

The Fifth Column at Fords

After the Parity strike he was never off our backs : after the Dillon strike he trod more carefully. But now the foreman is showing his true face again. If he doesn't like the look of you or you stand up for your rights

- * he'll make sure you never get promoted to a better job
- * he'll keep a secret file on you
- * he'll move you around the plant.

The Foreman

On one section in PTA a few weeks ago the foreman made up 2 men to relief job. They'd only been there a few months and there were 10 men who'd been there longer. The most senior man isn't in the foreman's good books because he sticks up for himself and the other workers. So once again he was passed over.

We can't name the man or the section because it'll mean more trouble for him. The foremen keep files on men like him, listing every complaint he's made and every action he's taken. Like being off sick when the foreman has power to judge whether your excuse is valid. In Material Handling, job interviews are all done by the general foreman. If you've got a record you've had it. One man was refused a job there last week because of a written warning he was given in 1968. He was the most senior man applying for the job.

And what happens when you leave Fords and go for a job somewhere else ? The foreman gets a form to complete and says whether or not he would be prepared to re-employ you.



WHY DO THEY BOTHER ?

It's not just that they're power mad. They're the lowest level of management doing the day to day job of carrying out orders on the shop floor. Since the speed-up started their job has been

- to keep production going at all costs
- to deal with militants who try to fight speed-up.

Fords are desperate for higher production. On the Capri line for example the speed was 17 before the strike.....23 last week25 now... And foremen are on the spot to make sure it goes smoothly.

- * If a man complains about timing - and speeds are varied in an attempt to fool workers - the foreman's there with stop-watch to say the timing's right
- * If militants take action he's there with his records to threaten them and divide them from other workers by going easy on the yes-men.

Like the rest of management, they're more interested in higher production than safety or working conditions.

* In PTA a man stopped the line because a car body was not set on its skid. The foreman threatened him with disciplinary action and claimed it was O.K. (does that explain why he then rectified it?) The man insisted on seeing the safety officer, who said he had to go along with the foreman.

* In the sanding section foreman, safety officer and doctor all insist that the work is safe though clouds of dust are flying about.

And it's too bad for the foreman who doesn't push Fords' hard line. One foreman was sacked recently for failing to report men who left the line.



"FOREMAN'S FAVOURITES" — [HE'S GOT FILES ON THE REST]

Other events show just how worried Fords is about keeping up production

* redundancies were threatened at Silcock and Tollings and the men were ready to take action. Nothing happened. No jobs have gone. How much pressure did Fords put on S.C bosses to avoid an expensive bottleneck in the compound?

* after we gave out our last leaflet, we were stopped and questioned by the police and offered a night inside. They said Fords didn't want us there. It's not us they're afraid of because we can't tell any worker what to do. They know that some workers work with us and that many more share our ideas. And when convenors and union officials issue warnings about us they're showing how scared they are of the workers knowing the truth about their situation and making up their own minds what needs to be done.

Ford workers have the right to choose what they read and to decide for themselves whether we have anything to say.

MASS ACTION.

Fords are prepared to make minor concessions to stop trouble. This weakness has already been used and can be used again -

* In Transmission the men have been trying for months to get safety shoes. Nothing happened until news reached management of a sit-in planned for the next day. The sit-in never happened because Fords brought the shoe man in to display his wares.

JUST THE THREAT OF MASS ACTION ON THE SHOP FLOOR FORCED FORDS TO GIVE IN.

* In PTA a man was sent home but was reinstated after a walk out by his section.

Collective action on the shop floor is the only way to fight speed-ups and the foremen who are pushing them through. It's amazing what Fords will give just to keep the lines running. And next time a man gets sent to the office by a foreman, why should he go alone? They can intimidate one man, but what about a whole section?

8/11/71 BY A GROUP OF FORD WORKERS AND BIG FLAME, 78 Clarendon Rd, Wallasey. Tel: 639 5448.

We will be talking about the sit-in in the Press Shop in our next leaflet. If you'd like to talk about this or any other issues come to one of our meetings at Open Design, 24 Wapping (dock road along from Pier head) on - Wednesday 8p.m, Thursday 8pm or Sunday 12 mid-day.