

solidarity



for workers'
full control

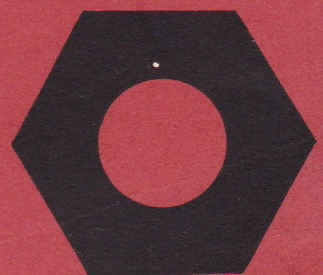
Kelloggs & Mud

Grand Old Duke of King Street

Kingsnorth Power Game

Bleeding Students !

6d / No 1



solidarity

(South London)

79 Balfour Street. London SE17

A NEW SOLIDARITY GROUP

We are a recently-formed group of mainly working-class people within the Solidarity movement.

We believe that a crisis is affecting modern society right down to its foundations. Many people, particularly industrial workers, know that they are living in a pretty rotten set up. They are up against it practically all the time at work — which means most of their lives — and they can only seem to escape from it for a time by shutting themselves off and concentrating on private domestic matters. Community life, an essential need, has been almost completely destroyed.

THE STRUGGLE IN INDUSTRY

Some of Solidarity's ideas about the situation have been briefly outlined in a leaflet which you'll find among the pages of this, the first issue of our monthly paper. In each issue, we shall try to show the relevance of these ideas to the struggle in industry and to the problems faced by people generally.

CONSCIOUS DIRECT ACTION

It is our intention that the main articles, whether signed or not, shall represent the work experiences and views of the group as a whole. We aim to do this through real discussion between ourselves on proposed articles before they are published. Therefore, the articles will not be in a high-falutin academic language which is as foreign to workers as the nature and purpose of their work. We want to write about what really matters in life in a down-to-earth way. We shall be in the struggle physically wherever possible.

Everything we do and say will relate strictly to our absolute conviction that society must be radically changed, not reformed, and that this depends ultimately on conscious direct action by workers, particularly those in industry. The extent to which we move towards this goal depends directly on the degree to which people take action themselves as opposed to leaving it to others to act on their behalf.

STIRRING TIMES

We know that our work is not going to be easy. No doubt we shall slip up sometimes. But there is a lot of shit around and we're going to stir it as hard as we can.

We hope you'll help. Write to us about your work, your experiences. Tell us if you think we're wrong and why. Tell us about your ideas.

KELLOGGS AND MUD

At Coryton, on the Essex side of the Thames estuary, a £20 million extension to the Mobil Oil refinery is being built. I work for the main contractors, Kellogg International Corporation. They've got 1000 men on this job. The struggle between us, the managed and them, the management, has continued ever since the job started. Sometimes it flares into open revolt with major confrontations.

There was the attempted lock-out in the middle of last summer. Kelloggs gave 800 men a week's notice because they refused to accept the sort of diabolical agreement which management and union bosses are trying to introduce into industry everywhere. Even by calling it an 'agreement' they are trying to mislead us. The 'agreement' is between them - the firm's management and the unions' management. Together they agree that every form of job control the men themselves have must be smashed. The so-called agreement at Kelloggs is aimed precisely at this. Why else would it involve a general lowering of wages, the ending of tea-breaks and the introduction of 'flexibility of labour', to mention only a few of its effects.

Anyway, the notices were eventually withdrawn, but not without cost to the workers. While the men were under the week's notice threat, a swindling bonus scheme had been bulldozed through, the workings of which were kept a jealously-guarded secret by the management. At the end of August, the men succeeded in wringing a new, more straight-forward bonus scheme out of the management. After this scheme had been operating successfully for five weeks, the management chopped it. The men struck.

It is important to note that despite the continual, almost head-on conflict on the site where for many months there had been dispute after dispute, productivity had nevertheless been fairly high. There was a time last year when the job was three months ahead of schedule. This enabled the Kelloggs bosses to feel that they could be even more beligerent in their attempts to smash site organization. Many may well ask themselves whether this alone suggests a good reason for keeping productivity as low as possible and wages as high as possible.

However, when the men struck in October, it had been a real democratic decision, that is, they had decided to act without the consent of the union bureaucrats. But since it was 'unofficial', they got no money from the union to which they had regularly paid their dues. The strike ran into December and the men were under all the additional financial pressures of the Christmas season. After eight weeks, it was called off with very little achieved.

MANAGEMENT CHANGING TACTICS?

It's interesting that since the strike ended, the management's attitude has been more subdued, or rather, more subtle. There have been troubles, usually over minor things, but the management has backed down fairly quickly. This is not to decry the work of George MacMahon, the convenor, and some of the stewards, especially Dave Hamley and Larry Clarke. They are two pipe-fitting stewards who always stand solidly with the men in any action against the bosses.

Maybe the management have changed their tactics because the productivity situation is not now as rosy as in the past. They seem quite happy to have these small confrontations. Yet the fact remains that the only monetary gain we've made since the strike is 6d. an hour condition money on all hours checked.

Another thing we've noticed is that most of the foremen and supervisors seem less eager to throw their weight around. The Dutchman is an exception. He still keeps flying out with wrist-watch at the ready to quarter anyone going to dinner 2 or 3 minutes early. Still, nobody takes his sallies very seriously.

Kennedy and Turner also continue to make nuisances of themselves. Kennedy, a fitting supervisor on the offsites (the areas outside the main construction centre), finds it impossible to talk to anyone in a decent manner. No doubt in his case the old saying is true that conceit is strongest in the weakest.

Alex Turner is the welding supervisor on the offsites. He rides around in a jeep all day with his henchman, Tommy Case, grunting disapproval at everyone, like an old sow that's got too bored. Apart from threatening welders with a sticky end, his prime reason for existence seems to be pulling welding sets around the job. The welders all know what they'll pull when they get half a chance.

QUAGMIRE CONDITIONS

Talking of pigs, I don't suppose there's a farmer in the country who would let his bacon loose in conditions like we've got throughout the site. When we get off the coaches in the morning, we have to walk 50 yards or so to the changing huts. This area is a quagmire in winter and a dustbowl in summer. We've got to walk across it in our decent clothes before we can change into our indecent ones. The managers and staff drive up to their offices in style. There's a tarmac strip around them, so they can avert their gaze from the vulgar mud scene and walk cleanly in. Talk about the collar bar!....

The changing huts are real classy. There are no lockers to put your clothes in, just hooks to hang them on. Sometimes clothes get lifted, but the firm accepts no liability for that. The under-floor, steam-pipe heating in the huts has the habit of breaking down. This has meant wet overalls the following morning. So most men refuse to work until the heating is on and their clothes have dried.

The lads who work on the offsites travel from the huts to the job in coaches that are long since past it. At one time there were no seats, so the men refused to travel in them. So the management had seats put in. Of course, they're not plush ones like they've got — wooden benches that are often wet and falling to pieces are good enough for us. But

some of the lads won't travel on them anyway. They either walk to the job or hang around in the huts until the coaches have left, then get lifts in the transit vans which run around the job. The men working on the process unit of the refinery have it just as rough. To get to the job, they have to pick their way across an expanse of watery mud worse than the Thames at low tide. It's relevant to not that many of the men on the job are skilled. They have been trained and have worked in the much better conditions of the workshop.

MANAGEMENT BALLS-UPS

We are paid the princely sum of 6d. an hour for working throughout the day in conditions like this. You'd think it's really about time that we seriously got down to the job of forcing the management to make some very definite improvements. Well, Marting Gould, a fitter's mate, got up at a meeting and suggested that we should give the firm an ultimatum. If, after a set period of time, the condition in the area around the changing huts and clocking on traps had not been radically improved by proper surfacing, we should refuse to leave the huts. Of course, this is what we must do. But one bloke, a fitter, got up and said we would be asknig for lawns and flower beds next. Yes, and why not?

On the offsites, welders are paid an extra 3d. an hour for working on jobs classed as confined-space jobs. These usually involve the welding of butts (joints in pipes). As they are about nine inches from the ground, you have to lie in the mud to do the job. It's tricky because the finished job is liable to be Xray tested. So the welders ask for extra condition payment. The management refuses. So the men tell these monkeys that either the pipes will have to be lifted or holes dug underneath. Lo and behold, the management agrees. Now we've got the situation where it costs the firm far more than the extra condition payment would have done. For the welders have to stand around waiting for the riggers or labourers to set the job up. That's only one of the many things that wouldn't happen if we were running the job. Here's another.

Slips are now being used by all the men for booking in 'waiting time'. (You can wait hours every day because the job is not ready for you to start work) The use of these slips should help the bonus which until now has been paying between three and four shillings and hour — that is, if you can get chargehands or foremen to record and sign them correctly. Some of them try to con you by saying that they have given you a few extra shillings condition money, and that this is better than booking waiting time. You see the fiddle? A big chunk of waiting time payments in the accounts makes it too bloody obvious that the management are making a balls-up somewhere.

SAFETY AND BILL WILSON

You've also got to watch them like hawks when it comes to safety. This is just what Bill Wilson, a fitter, and his mate were doing on Wednesday, 19 February. They refused to work on a job in Area 7 of the offsites because they considered it unsafe. (A site of this vast size is split up into areas to assist management control) The job involved the fitter in walking on a pipe track which was covered in ice. Although the track is only two feet from the ground, a slip could easily break your leg. This had happened to a bloke in similar circumstances only a couple of weeks earlier. And it could be much worse. An awkward slip

could ruin your chances with the birds. Anyway, they were taken off this job. The mate was put on one away from this particular area, and Bill Wilson was given another job on his own. Bill was doing this when the foreman came up and told him to go on yet another job. This turned out to be the same one that he'd refused to do earlier. So, Brother Wilson got onto his shop steward who, in turn, contacted the Site Safety Officer. When the Safety Officer saw the job, he agreed with the fitter that it was unsafe, and stipulated that boards should be placed on the pipes. Sometime later, Bill Wilson was informed that the job was now safe. Back he went. But he still couldn't start work — the wrong job had been boarded out.

MANAGEMENT'S WILDCAT ON THE LOOSE

Now Bill was beginning to get a little bit bored with all this. Nevertheless, he got on to the steward again and told him the latest. Off they went once more to inspect the job. The Site Superintendant, a gent called Turcott, accompanied them.

No doubt we ought to feel compassion for people like Turcott. He has obviously got big private emotional problems. But it's very difficult to be so nice and understanding when we're the ones he takes it out on — especially when you're involved in a constant struggle and Turcott is on the other side.

Anyway, while they were on their way to look at the job, Turcott flies into one of his usual screaming rages, sacks the fitter and, just for good measure, accuses the Safety Officer (a Kelloggs staff man) of scratching the steward's back.

After a lot of argument between the stewards and the management, the sacking was reduced to a suspension of undefined time. This was on the Friday, by which time the job in question had been done by another fitter who hadn't known of all the trouble about it. Also on the Friday, the Safety Officer declared the job safe.

WHO'S BENT ON 'FLEXIBILITY'?

On the following Monday (24 Feb.), there was a mass meeting in the canteen. Over 800 men were there to hear a report-back from the Convenor and shop stewards about the various things they had been discussing with the management. One of the items on the agenda concerned a clause in the 'agreement' (now being worked to) about the introduction of 'flexibility of labour'. Most of the party politicians and the union hierarchy talk about this flexibility with such passionate ardour that you'd think it meant 'all the crumpet you want' or something.

'Flexible' means 'easily bent' and, by Christ, we'd have to be pretty bent to accept this one. Here, it really means an easier way of pushing you around, and the men know it. The vote was unanimous that this clause be removed from the agreement, that the union delegates be used to get this done, and only this, since they couldn't be trusted to do anything else. They were also unanimous that any action arising out of this was to be taken solely by the men on the job. Many of the lads didn't want to have anything to do with the delegates at all. And it's interesting that quite a few of them were the ones who earlier had championed the suggestion of bringing in the delegate to deal with the case of Brother Wilson, the sacked/suspended fitter.

THE DISTURBING AMENDMENT

The stewards reported that the management's attitude about Bill Wilson was unchanged -- the man remained suspended. George MacMahon, site convenor, and the other stewards recommended immediate action. A proposal came from the floor that the men should take the rest of the day off and hold another meeting the following morning. In the meantime, the stewards should negotiate with the management. If they were unable to report to the meeting that Brother Wilson had been reinstated, further action could then be decided.

This seemed pretty reasonable. But an amendment was then put. It proposed that nothing should be done until Wednesday (26 Feb.), when Ken Burt, the Plumbers Trade Union delegate (and member of the Communist Party) would be in the area and it could be left to him to sort out. At this point, the meeting was adjourned until the lunch-break when, the men having clocked off, it was re-convened in the carpark outside the gate. After a few stormy scenes, the amendment was carried by a majority of about 150 votes.

The disturbing thing about the whole business was not simply that several brothers were heard to say that they had voted for the amendment because Brother Wilson wasn't worth supporting. But this was being said by men who didn't even know him! Obviously, a few of the management's pet reptiles had been creeping around and spreading this venom. It had blinded some of the more vulnerable lads to the principles involved and to the real issue at stake.

KNIGHT IN SHINING T.U. ARMOUR

On the following day, Tuesday, the men discovered that the posh management boys had a few more tricks up their snotty sleeves. Thirty men (fitters and mates) were suspended. They had been working on testing and had refused to do a job which was in dispute due to their demand for extra payment in connection with it. All the fitters immediately held a meeting and decided to work to rule.

On Wednesday (26 Feb.), dozens more were suspended and a right old chaos was developing. The Safety Officer then declared that the whole of the process unit was unsafe to work in, so off the men came. On the offsites, the lads refused to leave the huts until the Safety Officer had inspected the job. When he finally arrived, he came up with a brilliant piece of reasoning. He said that various jobs were safe to work on, but the men couldn't start until the conditions had been improved -- the bad conditions were making the jobs unsafe. Well, I began to think I was back with Tweedledee.³⁰

Then who should turn up but Ken Burt, the P.T.U. delegate, galloping into the camp on his sturdy white charger, nostrils flaring. What a fine swashbuckling figure he made as, with rule book in one hand and kneeling pads in the other, he strode into the office. As a result, Brother Wilson was reinstated, the stewards were conned into dropping the work-to-rule, and the day was saved for moderation, good sense, and general arse-hole crawling.

What a beautiful piece of rigging! They're teaching us lessons all right. Let's learn them. They can't be stressed too much or too often. The Kelloggs management have a very definite interest in bringing about

C. J. W. M. A. S. D. E. P.

a situation where the union officials can appear to be the cat's whiskers at sorting things out. Management's control of the job depends on the union 'middlemen'. Our control of the job depends on our own site organization — the extent to which we participate and organize ourselves. Let's get wise to the true role of the T.U. hierarchy. They are all potential Woodcocks and Paynters, at best. They're not paying George W. (late of the T.U.C.) and Will P. (late of the C.P.) £11,500 and £6,500 a year for nothing. The Government, and managers generally, expect to get their money's worth out of them.

JOB CONTROL

The union hierarchy have been pulling the wool over our eyes for so long that they have become over-confident in their ability to continue doing it. Perhaps the recent events at Fords have pulled them up short. Until as late as 10 February, the bosses of all the unions in Ford's NJNC were prepared to sign an 'agreement' which quite clearly was an attempt to nail down the coffin of rank-and-file job organization.

It was only after a substantial number of Ford workers had taken action against the 'agreement' that the bosses of two major unions (AEF and TGWU) made the strike official. Thus, they tried to regain some of their lost control and to cover up the fact that their members had bypassed them. ~~XX~~ But just as firms' managements are becoming more subtle in their attacks, so also will unions' managements.

Not only must we keep what job control we've already got. It's essential that we extend it. Solid rank-and-file job organization, as well as being of the utmost importance to us on this site now, is going to be crucial in the coming months if we in industry everywhere are going to withstand and fight back against the attacks that are certainly going to be made on us.

— From our man in the shit

* "Contrariwise", continued Tweedledee, "if it was so, it might be; if it were so, it would be; but as it isn't, it ain't. That's logic." — Alice Through The Looking Glass.

XX We shall look at the Fords situation in more detail in our next issue.

THE GRAND OLD DUKE OF KING STREET

On February 27th a meeting of all Trades Union Executives met at Fairfield Hall, Croydon to discuss the proposed Government legislation on Trades Unions. The Labour Movement in general treated the legislation and these executives with justifiable contempt. Below is an account of the activities of one of the organisations claiming to defend the interests of the working class.

The Liaison Committee for Defence of Trade Unions was first formed when the Labour Government first threatened the working class with the Prices and Incomes Act. That the Act itself was an attack on the living standards of the working class is now an historical fact, and is not in question.

What is in question here is the function of this Committee. It is a Communist Party front organisation, but it should be judged on its actions rather than its political affiliations. Its function to date seems to be to organise conferences, which in turn organise demonstrations and marches, ending with lobbies of M.P.s every time the proposed Prices and Incomes Bill or other legislation affecting the Trades Unions is read out or debated in Parliament. (Except of course when their nearest rivals, the Socialist Labour League, are holding a similar type of demonstration.)

The Committee's appeal to the rank and file to defend itself in the face of government attacks may seem to some a grand gesture.

THE GRAND OLD DUKE OF YORK

The methods used by the Liaison Committee for Defence of Trades Unions are also in question. First of all, its members appeal to areas of industry that won't be too disturbed by a One Day Token Stoppage. The rank and file will be told that factories, sites and offices all over the country will be making a march on Parliament on a given day, and that it is the duty of every trades unionist to be there and register his protest to his or her appropriate M.P.

Having assessed the amount of support it is likely to get from these areas, it then calls for all the key industries to send delegates rather than encourage complete shut-downs. This is because if a demonstration is too well supported it might get out of hand. The Police might find it difficult to control, and the C.P. members might not be able to get in to see their M.P.s. So a few thousand members is all that's required to make the point.

HE HAD TEN THOUSAND MEN

The government's Prices and Incomes policy, with the full support of the trades union leaders, is now in its third stage. Barbara Castle has already set up the Commission for Industrial Relations, the organisation that will be in charge of carrying out the new proposed legislation.

Once again, the Liaison Committee for Defence of Trades Unions organised another lobby. As a C.P. front organisation, they ensured that there were party banners, party slogan shouters, and London once again rang with shouts of "Tories out!", "Hands off the Unions!", and "Nationalize the land and the banks!"

On February 27th the C.P. took its hysterical place as the revolutionary vanguard at the head of the proletariat. (For one day only!)

HE MARCHED THEM UP TO THE TOP OF THE HILL

Appeals to M.P.s of any denomination have never proved fruitful. One wonders why trades unions, numbering over 9,000,000, should need to appeal to or defend themselves against less than 400 M.P.s. Some of the members of the Liaison Committee for Defence of Trades Unions are themselves prospective parliamentary candidates.

THEN MARCHED THEM DOWN AGAIN

After the Prices and Incomes Bill was passed, the Liaison Committee for Defence of Trades Unions made no attempt to fight the productivity deals as an organised body. There was no attempt to organise sympathy or solidarity strikes. Nor was any attempt made to link up the various industries which came out under all out attack. This was not because members of the Liaison Committee were not involved in any struggle themselves. On the Committee are such militants as Gordon Norris, (N.U.S.), Jack Dash, (T.&G.W.U.), Lou Lewis, (A.S.W.), Jim Piles, Dick Etheridge, Kevin Salpin, Sid Narroway, (A.E.F.), and Ray Awfully of the Boilermakers, to name but a few.

It is difficult to understand what the motives of these seemingly dedicated trades unionists are. As members of the Communist Party, it is understood that they, as trades unionists, have a common policy towards both government and trades unions, but what are they defending the working class from? Very often it seems from the Communist Party trades union leaders themselves. The attacks made on the workers to date have been in the form of increased discipline in order to effect major cuts in living standards. The methods

used have been the setting up of government bodies, such as the Prices and Incomes Board and the Commission for Industrial Relations, and many others. On every one of these, they have installed a trades union leader, including Communist Party leaders, e.g. Jim Mortimer, D.A.T.A., (P.I.B.), Will Paynter, N.U.M., (C.I.R.).

If the Communist Party is so keen on defending us from government legislation, why are their leaders sitting on these boards and commissions as servants laying the government lash deeper into the backs of the workers?

AND WHEN THEY WERE UP THEY WERE UP

The Communist Party does not seek at this moment in time to present itself as an alternative government. It seeks to gain representation within a labour Government. The methods used are to spread the illusion of some left wing within the government fighting the right wing on behalf of the working class, hence its tired call for left wing unity. It also seeks to get its members elected to leading positions in the trades unions where it is hoped they will be in a position to sponsor C.P. members to parliament who will join their comrades on the Labour left.

AND WHEN THEY WERE DOWN THEY WERE DOWN

Many rank and file trades unionists, who have been conned into electing C.P. members to leading positions in the trades unions have found to their cost that, once elected, they are no different from the others. (The left wing militant of today is all too often the right wing union official or M.P. of tomorrow.) All the promises are forgotten or ignored.

AND WHEN THEY WERE ONLY HALF WAY UP

THEY WERE NEITHER UP NOR DOWN

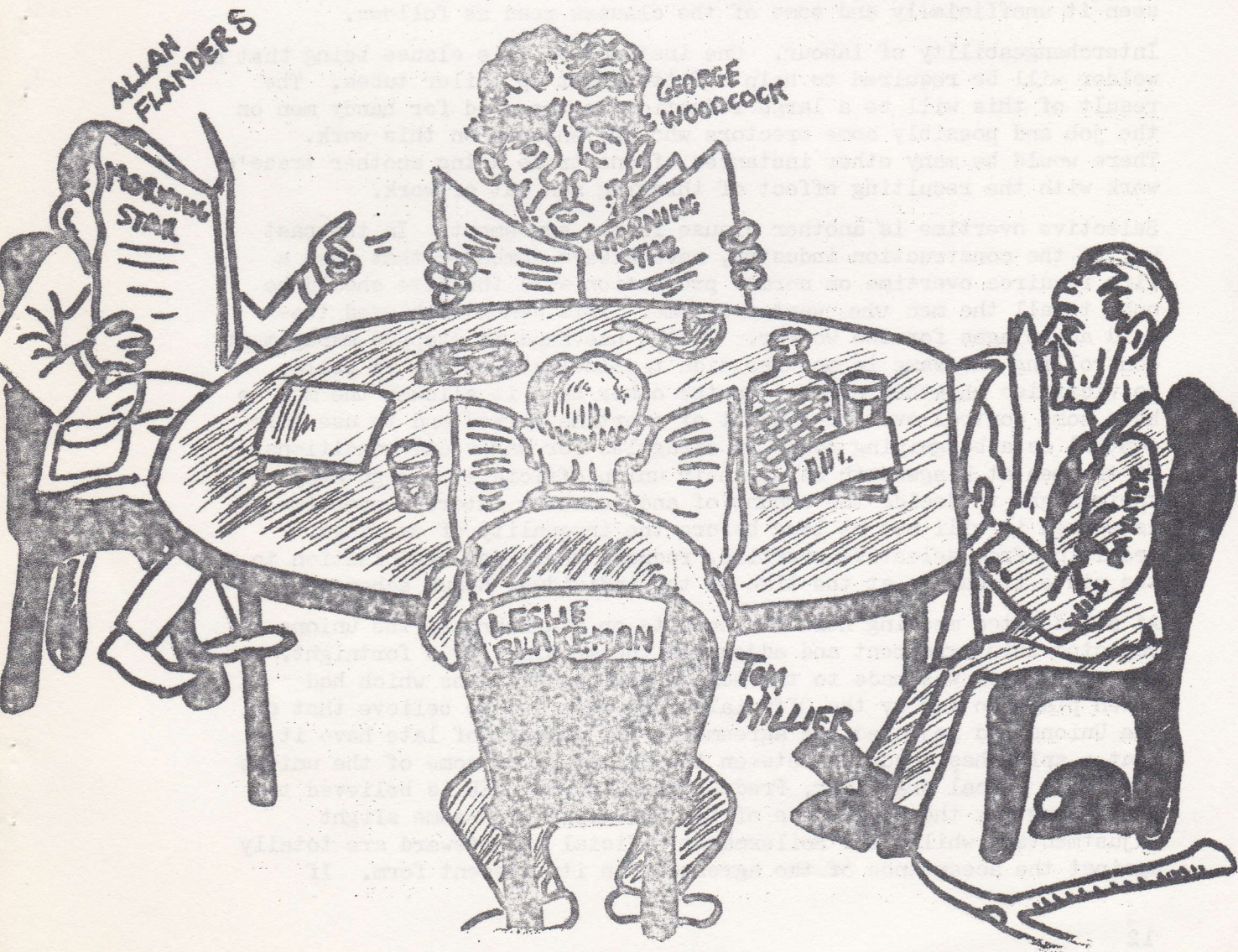
None of the recent attacks made on the working class by government legislation could have been successful without the aid and complicity of the trades union leaders. The ability of the workers in this country to negotiate at district or local level has been gradually eaten away.

In every area of trades union life, at the factory, on the site, in the office or union branch, it is becoming impossible for workers to make any collective decisions affecting their work, pay and conditions, without breaking some rules imposed by the trades union leaders as well as the employer and government. What is there left in the trades unions to defend? They have become an integral butt of the state, and act as policemen for the boss, judge advocates for the government and executioners to the workers.

THE LIAISON COMMITTEE FOR DEFENCE OF TRADES UNIONS

Its actions cannot be separated from the policy of its creators, the British Communist Party. Part of that policy is that every member of the C.P. will belong to his or her appropriate trades union. Assuming that it is sincere in its belief that mass lobbies of M.P.s will change the course of history, one would have expected the C.P.'s full registered membership of 34,000 to have attended the February 27th demonstration, together with their tail-enders the International Socialists. It should have been a lively demonstration if nothing else. It is to be hoped that the C.P. is not blaming the poor attendance on the apathy of the working class who have no doubt grown tired of being led up the hill to parliament and defeat too often.

Ernie Stanton



KINGSNORTH POWER

GAME

Once again Solidarity returns to Kingsnorth in an attempt to show how ICL site management are increasing their disciplinary powers and consolidating their control of the job and the relationship between these measures and the proposed new bonus scheme.

SLAVE CHARTER

Up to the time of writing none of the men on the job have been told officially the terms of the new agreement. A few individuals have seen it unofficially and some of the clauses read as follows.

Interchangeability of labour. One instance of this clause being that a welder will be required to help a fitter Butt up boiler tubes. The result of this will be a large reduction in the need for handy men on the job and possibly some erectors who are engaged on this work. There would be many other instances of one trade doing another trade's work with the resulting effect of throwing men out of work.

Selective overtime is another clause in the agreement. In the past we, in the construction industry, have always demanded that when a firm requires overtime on normal production work the site should be open to all the men who want overtime. This demand achieved two-fold advantages for the worker. On the one hand it stopped management controlling who came in and who didn't, allowing them, as it would, to victimise whom they chose. On the other hand it allowed the men to have some control over the amount of overtime worked and to use this control as a bargaining point in struggles for wages and conditions. If the men at Kingsnorth allow their union officials to sign away their right to decide the amount of and in whose interest overtime is worked it will not be long before the inequality of earnings, resulting from selective overtime, reduces their job organisation to the state it was in at the time of the individual bonus scheme.

At a federated meeting held on the site on 9th February the unions rejected this agreement and adjourned the meeting for a fortnight. No report back was made to the men on the negotiations which had taken place so far by the Officials. We were led to believe that all the Unions had rejected the agreement, but rumours of late have it that a split has occurred between the officials of some of the unions involved. Local organiser, Fred Copeman, of the CEU is believed to be pushing for the acceptance of the agreement with some slight adjustments, whilst the Boilermaker official and steward are totally against the acceptance of the agreement in its present form. If

the rumour is proved correct there is a strong likelihood of Bro. Copeman signing this agreement with no regard to the interests of the men on the site. CEU members will no doubt remember that the Woodall Duckham agreement at Romford and Greenwich was signed in a similar manner.

MANAGEMENT CRASH DOWN ON CONCESSIONS

It would appear from recent developments on the site that ICL management cannot wait for the repressive measures in the new bonus scheme to come into effect before using them. They have already broken an agreement existing between management and the local union officials on the men's right to hold monthly paid meetings in the Canteen to discuss domestic problems which arise on the Site, the last hour on the last Friday in each month being set aside for this purpose. The site management informed the stewards, before the last monthly meeting, that if the men held a meeting they would not be on pay and further more that they would have to hold the meeting outside the gate. Despite ICL action the meeting was held. Owing to the time it took to walk off the site (a distance of half a mile) the meeting started half an hour late. Because of this the men decided to challenge the management by adjourning the meeting until the following Monday and to hold it in the Canteen. This decision was carried out and the management made no attempt to remove us off the site.

TEA PROHIBITION

With the return of the Winter to Kingsnorth, ICL have stepped up their campaign to catch and discipline men found drinking tea in the afternoon.

To accomplish this task they send into action the "Untouchables". This task force is made up of one Foreman and one Engineer. The two most active members of the force are Satchel Face Homden and Engineer Elliott Mess Sheppard (sometimes referred to as The Working Class girls answer to Rock Hudson). These two Feds can often be seen between the hours of 3 and 4 apprehending criminal tea-drinkers in the vicinity of illegal tea distilleries. At a typical raid on one of these establishments tea totallers are caught cup in hand and promptly frog marched to the office, tried, found guilty and sentenced to the sack. After an appeal by defending counsel, Barr Q.C., the sentences are usually reduced to one-hour stoppages of pay and a final warning.

It should be pointed out that a tea-break means something more to a Construction Worker than just the opportunity to drink tea. From 1 p.m. we do not get a break until we finish at 4.15 and most of us have an hour or so travelling to do before we get home. We work in a half-finished power station which is partially exposed to the elements, winds, draughts etc. During the Winter the temperature inside the building can drop below freezing point (no factory or office worker would tolerate these conditions). Any attempt to warm oneself by lighting a fire in a tin is quickly stopped by some Sadistic Foreman or Engineer kicking it out and then returning to his warm office. The conditions we work under are not the only reason we need

a break. The work most of us do is at best monotonous, dangerous and dirty, so the idea of getting away from the job for a few minutes is something to look forward to. ICL stopped the afternoon tea-breaks at Kingsnorth some 2 years ago on the half promise that we would receive increased earnings, a promise that never materialised.

RESIDENT ENGINEER V FOREMEN

Since the contract began it has been a favourite sport for Foremen and Engineers to ambush men returning from the pub after the dinner break. Their strategy is to lie in wait at the main gate and at other vantage points around the perimeter of the site. The usual sentence for someone caught is instant dismissal. A few weeks ago the unusual happened. A certain chargehand Jack (congratulations) Willis was caught coming back from the pub late one Sunday afternoon. He was captured by Gallery Foreman, MacPherson, who told him to report to the office the following morning. At his trial, on Monday morning, he pleaded guilty to the charge and to everyone's surprise was let off with a caution by ICL's PR man Roberts. This decision was upheld by the RE Kempton. Immediately following this verdict the Foremen protested to Kempton that if he refused to sack Willis they could not guarantee the maintenance of discipline on the job. Kempton replied that if they did not like the way he ran the job they could fucking well lump it, and furthermore, he did not want to see Foremen lying in wait, to sack men, when they should be on the job supervising. He left them with the parting remark that he expected some of their resignations on his desk in the morning. (He received none.)

Some days later Kempton and Roberts were unexpectedly ordered to ICL's Head Office at Derby, to answer a complaint made against them in a letter from the CEEGB. They wanted an explanation as to why Kempton had refused to sack Willis. No report on Kempton's explanation is available; however, it was reported that Kempton and Roberts both received a bollocking. A few days after the excursion to Derby Mr. P. Hendry, an Engineer (known to his intimate friends as the Gonk) caught Micky Sinnett, a Foreman, returning to the site 20 minutes late. Kempton promptly sacked him. Kempton is reported to have said to Sinnett "don't blame me for sacking you; blame your fellow foremen", (possibly a reference to who was responsible for informing the CEEGB of Kempton's decision to be lenient with Jack Willis). It is the opinion of some of the men on the job that it was no accident that out of all the Foremen, Micky Sinnett was the one picked to be sacrificed in this little war between Kempton and the Foremen.

M. Sinnett has always had a reputation for being fair with the men under him, booking them the best condition payments possible. In the 3 years he was Foreman on the site he was never responsible for a man being dismissed (something few Foremen at Kingsnorth can boast of). An active trade unionist in the past, he always associated himself with the lads on the job. ICL management prefer not to have qualities such as these in their Foremen.

STOP PRESS

BONUS AGREEMENT SIGNED

At a Federated meeting held on the site on 18th February, the unions accepted a slightly amended version of the ICL original bonus scheme. All the main clauses were still there - they were just written less specifically so as to be more acceptable to the men.

On the following Monday the Stewards announced that the last two hours of the day were being set aside for the men to hear a report back from the officials on the Federated meeting. The two hours were split up into two separate paid meetings, the first hour being spent in the tea cabin discussing site problems and the stewards recommendations for a one day token strike on February 27th, in protest against the Labour Governments anti-strike legislation. This recommendation was accepted.

We closed this meeting at 3.15 to hear the officials report. Earlier in the day the management had gone to a great deal of trouble to lay on the CEGB Canteen for us, no doubt so we could hear Fred Copeman's words of wisdom better. They even took the unprecedented step of supplying coaches to convey us from the tea cabin to the Canteen.

From this point the whole set-up started to stink of a Sell Out (a fortnight before ICL had refused to let us hold a meeting on the Site!!). Fred (Sell it to 'em 'ard) Copeman opened the meeting by telling us that he had negotiated for us a bonus scheme to end all bonus schemes; that we could look forward to a long period of Peace and Tranquillity with the mythical Double Time Earnings just around the corner and almost in the same breath telling us that if we took any unconstitutional action, either collectively or as individuals, such as refusing to co-operate fully with the management (mobility of labour clause!), refusing to work at the pace supervision set; refusing to work overtime as and when management requires it, and any form of action that might upset the smooth running of the job such as leaving the tea cabin a few minutes late, going for a shit without a chit ect, ect., it would drastically reduce our earnings. Needless to say, with the limited amount of time available for the men to discuss the agreement, and with the Almighty Spratt of unlimited overtime for some, the men accepted the agreement on a very marginal majority.

It would be interesting to speculate on the result of this meeting IF

1. the management had insisted on the main body of men working a 40 hour week under the new agreement (by dropping their concession of every other Sunday overtime).
2. Copeman had not confused the men by putting his own interpretation of every clause in the agreement, (as he did in one instance by telling us to take the clause regarding unconstitutional action with a pinch of salt).
3. Copeman had not over-emphasised the good points (for example the 14/- full back rate) and glossed over the many bad points.

This leads one to suspect Copeman's loyalties!

It is a Union Official's duty to put a negotiable agreement to the membership in a concise and impartial way and then to leave it in the hands of the men to discuss the agreement and accept or reject it. After all, it is us and not Fred Copeman who have to work to these agreements and it is us and not Copeman who will in the long run suffer because of these agreements.

E. PATTERSON

Footnote

INFORMER EXPOSED

A few days ago MacPherson, a Foreman in the Gallery section, tried very hard to get three men sacked for being off the job for an hour. At their trial Hughie Barr was able to get the three prisoners off the hook by convincing the management that they had a legitimate reason for not being on the job. This vicious little reptile MacPherson was visibly sick when he discovered that his three victims had not been sacked. His attitude was not surprising however, when the trouble he had gone to to get these three men convicted was discovered. This information leaked out when a foreman confidentially informed two men on the job that MacPherson had set these three men up by using the services of an informer (a well known personality on the site with a very dubious reputation as a foreman on past jobs). It is common knowledge, on the site that MacPherson allows this person, named as the informer, to spend a couple of hours each day propping up the bar at the Five Bells, a crime any other man would be instantly sacked for. No doubt he is allowed this privilege for services rendered!

Incidentally, MacPherson is not below doing his share of grassing. Rumour has it that he reported one of his own colleagues (a foreman in the Pipe Work section) for incompetence. Evidently the Rats have started to eat the Rats at Kingsnorth.

BLEEDING STUDENTS!

"Not bleeding students again!", "Don't you ever do any work?" and "Get back to school": these were some of the things they yelled at us as we marched down Kingsway towards the L.S.E. And they yelled a good deal more too. They were looking down at us from the high scaffolding on an enormous building site. I felt a right charlie, walking there with about 1,000 other students, all sweetly linking arms, while around us on either side of the street there was indifference and real hostility towards us. And if by chance anybody was interested in what was going on and not mad keen to get home to their family and telly, they wouldn't have been able to find out much. It was all too confused and too dark.

Of course it wasn't only the workers on the site who didn't care and didn't want to know what the students were doing or what they wanted. Like the majority of the population, all they knew was there the students were again, all screaming and yelling, a bunch of long-haired yobbos parading up and down holding up the traffic, and generally farting around as if they owned the place.

'LONG-HAIRED YOBOS'?

Well yes, some of us do have long hair. And some of us do walk around as if we own the place, not caring a damn about who's watching or who's paying. That's true. For example, on this same march to L.S.E. there was a large and noisy group from one of the provincial 'red-brick' universities, all singing and dancing and having a 'rave' on the march. One of them said to me: "Some of us are real hard-core militants. We've got to lead the march." What a laugh!

The point to remember, though, is that the long-haired, 'hippie' spoilt-kid type of student is very much in the minority. And they are getting fewer and fewer all the time as they come to realise that there are more useful things to do than having a 'rave', 'smoke', or 'making the scene'. In fact, the vast majority of students in Britain are very ordinary people, and look it too. If they are not slaving away at their studies, they are at least dead serious about what they are doing and what they stand for, whether studying or protesting.

'HOW ABOUT DOING SOME WORK?'

Well we do, a hell of a lot. And most of it is done at home in the evenings, often during the night, while others are having their fun. Of course, we do get quite a lot of free time - between classes and lectures - but a student's life can be, and often is, pretty tough, what with very small grants and cramped, prison-like living quarters, interfering or racist landladies, etc.

Of course, no-one claims that the conditions that the student has to work and live under are ever as bad as those of the working man, as described elsewhere in this issue. But when the management at L.S.E. erect iron gates at various strategic points in the building, for many students it was the last straw - psychologically at least. Many other examples could be provided of the authoritarian conditions in the university.

A student would be mad to stay at a university under these conditions if he was not prepared to study and work. Of course, any student who doesn't keep up with his work is quickly weeded out and sent packing. More and more, universities are showing the same ruthlessness as is seen on the factory line or site. If you can't fit in and bow to the system, then get out.

The bad conditions in a university are mainly psychological. Anyone who has been round a university building immediately recognises this. Generally 75% of the premises are out-of-bounds 95% of the time to the majority of people in the building - students and staff; the faceless corridors are long and dark, leading nowhere, and the canteens and rest-rooms are very few and crowded. But above all, it is the very clear division between the management of the place (the Directors, staff and committees and senior teaching staff) on the one hand, and the managed majority (students, junior teaching staff and the manual staff) on the other that creates the real tension and alienation of the university. Students creep around in these hierarchical and authoritarian shadows looking for some corner where they can develop a little self-respect. Much of the student protest movement springs from these conditions of work. The students' demands are unmistakable. They want to clear the air, open the doors and take control of their situation. They want job control.

'GET BACK TO THE CLASS-ROOM'

The classroom is the only really important place in a university; it is where knowledge is exchanged, discussed and developed. At least it should be. The fact that it is not, the fact that the relations between the teacher and the student can never really develop usefully, is the greatest disappointment that the student meets at university. The reasons for this are many and complex. Very briefly they are:

1. the large size of the classes
2. the low level of the teaching
3. the middle-classness of the teachers
4. the authoritarian system, with countless rules and procedure, which discourages questions and discussion
5. the pressures of a rigorous examination system, which means a tight and superficial syllabus

All this adds up to a simple formula: "Get on with it. Don't ask questions. Don't waste your time."

Today many students and some teachers are reacting against this university straight-jacket. They can't put up with it anymore. They want to learn, really learn, not simply by taking everything down without question and learning it all by heart, but by a real exchange of knowledge, discussion and criticism, without pressure and interference.

UNIVERSITIES AND THE STATE

The disappointments experienced in this educational system and all the reactions and protests that result come directly from the way society is being run today. Modern society is developing very rapidly; the big industrial monopolies and the state bureaucracies are putting enormous pressure, via the Government, on the universities to provide them with two types of persons: managers and technical experts. And these pressures are felt in the university classroom, in fact at all levels of the educational process.

Students are becoming increasingly aware of these pressures and the demands of modern capitalist society on them. And increasingly they are adopting positions of protest against these pressures. For instance, when students go on strike or occupy a university building they are more or less expressing their refusal either to join the ranks of countless white-collar workers as technical experts, or to enter the vicious rat-race of management (on the backs of the working class). They are expressing their distaste for what society is offering them. They don't want to be managed, and they don't want to manage others; more and more, students, like the rest of the population, just don't want to know.

REVOLUTION

This refusal to toe the capitalist line of consumption, management and alienation is revolutionary, in that it implies a radical change in the whole set-up in society and in the relations between people. The student protest movement is a revolutionary one. It is a mass movement, and not just the plaything of a few 'militants' or 'foreign scum'. British students of all kinds are coming to realise the limitations in the occupation of their universities and the demonstrations against racialism, Rhodesia's U.D.I. or the Vietnam War, without general support from the population at large, and particularly the working class. Of course

students should not rush down to the factory gates and pester or talk down to workers or hob-nob with discredited Trade Union officials. On the other hand, students must make their protest meaningful to workers by clearly explaining what they are fighting against and what their demands are, and by pointing out the similarities between their struggles and those inside the factory. Only then can there be any real link between the struggles of the working class and the students.

Ever since the events of May last year in Paris, when the students and workers joined together on many occasions in an attempt to smash the Gaullist regime, it has become clear that students and workers can, and should, join forces and work together towards changing this society and building a new life for all.

In this country we are nowhere near achieving real co-operation between workers and students. In this Solidarity Group, there are student members and we have developed an atmosphere of mutual exchange of experiences and action. We believe one of the first tasks is to build meaningful links between student and industrial action. We will be publishing a series of articles by workers and students in future issues in an attempt to analyse and evolve a relevant strategy for joint action.

Any contributions on this question from our readers will be most welcome.

A.M.

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