

# BIG FLAME

## Ford Bulletin no 2

*Fraud*

**HALEWOOD**

*Fraud*



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LINE  
WORKER

# HALEWOOD - THE CLOCKS PUT BACK

This new contract which was highlighted with the '£68 million' wage increase, as we've said before, is not as good as it sounds, the loss of wash-up money is just one instance. As if this wasn't enough they've introduced these mobile clocks, where we are meant to clock in and out and prepare for the job in our own time. And why 'mobile clocks'? Well it lessens the chances of us making them work right with glue! and also it gives them more opportunity to waste our time. Well already (we are pleased to report) there has been some boycotting of their clocks. On Monday night (when they were first put into operation) a section of the night shift from around the trim lines, waited until the buzzer went until they clocked in, making the point that they clock in, in the company's time and not theirs. Then on Tuesday night the same thing happened, roughly about 25 men, in fact a whole booth from the discing area and 4 from the metal finish, but when they were up in the lockers preparing for the job a general foreman sent word saying that they were off pay. The men said 'alright we'll stay up here in the lockers. Then a steward from the white lines was called up to the office and told that the 4 men from metal finish were on pay and that they had not lost any pay, but the men from the discing area were still off pay. They remained in the lockers until 11-15pm when they were told they had only lost 10 minutes pay in all, by a senior steward. This proves that the company are scared of any confrontation over these new mobile clocks, as they know from the general feeling inside that they would get smashed. Also as far as we know, the whole of engine dress walked out without clocking off, and surely there have been other actions against the clocks that we don't know about.

Together with this and the fact of the confusion caused in the car parks at the change of shifts in the mornings, and it looks a dead cert that somebody is going to have an accident on the road, we should all take action against the clocks and not just accept their new regulations which they make for us.

The point is this: now we are meant to pay for wash-up time, and then have the aggravation of the busy car park and road after a shift's work.

As one worker put it:-

"What they've done in fact, is to have taken washup money from us and are paying it to the supervisors who receive £12 a week extra (1 hours overtime pay a shift) for operating these new mobile clocks".

## THE CLOCKS KNOCKED BACK

But once again our actions have forced the company to back down. The result of the J.W.C. meeting on Wednesday morning is that the clocks have been suspended till next Tuesday. The stewards have stated that they are prepared to take the lead on this one, we are all united, and we even have the police on our side, worried about the traffic jams in the morning.

So, as far as we concerned, there is no chance, that these clocks will be put back. If the company tries to, our reply will be the same as this past week. It's always nice to think that Ford have wasted quite a bit of money on these clocks.

We think that the mobile clocks are part of a general attempt by the company to tighten up discipline. The introduction of utility men, the possibility of a new code in the Blue Book, are other examples. Our resistance to all other means that management might try to introduce in order to screw more work out of us must be the same. As we said just after the signing of the deal, the fight must and will go on.

Now that we've smashed the clocks, the next move will be for wash-up. This is the feeling of most of the men on the lines who've always known that the recent deal was not that good for them. This is the issue which has mobilised the workers in Dagenham as we've shown in other parts of this bulletin.

# DAGENHAM — NO LET UP

No sooner had the unions accepted the agreement in October when in Dagenham the fight began against it. By 25th October management were already screaming. Here are a couple of extracts from a management bulletin:

"Dear Employee, following a meeting of line workers Thursday morning we were advised that a series of restrictions were to be placed on the Company. This included taking Preparation and Clean Up time within shift, not accepting new starts unless there was a months' notice of overtime and a refusal to accept efficiency improvements...."

...I must make it quite clear to you that Preparation and Clean Up Overtime will not continue, and we will not tolerate the restrictions you have stated you will impose. You must be as fed up as we are with the continual stoppages in this plant and I must remind you that we will not pay for stoppages of work or unauthorised meetings. I would ask you to reconsider your position and enable us to settle down to the business of building cars on an efficient and continuous basis...."

## DOWN THE OFFICE

Recently management provoked a lay-off situation in the Dagenham Body Plant after a torch solderer refused to do an extra job - it later turned out that there was probably a shortage of side panels at the time. It was no surprise that Fords chose this section to start trouble because the torch solderers, 2 days earlier, had started an overtime ban to back up the campaign to get wash up back for lineworkers. A 'delegation' went to confront the yankee plant manager about the lay-off and while 'negotiations' went on his telephones were smashed and his carpet ripped up. This kind of action is not exceptional at Dagenham, as the workers refuse to let the company get away with what it has in the past. Here is management reaction again:

"On Wednesday 13 November about 120 employees engaged in violent demonstrations in the office areas while discussions were being held with the Convenor and Shop Stewards. Subsequently about 40 entered the Operations Manager's Conference room and engaged in more than an hour of verbal abuse. Whilst only a small proportion of employees were involved all employees are warned that, in the event of any future demonstrations of a similar nature, those identified will be liable to be terminated from the Ford Motor Company."

## IMMIGRANTS RESIST FORD DISCIPLINE

There is a complete disrespect for authority at Dagenham. Why does this kind of action continually take place? Going on shift it becomes immediately obvious that over 60% of the workers at Dagenham are black - West Indian, Indian and Pakistani. These blokes don't come to Dagenham because it reminds them of their home countries. They're there for the money, just the same as anyone else and that's all. They work at Ford, because for most of them the main alternative is to work in some low paid sweatshop of which there are hundreds in the London area. A lot of the West Indians in particular come to Fords from these sweatshops - once you're out and in some bigger place you'll never put up with sweatshop-style bosses anymore. Furthermore many immigrant workers come to Ford without having experienced Ford-style industrial discipline, and can't see why they should begin now.

## NEW AGREEMENT HAS TO BE FOUGHT

But now for all workers the crunch is coming. As Ford fills its vacancies with relatively green new starters, they're beginning to crack down, a new discipline code as part of the Blue Book is in the wind. It will be designed to force in the 'efficiency' proposals of the recent agreement. However, many sections are well prepared to fight it even if most of the stewards are not. Many areas now have informal shop-floor organisation - ginger groups and the like have grown up over the recent period. As the Company moves to reduce manning, as on the B shift torch solderers recently, or as extra work is doled out, or again if the verbal agreements over work methods are suddenly wiped out by the foremen, workers' reactions aren't long in coming. However it's going to be a hard struggle and a long one as the company attacks insubordination and as workers defend their right not to undergo barracks discipline.

# WHERE'S THE CAR INDUSTRY GOING?

PART  
1

Advanced capitalism, the type of society in which we live, has been so far the society of the automobile. More than 200,000 car workers in this country. Tens of thousands working in the component industries. The car industry has been for years the centre and heart of capitalism, its most important economic sector. If you had forgotten how important Ford was, you certainly were reminded again by the press coverage of the last dispute, when a not so abnormal Press strike made national headlines for weeks. The car, symbol of 'progress', item of mass consumption, symbol of the increased buying power of the working class.

Then few years back; capitalism entered its worst crisis since 1929; after that, the oil crisis; now the news of the crisis of the automobile sector. Tens of thousands laid off, several plants closed down in the States, a 3-day week in Italy, dismantling of plants in France, mass redundancies and continuous lay-offs in Germany. In Britain, so far, things for the car industry seem to run more smoothly, with the possible exception of BLMC, but you would argue that what's happening all over the world will sooner or later happen here.

WHAT'S HAPPENING THEN TO THE CAR INDUSTRY? IS THE EPOCH OF THE AUTOMOBILE OVER? ARE THE BIG CAR MULTINATIONALS GOING BANKRUPT? WHY HASN'T THE BRITISH CAR INDUSTRY BEEN HIT BY CLOSURES, LAY-OFFS AND REDUNDANCIES SO FAR? BIG FLAME WILL TRY TO PROVIDE AN ANSWER TO ALL THESE QUESTIONS AND OTHERS CONCERNING THE FUTURE OF THE CAR INDUSTRY. THIS FIRST PART OF THE SERIES MUST BE SEEN JUST AS AN INTRODUCTION. FROM NEXT MONTH WE'LL LOOK IN A MORE DETAILED WAY INTO THE BRITISH INDUSTRY AND WE'LL START FROM FORDS.

In the early 20's a very strong working class movement swept across Europe, and the States, on the wave of the Russian Revolution. The workers councils in Germany, the factory councils in Italy and the steward movement in Britain grew and gained strength. The way the bosses defeated those movements was not just by blatant repression, but also by making changes in their plants and machineries rationalising and restructuring them, with the purpose to change the face of the working class. It was in those years that Fords introduced the assembly line which revolutionised all techniques of production. The main aim to decrease the importance of the skilled workers, those with a craft, a 'job', and a pride and capability in it, and base the flow of production on a mass of unskilled workers, without a specific job, with no pride, asked to perform, simple, monotonous, repetitive movements. The face of the working class was changed, the relationship between workers changed. Thousands went through a process of deskilling in the engineering industry. A new era started. As always, the workers' struggles had given the bosses the stimulus to make the changes necessary to defeat those struggles. The harder the struggles, the more drastic changes the employers need. It's taken the workers movement over 40 years to learn how to cope with that new situation: the mass production, assembly line, conveyor belt, no skill, no craft, no pride in the job.

This is the underlying cause of the present crisis of capitalism and especially of the car sector: the new wave of struggles that the workers have fought in the past years all over Europe and the States. Like in the 20's, the bosses are trying to go through a massive restructuring which will completely change the working class; the car industry is one of their starting points.

Only in this context can the present crisis be understood, i.e. not just in terms of stockpiling, drops in sales, and full car parks. In other words, we don't think that the huge car multinationals are on the verge of collapse ( that would really be the end of capitalism ), nor that the epoch of the automobile is over. For a start there has been no drop in sales in the world market; the drop in Western Europe and U.S. being absorbed by the increase in most other countries. And it's not a coincidence that Henry Ford has made this year the biggest investment since 1965, while Ford production increased of 1 million cars in the last year.

## CAR INDUSTRY CONTINUED

What is probably over is instead this particular way of making motor cars, this way of exploiting millions of workers. The bosses are clear about one thing: the profitability and rate of exploitation obtained in the 50's and 60's can't be repeated because of workers resistance. The solution is simple: shift large amounts of production to newly industrialised countries; decrease the number of car workers in the advanced countries; change the speeds, the manning levels, the structure of the working week; change the techniques of production; change the way in which plants are built.

The multinationals have been shifting production to Spain, Brazil, Argentine, the Middle East, Pakistani, India, Nigeria, Poland for some time now. In these new places they are guaranteed a more docile labour force, low wages, continuity of production enforced by right wing dictators (Spain, Brazil). At the same time, while the home markets show drops in sales, these nations are nearer to the new developing markets: those nations industrialised after the war, whose middle class and working class only now start to have any buying power at all. Take VOLSKWAGEN. In Germany they have registered a 20% drop in sales. 10,000 redundancies and continuous lay-offs. But with the Brazilian plant in full swing, the company will announce in 1974, record productions in its history.

At the same time, whereas only few years ago all central European firms were crying out for immigrant labour from the Mediterranean, now immigration has been stopped (like at Volkswagen where the immigrants are being sacked), or tightly controlled. Production is decentralised; instead of few huge plants, many small ones. Discipline is tightened through all sorts of deals in every firm. Utility men and portable clocks are just two examples. The car bosses have realised that a large concentration of young, unskilled, immigrant workers creates a daily, continuous struggle, a permanent thorn in the managements' side.

The fight between Henry Ford and Arthur Flicker is entering a new phase.

## FORD SPIES AND HATCHET MEN OF THE THIRTIES

We've said before that the introduction of utility men on the shop-floor was one of the more dangerous strings attached to the recent agreement. The following notes, taken from the book 'The Company and the Union', talk about Ford's use of Servicemen in the older days.

"In the period 1935-37 the union was being formed in the car factories. A report on GM said: The auto companies engaged in espionage to ferret out the union sympathisers and to block union organisation. Between 1934 and 1937, the corporation spent nearly 1 million dollars to spy on workers suspected of having union sympathies. The notorious Ford Service Department, were far more expensive and a far greater barrier to organisation. Made up of ex-cops, ex-athletes, thugs and racketeers, the Service Dept, in the mid 1930's numbered more than 3,000 men, perhaps the largest private police force ever assembled.

On the night shift these Servicemen often shocked Ford workers by leaping in front of them in the dark, flashing a light in their eyes, and demanding 'Where did you get that badge' and 'Who's your boss?'. They also practiced a technique called 'shaking up', in which a worker, called from his job, would be escorted between 2 servicemen, who would bump him between them as they walked down the aisle.

In 1932 tool and die workers who were considering joining the union had their tools smashed. Men were fired for no reason, and there was no means of appeal. Workers could not smoke on Ford property (a ban not lifted until the 1940's when Henry Ford II, a smoker himself, ordered it rescinded). For years workers were barred from speaking at lunch, a taboo that led the workers to talk out of the side of their mouths, like convicts - a practice known as the Ford Whisperm.

# MINERS NOT FOOLED BY 'CONTRACT'

Once again the ruling class is having kittens about the miners. The 3-1 majority vote against the productivity scheme is a big kick in the teeth for the social contract fraud that the Labour Government has been trying to put over on the working-class. This 'contract' has looked tattier and tattier as section after section of workers have seen through it for what it is—an attempt to working-class living standards. Fords, vast numbers of Scottish workers and the miners are among the most publicised sections that have ignored Labours master plan for getting the poor, hard-up capitalists back on the road to increased profits. The way is now clear for a united campaign for the miners to win a big increase in wages. But that's not the only important thing about recent events. Fights against productivity deals in general have to be an essential part of any battle with the bosses. 'Productivity' deals have always been a firm favourite with the T.U.C. leadership and the social contract was hinged around no wage increases without increases in productivity.

## PRODUCTIVITY IN THE PAST

In the sixties it was the National Power Loading Agreement that the N.C.B. used to increase the exploitation of the miners. This new scheme was to be a switch from measured day work to a piece rate system. At FORD, where measured day work was introduced Donkies years ago carworkers have always lagged behind in the wages scale. It has been the workers who have stuck to locally negotiated piece rate agreements that now have the highest wages in the car industry (a side effect of this has been section-alism etc which has led to some extent to the reputation of carworkers as being selfish and greedy) Lawrence Daly complained in 1971 that the miners' day wage agreements should have included the big increases that carworkers e.g. Standard Triumph, received when MDW was introduced. But whereas Fords, the masters of exploitation, could build factories particularly suited to tightly organised slave labour, in the mines it was much more difficult. Productivity increased initially after the 1966 agreement as mechanisation increased but a more important 'side effect' was the national unification of the miners for an militant programme, that won two substantial wage rises and brought down the Tory Government. Running alongside this wage militancy was a slow down in productivity as miners realised that they shouldn't have to work harder just to fill in the gaps that were left by redundancies and miners jacking it in for better jobs elsewhere.

## SCHEME TO BREAK UNITY

The miners and militants in the N.U.M. leadership have argued the new proposed scheme would smash the unity that miners have fought for since before the turn of the century. With different pits and different areas on substantially different bonus rates it would have effectively marked a return to the jungle of the piece rate system without even the concession of local bargaining power to push the rates up. The argument is simple—miners up and down the country do the same job... they should be paid the same money.

Safety in the mines would have also suffer. With men spurred on by the deputies (charge-hands) they would cut corners and forget about safety just to cut the extra coal that might mean a few quid in the wage packet.

Productivity schemes usually contain 2 vital ingredients besides more-work... increased supervision and the potential of redundancies. To get people to work harder the N.C.B. would have to get the whips out and with talk of "joint productivity committees" this would involve union blokes doing managements job (This is commonplace at Fords). Productivity schemes, because they try to make one man do the two or three lead to redundancies. In the 60's management managed to get rid of  $\frac{1}{3}$  the miners by closing down pits and moving men around so much (pit to pit, area to area) that they got fed up and left. That way they avoided paying redundancy money. Now apart from 'natural wastage' (100,000 men are over 50) the N.C.B. plan to keep wages down in so called unproductive pits and areas and attract men to the more productive ones. Also it was hoped that with a divided union mass closures would have been easier to implement.

## WAY CLEAR FOR WAGE FIGHT

There's alot about the proposed scheme that snacks of the recent Ford agreement, what with efficiency deals, increased supervision etc. (its not particularly surprising—bosses are always keen on these kind of things) The miners have knocked back the N.C.B.'s plans for the time being and the stage is set to fight a battle for a big increase in wages. Fighting for across the board big wages is the best way to resist the ruling classes attempts to curtail workers incomes and cut living standards. Ford workers have to begin to break the shackles of the present agreement—firstly by resisting any increase in supervision and workload but also being ready, not only to support the miners in any wage fight but take up our own fight.

# FIAT - GENERAL STRIKE

On October 17th 1974 a general strike was called of all Fiat workers in Italy, and of all workers of the Turin region, as well as the schools and colleges. The strike was to mobilise mass demonstrations against Fiat's decision to impose a 3-day week in the factories, and against unemployment. This unemployment and recession is the political choice that has been made by Italy's bosses in order to drive back the struggles that the Italian working class has been fighting, continuously and without a break, since the Hot Autumn of 1969. It has been dictated by the refusal of American and German capitalists to lend money to Italy unless the working class is first dealt with and repressed.

This general strike was a historic moment for Turin, because for the first time the Unions decided that they would hold a mass political meeting inside the grounds of the Fiat factory. The meeting took place on the morning of October 17th, with 20,000 people gathered to hear speakers from the political parties, the revolutionary organisations, the FIAT factory council, and from the representatives of 1,000 families who have just occupied a new housing estate on the outskirts of the town and from the students of Turin. The Unions, true to scabby form, chose a day when FIAT workers would be laid off, to have the meeting - but nonetheless there were many Fiat workers there and they were joined by a march of 4,000 school and college students, who marched 2 miles to the factory from the centre of town. It was a fine moment.

## 'WORK SLOWLY!' (ITALIAN WORKING CLASS SONG).

'Work nice and slowly, take it easy. Don't make too much effort. The man who works fast, ends up sick. He might have to go to hospital. And in hospital there's not enough beds. So let's face it, you could end up dying. Health has no price - it can't be bought. So take it easy - a pause here, a slowdown there, work slow. Take it easy. I salute you with a clenched fist - and in that fist there lies our struggle for less work and better conditions. Work more slowly. Take it easy.'

The following notice was found pinned up around the train in Hallowood!

### IMPORTANT

IT HAS BEEN NOTED THAT SOME EMPLOYEES HAVE BEEN DROPPING DEAD ON THEIR STATIONS. WE WOULD SUGGEST ANYONE WHO DIES FROM LACK OF SLEEP, CONSTIPATION, OR OTHER COMPLAINTS WOULD THEY PLEASE LIE DOWN AS IT IS REGRETTED TO BE VERY HARD TO DETERMINE WHEN A PERSON HAS EXPIRED OR JUST ASLEEP FROM FATIGUE. IN FUTURE ANYONE FOUND DEAD ON HIS STATION WILL BE DROPPED FROM THE PAYROLL (LAY-OFF).

WARNING. FAILURE TO COMPLY MAY RESULT IN PREMATURE BURIAL.

## FORD SPAIN

We've been asked by SEAT workers (\*) in Barcelona - currently on short time and hardening about the bosses and the government's plans for the car industry - for information about the new Ford plant near Valencia. If you have information about Ford's plans for the Spanish factory - production, lay-out, marketing, etc. - contact us and we'll pass it on.

(\*) SEAT, the biggest car producer in Spain, is a FIAT subsidiary. SEAT workers are at the head of the current struggles against the political and economic policies of Franco's fascist regime.

## MONEY, MONEY, MONEY

LEAFLETS COST ABOUT £7.50  
TO PRODUCE, THE BULLETIN  
A LITTLE MORE

WE WELCOME ALL CONTRIBUTIONS  
TO HELP COVER THESE  
COSTS

THANKS.

# FORD TACTICS — AND OURS

HENRY FORD HAS WAYS OF TRYING TO DEFEAT US-BUILT UP THROUGH DECADES OF STRUGGLE AGAINST WORKERS ON THREE CONTINENTS. THIS SECTION HAS BEEN WRITTEN BY A BROTHER IN THE BODY PLANT, DAGENHAM. THE SECOND SECTION, BY A HALEWOOD SOFT TRIM WORKER, DEALS WITH OUR ANSWER TO THE COMPANY'S TACTICS.

## 1 Harrassment

We are all well-acquainted with the tactics that your friendly slave-drivers use in the sections. Firstly, your foremen, to give them their due, are well trained. They not only keep production going, and in some cases

increase it. They also stave off potential stoppages and keep the workers happy. Sit back and think for a moment on how many times you have seen the foreman hold down potential trouble. The methods they use vary. With one man the foreman will say: 'Get on with the job, or there'll be trouble.' And with another he will say: 'Come on, me old chum, do this for me' ... even though you've only known him for five minutes! Both work well. The foremen are masters in the art of persuasion, and the only retaliation is for us to have, and show, continual contempt for them. This breaks their mystique and bares their true self - not your friend, but your slave-driver.

Once this method fails, they predictably start getting heavy. You're constantly harrassed until you once again toe the line. They watch you all the time, and attempt to make you feel uncomfortable in the hope that you'll speed up, either by choice, or unconsciously. Whenever I've gone slow I've had either the foreman, general foreman or superintendent breathing down my neck. Then they come on with the threats - 'You'll be out of the gate before you can say Henry Ford', etc. If you resist that, they may say that you have a valid case and that it's now in negotiation and could you carry on as normal please. If you've really got their backs up, they will continue harrassment until you pack your bags and leave, or until they give up and move you out of the trouble spot where you are holding up production - moving you onto a cushy no. where they can watch you, and where you can shout till you're blue in the face without affecting their profits one little bit. If, however, they are spoiling for a fight, they will keep you on the job, and watch you, dock time off for coming back late for dinner, accuse you of sabotage, shoddy work, trouble-making - anything they can throw at you - as well as increasing production perhaps.

Henry, of course, likes to have the best workers in the jobs that need high production. A good worker is strong enough to stand a killing pace, never talks back, has commitments and debts to keep him at work, doubles up if someone is missing, etc. Henry selects people for these tasks and keeps them at work until they either drop dead, or get bolshy. And both ways they have to be moved off the job!

Well, that is selection and harrassment for you. One of the more sinister and crafty tricks Ford gets up to is

## 2 Splitting

Different sections are split- the hard working ones from the easy, early finish ones from hooter-to-hooter ones (so as not to give them any ideas). Line workers are split from sub-assembly, electricians from semi-skilled, and so on. This, of course, can create a situation, where there is no solidarity in a plant- it's all different sections and sections within sections- wasting a lot of energy fighting each other instead of fighting the Company. Remember such things as: 'Sorry- no overtime- they've banned it!'. That creates enmity against fellow workers, instead of against the Company for not guaranteeing overtime. Or how about: 'You are all laid off from tomorrow because of the stoppage downstairs'. Ring a bell? It's the same; you think: 'Oh, those bastards are losing us money again', instead of 'Oh, no, you don't- we want 40 hours pay work or no work!'

It's obvious that from the Company's point of view, it's better to have workers battling each other, rather than uniting and fighting Fords. To split us means misdirecting tension, grievances and energy. It also saves them lay-off pay in many cases. It gets strikers back to work quicker - by pressure from other workers. Finally, shift work splits something chronic. The only people to see the other shift are the stewards, and it seems to be beyond their means to meet every day, so there is very little dialogue between shifts. I ask you, how can you discuss in a situation like that? 9



I think it's important that we talk about the question of all-out strikes and the alternatives to them.

## All out strikes?

A lot of militants think that the only way to fight, to win a dispute, is by indefinite all-out strike action. Some say that once you're back in, it's very hard to convince everyone to walk out again. It's also true that to keep any industrial action going inside a plant, like a go-slow, or overtime ban, or work to rule, you need a better organisation than to simply stay out.

Another point. Every time a dispute starts, it's tools down, out the gates and then, 'Next meeting, a week on Friday'. But you can't just expect workers to miss two weeks' pay just like that. With inflation, lay-offs and everything else, it's bad enough without long strikes. It's easier for the management to go on for a few weeks without production. Sometimes they welcome it to get over a bottleneck. Look at the ten week strike, in 1971, when we had to go back for an offer we'd got weeks before.

Some other militants say: 'NO mass meetings for a while. We don't want a return to work'. But I say, if you don't have the majority of workers fully involved, knowing what's at stake, why they're out, you'll always lose sooner or later, because Fords always know what they're fighting for. We want mass meetings, and if we make sense then we'll win then and have everybody informed whatever action we decide to take.

Another thing is that all-out strikes hit production, but don't create any chaos inside the factory. Which is what Fords are mostly afraid of: chaos. If we're out, Henry says, 'Well, I'll use those two or three weeks for a few changes'. We leave management time to think, plan and react. By the time we go back, they've found a way to recoup their losses. But if you strike, say, one hour one day, two hours next day, or one hour one line, and one hour the next line, and you'll see them all panicking. They won't know what's hit them. They do it on the Continent and it works there. And, it gives the workers a chance to take money home every day.

Well, Ford and then are very smart. We've got to be smart too if we want to stand a chance.

## HALEWOOD — ODDS AND SODS

IT SEEMS THAT THE MINISHIFT IS ALREADY DISLIKED BY QUITE A FEW WORKERS. LAST FRIDAY, WHEN THE A SHIFT WORKED IT FOR THE FIRST TIME THE ABSENTEISM WENT UP QUITE A LOT. THE ESCORT LINES WERE PULLING ABOUT TEN SHORT. THE FEELING OF A LOT OF PEOPLE CAN BE SUMMED UP "...." GIVE IT TILL THE NEW YEAR, AND THEN STICK IT". AS REGARDS TO THIS, WE SAY THAT THE ONLY REALISTIC DEMAND IS FOR A SHORTER WEEK ON NIGHTS AND THAT'S WHAT WE'LL BE CAMPAIGNING FOR.

SOME MEN ON THE TRIM, A SHIFT, HAVE SET UP A CLAIMANTS' UNION. THEY HOLD REGULAR MEETINGS ATTENDED BY PEOPLE WORKING IN OTHER AREAS TOO. THE PURPOSE OF THE NEWLY FORMED GROUP IS TO STAND A CHANCE AGAINST ALL THE TRICKS THAT THE SOCIAL SECURITY USES AGAINST US EVERY TIME THERE IS A LAY-OFF OR A STRIKE.

IT SEEMS THAT RECENTLY IT HAS BECOME INCREASINGLY DIFFICULT TO HAVE DISPUTES WITHOUT BEING THREATENED TO HAVE THE JOBS MANNED. ON ONE OCCASION ONE LINE HAVING A MEETING OUTSIDE WAS TOLD BY THE CONVENOR THAT THEIR JOBS WOULD BE MANNED. THE BOILER MEN RECEIVED THE SAME TREATMENT. THERE ARE ENDLESS EXAMPLES OF JOBS BEING MANNED. WE SAY THAT A GOOD TRADE UNIONIST PRINCIPLE IS NEVER TO MAN ANYBODY ELSE'S JOB. HOW CAN WE EXPECT THE OTHERS TO SUPPORT US, IF WE SCAB ON THEM.

ONCE UPON A TIME THERE WAS A STEWARD ELECTION ON CAPRI TRIM. TWO MILITANTS WERE STANDING; BUT THEN SOMEBODY HIGH UP REOPENED THE NOMINATIONS, THE MILITANTS SPLIT THE VOTE AND A FEWLY NOMINATED MODERATE GOT IN.

# LETTER

Dear Big Flame

I'm a body worker. I've worked here for six years, I always get your leaflets, and one of the comments I often hear from other people is:

"Oh they're Big Flame, they're against the unions".

But if you ask them, what is the union doing for them? they answer 'nothing'. The only time when you see a steward is when they want money off you - I.e. tote, death collection, union dues. Some stewards don't even do that, they have collector stewards doing it for them, so that they don't even have to show their face on the line. If you are lucky enough to get hold of a steward and ask him what's going on, he will tell you to mind your business. They do have a duplicator, I believe, but they never put any leaflets out on the shop floor. So the only information we get is from the Big Flame leaflets which we think are very true.

There is the odd occasion you will see your steward doing something, for instance when there was a committee post election and a chap from the W.R.P. was trying to get on this committee, some stewards went down the lines telling the men to vote against him saying that Big Flame was trying to take over the branch. At the branch meeting which is usually attended by about 30 men, this time there was about 200 men, some didn't even know where Transport house was, and they voted to a hand signal from the convenor.

There are a few good stewards but they get threatened with being branded if they go against this vicious circle of the senior stewards. There used to be a convenor here called Roberts and everyone praised him. He was something to do with Big Flame I was told.

Name and section supplied.

## 'STALAG 13'

The next article is a poem written by a P.T.A. worker in 1971 and we are reprinting it as we think it is still relevant and nice.

### 'STALAG 13'

You clock in and out every day  
That's what you have to do to get your pay  
Same old thing all the time  
It really does get on your mind  
You have to go fast to keep the pace  
Wondering how many hours you've got to work in this place  
The cars come down the line all day long  
Doing the same thing you can't go wrong  
Pressing a button, turning a screw  
That's all you ever seen to do.

What do we think and what do we say  
Same old thing every day  
Football and sex it is of course  
Or I think I'll have a bet on this horse  
Our minds are blank, other than this  
Working in Fords is no heavenly bliss  
We don't have time to drink tea all day long  
What Fortescue said was all wrong  
Let him work a day on line one or two  
I bet he wouldn't last the day, do you?

A gap in the line is a heavenly sight  
Especially when your working through the night  
It's no fun leaving your wife  
Or working nights all your life  
We stand like robots eight hours a day  
On Thursdays they even give you your pay.

Fenced in this place all day long  
we think this is all wrong

'Stalag Thirteen' we call this place  
You are a number not a face.

# WHAT IS BIG FLAME

BIG FLAME IS A REVOLUTIONARY SOCIALIST ORGANISATION WITH GROUPS IN WEST LONDON, EAST LONDON, BIRMINGHAM, MANCHESTER AND MERSEYSIDE.

On Merseyside we are organising with workers and tenants around Fords, Plessey, the Dockside Area, Tower Hill (Kirkby) and with students in Technical Colleges and University.

The Ford Halewood Big Flame group consists partly of Fordworkers and partly of external militants. We hold meetings usually on Sunday, usually in Stanley House (Upper Parliament Street) to discuss the situation at Ford, how to organise, as well as wider topics and prepare leaflets. In the near future we'll expand our activities to more of the industries around Speke and Halewood.

We feel that what we do around Fords, leaflets, meetings, newspaper and now the bulletin, is necessary because the unions are not capable nor interested enough to fight against the bosses. This does not mean we are anti union; we support the union as long as it is acting in the interests of the workers. When it doesn't, there has to be an alternative organisation of the rank & file that can fight for what it wants itself as well as put pressure on the union to do what the members want and not what the bureaucrats say it's best.

Fordworkers are always kept in the dark, divided and manipulated, and we have to find our own voice. Leaflets, the newspaper and this bulletin help to create this voice. The existence of the Big Flame Ford Group is a chance for isolated groups and individuals to get together and develop a strategy of action inside the plant. After all, Henry has hundreds of Personnel officers, foremen etc. thinking of nothing else, but how to squeeze more money out of us. We have to more prepared than they are. There is another B.F. Ford group in Dagenham with whom we are in close contact. The B.F. group in Birmingham has also started work around the BLMC plant at Longbridge.

