

Picket No. II

Sunday 11th May 1986



Tuesday 6th May, TUC lobby: pickets resolve to continue and regroup

Brenda Dean arrived long before the 10am meeting and before members had arrived for the lobby. Word was out that Hadleigh's secretive Friday meeting had already decided to purge Sogat's contempt. But the truth about Friday's meeting had been suppressed. The lobby gradually built up and it was quiet and peaceful. Hundreds came for an hour or two and drifted away. No news came out of the meeting. The police were in usual form, outnumbering the lobby in the very early morning, and later hassling people off the pavement and forecourt, erecting yet more barriers. There must be millions of these barriers in London now. Police announced that the TUC had informed them that the forecourt was private property and that even the group of marchers from Glasgow were to keep it clear. The news, when it came, was brief and to the point - Sogat had caved in. Down on the picket line at Wapping the news was greeted with anger and disbelief. There were many pickets at Wapping that night who had lobbied the TUC all day long. Most had thought that Saturday's police assault, witnessed by Dean, would have kept Sogat firm. The London distributors and NUR members who have blacked the Murdoch titles are now in the front line. Many strikers thought we would be sending the wrong signals out to Murdoch and especially the scab journalists in the plant. There was one picket who was particularly disgruntled. His family was at home glued to "Juliet Bravo" on the box. After seeing the police behaviour last Saturday he couldn't bear to watch this police soap opera and he came down to the picket line to remind himself "what it's like in the real world".

Wednesday 7th May, Wapping

The march of about 1,000 printworkers and supporters left Tower Hill at 9pm and met lines of police blocking The Highway at the top of Virginia Street. The march was organised by Sogat London Central Branch and is the carry-on of regular Wednesday marches. These marches centre on the continued support of London distribution members for the strike. It was a powerful rebuff to the Sogat NEC, which openly joins hands with Murdoch and the courts in front of the very eyes of pickets.

Ten horses were stationed half way up Virginia Street but there were no riot cops in sight. The crowd milled around and blocked The Highway till 10.40 when the police advanced and cleared the road. There were no arrests, but the tension after last Thursday and Saturday was evident. The air was thick with the pickets' hatred of the police strike-breakers. Some knew this truth from childhood and others came to it through the strike.

A small crowd left the main body of the pickets and marched up to Thomas More Street, up Dock Street to Ensign Street and back again. Scores of cops were in tow. This was a good tactic. It kept the police guessing and cheered up the pickets. The antics left by way of Wapping Lane.

Friday 9th May, Bouverie Street

A brilliant victory! Another early-morning picket started at 7.30am with the City police less threatening than last week. There were no indiscriminate arrests to harass and disperse the pickets. The pavement in Bouverie Street, across the street from the Sun building, was crowded, and whenever a scab walked through the noise was deafening. The picket stretched up and into Fleet Street. Sogat women were again out in force and could be heard a great distance away. At 9.50am a Fleet Street AUEW banner was unfurled and a spontaneous march began. Pickets thought it would be to Fleet House just round the corner. The cops were taken off guard. The march surged down Fleet Street to Ludgate Circus, a few hundred yards away, and then, surprise, surprise - instead of turning right towards Fleet House it turned left. Even the back of the march was surprised: the police nonplussed. The 400-strong crowd carried on up St Bride Street and Shoe Lane to Holborn Circus by the Mirror building. All traffic stopped. Three cops tried in vain to halt the march here. The delay lasted all of five seconds. Then it was along Holborn and right into Gray's Inn Road and on to the Times building. The march arrived at 10.10, yet it wasn't until 10.35 that 15 Met cops were drafted in and the City cops could retire to their own patch. Times scabs were treated to a good deal of verbal abuse. And it was only at 11.15, when the clericals had to go, that the rally began to break up. Everyone was on a high. Pickets had again organised themselves, thought, and taken advantage.

Saturday 10th May, Wapping

The rally organised behind the banners at 8.50pm and 5,000 marched to Wapping. It was quiet until midnight when ten horses charged unannounced through the crowd to the corner of Dock Street and The Highway. Ten minutes later another five horses galloped through. Mr Hicks, our steward with the megaphone, said the artics had left the plant and were at Wapping Lane. At 12.20am ten artics and a coach left by way of Thomas More Street. At 12.22 Hicks asked for the mounted cops' numbers. These weren't forthcoming. He announced that the agreement on policing with Brenda Dean and the police hadn't lasted long (about ten hours) and was now ended. At 12.30 the horses withdrew and there were two arrests.

At 1.10 there was an attempt on Virginia Street by a section of the crowd. The riot squad appeared and charged up to Dock Street and Wellclose Square towards the tea caravans. Seventeen horses followed through. There were injuries - a woman with a broken leg and a nasty eye injury - and a number of arrests. The gloves were off again. Thirty horses were brought up and 100 riot squad. Local skirmishes continued until 2am. At 2.20 two artics and many scab cars left the plant. The Highway was opened to traffic at 2.30am.

The night was notable for the increased hostility of the police. The mobility of the pickets showed up the weakness of the police organisation and showed the strength of support from many young people who stayed until the early hours. The picket reaffirmed that Saturday night is still on.

Further Southampton scab information

Bubbling to the surface for the first time comes Kenny Mathers, who lives with his dear old mum in a ducky little cottage called 'Oakdene', which can be found in Bridge Road, Lower Swanwick. Our Kenny was an art student, and says he loves his job as a paste-up artist at Wapping. Kenny loves to chat about his job, so perhaps you might like to give him a ring on Locks Heath (048 95) 2196. Another happy scab is Maurice ("nasty old Moe") Dryer, who lives right next door to Scabby Scanlon and family, at 242 Bridge Road, Bursledon. Moe is a trifle sensitive about his occupation in the Publishing Room. He has a business brain, though, despite working for Murdoch. So he has a nice little sideline on the go, which can be found at Unit 15, on the Segensworth Industrial Estate, just off the M27 at Locks Heath. Ring before you visit, on Locks Heath 82182. Visitors to the ever-popular Watercress Steam Railway may like to know that another Wapping colleague resides in beautiful Alresford, at 8 Shepherd's Down, which is just off Jacklyn's Lane. Or perhaps you could telephone M. Hone on Alresford 4331. Incidentally, we are pleased to be able to report that Mike Scanlon's daughter has been taken on to the Wapping payroll, making four Scanlons in receipt of Murdoch's big shilling. 244 Bridge Road is brimful of scabs, whilst a late wire from next door at 242 ("Old Moe's drum") tells us that Dryer has given sanctuary to yet another Wapping scab. This means that there are now six in a cluster!

Shocked trades unionists attending a recent meeting of Eastleigh Trades Council, at which two sacked News International workers were due to speak, couldn't believe their eyes when the EETPU's scab branch officer Bill ("Two Sons at Wapping") Luffman strode into the room to take the chair...and that clearly wasn't the only thing he was taking, either. Both our lads delivered their orations, scaring Luffman witless when they told the audience that every scab's address and Wapping occupation was known and listed. Luffman has now been pictured in the local Press leaving the EETPU office with a minder in tow, and was seen recently being driven away from Henstead Road in Scanlon's official car. Steven ("Mummy got me the job at Wapping") Seaman was at the wheel. Steven's sister Tanya has recently got a nice Wapping job.

Attention all Wapping machine-room scabs: As you start your shifts, have a good look round and see if you can spot two of your number with severe conscience troubles...and

Calendar

Picket Wapping - 24 hours a day, seven days a week. And don't forget Gray's Inn Road and Bouverie Street.

Wednesday 14th May, 8.30pm Tower Hill, march to Wapping.

Saturday 17th May, 8.30pm Tower Hill, march to Wapping.

possibly money troubles, as well. Which two lads flogged copies of the security passes number-list and a Southampton personnel list (leaked from your local EETPU branch office) to a visiting journalist? Here are two clues. They were seen getting into a Ford Cortina car with an FTR registration plate, parked near The Cowherds pub, on the Common, and were then followed to a council house about two miles west of where they sold you out. We believe the traitors may be related, and received £2,000 for this and other sensitive information about Wapping personnel.

Matthews

While Murdoch's representative-on-earth, Bruce Matthews, was regaling the media with the latest facet of Wapping, a meeting of a very different kind was taking place 70 miles away in Bursledon. Almost 50 Wapping scab EETPU recruits were in secret enclave, discussing their industrial tactics for the period after the print unions are dispatched (defeated) and the way is clear for them to establish a new monopoly of their own.


For lurking among the carefully-vetted goody two-shoes scabs that Matthews holds in such esteem are sleepers, or industrial trouble-makers, who have contributed to much of the decline on Southampton's waterfront. They are merely biding their time, carefully mugging-up on the old agreements previously held by the print unions, noting in particular the hours, holidays and wages achieved by the NGA and Sogat.

Some of those present are delighted with their £340-a-week; like the man who has all of four weeks' service at Wapping after relinquishing his £120 post with Meatpak Ltd, Eastleigh. But all are agreed that they can force Murdoch (who they see as a mug, high on his own hype) into stumping up for their "loyalty" all through these troubled times.

From the well-known wet fish salesman through to the ex-underpants salesman, feelings of newly-acquired power coursed through their veins as they avariciously calculated just how much News International could be soon screwed for.

Wapping Songs

Sung to the tune of "Oh Mr Porter":-




Oh Rupert Murdoch
What shall we do?
We wanted to go to Wapping
But you took old Pol Carew.
You took your Judas journalists
And scabbie labour too.
Oh Rupert Murdoch
You are rotten through and through.

Sung to the tune of "Hello Dolly":-

Hello Murdoch
This is Sogat, Murdoch
And we're going to send you back where you belong
With all your lies Murdoch
You'll be surprised Murdoch
We're still going, and we're glowing and growing strong.
With all your scab labour
And your strike-breaker
You thought we'd fall apart out on the street.
But we are tough Murdoch
Sogat can take the rough Murdoch
Murdoch you ain't never going to win.

Sung to the tune of "Two lovely black eyes":-

We're only doing our job
We're only doing our job
Even if we have to cosh one or two
We're only doing our job.



Letter from a regular picket

Uniforms and hard hats for the pickets would be a good start.

Letter from the wife of a sacked printworker

I went on both the Women's Marches along with my three children, and I was proud to follow Brenda Dean along the road in the belief that I was doing something to help my husband's fight for a job. But ever since that last march I have become disillusioned with Brenda Dean and the union in general. Why doesn't anyone let us know what is going on? If it

wasn't for my husband telling me what little he has heard, and "Picket" I, like the general public, wouldn't even know there was a dispute going on.

I know the union has a difficult job to do, but I think it would find it a lot easier with the full support of its members. But they cannot get this support unless they tell the members what is going on. They tell our husbands to stand strong all night in the freezing cold, but I don't hear of the union leaders being there giving their support. It is about time the leaders of this union became united with their members in this fight, then everyone would be willing and able to fight on harder.

I don't suppose you will even read this letter, but I feel a lot better now.

Letter (shortened) from a General Trade Printer

My observations so far have been that not enough people in the print realise what is at stake here. I liken them to an ostrich with his head in the ground hoping it will all go away. What we have here in Murdoch is a thug who is trying, with government help, anti-trade union laws to break the printing unions. In this he has the help of the scum in blue. We must not forget that it is our jobs in the general trade that are under threat as well.

How come some people haven't been to Wapping yet? My anger is at its peak when I see Wapping pickets talking to the scum in blue who look at themselves as great soldiers of the struggle. In a copper you have the lowest of the low; no real word can describe the shit.

Letter (shortened) from a Sun driver

With regard to Lacey's Coaches, Barking Road, East Ham, E6, in my local paper recently the local council was reported as saying that they were not happy with Lacey's for transporting the police to Wapping. The principle was wrong and the council was looking at its contracts with the company. On May Day there was a Lacey coach parked behind police lines at Wapping. It was full of police. To add insult to injury the driver had a big grin on his face when the police made a charge on the pickets. Lacey's, by the way, carries all the West Ham supporters to away matches.

Picket

This newsheet gives voice to the will, the confidence and the experience of the pickets. It does not issue slogans, which has come to be the method of hypocrisy. The pickets acting as a collective are able to decide the next move. Picket is one small hand on the wheel, and initiative. It is the simple written record of ordinary workers on picket duty. These are a thousand times more revolutionary than anything else.

This newsheet was conceived in the miners' strike, where the genius of the everyday pickets was that it was the only body that could be trusted. By the second half of the miners' strike the bosses' press/TV had come more and more to play an important role in the strikebreaking. To our (I, you, we) detriment we worked on during the strike and produced strikebreaking propaganda. One of the miners' responses was a whole number of pit village newsletters, a beginning for workers to have their say in print.

The printers' strike is a direct continuation of the miners'. Printers and supporters have picketed and picketed and picketed. It's a good job.

Behind the visor stands a yellow coward

The police are demoralised rubbish. Some of them are bought cheap, others want to believe they are only dealing with Libyans in disguise. A cop is a cop is a cop.

At Virginia Street on Saturday, 3rd May the police carried out scab orders in a vicious but disciplined way. To the west, by Dock Street, away from the glare of TV lights, things were heavier. But playing at moral outrage is a game workers always lose. It was a straight fight and we lost.

The pickets have never stopped a night's scab papers yet. More and more workers will be drawn to Wapping, not by playing on shocked public opinion, but by meaning to win.

Notes:

Two Communist Party scabs (NUJ) at Wapping are Chris Nawrat and Stanley Levinson.

Knights pub in Walton-on-Thames is popular with certain white-van drivers from Byfleet.

Income: £1,50 Sogat RIRMA; £2.35 Times clerical; £4 International Thomson Publishing Chapel; £3 Times RIRMA, £1 Sun clerical; £1 a striker; 40p NGA striker; £10 NGA minder.

Address: Picket, c/o 628 Tottenham High Road, N17. Published by Sogat/NGA pickets.