BUILDING WORKERS face the biggest offensive ever. The employers are hell bent on driving militant trade unionism out of the industry.

The reason is simple. Last year’s dispute scared the life out of them. You could hear the ice rattling in their whisky glasses as their hands shook with terror from one end of the country to the other.

Undoubtedly many an employer sought solace from Lord Lambton-style prospects. The prospect of 300,000 builders organised and prepared to fight to win a secure and decent standard of living was one the employers were not prepared to accept. They were afraid to take on building workers all together after the dispute, so it was done site-by-site.

They were well aware that after a long and hard dispute building workers were tired. The counterattack was made mainly by cutting back the increase on the bonus, so that on most sites take-home pay is hardly different than before the dispute.

VITAL

Nonetheless the strike gained much for the first time in this industry. Perhaps the biggest gain was that building workers have established a national campaign and next time it will be even more viable.

The central strategy in the employers’ case, apart from the use of the lump, is one of dividing and conquering. We must insist that the lump must be bought to an end and that we organise to do the job.

It is a vital task. And not just for the building workers whose organisation the lump wrecks, whose potential allies against the employers are reduced to chattering and slaves.

The lump kills and the lump maims and the lump subjects people in a most brutal fashion. But it also ensures that the cheap-skate buildings erected for profit and for working people to live in or use are jury-built and dangerous.

So that the strike the employers have devoted enormous energies to ensuring that local authorities do not ban the lump on public housing contracts. They are now well on the way to success.

Last June the London Boroughs Association—the umbrella organisation of all the councils—decided to prevent contractors from using the lump and other various subcontracting devices on council contracts. 33 London boroughs followed their lead.

The employers then organised a boycott through the National Federation of Building Trades Employers, taking advantage of the construction boom created by the Tory government. They refused to tender for jobs or lodged grossly inflated tenders.

ROTTEN

On 21 March the London Boroughs' Association altered its policy. Since then council after council has fallen back into line and opened its jobs up to the lump. On May Day the staunchly Labour Islington Council collapsed.

It is not by chance that the industry is rotten with the lump. It was introduced at a time when shop stewards’ committees and the union were trying to make a dent in the industry. It was introduced for one reason: to prevent trade union organisation by splitting the work force.

That is why employers are prepared to pay up to £15 a day for brickies and yet will not concede to a £30 basic wage for a 35-hour week.

The effort the employers are putting into this bid to break union organisation can be seen from the cash the employers are now offering lump workers. £120 a week has been mentioned in London, £80 a week in Birmingham and £70 a week in Glasgow.

There is also another reason for ending the lump and the dispute—written into the agreement is the employers’ hobbieshorse for the past 10 years.

Grading can only hamper the already hard task of trade union organisation on the sites. It plays worker off against worker and splits workers into even smaller groups. The employers also aim to introduce flexibility—in other words trades would almost disappear and we would be left with general craftsmen of varying grades.

With poor attendances at union branches, if the idea of grading is put forward, it would quite likely go through. Particularly as such a move would be covered by long articles and letters from George Smith extolling the virtues of grading.

Graded workers make finer profits for lower wages.

GROWTH can be seen from the number of ‘tax exemption’ certificates applied for since the anti-lump legislation. The official figure is a staggered 450,000.

But no amount of begging will make the lump go away. A campaign must be mounted. A campaign that does not consist of empty words but has some teeth. And it must set out to win the battle on the lump towards organisation under the banner of Direct Employment.

If the employers succeed in driving the trade union organisation then the high premiums now being paid to lump workers will be slashed. It will then be too late to fight back. And without the union there will not be an organisation capable of winning even the basic demands.

VARIETY

The lump must be fought and it must be fought now. But we cannot expect George Smith, UCATT general secretary, to begin such a fight. He doesn’t want to. It would only threaten his cosy relationship with the building employers’ federation. His attitude to the lump is ‘perhaps we can’t fight the lump and should organise lump workers’.

Such an attitude runs away from the problems of the industry. The lump must go whatever it be the cash-in-hand variety or the more respectable ‘labour-only’. While the lump exists demands for 100 per cent trade unionism, better conditions and higher wages cannot be won.

Against the blacklist

WITH the fight against the lump, there must be determination by officials and the lads on the sites over the issue of victimisation and the blacklist.

Unless a firm stand is made by the union, there is little to give lads on unorganised sites the courage to stand up and take on the job of stewards if the only prospect is your cards in your back pocket and little prospect of another job because of the blacklist.

The employers’ blacklist must now be as thick as the Encyclopaedia Britannica.

Time to fight for a new deal

£40 for a 35-hour week

The fight against the lump must be coupled with the ending of the present two-year agreement and a new contract on the basis of £40 for 35 hours.

Ask any lump worker why he stays on the lump and his reply will be quite simple. Cash. An increase on the basis of £40 would mean a real increase of £25 to £30 which this increase is coupled to existing bonus schemes.

When we begin to talk in terms of wages like that, lump workers will see the trade union as a real alternative to the sorry conditions on the lump.

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The lump, victimisation, blacklisting are the employers’ main weapons. They are aided and abetted in their villainy by the state and the police and courts. The Shrewsbury building workers facing conspiracy charges under an obsolete law, the South Birmingham building workers arrested in mid-April and the new picketing laws about to be announced show quite clearly that the building trade employers do not operate on their own.

To resist them we must organise on a national basis. However strong our region is, if left in isolation, it will crack.

CAMPAIGN

As has been shown in Birmingham, we need to strengthen the voice of the rank and file workers. Shop stewards’ committees, such as exist in Birmingham and Liverpool, with official backing from the union, will maintain their independence, are certainly a step in the right direction.

The continuing and enlarging of the present campaigns against the lump and labour-only must be given full support. If we are to take on the employers, then what better way than by closing down a major firm, hitting its sites up and down the country, and keeping them closed until it agrees to get rid of the lump and the blacklist. Then other major contractors would think twice about using lump labour on their sites.

But before this can be done, regions that have not yet joined the campaign should adopt similar tactics to those used in London and Birmingham.

For building workers the message is loud and clear. Either fight the lump and best it or be destroyed by it.
by a Liverpool building worker

MOST trade unions in the building industry are only too aware of the threat posed to them by price competition, the power of the Building Paper, the Building Charter, Viewpoint, and the Building Employers’ Federation (BEF) which doubt many others have even read articles on how the lump destroys site organisation and so deprives the worker of the job and works control.

Mounting accident figures, the listing of training schemes, declining trade union membership, blacklists and - of course - record company profits all testify that the lump is on the increase.

Many agree that the present situation on the sites is intolerable, and that something must be done. But what?

Since last summer’s 12-week strike, more contacts have been held in recent talks with both the employers and the unions. Unfortunately, both sides of talks have haggled around some sort of blanket national agreement.

At the beginning of April, the newly formed Construction Commission led by George Smith and City Engineer Adam Dalgleish, along with the Transport Union, Harry Wardman of the Transport and General Workers’ Union, and Charlie Lovell of the Plumbers met the government and put forward a number of demands on labour relations in the industry. The TUC made the trade union proposals. These were:

- A public inquiry to be set up to look at problems of casual labour.

- The appointment of a "Construction Industry Manpower Board" to determine the number of workers which would be administered by the Manpower Services Commission.

The memo went on to say that these proposals would be "essential conditions" of moving towards a "proper" national agreement which could be registered according to skill.

In addition, the memo noted how "interest in going out of the lump has been greater in this week's words - something more effective. This is illustrated by the excess of the electrical contracting and plumbing unions which are looking more effective.

To the News were appended the following words:

"The program of negotiations summed up the situation clearly: 'The whole country has been in the dark regarding the proposals of the employers. We have been given the opportunity to deal with the problem - which means that the trade unions are an essential part of the solution.'"

In the last few months, the trade unions have taken a new approach to the problem of trade unionism. They have been aware of the fact that the lump is an important part of the problem, and they have been working hard to ensure that it is dealt with effectively.

The trade union leaders who met recently to discuss the problem agreed that the lump is an important part of the problem. They have been working hard to ensure that it is dealt with effectively.

PRIORITY

Clearly the unions agree with the employers that the lump should be replaced with a more acceptable alternative. The TUC-inspired deal offers no comfort to workers on the sites.

Recently a great deal of publicity has been given to Eric Heffern's proposals for prohibiting the lump. His Labour-only plan to substitute a bill for the trade unions to organise the lump has been backed by the TUC, who have suggested that the proposals be "taken seriously."

Over the past year the leaders of the building unions in particular, and the TUC in general, have been very worried about the problem. The trade unionists have now decided that the lump is an important part of the problem, and they have been working hard to ensure that it is dealt with effectively.

The lump has been the subject of a number of discussions, and the trade unionists have been working hard to ensure that it is dealt with effectively.

As the Heffern proposals come into effect, the building industry will be taking a new approach to the problem of trade unionism.

The TUC has a number of proposals which are being considered by the building unions. These proposals include the introduction of a new system of organization for the building industry, which will be based on the principles of trade unionism.

The new system of organization will be designed to ensure that the trade unions have a more effective voice in the industry.

The trade unionists are determined to ensure that the lump is dealt with effectively, and they are working hard to ensure that the new system of organization is put into effect.

LEON ALTEMOSE, the Philadelphia contractor, was named as 'US Construction Man of the Year' last February by the American Journal of Engineering News Record.

Altemose received the award for "courageously exercising his right to work as an open shop general contractor despite organised physical violence and its continuing threat," says the News Record.

Altemose is a non-union member and has refused to sign a closed shop policy and employ his workers at the agreed basic trade union rates.

Altemose’s objections to the unionists were that they wanted to prevent him from making decisions about the payment of wages and benefits, his legal adviser said in a letter to Altemose.

On 4 June last year a mare’s nest kicked down on the site and bumped it to the ground. No arrests were made.

Banned

The county court replied with an injunction barring the unions 'from picketing within a mile of the Altemose job sites' and this was extended to cover his office. It also forbade 'interference with any deliveries to his sites,' and the unions 'to refuse to serve or damage the property of the company,' its subcontractors, its officers, supervisors and employees.' The protection was complete with the one mile picketing ban to include letters and offices which might be concerned in any other conflict.

The morning after the injunction was issued pickets demonstrated against it outside Altemose’s office. The pickets were met by an armed guard of local and state police. The local sheriff read out the injunction, then ordered the police to clear the area. 123 of the 129 men were fined $100 dollars and when they came to court a mass demonstration of 10,000 building workers was again met with an armed guard.

The unions appealed to the state courts to quash the injunction and the convictions. The grounds of appeal were that the injunction infringed the constitutional rights assembly in protest.

The unions' right to picket and to demonstrate and their right to apply for an injunction to prevent the destruction of property is being considered.

The court found that defendants in demonstrated either unlawful or unlawful court orders (prohibited) only permitted peaceful that peace was so inessential with acts of violence impossible the domino effect in safety of community.

Paw

The unions are not picketing, but destruction of war 1943 this was so, and the activities would be the Taft-Hartley Act extraneous to the relations Board pre 1949 state or federal court.

Grafted on to this, however, is an action. Said the court, the Court of the United States, before and after the Act, has repeatedly been the duty to have the order and safety property damage.

IT'S HAPPENING
Operation Smash
Trade Unionism

MANY people think the building strike ended last September. The building employers certainly wouldn't agree. For them, the new wage agreement was the signal for the big one. They call it Operation Smash Trade Unionism.

They set about spreading the rumour in new guises—even further, so that their unions' variety of contractors would not have the slightest chance of organisation in as many places as possible. Not surprisingly, they looked to their allies in the Tory government for a little help. And they got it.

The effect of their concern was the flying picket. For during the strike the flying pickets had shown that even the lump-ridged sites could be held by lump-working contractors. They would be used by the government to bring in more repressive anti-union laws on the question of the right to picket.

Of course we have the right to picket. Of course we have the right to withdraw our labour, in the statute books, the court cases of the Shrewsbury and Birmingham building workers will be used by the government to bring in more repressive anti-union laws on the question of the right to picket.

The employers didn't leave it there. McAlpine called the police. The police proceeded to make a sham criminal investigation with 20 officers working full-time on the Shrewsbury case.

Go-ahead

But before any arrests were made, the employers put a few more sticks in the fire. They lobbed Tory ministers and got an agreement that the law on picketing would be more ruthlessly enforced. They published their fake dossier on "violence and intimidation" in the strike, in a public relations drive.

One month after the dossier came out, the police sent the papers on the Shrewsbury pickets to the government law and order department, the Director of Public Prosecutions. His mind was, as usual, already made up for him and he gave the go-ahead for a massive prosecution of the building workers on charges of criminal damage, intimidation and demanding money with menaces. The use of conspiracy charges against some of the men was also agreed.

Sentence a man in 1972, the employers and the government will have taken more than a passing interest in the Altemose case.

Building workers march in Shrewsbury in solidarity with the 26 accused pickets

The trade unionists have the power to prevent such changes. Be prepared to fight. It's their rights they are trying to destroy.
Reports from the regions

‘Big money on the lump’ is a myth

by lan Collins (TGWU, Bristol)

BRISTOL—A leading local steward described the local situation to a tee the other day. ‘It’s like a bloody great swamp with the Monster on it. There’s one way out but the people who know it just hide.’

The Monster is the lump, the way out is site organisation, the people who know are the union officials who hold back from ever just helping the isolated militants trying to fight it.

The seriousness of the situation is seen in two sites, both McAlpine’s, within 500 yards of each other. One is finishing up and was organised, the other, just starting, is ‘sabbied out’ from the ground work to the chippies. As more and more major projects draw to a close this pattern is being repeated all over town.

What about the Building Workers Charter? The answer is obvious to the militants—a concerted attack on the sites. Unfortunately the officials seem to think otherwise.

On May Day, workers on the Parkway, Bristol’s urban motorway, stopped work to join the demonstrations against the Tories and their system in the building industry, the lump, and marched behind the local Charter banner.

There should have been more—but the letters sent by UCATT telling members of the one-day official stoppage went unheeded. The trade union did not play the game, and the sites worked as usual.

But with the lump spreading, the second half of the Charter agreement comes up, the lump in wages due to Heffer’s and the trial of the Shrewsbury pickets threatening every union member, the resolve to fight and win still holds.

Transport union branches are pushing for a mobilisation to support the lads accorded at Shrewsbury. This must be the start of a campaign to rid Bristol of the lump, the cancer that threatens every building worker.

The MEN WHO HOLD US ALL TO RANSOM

‘They’re holding the country to ransom!’ is an accusation levelled against unionists again against workers in struggle. The recent scandals involving the infamous Nottingham-Jeffries affair, have shown who is making off with the spoils—those trying to use their hypocritical preaching about class warfare to persuade workers to pull in their belts for ‘the good of the country’.

UCATT members picketing the Laing’s Livery Street site in Birmingham—see report below.

BIRMINGHAM—Conditions on many sites are primitive. Toilets, canteens and drying rooms are a luxury and where they exist they are not kept clean. Even the toilet rooms have been made so unhealthily cleaned that we demand a clean shanty are we misguided, militant extremists?

The lump acts in these circumstances as a union-busting operation for the employers, dividing the men and maintaining low pay and poor conditions. We have found in Birmingham that the claim that lump workers are making big money is largely a myth. Most men get £4 and £5 per day.

Living conditions are the SOE bureau varying rates. The rate depends on the assessment of the site agent. What happens of course is that the men will demand of the agent the higher rate. He in turn tells the contractor that he is the highest rate and agrees it up. The rate paid can vary from week to week or from day to day.

The lump system is the work, the work, the work. In holiday, no pay during weather, no pay for work, no pay in the winter, no holiday. As a result of the lump system, the lump is the race, the race is the lump.

This means that a campaign must be started in every region similar to that started here in the Midlands. The lump involves sending stewards to see men on jobs to check the lump exists and that the lump is put together to persuade them to come out on strike for direct employment. This has now been done in the Merthyr report and the driver and the trial of the Shrewsbury pickets threatening every union member, the resolve to fight and win still holds.

Steward

When the men have come out for direct employment we have done our best to get collections from them on a weekly basis of the organised jobs. This policy has so far been successful on four jobs. We are as the moment trying to crack a tougher nut.

We put a picket on Laing’s Livery Street job. Most of the men left the site, after being visited by an official from the union and elected Eddie Elliot, the crane driver, as their steward. The men had good reason to feel bitter with their employers. They were on the rate of basic with bonus rarely earned, no overtime, 60-hour week work. There is no qualified scaffold hand on the job and the crane gives doctors every day. The stewards said he would be safety-officed.

Since the dispute started the stewards has won 90 per cent of the men on the job. There is no qualified scaffold hand on the job and there are very many doctors every day. The stewards said he would be safety-officed.

REFUSAL

Sir Keith Joseph for example, who as Minister of Health, rubbished the hospital workers’ strike as a ‘threat to the nation’ in Bovis, one of Britain’s big building companies. Bovis had a long and disgraceful relationship with Poillon and T Dan Smith, the man who was found not guilty of bribing Smith’s men. Bovis is a private company and has no reluctance, no scruples in accepting Smith’s bribes.

Or Geoffrey Rippon, a former director of Cubitts and a few other bigger boys, Rippon, a boss of the Department of the Environment, which co-ordinates vast areas of public sector building. Rippon has more shares in Cubitts now than he had when he was a director of the firm.

He recently refused to meet Hammarskjold’s Trades Council’s request for a public inquiry into the World’s End council housing project which has been described to blackmail the council to give them an excess £1 million to finish the job, which is already years behind.

The impartial Mr Rippon did not think this scandal merited a public inquiry. Or perhaps he felt Cubitts and himself could not afford one. After all, what is happening to the price of his shares?

Blacklist hits city site

by Tony Price

MANCHESTER has not escaped the Blacklist. New Moss Side centre re-development in Manchester has been advertising for fixers, brickies and joiners for months. The site is 100 per cent organised with no lump. At the E10 million Taylor Woodrow Market Street development, where the vicious application of the blacklist has made the shortage worse, they are trying to fill the gap by ferrying in workers from Leeds. In recent weeks they have stepped up the lump while refusing to start local men on the contracts.

Militants who want to fight the lump have raised the question in the Manchester Building Workers Forum, the local Charter group. At a meeting on 18 April ‘action against the lump’ appeared on the agenda. After a report that emphasised the importance of support for Heffer’s bill, the convenor from Laing’s Moss Side said that while support for Heffer’s bill was necessary, an intensive campaign at district level was needed.

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