

Special Report

SPECIAL BRANCH S.D.S.

6th day of February 1978

SUBJECT

Socialist

Workers Party

Reference to Papers

100/77/238

1. Submitted herewith is a leaflet received from a reliable source. It was produced by the South West London District of the Socialist Workers Party in conjunction with firemen members of that District.

2. Its purpose is to explain what the firemen's strike meant to workers and to underline the fact that the defeat of the firemen will adversely effect other wage claims currently in the pipeline. It also claims that the firemen's strike was lost because of the poor leadership of the Fire Brigades Union and the lack of support from the TUC, whom it alleges ignored the feelings of the rank and file firemen. It is argued that the strike could have been won if it had been successfully extended to include the mass picketing of oil refineries and other high risk fire areas.

3. The leaflet ends by explaining the need for a national rank and file movement with links in all industries, as proposed by the SWP. Accordingly, readers sympathetic to this idea are urged to contact the SWP.

Chief Inspector

[Handwritten Signature]

BOX 500

A. Dickinson

CHIEF SUPERINTENDENT

TO

P.A. M.

Socialist Worker says

THE FIREMAN'S STRIKE: WHAT IT MEANS FOR EVERYONE.

Our defeat is your defeat

For nine long cold weeks we battled to break through the government's 10 per cent pay limits. There was tremendous solidarity and determination within our ranks which was strengthened considerably by the tremendous public support we received. But we lost. The consequences of this defeat are clear. Wage settlements will be reduced even further this year. British steel workers have only been offered 6% and Callaghan has announced that he intends to bring the pay limit down to 5%.

Why did we lose?

The main reason was that we were saddled with a leadership that didn't want to win and which put loyalty to the Government before loyalty to its own membership. And if that wasn't enough, the big nobs of the TUC, who ignored the feelings of rank and file members, stabbed us in the back by refusing to organise the support which most trade unionists would willingly have given. In the face of this treachery it was not surprising that a majority of FBU members voted to return to work.

Could we have won?

Many workers will draw the lesson from the firemen's experience that it is pointless to try to fight the government, the newspapers, the t.v. and the national trade union leaders, as well as their own employers. This of course is the lesson the government intended you to learn - BUT IT IS NOT TRUE. GOVERNMENT PAY LIMITS CAN BE OVERTURNED - and have been. The miners did it in 1972 and 1974, and only three months ago British Oxygen workers won more than 20% through strike action. But they didn't win simply by stopping work, and waiting for the employers and the Government to give in. They did it by using their strength to stop other sections of industry from working and by using mass pickets to stop the movement of supplies. They spread the economic impact of the strike. If we had mass picketed the oil refineries and other high fire risk plants and brought them to a standstill, we could have forced the Government to retreat.

Get Together

The only way to win today is to spread a strike, and this cannot be done by leaving it up to the trade union leaders. We have to organise ourselves and build up links with workers in the same industries and with active rank and file trade unionists in other industries. That is the only way to stop the sell-outs. We joined the Socialist Workers Party because it supports the building of a national Rank and File movement. We are tired of being shat upon by people who claim to represent us. If you are too - get in touch with us.

Produced by firemen members of S.W. London District of the SWP. C/o 6, Cottons Gardens, E2.

JOIN THE SOCIALIST WORKERS PARTY
Please send me more information

Name _____
Address _____
Trade union _____

Send to: National Secretary,
Socialist Workers Party,
London E2 6JH