

**NOTTINGHAM  
WORKER**

**Solidarity Forever!**

**PAKISTANI**

**WORKERS WIN**

**LENTON STRIKE**

**5p**

WORKERS WIN STRIKE AT CREPE SIZES, LENTON.

By Brian Simister.

On June the 9th., 44 Pakistani workers employed by the private firm of Crepe Sizes Ltd., Friar Street, Lenton, Nottingham, won a two week long strike against five redundancies and for Union and shop steward recognition. The facts of the dispute are briefly as follows.

The factory, prior to the dispute, employed about sixty people - forty four of whom were Pakistanis engaged in production work. The factory produces man made fibres. The workers were working an eighty four hour week, consisting of twelve hour shifts, seven days a week. For these hours, the men were receiving gross pay of £40.08 per week (day rate). The long hours, for all practical purposes, were a condition of employment.

Crepe Sizes Ltd., have, over the years, spent scant attention to matters of safety and hygiene. The forty four men shared one toilet, which was usually filthy. At one time, the men asked the management to employ a man to clean the toilet and offered to pay that man's wages out of their own pocket. The management rejected this idea. Another toilet, which was blocked two years ago, had not been cleared up to when the strike began.

The machines at Crepe Sizes are dangerous, but 'first aid facilities' consisted of little else but a roll of plaster. Over the last four years, three men have had serious accidents, involving the loss of a finger or part of a finger. Far from receiving any compensation for these accidents, all these three men got from the firm was the sack. During their twelve hour daily stint, the workers had a lunch break consisting of half an hour. The firm's canteen had only four chairs in it and was used by the handful of Englishmen who worked there. These men objected to sharing the canteen with their Pakistani fellow workers.

For some time past, the men had been putting demands to the management relating to their basic pay and working conditions. On the 19th. of May, they joined the Transport and General Workers Union. Shortly afterwards, the management declared five of the men to be redundant, including one of the newly elected shop stewards, due, the management said, to 'contraction of demand within the man made fibres industry.' What, the sackings really represented was a blatant attempt by the management to prevent the Union organisation from getting off the ground. The workers demanded a reduction in the working week, in order to avoid the redundancies. When the management rejected this demand, the workers walked out. This was on the 27th. of May. Shortly after the strike began, the management declared that the men had dismissed themselves by failing to report for work, and advertisements were placed in the 'Nottingham Evening Post' offering jobs at Crepe Sizes at 'up to £40 a week', no mention naturally of the strike, the hours or the conditions.

However, the management were to get more than they bargained for. The men organised themselves into large picket lines, and these were maintained every day, throughout the dispute. Thus, they succeeded in preventing any new employees from being taken on. Whilst the firm's English employees remained at work, not wishing to damage their chances of receiving a gold watch on retirement, a significant number of lorry drivers delivering to the firm were turned back by the pickets. The Nottingham Branch of the I.M.G.,

together with the Black People's Freedom Movement and other organisations, formed a Solidarity Committee, which organised financial appeal, helped with picketing and sought to put pressure on the local full time officials of the T. and G.W.U., to call a District Committee meeting, so that the strike could be made official. Many individual members of the Union employed elsewhere, also tried to get the officials to take action.

On Wednesday, June the 7th., the Solidarity Committee organised a public meeting at the Co-operative Education Centre, which was attended by about 200 people. £50 was collected at this meeting. In spite of all the publicity attending the dispute, the justice of the men's case, and the pleas of individual Union members, Ray Thorpe, the District Secretary of the T. and G.W.U., remained unmoved and detached, only allowing himself to get annoyed by the leaflets put out by the Solidarity Committee, in support of the members of his Union. Such calm and serenity, whilst it was remarkable under the circumstances, was not helping the strike. However, on June the 9th., the clamour was such that he roused himself to see the management, who promptly caved in. All the men, including the five who had been declared redundant, were reinstated, the Union was recognised, along with the negotiating rights of the elected shop stewards. Working hours were cut from 84 hours a week to 60 hours a week.

The struggle at Crepe Sizes is not over. Conditions still remain utterly unsatisfactory. However, the men are in a much better position to fight for a better deal, than they were before this victory was won. This dispute highlights a far too common situation in industry. There are many factories in the Nottingham area, where conditions are similar to those existing at Crepe Sizes. During the last eighty or so years, the trade union movement, through a long and bitter struggle, has won big gains for the working class in terms of pay, working hours and conditions. This struggle is by no means over and it will not be over until the system which puts profits before people is destroyed completely and is replaced by one where the workers enjoy the full fruits of their labour. Yet, in spite of all the victories that have been won in large sectors of industry, there are some companies, which have somehow slipped through the net, which pay wages and provide conditions which are well below the average, unsatisfactory though that average is. These companies usually employ workers who are unorganised. Many of these workers are women. Many others are black. Black workers have particular problems, which make them vulnerable to companies wishing to make super profits at their expense, and which play on the fears that Black workers have with regard to the Immigration Act and the difficulties they have in getting jobs. Often, the organised labour movement has been apathetic, sometimes downright hostile even, to these extra exploited sections of the working class.

These are among the reasons why it is necessary for Black workers to form their own organisations, to fight against discrimination, and why the development in recent years of militant womens' organisations should also be welcomed. However, it is only a united labour movement, determined to fight for all sections of the working class that can hope to be successful.

Nevertheless, a victory has been won at Crepe Sizes, a victory from which all workers in similar positions can take heart and learn the important lesson that firms like Crepe Sizes can be beaten. The Solidarity Committee formed because of this strike, is remaining in being, so that similar struggles can be aided in the future.

TORY UNION GAINS RECOGNITION AT C.A. PARSONS'  
NEWCASTLE.

By Frank Gorton.

A direct consequence of the Industrial Relations Act has been the appearance of numerous phoney unions, Tory supported, with the conscious aim of dividing and weakening the existing traditional trade unions.

One of these, the United Kingdom Association of Professional Engineers, (U.K.A.P.E.) has chalked up its first victory in the service of the employing class. At C.A. Parsons, U.K.A.P.E. challenged the 100% membership agreement between the the Technical and Supervisory Section (T.A.S.S.) of the A.U.E.W. and C.A. Parsons.

The challenge against the closed shop agreement was placed before the Industrial Relations Court, on the grounds of 'unfair industrial practice,' specifically - threatening irregular industrial action against U.K.A.P.E. and calling for action against U.K.A.P.E., whilst enquiries were pending under Section 54 of the Industrial Relations Act.

U.K.A.P.E. sought an interim order directing T.A.S.S. to refrain from any organising, financing, procuring, or calling of a strike, or any other irregular industrial action, either against the firm, or U.K.A.P.E., or its members. Also, T.A.S.S. was expected, should the Court require it, to pay compensation to U.K.A.P.E., in respect of the action and threats complained of.

In the event, T.A.S.S. refused to attend the I.R.C. and placed itself in contempt of Court. It, then, took its case to the T.U.C., where it was refused support by the General Council.

This blow to the rank and file of T.A.S.S. at Parsons is another instance of the T.U.C.'s inability to adequately oppose the Tory Government's legal offensive against the organised labour movement. We need a Trade Union leadership like that of Quebec, one that is prepared to fight this anti working class legislation all the way, (to prison if necessary), mobilising the working class in mass actions and strikes. One component of this, must be the recall of the Trades Union Congress, and the election to the General Council of men and women with the guts to fight it out to the bitter end.

BENTLEY ENGINEERING WORKERS FACE THE CHOP.

By Bertha Cairncross.

The total workforce of 120 men at the Atlas Works, Kirkwhite Street, The Meadows, has received redundancy notices, to take effect from July the 21st, according to a report in the 'Nottingham Evening Post', of June the 21st.

The closure of Bentley Engineering's Atlas Works comes as no surprise. This has been pending for some time. What has shattered the men is that the firm has offered hardly any jobs to Atlas Works men, at their other sites. The firm had told them last Christmas that all the Atlas Works men would be given jobs at County Road. Now, all that seems to be on offer is a vague promise of jobs for 17 workers at Leicester.

The recent history of Bentley Engineering has been a stormy one. The firm, which is a manufacturer of textiles machinery, is part of the giant Clore combine, and its management techniques are of the

modern, cut throat variety. About two years ago, after a major purge of its middle and junior management layers, it unleashed a big campaign against the earnings levels of the shop floor workers and against the workers organisations. First, they adopted the tactic of attempting to victimise militant shop stewards. Then, they introduced a system of measured day working. This latter system is one where the workers are subjected to time and motion study, on the basis of which output targets are set. If workers reach the set targets, they receive a standard wage. If they fall below the targets, they face pay cuts at best, and the sack at worst. If targets are exceeded, bonuses are not normally paid. The more usual outcome is that management assumes that the targets are not high enough; they therefore institute another time and motion study, and targets are then increased. What measured day work boils down to is that it is a scheme whereby firms like Bentley's can exact more work out of each individual worker, thus making it possible to reduce the work force and yet retain production at a high level. Also, by paying standard wages the firm can plan its costs and can eliminate the bargaining which normally takes place between workers and rate fixers, when you have a normal piece rate system.

When this scheme was introduced at the Atlas Works two years ago, workers had the choice of accepting it or becoming redundant. A small group of fitters employed at the Atlas Works went on strike against the management's plan, but after ten weeks the men were sold out by their Union, who came to an agreement with the management that the men be made redundant. This defeat weakened the trade union organisation at Bentley's. Now, in 1972, the management feel that they can deliver the coup de grace.

How the workers at Bentley's will react to the redundancy notices remains to be seen. I understand that their Union, the A.U.E.W., has stated that it could help in finding jobs for the redundant men in the area. With the present unemployment situation, this seems a forlorn hope, and the workers would do well to disregard it.

There is no reason why the redundancies at Bentley Engineering should be accepted. Bentley Engineering are simply endeavouring to cut their wage costs by eliminating the Atlas Works; thus concentrating production at their other branches, where the workers employed therein will be induced to step up output, so that overall production levels can be maintained. If they get away with it profits will be increased, the Clore combine will be delighted and 120 men will be thrown on the industrial scrapheap, like any other unwanted component in the money making process that the capitalist system represents. Yet one thing should be remembered. It is not the Bentley Engineering management, nor the big Clore shareholders, nor their American style measured day work schemes that produce textile machines. Such production is only rendered possible through the efforts and skill of the men at Atlas Works and their fellow workers at the other branches of the firm. These men have every right to say that they will not allow the Bentley management to manipulate them and trade them in, like pawns in a chess game. They would have every right to prevent the closure of the Atlas works by occupying it. If they do this, it would be no empty gesture. The workers at U.C.S. (Glasgow), the workers of Plessey (Alexandria), women workers at Norwich, engineers at at least four plants in Manchester have all used this tactic recently, with a highrate of success. If the workers at Bentley's decide on a factory occupation, whatever form that occupation takes, it will be up to the entire labour movement in Nottingham to give them all the support they need.

The present day Nottingham industrial scene does not mark it out as one of the centres of high wages and high militancy. From the point of militancy it is nearer to Ambridge than Coventry. The large factories are scarcely national wage leaders; the small firms often operate on long hours and low rates, and the female outworkers are paid what must be amongst the lowest rates in the country. But this was not always the reputation of Nottingham. Henry Vincent, one of the leaders of Chartism, described Nottingham in 1842 as a 'famous radical town'.

Chartism was a movement of the working class to win the right to vote: a part of the long process towards real democracy that can only be completed when the wealth of the world is given to those who produce it - the working class. This partial victory of winning the vote was not won by gentlemanly persuasion or as the benevolent gift of enlightened bosses. It was won by the struggle of the workers and nowhere were the struggles as fierce as in Nottingham.

This political fight by the working class was related to the appalling conditions under which they had to live. The life expectancy in the area around Parliament Street was 20. During the Winter of 1839/40 around 2,000 people were starving on the streets. The response to this was the growth of the Chartist movement, the first attempt of the British working class to organize itself independently. The strength of local Chartism was such that General Sir Charles Napier, with a command of 10,000 troops was headquartered in Nottingham. The town was patrolled by the military.

The response of the Chartists was to organize massive meetings, usually on the Forest or the Square and to call strikes. Perhaps the most impressive incident of this period was the 'Battle of Mapperley Hills'. The rejection by Parliament in May 1842 of the Chartist petition was the signal for a wave of strikes. The strikers went from factory to factory calling the men out. Some went to Radford while others tried to go to Lord Middleton's pits. The troops were unleashed and arrested 200 strikers on Friday August 19th 1842. On the Sunday Arnold was in tumult and the troops were brought in again. The following Tuesday saw a massive demonstration on Mapperley Hills when some 5,000 Chartists held a meeting there. The response of the guardians of 'law and order' was to send in the Dragoon Guards. The Dragoons broke up the meeting and captured around 400 men. These men were roped together and then dragged back into the barracks in town. The ruthlessness of the employers and gentlemen broke the strike. The local paper commented "... these arrests were a complete farce, a party of poor, starving, defenceless men, seated at their hard begged-for meal beneath a canopy of heaven and on a carpet provided by nature, for all to be surprised, surrounded by dragoons and dragged through the streets to jail, when they are not committing the shadow of an illegal act is rather too barefaced."

It was the struggle of workers like these that gained some concessions from the capitalist system. In this year of the miners' strike and the Industrial Relations Act it is as well to learn just how far the forces of 'law and order' will go to protect the profits and privileges of the ruling class.

A. Jenkins.

Editorial Note. Articles describing the past struggles of the working people of Nottingham will be a regular feature of our journal, since it is important to know how the rights that we enjoy today were won, and since the heroism of ordinary people in the fight against oppression rarely gets into school history books.

By Mike Hamlyn.

When you go and sign on at the Labour Exchange, they will tell you to do one of three things. You will either be sent for a job (very unlikely); if you had been in regular work for some time you may be told that you are entitled to National Insurance (Unemployment) benefit, or you may be sent down to your local office of the Ministry of Social Security to claim Supplementary Benefit. If you are unfortunate enough to be unemployed and are sent to the Ministry of Social Security - the S.S.- they have a simple message for you. It is: be servile and obedient. They will deny that you are entitled to any benefit; make you wait for hours and hours and generally treat you as some kind of parasite. This is not because the people behind the counter are particularly nasty people, though some of them undoubtedly are. Rather, the answer lies in the type of society in which we live - capitalism. This system has established certain priorities and works according to certain laws. Profits are more important than any consideration of individual needs or humanity. While Heath goes yachting, thousands of people sit at home without a shilling for the gas or enough food to eat. You will see some of these people when you claim your benefits.

In Nottingham, there exists a Union which will fight for your rights under Social Security - it is called the Claimants Union. This is a Union of people in a similar situation to your own, people who for one reason or another are forced to live, wholly or partially on Supplementary benefits, but who understand what your rights are and the best way to fight for them. If you join the Union, you will be able to get your rights much faster than if you try to win them on your own. For example, since we started last September, we have fought and won dozens of cases, where claimants weren't getting their basic minimum entitlements. We have managed to get outstanding H.P. debts and other bills paid up and we have won lots of 'exceptional needs' claims for extra clothing, bedding or household equipment.

The Nottingham Claimants Union, like Unions in other areas, stand for what is known as the 'Claimants Charter'. It contains four points:

1. The right to an adequate income, without means tests, for all people.
2. A free welfare state for all with its services controlled by the people who use it.
3. No secrets and the right to full information.
4. No distinction between the so called 'deserving' and 'undeserving.'

The Claimants Union is not a 'charity' or a 'welfare' organisation. It encourages claimants to work together to fight for their rights, representing each other at the S.S. and at Appeals Tribunals, pooling information and experience, organising collective action.

The Social Security, as you probably know, is a highly discriminatory system. It discriminates against the young (lower allowances the younger you are). It discriminates against unmarried women with children. It discriminates against single, unskilled men. In

addition, it operates under a series of rules and regulations, which no one else is allowed to see - the 'A.2.' code, which is classified under the Official Secrets Act. By reference to this code, the S.S. officers can cut your benefits, without informing you of the reasons. In this situation you have no 'rights'.

The benefits which are granted under the S.S. system do not enable you to live a life of luxury. In fact they need to be drastically increased and tied to increases in the cost of living; but the trend of the past few years has been for successive governments to attack even these meagre benefits and to introduce new rules. It was the Labour government which, in 1968, introduced the notorious four week rule, cutting off supplementary benefit to unskilled, single men up to the age of 45, if they had not found a job after four weeks. The Tory government introduced an act reducing the benefits for the families of workers on strike and also set up a commission to investigate so called 'abuses' of the S.S. system.

These measures, of course, are backed up by a hysterical press campaign against what they variously call scroungers, loafers, etc. living, we are told, off the backs of the public. Their hypocrisy is contemptible. Whilst lamenting the unemployment levels, they denounce the unemployed, as if they were responsible for the fact that the capitalist system and its various administrators, Tory or Labour Governments, are incapable of providing sufficient jobs. They cover up this incapability by slandering the people for whom they cannot provide employment.

For these reasons and others, we consider it necessary for the unemployed to organise themselves into Unions. This is the first step, if they are even to get the benefits supposedly guaranteed to them under the various Social Security Acts. However, we think that it is insufficient for the unemployed to organise into Unions just to gain their rights. What is necessary is to drastically increase those rights and finally to end the situation in which one million or more people can be without jobs. This means abolishing the system which has proved incapable of providing jobs. We want a system where the priorities are not profit, with the inevitable side effects of poverty, unemployment and misery. We want a system where the priorities are the interests of the working class.

This task, and indeed, in the present situation, even increasing benefits, cannot be achieved without working towards the unity of the unemployed and employed sections of the working class. We, therefore, think it is vitally important to work amongst the employed sections of the working class to gain active support for the unemployed, and to explain the unity of their interests with those of the unemployed. Only in this way can unemployment, and its accompanying degradation, be finally eliminated.

#### Editorial Note:

The meetings of the Nottingham Branch of the Claimants Union take place every Monday at 8.0. p.m., in the Lion Hotel, Clumber St., Nottingham.

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## Pollution and the Preservation of the Environment

Pollution and the preservation of the environment have become very familiar topics of conversation and topics for coverage in the news media- and not without reason for the environmental crisis threatens the entire existence of humanity. Magazines like the Ecologist have pointed out the dire consequences for mankind if it continues to wastefully squander the earth's resources and willfully dump poisonous by-products into the air, the rivers and the sea.

Unfortunately, however, the real reasons for this problem are rarely discussed in the media and are little understood. It is obvious that poisonous by-products could be treated and technology could be used to help preserve the environment rather than to destroy it. So why is this not the case? Here is a quote from a company magazine that gives us the answer:

"...industry cannot be expected to spend large amounts of money of its own volition (to prevent pollution) while its main legal obligation is to earn maximum profits for its owners, the shareholders. However conscious of its social responsibilities, its actions will tend to be limited to its statutory requirements."

The magazine from which this is taken is that of Tube Investments Ltd. The rest of the article is taken up with some discussion of the problem of pollution and the claim that Tube Investments do not have a record that is "too shameful" on this issue. But the main point is there for all to see- where industry is privately owned and run to make a profit for the owners then "...industry cannot be expected to spend large sums of money of its own volition...". In fact moments thought will make it obvious that it is actually in the interests of the private owners of industry to pollute and destroy the environment. To treat the poisonous waste and by-products costs money and will reduce profits. To prevent the offensive smells that come from some industrial processes would mean installing equipment which would again cost money and which would reduce profits. If industry squanders resources on products that are built not to last or which will be made unfashionable later by the introduction of new products, then this is simply because profits will be higher if consumers can be made to keep on spending as a result. If packaging and advertising is extravagant and wasteful then this is for the same reason- the private owners of industry are afraid that their competitors will take away their customers and hence their profits.

The fact that the above quote is from the magazine of Tube Investments Ltd. gives the problem a local flavour because Raleighs is a member of the T.I. business group. One wonders how Nottingham people have suffered from Raleigh's "legal obligation" to earn maximum profits for their shareholders. Certainly there are other local firms that do not have too good a record. For instance on the Colwick Estate the British Sugar Corporation factory during the process of refining sugar uses large settling tanks. While it is unknown precisely what these tanks <sup>contain</sup> what is known is that local residents complain that the smell from these pits in the summer is extremely offensive and the substance that they contain is probably dangerous since trees and vegetation nearby have been killed. While there is a danger sign at the entrance to the estate it is possible for children to get near the settling tanks and since they are steep sided any child that fell in would find it difficult to get out. Large drums of atricide - an extremely poisonous weedkiller- are also within access to children near the settling pits, "are large plastic containers by Rentokill with labels clearly marked "Bury or incinerate after use".

As mentioned above the problems of pollution and this attitude towards the environment largely derives from the fact that industry is run to make maximum profits for its shareholders (within the context of the present society nationalized industry is run on the same kind of principles). As such the problem can only be fully dealt with by getting rid of private ownership - i.e. getting rid of capitalism - and by the working class running industry in their own interests.

To say that the problem of pollution and the destruction of the environment is caused by the existence of capitalism and that it can only be solved by getting rid of capitalism does not mean that nothing can be done here and now. Over the last few years the working class have shown its willingness and ability to impose its will over the employers and their government. Apart from exposing whenever and wherever possible how the employers are destroying the environment and bringing down the quality of life it will sometimes be possible for workers in a factory to refuse to work processes which endanger or inconvenience the rest of society. This would be an extension of the legitimate right of workers to exercise a veto over working dangerous jobs inside the factory.

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By Brian Davy.

Editorial

When launching a new magazine, it is customary to say something about your reasons for doing so, so we will follow in this well trodden tradition. For a long time, we have felt the need for a paper which seeks to give full support to the struggles of the working class in the Nottingham area. Because 'Nottingham Worker' will be a monthly publication, it would be stupid to see ourselves as presenting 'news' rather we will seek to analyse what is going on. What we will endeavour to be factual, we warn our readers that our comments will be solely biased in favour of the working class and against their exploiters. We make no apologies for this, since the employers and the Government already have enough papers of their own.

Although this magazine is the publication of the Nottingham Branch of the International Marxist Group, we will welcome contributions in the form of articles, etc., from anyone who is a socialist.

Brian Davy and Brian Sinclair.

Annual Subscription: £1, post free; Business Address: 35, Grey Road, Nottingham, Nottingham.

'THE NOTTINGHAM WORKER'

June 29th., 1972. Volume one, Number one.

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Annual Subscription: £1, post free : Business Address: 32, Greys Road,  
Woodthorpe,  
Nottingham.

Published by I.M.G. (Nottingham Branch), 8, Derby Grove, Lenton.

PUBLIC MEETING IN SUPPORT OF THE WORKERS OF JONES STROUD Co. Ltd.

About eighty English and Pakistani workers are on strike at the Jones Stroud Co. Ltd. They are demanding the reinstatement of Mr. Mahmoud, who was sacked for allegedly damaging the machine he was working on.

The workers maintain that the real reason for his dismissal was that he helped to unionise them into the Transport and General Workers Union. The workers had decided to form the Union, in order to fight for better wages and working conditions.

The public meeting will take place at the Long Eaton Labour Club, Lawrence Street, Long Eaton, on Monday, the 24th. of July, starting at 7.30. p.m. The speakers will include the following:

Chairman: George Powe,  
Tommy Skelton, T.&G.W.U.  
Peter Fitzpatrick, N.U.G.M.W.  
Ron Richards, E.F.T.U.  
Beni Bunse, B.P.F.M.  
Brian Simister, I.M.G.  
M. Aslam, Pakistani Friends League.  
Chan Chal Singh, Indian Workers.  
Mahmood Ahmed, plus one other member of  
the Strike Committee.  
And other speakers.

This is a strike about basic trade union rights and should be supported by every working man and woman. We urge you to make every effort to attend the meeting.

Published by the Solidarity Committee, B.P.F.M. Offices,  
Derby Road,  
Nottingham.