

BIG FLAME

FORD SPECIAL

NO. 2 DAGENHAM JULY 1974



BODY, PTA, & ENGINE PLANTS

LAY-OFFS

SAFETY

UNIONS

HOME LIFE?

STRATEGY

TACTICS



INTRO

This is the second Ford Special that we've printed. Our reason for doing it is that we feel that our leaflets aren't really suitable for writing about more general issues. In this pamphlet we've tried to look at a number of issues that are happening at Fords, and the lessons of some of the struggles of the past year.

Our apologies if some of the articles are rather long. We've tried to deal with things in some detail...but even so, we obviously haven't covered all the things that need to be said.

One thing is clear, though. If we're going to get anyw here at Dagenham, the fight is not going to be led by the Union structure. It's up to us, to start getting organised among ourselves as workers.

And getting organised doesn't just mean getting money inside Fords. It's the whole of our lives that are screwed in this system - whether you talk about health, housing, education, food or even a clean area to live in. Our fight isn't just on the assembly line or the picket line - it's in the streets of our areas as well. Especially in these days of inflation when every wage increase we win in the factory is taken out of the family budget by the capitalist raising the prices in the shops, rents, taxes etc. Our fight is because we want a better life for ourselves - but right now we've got to fight hard just to make sure that things don't get worse!

The articles in this pamphlet cover a number of different areas, relating mainly to Ford:

Hot Autumn at Fords? looks at the general economic situation in Britain, and Ford workers' economic struggle within that.

Fighting Layoffs is about the struggles over layoffs over the past year, and some lessons about how to avoid being laid off.

Is there Life after Ford is about what happens to our life once we start selling our labour to our Ford and Master...

Fighting Ford is 3 articles about conditions at Dagenham, especially mobility, and time & motion, and the way Ford is operating with these.

A Question of Tactics looks at Fords tactics for maintaining our slavery, and some ways of fighting back.

Health and Conditions deals with our conditions, which in the past have too easily been sold and bartered away.

Big Flame and the Union is about why we're criticised for knocking the Union at Dagenham, and

Big Flame Ford Group is about us and what we'd like to see starting to develop at Dagenham.

[PS: We only had enough money to print a few hundred of these pamphlets - so there aren't many around. So...when you've finished it, don't hang on to it,

PASS IT AROUND!

A HOT AUTUMN AT FORDS?

ALL THE SIGNS ARE that there's going to be an awful lot happening in this country after the Summer shutdown. So that we're not caught on the hop this September, we should start preparing for it now. This coming period will be a crucial test of our strength for the pay claim next February. In fact, what we shall try to show here is that the pay claim fight should already be starting. For the first time for a long while Ford is actually giving more money now, between contracts. This, instead of the usual talk about no money increases within the life of the agreement. And more should be coming. This is the current position and outlook.

HALF HOUR WASH-UP

The half-hour wash-up is now agreed for all lineworkers in the Body and PTA at Dagenham. They are now getting $\frac{1}{2}$ hour extra pay if they clock on 10 minutes early and out 10 minutes late, and they get paid for 10 minutes of the lunch break. Most people are doing this, though there's also quite a lot of resistance to the extension of the working week and the exclusion of non line-workers. Several 'grey' areas have walked out to get the half hour, such as the one-day strike on Mon. 24th June by the Trim Shop in the PTA A-Shift, and the overtime ban on the B-Shift. Lineworkers are moaning about the 'grey' areas going for this wash-up money, but we should support them because we all need the extra money, specially when it's paid at overtime rates.

Halewood Body-in-White workers have, in fact, got the best policy on this. There, the C Grade line-workers got the paid wash-up time in January this year, and the B Grade got it at the beginning of May, 2 weeks before it was agreed in the Body Plant at Dagenham. But there they have it without any change in work practice or increased schedules. The lines are still starting late and stopping early. In this circumstance, it's clearly more a victory for workers than the management. More money for the same work. And at Dagenham all previous agreements and arrangements are supposed to be still in force. We must ensure that this continues. They also have little mobility of labour in the Body and PTA at Halewood, through the operation of a "last in first out policy". So, if the Company wants to move someone, they have to move the newest starter. Resistance to mobility and manning changes is the starting point for strong organisation. That's why the 'status quo' agreement on manning that has operated on the Cortina Trim light lines in the PTA at Dagenham is important, as is the ban on time study on the Cortina Final Line on A-Shift.

PRODUCTIVITY + PROFITS

Still, for once it's clear that Ford is quite willing to give us some money. There are 2 main reasons for this, as far as we can see:

- a) To try to keep everyone 'happy', to encourage people to stay at Fords, and to encourage them to work.
- b) To use the wash-up agreement (if they can) in an attempt to obtain hooter-to-hooter working, so as to get their lines working to the maximum, theoretical capacity, as calculated by the time-study men.

This is so as to increase the productivity in relation to the capital invested. This increased productivity is absolutely essential to the employers, not only at Fords, but throughout the whole of industry, in order to increase the rate of profit. The rate of profit is profits in real terms (ie after inflation) calculated against the capital invested. This is diff-

erent from the total, absolute value of profits, which currently is rising. At the moment, the rate of profit they're getting is not enough. This is at the centre of their economic crisis, and it's most acute in Britain and Italy.

THRESHOLDS

The threshold agreement runs out in mid-November. And the renewal of it will almost certainly not be automatic. Remember, although we all know that Ford is one of the most profitable companies out, it is also having its problems with low production and profitability, low productivity, and a declining market.

But, more important, Ford is a very class-conscious company, especially in these crisis-ridden days. Even if it could easily afford to continue to pay threshold agreements, it would still fight against doing so if the rest of the employers and the State decide to do so. In fact, as we know, Ford often plays a crucial part in attempting to give a lead for other employers and the State, as it did in the 1969 contract over penalty clauses, and the 1971 2-year "American-style" agreement.

The Unions and the TUC are also certain to lend a hand to the Government in this and step in to try to defuse or avoid this struggle, since their first concern is not to uphold the living standards of their members, but to keep the Labour Government in power, so they can use their influence to determine State policies. The settling of this year's Ford contract on the very day Labour took office is a prime example of this.

We should beware of this danger, and start clearly to press for the renewal of the threshold, plus the increase in the 40p we get now, which is only worth a paltry 28p after tax anyway. If we got 80p, then that might nearly cover the actual increase in the cost of living. The State price index, anyway, is calculated according to a middle class and not a working class budget.

ABOLITION OF PHASE 3

Phase 3 is due to be abolished in July. When this happens, it will mean several things. First, Ford agreed at the last contract that it would abolish the incremental scale as soon as the law allowed, bringing all Ford workers up to the top rate (95p for B-Grade). So, those here for less than 6 months will be getting a 6p an hour wage rise. We should make sure this is implemented immediately Phase 3 goes. But Ford will probably do this anyway, because as everyone knows they can't get anyone to work here anyway, so they have to give a bit more money.

Second, since the State hold on wages will be off, there is bound to be a rash of strikes in the Autumn. It's just possible that if the Unions succeed in holding down workers' wage demands that there won't be a statutory control put on wages until next Spring, which would mean that for the next Ford claim we would be free from direct State control. But it's very unlikely

that the Unions will succeed in controlling the class struggle over the next few months, in which case there will probably be yet another freeze on wages this Autumn. Already the Engineering Employers' Federation (EEF) are calling for this, because they say they can't afford to pay the threshold rises, which will be up to £4-£5 by October.

On June 27th Ford of Britain announced the biggest profits ever - £65.4 millions before tax, all sweated off our backs. But the crafty Bill Batty then does a magical sleight of hand to show that this £65.4m is really only £55m. Hey Presto! That's called "inflation accounting". Well, if he's so bloody clever, he should do some inflation accounting on our wages to show how they're buying much less than they did 3 years ago! Of course, we'll never see that printed in Fraud News!

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GENERAL ELECTION

This is where the General Election comes into the picture. Wilson can't risk waiting until the disputes and strikes start in earnest until he calls an election. According to the papers, an election in October is near certain.

Here's where the danger comes for us. If he gets in with a clear majority, he will be able to impose a wage freeze or a near-freeze without having to call on the working class to vote for him again for another 4 years. And, make no mistake, the very low and declining rate of profit is going to make it inevitable that they are going to try and do something drastic about it. In the present crisis the material conditions exist for severe repression and attacks on the working class, if we allow them.

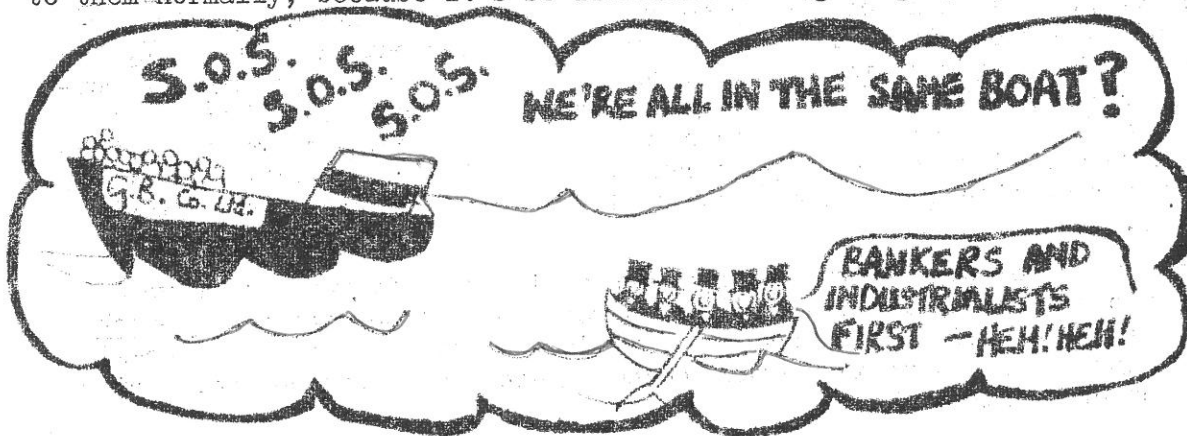
STATE STRATEGY

The State's thinking is approximately as follows:

With the very high rate of inflation, which the ruling class is using to reduce the living standards of the working class, they run the risk of large-scale wage claims and increased militancy, and a growing number of disputes throughout the economy. In order to quieten things down, they had to have the threshold agreements, which attempts to keep people quiet and give the impression that the threshold increases would keep wages up with inflation.

But everyone realises that the working class has suffered a massive wage cut over the past 4 years. So, many sectors are fighting either to have a threshold agreement, or to have the limit on their agreement removed, if there is one. The Unions nationally have been behind this, because they have to be, in order to keep some control over the struggles going on.

The employers are shit-scared of the threshold agreement at the moment. Some of them are angry with Heath for including thresholds in the November 1973 Phase 3 package. They understand that inflation is such a useful weapon to them normally, because it's so difficult to fight against, because it



happens every day with every price they raise in the shops. With the introduction of thresholds, it gives the working class something concrete to fight around so as to combat inflation.

But in fact the threshold was not a 'mistake' but was essential in order to counter the possibility of even greater militancy, and it is likely to play the crucial part in the package which the government will probably introduce in the Autumn.

This strategy, which has been originated and drawn up by the TUC, will be that while everyone should have a regular cost-of-living increase, say every 3 months, nobody should have any actual increase in the basic rate. All this, they will try to say, is to bring down the level of inflation, whereas, in fact, it will be to coordinate the State level yet another reduction in the standard of living of the working class, thereby hoping to solve capital's problems.

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The Unions would have the most important part to play in this, because it is only they who could sell the deal to rank and file workers. For us at Ford the meaning of this is very clear. We've suffered an enormous wage cut over the past 2 years, because of the contracts the Unions have signed with Ford, over our heads. If we allow them to do this again, we've only ourselves to blame. As we've said, the Unions' loyalty is to the Labour government; the government's loyalty and responsibility is to the system; the system is run, owned and controlled by the employers, who have to increase their rate of profit to prevent the whole capitalist system collapsing. AND, AS MUST BE OBVIOUS TO EVERYONE, THE CAPITALIST SYSTEM NEVER DID ANY GOOD TO ANY WORKER OF ITS OWN FREE WILL. THE ONLY WAY WE GOT ANYWHERE AT ALL WAS BY FIGHTING FOR IT.

INFLATION - OUR NEEDS

Inflation is going to continue rocketing for at least the next 6 months. Amazing though it may seem, the bulk of the inflation 'caused' by the oil price-rise hasn't got through to the economy yet. So the point is that after the shutdown the State's control on wage rises is likely to be off for a short period. For us it will be the first time since the 1971 strike that we will be able to push once again for the demand for parity with the Midland carworkers, many of whom will be on a basic day rate of over £50 by this time.

This is why we believe we should look ahead to September, and see it as a chance to force on the Unions, Ford and the Government our 2 most important needs: a much higher basic rate and the guaranteed week's pay. It's useful to remember that Ford workers were instrumental in defeating the last Labour government's attempt at wage control ("In Place of Strife"), through the 3 week "Penalty Clauses" strike in March 1969.

REDUNDANCIES

More and more, employers are going to use redundancies and the threat of unemployment to reduce the living standard of the working class, in order to counter big wage claims and militancy over conditions, and to increase productivity. The signs of the "recession" are already there. At the beginning of June the Unions signed a new mobility agreement at British Leyland's Longbridge plant, giving increased cooperation to the management in "improving productivity". 2 weeks later Leyland started to talk with the Unions about "overmanning" and the need to reduce the workforce. At Longbridge the Unions have agreed that the Company can stop recruiting, and at Cowley there has been a reduction in the workforce of 1,200 this year (through "natural wastage").

At Ford Halewood the Company has been saying that it wants to have a 6 week shutdown in the summer, instead of 3 weeks - in other words, a 3-week layoff. They're saying it's because of production problems on the face-lift on the Escort. When have they ever needed a 3-week shutdown before, during the period of booming sales?

In a situation like this we obviously have to be prepared. The analysis in this article is tentative, and we think correct. But some aspects of the situation could change very fast - like the sudden emergence of the "oil crisis" last year, or the possibility of an earlier election this year. In this pamphlet we have tried to show how the fight has been developing at Dagenham - but there are also more strategic questions to be answered. Like, for instance, what should be done about the coming wage claim? This involves discussion of many issues - like the fact that skilled men are going for separate negotiations to increase their wage differentials; the question of Company proposals for regrading workers; the question of relief times and taking Friday nights off; and parity with the Midland carworkers.

We hope to start discussion on these after the Summer shutdown, because now is the time that these things should start being acted on.

FIGHTING LAYOFFS AT DAGENHAM

[So far we've talked mainly about the money aspect of our fight. But fighting Fords isn't just economics. For instance, a lot of the struggles of the past year at Dagenham have centred around lay-offs. This isn't just a matter of getting a guaranteed week's wages. It's also a matter of stopping the way Ford uses layoffs as a strategy to split, divide and confuse us.]

The beginning of June saw the first big lay-off at Dagenham, in the PTA, since March. If anyone doubts how much trouble Fords takes to divide us, they should take a close look at those events.

THE PAINT SHOP DISPUTES

First the Paint Shop went on overtime ban to get lightweight trousers and tee-shirts. After a week, on Tuesday June 4th, they were told by Supervision that they couldn't have them. The next day, by some miracle known only to Our Ford, the Company changed their mind.

After this victory, on Thursday morning June 6th, the enamel sprayers in the Paint Shop had a joint shift meeting at 7.30am, and decided to go for the big one - upgrading from C-Grade to D-Grade - in other words, they wanted more money, like every other worker at Ford. The decision was to strike for Thursday and Friday, and meet again on Monday.

Other sections in the Paint Shop were backing them up on this, because if they got it, then it was open to all other line workers to get it as well.

By 12 o'clock on Thursday morning all the lines had stopped. The whole of the PTA was laid off at lunch and told not to report till Monday. The same thing happened on the night shift.

FORD DECIDES - SPLIT THE WORKERS

At this point the Company, with their 50 years experience in the science of screwing the people who produce their profits, put their Number One principle into action: SPLIT THE WORKERS.

The PTA were told not to report till Monday. But the Body Plant line workers were told to report for work as normal on the Friday, despite the fact that they knew that there was no work for them to do. Foremen even had the nerve to go round telling people that there would be overtime at the weekend. This was just a lie, designed to stir things up.

So the Company was quite prepared to pay all the Body Plant line workers their Friday's pay, whilst getting no production. (Sub-assembly throughout all this worked normally and had overtime, which is another split Ford uses against us.)

The result of this was that the PTA was very angry, but not organised to do anything to prevent it (except in the Paint Shop, as we shall see later), and the Body Plant was as happy as you can be in this place - not working and getting paid for it. Next time, however, it could just as well be the Body Plant that gets the layoff treatment.

PAINT SHOP VICTORY

But the Company didn't have it all their own way. When the layoff was announced at lunch-time on the Thursday, 140 men from the Canopy/Wet Deck section in the Paint Shop, B-Shift, got together and decided not to accept the layoff, and instead of walking out they stayed in the plant for the

rest of the day. The Company paid them their full day's money.

IF THE WHOLE OF THE PTA HAD DONE THIS, THEN NOT ONLY WOULD THEY HAVE SCARED THE MANAGEMENT INTO PAYING THEM FOR THE THURSDAY AND POSSIBLY THE FRIDAY, BUT THEY WOULD ALSO HAVE MADE FORD THINK AGAIN BEFORE USING THE LAYOFF WEAPON AGAIN. If word had got round the PTA, then Ford wouldn't have got away with robbing most PTA workers of 2 days pay.

Also, as we've said several times in leaflets, although the near-riots in the PTA last September/October did not win the guaranteed week's pay, there were no layoffs for the rest of the year - whereas there had been 43 layoffs previous to that date. That was the success of that struggle [Think: Does that mean it takes a riot to stop layoffs??]

On the Monday, June 10th, on the return to work after the layoff, both shifts in the PTA had meetings, stoppages and walkouts to demand full pay for the Thursday and Friday layoff, but hardly anyone knew of the victory that the Canopy and Wet Deck section had won. This just shows the importance of having better communications between ourselves.

* * ACTION AGAINST LAYOFFS * *

COMMUNICATION

There has got to be better communication throughout the plants. In most sections now there are the elements of a ginger group that could be formed, and in other sections there are usually one or two militants. We've got to start pulling together more, so that in the event of layoffs we can be ready. At the moment the Unions don't fill this function. So we have got to start doing it, starting from the bottom, and those stewards who are any good will come along with us.

A] Whenever there's a rumored stoppage, in our own plant or in another, we send someone down the line to find out what's going on, and report back. Rumours spread confusion. If we're going to be prepared we need Facts. Staff-truck drivers and other mobile workers could help in this.

B] In sections where a dispute takes place, somebody must be delegated to let other sections know what's happening, so that they can be prepared for layoffs or other Co. measures. A simple way for lineworkers would be to find ways of leaving messages in car bodies and sending them down the line (we respectfully suggest that morse-code messages in rivets down the side-panels would not be the best idea!).

C] Keep an eye on the papers in case there are strikes in Ford component suppliers which might cause shortages at Dagenham. At times like this the Co. likes to provoke strikes to avoid paying layoff pay. Storemen and delivery drivers are a useful source of info for this. Be Prepared!

ACT NOW - NO PROCEDURE

Secondly, although prevention is the best cure, the only time to fight the announcement of layoffs is immediately when they are announced, even if this happens half-an-hour before the end of the shift (which is getting to be God's favourite trick). Meetings and discussions have to be started from the floor, and any action must be firmly based inside the plant while everyone's together.

If we put it into procedure we might as well all give up. Remember last November, the PTA Convenor and Union officials managed to put the demand for the guaranteed week's pay into procedure, and look where it's got us - absolutely nowhere!

LAYOFFS ARE A POLICY

We have to be clear that the way Fords uses the layoff is as a political weapon against the shop floor. The same thing happened earlier this year, on

Friday March 8th, when the PTA shift on days was called in during the welders' dispute over brazing rods, when there was virtually no work to do and the Night Shift was laid off. Whatever we may think of Fords, they are certainly not fools when it comes to splitting us up, to keep one lot feeling happy while the other lot is laid off. They know that the only way we'll beat them is through a united fight.

NO SPLITTING

Every time there is a dispute in the plant, Ford tries to turn the rest of the plant against that section by laying them off. This is the double edge of the guaranteed shift agreements, when you don't get a guaranteed shift's pay if the dispute takes place inside your plant. And Ford is full of tricks here - for instance, when it suits them Ford will say that the Press Shop and the Body Plant are separate plants...but when it comes to questions of layoff pay they suddenly become one single plant.

All layoff agreements have this side to them. It is precisely to prevent solidarity action being taken, that is, to prevent the unity developing that could win a guaranteed pay agreement. So that if there's a dispute in the Body Plant, the PTA would lose its guaranteed shift's pay if any section came out in support..

NO PROVOCATIONS

This is the way the bosses use layoff agreements to divide us. And remember, Ford has never ever paid layoff pay at Dagenham or Halewood because of failure of outside supplies, despite the various layoffs that have happened because of strikes in suppliers. Like they did in July '73, when Smethwick Drop Forgings was on strike and there were no con-rods for the engines. Then they provoked a strike of the drivers, and immediately laid off the whole of Dagenham and Halewood, without pay.

UNITY

Apart from all the things we've said in this article, the Body Group and the PTA have got to realise pretty soon that as far as production goes they are one plant, not two. We should no longer tolerate the way Fords divides us artificially for their own ends. The new stewards in the Body and PTA could do a useful job by breaking the Body Group's isolation from the PTA, not to mention the rest of the Estate.

GUARANTEED WEEK

Division is the name of the game, and there's only one answer to it. We have to fight for a guaranteed week's pay, work or no work, every day of the year, without any strings. And we have to do this by organising against layoffs in the plant, in every section. Many sections in the Body plant have already got an understanding based on the "one out, all out" principle. This might be extended to cover every section. Whatever happens, we must fight Ford's attempts to split us up and set us against each other. And if we organise seriously against layoffs, then we'll be much stronger in our day-to-day battles against mobility, manning, speed-up etc.

FORD'S PRODUCTION PROBLEM ARE THEIR HEADACHE, NOT OURS. WE WANT 40 HRS GUARANTEED PAY-NOW!

For layoffs, we believe that prevention is the best cure. When the Company knows that they will get aggravation for laying us off, they will certainly stop doing it. Like they stopped laying off the Body after the riots last year. Ditto the PTA. Some sections are now calling for an additional action - imposing a go-slow, section by section, with a policy of non-cooperation and a ban on all mobility and ban on new starters until Ford is prepared to guarantee in writing, a full 40 hours pay. Unlike the walk-out strike, this policy has the merit of not costing workers money. It goes by the old principle of

MAXIMUM COST TO ENRY, MINIMUM COST TO US.



IS THERE LIFE AFTER FORD?

[It really gets you down at Fords. We joke about sex always but how often do we really talk seriously about it? It's too easy to get embarrassed and think other blokes are going to put us down or take the mickey. After all, who is going to admit that he hasn't got a satisfying sex life...or that he's all screwed up about women...or maybe that he prefers blokes to women.

But all of us know that working at Fords screws us up, because it's really hard to keep up a steady, satisfying relationship with someone. Like if you're a single bloke, how can you fix up a date when you're on nights? Shift work makes life havoc. We're told by some clever dick that "You can do whatever you like when you're not working. You'r private life is your own affair. Fords can only boss you when you're at work". But any Ford worker with a family knows that what follows is the simple truth - that **WORKING AT FORD REALLY MUCKS UP EVERY PART OF OUR LIVES.**]

FORD GETS US IN EVERY WAY

"If John is working on nights, he'll just want to get up on Saturday afternoon and turn the box on. Ford has mucked up our whole weekend. There is just about time to do some of the shopping. I get all irritable because I haven't seen him all week. Things get really tense when he's on nights. You've got to get used to living on your own. I sometimes get my sister over when he's on nights. In the olden days it wouldn't have been so bad, because there would have been other people around. Now we are all cooped up in a small flat, staring at the box.

"It gets really hard on the kids. You have to tell them to shut up all the time because Dad is trying to get some sleep. You get tense all the time, because you think you are going to wake him up. Some blokes find it really tough to sleep during the day. You can't blame them when they get all ratty, but it's tough on the kids.

"Sometimes you don't want to go to bed in the afternoon. Sex is hard if you've got kids to look after. You don't always feel like it. You just can't do it. It makes it all cold-blooded and mechanical. It makes me feel bad, and I just can't enjoy it. I'm sure many other women must feel the same.

"You can't make love, just because you've got 5 minutes to spare. So you don't go near to each other. You get used to doing without sex. You aren't bothered. This just shows you the state that people get in. It's no surprise that blokes are frustrated most of the time. Things get worse if you're doing a job yourself, because you hardly see him. He comes back from work all tense and tired, and you have to go off to work soon after. What a life this is! It's hard to keep putting a good face on it all. Fords controls not only the money we get, but our whole life as well...They don't think about what is happening to the blokes that are doing all the work and making all the cars. And when they get old or have an accident, they're just thrown onto the scrapheap.

"It's alright for the blokes sitting on their arses in the offices giving the orders. They never have to spend the whole night working. It seems as if the Union officials don't, also, cos they never do anything about it. People should be paid at least double rates for working nights. And I don't think they should do it at all. It isn't human. If people mattered in this society, we wouldn't have things organised in this way.

You can't afford to buy the bloody cars anyway - so who are we making them for? We do all the bloody work - the working class. Fords are killing people everyday - they are just doing it slowly, so they get away with it. Of course, they are "ever so nice" when anything goes wrong.

"If a kid gets ill, you're left alone in the flat. Does Fords pay blokes to stay at home to look after the kids when they're ill? Why not? You can't manage on one wage these days. Women have been forced out to work. It used to be to get a little money for extras - now it is for the bare essentials. Why should wives have to pay for a nursery when the profits that we make for Ford could pay for it? The nursery shouldn't have to come out of our pocket, along with everything else. Ford has even knocked the Xmas party for the kids on the head. We do all the work, so we should have some say in how the money is spent.

"The way things are now, a bloke has to do overtime before you can get a night out. Even then you can't just plan to go out next Tuesday. You have to think: "Is he on days or is he on nights?". Even if you could afford it, you can't really go, cos the pictures don't finish till past ten, and he's got to get up next morning. The Ford prison camp doesn't need guards, because they've got us all where they want us. If you've stayed in for a week, it's only natural that you want to go out. You begin to feel trapped, especially when there are kids around. I often take it out on him, but it isn't his fault at all. I know that, when I think about it. I can understand how the women at Cowley got everything the wrong way round, and started blaming their blokes. This is just what the bosses want, dividing us up so as to stop us questioning the profits they make off our work.

"It's so easy for women stuck at home, to think that blokes don't know what they are moaning about. If you go out to work yourself, you get to know the monotony of it all. I wouldn't work in a factory if it was the highest paid job in the world. Let alone shift work. If people do shift work, they should really be paid a lot more for doing it.

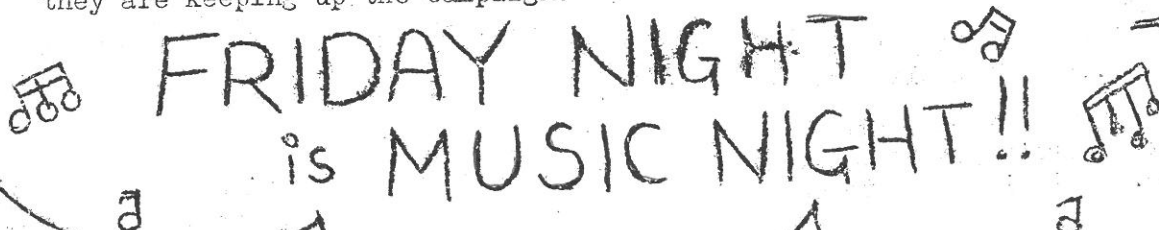
"After all, Fat Henry doesn't do night work. He sits in a flashy office with a big fat cigar...he's on his backside all day, grinning as we do all the work. Fords will pay as little as they can get away with. It's always been the same. We only get what we fight for. It's no use the Unions going cap in hand. We're not looking for charity!"

Merseyside Ford workers have found a way of making night shifts more bearable - MASS ABSENTEEISM ON FRIDAY NIGHTS.

It all started when Halewood, unlike Dagenham, was put on a 3-day week. This was a taste of freedom from work, and the thought of returning to a full 5 nights work was too much. So, a few individuals started taking Friday night off. Then it became unofficial plant policy, with a picket on the gate organised by workers to stop all work.

The movement has snowballed. Ford is trying to think of a way round it - like 4 x ten hour shifts. But 10 hours in a Ford plant is too much for any human being, and Halewood workers are calling for a real reduction of the working week, with no loss of wages. Meanwhile they are keeping up the campaign:-

FRIDAY NIGHT
is MUSIC NIGHT!!



Fighting Ford

Why is Fords Dagenham in such a disgusting state? Why does management act like it thinks it can walk all over us? Why are people leaving every day, saying that "There's no fight at Fords"? Ask any lineworker. Ford means slavery, hours of overtime, speed-ups and intensification of workloads.

The trouble is, half the Union here acts like firemen, pouring out cold water at the first sign of trouble. Anybody who tries to take action is left alone and isolated, as a deliberate policy while the Company/Union structure tries to strangle us thro' Procedure.

What chance does a worker have to improve his conditions of work? Ford has got a whole army of industrial engineers, college professors and all kinds of personnel staff and other slugs working for them, perfecting the noble science of how to squeeze the last drop of effort out of the worker. "Forditz" isn't just a place of work - it's a scientifically organised slave camp, using methods that Ford has developed over the last FIFTY YEARS!

But the worker arrives in the Factory without the understanding of this "science". How many of us really understand Time and Motion...Manning schedules...Job Evaluation? And all the other pseudo crap that they feed us. THE WHOLE OF THE FACTORY IS A MASSIVE MACHINE, SCIENTIFICALLY ORGANISED AGAINST THE WORKER. If we're going to fight it, we've got to begin to understand it, and share our understandings with each other, so that we can know the Monster's weak points. We must start to attack them.

a) Mobility in the Engine

[In the Engine Plant Ford is using a mixture of racist employment policies and high mobility in order to maintain production through a sort of terror. The following account comes from a brother in the Engine Plant.]

Right from the early days in Detroit, Fords has been skilled in the use and exploitation of immigrant and migrant workers as a way of enforcing speed-up and keeping down wages. Scots and Irish at Halewood; West Indians Irish and Asians at Dagenham; Turks and Yugoslavs at Cologne etc. At Dagenham recently we have been seeing a dirty policy in the Engine Plant - and that dirty policy means employing coloured workers, bringing them into the factory attracted by the so-called high wages, and then moving them around from job to job so that they cannot resist or organise.

Everyone knows that Fords can't get workers for love nor money. One week in May 70 workers joined the Body Plant, and one week later 80 men left. Conditions are that disgusting, and most lineworkers never see that magical "£47". White workers will hardly touch Fords now. Most new starters are black, and very many are Asians. Many Asian workers end up in the Engine Plant...and Ford plays tricks on them.

New starters arriving in the Engine Plant are put in the Machine Shop, where there's plenty of overtime, and where you're not so tied to an assembly line. This is so as to get them to stay. But when they've settled in, Fords

take them off these jobs, and put them onto the Commercial Line or the OHC line, where there's no overtime, only permanent days. In other words, a wage cut of about £15 for some people. The idea is that Ford gets them in, puts them on a cushy number so as to get them to stay at Fords, and then, once they've got settled in, moves them around so as to vacate the cushy jobs for the next batch of new starters.

The people who are moved around like this are mainly the Asian workers. It's well known that West Indian workers, if they are provoked, are more likely to take a hammer to hit the foremen (the other week Dagenham foremen started demanding protection money after an incident like this). But many of the Asian workers are scared for their jobs. And the Trade Unions do nothing about it.

Ford has a tremendous power when the Unions do nothing. We have been trying to put up a fight, but see no hope of help from the Union. For that reason, a lot of blokes just leave. And those who stay have all the cards stacked against them. Fords main weapon is mobility of labour. The high turnover acts to prevent organisation, because people drop out of Fords like flies and don't stay long enough to build the fight. Also, not only does Fords move new starters around. They also use mobility to move round militants, whether black or white, so as to make sure that no militant stays in one section for long enough to build a strong section round him that could make a stand.

There are hundreds of cases like this. Immigrants are being threatened and intimidated by Fords and by this use of mobility. Anyone who makes the slightest resistance is dragged up to Personnel. It happens every day. You're told you're not working hard enough, you must work harder. You are threatened. Personnel is always trying to push more production out of you.

"I went to see a friend. He was sitting, crying, at home with his wife and kids. He didn't know where to turn. He said: 'God knows what I'm doing. I'm so much terrified by the foreman. They push you all the time, even push you by hand to make you work. I don't know what to do. I can't carry on like this.'" That's what's happening with Asian brothers in the Engine Plant.

This is terror by Ford management. It's no accident that this is happening in the Engine Plant, which is hidden right at the heart of the Dagenham complex. It's like a prison camp, with security all around, because the Engine Plant is vital to Fords production, and highly profitable.

The trouble is that Ford management tries to split us. Each department has 3 or 4 informers in it, and they spy on us to pick out anybody who wants to make a fight. We are all split by nationalities. You've got all sorts of people in here - Sikhs, Pakistanis, Singaporis, West Indians, white blokes. If all these people could only unite, Fords would be really scared.

Dagenham Engine Plant

b) Time and Motion

Time and Motion is something that affects all of us - but workers don't usually pay any attention to the fact that it exists. It's blindly accepted by Trade Unions, without having the means to check what workloads are, or what they should be. They ignore the general effect of these Time and Motion studies, which are done by a very organised group of so-called "scientific" people, who are paid big salaries so as to screw more work out of every worker.

TAKING OUR TIME

At Fords blokes talk about how, in the old days, workers used to have some kind of control over the job at Ford. At one time, they say, you used to have enough time on the line to play cards between jobs. Or it was easy to take over another bloke's job so that he could take a break.

Now you haven't even got time to blow your nose. They've tightened up a hell of a lot. Some say the work content has tripled...When you're given a job, most of the time you can hardly manage it. Then, after you've been there for a few weeks, they come round and time you. After another 6 months, you've learnt all the short-cuts on the job - you think you've earned the time to take it slightly easier. But then Fords come along and try to take it all away from you again, by retiming you and giving you more work.

With the work that we do here, if we were on piecework, we'd be earning three times what we do here. But we're not on piece rates. We're just paid to do the job, and that means just doing it, not acting like bloody machines.

Time and Motion is a con. It never works in workers' favour. Just every so often, so as to kid us it's "scientific" and "neutral". But we know that the management doesn't worry about whether we can manage a job... when they send the T&M bloke down onto a section, they tell him in advance that they want two men taken off.

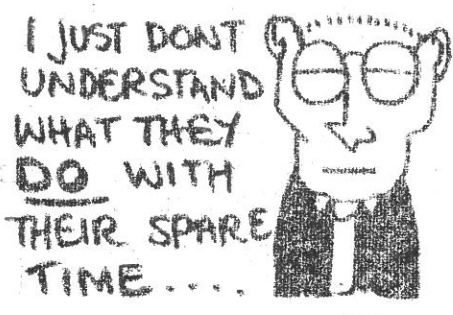
Then there's the actual timings. Fords is one of the few companies that works to a straight timing of a job. Most companies work to the British Standard, which gives an allowance for physical and mental fatigue. At Dagenham, in the PTA, you get 17½ minutes to yourself over 8 hours - about 4%. British Standard allows approximately 12% free time - an hour over the eight.

When they time a bloke, they try and do it when the steward isn't around. Sometimes the new blokes think that they're being tested - they think they have to work as fast as possible while the bloke has got the watch on them. They don't realise that they're letting themselves in for extra workloads. Don't do it!

Sometimes a militant bloke will refuse to do the extra work. So Ford passes the extra job down the line until they can find an operator who doesn't moan and will do the job. This is what they're hoping. They want us to fight among ourselves about the extra work, so that it ends up with everyone pushing everyone else, rather than fighting the Company, who is the real enemy. Or, if a bloke kicks up a fuss, they'll give him an easy job - so that if it comes to any action, he'll say he's alright where he is.

The only way to fight this is not through Procedure, but on the floor. That means everyone together, so that individuals can't get picked off. If the job is too much, then everyone has to let the jobs go. Drift down the line with the job. Then the line has to stop to work all the jobs back to the bench.

In the old days they used to walk off the line every time the time and motion men came on. In some parts of the plant this is still the rule - at the first sign of a stopwatch, everyone stops work and sits down. This is the way to treat them. But now things are getting so bad that every time there's a gap or break in the production, they get you doing other things - cleaning, or sweeping up, or taking stock. In the PTA they even had the "Golden Broom" award - a fiver for the cleanest section. That didn't last long - the blokes from the sections around used to shovel their dirt into the section that won the award. If they ask you to clean up, don't "refuse to work". Just tell them to stuff it, because they can't give you any of the work they hired you for in your contract.



c) Mobility in the Body Plant

Here is one example of Time and Motion, which has affected the Pit workers in the Body Plant for the last 3 years, and which the Union has been well aware of, all the time, and at the time of writing had done nothing about. This comes from a document circulating in the Body Plant, as does the above.

THE PITS

Earlier this year there was a dispute in the Body Plant. It was in the welding pits, over a question of manning and timings. Even after a short strike and long negotiations, it still hasn't been settled. The dispute is just one example of how Fords slavedrivers work, and how we must begin to fight them.

The Welding Pits at the beginning of the assembly line proper are a key section in the downstairs Body Plant at Dagenham. A bottleneck. If the pits don't work, nobody can work. But the job is very taxing. Very fast. And conditions are dangerous.

There are two welding pits. They are 4 feet deep and about 30 feet long. 2 men work in one, and 4 in the other. The job of these welders is a whole series of spot welds under the doorsills and under the mudguards. The car bodies never stop coming. The work averages 25 per hour in one pit, and 60 per hour in the other. There's supposed to be a time allowance for resting, but you get no break. The line runs continually. Even if the main line breaks down, there is the feeder line, and the foreman pushes extra cars into the Pit by hand.

The lines run at head height, and the welding guns swing in overhead. They are heavy and awkward to move. You're always running to and fro, as if you were doing a stupid dance. Often you don't have time to complete the job in your own space, which means moving into the next man's space, which is dangerous.

In the first pit (Main Cortina Line), with 4 men, one man uses one gun and the frontside man uses 2 guns. In the other pit (Granadas, Estates, overflow from Main Cortina), with 2 men, one man has to use all 3 guns. The work is physically and mentally torturing. It's all GO, and tensions build up inside you. After a day of it, you're exhausted. You're capable of falling or tripping. But not only is the job hard - conditions are also diabolical...

CONDITIONS ARE DIABOLICAL

The line runs at head height. When you weld, the sparks fly at you. They are like a constant barrage of hard blows, and they hurt when they hit you. For this reason, you can't look at the job when you're doing it. Sparks land on your skin - wrists etc - and burn you. You have to do about 70-80 spots per car, and this involves using 1, 2 or 3 guns, depending on where you are. You find that all those times moving from one gun to another, and back again, after a couple of hours without reliefs you begin to feel really dopey. This is the Madness of this job. The sparks are flying all the time. Blokes' clothes catch fire all the time from the sparks.

For the front weld you have to use a clamp. The clamp gets red hot, of course, and it's very easy to graze your wrist on it. This burns your skin.

The whole job is a murderous operation. And it's one of Fords many testing places, where they test out workers. If you can stand the Pit, you can stand anything. Not surprisingly, there is a high turnover of men in this job. Pit workers are constantly getting moved around - ESPECIALLY WHEN THEY TRY TO GET ORGANISED TO DO SOMETHING ABOUT IMPROVING THE JOB!

MANAGEMENT CRACKS DOWN

In recent history there have been a number of struggles by lads working in the Pits - 3 times in recent history. Each time management replies by trying to make conditions even worse, and each time the fight has been defeated by moving people around. Mobility of labour is bad for workers organising.

The latest time was just after Xmas 1973. Ford came round on the A shift and tried to move the 5th man out of the Cortina Pit. This was the relief man, who did the round of the welders, relieving them so that they worked roughly 45 minutes in each hour. The Company tried to take him off, and offered instead 2 x 15 minutes breaks, one in the morning and one in the afternoon, which makes very little difference for the worker in the Pit.

Ford was trying to get blood out of a stone. This further worsening of conditions was too much, and the issue developed into strike action. The dispute was and is about the speed of the line per hour.

The men off the Cortina Pit decided to take action. They approached the men from the other Pit, and decided to take the question of manning through Procedure.

Going through Procedure got them precisely NOWHERE. Procedure is a talking shop, designed to let grievances get lost. All wind and no action. The Union's Regional Officer was called in, but the Company still refused to allow the relief man back on his job.

The negotiations went on. The Union said they couldn't get anything extra. The welders decided to give a 12 o'clock deadline. When the deadline came, they stopped work. They stayed in the factory, because the feeling was that you shouldn't go home when you strike. But most of the Upstairs Body went home because there was no work for them.

They came in the next day. The Union called them in, because they were still refusing to work. The Convenor had the nerve to ask them to carry on working "for a few days", while negotiations take place! This is typical - always Talk rather than Action. The men at first refused.

But Ford had found a way of splitting the men. They offered the 2 men from the Granada Pit extra relief periods, to buy them off. They accepted, and agreed to return to work. Once again, Fords offers a handful of peanuts to the Few, and splits them from the majority.

With this split, Ford delayed and played for time. They took advantage of the situation to move all the men off the job and move new men onto it.

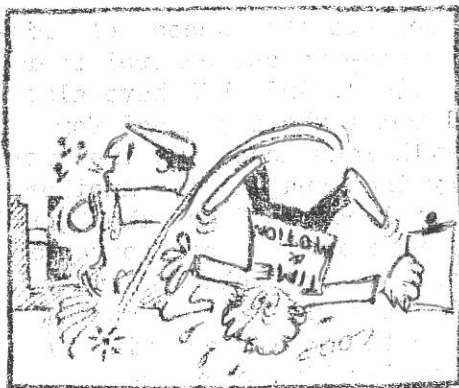
This is what they do everytime, to break up a fighting section. That's the rule for the lines. They shift men all around the factory as soon as they look like getting anything together.

This happened in February. There are now a whole new bunch of men on this section. That's the rule for the lines: constant mobility. And like the rest of the lines, it's generally coloured labour, because black workers are the only ones who will stand the pace.

The Union accepts this level of mobility, because most of them believe it should be the Company's "right". But don't they see that it is breaking up sections that are prepared to fight? And don't they see that this mobility is leading to a permanent worsening of conditions throughout the factory?

Since that time, the Convenors and the officials of the Union who have been discussing this affair have not so far reported it to the other shop steward who is now handling this affair. All the workers in both the Pits are fed up to the teeth, and expect some action from the Union and management to improve working conditions.

Body Plant June 2nd 1974



A QUESTION OF TACTICS

[It's not only Ford's tactics that we have to be thinking about. We also have to be improving our own tactics. The following contribution comes from a brother in the Body Plant.]

INTRODUCTION

Henry is well-practised in tactics. He knows myriad different methods of control. It is no coincidence that many former Ford personnel are now staffing other companies in Britain - they are sought after, as being well-practised in the Management's form of workers' control - here subtle, there blatant. We feel it would be useful to categorise these forms of control, so that you know just what they are doing and why. This is not only relevant to Ford, it is relevant throughout Industry. You will, of course, recognise most of these tactics. However, we also include some that you may not have thought of, and also our suggestions of how to deal with them. Elsewhere in the pamphlet are details of what is happening and what will happen in the car industry - making it obvious that Henry Ford will use some of the more blatant tactics soon. KNOW THINE ENEMY.

OMINOUS CIRCUMSTANCES

In times such as these, when HF is crying out for cars, he normally cracks down, speeds up lines etc. However, he is also in great need of manpower, so he is making things soft - no trouble is wanted. So the situation is that you are kept at work as much as possible. The foremen are all very nice. Militants/troublemakers are either weeded out and put into a cushy no. or put onto a nasty one so that they leave pronto. However, they

will soon be in a position where they want to cut down on manning, speed up the line, and start wholesale sacking of stewards, militants, and whoever else you care to mention. When this comes, and also leading up to it, there will be these things:- no more perks or oversights relating to clocking, linespeeds and quotas, shoddy work, lateness and absenteeism and so on.

You see, Henry 2 could afford to be lax over the past months - what was lost through underproduction was compensated for by lack of cars lost through dispute; lower labour turnover; better work etc. However, we now see a coming together of various symptoms and factors which herald a re-appraisal of the situation by our Ford and Master. First, the economic situation is such that Henry is hit in 2 ways - his material cost of producing the car has increased, and also his available market is decreasing - due to increased petrol costs and lowered expectations of prosperity - consequently people are less sure that they can buy and run these cars.

He has already cut material costs to a minimum, so where else can he save? THE ANSWER IS RIGHT UNDER YOUR NOSE - YOU! The method employed by HF will be line speed-ups and cuts in manning - work will be harder and faster. Less time will be allowed off the line, and more work required on it. We know that already, with the number of workers leaving Ford each day, those who remain are doing more work with fewer people.

The other factors pointing towards this crunch are the success of British Leyland at Cowley, where there are now line speed-ups and control over who will be a steward (a parallel to Dagenham in 1962). And BLMC have also started talking of mass redundancies. This will point the way ahead for Ford. Also, the hols are not far off, and you will want money and thus work for that. This is a favourite time for a move by the management. Another point is that Ford can take advantage of the "social compact" and the "Don't rock the Boat" syndrome - this will make the Unions wary of a confrontation which will be leapt upon by the Tory Press - again, the example of Cowley. Looking further and pessimistically/realistically into the future, as the present crisis goes on, yet more firms will "go to the wall", creating a pool of unemployment for Henry to draw on, and letting him, over the long term at least, ignore labour shortages. So, the conclusion must be that the crunch will come, but when?

HAVING, I HOPE, convinced you of the ominous circumstances that we are in, I can now set out the tactics that Henry is using at present, in the section, factory, and complex.

SELECTION AND HARASSMENT

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 used vary from worker to worker. With one man he will say: "Get on 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 have only known him 5 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 slavedriver.

Once this method fails, they predictably start getting heavy. You're constantly harassed 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'll continue harassment 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 that they can throw at you - as well as increasing inspection 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. He selects people for these tasks and keeps them at work until they either drop dead, or get bolshy - both ways they have to be moved off the job!

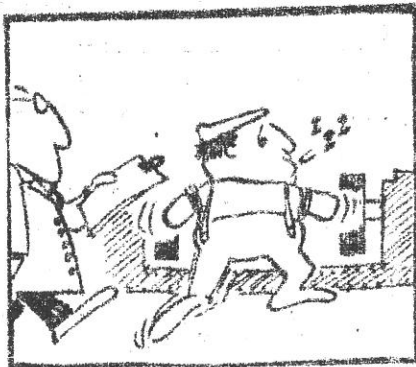
SPLITTING

Well, that is selection and harassment for you. Now onto the more sinister and crafty tricks that Fords gets up to. One of these is splitting.

Different sections are split structurally - 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 etc from others etc. This, of course, creates a situation where there is no solidarity in the plant - it is 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 'cos they have struck downstairs." Ring a bell? It is 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 all splits us, and make no mistake, it is deliberate Company policy. Divide and Conquer.

Man from man, line from line, section from section, grade from grade, colour from colour, skill from skill, plant from plant, Halewood from Dagenham, Ford Britain from Ford Germany.

It is obvious that from the Company's point of view it is better to have workers battling each other, rather than uniting and fighting Fords. To split us means misdirecting tension, grievances, energy etc. It also saves them layoff pay in many cases. It gets strikers back to work quicker - by pressure from other workers (and the Press - remember Cowley?...I'm sure



Henry does...Headlines of 150 "extremist" drivers throw 100,000 out of work... that was also an example of isolation over a minor issue - ie confined to a small section - rather than confrontation over a major one - eg that of speed-up).

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. And some guys (like electricians) you will meet on one shift, and you will not be on the same shift as them for another month. I ask you, how can you discuss in a situation like that?

And now to a more sinister aspect: the way the Ford Motor Company has got us sussed mentally!

The foremen are the main offenders (by which I mean they are truly offensive). Some have 20 years experience of how to keep us on the job and working well. Ever noticed the way they are your close friends from the first second. Some of them must think they are married to you, the way they cling to you. The way they put their arm around you - the sort of physical contact that is not characteristic of the British male species. It is, of course, a manoeuvre on their part to get you off your guard...it is difficult to confront someone and tell them to piss off if they are 6 inches from your face. (I think I'll start eating pickled onions!) It is one hell of a lot easier if they are 4 feet away - that is a well-used and successful ploy. Also, there is the harassment bit that I have already covered. Then they appeal to your 'better' nature: "Look at the fucking mess you have made of those jobs - you wouldn't want to buy one of those, would you?!" The set answer is: "I couldn't afford it on these wages anyway."

Also, whenever there is a dispute, they try to drag you off to the foremen's hut - onto their territory, where you feel ill at ease, especially with about 6 of the bastards all around you.

OUR TACTICS

Now it is our turn, or, to misquote the Bard:-

"To fight or not to fight, that is the question - whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer the slings and arrows of outrageous tactics, or to take up against the bastards and, by opposing, crush them."

Well, I think that we should start with the things that we should all be doing anyway. Obviously, you should only do your job. Don't talk bullshit, you might answer to that. But I mean it. I'm not talking about covering for someone who's having a fag. I'm talking about some among us who do more than they should. Such as covering for someone who's having a piss, or getting stock to keep the line going when it is not your job, and other such things. Do your job by the book. Don't fix things.

Also, there is the question of safety. Don't work with a sparky spot-welder, or with water on the floor, and don't allow anyone else to do so. Fumes, heat, cold - complain and/or stop work, and don't take any bullshit about it being fixed in a while. Get it fixed right there and then.

Complain, and insist on getting adequate training on each job if they shift you around all the time. Balls the job up....take a day to get trained...and they'll soon stop moving you.

Over the question of action, this can take many forms. We all know the various forms of Union action - strikes, go-slows etc - but there are other forms of action, varying in intensity, that can be used.

At the lower end of the scale there is, as I said, the go-slow. Now, I hope that we all know how to go slow (if you don't you probably won't have got beyond the first sentence). This entails working slowly, and other means can be used to slow the line even further - going for a piss without telling the foreman; not telling him you are running out of stock; refusing to work out of your space; stopping over safety; stopping over bad conditions; absolute non-cooperation; refusing to work with foremen also working on the line; stopping the line so as to tie your shoe-lace; acting thick so that the foreman takes half an hour to get through to you that you've let 10 jobs through untouched... (meanwhile you've let another 10 through absolutely untouched, and when he comes back to tell you that you've let another 10 through, he takes half an hour to tell you etc etc...)

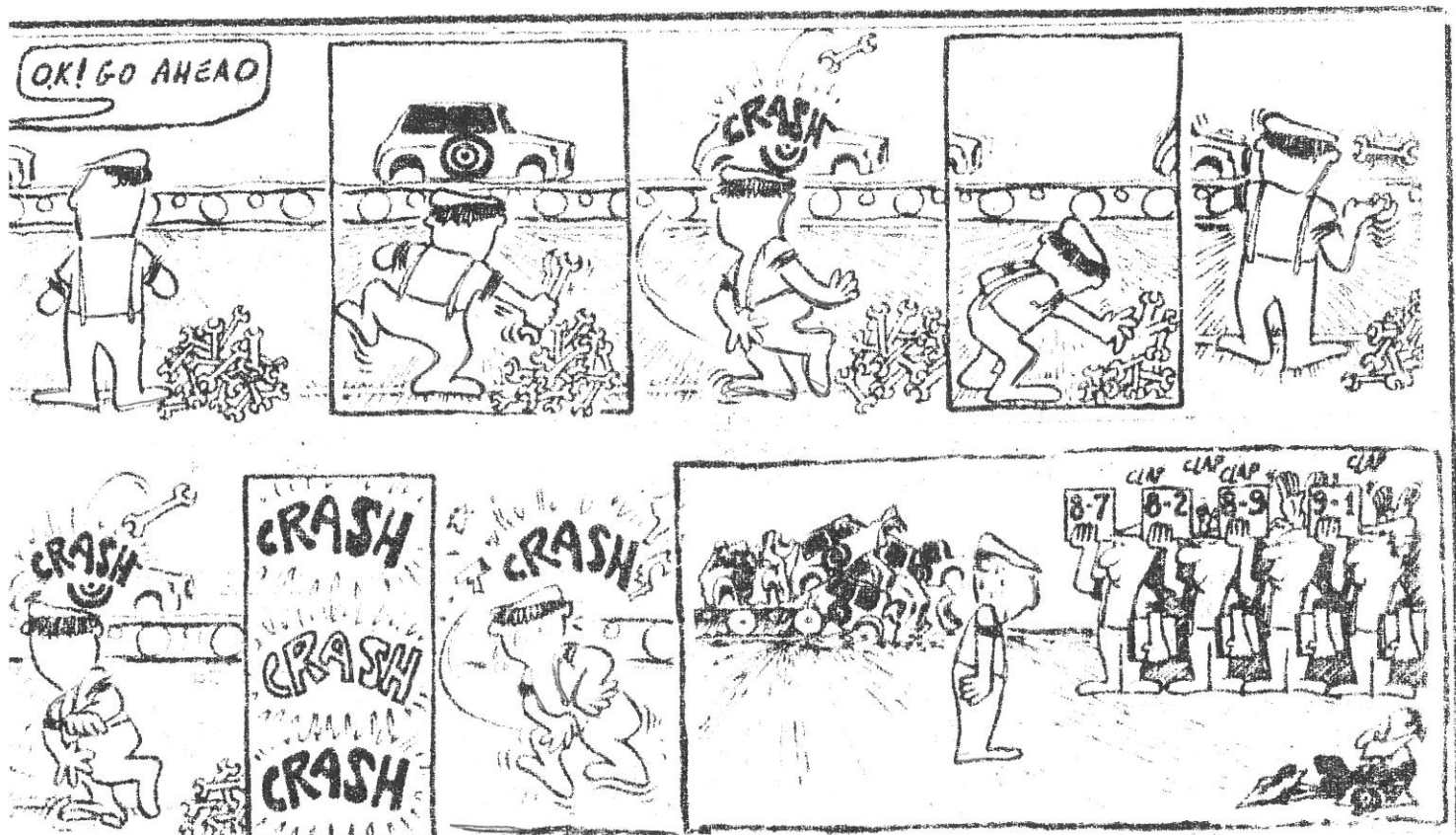
We understand that in other car plants more extreme methods are applied. Purely for the sake of accurate representation and documentation we include

these in this summarisation of the tactics used by carworkers. [Legal Note: We are not recommending them for use here.]

Firstly, jobs are deliberately done badly - badly spot-welded, assembled with the sole purpose of filling up the repair lines, getting the foremen and supervisors in shtuck, and costing the Company a lot of money. Also, jobs are deliberately damaged, with the same end in mind. People smash spot-guns by pulling hoses, hitting them on the floor etc. The same is done to other pieces of equipment. Bolts and other such things are dropped onto the chain line with the intention of smashing the drive. In a certain factory, the workers take shots at the fire sprinklers, to set them off, with air rifle slugs, so stopping work for a time.

Ah, you will say, this is a malaise. A sign of the times. Too true! But who can say where it will lead? For instance, the following....

"An extreme example of what can happen took place in October 1969, at the Chrysler Eldon Axle Plant. James Johnson, a black production worker with 'a low frustration tolerance' was sacked. He went home, got his gun, and came back and killed two foremen and a United Auto Workers Committeeman. The following day, workers all over Detroit stuck the press cuttings on the Johnson case on their foremen's desks. At his trial Johnson defended himself. He claimed insanity, brought about by working in the noise, filth and danger of the plant. The judge and jury visited the plant. Their verdict was unanimous - acquittal. Since then there have been a large and growing number of assaults and killings of supervisors." [from the Solidarity pamphlet, 'The Lordstown Struggle']



Grand Final Ford Knock-out Competition 1975.

come to your funeral (it happens!). Remember what Ford itself says to its trainees (management trainees of course): the Safety Programme involves an attempt to "improve productivity and efficiency"....which means saving on COSTS.

If you go home and discover that your back really hurts, Fords will of course deny that it's anything to do with them. Who are they kidding - because this happens to at least 10 blokes a week. But Fords manage to get away with it.

How many times have blokes gone to the Medical with a bad headache or feeling sick, just to get sent back on the lines with a few pills. You can cut your arm off, they'll just send you back on the line with a plaster. Like in the Lead Discing booths a couple of months ago, in the Body. The lead discers work wearing air hoods! They started complaining because they were getting a bad smell through the air hoses. They got headaches and blokes were vomiting thro' getting poisoned. But they had to go on strike on two occasions before Ford would even change the air filters.

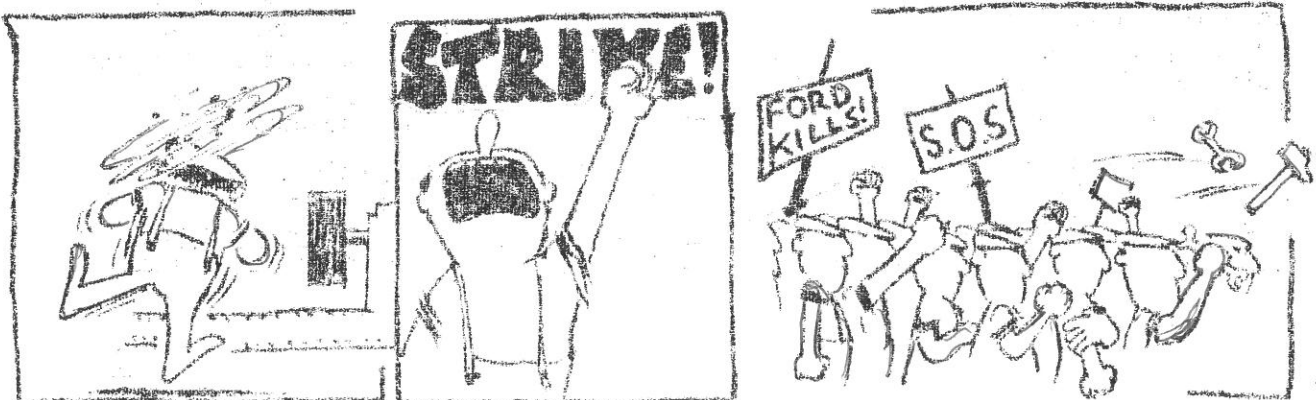
Even the food they serve up isn't enough to replenish the energy we use up humping heavy metal all day long. On nights half the canteen stuff is just stuff from the day shift, reheated. Where's the food value in that? This isn't the fault of the canteen workers - it's all down to Ford. But then they expect us to pay for it too. This food should be free - after all, Ford was willing enough to give away food while the canteen workers were on strike, just to keep us working.

MORE THAN MONEY

As we've tried to show, fighting over better pay and shorter hours is only one part of our fight. We don't want to end up as well-paid cripples. Better working conditions, safety regulations, less mind-breaking monotony, it's all part of the fight.

There's no point in just relying on Factory Acts etc. We all know that they're not enforced anyway - if they were, Dagenham would come to a standstill. The only way to protect our health is to get our own control over the work process. Like the question of wash-up time, which isn't just extra time and money. A good clean up means protection from Dermatitis and other skin diseases. We fought for that, and we got it. Like the lead discers who took the matter into their own hands. And like the many other sections that are beginning to say that we're not demented rabbits to go leaping around over the lines at the lunatic speeds they're driven at. Nor will we work with grease on the floor. Nor with faulty tools. Nor will we work ourselves silly just for H nry's profits.

The point is, we can't afford to delegate responsibility for our lives and our health to management, unions, or anyone but ourselves. It's us who have got to get organised.



BIG FLAME & THE UNION

People have said that Big Flame is anti-Union. This is nonsense. We're not against the Union as long as the Union is acting in the interests of workers. When the Union does act against our interests, though, which is happening more and more recently, WE GET ANGRY. The Union is supposed to be on our side and not the bosses' side, but more often it looks the other way round.

People like Jack Jones and Hugh Scanlon spend more time in meetings with employers and government officials than they do with workers. They are getting to feel they are running the country and have to act "in the national interest". But the way the system works is that the "national interest" is another way of saying that you've got to keep the bosses happy or they'll take their money out of the country. In a time of crisis this means hitting the workers first. This is what the TUC "social contract" with the Labour government is all about - it's an agreement to hold wages down while prices rip. And nearly all Trade Union officials are tied up with it. It's not that they're all necessarily bent - though a lot are as well - but that it's in the nature of their job to be as concerned about the interests of the bosses as they are with us. Their idea of "good labour-management relations" is "peace" in the factory on any terms - ie to have the bosses walking all over us. Our idea is peace on our terms, which we think can only come with a total change in the system, in which we have the power.

In the end the refusal of the Unions to fight the last Ford national agreement meant holding down our standards of living to protect Henry's profits, and stop him investing elsewhere. And they call us the black-mailers! [Not that there's much danger of Ford moving out of Britain. After 3 successive Union sell-outs over our wage demands, this year Fords announces a record £65.4 millions pre-tax profits in Britain, a country which Henry sees as a cheap labour pool compared with the £2.20 per hour he has to pay lineworkers in Detroit!]

CONVENORS AND STEWARDS

It's the same generally with Convenors. Often the only time we see them is when they tell us to get back to work while they negotiate for us. The Convenors sit in their office next door to management. And the stewards are off on training courses or sitting in the office with Personnel. They end up doing Management's job for them, half the time. Somehow it happens. It's in the nature of the job that they get separated from the other blokes on the line, and it takes a strong bloke not to compromise. The trouble is that a strong bloke is almost certain to lose his credentials if he always does what's right by the workers, on account of the Blue Book - which has been called "a history of workers' defeats at Dagenham". The Blue Book is a bosses charter, which the stewards are supposed to abide by. Its whole aim is to take the steam out of any situation, and get blokes back to work while one or two people disappear up to the office to 'negotiate'. Once this happens we've usually lost the initiative. We don't know what's happening, the impetus is lost, and the case disappears, to be lost in Procedure.

We're not saying that we have to stop work for everything. We are saying that when it comes down to it, the only strength we have in Fords is our own, and the question for us is how best to make our strength work for us, and not pious declarations about being better or worse trade unionists.

BREAK THESE DIVISIONS

A few weeks ago in Fords, the PTA was laid off, while the Body Plant was kept in and paid for 'clean-up'. The Convenors must have known about this obvious injustice - and known that people in the PTA would have been angry to hear about it. Yet they did nothing to let people know what was happening, to call meetings, or to lead any kind of fight for layoff pay.

Two weeks before that, four Fordworkers were arrested on picketing outside the Body Plant. The stewards put out a leaflet congratulating themselves on the success of the strike. But they have done next to nothing to help the 4 blokes who were arrested. If these men were arrested on a picket in defence of Union funds, why has the Union done nothing to date to organise in defence of them?

This kind of ridiculous sectionalism has got to stop. It's been clear to all of us for a long time that the Body Plant and the PTA are effectively one plant. Ford tries hard enough to divide us. We don't need the Union doing it as well.

We've just had elections for Convenors and Stewards, and we've got a new Convenor in the Body Plant. Now is a good time for the stewards to start holding regular meetings (what about a mass meeting in the Body!) and to start getting some information around. It's not that we're against better stewards. But we have learnt too much over the past few years to remain dependent on them. We have to be able to fight for ourselves where the official movement won't fight for us. We have to look for new tactics that use all our organised strength - it's no good leaving it to anyone else to fight for us.



THE BIG FLAME FORD GROUP

The Big Flame Ford Group has been working in and around Dagenham for a year and a half now, putting out leaflets aimed at linking up different sections of the factory and developing a strategy with which to fight Henry. This pamphlet has tried to outline some of the elements of that strategy, for the coming months. We feel that this job has been necessary, because Ford workers are always kept in the dark, divided and manipulated, and we have to find our own voice. The leaflets have tried to tell the truth as we see it, about what's been happening. Now we have to start working to break down some of the divisions in this place.

One way of doing this is to form ginger groups on every section that can lead actions and put pressure on the steward if necessary. The groups can begin to draw up demands and strategy for the section - for relief times, for upgradings, against speed-up etc. They can push for meetings, and they can start making links with other sections, to make sure the action is spread, if necessary. The elements of such groups exist in most sections, among both black and white workers. We've all got to start pulling together so that we're more effective in action. We have to get away from the situation that existed a few weeks ago, when the whole of the PTA was laid off without pay - except for a few sections of the Paint Shop, who sat in alone, and got their pay.

For us, the existence of the Ford Group is a chance for these isolated groups and individuals to get together and develop a strategy of action in

the factory. After all, Henry has hundreds of personnel officers thinking of nothing else but how to squeeze more out of us. We have to be more prepared than they are.

At Fords today they want us to work harder and harder every day, for a wage that is worth less and less. The work is a grind. We have to work just to survive, but Henry doesn't want us to live. We know that if we want to live instead of just surviving, we're going to have to fight for it. And we also know that we want to live now. Not just vague promises of a rosy and socialistic future, but a better life NOW. And of course, that will mean fighting Henry, because he and his shareholders have been growing fat off our labour for too long.

THE FORD GROUP

The Ford group consists partly of Ford workers and partly of external militants. It has been growing over the past year, as people from different sections have begun working with us. Some people just keep us in touch with the struggles in their sections, but others have the time to come to meetings, prepare leaflets, have more general discussions etc about working out how to organise in Fords.

Over the past years we've seen how Fords divides us. The latest and most obvious example is the attempt to set line-workers off against tradesmen, sub-assembly etc over the question of wash-up payments. In these circumstances it's clear that we can only organise the fight against Ford if we've got people from every section of the plant, keeping up the network of information and contacts that must be developed here. For that reason, if you'd like to work with us, we'd be happy to hear from you.

LEAFLETS

We've been putting out leaflets at Dagenham quite regularly. We have access to our own printing press, and are able to print leaflets ourselves quite cheaply and easily. We meet every Sunday in East London, in order to discuss what needs doing for the following week, as well as meeting on other occasions for more general political discussions. In addition, other Ford workers who are not part of the group phone us so that we can print info about what is happening in their areas.

The leaflets are paid for by members of the group. Each one costs about £10 to print, and this is a heavy burden that limits the number of leaflets that we do. There are many situations where a leaflet would be very useful, but we don't have the money resources to do it. It also means that we have to limit the number we print and the number of places where we distribute. A few bob from a few more people would go a long way to improving things. Any contributions could be sent to our address, or passed over to people who give out the leaflets.

BIG FLAME

The Ford Group is part of a general political group called East London Big Flame, working around all the issues that affect our lives, not only inside the workplace but in the community as well. We're involved in organising around housing, prices, education, playgroups, women at work, racism as well as Fords. There are also Big Flame groups in West London, Manchester and Liverpool - including a group at Ford Halewood, with whom we meet to compare notes and hold discussions.

If you're interested in working with us in East London, or if you want to know more about the Big Flame Ford Group, drop us a line to the address below, preferably with a phone number where you can be contacted, or phone us any time:

Big Flame, c/o 79c Anerley Road, London SE 20.
tel. 01-659-3895