

# Picket no. 12

Sunday 18th May 1986

## Saturday 10th May, Worthing and Brighton

Three to four hundred pickets, all in private cars and with no advance warning, turned up around 11.30pm at Portobello Press, Worthing where 250,000 copies of the NoW are printed. There were negotiations with the manager, but two lorries came out at 1.15am with a police escort at a very slow speed. The lorries were more like bread vans than the familiar artics at Wapping. All hell let loose - windscreens went and doors whipped open. The lorry drivers were taken to hospital. Then it was on to Brighton where a picket formed from 2.30 at Station Road. The road was successfully blocked for a time. There were arguments between pickets and drivers. The drivers are all Sogat members but took no notice of the pickets. People felt satisfied - they had achieved something.

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At Portobello an official went in to speak to the drivers, but after 45 minutes had no luck in persuading them not to cross the picket. Two hours later than usual two lorries came out, flanked by police bike riders. The police hadn't a clue what to do as the pickets had spread themselves all along the road. The lorries were held up a minimal time but long enough to stone them both. Windscreens and side windows were totally demolished. One bloke was arrested but the police had to let him go.

After, the pickets went to Brighton to picket depots. One near Brighton Station was shut, so was another near Brighton FC. On to Surridge Dawson's where the caretaker was just opening up. First we pulled a compressor across the front entrance and slashed the tyres. A few scab vans turned up but went away after seeing the size of the picket. It was around 5am and still no lorries had arrived, so we went to Brighton station. By now the police were out in force. Four pickets were allowed into the station to inspect vans and trains. No NoW or STs were found.

At 6am there were still about 50 pickets at Surridge Dawson's. Everyone came home feeling exhilarated.

## Monday 12th May, Scarborough

Four coachloads of pickets left London Sunday night for the EETPU annual conference in Scarborough. Once again the powers that be had the foresight to let everyone concerned, including the electricians, know in advance. Eric Hammond told the police on the Sunday that the printworkers were not going to Scarborough to hand out posies. Police cars met the coaches and prevented the pickets getting to the conference centre. There were many police reinforcements in evidence, and the coaches were sent to the car park at the other side of the bay well away from the conference. Pickets leafletted the town and attempted to return to the conference area. No group of pickets was allowed within 200 yards, but a number did speak briefly to a few electricians. The pickets went for an electricians' breakfast "Hammond eggs" and later spoke to more electricians as they came out for their lunch break. There was a good response from the ordinary members but it was obvious from them that the bosses would not be swayed. A meeting was arranged for that evening at the Mount Hotel which was attended by pickets and quite a few sympathetic EETPU members. These were mainly from London but there were exceptions. Inverclyde EETPU has already been on picket duty in Glasgow. Those who addressed the meeting could not understand why Sogat had purged its contempt. But then even the pickets could not understand that! Most coaches left after the meeting, arriving back in London 4am Tuesday morning.

## Monday 12th May, Gray's Inn Road

The early morning picket of the Times building was small. Fifty were there to lobby the scabs. Word had obviously not been spread effectively through the striking chapels. This was particularly galling after the ingenuity of last Friday's early-morning picket at Bouverie Street and the ensuing march to Gray's Inn Road which surprised the police.

## Wednesday 14th May, Wapping

About 800 printers marched from Tower Hill, organised by the Sogat London Central Branch. When the march reached Virginia Street, in front of the plant, The Highway was blocked by two lines of police strikebreakers with a dozen mounted, visible behind. The march

stayed there until it was moved off the road at 10.45pm. The Highway was open to traffic at 11pm. Distribution was unaffected.

It was noticeable how few supporters were present. There was no spontaneous march around the side streets this Wednesday.

#### Saturday 17th May, Wapping

A new tactic was tried to seal the plant. Printworkers were given one of four prearranged exits to cover and told to arrive at 11pm. The march from Tower Hill at 9.00 was to be for supporters outside the print. Three artics had been seen heading north up Commercial Road under escort as early as 8.30pm.

There were about 1,500 in the march from Tower Hill and it took 40 minutes to get to the top of Virginia Street. Here the road was again blocked by lines of police across The Highway. There was a bit of pushing and shoving but the line held firm. On the railings by Wellclose some nationalists had put up strongly-built hoardings saying "Britain's Our Country" in carefully-painted red-white-and-blue. These were removed by pickets and destroyed.

The crowd was rather dispirited and many dispersed when the rain came down. Many of the supporters had been kept ignorant of the change in tactic and wondered where the printworkers had got to. They felt isolated. Police disappeared from Dock Street and a number of private cars came down The Highway at speed towards the crowd. It would only have taken one idiot to try to accelerate through.

From 10pm onwards the police blocked many of the side roads so as to stop printworkers getting to their stations. Those going to Cannon Street Road found Ensign Street and Cable Street blocked. Even residents were not allowed to pass. But printworkers arrived as scheduled at 11pm. For most of the evening the two Murdoch titles were not stopped from leaving by the eastern exits, although some time after 11pm artics were bricked at Glamis Road and one or two had to go back. At midnight Wapping Lane and Glamis Road were cleared and at 12.25 a convoy of about half a dozen artics and scab cars left the plant via Wapping Lane. Another convoy about the same size left at 1.20am.

Many pickets dispersed and didn't wait for the arrival of the smaller white vans for the local distribution. The tactic was deemed by many printworkers and supporters to have been demoralising. It had split the printers from their supporters, there was no march for the printworkers, and it was all but ineffective.

#### A message to Thatcher's Boot Boys (3rd May)

To the Flat Top who had me handcuffed --  
You wanted to kill me so bad,  
But I'm back here on the picket line  
Alive and well and so glad.  
Your cuffs I've had framed and mounted,  
To remind me of evil days  
When the police of this land fell into the trap  
Of behaving in Hitler's ways.  
I'll gladly surrender your cuffs, Chief  
This Saturday night around ten  
I'll wrap them in Murdoch's barbed wire  
That's if you're better by then.


To the horseman who battered my head in,  
I don't know what you achieved  
For I'm back here on the picket line  
Alive and well, not aggrieved  
You with the stick, shield and visor  
I won't even give you a name;  
For your kicking and punching the women,  
Your foul deeds were all in vain.  
For we're all back on the picket line  
Determined as never before,  
To smash you and Rupert Murdoch  
And that we'll even the score.

Letter from a member of the Lesbian and Gay Support Group (shortened with apologies)

We have been meeting weekly for three months and regularly picket. And we march behind our own banner. We also collect money for Sogat clerical. Given the viciousness of the homophobic propaganda put out by Murdoch's papers why should lesbians and gays want to support the people who have been printing this? Who can forget the description of AIDS as the "gay plague"? Decisions about content are made by management. The workers who print have little control except when they refuse to print. It is important to be aware of the deeper implications of Murdoch's attack on the unions. They were asked to sign a slaves' charter.

Unions have not been falling over themselves to support gay rights, far from it. But the attack on trade unions makes lesbians and gays more vulnerable to discrimination and harassment. By being at Wapping we are offering positive support and a more positive image of lesbians and gays. Past experience of Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners shows that enormous changes of attitude are possible.

**NEWS INTERNATIONAL DISPUTE**



**WEDNESDAY DEMONSTRATIONS**

EACH WEDNESDAY EVENING THERE WILL BE A MAJOR DEMONSTRATION AT WAPPING IN SUPPORT OF THE PRINTWORKERS DISMISSED BY RUPERT MURDOCH.

**MARCHES BEGIN AT 8-30<sup>PM</sup> AT TOWER HILL**

Letter (shortened) from a Sogat RIRMA member on the Glasgow to London Printworkers' March  
There is support around the country especially in areas like Preston where factory workers clocked off for an hour losing money to give support. And an FoC in Lancashire approached by News International to print copies of the NoW was offered £1,000 per man guaranteed for a minimum of eight weeks and they turned it down. There was also great support in all the mining communities and in Scotland too - especially from Sogat members. I contrast this with the lack of support from my own officials. There were five RIRMA members on the march, and the lack of support was a great disappointment.

Notes:

- Greetings to Wapping Post no. 1
- Thursday 22nd May 8.30am at Wapping: a mass picket is being organised by RIRMA strikers
- Deptford picket at Convoys Wharf, King St, 6.30am is continuing every Friday
- The two NUJ Communist Party scabs at Wapping mentioned in the last issue have now been expelled from the party.
- Walter Dowie, a member of the NGA, was jailed this week for seven days by Thames magistrates on charges arising out of the 15th March demo at Wapping.
- The Daily Telegraph may try and do a Murdoch at the Isle of Dogs as soon as September. They are demanding a slaves' charter, big cuts in staff and wages. Will concessions be accepted and the Wapping pickets further isolated, or will pickets take matters into their own hands?
- Weather report: At the close of the miners' strike the NCB claimed 36 scabs at Markham Main colliery, Armthorpe. This pit has recently become SCAB FREE.



Discerning news vendor at King's Cross (from Wapping Post)

#### Additional notes on Saturday 10th May

The attacks on the picket began when the police strikebreakers prepared to bring out their scab lorries at midnight. They blocked The Highway a little to the west (around Dock Street) in order to open a route for the lorries through Thomas More Street, just farther to the west. Pickets tried to defend themselves against the thugs in uniform as best as possible. The despicable accusations by one official against non-printer pickets are just jumping to the bosses tune of divide and rule. The provocateurs are the police and drivers who have repeatedly driven at or near the crowd in order to provoke.

Shortly after, a single policeman ran into the crowd to make an arrest and he was followed by riot squads who went in to break up a concentration of pickets in Wellclose. Mounted police charged in, knocking down a woman. As pickets surrounded her a solid block prevented further police charges. Attempts by police to pretend concern for her health were repulsed. Police turned their efforts to Dock Street where there was heavy fighting and forty arrests.

#### Saturday night, 10th May

The editor of the News of the World, Montgomery, had driven up by the World Trade Centre in East Smithfield, Wapping, to get a closer look at the demonstration. He was caught and had his bodywork rearranged.

#### Pickets rest up for Monday meeting

Picketing printers and supporters are faced with an enormous mountain to climb. The enemy holds the high ground well guarded and the way back is a swamp. Systematically isolated, contained, and lacking professional tools, this has been an heroic struggle which stands us in good stead for the future.

Brenda Deal has never ceased in over four months to try to sell the rotten lie of compensation. The inventiveness of the strikers has been tremendous. But pickets have been pissed around in the streets of Wapping for 115 days by police and officials making deals with each other despite the hostility of pickets to deals. Monday's meeting is crucial. Printworkers are worried about a sellout, based on Gray's Inn Road and redundancy payments. Brenda Deal has been sending out all the wrong signals.

The sacked printworkers need to build on their own organising abilities to picket. "Rank and file" organisation is born from action, not meetings. It remains for ordinary pickets to take complete control of the strike.


Donations: £2 NoW machine; £1 Tele warehouse  
£5 Mirror commissionaire; 50p, £1, £1, £1, £1  
Sun cleaners; £3 Guardian composing; £2  
Guardian Gray's Inn Road; £1 Times graphical  
£1 NoW NGA; £10, £20 NGA machine minders;  
£11.63 Lesbian and Gay support group; £13  
International Thomson Publishing chapel;  
£1 postman; 20p Sogat member; 50p, £1, £1,  
15p Sogat clericals; £1 engineers assistant;  
£2 Times RIRMA; £1 picketing friend.

Picket is grateful for all donations,  
however small.

Address: Picket, c/o 628 Tottenham High Road,  
London N17.

Published by Sogat/NGA pickets.

Concise written contributions welcome.



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DISPUTE**

**SATURDAY DEMONSTRATIONS**

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WAPPING IN SUPPORT OF THE  
PRINTWORKERS DISMISSED BY  
RUPERT MURDOCH.**

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