

The TYNESIDE SYNDICALIST

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25P

SOLIDARITY WILL WIN

The dispute over the sackings of 47 workers at HFW Plastics, Gateshead, continues with workers still hopeful of gaining a victory over their employer, Paul Jackson, and securing their wage rise and full re-instatement. Since the last issue of the 'Tyneside Syndicalist' much has changed in the dispute, not all for the good unfortunately. There are now around 60 scabs entering the factory each day, without much trouble due mainly to the role of the police and their new tactics and physical numbers, sometimes outnumbering pickets.

DRIVERS GIVE SUPPORT

In the face of the police presence it is heartening that much support is being shown by drivers, who have continually refused to cross picket lines. Jackson is now using firms from such places as Leeds, and North Yorkshire in an attempt to get plastic etc into his factory. At the moment most of the deliveries made to HFW Plastics factory are made by the companies own van. This support is an encouraging side of the dispute and hopefully worker-solidarity can be gained further in order that victory can be secured.

THE SCABS

The new scab workforce are mainly hired on three month contracts, a growing trend by employers to keep a firm grip on their 'right to manage'. Wage levels are set at around £58 and £67 for women and men respectively. Jackson has never thought women workers warranted an equal wage. The company has also taken full advantage of the governments 'Jobstart' scheme (the scheme is designed to drive down wage levels) which enables employees earning less than £80 per week to claim a £20 'top-up' allowance for up to six months.

SIMILAR DISPUTES

We have reported on many disputes which are similar to that of HFW Plastics over the last few months, none more so than the dispute with millionaire boss Lionel Pickering at Trader Web Offset in Derby and Nottingham. Many similarities including the origins (where the workforces were sacked) and print unions involved are present at both HFW Plastics and the Trader fights. The print unions SOGAT 82 and NGA both are organised at Trader Web. A full story on the Trader dispute is included in this issue of the 'Tyneside Syndicalist'.

CONDITIONS AND INEXPERIENCE

A major concern inside the factory before the sackings took place was that of health and safety levels. In particular workers refused to work a guillotine they said was 'too dangerous' as it had a habit of working 'when it felt like it'. This machine was at the centre of an accident on May 27th when a 19 year old scab had fingers crushed and severed while operating it. Not only is this case a damning indictment on the managements use of unsafe machinery but also a case of his bloody-mindedness in an attempt to drive down wages, conditions and practices and in the process rid himself of the organised SOGAT workforce.

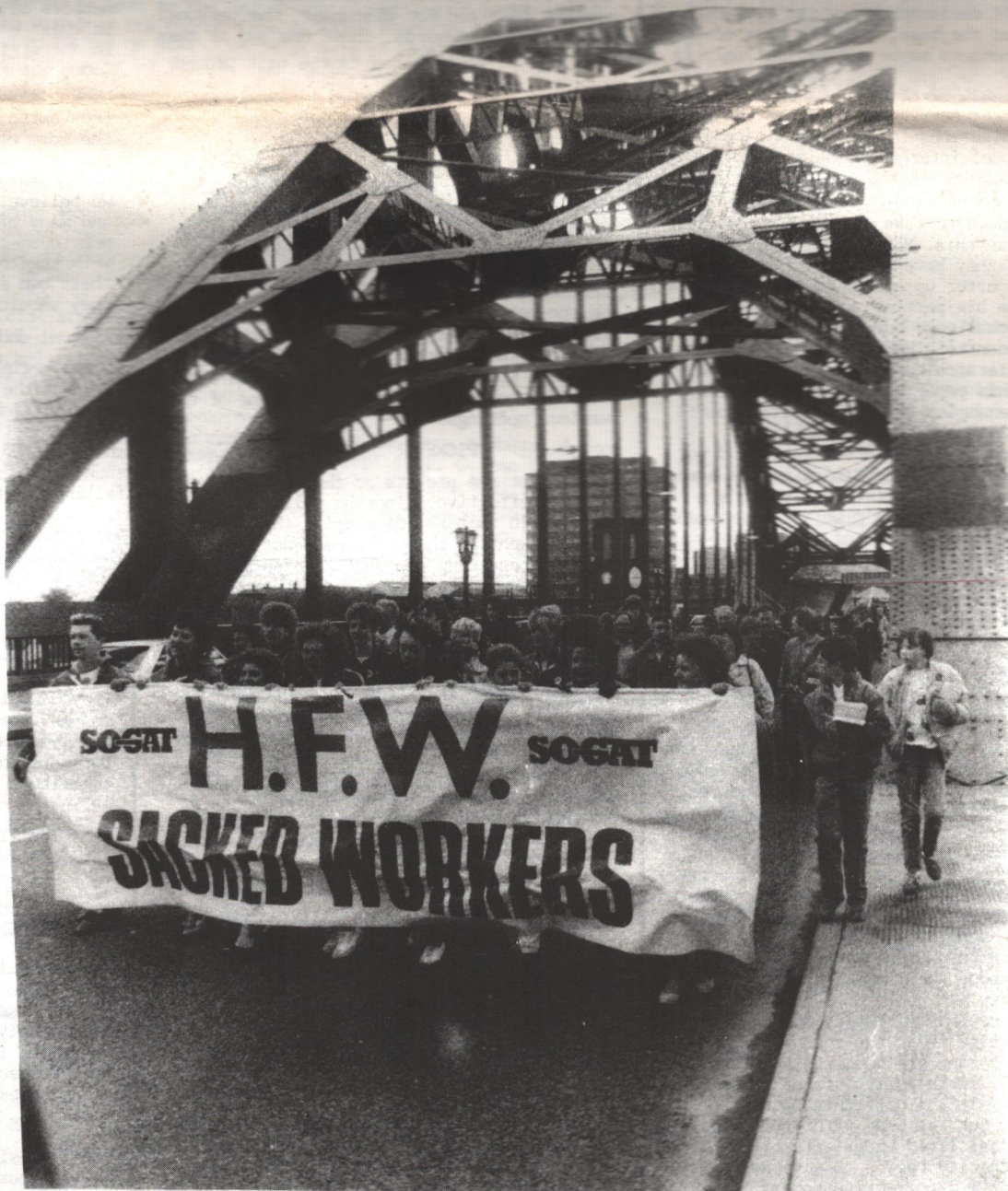
Unskilled workers cannot hope to operate machinery and do a job that workers have performed for many years, nor can they hope to gain adequate training as experienced staff is at a very low level in the factory. It is not unlikely that much of the production inside the factory is actually discarded as 'useless'. Many companies and firms now in receipt of the scab mad products have now to do their own 'quality control' as the scabs are not qualified to do so. No doubt countless orders will be returned as 'rejects'.

SUPPORT GROUP

Supporters of the 47 sacked workers have begun to meet regularly though attempts at forming a support group have been hampered for various reasons - not through problems of the supporters themselves. It is hopeful, however, that these initial teething problems will be overcome in the near future and an active support group formed. Supporters have, however, produced a strike bulletin to be distributed amongst supporters and workers in other factories in order to keep everyone interested updated on the dispute, a section from 'PICKET' number one has been included in this issue.

To date three benefit socials have been organised for the sacked workers to raise funds for the dispute. At the moment students at the Newcastle Polytechnic are in the process of organising a further event.

TURN INSIDE FOR MORE NEWS, VIEWS AND INFORMATION ON SUPPORT YOU CAN GIVE TO H.F.W. PLASTICS SACKED WORKERS.



MARCHING FOR VICTORY:

HFW PLASTICS SACKED WORKERS LEAD GATESHEADS MAY DAY MARCH

ANARCHO-SYNDICALIST MONTHLY

As we approach another General Election the media circus is regurgitating the usual sickening cliches and nonsense about the difference it will all make. We are not going to go along with this by criticising the parties, policies or manifestoes. Instead we prefer to question the whole idea of parliamentary democracy, and to broaden the argument by talking about the underlying issues of authority, power and control.

Our system of government is geared to fitting in with the needs of capitalism. The small differences there are between the major parties concern how best to accommodate to the quest for profit of the multinationals and financial institutions. As voters we are presented with apparent choices of style, but we have no realistic opportunity to reject the whole sordid assumptions and practices of capitalism. So our power to wield our votes to change things is mainly an illusion.

But that's not all. The structure of any political party means that we are made even more passive by supporting or joining it. Parties consist of massive and overbearing hierarchies where even straight-forward and sensible change is virtually impossible to achieve unless the leadership already desire it. Changes that would imply removing control from the top obviously get nowhere.

Some people enter the party hierarchy with the intention of improving things from within. They very quickly get swallowed up by the dead weight of bureaucracy and neutralised by the control of those at the top, and it's irrelevant how much support from the base they have. The only other alternative is to get to the top themselves, but by the time they've managed it, the distortions and perverting effects of the hierarchy have inevitably taken their toll - so that the old status quo is now accepted. We can see this very clearly in one-time radical labour politicians or broad-left trade union officials who become more and more reactionary as they climb the ladder and leave the base behind. Meanwhile those at the bottom are left passive and powerless, and maybe worse off because of the time and effort wasted on keeping the faith in a "better leadership".

Clearly this type of analysis applies to supposedly revolutionary parties and to trade unions just as much as to the big parties. If decision making isn't placed squarely at the base, then the mass of ordinary members maybe active, but only in doing what they are told, what is permissible, and they are in no position at all to challenge the status quo. These days most organisations involving politics make a big show of internal democracy, but when it comes down to it those at the top have to agree before anything gets done.

But we have to take the analysis a bit further than this. Most people seem fully aware that they have no control, but still manage to muster up enough motivation to support the big parties and to make no effort to challenge bureaucratic and authoritarian control. We can present alternatives to hierarchies and powerless membership - in this paper we consistently offer ideas and examples of rank and file control, assembly-based decision-making, mandated and re-callable delegates and so on. Such ideas are acceptable, people agree that they would be better. But there's a tendency to say "it won't work" (even when given cast iron evidence of it working), and to not really want or be able to apply the ideas in their own real lives. It looks as though people feel more comfortable being passive, don't want the bother of being responsible, in fact desire to be dominated. Why is this?

The Desire To Be Dominated

People aren't completely logical, we all behave irrationally quite a lot of the time. So while working class people want freedom, struggle to make our lives better and recognise the injustices of society, other parts of us also desire to be controlled to let others make our decisions for us. That's why it is possible for Thatcher to attract so many of our votes. All of the other parties have massive blind spots to the problems of power and authority too, and can't afford to examine these areas because it would expose their own (equally large) shortcomings.

In this society virtually all of our lives are lived under the shadow of forms of authority that are completely out of our control. It is built into us to be subservient. It's a difficult pattern to break down, but the best path is in active struggle. Real lived experience of battling against authority begins to give us confidence in our own collective power.

Experience of the double-dealing, betrayal and manipulation of politicians and trade union officials clinging onto their positions in the hierarchy tests our faith in their influence, whilst we know we can trust one another.

So rank and file control is not enough - we need also to be conscious of why we need it. Because otherwise we will find ourselves trusting the next plausible dominator who comes along, and the gains of our experience of collective self-control will be lost.

FINANCING JACKSON

Even though the company is having problems on a staffing and output level, due mainly to the inexperience we have mentioned, and the support shown from drivers refusing to cross picket lines with materials and goods, they are by no means broken. Finance from Crawfords in Longbenton and Mawsons, Near Sunderland (Crawford also has joint ownership of HFW Plastics with his son in law Jackson - both have a stake in Mawsons) will enable Jackson to carry on financially without having to make a profit at HFW Plastics for a time.

CRAWFORDS AND MAWSONS

The Crawfords and Mawsons factories are a very important issue in the present dispute, without profits from the two companies Jackson would soon find it difficult to continue as he is now. To do the most damage to Jackson and Co the dispute must cut off the employers finances.

Though Crawfords is a SOGAT organised factory the union have not as yet called on their members to come out in support of their sacked fellow workers. The entire time these factories are working it makes it that much more difficult to gain victory and will in any event prolong and draw out the dispute that much longer.

SOLIDARITY ACTION NEEDED

On striker told us, "the only way we can win is if all SOGAT members in the region come out on strike".

Such feelings abound in the sacked workers ranks though as yet this type of support has not effectively been sought or forthcoming. All local companies are looking at the HFW plastics dispute, in fact many local employers have pledged full support to Jackson (whether or not this is purely verbal is not known). Workers at Crawfords, Mawsons and many others in the area will surely come under attack by the employers if Jackson finally succeeds in this fight. A victory for Jackson will give many employers the confidence to go down the same road as that taken at HFW Plastics.

YOUR TURN NEXT

There is no substitute for direct contact, delegations of factories to raise support for sacked workers and to explain the basic facts as they stand must surely become a central issue to the present action. On the whole letters to factories have a habit of getting lost and not discussed, the personal contact with stewards, convenors and at mass meetings of workers has in the past proved extremely effective.

The message is, it could be your turn next, take action now!

COUNCIL WORKERS

A 1,500 strong council workers depot is directly opposite the HFW Plastics factory, union officials and shop stewards have been approached for support on the picket lines but to date nothing has evolved. Direct contact with the workforce themselves could be the best way to organise such support. Leaflets have been produced calling for a walk out in support of the mass pickets, but as we go to press these have not been circulated in order to await the outcome of the various meetings.

PICKETS

At present the pickets at the factory gates are not effective. Since the police began to turn up in numbers, developing their tactics as time went by the scabs have not had many problems entering the factory each morning. Unfortunately the picket organisation has not developed in the same manner, this is by no means the fault of the sacked workers.

Mass pickets have now been called for each week day. This is extremely unfortunate as the regular three day mass pickets have not, of late, had any effect on the entrance by the scabs.

The organisation of say 'spontaneous' type pickets (organised through contacts) is a worthwhile method that should be tried. Such a picket would, hopefully, throw the police into confusion as to the date of the next to enable the scabs to be stopped for at least a short period of time.

Since the numbers of police have built up other forces have had to be used, to get this organised would be enough time to delay production for a short while. Anything is worth trying once or twice! The effect may even be surprising.

SUPPORTERS MESSAGE TO HFW SACKED WORKERS.

Supporters of the sacked workers recently produced a leaflet concerning developments in the dispute. We include sections from the leaflet below (all subheadings have been inserted by the Syndicalist):

STRIKE COMMITTEE ESSENTIAL

"We recently arranged for workers from Contracts, South Shields, to talk to you about setting up a strike committee to organise additionally to the pickets but unfortunately not many of the strikers turned up. The Contracts workers explained the need for strikers to organise factory delegations and other activities. With all the best will in the world, your union cannot give all their time to the strike, as they obviously have the rest of their members to serve".

The next section is an extract from 'PICKET' number one;

WHICH SIDE ARE THEY ON?

The 47 sacked workers have learned quickly which side the police, courts and government are on. Within the weeks since the dispute began there have been over 35 arrests made on the picket line and elsewhere.



Meanwhile, scab drivers entering the factory have knocked over and injured three pickets - no charges have been brought against the drivers although complaints have been made. The first incident happened early in the dispute when a K.B. Transport - local haulage firm - driver refused to stop for the picket and hit one of them. This lorry had no current tax disc or MOT and the driver had no HGV licence. The same firm was at the centre of the second incident on Saturday May 2nd (supporters had gathered at the factory to start a May Day march). The company had earlier pledged support for the sacked workers though on this date the owner himself drove straight through, hitting one picket. The latest incident happened on May 14th as HFW's warehouse manager smashed his car into the legs of a sacked worker

throwing her over the bonnet.

While the scabs have got away with what could have been murder, pickets have been arrested on ludicrous charges. Two arrested early in May were charged with throwing tomatoes at the scab bus. Supporters and sacked workers have created a 'norm' of demonstrating outside Gateshead Police Station when people are arrested.

Lately police have taken to arresting demonstrators; 14 were arrested at the demonstration which resulted from the 'tomato' incident above.

On May 1st, at such a demonstration after three were arrested on the picket, scaffolding work on Gateshead Police Station was halted when two AEU members refused to work for the day in support of the arrested pickets.

Injuries to pickets have not only been incurred as a result of the scabs. The police have caused many injuries while wading into the picket to allow the scab bus entrance to the factory. Police are now being drafted in from all over the area, on some occasions their numbers exceeding 100 and outnumbering the pickets.

CUSTOMERS

BANKS: TSB, Lloyds, NAT WEST, HALIFAX, YORKSHIRE, NATIONAL AND PROVINCIAL, GIRO BANK, NEWCASTLE BUILDING SOCIETY and MERCANTILE CREDIT.

OTHERS: Hamlyn Publishing Group, Avon, AAF, Commercial Plastics, Balck & Decker, HMSO, Marks & Spencers, Celluware, Glaxo, Chantworth Studios, Proctor and Gamble, Granada, Burgess, James Galt, Ashton & Tate, Crawfords, British Telecom, Lion Brush, Sand Rockets, Mysson Heaton, DeWarts, Annan of Sterling, Phillips, Fisher Price and Reed Print.

CONCLUSION

More support from other workers is desperately needed to enable the 47 sacked workers to win their fight. We must show solidarity through physical support:

- * Ensure your company does not cross HFW picket lines.
- * Demand that your company stops dealing with HFW Plastics.
- * Call a mass meeting in your workplace and invite the strikers to speak to you.
- * Send messages of support to the picket line.
- * Organise workplace collections to assist these workers fighting for their jobs.

Letters of support and donations to:
HFW SACKED WORKERS,
c/o 119, Jesmond Road,
Newcastle Upon Tyne,
NE2 1NL.

Hospital strike

North East hospitals are once again at the centre of a low pay row. On May 28th 35 Medical Secretaries at Shotley Bridge Hospital walked out over regrading. At present the Medical Secretaries are on an average net wage of between £70 and £75 for a 37 hour week. The NALGO members say they are grossly undervalued, regrading would mean around £10 per week extra. Management have offered to upgrade a very small number of the staff but the workers have refused, "we want upgrading for all Medical Secretaries" said one striker. Action throughout the health service on this question has not, as yet, been ruled out, with many looking to see the outcome of the dispute.

As we go to press the strike continues.

Subscriptions

If you are finding it difficult to purchase a copy of the Tyneside Syndicalist on a regular basis, or would like to begin receiving the paper, subscriptions rates are as follows;

- 3 MONTHS £1.00
- 6 MONTHS £2.00
- 1 YEAR £4.00

All subscriptions include postage. Donations are welcomed.

If you would like to make any comment on the Tyneside Syndicalist, contact the Tyneside Revolutionary Syndicalists for more information or would like to contribute to the paper both financially and with information please contact:

THE TYNESIDE SYNDICALIST,
c/o Tyneside Free Press,
5, Charlotte Square,
Newcastle Upon Tyne,
NE1 4XF.

If you would like to see the continuation of the Tyneside Syndicalist we urge you to make a financial donation immediately.

The paper is produced on a shoestring and your support is needed. Please make all cheques and Postal Orders out to:

THE TYNESIDE SYNDICALIST

The 'Tyneside Syndicalist' publishes news, reports and information on industrial disputes, rank and file workers organisation and trade union activity and community and social issues in Tyneside and elsewhere.

If there is something happening in your workplace, community or trade union that you feel people should know about please write to us with details if possible an address or telephone number where we can contact you would be of help. All communications will be treated with complete confidentiality.

As with the Senior Colman dispute and others the fight against sackings continues. The dispute has made little progress over the last few weeks though victory has not yet been ruled out.
Send donations and messages of support to;

Keetons Strike Committee,
AEU House,
Furnival Gate,
Sheffield.
Tel: 769041.



Spanish Dockers 1 'Socialist' Government 0

In recent issues of the Tyneside Syndicalist we have documented the struggle between the Spanish dockers and the "socialist" government. The dockers and their rank and file controlled union, the Co-ordinadora, have fought the socialists plans to privatise the whole of Spains docks. These plans achieved the active collaboration of the reformist unions who have indulged in organised scabbing and other anti-working class tactics.

where the Co-ordinadora are fairly weak. Twelve members, office and maintenance staff at Contenemar, were sacked for refusing to work with scabs. Those sacked (mainly women) occupied Contenemar's offices and embarked on an inspired campaign. This included floating rafts with posters down the river, kidnapping executives and driving them around Bilbao for hours before releasing them, and following management



CONTENEMAR SURRENDERS

The first round has been won by the dockers, as Contenemar (the government-controlled holding company running the docks) has withdrawn from the plans. The government will have to find another stooge to implement its capitalist policies.

BILBAO DIRECT ACTION

A suprising victory has been won in Bilbao,

Senior Colman

The fight over the 47 sackings in January continues with workers in extreme financial hardship and desperately looking for support. Though South Manchester District AEU voted by 82.5% in favour of a levy in support of the sacked workers this has been vetoed by the AEU Executive Committee.



The sacked workers are now holding talks with the occupiers of Ancoats Hospital in an attempt to organise joint action and links - lets hope such a move pays off.
Donations and messages of support to;

Senior Colman Strike Committee,
c/o AEU House,
43, Cresent,
Salford,
M5 4PE.

around, pestering, shouting at and photographing them.

CONTENEMAR PULL OUT

The demoralised Contenemar management caved in and offered the workers their jobs back. The deal even included them being paid for the 4-month period of the occupation. Imagine such tactics over here - win your struggle, have great fun in the process, and get paid for it!

BLOCKADE HALTS MEETING

On April 28th the decision-making management body at Newcastle University (the Senate) met to finalise department closures and 250 job losses. But as Senate members turned up they met a blockade of over 600 secretaries, clerical workers and students determined to register their opposition to the cuts. The blockade continued into the afternoon working hours and brought together 400 NALGO and ASTIMS members in joint action. A NALGO member commented,

"The staff - secretaries and clerical workers - had united in a tactic of direct action and showed their strength. ...We had refused to be intimidated and lumped in with "resources to be cut"!"

On this occasion the action was unsuccessful it was an encouraging case of workers combining across union boundaries, and bodes well for the future.

Manchester Hospital Occupied

Residents in Manchester are furious at the closure of Ancoats Emergency Hospital, so much so in fact that they have occupied the building in a demand that the unit be re-opened immediately with full back up facilities, intensive and coronary care and blood bank.
The unit was occupied on February 1st this year.

BACKGROUND

In 1986 26,791 people attended Ancoats casualty accounting for over one third of all North Manchester accident and emergency treatment. 25% of these admissions were children..

The hospital itself is 1/2 mile from the city centre, making it all the more important that the unit is re-opened. The alternative use at the moment since the closure has been North Manchester General Hospital which

cannot now cope, due to lack of resources and is now turning patients away.

WHOSE HEALTH SERVICE ?

We must realise that the health service belongs to us, and it is we who must fight all cuts, closures and attacks. We must join together with workers in the health service, such as those organised in NUPE, COHSE, GMBATU etc to not just stop the cuts but also to extend the resources and services needed by those who are ill. Full support must be given to the Ancoats occupation. Letters of support and financial help should be sent to;

Ancoats Casualty Sit In,
c/o Ann Dobson,
24, Woodward Street,
Ancoats,
Manchester, 4.

HEALTH SERVICE CUTS IN NEWCASTLE

FLEMING MEMORIAL HOSPITAL FOR SICK CHILDREN

Newcastle Health Authority has decided it can no longer afford to keep open this specialist Children's Hospital. As part of the financial cuts, it will close in 1987 despite the complete absence of guarantees that the facilities demanded by the Community Health Council will be made available.

WARD CLOSURES

Two General Surgical Wards at the RVI (Wards 19 and 20) and an operating theatre at the RVI have closed, as well as an Orthopaedic Ward at the Freeman Hospital and a Paediatric Ward at Newcastle General Hospital. These were all "prompted by financial crisis" according to Newcastle Health Authority.

NEW WARD BLOCK

Newcastle's future health plans are dependent on the opening of the new RVI Ward Block by 1992. Government and Regional Health Authority continue to refuse commitment to it. Without this Ward Block, the movement of Children's services from the Fleming to the RVI will seriously deplete other specialities within the hospital.

HOSPITALS FOR THE ELDERLY

Wylam and Ponteland Hospitals which provide essential care to the elderly face closure in the absence of any alternative provision.

MEDICAL AND SURGICAL EQUIPMENT

At least £6 million is needed to replace essential medical and surgical equipment.

PADLOCKED WARD FREEMAN HOSPITAL

The Ancoats occupation in Manchester must be an inspiration, we must in future take such militant stands ourselves and link up with NHS unions to defend our right to a free and adequate health service.

900 WALK OUT

For almost two months 900 workers at Babcock Power, Renfrew, Scotland, have been on strike over wages and managements breaking of agreements.

The company has over the last few months been using Temporary and contract labour to keep up with orders, this may have something to do with the fact that 600 redundancies were made some months ago, the unions gave no opposition. This connected with the refusal to give a wage rise led the workers to walk out.

At present white collar workers are scabbing, TASS saying they will do nothing until they receive an official letter from the AEU. When this will happen, if ever, is anyone's guess. The Paisley AEU delegate, Jim Carty, does not seem interested in the dispute - his work lately has centred around the election and a 'Labour victory'. Meanwhile scab labour has been taken on from a company in Paisley, Scot - test. Babcocks has a further 24 factories throughout the country. Pressure must be put on the company as a whole and these workers called out. Likewise all companies with contacts with Babcocks must be contacted and workers asked to black any Babcock work.

Jim Gallagher,
22, Walnut Crescent,
Glasgow,
G22 6EY.

Attacks on our health service are being stepped up. In the long run it is we who will pay the cost of closures and cut backs, it is we, all users of the NHS, therefore who must fight ALL attacks.

'CONSPIRACY' Threat

During the Wapping dispute many support groups were formed to organise solidarity and finances for the 6,000 sacked printers fighting Murdoch. Leicester was no exception. Two active members of the 'Print Support Committee' formed in Leicester, Sue Faulkner and Ross Galbraith have been accused of 'conspiring with person, persons, unknown to cause damage to TNT Newsfast Ltd, in Leicester and elsewhere in England and Wales'. This follows their arrest and initial charge of causing damage to a TNT lorry during the print dispute. The conspiracy laws have been used on many occasions against trade unionists who have fought the bosses. If the two are convicted they face a minimum sentence of 3 years in jail.

A campaign to defend the two has been launched by Leicester and District TUC. The campaign calls for the charges to be dropped and the conspiracy laws scrapped. For more information on what is happening and how you can give support to the campaign contact;

Leicester and District TUC,
138, Charles Street,
Leicester,
LE1 1HB.

WORKERS TO JOIN FORCES

Up and down the country workers in all industries are feeling the effects of existing anti-union legislation, the ineptness of reformist trade unionism and an expanding employer confidence that is being gained as a result. The 'Tyneside Syndicalist' has continued to report the struggles of workers, unluckily most of which are won by the bosses due to union sell-outs and legal pressures. Some light is now at the end of the tunnel with a move to bring all sacked and workers in dispute together to stand together in an attempt to drive off isolation and secure greater solidarity. In the recent past we have seen union withdrawals at Contracts, Silentnight and Wapping, this betrayal on the part of the existing union movement will not change, as has been seen more recently at Hangers, Caterpillar and Ardbride, but through joint solidarity of workers in dispute and their supporters defeats may be avoided with or without official union backing.

CONFERENCE

On July 25th this year a conference has been called by many sacked workers and supporters

F.T.A.T.: Yet Another 'Silentnight'

For over eight months workers at J.E. Hangers, Roehampton, London were in dispute with employers after the sacking of four shop stewards. They have now been deserted by their unions, TASS and FTAT - well known for their sell-out at Silentnight. During the dispute the two unions never attempted to organise solidarity or extend the fight to other firms either owned or connected with Hangers.

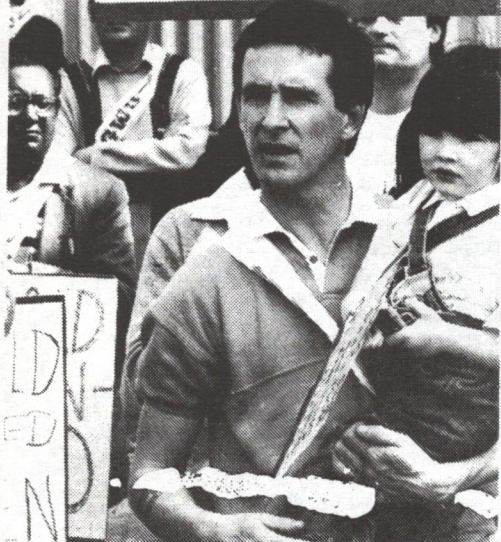
DEAL ACCEPTED

The sacked workers have been forced to accept a deal which does not give them re-employment, or even re-employment but a miserly cash payment. Many of the sacked workers were furious at the deal claiming the unions were more concerned with collecting union dues, even from scabs, than with defending those sacked. One sacked worker said of the union leadership, "these people should not be allowed to do again what they have done at Hangers". Unfortunately the bureaucratic leadership continue unchecked.

Another SACK-O-GRAM

Forty three workers at a Salford Plastics factory have been sacked for daring to show their support for six victimised colleagues. Trouble started at the Salplas plant after management refused to give in to the demand of a wage rise in January, the workers had not had a rise since May 1985. Six workers were then laid off by the management for supposedly "not working hard enough". Forty three walked out in support and were immediately sacked by the employer, B. Chapman.

SUPPORT US
DON'T BUY
SALPLAS
HOSEPIPES
THIS SUMMER



Salplas make garden hoses and rigid extrusions for household and motor car appliances. The sacked workers ask all supporters to boycott all Salplas products. Support is now being received from the National Union of Seamen who have agreed to stop imports and exports. For more information, letters of support donations, contact;

Jim Billington,
43, Abington Road,
Urmston,
Manchester.

(see advertisement). The Conference will be held in Manchester. The purpose of such a meeting is to bring all workers in struggle together to form joint bodies of action and discuss and organise joint work such as demonstrations, publicity and pickets. Joint work will take up a major part of the Agenda.

SUPPORT SUCH A MOVE

Such a move must be supported. A body such as this will give the working class a fighting chance and will undoubtedly be a major step forward, as long as those involved in disputes are in control and not politically correct manipulators or union bureaucrats. Fortunately there is not much chance of this happening at this point in time. We urge you to support such a conference, send letters supporting the move, requests for more information etc should be sent to;

Gateshead Workers Support Group,
c/o Gateshead Law Centre,
13, Walker Terrace,
Gateshead.

Tel: 4771109.

VENUE: MANCHESTER TOWN HALL

DATE: JULY 25th TIME: 12 noon

CONFERENCE CALLED BY:-

- *Gateshead Workers Support Group
- *Ardbride Sacked Workers
- *Ardbride Supporters
- *Trader Web Sacked Workers
- *Senior Colman Sacked Workers
- *Ancoats Hospital Occupation

INVITATIONS SENT TO:

Keetons Sacked Workers, Salplas Sacked Workers, Trader Support Groups, Babcocks Strikers, Sacked Printers, Caterpillar Workers, National Rank & File Group and many more.

'UNION' FEARS AT TRADER

Defiant printworkers involved in the Midlands Trader dispute have pledged to fight on. A chapel-vote on May 15th backed a call to the National NGA committee demanding they keep the dispute "official". The Trader dispute began in December last year when millionaire print-boss Lionel Pickering sacked 90 printworkers in an attempt to go "no-union". Since he dismissed the workforce from his plant at Heanor Gate in Derbyshire, printing of the Trader titles has been done by other firms scattered throughout the country.

controlled Trades Council blocked all attempts by the sacked printers to speak from the platform. Workers in struggle were to be silenced at all cost, so that Michael Meacher MP could address the rally at length. The CP would allow nothing to upset their "vote Labour" carnival, especially workers who are prepared to fight the attacks of the bosses.

DEFIANT PICKETS

At the 24-hour picket line at Heanor Gate, an accidental fire on May 3rd burnt down



UNION SABOTAGE

Every few weeks, the NGA review the position of the Trader dispute, and, as this issue of the 'Tyneside Syndicalist' went to press, printers were awaiting the out-come of their meeting. Many printers fear that the union officials who have done nothing to back their struggle for reinstatement will now stab them in the back by trying to kill off the dispute.

SOGAT PULLED-OUT

SOGAT officials have already sold out their Trader members by cutting off strike pay after twenty weeks. To speed up their attempts to starve their members off the picket lines, one local SOGAT official set up job interviews for two sacked SOGAT women. "My husband's got no job", one of the women explained, "and with my union cutting off strike pay, I'm left with no money to fight on with. What can I do?"

"They've forced me to take this job, but you can bet we'll be back on the picket lines on our days off. You can't get rid of us that easily!"

UNION REFUSE TO BACK SUPPORT GROUP

Supporters of the sacked printers too face attacks by union bureaucrats. The lone NGA rep on Nottingham Trades Council actually opposed the donation of £100 to the sacked printers support group in the town! His reason? He is "wary of autonomous groups outside the unions control". At May Day rallies throughout the region, the sacked printers were able to argue the case for solidarity from other workers. Much money was raised and many important contacts made. But, at the Chesterfields May Day rally, the Communist Party (CP)

the picket huts in a matter of moments. But scab maintenance staff arriving later the same day were greeted by the sight of a large caravan of the printers had immediately bought so that picketting would continue without a break.

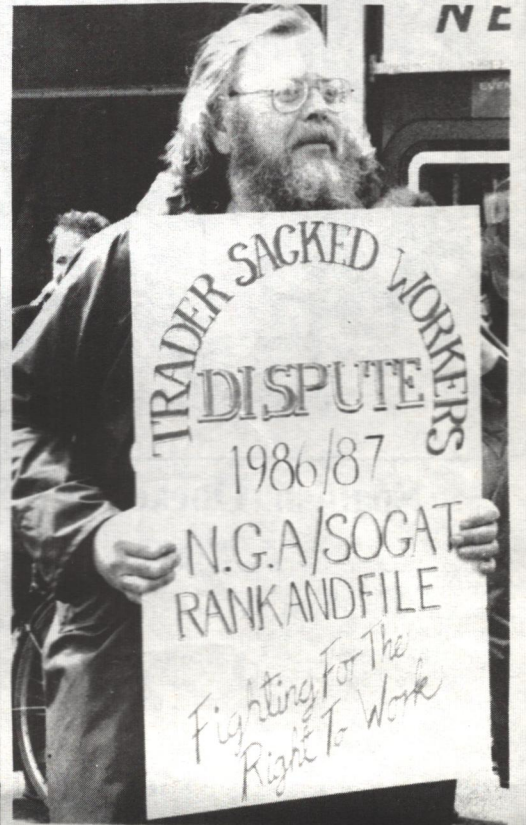
The contract with the scab firm Ad-scene in Canterbury for the Trader titles is up for renewal in a few weeks time. The contract is costing Trader-boss Pickering a fortune. This could well be the time that his finances force him to return to Heanor Gate and employ a scab workforce. If this were to happen, the Trader printers are ready to build "Warrington-style mass pickets". Picketing at Trader offices in the region is slowly becoming more militant. At the Leicester office on May 6th scabs cars were blocked for a half hour. Scabs then had to contend with glued-up door locks while being yelled at by a crowd of angry printers.

RE-INSTATEMENT OR CLOSURE

The union solicitor meanwhile is pursuing "unfair dismissal" claims through the courts. Picketing could well be forced to pay compensation to the sacked printers, should he lose the case. But its unlikely that he'd be forced by the courts to give the printers back their jobs. "We don't want a thousand quid and a UB40", explains one of the printers. "That way Pickering gets to re-open a non-union factory in the Midlands, which, because of the crap wages he pays, will be, that much cheaper. It'll put every other NGA and SOGAT printing job in the region at risk". "We can only win victory in one of two ways. Either we force Pickering to give us all back our jobs in a unionised factory at a decent wage-level, or, we make the bastard go bust."

TRADER: RON SENCHAK SPEAKS OUT

We have decided to include a statement included in 'DISPUTE' a paper produced by supporters of the sacked printers, made by Ron Senchak, sacked Trader F.O.C.. The struggle for trade union recognition and for the right to work at the Trader printers is now entering its 22nd week. 22 weeks of picketting 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Its been a long and cold winter but we've endured, we've had high court injunctions against us but we're not frightened, we've had police harassment on the picket line but we will not be intimidated. Mr Pickering, the boss of the Trader has attacked us in his newspapers that are being produced by scabs. Tory MP's have attacked us in the columns of the Trader newspapers. The columns of the Derby Trader are now totally devoted to attacking the Derbyshire Labour County Council (they have boycotted the Trader) and the trade unions, and is now no more than a right wing propaganda sheet.



Despite all the smears and propaganda we have not wavered in our defiance of these bully boy tactics and our determination is as firm as ever for the fight for trade union rights. The organisation of support and solidarity is now more important than ever, we cannot win alone. The support of trade unionists and socialists is vital if we are to carry on the struggle. Every trade union branch and shop stewards committee must invite sacked printworkers to speak at their meeting. Their is no substitute for this direct contact.

PICKETTING

...the fact that we are picketting has kept the printing works from being used. The presses have not run since the 4th of December, the day that we were sacked. Managements intentions were to print again under the mistaken belief that we would soon give up due to hardship caused by the sackings. This dispute is costing Mr Pickering thousands of pounds every week that the presses in Heanor stand idle.

CLASS SOLIDARITY

This struggle can be won, and sooner if we had the support of the Labour Council in Nottingham (advertises from Notts council still appear in the Trader and the City council have had their own council newspaper delivered inside the Trader....Ed) and the support of the Nottingham CO-OP, there is no excuse for not giving workers in struggle the support and solidarity thats necessary now when they need it most. Its only solidarity and unity in struggle that's ever achieved victory for the working class. Every act of solidarity with the Trader sacked workers is also building our movement, building up the confidence of workers confident of their own power.

GIVE SUPPORT

That is what Mr Pickering fears and what the Tories try to break - workers power, that's the power that can change the world. The world needs changing, give us the support we need and together we can begin to turn the tide - victories instead of defeats! SUPPORT THE TRADER SACKED WORKERS. Messages of support, donations and requests for more information to;

114, Stonehill Road,
Derby,
DE3 6TL.

'DISPUTE' issue Number 1 was produced at the back end of April and copies of this and future issues can be received by writing to;

Sacked Trader Print Workers Support Group,
c/o BOX 5,
118, Mansfield Road,
Nottingham.

Lies, damn lies and Laura Ashley

The dispute at Ardbride Products Ltd., Ardrossan, where 21 women are fighting to regain their jobs, is now over 8 months old. The prospects for victory are high, thanks mainly to excellent solidarity action by workers, literally from all over the world. Laura Ashley shops, main customers of Ardbride Products, have been forced to put pressure on Ardbride's manager, Stuart Ross, to end the strike. Now, in a surprising, and unprecedented, move Laura Ashley have placed a notice in their shops attempting to explain away their involvement with the dispute (see box). Of course, it is full of downright lies and half-truths, however we feel it is important to counter such propaganda. So we propose to tell the story behind the 'FACTS'.

Re-instatement. All sacked strikers to return to work between May 1st and June 1st, not all at once, but one by one at HIS DISCRETION. The two supervisors on strike were to go back and work under the scabs they had trained. We refused.

OFFER REJECTED

We told the three T&G officials that re-engagement was out of the question. Under re-engagement, Ross could sack us at any time by claiming overstaffing, therefore '1st in, first out'. As to the two supervisors, it was totally unacceptable that they go back and work under the scabs. Willie Queen then demanded that we accept this offer. If we should refuse, it would mean the T&G Lay Committee would vote to withdraw the union from this strike. A heated argument broke out. We told T&G that it was not through their actions that Ross had been brought to the negotiating table, but through the actions of DAM and IWA. The International solidarity from ordinary people had pressured Ross into negotiations. The meeting ended when we said that Partial Union recognition was a carrot thrown by Ross and that they being the rabbits, had swallowed it. If this is the extent of solidarity and support we can expect from this union, then we go on alone".

It was with great interest that strikers read in a local paper (Ardrossan & Saltcoats Herald 8.5.87), that Ross denied partial union recognition had ever been part of any deal with the T & G!

however. Supporters around the country must step up the action. Laura Ashley need to be picketed as often as possible. The lies in their statement need to be exposed. The 21 (not 5) strikers are still fighting to return to work (not close the factory down). They have the support of thousands around the world (including Ardrossan Labour Party).

As supporters we must try and raise money to keep the women going, also, now that lorries are going through the picket lines (due to the dispute now being unofficial), visits to the picket line should be made. Messages of support are essential to let the women know that they are not alone. Laura Ashley think they can talk their way out of their role in this dispute. We must ensure that they can't and increase the pressure on them until they force Ross to come to terms.

INCREASE THE SECONDARY ACTION NOW!

SOLIDARITY ACTION ROUND-UP

In Britain, Laura Ashley shops continue to be picketed in many areas. In Newcastle, there is a daily lunch-time protest which turns many away. And there is evidence that the pickets are increasing in number and in frequency. For example in Nottingham, members at Notts at Anarchist Group, Notts Anarchist Communist Federation and Notts Direct Action Movement joined forces to hold the first picket in that town on May 13th. This has resulted in local media coverage, and further pickets have successfully

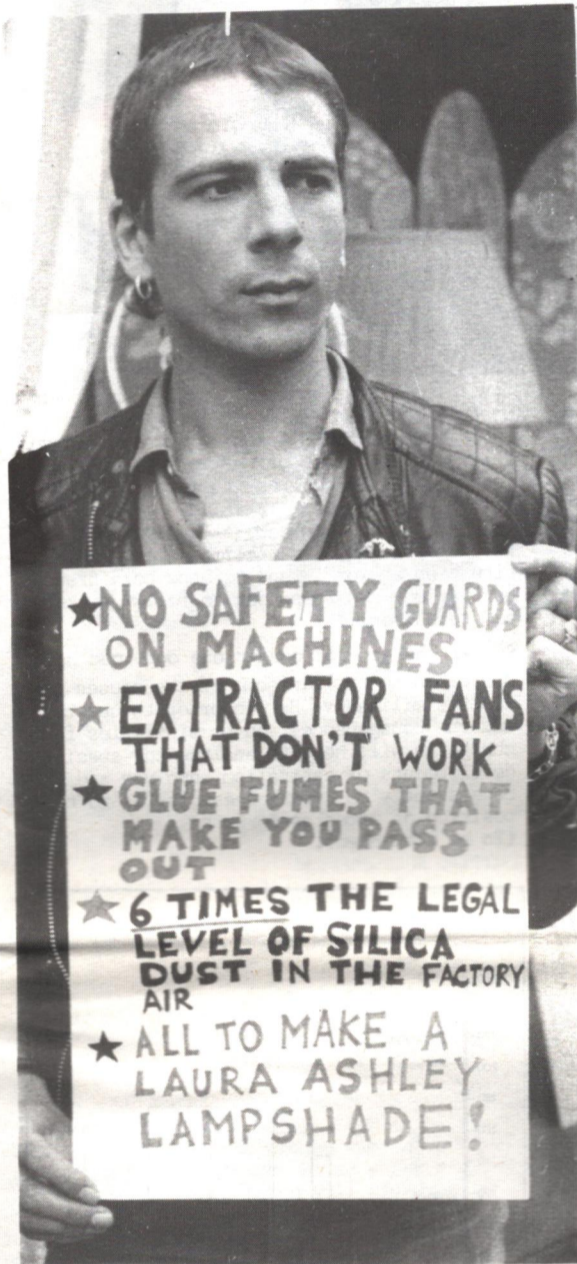
head-management of Laura Ashley in Rotterdam. They refused, arguing that it should be the women strikers who should be invited! Their success is a direct result of their activism. Other supporters in Germany have picketed inside Laura Ashley shops in Munich, and despite facing police pressure (in Hamburg), continue successfully to help the women at Ardbride.

The message from this activity comes through all too clearly. We must step up the action. Laura Ashley are clearly on the DEFENSIVE and must be kept so. But we must not be complacent, and must keep the pressure on.

SOLIDARITY WILL WIN!

All correspondence to;

Anna Druggan,
28d, Montgomerie Street,
Ardrossan,
KA22 8EQ,
Scotland.



THE TRUTH

One of the main points raised in this extraordinary document, is that workers refused to accept an agreement drawn up between Ross, and the local TGWU.

The whole truth is more revealing than that simple statement however. Ross, clearly losing the dispute, offered the strikers £700 each to 'go away' back in early April. This was a "final offer". On the 22nd April the offer went up to £1,000, on the 23rd to £1,500 and on the 24th to £2,000. Each of these 'final offers' was rejected by the strikers, as it was clear to them, though not the T&G who recommended acceptance, that Ross was running scared and that much more could be gained than a simple 'pay-off'. Then on the 29th April the strikers were called to a meeting in Saltcoats T&G offices. A striker tells the story of that meeting, "...We were informed by Willie Queen (T&G Official) that Ross had met with him that day and offered; Partial Union Recognition. Re-engagement, NOT

DISPUTE AT ARDBRIDE PRODUCTS.

The FACTS are as follows:

1. Ardbride Products Ltd. is not a member of the Laura Ashley Group of Companies as we have NO CONTROL over its EMPLOYEE RELATIONS.
2. Laura Ashley has fully supported and encouraged negotiations between strikers and management. The Transport and General Workers Union, with ACAS acting as arbitrator, negotiated an agreement with management which included RE-ENGAGEMENT for ALL strikers.
3. The TGWU, the local Labour MP, and the local Labour Council have all withdrawn their support for the strike following the REFUSAL by the strikers to ACCEPT the AGREEMENT.
4. The STRIKERS have expressed their intention to CLOSE DOWN Ardbride Products. They are FIVE in number; SIXTY people are currently employed by the company. It is THEIR JOBS that are at risk.
5. It would be easy and apparently lead to the end of any picketing of LAURA ASHLEY SHOPS for the company to withdraw its custom from ARDBRIDE PRODUCTS. BUT it would almost certainly lead to the LOSS OF MANY JOBS in an area of HEAVY UNEMPLOYMENT. LAURA ASHLEY have decided it would be IMMORAL and UNFAIR to take such a course.

JOHN M. JAMES
GROUP MANAGING DIRECTOR
LAURA ASHLEY HOLDINGS PLC.

T.G.W.U. ROLE IN DISPUTE

The T&G's actions in this dispute have been disgraceful to say the least. First they refused to allow strike pay (while spending over £1 million on new offices in Newcastle) second, they have continually hindered effective picketing. One official stated, "The T&G are not here to become involved in this dispute, our role is simply to give advice and ensure you don't break the law". Finally, after failing to get the women to do as they were told, the T&G APOLIGISED TO LAURA ASHLEY! (for full account on the union role throughout the dispute see issue 14 of the 'Tyneside Syndicalist').

WHAT HAPPENS NOW?

The first thing to say is: THE FIGHT CONTINUES. Not surprisingly, Trade union recognition is not anymore on the agenda. The Ardbride women are demanding:

- * FULL Re-instatement of all sacked strikers.
- * DECENT wage levels.
- * Healthy and safe working conditions.

They believe that once they achieve these demands they will be able to go in and hold their own in the factory. This will be done through their own organisation, and they believe that they can do a better job than the Union has done.

GOOD CHANCE OF VICTORY

There is a good chance of victory in this dispute. The women cannot win on their own

persuaded customers to boycott the shop. Latest news is that pickets are now twice weekly.

INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT

Solidarity has not been confined to the U.K., however (also see last issue). The Danish section of the International Workers Association (IWA) has started protests outside a Laura Ashley branch in Copenhagen, while pickets are successfully held in West Germany. German comrades in Cologne, members of the 'Free Workers Union' (FAU; German section of the IWA) were officially invited to meet

WHERE WE STAND

1. We believe in independent non-hierarchical working class organisation. Political parties and bureaucratic trade union structures cannot represent the true interests of the majority of the people - those who create wealth by manual or intellectual means.
2. We believe that under capitalism the struggle for short term gains such as better pay and conditions and the rights of women and black people should be supported. But these should be seen for what they are. Limited interim reforms are no substitute for the total re-organisation necessary to achieve true democracy, equality and freedom.
3. We believe that the parliamentary system and the election of new leaderships will not solve the problems that we, the working class, face. The solution lies in the creation of new workplace and community structures which allow us all to have total control over decision affecting our lives.
4. As revolutionary syndicalists we believe that the only way capitalism can finally be removed is through a general strike accompanied by mass occupations and the implementation of workers' control. This can lead to a free, self-managed society where production and labour are geared towards need and not profit.
5. We oppose all forms of racism, sexism, fascism and nationalism - indeed any ideology which divides the working class or which imposes artificial barriers on people developing their potential.

MOSES MAYEKISO FACED WITH DEATH PENALTY

Moses Mayekiso, General Secretary of the 60,000 strong Metal and Allied Workers Union (MAWU), faces death if he is convicted of 'High Treason' at his court case in September.



Moses Mayekiso

Moses was charged this year along with four others of organising to, "overthrow, usurp or endanger the authority of the state" due to their involvement with the Alexandra Action Committee. Moses has been held in continuous detention

since June last year, most of this time has been spent in solitary confinement with no windows in his cell. The authorities have stopped him from sleeping during this time by checking his cell every hour and wakened by the guards if he has gone to sleep.

STREET COMMITTEES

In February 1986 the North Johannesburg township of Alexandra fell under the total control of the community for four days after the security forces had been driven out of the area after they had attacked a funeral (see Syndicalist 10 for further information on street committees). The state has attempted to isolate Moses from other political prisoners for this is a direct crime against the state rather than trade union organisation. However as we have continued to report in the pages of the 'Tyneside Syndicalist' union such as MAWU and the union federation COSATU realise the importance of bringing the community and workplace struggles together if Apartheid and capitalism in South Africa are to be destroyed. COSATU has informed all its members to fully participate in the street committees for, "like our unions in the workplace, give the strength to fight for control over every aspect of our lives".

FREE ALL CLASS WAR PRISONERS

We must demand the immediate release of Moses Mayekiso and his four comrades along with all other political prisoners in South African jails. The best way to demand their release is through workers direct action in the form of 'workers sanctions' until Apartheid and capitalism in South Africa is destroyed.

PAMPHLETS AVAILABLE

The following publications are available from the TRS.

- The Spanish Revolution 1936 - 1939. History of workers organisation.....TRS...15p.
- Libertarian Labor Review. New technology, working week, Bolivia.....IWW...80p.
- Strike strategy. Early National Rank and File publication.....NRFM...10p.
- I.W.A. Aims and Principles. Aims of International Workers Association.....IWA...40p.
- Strike action. Tactics and way to organise during disputes.....DAM...20p.
- Miguel Garcia story. Militant in Spanish civil war and after.....MGM...£1.
- Anarchism and feminism. Women workers and trade unions.....DAM...35p.
- Tell us lies about the miners. Media coverage of '84-'85 strike...Douglass...60p.
- Come wet this truncheon. Police role and actions in '84-'85 strike...Douglass...80p.
- Bulgaria - A New Spain. Bulgarian revolution of 1944.....ABAF...60p.
- Libertarian Communism. Ideas of libertarian structure and organisation.Puente...60p.
- My Social Credo. The belief of Anarcho-Syndicalism.....Maximoff...50p.
- Program of Anarcho-Syndicalism.....Maximoff...£1.
- Syndicalists in Russian revolution.....Maximoff...45p.
- The Tragedy of Spain. A look at the revolution of 1936 - 1939.....R. Rocker.£1.20.
- Syndicalism in practice No.1. Spanish revolution.....Rebel Worker...20p.
- Syndicalism in practice No.2. Argentine organisation, FORA.....Rebel Worker...20p.
- Syndicalism in practice No.3. Syndicalist organisations of Chile.Rebel Worker...20p.
- Syndicalism in practice No.4. Syndicalist organisations of Poland.Rebel Worker...20p.

Please add 24p for orders under £2 and 10% for those over, to cover postage cost.

We wish to point out that TRS do not necessarily hold all views contained in the literature above.

WOMEN AT WORK

Women are taking an increasingly active part in the working class struggle, in this country and globally. The enormous contributions of women's support groups during the miners' strike cannot be underestimated, even if the NUM blocked their affiliation to the union. The support groups showed a link between women's traditional role of caring and support, and their capacity to extend this into a more direct factor in industrial struggle. Unfortunately however the conventional bias of the working class movement continues to see the involvement of families and the community as secondary to the flexing of industrial muscle in the workplace.

MILITANT WOMEN

But women are coming to the fore in the industrial arena too, shown clearly in some of the most militant of recent disputes (where most or all of the workers involved are women). Examples would be at Contracts and northern garment workers generally, Dunnes, Silentnight and now at Ardrbride, and HFW, and also in many other countries where women represent an increasing proportion of the workforce as a whole (as well as of the most militant section).

MORE WOMEN, IN WORSE CONDITIONS

The militancy of women workers is by no means a new phenomenon - quite the contrary in fact. Countless disputes over the last century have been organised, run and won by women, even in the face of extreme hostility from male-dominated unions. But current conditions are leading to an increased tendency for women at work to be fighting back against their employers. Many factors are relevant. Not least is the influence of feminism, which means that women are finding the confidence and strength to resist even more than they have in the past. Also, more women are workers, and in more sectors of industry. The demands of world capitalism are now placing the emphasis on short term, part time, low paid, flexible and disposable labour, and for a variety of reasons such conditions favour the employment of women.

SIMILARITY AND DIFFERENCE

But we should not imagine that this rise of militancy among women workers makes them the same as any particularly militant groups of men workers. This is not so, and the difference may indicate some important lessons for the working class as a whole.

We wish to look more closely at why it should be the case that women workers are finding their voices at a time when trade union effectiveness is at such a low level and when the working class is so demoralised.

The rest of this article consists of a background information on women's work. In the next issue we will attempt a deeper analysis of the significance of women's work and struggle.

WOMENS WORK

In the industrialised countries the majority of women do paid work - more than 1/2 in Western Europe, Russia, China, N. America and Japan, and more than 2/3 in E. Europe, S.E. Asia and some African countries. The proportion of women working is rising, at the same time as unemployment among men grows all over the world. The proportion of the workforce who are women is rising too, over 40% already in W. Europe and N. America and over 60% in E. Europe and China.

JOB "GHETTOES"

Historically women have tended to do certain

Of the 170,000 extra workers who joined the labour force in 1985, all but 2,000 were women. Despite the increasing importance of women's work, and the effects of the 1974 Equal Pay Act, women remain lower paid than men.

TABLE 3 Average gross hourly earnings, excluding the effects of overtime of selected occupations: Full-time employees on adult rates, GB 1985.

	Men	Women
BAR STAFF	£2.52	£2.20
CLEANERS	£2.82	£2.36
SALES STAFF, SHOP ASSISTANTS AND SHELF FILLERS	£2.89	£2.25

Source: New Earnings Survey

types of work. All over the world women are the vast majority of nurses, primary school teachers, service and sales staff, housekeepers and child carers. What else is women's work (on top of all these areas) varies though. In many countries garment workers, market traders, domestic servants and food harvesters and processors are mainly women. In some E. European and Asian countries multinationals can squeeze higher profits work such as electronics assembly is done almost exclusively by women. Women build the roads in Nepal and Russia, and in the latter country most doctors and administrators of collectives are women. But whatever is thought of as women's work invariably brings low status and pay and little security. Indeed the most important areas of women's work have no pay or status and aren't seen as work at all - home and family care and maintenance.

PAY AND CONDITIONS

Women earn on average considerably less than men for the same work. In most of Europe and in Australia and a couple of African countries women can earn 3/4 or even more of men's wages. In Britain and N. America the figure falls to around 2/3, and less than half in Japan and some African and Central and South American countries. Even when the vast majority of workers in a particular job are women, they will almost always earn less than the few men who do the same job. Also of course their chances of better paid work are much lower, if possible at all.

JOB SECURITY

The trend is now for part time and short term work to be preferable to employers in the industrial countries. Part time jobs are held by 1 in 20 men workers, but by 1 in 3 women workers in Scandinavia, Britain, Australia and the USA. These general statistics give just a glimpse of the considerably worse position of women workers compared to their men colleagues.

REPRESENTATION

But when we look at the representation of

women in the trade unions we find that most union officials are men even when virtually all the workers are women. Apart from E. Europe (about 1/4), France (1/4), Italy and N. America (1 in 10) - in the rest of the world fewer than 1 in 20 officials are women. Remember, this is in a context of getting on for half of all workers being women.

NOT TAKEN SERIOUSLY

Perhaps this gives a hint to the reasons behind women's present militancy. Women do not get represented in their trade unions due to patriarchal structures and men officials who don't understand or care about the needs and problems of women workers. Of course, more women officials would not solve the problem - bureaucrats are bureaucrats whatever their gender, and the structures remain. Not that the present trade unions do the men members much good either, but it is the exception rather than the rule for women workers to be taken seriously by their unions at all. No wonder women take matters into their own hands!

WORK AND MORE WORK

Women workers normally have two jobs, in fact, because they do most of the housework and childcare. In general women do over 90% of this work, but women who are waged still do over 70% of it. Women have far less leisure time than men (because of the "housework") and their wages are considered a necessary part of the family income rather than a man's private money to be dispensed as he sees fit.

A DIFFERENT CONSCIOUSNESS

These factors tend to give women a different orientation to their paid work than men. For women their is not such a rigid split between the public world of the job and the private world of home and community. The demands of shopping, housework and especially motherhood and childcare have to be fitted around paid labour.

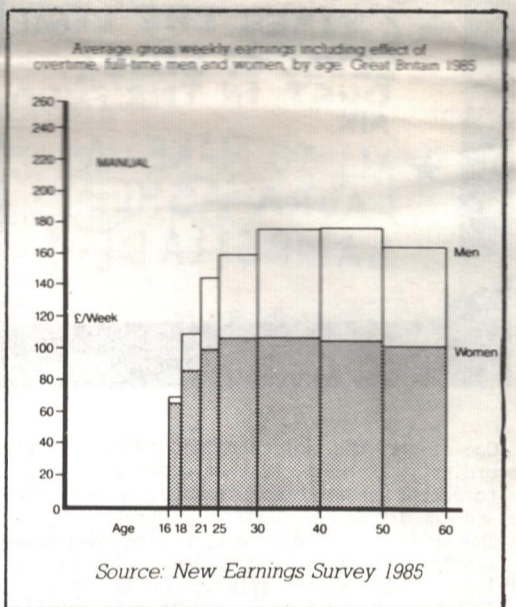
THE SOCIAL EMPHASIS

On the one hand this leads women more eas-

ily to part time and exploitative employment. On the other hand it means that home and work life are woven together much more than for men. The nature of the work becomes less central, whereas men tend to identify with "their trade".

These differences can lead to quite contrasting thoughts and feelings about the situation at work, and perhaps to different motivations and responses to fellow workers and to bosses.

So far the general conditions outlined here can begin to explain some of the causes of women's militancy. But in order to understand the consequences and possibilities for change we will need to analyse the specific developments of capitalism involved and consistently to relate these shifts to the position of women as workers. (To be continued).



TORTURE OF WOMEN

Campaign comes to Durham



Over four years ago, on November 11th 1982, the systematic strip-searching of women prisoners was introduced into Armagh prison, N. Ireland. Prior to this regular strip-searching had not been used. In March 1986 the women were moved to Maghaberry prison

from Armagh. Maghaberry has had over £5m spent on security alone making this new prison the most secure in Europe. Yet women prisoners continue to be strip-searched.

It is quite obvious from these facts that strip-searching is not imposed for security

reasons. The real reason is the use of techniques of psychological torture to break the spirit of the prisoners. It is not enough to imprison those who resist, the state takes the process further - dehumanising men and women, partly with the aim of

destroying their lives so that they do not become active again when they leave prison. Across the world the fashionable methods of torture often involve violence done to the prisoners' sexuality. British manufacturers export electrical apparatus used to pass high voltages through genitals etc.. These practices have been used before in N. Ireland, but can cause too great a public outcry. So with apparent justifications of security, the strip-searching of women is a convenient alternative for extreme degradation and humiliation of women.

These repressive state control measures are used predominantly on political prisoners, some of whom have been strip-searched more than 200 times already. Women arrested during the miners strike, at Greenham Common, and especially Irish and black women are particularly likely to be subjected to strip-searching as part of the catalogue of abuse.

This inhuman practice must be stopped. A campaign has begun that includes a demonstration in Durham against the strip-searches there and at Maghaberry. We support this campaign unreservedly and encourage others to do likewise.