to the 'Club Members' only Lounge Bar - the holy of holies.

They refused to serve us. Big arguments broke out with the Manager and Head Waiter who were threatening, bribing and begging us to get out of the Lounge Bar. Out of the seventeen staff who had trespassed into the sacred place, a 'short list' of six 'ring leaders' was drawn up and told that they were sacked.

At a boisterous meeting in 'Y' Block (everyone was drunk) it was decided that we would all turn up for work in the morning and would only start work if the six were reinstated. But next morning, the management refused. They were banking on the fact that it was Saturday morning - the day when grateful departing 'Club Members' stuff pound notes into the waiters' eager hands and that no one was going to miss out on their hard-earned tips for the sake of a principle or two and that anyhow all the boys were sober now.

Two thirds of the D.C.C.C. staff never started work that morning. Fifteen waiters, one of the kitchen staff and a receptionist walked out and left for good.

## LESSONS LEARNED

We did not achieve very much, except a feeling of satisfaction that we had balled them up. The 'hire and fire' attitude of the management, the long list of petty rules and the overall fraud of the 'County Club' had made life intolerable.

The next time we organize seasonal workers we will include all the departments (the gardeners and maintenance men were recruited as 'waiters' for a day when we left).

One of the most rewarding features was that the students, who at the beginning were reactionaries of the highest order, and the next generation of technocrats and bureaucrats, have been subjected to a political struggle and have seen and understood the meaning of solidarity.

It would be nice to see if the D.C.C.C. management have learnt anything but I don't think they'll have me back next year.

Perhaps, if anyone feels that they would like to get away from politics and the rat-race, etc, next year, please write to Mr. Hooper, Devon Coast County Club, Smallcombe Road, Paignton, Devon. And good luck, Brother.

# LETTER FROM AMERICA

Marvin Garson

It is very clear that the uprising in Los Angeles had very little in common with last year's riots in Harlem, Philadelphia, and Rochester, and still less in common with the classic American race riot. That is why I - and much of the local press - refer to it as an uprising rather than a riot. Although there was no planning and no conspiracy, there was a clear pattern of spontaneous organization that emerged after the first day or so.

Because of this organization, the uprising earned a great deal of respect from unusual quarters. I expected all the press to condemn 'this outrageous violation of law and order', 'this pointless violence that only damages the Negro's cause', etc. But the only such statements came from Mayor Yorty and Police Chief Parker of Los Angeles. Most politicians and newspapers outside of Los Angeles followed the line that the Negroes must have some terrible grievances if they are forced to react this way - and they put the blame on Yorty and Parker. The general feeling was that of course one sends in the army to quell insurrection and so forth, but one doesn't blame the Negroes who are machine-gunned by the army. I happened to tune in on one of those late-night radio programmes in San Francisco where the moderator answers telephone calls from listeners. In this case the listeners - mostly white - sympathized with the Los Angeles Negroes, and the moderator was about the only one defending Yorty and Parker.

Willie Brown, liberal Negro assemblyman from San Francisco who has a marked tendency to fink out when the pressure is on, spoke at a fund raising rally for the FSM. He had been in Los Angeles during the uprising, and was clearly impressed. Not only did he support the uprising without reservations, but said it was part of the same movement as the FSM. He said he saw arson conducted as follows: Negroes would assemble in a street lined with shops; they would pick out the shops owned by outsiders (usually white, in the nature of the case) who had no roots in the community but were merely there for a quick profit; they would leave alone the shops owned by local residents (in borderline cases, Brown said,

the shopkeeper often came out and made a case for his business, followed by discussion among the crowd); the shops marked down for destruction would be slowly and deliberately looted, and then, when they had been completely cleaned out, carefully burned down to ashes.

I heard a Negro teenager on the radio who was asked whether he thought the arson was right. He answered in purely technical terms. Boycotts, he said, had never been really effective, but he thought that burning down a shopkeeper's store would be effective because it would make him think twice before cheating the people again.

The war with the police seemed to me to have been inspired by the Vietcong, in a sense. A young Negro has very little to identify with in this society. The culture heroes (presidents, astronauts, movie stars) are white, and 'successful Negroes' are only half-men. Bombarded with daily news from Vietnam about the grit and determination of Vietcong guerillas, he begins to have a fantasy life based on guerilla warfare. During the Los Angeles uprising, there was a raid on the Central Police Headquarters in Saigon, and quite a few Los Angeles Negroes read about it and said: 'Why not do that here?'. In fact, they did. Whereas in Harlem the local police easily put down the rioters, in Los Angeles the Negroes beat the police - that is why the army had to be called in.

The police are now taking their revenge. They break into people's houses without search warrants, 'looking for stolen goods' and taking whatever they want. But there is no sense of bitter defeat, as there was after the Harlem riots. The Negroes feel satisfied that they put up a good fight, and mayors and police chiefs everywhere are scared.

It represents a very definite escalation of the civil rights struggle. From now on the government will be sending in the army without much hesitation, and Negroes will be thinking in terms of organized violence without much hesitation either. The best indication of the new order is in Natchez, Mississippi, where the following events took place last week:

The local civil rights movement presented a list of demands to the City Council, warning that Natchez Negroes in their frustration were arming themselves. The City Council turned down the demands and then the Governor immediately called in the army, before any violence had occurred. The streets of Natchez were patrolled by tanks and jeeps, and that kept things quiet.