

COMMUNICATION WORKER

no: 4

1971



**LET'S NOT MAKE THE
SAME MISTAKE TWICE
ONLY RANK & FILE ACTION CAN WIN**

WE ARE TO BLAME

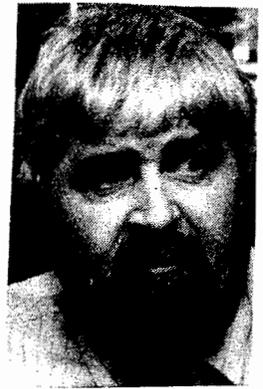
Once again Bill Cockburn, managing director of letters, has attacked the current spate of wildcat strikes. He states in the September issue of the 'Courier' that some 13,000 working days have been lost since April, as a result of over 60 unofficial strikes. Strangely enough in the August issue the figure was 15,000 days lost, maybe Bill's been doing a bit of overtime to make up for lost production (wish he'd share it with the rest of us). Cockburn goes on to state that unless this is stopped the business will go into a 'spiral of decline'. He threatens that we might lose the letters monopoly, and that £10 million of international letter traffic might be lost, undoing a years marketing effort.

The only thing that has gone into a spiral of decline is our pathetic wage packet, and the outdated working conditions we suffer under. Whilst many of our colleagues out in the provinces take home a lousy £80 a week; with 1 in 5 of our people getting sweet FA out of the IWM; and when we look to see what overtime is available all we see are casuals taking our work. Is it any wonder that office after office is coming out on strike. Even as Cockburn's statement was being delivered to the press, 1,100 drivers from the Centrally Controlled Services (CCS) walked out on strike over the use of private contractors moving mail. For a day no mail moved in or out of London, and even two weeks later there was a back log of work at the London sorting offices.

Yet these victories are still short term victories many have ended up with the union stitching up deals with management. The Post Office will soon be forced to make an all out attack upon us. Possibly it will come with the claim for the reduced working week, there are also plans to stop the IWM once and for all. So let's not rest on our laurels, don't let the union bureaucrats rob us of victory. Our strength is with our mates on the shop floor not with Tuffin and his cronies in UCW house.

Mike Hogan:

The man to blame



"We are not to blame" said London UCW District Organiser Mike Hogan in response to management's recent attacks on postal workers in the national press, and their own rag 'The Courier'. Well Mike we agree with you. You've tried hard this year to stop unofficial action in the PO. In the last West Central strike, for example, you went down there to tell them to go back to work and for other offices not to come out in support, management were undoubtedly proud of you, pity your own members weren't, and told you so in no uncertain terms. And what about when South East London tried to institute the 9.15 cut off, you told them at the South East Joint Advisory Committee meeting on Tuesday, June 9th. "If you carry this motion today management would class this as industrial action. You must be aware, that L.D.C. thinks you are going down the wrong road because you are outside the terms of of the L.D.C./LLT agreement." We thought the 9.15 Cut off was a national agreement and the L.D.C. has the front to to say we're going down the wrong road. The motion was passed, and the 9.15 Cut off remains in South East London, but no thanks to Mike Hogan.

We agree with you Mike, you're not to blame for us fighting to protect our already poor pay and conditions, just for trying to stop us.



A UCW FAIRY TALE

WHY ? The membership is asking, is the UCW taking such a laid back approach over the 3 hour reduction in the working week. Could it be because they want some luck, and have it rejected once and for all. This is a thorn in their side, so is this why 'Lucky' Les Hewitt was given the job of standard bearer of the 40 hour week.

A potted history of Les:- Always one of the boys, and very good for a laugh and a joke, a rising star, like others at the time. He felt he could better serve the SE and SEDO membership by being on the EC of the old UPW. His first lucky break was being nominated by SEDO for the EC, and then one good speech at conference on security (written by M Stiles) and he was off, the EC, and the world, was his oyster. His main call to fame over the next few years was at UPW schools, where he was very good at football, studding and telling jokes, and not much else. In fact he was so actively engaged that as time went on he could never make a branch meeting, except, of course, when it was time to be nominated.

As the years passed, seemingly his luck ran out, and SEDO branch no longer felt he was suitable for re-nomination, and even when he pleaded tearfully with them, and promised he would change his ways, the branch stood firm.

Was all lost for 'Lucky' Les ? No, next on the scene come's his fairy God mother, Tom Jackson, with wand in hand, one wave and 'Lucky' Les was whisked away from the wicked SEDO, to Woking, and, surprise, surprise, a branch nomination. The rest is known. And that's why they call him 'Lucky' Les.

Foot note:- How long would it take you to get a transfer to Woking, maybe he should be called instant potato.

'COMMUNICATION WORKER' would like to thank all who made a donation to the cost of publishing this paper. Group donations: Bristol CWG £100, SW London CWG £8, E London CWG £12. Individual donations: D-£10, J-£2, A-£2, I-£1

The money though is not the most important thing. What we really need is contrubtions to the paper, if you have a dispute at your office tell us about it, find some dirt on a union beaucocrat-we want to know about it. For this paper to get better we need more info, so drop us a line and if your doing enough docket to send us a donation make the cheque payable to P.Blake.

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IT'S ALL HAPPENING



There are days when all we are is just plain busy. There are other times when it seems as if everything is happening at once.

I looked forward to going to the TUC in Blackpool. Firstly to put our case on a number of important issues, but secondly, and more importantly, I thought it was about time me and the boys from the Executive Committee had a good piss up. I mean the last one we had was that last binge we had down in Jersey, oops sorry, I meant the national conference.

Anyway we had a good drink or two up at Blackpool, all down on the expenses of course. Mike Hogan had a few too many and asked me to carry him back to the hotel, but as he weighs over 35lb I had to refuse, after all I've got to set some example to my members. Pity John Taylor wasn't with us this year, What with that little business deal he had on the side he was always good for a drink.

Then there's that article by Bill Cockburn. I was personally very upset by this, after I've done my best to stop these strikes, but nobody seems to be listening to me any more.

Finally, there are too many reports landing on my desk. I had three last month, as well as a 'phone call although that was a wrong number. I mean I had to miss my golf lesson one afternoon. So come on people, stop causing all this trouble, give your General Secretary some rest.

1971: National Strike

Talk to a lot of the older blokes about the 1971 national strike, and you will probably get a reply of 'Never again', or something similar. In this issue we look at why we lost and what lessons we can learn from the defeat.

After months of negotiating the Union of Postal Workers (UPW now the UCW) and the management reached a deadlock. The union was asking for a 15% pay rise and the management would only offer 8%.

Tom Jackson (General Secretary) announced that there would be strike action as soon as possible, and the Executive Committee instructed the workers to withdraw their labour on the 20th January, while the strikers were left to find out from the 'papers and the TV that there would be no strike pay.

Postal workers weren't consulted about anything from the beginning to the end. They weren't consulted over whether or not they wanted to come out in the first place, and they certainly didn't get a say over whether or not they should get strike pay. However, almost everybody came out, except for a few scabs amongst the telephone operators (this was in the days when the PO and BT were the same company).

If the union had been serious about fighting for our rights they would have paid us strike pay, there hadn't been a big strike for years, so where had all our subs gone? If the TUC had given us the support we deserved they could have levied the entire membership, for example 10p would have brought in £900,000 a week. What about solidarity action, mail was still being handled by air, sea, road and rail with other workers handling goods normally handled by postal workers. But the union never did any of these things, they didn't fight for our interests then, and won't do now.

The union organised weekly rallies in London, the largest of which had nearly 50,000 postal workers, and their supporters on it, including Post Office engineers in a token one day stoppage. And while they listened to boring speeches in Hyde Park, scabs were keeping the telephone exchanges working. Fifty thousand workers could have easily closed these down

However, despite the union's unwillingness to fight the workers were determined to stick it out. Very few went back to work, and the strikers were intent on staying out until their claim was met in full, despite seven weeks without strike pay.



At the beginning of the seventh week the UPW recommended an offer to postal workers which would call off the strike and accept the findings, and the decision, of a three man court of inquiry.

This was the first ballot they had called in the course of the whole strike. After offering no tactics on how to spread and win the strike, after paying out no strike pay, we were allowed to vote to go back to work having won nothing, such is trade union democracy. The vote, not surprisingly, was a vote to go back to work. The union could only say "You made the decision to go back to work, not us, we were prepared to fight on". They knew how to use democracy to their own advantages, to deprive us of any say in the strike and to cover up their treacherous acts.

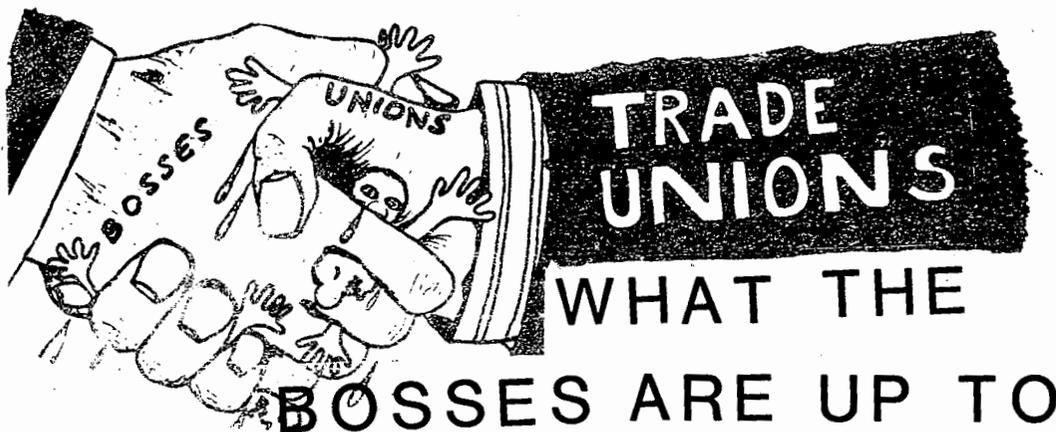
Despite this their trickery did not pass without opposition, the Executive Committee was met by crowds of angry strikers, and Merseyside stayed out an extra day in protest.

However, we are also to blame, by putting our faith totally in the hands of the union we gave up our chance to run the strike ourselves and fight it effectively.

Next time round the opportunity will be there to either make the same mistakes as last time, or to organise ourselves independantly from the union. With the actions of Mike Hogan in the London strikes (see elsewhere in this paper) more and more postal workers are realising that the union hasn't got their true interests at heart.

COMMUNICATION WORKER exists to spread ideas of independence and self organisation. If you agree with us why not take a few issues to put round your office, or send us reports and articles and help us to build a fighting rank and file movement.

Shorter Working Week



By the time you read this, you will probably have been balloted on taking industrial action over the shorter working week. Postal workers have been kept in the dark over negotiations whilst the union plans to stitch us up.

The union bosses are just as afraid of the power that we've shown in recent wild-cat strikes as the Post Office are. Mike Hogan (London District Organiser for the UCW) has tried hard to stop the fightback in London (see article in this issue), and the UCW has tried to get rid of militancy by leading us to defeat in this campaign over the shorter working week.

1. The union knows that a lot of postal workers don't want to be drawn into a prolonged all out strike, and they would like a no vote in order to demoralise militants.
2. The union knows that a lot of postal workers already make three hours or more on "job and finish", so they don't expect us to strike for something we already have.
3. The union knows that a lot of postal workers depend on their Xmas for holidays, decent Xmas presents for their kids etc... and will be worried about losing that money.

The management want confrontation in order to smash us. Our ability to fight back against their attacks has worried them and they want to escalate the fight into a national conflict and take us on once and for all. However, "Communication Worker" called for a vote for action in this ballot. Why? For two reasons; firstly because we haven't had a reduction in the working week for 22 years and we deserve one ! Secondly, because we too see the need for confrontation. A victory for us would give the PO serious doubts about bringing in casualisation, RRP, cutting over-time etc.

If the ballot is won the union may try a number of tactics, they might call an all out strike hoping that people would not support it and that it would quickly collapse. Then they would say "Your leaders were prepared to fight, but you weren't".

Or they might call selective strikes, work to rules, or an over-time ban. These tactics could drag on without a hope of winning, and instead, just demoralising us (as in the recent Civil Service dispute).

If this happens, management will be sure to push the issue and force confrontation on a much higher level. So if the ballot is won a national strike will be well on the cards.

WHAT WE CAN DO

If a national strike is coming it must not be a repeat of the 1971 farce. If we put trust in the union we have no chance. Only militant activity can win. If they bring in scabs offices must be occupied. Other groups of workers handling mail (railway workers, seamen etc) must be called upon to black the work. Action committees should be set up in order to run the strike from the bottom upwards. If we control the struggle, we can win.

**DON'T TRUST THE UNION
TRUST NOBODY BUT YOURSELF
AND OTHER RANK AND FILE
WORKERS**

GOVERNORS COLUMN

Apparently Chapman, the governor at Blackheath SDO, went wild about the last issue of CW, when we exposed how he was firing posties for failing an IP test. We hear he wanted to have a word with us, well we're not particularly interested in talking to this slimey git. So our message to Chapman is TOUGH!

Instead we've decided to run a regular column about those people who make our work place what it is, yes you've guessed it:- the governors.

We're kicking it off with Luther (Louie) Corbyn. Louie has been having a good year so far, he's seen more of South West London than the 137 bus. Being transferred from office to office as some kind of hatchet man for management. At Battersea he received a traditional post office welcome, when someone accidentally poured brake fluid over his car. At SWDO he was almost knocked down, whereas at Streatham he was removed after a work to rule. And news has just come in that four cadets beat him up in a pub.

Meanwhile postal workers at Putney SDO had a nasty surprise recently, when Charlie Johnson arrived at their office as a new PHG. He'd just come down from SWDO where he used to be a PE'D' until he was demoted for sexual harassment. Be careful boys and girls, this bloke can be one two faced bastard, take it from someone who knows.

Anyway if you've got any news about your boss why not drop us a line.



'Its a socially useful tool, for use on the management.....'

SOLIDARITY

In the September Courier there was a small bit about TNT taking Post Office business and that this meant possible job losses. In the News International strike at Wapping TNT scabed on the printers. If Murdoch was beaten it's possible that TNT wouldn't be in a position to be taking our jobs now. This is why it is important to support all workers in struggle, because an attack on one group of workers is an attack on us all
THE WORKERS UNITED WILL NEVER BE DEAFEATED!

BACK AT THE BUNKER

From our busy mole er correspondent in the South East. Communication Worker has received an interesting and inspiring lesson from the Bunker, better known to those outside the South East as the sub office in Greenwich.

For years the Bunker has fought off unreasonable demands from the management who have been constantly harassing the workers; one worker to our knowledge has died trying to impress management. This of course is nothing new or unusual, the bastards are well aware of medical problems relating to work.

With these relentless demands for cutting duties, despite an increasing volume of mail coming into the office, clearly the workers were faced with heavier work loads causing undue pressure and ultimately the death of a colleague.

Over the years they had suffered cuts in their night, walk and van delivery duties. At one stage they even had to hire a van from a private company - wonder what the customers thought of that! The Bunker was involved in several go slows and unofficial walk outs. Although these disputes were a real pain in the arse for the workers and meant loss of earnings they had little choice but to resist. Other problems resulting from these disputes were never ending threats to introduce casual labour and disciplinary action from both union and management.

Needless to say the lead swingers at the UCW gave no real help to the workers at the Bunker, just the usual helping of bullshit and on many occasions undermined their actions by ordering them back to work. A stark contrast when you consider that the Bunker has won back its night, walk and van duties.

The moral of the story is obvious. Forget the UCW, after all their interests and priorities are different. If they won't fight for our rights then we must. Direct action is the only answer. Perhaps the recent utterance of a high wanking UCW official sums them up and I quote "Its not worth striking, we will achieve nothing anyway". No wonder workers' morale is at an all time low with this sort of shit being churned out.

STRIKING PAYS

Anyone who says that they can't afford to go on strike should look at what happened at Tooting SDO recently. A fair old bit of work had built up and the management offered an hour and a half extended delivery to clear it, the workers demanded two and a half which management refused, so they walked out. They returned after one day out to an agreement of three hours extended delivery every day for the rest of the week. We make that six hours at $1\frac{1}{4}$, three hours at $1\frac{1}{2}$ and three hours at 2 adding up to eighteen hours of pay. Worth losing a day's pay for 'ey lads?

WHY THE RANK-AND-FILE

WHAT DO WE MEAN WHEN WE USE THE TERM 'RANK AND FILE'?

The rank and file is us, you and me, the ordinary worker. The rank and file Communication Workers Group differs from the UCW and all other unions, in that it is composed solely of ordinary workers from the shop floor. We have no leaders or full time officials. All the decisions we take are ours and ours alone.

WHY DO WE TAKE SUCH A HOSTILE LINE ON FULL TIME OFFICIALS?

Because, quite frankly, they have sold us out, time after time. We have only to look at the recent history of the communication workers unions. John Golding, General Secretary of the NCU, plucked defeat from the jaws of victory when he accepted the strings attached to the BT pay offer. Whilst Alan Tuffin claimed that UCW members had accepted the P.O.'s derisory 5.2% pay offer, when less than 10% of the membership voted. That's what comes of holding ballots on a Sunday morning. In short, they take us up shit creek and leave us

WHY DO OFFICIALS BEHAVE IN SUCH A WAY?

At one time in their life the full time official was just like us, an ordinary worker. Then he or she decided, either for good or bad intentions, to stand for some union position. Either they saw it as a genuine attempt to improve their workmates conditions, or as a cush little number. It matters not. Sooner or latter they forgot what life was like on the shop floor, they forgot about the hard work, the dirt and the danger, as they sat back in their comfy chair and saw their career stretch out in front of them. Obviously a few bureaucrats stick to their principals but they are swamped by the rest and forced into acts which are against their members intrests.

WHAT CAN BE DONE?

True power lies not in the hands of the officials, but in ours. We provide the manpower for the industry, not them. The lesson we must learn is that we must build our own organisations which are capable of fighting for our intrests. We must have representatives not leaders. People from the shop floor who will represent our demands, who dont spend all their time in offices twiddling their thumbs. After all how can Alan Tuffin represent a postman on £8,000 a year when he earns £28,000. Only workers can represent workers. As we said earlier the R&FCWG aims to build such an organisation, if you would like to know more about us why not drop us a line.

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