

Wildcat

MANCHESTER FREE BULLETIN

NO 2. PASS IT AROUND

OUR OBJECTIVES

1. To report on, analyse and seek solidarity for important struggles amongst our fellow workers, especially in the Greater Manchester area.
2. To encourage independent working class activity outside of the control of the trade unions and in opposition to all political parties.
3. To aim at the overthrow of all governments, bosses and leaders by a revolution in which the majority of people, who at the moment are just expected to follow orders, all play an equal part. And we would like to see the creation of a world, without the wages/money/market system where we can all have a say in how things are run, and where production is for human need not profit.

LAURENCE SCOTT THE STORY SO FAR

On the 4th of November two helicopters, in a commando style raid, carried equipment from Laurence Scott's under the protection of 100 police, some on horseback, while a handful of pickets looked on helplessly. The police denied supporting Snipes operation but admitted having advance warning of it. Anderton claimed he went in with force because of a tip off about a coach load of flying pickets but, not surprisingly, these didn't turn up!

Just a week before, the strike committee had sensed victory close at hand. Snipe, the owner of the company, and suspected of having bought the factory for asset stripping purposes, decided to re-open the factory for what the workers were told was a very important contract that only LS's could complete and on which Snipe had riding a 5 million guarantee. The national press suggested that Britains entire fleet of Polaris nuclear submarines would be rendered useless without the special

flame-proof motors made at LS and that the Ministry of Defence was behind Snipes unexpected turnabout. But in light of the helicopter raid, this may only have been another ploy to gain access to the factory in order to remove the equipment and products trapped inside since the occupation started in April. Snipe now claims to have succeeded in taking what he wanted and has dropped all talk of reopening the factory.

When he had previously attempted to open the factory some 500 pickets, including many recruited from local engineering plants, turned up to prevent him. Snipe had only agreed to open up with a maximum of 150 workers, which he intended to hand-pick from the original workforce of 650. After a 7 month hard fought battle, the 230 workers still involved in the dispute naturally wanted jobs for themselves. They had been the most militant and most determined in the fight against closure and so those whom Snipe least

wanted to re-employ. Snipe was approached by one of the shop stewards and took this to mean that the strike committee was willing to compromise on its demands. "That was a mistake" admitted one of the strike committee "We should have waited for Snipe to approach us." But the workers had no intention of backing down when they at last seemed to be getting somewhere. The pickets explained their case to the handful of ex-employees who turned up to try and get their jobs back; in each case they 'saw the light' and left. Only one member of the management had gained access to the plant then and was trapped for a couple of hours until Anderton's special Tactical Aid Group managed to get him out. He complained of being kicked in the groin on entering the plant. "Don't know how that happened" one of the pickets said, "he was surrounded by a corridor of police", suggesting that perhaps one of the police was the culprit.

CONTINUED OVER

TROUBLE BREWING AT BL

Have you heard the one about the man who started work at the new Metro plant at Longbridge?

His job was to drive the completed cars off the assembly line to the storage yards. While the foreman was showing him round he saw a new Metro being driven out at breakneck speed - about 70 m.p.h.

"That look's exciting, can I do that as well", he asked the foreman.

"Not only can you do it," came the reply, "you have to drive like that, otherwise you won't keep up with the speed they come off the line."

This is a true story. And its no joke.

The strike at Longbridge over the reduction of time for breaks isn't a side issue. It's part of a deadly serious struggle by workers there against the inhuman working conditions which are being forced on them. The unions having negotiated a reduction in the working week from 40 to 39 hours, management is now saying this will have to be paid for by a reduction in the time for breaks of 11 minutes a day. So the workforce



will gain only 5 minutes a week, and take a severe cut in their relaxation time, which is their only respite from the slavery of the tracks.

This strike shows that workers at BL haven't lost the will to fight. But the failure of the earlier strike over pay shows how serious is the situation which faces workers, not only at BL, but everywhere.

The strike over pay was sabotaged by the unions. The unions said that BL couldn't afford to pay more than 3.7. THIS IS TRUE... if you accept the bosses' logic - the logic of capitalism. The unions accept this logic: "We have to make reasonable demands which the bosses can afford", they say. But all the bosses - and their system - can "afford" is more pay-cuts, speed-ups, and redundancies.

Resistance against all these attacks - like at Longbridge - is important. But much, much more is needed. Against the systematic attack we're facing now, small strikes by isolated groups of workers can at best achieve only temporary success.

The unions, like the bosses, say we have to make sacrifices now, so that things will get better in the future. But there are no "better times ahead"... unless we fight for them. And, more and more, its going to be all or nothing. Either we accept the bosses logic, or the working class as a whole tells them - and shows in its struggles - that "enough is enough".

LS cont.

The police action during the helicopter raid has demonstrated yet again that the 'Law and Order' the police claim to maintain is that which maintains the ruling class and the status quo. When one picket refused to move from in front of the gates he was arrested and charged with obstruction. If on that occasion the pickets hadn't outnumbered the police, more would have been arrested. No one challenged the arrest, "No one noticed" a shop steward said, but pickets were sent to the police station when it was feared the man would be kept in overnight and managed to obtain his release.

In the strike committee office down the street from the factory, a shop steward said he thought Snipes behaviour was 'understandable' but he'd been given 'bad advice from the works manager'. The workers talked with confidence then of getting their jobs back, though they didn't see that as the end of their problems. Firstly they would still have to deal with an anti-union management and secondly with their union the AUEW, which is plainly and increasingly anti-working class.

Early in August, before the occupation was ended by 40 bailiffs armed with clubs etc, and backed by police, Snipe had made a pathetic offer to re-open the plant on short-time working for 3 months, on the condition the workers paid back their redundancy maney. This derisory offer was accepted by Duffy and Boyd, president and secretary of the AUEW, and put to the workers at two mass meetings where it was overwhelmingly rejected. At this point official support for the occupation and the £5 per week strike pay was withdrawn.

Because of the departure from normal TU practice of returning to the negotiating table (a matter Duffy was at pains to point out during the BL fiasco), the workers were naturally incensed. The matter was then referred by the Manchester North District AUEW to the Final Appeal Court of the Union which was to meet during the week commencing October 12th. Mysteriously though, the item got dropped from the agenda. The workers blamed Duffy and Boyd for this manouvre. The strike committee sent over 3000 letters to AUEW branches asking them to censure the EC as the next Appeal Court isn't until May 1982! So far some 350 branches have responded. If this fails to get the strike reinstated they "might as well rip up their union cards" one steward said. They believe Duffy is afraid of taking Thatcher on and is willing to break union rules rather than risk a confrontation. At the same time they think he is afraid of losing control of the membership. After all if they succeeded without official support "it would show the leadership isn't necessary".

They hoped to send a mass picket to Snipes Head Office in Doncaster, but didn't see how "without getting

union support to mobilise the masses". Perhaps it is this view that has represented the major weakness of the LS campaign. Their reluctance to take their case outside the confines of the trade union structures - which has demonstrated its ability to contain their struggle - and into the community and to other workers apart from those in the District AUEW. Instead it took the helicopter raid to bring the local community into the protest. For the workers to have taken the dispute outside the trade union would clearly have been a political act. To recognise that the outcome of the fight at LS affects the interests of the working class as a whole in its battle against the capitalist class suffering from world recession and determined to make the working class pay for it, is perhaps too much to expect from an isolated group of workers. Or perhaps as one striking cynic put it, "they're only interested in getting their own jobs back, they don't care about unemployment"?

In the class war the capitalist class hold the big guns. They are willing to use all the agencies of the state, including the Trade Unions plus the threat of mass unemployment in order to try and divide and pacify us. The TUC and Labour Party parade the unemployed up and down the country in a surfeit of silly walks under the ironic slogan 'united we stand divided we fall'. Whilst most workers have their attention diverted by this and the strikers themselves seek only moral and financial support we are bound to be the losers. It must be increasingly obvious to LS workers and to many others that if we are ever to win this war we must unite across trade union boundaries and break from all these moribund structures.

STOP PRESS

Although picketing of the Manchester factory has stopped, regular pickets are now being placed on the parent companies works in Doncaster. Transport workers have been respecting the picket but they haven't yet managed to persuade the Doncaster workers to come out on strike. Help is needed on the weekly mass pickets.



NATIONAL UNEMPLOYED WORKERS MOVEMENT CONFERENCE

On the weekend of the 31st of October, in London, about 100 people from 37 organisations of the unemployed from all over Britain, gathered together for a conference to launch a national organisation of the unemployed. New hope for the unemployed - unfortunately we don't think so. Full report in the next issue of 'Wildcat'.

CONTACT Wildcat

The group that produces WILDCAT includes people who have been involved in political organisations such as "World Revolution" and "Solidarity" as well as other individuals. We decided that our political differences weren't important enough to stop us working together. The ideas that unite us are more important. Some of our basic principles are outlined in the Objectives which are printed in every issue of Wildcat; others appear in the articles we write.

Most important of all we think that workers have to TAKE CONTROL OF THEIR OWN STRUGGLES. We know that there are many cases where workers try to do this which don't get reported. We hope that by reporting these we can make a small contribution towards breaking the feeling of isolation which discourages workers from fighting back against the attacks which are now being made on us all.

What we can do on our own is very limited. We would like to make Wildcat bigger and publish it more often. To do this we need people to write to us and tell us about struggles in their workplace or neighbourhood. We need people to help distribute Wildcat; and we also need financial contributions.

We would like to hear from anyone who agrees with the ideas expressed in Wildcat and who would like to help us or join our group. If you don't agree with us we'd like to hear from you too - we'll try to answer letters, either personally, or in Wildcat. We would also like to hear from people in other areas who are interested in what we are doing.

If you would like us to mail you copies of Wildcat as they appear, please write enclosing £1 to cover postage.

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THE RIOTS

STATE SEEKS REVENGE FOLLOWING RIOTS

One young man from Moss Side, for allegedly throwing a petrol bomb at police as they drove vans at speed into groups of people, got six years in prison. Perhaps even more pernicious has been the sentencing of 16 year old Simon Los in Nottingham for 'incitement to riot' - because he gave out leaflets supporting the rioters. Although he had no previous convictions he received a vicious 3 year sentence. This kind of repression bears a striking resemblance to that handed out to 'anti-state activists' in Russia, which our rulers and their papers are so keen to condemn!

And the riots aren't over yet. In early November police cars were overturned and petrol bombed in Wythenshawe as people expressed their feelings with action.