During the latter half of 1937, the question of trade union recruitment in the Dagenham area was resurrected. Wage rates at this period in Dagenham were higher than those in alternative employment in the area, which meant the company was unable to meet its labour requirements without any great difficulty, despite bad conditions, harsh discipline, and refusal to recognise the trade unions.

At a General Council Meeting of the Trade Union Congress on Wednesday, 8th December 1937, a copy of an anonymous letter was read, as follows:

"Dear Sir, every week outside the Briggs and Ford factories, leaflets are being distributed to the workers, using official's and other trade union leaders' speeches as propaganda, in order to further their subtle Fascist reaction to the workers' unity.

Don't you officials think it is time something was done to counteract it, or are you accepting and women and children are being led into a trap in order to break up all unions, including your own, like they were sick in other countries?

We, of the Briggs Body Corp., are the victims of low wages and high speed production. The work is such that we are becoming more appendages to the machines, the machine setting the speed. Everyone in these works is panicky and nervous, accidents occur by the dozen. The First Aid is, by the nature of things, also working at top speed. One poor fellow was crushed to death last night owing to the anarchy prevailing in methods of work. Men and women are so afraid of losing their bread and butter that they dash about here and there, with little regard for anything or any other. This was how the man was killed. He was crushed by an overhead crane. The crane-man had to hustle so fast that he had no time to look out for anyone who might be in his way.

We are crying out for organisation and the only thing we are offered is this cryptic red baggy pamphlet, in order to use when "Der Tag" arrives, for some Fascist leader to declare all unions illegal. Will you help us to set the feet of these workers on the path of real unionism, or must some of us come to the Communist conclusion that nobody gives a hang, and the only way out for us is "Bloody Revolution"?

The normal day's work here is from seven (morning) until seven-thirty (night), at straight time. No overtime money is allowed. The wages average about one shilling and fourpence per hour. Some children are paid fourpence-halfpenny. We work 50 to 60 hours per week. It is a terrible strain. As workers we plead that you use your power in order to make these conditions public property; as we have to be very careful owing to the well-dried espionage system in force here, we are approaching your organisation first.

If this plea fails, desperation will make us look around for others who may make us bring our grievances to the fore. For reasons that are obvious, we are very sorry, but we can only sign ourselves as,

"TWO BRIGGS WORKERS"

[It was agreed by the TUC, after the letter was read, that a National Conference of Trade Unions be convened, with the intention of organising workers in the Dagenham area.]

"There are periodic layoffs, and hundreds of workers are laid off with hardly any notice. When Ford begins to take on workers again, it's hard to say who will be coming back into the factory. There’s no doubt that hundreds of Union members are managing to get themselves signed on at these plants by not admitting the fact that they're Union members...Discipline is very strict in the factory, and there is an extensive Company Spy system. The factory is infected with informers, whose job is to spy on any show of militancy and refer it to the relevant department. Workers who are pointed out in this way are put on the list for the next round of layoffs."

The Drive for Unionisation

The Communists were putting very strong pressure on the ASU to concentrate its unionising efforts in the sections where there were large numbers of skilled workers. This is explained by the fact that these sections were the only ones that were immune from high labour turnover (in fact Ford had considerable difficulty recruiting skilled men in the period 1935-37) [Note 46].

Up until 1935, the process of unionising Ford was due almost entirely to the efforts of the ASU. The other unions and the TUC played little part in it. The TUC had a policy of banning Communists from holding office in it - but the Communists were so successful in pushing the ASU recruiting campaign that the TUC was finally forced to reconsider its official position (which was to "leave Ford alone") and to start a recruiting campaign of its own. The campaign was led by the AEU, and was boycotted in vain by the TUC officials at Ford. This campaign was not only an attempt to strengthen internal organisation, but also to spread the word: it was also an attempt to weaken the Ford management and to encourage works struggle, which, if it produced some victories, could reduce the high mobility of the labour force at Dagenham. This would be done by improving conditions at Dagenham, and would force up wage levels in South East England as a whole (taking advantage of a boom period), as well as furthering the likelihood of tensions between the employed and the unemployed.

This was a now period of boom production. The factory saw an influx of the last intake of agricultural labour and small farmers who had been driven from the land by the soaring unemployment. With the crisis, the Ford workers saw an opportunity to strengthen their organisation. The number of workers at Dagenham virtually doubled between 1935 and 1937, and after the temporary layoff of March 1936, increased again by nearly a quarter in the second phase of the War effort, 1941-1942.

After the unionisation campaign of 1936-1937 (with the other unions now competing with the ASU for membership), a semi-clandestine network of shop stewards began to show its organisational strength with a number of stoppages and sectional strikes against the employers and against the TUC. Both the employers and the TUC refused to recognise the "unofficial" organisation - precisely because the right way that Ford organised their production process left no room for the traditional form of representation through shop stewards, which existed in factories based on piecework. In this period 46-48 hours a week were still the norm.

In general, the worker's standard of living at Dagenham before the start of the War was not as poor as in other European countries. There were no direct taxes on workers' wages; transportation costs to the factory were still low, because the factory and the housing were located near to each other (unlike the postwar period, 1946-48).
6. The Unionisation of Ford America - 1941

In 1941 Henry Ford took a major step forward in American industrialism, and signed a closed shop agreement with the UAW at the River Rouge and Lincoln plants. The union's demands were extensive: 1) wage increases to make up the highest paid in the motor industry; 2) abolition of Ford's own system of 'twin timetables'; 3) a shop steward system; 4) time-and-a-half for overtime for all workers; 5) limited layoff for all; 6) a reinstatement of thousands of workers fired for being union members. Ford granted this - and more - immediately. Ford, the 'Progressive' American, and the UAW were in business together. In fact the unionising surrender was forced on the company because Ford was a non-union company. Unionisation meant coming off the boycott list, increased sales, and a guarantee of union control inside the factories.

Workers' Struggles and the War

At the moment when the War began, the initiative seemed to have passed completely into the hands of the employer. Speed-up was rife, and the official working week was increased from 44 hours (1941) and later to 48 hours. The conversion to war-production meant that the production of big internal combustion engines took precedence over the production of motor cars (more than 262,000 VS engines were produced in the war years, compared with a normal 16,000 per year before the War). This period also saw an international division of state capital and Ford capital which, until the War, had been unknown at 29.

The shop stewards at Ford Dagenham remained closely linked with the unionised rank and file workers, and were not drawn into collaboration with the TUC. In fact the TUC, for the whole duration of the War, was belligerent. The shop stewards' organisation, while at the same time imposing its 'anti-strike' line on the strike committees of the shop stewards, by threatening to leave them at the mercy of State repression if they extended their demands to challenge the general working conditions that were prevalent in War-industry.

But as far as the working class at Ford was concerned, at the moment when the War began, Ford workers had won a certain level of autonomy, and no appeal to 'national unity' would bring them to knuckle under to the interests of capital. Sectional strikes and stoppages, against speed-up and for a reduction in hours, continued, regardless of the ups and downs of the War - although they intensified when victory against the Axis powers was certain. The workers' struggles during this period had two decisive results: the split between shop stewards and unionised rank and file workers on the one hand, and the TUC and Labour Party on the other, became far deeper; and the campaign for shorter working week developed, slowly and steadily, to come to a head in 1948.

Briggs Recognises the Stewards

At Briggs, the first all-out strike happened when Britain stood alone against the Axis powers. The response from the management and the Government was one of calm at first. Briggs said that they were prepared to negotiate with shop stewards, but not with the unions [Note 50]; they then changed their minds, against negotiations with stewards - a position which they kept up till 1944, although they didn't seem to appreciate the dangers of negotiating directly with stewards rather than with union officials. Finally, in 1944, "following a period of agitation and strikes" [Note 51], and prior to the Normandy landings, an agreement was reached that recognised the shop stewards as negotiating bodies and spread the shop stewards' organisation throughout the plant - although still not recognising the unions. [Note 52]. This put the shop stewards
in a position to promote a period of wage-drive which became increasingly disruptive of the company's plans, even though in terms of strike action the company appeared only right up to 1932 (Note 53).

Ford and the Unions

At Ford itself, the TUC leadership stepped in and prevented the strike spreading "in view of the impending invasion of France". Union officials came into the factory to convince the workers to postpone the strike till the War was over. They noted the tension in the plant, and reported back that, in their opinion, the plant meetings would immediately have turned into strikes if they had made it clear that the TUC was prepared to isolate and smash the strike.

After their success in getting the strike postponed, Ford and the TUC signed an agreement in April 1944 which set up the Ford Joint Negotiating Committees, going right over the heads of the shop stewards at Dagenham. This was a blow to the aspirations of the Trade Union left, who had hoped that they would be able to force the coalition Government and Ford to recognize the Union locally at Dagenham in this period of boom production. In this way, by instituting the FJNC and having the pressure from the shop floor, Ford was able to take a leading role in eliminating the wage leap-frogging usually associated with situations of shop-floor bargaining; this was a fact that the labour movement had to contend with as from 1947 - although Ford's example was not immediately followed by the other motor manufacturers.

Liberalisation necessarily took place after, and not during the War, when Ford reconverted to peace-time production and made plans to launch the motor car as a mass consumer object (one of Ford's models was called the "Popular") - parallel with the German Volkswagen established under Hitler.

At Dagenham the management decided on a policy of mass sackings, which would enable them to eliminate the most militant groups of workers in the guise of carrying through their factory reorganisation after the War.

At this point 95 shop stewards were elected - and the Labour Party (now in Government) managed to defuse the situation - but only after Ford had set up a lookout. This was also the point when trade unionism was recognised at Ford Dagenham, thereby providing some guarantee of a continuation of the wage increases that had become possible with the favourable posture balance of class forces (increases that were written into the 1946 Agreement).

Post-War Restructuring

After the War, Ford expanded its production. The expansion followed the American lines of a rapid conversion to peace-time production, with an increased mechanism of production, taking advantage of the fact, while most other countries' motor industries had been brought to a halt, the car factories in the UK and USA were not so hard hit. Dagenham continued to act as the centre for Ford's exports to the Commonwealth. The new investment associated with reorganisation increased the amount of
8. The Productivity Push - Shop Stewards 1941

In the space of 1½ years the atmosphere of total resistance to the employing class had changed. Trade Union leaders were brought into Government and into the running of the economy - but more important was the fact that Russia had now entered the war, and increased productivity was a way of supporting the Soviet peoples (as this report shows).

For Maximum Production

REPORT OF A CONFERENCE HELD BY THE ENGINEERING AND ALLIED TRADES SHOP STEWARDS' NATIONAL CONGRESS

On October 15th, a National Conference of Shop Stewards was held in London. Here is a summary of the opening statement by Mr. Walter Swann, Convenor of Shop Stewards at an important aircraft factory:

This conference met in one of the most serious and desperately urgent situations that the British people have ever had to face. The glorious and heroic resistance of our ally, the Soviet people, fills us with a sense of duty as to what we should do in our present struggle, we shall not fail them, but shall strive to emulate their example in face of the enemy.

We have not reached a position where every one of us has learnt the problem of production from a new angle, and we believe we will get the best results from our conference, not merely by discussing the ways and means, mismanagement and inefficiency of certain methods of control and direction of production, but what we can do and will to increase production from now on and in doing so help to effect changes which will go through industry even to the top.

Our main concern is that the political composition of the workers has been won, viz. the understanding, initiative and energy to increase production new, not in this country before.

Let every worker set the highest example in quality, quantity and expediency, which with them the job out. Let the shop-stewards and trade unions secure agreements that some should not be in piecework prices or bonus rates, however high the output, is hindered by Government action against employers who break such agreements.

The most effective training of all skilled men and women, and removal of barriers to trade progress, for exchange of trade union membership according to the work engaged on.

Shop-stewards of every trade to secure agreement of the workers and the trade unions for production demonstration duties from being a tremendous restrictive factor in improving output when we are fighting for our way out against Fascism.

Confession of Success - Report by Douglas Hyde.

Our thousand, two hundred and thirty-seven delegates, from four factories in all parts of the country and representing some 800 workers, present at the great shop-stewards' conference held by the Engineering and Allied Trades Shop-Stewards' National Council on October 15th, was the result of long and arduous work by the leading members of the council, who were elected to the post.

The conference was opened with a speech by Mr. Walter Swann, who stated that the main object of the meeting was to discuss the methods by which the production of the country could be increased. The conference was divided into three sections, each dealing with a different aspect of the problem.

Section I dealt with the centralisation of production, Section II with the organisation of production, and Section III with the training of workers.

Mr. Swann stated that the conference was held in the belief that it was possible to increase production by a considerable margin, and that this could be achieved by the following measures:

1. The introduction of new machinery and methods of production.
2. The training of workers in new skills.
3. The organisation of production on a larger scale.
4. The elimination of waste and inefficiency.

The conference was concluded with a vote of thanks to Mr. Swann for his opening address.
9. The Post-War Years

For this page we wanted to include notes on the working class history of the 1950s — but this is a terrible gap in the history books. In future pamphlets maybe we’ll be able to cover it — but for the time being, here are images of Ford-USA in the 1940s-50s: a demonstration of Ford workers demanding unionisation (“in the Ford Empire few feel free”); Violence erupting on a Ford picket line in 1941; and verses from Woody Guthrie’s “Talking Union Blues.”

Suppose they’re working you so hard it’s just outrageous
And they’re paying you all starvation wages.
You go to the boss and the boss will tell
Before I raise your pay I’ll see you all in hell!
Well, he’s puffing a big cigar, feeling mighty slick
Cause he thinks he’s got your union licked.
Well, he looks in the window and what does he see
But a thousand pickets, and they all agree —
He’s a bastard... infantry... slave-driver...
But he has his wife...

Now boys, you’ve come to the hardest time.
The boss will try to bust your picket line.
He’ll call out the police, the national guard,
They’ll tell you it’s a crime to have a union card,
They’ll raid your meetings, they’ll hit you on the head,
They’ll call everyone of you a red —

Unpatriotic... Japanese spies... subversing national defense.

But out at Ford, here’s what they found,
And out at Vulture, here’s what they found,
And out at Allen Chalmers, here’s what they found.
And down at Bethlehem, here’s what they found,
That if you don’t let red-hating break you up,
And if you don’t let bullies break you up,
And if you don’t let vigilantes break you up,
And if you don’t let police break you up —

You’ll win... what I mean, take it easy, but take it...

to intervene, and despite the fact that the NUMW refused to make the strike official. The strikers' reactions to the layoff were swift: they accused the Company of lock-out and reprisal. But they also put 2 important demands before the Company: they demanded either back pay for workers who were laid off, or some way of regulating the production cycle so as to smooth out the effects of booms and slumps on the worker's wage packet.

In 1946 the fight over the question of layoffs had been smoothed by the intervention of the Labour Government. Then, in 1948, the Union leadership had managed to see off the strike in an Agreement. But by 1952 a struggle was effectively being fought for wages for not working, and the obvious strength of the workers' organization convinced the Ford Negotiating Committee that counter-measures would have to be taken.

Ford and the Unions against the Stewards

"After the 1952 strike, the NUMO considered creating an agreement aimed at entrusting a major controlling-power to the national officials of the Unions. It was difficult to obtain ratification of this plan by the individual Unions, and it became clear to the Company that the delay in getting it signed was due to the resistance put up by the shop stewards." [Note 55].

Ford's takeover of Briggs was decided in Detroit, following joint pressure by both Ford and the US Government. It came at a time when Ford was already taking steps to isolate and discipline workers at Dagenham, with the idea of weakening the strength reached with the 1956 strike, and bringing the shop stewards' organisation under the control of the national leadership of the various Unions.

Ford had to regain control: this was a necessary precondition for the 1955 Procedure Agreement at Ford's, which for the first time gave the employer the possibility of making use of the network of shop stewards who existed, and who at that time were elected on "a craft, departmental or geographical basis" [Note 56]. However, since there were no ground rules about which Union a steward should belong to, this made it hard to establish Union control over stewards that belonged to a different Union to that of the men he represented.

However, the 1955 Agreement did not recognise the existence of the Shop Stewards' Committee at Dagenham. There were two reasons for this. First, to limit the power of the shop stewards so that they were no more than middle-men between the shop floor and the foremen (and always confined to the single section, or the single problem). And second, in order to put an end to the wage-drive, which had arisen at Briggs precisely because of the system of 'direct negotiation between stewards and management.

As a rule, as organic composition (the amount of capital, machinery etc per worker) increases, shop stewards become less and less responsible for bargaining over wages and piecework rates. [However, this role of the shop steward continued, in the Midlands motor factories, right up to the early 1970s, because the Midlands plants have had a far lower level of organic composition - Note 57].

At Briggs, however, there had traditionally been a gulf between rank and file workers, and the Unions. This was not due so much to the interference of Union officials in the struggle, as it was at Ford, but rather to the fact that the indirect part of the wage was increasingly being taken out of the control of the stewards, with the compliance of the
10. Ford Methods of Control

Ford has many methods of imposing control inside the factory—ranging from gangsterism to psycho-drama, as the quotations, below, show:

In the 1930's "In 1936-37 the Union was being forced in the American car factories. The auto companies were engaged in espionage to ferret out union sympathizers and to block union organization. In 1934-35 General Motors spent over a million dollars on an army of 3,000 men, perhaps the largest private police force ever assembled. On the night-shift these Servicemen often shook Ford workers by leaping in front of them, flashing a light in their eyes, and demanding "where did you get that Ford badge"...and "What's your bonus?". Note that in 1932, too, the anti-union managers who were considering joining the Union had their tools smashed. Men were fired for no reason, with no means of appeal. Workers could not smoke on Ford property. And for years workers were barred from speaking at lunch—a taboo that led the workers to talk out of the sides of their mouths, like convicts, a practice known as the "Ford Whisper."

From 'The Company and the Union' in Germany 1937: The crisis is being used by the employers to expand the machinery of repression inside the factories. The German employers are setting up regional 'associations', which coordinate files and information on individual workers. There have been scandals about this...but meanwhile, Ford has been building up its inquisition files quite legally. As a result, Ford-Cologne now has the best employer's espionage-filing system of any employer in Europe.

When a worker starts working for Ford, all his or her personal details are recorded on an IBM main computer. The salaried personnel departments were centralised in 1959. The information includes matters like work record; disciplinary action; changes in name, address, neighbours etc.; medical data including pregnancies; army record; record of skills and education; loans; deductions from wages; buner taken to work (1) and, of course, political activity. The 'political surveillance' section of the computer-file provides Ford not just with details of membership of groups etc., but also comprehensive personal details—workplace, friends, visits...Plus information that passed on by the Union. Officials of the DGB Union (to which 80% of Ford workers belong) are known to have passed on information to the German Special Branch as well (something that Ford does as well...).

In the 1970's And a sorry little story from Holland, in 1972:

The scene is Noodwyk, a fashionable Dutch seaside resort. Under the leadership of the Ford Psychologist (1) van Sande, members of the Workers' Participation Committee of Ford-Holland are going through a four-day training course, entitled "Fair Play Between Workers and Capital!" In Holland every big company is legally bound to appoint a Workers' Participation Committee—part of the government's plan to help the bosses "keep the dialogue open between capital and workers". Hence this psycho-drama. While some members of the group acted out various "conference situations", others acted as "observers", giving the impressions to the psychologist asked for them. In the evening, such "wider" issues such as the "development of mankind" were discussed.

The chairmanship of this Committee is, by Dutch law, firmly in the hands of the Managing Director—R. P.Peddermore. Peddermore was recored as saying: "Nowadays the Directors and the Workers are seen as sharing the same interests." Thus responsibility for the running of the Company should be shared out too.

We are building the future with a clear place for the men in our concern..."

From Amsterdam Weekend, Nov. 1972

New Investments and Decentralisation

It took Ford another 2 years to defeat the forces that were defending their existing conditions of work. This came after the "bell-ringer" strike of 1957, with the Standardisation Agreement of August 1958. This agreement brought Briggs' 'conditions of employment' into line with those at Dagenham, and gave management power to operate whatever internal mobility they thought necessary. Ford were only able to win this battle through the intervention of the State—through the Cameron Court of Enquiry, which had managed to defuse strike action at Briggs (Note 60).

The political stability resulting from the steep increase in fixed capital between 1954 and 1959 was fairly precarious and short-lived (Note 59). The motor industry was expanding, and production of popular cars for the domestic market was slowing rising (thereby reversing the situation from 1946-1954, where exports had been higher than home production). Ford's exports were still growing at 27% in the period 1951-1955 compared with the previous 5 years (Note 60). Ford-UK's function within Ford's overall multinational operations was redefined: it lost its function of central planning, and new investments in Europe, it had no role as a 'development area' coordinator, and it was relegated to be a simple exporter of cars (Note 61).

Already, by the early 1960s, exports as a % of the total sales of Ford-UK, were far higher than the other big UK motor companies: Ford was 6th in terms of turnover, but 1st in the number of cars they exported, a position maintained for a number of years. Ford's situation, therefore, was different from other multinational companies based in Britain— but this was a result of the decision by the management of Ford-America that Ford-UK should function specifically as an exporter of goods

The next phase of investment was in 1959-64, as part of Ford's strategy to knock out the possibility of workers defending their interests merely at shop-floor level (Note 62). A crucial element in this new phase was Ford's policy of increasing decentralisation and production (Note 63). The new plant at Halewood, with its 17,000 workers, was built on Merseyside, which was at that time a "development area", with a large pool of unemploy- ed labour, which represented a certain political threat to the State. The State paid the costs of laying the infrastructure for the twin develop- ment of Ford at Halewood and MG at Speke. Subsequently, and hopefully, much work previously done at the Dagenham plant was farmed out to other factories around Dagenham, some of them new, and some wholly reorganised. Langley was doubled in size, and was developed from being a part factory (after having been used as a Transporter plant) to a new production area of all Ford trucks, with the ex-Briggs Rosslyn plant which Ford had taken over in Southampton in 1953. Decentralisation and expansion prepared the ground for the moment when Ford-America moved from being the majority shareholder in Ford-UK, to take complete control of the British
11. Layoff Struggles at Dagenham-1973

"In the words of a PTA Convenor: "Since January the men in the PTA have been laid off 35 times!' Very large numbers of workers have left Ford's, in disgust at the loss of earnings due to frequent layoffs, but among those who remained, the anger is building up. At the moment there is an official strike call in the PTA plant to get a new layoff agreement. The demand has come up in the factory for 40 HOURS PAY, WORK OR NO WORK. The demand has come directly from workers. The Unio is worried by the way the fight for the 40-hour pay has developed...the way it has gone completely out of their control for a period, as is clear from the following examples:

March in the Body Plant, Night Shift: August 30th

On Thursday night, the Body Plant was working normally. At ten minutes to midnight the management came round and said that the Upstairs Body Plant was held up, and they said "all go home". Some people accepted, and went home. But Ford's action was obviously provocative, and since many of the workers had no chance of getting home at that time of night, they decided to show the company what they thought of it.

About 300 men marched up to the Supervisors' Office. They blocked the door so that management couldn't get out. The stewards went in, but didn't win any guarantees of a full night's pay. So there was a lock-in.

In the words of one man: "We had marched up there. You could hear the shouting from the street outside. People were trying to kick the doors in, and a lot of windows got smashed."

Fire extinguishers were set off and fire alarms rung. There was broken glass everywhere. The police were called in, and after the management had been locked in for a full hour, they agreed that the men would be guaranteed a full night's pay.

"We ended up doing nothing all night. Just sitting around, sleeping, playing cards and messsing about...AND getting paid for it!"

The lessons of this action have not been lost. The stewards got nowhere by negotiating. Direct action by workers paid results. The men refused to go home, and decided to stay in the plant. They got together as a body, and went up to the management's offices - the 'lock-in' went from 8 to 10 o'clock directly and violently. When the Body Plant manager was asked why he had allowed them the full night's pay, he answered simply: "Because they threatened me."

Notts and Pickets: Body Plant and PTA: Day Shift: September 16th

3 weeks later, Ford again tried mass layoffs. On Friday Sept. 14th a West Indian worker from the Body Plant was sacked for allegedly hitting a white worker over the head with a mallet; on the same day, a white man was found in the body plant with a broken arm.

On Saturday the 15th, the picketing started. Ford locked the PTA out of the plant. On the 16th, about 1000 workers walked out, and the company locked them out.

"A strike over a sacked worker erupted into violence as thousands of Ford workers ran riot through the Dagenham factory. Production of Cortina and Granadas was halted as workers swarmed over electrical equipment. A huge procession of men, estimated to be 2,000 strong, marched to the management offices to demand work, and the police were rushed into the factory. Employees from the Body Plant and PTA started a 'lock-in'. When it became clear that production was stopped, they started wrecking vehicles and shouting anti-management slogans. Workers declared that they would occupy the plant until the night shift, which was working normally, arrived."

During this period of layoff struggles workers were on permanent stand-by at the local police station, in case of an 'uprising' at the factory."

Company (1960).

Ford's intention was to put the American company in complete control of the operations of Ford-UK (Note 64). And, ironically, at this very moment Ford was organizing conferences for shop stewards, in which they were explaining that Britain's imminent entry into the Common Market was going to require maximum cooperation from everybody concerned.

Meanwhile, as Ford workers had expected, the take-over by Ford's American management meant Detroit-style policies in the plant. Management set about dismantling what remained of the old "custom and practice". They began laying off Dagenham's higher supervision off to Detroit and Cologne so as to show them how Dagenham workers could be made to keep up the workloads and linespeeds common in Germany and the USA (Note 65).

Here we see American capital intervening at a point where a section of the British working class was relatively strong; we see Ford's international control-centre intervening in order to bring the UK level of struggles down to the international average level for that period.

The Attack on the PTA

The first testing ground for the new policies imposed by Ford-America was the PTA plant at Dagenham (Paint Trim and Assembly), where, for the first time in the history of Dagenham all the operations of painting, trim and final assembly of cars had been organised into a single, continuous assembly line. Management in the PTA had been strengthened by an injection of American personnel, and workers in the PTA found that they were increasingly bearing the brunt of the mechanisation of operations farther back up the line.

Resistance and organisation against the increased linespeeds began in earnest in the PTA in 1959, with small groups of workers organising stoppages on the line. At this time (1960), the average number of strikes in other Ford-UK plants was 0.5 per month; at Dagenham, excluding the PTA, it was 1.5 hours; and in the PTA it was 7.5 hours per worker - a total of 100,000 in 1960. In 1961 this figure rose to 184,000, and in 1962 it stood at 454,000; 69 strikes and 114 overtime hours (Note 63).

"After lengthy negotiations the stewards had sometimes made the offer of a slight improvement, and supervision, in desperation at the continuous struggle, unwillingly compromised and, in accepting only a small proportion of the fight which they were entitled to expect, were left with even more determined resistance to overcome in order to achieve a normal day's work."

"The Company maintained that in most areas of the Assembly Plant there had been a complete and organised effort to restrict output, and any attempt to achieve an improvement had brought the threat of an overtime ban or a stoppage of work." (Note 67).

Ford's policy at this point was to create differences of workload within the Dagenham plant, and then to play on these differences. They chose to attack at a point where the workload was relatively light. And the attack was able to use the fact that struggles of individual sections were isolated from each other. Ford profited from the fact that there was no generalised workers' offensive against the overall organisation of work throughout the plant: this meant that the Union leadership was able to
Ford's exploitation has always been built either on labour in undeveloped areas (where unemployment acts as the whip) or on labour from undeveloped areas (immigrants, contract workers, with few rights and little organisation). However, in the past 10 years the immigrant carworkers who were drafted into the world's car factories after the defeat of the white, Communist vanguard of the 1940s-50s, have emerged as a major political force. In Ford itself we saw the explosive mass-strike of Italian and Turkish workers at Ford-Tolosa (1970) and the direct strike of some 2,500 workers at Ford-Colnago (1973) was a major break-through in the German class struggle. In Britain the union organisation of Asian workers at Ford-Lemington and the consolidation of the new Asian, African and West Indian unionists at Ford-Sagenheim have provided new reference points in 1974-76. It is these immigrant workers who have been at the base of the autonomous struggles that have developed in the motor industry in the past decade - but in very few places has their political emergence as a lasting power in its own right, breaking through the old crusts of Labour Party/Communist Party (mainly white) leadership. This is an organisational task for the coming period.

What follows is an interview with an Italian immigrant worker from the Ford plant in Genk, Belgium.

Reprinted from "Dossier of Fear for Ford" (Factofolder, 1971)
animal, as likely even animals get better treatment than we do. If they get sick and they don't fight, they ain't going to live after until they get better. But you can't say even that much for Ford.

Union

Q: What about the unions here?

F: Don't they do anything for the immigrant workers?

A: We're unionized! You must be joking!

They're real. There was one lad who was killed in the hospital a few months ago. He was in hospital in front of the main one, Sanatorium, and a car ran him over. He was really out so far the way taken in the hospital. Now since it was the end of the week, the he had no money. So we went to the solicitor and asked if they could give him a little bit of cash, but they said that they would not do a thing, because he should have been more careful crossing the road, and any way he must have been drunk in the first place! Drunk, when he didn’t have even the money to buy food! And not only that, but when he went in to the room to start with, they had already been sent back and he been sacked in his absence. And once again, there wouldn't do anything for that. That's how the unions care for you.

Divide and Rule

Q: Do the Ford try to split up the immigrant workers they employ here?

A: They didn't want to split up two Italian workers who were working next to each other on the lines. That's why they told you that you are an Italian, then a Turk, a Moroccan, then a Yugoslav, etc., all working on the lines in such a way that nobody can talk to the next person up to him because he doesn't understand the language. Because they know that if people can get together and talk about the difficulties they face, then something is going to be done, then there's going to be trouble. But they don't do that at Ford. There's no trouble, because they're signed on so many Italians over the years that it's impossible to keep them apart. Mind you, although they're being Italian to work here over since the plant was opened in 1964, you'll find very few who've been here since the start. Most of them have been here for a very short time, because they can't stand it. The ones who do stick it are more the machines than the human beings... they come home at night, and the only thing they have time to think about is how they're being treated in the morning again tomorrow. There's not many of the kids willing to lead a slide like that! Even if they have very little choice in the matter.

The way they treat you at Ford is to humiliate you, make you feel nothing. There's a permanent standing over you, and if you fall behind even slightly, he'll come up and tell you to stop it, because if you don't he'll give you a black mark. You feel like a little schoolboy. Fully grown men, wives and kids, are made to feel like the farmers' son - some jump up off the dock to do this. They have the power to order others. And the reason that they're frightened is that they know that if they lose their job at Ford, there's unemployment among these yards that they might never get a job.

And what's more, if you're an immigrant without a job in Limburg, you have no police on your back the whole time. They want to know who you are, why you aren't working, where you're going, and why. They even look into your pockets to see if you've got money. And if you're no money, they can just push you off back to Italy like the money car - take you to the border and leave you to find yourself. This happens all the time. A sort of continual harassment. This is the sort of thing that the Carreras are up against - first Ford, then it's like a mad-house; then the mines, which are worse than a slave ship; then the whole army of the police peering through from the Italian consulate in the unions.

Tradition of Resistance

Q: From what you say it sounds as if Ford and the mine employers have immigrant workers completely at their mercy.

A: No. I wouldn't say that. Because, as I say, the lads know the situation as they're in, and long before they're going to be in a position to really do something about it.

The employers have just that they're petty clever. When they go to Italy looking for workers, they don't go to the North, because there's industry in the North of Italy, and the workmen there have got themselves organized and are strong. But the old lad who's got more than a year's experience is the North - around Turin, Venice and so on. Now, what they do is go down to the South, where there's no industry, and where workers doesn't organized in the same way, but that's not going to last long either, because you must have read what've been happening at the South - Belpolito, Reggio Calabria... all the rest. You know, we Italians take a long time to get moving, but when things start, you have to look out, because that's going to be trouble. We want one rights, and if we don't get them, we're going to wreck this whole lot. I think there's a lot of the Italian here are beginning to get the same sort of things happening back home, and I'm starting to wonder what they can do themselves.

Spitting at Ford

Q: I was told that a group of workers was brought up here from Heinola to work either at Ford or the mines, and that after a few weeks, out of 400, most all of them had left. Is that true?

A: Not almost all of them. All of them! Even if they know they'll never find other work, and that their families would rather be in Italy than do a favour for the 'big companies'.

Q: And the Italian in the mines?

A: I tell you, there are some of the lads here who've worked at Ford, and it makes them even hate the mines. I've seen people standing by the roadside, and when a Ford trolley passes they spit at it, because of their hatred for what Ford has done to them. They don't think they'll never buy a Ford car for the rest of their lives, even if it meant going everywhere on foot.

And the ladies who come here to work at Ford come up by Italy on the train. They've been travelling for days, and when they get here, they're given any sort of time to get used to the place, to look around the towns and see what it's like. No, they're put to work almost straight away. They're given a little money by Ford before they come, for travelling expenses and so on, but by the time they get here it's more or less gone, and they have no choice but to work. They get here in the afternoon, and they're expected to be in the want morning for the morning shift at Ford. They're not paid at all, and no money in expenses on top of that. In fact I would say they're imposed, because Ford men don't get paid at all, not as workers, but as so much raw material for the production lines.

Ford's New Factories

If we want to understand the changing balance of class forces at Ford in the period since 1962-63, we have to take account of the level of workers’ struggles internationally in the 1960s - both inside and outside Ford's international cycle of production. We also have to understand Ford's new thrust in Europe as a whole.

The keynotes of Ford's expansion plans at the end of the 1950s - both in Britain and in Europe - was the injection of a young labour force onto the assembly lines: this becomes a coordinated company policy. The new plants of the period were Halewood on Merseyside, and Genk in Liege, Belgium. Both of these were 'developments areas', where Ford received State aid worth £1m and 10bn Belgian francs respectively, for setting up their factories. Both were high unemployment areas, with large labour reserves, so that Ford could reasonably expect easily planned wage
13. Ford Workers against the State-1969

"The Economist" has pointed out the implications of Income Policy strongly:

"The price of securing an incomes policy in Britain will be a willingness to stand up to strikes...Another weapon against unofficial strikes is that, quite bluntly, blacklegging must become respectable again" [Economist, 5th June and 4th September 1965].

And one economist recommended a vote for the Labour Party in the 1964 General Election, because...

"Paradoxically, one of the strongest arguments for a Labour Government is that, beneath layers of velvet, it might be more prepared to face a showdown in dealing with the Unions." [S. Brittain, 1965]

The same point was made by Sir Patrick Hennessy, Ford's chief, stating: "It is my conviction, following the latest moves - the cooperative action of the industry, the Trafalgar Union, and the Labour Government - that we may soon see action to prevent unofficial stoppages..."

Harold Wilson did not disappoint Sir Patrick Hennessy. One of the first acts of the Labour Government was the appointment of the Donovan Commission on Trade Unions and Employers' Associations.

"The main target of Donovan was clear:"

"...the central defect in British industrial relations is the disorder in factory and workshop relations and pay structures, promoted by the conflict between the formal and the informal systems. To remedy this, effective and orderly collective bargaining is needed..."

The aims of the Donovan Report was the integration of the shop stewards into a streamlined union machine, into a plant consensus. The process of integration could be helped by greater legal and managerial discipline. Order had also to be brought into the workings of the unions. [June 1968]

The bugbear of the Donovan Commission was the unofficial strikes. The Commission recommended that the definition of trade unions should be altered to exclude "temporary combinations" of workers, and that only registered trade unions should come under the protection of law like the 1906 trade disputes act, which protects workers on strike against civil action for damages. The effect of this would be to place all workers on unofficial strikes at the mercy of the litigating employers. To soften the blow and the contradictions of such a policy, this Commission recommended that no legal sanction can be introduced against unofficial strikes as such. They argued against the wisdom of penal sanctions.

Seven months after Donovan, the Labour Minister Barbara Castle came out with her own variation on the same theme - In Place of Strife. This proposed the establishment of a register of trade unions in order to establish control; the setting-up of industrial courts; powers for the State to impose a 28-day cooling-off period for unofficial strikes and to impose a strike ballot. Workers could be fined for ignoring these procedures.

Simultaneously the Ford Motor Company was preparing its own penal sanctions: in the 1969 wage negotiations they tried to include a Penalty Clause, whereby: "For lay-off benefit Ford will pay 4/- per employee into a fund, but if there was an unconstitutional action in any plant all the workers would lose all the payment for 6 months."

In a prolonged strike action, Ford tried taking the Unions to Court - but as a result of a very militant and massive strike, Ford management's penalty clauses were smashed to pieces...And the same went for Labour's proposed Income Policy. They were voted out of office the year after."

costs for many years ahead. And both were located in regions of declining industries - apparently promising a degree of medium-term political stability.

However, their hopes proved ill-founded, because workers at both the new factories maintained a continuity of struggles with the old "declining" sectors - engineering on Merseyside, and coal-mining in Liège [Note 75]. At Halesowen, the building and starting-up of the new factory was accompanied by strikes and overtime bans from 1960 to 1962 - and this culminated in 1962 with the breakdown of the agreement between the Union (GWU and ABU) and Ford. (In 1960 the Unions had accepted longer hours and lower wages than Dagenham in return for preferential unionisation agreements) [Note 76]. With the struggles of 1965 we see the end of Halesowen's unification with the rest of Ford-UK.

The unification of Ford-Gent with Ford-Antwerp took longer. Ford-Gent began production in 1954, with a young labour force that was mainly of Southern European origin - some of them came to Ford after a spell in the Liège coalmines, where about 60% of the workforce in the 1950s and 1960s was imported migrant labour, and some of whom came in a fresh influx of immigrant labour from Southern Europe and North Africa (many Turks and Italians amongst them). This meant that by 1965 the average age of the Ford worker at Gent was not much over 25 years. This long period of organisation of young people's muscle power on the assembly lines opened the way for a speed-up of such intensity that it created a unity between old and young workers - united in their refusal to work at Ford: of the 500 ex-Doversberg miners who entered Ford-Gent when it opened, only 200 were left by 1965. Between 1964 and 1966, 9,000 workers had left Ford-Gent in protest against the 45-hour working week, the high line-speeds, and the fact that Ford-Gent paid 12 francs an hour less than Ford-Antwerp (see facing page).

The 8,000 workers at Ford-Gent had their first trial of strength with Ford's international management, in the strike that lasted from October to November 1965: the demands of the strikers were similar to those of the hands being made by Halesowen workers in relation to Dagen- ham: wage-parity with Ford-Antwerp; rank and file control of the struggle; and the need to establish coordination with other Ford plants in Europe. The Union ended this struggle with an agreement that was supposed to run for 4 years, "the trust in Labour" - but this time cooperation broke down in January 1970, when Gerken workers re-opened the struggle, and joined up with the striking miners of the surrounding Liège mines.

When Ford chose to site the plant at Gent - almost midway along the 1,200-miles of motorway that link the Cologne and Antwerp plants - this signified that the core of Ford's sales and production was being shifted from Britain to the Belgian/German axis, and that overall European control was passing from Ford-UK to Ford of Germany. Ford's interests were clear: they had a more favourable labour situation in Germany, and a level of labour discipline that they hoped to be able to impose on the British plants. The fact that Ford had created an international cooperation between the Belgian, German and British plants could have laid the basis for cooperation between their overseas counterparts, and develop common forms of struggle and this unified production process. However, this was scotched: the Unions' response to this capitalist initiative was to take away the fruits, more and more of their channels of communication at the national level.
14. The Parity Drive - Ford Strike 1971

This article from the Financial Times, March 11th 1971, was published during the 3-week Ford Strike of that year. It describes the central focus around which both the workers and the employers in the motor industry organised their strategy - the question of parity. It also stresses the importance of the Coventry Toolroom Agreement which came under attack in that year.

and to keep tight Union control of any direct communication with representatives from Ford plants abroad.

Wages, not Productivity

Although individual struggles remained isolated, they had a common factor - the drive for increased wages. We can see that the refusal of work at Ford (and the associated labour mobility) was an important factor in the wage drive at Ford's in the 1960s - but we should also note that this was a generalised phenomenon at the worldwide level, particularly in the motor industry. From this we can see the most obvious common factor of the wage drive: the cost of labour/mobility, which presents itself as a direct demand for higher real wages, and refuses to accept that wage rises should be linked to increased productivity (in the shape of the various sorts of productivity and incentive schemes). This has always been the pattern of things at Ford: the workers' demand for increased social welfare grows in hand in hand with the increasing refusal to work at Ford, of the mobility that this brings about, and the social costs that result from this refusal. This is a characteristic that unites the different struggles that emerged in the 1960s; and it also raises the responsibility of developing this characteristic at an international level - something which will prove an important testing point for the new working-class forces that are emerging now. Furthermore, the fact that capital is now using stagnation as a political weapon, as well as underdevelopment (as previously in the case of the West Indies, even more than Southern Europe) means that the problem of the overall relationship between driving sectors of the economy and the non-wage areas becomes a problem not only for the masses of workers coming out of the underdeveloped areas - but for the whole of the working class.

Ford-UK is an important focus of class forces - and it was here that Ford management undertook a trial of strength that led to the workers' strike in 1962. Ford's initiatives was the beginning of a new wave of workers' resistance to increases in money wages - a resistance which took shape in the Budgets of 1961 and 1962, during the brief period when Selwyn Lloyd was Chancellor of the Exchequer, and which began the policy from July 1961 to March 1962 ("pay pause"). This experiment was a taste of the "wage freeze" which was being proposed by the Tory Right-wing (although this Right-wing suffered a demise as a result of the Government's inability to confront the wave of strikes in 1962 - and did not resume control of the economy until the 1970 Election).

The fact that this wage freeze experiment was held in reserve while Labour was coming to power (the 1964 Election) did not imply that a new phase of social democracy was on the way. Rather it was a period of uncertainty for British capital, in the face of increased wage pressures. It was a period in which the employers were preparing an offensive against working class struggles, through the attempt to involve trade unionists and shop stewards in a much tighter co-ordination of company planning and national economic planning. 1962 had seen the formation of the National Economic Development Council and the National Incomes Commission. But it was to be Robert Carr's Industrial Relations Act which would mark the most significant attempts to contain the Ford experiment: in this 'collective capitalism' tried to detach workers' factory representatives from their shop floor base and tried to direct them upwards into the Union...
15. Is there Life after Fords? 1974

Ford, in 1912, set out to control the lives and desires of his workers. He later also introduced night shift working - the effects of which are described below by the wife of a Dagenham Ford worker. But the sharp
homosexual division of labour also leaves its mark inside the factory:

"The first thing that hits you when you walk into the plant - after the racial composition of the workers - are the Playboy-type models in every available space. It's like being wrapped up in the Sun. The naked woman becomes the symbol, however distorted and distorting, of "real"
life outside the factory. And any woman who happens to pass is seen in this extreme way. What a life!" [1974]:

"If John is working on nights, he'll just want to get up on Saturday
afternoon and turn the box on. Ford has mucked up our whole weekend. There is just about time to do some of the shopping. I get really tired because I haven't seen kids in 6 weeks. Things get really tense when he's on nights. You've got to get used to living on your own. I sometimes get my sister over when he's on nights. In the olden days it wouldn't have been so bad.

"It gets really hard on the kids. You have to tell them to shut up all the time because Dad is trying to get some sleep. You get tensed all the time, because you think they are going to wake him up. Some blokes find it really tough to sleep during the day. You can't blame them when they get all ratty, but it's tough on the kids.

"Sometimes you don't want to go to bed in the afternoon. Sex is hard if you've got kids to look after. You don't always feel like it. You just
can't do it. It makes it all cold-blooded and mechanical. It makes you
feel bad, and I just can't enjoy it. I'm losing myself the same.

You can't make love, just because you've got 5 minutes to spare. So
you don't go near each other. You get used to doing without sex. You
aren't bothered. This just shows you the state that people get in. It's
no surprise that blokes are frustrated most of the time. Things get worse
if you're doing a job yourself, because you hardly see kids. Be something
about the lack of business, all the work and tired, and you have to go to work soon after. That's
a life this is! It's hard to keep putting a good face on it all... Fords
controls not only the money we get, but our whole life as well. They
don't think about what is happening to the kids, that are doing all the work and
make the decision what to do. When they get old or have an accident, they're
just thrown onto the scrapheap.

"It's alright for the blokes sitting on their asses in the offices

- giving the orders. They never have to spend the whole night working. It
seems an injustice that the workers can't do anything about it. People should be paid at least double rates for working nights. And I don't think they should do it at all. It isn't human. If people
mattered in this society, we wouldn't have things organised in this way.

"You can't afford to buy the bloody cars anyway - so who are we insulting then? We do all the bloody work, the bloody class. Fords are killing people every day - they are just doing it slowly, so they get away with it. Of course, they are "ever so nice" when things go wrong.

"But if a kid gets ill, you're left alone in the flat. Does Fords pay
blokes to stay at home to look after the kids when they're ill? Why not?

You can manage on one wage these days. Women have been forced cut to work. We used to have a little money for extras - now it is for the bare
essentials. Why should wives have to pay for a nursery when the profits
that we make for Ford could pay for it? The nursery shouldn't have to

1974 - A wife's and mother's view of Ford

Job Evaluation & Labour Hierarchy

bureaucracies [Note 77]. This kind of policy opened up new possibilities of
controlling incomes - especially when coupled with increasing wage
disparities between manual workers and the middle class (with the coordinated flight of overseas investments) that were taking place in that period. The working class
forces that emerged in the 1960s have not yet proved themselves capable
of taking their own class initiatives, quite separate from their formal
factory representatives - initiatives which would make it possible to
break through these new instruments of income control. However, there has
been a growing tendency for strikes to break with the Unions'
control of wage agreements; for workers to carry the factory struggle
out into the community; and for some Unions to be side-stepped by their
memberships [Notes 78, 79, 80].

Alongside this centralisation of Ford's European operations came a
new wave in the relation of wages to productivity within Ford-Motor. In
1967, Enzo, with the Fawley Agreement [Note 82], was the first company in
Britain to lay down an agreement which made wage increases conditional on
productivity (wage contract which was already higher at Enzo than the British average). Ford followed Enzo, in September 1967,
with the Job Evaluation Agreement, which attempted (rather shakily)
to translate the Enzo experiment into a sector of lower organic composition. The Ford Agreement called for the integration of job evaluation and the separation of assembly-line work and auxiliary/tertiary
functions [Note 81], and was a move in the direction of Europe-wide
planning of Ford's overall wage costs. It was negotiated by job with the
Unions and shop stewards, in the face of general dissatisfaction among
the rank and file of workers. But as from the middle of 1968 it began to come
under attack, with strikes by line workers, and in particular the strike of
sewists at Dagenham and Halewood, which provided a general platform of egalitarian demands against the hierarchy of labour
and the Ford control of wages, as well as taking up various issues related to that moment of
the struggle. Note that the "second wage packet" earned by married women
workers had been seen as an "extra" in the period of relative stability
of real wages - but it became increasingly a "necessity" as inflation
began to grow through the 1960s [Note 83].

By now more and more people were becoming aware that they had
to stick in their jobs, even to defend their present level of family
income - and in a sense this awareness contributed to the strength of
the Ford workers' campaign for Party with the Midlands car workers. We

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The next 17 pages of our pamphlet consist of:

a. Notes to sections 1 & 2 of the pamphlet.
b. Appendix 1, which explains some of the terms used in the pamphlet.
c. Appendix 2, which explains a few things about the capitalist crisis, as we see it.
d. A suggested reading list about the Ford Motor Co.

Reading List (Continued from inside back cover)

Ford Motor Company, 1957 (WHC, Cmsd 131); of the Jack Court of Inquiry into the 1965 Ford dagenham dispute (IMCO, Cmsd 1999).

And finally, the old bastard himself: (i) "My Life and Work" by Henry Ford, pub. Garden City 1922; (ii) "Today and Tomorrow", H. Ford, Garden City, 1926; (iii) "Moving Forward", H. Ford, Garden City, 1937.

3] And, to conclude, some necessary GENERAL READINGS: (i) the article "Americanism and Fordism" by A. Gramsci, in "Prison Notebooks", LAW, 1971, p.279; (ii) the book "Opera e Stato", ed. Bologna & Negri, pub. Feltrinelli 1972 - the book from which this pamphlet is taken; (iii) "Ford Facts" - a folder of relevant information published regularly by the Ford Motor Co.; (iv) There are, of course, many other pamphlets, leaflets etc that have been published by political groups over the years of Ford's existence, both in Britain and in the other countries where they operate. The trouble is that a lot of them are not in English - and even those which are, are very hard to get hold of.

- Contained in this pamphlet you will find reference to the main sources and documents for the history of Ford. If anybody is interested in working on a more complete documentation (or a bibliography) of working class struggle in the Ford Motor Company, we would be glad to cooperate, both by making material available, and by providing possible further leads.

NOTES

1] For the relationship between supplier firms and the larger motor manufacturers in Britain, see the article in Economic Intelligence Unit - "Motor Business", No.55, 1968.


4] From the Times article (see Note 3 above), page 4.


6] It's exceptional for motor firms to self-supply 50% of their parts. Ford's other 50% comes from 11 supplier firms. For more information, see Economic Intelligence Unit - "Motor Business", No.55, 1968.

7] Primary lines and auxiliary lines - are the main assembly lines and the feeder lines.

According to the RESEARCH DEPARTMENT OF METAL-WORKING PRODUCTION, McGRAW HILL, Census of Machine Tools in Britain, Metal-working production, July 27th 1966, published by McGraw Hill, London, 1966, the percentage of foreign manufactured machine tools within the UK total was as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AGE OF MACHINE TOOL</th>
<th>MANUFACTURED, ABROAD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LESS THAN 10 YRS OLD</td>
<td>11.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BETWEEN 10 &amp; 20 YRS OLD</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MORE THAN 20 YRS OLD</td>
<td>10.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As the census-completion point out, these percentages are in terms of numbers, and not of value. It's usually the machines that are most expensive and hard to find in the UK that are imported, and this means that the percentage based on value rather than on numbers would show a larger number of foreign machines. These considerations are, more generally, for the vehicles industry than for industry as a whole, as the percentages show. They are also more true for Vauxhall and Ford than for the vehicles industry as a whole, because it's relatively easy for them to transfer technological innovations from General Motors and Ford-US. There is also a considerable production in Britain of machinery under licence from these 2 American companies.


9] See Labour Research No.45, December 1965, which shows that the relationship between capital investment at Ford-UK and EEC has remained almost unchanged since 1957. See also Economic Intelligence Unit - "Motor Business" No.16, 1958, Table XIII.

10] This period runs from that start of the motor industry in the UK, through to the end of the 1960s, when the switch-over-from piece-rates was introduced at BMC - the company that emerged from the merger of British Motor Holdings with Leyland.

11] See Labour Research No.45. In 1965 BMC were producing 8.86 cars per worker, Ford 10.97, and Vauxhall 10.1.

12] Royal Commission on Trade Unions and Employers' Associations (Donovan)

[Notes 1]

13 Royal Commission (as in Note 12), para 56-58.

14 "Net Value added per employee" is a useful way of measuring relative exploitation. Moses Evans in the NUM's 'Ford Wage Claim' for 1971, page 17, reports Ford's statement to the NUM in November 1969, that £2,764 net value added per employee represented a 'favourable comparison in the UK'. But, using Ford's 1968 accounts in 'Ford Facts', Evans claims that the real figure is nearer £3,500 per employee...which 'compares even more favourably with other British producers.'

15 Again, see the NUM wage claim for 1971, which gives the best figures for the national and international differences in Ford's wages. Pages 39-46 give figures for comparative wage costs in the UK and in the Common Market, while pages 33-35 give comparative wage rates within the UK motor industry.


17 An 'unconstitutional strike' is one that ignores the negotiating procedure laid down in the Company agreement. See Socialist Worker, January 29th 1969, page 4.


20 See, for example, the article in the Sunday Times, March 19th 1969, page 12 or "The Ford in Wastes A Little": "With new wage increases, the pressure of wage demands not linked to productivity - consuming what we have not yet created - would grow immediately. This is why the Ford strike is of such prime importance for British policy."

21 One of the tightest groups at Dagenham, the process workers in the Ford's foundry, give the example of how they waged a struggle through 1968-69 - ie at the time Ford was introducing the new hierarchies developed by the Ford evaluation study.

There were a few stewards who wanted to bring notions of 'workers control' into the struggle over job evaluation, but this didn't go very far. Among the most ideological stewards on the British Left, the idea of workers' control reigned supreme, and supply it not only to the control of production, but also the defence of skills. Their idea was that workers and stewards should be the ones to decide skill ratings, without challenge the whole notion of 'skills' at Ford. For example of this attitude, see Socialist Worker, 29th March 1969, page 2: "The control of job evaluation and comparisons of differences in pay must be in the hands of the shop floor. The workers will accept the decisions of other workers - the representatives that they have elected."

22 In June 1968 Ford laid off large numbers of workers at the time of the women sewing machinists' strike, and again in September-October, following a strike in one of their suppliers.

23 On the British Left people are often as frightened to admit that from the capitalist point of view immigration has been an anti-worker exercise as they find difficulty in admitting that it was also an anti-proletarian operation in the ex-colonies, and that the struggles of immigrant workers lead the movement that is going to break this operation, by attacking the links that bind "development" and "underdevelopment"...

24 This was the same in the sewing machinists' strike at Dagenham in June 1968. In the decisive meeting between the workers' representatives and the Minister of Labour, the women were refused a higher grading, but were offered wage increases that would leave them 50% behind the average of the wage packet. The notion of the women to get themselves upgraded was translated by the State into a demand for 'Equal Pay for Equal Work'.

25 Royal Commission, paras. 61-62. A confidential report, put out by the Ministry of Labour, with the aid of industrialists and trade unionists, was published in Socialist Worker on December 21st 1969, with the continual introduction of expensive new machinery and equipment, shift working will no doubt continue to increase so as to maximise the economic return from the capital investment involved, and indeed before committing capital to the purchase of such machinery, employers want to be assured that shift working will be possible so as to ensure an adequate return.

The Report discussed Section 68 of the Factory Act, which says that women and workers under 18 should take their rest periods at the same time. This, the Report concludes, "denies the employer the flexibility so essential in present-day conditions". The employers would rather see rest times dictated by the needs of production - staggered breaks etc.

This tendency is confirmed in J. Blackman's article in the 1970 Trade Union Register (pages 109-115), especially pages 109-110:

Progress towards equal pay without legislation has been made in some branches of industry during 1969. At the end of 1969 a step forward towards treating men and women alike for pay was made by Fords, on condition that the restrictions on women working night shifts were lifted. At the beginning of this year (1970), Vauxhall established a policy of "Equal Pay for Equal Work" also, by an agreement whereby women received the full men's rate for the same work, including night shifts...this was regarded in the Press as a useful step which may be significant for other car plants and engineering in general.


Notes for Section Two

[The writing of the second part of this pamphlet was made possible by the help of Robert Lovell - ABE official at Dagenham from 1943-55 - who provided documents and information that would otherwise have been unobtainable. The notes that follow have been slightly expanded from the original Italian text.]

27 The Ford plant at Trafford Park was a converted coach-building establishment. Ford started production there in 1911, with the formal setting-up of the Ford Motor Company (England). In 1912 they acquired their first body-making plant.

28 This political movement included the Russian Revolution, the development of the revolutionary Workers' Councils in Germany and Italy (to be crushed by Social Democracy and Fascism respectively), the Nazi
General Strike and the Steel and Railroad strikes in the USA, and the Triple Alliance in Britain.

29) General Motors took over Vauxhall in 1925 and Opel in 1929. The European market was divided up in the 1930s between the two big US manufacturers. In Oct. General Motors had the edge over Ford. The turnover of Ford-Werke AG was a quarter that of Opel, while Vauxhall's turnover was half that of Ford-UK.

30) Ford's penetration into Commonwealth markets was not in fact organised by Ford-UK, but by Ford-German, through Ford of Canada, where they controlled 78% of the company from America.


"When housebuilding started late in 1921, the situation was getting acute (because of lack of funds) ... eventually unemployment helped the situation. Unemployment then being very serious (all over the country), an Unemployment Grants Committee was set up with means at its disposal. That provided 65% of the cost (of the infrastructure)." [See the text facing page 16 for the restructuring of British industry in the 1930s out of the traditional working class strongholds.]

32) In this period 70% of the houses were built, while the figure for 1921-24 was 10% and 9% in 1929-30. According to the Census figures the population rose from 9,127 in 1921 to 19,363 in 1931.

For the first years of Dagenham as a New Town, see O'Leary's book [Note 31], and also T. Young's book "Reenact and Dagenham: Report made for the Pilgrim Trust", London 1934.

33) According to the figures from the Dagenham Employment Exchange, apart from Ford, Briggs and Kelcey Hayes, there were 5 other industrial employers, employing about 1,134 workers in 1935.

34) According to an internal ABE document of the time, the number of ABE members at Dagenham in 1930 - the year before Ford opened - was 24. Up until 1935 the ABE had only one branch at Dagenham.


"The remarkable unity, not only between the strikers and workers in other places, but also between the employed and unemployed... the picket lines included not only strikers, but also many unemployed.

36) For the beginnings of the Sit-down strike movement in the USA, see the illustration facing page 16. See also the "Solidarity" pamphlet, "The Great U.M. Flint Sit Down Strike", and the excellent book by Jerome Brecher, "Strike", pub. Straight Arrow Books, USA, 1972

37) In the midst of the Depression, Roosevelt, newly elected President of the USA, began a programme of "Relief, Recovery and Reform". The National Recovery Act was designed to raise workers' wages, to set up work relief projects, and to guarantee unionisation. It opened the way to a wave of strikes in 1934, and to the signing of the 1935 Social Security Act. Roosevelt made his point: "I laid down the simple proposition that nobody is going to starve in this country. It seems to me equally plain that no business which depends for its existence on paying less than a living wage to its workers has any right to continue in this country..."

38) For the history of the organisation of the unemployed, and the role of the Communists in that organisation, read W. Hennington's book "Unemployed Struggles" 1919-1936, published by Lawrence and Wishart, London 1936, and reprinted by SP publishing house, 1973. [See also the text facing page 17].

39) For the importance of this strike at Dagenham, see the duplicated paper put out by the organisers of the struggle - the "Ford Worker", No. 12, March 1954. At Dagenham: "The strike was a lesson to Detroit, Sweden, Cologne, Briggs, Pitestown, Rape and all workers..." Also the unpublished "Years of Struggle against Injustice" pamphlet, prepared by the Ford Dagenham TU panel:

"The strike at Briggs Bodies had revealed conditions under which no human being should be expected to work. It was a revolt of the unorganised against tyranny and oppression. Accidents were numerous and occurred almost hourly in an atmosphere of sweat. Conditions there appeared to be little unity and liaison with the trade union movement in the Dagenham area at this stage..."

40) At this point, reference to Keynes is unavoidable. In December 1930 Keynes had warned against attempts by individual employers to introduce wage cuts - see "The Great Slump of 1930", Collected Works, Vol. IX, p.128:--

"In this quasidry individual producer base illusory hopes on courses of action which would benefit an individual producer or class of producers as long as they were alone in pursuing them, but which benefit no one if everyone pursues them."

Keynes was implicitly posing the necessity of an international policy towards the crisis, built on a basic coordination of policy between the 'democratic' capitalist countries - in particular Britain and America - acting against the maverick solutions to the crisis. Such a coordination would mean a common wages policy - or rather a homogeneous policy was a necessary precondition for making the decision on whether to have wages low or high.

41) See "Ford Worker" [Note 39, above], page 5.

42) See "Ford Worker" [Note 39 above]: "The firm is experiencing difficulty in getting the 'right men', as men in jobs won't pack them up to come to our place, while hundreds are leaving this concentration camp at the first opportunity".

43) According to the Daily Herald, 30th March 1933, several hundred workers were clocking up 12 hours a day on the 2-shift system.

44) In a handwritten Report by a Briggs worker, sent to the ABE in about 1934, it says: "If any overtime is worked, any man on the job who is paid a little higher rate than the others, is sent home, so as to save money..."

45) See the Report [Note 44, above].


47) See the Report [Note 46, above], page 3. There is also an appeal for local trade union unity, from the Communist members at Ford: "Quite obviously the existence of these establishments at the present moment are a menace to trade union conditions in unionised factories."

48) See the Report [Note 46, above], page 4: "The situation for the Unions
at this moment is hopeful because of the difficulties the Company is having in obtaining suitable classes of skilled workers."

49) The general conditions of work, and in particular the fluctuations in production, were the main reasons for the refusal of work at Ford, by 1951, the number of people travelling in to Dagenham was immense, many of them coming from London. This broke one of the lynching pins of Ford's "New Deal" at Dagenham - the closeness of workers' homes to the factory, all under the control of local councils. This closeness had been very convenient, since it avoided the pressures of travelling expenses on the wage packet. For the 1951 Census figures, see the Book of Dagenham (Note 31, above).

50) "Report by a Court of Inquiry in the matter of a Trade Dispute apprehended at Briggs Motor Bodies Ltd., Dagenham, HMG 1941 (Cand 6248) page 6:

"The management of this company has in fact take notice of, and have dealings with, certain of their own engineering employees whom they know to be members of the AEU, and shop stewards chosen by members of that union. They have, however, no dealings with the officials of that union unless they are also employed by them."

51) "Report of a Court of Inquiry into the causes and circumstances of a dispute at Briggs Motor Bodies Ltd., Dagenham (under Lord Cameron)" (Cand 131) HMG 1957, page A5.

52) For the unionisation of Ford-America, see the text facing page 21.

53) The Cameron Report (Note 51, above), page A5:

"The 1941 arrangements applied originally only to the Engineer Division, but, after a period of agitation and strikes, an agreement was reached in 1944, in virtually the same terms as the 1941 Agreement, covering the whole of the Briggs plant. Thereafter the trouble appears to have become manageable for a time."

54) This coordination was formalised when the Motor Industry Industrial Relations Panel was set up in 1961 (MITRP), after Ford-America had taken over full control of Ford-JUK.

55) See the Cameron Report (Note 51, above), page A5.


57) For the employers' attack on the bastions of the piecework system in the Midlands motor industry, see the article on the Coventry Toolroom Agreement in Factofiler No.1, 1971, available from Red Notes.

58) See the Jack Inquiry (Note 56, above) and the Cameron Report (Note 51, above), para 19 and para 78 respectively.

59) In terms of vehicles, the numbers of Ford's annual production that were exported were the following (in %):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1930</td>
<td>12.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1946</td>
<td>39.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1950</td>
<td>75.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

60) In 1950 Ford-America took over from Ford-JUK the control that they had held since the 1930s over the coordination of Ford's European operations. The coordination of investments in the Commonwealth was still left with Ford of Canada, which was still controlled by Ford-JUK.


62) This phase of Ford's policies in the United Kingdom was part of a new period of Ford's international investment, with a shift from simple assembly of imported parts to the local production of complete vehicles. This happened in Brazil in 1959, in Argentina in 1961, and then in Mexico and South Africa.


64) "What Happened at Ford" [Note 62, above], page 13.

65) The Jack Inquiry [Note 56, above], para.29.

66) "What Happened at Ford" [Note 62, above], page 14.

67) "What Happened at Ford" [Note 62, above], page 14.

68) "What Happened at Ford" [Note 62, above], page 15, the Communist Party had 110 members at Ford Dagenham, 30 of whom were stewards or convenors. They had 2,000 members in south-east Essex, of whom about 1,500 were workers.

69) For the turnover and the level of fixed capital investment, see Ford's annual published reports.

70) In some sections of the PTA, the lines were speeded up by as much as 30%, with some increases even of 37% in the months following the strike. See the article "After the Ford Defeat" in Solidarity Vol.4, No.3, pages 9-11, and "Murder at Ford", in Solidarity Vol.4, No.4, pages 15-16.


73) See the article "Too Old at Fifty" in Solidarity Vol.4, No.3, August 1966, page 20-22.

74) For conditions at Ford-Bork, Bleigem, see the text facing pages 26 and 29.

75) Solidarity Vol.2, No.5 and No.10.

76) It seems that this is the common element of both the Labour and Tory legislative measures - an element that is anti-worker but not anti-union. This can be traced from the Donovan Commission, through Barbara Castle's Bill, to the Industrial Relations Act.

77) The passivity of most workers in Ford's main factories when 1,500 workers at Ford-Chesapeake struck in February 1970 over parity with the Midlands, was seen by the left as a sign that Union activists and shop stewards had failed to raise the class consciousness of the rank and file. The Bourgeois press saw the message of the Gulf between the high wages that were being demanded and the low level of organization that was offered by the shop stewards to the rank and file - and the resulting refusal by the mass of workers to enter into a struggle at that particular moment, unfavourable as it was. The Guardian (16th Feb. 1970) wrote: "Incidentally, this is a test case for last year's Downing Street agreement, under which the TUC promised to deal with unofficial strikes, especially those minority groups who jeopardise the interests of both their fellow workers and the nation by selfish stoppages."
The suggestion of making links between the struggle in the factory and the working class community in Dagenham was raised by groups of workers, following the poorly-supported strikes at Dagenham in February 1970. But these links are hard to make - especially with the capitalists' ability to turn "consumer opinion" against workers in time of strike action. Some of the left's groups, though, saw this as an unwillingness by workers to spread the struggle from the factory to the community.

Some Unions were more unwilling to mediate between "unconstitutional strikes" and Ford's factory plan (eg UNW, the Rollermakers, and the Plumbing Trade Union). But their freedom of action was increasingly restricted as the TUC and AUEW were increasingly stepping in to the unofficial strikes of the late 1960s.

The definition used here of "auxiliary work" in the engineering and motor-working industries (meaning work that feeds and connects the main production lines) and "tertiary work" (meaning the application of scientific research) comes from I. Alquati in "Capital and the Working Class at FIAT: a Mid-Point in the International Cycle", reprinted in "Sulla Spianata: e altri scritti", Feltrinelli, Milan, 1975.


According to a Union circular in February 1969, the buying power of the average Ford worker's wage for a 44-hour week was 12.6% lower than in 1938. Tame, which did not apply in 1938, accounted for almost all (12.1%) of this gap. (1)

End of the Notes

APPENDIX 1.

We're adding a post-script to this article, since some of the terms used in it are not as familiar in the UK as they would be in Italy. Many of the terms stem from a new method of analysing the present day class struggle, developed by Italian Marxist from the early 1950s - especially in the review Quaderni Rossi (Red Notebooks: 1961-64) and Classe Operaia (Working Class: 1964-67). It was no accident that this 'new Marxism' should develop inside the Italian working class movement, given the changes rapidly taking place inside the composition of the Italian workforce, and the resulting crisis of the traditional working class movement - both the Unions and the Communist Party of Italy (PCI).

The years 1961-65 saw a revival of class struggle after a period of Cold War and 'social peace'. The economic and political situation was marked by things: monopoly corporations were consolidating themselves, bringing about a new organisation of production, and thereby a new composition of the working class; there was an ever-increasing tendency towards capitalist planning of the economy, with increasing State intervention; and the policy of the traditional working class organisations was to take the 'Italian road to socialism', by participating in and, eventually (they hope) taking over State planning.

In 1965 a series of essays was published - 'Workers and Capital' - by Mario Tronti, one of the central people in this new Marxist current. By this time it was already clear that the old socialism of the official labour movement was outdated as far as workers were concerned. Workers were no longer fighting for planning, State ownership, and control of production, but rather for wages. And not wages 'linked to productivity', but wages based on the workers' need to live. In other words, fighting against productivity, against work under capitalism. This was shown, for instance, in the demands that were to develop later in the fight at FIAT in 1966-70. This fight expressed the specific material needs of workers, of their own autonomy as a class, against the 'general interest' of capitalist (or socialist) society, and against planning and all its agencies, from the State down to the Unions.

The new approach, based on this new class situation, meant returning to Marx. In other words, a re-reading of Marx (especially the Grundrisse) in order to rediscover a scientific approach to the class struggle, behind the distortions of socialist orthodoxy over the past 50 years.

The new Marxism in Italy countered these distortions by returning to the basic antagonism between capital and labour within production, and developed this as the basis for a movement with communism and the abolition of wage labour as its aim. Their understanding has been confirmed by the development of the struggle since 1965 in the advanced capitalist countries - the collapse of incomes policies and Keynesian planning.

In this Appendix No. 1 we have tried to give a brief definition of some of the terms used in this article, and the way these concepts are used as a means of analysing the class struggle. Some of these terms, such as 'vertical integration' and 'production cycle' are simple technical terms in general use by capitalists; others are specifically Marxist, and are developed in Marx's study of Capital.
1 Class Composition, Raciality, Recompensation

The use of these terms implies a way of seeing the basic confrontation between the working class and capital as the meeting point of two antithetical forces, two drives, which counterpose each other, and which develop along with capital accumulation.

First, the organization of workers by capital. By CLASS COMPOSITION we mean the structural relation of the working class as a category of a given historical period around a given structure of the organization of production. Thus, the question: how is the working class composed at any given moment? From capital's point of view, this means things like the distribution of the labour market; the direction of labour migration; the control of education and job-training; the division ('hierarchy', 'articulation' of the labour force) of the workforce into skills, age, nationality etc. In other words, the way in which capital both uses and constructs the class in order to maintain control.

Workers within a given composition of the working class organise to overcome these divisions, and become strong in their work situation. Within this permanent and uneasy situation, capital creates new machinery, new branches of production, to create and exploit new types of workers, while older, militant sections become redundant, promoted, or marginalised. Or, often, physically destroyed. This is what we would call CLASS DROOMPOSITION.

A typical case would be the liquidation of the skilled 'Bolshevik' vanguard in the 1920s by the introduction of assembly-line production, starting in the USA with Ford. (Note: the class is also 'composed' by capital outside the workplace - in the community and in the home: see decomposition of the family planning, architecture and the organisation of social capital, psycho/sexual control, the creation of consumer needs etc.)

Second, and conversely, the working class tends always to recreate its unity, tends to reciprocate itself in struggle, overcoming all the above divisions: each phase of decomposition leads to a new and more generalized RECOMPOSITION OF THE CLASS AGAINST CAPITAL. (By 'higher and more generalised' we mean, for instance, the growth of the proletariat from minority status (the 1910s) to majority status within capitalist society.)

Productive and non-productive forms of urbanization, town planning, architecture and the organisation of social capital, psycho/sexual control, the creation of consumer needs etc.

The further stage is POLITICAL DROOMPOSITION OF THE CLASS, the stage where this process of reworking the contents and the struggle takes up an institutionalized, political form.

The struggle outlined above is a constant condition of relations between capital and the working class. In periods of capitalist crisis and global class reunification, it becomes explicit, public and violent.

2 Organic Composition, Fixed and Circulating Capital

'Organic composition' of capital (see Marx, Capital Vol.1) refers to the relation between the separate parts of capital: the proportion of constant capital (constant in value) as against variable capital (i.e. living labour which produces surplus value). Constant capital includes both fixed capital (machinery, plant, etc.) and the objects of productive materials (fuel etc.) which are 'laid out' in the capital itself. According to Marx, the tendency of capitalist development is that the proportion of 'dead labour' (that is, past labour which is embodied in machinery, plant etc.) increases in relation to living labour as workers are replaced by machinery and the average productivity of the workers rises as a result. You have the same number of workers setting in a larger mass of constant capital, which means that the relative exploitation of those workers increases (i.e. the proportion of workers' time during which they produce surplus value and hence profit for the boss). We can't hope to describe this better than Marx. Capital, Volume 1, Chapter 15.

3 Means of Production is a general term, covering both raw materials and the structure; the direction of labour (for instance, the whole cycle of one branch of production, i.e. from raw materials, mining, plant etc. to distribution of the final product).

Example - Ford's rubber plantations in Brazil in the 1920s, of EMO's newly-developed loco/scraper service network.

4 Inaccessibility, Struggle against Work, Autonomy

We return to the content of the raw phase of workers' struggles in the 1960s-1970s. The increasing development of flow-line production, increased mechanization and fragmentation of jobs, the introduction of MNO, all these lead to work that is repetitive, alien, boring, and lacking in initiative. There is no longer even the semblance of pleasure or creativity in the work process - and workers' struggles become a continuous struggle against productivity, against the worker's relative exploitation. At this point, the capitallists' whole policy is devoted to involving the worker in work (participation, workers' control, notions of 'skill' etc.) at a time when workers are expressing their independent interests (autonomy) as the working class, against the 'general interest' of society and confidence in the community (union etc.) under present capitalist conditions.

Against the bosses and unions, who negotiate and organize the reform of working conditions, incentives to work etc. the working class has produced a crisis of the whole system since 1968 in all Western countries, by opposing that system at its very root - the productivity of labour. Inaccessibility means just what it says.

5 Concentration

An example of more recent pressure towards concentration was 1968-1970. A wave of strikes in the component industries (Dunlop, GKN, Pillsbury) resulted in widespread layoffs in the Assembly firms, and demands for better layoff pay (Ford, with the 1968 Girling strike; EMO with the 1970 Dunlop, GKN strikes). Rather than face continuing struggles in component, so as to avoid paying the cost of them (layoff pay etc.), the big motor firms pushed towards greater integration of these firms.

6 Piecework Discipline and Shop Stewards

Where wages have been paid to workers according to output, as in British engineering up to the 1960s, these wage systems have been a means of subordinating the workers' co-operation in production. This means that many management functions were handled indirectly by shop stewards or gang-leaders - regulation of output, maintenance of quality, organisation of the labour process etc. This unofficial 'workers' control' was permitted under the wartime and post-war 'Coster family' system.

Appendix 1(b)
Notes on the Crisis (i)

and was widespread in the Midlands engineering industry. Piecework
discipline means voluntary self-organisation of discipline through stem-
ness, rather than directly by management and staff. However, piecework
and this kind of "discipline" began to be used by workers to control
their output, so that wages increased soon began to outstrip productivity
increases (wage drift) during the 1960s. Management was
forced to impose direct controls over the work process and introduce
standard measured day rates. This went together with increasing mechan-
isation, so that now became the speed of the machine and not the money
incentive, which drove the worker to work, and discipline was now imposed
by a vastly increased army of supervisors and foremen, instead of by
stroke rates and by workers themselves as under the old wage systems.
However, in some sectors (ag the docks and the coal mines), the removal
of the coercive aspect of piecework and incentives led to such a
high and rising levels of wages, in return for increasing productivity.
This, at the same time, would guarantee a high consumer demand. As Ford
realised, you pay a worker not only to work, but also to buy.

Keynesianism was thus the strategy that enabled the mass-consumption
industries to expand (and their demand for investment goods would, in
turn, allow for growth in the capital goods sector). The strategy was
based on full employment, in order to rule out the class struggle around
the unemployment of the 20's and 30's. Keynesianism hence was a further
step towards integration of the working class, by the State taking over
the organisation of some of the most fundamental needs in working class
life - education, health, housing, security against poverty and unem-
ployment, and so on, in short, welfare capitalism.

Fordism organised the working class on the shop floor. Keynesianism
organised the worker as an consumer, in society at large. The two aspects
worked in parallel, to become the dynamic force of capitalist development,
driven forward by the struggle of the working classes. In this context
the Fordist industry was central: on the one hand it developed Fordism to
its highest extent and provided a model of productivity for other sectors;
and on the other hand, its product, the motor car, became the mass con-
sumption good of the period.

Notes on the Crisis (ii)

APPENDIX 2.

The year of 1975-76 has brought us to a worldwide crisis of capitalist.
Within this crisis, the motor industry (which, for 40 years has
been one of the crucial Vanguard sectors of the worldwide capitalist
system) has been affected in the most dramatic way. The motor industry has
grown, and within it the power of the motor industry working class has
grown. We believe that there is a close link between the growth of that
power, in that section of the working class, and the growth of the crisis in
the political and governmental forms of the capitalist economy.

The following notes are an attempt to define, first, some of the key ele-
ments in the development of capitalist strategy over the past 40 years
(Fordism, Keynesianism, Social Democracy, the Mass Worker). Then we
use these terms as a basis to outline some Notes on the Present Crisis.
This Appendix 2 is necessarily sketchy, but it outlines the areas that
we hope to look at in later Red Notes pamphlets.

a) Fordism

This is the technique of factory organisation developed by
Ford, and later taken up by other capitalists. It is a tool of the
capitalist class, to organise and exploit the working class. It is
a necessary accompaniment to mass production. It centres on the assembly
line, in which the whole process of production becomes a continuous flow.

The intention of Ford was as follows:

The assembly line would be directed and controlled by management. The
worker would be given a specific task or operation, with a specific
machine, which should be done within a given time determined by the speed
of the assembly line. The worker's job would usually be extremely simpli-
ified so that it could be performed repeatedly, continuously, and
monotonously. The advantages of this system, for capital, are obvious: in theory management controls
the speed of the whole production process (control being taken out of
the hands of the worker), as well as controlling planning of the operation;
the production process the division of labour and the deskilling of workers
which accompanied Fordism would deprive individual workers of control
over their job; the organisation and integration of the labour process as
a whole with the automatic and exactly timed movement of the product from

Appendix 2(a)

b) Keynesianism

This was developed as the overall economic and political strategy to accompany Fordism after
the Second World War. Economic policy and State intervention were meant to
provide a means to resolve two essential capitalist contradictions:

1. It would make mass production a possibility in the society as well as in the factory. It would generate the necessary demand, so that goods
could not only be produced at a mass level, but also could be consumed at a mass level. Politically, the strategy of Keynesianism was the result of
the crisis of the 1930s. The State, by controlling demand, was supposed to
prevent further crises of overproduction.

2. It would integrate the working class. The worker would be granted a
higher and increasing level of wages, in return for increasing productivity.
This, at the same time, would guarantee a high consumer demand.

Fordism realised, you pay a worker not only to work, but also to buy.

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worked in parallel, to become the dynamic force of capitalist development,
driven forward by the struggle of the working classes. In this context
the motor industry was central: on the one hand it developed Fordism to
its highest extent and provided a model of productivity for other sectors;
and on the other hand, its product, the motor car, became the mass con-
sumption good of the period.

c) Social Democracy

This has been the post-War form of political organisation of the capitalist State, under
which Fordism and Keynesianism functioned. This form created the ideology
and mass mystification of 'reformism' - putting forward a step-by-step
'approach' towards socialism. It also proposed the integration of the
working class organisations, like the unions and the Party, into the con-
text of "social partnership". Social democracy is always a politics of
cooperation between Capital and Labour, within which the working class
is forced to accept the capitalist attack. This has been true through
history, and is especially true in this moment (1976).

d) the Mass Worker

Fordism and Keynesianism developed a new kind of worker. Machinery was meant to break the
strength of an earlier working class. Machinery, centralisation of company
planning, and plant gangsterism in the factory were the means to wrest
the working class, and remove workers' earlier control over production.
Fordism, in its mass production, brought together a mass of workers, all
under the condition of doing simple repetitive work, of being rapidly
exhausted by it, of having little interest in the job and little incentive

Appendix 2(b)
Notes on the Crisis (iii)

to work apart from the need for a daily wage. Keynesianism, with the State intervening in 'demand management', and with the ideology of 'welfare', aimed to control the working class outside the factory, by creating the 'mass consumer'.

But this increasing unification of the conditions of work and life was tending to reduce the divisions and differences between workers, was tending to create new aspects of unity within the working class. The working class, as "mass workers", responded to the unification of conditions under Keynesianism and Fordism: these advanced forms of capitalist organisation and control led to advanced struggles by this working class. It is in this context that we have to analyse the present crisis. We see this crisis not just as a "market crisis", but as a class of class forces in struggle.

e) the Crisis

The present crisis of the capitalist economies is by far the most serious of the past 40 years. Because of its scale it is clear that it is not just a 'cyclical aberration': rather, it is a structural crisis, a crisis of the system as a whole. Within the British Left everyone agrees that the crisis exists, but there is widespread lack of understanding of the underlying reasons for and historical development of that crisis - as follows:

Can we say that this crisis is just a market crisis, and that Britain is specially hit-hard because of the "forces of international competition"? This does not explain the international and world-wide character of the crisis, and why Keynesianism, as the management of demand, could not prevent its outbreak. Then, is it enough to say that the crisis is a "necessary consequence of the laws of the capitalist mode of production, as outlined by Marx"? Stating the tendency of the rate of profit to fall, of the "social" character of capital, of "disproportionality within capitalism", etc will not suffice. Such an analysis is far too abstract - even ahistorical. It does not explain the crisis in concrete and material terms: the class struggle and its impact within capitalist development, and has reduced to an abstraction. Finally, is it appropriate to claim that this crisis is nothing but a capitalist "crisis" to smash the power of the working class? We think that it's correct to say that the crisis is now used by capital in order to destroy that power - but we also have to point out how it was that power which lay at the root of the development of the crisis in the first place. In short, the "mass worker" who has developed over the past 40 years has built up a certain power in society; the struggles of this working class have brought about the crisis through a blockage of accumulation; the capitalist class now uses the crisis in order to reconstruct its control and its command over labour; the capitalist intention is to destroy the growing autonomy of the working class.

Some Notes on the Present Crisis

We have reprinted this article by F. Gamsino because of its importance as a concrete and historical analysis of class struggle in the British motor industry - the industry which, under the operating conditions of Keynesianism - Fordism, became the vanguard industry of advanced capitalism. The production of cars saw the highest development of Fordism, and became a model of productivity for other sectors...the car as a commodity changed from the "value consumer society" in its highest form. Within this international capitalist as a social relation found its most advanced level.

Car firms, in terms of the capitalist organisation of production, have been the most militant of all the broad-based capitalist sectors in the post-War period (only now being overtaken by electronics, petrochemicals, etc). This can be seen, for example, in the multinational nature of car firms, in their use of the international division of labour (operations of the labour-intensive stages of production in cheap labour countries and the capital-intensive stages in the 'advanced' countries); in the form of competition, mergers and takeovers; in their control over raw materials and other supplies; and in their ability to control individual nation states.

The nature of capitalist organisation of production in the car firms has also produced the highly unified and homogeneous political force of the "mass worker". The forms of struggle developed by this new working class have been advanced as the advanced techniques of their employers. (The highest level in a place like Longbridge, where the Fordism seems to have reached its peak - see p.13, and our pamphlet shows the levels that this has reached within one individual firm). But, in addition, when we analyse the struggle in the motor industry, we see that the working class have been gaining a continuous vanguard within the working class as a whole, both in the UK and internationally. In developing the most advanced levels of struggle in the epoch of Keynesianism and Fordism, they have provided a certain reference point for other sections of the working class. The vanguard character of car workers on an international scale has meant that their struggles were generalised throughout the class as a whole.

Examples of this would be the role of Renault workers in France in May '68; the role of FIAT workers in the Italian "Hot Autumn" of 1969; German car-workers in the wildcat strike waves of 1969, 1971 and 1973 (in particular VW) and the immigrants at Ford-Dagenham; the vanguard role of Argentinian car workers in the present crisis of Peronism; and, at the time of writing, the ability of NUM workers in the UK to provoke a direct crisis in State strategy and policy.

However, the breakdown of the control mechanisms of Fordism and Keynesianism, the working class has been developing its power, an class, through struggles both inside and outside the workplace. In response to this power, capital is forever seeking new strategies, new means of control. But many of the weapons of the capitalist class have either been taken and used by workers (social wage, payment systems, welfare state, etc) or have been destroyed (Industrial Relations Act, Incomes policy etc). Furthermore, in this period ("Welfare State", and "High-Wage-High-Productivity" economy), the expectations of the working class have increased, creating a system of needs and expectations. We can now speak of a "downward rigidity", both of the wage and of the social wage. Increasingly this network of needs (general conditions of life, work) is translated into a contradiction leading to the class struggle, and just over the wage, but over all social conditions. This is part of what we mean by "working class autonomy" - the way that the working class is being developing its own struggles, organisation and demands, which are independent of, and less controllable by, capital. In other words, the working class fights for its own needs against the interests of capitalism and the State.

The build-up of struggles, both inside and outside the workplace, in recent years has increasingly blocked the capitalists' profit possibilities. The victories of the struggles through the 1960s, and at an international level, are the reasons for the present 'stagflation' crisis (ie stagnation as a result of reduced profits and blocked expansion, and inflation as the only way for managements to compensate increasing costs and to regulate the class struggle from below). But the 'stagflation' has not been enough to break that working class power: on the contrary, it has increased class resistance, thus intensifying the world-wide crisis.

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Inasmuch as the crisis has been a direct result of working class power, capital will have to destroy this power in order to regain its strength (which is always based on command over labour). The present period is therefore one of class war, and thus a period of fundamental historical importance.

The present crisis means a capitalist attack, and the end of integration: therefore the end of Keynesianism. The ideology of full employment is replaced by a conscious policy of unemployment, intended to discipline workers. Increased productivity is maintained by an intensification of work, and break up class organisation. At the same time, real wages are cut and the 'Welfare State' is to be destroyed (see the recent White Paper on public spending cuts). And in order to lubricate this process, capital increasingly tends to integrate the unions - as it always will impose the discipline. The working class increasingly loses control of the Union as a way to organise the struggle. Therefore the question of developing working class autonomy is the question of working class organisation at central problems facing us all.

Also, sectors in which the working class has developed a high degree of class power are either run down (eg motor industry, mechanical engineering, shipbuilding) or undergo a capital intensification (docks, mines, rail). This is an attack on the working class' power in society.

In this period of capitalist transition and restructuring, the role of the State changes dramatically. It becomes obvious that the State operates entirely in the interests of the capitalist class as a whole, as the institutionalisation of capital as a class. New capitalist tactics are formulated at the State level (eg Heath's "unprecedented" conditional Budget of April 1976). Thus, in order to restore capital's command over labour in the production process, the State is only given to near-bankrupt firms on condition that the firm reduces labour, increases productivity, eliminates non-capitalist strikes etc. On the one hand this gives individual enterprises the backing of the State's authority...and on the other hand it means that, behind their employers, workers are directly fighting for the State.

Finally, as individual governments show themselves unable to restore class control, the reins of control are taken up by centralised money lending bodies (eg International Monetary Fund), acting in the general class interests of the major imperialist power. IMF loans are given conditionally and at the same time Individual Governments (Britain, Italy, Portugal, and of course Chile) cut public spending, maintain the inflationary policy, restore 'law and order', keep Communists out of Government etc. This contains, by money-as-capital spreads through every level of society, from the IMF's threatening to make Italy bankrupt, to local councils' dependence on favourable terms from finance houses. At both international and national level control of money-lending is thus increasingly used to carry out and enforce the capitalist attack.

We believe that all these are crucial areas of study, if we are to deepen our understanding of the present phase of the revolutionary crisis. They will have to be developed further, in discussions with comrades and in analysis of other areas of the class struggle. We see this as the work of the Red Notes collective in the coming year. We welcome all discussion and criticism in this direction.

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