

# Wildcat

MANCHESTER FREE BULLETIN

NO 3 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.

## WIGAN SIT-IN

In the first week of December 800 engineering workers staged a sit-in at Gillick Dobson in Wigan. The immediate cause of the dispute was the managements' threat to suspend 26 workers for refusing to unload non-union lorries. But underlying this is a dispute over wages. The workers are claiming £15 across the board; The company has offered 1½% on the bonus and nothing on the basic rate.

We arrived at the plant just as the union's strike breaking machinery was moving into action. An AUEW area official had come that morning for "negotiations" with the convenor. Some of the pickets more experienced in union tactics expressed the opinion that he had come to try to get them back to work. And of course they were right. But at the time no-one knew exactly what was happening because the discussions were being held in the strictest secrecy. We were taken into the plant to get more information from the strike committee - but they were equally in the dark about what was going on.

When we came across the union official he was instantly recognisable. He was the only one wearing a suit and tie. He looked and acted like a boss. He told us we had no business inside the plant. He said he was trying to keep the situation "under control", and didn't want any "outside interference". Above all he seemed afraid that we were connected with the Laurence Scott dispute in Manchester, which has also been effectively sabotaged by the AUEW. The two disputes are quite unconnected, he told us.

It was clear the union had intervened in the dispute with one aim only: to end the strike as quickly as possible. The next day the workers were persuaded to go back to work. There was no improved wage offer, although management had withdrawn the threat of suspensions.

The union's attitude provides the link between Gillick Dobson and Laurence Scott. The two disputes are part of a small wave of resistance by engineering workers against the bosses' attacks on jobs and wages. The long struggle by engineering

workers at Staffa has now ended. But the Laurence Scott workers are fighting on. Also in Greater Manchester 500 workers from Gardners recently demonstrated against the renewed threat of redundancies. At Leyland, several hundred workers recently demonstrated outside a union meeting to show their determination to fight redundancies there. In Leeds 800 workers at Kirkstall Forge are out on strike.

If these actions inspired other workers to fight back then the modest wave of strikes could unleash all the pent-up anger and frustration of workers across the country, and become a major strike wave.

This is exactly what the unions fear most. Now more than ever in the face of the governments proposed new union laws, the unions want to show how "responsible" they are. They want to show they can keep their members under control without the help of government legislation. They don't want news of strikes to get around, so that they can isolate and crush them like they did at Staffa, and they tried to do at Laurence Scott.

## POLAND

The military crackdown in Poland shows how ruthless the state is prepared to be to maintain the existing system. The total communications blackout inside the country was instituted to prevent organised resistance; travel was forbidden for the same reason; the vast majority of Solidarity officials were arrested, in an effort to decapitate the movement. However this last measure has not worked, for the simple reason that the workers themselves are the driving force in Poland, not the elected officials of Solidarity. Deprived of these "leaders", the Polish workers have put up organised resistance with strikes, occupations, go-slows, sabotage.

Solidarity itself is largely to blame for the weakness of this resistance (compared to the strength of the early days of August 1980). Ever since its creation Solidarity has sought to control the workers, and by calling for token stoppages and dialogue has discouraged the mass strike, the workers strongest weapon. And because the workers let Solidarity take over the links they had between factories and cities, the strike resistance to martial law was isolated plant by plant.



For now the military may be able to break individual strikes and force people back into the factories - but they can't force them to work; in the first week of martial law only one tractor was produced at the giant Ursus factory. And they can't imprison everyone - for who would then run the factories, hospitals, schools, offices, etc?

The shooting of workers in Poland in 1970, 1976, and again in 1981 shows that the authorities in the eastern bloc have as little in common with the workers as the authorities here. In fact the authorities in the west go hand in glove with those in the east when it comes to repressing workers. Bankers in West Germany,

Britain and the USA have been saying that they're pleased that the military have taken over, as it increases the chances of Poland repaying some of the money it owes the banks. One banker even said he'd like to see a Soviet invasion! However the way things are going the banks will never get their money back, especially since even less is being produced now than before the army moved in.

Poland is the first industrial country to face bankruptcy. Could Britain be next? We are already facing unemployment, price rises, wage cuts, rising police repression.... What has happened in Poland points our own future if we do not act. We must stand up and fight, as the Poles are still doing, and refuse to accept austerity and repression.

A recent Home Office study of police-community relations in Moss Side claims that most contacts with the police by both black and white people in Moss Side are "friendly". Presumably the injuries suffered by people picked up during the riots were caused by playful digs in the ribs and back-slapping by policemen who didn't know their own strength.