

Friday 13th June, Bouverie Street and the Press Association - afternoon picket

On this clear, sunny day 200 pickets gathered opposite the Sun building at 1pm and were promptly hassled by the police. Reinforcements were quick to arrive. Failing to catch the police by surprise the pickets moved off. Groups of pickets gathered on the pavement in Bouverie and Fleet Streets. Many Fleet Street workers on their lunchtime break were reminded of the struggle and stood and watched. Just round the corner, in front of the Press Association building, another lunchtime picket had formed. The aim of this picket is to prevent copy being sent from the PA to Wapping. Strikebreaking is going on at the PA. The Fleet Street Support Unit should decide whether it wants to lobby or picket. To lobby you stand on the other side of the street. If you picket then you stand at the entrance and demand support. The pickets here were mainly clerical - on their way to a local hall for their weekly chapel meeting. Strikers who miss out on regular chapel meetings are often not aware of the pickets.

Saturday 14th June, Wapping - early-morning picket

At 8.10am 350 pickets collected at Wellclose and surged down to block the main entrance. It was a complete surprise. Groups had met behind Wellclose and in Cable Street and marched down together at a pre-arranged time. The few police present on this the morning of the Trooping of the Colour were going mad on their radios. Immediately two transit vanloads of police arrived, but were outnumbered and could do nothing. The police blocked the top of Virginia and Pennington Streets stopping scab cars and coaches from approaching the gate. From 8.30 the police prevented pickets who had arrived late from joining their colleagues at the entrance. There were no arrests. Nothing could enter or leave the plant and the pickets were overjoyed at this achievement. At 9.30 the police asked to speak with the leaders. The cops had threatened to bring up reinforcements of 400 men, horses and the riot squad. It was decided to march back and leave the gate without even waiting to see whether these reinforcements would arrive. The pickets marched back in dribs and drabs up to Wellclose at 9.55 without a sign of reinforcements. Many were furious at this. But it was a very effective picket while it lasted. At the time of leaving the gate there were only 50-60 police present and three horses. There was no sign that the police could in fact muster reinforcements. Indeed the timing of this early-morning picket was because the police would be stretched guarding the Trooping of the Colour. One picket shouted out: "Why aren't you lot guarding the Queen?" and at least that raised a laugh. Later there were recriminations - "We were fooled". A constant stream of scab artics, coaches and cars entering the plant bumper to bumper from 10.05 and for the next half an hour showed how effective this picket had been. But it could have been even better.

Saturday 14th June, Wapping - march and rally

This was the 142nd day of the strike. As the march assembled, an excellent spoof issue of The Sun was distributed much to the pickets' delight. At 9.15pm the march moved off from Tower Hill, and was led, quite rightly, by a Kent miners' contingent. The march stopped in front of Virginia Street - the small road leading to the main gate. It was blocked by the bosses' thugs. Further east along The Highway these strikebreakers were blocking the road just to the west of Cannon Street Road preventing the march from proceeding to any of the easterly exit routes used by the scabs. Horses and riot squads were in evidence. Groups of pickets separated from the main body and various marches began. Most printworkers attempted to get to Glamis and Commercial Roads, but there was a sizeable contingent at the top of Thomas More and Dock Streets.

At 11.10pm a large convoy of artics and coaches left the plant by the easterly exit. Of the various marches the INL Graphical banner was with the largest group. The pickets managed to get to Butcher Row and cause havoc. Towards midnight the march picked up more pickets at Glamis Road and continued west along Cable Street followed by a vanload of police and police on foot. A sensible left turn into a narrow alley prevented the coach from following and annoyed the accompanying police. Travelling through the blocks of flats near King David Lane the pickets reached The Highway, blocked the road and marched west to the top of Wapping Lane. The plant was successfully blocked for a time - all three exits sealed. The line of police moved from blocking The Highway west of Wapping Lane to blocking Wapping Lane itself. Scab cars leaving the plant by this exit were

turned back into Wapping. The march stopped here for almost an hour. At 12.30am there were at least 30 horses in Wapping Lane and another ten arrived from the direction of Wellclose. At about this time, when the police stopped blocking The Highway, the marchers began to move eastward. Immediately police swarmed out of the alley just east of Virginia Street to block The Highway there. Some time after this a march of 100-150 pickets who had been at Glamis Road came west along The Highway with the Times Graphical banner. They moved right up to the rear of the police line. Eventually these pickets were pushed back through police lines to the main body of 1,000 pickets. At 2am the police massed at the top of Virginia Street to clear The Highway. The Kinnocks with a stick smashed their way partly into Wellclose clearing the road. There were a number of arrests, and the pickets milled about.

Monday 16th June, Law Courts, the Strand - early-morning picket

A picket had been called for 10am to support the "Warrington four" being prosecuted by Maxwell for losses incurred by the Mirror Group during the strike three years ago. Most printworkers had heard on the previous Saturday that the case had been adjourned, but 80-100 still turned up. There were also a number of pickets from South Africa House who expressed their support. They invited printworkers to the evening picket in Trafalgar Square. A few of the pickets moved off down Fleet Street to Bouverie Street to swell the numbers on the picket lines at the Sun building and Fleet House.

Monday 16th June, South Africa House - evening picket

Hundreds of youths picketed the South African Embassy in the evening on this the tenth anniversary of the Soweto uprising. The boot boys in blue cleared half of the pavement closest to the entrance, herding the pickets behind the movable barricades on the street-side half of the pavement. The picket overflowed into the street. A number of arrests were made, mainly for obstruction. But there was not the same kind of reaction to this as on printers' pickets. Copies of Picket were distributed. There are reinforcements to be made here. But this won't be done by official pleas - only by picketing. A major stroll is planned for 28th June.

Tuesday 17th June, Wapping - afternoon picket

This was a splendid afternoon's work - a great victory. It was the second time in a week that the main gate had been held and the police and Murdoch outwitted. At 2.45pm 250 pickets crossed The Highway and blocked the main entrance. Another 50 moved down Breezer's Hill into Pennington Street and were blocked by police. And at 3.20 the latecomers at Wellclose (another 300) surged to the top of Virginia Street and blocked The Highway. Another group of 50 had travelled round to the south-east corner of the plant to ensure that the alternative exit was not used. Police at this time were trying to control four separate groups of pickets and were hopelessly outnumbered. At 3.30 three horses cleared The Highway but another group of pickets managed to reinforce their colleagues half way up Pennington Street. During this time there were three arrests. At 3.35 a solitary scab on foot was sent to the gate to provoke the pickets. Two police horses attacked the picket charging into the crowd at the main gate and clearing half the entrance. Four vanloads of police arrived, some going to the 150 pickets in Pennington Street and the rest maintaining the narrow path for the side entry. In Pennington the pickets confronted a Convoys reel lorry and kept the police busy. The feeling was that this was much better than Saturday's early-morning picket especially when there was no communication between the police and pickets. The picket on the megaphone was repeatedly warned and threatened by the police, but bravely ignored it all.

At 3.50 there was a surge again from Wellclose Street and The Highway was again blocked. The police meanwhile had erected mobile barriers and sealed off Virginia Street. All traffic came to a complete halt and the jams started to build up from Rotherhithe Tunnel to Tower Hill. At 4.05 five scabs were escorted into the plant with much pushing, shoving and shouting. They barely made it. Two more horses arrived to help this quintet get past the pickets. And another two horses arrived at 4.15. At 4.20 the police gave a three-minute warning of attack by the six horses and their reinforcements and the pickets made an orderly retreat. The police obviously expected that this was the end of things. They were wrong. Once the pickets from the main gate had joined the group at Wellclose a march began up to Dock Street and back. The Highway was still closed and traffic was at a standstill. One van driver with a copy of The Sun on his dashboard had it shredded in front of him. There were 1,000 pickets milling around at this time. The police tried to

push back the crowd to one side of the road and they split and reformed a few yards either side. The Highway was cleared again at 5pm. But immediately another march with an Express banner through Swedenborg Gardens enabled the picket to reform on The Highway east of Virginia Street and march on to Wapping Lane. Another group meanwhile blocked Dock Street. At 5.35 the two groups met up at the top of Virginia Street and again split up causing chaos to the traffic and upsetting the police. They must have wished by this time that they had left the pickets blocking the main gate.

At 5.40 there was another arrest when policeman H226 snapped and attacked a picket. One witness summed it up: "He should be in the World Cup the way he kicks". At 5.47



From Calverton, Notts miners' newsletter

another march arrived at Wellclose from Dock Street and then another 150 split off and moved back to Thomas More Street. At this time there was a lot of pushing and shoving with the police and one uniformed strikebreaker lost his helmet. One of our valiant ladies scooped it up with her left foot and it hurtled over the railings and onto the razor wire. Truncheons came out. One scab spotted in a car was confronted and given a chorus of "scab". At 6pm it was decided by a group of pickets angry with the earlier arrests (and in particular the H226 incident) to march on Lemn Street police station. This tactic clearly annoyed the police - two ladies were arrested and another picket injured. The police in Lemn Street were certainly made aware of the depths of feelings and the strength of the pickets. Police poured into the street and the pickets did not stay long. From Lemn Street the marchers turned west along Royal Mint Street towards Tower Hill and back again into The Highway. The traffic was still in chaos and all roads jammed. At 6.35 the marchers arrived

back at Wellclose and decided to call it a day. Most reckoned they had walked five or six miles on the marching up and down. For the thousand pickets there that day this was one of the best pickets to date.

Wednesday 18th June, Wapping - march and rally

Five hundred pickets managed to tear themselves away from the World Cup and assemble at Tower Hill. There was a welcome contingent of ladies from the Tower Hotel - most of them being Wapping/Tower Hamlets residents. The march set off at 9.15pm stopping briefly in front of police lines at the top of Thomas More Street, arriving at Virginia Street at 9.45. Here the usual police lines stopped the march and the pickets blocked The Highway opposite the plant. The westbound lane was opened to traffic at 10.25 and the road cleared soon after. There were no arrests. Traffic in and out of the plant used the Wapping Lane exit.

Calendar:

Picket Wapping - 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Don't forget Gray's Inn Road and Bouverie Street.

Saturday, 21st June, 8.30pm Tower Hill, march to Wapping.

Wednesday, 25th June, 8.30pm Tower Hill, march to Wapping.

Which Side Are You On?

Come all you good workers,
Good news to you I'll tell
Of how the good old union
Has come in here to stop.

Chorus:

Tell me which side are you on
Which side are you on,
Tell me which side are you on
Which side are you on?

They say in Harlan County
There are no neutrals there,
You're either with the union
Or a scab for JH Blair.

Original words to "Which Side are you on?"

1932 Harlan County, USA miners' strike

Chorus:

We've been out in the air for months,
We'll stay out till we've won.
With you fellow workers
We will overcome.

Chorus:

Don't scab for the bosses
Don't listen to their lies
Us workers never had a chance
Unless we organise.

Notes:

- The writs against the print unions have been postponed to 7th July.
- Enterprising pickets outside Gray's Inn Road last Friday, 13th June pointed out to the police a number of scab vehicles without road tax discs. Two bikers have the added inconvenience of having to produce their documents at the local nick.
- John Normile, 142 Aberdeen Park, Highbury, N5 is a scab working at Wapping. His brother is a sacked Times printworker. Mr Normile does not believe what he is doing is scabbing, but he should know better. Twenty-five years ago, as a member of the London Machine Branch, he went to live in Australia and worked there for Murdoch.
- Going "straight": from burglar to scab: Roger Hunt, 17, of Priors Park, Hornchurch, was part of a gang which broke into three schools, a vet's surgery, a swimming pool, health clinic and bowls club over a seven-month period. Police, alerted by a burglar alarm, arrested him near a school in Rainham, and in court he admitted the seven burglaries. His solicitor said in court that Hunt now had a job at News International and was making a fresh start. He was sentenced to 80 hours of community service.
- D F Lawrence is very busy at Bouverie Street at the moment. There is a lot going on. Mr Lawrence is a Sogat Machine overseer: Reeves Green Cottage, Reeves Green, Wareside, Ware, Hertfordshire (Tel. 0920 61071).
- Despite the Sun is a 50-minute long VHS video from the Tower Hamlets Arts Project, 178 Whitechapel Road, E1 (01-247 0216). It can be hired for £2 a night, or bought - £12 to individuals, £20 to groups and trade unions.
- R W Buckler, 9 Laurel Drive, Buckley, Clwyd, CH7 2QP is a scab TNT driver. He works for Division 800, TNT Roadfreight (UK) Ltd, Fourth Avenue, Deeside, Clwyd.

Income:

£40 NoW Publishing; £9.35 Sun Night Machine Tea Wagon; £3.65 Guardian Revisers and Copy-readers chapel; £1 Sun Machine; £1.50 "TI"; £1 Daily Mirror; £1 Sun Stereo; £2, £2 NoW NGA strikers; £1 NoW Stereo; £1 Sun Composing chapel; £5 Times Machine; £2 LMB Mirror; £2 Sun Composing (ex-lino); £1 SWP printer; 40p Sun Clerical; £50.50 Times Night Publishing chapel; £1 WH Smith, Hammermith; 50p INL Graphical; £1 DHSS "scrounger"; £1 misc; £2 Scots supporter; £1 picket; £5 printers north of the gap; £5.64 picket donations.

Concise written contributions welcome.
Picket is published by NGA/Sogat pickets.