

# solidarity

FOR WORKERS' POWER

VOLUME 5 NUMBER 2

Strikers 'throttling the country'



ROOTES: THE LINWOOD  
STRUGGLE

ROOTES/DUNSTABLE  
SACKINGS

THE KELLOGGS SITE  
PRODUCTIVITY DEAL

FRENCH MOTOR WORKERS  
STRUGGLE AT RENAULT/  
FLINS

BIG BROTHER IS WATCHING  
YOU (SNOOPING IN BRITAIN  
- IN 1968)

LEND A HAND

6<sup>D</sup>

# the meaning of france

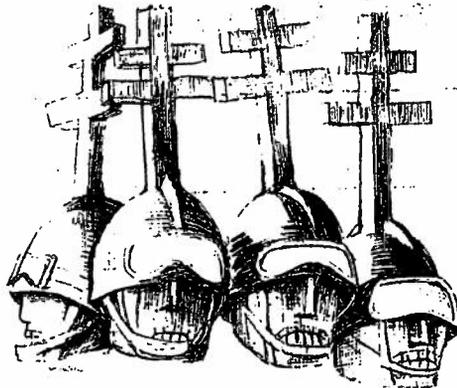
Revolutionaries throughout the world are still discussing the implications of the tremendous crisis which shook France a few weeks ago. The events which took place there will have repercussions on revolutionary theory and on the pattern of revolutionary action for many years to come.

We have made a modest contribution to starting this discussion in Britain by documenting a little of what happened. (Solidarity Pamphlet No.30, PARIS : MAY 1968) We are fully aware that for some people facts are not essential in any such discussion (or at best can only serve to substantiate a predetermined conclusion). For those however who are prepared to learn from real history, the French events provide a wealth of experience, which must now be assimilated and understood.

In our latest pamphlet (which has already sold well over 3000 copies) we describe what one of our supporters saw and heard during those momentous weeks. The dossier however has barely been opened. A mass of material is gradually becoming available, material produced by Action Committees and Strike Committees, from schools and universities, factories and offices, from established political groups and from groups which developed during the struggle itself.

Much of this material is being translated. Starting this autumn we hope to publish excerpts regularly. We will seek to deal in particular with areas outside Paris where the struggle at times reached a very high level, for instance in Nantes, where the Strike Committee for a while controlled all access to the town. We will discuss what happened in those few areas where workers actually took over control of certain factories. We will deal with the lessons learned during street demonstrations and with the nature of the police repression, with the new ideas which emerged and with the ones that have been irrevocably condemned during the unfurling of the real movement. We urge all those interested to take out a subscription now.

We had hoped to start in this issue, with an article on events at the Renault factory at Flins. But in view of developments at the Kellogg's site (at Coryton), this article has had to be deferred to our next issue.



# FRENCH WORKERS DEFENCE COMMITTEE

The great revolutionary upsurge in France has been followed by a period of harsh repression. The French Workers Defence Committee was set up to fulfill three functions:

1. to collect money which will be used to finance activities in France.
2. to spread information about the situation in France.
3. to organize activities in England in support of the French workers and students.
4. a newsletter is being produced in conjunction with the Free France group and also a bulletin about the Committee's activities. Speakers, leaflets and pamphlets will be made available for meetings on request.

The vital needs are money to finance the continuing struggle and assistance in spreading the information about the situation in France. If you can help in either or both of these ways, please contact us at 30, Winchester Avenue, London NW6.

## ADVERT

SOCIALIST WORKER (formerly Labour Worker) has built a large circulation and reputation for its studies of modern capitalism and its reports of industrial struggles. Currently appearing monthly, from September it will be a weekly agitational paper. Full details of subscription and bulk rates from 39 Gondar Gardens, London NW6.

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All the above (except 'Socialist Worker') available from International Socialism, 36 Gilden Road, London NW5.

# LINWOOD-ROOTES AND THE MOTOR INDUSTRY

This article was inspired by the recent 4 week long dispute by 550 men at the Linwood factory of Rootes Motors. The happenings at Linwood are closely linked with events in the rest of the Rootes empire and in the motor industry in general. The article therefore attempts to deal with the Linwood struggle in its broader context.

## THE MEANING OF MEASURED DAY RATE

In December 1966 Mr Jack Scamp, the 'independent' troubleshooter, published his first Annual Report on the state of the motor industry. In it he proposed a 'rationalization' of the wages structure. The reason was clearly stated. Piecework, bonus, and other wage increments negotiable at shop floor level, as well as complex wage structures capable of many interpretations, were seen as one of the main reasons for the strength of the shop stewards movement. They were attacked as contributing to conflict within the industry.

Within a few months of the Scamp report all the major car producers such as BMC, Vauxhall and Rootes (Ford had initiated its scheme a few months earlier) had come forward 'independently' with schemes for introducing 'Measured Day Rate' combined with job evaluation and work study.

These schemes were clearly conceived as a weapon to weaken job organization rather than simply as means of increasing productivity. Productivity had in fact been rising rapidly without the aid of such schemes, as shown by the following figures:\*

<u>Year</u>	<u>Cars and Vehicles produced (in 000s)</u>	<u>Men employed (in thousands)</u>	<u>Output per man</u>	<u>Output per man hour</u>
1959	1,560 = 100	330 = 100	4.1 = 100	100
1964	2,333 = 149	482 = 125	4.8 = 119	128

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\* Source: 'Labour Relations in the Motor Industry' by H.A. Turner, Garfield Clack, Geoffrey Roberts. Published by Allen and Unwin, 1967, p. 103)

It will be seen that the production of vehicles has been increasing twice as fast as the increase in the labour force. Output per man-hour had been increasing at over 5½% per year, a rate well above the national average. The process, moreover, had been going on for well over 10 years.

The reasons for the new unified assault on piecework and other systems of payment vulnerable to shop floor bargaining were given quite clearly in a well informed article by Stephen Aris (Sunday Times, April 16, 1967) dealing with the Rootes 'Measured Day Rate' proposals. Discussing the firm's Coventry factories the article points out that:

'With piecework bonuses forming such a large proportion of the pay packet, no one pretends that they are incentives any more. The prices bear no relation to how hard or how skilled the job may be,' says a chastened motor man. The bonus is simply a result of a bargain on the shop floor: a battle between the rate fixers and the shop stewards. As a result management has almost no control over the labour content of a car.' The article goes on to quote George Evans, West Midlands Organizer of the NUVB as saying of the Rootes proposals: 'If the norm is fixed and the wage is fixed, control over the men's earnings must pass to management'. (It is not clear whether this was a statement in favour of the proposals or not!)

The last paragraph of the Sunday Times article was perhaps over-optimistic, but it clearly brought out the close relationship of events at Rootes with what was happening in other sections of the motor industry. In this sense the dispute at Linwood was a blow on behalf of workers throughout the industry:

'If all goes well it now looks as if the whole scheme could be buttoned up within a fortnight. (Negotiations are in fact still continuing - K.W.) And if that happens it will doubtless encourage British Motor (sic) whose wages system is undoubtedly the messiest in the industry, to get a move on with its unions.' (Emphasis mine - K.W.)

It is ironic that militants should now be struggling to retain a system which they have traditionally opposed. To explain this, one has to look at the real situation in the better organized plants. After years of struggle to increase prices, to resist price reductions, a struggle often combined with a rigid control of earnings, the teeth of the system have been pulled.\* The system has lost its original power to be a self-disciplining system for reaching maximum output. It now often has an opposite effect.

A large part of the British motor industry is on piecework. The two main exceptions are Ford and Vauxhall. Of these two, the former has a system of merit payments which is a potent source of conflict. The latter has a system of several gradings for the same job which allows

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\* This does not mean that in many factories the system of piecework does not retain its old characteristics. The deciding point is the strength of shop organization.

considerable scope for shop floor pressure to increase real wages. At the moment 3 of the 4 main car producers (BMH, Ford and Rootes) are negotiating measured day rate agreements. The fourth (Vauxhall) has, with the willing aid of the unions, already imposed its 'Slave Charter'. (For a description of this scheme, see Solidarity vol.IV, Nos.9, 10, 11 and Vol.V, No.1).

The government is in favour of the introduction of Measured Day Rate. This is shown clearly by the appointment of George Cattell, architect of the Rootes agreements and victor of BLSP (see The BLSP Dispute, Solidarity Pamphlet No.8), as boss of the new government Pay and Productivity team. He was appointed by that well-known 'left-winger' Barbara Castle, Minister of Employment and Productivity. The Royal Commission on the Trade Unions has also come out firmly in favour of Measured Day Rate. The trade union leaders have already shown that they will not resist it.

## THE BACKGROUND TO THE DISPUTE

In 1961, Rootes began to face major problems. At that time the company, one of the most profitable and rapidly expanding in the field of motor manufacturing, was simultaneously engaged in an internal rationalization and in an expansion of its small car capacity. In August 1961 the firm provoked a strike at British Light Steel Pressings with the aim of smashing the very powerful job organization that had been built up there.\*

The BLSP strike was a long and bitter dispute. It lasted 13 weeks and although Rootes were eventually 'successful', it was at enormous cost. For the duration of the strike Rootes virtually ceased to exist as a production unit. The strike cost them 501,000 man days and something like £3,000,000 in cash. These self-inflicted wounds came at a time when the Rootes Group was heavily committed to huge capital expenditure at the new Linwood factory, where it was planned to produce the revolutionary 'Imp' range of small cars. They had a crippling effect. The ensuing financial crisis forced Rootes to accept a 30% Chrysler shareholding in June 1964. In January 1967 the group was wholly taken over by the American firm.

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\* The driving force behind this campaign was Mr George Cattell. He started his career as a regular Army officer, later becoming political adviser on organization and manpower planning to the reactionary regime of Tunjku Abdul Rahman in Malaya. After leaving the Army he joined the staff of the Engineering Employers Federation, from which he later joined Rootes as director of personnel. In August 1963 Cattell became Director and General Manager of the Linwood factory. Later he became the Manufacturing Director of the Rootes Group. Immediately following the struggle described in this article Mr Cattell was seconded indefinitely to head the Manpower and Productivity Team set up by 'left-winger' Barbara Castle.

The new management began a substantial reorganization. First they concentrated production at fewer places: light cars at Linwood, medium cars at Coventry and commercial vehicles at Luton and Dunstable. This meant the closure of the London factories of the group (Thrupp and Maberley, BLSA) and the Dodge Truck plants at Kew and Canterbury which had been brought into the group by Chrysler.

In 1965, after Pressed Steel had been taken over by BMH, Rootes bought the Pressed Steel plant at Linwood. This plant became known as the North Plant and it was here that the dispute described in this article took place. The North Plant produces the bodies for the South Plant (the old Rootes factory at Linwood). It also produces cabs for the BMH lorry factory at Bathgate. This reorganization and expansion had raised the number of workers employed by the Rootes Group from about 11,000 in 1961 to a present total of nearly 30,000. This expansion was accompanied by a large programme of capitalisation which still continues. In the 5 years starting in January 1967 Rootes will be spending at least 20 million pounds much of it on sophisticated machinery. For example they are spending £900,000 on a cylinder block transfer line, built by Herbert Ingesoll for their Coventry engine plant, which will start production in 1969.

While this reorganization and expansion were under way, Rootes' share of the car market rose to 12% (in 1967). Its production rose by 6% (to 181,000 cars) at a time when the production in the industry as a whole was contracting. But the firm was meeting with considerable resistance inside the factories of its two main expansion areas: Linwood and Luton/Dunstable. At Linwood, production had failed to reach the target of 3,000 a week. By December 1966 it had only reached 1,000 a week (Economist, December 4, 1966). By July 1967 production was still well under half what had been planned. At Dunstable and Luton, production has consistently been under the targets unilaterally set by the management. In 1966 Rootes had lost 4.5 million pounds.

This resistance had to be defeated. This is the background to the dispute at Linwood.

## THE ROOTES PROPOSALS

The South Plant at Linwood had been on Day Rate since the middle of 1966. This plant is much smaller, and has always been much less militant than the North Plant (the old Pressed Steel factory). Most workers there were on a form of incentive bonus. For a long time there had been manoeuvres by management and certain full time officials to 'standardize' the two sections.

Late in 1967 the Management presented proposals for the introduction of Measured Day Rate. It is interesting to note what the District Organizer of the NUVA, T. Taylor, said of these proposals (see his report in the January 1968 issue of the 'Vehicle Builders Quarterly Journal'). He said: 'There has been reluctance to bring the full time officials

into the matter, and I have now received information from the Employers Federation (my emphasis - K.W.) of a local conference on an employers terms of reference'. Mr. Taylor hereby admits that he was called on to the scene by management and not by the men. The shop stewards were more than a little suspicious of the intentions of the full-time officials. Their suspicions, as it turned out, were eminently justified.

Mr. Taylor later signed the agreement despite the fact that in the same report he stated 'one of the conditions however of the offer made by them (the management) is the acceptance of measured day rate to which our members are antagonistic'. (my emphasis - K.W.)

The main provisions of the Agreement were:

(1) The ending of the existing Incentive Scheme and its replacement by an hourly rate.

(2) The introduction of new production standards which would be established by work study techniques, and which would be determined by management alone. (Previously mutual agreement between management and men had been necessary.) If an operator failed to maintain 'standard performance', and management decided that the fault lay with him, action could be taken against the operator under the Company Disciplinary Procedures.

(3) The establishment of a standard personal allowance of 35 minutes a day to replace a system of negotiated times dependent on local conditions. In some parts of the plant workers received 55 minutes. The new agreement meant that their working week was extended by 100 minutes. This personal allowance is for such purposes as going to the lavatory, washing, putting on protective clothing, etc.

(4) The imposition of new starting and finishing times.

(5) The implementation of 3 shift and other systems of working

(6) The acceptance of new terms of employment and new work rules.

(7) The introduction of absence and lateness procedures, with the implicit acceptance of far greater discipline in this area.

(8) The agreement to compulsory overtime which would be determined by management.

(9) Increased 'flexibility'. By this was meant the abolition of no less than 32 grades of work, these grades being incorporated into the work done by other grades. Some grades were eliminated altogether, for example, mates. All this was to be accepted without management giving any guarantees whatsoever about the displaced workers.

All the jobs in the plant were divided into 6 categories. Implicit in this was a greatly increased flexibility within each grade. A number of existing job specifications were greatly widened: the men doing a particular kind of work would have more to do. All demarcation agreements would be ended.

The Agreement also proposed, without going into any detail, a 'new Union/Management consultative and negotiating machinery'.

What did the men in the North Plant get in return?

Firstly an increase (averaging about 1/- an hour) in their consolidated time rate. This is not quite as good as it sounds as a wage increase was overdue in any case. Production operatives at Linwood will still get 4/- an hour less than workers at the Rootes factories at Coventry. This immediate rise would be followed by 3 further annual increases of 1/- an hour. Secondly, the addition of 3 days paid holiday in July 1969. Finally, certain increased pension rights, in 1970.

As the leaflet produced during the recent dispute by the AEF Shop Stewards Committee put it, the Agreement 'meant in essence extensive speed-up methods and wholesale slaughter of our slower and older members.'

Late in 1967 the management of Rootes put further pressure on the officials. They made further wage increases in the South Plant dependent on the officials accepting measured day rate 'on behalf' of the North Plant. On April 5, 1968, the 'Linwood Wage Grading and Productivity Plan Agreement' was signed by the NUVB and the TGWU.

## THE TROUBLE STARTS

The local officials of the AEF had refused to sign the Agreement. This put Rootes in a quandary. The imposition of the Agreement was crucial to them: its acceptance would, in their own admission, save them £2 $\frac{1}{2}$  millions on the expansion programme.

To cut the Gordian knot, P.L. Griffiths, Manufacturing Director of the Linwood Plants, sent out a hastily composed letter to all Linwood-Rootes workers in which he said:

'There can only be one method of payment and one basic set of conditions (emphasis in original) for hourly-paid employees at Linwood. The Company has already agreed with the majority representation (NUVB and TGWU) what this payment and set of conditions will be.

'It is with these reasons in mind that I implemented the Agreement on Monday, May 6. As I have said repeatedly the Company is not in any position to turn back. There is no possibility of retaining an incentive bonus scheme, but the improved wages and conditions provided for in the Agreement are themselves a considerable incentive. We must have Work Standards based on proper measurement. We must have standard personal allowances which apply plant-wide. We must apply the flexibility provisions of the Agreement which enable the Company to make the most effective use of its available manpower.'

Griffiths then goes on to make a thinly veiled threat: 'In those areas of the factory where improved wages and benefits have been applied, the results so far have been encouraging. Those working in other areas and represented by trade unions who are not signatories to the Agreement should think carefully whether or not they wish to participate in the continued expansion of Rootes in Scotland, which can do so much to improve employment opportunities and security.'

On May 6 the management had tried to impose their proposals unilaterally. But 200 AEF members had refused to operate the new working practices. Thereupon they had been sent home. They were soon followed by maintenance men who refused to repair the car delivery conveyor without their mates. Soon 550 men were involved, and production in the whole plant came to a dead stop. Over 4,000 workers were laid off, soon to be joined by a further 1,000 men at British Leyland's lorry factory at Bathgate.

The Company had come unstuck. To extricate them an Industrial Court of Inquiry into the dispute was set up on May 23, presumably to persuade the men to go back 'while awaiting its findings'. Its general proposals are a foregone conclusion. Its 'independent' Chairman (Professor Donald Robertson of Glasgow University) is already on record (in his evidence to the Royal Commission on Trade Unions and Employers Associations on July 26, 1966) as being emphatically in favour of... precisely the type of agreement proposed by Rootes.

Unfortunately for them another mistake was made by the firm. The Executive Council of the AEF was not consulted, and this body consequently refused to collaborate with the inquiry. So the Court of Inquiry manoeuvre misfired on both counts. It failed to get the men back to work on the firm's conditions and its findings were prejudiced in advance by the absence of one of the main parties.

The management, in the person of Cattell (already secretly appointed by Barbara Castle to his Ministry job, although this was not announced until after the men had returned) again tried to threaten the men back to work on the firm's terms. In the 'Scottish Daily Express' (May 27, 1968) Mr. Cattell is reported as saying:

'We believe there are sufficient people with the necessary skills available in Scotland to man the factory on the basis we have in mind. Some of these people may well be misguided ones who are on strike at the moment, some may not.'

'The inference is obvious. Either the 308 of the labour force who have not accepted conditions which are necessary for our future expansion do so, or we will find others who will.'

The men refused to be intimidated. Nor were they influenced by an outrageous smear campaign in the 'Scottish Daily Express' which led witch-hunting attacks on the shop stewards and on the District Committee of the AEF. (In fact only one member of the Shop Stewards Committee was a member of the Communist Party.) The men were also attacked in a series

of statements to the press by John Boyd, salvationist Scottish Executive Councillor of the AEF. On May 21, Boyd denounced the men as 'rebels without a cause'. He said:

'Never in the history of the engineering unions in Scotland has such a generous offer been made to members. It is the most generous offer the employers have made in 25 years.' (Scottish Daily Express, 7.6.68)

A similar attitude was expressed by the General Secretary of the Scottish TUC, Mr James Jack.

All these threats were ignored by the men. They realised that the Company was facing losses in the region of £600,000 a week, slap in the middle of the peak sales period for Imp cars. One gets a feeling that the gentle art of timing a dispute (so that it has maximum effect) is fortunately not dead. Too often struggles are waged at a time suitable to the employers. On this occasion the boot was on the other foot.

The men were supported by members of the NUVB and TGWU, 'on whose behalf' the Agreement had already been signed. A mass meeting of these men agreed to levy themselves a pound a week each in support of the men in dispute. A meeting of representatives of 14 factories at the nearby Hillington industrial estate also pledged support. The men were also supported throughout by the Paisley District Committee of the AEF.

Ian MacAngus, the Convenor of the North Plant, paid a flying visit to other factories in the Rootes Group. Links at factory level within the group have probably been built and we hope they will prove strong enough to make the implementation of the Rootes proposals too expensive a task for the employers to try on. (Elsewhere in this issue we have an article on the Agreement at the Luton/Dunstable factories.) The proposals at Coventry are even worse than those at Linwood, except that the proposed price is higher. At Coventry, 100 men at the Rootes subsidiary of Hills Precision (which makes plastic parts) have been on strike since June 17 over the victimization of their convenor. Now is obviously a very opportune time for Rootes workers to unite and fight.

On June 6, the Linwood management finally caved in. After negotiations lasting a week an agreement was reached which virtually conceded the status quo. The new agreement would not apply to members of unions which had not signed it. The press shop operators would only be expected to operate to work standards agreed in May 1966. Mates would not be redeployed. The next day there was a mass meeting of the men in dispute. A return to work was endorsed and the dispute was at an end.

The question facing Linwood workers now is whether the breathing space which they have won - and it is nothing more - is going to be snatched from them. Are they going to be influenced by the results of the rigged Court of Inquiry? Are they going to be manipulated by the full-time officials? Or will they use the opportunity to prepare themselves, so that management will think three times before taking them on again? The working conditions - and ability to fight back - of whole

future generations of workers at Linwood are in the balance (and have already been given away by the NUVB and TGWU). Will there be further concessions in return for wage increases which will still leave Linwood workers economically well behind other workers?

## CONCLUSIONS

The trade unions have shown again and again that they are prepared to sign agreements which destroy job organization. At best they will haggle over whether the price is to be 29 or 30 pieces of silver. There might be minor variations between officials but it would be insane to delude ourselves about their function. The unions have already signed hundreds of similar productivity agreements. Any reliance on their good offices is doomed to failure.

The Linwood struggle, and those which will follow it, are political ones. They are not over a price, but over a principle: the right to strengthen job organization, and the right to a human existence at work.

Sometimes workers develop illusions in officials. Some officials may verbally attack agreements signed by other officials. Unfortunately, these people usually keep quiet about similar agreements which they have signed themselves. A perfect example of this kind of behaviour was provided by Arthur Leary, East Midlands Organizer of the NUVB. At the union's Annual Conference at Felixstowe, on June 19, he attacked the Linwood agreement in no uncertain terms. What Mr. Leary, who is bidding for power in the NUVB, forgot to mention was that he had signed an agreement every bit as bad at Vauxhall (the 'Slaves Charter') on November 17, 1967.

The resistance to Measured Day Rate, job evaluation and similar schemes will take place in the factories, not in the union offices. One of the first conclusions to be drawn from the Linwood struggle is the relative weakness of links between shop stewards in factories of the same firm, let alone within the motor industry generally. One of the first essentials for effective resistance - and for that matter for an offensive - is an adequate communication network between car workers. In this respect there have been several well publicised attempts to call motor workers together by this or that political sect (see 'Solidarity', vol.IV Nos. 9 and 12). But this is not what is needed, not even if the dominant group was 'Solidarity'.

The calling of a modest meeting of rank and file motor car workers to discuss their own problems and to exchange information could be the first step towards starting a motor works Information Bulletin. This in turn could play a very large part in creating the basis of an industry-wide rank and file movement. We are prepared to contribute towards such a development in any way possible to us. We ask all motor workers who want to fight to get in touch with us.

Side by side with the isolation of car workers on a firm and national basis is the fact that international connections on a rank and file basis are virtually non-existent. Three of the big four British car manufacturers are part of American-owned international combines. There is accumulating evidence of plans for an international division of labour between the various national components of each firm. Thus 'Ford of Europe' is introducing German management and bringing the organization of the British factories in line with Taunus in Germany. And Chrysler is considering exporting Linwood bodies for use by its French subsidiary Simca, and moving its assembly of medium range cars, now done at Coventry, to the Simca factory at Poissy.\* International contacts are no longer an abstract question. They are as practical and urgent as national ones. 'Solidarity' is proud to say that it was instrumental in establishing direct links between Vauxhall and the workers at the General Motors-owned firm of Opel in Germany.

The creation of these national and international links are not only essential for the strengthening of job organization, but a healthy, independent and conscious rank and file movement is essential for the development of a healthy revolutionary socialist movement.

KEN WELLER.

## CONTEMPT OF COURT

On July 2, 1968 - after this article had been written - the Robertson Court of inquiry published its report. Its findings were entirely as expected: support for the Agreement itself, criticism of the AEF for not signing it combined, 'for the record', with a little very mild criticism of the Rootes management's unsuccessful attempt to impose the agreement without the signature of one of the unions.

The current Court of Inquiry led by Jack Scamp into the Ford women machinists' strike can confidently be expected to come to a similar conclusion. These circuses, with their stereotyped composition, procedure and conclusions, should be absolutely ignored by rank and file workers. They are totally in the hands of the other side. The workers involved aren't even asked to give evidence.

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\* See 'Economist', October 7, 1967.

# R. S. S. F.

About 700 people attended the founding conference of the Revolutionary Socialist Student Federation, which was held in London on the 14th and 15th of June. A provisional committee was elected which will coordinate activity until the next conference in October.

It is too early to say whether this is the beginning of a genuinely revolutionary students' movement, but it does mark a break from the bureaucratic politics of NALSO or the Radical Students Alliance.

Everyone agreed that the new organization was necessary, but there was much less agreement on what it ought to be doing. A number of speakers from the 'Militant' group gave their familiar 'back-to-the-womb-of-the-Labour-Party' speech. The general impatience with this was very encouraging. The Tariq Ali school of armchair Guevarism seemed to be much more popular, but a number of participants were also critical of this mystification.

We urge our student readers to get in touch with the RSSF at 120 Commercial Road, London E.1.



# THE ROOTES (DUNSTABLE) SACKINGS

This article is about 28 men who were sacked at a Rootes (Dunstable) plant for trying to achieve equal wages.

Last year Rootes concentrated their commercial vehicle production. They closed down the Kew, Surrey, factory of Dodge Trucks and removed production to the massive new 'Pilot Block' at Dunstable, using the opportunity to introduce a consolidated hourly rate in the new block as opposed to the piecework paid to workers in the rest of the plant. Ever since production started on 3/4 ton vehicles there has been trouble in the new block. The men there have a lower take home pay than other workers doing similar work in the same factory.

The question of wages and other grievances have soured relations in the new block ever since it started production in the latter part of 1967. The position has been made worse because the factory has been on regular short time working for nearly a year, and there were even a few redundancies in the nearby Luton plant.

In the new block disputes have centred around bad working conditions (for instance the repeated breakdowns of the heating arrangements last winter). There have also been disputes about labour manning and there has been great resistance to work times and productivity norms arbitrarily set by management. The new plant was being used as a Trojan horse for the job evaluation scheme which Rootes are trying to introduce at Linwood, the Coventry factories and on the rest of the workers at the Dunstable and Luton plants. In this context it is important that workers at these places should know what happened to the 'guinea pigs' at the 'Pilot Block'.

Due to the long protracted negotiations on these problems and a general disillusionment by the men in 'their' officials, a militant group had emerged. They had just about had enough. On March 16 this group of 28 men in the 'Body in White' department decided to work-to-rule and to withdraw goodwill. The men told the officials to 'piss off' - they would not require their 'assistance' any more. The work-to-rule was effective. By March 27 the Rootes management were complaining that the workers were only producing an average of 175 vehicles compared with the management's target of 185 per week.

The full time officials of the AEF (the main union involved) reacted by egging the other 120 workers in the new block against the 28 men. A good example was the report of Arthur Sjogren (District Secretary) to his District Committee on April 3rd, 1968. The official minutes record:

'Further to this, the Secretary also reported that a group of 28 members on the Body-in-White were operating in such a manner that the livelihood of the rest of the 120 on the track was being prejudiced and there was a distinct possibility of a reversion to 4-day working. The Shop Stewards Convenor had tried to get a reversion to normal working and instructions had been issued from this office for same. This was being defied, with a result that the Company had issued an hour's notice to each of the 28 as from 4 pm today and they would be expected to collect their cards by 8 am tomorrow morning. Those who wished to apply for their jobs back would be considered by the Company.'

The men were sacked with one hour's notice. They were told that 'they could crawl back for their jobs one by one the next morning'. At 4.30 pm the Convenor called a shop stewards' meeting. It obediently washed its hands of the sacked men and refused to give them any support.

Management had reacted in a vicious manner with the aim of smashing a pocket of resistance. Their ability to do it with so little trouble was due to several factors.

Firstly, the Dunstable factory is without any tradition of militancy. Secondly, the local union officials are ineffective and subservient to the requirements of management to an extent unusual even for their profession. Thirdly, Rootes has a long record of using subtle techniques of splitting workers. The management knew that the threat of renewed short-time working and a cut in earnings was an effective method of isolating the militants, particularly among workers who had been demoralised by not having seen a full week's wage packet for a year. In carrying out this 'scare' policy the management was helped by an imported 'well-known sheet metal expert from the Midlands', who systematically egged on the backward elements in the plants against the more militant sections.

The method used by the management is worth noting: the 'shock treatment' of sacking a whole sector facilitated speedy demoralisation. To have picked on individuals would have meant the creation of martyrs. The classic tactic of giving one hour's notice an hour before finishing time is an effective way of by-passing solidarity action by other sections.

Unfortunately for Rootes, however, their schemes came unstuck. There was a 'revolt' on the District Committee of the AEF which managed to force reinstatement of the men without strings.

The lesson should not be forgotten by Rootes workers at Linwood and Coventry. The actions of the firm in relation to workers on measured day rate at the 'Pilot Block' clearly points to the treatment other workers can expect to get from Rootes when they come under similar agreements.

# BIG BROTHER IS WATCHING YOU!

by RON BAILEY.

Imagine a society in which everyone is spied on, or in which your every movement is watched, recorded and filed. Closed circuit T.V. cameras may be watching you in the street. Your house or office might be "bugged" with hidden microphones. Your phone might be tapped. You apply for a job and the firm checks with an "intelligence agency" about your past. The Council may be keeping an eye on how you are living. A "security firm" might be finding out about your bank balance; another might be checking up on your political affiliations. If someone doesn't like you, an anonymous phone call to the police could get you raided. And be careful - that friendly bloke in the pub or at work might be planted there to spy on you.

A nightmare world. Is it George Orwell's 1984? Or something out of Patrick McGoochan's "The Prisoner"? Or the kind of thing that goes on in Russia? No, it's BRITAIN, TODAY, 1968!

You don't believe it? Then consider these facts:

Liverpool and Croydon police have been experimenting with cameras on roof tops, spying on shoppers over large areas. The new Victoria Line will have closed circuit cameras on every station. Perhaps, even, the firm of Christopher Robert and Co of Wallington, Surrey, are on to you (1). For £70 per day they'll provide a television that can pick up details in a room 100 yards away. If you think you're safe at night, you'll be pleased to hear about the Noda camera. Using infra-red rays, this can photograph people in the dark up to 100 yards away (2). For anything over £200 this firm will tap your telephone. Transmitters and bugging devices to fit into cigarette packets or the lining of your coat cost rather less.

In business? Want a credit account? Think twice! Dun and Bradstreet may be called in to investigate you. Neighbours, local officials or councillors may be sent an extensive questionnaire requesting a wide variety of details about you (3).

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(1) Sunday Mirror, March 3, 1968.

(2) Sunday Times, February 4, 1968.

(3) Information obtained from Councillor who has received these forms.

Got any goods on H.P.? If so, be careful not to slip behind with payments, and don't forget to let the firm know immediately you move, or you might find Tracing Services Ltd., of Cromwell House, Cromwell Road, Kensington (branches in many cities) onto you. They'll pose on the phone as officials, policemen or government departments, to find out your address, social security benefits, rent arrears, bank balance, or even prison record. Nothing is safe (4).

Where do you park your car at night? Outside your house? Careful then! If you live in a council house, somewhere in the small print on your contract may be a clause saying you're supposed to have a council garage. And one council, Chesterton, near Cambridge, is going to make sure you do - even if it means sending spies round in the middle of the night to see where your car is parked, and starting eviction proceedings if it's not in one of their garages (5). And if you live in Wheatley Road, Bournemouth, you'd better make sure your home is up to scratch, for last February the council inspected all 110 houses in the road. Any family that doesn't bring its home up to the required standard is to be evicted (6).

On the phone? Then you'll be pleased to hear that everyone from businessmen and lawyers to M.P.s have complained about tapping (7). And not just be private firms, but by the "wire-tappers of Whitehall". They can even listen in to your room if your phone's on the hook (8).

What about your politics? If you're a left wing student then watch out for the activities of Dr Wyndham Davies and Mr John Jackson, Tory G.L.C. candidate for Redbridge. There, members of the Monday Club are trying to compile lists of left wing students - to expose them. They've written to other students, asking for names to be supplied (9). Worse still, however, M.I.5 or Scotland Yard's Special Branch may well have you on their blacklists(10).

One good thing - Flute, an organisation which used to uncover, and compile files on left wingers for businessmen, closed down last year. How many other such organisations are there though? (11)

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- (4) Sunday Mirror, February 4, 11, 18, 1968.
  - (5) Sun, November 24, 1967.
  - (6) Guardian, February 5, 1968.
  - (7) Sunday Times, November 20, 1966. Daily Telegraph, November 17, 1966.  
Times, November 17, 1966. Evening Standard, April 17, 1968.  
Guardian, April 18, 1968.
  - (8) Sunday Mirror, March 10, 1968.
  - (9) Most national papers, April 10, 1968.
  - (10) Sunday Mirror, March 17, 1968.
  - (11) Daily Sketch, April 10, 1968.

That friendly bloke at work? Sure he's not a "private eye" spying for the boss? Workers at Mellows Engineering Factory, Oldham, recently discovered he was (12). And motor workers at Vauxhall's now know he was a Sunday Telegraph reporter working on a story (13). And last May a Leytonstone man found that the bloke in the pub was a detective (14).

If someone doesn't like you, all he need do is phone the police anonymously, mention drugs, and you'll be raided. The police booped when they raided Lady Diana Cooper - it got out (15). But when a coloured man from West Ham was raided after an anonymous tip-off recently (16), there was no national outcry.

Finally, what about getting a job? Last June David Winnick, M.P., tried unsuccessfully to stop the growing practice of asking about applicants' private lives and habits at interviews (17). But your biggest threat here is Management Investigations of Lea Bridge Road, Leyton. Firms supply them with information on their employees. And if you seek another job, the new firm can contact Management Investigations and be given the low-down on you (18). And you'll never know - you'll just not get the job, with no reason given. Talk about being tried without a hearing!

Well, there it is! Big Brother in Britain today. How widespread is it? We don't know! But YOU do. All of you. Please tell us. Let us know of any incidents, however small, of spying or arbitrary power that you have experienced, or know of. Only by information being compiled and acted upon can the growing threat to individual liberty and privacy be halted.

HELP US TO FIGHT BIG BROTHER!

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- (12) Daily Skotch, April 10, 1968. Daily Mirror, April 10, 1968.  
(13) Sunday Telegraph, March 24, 1968.  
(14) Leytonstone Express and Independent, July 14, 1967.  
(15) Times, February 26, 1968.  
(16) Stratford Express, March 22, 1968  
(17) Sun, June 6, 1967. Leytonstone Guardian, March 22, 1968.  
Leytonstone Express and Independent, January 12 and March 22, 1968.  
Guardian, January 20, 1968.  
(18) Times, February 6, 1968. Guardian, February 6, 1968.  
Hansard, February 2, 1968.

# KELLOGG'S MEN BREAK 'CONSOLIDATED' CEILING

The Prices and Incomes Board, according to John Baldwin, district organiser of the Constructional Engineering Union, has approved a new pay agreement for hundreds of workers on an oil refinery site at Coryton, alongside the River Thames in Essex.

This is the first known "break" in one of the new "Fawley-type" consolidated agreements foisted on workers since 1961. It was the outcome of a long period of "non-cooperation on the site".

This news from Baldwin (who is also Secretary of the Joint Union Negotiating Committee for the North Thames Oil Refineries) is a significant victory for the lads on the Kelloggs contract for the Mobil Oil Company.

The new deal - at the most important construction job, at the moment in the South of England - lifts wage rates from 9s an hour to 10s 6d and adds a bonus of 5s 6d an hour.

As reported in the last issue of Solidarity, construction workers have been under attack, for some time, from employers, the Government and union officials of the CEU. The object of the attack is to break the traditional job control which has enabled these workers to earn reasonable wages in an industry where deaths and serious accidents are commonplace.

In the past, pay packets have been based not on basic wage rates, but on bonus earnings negotiated by stewards on behalf of the various gangs on a site. The management would state their cost-factor (the time they wanted to allow for an item of work) then the steward of each gang would negotiate a rate for doing the work in a mutually-agreed time. All bonus goes into a common pool to be shared equally among everyone on the site to prevent management from playing one gang against another.

Stoppage after stoppage often took place as the workers fought to carve a reasonable share from the profits in their savage industry. But once the bargaining was over, the management gained from a speedy completion of the job.

The current drive to smash rank-and-file control came into the open even before the Kelloggs contract started. It will be of interest to those who suffered under the Woodall Duckham - CEU agreement on the

Romford/gasworks site (see Solidarity, Vol. V, No. 1) to note that the original Kelloggs agreement was also signed without consulting the men of the North Thames refineries.

It is the practice in the construction industry for site agreements to be signed many months before a job opens. But it was only at the last moment that word got around about the exact details of the labour deal for the coming Kellogg's contract.

At the insistence of stewards on the refineries Bro Baldwin called a meeting in a hall at Corringham to discuss the "agreement". This provided for a consolidated rate of 10s an hour and contained clauses giving management complete control over production and flexibility of labour. (By "flexibility of labour" management meant interchangeability of trades, which inevitably leads to dilution.)

When the stewards voiced their heated opposition to this kind of contract, John Baldwin held up the agreement and declared: "This is going to be signed by lunchtime tomorrow whether you like it or not". What an indictment of the trade union bureaucracy in Britain today. The agreement was duly signed on February 1, 1967.

After much agitation, the agreement was amended (in June 1967). It now stipulated a lower rate (9s an hour) but included an incentive bonus scheme.

When the site opened up (around Christmas 1967) it soon became clear that the bonus scheme was just a carrot. The management would not disclose how the bonus was arrived at. We were expected to work harder and harder for more or less nothing extra.

But Kelloggs should have thought less about the carrots and more about another old saying: "You can take a horse to water, but you can't make it drink".

A policy of non-cooperation had been followed from almost the beginning. Gangs wouldn't work without their full number being present. If anyone left the job for some reason, work would stop until he came back to make up the correct number.

Safety regulations were rigidly adhered to. Skilled men wouldn't get stuck in unless their mate was present. Needless to say, production wasn't proceeding as anticipated under the union-company agreement.

Money wasn't the only thing that angered everyone. For instance, the management also refused to recognise Bro. G. Macmahon (PTU steward) as site convenor.

Behind this attempt to victimise a good workers' representative was Mr W Strangeways, the "Labour Relations' Officer" who is supposedly employed to represent both management and labour.

His attitude towards the stewards and men has been one of complete non-cooperation. On several occasions he has given veiled threats of dismissal to Bro Macmahon and other stewards if they continued to exercise their rights as stewards and convenor respectively.

As an ex-CEU official (among other things) Mr Strangeways knows enough about trade union procedure and rights to understand how he was interfering with custom and practice.

In the light of this, his attitude can only be interpreted as deliberate provocation and a bungling attempt to deprive the men of one of their most basic rights - the right to a steward of their own choosing. It was only on May 28 that recognition was given to Bro Macmahon as convenor.

Victory has also come in the fight to get a decent pay packet to take home. Faced with unmet production targets, the management has revised the basic rate to 10s 6d as stated at the beginning of this article. It has also re-calculated the bonus to give 5s 6d an hour.

Even so, earnings are still low compared to what the level was in the past. There would be some progress if the 16s an hour was basic money.

As it is, the men are still at the mercy of a bonus scheme whose operation is still a management secret. The 5s 6d bonus will only be kept and improved upon if careful watch is kept on union-management machinations.

More is at stake than just the Kelloggs site conditions. If a decent living wage for 40 hours cannot be achieved at Coryton, it won't be made any more anywhere in the Thameside refineries.

The rot in the construction industry has got to be stopped. The Kelloggs site has got to regain our losses if a national disaster for the rank-and-file is to be avoided.

The lesson from the Kelloggs site is simple. Several months of struggle got us an increase, at a time when no union official, however "left", was prepared to challenge a consolidated rate.

Union officials now see these types of deal as the beginning and end of all industrial agreements. They hope that with these consolidated rates stewards will stop negotiating at shop level and leave all transactions to the officials in their offices.

Officials like Jack Johnson and John Baldwin have played their part in negotiating these "productivity deals" which have lowered the standard of living of many of their members. Both are now offering themselves for the post of General Secretary in the CEU.

It is time the men on the job asked themselves a question: The question is this : Who organised, suffered and fought for our standards and conditions in the past? As everyone knows, it was ourselves, without the help and sometimes in defiance of Patterson and his puppets.

Let's learn the lessons of the recent betrayals at Romford gasworks, Kelloggs and other sites. The elections are a diversion. Our task is to get control of the job.

# STOP PRESS

On July 12, the Kellogg International Corporation, main contractor on the £20 million extension to the Mobil Oil refinery at Coryton, sacked 800 men. Why? Because they had refused to accept a proposed agreement which the management wished to impose on them without even making copies of the draft available to stewards.

The new agreement would have given the management a blank cheque. It would have allowed them to determine work norms. It would consequently have handed them absolute control over bonus payments. It would have reduced payments for 'unmeasured work' (that is work not covered by bonus, which constitutes about 40% of the total) to 'base rate' (10/6 an hour) for the first 20% and to 'base-rate-plus-1/5th' thereafter. At present this type of work gets 'status quo' - that is average earnings (which amount to about 5/6 on top of basic rate).

The site agreement is the usual diabolical document. It resembles the Woodall-Duckham Agreement against whose use as a precedent we warned in our last issue. It abolishes the afternoon tea break, introduces 'flexibility' and ends demarcation agreements. It would also have the effect of reducing 'condition money' and 'radius money' (that is payment for travel to the site).

The ironic thing about the Coryton site is that despite many disputes there, productivity is exceptionally high. Even 3 months ago the job was 3 months ahead of schedule. This headway will be sacrificed by Kellogg's in their attempt to smash site organization.

Relations on the site have been greatly worsened by the activities of the site industrial relations manager, 'Wilf' Strangeways, an ex-full time official of the CEU. This sort of job is increasingly becoming the aim in life of certain union officials. This might well explain their subservient attitude towards management. Whom they see as possible future employers.

The main union on the site is the CEU, but the PTU and AEF also have substantial membership. Two of the officials concerned are members of the Communist Party. One of them, Roycraft of the AEF, has distinguished himself by being the only official openly to state he is prepared to sign the agreement as it stands. There is no doubt that all the other officials are also prepared to sign - given the opportunity to do so.

The Industrial Committee of 'Solidarity' produced a leaflet on July 11 which said:

'In view of the efficiency and productivity of the site construction and the importance of the refinery to the national economy we feel that the workers there should "back Britain" and refuse to accept the management's unpatriotic attempt to close the site down. They should refuse to dig their own graves, clear the site up, make it safe and return their tools. Instead, they should start work normally on Monday, June 22nd, and ignore the unilateral wildcat action of the management in closing the site down.

'...We feel that we must issue a warning against the activities of certain full-time officials. Some of these sinister men are already prepared to sign the agreement, while others have already signed similar ones on other sites.

'The defence of job conditions at Coryton can be victorious. But it can only be won by the united and determined action of the men on the site.'

The struggle at Coryton has broken out at a difficult time. The previous high productivity on the site has made it easier for the Company to close the site down now (there is a lesson there, somewhere). Moreover if the Kellog men are defeated, all future work (not only at Coryton) will take place under conditions determined solely by management.

The Coryton lads are not only protecting the conditions on this site, but also on other sites in the Thames estuary area. If they accept the new 'deal', they will be accepting lower wages and worse conditions for themselves and their families at all future jobs in the area.

THE WRITING'S ON THE WALL

Slogan painted up at the Kings North construction site in Kent:

Remember  
Romford  
and vote for J. Baldwin.  
The man who gets things done.  
Including you.

IF YOU WISH TO KNOW MORE ABOUT 'SOLIDARITY', ITS AIMS AND ACTIVITIES,  
PLEASE FILL IN THIS FORM AND POST IT TO THE ADDRESS BELOW.

NAME .....

ADDRESS .....

TEL. No. .... UNION .....

PLEASE SEND TO : SOLIDARITY, c/o H. Russell,  
53A, Westmoreland Road, Bromley, Kent.

JUST OUT : 'SOLIDARITY' PAMPHLET No. 30

PARIS: MAY 1968. An eye-witness account  
of exciting events. Workers and students in action. Renault,  
the Sorbonne, Censier. Full documentation of the role of the  
Communist Party. Preliminary bibliography. Price (post free):  
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## SOLIDARITY regional addresses

- ABERDEEN Mike Dey, 142 Walker Road, Aberdeen
- CLYDESIDE Dan Kane, 43 Valeview Terrace, Dunbarton
- LEEDS Tony Woodiwiss, 2 O'Linda Street, Leeds 2
- LONDON H. Russell, 53A, Westmoreland Road, Bromley, Kent.
- MIDLANDS G. Childs, 29 Pickerell Rd., Coseley, Bilston, Staffs.
- WALES David Lamb, Coleg Harlech, Harlech, Merioneth.