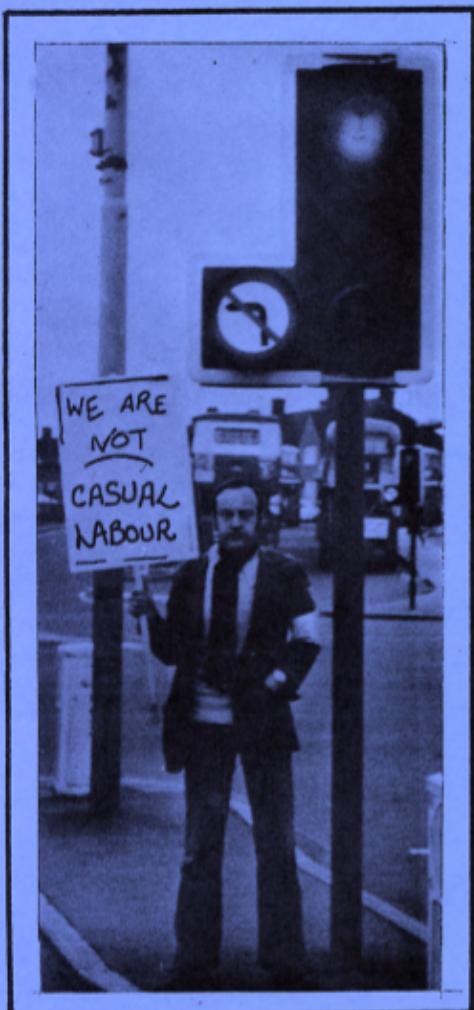


THE LITTLE RED



# BLUE BOOK

- A Short History of  
the Ford Worker's  
Fight against Layoffs.
- What is a Layoff?
- Diary of the June 1977  
Dispute - with Photos.
- Some Problems.
- What Needs to be Done.

FIGHTING  
THE LAYOFFS AT FORDS

*Fraud*

# CONTENTS

For too long, the motor industry workers in Britain have been treated as casual labour. Over 10 years ago, a Government report (Devlin) recommended decasualisation of the nation's dock labour force, concluding that this would help productivity, would give dockers a measure of financial stability, and would restore a sense of pride and dignity into the job.

We say that the time has come for a decasualisation of the motor industry, an industry where workers are still subjected to repeated layoffs, instability and loss of earnings, usually as a punitive measure by the employers. It is now 1978, and the Government, the Trade Unions, the public, and above all, the Employers, must come to realise that these practices must stop.

Through long struggles in recent years, workers in the industry have already served notice that decasualisation is what they want. The key question is a guaranteed 100% of basic pay in the event of layoffs caused by circumstances outside the individual plant - this to be given with no strings or penal clauses attached.

In short: 40 Hours Pay, Work or No Work!

People in Britain are too quick to condemn the car worker, without realising the conditions in which they have to work, and the bitter struggles they have to fight, just to maintain security of earnings. This is the reason we have produced this pamphlet. It's time for some action!

The pamphlet contains the following sections:-

- 1) An Introduction, telling the recent history of the workers' fight against layoffs at Ford-Dagenham.
- 2) What is a Layoff?
- 3) The Diary of the June 1977 Layoff Dispute at Ford-Dagenham, with Photos.
- 4) Some Problems.
- 5) What Needs to be Done?

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- THE AUTHORS of this pamphlet have been active in and around the motor industry for many years - and Fords in particular. Some of the material we have used is from interviews with Ford workers (the material in the "quotation" marks). Other material is drawn from files and leaflets published by various action groups at Fords. The rest we have written ourselves.

We're particularly grateful for the information and the photos provided by the Ford Workers' Group at Dagenham, by the Ford Langley Action Committee, and by the Ford Halewood Big Flame group. The views presented in the pamphlet, however, are those of the authors.

# INTRODUCTION

## A Short History of the Struggle against Layoffs at Ford-Dagenham

Our story could start right back in 1932 - the opening year of Ford-Dagenham - and trace the history of slump-boom-slump that has bedevilled car workers since that day. But that would take up volumes! So we'll start in 1973 - a year when the fight against layoffs at Dagenham was a hot one.

On the official side there is not much history to show. In the minutes of the Ford National Joint Negotiating Committee the layoff question is always pushed aside by the well-heeled Union bureaucrats who don't have to suffer them.

This struggle has been almost entirely in the hands of Ford workers themselves, always hindered by (and often in direct opposition to) the Union officials. Since the Union has ignored the workers' rightful demand for security of earnings, the fight has usually taken the form of riots. However, Fords don't mind the occasional riot....They can just write off the damage to their Insurance Company, and meanwhile the Poor Bloody Ford Worker labours on, in eternal insecurity.

So, what follows is a record of the recent struggles by Dagenham assembly workers against their condition of casual labour. That is then followed by the story of the June 1977 layoff dispute.

### MARCH THROUGH THE BODY PLANT AT DAGENHAM. MANAGEMENT LOCK-IN. MANAGEMENT OFFICE WRECKED. Night Shift. August 30th 1973.

On Thursday night, the Body Plant was working normally. At ten minutes to midnight (a time when it is impossible to get buses or trains), the management came round and said that the Upstairs Body was laid off, and they could all "go home". Some people accepted, and went home. But Ford's action was clearly provocative, and since many workers had no chance of getting home at that time of night, they decided to show the Company what they thought of it.

About 300 men marched up to the Supervisor's office. They blocked the door so that management couldn't get out. The stewards went in to negotiate, but they didn't win any guarantees of a full night's pay. So there was a Lock-in of the management. In the words of one Body Plant worker:-

"We had murders up there. You could hear the shouting from the street outside. People were trying to kick the doors in, and a lot of windows got smashed".

Fire extinguishers were set off, and fire alarms rang. There was broken glass everywhere. The police were called in, and after the Management had been locked in for a full hour, they finally agreed that the men would be guaranteed a full night's pay.

"We ended up doing nothing all night. Just sitting around, sleeping, playing cards and messing about. And getting paid for it!"

RIOTS AND PICKETS. MARCH ROUND THE FACTORY.  
BODY PLANT AND PTA. Day Shift. September 19th 1973.

Three weeks later, Ford again tried mass layoffs. On Friday September 14th, a West Indian welder from the Body Plant was sacked for allegedly hitting a foreman with an iron chairleg (the 'Winston Williams Affair'). The next Tuesday his whole section (140 men) struck in his support, and Ford told the next day's Day Shift that they were laid off until further notice. The riotous events that followed were described in the "Dagenham Advertiser":-

- "A strike over a sacked worker erupted into violence as thousands of Ford workers ran riot through the Dagenham factory. Production of Ccrtinas and Granadas was halted, as workers swarmed over electrical equipment. A huge procession of men, estimated to be 2,000 strong, marched to the Management offices to demand work, and the police were rushed to the factory. Employees from the Body Plant and PTA started a "Work-In". When it became clear that production was stopped, they started wrecking vehicles and shouting anti-management slogans. Workers declared that they would occupy the plant until the Night Shift, which was working normally, arrived."

During this period of layoff struggles, extra police were on permanent stand-by at the local police station, in case of an uprising at the factory!

The records of the Ford Workers' Group for this period include a note: "At Tuesday's PTA meeting, Convenor Brian Elliott didn't mention the Winston Williams sacking! What's more, he had to be pressurised from the floor of the meeting to publicise the PTA's demands relating to layoffs, to the rest of the Dagenham Estate. This is incredible!" (Sept. 30th 1973) (This was because PTA plant policy at that time was not to interfere in the problems of another plant: there's nothing Ford would like better than to have PTA workers pressuring Body Plant workers to get back to work. But at the same time it creates problems of divisions between plants, lack of unity etc).

MUCKER MILLS KILLS THE OVERTIME BAN STONE DEAD:  
THE PTA'S FIGHT IN 1973.

By the end of 1973, the layoffs were getting so bad that people were leaving Ford-Dagenham as fast as they could. The PTA was especially hard hit - so a policy was adopted - of an overtime ban. This was implemented, and it very soon started to hit Ford's production. The result was that Ford, desperate for production, didn't dare lay off the PTA workers: they were getting more regular money than they had in years. This was a real way to win.

But other plants were losing overtime (the Engine and Body), and through the Dagenham Panel the convenors of the other plants pressured the PTA leadership to lift the overtime ban. At this point, Ford tried a move in the Garage, with a view to splitting the PTA even further. They tried to introduce 3-shift working in the Garage, instead of 2-shifts. This would have the effect of nullifying the effect of the overtime ban - since the Garage was the main bottleneck.

At this point the Company and the Union officials stepped in, and were able to break the ban. We are referring to Mr J.Mills of the GMWU.

November 22nd 1973: "By wheeler-dealing, Mills of the GMWU was allowed to take a mass meeting of A-Shift. He played on the fact that the lads wanted money just before Xmas....He said that NO WAY would they win any guarantees against layoffs....and he addressed the weakest section of the plant first.

That was the end of probably the most effective overtime ban in the history of Fords. After the meeting Mills was seen drinking coffee and chatting

merrily with Plant Manager Pearman in his office. Anyone telling us that wasn't a fix!?

The B-Shift meeting was a repeat performance. Only 300 men turned up for Mills, Ron Todd and Fred Blake to do their dirty tricks. It was an angry meeting, with bottles thrown at the Union officials - but the issue was lost....for the time being...."

The overtime ban was lifted.

SIT-IN ACROSS THE LINES, DEMANDING LAYOFF PAY.

PTA Night Shift. June 3rd 1974.

The issue of layoffs simmered all through early 1974 at Dagenham. (On March 13th 1974 the Dagenham Post reported: "5,000 Sent Home in New Row: Ford Unions Lash Out Over Layoffs"). The issue came to a head again in June.

Because of a strike by Repair Men, PTA workers had been called in to work, and then sent home as soon as they arrived, having travelled from all over London. The following night they decided to take action to get full pay for this layoff.

They reported for work, but refused to start work. The Convenor and Deputy Convenor tried to get them to start, but they refused yet again. The Company then tried blackmail - taking men off pay etc. And, for a while, it looked as if the action would end.

But then a handful of men marched down to the roll-off section, where the cars come off the line. They blocked the line, by sitting and standing across it, singing 'We Shall Not Be Moved' (although nobody could remember the words!). They blockaded the line with a huge barrow that was full of cushions - and some of the blokes immediately climbed in on top of the cusions to sleep. One of the lines was jammed good and proper by a bloke jamming a wrench in it. There was no way that Ford would start that line!

So this was the situation. Nobody else on the lines could work. "They were sitting around doing fuck-all". The men sat over the end of the line, and busied themselves all night making posters etc.

They were still there blockading the line when the Day Shift came in, in the morning. They were gaping at the posters, dozens of them, made from the paper floormats that go inside the cars. One poster said: "8 Hours Pay for All PTA"; another said: "United We Stand - Divided We Almost Fell". There were posters directed against the scabs. And posters talking about the £65m profit that Ford made that year.

A really important development was that the other blokes (who were paid a full shift for that night, even though not working) proposed having a whip-round to pay the night's wages of the 60 men who did the sit-in. An effective principle of action.

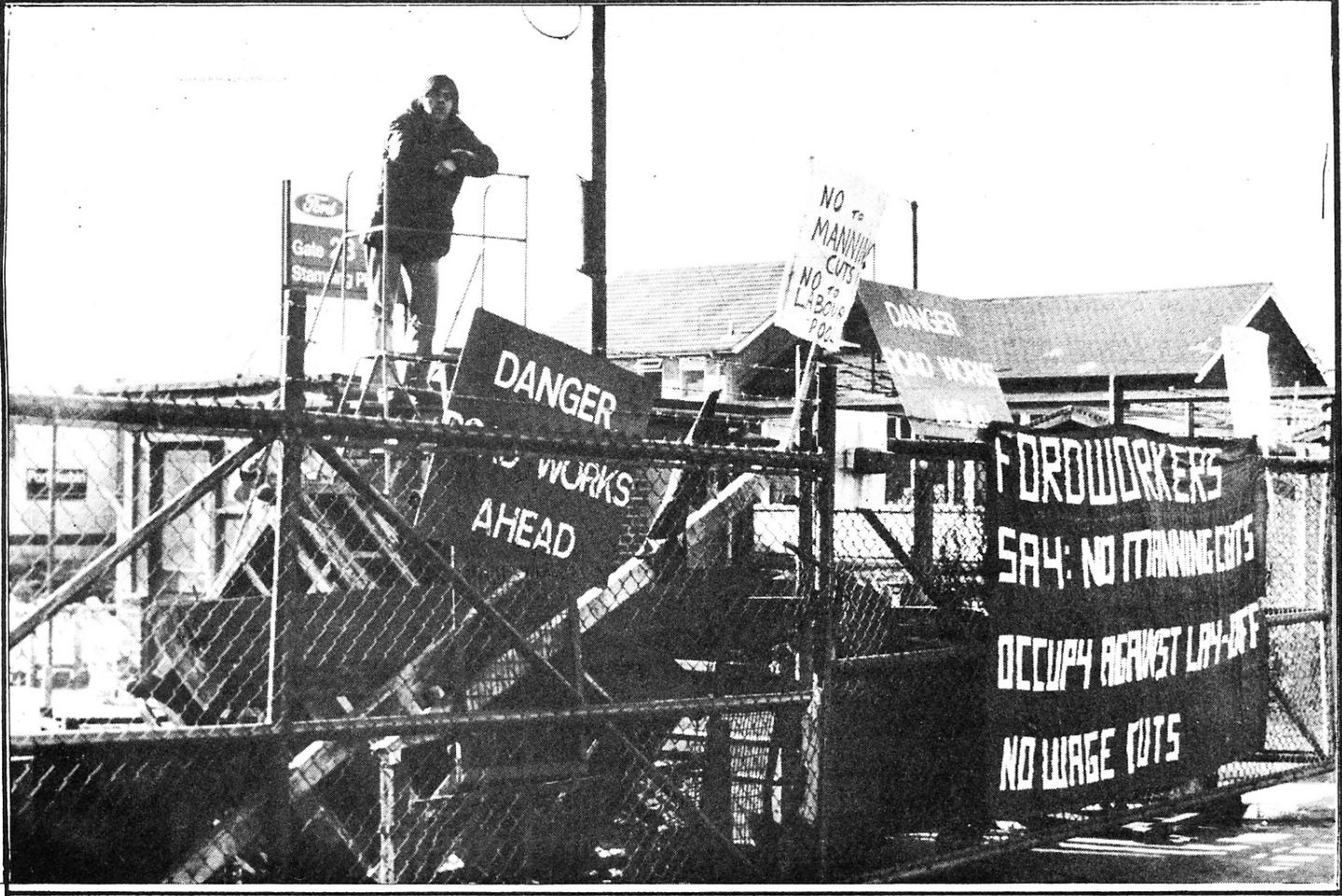
Anyway, to sum it all up: when faced with a layoff, a small group took determined action inside the factory. They sat down across the lines. They were not victimised afterwards. AND THE MAJORITY OF WORKERS NEVER WORKED THAT NIGHT.....BUT THEY GOT PAID FOR IT!

"FORD LAYOFFS. ANGER FLARES. CUPS FLY. WINDOWS SMASHED  
AT FACTORY MEETING". Night Shift. October 8th 1974.

The layoffs continued, though. Later in the year the Evening Standard reported:-

"The first new layoffs as a result of the unofficial strike of Press Shop men at Ford's Dagenham factory were announced today. The canteen meeting where the announcement was made, ended at 3.15pm, and Mr Alfred Spurling, who works in the Trim Shop, said: 'It was a nasty scene'.

• | 'All at once, crockery was flying all over the place, and windows were smashed. When the Union convenor told us we could not work tonight



because there were not enough panels for us to work on, the men seemed to go wild. The canteen was a shambles.

'I have worked at Fords for 29 years, but this is the worst ever, this year. So far I have been laid off 43 times, and since June I have only drawn two full week's wages.'"

#### SHORT-TIME AND LAYOFFS:

#### OCCUPATION OF THE BODY PLANT. April 1975.

October 1974 had marked a turning point of the struggle at Dagenham. It was the month of the Press Shop strike - and immediately after that strike, Ford started to win the upper hand.

Within 9 months, sections of the workforce had been decimated by mobility, and by layoffs involving thousands of workers for weeks at a time. It was hard to organise anything at all. In the words of one Body Plant worker: "They're kicking us while we're down".

Body Plant workers tried to make a stand, by occupying their plant, in April. But this was only a handful of people - mainly the Leftwingers. And the occupation collapsed for lack of support. A brother from the Body Plant described his feelings after a spell of picket duty:

- "I'm not sure that the occupation was really the right answer. I mean...what the fuck are we doing here?! We're not putting any pressure on Fords....and this is what everyone is aware of. We're in a dangerous position at the moment....Right now it's almost creepy. There's more management here than there is workers, which is not very pleasant for a start! Everyone's just fucked off home!"

This occupation was the culmination of the glorious leadership by the Communist Party in the Body Plant. Instead of fighting the shop floor issues of mobility, layoffs etc, they had been leading workers off to Parliamentary lobbies calling for Ford to be nationalised!

# FORD DAGENHAM: 1976 THE FIGHT AGAINST LAYOFFS

Dagenham workers go on rampage

# RIOTERS SMASH UP FORD PLANT

DAILY MIRROR, Thursday, September 30, 1976

- For 18 months the struggle at Dagenham hit rock-bottom, with the Company firmly on the attack. Then, in September 1976, there was a riot against layoffs in the Body Plant - at the height of the economic and political crisis that was shaking Britain at that moment. The events speak for themselves (PTO).

"I don't think anyone agreed with the hooliganism. But it's as much of a sin to vandalise a worker's wages as it is to vandalise property."

Ford Worker.

40 HOURS PAY

(THERE'S ONLY ONE WAY TO SETTLE THIS ARGUMENT!)



WHETHER  
WORKING  
OR NOT!

# THE EVENTS SPEAK FOR

**1** SEPTEMBER 28th 1976: The Labour Party Conference is in progress. The Labour Left is spluttering like a spent firework. The radical proposals by the Labour Party's left-dominated National Executive (Sept. 8th) to nationalise the Big 4 clearing banks and the top 7 insurance companies instantly mobilise the international "collective capitalist". A record fall in sterling balances takes place. By the day of the Ford Dagenham Riot (Sept. 28th), the £ sterling is reaching its lowest-ever exchange rate against the dollar. Multinational capital is imposing its implacable blackmail - a "Crisis of Confidence" - against the Labour Government. This "Crisis of Confidence" is orchestrated in Banks, Government Offices and Company Boardrooms all across the world. Another turn of the monetary screw, and sterling tumbles another "terrifying 5 points". The radio last night was talking about the German style inflation of the 1930s. The papers this morning are speaking of a "Panic Over The Pound"..."The Most Ferocious Battering The £ Has Ever Taken"...."Panic About the Possible Collapse of the Labour Government."

Trade Union leaders add their chorus of woe: the £ sterling crisis threatens Britain with mass Fascism and a breakdown of civil society. The panic and crisis-rhetoric is almost unbelievable in Official Circles.

Last night it was announced that the UK Government will have to turn to the IMF to negotiate a huge loan of money. Under the extended credit lines negotiated a short while ago, these loans were supposed not to be necessary.... But now the Labour Government will go crawling on its knees to the IMF....and the IMF will impose strict conditions against the British working class. The papers announce: "Healey Moves to Satisfy IMF....MLR Raised 2% to 15%.... IT'S THE BIG SQUEEZE"

**2** The Labour Left is lost like a whisper in a storm. A small victory in a vote against the public spending cuts. Nothing more. Callaghan is establishing his position, on the crest of a Rightward shift in the Labour Government. Massive public spending cuts are being imposed. The working class will bear the brunt. But where is the workers' answer to all this? Why is there no resonance of working class struggle in the Labour Party's annual Conference? The TUC have just conspired to eliminate the last trace of resistance (the National Union of Seamen's wage claim). Now, apparently untroubled by fears of a working class come-back, our very pro-American Prime Minister prepares to deliver us into the hands of the International Bankers.

## THE RACE to save the crumbling pound was on last night. Chancellor Denis Healey made a dramatic turn-round at Heathrow Airport as sterling collapsed to an all-time low.

He was due to fly out for a meeting of Commonwealth finance ministers in Hong Kong.

But he opted out of the 17-hour long journey when news was flashed to him that the pound had plunged by a terrifying five cents to 1·63 dollars.

He went back to the Treasury with Bank of England governor Gordon Richardson, who had driven to the airport with him for last-minute talks.

He was keeping the Prime Minister in touch with any developments by a series of "hot line" phone calls to Blackpool. But Mr. Healey had no immediate plans for going North for any meetings with Cabinet colleagues at the Labour Party conference.

The decision to call off Mr. Healey's Hong Kong trip came as the pound hit its worst-ever trouble.

On the foreign exchange markets, dealers were overwhelmed by massive selling orders as confidence in Britain collapsed.

In Blackpool, Premier James Callaghan made what was considered a tough "blood, sweat and tears" speech to the conference.

But hard-headed money men evidently thought his words were no substitute for action. In the City, the feeling was that Mr. Healey would postpone any action until flying to Manila next week for a meeting of the International Monetary Fund. Britain's "bank manager".

Then he is expected to announce fresh borrowings made in exchange

for guarantees of tougher policies at home. These are believed likely to include:

- Imposition of some form of import controls.
- A cut in the amount of foreign currency Britons can take abroad - at present it is £500 a head.
- Higher taxes on spending.
- Further curbs in Government spending.
- More credit restrictions and higher borrowing charges.

Daily Mirror Sept 29th 1976

Daily Mirror Sept 29th 1976

# THEMSELVES Sept 28-9th 1976

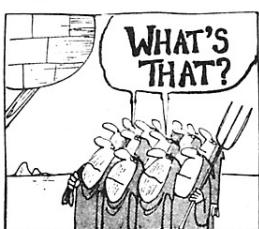
So, the blackmail of the Crisis is working. For us it will mean higher taxes, more cuts in public spending, and an extension of wage controls. And all this will be done with the active help of the Trade Union leaders.

**3** The atmosphere is tense. And what does it mean for workers? Two items from the newspapers present the picture. First, a lesson in economics from the Sunday Times (April 27th 1976) :-



"The Unions may win victories over the employers, but they can never beat the Exchange Rate. It always wins in the end - the only point in question is the rate of inflation at which it ultimately achieves its supremacy."

And now, a lesson in economics from the Financial Times (October 13th 1976) :-



"We very much respect what your Government has done on wage control and economic policy", said a US executive from the floor, when Prime Minister Callaghan asked for questions. "But what we worry about is whether you can hold your Left, and what you are going to do about nationalisation of the Banks." "That," replied Mr Callaghan gently, "is my problem, not really yours." "But it's our money, not yours", muttered an American banker beneath his breath.

**4 MEANWHILE, IN THE MOTOR INDUSTRY....** Jack Jones and Hugh Scanlon were telling the car workers that the TGWU and AUEW intended to maintain strict discipline in wage bargaining and grievance procedures. They showed themselves very clearly as Union policemen of the struggle. But the patience of many carworkers was at an end. The employers had been having a field-day for almost 18 months. They had successfully used the crisis-conditions in the motor industry to cut wages, reduce manning levels, make large numbers of workers redundant, and reduce the rest to a condition of casual labour by repeated layoffs without pay. A SUDDEN WAVE OF STRUGGLES SHOWED THAT CAR WORKERS HAD HAD ENOUGH:-

## THERE'S a new mood in Britain's car factories.

It's the anger of shopfloor workers fed up with losing money.

Time and time again they are laid off and sent home because of someone else's dispute.

Tuesday night's riot at Ford's Dagenham complex is just part of the story.

Last month at Leyland's Longbridge plant in Birmingham, 400 men rebelled at being laid off for the umpteenth time.

They marched around the works chanting: "We want work" and "Give

us a 40-hour week."

Days later, as Leyland reeled under a spate of crisis strikes, other workers followed the lead.

Hundreds refused to be laid off at the Castle Bromwich plant—and carried on turning out car seats without supervision or pay and in defiance of management orders to go home.

It happened again on Tuesday night at Leyland's Jaguar factory in Coventry . . . just hours before the Ford men went on their rampage.

Angry production men stood round for hours after being "taken off the clock" by a dispute involving just eleven internal ferry drivers.

Car men don't get paid for a lay-off if the cause is an internal dispute.

Only outside trouble qualifies them for lay-off money.

So what's the answer to the long shadow of the lay-off and another chunk out of this week's pay packet?

Eddie McGarry, joint chairman of Leyland's National Shop Stewards Committee, says: "Guarantee shopfloor workers the same protected salary deals as their white-collar colleagues."

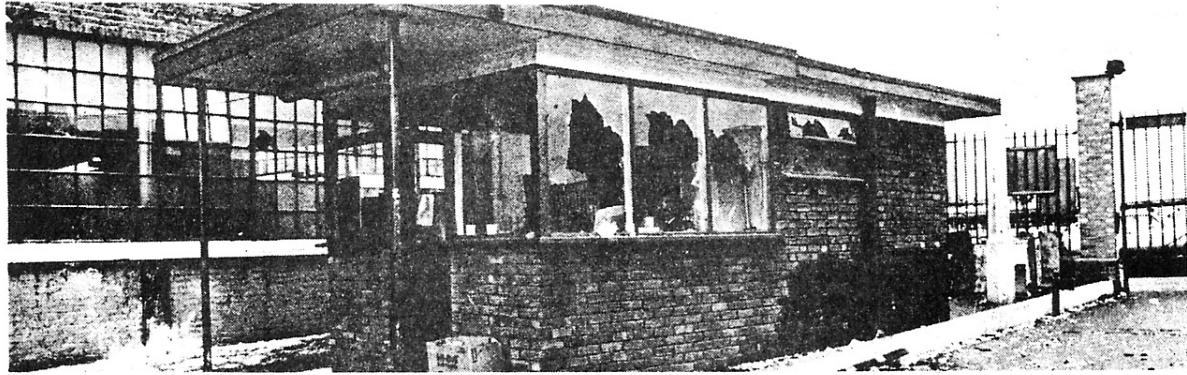
He added: "The days of treating shopfloor men as the poor relations of staff members, just because they have grease on their hands, have got to end."

**5 IT WAS AT THIS PRECISE MOMENT OF DEEPEST CRISIS OF THE LABOUR GOVERNMENT AND OF THE £ STERLING THAT THE STRUGGLE OF FORD DAGENHAM WORKERS BURST ONTO THE SCENE:-**



# Fury on the night shift

Security Hut - Gate 35.



By PATRICK LONG,  
STUART GREIG  
and JILL PALMER

**RIOTING** car workers went on a rampage of destruction at Ford's Dagenham works early today.

They smashed cars, attacked the security gates and started fires inside the factory.

When police arrived they were bombarded with a hail of missiles.

Bottles and bricks were thrown through the windows and rioters were reported to have ripped off pieces of the roof and thrown them to the ground.

Hundreds of police surrounded the area but the car men locked the gates and refused to let them or the fire brigade inside.

Instead, the rioters found their own hosepipes and turned them on the police.

Ford officials urged them to go home and not jeopardise the company's future.

They spoke to the men through loud speakers after they had barricaded themselves in the building.

But this was greeted with a shower of glass and furniture, which they took from the Ford

## Fires break out —then hoses are turned on police

canteen and hurled at police and officials.

Some of the rioters tried to set fire to the canteen.

Ford officials pleaded: "If you don't care anything about the company you must care for your own lives and you are putting them in danger.

Each request for them to disperse was greeted by roars of cheering and barrages of bottles, ash trays and glasses.

The trouble started on the eve of the official launching of Ford's new Cortina model.

### Wild

Twelve men in the body plant refused to start work over a dispute concerning manning levels for the new Cortina.

As a result 1,000 men were laid off.

They refused to go home and held an emergency meeting in the canteen.

One worker said: "This is the fifth week running we have been laid off for a day, and we are fed up with it.

"Tempers ran high and the men got out of control."

He said rioters had overturned vehicles and set fire to rubbish skips.

"We went for our tea-break and were told not to go back to work as we were being laid off," he said.

"Within an hour the place was in uproar."

As police reinforcements arrived in vans and coaches the company made a new appeal to the rioters on the public address system.

A Ford official told them: "We've got the new Cortina coming out tomorrow — don't jeopardise the future of the company and make this launching an unhappy one."

Later, a Ford spokesman said: "Hundreds of men just seemed to run wild. They were led by a small band of troublemakers.

"We have faced strikes, militants, and many troubles in the industry, but never anything on this scale.

"The body construction people are notori-

ously the most troublesome but we are surprised and shocked that they could behave in this way.

Today senior management will launch a full-scale probe into the night's riots, which cost thousands of pounds of damage.

By the early hours the trouble was calming down, but police and firemen were still standing by.

A Ford spokesman said: "What started as a minor dispute turned into the ugliest situation we have ever faced."

Management representatives and union leaders met during the riot to thrash out what went wrong and to try to find a solution.

The incident is by far the most violent which has yet hit Britain's troubled car industry.

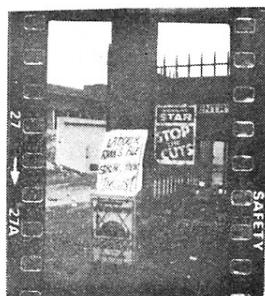
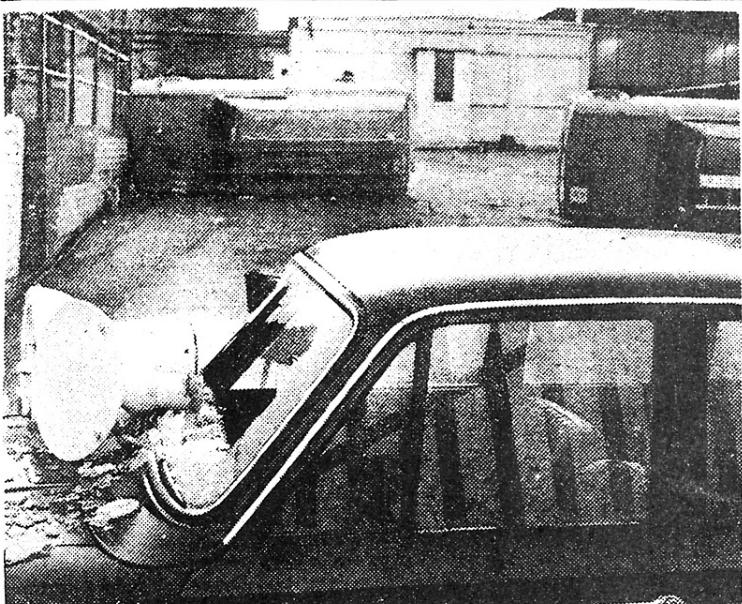
### Anger

There was a minor incident three years ago when night-shift workers at Dagenham threw plates around the canteen in anger at the news of yet another strike which threatened lay-offs.

The new violence comes when Ford union negotiators are calculating the terms of the next pay deal.

A claim for up to 40 per cent to give them parity with European Ford workers has been lodged, although the unions know they have no hope of achieving it under the Government pay curbs.

**Mirror CLOSE-UP on  
the car workers driven  
to breaking point**



## Devastation . . .

DAWN broke over this scene of destruction at the Dagenham plant . . . a car with its windscreen smashed by a vandalised lavatory pan, and two Post Office vans overturned by rioters.

# Importance of the Riot

- Now, without giving more details about the Riot itself, here are a few points about why it was so important, politically.

**A** As has often happened before, the political timing of the Dagenham Body Plant workers was right on the nail (just like the Press Shop Strike which coincided with the October 1974 Elections). In this case the Riot coincided with the Labour Party Conference; the £ sterling crisis that was being forced on Britain by the international capitalists; and the launching of a new model at Dagenham. By chance, the Morning Star's placard outside the Body Plant the following morning said: "Labour's Rank and File Show Their Disgust". Very true! The Dagenham Riot gave the workers' answer to a smug and complacent Labour Party Conference that had very few echoes of the working class in it. It was also the workers' answer to the blackmail-talk of the "Crisis of Confidence" that the multi-national financiers were manipulating against £ sterling.

**B** The Riot gave expression to two things at Dagenham. It was a symbol of the frustration that had afflicted the whole of the working class for almost a year and a half. On the one hand there was a clear will to fight - but there was a lack of organisation to carry forward that fight. The Riot was the culmination and the first break-out of an 18-month long period of defeat and demoralisation at Dagenham. (Dagenham workers, particularly the Body Plant, had suffered the effects of the Crisis more intensely than other car workers, because Ford had been very clever in using the motor industry crisis in order to break up workers' organisation).

A Body Plant worker said in 1975:

"The Company thinks that they can kick us while we're down. But just wait till we get back on top. Then we will be kicking them!"

All through 1975-6 the Company had been using the Crisis....taking away little bits from workers....chiselling away at "minutes and seconds" here and there:

"They've taken a lot of things that we used to have, and they've killed them, killed them stone dead."

But the launching of the new model Cortina (scheduled for the day after the Riot) signalled Dagenham workers' return to a position of strength and organisation.

**C** Once again it was the Body-in-White workers in the vanguard. In the words of Ford management: "The Body construction people are notoriously the most troublesome." (D.Mirror, Sept.29th). This section of workers seems to provide a vanguard of struggle and resistance all through the motor industry. For instance: "The workers in Chrysler-Linwood's notorious K Block - nicknamed the Crazy K throughout the plant". (Guardian Mar 16th '77)

The Riot was systematic destruction of Company property. The scene the following morning was described like this:

- The whole of the entrance to the Body Plant was smothered with broken cups and plates, detergent scourer, plastic bags, burned paper from the bonfire the lads had made, broken glass etc. There were the 2 GPO vans, overturned on their sides, and smashed, standing there as barricades against the police (and nicely in the range of the Press photographers).

The Management's dining room, which is separate from the workers' canteen, was completely smashed. Glass doors, windows, furniture etc

were smashed and scattered all over the floor. Some workers had apparently proposed setting fire to it, and it is said that they were in there drinking Management's whiskey and smoking their cigars during the Riot.

The security guards' hut at the entrance to Gate 35 was also smashed.... all the windows smashed....and the windows in the Administrative Block opposite had also been broken....right up to the top of the building.

Funnily enough, in the workers' own Canteen there was one of the new model Cortinas on display....all shining green, with lights on it etc. It had not been touched during the riot!

It's noticeable how few photos were taken by the Press (who were down there all night). One Press photographer commented that it was like war-photography....every time he put his head round the gate, a worker threw something at him.

But not only that. The police also came under attack. In the words of the Daily Mirror: "Hundreds of police surrounded the area, but the car men locked the gates and refused to let them, or the fire brigade, in. Instead, the rioters found their own hosepipes and turned them on the police".

**D** The question of security of earnings has been in the forefront of the Dagenham struggle for some years - but not only at Dagenham. At the time of the Riot a national strike of American Ford workers was under way, with demands including a shorter working week; better health and safety conditions; cost-of-living adjustments for pensions; parity with the building trades for skilled workers; and Union control of sub-contracting. One of the key issues was also security of employment - in other words, protection against layoffs.

Protection from layoffs is a crucial issue for assembly-line car workers. But in every Ford-UK wage negotiation it is always the first demand that the Union negotiators "drop". And at the precise moment of the Ford Riot, the TGWU and AUEW were in the process of negotiating a new wage deal with Ford Motors in the UK. The issue being pushed by the Unions was parity with Ford-Europe wage rates.....AND ONCE AGAIN, THE ISSUE OF LAYOFF PAY WAS BEING PUSHED INTO THE BACKGROUND.

So, once again the motor-industry Unions were ignoring the voice of the mass of workers - the lineworkers in particular - and those workers had to adopt violent means to serve notice of what they wanted.

**E** The Dagenham workers' Riot was not just an isolated incident. It was part of a whole wave of struggles against layoffs all through the UK motor industry in the Summer of 1976. Those struggles started, and continued, in more or less violent form. BLMC-Longbridge...BLMC-Castle Bromwich... BLMC-Jaguar...Ford-Halewood...Massey Ferguson etc. The message from car workers was clear: WE ARE NOT PREPARED TO BE TREATED AS CASUAL LABOUR. The message was pushed right into the public eye by the events at Dagenham - and not even the Daily Mirror could find fault with the workers involved!

**F** "There's a New Mood in Britain's Car Factories" - that's what the Daily Mirror said. Yes, very true! The Crisis effects were starting to wear off. But the Dagenham Riot was not only a show of strength. It was also a show of weakness. It showed a will to fight, but also a lack of organisation. It was already becoming clear that skilled workers still had the sectional strength to fight for their own demands - but the mass of line-workers still lacked that strength. The big question (and one that is still with us) was how will the mass of car workers find the organisational means to fight, in this coming period...and win!

**G** While we're on the question of organisation, the Riot also showed up what the Communist Party has been doing in the Body Plant. For a couple of years the CP clique had been organising around lobbies of Parliament, calls for nationalisation of Fords etc, but they had done not much about the key shop floor issues (eg the mobility of labour that Ford imposed as part of their layoff policies in 1975).

A year previously, the CP had joined with the Left, and had called an Occupation of the Body Plant. The majority of workers deserted the Occupation, because of the grip of the CP/Union leadership on it. So, what happened after the Riot, a year later?

- One year later, the Body Plant workers rioted. The CP seized this moment to jump in the front of the leadership of the struggle. This was entirely necessary if the CP was not going to lose all credibility in the plant. So, when a puzzled West Indian worker asked Dan Connor (Communist Party Convenor of the Body Plant): "Who are you, anyway?!", he answered:

"I have been leading the struggle against layoffs in this plant for 10 years, and the last time we had a riot, I was at the head of it."

At that point he also put forward "his" demand - a demand which the Body Plant stewards had systematically ignored for 3 years:

"At this point there were great cheers, and Connor stressed that the single unifying slogan of this strike ("Come on, lads, let's hear you") was 8 HOURS PAY WHETHER WORKING OR NOT"

But even now that the CP had jumped into the leadership, they did not win the support from the workers. When Connor asked for a vote on indefinite strike action, this was endorsed almost unanimously, (even though the demand for 8 hours pay with no strings is pretty much Utopian, as any car worker knows). But when he asked for volunteers to set up pickets, join the strike committee etc, he got almost nobody. Some people will interpret this by saying that the workers were unpolitical. We disagree. We say that the workers were not prepared to put themselves in the hands of the CP/Union bureaucracy - and to have supported Connor's call for action would simply have meant giving strength to that bureaucracy.

But this leaves us with a question: what form will workers' organisation at Dagenham take, in the coming period. If workers have no organisation in the plant, then they're as likely to riot. But when there is organisation, the question is how far does that organisation get sucked into the official Union, and how far is it really responsive to the demands and needs of the shop floor. This is a burning issue - and it was highlighted in the Riot of September 1976 and in the Flying Picket Dispute in June 1977 (See our account on page 17).

**H** Finally, it was no accident that the Dagenham Riot came within a month of the rioting at the Notting Hill Carnival and the experience of Soweto, which had been on TV and in all the papers. After all, Ford-Dagenham has a very high number of black immigrant workers....and it had been a Long Hot Summer in more ways than one. There had been many racialist attacks on immigrants in London - including murders. In a way the Ford Riot was an answer to those racialist attacks - West Indian, African and Asian workers came together with white workers, and turned their energies against the common enemy - Ford management and the police.

- So - that's a short history of the struggle in the past 5 years. Now, just for the record, we turn to the question: What is a Layoff?

# What is a Layoff?

- These notes were produced in 1973, as part of a project to launch a mass, public campaign about the crucial importance of layoff pay in the working class struggle, and how to fight against layoffs. Four years later, the issue is still being pushed to the sidelines by Trade Union negotiators. We hope that publishing these notes will serve to raise the issue again because it is an issue that workers -particularly in the motor industry - are not prepared to allow to die.

## WHAT IS A LAYOFF?

A layoff is not the same as a sacking or a redundancy. In a layoff, one worker, or a group of workers, is sent home for a temporary period, either with no pay or with very little pay, until the employer solves some particular "problem" of production (which might be a technical fault, or a shortage of supplies, or a strike in another section).

The importance of layoffs is not only that workers lose money. Also, when they are sent home, they lose their base of organisation and struggle against the employer (ie they are forced into a passive situation). But, more importantly, the employers use layoffs to divide one section of the working class from another.

## LAYOFF IS A POLITICAL ACT.

The employers describe layoffs as a "technical" fact, something natural and god-given. Like when it's raining and building workers can't work....or when car workers can't work because of a "shortage of parts" etc.

But layoffs (like unemployment in general) are a political act by the employing class against the working class. In a nutshell, we, as workers, have to live. If we were capitalists, we would have capital invested in stocks, shares etc, which would bring us income without working. But we don't have capital. We are always without money. Going without a week's wages means going without the things we need to live in that week. For many of us it's a question of not eating properly, or using up our savings, or going into debt. A prolonged period of layoffs creates chaos for workers with mortgages and HP payments to meet. And for immigrant workers the loss of a week's wages means hard times for a whole family back in India, Africa or the West Indies.

So, it's the old question: What gets priority - the capitalists' profits, or our needs to live?

The employer turns round and says: "This week I can't produce. Therefore there's no work for you. Therefore, since there's no work for you, I will not pay you for this week. We are not in the business of paying workers to do nothing."

The worker's answer is: "If you have production difficulties, that's your problem, not ours. We need to live, and we have nothing to live on except what you pay us. Therefore you are going to have to pay us money for this week, whether there is work or not. We shall struggle to make you pay."

## LAYOFF IS AN EMPLOYERS' WEAPON

But the problem with layoffs is not just that we lose money. It is also the fact that the employers use layoffs as a political weapon against the working class in times of struggle.

The usual reason why an employer has to stop production is not because of some accident or freak of nature. It is because somewhere, a group of workers have taken militant action, and that militant action has stopped the flow of production.

The employer's response is to make the working class pay the price of that action, instead of paying the price himself.

If a small group of workers in a car factory go on strike, it usually means that there is no work for other workers up and down the line. So the employer sends home large numbers of workers. For two reasons: (a) to avoid paying them money while they are not working, and (b) to punish the mass of workers for the actions of a few, and thereby put pressure on the few to return to work.

In the 1972 Miners' Strike, militant picketing by the miners meant that there were electricity shortages throughout the country. As a result, workers in many industries were laid off. Many of them were not paid during this period of layoff. The same thing happened when Edward Heath brought in the 3-Day Week in early 1974, as a weapon against the miners. This was an attempt by the employers to make the working class as a whole pay the price of the miners' actions.

The American Army in Vietnam applied the same principle of collective punishment of whole villages for the actions of one or two guerrillas.

#### BUT LAYOFFS ARE A DOUBLE-EDGED WEAPON

Layoffs are not something new. They have been in the experience of workers for centuries. But there are good reasons for discussing layoffs at this particular moment. First, because layoffs are increasing; second, because the fight against layoffs is developing inside the working class; and third, because workers can use layoffs as a weapon of their own, in some circumstances.

Layoffs are certain to intensify as the present class situation develops. This has been developing ever since 1971, with the massive spread of layoff, short-time working and unemployment in that year. As we stand now, more and more groups of workers are going to be forced to take militant action in their place of work. This is going to mean increased shortages of supplies, components, services etc, which will lead to companies laying workers off. We've got to be prepared for this, and begin to work out broad strategies for the situation. As workers, we do not accept the employers' strategy of making us pay the price of our fellow workers' struggles.

Furthermore, when we can win a favourable layoff agreement, it does more than just guarantee us a certain amount of money in the event of layoffs. It can also directly strengthen the fight of all workers. A company which cannot afford to layoff workers on full pay, will more readily give in to the demands of groups of workers, for fear of provoking a layoff.

Also, a favourable layoff agreement is as good as a wage rise for assembly line workers who are laid off very often. In the words of a Massey Ferguson worker from Coventry: Having a good layoff agreement has saved us hundreds of pounds in lost wages over the course of a year.

#### SOME EFFECTS OF LAYOFFS AT FORD DAGENHAM

- 1) From Ford's point of view, they don't always like laying men off.

## What is a Layoff?

If they're having trouble recruiting, they know that they run the risk of losing more workers if they use layoffs too often. Very many workers were lost during the 1973 bout of layoffs at Dagenham - they just walked out of Ford, disgusted by the insecurity of earnings, and went to find jobs elsewhere.

2) Again, from Ford's point of view: they know that when workers are laid off frequently, or for long periods, they lose the habit of working. They lose the basic discipline which is imposed by the factory. In the words of Ford's ex-Labour Director Bob Ramsey: "Workers begin to feel 'Why should I worry about production'."

3) From the worker's point of view, the situation is simple: in a period of hot struggles you rarely get any advance notice of the layoff. So you come to work. For Dagenham workers this means travelling from all over London, paying the usual exorbitant fares, or getting stuck in the usual diabolical traffic jam. You arrive at the factory, only to find that there's no work for you because you've been laid off. In 1973 this was like an epidemic - and it happened very often on the Night Shift (people arriving at 10.00pm and then having to find their way home again). The tension and the anger at this time were unbelievable. If they were lucky, workers were given 2 hours pay to compensate them - but even then the Company sometimes insisted that they work for those 2 hours!

4) Because the layoffs were usually caused by workers' actions inside Fords, the Company (by the official terms of their Agreement - the Blue Book) were not obliged to pay layoff pay - and they didn't. And because of the severely restricted terms of the State's layoff benefits, almost nobody was able to get State layoff benefits either. This meant that workers were working only a few days out of each week, and over a 5-6 week period were taking home only £15-16 per week.

5) The effect of continued layoffs is like getting punch-drunk. After a while you forget what a regular wage packet looks like. Layoffs destabilise you. Workers buy houses....they've got cars....they've got kids....they take on commitments. They plan their lives on the expectation of getting a regular 2 weeks on days and 2 weeks on nights, and getting a regular wage. On that expectation, they enter into new commitments. When a period of prolonged or repeated layoffs arrives, it plays havoc with their lives. Workers are really weakened by this.

6) The layoff situation creates divisions among workers - or rather, it emphasises those divisions already created by the employer. For instance, the people who are hardest hit by layoffs in a car factory are line workers on the assembly lines. Other workers (electricians, repairmen, workers on the feeder lines etc) are usually able to continue working while lines are stopped. And it's a fact that, anyway, line workers get the lowest wages of the majority of Ford workers. These divisions lead to tension. For instance, when the electricians take strike action, bad feeling often occurs. The electricians are big-money people. Their actions are also capable of laying off many production workers. Line workers are then furious to find that electricians are coming in at the weekend (overtime rates) to do the work they had not done during the week - thus keeping up their money. This happened in 1973.

7) However, the situation can also backfire on Fords, by breaking the divisions that exist among workers. Workers can come together, over the issue of layoffs, very quickly united. Those workers might previously have been split and divided, with no channels of communication etc - and suddenly they have an issue that faces all of them. It's not like a wages issue, which

you can choose to ignore and carry on working. When you're hit by a layoff you have no choice in the matter. Like it or not, the Company is putting you in that position - thousands of you. Now, if you've got the ability to generate a struggle and catch the moment of that anger, you can make great leaps forward in workers' organisation.

8) Layoffs raise the question of parity with white collar workers, who very rarely get laid off. They are usually monthly-paid, rather than hourly paid. This adds to the other "perks" and privileges they have, compared with production workers. Workers today are pressing to end this division.

9) The other side of layoffs is the question of overtime. When workers return to work after a long period of layoff, they are usually keen to work overtime, in order to make up for lost earnings. But in a period of layoffs, one of the best ways to hit the employer is to refuse overtime, thereby denying him flexibility of action in the factory.

10) After a period of layoffs, workers are generally in a weaker position to struggle. The Company therefore uses this period when you are laid off, in order to restructure production so that when you come back you can achieve the workloads in faster time. As well as your regular job, they'll now have you doing repairs, stocktaking, storage etc, in addition. More work for the same money.

11) The Company knows that, because people are in a weaker position after a layoff (short of money etc), speed-up can be implemented more easily. It is very easy for Ford to speed up after a period of layoff - where perhaps this would have been impossible a month previously. You often find that this speedup is allowed to pass almost without a fight.

## AND NOW FOR THE STORY OF THE JUNE 1977 DISPUTE.....(pto)



● PTA stewards and Convenor on the picket line.

## INSIDE

1500  
pickets  
face 400  
police

There was more violence today at the Grunwick factory as 400 police and 1500 pickets turned out in force. Workers spoke of the "terrifying ordeal" of breaking the picket line. Page 6

Tighter noose  
on S. Africa

Page 43

# 22,000 FACE TOTAL FORD SHUT-DOWN

- The Press and TV immediately distorted and sensationalised the June strike. The issue of the strike was full payment for layoffs. The Evening Standard (below, June 17th) got it just about right. But the Sun (which, for some reason, Fordworkers read more than any other paper) gave over a hysterical front page, headlined: "The Man Who Cost Fords £15 Million: 'They Deserve To Lose It All'". "The man who has brought the Ford car giant to its knees said last night: 'I don't care if they lose £50 million. I am not going to be pushed around - and I am not going to back down.' Nigerian-born welder Olatunji 'Bill' Taylor has cost Fords £15m since he was suspended for refusing to switch to a new method of working which, he claimed, hurt his wrist..." (Sun, June 21st)

**THE FORD** strike, which started when one man refused to change the way he worked his machine, threatens to shut the Dagenham plant from Monday.

Production of cars has been halted for several days and the firm has started laying off workers without pay.

Three thousand workers from the assembly line and other sections were sent home this morning.

By tonight a total of 8000 workers were expected to be laid off and a spokesman for the company said the outlook for the 22,000 people employed at Dagenham was "grim."

## Workers demand pay

Trouble flared after a worker who had been operating a machine for three years was told he was doing it wrongly and was ordered to change. He refused and was suspended for three days.

Other workers downed tools in sympathy. The dispute spread further when workers laid off were told they would not be paid.

From a trivial start the strike has now escalated into a major row with workers demanding pay when they are laid off through a dispute in which they are not directly involved.

Ford management refuses to pay unless the strike occurs outside its organisation.

Workers were warned of the lay-offs in a letter sent round by hand only a few hours before the action was taken.

The letter from the Ford company's personnel department said: "During the last few days we have been prevented from carrying out normal production at Dagenham estate due to a dispute which originated at the body plant and spread to the paint, trim and assembly.

## Pickets prevent supplies

"Despite efforts of management and union officials, pickets are preventing delivery of vital supplies.

"There are 22,000 people who want to carry on normal working. The situation is that a small group of employees in defiance of the company and the unions are jeopardising the work of everyone at Dagenham.

"Clearly we cannot go on paying people without working indefinitely."

The company's tough line follows a week in which pickets disrupted assembly line work by marching through the factory with banners and placards, shouting and jeering as they went.

They have threatened lorry drivers who tried to get through the picket lines, and a policeman was injured in one of several fights yesterday.

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# **THE DIARY OF THE ASSEMBLY PLANT'S STRIKE AGAINST LAYOFFS - JUNE 1977**

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- This section of our Pamphlet gives a short history of the Layoff Strike at Ford Dagenham in June 1976.

This strike was in many ways the climax of the Assembly workers' long-fought struggle against their condition as casual labour - permanently getting laid off etc. The Assembly Plant workers now felt that, in the words of the poster on the picket hut: "Now Is The Time to Fight!"

Our account is taken from leaflets distributed by the Shop Stewards Committee of the Assembly Plant (PTA), from leaflets and minutes of the Dagenham Ford Workers' Group, from newspapers and Company documents etc.



# (note)

• It's not an easy business to write the history of the working class in struggle. Still, we have done our best to be accurate in this pamphlet, by drawing on leaflets, news articles etc, that were published at the time - and interviews with Ford workers.

The draft of this pamphlet was circulated in the factory before publication, for corrections and criticisms to be made. We have incorporated these specific points. However, there were also more general criticisms made, as follows:-

a) The pamphlet gives too "rosy" a picture of the June dispute. That fight was not easy. It took long, hard months of preparation, organising in sections etc. And it was touch and go all the time whether it would succeed or fail, since Ford was keeping workers in the plant, on pay, for the whole of its duration. In the words of one picket: "We managed to keep going, but God knows how!"

b) The pamphlet implies that there was a continuity of the struggle over layoffs at Dagenham. But in fact each of the struggles described took place with workers who had only been in the plant perhaps a short while. The big 10-week layoff in 1975 broke that continuity, with many militants leaving Fords in a growing turnover of labour. So the 1977 dispute had to be built up once again, right from scratch, with a new inflow of workers in the PTA.

c) The atmosphere in the PTA changed, because of the June dispute. "We were seen to fight, and we were seen to win. Even the Right-wingers had to admit it. This was a real step forward". And in fact it was Ford's sense of the strength and confidence of the PTA after the strike, that prevented them using layoffs again for months afterwards.

d) It's important to stress single issues like layoffs - but these single issues will get you nowhere unless you build up broad-based organisation right through the plant, building up confidence through a whole series of small actions which can then lead into more prolonged action when it is needed. Also, while an occupation might have good results, there is nothing to beat the "fire power" of a Flying Picket - and that's what really scares companies like Ford.



# The Story Starts Here...

• THIS SECTION OF THE PAMPHLET DEALS WITH THE JUNE 1977 STRIKE AGAINST LAYOFFS AT DAGENHAM. BUT IN ORDER TO GET THE JUNE DISPUTE INTO PERSPECTIVE OUR STORY STARTS IN FEBRUARY 1977, WHEN THE LAYOFF ISSUE ONCE AGAIN FLARED UP IN THE ASSEMBLY PLANT.

IN FEBRUARY 1977 THE LAYOFF ISSUE ONCE MORE STARTED TO COME TO A HEAD IN THE ASSEMBLY PLANT AT DAGENHAM (PTA). FORD WAS NOW CRACKING DOWN, ON THE ISSUES OF SPEED-UP AND DISCIPLINE. IT WAS OBVIOUS THAT - UNLESS THESE WERE GOING TO BE ACCEPTED WITHOUT QUESTION - THERE WOULD BE DISPUTES. AND AS SOON AS ANY SECTION STARTED TO RESIST, FORD WOULD CERTAINLY RESORT TO LAYOFFS, AS PART OF THEIR PENALTY MOVES AGAINST WORKERS' ACTIONS. A LEAFLET WAS DISTRIBUTED BY THE FORD WORKERS' GROUP, OUTLINING THE POSITION, AND INDICATING THE KIND OF POLICY THAT ASSEMBLY PLANT WORKERS WANTED TO BE ADOPTED. (Feb. 22nd 1977) :-

## • Fellow Workers,

It is obvious that to fight Ford's SPEED-UP and DISCIPLINE, we will also have to fight against their LAYOFFS! But what a disaster in the PTA last Wednesday night.....!

### THE FACTS

At 10.30pm we were told we were being laid off at the end of the Night. The Convenor decided, out of his own head, that "the men don't want a mass meeting" (!!). But, after heated discussion, he finally agreed to allow section meetings to be held - to discuss calling a Mass Meeting and to plan workers' action against Ford's layoff.

In these section meetings, the PTA Trim Lines made a great step forward: we all decided to come together in one single meeting (3-400 of us) to discuss a joint policy, as follows:

- a) Solidarity with our brother in the Body Plant;
- b) The Body Plant strike to be made official;
- c) The PTA to demand re-opening of Ford's national wage negotiations, including a better layoff agreement for us.

The feeling among us was a will to fight, a confidence in our strength, and a determination to DO SOMETHING. The above policy was accepted unanimously. As was a proposal from the floor, for work-sharing.

We wanted action there and then. One brother proposed:

"We want a mass meeting - now! Right away. We don't move from here. We don't go back to work. We want the Convenor down here, now."

At this point we started marching through the Plant, about 400 strong. Fellow workers from the Main and Final Lines came and joined us. And we went to the West Canteen. The mood was angry (as shown by the stewards clearing away the milk and cups in case we started chucking them. And we waited...and waited...for nearly an hour for our beloved Convenor to come down. And what did he say to us?

### "YOU ARE AN UNREPRESENTATIVE MINORITY"

The Deputy Convenor arrived and told us that we, 600 angry men,

were an "unrepresentative minority", and that NO WAY would he accept our demand for a mass meeting to be held there and then. At this point he walked out, accompanied by booing and jeering in his ears.....

The Deputy Convenor finally held the meeting at 6.45am, knowing that leaving it so late would kill any possibility of action that night. He told us a pathetic story that, through negotiations, the Union had never won any guarantees on layoffs. He also told us a Lie - that the PTA workers were not prepared to take action on this in the past.

When he finished, a lot of Proposals for Action came up from the floor. The Deputy Convenor ignored them, rejected them, and poured cold water on them. Eventually he declared the meeting closed, for being "unrepresentative"!! So, now, let's see the practical proposals of our fellow workers:-

- 1) WORKSHARING: If one shift hasn't got work, then we share the other shift's work 50/50, with no loss of pay. Afterwards we should be redeployed to do other jobs (like the PTA needs a new coat of paint!) or left alone to amuse ourselves.
- 2) If Ford doesn't accept that, then we set up pickets, not only on the PTA, but also on the Body Plant, Engine etc. (Note: more than 200 lorries come into the PTA every day).
- 3) A brother proposed that when we return to work (today), we should adopt HIT AND RUN tactics. In other words, different sections, at different times, on different days, will strike unpredictably for 3 hours. In this way we'll be in a good bargaining position.
- 4) Since we are almost all in the same Union, the TGWU should call all its members out, in the event of a layoff.

#### WHAT DO WE DO NOW?

These are excellent proposals. But we need a way of carrying them through. In view of the defeatist position of many shop stewards, we have to ask ourselves a few questions:-

FIRST: "Our Organisation" ignores what we want. So we have to ask: Who can represent the interests of shop floor workers? Do we need to take over the Union and kick out the dead wood? Or are alternative forms of organisation needed? Is it better to "stay united" and lose every time (as the Deputy Convenor wants), or is it better for some sections to start taking their own actions, spreading the action ourselves, so as to win our demands?

SECOND: In a situation like Wednesday night, we should have elected line delegates so as to coordinate ourselves by sections, departments, areas etc. Eventually this could start to build up a really representative organisation, instantly recallable, and controlled by us, effective to win our demands.

THIRD: When in the Canteen meeting, we should have immediately organised ourselves into 3 Flying Pickets (each 200 strong), to spread the information through the PTA. Most workers would probably have agreed with the decisions of the Meeting, and would have taken action with us, and the whole thing could have been resolved much quicker.

Fellow workers - remember all these things. We must discuss them and be prepared to act on them. We return to work tonight, not knowing if our brother in the Body Plant has been reinstated or not, and with the question of layoffs still unresolved. How much longer are we going to let Henry Ford and people like the Deputy Convenor walk all over us?

● A PTA WORKER DESCRIBED THE COURSE OF THAT DISASTROUS MEETING IN THE CANTEEN:

The mood was a bit bad. A bit depressed and demoralised. What to do?

The Deputy Convenor started presenting the situation. A real defeatist sort of position. He moaned about how the Union side has been fighting for layoff pay for ages, and still hasn't got anywhere. The only thing his speech achieved was to demoralise people.

Finally, he started taking questions, proposals etc, from the floor. But just look at the way he dealt with them:

Worker: "We should demand support from the other shift for worksharing during layoffs, because today it's happening to us, and tomorrow it could be happening to them."

Deputy Convenor: No way! The other shift wouldn't support us. Things like this have already happened many times. The other shift won't support us.

Worker: Well, if they don't support us, we'll fucking picket the whole place and then they'll have to support us!

Deputy Convenor: Sorry brother, we are not in the business of having battles between trade unionists. We must fight in an organised and orderly way.

Worker: I propose that if they are sending us to the Dole to get our money when we are laid off for an external dispute, the Company should pay us 80%....or we'll do them a favour and just let them make our Dole money up to 80%....

Deputy Convenor: Sorry brother, the Ford Motor Company has said that it is not in the business of doing that.

Worker: Well, anyway, we're all in the same Union, so it's not a matter of whether the other shift supports us or not. It's a matter of the Union telling them to stop work.

Deputy Convenor: Sorry brother, we are the Union. Nobody dictates to us what we are supposed to do, and we don't go dictating to other people.

Worker: WHAT IS FUCKING HAPPENING IS THAT THE UNION DOES NOT SUPPORT US AND WHAT WE SHOULD BE DOING IS STOP PAYING OUR UNION DUES!

Deputy Convenor: That is not a suggestion, brother.

Worker: I demand that the Convenors throughout the Dagenham Estate meet up and plan joint action, because the more pressure we put on the Company, the quicker this man is going to be reinstated. And the quicker he is reinstated, the quicker we shall be back to work.

Deputy Convenor: Well, sorry brother. As it happens every plant here is a separate unit. The PTA is nothing to do with the Body Plant. We don't dictate to the Body Plant what to do, and the Body Plant can't dictate to us what to do. And we would be very annoyed if they tried to.

Anyway, if the other shift in the Body Plant hasn't stopped working, why should we stop?

Worker: SOLIDARITY!!!

February 22nd.

● BY THE BEGINNING OF MARCH, THE FIGHT AGAINST FORD'S DISCIPLINE WAS STARTING TO LOOK LIKE GUERRILLA WARFARE. THE COMPANY CONTINUED TO LAY OFF WORKERS AS A RESULT OF STRIKES BY SMALL SECTIONS - AND REFUSED TO PAY THEM FOR THE PERIOD OF THE LAYOFF. ON MARCH 3rd THEY SENT THE FOLLOWING LETTER TO PTA WORKERS:-

PTO.



Ford Motor Company Limited

DAGENHAM Essex RM9 6SA  
Telephone: 01-592 4588  
Telex: 882121

3rd March 1977.

Dear Employee,

Yesterday we advised you of the importance of working normally and of observing the procedure agreed between the Company and the Trade unions for resolving your grievances.

For the fourth night running this week small groups of people have disrupted production. Considerable leniency has been allowed this week for you to discuss your grievances, and every effort has been made to keep those people who wanted to work, fully employed.

Yesterday evening Plant and Operations Management met with a Trade Union official, your Joint Works Committee, and some of your Shop-Stewards.

It was then made clear that we were not prepared to pay employees for being laid-off by strikes of other employees in the Company.

However, it was agreed that the specific problems of the P.T.A. will be raised at the N.J.N.C. sub-committee on lay-offs, on Monday 7th March.

The vast majority of employees in this plant want to work without disruption, and normal working is essential if we are to avoid lay-offs.

It is also essential for our livelihood.

This week so far we have lost 2000 vehicles from our production schedule. That means that this number of customers will experience delays in receiving their cars, and some of these will cancel their orders to the benefit of our competitors.

It is becoming impossible to run this plant, and it must be made clear that unless assurances are given by the employees, serious action will have to be taken that could adversely affect all of us.

\*

*L. Fisher*

L. R. Fisher,  
Night Manager,  
Dagenham Assembly Plant.

•THE LETTER FROM NIGHT MANAGER FISHER CREATED A LOT OF ANGER. AT LAST THE PTA SHOP STEWARDS MOVED INTO ACTION. THEY VOTED AND ADOPTED A POLICY AGAINST LAYOFFS. IN THE MEANTIME THE COMPANY TRIED TO CREATE A RIOT OF THEIR OWN, IN THE PTA. A LEAFLET FROM THE FORD WORKERS' GROUP DESCRIBED WHAT HAPPENED:-

PTO.

REPORT FROM THE PTA:

March 16th 1977

"In the past few weeks we have been laid off several times in the PTA. As a result, the fight for layoff pay and security of employment has come up yet again. The Company-Men and Blue-Eyed-Boys said we would get nowhere - but they've been proved wrong!"

80% PAY FOR ALL 'EXTERNAL' LAYOFFS

'It is becoming impossible to run this plant'. That's what Ford told us on March 3rd. But we replied: 'It is impossible to live for one week on two days' wages'. We are not casual labour. We are not Yo-Yos to be put in and out of work when Ford feels like it, nor are we light-bulbs to be switched on and off at will. We stated it clearly - whether or not Ford has work for us, we expect a guaranteed 80%, rising to 100% when we're in a position to win it.

The determination of the PTA was shown clearly in the unanimous backing given to the resolution of the PTA Shop Stewards Committee, who have finally shifted their backsides into action. We bring this resolution to the attention of all Ford Workers:-

- The Shop Stewards Committee has adopted the following policy to fight layoffs. In the event of further layoffs due to disputes outside the Assembly Plant, a total stoppage of all work is to take place. The factory is to be occupied. Pickets are to be set up at key points on the Dagenham estate, to seek the support of the transport drivers. This action is to continue until the Company agrees to paying 80% of basic pay to the men being laid off.

In other words, we have decided to occupy the factory and call a total, all-out strike in the PTA next time we are laid off without pay for "external" reasons. And this policy has put the wind up Ford Motor Co. It is for this reason that they tried to provoke a riot and dissension among workers, aided by PTA right-wingers:-

- On Saturday morning, March 5th, Ford threatened the whole PTA with layoffs, because some sections refused to start work over the issue of layoff money, and 70 men were suspended. In order to pressure these sections, Ford called a mass meeting (!). It must be stated clearly: the Company called the meeting, without anyone agreeing to it on the Union side. When the Convenor refused to accept this, noted Right-wingers (and Billy Wright among them) tried to lead an attack on the Convenor's office, to wreck it. This attack failed, when workers from other sections came to the rescue.

Our fight over the past 2 weeks has shown many things. First, we won a victory, because the Company had to lift the suspensions of the 70 men. Second, we showed willing to fight against layoffs - Ford kept a lot of workers on pay while this fight was going on. And third, we now know that if Ford knows we are prepared to strike over layoffs, it makes them less willing to provoke strikes in other sections. A GOOD LAYOFF POSITION IS AN ADDED PROTECTION FOR ALL OF US!

Ford Workers Group.  
March 16th 1977

- THE RIGHT-WING SUNDAY TELEGRAPH DESCRIBED HOW FORD HAD TRIED TO ENGINEER THE RIOT AGAINST THE CONVENOR:-

PTO.

# Police called in at Ford

Sunday Telegraph Reporter

POLICE were called to the Ford motor works at Dagenham, Essex, early yesterday when about 300 night workers in the assembly plant jostled shop stewards, shouted at them and threatened physical violence.

A Ford spokesman said later: "It was a potentially ugly situation."

Management and union officials finally persuaded the men to return to their posts or go home. The police remained outside the gates and were not asked to enter the plant.

At one stage the men had threatened to riot and there

were fear of a repeat of scenes last September when body plant workers caused £15,000 damage during a violent rampage.

Yesterday's trouble flared during a dispute over demands for payment during lay-offs. About 300 of the 1,800 men on the shift were involved in the demonstration.

## MEN SUSPENDED

More trouble is feared tomorrow night when the same shift returns. About 70 men suspended by the management after yesterday's near-riot have been instructed by their unions to report for work tomorrow night.

According to one senior union official, some of the men smashed windows in the convenors' office but a spokesman for the company last night denied that any damage had been caused.

Earlier, union leaders had met management to press demands for payment for assembly plant workers laid off on two nights last week because of a dispute elsewhere within the plant. Throughout the Friday night shift and during union-manage-

ment talks about 70 men refused to work, so delaying production throughout the rest of the assembly plant.

## UNION REFUSAL

The management asked the union leaders to call a mass meeting of the night shift and offered facilities for it. When the request was refused the company sent circulars to all the workers telling them their union leaders had refused to call a mass meeting. The men descended on the union office in the plant, demanding that the meeting be held and threatening violence if it was not.

One of the union officials who was threatened said yesterday: "It was a blatant attempt by management to drive a wedge between the rank and file and their representatives.

"But it didn't work and when one section of the workers realised what had happened they sent a letter to the management warning that if the same tactic was tried on again there would be indefinite industrial action."

He said the union did not call meetings to suit management.

- THE PROBLEM FACED BY DAGENHAM WORKERS HAS BEEN THAT THEY HAVE NO ORGANISATION TO CARRY FORWARD THEIR INTERESTS. THE UNION MACHINE SEEMS TO HAVE LOST TOUCH WITH THE GRASS ROOTS. A FORD WORKERS' GROUP LEAFLET IN EARLY APRIL DESCRIBED THE PROBLEM - "WE ARE SITTING IN A HOLE!"

### WE ARE SITTING IN A HOLE!

So, fellow paupers (except the 7-days-a-week Overtime Wallahs), we are in a Hole. This Hole is called Poor Living, Hard Times and Hard Work.....

Since Ford workers have not always been in this Hole, it needs explaining why we are here now. In the Ford Workers' Group we have discussed this question in our meetings. We see the position as follows:-

The employer always tries to get as much profit as possible out of the worker, making us work harder, for less money. Our only protection against this is when we stand united - in a Union. So the working class built up trade unions, to defend our interests.

But today we find that things are going the opposite way.

We find that Trade Union officials are acting against our interests. A lot of little men in suits and ties - who have forgotten what it's like to work for a living - run round selling us Insurance, Cheap Holidays, etc, taking money from us each week to pay for their Bureaucratic Machine.

It's no accident that many workers see 'The Union' as standing against them. Because, in place of bargaining on the shop floor for better wages and conditions, the Union Machine has taken it out of our hands, and has centralised negotiations. This is an instrument of the bosses against the workers.

Now that negotiations are centralised, the Government has imposed wage freezes. THIS MEANS THAT THE WAGES OF 25 MILLION WORKERS IN BRITAIN ARE NOW DECIDED ONCE EVERY FEW MONTHS BY ABOUT 20 TUC OFFICIALS AND A FEW GOVERNMENT MINISTERS.

The Union Machine that we pay every week to maintain, has become degenerated.

(Continued over..)

Originally its only use was to fight for our interests. Today the whole purpose of the Union Machine has changed. We find increasingly that we are fighting against the Union bosses when we want to win something. Often the Machine only functions to stop us fighting.

So how do we get out of this Hole?

In Fords there's a big job to be done. The old Dead Wood Defeatists among the shop stewards and convenors have got to be cleared out, and we've got to start building a Fighting Machine that will fight on behalf of Ford Workers. So.....how about it, brothers and sisters!

- WITHIN A MONTH, THE TIME HAD COME FOR THE PTA LAYOFF POLICY TO BE PUT INTO EFFECT. BUT IT WAS NOT THE PTA THAT DID IT! A HEALTH AND SAFETY DISPUTE IN THE ENGINE PLANT RESULTED IN LAYOFFS - AND A MASS PICKET WENT OUT ON THE NIGHT SHIFT AND ORGANISED, INSTEAD OF JUST GOING HOME. A FORD WORKERS' GROUP LEAFLET TELLS THE STORY (MAY 13th):-

Fellow Workers,

As you know by now, Engine Plant workers are in dispute over the question of Health & Safety in the factory, and Layoffs. They are asking for support from all other workers. This is our chance to get a united policy to smash Henry Ford's "casual-labour-send-'em-home" layoff habit.

#### THE FACTS OF THE CASE.

On Wednesday Night, the Dyno Test area of the Engine Plant entered into dispute, informing the management that they were no longer prepared to work in an area that has been unsafe for years. Ford said that they were prepared to investigate the matter of the hazard, but in the meantime the lads should resume work. This is contrary to the policy of "Health & Safety: If in Doubt, Stop Work: You Could Save a Life". (...) They were threatened with being taken off pay. A layoff followed. (...)

The result of this is that last night (Thursday), at a mass meeting in the Engine Plant, the workers' policy against layoffs was put into action. Namely, to mobilise pickets to all plants on the Dagenham Estate, to seek support from fellow workers, on a policy of "One person laid off, everybody out!"

#### THE MAIN POINTS AT ISSUE: WHY WE SHOULD MAKE A STAND

First: The issue of Health & Safety is at stake. As we pointed out in our last leaflet, all test areas are dangerous (...) Management say they would talk and investigate the hazards. But as every worker knows, "talk", "investigation" is the best way to get NOTHING done. You have to "strike while the iron is hot".

Second: The issue of Layoffs is at stake. The Commercial Area was laid off by Ford because Dyno workers refused to work in Ford's unsafe conditions. The policy of the workers was then "One Out, All Out".

- 1) This demand makes unity between workers. We should not accept a layoff in one area while other areas are working, especially when management is so clearly at fault.
- 2) The Engine Plant workers hope that by taking a stand now, they will be able to stop Ford management's habit of laying us off at will. As we have pointed out in our leaflets, an aggressive policy against layoffs is the only way to win the Ford worker's right to "full pay whether working or not".

Third: We now have to build up the UNITY of Dagenham workers. Let us end

(Continued over...)

the complaints of the Weary Willies & Moaning Minnies (for instance: the Engine Plant never supported us in 1893, so why should we support them now?!) The fact is that it is now workers who have taken the action into their own hands....not the Union leaders who have done nothing for years... And they are appealing to other fellow workers to support them. We are all exploited by Henry Ford, and it's only through UNITY that we can fight back. For instance, the Ford drivers have honoured the picket lines; some commercial firms are also refusing to cross the picket; and so are some bus drivers.

THE PICKET.

The picket last night was very good. A couple of hundred blokes, even though the thing had only been organised at the last minute. It rained pretty solidly through the night: the lads got soaked. But they stuck to it, with placards etc.

The Day Shift in the Engine Plant has also come out in support. This is a great boost. The only drawback is that one steward - Sinclair Barber - has not been prepared to abide by the majority decisions. He has kept his section working for the time being (Kent & Fiesta). This situation may be resolved during the day.

WHAT ABOUT TONIGHT?

It is clear that this action must continue tonight. This time, though, the picketing has got to be organised better. For instance, how about some ways of keeping dry! And how about a few more lads joining the picket lines! Don't leave it all to the 200 who were out last night. Take your share of the work.

It is also clear that the best way to deal with the situation would be if the Night Shift in the Body Plant and PTA agreed to come out in support of the lads in the Engine Plant. Don't just take our word for it. Talk to the lads on the picket line. It is not very often that a development like this takes place at Dagenham - when we could do something to stop these layoffs. The word is 'Seize the Time'.

Seize the Time!  
Fight the Layoffs!  
Support the Pickets!

May 13th 1977

● BUT THE PICKET WAS SOLD OUT, THE FOLLOWING DAY, AFTER IT HAD BEEN RELIEVED BY THE DAY SHIFT. IN THE WORDS OF A BROTHER FROM THE ENGINE PLANT..... (May 15th 1977)

The Night Shift pickets were relieved by the incoming Day Shift. That day the Engine Plant Works Committee called a meeting of Day Shift stewards. Night shift stewards who had been on the picket line were called into the meeting (although deputy stewards were asked to leave). The Right Wing moved that the picket line should be removed. Bros. Legassic and Davies went to the picket line and tried to order the picket to be removed. 30-40 stewards were able to out-vote 500 workers without any authorisation or meeting from their departments. The men on the picket, knowing that the main concern of these two men was for their weekend overtime, refused to lift the picket. The picket remained in force until Bro. Davies called on the lorry drivers to break the picket. (After the meeting the Assembly stewards admitted to being conned and stated that they should only have attended the meeting for information purposes. The purpose of the meeting was only to tie them to a decision to return to work.)

• THE STRUGGLE IN THE ENGINE PLANT SHOWED THE VALUE OF AN AGGRESSIVE POLICY AGAINST FORD'S LAYOFFS. THEY PICKETED THE TOP END OF KENT AVENUE - AND ONCE AGAIN FORD HAD CALLED THE POLICE. BUT THE PICKET HAD BEEN BROKEN BY THE ASSISTANT CONVENOR. HOWEVER, WITHIN A COUPLE OF MONTHS THE LAYOFF FIGHT WAS TAKEN UP BY THE ASSEMBLY PLANT (PTA). (Note: Bro Sinclair Barber, Engine Plant steward, who had refused to call a meeting in support, was voted out at the next elections).

IN EARLY JUNE, THE MOMENT CAME FOR THE PTA STEWARDS' RESOLUTION TO BE PUT INTO EFFECT. THE FORD WORKERS' GROUP MINUTES SHOW THAT THIS WAS A DELICATE MOMENT OF THE STRUGGLE.

#### THE FOREMEN'S DIRTY WEEKEND IN BRIGHTON

It has come to our notice that Ford Foremen have been away to Brighton, for discussions about how to re-impose discipline in the Dagenham factory. This trip was paid for by Ford.

Furthermore, last Wednesday, foremen in the Engine Plant (both Night and Day Shifts) were called in by management and were told quite clearly how Ford intends to clamp down on shop stewards in the Engine Plant. There are a number of Ford management leaflets to this effect.

In fact this attack is taking place in various parts of the Dagenham Estate (for instance victimisation of 4 International Socialist stewards in the Body Plant). Part of Ford's intention is to firmly limit the stewards to established and limited areas.

Also, the time is ripe for such a crackdown. The production situation plays into Ford's hands, particularly in the Engine Plant. They're pretty well supplied with production. It's a dead right situation for a provocation.

In a situation like this, workers are going to have to be very careful. In particular, militants are likely to come under attack equally from the Company and from the Union.

• ON JUNE 10th THE BALLOON WENT UP. THERE WAS A LAYOFF ON B-SHIFT OF THE PTA. IT WAS TOO LATE FOR B-SHIFT WORKERS TO TAKE ACTION. THEREFORE THE INCOMING A-SHIFT SHOP STEWARDS TOOK ACTION ON THEIR BEHALF, IN ACCORDANCE WITH AGREED PLANT POLICY. THE PTA STEWARDS ISSUED THE FOLLOWING LEAFLET:-

BROTHERS,

THIS IS A BRIEF STATEMENT BY THE ASSEMBLY PLANT SHOP STEWARDS COMMITTEE IN ORDER TO CLARIFY THE PRESENT SITUATION.

IN FEBRUARY OF THIS YEAR, EVERY AREA OF THIS FACTORY ON BOTH SHIFTS INDICATED FULL SUPPORT FOR THE COMMITTEE'S POLICY OF FIGHTING REPEATED LAYOFFS.

ON JUNE 10th, 'B' SHIFT WORKERS WERE LAID OFF ON THE CLOCK FOR TWO DAY WITHOUT PAY.

IN LINE WITH OUR NEW PLANT POLICY, PICKETS WERE PLACED ON THE DAGENHAM ESTATE, AND A STOPPAGE OF WORK TOOK PLACE IN THE P.T.A. ON BOTH SHIFTS.

THE STRIKE AND PICKET HAS BEEN THE MOST EFFECTIVE ACTION TAKEN BY THE P.T.A. IN ITS HISTORY. ALL THE COMPANY'S OPERATIONS IN BRITAIN AND EUROPE ARE NOW VIRTUALLY AT A STANDSTILL.

BROTHERS, IT IS NOW OR NEVER FOR OUR LAY-OFF PAY. VICTORY IS WITHIN OUR GRASP. WE URGE YOU NOT TO CLOCK ON AND NOT TO START WORK. FOLLOW THE INSTRUCTIONS OF YOUR SHOP STEWARD.

Issued by PTA SHOP STEWARDS COMMITTEE.  
June 10th 1977.

- THE ISSUE WAS DESCRIBED AT GREATER LENGTH IN A LEAFLET OF THE FORD WORKERS' GROUP, JUNE 13th.

Fellow Workers,

Tonight the pickets are out once again at Dagenham. This time it's the PTA workers. Their fight concerns all of us in the other plants. THE ISSUE IS ONCE AGAIN - LAYOFFS.

THE FACTS ARE AS FOLLOWS:

Last Thursday a worker in the Body Plant, Common Door Line, Day Shift, had a sore arm and asked to be moved, temporarily, to a lighter job. The foreman refused, and next day the bloke was suspended for 3 days for allegedly not working according to the laid-down process.

It was left up to his mates to fight against this injustice. They decided to go down the road for the time that he was suspended. Without further discussion, the Company laid off 1,500 men in the Body and 2,500 in the PTA.

We in the PTA were told about the layoff 30 minutes before the end of the shift, so that we could not organise immediately against this drastic provocation by the Company. But despite this, the PTA shop stewards decided to take action, on the basis of the agreed policy adopted last March:

THE POLICY

"In the event of further layoffs due to disputes outside the Assembly Plant, a total stoppage of all work is to take place. The factory is to be occupied. Pickets are to be set up at key points on the Dagenham estate, to seek the support of the transport drivers. This action is to continue until the Company agrees to paying 80% of basic pay to the men being laid off."

The above policy had been accepted at departmental meetings throughout the PTA. It is in accordance with this policy that the PTA B-Shift workers and shop stewards have been picketing the Dagenham estate for the whole of today. The picket has been very successful. Trade into and out of the plant has been stopped. Extraordinary support has been received from lorry drivers and contractors.

TONIGHT THE STEWARDS WILL ADDRESS DEPARTMENTAL MEETINGS AND THE PICKET WILL CONTINUE INDEFINITELY UNTIL FORD MEETS OUR DEMAND OF 80% LAYOFF PAY.

We all realise the importance of this fight. Only 3 weeks ago the Engine Plant had a two-day picket against the layoff of the Commercial Lines. Over the years, in every plant, we've been plagued by the lay-off "disease", which on occasions has even led to riots.

By now we should have realised that layoffs are not a technical fact (ie something natural and god-given). They are a political weapon used by the employer in order to divide the workers. (...)

THE CARDS ARE ON THE TABLE AND THIS TIME WE'VE GOT THE ACES IN OUR HAND. IF ALL OF US ON THE DAGENHAM ESTATE UNITE TOGETHER AND SUPPORT THE ACTION OF THE PTA, WE COULD ONCE AND FOR ALL RESOLVE THE PROBLEMS OF LAYOFFS.

WE WANT 80% LAYOFF PAY

LET'S SUPPORT OUR BROTHERS IN THE FIGHT FOR A GUARANTEED WEEK'S PAY.

A VICTORY FOR THE PTA IS A VICTORY FOR ALL OF US.

- THE FOLLOWING DAY, THE DAGENHAM DISPUTE WENT ALMOST UNNOTICED IN THE DAILY NEWSPAPERS. A NOTE FROM THE FORD WORKERS' GROUP DIARY:-

BLOCKADE OF THE FACTORY - MASS PICKETS AT FORD DAGENHAM  
WORKERS STRIKE AGAINST REPEATED LAYOFFS.

June 14th 1977.

This morning all the newspapers are full of the news about the mass picket at the GRUNWICKS photo-processing laboratories in North London, (a strike for unionisation which has lasted for 40 weeks). Yesterday the TU movement organised a mass picket to stop the scabs going in. The pickets were attacked by police, and 80 people were arrested. There is a row in Parliament, and the story hit many front pages. But nowhere is there mention of the fact that 200 workers from the Ford-Dagenham PTA plant yesterday set up a mass picket and blockaded the whole of the Estate (27,000 workers) as a response to repeated layoffs. Once again the Ford workers' struggle goes unheeded. The strike continues today (June 14th)

- SO, THE PICKETS WERE IN PLACE AND THE BATTLE HAD STARTED. THE KEY QUESTION NOW WAS: HOW MUCH SUPPORT COULD BE EXPECTED FROM OTHER PLANTS ON THE DAGENHAM ESTATE? WOULD THE OLD RIVALRIES BETWEEN CONVENORS AND STEWARDS CONTINUE, OR WOULD THERE BE ACTIVE SUPPORT?

THE ANSWER CAME WHEN THE BODY PLANT WORKERS, IN RESPONSE TO BEING LAID OFF, DECIDED TO OCCUPY THEIR PLANT IN SOLIDARITY WITH THE PTA PLANT. A LEAFLET FROM THE FORD WORKERS' GROUP DESCRIBES WHAT HAPPENED:-

WHAT HAS HAPPENED TODAY?

June 15th 1977

This morning, when the PTA B-Shift (Days) returned to work after the layoff, meetings were held throughout the plant. Most people decided to stop production, and many joined the picket lines. As a result, no Cortinas were produced during the day, and only a few Fiestas came off the lines.

In the Body Plant all departments (except one) who had been laid off, held a mass meeting in the Canteen at dinner time. They rejected the recommendation of the JWC to return to work. They decided to come out on strike until next Monday, demanding 80% layoff pay for the time they were out.

The mass meeting decided to march around the Estate seeking support and spreading the message of the struggle: "What do we want? 80%! When do we want it? NOW!!!" They marched off to join the PTA in their picketing efforts at the top end of Kent Avenue. This sort of action - creating unity between the Body and PTA workers, is the sort of thing that should have happened years ago: it's the only way we can fight the layoffs.

Ford management have been badly hit. They now see a show of strength. For once they are scared to use layoffs as a weapon. This seems to be the reason why last Monday they didn't lay off the Body Plant when the Common Door Line walked out again. It is also the reason why Fords have kept the Engine Plant and Foundry etc going (with the Foundry lads twiddling their thumbs half the day).

(June 15th 1977)

- AT THIS POINT EVERYTHING WAS TOUCH AND GO. FORD MANAGEMENT, THE TRADE UNION OFFICIALS, AND CONVENORS IN OTHER PLANTS WERE DOING EVERYTHING POSSIBLE TO DESTROY THE STRIKE. FORD'S TRANSPORT DRIVERS WERE WILLING TO SUPPORT THE STRIKE - BUT THEN THEY WAVERED WHEN MANAGEMENT TOLD THEM IT WAS ALL OVER. AND IN THE BODY PLANT, THE COMMUNIST PARTY MOVED TO DESTROY ANY SOLIDARITY WITH THE PTA WORKERS. ONCE AGAIN, AN ACCOUNT FROM THE FORD WORKERS' GROUP DIARY (Tuesday June 21st):-

THE SITUATION AT DAGENHAM

Pickets have continued at various points on the Dagenham Estate, over the weekend. They have stopped lorries, buses, supplies etc. The occupation and the picketing have been going ahead - but with very few people, and not sure whether they can count on mass support from the rest of the workforce this week. A situation of incredible weakness

The JWC in the Body Plant has tried to block any solidarity action between the Body Plant and PTA. After a mass meeting, called mainly by the IS shop stewards and sympathisers, had decided to take action, another meeting was called by Communist Party convenor Dan Connor, to get the decision reversed. The men were assured of guarantees of work if they gave up their strike and returned to work. The men went back to working, thinking they were guaranteed work till the end of the week. But within a very short time they were laid off again. It was for this reason that the Body Plant was occupied.

The Body Plant occupation looks good. All the main gates are barricaded with stakka-trucks, forklifts etc. There are banners and posters hanging all around. And on nights the Body Plant is like a sleeping giant. Not a thing moving. Welding guns hanging limply by the lines. A sort of creepy silence, and all panels and pressings lying around, like the shells of so many dead animals. Like a great, silent forest of plant and machinery, instead of the usual hum and crash of noise and bustle.

- ON THE MONDAY MORNING MEETINGS WERE CALLED IN THE PTA. OVER THE WEEKEND FORD HAD ADVERTISED THAT THERE WOULD BE NORMAL WORKING IN THE PTA, AS FROM MONDAY MORNING. IN THIS WAY THEY HOPED TO FORCE A RETURN TO WORK, LEAVING THE PICKETS ISOLATED.

THE PTA SHOP STEWARDS PUT OUT A LEAFLET ON MONDAY MORNING, INFORMING INCOMING WORKERS OF THE POSITION:-

STATEMENT BY THE SHOP STEWARDS COMMITTEE  
OF THE ASSEMBLY PLANT.

FOR THE PAST TWO WEEKS, WORKERS IN THE PTA HAVE CARRIED ON THE MOST DETERMINED STRUGGLE AGAINST REPEATED LAYOFFS.

OUR POLICY HAS BEEN, FOR DISPUTES OUTSIDE OUR PLANT, NO LAYOFFS FOR PTA WORKERS. EITHER PROVIDE ALTERNATIVE WORK OR PAY 80% OF WAGES.

AT 2.00pm A MEETING TOOK PLACE IN THE PTA BETWEEN OFFICIALS AND CONVENORS OF THE DAGENHAM ESTATE. THE RESULTS OF THIS MEETING WERE NOT CONCLUSIVE. THE MEETING WILL RESUME AT 9.00am TODAY TO DISCUSS A 14-POINT DOCUMENT WHICH WILL BE PRESENTED BY THE COMPANY.

WE ARE AT THE ELEVENTH HOUR OF THIS STRUGGLE, BROTHERS. CONTINUE THE FIGHT AND WE WILL NOT FAIL.

DO NOT START WORK. FOLLOW THE ADVICE OF YOUR SHOP STEWARD.

REMEMBER, THE CONCLUSION OF OUR JUSTIFIED CLAIM IS LONG OUTSTANDING.

PRINTED AND PUBLISHED  
PTA SHOP STEWARDS COMMITTEE.

- THE COMPANY'S INTENTION WAS CLEAR - TO TRY AND BREAK THE STRIKE BY CALLING IN THE MASS OF WORKERS, TO GO THROUGH THE PICKET LINES. THEY WERE TRYING TO MOBILISE THE MAJORITY AGAINST THE MINORITY. THIS WAS A VERY TRICKY MOMENT.

- AN ACCOUNT FROM THE FORD WORKERS' GROUP DESCRIBES HOW THE COMPANY'S STRIKE-BREAKING ATTEMPT AND INTIMIDATION FAILED (Tuesday June 21st):-

#### DIVIDE AND RULE BREAKS DOWN

Most people felt that yesterday would be make-or-break day (Monday). Last week Ford played the hard-line in the PTA. Although workers were being allowed in, and were being kept on pay, Ford was refusing to allow strikers to enter the plant. There were shop stewards who had to run the gauntlet of foremen, with the Personnel Manager at the head - and were then refused entry to the plant because they were on strike. This was important, because the picketers had to make contact with those men who were still working (and there were some.....although many people still inside the plant were able to claim that they were "sitting in"!). Also, in the Body Plant there has been an incident of Ford management filming the Occupiers from an upstairs window. Many of us are expecting a disciplinary crack-down, like the 1962 sackings, with stewards getting sacked - especially if more support is not forthcoming.

Although the Company called men in over the weekend, only a few actually came in. They sat around for a while. The section meetings were held in the PTA. Contrary to expectation there was a fair amount of support for the strike. A number of sections in fact voted to come out on strike in support of the pickets - and to stay out till Wednesday to enforce their protest. They made it clear that they are not prepared to be used as pawns by the Company in a game of divide-and-rule (with the Company deliberately keeping men on pay all last week, so as to isolate the pickets)

So, the divide-and-rule has broken down. Ford had no choice - in a couple of hours they laid off the PTA Day Shift. At the same time, the Engine Plant had been laid off and sent home. And in both plants the Night Shift was also laid off yesterday evening

Meantime in London, negotiations are moving ahead between the Company and the Unions. The Body Plant leadership (Messrs Connor & Harraway) have been claiming that they are not in dispute, but merely laid off and occupying the factory. They say that their demand is for a provisional agreement about security of earnings for the Body Plant (regardless of all other plants) until the new Company agreement in October.

- THE COMPANY KNEW THAT NEGOTIATION WITH THE TRADE UNION OFFICIALS WAS NOW THE ONLY WAY TO END THE DISPUTE:-

"Ford knew we were solid behind our demand. Because our convenor Brian Elliot supported our demand for 80% layoff pay, the Company refused to negotiate with him. Instead they called in the Union officials (Messrs Murphy, Blake, Mills etc) and, with the Dagenham Panel of Convenors, they tried to cook up a deal over our heads. They told us to resume work on the basis of a new disciplinary agreement. The offer made by the Company gave not a mention of layoff pay....and the new Disciplinary Agreement was the opposite of what we wanted."

- AFTER A WEEK OF PICKETING AND NEGOTIATION, A MASS MEETING OF THE PTA WAS CALLED (Friday June 24th) TO DISCUSS THE COMPANY'S OFFER OF A "13-POINT DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURE". THE MEETING REJECTED THE OFFER. SO THE PICKETING CONTINUED OVER THE WEEKEND.

BUT ONCE AGAIN, FORD MANAGEMENT TRIED TO BREAK THE STRIKE BY CALLING PTA WORKERS IN TO WORK, THE FOLLOWING MONDAY MORNING. THE PTA SHOP STEWARDS WERE READY FOR THIS MOVE, AND ISSUED THE FOLLOWING LEAFLET EXPLAINING THE SITUATION:-

OFFICIAL STATEMENT BY THE SHOP STEWARDS COMMITTEE  
OF THE ASSEMBLY PLANT.

THERE HAVE BEEN A NUMBER OF MISLEADING AND UNTRUE STATEMENTS IN THE PRESS AND MEDIA RELATING TO OUR SITUATION IN THE PTA.

THESE ARE THE FACTS:

A MASS MEETING OF BOTH SHIFTS IN THE PTA WAS HELD LAST FRIDAY. THE COMPANY GAVE FACILITIES FOR THIS MEETING AND SENT OUT LETTERS AND TELEGRAMS INFORMING EVERYONE.

THE PURPOSE OF THE MEETING WAS TO DISCUSS THE 13-POINT DOCUMENT PUT FORWARD BY THE COMPANY AND ACCEPTED BY THE DAGENHAM PANEL OF CONVENORS AND UNION OFFICIALS.

AT THE MASS MEETING THE PTA SHOP STEWARDS RECOMMENDED REJECTION OF THE 13-POINT PLAN, AS IT DOES NOT GIVE US ANY GUARANTEES AGAINST FUTURE LAYOFFS, NOR DOES IT GIVE US 80% LAYOFF PAY.

THE MASS MEETING VOTED BY A CLEAR MAJORITY TO REJECT THE COMPANY'S OFFER AND TO CONTINUE THE STRIKE.

WE ARE CONTINUING OUR PICKET IN THE SAME PEACEFUL MANNER AS IT HAS BEEN OVER THE PAST TWO WEEKS.

OUR PICKET HAS THE COMPLETE SUPPORT OF THE TRANSPORT AND DELIVERY DRIVERS.

WE DO NOT ACCEPT THAT THE DAGENHAM PANEL OF CONVENORS WHO REPRESENT OTHER PLANTS WHOSE MEMBERS DO NOT NORMALLY SUFFER LAYOFFS HAVE THE RIGHT TO ACCEPT AGREEMENTS WITHOUT CONSULTING US AND THEN TELL US TO GIVE UP THE FIGHT AND GO BACK TO WORK (WHAT NONSENSE!).

THE COMPANY IS WELL AWARE OF THE DECISION OF FRIDAY NIGHT'S MASS MEETING, YET THEY HAVE STILL ADVERTISED IN THE PRESS THAT THE STRIKE IS OVER (WHAT LIES!)

BE AWARE, BROTHERS, THAT THE COMPANY'S TACTIC OF OPENING THE PLANTS FOR WORK TODAY IS A LAST DESPERATE GAMBLE TO UNDERMINE THE STRIKE AND DEFEAT US.

WE ARE FIGHTING FOR OUR JOB SECURITY, AND ASK FOR YOUR CONTINUED SUPPORT AGAINST THE INJUSTICE OF LAYOFFS.

WE CALL ON ALL PTA WORKERS TO ABIDE BY THE DECISION OF THE MASS MEETING AND JOIN THE STRIKE! JOIN THE PICKET LINE!

Printed and Published by  
PTA Shop Stewards Committee.  
June 26th 1977.

- THE COMPANY'S NEXT MOVE WAS TO CALL A MASS MEETING FOR THE TUESDAY MORNING. AT THIS MEETING, TGWU OFFICIAL FRED BLAKE WOULD PRESENT THE COMPANY'S OFFER AGAIN, IN AN EFFORT TO BREAK THE STRIKE. THE TGWU OFFICIALS SAID THAT PTA CONVENOR BRIAN ELLIOT WOULD NOT BE ALLOWED TO SPEAK FROM THE PLATFORM (SINCE HE WOULD NOT RECOMMEND A RETURN TO WORK). ONCE AGAIN THE STEWARDS ISSUED A LEAFLET:-

OFFICIAL STATEMENT BY THE SHOP STEWARD COMMITTEE  
OF THE ASSEMBLY PLANT.

BROTHERS,

IN CASE YOU ARE NOT AWARE, THE DAGENHAM TRADE UNION OFFICIALS, IN LIAISON WITH THE COMPANY HAVE DONE EVERYTHING THEY CAN OVER THE PAST TWO WEEKS TO DEMORALISE US AND DRIVE US BACK TO WORK. THEIR JOINT

AIM HAS BEEN TO ACHIEVE THIS RETURN TO WORK WITHOUT OUR HAVING ACHIEVED ANY GUARANTEES AGAINST LAY OFF OR 80% LAY OFF PAY WHEN WE ARE SENT HOME.

BOTH THE OFFICIALS AND THE COMPANY KNOW FULL WELL THE DECISION OF OUR MASS MEETING LAST FRIDAY TO REJECT THE 13-POINT PLAN AND CONTINUE THE STRIKE.

MESSRS BLAKE, MURPHY, MILLS AND MITCHELL DECIDED JOINTLY WITH YOUR EMPLOYERS TO CALL THIS MORNING'S MEETING IN ORDER TO TALK YOU INTO ACCEPTING A WORTHLESS DOCUMENT.

BROTHERS, IF THEY FOOL YOU, DON'T BLAME THE PTA STEWARDS.

SOME POINTED QUESTIONS NEED TO BE ADDRESSED TO OUR SO-CALLED LEADERS.

1. TRY AND FIND OUT WHY ALL THE OTHER SENIOR STEWARDS ON THE DAGENHAM ESTATE WERE INVOLVED IN DISCUSSING THE PTA PROBLEMS OF CONTINUOUS LAY OFFS.

2. WHY HAVEN'T THE OFFICIALS INVITED THE PTA CONVENOR IN WHEN THEY WERE NEGOTIATING PTA BUSINESS?

3. WHY IS IT THAT AFTER TWO WEEKS OF STRUGGLE AND PICKETING BY PTA WORKERS, THE OFFICIALS HAVE SIGNED A DEAL WHICH DOES NOT MENTION LAYOFF PAY?

4. DOES THE DOCUMENT GUARANTEE US THAT WE WON'T BE LAID OFF? IF NOT, DOES THE DOCUMENT GUARANTEE US 80% IF WE ARE SENT HOME BECAUSE OF A DISPUTE OUTSIDE THE PTA?

5. IF THE FORD MOTOR COMPANY CAN PAY OVER 16,000 OTHER WORKERS IN DAGENHAM FOR DOING ALMOST NOTHING, SUCH AS IN THE PAST TWO WEEKS, BECAUSE OF A DISPUTE IN THE PTA, THEN WHY CAN'T THEY DO THE SAME FOR US WHEN OTHER PLANTS STOP WORK?

6. WHY HAS BROTHER MURPHY NOT FOUGHT TO MAKE THE PTA DISPUTE OFFICIAL, IN LINE WITH THE CLEAR POLICY OF HIS OWN UNION BRANCH, THE TGWU 1/1107 (FORD CENTRAL BRANCH)?

7. WHY IS IT THAT AT A SUPPOSEDLY 'DEMOCRATIC' MEETING THIS MORNING, THE OFFICIAL HAS SAID THAT NO SHOP STEWARD, INCLUDING OUR CONVENOR, HAS THE RIGHT TO SPEAK OR REPLY FROM THE PLATFORM "UNLESS THEY AGREE TO SUPPORT THE 13-POINT PLAN"?

BROTHERS, YOUR SHOP STEWARDS COMMITTEE IS UNANIMOUSLY OPPOSED TO THE SO-CALLED 13-POINT PLAN. IT IS NOTHING MORE THAN A SHAM, AND GIVES NO PROTECTION WHATEVER TO WORKERS IN THE PTA PLANT.

THE COMPANY IS ON ITS KNEES. FACED WITH A TOTAL SHUTDOWN IN BRITAIN AND EUROPE, IT IS CONSCIOUSLY USING THE OFFICIALS TO DRIVE US BACK TO WORK WITH NOTHING.

WE CALL ON YOU TO REJECT THE COMPANY OFFER AND TO VOTE TO CONTINUE THE STRIKE.

JUNE 28th 1977



"The Company is on its knees...faced with a total shutdown in Britain and Europe...."

- THAT MASS MEETING WAS A DISASTER FOR THE UNION OFFICIALS. FRED BLAKE WAS CHASED OFF THE PLATFORM, AND RAN OFF TO HIDE IN MANAGEMENT'S OFFICES. THE MEETING VOTED TO CONTINUE THE STRIKE. THE FOLLOWING ACCOUNT WAS PRINTED IN THE FORD WORKERS' GROUP'S 'Fraud News':-



At the big mass meeting called by the TGWU officials to sell out the June strike, "Freaky Fred" Blake, TGWU official tried to palm off a "13-Point Procedure Plan" which didn't even mention layoffs!

It was a big mass meeting, and had been called by the Company and the Officials, over the heads of the Convenor, shop stewards and pickets. Ford had smuggled a powerful public address system through the picket lines - powerful enough to drown any hecklers! They set it up in the car park at the back of the plant, so that Blake the Snake could do his stuff. Blake had already told Convenor Brian Elliott that he wouldn't be allowed to speak unless he recommended a return to work (which he wouldn't).

The PTA workers thought differently, though. They didn't want Fred. They wanted to hear from Brian Elliott. So a whole lot of them crowded onto the platform. Fred was a bit nervous! Smiling sheepishly, he adjusted his tie, and spoke into the microphone: "Brothers....." Immediately there was a roar of abuse: "Fuck off, you scab!" "No brother of yours...!" "Dirty sell-out..." etc.

Fred became flustered. But his problem soon ended, when somebody nicked his microphone! Freaky Fred went pale. He scuttled off the platform and ran away to hide in Management's offices, refusing to come out again.

The mike was then in the control of workers. Not just the convenors and stewards, but workers too! A very rare event for Ford-Dagenham!

Ford thought they were clever: they cut off the big amplifiers. So, to continue the meeting, one of the stewards brought out a megaphone (Be Prepared!) Someone must have told the amplifier man that if he didn't switch on the sound system again there might be a riot - so the power came on, and for the next 20 minutes, workers, shop stewards and the convenor had the platform all to themselves, to make speeches, tell bad jokes, and argue the case. Nice one!

•THE VOTING, HOWEVER, WAS CLOSE, AND THE WAY WAS OPENED FOR THE UNION OFFICIALS TO MANOEUVRE AN END TO THE STRIKE.

MEANTIME, DURING THIS PERIOD, FORD'S LORRY PLANT AT LANGLEY (WEST LONDON) HAD ALSO BEEN LAID OFF. THEY TOO HAD BEEN PICKETING THEIR FACTORY - AND ONE OF THEIR LEAFLETS DESCRIBED THE SITUATION THERE, IN THE LIGHT OF WHAT WAS HAPPENING AT DAGENHAM.

#### UNION OFFICIALS TRY A SELL-OUT

On Tuesday, Ford Management and 5 Union officials called a mass meeting of the PTA to try and get them to accept a "peace formula". In fact the "peace formula" was a new, even tougher, disciplinary code. Under the new code, if a bloke is suspended or sacked, his workmates would not be allowed to take any action in his support for 48 hours, while Ford consulted the Union officials. In return, Ford would wait 48 hours before carrying out the suspension or sacking.

But if his workmates did take action, then the bloke would be immediately suspended, or sacked without appeal.

Not surprisingly, the PTA Convenor and Shop Stewards unanimously rejected this "peace formula". They saw it as an attack on workers' rights, and a complete SELL-OUT over the main issue - 80% layoff pay.

#### SO WHAT HAPPENED AT THE MASS MEETING

Because the PTA Convenor and Stewards had rejected the "peace formula", the Union officials decided to BAN THEM from speaking at the meeting - of their own plant! When the 4,000 blokes at the meeting discovered this, there was uproar. The officials were shouted down by the meeting, and while these officials beat a hasty retreat, shop stewards and workers took over the platform. And the meeting overwhelmingly rejected the peace formula, and decided to continue the struggle for 80% layoff pay

#### AND AT LANGLEY.....

Since the layoff the Monday before last, workers from Langley Phase I and Phase II have been picketing the gates. There was even an all-night picket last Thursday night. By Friday it was clear that this was hitting the Company hard. The vast majority of trucks had been turned away (although 2 of the pickets had been knocked down by trucks that didn't respect the picket - fortunately, they weren't seriously hurt).

But the achievements of the picket were completely destroyed over the weekend by the action of the Convenor. Knowing that there would be no picket, he encouraged Receiving to come in on overtime over the weekend - and most of the trucks that had been turned away over the week then came in.

The Convenor's action was in flagrant breach of plant policy - that if anyone is laid off in the Plant, then no-one else works overtime. That is why there was no picket.

Not only did weekend working break Plant policy - but it suggested that the struggle against layoffs was over. Who's to decide that? Vic Barnes, the Convenor, without consulting anyone? Or Receiving? Or everyone who was laid off.....

Ford Langley Action Committee  
June 29th 1977.

•THE FOLLOWING THURSDAY THE UNION OFFICIALS CALLED ANOTHER MASS MEETING - THIS TIME PACKED WITH WORKERS FROM OTHER PLANTS. THE FINAL VOTE WENT AGAINST THE STRIKERS, AND RESULTED IN A RETURN TO WORK.(June 30th). ONCE AGAIN, AN ACCOUNT FROM THE FORD WORKERS' GROUP:-

"At the Tuesday meeting a vote was taken, and the sell-out was rejected. By then we'd been on strike for 18 days, and we felt more confident than ever!

But the Officials still weren't prepared to accept the feelings of the men. So Ford and the Officials called another mass meeting. The Company sent scabs from other plants to it....and half of our workers were not notified of the meeting. At this meeting a new proposal was put forward which gave us at least 24 hours notice before a layoff.

A large number of men were still prepared to stay out for a better deal - and voted to continue. But the combined effect of the Union Officials and the Company left its mark. The strike was called off. And we were left with the TU officials telling us that this was only a "bridging agreement". The 80% Layoff Pay would be pursued - "vigorously", they said - in the National Wage Claim.

So, we're now in a position where the strike is over. A couple of things can be said right away.

First: during this dispute, PTA workers have built up a level of confidence and organisation not seen since the old days before the 1962 defeat.

Second: we now have, officially, 24-hours advance notice of layoffs. This is not perfect, but it will work in our favour in the coming period."

**THE END**



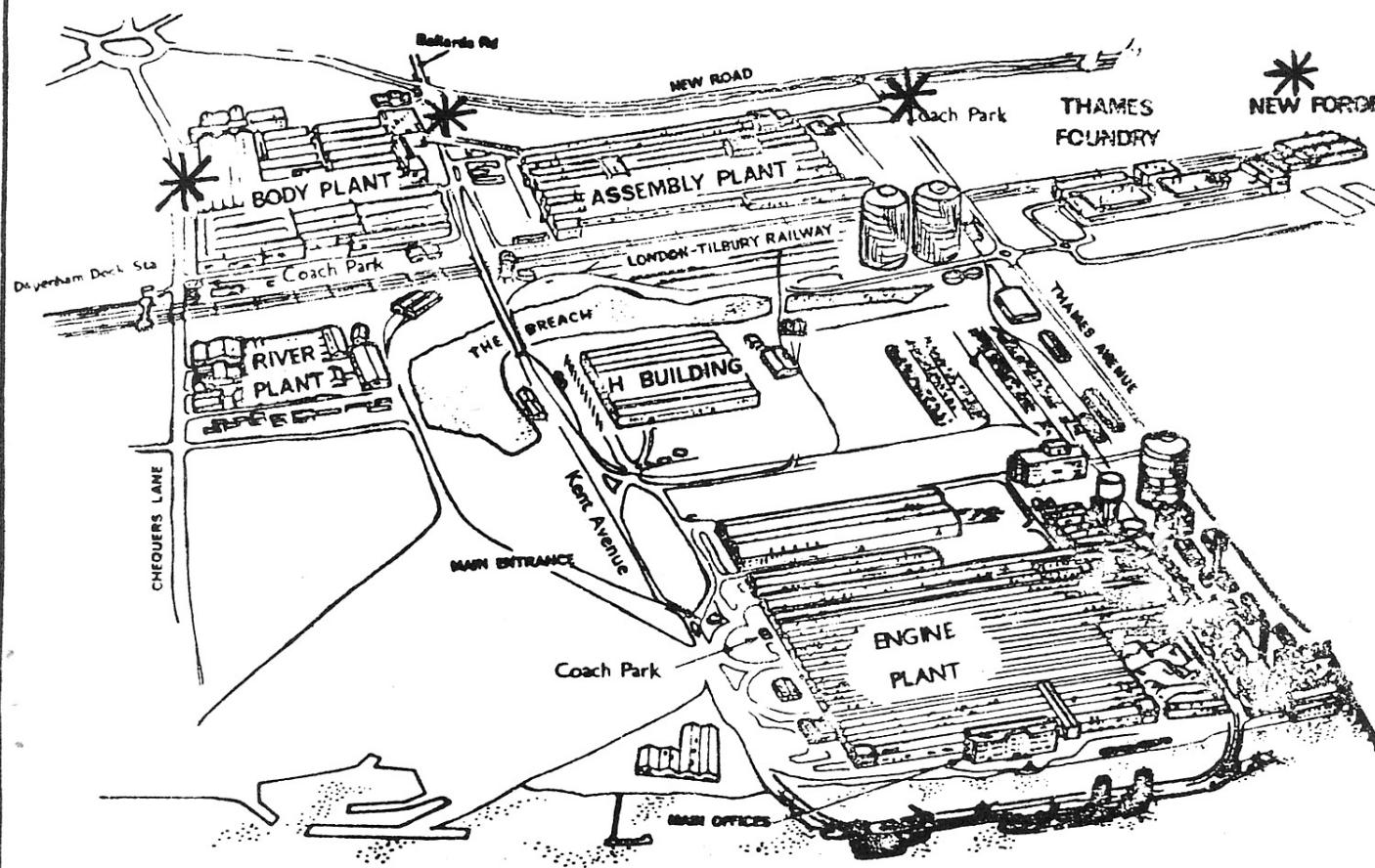
•Closing the Body Plant Gates - Gate 35.

# HANDY HINTS FOR THE SUCCESSFUL STRIKER

- The 'joke' title of this section has a serious purpose. The June Layoff Strike at Fords showed that determined and imaginative use of tactics is essential for any struggle in these days to have even a chance of winning.

From interviews with some of the workers who were involved in the picketing, we have drawn up a short series of points about how that strike was organised, describing some of the tactics etc adopted, which may be of interest to workers in struggle elsewhere.

DAGENHAM ESTATE



• A map of Ford-Dagenham. The (\*) asterisks mark the picketing-spots.

# ○ Stopping the Lorries



"The most important part of our strike was to try and paralyse the mighty Ford Empire. Since Ford's production is spread out between so many plants, all depending on each other, a dispute in one can stop the lot. Getting the support of the Toleman's delivery drivers was highly important. At first the Toleman's drivers (like many other firms) wanted official confirmation of the dispute from our Convenor. Once they got this, they gave us 100% support right up to the end of our strike.

Within a couple of weeks our Flying Pickets had brought production more or less to a standstill

at Dagenham, and plants as far afield as Cologna and Valencia were threatened."

The pickets got a good thing going with Ford's own drivers too - and that in itself would have been almost enough to paralyse Ford. "The Ford drivers supported us completely in the first 2 days. But then, somehow, under the influence of Johnny Davies (Engine Plant Deputy Convenor) they were persuaded that our dispute was not real. The Right-wingers tried to get the Ford drivers to smash our picket lines. That was when we had to get a fair number of men out onto a mass picket on the third day of the dispute, so as to stop a big convoy of Ford lorries getting through. After that, though, they didn't cross any more."

As regards other lorries (outside firms etc), you've got to have your picket across the road. The police will try and limit the picket to only a few people....and your job is to stop all incoming lorries.

"The picket here did not have to be a mass picket, like at Grunwicks during the same period. Why not? Because of the history of trade unionism. It's not numbers that matter, but the fact that brother supports brother. Here it wasn't a matter of physical strength."

There were lorries turning back after coming all the way from Scotland. The few Flash Harries who thought they'd try and get through - they were told that if they crossed the picket line they'd go on the Cherry Blossom list, for blacking all over the country. And of course, a little gentle persuasion (out of earshot of the police) may also be useful. (In one case it was in fact a policewoman who went over and told a scab driver to F\*\*\* Off out of it!!)

Some lorries that slipped through were blacked by workers in other areas. For instance, on the third day of the dispute, a container lorry left Dagenham straight away after the Ford-drivers mass meeting. It went down to Tilbury Docks. But the dockers knew that there was a dispute on at Dagenham, so they blacked it.

But Ford management is always up to its little tricks:

"You get to recognise the Company's cars after a while. And when they look suspicious, turning up 3 in a convoy, you can check them for smuggled goods. People in the Engine Plant were telling us: "Look, they're unloading things from private cars".....oil pumps, small things of high value. So we stopped several of these cars. We put our pickets across the road and asked to see what was in the boots. They refused to let us, and drove away. Once they tried to drive past, but a little "friendly persuasion" through the car window soon put an end to that."

And on other occasions Ford was doing dirty tricks like phoning up the lorry companies and telling them that the strike was off, and that the picketing was over. In that situation it was very important to keep in contact with the shop stewards at the haulage firms - and also to have a leaflet available every day, explaining the facts of the dispute.

## ○ Picket Huts



"Would you believe it! The middle of June! When we were out picketing it was raining, and when it wasn't raining it was bleedin' cold!"

Any dispute, even in Flaming June, can get a bit chilly - so Be Prepared! The first thing the pickets did (having examined the possibility of camping in the security guards' huts) was to set up a shelter by the main gates and picket points. This is the answer! Spare no effort! Better a little hard work than a dose of the flu. Scour the factory for wood, polythene, ropes, railings etc. Make yourself a home-from

home. Get a radio (for general entertainment and for news of latest developments), get a couple of beds (for the night shift pickets), get a gas stove and a kettle for tea-making, get a few good books to read, and above all, provide yourself with HEAT. In this case, a couple of oil drums with holes in; plus a goodly supply of coke from the Blast Furnaces kept everyone roasting-warm through the chilly nights.

## ○ The Occupation



If you're picketing a place, it's worth turning it into an Occupation Centre as well. In a place like Fords this doesn't mean much - after all, how can a couple of hundred men on shifts picket and occupy a plant that spreads over 3 miles! But an occupation can be useful. For a start, it means that you've got the run of the place, and can use all the facilities.

"During our dispute, the Body Plant lads occupied their bit of the factory. This meant several things: it meant that we had toilets, wash facilities and phones at our disposal. It also meant that we had the Canteen ladies were terrific. They let us have cups of tea, to keep warm. We could sit in there and keep warm, waiting for the picket rota to come round."

### FILM SHOW AND SING-SONG

What is an Occupation? It's a way of breaking down the walls of a factory. It's a way of letting the outside world look in and see what's going on. And it's a means for workers to start taking over their place of work....even just in little ways.

That's what started happening during the June dispute. The strikers brought their friends and families down to the factory and showed them what was going on. And for a short while the picket lines were a sharp focus of Socialist discussion, ideas, arguments etc.

For the first time in a Dagenham occupation, some entertainment was organised inside the Plant. After all, sitting around at 2:00am can get a bit boring. So, one night a film show was organised in the Body Plant canteen, with films about workers' struggles in other parts of the world. Then, another night, a few people went down with guitars, and there was a good old sing-song round the coke-burners. Not very often that the walls of Ford-Dagenham ring with the sound of Socialist songs!

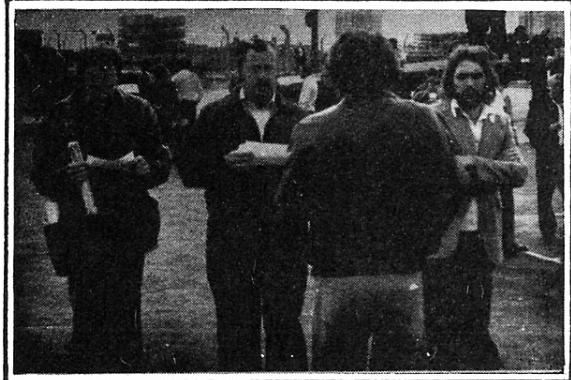
# ○ Flying Pickets



Communication of the struggle is an absolute necessity. You can never tell when scabs are going to try and bust through the picket lines, when the police might come down making trouble etc etc. All pickets should avail themselves of the best possible means of communication. For example, Ford Motor Co's phone system provides an excellent means of link-up.

Another means of communication is the Flying Picket, equipped with motorbikes, cars, bicycles etc (skateboards and Pogo sticks may also be useful), who can shoot round instantly to any potential trouble points and keep everyone informed about what's going on. Instant mobility is essential, to make a picket line really effective.

# ○ Leaflets



As the strike went on and the days went by, the question of information and communication became more and more important. The Company was telling lies, the Press and TV were telling lies, and the Union officials were also telling lies!

"One day, Fred Blake (the TGWU official) tried to confuse the rest of the Dagenham workforce, by saying that our pickets would turn into a "Grunwick-type situation" - mass violence etc. He later denied that he ever said this (he's a liar, and I just wish we'd had someone tape-recording the radio that day!) Anyway, a lot

of blokes were worried there would be a fight there. So the only way the stewards could counteract Fred's lies was to put out their own leaflet. But that only showed up our weakness, in some ways."

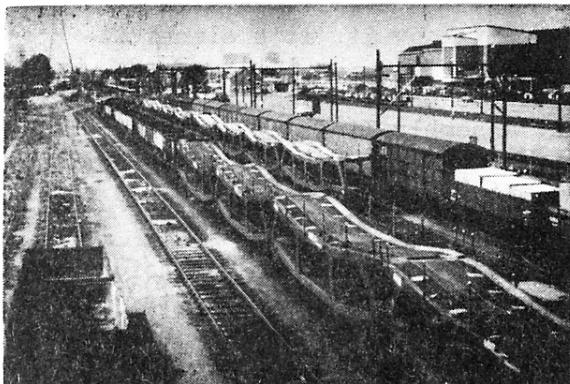
In the old days, before 1962, the PTA shop stewards Committee used to have £20,000 in the bank, and they used to support and finance strikes of other workers all over the country. But nowadays they don't even have their own duplicator! So most of the shop stewards leaflets had to be produced by the Ford Workers' Group, usually at very short notice. This shows that a number of things need to be arranged in a dispute like this:-

- a) access to a duplicator and supplies of paper which are directly under workers' control (so that no bureaucrat can go censoring leaflets etc)
- b) access to a typewriter (office staff in the plant can often help here)
- c) knowing what you want to say; keeping it short and to the point.

The best way to do leaflets is to print them every day. If you've got a small committee of workers and shop stewards, the job is easy. That way, NOBODY is kept in the dark about the progress of negotiations etc.

Also, as the pickets found out, it's always useful to have a short leaflet explaining the causes of the struggle to lorry drivers, other workers etc, so that they know what's going on. This brings support.

# O Railways



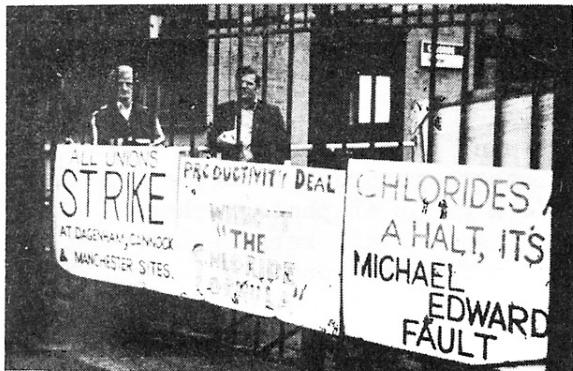
Any factory is served by very many service routes. These include the postal service, water, telex and telephone, computer links, gas and electricity, road access, and the railways and waterways. These services are often vulnerable (like when the postmen blocked George Ward's mail in the Grunwick strike).

In the June layoff dispute the pickets made a mistake. During the 1972 Miners' Strike, the miners had Flying Pickets on boats going down the river. However, the Ford pickets forgot to organise their Navy....So Ford was able to ship

in supplies down the River. But there was more success on the rail front. One dark night a few hardy souls crept out and banged a fork-lift truck across an important section of Ford's rail link out of the Press Shop. The forklift, which ever-so-slightly dislodged the rails, was also accompanied by other assorted items of old garbage.

As it happened, Ford eventually cleared the lines....but it was of no use to them. The pickets had talked to the British Rail depot workers, and had assurances from them that they would black any wagons that came out of Fords by that line. This was a powerful weapon.

# O Solidarity



In any dispute, contact with other groups of workers is a vital source of strength and support - especially nowadays when the Trade Union leaders and officials are scabbing on almost every strike there is.

In the case of the June layoff dispute, the workers at the Gaedor Chloride plant down the road had been occupying their factory for 7 weeks, with barricades etc. So, one day some of the lads from the Body Plant armed themselves with a megaphone and set off down the road to visit the Chloride workers. They arrived there, and held a short solidarity meeting in the

road, with speeches of solidarity being made from both sides of the Chloride gates.

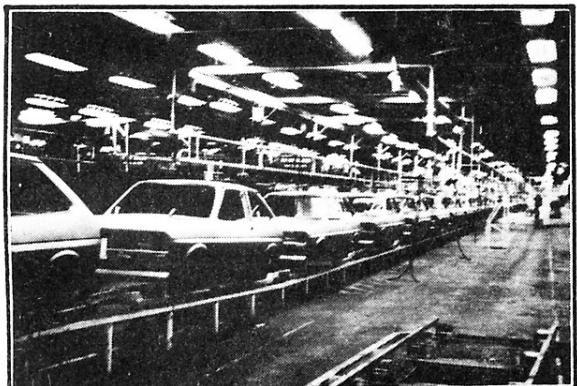
# O Getting the Message

There's a thousand ways to spread a message. When the Union officials control the platform at a mass meeting and you can't make yourself heard over the loudspeakers, the simple application of pen and paper can be very useful.

We looked up "Quisling" in the TUC's Trade Unionists Handbook of Useful Insults and we found this: Quisling - a scab, dirty rat, vile person, traitor, specialising in sell-outs.



# ○Photographs



In case you didn't know it, it's almost impossible to take photographs inside Fords. The worker who took the photo on the left, showing the Body Plant assembly lines at a standstill during the picketing, was arrested by security guards inside the plant and accused of being an "industrial spy".

All car manufacturers seem to be paranoid about exposing the conditions in their plants. In 1975 for instance, Jack Sprung - a long-time militant at BLMC-Canley - was sacked because he had invited a Socialist film crew into the factory

during an Occupation. But Ford is the most paranoid of all. In the USA the Unions have signed Health & Safety agreements with the motor manufacturers allowing shop steward safety reps to take photos of accidents, hazards etc. But Ford refused to sign that clause. What are they so scared of!?

"Ford management aren't worried about taking photos themselves, though. During the Body Plant occupation we saw them taking photos from an upstairs window. And in the PTA, a member of PTA management who was trying to take pictures of the Sit-In across the lines had an "unfortunate accident" with his little camera - eg dropping onto the floor and being unusable afterwards. That's the way we ought to deal with spies and informers!"

During the dispute a lot of photos were also taken by workers and by socialist photographers. That's where some of the pictures in this pamphlet come from. It's always worth having a camera along with you, during a dispute. It can serve several purposes. First, a camera can record the struggle as it's going on - something to show the grandchildren! Second, a camera is useful in the event of police provocation, aggravation from scabs etc, to provide evidence. And third, a good photo might earn a few bob for the strike fund by selling it to the Press.

Also, there are a lot of sympathetic Left-wing photographers and even film-makers, who will gladly offer their services to record a struggle for the workers involved. One group is called Report - a group of photographers who take photographs for the labour movement. They ask all workers to phone them and tell them of their struggles (411 Oxford Street, London W.1. Tel: 01-493-7737)

# ○The Newspapers

Daily Mail  
8 PAGE  
TV MAIL

Car workers take over factory in job security row

## BARRICADES UP AT FORDS

By ROBERT PORTER AND STEPHEN CRADLER  
ANGRY car workers were occupying the Ford Dagenham plant behind barricaded gates last night after a dispute over one man developed into

Princess Astrid marriage denied  
Charles engagement: A day

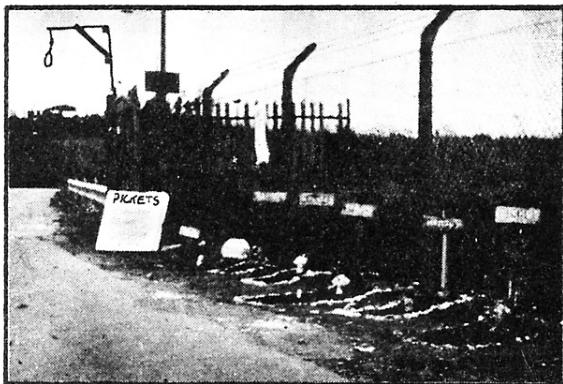
"It's worth having a Press Officer, always on the ball, to put the strikers' case. Our Convenor was the Press Officer in this case. He gave an incredible number of interviews. But usually they print more of the Company's side. You can't control it. Also, although the reporters are always very KIND (!) when they come down to talk to you, they're usually two-faced bastards, and they'll print a savage story about you, if they get the chance. And they're also stupid! They wouldn't know a layoff from the back end of a bus!

The Press also completely distorted our dispute.

They said that it was because of a man who had damaged his wrist, and the strike was costing Fords millions. But in fact that dispute was only a little part of the whole issue. And also, when they interview people, they get people like foremen, scabs etc - not the real, fighting workers."

(A Ford Picket)

# ○ Boot Hill



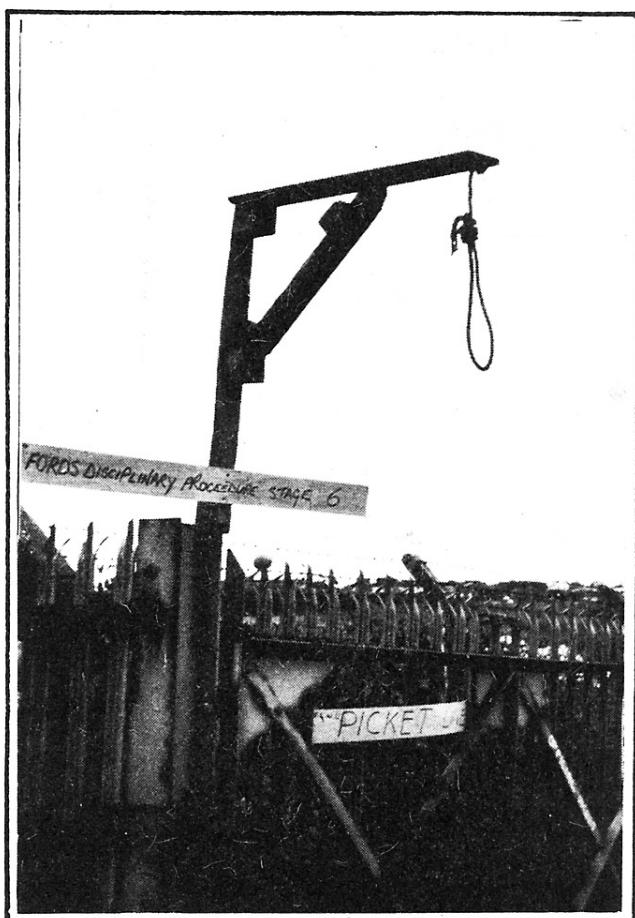
Question: What wins strikes? Answer: Workers' creativity and imagination.

Problem: As every striker knows, when you're in dispute, you've got to bring your problem to the public's attention. But how do you do it? The Establishment is dead-set against you, and the Press and TV are either telling lies, or just ignoring you. But, when all's said and done, they'll do anything for a good story.

Solution: Some of the pickets were standing watch at Sandy Lane. It's an important point, strategically because it's Ford's back door....but it's a backyard dump, and they were getting BORED just sitting around. So they decided to have some fun. They laid out a row of mock graves. Some of them were for Ford Management - Messrs Fisher, Hitchcock, Drury etc. Others were for the Union officials who tried to sell out the strike - eg Mick Murphy, TGWU. And Johnny Davies. And there was one, humble, undecorated grave dedicated to the Unknown Ford Worker. Also, in a tribute to Ford's wonderful industrial relations procedure, they erected a Gallows with "Ford Disciplinary Procedure - Stage 6" written under it (there are only 5 stages, officially)

Well, the Press (hungry for a story) went down and photographed this Strikers' Boot Hill, and the next day it was splashed all over the national newspapers. A little bit of imagination paid off! And the next day workers at Ford-Langley (who were also picketing against layoffs) built some graves outside their own plant.

(Next time, by the way, the Gallows will be for real. And it appears that Ford management are already being measured up for their own, personal, made-to-measure graves!)



- Negotiations are currently under way to add a 6th Stage to the 5-stage Disciplinary Procedure which exists at Fords.....

# ○ The Police



Every picketer has to face the problem of the police. In general they are no friends of the striker - Grunwicks showed this. But there's a difference between the riot-trained thugs of the Special Patrol Group (who need their weekly diet of red blood and busted heads to keep going) and PC Flatfoot from the local nick. The police, after all, have their own problems. That nasty Mr McNee wanting to cut their overtime...and they don't even have the right to strike....and nobody ever told them the difference between a worker and a scab.... The poor devils really suffer -

and one day (as you can see from our photo) they even came down to the picket line and held their own demonstration!

Somebody asked: why was it that thousands and thousands of police were turning out to bash heads at a small, isolated photo factory in North London (ie Grunwicks), and meantime, Ford workers who were bringing to a standstill millions and millions of pounds of capital and machinery, only deserved 2 flatfoot bobbies on the beat! There's many answers to that - but one reason why Fords don't want the police intervening at their factory gates was summed up by a FIAT worker during the blockade of FIAT-Mirafiori in 1973:

"This plant is like a jungle. If they tried to chase us in there, we known our way around. A lot of damage might get done... and they wouldn't like that."

There was one incident, on the 3rd day of the dispute, when there were about 80-90 people on the picket line. One of the pickets was arrested on Kent Avenue, and the police had him up against a wall, hurting him. The pickets were angry. The word went round that stewards were being arrested off the picket line. People started coming out of the Body Plant to see what was going on. The police were so nervous by then that the Superintendent of Essex police came, in person, and the troublesome constable was removed from the area of Ford-Dagenham. And from then on, the police kept their distance, and sometimes even helped the pickets! Not at all like Grunwicks!

It seems that at the moment Fords don't need the police to act against strikers. They've got much better policemen in the shape of the Trade Union officials:-

"Mick Murphy went into the JWC meeting on the Monday. He said that within 3 days he would recommend to the TGWU Executive that our strike be made official. But then, on the Friday, he came in and denied that he'd ever said that - denied it 100%. And from that moment on, he did everything in his power to sell us out. And Fred Blake was just as bad."



← Nice policeman, on the Ford picket line. Reading "Socialist Worker". June 1978.



Not-so-nice policeman, on the Grunwicks picket line. Beating up pickets. June 1978.

# Outsiders

During the build-up of the layoff campaign, the local Press were making a big noise about "outsiders" being involved on the picket lines. Well, the picketers had adopted a policy on this. Anybody who can assist and strengthen the working class struggle is welcome on the picket (although decision-making and stopping of lorries would only be done by Ford workers). As one picket said: "I suppose you could say that, by that definition, it's the Union officials who should have been thrown off the picket line. They're the real outsiders. They only ever come here to destroy our fight."

Also, another important point: wives and girlfriends were welcome on the picket line, because they too are part of the struggle. The 2 articles on this page sum it up - both of them are contributions from wives of Ford workers: one went round the plant on a duplicated leaflet; the other was printed in the Ford Workers' Group's "Fraud News".

## Just a Wife

*Shame on Fords! Another Strike?  
Someone fighting for his right?  
The men involved mean no harm,  
But they have felt "Ford strong arm!"  
While other sections strike for gain  
The PTA's laid off again!  
Hasn't anyone got soul?  
The PTA live off the dole.  
If they enjoyed being in that queue  
They would never have worked for you.  
This week again, just three days pay.  
What do we do, just hope, or — pray?  
I'll write a list and perhaps you will  
Assist me with my grocery bill.  
Our men ask nothing, not a quirk,  
They only want the right to work!  
Management say they understand your dismay  
How long will they expect you to suffer this way?  
So along to the dole queue, what a cheek!  
The unemployed get full money each week!  
You selected and employed these men  
But what you didn't tell them then  
Was the inevitable that laid ahead,  
"You've got no rights, lay offs instead".  
You tell them now to work — not stop.  
Allow you to talk — about what?  
Alas, your answer is already known.  
At the first meeting you told them so.  
Please listen to what they have voiced  
They never chose to be unemployed.  
So, for you, they'll work relentlessly  
In return they want security!  
I'll quieten now, I've told their plight  
For after all, I'm just a wife.*

## 'It's the women who bear the brunt'



We both work for Ford's...

**'You're laid off without pay until further notice.' This is the bane of lineworkers in all the Ford assembly plants. And it's the wives and girlfriends — the women — who bear the brunt of it. They have to scrimp and save on social security. They are often forced to take a temporary job in addition to the housework they do already.**

The last layoff which affected Dagenham, Southampton and Langley Ford assembly plants was in mid-June. The Dagenham plant took strike action to get layoff pay, fighting for 'Eighty per cent now!'

At Langley the blokes on the picket line were joined by a couple of wives and girlfriends of the men laid off. We talked to one of the women on the picket line. Julie Gungi is married, with two children and one on the way — she is seven months pregnant. It was her first time on a picket line.

### What did you think about your husband being laid off because of a dispute at Dagenham?

I didn't think it was fair. They are two different plants. The men at Langley are always being laid off through no fault of their own.

### What was the reaction of other wives?

When I was on the picket line I talked to a lot of men, either on picket duty or picking up their one or two day's pay. I found that many of the wives supported our action — it got quite a lot of publicity in the local paper.

I think it's time Henry Ford realised that we have enough on our plates at the moment — looking after our children and families with inflation like it is — without putting our men out of work just when it suits him.

Ford refuses to guarantee a week's pay every week. But Massey-Ferguson in Coventry gives this guarantee — so why not Ford's?

### Did anyone object to you being on the picket line?

Yes, the deputy convenor. I was accused of not being a Ford worker, but a university student! I am a full time housewife with two children and one on the way — but it was flattering. But I see myself as a Ford worker.

My husband works at Fords and brings home the money. I get him up and make sure he gets to work on time. I make it possible for him to work by looking after the kids and washing his filthy work clothes. The deputy convenor was objecting to the picket itself — because it was 'unofficial'. He asked me if I worked for Fords. I said, 'Yes'. He said, 'Which department?' I replied, 'At home'.

**You are a member of the Ford Langley Action Committee? Yes, I am chairperson. FLAC**

came about on the picket line. It is trying to make the union fight for what the ordinary blokes on the line and their wives and girlfriends want. There are two other women involved in FLAC and that is very important.

### What are your plans?

First, I am trying to get a group of wives together — like if there is a strike. Then we are circulating a petition to wives and girlfriends about the importance of the guaranteed week in this wage claim. We are not objecting to the unions — it is just that they don't seem to think about the position of the wives.

I would support a strike called just to win the guaranteed week. A lot of women should support that, and they should look into the changes coming up in the pension plan. Before, a wife who was widowed would get 2 years wages — about £6,000. But now she will only get one year's wages plus a pension.

If she is young when her bloke dies, then she will get almost nothing each week. This new plan would make her much worse off in that situation. I think that's what the plan involves. It is very complicated. It looks as though the young widow would get much less and the older widow a bit more.

### What was the reaction from wives, blokes and truck drivers when you went on the picket line?

The truck drivers were very sympathetic, and most turned away. The whole experience was very interesting. The blokes didn't seem at all put out. They were just pleased I was there.

Some of the wives were a little hesitant. They didn't think they could do it. They say 'Not me, I have kids'. But I have kids too, and I am pregnant. If we all pull together, we can do these things.

# ○ Social Security

In theory, when you are laid off from Fords, it is your right to claim Social Security for the period you're laid off. At least you should be able to claim hardship money for your family. But things are never that simple. The State's layoff benefit scheme works in the same penalising way as Ford's own scheme. In other words, if the Social Security manager decides, at his "discretion" that you are supporting the strike, directly or indirectly, then he feels entitled to refuse you benefit. Supporting the strike can mean something as simple as belonging to the same Union as the workers on strike.

The stinking thing about this arrangement is that Social Security usually take it on Ford's say-so, whether you are involved in the dispute or not. In other words, it's up to Ford's discretion whether you get paid or not!

Experience has shown that the only way to get your Social Security in the event of being laid off, is to get organised. Shop stewards should prepare a basic Social Security leaflet, to be ready for any eventuality. And then they should be prepared to lead hundreds of workers down to "visit" the manager of the Social Security, refusing to go home until they are paid their rightful money. Since payment is generally at the Manager's discretion, this approach generally pays results. And above all, "Never Meet the SS Alone!"



## ○ Penal Clauses

### Leyland deal to deter wildcat strikes

By R. W. Shakespeare

More than 100,000 workers in Leyland car plants are covered by a new shopfloor deal which gives them much improved layoff pay when work stops because of reasons outside their control, but imposes a stiff "penalty clause" on those who take part in unconstitutional strikes.

The deal has emerged from Leyland's new central negotiating body, and represents the last major achievement of Mr Geoffrey Whalen, industrial relations director of Leyland Cars before his resignation.

Signed by all car unions, the agreement is an attempt to maintain the earnings of workers at an average level when they are made idle by disputes either outside the company or in other Leyland supplying companies. But at the same time it seeks to deter unofficial strikes by disqualifying those who take part in them

from the layoff guarantees for three months.

Last year alone Leyland car plants lost well over three million man hours and the production of some 200,000 cars because of layoffs due to "external" disputes.

Under the deal, men laid off because of strikes outside the company will get a guaranteed 15 days' pay in each quarter on full basic rate. When the layoffs result from disputes in other Leyland sectors the guarantee is seven days in each quarter at 80 per cent of normal basic rate.

Previous layoff agreements, which had been negotiated on a plant-by-plant basis, gave seven days' pay for external disputes and five days for internal disputes, both at 80 per cent of basic rate.

The tough penalty clause will mean that any workers taking part in what the company describes as "unconstitutional disputes"—as opposed to unofficial stoppages, which can sometimes be "constitutional"—

will forfeit all entitlement to layoff pay during the following quarter.

The agreement is being back-dated to November, and from March 1 this year there will be other clauses that will give fresh guarantees on pay for workers absent because of bereavement, hospital attendance, civic duties and certain other reasons.

A Leyland spokesman has described the deal as "one of the most advanced in the industry".

A refreshingly honest article from the Times newspaper shows clearly the anti-worker nature of most lay-off agreements. They are not designed to protect workers. They are designed to penalise workers, and to protect the employers. (Times, Feb. 7th 1978)

# SOME PROBLEMS

- So far we have looked at the struggle of the Ford workers over the years. Now we must turn to more general issues - the problem of layoffs in the British motor industry as a whole. We are reprinting here an article that appeared in the December 1977 issue of NETWORK - an independent bulletin produced by socialists in the motor industry. It analyses the legal position regarding payment for layoffs.

## Layoffs & the Guaranteed Week

"Unpaid layoffs are a cancer in the motor industry. Most layoff agreements are worthless. Whilst only industrial strength can stop unpaid layoffs, an understanding of the legal situation and comparison of different agreements can be useful.

### 1. THE LEGAL SITUATION

Due to a mixture of Common Law rulings and the Redundancy Payments Act 1965, Incomes Date Services (IDS Handbook No.3, p.11) states:

"Employees have the right to full pay during layoff or short time unless  
\*there's a term in their contract that allows for unpaid layoff, or  
\*they've agreed to change their contract to allow this, or  
\*they've agreed to forgo their layoff rights.

This applies to monthly-paid staff, commission earners, piece-rate workers, and probably to hourly and weekly-paid workers, though the law here isn't settled."

The same independent report also states:

"Workers are worse off under a Guaranteed Week Agreement than if they had none. Indeed, such agreements are less about guaranteeing wages when there is no work, but more about defining the circumstances in which employers can lay off with impunity."

No wonder so many employers are happy to sign pathetic layoff agreements!

One result of the legal situation has been the number of redundancy cases in industries of companies where no layoff agreement exists.

In one such case, reported on 5th May 1977, the Employment Appeal Tribunal made an important ruling: that a man laid off without one week's notice was dismissed unfairly and could claim compensation. Justice Kilner Brown said:

"The fact that no employer could lay off a man with less than a week's notice sprang from the application of a modern statute to a long-standing case. It underlined the vital importance for a clear-cut form of agreement as to an employer's power to bring about a layoff."

### 2. PROTECTING THE EMPLOYERS

In this dodgy situation (dodgy for the employers), employers have rushed to sign Guaranteed Week Agreements. And workers, sick of unpaid layoffs, have grasped at any straws. And our full-time officials, instead of warning of the dangers of such agreements, have rushed to sign them. Incomes Data Services (which is not a workers' organisation!) stress again and again:

"Guaranteed Week Agreements appear again and again in tribunal cases as the main contractual source of the employer's right to lay off without pay."

But what about the much-heralded provisions of the Employment Protection Act? The following points should be made about these:-

- 1) They share with private GWAs totally inadequate payments and conditions for non-payments.
- 2) Acceptance of the Employment Protection Act (EPA) payments does not remove the worker's general legal rights over layoffs. As Incomes Data Services put it:-

"If an employer has no contractual right to lay off without pay, the new law isn't going to give him or her that right. There is no quid pro quo for this particular guarantee. An employee can take the guarantee and still claim a redundancy payment, or sue for wrongful dismissal."

### 3. LAYOFF AGREEMENTS

All workers are covered by the minimum payments of the EP Act. The majority of workers are now covered by local or industry-wide agreements as well. All agreements have common elements:-

#### a) Size of Payments

Under the EP Act provisions, the entitlement is for up to 5 days payments at £6 a day in every 3 months, starting on February 1st in each year. This is far less than many Company schemes offer. And it is less than a husband and wife with two children would get in unemployment benefit.

Payments under Company schemes vary widely. In the motor industry, Fords guarantee 80% of basic pay, while Vauxhall guarantee full basic rate but exclude additional payments such as premium pay.

Payments outside the motor industry are sometimes higher. In Tobacco manufacture, employees with one year's service get 100% of their normal weekly wage. And the agreement between Calor Gas and the TGWU drivers is for "42½ hours - ie 38 hours basic pay plus 4½ hours at overtime rate".

#### b) Period of Payments

At Calor Gas and Massey Fergusons (Coventry) layoff pay is paid for an indefinite period - as long as the layoff lasts.

Most agreements have limits, however. At Fords it is 15 days at any one time. At Chrysler it is 160 hours in any 12 months, but with a maximum of 10 consecutive days shift payments at any one time. At Vauxhalls it is up to 25 days in any calendar year, plus payments for any unworked part of a shift.

#### c) Service Qualification

Under the EP Act and some Company schemes, 4 weeks service is required before payments are available. Agreements without qualifying service include the Massey's (Coventry) one.

#### d) "Reasonable Alternative Work"

This can be a tricky one! Almost all agreements, including the EP Act, require workers to undertake "reasonable alternative work" before becoming entitled to any guarantee payment. This should be a matter of mutual negotiation.

The legal position here is not yet finally defined, but according to IDS (and contrary to many agreements) the position is as follows:-

"reasonable alternative work does not include work at lower pay".

And Tribunal decisions

"don't generally find changes involving loss of pay, or status, reasonable". (IDS p.42-3)

e) No Payment During Industrial Disputes or Other Factors

These are the suspension clauses behind which the employer usually hides.

Some agreements cut out or curtail such clauses. Obviously, many staff workers in the motor industry receive full pay during disputes, even when their own work is disrupted (progress clerks etc). The Calor Gas agreement referred to only can only be suspended if an individual employee is suspended or dismissed for industrial misconduct.

The Masseys (Coventry) agreement, as amended (May 1977) is suspended in the case of certain industrial action within the Coventry factory, but not at Massey factories elsewhere in the country. Disputes outside the Coventry plant cannot lead to suspension of payment. And for the Assembly Shop, once the weekly production is negotiated each week, Assembly workers cannot be laid off without pay for internal disputes either. This applies to all internal disputes (drivers, labourers, maintenance, machine shops) except those actually involving track and paintshop workers.

The EP Act, however, stops layoff pay if the layoff is the result of an industrial dispute involving the employer or an "associated" employer.

The Engineering Employer's Federation/CSEU Agreement (Part 3.2 (c)) goes even further:-

"In the event of dislocation of production in a federated establishment as a result of an industrial dispute in that or any other federated establishment, the operation of the guarantee shall be automatically suspended."

By industrial action, the EEF means go-slows and work-to-rules, as well as strikes (or lockouts).

There are great differences between the details of how employers are allowed to suspend layoff pay.

What seems central to past experience is this: so long as any Agreement allows the management to suspend it on account of industrial action, then employers will abuse it. If there are no disputes taking place, they can always be provoked - eg. Chrysler-Ryton 'Shoddy Work' dispute (1973), BLMC-Canley Paint Shop dispute (1977).

Furthermore, the threat of unpaid layoffs can always be used to blackmail groups of workers considering industrial action. As we have seen, the Calor Gas agreement rules out layoffs caused by industrial disputes external to the workers covered by the Agreement. And the Masseys (Coventry) Agreement both limits it to one establishment, and protects the Assembly Shop for up to one week against suspension for any reason except track disputes.

4. THE GUARANTEED WEEK IN ALL SITUATIONS

Recently more and more workers have resisted being treated as casual labour. The answer has been seen in seeking layoff agreements. In our opinion, unless these give a 100% Guaranteed Week without suspension clauses, there are REAL DANGERS:-

- a) They reduce your common law rights, compared to having no Agreement;

- 
- b) Companies often avoid payment, through phoney exemption clauses;
  - c) Arguing about 'more' or 'less' layoff pay can obscure the fight for NO loss of earnings;
  - d) Layoff agreements can be used by Companies (and by Convenors, in some situation) to blackmail strikers back to work, to divide a workforce, or to accept mobility of labour which would be unacceptable in normal working situations.

WORK SHARING WITHOUT LOSS OF PAY - 40 HOURS WORK OR 40 HOURS PAY are the goals to aim at. Knowledge of the above agreements may help the fight for this.

#### 6) FIGHTING FOR THE GUARANTEED WEEK

Contrary to what Union officials may tell us, it is a waste of time relying on the Employment Protection Act. As IDS puts it:-

"The Government's EP Act guarantee-payment provisions....might be the biggest damp squib of their much-acclaimed workers' rights legislation".

Equally clearly, it is a waste of time relying on CSEU officials to make any moves: the EEF/CSEU Agreement is one of the worst in British Industry, especially as regards its suspension clauses.

In general, it is only where workers have used very tough tactics to oppose layoffs that progress has been made.

This was the case earlier this year during the struggles by the Dagenham PTA workers, which won some improvements.

And at Massey-Ferguson (Coventry) the Assembly Shop has had to implement its policy of "anyone laid off without pay - everyone on the gates" several times. The determination shown by their pickets - which shut down not only the Assembly Shop, but also the Machine Shops, CKD and European Office HQ - eventually ensured that the Company dared not lay them off. It is this tough policy - more even than the paper agreements - which has ensured a virtual end to unpaid layoffs in recent years, with a resulting big jump in real earnings. In a number of cases, the Company has (at the 11th hour) "solved" internal stoppages which would have led to layoffs - and then to strong picketing or occupation of the plant.

In one recent dispute, the Shop was paid when Machine Shop workers occupied their tracks for 24 hours. To obtain payment, the Manufacturing Director was escorted to a mass meeting from his office, by a Flying Picket. The meeting ended when he promised that they would be paid!

The lessons should be clear for any other workers fighting unpaid layoffs.

- Please Note: The editors of NETWORK, the car workers' bulletin from which these 4 pages were taken, would welcome any information relating to other agreements with better features than those mentioned in the article. Write to NETWORK, 31 Gresham St, Coventry.

# WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE

- Finally, to end this pamphlet, we have to look at the practical problems of the future fight against layoffs. When we have discussed the draft of this pamphlet with Ford workers, they have made it clear that the fight against layoffs at Fords cannot be separated from workers' organisation in general. So here are some of the points that have come up in our discussions.

## SOME PROBLEMS OF ORGANISING AT FORDS

Leaving aside the problems that workers everywhere have during this period of the crisis, Fords has its own specific problems. Ford Motors (and Ford-Dagenham in particular) is a company built on high labour turnover and built on successive waves of immigrant labour. Both factors work to the Company's advantage: they make it very hard to keep up long-term organisation. For this reason, the actions of the past 5 years at Dagenham have been mainly short, spontaneous, angry outbursts of action, carried out by workers who may not have been in the plant for very long, and who are not destined to stay long, either. Fords is a very class-conscious employer (see the material that we reprint below): they do a trade-off. They are prepared to accept short, spontaneous outbursts as the price for a high rate of exploitation in the worst sections of jobs. They sail as close to the wind as they can, expecting sporadic outbursts, and planning how they can isolate and defuse those actions (the only real threat comes when such actions spread and involve larger groups of workers). And at the same time, Ford has whole personnel offices dedicated to the scientific study of how to manipulate and divide workers, to prevent their unity. For example, they rely on perks, small incentives, 'cushy numbers' etc, to keep the majority of the plant "sweet" and opposed to militant action. It is a calculated game of divide and rule, of playing the 'moderate' majority against the 'militant' minority. They also extend this divide and rule into the scientific organisation of racialism in the plant.

At all times the factory is like a giant battlefield, with workers trying to consolidate their positions of strength in order to win small battles that might lead to larger, long-term victories. At all times, Ford's constant concern is how to break up organised groups of workers; how to re-introduce divisions when the workers' actions break them down; how to cut off (or buy off) the militant leadership; and how to win back the ground that has been won by workers in battle (eg more work, less free time etc).

## PLAYING IT BY THE RULES

The "Ford" organisation of work in the factory is still one of the most advanced in the capitalist world (and its success is proved by Ford's record profits, even during the motor industry "crisis"). "Fordism" is today being taken up by major sectors of British industry - particularly those sectors controlled by the State (eg British Steel, British Shipbuilders, British Leyland etc). This means Measured Day Work; national agreements with common starting dates; simplified gradings; high job mobility; flexibility etc.

This "Fordist" organisation of work is a studied system of exploitation. It is a set of rules governing the class conflict. It is embodied in Ford's Blue Book and Work Standard Agreement. The Blue Book is a set of agreements ratified with the Trade Unions over the past 16 years, consolidated into a single volume of working practices - in short, "a written history of the defeats of the working class at Fords".

It is these procedural agreements that provide the basis of Ford's power, and it's these that have to be attacked. The guerrilla fighter in the jungle does

not accept the "traditional" rules of war that are laid down by a technologically stronger enemy with a large standing army. In the same way, workers cannot accept the ground rules that are laid down by Ford. By necessity workers have to take action that goes outside procedure, and therefore becomes "unconstitutional" in the eyes of Ford.

It is obviously right that militants should mobilise around wage claims etc - but a sustained campaign to scrap sections of the Blue Book would do a lot more for workers' power in the factory. But, in the words of one Ford worker:

"To get rid of the Blue Book at Fords, you get the distinct feeling that you'd need a revolution."

#### THE PROBLEM OF THE TRADE UNIONS

In 1978 we are in a position where the Trade Union officials are moving to crush all signs of militancy and dissent among organised workers in industry. The list of examples is long - and the TGWU has been in the forefront of this repression. In Ford-Dagenham in particular, militants have as much to fear from their Union officials as from the Company. And this is certainly true in the case of layoffs.

To be specific: TGWU District Official Mick Murphy has made a proposal to Ford management at Dagenham, regarding a "solution to the layoff problem". He has proposed (January 1978) that all industrial action that follows an agreed disputes procedure should be termed "constitutional", and that people laid off as a consequence would be paid 80% of hourly rate. However, "unconstitutional" action would be any employee-initiated action that refused to pursue grievance procedure, or that ignored convenors'/officials' instructions to return to work for negotiations.

Since it is well-known that Union officials usually only intervene so as to kill workers' action stone-dead, it's obvious that many workers' actions would then become "unconstitutional" in the eyes of the Union, as well as in the eyes of the Company (as at present). And Murphy leaves no doubt that the full weight of the Trade Union would be applied against such workers.

IN OTHER WORDS, MURPHY'S SOLUTION TO LAYOFFS IS TO STAMP OUT THE ONLY KINDS OF ACTION THAT EVER SEEM TO WIN ANYTHING AT FORDS. This, by the way, is the solution that Fords has been proposing. They have consistently refused to pay a guaranteed wage: instead, they have tried to enrol the Unions as the policemen of the struggle, in order to prevent the disputes that spark layoffs.

Here we reprint part of Murphy's letter. It is an important letter. He is scared that the TGWU is losing credibility as a result of so many sell-outs at Fords; he believes that anybody who takes disruptive action is aiming at the destruction of the trade union movement; and he is forced to admit the powerful effectiveness of the Flying Pickets.

#### MURPHY'S LETTER

- "...I wish to submit the following: UNLESS AN AGREEMENT IS REACHED SHORTLY, GIVING GREATER SECURITY OF EMPLOYMENT TO FORD WORKERS, THERE IS NO DOUBT IN MY MIND OF THE CONSEQUENCES FOR BOTH THE COMPANY AND INDEED THE TRADE UNIONS.

The dispute in Dagenham in October 1976 and the dispute of June 1977 clearly demonstrate the degree of dissatisfaction and frustration that exists in connection with this matter. No longer can we expect that layoffs in the future will be confined to those traditional areas, ie Body and Assembly Plants.

Mass-picketing, as witnessed in June 1977, has completely transformed the situation, and any future layoff will almost certainly within a short period of time involve the whole of the Ford complex. It is essential, therefore, to re-examine our whole attitude to this question, as our inability to secure security of employment for our members will be and is being exploited by certain

elements who have vested interests in the destruction of the trade union movement.

In seeking therefore to find solutions to this problem, it is necessary to examine in considerable depth the cause of layoffs. I have no doubts whatsoever that 99% of all layoffs have their roots in what is termed Company-initiated disputes, principally the application of the Company's disciplinary procedure... This approach to industrial relations problems has always had the potential of confrontation. Over the last few years it has become more and more obvious that this is now a bankrupt policy and the membership will no longer accept this instant punishment philosophy. It is essential, therefore, to rethink our whole position in this area..... (He then outlines his "disputes procedure"). In the event of an agreement being reached within the Company, steps will be taken by the Trade Union to ensure these procedures are adhered to. This will require in-depth discussions with all concerned - ie National Convenors, JWCs and Joint Shop Stewards Committees. This is essential, because by the nature of Ford's operations, any one of a hundred small groups can by its actions jeopardise the livelihood of thousands of their colleagues. No longer can we accept that one or indeed a group of individuals have the right to ignore jointly agreed procedures, if by so doing they threaten thousands of others. If in such a situation a group chose to ignore the elected Joint Works Committee, the Joint Shop Stewards Committee and the local full-time officers, steps should and must be taken to mitigate against possible layoffs. No longer can we support misconceived notions that every dispute is correct, irrespective of merit or consequence. To do so would mean that we can never ever come to terms with this problem.

M.Murphy  
District Officer, TGWU.

#### A FUTURE FOR SCABBING?

Murphy speaks of "taking action to mitigate against possible layoffs". In fact what he means is allowing the Company to put new workers into sections that are in dispute - something which appears to be happening increasingly at Ford, with the support of Union officials.

Obviously this specific move needs to be resisted. But it could only happen in situations where the conditions were ripe - in other words, where the officials manage to split workers in dispute from the workers who are laid off. This raises a general question of tactics: how to rebuild a general organisation at plant level that will prevent the Union officials, the Company, and the Communist Party (this is their favourite tactic of the moment) from mobilising the "moderate" majority against the "militant" minority. Because, as long as they can do that, there will be a future for scabbing.

## A Company Document

- All through this pamphlet we have talked about the tactics of workers and the tactics of the employers. We have also said that Ford is a very class-conscious employer. The truth of the matter was revealed publicly in June 1978, when a member of management sent a copy of an internal management memorandum to the organisation "Workers' Action". They reprinted it in their newspaper, and we are reprinting it here.

Note that the 2,000 new hirings in the Assembly Plant was out of a total workforce of 4,700!

Also note the Company's great appreciation of District TGWU Official Mick Murphy!

PTO.

# Body Plant

## 1977 Achievements

- The River Plant Press Shop was closed with TU agreement and without industrial action.
- Cortina line speed was increased from 45 to 55 uph despite hostile TU opposition.
- Foundations were laid for the better control of four militant stewards on 'A' shift (Birmingham was fired in January 1978 and Wray terminated at same time — with minimal disruptive action).
- Agreement was obtained from TU side for Tooling Consolidation programme and eight out of [? — Illegible] identified restrictions in Group Tooling were eliminated.
- Agreement was obtained to run Cortina Estates down the Fiesta solder line in order to improve quality — despite a TU resolution of no such model mix in the Body-In-White.
- Management's firm disciplinary line against people involved in assault cases forced the TU side to seek discussions on the subject and state that employees were not as a right entitled to representation.

## 1978 Plans/Strategy

- Continue firm approach to discipline — continue discuss-

ions with District Officials on elimination of violence.

- Negotiate plant agreement on avoidance of disputes — maintain firm control of maverick shop stewards — make more use of JWC to explain plant problems and objectives.
- Continue negotiations and pressure on those restrictive practices which have serious effect. Tackle lesser restrictions as and when opportunities arise.
- Continue work standard study programme taking counselling or disciplinary action if appropriate.
- Recruit a number of experienced men externally to undertake foremen and general foremen positions — establish development programme for supervisors with potential — if possible recruit foremen in advance of requirements to ensure they are properly trained.
- Negotiate with TU closure of River Plant die shop.

## Body Plant

Labour turnover in the Body Plant was 17 per cent — well up from 1976 and slightly down from 1975. Hirings during the year totalled over 1500 people, reflecting the high turnover and increased production schedules.

Work stoppages increased from 80 in 1976 to 129 in 1977, and man hours lost during the same period almost doubled, primarily reflecting lay-off time — the Body Plant had fewer hours lost in 1977 due to strikes.

Towards the end of the year there was some evidence that the District Officials and JWC members were playing a slightly more constructive role in dealing with disputes. We believe this to be due to a number of factors:

- consistent firm approach by management in dealing with discipline, stoppages, and attainment of management objectives.

- appointment of a new TGWU District Official who was not dominated by Plant shop stewards.

- action by management against certain specific stewards

- possible realisation by TU's of the serious competitive situation in the automotive industry.

- freedom from major disputes since mid 1977 has created a better atmosphere to deal with minor problems.

- 'hold on action' in disciplinary cases has removed much of the emotion from disciplinary action.

# Assembly Plant

## Achievements

- Hiring, training and placing of 2000 new hirings throughout 1977.
- Establishment of paint sprayer co-operation in new spraying processes.
- Re-negotiation of off line transfer agreements.

## 1978 Plans and Strategy

- Establish a plant agreement on Health and Safety structures.
- Continue to attempt to overcome the existing split between skilled and semi-skilled union representation on the JWC.
- Maintain firm commitment to principle of no pay for periods of stoppage of work.

## Assembly Plant

Over 2000 new hirings were

effected during 1977 and in the first nine months of the year turnover rates were high largely as a result of continuing labour disputes and consequential lay-offs. Turnover rates reduced considerably in the Fourth Quarter following the acceptance of the October Wage Award.

The major causal factor of the 55 disputes, involving the loss of 398,000 man hours, in the First Half of 1977 was lay-off. Stoppages in the Third Quarter were mostly minor involving safety and environmental factors. The Fourth Quarter showed a continuation of these problems although greater willingness was evident to submit safety items through procedure. The major dispute in this period concerned a demand for removal of a supervisor from the Trim area which caused 'B'

shift to be laid off for 9 shifts.

Disciplinary actions continued at the same level as in 1976. Absenteeism in production departments showed an increasing trend through to the middle of the year but declined following the October Wage Award.

In 1978 we will maintain a consistent and firm approach in dealing with discipline, and stoppages. We will also continue our efforts to finalise an agreement with the Trade Unions over a health and safety structure within the Plant which should lead to a decline in the many disputes over these issues.

Local talks will continue in an attempt to overcome the split between skilled and semi-skilled Trades Unions within the Plant with the objective of resuming JWC meetings.

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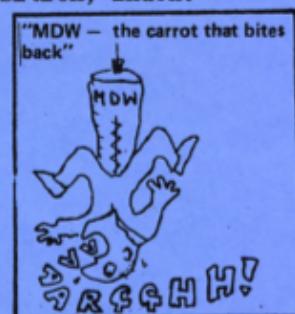
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